Arab philanthropy, education, and inclusive citizenship in Lebanon

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Abstract

Typically, Arab philanthropy can be characterized as being underpinned in religious terms of charity (Ibrahim, 2008), and tends to be personal rather than systematic and institutionalized; as such it is relatively underdeveloped compared with other regions with similar income levels (El-Gamal, 2013). Research has also shown that typically these philanthropic networks foster intra-class (horizontal) solidarity rather than inter-class (vertical) integration (El-Gamal, 2013). Yet philanthropy for civic change - often led by business leaders, and also transnational philanthropy are growing trends (Ibrahim, 2008), which have intensified with the eruption of revolutions across the Arab world. Furthermore, the field of education is a critical site for such socio-political transformations (Kiwan, 2014, forthcoming). This paper examines Arab philanthropic efforts in the field of education for inclusive citizenship in Lebanon. Initiatives focusing on the educational and economic empowerment of women - often marginalized, is a significant area of activity, funded by international organizations, corporate social responsibility programs of banks, local ‘citizen-business leaders’, and partnerships between these different players. 2013 was designated the year for an all-out effort by women’s organizations, the private sector, civil society institutions, NGOs, and individuals to ensure protection of women against violence and economic and political marginalization. In addition, initiatives focusing on youth continue to be another significant area for funding, which is not surprising given the large youth populations in the Arab world, with over 40% of the population being under the age of eighteen (Faour and Muasher, 2012). Moreover, by the end of 2013, it has been estimated that over one million Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, with half a million of these being children, and so this is a relatively new area of focus for philanthropic activity, as yet not systematically studied or mapped. This paper will firstly, consist of a mapping of philanthropic activity in Lebanon pertaining to these three (inter-related) populations – women, youth and refugees, focusing on the educational domain – both formal and informal, since 2011. This will draw on ‘YouCitizen’, a European Research Council-funded project which uses network analysis to examine funding relationships between international organizations, civil society groups, states and other actors to promote youth citizenship in divided societies, with Lebanon as one of its cases (http://youcitizen.org/). Secondly, the paper identifies and examines two case study examples of initiatives working with the three above-mentioned populations of women, youth and refugees, with the aim of elucidating key characteristics and challenges faced in these domains.
Introduction

Typically, Arab philanthropy can be characterized as being underpinned in religious terms of charity (Ibrahim, 2008), and tends to be personal rather than systematic and institutionalized; as such it is relatively underdeveloped compared with other regions with similar income levels (El-Gamal, 2013). Research has also shown that typically these philanthropic networks foster intra-class (horizontal) solidarity rather than inter-class (vertical) integration (El-Gamal, 2013). Yet philanthropy for civic change - often led by business leaders, and also transnational philanthropy are growing trends (Ibrahim, 2008), which have intensified with the eruption of revolutions across the Arab world.

Furthermore, the field of education is a critical site for such socio-political transformations (Kiwan, 2014, forthcoming). This paper examines Arab philanthropic efforts in the field of education for inclusive citizenship in Lebanon, with a particular focus on initiatives relating to youth, women and refugees. Initiatives focusing on youth continue to be a significant area for funding, which is not surprising given the large youth populations in the Arab world, with over 40% of the population being under the age of eighteen (Faour and Muasher, 2012). Initiatives focusing on the educational and economic empowerment of women is another significant area of activity, with 2013 designated as the year for an all-out effort by women’s organizations, the private sector, civil society institutions, NGOs, and individuals to ensure protection of women against violence and economic and political marginalization. Thirdly, with regards to refugees, Lebanon has more Syrian refugees than any other country in the region, with an estimated 1.5 million refugees expected by the end of 2014. The first section below consists of a mapping of philanthropic activity in Lebanon pertaining to these three (inter-related) populations – women, youth and refugees, focusing on the educational domain – both formal and informal, since 2011. This is followed by two case study examples of initiatives working with the three above-mentioned populations of women, youth and refugees, with the aim of elucidating key characteristics and challenges faced in these domains.

