

Strengthening Non-Profit Knowledge Sharing in a
Conflict Zone: A Pilot Study in The Occupied Palestinian
Territories - Gaza

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Strengthening Non-Profit Knowledge Sharing in a Conflict Zone: A Pilot Study in The Occupied Palestinian Territories - Gaza

INTRODUCTION

GGateway, “a women-led IT outsourcing Impact Business that aims to provide young talented professionals with access to employment and capacity building opportunities”¹ is the focus for this pilot study on non-profit knowledge sharing in a conflict zone. Originally a UNRWA initiative, independent since 2016, and a leading social and business enterprise and outsourcing hub in Gaza, GGateway attracts significant donor funding from inter-governmental and philanthropic sources. At the time of this research, GGateway provided intersecting work streams of youth empowerment and youth outreach through technical workshops, and cyber education training; building Gaza graduates’ capacity for workforce entry through developing high level IT skills and capability among young women and young men trainees, to enhance independent income generation opportunities. As an organisation offering a platform through which to catalyse social resilience in an immensely challenging environment, GGateway was chosen as an exemplar organisation for studying knowledge sharing in youth development within a conflict zone.

Social resilience in the Palestinian Occupied Territories is at a premium among its young people, as the intersections of conflict, occupation, poverty, demographic pressures and minimal infrastructure impact on their search for dignified living and decent livelihoods.

So too, in these fractured conditions, are the responses and actions in local civil society among nonprofit and non-governmental organisations (NPOs and NGOs), especially those creating and sustaining innovative employment opportunities, together with their donors and funders, such as GGateway. In such circumstances, knowledge held in these organisations, by all their stakeholders, is a critical organisation asset; while knowledge sharing, (KS), and knowledge flows within these organisations may release and use this asset to enhance their development and performance.

This research therefore has explored the social resilience experiences of young women in Gaza, who are participants (or ‘beneficiaries’) of GGateway’s employment-focused innovative IT-led and entrepreneurial training programmes; their perspectives on the

¹ <https://www.ggateway.tech>

programme knowledge which they hold, and their opportunities to contribute to knowledge sharing in support of GGateway's work. A pilot study, concentrating on a single organisation, its methodological focus was the appropriateness of the chosen research approach, and method, including identifying the qualitative research challenges likely to be faced in a subsequent substantive study (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Supported with funding from Research England, from the Global Challenges Research Fund, the research is underpinned by the context that in many low income countries facing conflict and socio-economic and political fragility, young women and men experience exceptional struggles to gain access to rewarding and decent livelihoods (Fox and Kaul, 2018, Hashweh, 2017). Women are disproportionately affected adversely, when the factors of gender, place, ethnic privilege and economic class are taken into account. (Flynn et al., 2017); while nonprofit employment-focused interventions directed to young people, including young women, draw on concepts of social resilience (Hall and Lamont. 2013) to underpin their work.

Meanwhile, knowledge sharing's advocacy as a means of programme and organisational improvement and development continues to grow among NPOS and NGOs with knowledge understood as an organisational asset in its own right (Langmann et al., 2020, Mohd Noor et al., 2015, Hailey and James, 2002.) Yet much advocacy is related to the operations of philanthropic foundations and the funders of nonprofits, rather than being explored and understood in the context of operating organisations.. Contributions to knowledge sharing by nonprofits' beneficiaries and programme users also remain much less in evidence, while social resilience experiences (Marie et al., 2018), notably of beneficiaries, may affect their capacity to contribute to organisational knowledge sharing.

The research's rationale responded especially to Marie et al.'s argument (ibid., 22) that the majority of Palestinian young people "function effectively, in spite of the surrounding risks"; and that instead of imposing pre-existing understandings of resilience, there is a need to understand their ideology, their way of thinking and "their created meaning regarding adversity". It was undertaken in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 'decent work and economic growth', cross-cutting with Goal 17, 'partnerships for sustainable

development’; and with reference to SDGs 4 and 5 concerning equitable opportunities for all and gender equality.²

The research took place between January 2020 and September 2021, as a collaborative research project between researchers from Bayes Business School, City, University of London, the Academy of Philanthropy (AoP) of the Global Donors Forum and colleagues at GGateway.

The aims of the research were to explore young women trainees’ experiences of social resilience through programme participation in GGateway, and to discover the nature and extent of these trainees’ contributions, actual and potential, to this nonprofit’s programme development and change, through knowledge sharing. Its objectives were first, to discover and reflect on the extent to which trainees’ training programme experiences contributed to their reported sense of social resilience in the Gaza setting, in their own words, as a contribution to the literature on beneficiary roles and voices in NPO/NGO development. Second, to explore opportunities for these trainees’ contributing to knowledge sharing within GGateway, as a potentially under-developed or untapped resource, through in-depth interviewing with trainees.

These aims and objectives stemmed from scholarly and practice concerns regarding knowledge gaps, notably the growing centrality of KS to enhance and sustain organisational progress in NPOs yet the marked absence of beneficiaries’ voices as KS sources and assets for NPOs’ learning.

However, as the research proceeded, its closing fieldwork period coincided with a major, open cross-border conflict (May 2021). This raised the immediate challenges of the extent to which KS among NPOs was predicated primarily upon conditions of relative stability, and of the effects of this conflict on the social resilience of the research participants. A third aim thus emerged: to understand and report on trainees’ experiences and perspectives in the light of this upsurge in conflict, and to consider the theoretical and empirical implications of the nature of and rationales for organisational knowledge sharing in a conflict zone.

² Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The report proceeds as follows. An outline summary of the report is provided, followed by examination of the study's research questions, the working definitions used and the national and socio-political context in which the research was undertaken. The literature framing the study is then reviewed in four inter-related areas. These are beneficiaries in NGOs, social resilience in the Palestinian context, knowledge sharing and NGOs; and donors and policy makers and knowledge sharing.

The research design is presented, showing the two phases of the study (pre and post the experiences of violence in Gaza during May 2021), and the research methods employed. Findings for both phases are presented and discussed, with the limitations of the study considered. Final reflections are provided on the research outcomes, including the nature of recommendations to GGateway ; and possible directions for subsequent research, including new considerations in the literature on the challenges of organisation knowledge sharing in conflict zones.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This research project focused on a small group of young women trainees (or ‘beneficiaries’) in Gaza, OPT, enrolled in an innovative IT entrepreneurial training programme led and organised by the local NPO GGateway. Originally an UNRWA initiative, GGateway is a women-led social business hybrid, operating in the digital economy to expand Gaza’s business opportunities and professional capacity.
- Embracing the UN Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 17, and incorporating SDGs 4 and 5, the research explored women trainee experiences of social resilience in the context of training and income generation challenges in Gaza and how and whether their knowledge and learning is shared within GGateway to further support this nonprofit provider and its funders. A pilot study, on a small scale, in one organisation, it explored methodological feasibility questions and the challenges facing qualitative research in the Gazan context.
- In the light of the upsurge of violent conflict in Gaza in May 2021, a related research focus emerged, concerning the challenges for organisational knowledge sharing in nonprofits in a conflict zone, and the conflict’s reported effects on the women trainees’ social resilience.
- The research was supported by Research England, within the framework of the Global Challenges Research Fund; with GGateway purposively invited as a research partner, and exemplar case.
- A narrative literature review underpinned the research, examining beneficiaries in NGOs, social resilience, knowledge sharing in NGOs, and donors’ and policy makers’ engagement with knowledge sharing.
- Field research, of necessity conducted remotely, given Gaza’s closed (blockaded) position, even prior to global health restrictions, was facilitated by GGateway’s standing as a leading IT digital enterprise. A protocol for remote (‘Zoom’) interviewing of GGateway women trainees and trainees, was agreed and implemented.
- An overview of the GGateway context gained from leadership interviews with GGateway’s Co-founder and Partnerships and Impact Director, and with GGateway’s Chief People Officer. Seven individual trainee interviews were completed, conducted in English, with Arabic translation support available and a group interview conducted with trainers.

- Thematic analysis of the individual interview transcripts took place manually; and content analysis of the group interview. Core themes of being ambitious, being indomitable; managing success; and recognising personal growth, together with the potentially contradictory theme of acknowledging the social limitations of gender and family, were identified. These appeared to reflect a wider theme Palestinian studies, of fortitude (the Palestinian usage of the word 'sumud').
- The closing stages of the distance-based field work was thrown into sharp relief by the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza, in May 2021, and the renewal of physical conflict and danger. Although GGateway staff and trainees remained physically safe through this period, their work was wholly suspended, and faced, even for Gaza, unprecedented risks.
- In the face of this apparent functional coping by respondents contrasting with researcher safety, agreement was obtained from GGateway and respondents, to conduct a further round of contacts, to capture experiences, organisational and personal, accompanied by a further level of institutional (City) research ethics support. These were presented as 'meetings' rather than 'interviews'; and formed what became phase two of the research.
- Following the ceasefire, these meetings took place, with the attendance of a GGateway moderator, to support trainees through the conversations, and to translate from Arabic into English if necessary. Four trainees participated. A limited analysis of the transcripts from these meetings used the empathy mapping approach; creating a powerful record of programme disruption within a conflict zone from trainee–beneficiary perspectives.
- Findings in phase one challenged the view of beneficiaries' likely passivity as knowledge sharers and sources of organisational learning but evidenced the difficulties of conventional KS demands if and where factors such as modesty or gratitude across all participants' responses came into play.
- The thematic analysis included reports of changing lives (regular income, new independence) through enabling IT freelancing yet community and family challenges and barriers; significant loyalty to Gaza, sustained by programme-led confidence levels; modesty/gratitude limiting KS; and some ideas shared but with limited effect (e.g. concerning increased emphasis on freelancing than technical learning; or seeking emphasis on soft skills; better balancing of training intakes' experiences). There were

structured formal feedback loops available within GGateway , but used with caution by trainees and appearing uni-directional.

