What about Men?
The gendered hierarchy of vulnerability in humanitarian aid

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Abstract

Gender mainstreaming has become a widely discussed and applied tool, aimed to aid progress towards gender equality. The latter has been an important aspect of international development and humanitarian action, as is evident from the Sustainable Development Goals. In humanitarian aid, this tool has the purpose of making aid more effective and inclusive, by critically assessing how crises affect women, men, girls, and boys differently. Specifically, it enforces a needs-based approach to delivering aid. However, gender biases still guide perceptions of vulnerability, which is a key determinant in needs assessment. Specifically, women and children are perceived to be the most vulnerable in all cases, while men are either sidelined, perceived as necessary allies to gender equality at most or, in the worst case, as threats. Though women and girls do suffer most from systematic gender inequality due to various factors, gender-specific threats are not reserved for women and girls, alone. Men and boys face different types of threats that are unique to their gender. This paper will explore male-specific vulnerabilities by addressing conceptual and theoretical concerns, followed by a policy analysis. This analysis is based on policies of implementing organizations in Syria in 2017. The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether these humanitarian actors are aware of male-specific vulnerabilities, and whether they address them in their policies and programming. In doing so, obstacles to the successful inclusion of men in gender mainstreaming efforts will be identified.
Acknowledgements

This thesis represents both academic and personal effort and growth. This experience has forever changed me, and I expect I will continue to draw new lessons from it in the years to come.

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List of Abbreviations

4Ws  Who does What, Where, and When
ACF  Action Against Hunger
ADRA  The Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFK  Aga Khan Foundation
AKND  Aga Khan Development Network
BBC  The British Broadcasting Corporation
CARE  Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO  Community-based Organizations
COI  Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
DRC  Danish Refugee Council
ECHO  European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
GBV  Gender Based Violence
GOPA-DERD  Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East - Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development
GVC  Gruppo di Volontariato Civile
HCT  Humanitarian Country Team
HELP  Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe
IAC  International Armed Conflict
ICMC  The International Catholic Migration Commission
ICRC  International Committee Red Cross
IHL  International Humanitarian Law
IICISAR  Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
IJRC  International Justice Resource Center
IMC  International Medical Corps
INGO  International Non-Governmental Organization
IR  International Relations
LGBTQ  Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSJM</td>
<td>Monastery. Saint James the mutilated</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NIAC</td>
<td>Non-International Armed Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRIO</td>
<td>Peace Research Institute Oslo</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender Based Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIF</td>
<td>Secours Islamique France</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDH</td>
<td>Terre Des Hommes</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>The United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN ECOSOC</td>
<td>The Economic and Social Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNOCHA</td>
<td>The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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1. Introduction

Gender mainstreaming, the internationally adopted strategy to achieve gender equality, has been implemented in the humanitarian sector to systematically identify the different needs of beneficiaries based on gender. The underlying idea is that men, women, boys, and girls are affected differently by crises, and that a critical gender approach will ultimately make aid more effective, as it allows organizations to contextualize vulnerability and better determine the needs within communities. Humanitarian organizations aim to ensure that aid is delivered “to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.” (UNOCHA, 2017) Interestingly, as this thesis will demonstrate, the opposite appears to be true: unchecked gendered assumptions directly influence how humanitarian organizations, governments, and the international community at large perceive and interact with beneficiaries. The following example demonstrates the issue:

“Do you have a specific accusation? That the Popular Mobilization killed a woman or a child or an old man? […] So, these accusations are about men able to carry weapons? This person might have been IS or maybe not. Maybe a mistake happened, maybe not. Maybe it was revenge, maybe not.” (BBC, 2018)

This statement was made by a community leader in Diyala in response to a question posed by BBC Correspondent Feras Kilani about the massacres that occurred there. The implication behind this statement is that, though those who were killed were civilians, they were able-bodied men and thus their civilian status, and their innocence, was outweighed by the potential threat they posed. His rebuttal question — whether there were any accusations concerning the killing of women, children, and the elderly — is key to understanding the underlying biases at play: that women and children are innocent, while men are a threat.

This is one of the many ways in which male-specific vulnerabilities are normalized and overlooked. Other examples are the underrepresentation of male victims of SGBV and forced recruitment, which is generally not framed as a gendered vulnerability at all, unless it concerns children. Additionally, when humanitarian organizations and
governments want to raise funds or gain support for a particular cause, images of women and children are favored, as they garner more sympathy. Judging from its stated purpose, these types of biases are precisely what the gender mainstreaming tool is expected to reveal and combat. However, men continue to be sidelined in humanitarian efforts, with most organizations focusing heavily on women in their gender policies and programming.

To explore the effects of gendered interpretations of vulnerability on men in humanitarian aid, this thesis will feature a policy analysis based on implementing organizations active in Syria in 2017. The purpose of this analysis is to explore to what extent and in what ways men are included in gender mainstreaming efforts, and to identify key factors contributing to the exclusion of men.

1.2 Research Process

1.2.1 Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to assess whether gender mainstreaming is balanced in its application by humanitarian aid organizations. More specifically, it seeks to address the issue of male vulnerability in a humanitarian crisis caused by conflict. Analyzing publications on gender policies and tools by INGOs working in Syria will help shed light on whether men and boys are included in gender equality programming. If they are not, it would mean that the very tool that is intended to challenge gender stereotypes and ultimately improve gender equality, is instead helping to reinforce these biases when it comes to needs assessment. This is harmful to men and boys. By addressing this issue, a more critical approach to gender and gender equality may be achieved.
1.2.2 Research Questions

The research question addressed in this thesis is: What factors affect the inclusion of men as victims in gender mainstreaming policy by humanitarian organizations working in Syria?

To explore this issue, the following sub-questions will need to be addressed:

1. What does gender mainstreaming mean in humanitarian aid?
2. What threats are unique and specific to men and boys?
3. Do INGOs working in Syria have gender (mainstreaming) policies?
4. Are male specific vulnerabilities addressed in these policies?
5. If so, in what way have they been addressed?

1.2.3 Methodology

This thesis is based around an analysis of tools and policy documents of a set of humanitarian organizations, and includes a literature study and case-study to gain a deeper understanding of certain theoretical concepts. The research has a qualitative character, with the final analysis based predominately on publications by the UN and INGOs.

Data collection

To conceptualize the main themes of this thesis, an extensive literature review has been conducted. The themes are all framed within the context of humanitarian aid. They are: gender norms, vulnerability — specifically the effect gender norms have on the determination of vulnerability in humanitarian crises — and the UN tool: gender mainstreaming. Sources used for this literature review are predominately academic, such as articles and books, as well as policy papers and legal resources. These sources were mainly found and accessed through the Uppsala University Library, Leiden University Library, and Peace Palace Library databases.
The literary data is built on several key researchers: Dr. Charli Carpenter, based at the Department of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, whose research focuses on humanitarian affairs, gender, and political violence and who has conducted extensive research on male vulnerabilities in humanitarian crises; Dr. Adam Jones, of the Political Science department at the University of British Columbia, whose research focuses on gender, violence, and humanitarian aid. A major hallmark of his research is his exploration of the concept ‘gendercide,’ specifically its consequences for men in conflict; and Dr. Christopher Dolan, director of the Refugee Law Project, whose expertise has provided both practical and academic contributions to the fields of refugee law and international policies. Additionally, he draws attention to male victims of sexual violence, and the lack of attention this group has received. On the topic of male-specific vulnerabilities, these researchers have brought forth the most comprehensive and current theories and discussion points, and they have made it their specialty. Dr. Sandra Whitworth’s research is also relevant to this thesis. She is a political scientist and human rights expert who specializes in gender and feminism in international relations and politics, and works at the University of York as associate dean and professor in the Politics Department.

Data for the case study has been collected from annual reports from the year 2017, as well as project reports, policy papers, and organizational websites, some of which are from later years. The year 2017 was chosen for the annual reports to ensure consistency, because most organizations have not yet published their reports for the year 2018. The humanitarian crisis in Syria was chosen as a case study, because it is current and relevant to the discussion. According to a 2018 ECHO factsheet, “[p]rotection of civilians remains a serious concern in large parts of Syria. Rape and sexual violence, enforced disappearances, recruitment of child soldiers and forced conscription, executions and deliberate targeting of civilians remain commonplace.” Some of these issues have been identified as being a particular threat to men and boys, as will be discussed in later chapters. Another reason for this particular choice is that International Humanitarian Law applies to the case of Syria, which is relevant to the discussion on civilian protection and needs assessment in general. According to Davis (2017) “the last five plus years of
fighting in Syria raises questions regarding how we think about gender – and particularly men – during conflict.” Single male refugees from Syria are typically not favored by host countries’ governments, despite the fact that they are fleeing from violence. There is overlap here between Islamophobia and the idea that men are considered more threatening than women. The focus in this research will remain on the gendered aspect of the issue.

To ensure a relatively unbiased and systematic approach to the selection of organizations for the case study, the organizations were selected using the UNOCHA 4Ws Presence dashboard (2017). This dashboard provides a comprehensive overview of ‘Who does what, when, and where’ in humanitarian aid. Although there were many different types of actors working in Syria in 2017, the selection has been limited to INGOs for the purpose of this case study. The organizations presented on the dashboard are all part of the Syrian HCT. An overview of these can be found in Table 1 in the Research Findings, where each INGOs’ particular activities in Syria are documented, as well as their and gender policies, if applicable. To find these details, the following terms were entered into the websites’ search engines, as well as the finder option within documents: “gender mainstreaming,” “gender equality,” “gender,” “men,” “women,” “male,” and “female.”

Data analysis

A case-study method has been chosen to explore the complex concepts discussed in the literature review. This method is time-tested, and has seen multiple developments over the years, that have improved and refined it for the purpose of dealing with complex theoretical concepts. Harrison et al. (2017) states that:

“The continued use of case study to understand the complexities of institutions, practices, processes, and relations in politics, has demonstrated the utility of case study for researching complex issues, and testing causal mechanisms that can be applied across varied disciplines.”

The selected organizations’ policy documents will be analyzed by means of a simplified document analysis, focusing on the way men and women are represented in the documents, with special emphasis on the men. These themes are then compared to the outcomes of the literature review.
“Document analysis yields data — excerpts quotations, or entire passages — that are then organized into major themes, categories, and case examples specifically through content analysis.” (Labuschagne, 2003 cited in Bowen, 2009, P.28) It is also particularly useful for qualitative case studies. (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994 cited in Bowen, 2009, P.30)

Once the gender policies of the selected organizations have been analyzed, their implementations will be compared to the points raised within the theoretical discussion. Organizations that do not mention gender mainstreaming or gender policy on their website or within publications will not be used in further analysis. They will remain on the list, as it is relevant to document the organizations that do not implement the tool at all, as well.

1.3 Relevance to research in the field of Humanitarian Aid

Gender equality has been part of the MDGs, as well as the SDGs. These are closely linked to overall development and humanitarian endeavors worldwide. As a key tool towards achieving gender equality, gender mainstreaming should not be vulnerable to the very gender biases that have hindered equality from being established. The issue also concerns the very principles that humanitarian organizations operate on, most importantly the principles of impartiality and humanity. If aid is to be delivered on the basis of need, then discussing the gender sub-norms that influence both needs assessment processes, as well as policymaking and the implementation of policy, are key to staying true to these principles.

To complicate matters, the lack of data available makes it difficult to challenge imbalanced perceptions of gender-specific vulnerability in conflict, much less to inspire any change in behavior by the international community, governments, parties to a conflict, or legal institutions. As Dolan (2017, pp. 12-13) so eloquently puts it:

“In the long-standing tug of war between gender norms […] and numbers that do not always support a simple narrative of women’s gender inequality norms currently hold the balance of power.”