A. A mapping of philanthropic activity: network analysis

In order to provide an overview of philanthropic involvement in citizenship education in Lebanon, this paper draws upon research conducted by the YouCitizen research project.¹

¹ Youth Citizenship in Divided Societies: Between Cosmopolitanism, Nation and Civil Society, ERC Advanced Grant 295392
As part of a wider study on youth citizenship promotion in divided societies, this project uses social network analysis to map the relationships between international organizations, civil society groups, state agencies, and other actors involved in citizenship education in Lebanon. Although typically viewed as a method for quantitative data analysis, the line between quantitative and qualitative data in SNA is not clear. The social relations that comprise social networks are often best researched and expressed qualitatively. This research uses qualitative data taken from internet and database searches to construct Lebanese civil society network maps. These network maps are then used to inform further research, including interviews, focus groups, and participatory observation.

The network maps used in this research are comprised of NGOs, civil society groups, and international organisations involved in youth citizenship promotion in Lebanon. Represented as nodes on the network graph, these organisations were identified through internet, social media, and online NGO database searches for organisations in Lebanon promoting citizenship, civic engagement, and participation. Once identified, a list of the organisation’s donors and partners was compiled using publicly accessible information from organisational websites and annual reports. The full dataset of citizenship education organisations and their donors and partners was then used to construct the network graphs, illustrating the overall makeup of the citizenship education field in Lebanon.

In Figure 1 (see Appendix), the lines connecting the nodes represent funding flows from donors to recipients (the lines are not weighted to indicate amounts of funding as this information is not always publically available). The size of the node indicates out-degree, that is, the number of organizations that a donor funds. Black nodes are local Lebanese NGOs that are active in the field of citizenship education (although their main issue may vary from education to youth participation, women’s empowerment, environmental protection, promoting secular democracy, among others.) Blue nodes are donors. Again, these range from international NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, and foreign governments, to local Lebanese businesses, state agencies, and civil society organisations. Finally, the red nodes represent Arab philanthropic charities. These are often family foundations or charitable associations based in Lebanon or another Arab state, or run by Lebanese émigrés in Europe or the United States. These foundations and charities may act as sponsors for local organizations engaged in citizenship education, or they may
carry out these activities themselves, but in no instance do they receive institutional support from a donor, relying instead on individual contributions and endowments.

Looking at the funding relationships between donors, philanthropies, and local NGOs, a difference in the funding patterns appears. Issue-based local NGOs must establish multiple funding relationships from a range of donors. Likewise, these institutional donors, often foreign government aid agencies or international NGOs, distribute funds to multiple local partners. This creates a fairly coherent network of actors often clustering around significant themes. In contrast to the dense network of lateral funding relations between institutional donors and issue-based NGOs, Arab philanthropies seem to be organized more vertically. In most cases, these foundations and charitable associations operate independently, managing and dispersing their own funds. Not captured on these graphs are the networks of social, familial, and cliental relationships in which these charities are embedded. In cases where these philanthropies make donations or grants to other organizations, this graph suggests they tend to form a relationship with one partner in a given area or issue. In addition, it is less likely that an organization will take donations from multiple Arab philanthropic charities.

Insert Figure 1 here

*Arab philanthropy and education for refugees*

Since 1948, UNRWA has been the main education provider for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As Palestinians are not legally permitted to attend Lebanese public schools, UNRWA operates sixty-nine schools in twelve official refugee camps across the country (UNRWA, 2013a). Thus, the majority of aid to education for Palestinian refugees has been directed to UNRWA and education has been its largest budget expenditure, despite the agency’s primary responsibility for other basic services including health and shelter. Non-governmental organizations complement UNRWA’s educational services, particularly in early childhood and vocational education (ANERA, 2012), and funding comes from well-established Palestinian foundations such as Welfare Association, AlQattan and Said Foundations through providers in Lebanon for scholarships, school infrastructure and extra-curricular programs.
Despite efforts to encourage government and philanthropic contributions from Arab states, as stated in the commissioner’s report to the UN (UNRWA, 2013b), UNRWA receives over 90% of its budget from non-Arab donor countries (UNRWA, 2012). From the Arab world, their largest contribution came from the Islamic Development Bank. Other contributions were from what could be characterized as the traditional funders of humanitarian relief in the region such as the UAE Red Crescent.