- Wariness among respondents of sharing frustrations ‘upwards’ in the organisation appeared because of the outstanding opportunities being provided; their extensive self-learning and KS (including with their family members) and with (some) supportive trainers; donors and organisations with ‘good listening protocols’ for ‘ground level’ and ‘satisfaction issues’; but realisation of trainees’ ‘having to raise one’s voice’.
- In the light of literatures reviewed, significant expressions of social resilience appeared largely underpinned by GGateway’s programme , being interpreted as tenacity to remain in Gaza, among trainees from both privileged and highly conservative backgrounds.
- Trainers reported a variety of collaborative and KS approaches and minimal access for KS with donors. Other issues linked to KS ranged from the limitations of programme location in Gaza City to long term impact measurement of the programme and KS’s value. Also, the need for links with local (Gaza) universities, to stimulate KS and these universities’ social enterprise interest; links that were currently absent and believed by trainers not of interest to donors.
- From phase one findings, incremental recommendations were made to GGateway (and indirectly to donors) concerning KS modelling and growth. The increased incorporation of and further acknowledgement of trainees’ pro-active and potential as knowledge sharers was stressed: responding to the belief that “we beneficiaries must have to be part of the improvement of the programme”.
- Contrasting findings emerged from phase two. With such small numbers, transcripts were reviewed only descriptively; recording personal and work orientations intertwining. These ranged from being unable to cope with the opportunities for freelance work (losing power and losing tenacity), trying to continue working and tell clients that ‘we have a special situation here in Gaza’ or suddenly losing employment when the employing company was partially destroyed.
- Trainees’ national, community and family-based social resilience, as seen through the means of empathy mapping, was all-but evaporating. Notwithstanding the gains, economic and social opportunities and confidence derived from by GGateway’s programme, the need for peace for trainees, their families and children was

overwhelming. In significant contrast to the phase one interviews, departure from Gaza by these trainees - knowledge-holding assets - was now contemplated widely; since “where will we hide next time this happens”.

- This raised further questions regarding knowledge sharing, its understanding as a construct operating largely in stable times and settings; and whether a new dimension of knowledge sharing, with implications for its operations in conflict zone was appearing. A further literature review was developed, in response to these last findings; and the absence of such considerations noted in the NGO conflict zones discussion.
- In the light of this (academic and practice) literature gap, it was suggested that new approaches to organisational knowledge sharing in conditions of extremis, may emerge, distinctive from that relating to knowledge sharing in conditions of stability; with perspectives that prioritised organisational survival and preservation of important organisation artefacts or belongings.
- Final reflections on the findings, including the practice recommendations merging for GGateway were made. These included the complexities of knowledge sharing for NGOs in conflict zones, the role of research partnerships and remote working, and the extent to which research in the OPT and Gaza especially was inevitably fragmented. Also the implications of the use of the notion of “sumud” in this setting, especially whether donors were expecting ‘fortitude’, personally and organisationally, in their support of NGOs in conflict zones, as part of their sustainability agendas.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND WORKING DEFINITIONS

The research questions derived from our two aims and objectives for Phase one were as follows:

How and to what extent, if at all, do young women beneficiary/trainees in the GGateway (Gaza) programme report their coping, adaptive and transformative experiences, arising from or associated with their programme participation in the Gaza setting?

What knowledge derived from young women trainee's GGateway programme participation are they able to share and/or would wish to share with their programme providers and /or programme funders, to help enhance the programme's effectiveness and further development?

Our project resources and time scale precluded the development of research questions addressing directly the host organisation and the programme donors. However, trainer perspectives on the GGateway programme , which could incorporate the experiences of all participants, both trainers and the trainees whom they supported, were understood as important. A supplementary question, was therefore developed, to gauge from trainers as a group:

In what ways and in which directions are trainers' perspectives on the GGateway programme's development expressed, with particular reference to organisational knowledge sharing?

In phase two, with the onset of the violent conflict taking place in Gaza in May 2021, discussed above, a third research question emerged and was explored:

How do young women beneficiary/trainees report their experiences post conflict (after May 2021), in relation to their programme participation with GGateway and the extent of their social resilience?

Knowledge and Knowledge Sharing

We define 'knowledge' as 'justified personal belief that increases an individual's capacity to take effective action', following Alavi and Leidner (2001). Many researchers use 'knowledge' and 'information' interchangeably. We follow this broad approach, where knowledge is

information processed by individuals including ideas, facts, expertise, and judgments relevant for individual, team, and organisational performance (Wang and Noe, 2010).

While Lee and Al-Hawamdeh (2002) , define knowledge sharing simply as a thoughtful act that creates value to be used by others, we define knowledge sharing (KS) within its specifically organisational context , as “‘the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures,’ (Wang and Noe, 2010).

This definition incorporates the practice perspective that knowledge sharing is “more than mere communication because much knowledge in organisations is hard to articulate” (Janus, 2016, 6). Thus knowledge sharing may be understood as “a subset of knowledge management encompassing the exchange of knowledge (information, skills, experiences, or expertise) within and across organisations. Although it can be one-directional, knowledge sharing in most cases is a two-way or multilateral exchange in which the parties learn from each other,” (ibid.).

Beneficiary

In development terms ‘beneficiary’ refers to one whom a nongovernmental, nongovernmental or public project or programme explicitly sets out to serve. Responses to its usage are though accompanied by explicit critiques, for example, its’ judgmental nature (‘who is and who is not to be ‘served’), or condescension (for example, where beneficiaries are understood as a ‘needy’ category).

We use Benjamin’s (2020, 5) understanding of ‘beneficiary’ which highlights that a project’s expectations and intentions, which may or may not come to fruition: A beneficiary refers “the primary person that the nonprofit hopes will directly benefit from its work”. Benjamin affirms that “beneficiaries are central organisational actors”, that are “not simply external stakeholders who are the targets of nonprofit social change efforts...(but) internal organisational actors whose participation impacts the day-to-day work of staff and volunteers as well as the beneficiaries themselves,” (ibid., 5).

Social Resilience

Resilience can be understood as an ability to go on with life, or to continue living a purposeful life, after hardship or adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). As a multi-faceted

attribute, conceptualising 'social resilience' is seen by Bolzan and Gale (2012), (working with young people's own assessments) as an attempt to gain a contextualised and less individually dependant understanding of resilience ,one which articulates a relational, communal aspect to resilience.

We follow Keck and Sakdapolrak's understanding of social resilience as incorporating three types of capacity; coping capacity, adaptive capacity and transformative capacity, (2013, 10). Drawing from a range of scholarship, they go on to list four criteria which are applicable to each capacity. These are 'response to risk', 'temporal scope', 'degree of change' and 'outcome'.

In following this approach, we also draw on Marie et al. (2018, 20) in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and Gaza, where resilience "refers to ways of surviving in the context of occupation, chronic adversity, lack of resources and limited infrastructure".

The terms NGO and NPO are used interchangeably across development literatures and we have followed this practice.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Palestine, with 3.12 million people in the West Bank and 2.11 in Gaza is facing rapid population growth, with 69% of its population below the age of 29. (ICNL, 2021). UN Population Fund projections in 2016 indicate total growth reaching 6.9 million by 2030 and 9.5 million in 2050; with Gaza's population exceeding that of the West Bank, and remaining younger on average (Courbage et al., and UNPF, 2016). With the youth or young people cohort understood as those between 15-29 (Euromed, ND, 7), this youth population growth over the past 20 years reflects the highest increase among Arab countries; a "youth bulge" and a "serious developmental issue," (UNFP, 2021, NP).

A bleak set of economic indicators for the OPT provides the background for these demographic patterns and trends. Noting a "2012 UN warning that unless ongoing trends were reversed, Gaza would become uninhabitable by 2020". A European Commission report (2019, 6) found that "the productive capacity of Gaza has been eviscerated by three major military operations and a crippling eleven-year air, sea and land closure, which has almost completely de-industrialised the Strip." Across five decades from 1967, UNCTAD (2017, 1) reviewed "five decades of prolonged occupation, economic stagnation and de-development", with that de-development occurring unabated in Gaza, where "since the conclusion of the Oslo Accords in 1995, per capita GDP in Gaza has shrunk by 23 per cent" (ibid., 2) The resulting "distorted economy" was also experiencing weakening donor engagement. One reason for this was occupation preventing aid from translating into development gains; with "damage control, humanitarian interventions and budget support have been taking priority at the expense of development support," (ibid., 8).

Significant levels of unemployment, persist. The December 2018 Labour Force Survey for the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2019, 2) reported unemployment running at 24% for males and 48% for females; the overall rate in Gaza three times higher than in the West Bank, at 51%, compared with 16% in the West Bank. A large gap in the labour force participation rate between males and females was also reported: 7 out of 10 males participating, compared with 2 out of 10 of females.