The purpose of this type of research is then to impress upon others the importance to not only collect gender disaggregated data, but also to review what type of data is worth looking at, and how to present the findings of such data to the public. In the case of GBV,
for example, the issue is not just the lack of gender disaggregated data, but also that the
international community seems to focus primarily on the type of GBV to which women
are exposed. According to the literature, male victims of this type of violence remain
underrepresented, and a more inclusive definition would result in even larger numbers.
Male victims have been receiving more attention recently, mainly in academic spheres,
but also in the field of humanitarian aid. In applying some of the themes discussed by
researchers presented in this paper to humanitarian efforts in Syria, this paper attempts to
shed some light on the current state of affairs.

1.4 Limitations

This research is predominately based on primary sources, namely policy documents and
annual reports published by INGOs. However, these are organizational documents, and
personal accounts or interpretations of these documents and policies may have provided
interesting and relevant insights to analyze. These personal accounts could have been
collected through surveys and interviews with aid workers. However, doing this would
have complicated the research beyond the scope of a Master thesis. As a result, this
approach has been left out, so it not possible to analyze or make conclusions about
individual aid workers’ current stances on the topic of gender mainstreaming in
humanitarian aid. The lack of aid workers’ individual accounts could result in an
eschewed perspective, as more informal actions are more likely to slip through. For
example, a report or website may not mention that an organization paid special attention
to male victims of GBV, but field aid workers may have initiated something to support
this group on their own accord. The lack of gender disaggregated data in many cases
makes it difficult to make statements about situational vulnerability.

Similarly, to avoid making this thesis too convoluted, the question of how the LGBTQ
community fits into the discussion of gender mainstreaming in humanitarian aid has been
left out of the research. Including this group in the research would be easily justified, as
this would have provided interesting insights and nuances to a discussion that is about
perceptions of gender, innocence, and vulnerability. However, the topic is so complex
that it would and should easily sustain a research project on its own, where the topic would be better served.

Though some commentary will be based around IHL, UN Security Council Resolutions, Human Rights Law, and other international policies and regulations, the legal aspect of the issue of gender-mainstreaming is not the main focus of this research. These are purely added for context. As a result, certain nuances are sure to be overlooked. Additionally, there are different types of humanitarian disasters, each of which are characterized by a different set of consequences, plans of action, laws, and policies. This research is based around a conflict situation, which has caused displacement for millions of people. This paper will not deal with natural disasters. Furthermore, there are limitations to the case-study method. Though it has been established as “a credible, valid research design that facilitates the exploration of complex issues,” a case study necessarily reduces generalizability of the studied concept. (Harrison et al, 2017) Finally, this study is about beneficiaries and their involvement with humanitarian aid organizations, not how the organization itself deals with gender mainstreaming internally, i.e. hiring a certain number of women versus men.
2. Background

To contextualize the theoretical discussion and analysis in the following chapters, it is helpful to first address a few key definitions, as well as certain historical factors. Specifically, knowing the history of gender mainstreaming and gender equality is necessary to understand why, in many cases, men are sidelined in international efforts and humanitarian aid. Additionally, civilian protection is also briefly addressed, because it reinforces the argument that, although policies and regulations are not gendered, fair and successful implementation of these is dependent on the interpretations of a network of actors. This often results in imbalances caused by gender sub-norms, a term that will be explained in Chapter 3. Finally, an overview of male-specific vulnerabilities that Syrian men face as a result of the crisis, as well as an overview of the crisis itself, is important to understand why it is so harmful that men’s vulnerabilities remain largely unaddressed.

2.1 UN Gender Mainstreaming mandate

In order to assess the application of gender mainstreaming in humanitarian aid, it is necessary to understand its purpose and definition. Gender mainstreaming is, put simply, “a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality.” (UN Women). It originates from the Platform for Action established during the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. In the Conference Report Mission Statement, this Platform is defined as “an agenda for women’s empowerment,” and aims to accelerate the “implementation of the Strategies […] for the Advancement of Women,” that were established during the Third UN World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. (1995, P.7) The Report calls on Governments, the United Nations, as well as regional and international organizations and NGOs to commit themselves to the Platform for Action, “ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes,” as “[e]quality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for
equality, development and peace.” (Idem, Pp. 5 -7) Additionally, the Platform for Action insists that gender analysis is essential for implementation of gender mainstreaming. In 1997, the UN ECOSOC affirmed that the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was “essential […] to foster the empowerment and advancement of women,” and stated that “the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective.” (ECOSOC, 1997, P. 24) Finally, recognizing that gender had up to that point not been “fully integrated in the mainstream of UN activities,” ECOSOC defines Gender Mainstreaming as follows:

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” (Chapter IV, Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2)

Additional documents which cemented the UN mandate for gender mainstreaming are the Secretary General’s Communication on Gender Mainstreaming in 1997, and the Outcome Document from the General Assembly in 2000. The former provided more concrete directives, while the latter served as a follow-up five years after the implementation of the Plan for Action.

2.2 Gender and Gender Equality

As gender mainstreaming was promoted as a global strategy for achieving gender equality, it is necessary to define both ‘gender’ and ‘gender equality,’ especially within UN documents. For the purpose of the Platform for Action, the Fourth World Conference noted that “the word ‘gender’ had been commonly used and understood in its ordinary, generally accepted usage in numerous other United Nations forums and conferences,” and saw no need to divert from that usage. (UN, 1995, p.218) UN Women defines gender as:

“…the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations
between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes.”

For the purpose of discussion, and to avoid any confusion, this thesis will assume the same definition of gender. Most researchers addressed in this research have adopted a similar if not the same definition, at the least agreeing that gender refers to the socially constructed stereotypes assigned to women, men, girls, and boys, whereas sex refers to biology. However, occasionally these terms are used interchangeably: for example, within the context of this discussion, ‘male-specific vulnerabilities’ is meant to address vulnerabilities that are specific to men. Though ‘male’ relates to sex, rather than gender, the reason they act or are treated differently in this context relates directly to the socially constructed roles based on sex, i.e. gender. Gender equality “refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.” (UN Women) The goal of gender equality is that “the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female.” (Idem) In a selection of documents, UN Women takes special care to note that “equality” is the preferred term within the UN over “equity,” as the latter allows for an “element of interpretation of social justice, usually based on tradition, custom, religion or culture, which is most often to the detriment to women.” (2001a, p.2) It is therefore “unacceptable” to use “equity” as the term to serve the advancement of women. It is important to note that the UN Women takes special care to clarify that women’s empowerment and gender mainstreaming are complementary, but not the same. They’re complimentary in that they both serve the goal of gender equality, but women’s empowerment concerns “women gaining power and control over their own lives.” (Ibid) Gender mainstreaming, however, entails that “attention is given to gender perspectives as an integral part of all activities across all programs.” (Ibid) This means that targeted activities to support women should not stop as a result of the mainstreaming strategy.

Additionally, a UN Women Factsheet specifically points out that “gender” and “women” are not interchangeable concepts, and that the inclusion of men in understanding gender equality is necessary. “Gender refers to both women and men, and the relations between
them. Promotion of gender equality should concern and engage men as well as women.” This document outlines three main approaches that have been taken to include men in the process: 1) “the need to identify men as allies for gender equality,” 2) the recognition that gender equality is not possible, unless men change their attitudes and behavior in many areas,” and crucially, 3) “that gender systems in place in many contexts are negative for men as well as for women — creating unrealistic demands on men and requiring [them] to behave in narrowly defined ways.” (Idem, p.1). Gender equality has been a major point in both the MDGs, which concluded in 2015, as well as the SDGs, which took its place in 2016. The Goal, titled “Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” focuses heavily on women and girls, with little mention of gender mainstreaming. Gender equality is enshrined within the UN charter in Article 1.3:

“To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

Its commitment to gender equality is also evident in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the Commission on the Status of Women ensured to contain gender neutral language.

2.3 Civilian Protection

International Humanitarian Law applies in cases of armed conflict and is enshrined in treaties, such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, and in customary IHL, stemming from general practices that are accepted as laws. It provides a legal framework for situations of armed conflict or occupation, and seeks to limit its effects for humanitarian purposes, by protecting those who are not, or are no longer, participating in hostilities, and by regulating the possible means of warfare available to parties in an armed conflict.

At its core IHL represents a balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations in the context of conflict. Humanity, as a cornerstone of IHL, represents the imperative during conflict to alleviate suffering and save lives, and each individual
humanely and respectfully. Military necessity is the justification of measures necessary to achieve a military a goal, provided these measures comply with international humanitarian law. (IJRC)

There is a difference between international and non-international armed conflict, and these are governed by different protocols: Protocol I deals with IAC, whereas Protocol II deals with NIAC. The scope of civilian protection is well defined within Article 50 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I, but is not helpful in the case of NIAC. The conflict in Syria is a NIAC, as was officially declared by the ICRC in July 2012. (ICRC, 2012) Civilian protection in NIAC is defined in Additional Protocol II, Part IV, Articles 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. However, problematically, the Democratic Republic of Syria has not signed this protocol. This means that the mandate for the protection of civilians has to come from elsewhere, namely, Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention. This Article lays out provisions to each party to the conflict in case of “armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties.” These provisions stipulate that “[p]ersons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed 'hors de combat' by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria,” and that “[t]he wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.” (cited by ICRC)

2.4 The humanitarian crisis in Syria

The ICRC publicly confirmed the initiation of an armed conflict within Syria in an operational update in July 2012. To verify, the COI evaluated the situation and determined that: “[…] the intensity and duration of the conflict, combined with the increased organizational capabilities of the FSA, do, in fact, meet the legal threshold for a non-international armed conflict. With this determination, the commission applied IHL, including Common Article 3, in its assessment of the actions of the parties during hostilities.” (COI Report, Annex II, paras. 2–3, 2012)
The conflict in Syria has caused over 11 million citizens to lose their homes. In March 2019, the UNHCR reported record numbers of humanitarian needs within the country, with over 6.1 million IDPs, while 5.6 million Syrians are registered refugees. Some of the largest numbers of Syrian refugees are hosted in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq. Germany, Sweden, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark also made the list of top-ten refugee-hosting countries in 2017. (Statista) Meanwhile, humanitarian organizations have had issues with accessibility to communities in need, both inside and outside of Syria. Since the onset of violence, there have been global efforts to protect civilians, relocate the displaced, and deliver humanitarian aid.