Although emergency appeals have long characterized UNRWA’s funding request approach, the urgency and magnitude of the Syrian refugee education crisis has overshadowed the long-term challenge of providing education to Palestinian refugees. Currently, there are approximately 400,000 Syrian refugee children out of school in Lebanon (Watkins, 2013). UN agencies and international NGOs have appealed to the international community in largely uncoordinated requests for funding, though no humanitarian appeals for Syrian refugees have been fully funded. At the end of the Kuwait Donor Conference, despite the recognition of need, donors did not specify pledges to education. A new proposal by UK Former Prime Minister and current UN Envoy for Education Gordon Brown calls for a coordinated approach to putting Syrian children into school using Lebanese public schools in a double shift scheme at a price tag of $195M/year (2014). While funding for this initiative has not yet been finalized, it is expected that it will also receive the largest amount from foreign governments.

**B. The case studies**

This section details the work and funding of two selected non-governmental organizations, whose initiatives relate to the focus of this paper – education for inclusive citizenship. Both organizations are relatively new initiatives, although the first organization detailed below, Unite Lebanon Youth Project is relatively more established having been established since 2010. This example was selected as it illustrates an initiative whose programs relate to women, youth and refugees (including long term resident Palestinians in Lebanon, as well as more recently arrived Syrian and Syrian Palestinian refugees). It also illustrates an organization that is well-networked with regards to funding, with various partners, and with sources of Arab philanthropic funding. The second organization, Basma wa Zeitooneh, is a newcomer to the scene, having been established in late 2012, with its school for 6-14 years launched in January 2014. Having only secured its registration as a Lebanese non-governmental organization
at the start of 2014, its sources of funding are less established, including its sources of Arab philanthropy. Its target audience are Syrian refugees – both women and youth.

**Unite Lebanon Youth Project**

The Unite Lebanon Youth Project (U.L.Y.P.) is a non-governmental organization that was established in 2010, and run by Ms. Melek El Nimr with the remit to promote social cohesion between ‘the Lebanese host community and its refugee populations’. It focuses on education in the broadest sense in addressing sectarianism, with a particular focus on women, children and youth. ULYP has a number of core programs that include sports, literacy, arts, academics and social media, which are run at a campus south of Beirut, in Dibbiyeh. The curriculum of these programs entail ‘peace building’ and ‘conflict resolution’. UYLP is supported by a large number of volunteers recruited both locally and internationally from a range of organizations (UYLP, 2014).

Programs include ‘RARE’, which was launched in December 2013, for underprivileged Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese students studying at vocational schools. These students have typically dropped out of mainstream academic education and this program provides skills training for accessing employment, as well as general empowerment through learning about human rights (UYLP, 2014). This program is funded by the United Palestine Appeal. A second program, called Bridge, targets Palestinian students, providing them with training and scholarships to universities in Lebanon. This program is funded by individual Palestinian business donors.

According to its website, U.L.Y.P’s fundraising is from foundations, corporations and individual donors. Current funding includes the following Arab philanthropic sources: Welfare Association, United Palestine Appeal and The Qaddumi Foundation. Previous sources include a number of international sources, including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Australian Government Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade Direct Aid Program (DAP) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Individual Arab philanthropic donors include Jalal Laham, a Palestinian businessman based in Holland, Mrs Rima Hourani (of Palestinian descent), and the El Nimr Family fund, and the Qaddumi Foundation (based in Jordan).
Basma wa Zeitooneh

Basma wa Zeitooneh started as an informal group of volunteers working to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon, launched in September 2012 (Basma wa Zeitooneh, 2014). Its promotional material states that it serves 15,000 Syrians in Beirut in two locations – Shatila and Burj Al-Barajneh refugee camps. In early 2014, it became registered as a Lebanese NGO. Its remit is to work with Syrian youth and women refugees. It has already developed partnerships working on a number of programs with a number of Lebanese non-governmental organizations. Basma wa Zeitooneh’s vision is to go beyond humanitarian approaches of characterizing refugees primarily as recipients of aid, through programs emphasizing the dignity of the refugee. In addition, it works with those who are ineligible for aid from international agencies.