While "in all MENA countries with available data, youth unemployment rates are higher than the world average of 13 percent", the highest MENA rate is found in Palestine "(Kabbani, 2019, 1); and within that group, the highest rates are found among graduates. On International Youth Day 2020, Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) figures reported

that the percentage of youth (18-29 years) with a bachelor's degree or above had increased from 11% across Palestine in 2007 to approximately 17% in 2019 (PCBS, 2020, 1). A doubling of degree holders among female youth over this period was also reported. Unemployment rates among graduates were running at 58% during 2019, (40% for males and 73% for females); (PCBS, 2020, 2) ; that is, more than half the youth graduates unemployed.

A year later, confirming the “disappearance of illiteracy” and decreasing early marriage in Palestine, the PCBS reiterated the persistent coupling of young people with higher education degrees and high unemployment levels, education's “real investment for Palestinians”, the overall broad success of remote higher education access during the Pandemic; and internet usage by youth (18-29) reaching 86% (90% in the West Bank and 79% in Gaza), with no difference between males and females (PCBS, 2021, 1). The International Labour Organisation's employment diagnostic study for Palestine, assessing Gaza doing “markedly worse” with the volatility of any opportunities for growth and falling real wages” (ILO, 2018, 12) is blunt in terms of women's opportunities: “typically, girls and women are highly educated in the OPT, in part because it is considered valuable but also because males are sent into the workforce early. However, when the small numbers of women who are working try to use their advanced education to get a job, they find numerous barriers, not least of all acceptance by the market itself” (ILO, op. cit., 13).

Finally, as this report was in preparation, the World Bank (2021) reported while the West Bank was expected to grow by 3.6 percent, up from a very low base in 2020, the economy in Gaza was now projected to contract by 0.3 percent. This was due to the May 2021 armed conflict between Israel and the de facto authority in Gaza, which led to casualties on both sides, but especially in Gaza where there was also extensive damage to infrastructure and where reconstruction efforts have been slow.

This section has provided the broadest of contexts for this study, one where “data indicates that since 1994, Gaza's compounded annual growth rate was a mere 1 percent” (World Bank, 2021, 16). Whilst Gaza's private sector has been lauded for its “extraordinary resilience” and its finding new “survival strategies” (European Commission, 2019, 6), it is also the context where young Palestinian graduates' perspectives on living in Gaza under occupation ,report multiple adverse effects, from humiliation and injuries to dignity to life being on hold (Hamad and Tribe ,2020). Such perspectives are a reinforcement or reflection of the concept of “waithood”, (a series of delayed transitions, for example, to work, home

ownership and civic participation). A term applying to youth across the MENA region, “reflecting the waste of youthful energy and potential”. (Kabbani, *ibid.*) it appears highly relevant to Gazan youth.

. ‘Waithood’s role in the complex process of ‘de -development’ (weakening an economy’s ability to grow by preventing it from accessing and utilising critical inputs, Roy, 1987) appears relevant also.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This is a narrative review, providing an overview of a range of literatures, in response to the broad question ‘what are the developing themes in the literature regarding the nature of the contributing roles of beneficiaries and the forms and extent of knowledge sharing in NGO and NPO activities?’. The review used the open access database of ‘Google Scholar’, and that of EBSCO host, supported and complemented electronically by City, University of London Library service. Its coverage extends from scholarly peer reviewed journals to include material from selected practitioner-led and development policy-led studies. It is not presented as a systematic review, in the sense of incorporating only primary research studies, completing full key word searches from specified databases and completing assessment of each studied identified to synthesise a full range of evidence

The literatures on the roles and contributions of beneficiaries to NGO programmes, and on the nature knowledge sharing and knowledge exchange within and across NGOs, their donors and funders, run to a considerable degree on parallel lines. Thus for example, beneficiaries are understood as “empowered” by their participation, though in their own lives rather than in those of the NGO itself.(Sultana and Islam, 2009; Nawaz, 2011)

Knowledge sharing as an organisational goal in its own right in NGOs is increasingly seen as important, but as a characteristic of employees rather than one incorporating beneficiaries, users or trainees (Zbachua et al., 2020). NGO accountability is recognised as enhanced where beneficiary outcomes, (whether they are “better off as a result of the nonprofit’s work”, Benjamin, 2013, 1224) are clarified, while beneficiaries’ stakeholder stature (and value) may be dependent upon support of other more powerful stakeholders.

Thus, Connolly and Hyndman (2017) examining the interplay of donor and beneficiary accountability needs, consider the extent to which concentration on one group may disadvantage another. Uddin and Belal (2019, 113) however “argue that donor accountability of NGOs also has enabling features which can be mobilised to the advantage of beneficiaries” and so, in turn, facilitate beneficiary accountability.

Acknowledgement of beneficiary roles in NGO project planning and start-up is especially prominent; for Rhamani (2012, 302) project design (in the Afghan context) without consulting implementing partners and beneficiaries “is like tailoring a dress for someone without knowing their height, size, taste, and culture”. However, persistence of beneficiary

involvement is less in evidence; similarly beneficiaries as conduits and exemplars of social resilience. The inclusion of social resilience as a literature stream relates to this field in its own right, and implicit as a series of characteristics or attributes that of themselves may encourage or discourage beneficiaries' knowledge sharing intentions and opportunities.

This review examines, first, the position of beneficiaries vis a vis 'their' organisations' development and change; second, considerations of 'social resilience' and thirdly issues of knowledge sharing in NPOs, beneficiaries organisational contributions in the context of programme and project advancement and change, and fourth, donors' relations with knowledge sharing activity.

Beneficiaries in NGOs – Definitions, Roles, Experiences and Contributions

A 'beneficiary' refers to one whom a nongovernmental, nongovernmental or public project or programme explicitly sets out to serve. Distinctions between direct and indirect beneficiaries of programmes may prove difficult, for a variety of reasons. These may arise from , for example, 'trickle down' results into families broadly when an individual family member is supported, the indirect beneficiary results being obtained by other organisations or individuals such as contractors or programme workers contributing to the programme; but also non-legitimate beneficiary effects, highlighted, for example , in cases of men gaining access through women family members to micro-finance initiatives aiming to support women.

Responses to its usage are though accompanied by a range of explicit critiques or concerns. Thus the term may be deemed judgmental (that is, others are the powerful deciders of who is and who is not 'to be served') or condescending (where beneficiaries are understood as a 'needy' category, if not passive and /or necessarily 'grateful'). In development terms , the term may perpetuate a usage that contrasts with rights-based approaches to services provision (Chu and Luke, 2018.) Implications of lack of agency and passivity that accompany the term may be a function of its usage in English, although possible equivalent terms in Arabic , such as Mustafid, from Mustaf, meaning 'chosen, selected, preferred' still carry some similar connotations. The literature does not tend to suggest that there is a 'hierarchy' of beneficiaries, based on perceived needs and personal characteristics, for example, levels of education, (or indeed that 'elite beneficiary' categories exist). Although different characteristics of beneficiaries may be important, not least to influence their relations with

their NGO providers and donors, for example levels and forms of trust, the literature does not appear to consider 'beneficiary profiles' in any detail.

For Flint and Natrup (2014, 273), "the term 'beneficiary' is potentially problematic and, for some, comes with certain negative connotations but suitable alternatives are difficult to find". Their use of the term denotes "those who are in need of humanitarian aid and assistance, including development assistance," (ibid.). Alternatives, such as service 'users', or 'clients' have limitations, for example potentially implying a power that a user/beneficiary may not have (i.e. the ability and opportunity to leave a programme and join another); as well as implying a necessarily professional level of service; although the notion that users of services are able to negotiate regarding services received, may be valuable. Beneficiaries then may be equated with an organisation's stakeholders; but necessarily among the stakeholders "who matter" (Bryson, 2004).

Given these challenges, Benjamin's (2020, 5) understanding of 'beneficiary' is helpful and nuanced, given that it highlights a project's expectations and intentions, which may or may not come to fruition: thus, a beneficiary refers "the primary person that the nonprofit hopes will directly benefit from its work". In using this approach, we are indebted to Benjamin's affirmation that "beneficiaries are central organisational actors", that are "not simply external stakeholders who are the targets of nonprofit social change efforts...(but) internal organisational actors whose participation impacts the day-to-day work of staff and volunteers as well as the beneficiaries themselves," (ibid., 5). Drawing from public services and human service management literatures, Benjamin argues that beneficiaries make direct contributions to organisations and to the change process, correcting a tendency to view nonprofits as the primary drivers of change and to credit success to them.

Consideration of beneficiaries as stakeholders within NGO operating frameworks identify them as a prominent channel for 'downward accountability', expressed mostly within programme and project evaluations. In this review, the beneficiary – the receiver of 'services' – is understood primarily in terms of the individual receiver, even though discussion may group these individuals together (for example as women or youth beneficiaries). Further, the notion of 'top down' beneficiary accountability may be seen as necessarily affected by the beneficiary's needs, as seen by the organisation Dewi et al. (2021), for example, in an Indonesian NGO case study, find that beneficiary accountability is

perceived by most of the officers, donors and volunteers as a mechanism for assisting beneficiaries to regain their self-reliance after periods of vulnerability.