Against the backdrop of recent changes in Syria, and with increased anti-refugee sentiments, policies, and rhetoric in host-countries, several thousand Syrians have started to return home. This is problematic, as the situation in Syria is far from safe or stable, and conditions for safe returns have not yet been met. (NRC, et al. 2018) For every refugee who has returned home in 2017, three others are internally displaced, while Turkey and Jordan had to prevent nearly 300,000 people from crossing their borders. (Idem) Additionally, an OHCHR report show that tens of thousands of Syrian civilians have been illegally detained by Government forces and affiliated militia, often without due process. Many have died in detention centers, often as a result of “torture, neglect, inhumane conditions, or from executions.” (2018, p. 2). Other armed groups and terrorist entities have also set up such detention centers, “where captured Government soldiers have been tortured, ill-treated, and, in some cases, summarily executed.” (Ibid) These detainees are being held for reasons such as “punishment for suspected loyalty, to extract ransom, or as a bargaining chip to initiate prisoner swaps with Government forces and affiliated militias.” (Ibid) The report states that the phenomenon is most prevalent in Government controlled areas. (Idem, p.3) Though the fighting in Syria is reported to have significantly diminished, civilians are still losing their lives, and the humanitarian crisis is “far from over.” (UN News, 2019)
2.5 The Vulnerabilities of Syrian Men

The Syrian conflict is particularly interesting to the debate about the vulnerabilities of men in conflict, because it has brought this issue under increased scrutiny. To demonstrate why, Davis provides the following example:

“The media and non-governmental associations repeatedly report that 75% of Syrian refugees are women and children. What they fail to do, however, is examine the statistics. Just over 50% of the refugees are children, and thus slightly less than 50% are adults. The statistics also show [...] that about half of the adults are women and half are men; thus indeed, some 75% of the refugees are women and children. But equally so, 75% of the refugees are men and children. Yet that statistic is never cited as significant, nor is it used in efforts to stir empathy for refugees or create policy or programming.” (2017)

Davis adds that the number of adult men fleeing the conflict exceeds the number women or children, and that “the vast majority of civilian deaths are of adult men—more than 70% according to the Violations Documentation Center in Syria.” (Ibid) Stacking up more evidence, an independent inquiry found that “in Syria ‘males of fighting age have emerged as the main targets of violence,’ constituting 85.1 percent of recorded victims of the Syrian conflict between March 2011 and April 2014.” (IICISAR 2015, paras. 54-58, cited by Dolan, 2017, p.5) Furthermore, the report noted that, “men of fighting age are not granted any of the protections afforded to civilians by any of the parties.” (Ibid.) In 2014, when the humanitarian ceasefire was declared in Homs, it was found that civilian able-bodied men had a hard time leaving their neighborhoods: “more than 500 men between the ages of 15 and 55 were detained in the city for question and security screening,” while women, children and older men were allowed to leave. (Davis et al. 2014, p.35) Men’s civilian status is a perceived grey area, because even if they are not carrying weapons or engaged in violence, they are seen as “either an asset or as a threat.” (Ibid.; Khattab et al, 2017) Many flee to avoid military conscription and recruitment by armed groups. Based on interviews with refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, Davis (2017) concludes that, although political ideologies of the respondents were mixed, many refugees were “unwilling to join the fighting because they did not believe in what the regime was doing, they saw it as a personal death sentence, or they did not want to pick up arms for anyone.” Those who manage to flee are considered deserters, which is linked to the aforementioned issue of detainment and imprisonment. (Al-Jablawi, 2019)
If Syrian male refugees do make it to a host country, they are more likely to be subjected to violence and harassment from local officials or the public, or to be arrested. (Brun, 2017, p.8) Turner adds that “[h]ost states that offer resettlement places for Syrians regularly exclude or try to minimize the numbers of single men.” (p.29, 2017). “[…] excluding or minimizing the number of single men reflects the widely held view that ‘authentic’ refugees are women and children, who are implicitly vulnerable and in need of external assistance.” (Ibid.) In another article, in which Turner explores male-specific vulnerabilities using Jordan as a case study, he states:

“Men are significantly more likely than women or children to be refouled to Syria for alleged security reasons, to suffer from particular forms of police harassment, and to be forcibly encamped (or otherwise punished) by Jordanian authorities for labor market violations.” (2016)

Despite stacking evidence that men are exposed to various types of danger and vulnerability in crises, the international community prefers to focus on women and children as victims. Male refugees are distrusted by governments and sidelined in humanitarian programming, despite the fact that they are facing legitimate threats, often fleeing to avoid persecution or forced to join in the violence. Brun's CARE report found that “Male refugees, especially single adult males, often lack a clear place within humanitarian response frameworks,” and that “there is a common perception that men are best able to look after themselves and negotiate the complexities of displacement unaided. Their specific vulnerabilities are often overlooked.” (2017, p.5) She elaborates specifically on the vulnerability of single 18-year-old men, who no longer fall under the category of unaccompanied minors, and who are only barely adults. Given the hostility with which single adult men are met in host countries, and the lack of attention they receive in humanitarian programming, this group is especially vulnerable: “drug and alcohol addiction, violence, and prostitution are the main dangers facing these young male refugees.” (Idem, p.10) The expectations on men, based around perceptions of masculinity, are also identified as a key factor in men’s vulnerability in crises:

“Frustration, anger, and boredom caused by their inability to conform to dominant and yet unattainable models of masculinity, their lack of prospects, and the feeling of being neglected, affects their well-being and can lead to addictions and mental illness.” (Idem, p.19)
The disconnect between these facts and the perceptions which inform programming and action lies at the heart of the discussion presented in this thesis, and will be explored in further detail.
3. Literature review

This chapter will delve into the current discourse and theory on gendered vulnerability, and the different aspects to this concept. This chapter builds on the work of key researchers in the field, who have been presented in the Methodology section in the Introduction.

3.1 Women and children first

As shown in the previous chapter, civilian protection is well defined in IHL, whether it be within Common Article 3, Additional Protocol I, or Additional Protocol II. Anyone, regardless of age, sex, or gender, can be a civilian. However, according to Carpenter, “gender […] shapes the implementation of international norms.” (2006a, p.7) In “Innocent Women and Children: Gender, Norms, and the Protection of Civilians,” she conducts a “very basic form of gender analysis into existing constructivist models for understanding how actors behave in situations of armed conflict.” (Ibid.) In the first pages of her work, she unpacks the concept of gender norms — defined here as norms that assign “appropriate relations between and among men and women” (Idem, p.13) — and its effects on broader norms and actions as expressed in international law, (humanitarian) policy, programming, and the actions of governments. Seemingly sex-neutral norms, meanwhile, can be found to “encode gender if the conditions under which they are held to apply vary according to the sex of those in question.” (Ibid) These biases are then perpetuated by language and practice, which can “produce a third kind of norm effect: […] a warping effect.

“Ideas embedded in broader normative understandings can generate an application of a broader norm that is inconsistent with its own internal logic. The implicit beliefs (or sub-norms) are not constitutive of the broader norm, nor do they themselves cause the norm to be implemented. Rather, they distort the way in which norm effects are manifest, while masquerading as a proper application of the norm.” (Ibid)

This groundwork conceptualization is important, as Carpenter goes on to apply it to the protection regime broadly speaking, and the immunity norm specifically as defined by IHL. These layers of social construct, norms, values, practices, and language all
contribute to the prevalent existence of a gender sub-norm which contradicts the norms on which the protection regime rely. (Ibid) What it comes down to is that it is more likely that women and children will be perceived as civilian, whereas men are more likely to be perceived as belligerents. (Idem, p.14)

To explain this, the protection regime is divided into three broad principles: 1) the distinction principle, which defines civilians as a distinctive category to be recognized; 2) the immunity principle, which is based on the idea that those not partaking in violence should not suffer from it; and 3) the protection principle, which states that there is a third party responsibility “to prevent or deter the targeting, and alleviate the suffering, of war-affected civilians.”(Idem. pp.29-30) Each of these are addressed, and it is argued that, while these principles are theoretically sex-neutral, the way it has been interpreted is anything but: "[…] the two concepts that give the principle of civilian immunity its moral force – material innocence and vulnerability – are gendered, both historically and in contemporary discourse.”(Idem, p.39) This bias becomes apparent when taking a closer look at how: 1) the international community responds to violence against civilian men vs. civilian women, children, and the elderly, and 2) belligerent forces communicate after exercising such violence against these categories. To summarize:

“Women and younger children are less likely to be targeted for outright execution than are “battle-age” civilian males; belligerents are more likely to deny or apologize for such killings when they do happen; and third parties are more likely to point to the protection of civilian women and children than of civilian men as justifications for intervention in humanitarian emergencies.” (Idem, p.56)

Historically, women have been treated as property, and as inherently weak and in need of protection. Today, women are part of a special category due to two “distinct but interrelated discourses relating to women:”

“In both, women are positioned in relation to small children, the social category most indisputably innocent in both moral and material sense. First, women are constructed as indispensable to children’s protection, and receive respect and rights on the basis of their reproductive and child-rearing roles. […] Secondly, women are conceptualized as analogous to children in terms of perceived vulnerability.” (Idem, pp.32-33)

As further exploration of these issues will make abundantly clear, these assumptions are reversed for men. Within the protection regime, discourse around men perpetuates the
idea that they are a threat, either directly, or indirectly by failing to challenge the sub-norms responsible for these biases. This in turn directly undermines their position as civilian as per the second and third aforementioned principles of immunity and responsibility within the protection regime.

3.2 Framing vulnerability and victimhood

In a personal interview with Carpenter, an ICRC official stated: “civilian men remain […] the big forgotten ones, the ones nobody talks about.” (Carpenter, 2006b, p.88) The shift from IAC to NIAC in recent decades has seen a rise in civilian deaths. The ICRC states that, “over the past 60 years, civilians have been the main victims of war.” (ICRC) It is also common for scholars and the international (humanitarian) community in general to state that “90 per cent of casualties in recent wars are civilians, frequently followed by the expression, 'the vast majority being women and children.” (Carpenter, 2006a, p.98) Interestingly, “although this statistic is sometimes attributed to the UN, no one at the Department of Statistics could tell me where it came from.”(Ibid) While the data on which these statements are based are generally accepted to be unreliable, humanitarian organizations are quick to point to it, such as in a Save the Children Report, which states: “While there is little data on how many of war’s recent casualties have been women, it is known that women and children compose the majority of civilian deaths and the majority of all refugees.” (Save the Children, 2002, cited by Carpenter, 2006a, p.9) However, a PRIO paper reported that “there are practically no global data available that allowed us to investigate conflict mortality disaggregated by gender.” (Ormhaug, 2009, p.3) Though women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sex- and gender-based violence during and post conflict, numbers often neglect to take into account the time that has passed since the onset of violence and the duration of the crisis when supporting the claim that they are always the most vulnerable. The report found that “men are more likely to die during conflicts, whereas women die often of indirect causes after the conflict is over.” (Ibid) Invoking a sense of urgency to the correction of this lack in data, Dolan warns: “In the absence of well researched and documented figures for the victimization of men, sweeping assertions about numbers will continue to nestle at the heart of claims to the victimhood of women as a category.” (Dolan, 2017, p.7)
Although children and women are also killed, disproportionately affected by sexual violence, and nearly always indirectly affected by long-term effects of violence, it is often the men who are initially targeted for murder in armed conflict. (Rehn et al. 2002; Kelly, 2002; Ghobarah et al. 2003; Goldstein, 2001, p.400; cited in Carpenter, 2006a, p.99 ; Jones, 2000, p.186) What Carpenter, Jones, and Dolan are implying is that gender biases also affect what type of assumptions are made about the frequency and kind of threats people face during and after a conflict. When the parties involved base their decisions and actions on such assumptions, certain types of violence become normalized, while others are ignored, creating a hierarchy of victimhood. This, in turn, affects international response to crises:

[...] when the civilians in question are female or young (and especially females with young), states and other warring parties are less likely to directly target them with lethal violence; they are less likely to justify their actions when they do; and they are more likely to condemn such actions by others.” (Carpenter, 2006a, p.163)

The BBC documentary quote featured in the introduction of this paper perfectly illustrates this trend; women, children, and other “vulnerable groups” — such as the elderly or disabled — are unambiguously recognized to be vulnerable civilians and deserving of both protection and sympathy. In contrast, men, specifically able-bodied men, fall into a grey area whereby their innocence and vulnerability are often either ignored or even contested. Perceptions of masculinity pose another obstacle the inclusion of men in the victim-category; apart from being viewed as potential combatants purely on the merit of their gender, there is also the issue of the international community associating “both marginalized and hegemonic masculinities with violence, following a generalized assumption that men who lose their masculinity through war think that they can regain it through violence, and particularly sexual violence against women.” (Muhanna-Matar, 2019) In short: men’s civilian status is not only contested; they are seen as direct threats to women and children, who have been labeled as the ultimate victims, and are placed at the top of the hierarchy of vulnerability.

