A Gender Lens on the Settlement and Integration of Syrian Refugees in Rural Ontario

Student name: Rana Telfah
University of Guelph
School of Environmental Design and Rural Development
Supervisor: Professor Wayne Caldwell
The Syrian crisis is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time.
Distribution of Syrian refugees in Canada by province

- Yukon: <1%
- British Columbia: 9%
- Alberta: 13%
- Saskatchewan: 4%
- Manitoba: 4%
- Ontario: 41%
- Quebec: 19%
- New Brunswick: 5%
- Nova Scotia: 4%
- Newfoundland and Labrador: 1%
- Prince Edward Island: 1%
Pre-migration experiences
Refugees vs. Immigrants
The Syrian refugees

- Family size: 40% 4-6, 32% single, 18% 2-3, 10% 7-10
- Education: 69% Secondary or less, 21% university degree, 10% diploma
- Language: 34% English, 2% French, 62% Neither, 2% not stated
- Gender: 49% female, 51% male

Problem Statement

For newcomers to Canada, the settlement and integration process is dynamic and complex, and the profile of Syrian refugees shows that they will face barriers to settlement and integrating in rural communities in Ontario. Due to
✓ The capacities of Syrian refugees
✓ The characteristics of rural communities
✓ The settlement services

Moreover, Syrian women confront two types of constraints
✓ One stemming from their societal values and beliefs
✓ Other stemming from how they are received in the Canadian society

Consequently, Syrian refugees are disadvantaged group in society, where they are excluded from social and economic integration.
The goal of my research is to explore the challenges that face Syrian refugee families in Guelph and Southwestern Ontario and to identify strategies that will lead to better outcomes of their settlement and integration.
Objectives

- Objective 1: To determine the impact of family size, age of children and gender relations on the outcomes of refugees and families

- Objective 2: To identify the key factors that determine the capacity of a community to attract and retain refugees, does the size of the community make a difference

- Objective 3: To determine the service supports needed to be in place for all members of refugee families to keep them in rural communities
Methodology

This research is an interdisciplinary and feminist perspective, with a focus on participatory methods to engage with refugee women and their families. The participants’ stories give a more in-depth and realistic understanding of the discussed issues and highlight hidden factors that marginalize women such as culture, and external systems (Bokore, 2016).

Methods used:
- Discussion groups with women refugees and their families
- Key informant interviews with settlement services providers

The context of the research will be focused on Guelph and Southwestern Ontario.
Significance of research

This research will

- Fill knowledge gaps concerning the needs of Syrian families and especially Syrian women in rural communities.
- Bring focus to opportunities associated with the movement of Syrian families to rural Ontario, and specific focus to the role and needs of Syrian women. These new Canadians have the potential to help address population decline, labor shortages and creating new business development.
References

- Castles et al. (2002). Integration: Mapping the Field Integration: Mapping the Field, (December).

- Ditchburn, J. (2016, May,21). “The refugee issue debate in 2015 should have been about how well prepared our institutions are to integrate newcomers, instead of solely about terrorism and security”. Retrieved from http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/may-2016/canada-was-having-the-wrong-debate-about-refugees/