The international development literature then presents the beneficiary in organisational rather than individual terms. For example Ika and Donnelly (2017) report on 'success conditions in international development capacity building projects, where a focus for study is 'the beneficiary organisation' ('the local government') (ibid., 48) and respondents for one case study included "beneficiaries/coordinators (project champions working for the local government but also in a coordinating role)" (ibid.,51). Such organisational beneficiaries may thus be formal (as in constituted local governments); but also informal, for example found in local action groups within communities .

Benjamin' s (2013) stress on NGOs' measuring programme outcomes as well as outputs makes clear the relative importance of beneficiaries per se, since outcome measurement focuses on results for beneficiaries rather than on organisation activities. Analysing ten outcome measurement guides targeted to nonprofits, she finds these guides "neither uniform in the conceptualisation of nonprofit beneficiaries nor in how they directed nonprofits to use outcome measurement with their beneficiaries" (ibid., 1224). She comments that "even if nonprofits are required to report this data to funders presumably the focus on outcomes should spur nonprofits to lean more toward beneficiaries" and asks "so why do nonprofit staff feel outcome measurement is something they do for funders" (ibid., 1225).Her analysis concludes that beneficiaries have an ambiguous standing, relative to other stakeholders, in the nonprofit accountability environment.

It is this same environment that stimulated Kingston (2018) to research beneficiary participation within nonprofits in Australian contexts, with the aim of 'increasing NPO accountability to beneficiaries, and beneficiary empowerment within their organisation and in society at large'. Her case study research, while illustrating limited formal beneficiary evaluation processes, enables development of a typology of 'beneficiaries' evaluation process mechanisms' (op. cit. 184). In these developed organisations, these processes included individual, group and wider sources (e.g. annual meetings), verbal and written sources, discussion meetings, emails, telephone feedback lines, emails and surveys.

Whose responsibility it is to implement beneficiary – accountability dialogue is raised implicitly by Chu and Luke (2018), in their interview research with senior executives in ten INGOs operating micro-enterprise programmes in Vietnam concerning effective beneficiary

participation. Findings reveal a “three-level framework involving consultation, partnership and delegated control.....a graduated approach to empowering beneficiaries, and a basis for enhanced accountability (of these NGOs) at both a functional and a strategic level,” (ibid., 77). Mooketsane et al. (2018, 46) however, regarding Botswanan NGOs, press the case for donor responsibilities to ensure beneficiaries’ pivotal positions. Thus, “donors are not explicit about the need for NGOs to be more accountable to their intended beneficiaries”, in their (donors’) emphasis on “the importance of providing beneficiaries with the opportunity to understand and influence key decisions which are made in their name” ; while “beneficiaries should not be taken as passive recipients of the services that NGOs are offering” (op. cit., 47).

Scholarship which argues , further, that “organizations that are not paying attention to accountability towards their beneficiaries possibly undermine their own performance”. (Hyndman and McDonnell , 2009, Smith, 2010) is cited by Wellens and Jegers (2017, 197). These authors’ case study research of one European NGO and its local partner organisations in Southern Africa, exploring local partners’ involvement in local and ‘northern’ policy making, looked at local partners(as representatives of the eventual beneficiaries) . They found those partners “hardly involved in decision-making at donor level,” (op. cit., 196). These authors’ research focus includes factors/situations associated with facilitating beneficiary participation. While some are specific to the structure and systems of the single case, others appear more generic. They include: ‘when staff members are accessible for questions’, ‘when staff and partners are willing to find compromise’, ‘when the NGO does not only employ international staff members,’ and ‘when local staff members leave the NGO, they need to inform new staff members thoroughly,’ (ibid., 208).

That beneficiaries are at the latter end of attention from successive ‘waves’ of approaches to NGO accountability is however clear from Hielscher et al. (2017). These authors consider Crack’s ‘two waves of NGO accountability’ (for ‘good governance’, and ‘to mission’) and theorise about Crack’s (2013, 12) ‘third wave ‘of reforms to strengthen the implementation of (stakeholder) dialogues to empower intended beneficiaries. They note however that “this is viewed in the literature as an extremely difficult challenge, and observers remain skeptical about its potential of implementation due to high opportunity costs and a lack of skills. “ (ibid., 1586). Their proposal for instituting the support of credible third parties (“for example, the problem of NGOs to provide credible knowledge about the effects of promoted

policies to intended beneficiaries can be mitigated by partnering with scientific bodies”, *ibid.*, 1590) appears, surprisingly to introduce ideas of intermediaries between receiving beneficiaries and providing NGOs.

Beneficiary involvement in the early stages of project and programme development is noted as likely to be critical; but also likely to be subject to a lessening of involvement, as project scaling up occurs. In field study of a major anti-poverty programme in India, developing from 400,000 to 800,000 households, Majumdar et al. (2017) discovered that “facilitators in the first phase deployed a discourse that was carefully ‘co-produced’ (Ostrom, 1996) with its beneficiaries....(and) incorporated the interests of multiple stakeholders on the ground while bringing beneficiaries into the project” (*ibid.*, 14); but that the second stage “failed to include diverse stakeholder interests, objectives, and voices.... (differences which significantly reduced) , the intensity of participation and its concomitant social impacts”. (*ibid.*) In a challenging sentence, these authors report that “mobilization was rapid, but women found themselves alienated from the purpose of the project, and the project became an entity outside of them rather than synonymous with them,” (*ibid.*, 15)

The concept of ‘psychological ownership’ in beneficiaries’ project participation, in the early stages of development project (needs assessment and planning), is explored more specifically by Agar et al. (2018), as a means of beneficiaries contributing to those projects’ sustainability. These authors (*op. cit.*, 528) find that “genuine participation” in these stages instils such ownership (feelings for things created, shaped or produced) in project beneficiaries, in turn leading to positive behavioural intentions that promote project sustainability. However, they acknowledge the limitations of their testing method (using a quasi-experimental design, with students assuming project beneficiary roles in a series of scenario vignettes). The broader value of target beneficiaries’ programme ownership is also emphasised in specific studies of livelihood interventions, for example in programmes for fishing communities in the Philippines (Pomeroy et al., 2017). Flint and Natrup (2014) take a somewhat different route in their exploration of ‘ownership and participation’, where they advocate for ‘Beneficiary Led Aid’, whereby aid is predicated specifically on input from the community as a whole, rather than on the donor model (top down, agenda driven and expert led). Capable of being supported by technological developments, BLA is seen by these authors as running counter to ‘chasing the expert’ models of problem solving.

At the close of the programme process, when reflection (and presumably learning) occurs, the case for beneficiary involvement is also advocated strongly. Hollenback and Neuhaus (2017) in the context of post-disaster reconstruction, are blunt: “to really fulfil their claim improving the lives of those in need — ‘to build back better’ – Aid agencies and NGOs need to give up their resistance to honest self-development and self reflection...(and), give the profit of these learnings back to the former beneficiaries” (ibid., 101). Their further urging suggests the likelihood of uncertainty or ambiguity as to who have been the beneficiaries in these settings, and a view of beneficiaries as the ‘real’ local experts. Thus, bringing “the so-called beneficiaries back into the driver’s seats of post-disaster reconstruction” is called for, since “new contextualised knowledge” requires to be created “by local experts, governments and the recipients, together with their donors” (ibid.).

Paradoxically however, as Mercelis et al. (2016, 1446) note, despite beneficiary participation’s importance in development debate in recent decades, “in empirical research... beneficiaries themselves are seldom, if ever, asked about their perceptions of participatory mechanisms in place”. These authors redress this in their case study of a Vietnamese local office of a European non-governmental development organisation, working to increase local farmers’ incomes. Alongside the pro-beneficiary participation arguments (more organisational efficiency, more needs-responsive, supporting beneficiaries’ skill development, independence and self-esteem, increasing sustainability) Mercelis et al. warn that such positive effects are not to be taken for granted when and where beneficiary participation occurs. Challenges and pitfalls, across the literature included problems in evaluating the downward accountability mechanisms once in use, and substantial time implications, linked to complexity of mechanisms. Also the possibility of organisations interacting more intensively with some , at the expense of the (other) beneficiaries, possibly consolidating existing inequities, so “ creating unbalanced power relations between beneficiaries” (ibid., 1448).

In findings on beneficiary participation challenges, all stakeholders saw farmers’ participation reluctance as the most important. However, the research shows that “the differences in reasons for this are remarkable. The majority of the farmers perceived their shyness as an obstacle to participate, while the majority of the (local) staff members attributed this to scepticism. The (headquarters) staff (saw) potential conflicts of interest

and the absence of participative attitudes as reasons for the reluctance of farmers to participate” (ibid., 1455).

In reflecting on practice implications, Mercelis et al. (ibid., 1459) examine “(a) the NGDO’s attitude towards beneficiary participation, (b) the NGDO’s degree of decentralisation in decision-making, (c) the degree of alignment in downward accountability related values both locally employed staff members and staff members located at the NGDO’s headquarter attach importance to, and (d) the opportunities stakeholders have to discuss with one another, both informally and formally”. The value of informal, “more protected” communication channels is seen also as key to increasing depth of participation in policy making (ibid.); with “training of negotiation skills (appearing) to be of value,” (ibid.). These authors moreover argue that “even though private conversations take time, we consider these to be a valuable investment, just as motivating beneficiaries to share their ideas and to be critical towards existing practices. NGDO staff cannot be perceived as ‘those who know everything’, as this perception does not encourage beneficiaries to express themselves.” (ibid.).