Humanitarian organizations recreate this gender bias in their funding appeals, program design, as well as imagery: to acquire funding and communicate their cause to donors,
organizations will sooner opt to use images of a mother and child than a group of men, because of the unambiguous status of innocence of the former over the latter. On the topic of visual images of the vulnerable, Johnson discusses the reframing of refugees from “heroic, political individual,” an image prevalent following the forced international migration and displacement of Europeans as a result of Second World War, “to a nameless flood of poverty-stricken women and children” in Africa and Asia. (Johnson, 2011, p.1016) She attributes this shift in to “three overlapping patterns of transformation: the radicalization of the refugee, […] the victimization of the refugee […] , and the feminization of the refugee. (Ibid.) Johnson argues that “this change in representation has been strategic, operating to mobilize public support and concern for the plight of refugees within a humanitarian discourse and at the same time to manage the threat of instability and difference presented by the refugees’ condition of statelessness.” (Ibid.) Economic as well as security concerns have made borders tougher and people more skeptical: “genuine refugees are defined as fleeing from prosecution.” This shift has caused a “crisis of authenticity” (Idem, p.1027) of refugees, which led to questions about what true vulnerability and victimhood should look like, and who is deserving of sympathy.

“This move has two crucial implications. The first is the control that a victimization discourse exerts over the potential agency of the refugee, while also decreasing the perceived threat she poses. The second is the achievement of sustained support for a politics of humanitarianism which firmly locates the refugee 'problem' in the developing world.” (Ibid.)

Interestingly, if the numbers contradict the image of the perfect victim, a different narrative is adopted to mask reality. Such is the case with minors fleeing the Middle East and arriving in Europe as refugees. Though 90 percent of these minors are male, “media headlines repeatedly refer to ‘children,’ rather than ‘boys,’ despite the fact that 90 percent of these minors are male…” (Dolan, 2017, p.5) After providing this example, Dolan wonders if the same would have happened, had the majority of the minors been girls. When men are specifically mentioned, it is often to play into the negative stereotype of a bad victim; they are used to mobilize the public and inspire resistance. Czech President Milos Zeman was quoted saying that he is, "… profoundly convinced that we are facing an organized invasion and not a spontaneous movement of refugees.” Expressing his distrust and skepticism of these ‘illegitimate victims,’ he stated: "A large majority of the
illegal migrants are young men in good health, and single. I wonder why these men are not taking up arms to go fight for the freedom of their countries against the Islamic State.” (Anealla Safdar, 2015) Examples such as are not unique to the case of Syrian refugees. Another example can be found in a speech by USA president Donald Trump, during which he warned Americans of a caravan of migrants due to arrive at the Southern US border in several months, even dubbing it an “invasion.” He emphasized: “These are tough people in many cases; a lot of young men, strong men and a lot of men that maybe we don't want in our country,” and added that these men have, “overrun the Mexican police, […] and hurt badly Mexican soldiers.” He went on to say that these people are “not innocent,” and that they would “steal women,” among other things, and then stated that “women don't want them in our country, women want security.” (Schwartz, 2018).

To shed light on the perceptions of those working within the humanitarian aid field, Carpenter conducted several interviews with humanitarian aid workers. In one of these, a respondent recognized that the discourse around vulnerability “is a bit outdated,” but feared that the moment “you stop talking about women, women are forgotten.”(2006a, p.121) Another respondent said that, if women and men were already reasonably empowered, the situation would be different and it would be possible to “get them together,” but in places where women are oppressed, “I think if you involve men there would be a danger that they hijack the process again, and you’ve lost what level of achievement you’ve reached.”(2006a, p.122)

3.3 Redefining GBV: what is it and who are its victims?

GBV in conflict has become the stage on which the overall issue of men’s underrepresentation as victims has found a platform. (Dolan, 2017, p.9) Though awareness of the issue has increased, and it has become more widely accepted that men and boys cannot be excluded from efforts to protect the vulnerable from GBV, especially in conflict, progress has been slow and those in power to change the language and practice have continued to put emphasis on the protection of women and girls. (Idem, p.5) One of the main causes for this discrepancy is that the framework for defining
gender-based violence is too narrow, which has led to a nearly exclusive focus on women and girls as victims of GBV. (Carpenter, 2006b, p.84) One study found that, by “re-coding transcripts of testimonies … to include sexual humiliation, … mutilation … torture, and rape raised the percentage of cases of sexual violence that included male victims from 2 percent to 29 percent.” (Dolan, 2017, p.8) In order to promote a more inclusive understanding of GBV, Carpenter analyzes those cases that are currently not understood as gender-based violence, and argues they should be. These include sex-selective killing, forced recruitment, and sexual violence. (Carpenter, 2006b) There is another level of threat that is generally ignored to the extent that men are seen as victims of it: the fact that “male victims’ bodies can be utilized by the perpetrators as the direct instrument of sexual violence…. ”(Dolan, 2017, p.11) Jones and Dolan both bring light to the issue that men who are forced to commit or witness sexual violence are also victims of GBV. (Jones, 2000, 2002; Dolan, 2017)

Another potential issue, according to Carpenter, is that GBV has become increasingly reconceptualized as a security threat. This is problematic because, although the security and protection regime itself is sex-neutral, “much of the human security discourse in international institutions is based upon a highly gendered understanding of who is to be secured, characterized by the exclusion of civilian males as subjects of ‘protection’ or as victims of ‘gender-based violence.’”(2006b, p.85) On paper, gender-based violence is “violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and/or their socially constructed gender roles.’ It includes, but is not limited to, various forms of sexual violence.” (Women’s Caucus, cited by Carpenter, 2006b, p.83) According to the ICRC, rape; sexual slavery; forced prostitution, -pregnancy, -sterilization; “or any other form of sexual violence of a comparable gravity” are all considered sexual violence. (2016) However, in practice, international efforts have mainly addressed the kinds of gender-based violence to which women are exposed, and overall, gender-based violence has largely become synonymous with violence against women. (Carpenter, 2006b, p.84) Examples of this can be found in the SDGs, UN Resolution 1325, and other policies and texts dealing with the issue of GBV. Goal 5 of the SDGs, the so-called “Gender Equality” goal, lists several facts, figures and targets, all of which pertain to women and girls,
specifically, and many of which are related to GBV (UN SDGs). When men are mentioned, it is often in terms of raising awareness, or as perpetrators of GBV. Though humanitarian organizations have increasingly included men as victims in GBV assessments and policy, it remains an underrepresented issue, also in part due to the lack of disaggregated data. (ICRC, 2016)

3.3.1 Sex-selective killing: men as (il)legitimate targets

To explore sex-selective killing, Jones and Carpenter both turn to conflict case-studies; Carpenter dedicates an entire chapter in her book to discuss the former Yugoslavia, while Jones frequently uses examples from Rwanda, Kosovo, and East Timor. In the case of the former Yugoslavia, Carpenter writes that although "protection agencies were mandated with saving the lives of all civilians without distinction, prioritizing the most vulnerable if necessary […] the leading agencies charged with protecting war-affected civilians in the Balkans consistently did precisely the opposite, even in cases where a town was shortly expected to fall.” (2006a, p.139) She constructs three hypotheses, presented in Table 5.1 titled “Explaining Sex-Selective Evacuation: Cognitive Maps vs. Constraints,” to explore the cause of this outcome. The three hypotheses are based on the idea that sex and age were used as “proxy variables for vulnerable civilians,” by 1) aid workers, 2) international actors, and 3) local actors. (Idem, p.147) This works out in three possibilities, namely: that aid workers acted upon their own assumptions that “women and children … alone were “civilians or vulnerable; that aid workers were constrained due to expectations and assumptions from international actors, upon whom they are reliant for support and funding, or; that aid workers were constrained due to expectations and assumptions of local actors, upon whom they depend for access, communication, and safety. (Ibid.) If the primary evacuation of women and children were based on the assumptions of aid workers alone, they would not perceive such behavior as problematic. To answer these questions, she consults interviews with aid workers as well as reports and news stories about the case, and concludes that “the collected data show only weak support for Hypothesis 1,” as "protection workers themselves did not generally subscribe to a ‘women and children only’ rule.” (Ibid.) She points to the evacuation of the sick and
wounded in 1993 in Srebrenica as proof, pointing out that many of those evacuated were men. In interviews with aid workers, many distinguished between combatants and male civilians. One respondent said,

“We did try to help men. But that’s where we faced the biggest obstacles. A pattern was set up whereby we found we could relatively easily get women and children out. When things were very difficult, moving people out of the enclaves […] it was women, children, the elderly.” (Idem, p.149)

Later in the chapter, Carpenter writes that “[m]any respondents expressed a sense that their mandate did not include advocacy for adult men to the same extent as for the women and children.” (Idem, p.160) Another respondent explained why this mindset perpetuates the problem: “[I]n evacuating “women and children” as synonymous with the “civilian population,” protection agencies replicated the notion that the remaining population was composed of “fighters” and legitimized Serb targeting of those individuals.”(Ibid.) During the ICT Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia, the defense “argued that the concept of non-combatant was not always easy to delineate, especially when groups were not under the direct control of a central government.” As the lines between combatants and civilians were blurred, judgement about which category an individual belonged to was based on unchallenged gender biases. Ultimately, belligerents kept their legitimate targets, the Bosnian authorities kept their potential fighters and the attention of the international community, awhile the latter could rest assured feeling that they aided the most vulnerable groups.

Jones has dedicated numerous publications to ‘gendercide,’ a term first coined by Warren in 1985, who argued there was a need for a sex-neutral term, as there are already terms for the selective killing of women and girls, and “sexually discriminatory killing is just as wrong when the victims happen to be male.” (Warren, 1985, cited by Jones, 2000, p.186) The labelling of these killings is a point of contestation between Carpenter and Jones: Carpenter argues that what Jones calls ‘gendercide’ would be better titled ‘sex-selective killing,’ as she makes a point of distinguishing sex and gender, as it “maps usefully onto the conventional constructivist distinction between “brute” facts […] and “social” facts,” whereas Jones argues that ‘gender’ works as shorthand to “designate a continuum of biologically-given and culturally-constructed traits and attributes. (Carpenter, 2006b,
p.12; Jones, 2003)” In the end, however, they are effectively discussing the same thing: that due to gender-based social constructs, men are more likely to be killed in conflict situations. Like Carpenter, Jones looks into the historical status of women in conflict: they were regarded as property, and did not carry ethnicity. This means that women can be assimilated into a culture through (forced) marriage, rape, and can be taken as bounty; whereas men must be eliminated. “Reciting the patrilineal character of Rwandan society, Tutsi women were frequently viewed as “less” Tutsi than their men—or capable of being “liberated” from their ethnicity by rape and forced concubinage.” (Jones, 2002, p.75) As an extension of this idea, women’s bodies can be used as “a vehicle for the enemy’s child.” (Dolan, 2017, p.11) Jones explores this further using Rwanda as his case study, because “the aspect of gender in the Rwandan genocide is perhaps more extraordinarily intricate and multifaceted than in any genocide in history.” (Jones, 2002, p.65) The instigators built upon gendered tensions which came about due to economic crisis, drought, and historical and imperialistic power-struggles: the Tutsis were counterrevolutionary. Hutu men had fewer resources — women are to be included in the category of ‘resource’ — and they were encouraged to take these by force. In other words, “the organization and strategy underlying the genocide itself similarly played on younger-male aspirations and fears.”(Idem, p.67) Though both men and women were systematically murdered during the genocide of 1994, the extermination of males, both Tutsi and oppositionist Hutu, served as a kind of “vanguard for the genocide as a whole, an initial barrier to be surmounted and ‘threat’ to be removed, before the remainder of the community is consigned to violent death.”(Idem, p.70) It was a way to wield anger already present within the target demographic for recruitment, and present a way to ease them into the idea of killing, as these were legitimate targets, as was previously discussed.