In May 2013, Basma wa Zeitooneh opened a community center in Shatila which serves approximately 1000 families offering such services as a relief program helping new refugees to settle and providing basic provisions of food, mattresses, medical care. It also has a women’s program which provides training in embroidery and crochet, with the opportunity to sell their products. Not only does this provide financial support, but Basma wa Zeitooneh perceives that it empowers women and helps to restore dignity. The workshop initially had a capacity for 10 women but now has expanded to 70 women. The workshop also runs other rights awareness and health sessions for women.

Other educational programs include free literacy and computer training for all those over aged 10, launched in September 2013, and in January 2014, a school was opened for 300 Syrian children aged 6-14 years of age. It is specifically designed to meet the needs of children whose learning has been disrupted and it offers the Lebanese educational curriculum through an accelerated learning program (ALP), to address differences between the Syrian curriculum offered mainly in Arabic, and the Lebanese curriculum offered in either French or English. It aims to prepare students to integrate into Lebanese public schools. Basma wa Zeitooneh is also planning a ‘virtual university’ program for those students whose education was disrupted because of the conflict in Syria. The idea is to either raise funds for a virtual campus given difficulties in finding scholarships for individuals in local Lebanese universities.

Regarding funding, Basma wa Zeitooneh is still in the early stages of its fund-raising, having raised some funding from international sources, as well as from Syrian business,
networks in Europe, and some wealthy families. There has not to date, been funding for specific projects or programs from Arab philanthropic sources.

C. Conclusion

The network analysis conducted by the YouCitizen research project is one of the few contemporary systematic attempts to map funding relationships in the domain of inclusive citizenship education in Lebanon, and is an important contribution to knowledge in this field in this regard. In particular, two key findings emerge that relate to the case study examples presented here. The first is that issue-based local NGOs typically establish multiple funding relationships from a range of donors – local and international, and they often working with a number of local partners given how funds are distributed. In contrast, Arab philanthropies seem to be organized more vertically, organized around networks of social, familial and cliental relationships – ties that are less formal and thus not represented in figure 1. Secondly, the network graphs also illustrate a “rich-get-richer” phenomenon, whereby the more partners and donors an organization has, the more successful that organization is at attracting more partners and donors. Donors often want to see a history of past successful projects, and implementing more projects naturally attracts more partners. It may be that UYLP, as a Lebanese issue-based organization promoting social cohesion and non-sectarianism has been more successful in attracting a broader range of donors and partners. Its connections within Lebanon and its appeal to donor priorities make it more visible to Arab philanthropy and international donor networks alike. In contrast, the remit of Basma wa Zeitooneh is less to address a particular issue as it is to assist a particular population – Syrian refugees – and as such it relies largely on solidarity funds to do so. While the organization is still in its early days, it remains to be seen whether organizations such as this, grassroots efforts dedicated to assisting Syrian refugees in Lebanon, will be successful at attracting the support and attention of either Arab or major international donors.

With regards to refugees in particular, much more extensive research is required to determine the relationship patterns between Arab philanthropic organizations and non-governmental service providers in Lebanon. Of note is the absence of recorded philanthropic support to both Palestinian and Syrian refugee education, with few exceptions, by corporations in the Arab region. In the Arab region as a whole and for service providers of both the Palestinian and Syrian refugee communities, more effort is needed to clarify methods of engagement and value of investment for more corporations
to provide much needed financial contributions (Jalbout, 2013). Efforts to engage the Arab corporate philanthropic sector in education for the most vulnerable children can be informed by international research (van Fleet, 2011). The region however must also invest in its own research for a more strategic and sustainable philanthropic community to emerge in support of education for its most vulnerable.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Funding relationships between donors, philanthropies and local NGOs