Yet further reinforcement of funders’ inclusion of beneficiaries when selecting development project goals and shaping project design is found in Picciotto (2020), examining the rise of a ‘new project management movement’ in international development . Reflecting back on the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee’s project evaluation criteria evaluation criteria since the 1990s, Picciotto emphasises however that in the context of the criteria of interventions’ relevance, sustainability, and impact, achieving full consistency with beneficiaries’ felt needs, country policies, donor requirements and global priorities in one fell swoop is rarely feasible. This perspective is underlined in when considering challenges of research contact with beneficiaries in areas of contention, such as gender-equal treatment. For example, Wahidi (2018, 33), reporting on data on beneficiaries in microcredit provision in Lebanon, findings that “men loan officers may distinguish between male and female beneficiaries and prefer to grant microcredit to a man. Women beneficiaries may have less information about the credits offered by them, or do not take initiative because they live in a patriarchal society. Moreover, men go through their wives to get another microcredit.” However: “it should be remembered that we were not able to get in touch with the beneficiaries themselves who could have given us their opinions on the gender discrimination when granting a microcredit by The MFIs.”(ibid., 38).

Characterisation of beneficiaries themselves will also change perceptions and accounts of beneficiaries 'felt needs'. For example, Trujillo (2018, 150) , examining beneficiaries as "change protagonists rather than passive recipients" in the context of social interventions in Columbia, reports that beneficiaries "capacity for collective action", and alliance building, "lead over time to further benefits involving systemic changes" (ibid.). Trujillo draws in her paper on the work of Le Ber and Branzei (2010). These conceptualise the role of the beneficiary in value creation, based on the nature of the voice construct , providing three categories of beneficiary voice: voice-receiving, voice-making, and voice-taking. (For Trujillo, it is at the 'voice-taking' stage, that collective action occurs).

In her examination and critique of INGO accountabilities, and proposals for a 'third wave' of dialogic reform, above, Crack (2013) makes the case for 'reflective accountability', with its implicit and explicit demands concerns the nature of the voices coming into play. She stresses that "words like 'beneficiary' should be expunged from the language of accountability, since it is encoded with norms that implicitly undermine the rights of primary stakeholders to expect that INGOs should be answerable for their actions". Listening to marginalised primary stakeholders is facilitated by inclusive discursive arenas that enable and empower people 'to speak and be heard'. Further, INGOs need to use feed-back to become a learning organisation and collaborate with peers to engender a culture of reflective learning across the sector" (ibid., 824).

'Listening' is however itself a complex task, attribute and skill, invariably understood as 'going on'. In Crack 's study of "elite DFID officials to explore their understandings on how they expect NGOs to engage with local languages and the role of language intermediaries", she reports that "these officials assume that listening is unproblematic for NGOs and ask few questions about translation and interpretation" (Crack, 2019, 159.) A major finding was that "DFID generally assumes that NGOs do actually listen to communities, and that they are good at doing so," (ibid., 166). Crack's conclusions emphasise that "Customs, traditions and norms shape the ways in which people understand and respond to ideas, and engage in social interactions. Cultural knowledge is therefore also key to respectful listening and dialogue" (Ibid.). Acknowledging the small sample size and limited generalisability opportunity, Crack is clear that this research is "nonetheless indicative of a need for more knowledge generation on the expectations of donors about how NGOs navigate different linguistic and cultural landscapes" (ibid. 167).

The elements of 'listening' and 'learning' in their various forms are both central to the developing literature on knowledge sharing and exchange in NGOs and nonprofits which is now discussed below. Nevertheless, within their study of knowledge sharing issues within small, local NGOs, Langmann et al. (2021) are clear that "despite the numerous advantages that new knowledge and inter-organisational KS may offer in an NGO context, the literature is mixed around the impact this is currently having on the sector." (ibid., online, np). They note especially the risks that representational (external, professionalised) knowledge may "often overlook and exclude context-specific knowledge generated by NGOs or their beneficiaries" (ibid.).

Social Resilience

Resilience may be understood as an ability to go on with life, or to continue living a purposeful life, after hardship or adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). A multifaceted phenomenon, an attribute or series of attributes that may be applied to people, organisations and places, resilience is understood widely as both a process and an outcome. (Aslan Saja et al., 2018), and increasingly defined within the literature on sustainability. Brand and Jax (2007), for example, identify a tension between the original use of the term in ecological science (as a clearly descriptive concept) and its malleable usage in other disciplines. Zautra (2009) defines two aspects of resilience in the individual: those of recovery and sustainability, the former, returning to a more balanced state after disturbance, while sustainability involves a more conscious choice, pertaining to previous values and purposes in life.

Our working definition for this study uses Keck and Sakdapolrak's (2013, 10) work, drawing on a range of authors, to show that three types of capacity are necessary for understanding social resilience; labelled coping, adaptive and transformative capacities. They go on to list four criteria, with which to make each capacity's meaning explicit. These are: people's response to risk; the temporal scope or time horizon being addressed; the degree of change undergone; and the outcomes that are associated with each of the capacities.

Thus, coping capacity assesses how immediate threats are responded to and overcome using directly available resources, with the intention of restoration of the level of well being, before the threats. The adaptive capacity refers to the pro-active or preventive measures that people employ from past experiences, anticipate future threats and adjust

their lives accordingly. While coping rationales are tactical and short term, adaptive rationales are more strategic and longer term. Transformative capacity “encompasses people’s ability to access assets and assistance from the wider socio-political arena.... participate in decision-making processes and craft individual institutions that both improve their individual welfare and foster societal robustness toward future crises” (ibid., 11). The main difference between adaptive and transformative capacity lies in the degree of change achieved and the outcome it implies. “Transformation is then a radical shift: “its objective not to secure but to enhance people’s well-being, in the face of present and/or future risks” (ibid.).

Three fold understanding of social resilience are widely used in disaster scholarship; for example as absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacity by Aslam Saja et al., 2018. These authors’ study of 31 social resilience frameworks indicates that social resilience conceptualised varyingly as coping, adaptive, and transformative/participative capacities, and structural and cognitive dimensions. Their own proposed social resilience framework consists of five sub-dimensions, social structure, social capital, social mechanisms, social equity, and social belief (ibid., 862). Grey and Dagg (2019) studying resilience during periods of economic crisis or recession (within a cross-European study) found that life-course stage and biographical experience affected peoples’ orientations towards the future, with implications for their resilience (for example, failed expectations for intra-generational social mobility, combined with inter-generational obligations). With some studies suggesting that supporting or influencing individuals operated on somewhat of a deficit model, Bolzan and Gale (2012), working with young people’s own assessments of the nature of social resilience, argue that conceptualising ‘social’ resilience is an attempt to gain a contextualised and less individually dependant understanding of resilience and one which articulates a relational, communal aspect to resilience.

That NGOs will strive to enable and promote beneficiary resilience and donors come to expect that programmes will sustain beneficiaries’ resilience appears a given, even if beneficiaries exemplifying individual deficits, to be changed, is now challenged. In a striking paper, Maïtrot et al., (2020) highlight the significance of uncertainty in their work to enhance conceptual understanding of resilience; analysing resilience among the extreme poor in Bangladesh, and drawing on 72 life histories, taken between 2011 and 2014 of households enrolled on a major poverty reduction programme . Their respondents never

used the term 'resilience'; but not only refer to but give priority to "experiences of being stronger or weaker, frightened or confident, supported or abandoned, comfortable or in danger,". These authors stress that "we can never be certain that improving families will remain so, or that families in crises cannot improve and show resilience..... This is why understanding life experiences over time became so central to our conceptual framing of resilience, and our understanding of extreme poverty," (ibid., np). Moreover, the differences discerned in households—even when sharing broadly similar resilience portfolios—reflected differences in the way life events converged and evolved, and differences in the way households respond. Giving greater priority to the idea of uncertainty as the context for the pre-empting of risk or hazards through preparation as well as having a capacity to respond to shock, Maïtrot et al.'s work led them to interpret resilience "as not about a return to the status quo ante, but about sustained and more secure well-being".

With its experiences over time of risk, hazards, conflict and shock, it is unsurprising that a resilience literature is growing rapidly that concentrates on lives and livelihoods in Palestine. For Keelan and Browne (2020, 459) adoption of an (uncritical) resilience discourse "maintains the status quo rather than agitating for change. "For Marie et al. (2018, 20), in the Palestinian context, resilience "refers to ways of surviving in the context of occupation, chronic adversity, lack of resources and limited infrastructure" (Marie et al, 2018, 20). These authors (ibid., 22) argue that the majority of Palestinian young people "function effectively, in spite of the surrounding risks", so that "Instead of imposing pre-existing understandings of resilience, there is instead a need to understand their ideology, their way of thinking and their created meaning regarding adversity".

Further, the resilience of Palestinians is linked to "the related concept of 'Sumud'.a Palestinian idea that is interwoven with ideas of personal and collective resilience and steadfastness" (ibid., 20). Seen as very distinct Palestinian idea, Sumud "is the art of living to survive and thrive in the homeland in spite of hardship and under occupation practices. These skills of how to live inform all aspects of life, including the economic, political and social. They can also be used at many levels: individual, family and within the Palestinian community," (ibid., 29).