The phenomenon of sex-selective killing, targeting men specifically, is directly linked to the perception of men as potential combatants, regardless of their civilian status; if men’s civilian status is not protected, and they are seen as a potential enemy, they become legitimate targets for killing in conflict. This is a direct result of gendered perceptions, putting men at a disadvantage.
3.4 Women’s empowerment and gender programming

A recurring theme in the literature is the tension between feminist scholars and feminist theory, and gender equality and mainstreaming. Even those respondents who admitted, in their interviews with Carpenter, that focusing on women alone in gender programming is wrong, were reluctant to include men. Sandra Whitworth offers another explanation, focused on a more operational side of the story: feminist scholars and activists had to fight an uphill battle to inject gender into the UN realm, resulting in an understandable reluctance to include men on ‘their’ turf. According to Whitworth, they faced:

“…a difficult and ultimately contradictory set of challenges. [...] In order to be “heard” within [the UN] context, arguments must be presented in a way that adopts the language of the UN, accommodates itself to UN-produced understandings of peace and security, and is alert to the hierarchies, protocols and “stories” by which the UN personnel define themselves.” (Whitworth, 2004, p.120)

Whitworth explains that the strategy commonly used was to appeal to usefulness and efficiency in order for UN bureaucrats and military personnel to take gender seriously and include it in their programming and policies. (Ibid.) By doing this, certain questions and critiques on the inclusion of gender became “out of bounds”, because the UN operates on a system of assumptions about peace, security, sovereignty, and other topics of global impact that could each easily inspire several theses and discussions. Within academia, maintaining a self-critical and self-aware approach makes sense, but for the UN to operate effectively, it cannot, or simply does not, question the very principles and beliefs on which it relies. This is how gender within the UN has basically become trapped: it has become part of the UN operational protocol. The result is that even a movement that was borne out of a school of thought which relies on critically analyzing those systems that are otherwise invisible or taken for granted, has become part of a bureaucratic machine. Feminist theory itself is about questioning the basic assumptions on which much of society operates, such as how gender roles inform these assumptions, how power relations between men and women are sustained, or even critically analyzing the very idea that gender is a binary system. Carpenter’s gender “sub-norms” is an example of the application of such a lens. Although it often points towards the voices and
experiences of women and girls specifically, analyzing and critiquing a fundamental aspect of society is sure to also affect men and boys, as well. One of these consequences is a reevaluation of victimhood: if the process of determination of who is vulnerable and innocent is gendered, then a gender critical analysis would naturally challenge preconceptions about such processes, for example, the idea that women and children are always innocent and vulnerable while men are not. However, according to Whitworth, the result of the inclusion of this critical approach within the UN system and the wider international community can be best described as “the idea of gender as women’s difference.” (2004, p.125) To clarify, this implies that women need to be caught up within the context of the current system, without critically assessing this system.

In *Victims Who are Men*, Dolan provides a comprehensive overview of the feminist critique on international relations, and demonstrates how this approach has dominated gender issues generally. One particular example stood out: a quote from Goetz’ article “*Preventing violence against women: a sluggish cascade?*” in which she warns of the risk of including men in the discussion on gender-based violence as victims:

“The recent focus on male victims of domestic abuse and of war rape can have the unfortunate effect of further postponing the feminist social change project. The exposure of the ways in which men and boys also experience these types of violence (and we still do not know the full extent) has helped to attract new allies in the prevention effort [...] Wartime rape has been named as an almost gender-neutral weapon of war. Taking the feminist social change project out of definition and of the solutions to these problems makes response effort patronizing and, in the end, ineffective.” (Goetz, 2014, cited by Dolan, 2017, p.7)

However, as Dolan reiterates, “…whether men are or are not the principal victims, an appropriate response to sexual violence will always require a project of emancipation from the gender norms that made such violence so effective against all genders.” Initially, her article does set out to specifically discuss violence against women, and from a feminist theoretical perspective, it makes sense to focus on GBV as a women’s issue in the sense that it “is driven by profound inequalities between women and men that leave women dependent on individual men and that celebrate violent masculinities.” However, to claim that the reframing of GBV in conflict is somehow stealing feminist discourse and steering away from its purposes is missing the point. After her commentary that
wartime rape has been reframed as a “gender-neutral weapon of war,” she goes on to state that “the project becomes the protection of victims,” (Goetz, 2014) as if this is somehow a bad development. Within the protection regime, including humanitarian aid and civilian protection, it is important to uphold human rights and to deliver aid and protection to all vulnerable groups. Through increased research, it has been found that men are part of this group, and that this has been largely ignored.

This reluctance to include men within the scope of victimhood and vulnerability in a broader gender discussion is seen repeatedly. Dolan provides several examples of how, even in cases of demonstrable self-awareness on the exclusivity of gender concerns, the resulting actions are often lacking in that sense: though the G8 Declaration of April 11, 2013 called attention to the importance of “responding to the needs of men and boys who are victims of sexual violence in armed conflict, as well as to the needs of those secondarily traumatized as forced witnesses of sexual violence against family members,” and although it stated that it is necessary to “provide comprehensive support services to victims, be they women, girls, men, or boys,” the resulting UN Resolution diluted these statements significantly. (2017, p.6) Opening on a similarly optimistic note, Durnham and O’Byrne describe receiving an invitation to an expert meeting to examine gender perspectives on IHL, in which attendees were reminded that “This is not a meeting about women and war. This is very different: this is about gender and international humanitarian law.” (The senior representative from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2007, cited in Durnham et al, 2010, p.1) They describe this as a “chance for reflection,” as “many of us [sic] have spent considerable time researching as practitioners in the area of women and war….’’ (Idem p.2) The report based on this expert’s meeting note that, in terms of a “genuine gender perspective,” not enough has been done to discuss and incorporate it into IHL, and that it is time to revisit the subject, seeing as the traditional roles of men and women in society have changed, both in peace- and conflict.

(Report Summary, 2007 p.3) However, despite the apparent awareness and good intentions present in the invitation — as well as in the opening paragraphs of the summary — the main focus in the report is how the role of women has significantly changed, due to shifts within society during both peace- and wartime, and on the rights,
powers, and new roles they have gained that were previously not available to them. (Ibid.) The novel perspective presented in the report is that women should be incorporated into programs because of their involvement as either participants in conflict, mediators during conflict resolution, or as agents of change and rebuilding, instead of focusing on women as victims exclusively. Basically, on the women’s side, efforts to view them outside of the victim and innocent lens are ongoing. Though these are all positive outcomes after years of pushing gender into humanitarian law and programming, it remains a one-sided view on gender: where are the men? Is it not time to revisit the subject of a "genuine gender perspective," and critically assess the stereotypes around men?

3.5 Conclusion

On the issue of victims who are men in conflict situations, research has previously focused on the classification of civilians and the gender sub-norms which inform this classification; the redefinition and broadening of the concept of GBV, which has allowed for the inclusion of men as victims in the discussion; and the tensions between feminist theory and gender equality, specifically within the protection regime and humanitarian programming. Evidently, many of these biases have been allowed free reign because of a lack of data available, specifically gender disaggregated data. Carpenter’s work has provided the possibility to revisit definitions and understanding of civilians, GBV, vulnerability, and innocence. Her hypothesis, wherein she explored how age and gender are used as proxy identifiers for ‘vulnerable civilians,’ as well as her interviews with aid workers, are key to the following analysis. Jones’ research on gendercide, specifically male-selective killing, has provided a comprehensive case for a broader definition of GBV and male-specific vulnerability. Dolan’s critiques on the tensions between feminist theory and gender equality in humanitarian programming shed light on the necessity to rethink the concept of gender, and how it affects men and women in different, but equally disruptive ways. Finally, Whitworth’s work is a stark reminder that the very system on which a large part of international humanitarian action is built, perpetuates many of the very biases discussed in this chapter.
4. Research Findings

4.1 The organizational grid

The grid below represents the implementing humanitarian INGOs based within Syria, taken from the UNOCHA 4Ws Presence dashboard for the year 2017. The dashboard represents partners based within the country as reported in the sectors’ 4Ws working under the Syrian HCT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INGO</th>
<th>Syria Activities</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>INGO Gender Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture, WASH</td>
<td>“Understanding gender and age differences, and acting upon them is central to ACF International’s mission and mandate to be prepared for and respond to emergencies and fight against hunger and malnutrition as well as ensure long-term recovery.”</td>
<td>ACF Gender Policy Toolkit, 2014. Commitment to SDGs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADRA</td>
<td>Education, Shelter, WASH</td>
<td>“Gender Equity - ADRA puts a focus on women and girls because they are the most vulnerable to the devastating effects of poverty and crisis. shifting negative sociocultural norms as a cross-cutting intervention for all of our programs.”</td>
<td>Commitment to SDGs. ADRA Protection Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFK - (AKDN)</td>
<td>Education, Food and Agriculture</td>
<td>“AKDN is committed to highlighting the key role of women in the development process and to facilitating their participation. At the same time, it looks for</td>
<td>AKFC Gender Equality Policy. Commitment to SDGs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Organizational Grid
ways to engage with men around the attitudinal and structural changes that flow from programmes that benefit women.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Sector(s)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorcas Health</td>
<td>“Gender equality&quot; is identified as a “cross-cutting theme” in the Annual Report.</td>
<td>Commitment to SDGs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC Education, Protection, Shelter, NFIs</td>
<td>We integrate age, gender and diversity concerns at all levels of project/programme analysis and planning; strategy development; implementation; monitoring and evaluation; and policy and advocacy work</td>
<td>DRC’s Operational Principles. Commitment to SDGs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOPA - DERD Health, NFIs</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Not specified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVC Education</td>
<td>“To improve the conditions of women in different societies, several guidelines have been developed worldwide aiming to provide direction and recommendations for gender mainstreaming in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects”</td>
<td>Gender and WASH Toolkit (for Palestine) Commitment to SDGs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELP WASH, food, humanitarian/emergency aid, education.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Not specified; Support for the Inclusion Charter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Sector(s)</td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture</td>
<td>“With regard to gender issues, the goal of the Federation is to ensure that all Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes benefit men and women equally, according to their different needs and with the input and equal participation of men and women at all levels within the National Societies and the Federation's Secretariat.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMC</td>
<td>Health, Protection, WASH</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDAIR</td>
<td>Health, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter, WASH</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSJM</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture, Health, NFIs</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>Education, Food and Agriculture, Protection, WASH.</td>
<td>“We deploy senior gender expertise via our Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap). Our experts work with a number of agencies to strengthen their capacity to undertake and promote gender equality programming.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Focus Area</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiere Urgence Internationale</td>
<td>Education, ER&amp;L, Protection, Shelter, WASH</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESCATE</td>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>“En 2017 el Departamento de Atención Directa desarrolló importantes proyectos que significaron un apoyo fundamental a las personas refugiadas e inmigrantes en situación de vulnerabilidad. Nuestra actividad se mantuvo enfocada en afianzar el trabajo con elementos de género en todas nuestras actuaciones, y en específico en la atención integral a personas refugiadas e inmigrantes en situación de vulnerabilidad.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.2 Policy findings

Of the 20 INGOs presented in the grid above, 9 had clearly defined gender policies of their own. Some organizations had more than one document for reference. ICMC did not appear to have a specific Gender Policy, though they did produce two field-based reviews: one based in Northern Pakistan (2009), and another in Jordan (2017). GVC produced a WASH Gender Toolkit for Palestine (2017), which reads as part review, part policy and recommendations, which is why it has been included in the list of gender policies. It has since been applied in other regions and crises, including in Syria. Finally, the Aga Khan Foundation consists of a broad network of international agencies; its gender policy was provided by the Aga Khan Foundation in Canada. While 10 organizations did not have a clearly defined policy, many had formally announced their commitment to the SDGs on their websites, or within their Annual Reports. Two organizations, HELP and SOS, have added their support for the Inclusion Charter, which builds upon the core commitments developed for the World Humanitarian Summit.
roundtable discussions. The Charter consists of “five steps that can be taken by humanitarian actors to ensure that assistance reaches those most in need, and supports … the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

Those organizations that do provide a gender toolkit or policy of their own will be used for further analysis in the following chapter. To clarify, this includes the WASH Gender Toolkit. Table 2 notes the frequency with which “men;” “women;” “boys;” “girls;” and, finally, “men and women/women and men” are mentioned in each of the policy documents. The last column is added to correct for those instances that “men and women,” or “women and men” were presented as part of one group, or in other words, on the same side.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Men and Women/Women and Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACF Gender Policy Toolkit 2014</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFKC Gender Equality Policy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC Operational Principles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVC Gender and WASH Toolkit</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC Gender Policy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues 2013-2020</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC Strategic Framework Explanatory Note</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC Minimum Standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC Gender Policy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>Sections</td>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXFAM Gender Perspectives on Humanitarian Programming in Syria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXFAM Quick Guide to Gender Analysis</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXFAM Mainstreaming a Gender Justice Approach</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXFAM Gender Issues in Conflict and Humanitarian Action</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXFAM Minimum Standards for Gender in Emergencies</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOS Gender Policy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDH Theory of Change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADRA Protection Policy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all documents, save for two, “women” are mentioned noticeably more often than “men” are. The exceptions are: the "IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues 2013-2020,” in which they are mentioned an equal amount of time; and the DRC Operational Principles, in which neither “men” or “women” are mentioned.
5. Analysis and Discussion

From a historical perspective, the focus on women and girls within gender policy makes sense, as the development of gender equality as an integral part of humanitarian programming has been very closely linked to feminism and women’s empowerment. The original Platform for Action resulted from the Third and Fourth World Conferences on Women in 1985 and 1995, respectively. These made it clear that “women’s rights are human rights,” and the involvement of men was more a matter of ensuring gender was properly mainstreamed, instead of remaining separate in its mandate. Both men and women were to be involved, but it was clear it was women who needed to be ‘caught up’.

The aforementioned Summary Report based on the International Expert Meeting (2007) is a perfect example of this: a renewed perspective on gender predominately meant a change in the way women engage with and are affected by IHL and humanitarian programming. In lieu of ‘catching up’ women to men — for example, in terms of rights, socioeconomic independence, and agency — many organizations understandably ensure to design projects specifically to advance women’s empowerment. To a degree, this follows the UN mindset previously discussed, in the sense that ‘women’ have become the measure by which success is determined when it comes to gender equality.

However, on a less cynical note, it is important to keep in mind that these organizations work closely with beneficiaries and are likely to have a more realistic and informed view of what their needs are. As such, when INGOs decide to focus predominantly on women, this could very well be based on needs. Additionally, as a result of this proximity, it may be found that INGOs do address many of the concerns discussed in previous chapters within their policies and programming. Carpenter’s analysis on the use of sex and age proxies to determine who is vulnerable and who is civilian revealed that aid workers are aware of men’s vulnerabilities, and according to Whitworth, the inclusion of a gender perspective within the UN was put forward by NGOs and activists. (2004, pp.119-140)

Perhaps, in terms of an inclusive gender equality goal whereby men are seen as more than either allies or threats, they are once again paving the way ahead of the ‘operational’ side of humanitarian aid.
On its own, the data presented in table 2 is ultimately rather predictable — given the literature previously discussed — and inconclusive: it does not reveal much about the difference of representation and the underlying rationale present in these documents. To contextualize this data, the next step is to analyze how men and women are framed in these documents, respectively. The following policy analysis will reveal whether the ‘women’s empowerment = gender equality' mindset has prevailed, and whether men are being sidelined in humanitarian policy and programming, specifically in the case of the Syrian crisis.

5.1 The Sustainable Development Goals

Though not included in Tables 1 and 2, it is helpful to look to the SDGs for context, as they are frequently mentioned by humanitarian aid organizations, specifically those included in this study, and inform many policy and programming decisions. The Gender Equality Goal of the SDGs as presented on the official website does confirm much of the criticism that has been discussed in previous chapters. The initial tone of the text appears generally inclusive, but then specifically lists women and girls’ vulnerabilities, exclusively, as well as a list of goals concerning women’s empowerment. On the topic of the SDGs, UN Women states:

“Gender equality is a right. Fulfilling this right is the best chance we have in meeting some of the most pressing challenges of our time—from economic crisis and lack of health care, to climate change, violence against women and escalating conflicts. Women are not only more affected by these problems, but also possess ideas and leadership to solve them.”

While, on the official UN SDGs website it is stated that:

“Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world.”

Though there is very little wrong with these statements at face value, it is important to note the absence of men in both cases, while women’s needs are heavily emphasized. Though this framing of gender equality makes sense for UN Women, it is worrisome that the UN generally still takes gender equality to be synonymous with women's
empowerment. Based on previous research, it is safe to say that men are also vulnerable to gender-based discrimination, and that they are especially vulnerable in “escalating conflicts.” The difference herein lies in the interpretation, expression and definition of the parameters of victimhood. Still, under the tabs “Facts and Figures,” and “Goals,” all points are specific to women and girls, without a mention of men. (UN SDGs) Though women’s empowerment are indisputably necessary endeavors, and women and girls need a space for this discourse, excluding men and boys from a broader gender discussion is unnecessarily one-sided. Gender equality should mean that women, men, girls, and boys are all treated equally, and a critical approach to gender should benefit all. Though the assumption that societal systems generally work in favor of men is justified, this should not thwart a critical analysis of the ways these systems can also be harmful to them.

5.2 Framing men and women in gender policy

Based on table 3, found below, the following analysis will reveal whether the organizations in this case study have continued the exclusive conflation between gender equality and women’s rights, while sidelining men in gender mainstreaming efforts; or whether they have assumed a more inclusive approach to mainstream gender in their policies. Table 3 is an elaboration on table 2, in that it departs from the frequency of mentions of “men” women, “men and women/women and men,” showing the respective correlations between men and women to various themes within the organizations’ policy documents. The themes have been identified based on a very simple document analysis of the policies themselves. They are the following: 1) General statements concerning the gender policy document and the organization itself; 2) Definitions; 3) Vulnerabilities; 4) Women’s Empowerment; 5) engagement with gender equality programming, and 6) results of gender equality programming. Men and women are linked to or framed within each of these themes in different ways, though there is overlap in the more general areas, such as basic statements about the policy itself or definitions. This is also where “men and women/women and men” were mentioned together most often. The keywords in each of the columns represent the connection between men and women respectively to each
theme, and were taken directly from the selected policy documents, as found in the Organizational Grid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document general statements and purposes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s empowerment</td>
<td>Policy purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Women and children and other vulnerable groups”</td>
<td>Organizational Vision/Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vision/Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explanatory notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement of humanitarian programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Mainstreaming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender disaggregated data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender responsive budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>Single heads of household (either male or female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-destructive behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Single, widowed, elderly women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>overlooked/increased rights’ violations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td>Violence against women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidelined in aid programming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of access (jobs, community, health, medicine, WASH, aid)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced conscription</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of mobility</td>
<td>Human trafficking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerabilities</td>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>Reproductive health</td>
<td>Sexual violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of household skills/self-reliance</td>
<td>Human rights violations</td>
<td>Most often victimized</td>
<td>GBV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Empowerment</td>
<td>Need to raise awareness about</td>
<td>Division of labor</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women’s empowerment for</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sustainable change</td>
<td>Professional women’s empowerment</td>
<td>of aid programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s (community) participation</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hiring women for project implementation</td>
<td>strength of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership, decision making and consultancy</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in gender equality programming</td>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Sources of gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision makers in household</td>
<td></td>
<td>disaggregated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(resource allocation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Leadership and consultants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants (ex. Data</td>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>collection and access)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of gender equality programming</td>
<td>Engagement and participation in</td>
<td>Increased engagement and participation</td>
<td>Raising awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>change</td>
<td>Equal division of labor (Reducing tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Reduction tasks typically reserved for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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tasks that were traditionally reserved for women.)

women or female heads of household

Improved quality of life due to gender programming

Each policy provided definitions of key concepts, such as gender mainstreaming, gender equality, gender, sex, gender equality, gender equity, women’s empowerment, etc. For example, the ACF Gender Policy (2014) opens with the following statement:

“Whether they are natural disasters or conflict, emergencies affect millions of people each year. Nevertheless, men, women, girls and boys are affected differently. This means that they will have different needs, different perceptions and different priorities in terms of what assistance is needed.” (P.6)

There are a few previously discussed aspects and themes that can be lifted from, what is essentially, a basic explanation of the basis for gender mainstreaming:

1. The idea that that men, women, girls and boys are affected by crises differently,
2. That this translates to a difference in needs and perceptions,
3. And that this requires different kinds of approaches and actions from (I)NGOs

These three points relate directly to the humanitarian principles, especially, but not exclusively, the principles of humanity and impartiality. The principle of humanity dictates that “human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found,” while the principle of impartiality states that:

“Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.” (OCHA, 2017).

Some policies include statements that support the aforementioned operational narrative discussed by Whitworth, i.e. that taking gender into account will ultimately make humanitarian aid and its outcomes overall better. The AFKC document provides the following example:

“While gender equality and women’s empowerment are worthy goals in their own right, there is increasing evidence that they also contribute significantly to overall improved quality of life and opportunities for whole communities.” (2017, p.4)
As well as in the NRC Gender Policy:

“The integration of a gender perspective is a step towards improving the effectiveness of NRC’s programmes and advocacy on behalf of IDPs and refugees, nevertheless recognising that women and girls constitute a majority of the vulnerable among a displaced population.” (2016, P.3)

The IFRC Strategic Framework:

“By advancing gender equality and embracing diversity, it is possible to reduce the impact of many other humanitarian problems, including violence, inequitable healthcare and the negative consequences of disasters.” (2013a, p.2)

And finally, the IFRC Gender Policy:

” The full participation of both men and women in all Red Cross and Red Crescent actions not only ensures gender equality, but also increases the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the organization.” (1999, p.2)

It is noteworthy that the AFKC and NRC statements both emphasize women's empowerment and the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls. Depending on the type of organization, the importance of mainstreaming gender is linked to a specific goal. For ACF, taking gender into consideration means addressing “the gender inequalities which stand in the way of good nutrition,” and they deem it an “essential means by which ACF can achieve its mandate and strategic goals.” (2014, p.6) GVC’s toolkit was specifically developed with its WASH projects in Palestine, and addresses the way in which gender equality programming can affect and improve these projects. “Access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) knowledge and practices is directly influenced by gender,” states the GVC Toolkit. For example, “…WASH facilities and access to water is associated with responsibilities undertaken by women in Palestine, since they are the ones responsible inside the household of meeting the basic needs of its members.” (2017, p.12)

By now, the toolkit has been applied to different crises, including Syria. TDH and SOS’ focus is on children’s rights, and incorporate gender mainstreaming programming to ensure that girls’ and boys’ needs are equally addressed.

In examples such as these, it becomes clear why gender mainstreaming is such a useful tool: it reveals the ways in which gender influences the experiences of different people
across a variety of issues and themes. If gender analysis, which is an integral aspect of gender mainstreaming, is applied thoroughly, it can reveal vulnerabilities and needs that would otherwise remain hidden.