Resilience for Giacaman, (2019, 2) represents "a capacity to endure and resist" ; while "all too often Palestinian 'resilience' is over-rated and sometimes used as a means of avoiding acknowledging and addressing the issue of injustice,"(Giacaman, 2020, 1). From her

academic perspective, Giacaman reports that “we have not been able to locate a word in Arabic to fully express the meaning of the English term. Some translate resilience to Sumud (steadfastness, meaning sticking to the land), others to Jalad (meaning ability to withstand), or Muruneh (flexibility) or thabat (pliability), and yet others call it alqudra ala attahamul (capacity to withstand)” (Giacaman, 2020, 1). In concentrating on the duality of endurance and resistance, she emphasises that “this capacity to endure and resist is not linear, with cause-effect characteristics, and does not exclude feelings of distress, low life quality and feelings of humiliation”, being a capacity which is “both protective and frustrating at the same time,” (ibid., 4).

The perception that Palestine social history shows it as “a laboratory of freedom struggle, popular resilience, and recurrent waves of activism and tactical experimentation” (Anderson, 2021, np) reflects both those elements of protection and frustration. The growth and emphasis on entrepreneurship in Palestine is illustrative. Thus Althalathini et al. (2020, 297) focus on women entrepreneurs in Gaza and “how they actively renegotiate their multiple gender roles and navigate the social order through entrepreneurship”, finding that this activity “contributed to enhancing the agency of women and their ability to navigate the conflict and its consequences”. Nevertheless, they also found some gender roles as constraining as well as enabling, with gendered practices and assumptions still used as guidance for legitimising women’s entrepreneurship”; and argue that the topic of women entrepreneurs operating in conflict zones, remain under researched.

In a subsequent study of women entrepreneurs in conflict zones (Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine), these authors explore how, “within all three research contexts, the participants interpreted and practiced their Islamic religiousness in ways consistent with Islamic Feminism principles and that deviated from patriarchal Islam dominating their conflict zones” (Althalathini et al., 2021, np.) Earlier work from Bullough et al. (2014), presenting primary data from Afghanistan, suggests “that even under conditions of war, individuals develop entrepreneurial intentions if they are able to grow from adversity (resilience) and believe in their entrepreneurial abilities (entrepreneurial self-efficacy),” (Ibid., 493), with implications for role modelling and entrepreneurship training. (See also Korber and McNaughton, 2018, and their systematic literature review of the conjunction of entrepreneurship and resilience more generally).

Further, with health dimensions central to resilience scholarship, the literature is now reflecting on the effects of Covid-19 in Palestinian contexts. (Moss and Majadle, 2020); This includes the recognition of Covid-19 as a critical occurrence, depleting “resiliency resources” in a population where “resources of resiliency are already depleted by years of military occupation, economic crisis, health emergency, and political uncertainty” (Veronese et al., 2021, np).

Returning to Keck and Sakdapolrak’s (2013, 13), social resilience is thus “best understood as a concept in the making”, so that “how far it may be fostered (or hindered) is not settled yet”. They argue that the concept contributes new perspectives on vulnerable communities under stress; recognising “uncertainty, change and crisis as normal rather than exceptional” (ibid., 14) and as such is a dynamic process rather than a certain state of a social entity; and is a relational concept, with embedded social actors. Therefore, the search for new approaches to build this resilience is “not merely a technical question but a deeply political one” (ibid.).

This perspective is seen clearly in the contention surrounding the prominent concept of *sumud*. Arda and Banerjee (2019, 29), researching non-state actors roles in governing areas of limited statehood and the “NGOization of Palestine”, emphasise that while *sumud* is seen as a form of passive cultural resistance and steadfastness in the face of occupation, in recent years, “due to increased Israeli militarisation, settlement expansion, and an increasing disenchantment with the PA (Palestinian Authority) activists have called for a more active form of *sumud* that looks to the future and a willingness to confront both Israeli authorities and the PA.” Sabella and El-Far (2019, 1214)) while citing a range of literatures to support the case that *sumud* largely pertains to persistent nonviolent “everyday resistance”, identify it as particularly associated “with women’s struggle and resistance” (ibid.), and explore its meaning in women’s entrepreneurial initiatives, that “enliven atypical representations of resistance” (op. cit., 1215). *Sumud* appears becoming understood — or looked for — as less a series of reactive acts and activities and more an active way of life; evolving from an unconscious tactic of survival to a deliberate strategy (Busse, 2022); with some making the equation between *sumud* and resilience.

Citing Keelan and Browne, (2020, 2), Busse also however records the argument that “the promotion of the resilience agenda is a continuation of a colonial mindset that has been so destructive in that it encourages Palestinian acquiescence rather than agitation for change” .

Refraining from explicitly labelling sumud as either resistance or resilience, Busse identifies sumud as a spatial practice, to be primarily regarded as the attempt to actively adapt to a conflictive situation, trying to go on with everyday life under occupation, or as a way of 'getting by' while at the same time trying to equip these everyday acts with a political meaning.

In reconsidering the notion of sumud, Busse stresses moreover that the importance of striving for normalcy in conflict settings does not mean a normalisation of occupation. Rather, while the exceptional circumstance of the occupation represents a determining feature of everyday life, the conflict setting constantly needs to be taken into account. Thus, the conflict setting does not lead to a suspension of everyday life but to its reconfiguration.

Knowledge Sharing and NGOs

The expanding literature on knowledge sharing and exchange, within wider conceptual frameworks of organisational knowledge management, encompasses conceptual and practice debates concerning the social and intellectual capital which organisations contain, the creativity which knowledge sharing supports and the contributions towards effectiveness which organisation 'members', broadly understood, may make through knowledge sharing. It contains consensus and contestation. Thus communities of practice foster knowledge sharing in businesses, enhanced by globalisation processes (Aljuwaiber, 2016). Leveraging knowledge held internally and externally in organisations, through facilitating knowledge sharing raises complex issues, including challenges in organisations displaying diversity (Lauring and Selmer, 2012); and in sector specific industries and businesses (e.g. in technology intensive organisations in the service sector, Al Shamsi and Ajmal, 2018). Professionalisation may exclude or fail to take into account the kinds of knowledge held within individual NGOs, by beneficiaries (Langmann et al., op. cit.).

Social relations in organisations motivate individuals to benefit others, with inter-personal ties and trust widely related; while culture is identified as one of the most important factors that enable or impede knowledge sharing and transfer, acting as an important antecedent to knowledge sharing (Asrar-ul-Haq, and Anwar 2016), while Deichmann et al. (2020, np), turn attention to the "micro-level instances of knowledge sharing for innovation", and "how important conversations are for the success of an idea".

In business literatures, knowledge sharing is emphasised as the basis for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage, whereas in the non-profit literature, and social purposes knowledge sharing helps to enhance the sharing organisations' performance, (Rathi et al. 2014). For example, Mohd Noor et al. (2015), in quantitative survey research among Malaysian nonprofits demonstrate the importance of knowledge sharing for nonprofits' effectiveness, among nonprofits' intellectual capital resources. Context therefore is all-important. Sergeeva and Andreeva (2016) argue that much empirical research on knowledge sharing tends to downplay context. They stress the importance of settings in knowledge sharing research; drawing attention to the 'who' ('who shares knowledge') 'where' 'why' and 'what'. Scholarship directs attention to the importance of intra- and inter-organisational trust as an underpinning or pre-condition for knowledge sharing, whether trust in colleagues or organisation leaders (Le and Lei, 2018); and to the inter-relationships between trust, culture and cultural context. For example, Weir and Hutchings (2005, 89) explore the contextual constraints and cultural embeddedness found in Chinese and Arab cultures, where "managers and organisational members will share knowledge with those with whom they already have a trustful relationship." Facilitating knowledge sharing in a variety of cultural contexts may feature the role of knowledge intermediaries. Buffardi et al. (2017) cite the work of Jones et al. (2012), which identifies informing, linking roles, matchmaking roles (across heterogeneous actors), engaging users in framing activities and building adaptive capacity. Buffardi et al. (ibid., 712) comment that while knowledge intermediation was itself seen as an organisation role (e.g., CSOs), it is now conceived of as a function that different individuals and organisations could fulfil, including those involved in producing and/or using knowledge.

Hailey and James' (2002, 398) case that "Learning and knowledge management are crucial capacities for many NGOs", and their finding (in South Asian case study contexts) "that an NGO's ability to learn is dependent on its organisational culture and in particular the development of an internal culture of learning" is at the heart of the growing literature which examines knowledge sharing as an integrated element within NGO learning in development settings. This flows again from Hailey and James' assertion that "development is essentially a knowledge-based process" (ibid., 400). Optimising the social (knowledge based) resources embedded in NGO structures, is seen as critical by Miković et al. (2020, 515), for whom "mismanagement, of social links and knowledge resources have been

identified as the biggest challenges of ID NGOs in reaching vulnerable beneficiary populations.”

With knowledge sharing taking place through a range of mechanisms (in person, remotely, oral, visual ,written, experimental),and of varying lengths, duration and intensity, Buffardi et al. (ibid.) cite a World Bank report (2015a, 5) noting that knowledge sharing demands in development concerns being “connected to each other’s practical experience of the ‘how to’ of development and policy reform, as peers”. Sharing ‘with whom’ in NGOs and NPOs is shown as variable. Thus, Fait and Sakka (2020) report that in European NPOs, knowledge sharing provides an innovative approach to engage volunteers, acting as sources of creation, and supporting senses of belonging and trust in the organisation. Buonomo’s et al.’s (2020) systematic literature on intellectual capital management in NPOs makes it apparent that most such management and associated performance evaluation is conducted in informal and non-planned ways; leading them to argue in favour of moving these informal knowledge management processes to effective, strategic (i.e., formal) ones.