As several of these policies point out, a crisis severely changes the social, economic, and political structures of communities and countries. Many Syrians have fled their homes and their country due to the crisis, drastically changing the composition of families and communities, and altering traditional roles out of necessity. Shakun and Sbeih points out that “many women have taken on the role of principal breadwinners for their families, as men are killed, disappear, flee the country or focus on fighting.” (OXFAM, 2018, p.3) This is problematic for female-headed households, as they tend to have less access to resources for a number of reasons. On the other hand, “households which have lost their adult female members may not have the skills to cook, to care for young children or to do household chores.” (IFRC, 2013b, p.19) It is crucial that aid workers apply a critical analysis to gender, as “[c]ommon (or stereotypical) assumptions about women and men’s roles can make these forms of gender-based vulnerability invisible.” (Ibid)

Men have a place in each of the selected policies in the case study, though to various degrees and not necessarily within the space of vulnerability. Many of the selected policies make a point of ensuring that men are not forgotten by highlighting male-specific vulnerabilities, some even directly challenging ideas about men and vulnerability within specific contexts. However, most policies consciously or unconsciously mainly focus on women. This choice is often prefaced by a statement that while men can also be victims, women are disproportionately affected, thus justifying the choice. In many of these cases, men are mainly seen as necessary allies to gender equality programming. Using examples from the selected organizations’ gender policies, and keeping table 3 in mind, the next sections will explore the different ways in which men have been framed in gender mainstreaming and gender equality. The different frames are men as a vulnerable group, threats, and as allies, respectively. Finally, the last section will briefly discuss the way women are framed in gender equality/mainstreaming by the organizations in this case study.
5.2.1 Men as a vulnerable group

The ACF, IFRC, NRC, and GVC are excellent examples of an inclusive approach to gender mainstreaming when it comes to men:

"Experience has shown that while recognizing that women, girls, boys and men have different needs, and emergencies and malnutrition impact them differently, there is a need to avoid blanket categorizations of women and children as vulnerable or women as sole caregivers. This reinforces gender stereotypes; ignores the active role women are playing in contributing to peace and resilience, and leave men feeling side-lined in many occasions.” (ACF, 2014 p.7)

What sets this statement aside is that it addresses the way in which women are negatively affected by gender stereotypes as well as men; it addresses the deeper theoretical discussion on gender stereotyping and its adverse effects to gender equality. Similarly, the GVC document says to “not focus only on women since in some cases they might not be the most vulnerable group.” (GVC, 2016, p.28) The IFRC Explanatory note states that, “Gender equality is important for men and boys, too,” (2013b, p.11) while their Strategic Framework points out: “Gender is often incorrectly used as a synonym to refer to issues exclusively related to women. However, men can suffer from gender discrimination and gender-based violence also.” (2013a, p.2) Finally, the NRC document states: “NRC’s focus is on gender, rather than exclusively on women,” and further elaborates: “A gender perspective is not equivalent to addressing the needs of women only. Neither does it mean setting up individual projects for women only.” (2016, pp.2-3) These documents each address various vulnerabilities of both men and women during a crisis, and include examples of the ways in which men have typically been sidelined.

5.2.1.1 Perceptions of masculinity

According to many of the organizations, perceptions of masculinity are one of the greatest contributing factors to male-specific vulnerability. This is not surprising, as the same is true for women: gender stereotypes sit at the core of this discussion and are the cause of harmful perceptions and actions for both men and women. Based on these stereotypes, a trend has appeared in humanitarian action: on the one hand, men are less
likely to seek help, because they are expected to be strong; while on the other, it is often assumed that they would not be interested in being included in the first place. Stereotypes built upon perceptions of masculinity have a direct correlation with many other vulnerabilities and threats, such as GBV, natural disasters, climate change, and healthcare, including mental health. (IFRC, 2013b, P.10)

Though the IFRC states that “research has found that women are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters and climate change where their rights and socio-economic status are not equal to those of men…,”(Ibid) the document continues by stating that men are vulnerable in different ways, namely because “ideas about masculinity,” are causing them to take on high risks in protecting their families and community. To illustrate this, the IFRC uses examples of Hurricane Mitch in El Salvador and Guatemala: "as a result of societal concepts of masculinity that forced men to feel they had to take very high risks in protecting their families, property and communities.”(Idem, p.16) Though women and children “are 14 times more likely to die during a disaster than men…. men have died in greater numbers than women in some disasters (e.g., flash floods) largely due to their expected roles in search and rescue.”(Idem, p.21) Men and boys are pressured to fulfill "societal expectations of men being the main providers for their families,” causing them to “feel compelled to take very (unreasonably) high risks in protecting their families, property and communities from disaster impacts.”(Idem, pp.10-11)

As stated above, men’s lack of access to (mental) health support is another issue affected by gender stereotyping, specifically perceptions of masculinity. The IFRC points out that: ” …counseling services are required by means of responding to cases of post-traumatic stress disorder and the normally increased rates of depression and substance abuse that follow disasters. This is particularly the case for men, who are often missed in the provision of such support.” (Idem, p.19)

The reason men are often “missed,” is that, due to cultural norms, men may feel inhibited from "expressing pain, fear or their own perceived inability to fulfill their traditional roles as family providers.” Additionally, they may not feel they can speak to anyone, due to
“feminized caregiving systems”. (Idem, p.22) Implying a causal relationship between these issues and suicide, the IFRC quotes the World Report on Violence, which states there are four male suicides for every female suicide. (2013b, p.22) This issue is especially troubling for male survivors of sexual violence, as they are even less likely to report assaults than women and girls are. (Idem, pp.26-27) Such assault in both childhood and adulthood has “severe physical and psychological consequences,” yet “most doctors, counsellors and humanitarian workers are not trained to look for signs of sexual abuse in males or may not see men as being vulnerable to sexual violence in the first place.” (Ibid) That last statement is especially worrying, considering that the 2010 International Men and Gender Equality Survey has found that “as boys, 20 to 85 per cent of men had experienced psychological violence, 26 to 67 per cent of men had experienced physical violence, and one to 21 per cent had experienced sexual violence.(Idem, p.26)

Though it might be so that there is increased attention to male victims of sexual violence, professionals have yet to catch up to support these victims. A post on the TDH website on sexual exploitation of children specifically calls on an increase in attention and research on male victims. In an example of 53 cases that were handed over to the authorities, five of them were boys; this number caused the organization to question current data on victims of sexual exploitation: if five were addressed, how many cases remain unaddressed?

5.2.1.2 Forced recruitment and violence

Green notes that “the majority of combatants are male, and male civilians are often targeted or singled out during massacres; as a result men and boys account for the majority of those killed.”(OXFAM, 2013, p.2) SOS, being an organization focusing on child protection, also focuses on the vulnerability of boys being forced to become child soldiers.

As discussed in the Background and Literature review chapters, forced recruitment and the high number of male fatalities in conflict is a direct result of the perception of men and boys as potential combatants. Remembering Davis’ statement, men are seen as either
an asset or a threat, regardless of their civilian status. This line of thinking has been normalized over centuries, creating trends and patterns of behavior that are difficult to break through, namely, that gender and age are legitimate proxies to determine who can be considered an innocent civilian. Considering Carpenter’s case study of the former Yugoslavia, the consequences of allowing such trends to continue unchecked are dangerous: humanitarian actors can provide aid and protection to women and children more easily due to their perceived unambiguous status as innocent civilians, are more likely to receive funding and support, and are less likely to be hindered in their efforts by governments and armed groups. At the same time, states and warring parties keep their legitimate source of fighters and/or targets. Meanwhile, the general international community, including donors, continue to use the gender and age proxies for innocence, demanding their victims be unambiguously so.

5.2.1.3 Sidelined

Other, more invisible consequences of gender stereotyping like the following example provided by the GVC document are equally important to address. In the document, a man from FGD was quoted saying: “I have never had any hygiene session in my life and most of us are very interested to participate in sessions regarding topics such as drinking water, cleaning of tanks and associated diseases”. (2017, p.55) Additionally, as mentioned earlier, “single men and boys separated from their families be at risk of undernutrition if they do not know how to cook or care for themselves.” (ACF, 2014, p.6) Failing to address these issues could potentially become the direct cause for some of the difficulties men face, as is apparent from another example given by the IFRC within the context of human trafficking:

“...men are also the target of trafficking; since the focus is usually on women, these men can find themselves in even more risky situations. Men and boys account for up to 44 per cent globally of those subjected to forced economic exploitation.” (IFRC, 2013b, p.25)

The fact that these issues are being addressed within gender policies falls in line with the ‘do no harm’ principle, by which humanitarian actors strive to minimize the harm they might inadvertently cause through providing aid. This also relates to the interviews
Carpenter had with aid workers, discussed in the Literature review, where respondents agreed that, by prioritizing women, children, and the elderly, despite the fact that men were in certain cases more vulnerable, they legitimized the actions of armed groups and militia.

5.2.2 Men as threats

Though men are not singled out in these documents as evildoers, there is an interesting overlap between their role as victims and their role as perpetrators, specifically in cases of trauma due to abuse and violence. One obvious example is the issue of forced recruitment, as by taking up arms, men are committing violence against others. However, a more difficult and ambiguous cause for violence is victimhood of violence, placing men in both categories of victim and threat.

“Men’s own experiences of violence as children can be a key factor in their continuation of GBV as adults… Adult men who were victims or witnesses of domestic violence as children are likely to come to accept violence as a conflict-resolving tactic not only in intimate partnerships but also in their other relationships…. Additionally, these men are more likely to experience low self-esteem and depression.” (Idem, p.27)

The IFRC also links men’s experience with violence to the likelihood that they will support gender equality. The OXFAM Note (2013a) elaborates on this, quoting their 2013 studies on Masculinities in Conflict, which “suggests that failure to [address the legacy of GBV against men] can be a catalyst not only for more violence against women, but possibly also future conflicts as well”. In a table titled “Violence Amongst Men,” the IFRC illustrates the difficulty of the victim/perpetrator dichotomy among men: though men’s victimhood is disproportionately hidden, their status as threat is all too well known. (WHO, 2002, p.27, cited by IFRC, 2013b) Balancing facts and assumptions based on gender and vulnerability in a critical way is crucial to the discussion; this thesis is not attempting to mitigate attention away from the disproportionate effects of inequality on women and girls by addressing the ways in which men have been sidelined in gender mainstreaming projects. Rather, the point here is to broaden understanding of gender equality and allow for a more inclusive approach, which allows for critical analysis of the negative effects of gender stereotyping experienced by both men and women. Women are
not exclusively victims, just as men are not exclusively threats, though sometimes, these categories overlap, making discussions on the topic uncomfortable.