Other research highlights challenges in implementing knowledge sharing and knowledge management ; for example Benevene et al. (2019, 17) reports intellectual capital management in selected Italian nonprofits as “unplanned, unsystematic and short term”. The interlinking of leadership styles as influencers on knowledge sharing practices, is explored by Masa'deh et al. (2016) with over 170 employees of the Higher Council of Youth in Jordan . These authors cite Wu and Zhu (2012), in identifying five elements required for knowledge sharing to occur: value of the source knowledge, willingness of the source to share knowledge, media richness of the communication channel, willingness of the recipient to acquire knowledge, and the absorptive capacity of the recipient. Masa'deh et al. found that “transactional leadership impacted knowledge sharing, whereas transformational leadership did not”(ibid., 681). Nevertheless, transformational outcomes among NGO services recipients through knowledge sharing, the knowledge shared also transformed, and supported by boundary workers (moderators from the local NGO), is also found by Qureshi et al. (2018) Their study of knowledge sharing in conditions of extreme poverty, in case research on agricultural development in rural India raises the issue of boundary workers “creating space for recipient groups to engage in syncretism – or the reconciliation and unification of differing beliefs” (ibid.,1590). Thus “in some villages, boundary work and syncretism resulted in important knowledge and recipient transformation. Recipient groups

were transformed as they integrated new perspectives and softened some of the internal boundaries by changing the norms of interaction. Knowledge transformation occurred when it was recombined with existing community knowledge,” (ibid., 1590).

Boundary workers, with their wider and often multiple communities’ remit, are suggestive of different kinds of knowledge sharing intermediaries to those concentrating more specifically on the learning that can be derived from knowledge sharing within the operations and management of the target NGOs. Thus Bufardi et al. (2019, 709) examine the development of donors funding separate “learning partners”, to work alongside consortia of implementing (funded) organisations: “a team of organisation funded to support the generation, access and use of knowledge among collaborating organisations in a development initiative for a specified period of time, with an aim of improving performance and/or outcomes”. Studying eleven learning partner organisations, these authors find their greatest prominence of knowledge generation followed by knowledge sharing ; and identify the importance of continuing research on their roles and their effectiveness : including the influence on the nature of evidence brought forward ,” and the effects of what types of knowledge sharing strategies” (ibid., 720).

Scholarship is also extending to the virtual organisation and its practice. Studying factors affecting individual knowledge sharing behaviour in the setting of a virtual Taiwanese NGO, Chung et al. (2016, 432) surveyed 131 employees, and offer support for “the notion that increasing employees’ sense of well-being can successfully form a bridge that can connect social capital tendency, organisational culture and employees’ knowledge-sharing behaviour.” For these authors, “no previous research seems to have examined how organisational culture and workplace networks are closely intertwined and associated with individuals’ sense of well-being; these, in turn, affect their knowledge-sharing behaviour within the virtual organisation.” (ibid., 442). More broadly, Fuller-Love et al. (2016), in the context of the Bangladeshi NGO sector, provide some indications of the kinds of interventions that may help organisations encourage the kind of social dynamics that will increase overall knowledge sharing: those aimed at restructuring the pay-offs for contributing, those trying to increase efficacy perceptions, and those that make employees’ sense of group identity and personal responsibility more salient.

Research focussing on small, local NGOs in Tamil Nadu state however draws critical attention to these organisations’ difficulties which often limit activities to the situational

sharing of knowledge through personal networks , notwithstanding that willingness to engage in knowledge sharing is present (Langmann et al., 2021.) Moreover , they emphasise that the predominantly voluntary makeup of the workforce as well as the differences in operational styles between the various local-level NGOs hampers knowledge sharing possibilities; and reflect on the need for continuous initiatives. Of these, “the creation of awareness among local-level NGOs and networking opportunities is a first important step in this process, so that they can share information,” (ibid., no page). Thus “for local-level NGOs, creating such patterns of association that can be relied upon on a continuous basis therefore appears to be a more important factor for the future ability of local-level NGOs to share knowledge than the motivational aspects of their members to do so, a factor that appears to be much more problematic for well-established NGOs.”

It is perhaps unsurprising that the papers cited thus far are looking predominantly to knowledge sharing ‘s enhancement of programme and project effectiveness and not to the ‘other gain’ for knowledge sharing that is advocated, helping create organisational advantage and the organisation’s competitive edge (Almahamid et al., 2010, Eidizadeh, 2017). Yet “the NGO sector is becoming increasingly competitive”, with “small NGOs competing more aggressively for funding as they have less bargaining power over donors and large foundations, and face stronger competition from social entrepreneurship”, while larger NGOs “experience increased pressure for accountability (Schwenger et al., 2014). This aspect of knowledge sharing’s advocacy and delivery remains to be further explored.

Considerations in this section have also concentrated on the NGO sector broadly, and not specifically on Palestinian NGOs, and their roles as agents of development and civil society (Sullivan, 2006), as supporting and sustaining national identity (De Cesari. 2010), and providers of key services such as health (Tucktuck, et al., 2017). Our review found minimal attention to Palestinian NGOs’ knowledge sharing in support of organisational development; other than Hardy et al.’s (2003) paper concerning the effects of inter-organisational collaboration in the context of a small health-focused Palestinian NGO, where a managerial strategy pursued such collaborations, and new ‘knowledge creation’ possibilities thereby appeared.

Nevertheless, research exploring external donors’ behaviours towards and effects on Palestinian NGOs raises complex questions, in which NGOs’ knowledge sharing proclivities, attributes and opportunities are not examined directly, but are affected implicitly by donor

relations. For example, Atia and Herrold (2018, 1044) explore foreign aid funding to Palestinian NGOs as a form of patronage, finding it depoliticising those NGOs' work, with implications for "the limitations of NGOs as vehicles for social change in sensitive political environments. Arda and Banerjee, (op. cit.) go further, sensing that when efficient delivery of public services replaces political struggle, activities of professionalising NGOs funded by Western donors depoliticise the public sphere and in the case of Palestine normalise occupation. For these authors, donors are considered complicit in the institutional normalisation of occupation, for example, funding rebuilding or rehabilitation efforts when Israeli military forces damage or destroy donor funded projects, rather than mounting claims for compensation or reparation. Such directions in the literature raise the question for this study of donors' responses to and expectations regarding beneficiary relations and/or knowledge sharing in NGOs, and the extent to which these notions figure in donors practitioner-led and policy-led publications. The following section identifies briefly some of the key examples.

Donors, Policy Makers, Beneficiaries and Knowledge Sharing

The extent to which the practice literature has provided a marker for academic scrutiny of the rhetoric and realities associated with beneficiaries as contributors (as givers not just receivers) , through knowledge sharing and participatory activities, is striking. This section identifies some broad trends only, but in doing so highlights the extent and nature of the practice 'leads'.

In 1987, a World Bank Discussion Paper explored the nature of 'community participation ('CP') in its projects', through review of the Bank's experience of CP in urban housing, health and irrigation sectors.(Paul, 1987). A sample of forty projects with potential for CP and ten successful projects without CP were selected for study; and the paper presented a conceptual framework that drew attention to the objectives, intensity and instruments of CP and their inter-relationships. This paper's brevity and succinct argument make it a continuing landmark.

For Paul, "in the context of development, CP refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits" (ibid., v). Further, "the objectives of CP as an active process are: (a) empowerment, (b) building beneficiary capacity, (c) increasing project effectiveness, (d) improving project efficiency, and (e) project cost sharing," (ibid.). The

primary organisational devices used to elicit CP were user groups, community workers, and field extension workers. The intensity of CP in Bank projects ranged from the low level of information sharing to the moderate level of decision making in selected operational aspects of projects; and “at its highest where empowerment was the dominant goal” (ibid.) In concise and pointed discussion, Paul highlights critical learning features: that CP in project “demands frequent dialogue and negotiation among beneficiaries and users”; that its “indiscriminate” use is unwarranted; that Bank staff were likely to be more reactive than pro-active, in some instances lacking the skills and incentives to support CP ; and that “it would be a mistake [to infer that) standard guidelines on CP must be prescribed for all to follow.” (ibid., viii and ix.) Moreover the lessons learned from a range of CP endeavours “deserve to be disseminated widely and the scope for scaling up or adapting the underlying strategies examined” (ibid.).

Subsequent World Bank publications have delved in depth into knowledge sharing approaches and challenges. Its ‘Guide’, ‘Becoming a knowledge sharing organisation’, (Janus, 2016) , has as its subtitle, a ‘Handbook for Scaling Up Solutions through Knowledge Capturing and Sharing’. Exploring forms of knowledge (ibid., 5), and patterns of organisational knowledge flows (ibid., 6), attributing “thinking carefully” about knowledge flows, internally and externally, to “successful organisations”. Emphasising that “time spent capturing and sharing knowledge needs to be recognised as “real work”” (ibid., 15), and that there is “no particular threshold” for becoming a knowledge sharing organisation”, no less than thirteen indicators for its development are provided (ibid.). Detailed exploration of the “hows” of KS includes examination of incentives and organisational structure, with the overwhelming focus on staff and employee; and while ‘communities of practice’ are supportive and relevant, these are understood as “also known as expert networks,.... peer networks of practitioners in a given problem area or field who help each other perform better by sharing their knowledge” rather than organisation users (ibid., 28).