5.2.3 Men as necessary allies

What all these policies appear to generally agree on is that men are necessary allies in the endeavor to achieve gender equality. For example, OXFAM’s policies focus heavily on the role men have to play as allies towards gender equality, as their support is necessary in order to prevent backlash, as well as to build resilience in future crises. (2013a, p.4, 2013b)

“It is also critical to engage men and boys in challenging the attitudes and beliefs that undermine women’s rights, and to promote positive masculinities and acceptance of gender equality.” (OXFAM, 2013a, p.2)

A few examples of their strategy checklist are as follows:

“Identify how the rights of women and girls are compromised./Sensitize male staff (affiliate and partner) to the benefits of gender equality approaches./Work with male beneficiaries (and others e.g. government staff, community organizations) to understand the justice and benefits of, and to support women’s rights in emergencies./Do not alienate men and boys.” (OXFAM, 2013b, p.9)

These strategies are echoed in other documents. IFRC relates back to perceptions of masculinity, as these ideas “…particularly those related to power within the house hold and broader society, ownership and control of resources, and the accept ability of violence against women have a significant impact on the rights and well-being of women and girls.”(2013b, pp.10-11) GVC’s document adds: “To promote women’s rights it is crucial to raise men’s awareness of the importance of gender equality.”(2017, p.54) The organization also documented feedback from several women FGDs, who said: “Women organizations continue focusing on women while we know our rights and they should target men who do not know”.(Idem, p.55)
5.3 Women and gender equality programming

In Table 3, one of the vulnerabilities noted for women is Human Rights violations. This is not to say that men are not victims of Human Rights violations, as the entirety of this research is riddled with examples of exactly that. The reason it is highlighted as a women’s issue, is that it is often framed as such within the gender policies selected for this research: there are many resolutions, treaties, and conventions which specifically address the rights of women, such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women; the 1994 Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development; the 1995 Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women; the 2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security; the 2000 Millennium Declaration and Development Goals; and the 2008 UN Security Council Resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence. This particular list was pulled from the IFRC Explanatory Note, which they claim has informed much of their gender approach. The protection of women and girls generally, and specifically in humanitarian crises situations, has been like a slowly rising wave: it has received increased traction in international communities, and, as stated several times, has inspired much of the current gender mainstreaming movement. It is largely due to efforts to incorporate gender and women’s empowerment to humanitarian aid in the first place that discussions about gender in a broader sense are now possible.

Though previous sections have shown that many policies do address certain male-specific vulnerabilities, there are many that consciously or unconsciously choose to mainly focus on women. ADRA, for example, states: “… the global evidence indicates that women and children are most often victimized. Therefore, in the context of this Policy ADRA’s focus is primarily on women and children.” (2012, P.4) Regardless of the degree to which men are included, the general consensus in all these documents is that women and children are generally still the most affected. As the IFRC puts it, “Gender inequality lies at the heart of health inequities,” and women are often disadvantaged by systematic inequalities globally. (2013b, p20)
“This is especially the case for women who face other forms of exclusion such as poverty, ethnicity or disability; men in this situation are also disadvantaged, but exclusion based on both gender and diversity grounds often places women in an even worse position than these men as they can experience ‘double discrimination’.” (IFRC, 2013b, p.13)

As a result of their inherent inequality, they are disproportionately affected in disaster situations and crises, when societal systems fall apart. This sentiment is again repeated in SOS’ policy: “As our emergency policy states, girls and women are particularly vulnerable to deprivation of fundamental rights in emergency situations.” (SOS, 2014, p.3) OXFAM supports these claims, quoting a study of 141 countries that found that “more women than men are killed during disasters; particularly in poor communities and at an earlier age.” (OXFAM, 2013a, p.2) The document also presents the example of the 2004 Asian tsunami, where women accounted for over 70 per cent of the dead in many villages. (Ibid) However, as the earlier section discussing male-specific vulnerabilities has shown, there are nuances to these deaths in terms of causes, and both relate to gender norms. Finally, women and girls make up the bulk of the statistics on victims of sexual- and gender-based violence. “Several worldwide surveys suggest that half of all women who die from homicide are killed by their current or former husbands or partners,” states the IFRC document, adding that “A World Bank study on 10 selected risk factors facing women and girls [aged 16 to 44 years old] found rape and domestic violence to be more dangerous than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and malaria.” (IFRC, 2013b, p.26)

Given that the current data available suggests that most victims are women, and most perpetrators are men, the caution exercised in extending an open invitation to men to join the ranks of the vulnerable is understandable.

5.4 Policy in (in)action

The policy analysis reveals an awareness of the existence of male-specific vulnerabilities on the humanitarian actors’ part. However, there is a difference between policy, programming, and action. For example, while the SOS policy states that, “where [negative effects of gender on boys] have been identified, our gender equality policy also strives to address them,” a quick search on the organization’s websites reveals that
projects framed within gender equality are still predominately focused on women. (SOS, 2014, p.2) Searching for “gender” on these websites yields a variation of results, many of which link to articles, blogs, and activities relating mainly to women and children — mirroring the SDGs Gender Equality Goal — or to gender policies generally. On the GVC website, for example, the top results lead to a page titled “Students Against Hunger,” which is predominantly about children; and “Women can end hunger.” When entering the search term “women,” results tend to be specific and well matched to the search term, whereas searching for “men” bring up all manner of stories, none of which pertain specifically to them. Entering the search term “men” on DRC’s website yields a particularly interesting result: the second and third result are specifically about women, i.e. “Dignified Menstrual Hygiene for South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda,” and “Supporting Refugee Women in Greece on International Women’s Day.”

Interestingly, and perhaps predictably, within the frame of child protection, boys receive more attention: TDH has taken steps to ensure that boys are not forgotten in their endeavors to protect children from sexual exploitation, as is evident from their website and 2017 annual report. (p.24) When entering the search term “gender” on NRC’s website, the two top hits are related to the SDGs and a “Activism campaign against sexual and gender-based violence and child protection,” which states that “boys and girls were equally represented in the project.” (2018) On the NRC website, under ‘Addressing Gender Issues,’ the organization commits to taking gender into account across all their projects, “from speaking up for women’s rights, to building girl’s toilets in schools and protecting boys from being recruited as child soldiers...” NRC “put activities in place for boys at risk of being recruited as child soldiers,” though under GBV, the entire paragraph places women as victims, and men as perpetrators, without a mention of their potential vulnerability in this sense.

Keeping the theories presented in the literature review in mind, this outcome is hardly surprising. Though many of these organizations had noted in their policies that ‘gender does not equal women exclusively,’ the idea that ‘women and girls are disproportionately affected’ was also repeated, frequently. Though in many cases, women and girls are especially vulnerable — think of the aforementioned ‘double discrimination’ — these
results also recall Carpenter’s interviews: the respondents’ fears that, if humanitarian organizations would stop talking about women, they would be lost. As such, it is understandable that the discourse on women’s protection and empowerment is so fiercely defended in this sector, though a more inclusive approach to gender mainstreaming may have been expected based on the policy analysis. The fact that searches yield better results for children is positive, but ultimately still in line with the idea that ‘women and children’ are the most vulnerable.

What makes these results problematic is the following: given that organizational websites are generally geared towards the general public, with banners appearing on every page providing a quick link or button towards a donation form, these types of distinctions are important. Results like these do not challenge the public’s predispositions on victimhood and innocence. For the purpose of fundraising, presenting unambiguous victims in this manner is highly effective. However, less so for the purpose of informing and educating. Many (I)NGOs include ‘advocacy’ in their humanitarian programming. While this also relates to beneficiaries — for example, advocating for gender equality — it is equally important in terms of campaigning and fundraising, meaning educating and advocating to the general public. The international community namely the public, is a potential force for change. If these groups are unaware of the real threats men and boys face, the same way women and girls share specific vulnerabilities, then misleading and harmful discourse will continue. If Syrian men are continued to be seen as threats, instead of victims fleeing real danger, then host countries will continue to deny them, and donors will not support them. In terms of funding allocation, this is especially important, as transparency is becoming increasingly important in humanitarian action, and donations are given based on specific projects and causes. Similarly, if the public does not see the forced recruitment of men as an infringement on human rights, they will not rise up against it, will not demand governments stop these practices, and they will not donate for a cause aiming to stop it.

Though this research showed that the inclusion of men in gender mainstreaming policies and efforts is more common than expected based on the literature review, it has demonstrated a concerning lack of follow-through on the organizations’ part, at least
based on the information available to the general public. Though the international community is only one of many fronts with which (I)NGOs have to interact, it is an important one for creating awareness and willingness to help on the subject of victims who are men.
6. Conclusion and recommendations

The aim of this research is to explore to what extent men are excluded in gender mainstreaming policy and programs, and to understand the factors that contribute to this phenomenon. This final chapter will revisit the research questions and present the major outcomes.

To answer the main research question, it is necessary to understand the purpose of gender mainstreaming, and to determine whether humanitarian organizations understood and applied it. The policy analysis revealed that the selected organizations understand and adhere to the key aspects of gender mainstreaming, i.e. that men, women, boys, and girls are all affected differently by crises. This means that, in order to deliver effective needs-based aid, humanitarian actors should aim to include a gender perspective at all levels of their programming and action.

It is also crucial to determine the scope of male-specific vulnerabilities. Several were identified in the Background and Literature Review chapters, and further discussed and analyzed in chapter 5. The Background listed vulnerabilities specific to Syrian men, namely forced conscription and violence, including sexual exploitation, with particular attention to adolescent males. In the Literature Review, the subject was approached from a theoretical perspective. A key concept here was the use of gender and age as proxy determinants for the ‘innocent civilian,’ by humanitarian actors, international governments and communities, and belligerents. In essence, this translates to: women, children, and the elderly are generally considered to be innocent civilians, while able-bodied men are not. Carpenter found that, though humanitarian actors are aware of the needs of men in crises, they feel they would be hindered in their efforts to aid them, and instead choose to maintain a cooperative relationship with other parties to ensure access to beneficiaries. This implies that humanitarian aid workers do not necessarily apply gender and age as proxies to determine need, but that in a worst-case scenario, they perpetuate this perception, or at best fail to challenge it. As Dolan noted, due to a lack of evidence, these biases are often taken as the bases for needs assessment and programming.
Gender analysis, if done well, is an important aspect to gender mainstreaming policy, as it will create a factual basis in the form of gender disaggregated data. Another topic of particular interest was the broadening of the definition of GBV to include forced conscription, as this is an issue men are particularly vulnerable to, based purely on their gender. This is strongly linked to perceptions of men as combatants, no matter their civilian status; they are seen as potential weapons, instead of being valued as human beings. Because of the grey area men occupy, meaning civilian vs. combatant, they are often identified as legitimate targets for both militia and armed groups; if they are not fighting for them, they are, after all, a potential enemy.

Finally, the research findings and policy analysis confirmed Carpenters’ conclusion that humanitarian actors are aware of male-specific vulnerabilities, and are willing to take action to an extent. Based on the analysis, a long list of vulnerabilities was identified. Perceptions of masculinity is a major factor that directly influences many other aspects of male-specific vulnerability, including men’s tendency to take high risks in emergency situations, and a lack of access to medical care, which includes mental healthcare. Additionally, men are less likely to report violence, especially in cases of sexual violence. Both self-perceived masculinity, as well as the perceptions of their communities and humanitarian actors contribute to the issue. It was found that men themselves are less likely to seek aid, because they feel it would threaten their masculinity. On the other hand, humanitarian actors are often not equipped to encourage or support men in these cases, and often assume they are not in need of such aid. Gender assumptions on both sides cause men to be sidelined in humanitarian programming, which is a direct cause for increased vulnerability. Further research on the effects of perceptions of masculinity would be helpful to determine how to approach and include vulnerable men. The GVC Gender WASH Toolkit addresses these stereotypes particularly well, and extends it to other aspects of life, such as division of labor, and education on hygiene. The document makes a point not to make assumptions about role divisions based on gender. A few organizations emphasized these dangers, reminding aid workers that gender does not equal women, but often adding a disclaimer that women and girls are still disproportionately affected by crises. Based on the policy documents, it appears that steps
are being taken to create a more balanced gender mainstreaming approach, in which both men and women are included in needs assessment using actual data. However, judging from organizational websites and annual reports, women and children are still presented as the most important victims of crises deserving attention.

The resulting conclusion is one of cautious optimism: there is proof of awareness among humanitarian actors, though Carpenter proved that in her case study years ago. Still, several field-based examples could be found in some policy documents, and though there is little to no evidence of aid projects designed to specifically aid vulnerable men, they are being considered in program design, at least. However, this view is underrepresented on organizations’ websites, which is the primary source of information for the public, including private donors. As humanitarian organizations also work through advocacy, there is a responsibility to challenge gendered assumptions about vulnerability and innocence.
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