An especially intriguing section discusses “defining knowledge worth capturing” (ibid., 54); and goes on to propose a series of criteria for a potential knowledge resource (ibid., 29) that it should be relevant—meets a demonstrable internal or external need; narrowly focused; worth sharing—artfully conveys insights or lessons learned ;easy to capture ; easy to validate and at risk of being lost all criteria involving extensive intra-organisational stakeholders’ judgment. The notion of the “premortem” review of an organisation, imagining that ‘the

worst has already happened', a process which it is argued "can often reveal hitherto unrecognised insights, knowledge, and competencies" (ibid., 58). In its consideration of the nature of 'knowledge assets,' the report identifies the complexities of those assets and their need to be designed for relevance, search-ability and share-ability. Centrally however, the question "do we know what knowledge resides in our organisation?" remains the core challenge.

In its companion report, 'The Art of Knowledge Exchange, the centrality of Development Practitioners', where knowledge exchange, "when done right", can build the capacity, confidence, and conviction of individuals and groups to act (World Bank, 2015, vi). Here, knowledge exchange is understood as "or peer-to-peer learning" (ibid.), with extensive discussion of the "development goal" that knowledge exchange is seeking. This is presented as the "anchor" for the process, responding to the question "What beneficial results do the stakeholders, including key beneficiaries, seek to achieve?" (Ibid., 8), as well as the institutional challenges likely to arise. A complex grid, exploring varieties of intermediate outcomes, (new knowledge, enhanced skills, enhanced connectivity, improved consensus and new/improved actions) and the types of progress (such as fewer isolated members, increased cohesion, improved trust" is presented (ibid., 20). The further challenge remains of "finding the most appropriate knowledge providers" (ibid., 25); and although beneficiaries have been identified as among relevant stakeholders, the over-riding approach (for development practitioners) is one of knowledge brokerage and identification of 'others' by professionals.

A focus on beneficiaries per se is found in the reports of the UK government's DFID-funded programme, running from 2013 to 2016, to pilot Beneficiary Feedback Mechanisms, as part of their maternal and child health projects. With pilots in Ethiopia, Somaliland, Tanzania, India, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, and programme design support from INTRAC, three questions were explored: 'what makes a beneficiary feedback system effective?', 'Does it improve accountability to communities and the delivery of projects' and 'Is it worth the investment?'. A beneficiary feedback mechanism was understood as one which solicits, listens to, collates and analyses feedback, triggers a response at required organisation levels and reaches other relevant stakeholders; with the response/communicated back to feedback providers and "if appropriate to the wider beneficiary community" (INTRAC, 2016, 2). Closing the feedback' – ensuring communication to the beneficiaries - was cited as central to

beneficiary empowerment (ibid., 8); with their increased confidence to continue feedback. More broadly, INTRAC identifies a series of learning areas, including the need for feedback mechanisms to be flexible, with willingness to adapt during implementation; for “sensitisation of target beneficiaries “ to feedback’s purposes, to build confidence and “overcome fears about giving feedback”, and the importance of “clear referral pathways and relations with external stakeholders” for responding to feedback (ibid., 1). While “limited use of beneficiary feedback at strategic or policy levels was observed” (ibid., 9), this programme report presents critical insights into the ground-level demands of managing beneficiary feedback systems, notwithstanding that knowledge sharing for the organisation is not inscribed as a specific goal. Those insights include the importance of thorough context analysis before deciding on a particular feedback system, engagement with external stakeholders , including establishing referral protocols and “ensure that there is sufficient scope in the programme design to make changes and respond to requests to increase or reallocate resources; negotiate with the donor if necessary,” (ibid., 10).

Development practitioner studies, models, tools and rationales for the nexus between beneficiaries and knowledge sharing in and for nonprofits, point simultaneously to the programmatic and system-directed elements needed for this field; and the status, preferences and contribution value of beneficiaries , as organisational assets in their own right. Indicators, checklist tools and flowcharts are critical to this literature and express the significance of recognising entry points; into the knowledge sharing and valuing debates. They also, implicitly and explicitly carry forward the question of what kinds of authority if any , do beneficiaries have in the knowledge sharing context.

The final paper in this ‘practice’ section though, is turning the debate and the challenge around to the would-be listeners and rationales for not facing the listening tasks and responses that must come with nonprofits work. Twersky et al.’s paper, ‘Listening to Those Who Matter Most, the Beneficiaries’ (2013) addresses the reasons why in the search for “experts” and their knowledge, nonprofits are “bypassing the beneficiary as a source of information and experience, (so) we deprive ourselves of insights into how we might do better” (ibid., 41). The “we” is instructive and forthright: “it isn’t that we don’t care....(but) “Perhaps we don’t really trust the beneficiaries’ point of view. Maybe we’re fearful of what they might say—that without the benefit of “expertise” they might be misinformed or

wrong. Perhaps we're scared that we will learn something that calls our approach into question. Maybe we don't know how to solicit beneficiary feedback" (Ibid.).

From this implicit recognition of nonprofits' reticence concerning deep beneficiary engagement, in which "we" share, Twersky et al. also warn and cajole: "listening to beneficiaries is both the right and the smart thing to do," (Ibid., 42) . They determine three stages of organisation and programme life for maximising beneficiary listening: Before (programme design) During (when "rapid feedback loops that solicit the beneficiary viewpoint can help us adapt quickly") and After (discovering whether and why a programme has or has not worked) (ibid.). Moreover, they see the "During" stage as the one "most often overlooked".

It is this context especially that the possible realities of being on the receiving end of beneficiary feedback in a non-profit are made clear; and tools/checklist approaches may themselves be pitfalls. It can be expensive, difficult to get responses, and "it makes us feel uncomfortable" – "what if they don't think what we do is working? What if their perspectives call into question our most fundamental assumptions? People working in the nonprofit sector are overwhelmed by demands for help and work hard to meet them. It can be difficult to then take the extra step of creating rigorous feedback loops," (ibid., 45).

This paper is in some ways the more instructive, as its context and case accounts presented in illustration (all US non-profit based) are not international development-located . Yet the core argument remains the same: "There is certainly a strong moral argument for listening to the people you seek to help. Who among us would want others deciding what is right for us without being asked how we feel about it?" (ibid.). In both reflective and assertive mode, this paper continues to provide a touchstone for the 'action of listening to beneficiaries' — not just commended but essential. In doing so, it also provides the implicit argument for 'listening in turn to the listeners' — a logical, and in knowledge sharing terms , relevant and itself part of the feedback loop concept move; and for scrutinising in greater depth the extent to which subsequent organisational learning (to following knowledge sharing) is also capable of being fully shared.

Reviewing across the studies on beneficiaries Table 1 summarises the core themes and issues identified regarding the nature of the beneficiary, donors and beneficiaries as stakeholders, the rationales for beneficiary involvement , beneficiaries enabling

accountability dialogues and factors facilitating beneficiary participation and knowledge sharing.

Further tables summarising beneficiary systems' styles and challenges, drawn from the literatures studied, and key features of knowledge sharing, from the literatures are provided as Appendices 4 and 5.

Table 1: Some key themes in the literature for 'beneficiaries'

Author/Date	Theme/Issue
The nature of 'beneficiary'	
Benjamin 2020	Beneficiary refers "the primary person that the nonprofit hopes will directly benefit from its work; Beneficiary role corrects tendency to view nonprofits as the primary drivers of change and to credit success to those nonprofits; Beneficiaries are central organizational actors
Mooksetane 2018	Beneficiaries should not be taken as passive recipients of the services that NGOs are offering
Trujillo 2018	Beneficiaries are change protagonists rather than passive recipients
World Bank 1987	Three fold conceptualisation 'community participation' – around objectives, intensity and instruments of CP
Donor/beneficiaries as stakeholders	
Connolly & Hyndman 2017	In interplay of donor and beneficiary accountability needs, concentration on one group may disadvantage another.
Uddin & Belal 2019	Donor accountability of NGOs can be mobilised to the advantage of beneficiaries and so facilitate beneficiary accountability
Mooketsane 2018	Donors are not explicit about the need for NGOs to be more accountable to their intended beneficiaries
Beneficiary involvement rationales	
Hailey and James 2002	Development is essentially a knowledge-based process
World Bank 1987	The objectives of 'community participation' as an active process are: (a) empowerment, (b) building beneficiary capacity, (c) increasing project effectiveness, (d) improving project efficiency, and (e) project cost sharing
Rhamani 2012	Designing a project without consulting beneficiaries is like tailoring a dress for someone without knowing their height, size, taste, and culture

Benjamin 2013	<i>Outcome</i> measurement focuses on results for beneficiaries rather than on organisation activities (outputs) ; focus on outcomes should spur nonprofits to lean more toward beneficiaries
Hollenback & Neuhaus 2017	Call for the 'so-called beneficiaries back into the driver's seats of post-disaster reconstruction" ; new contextualised knowledge" requires to be created "by local experts, governments and the recipients, together with donors
Chung 2016	In a virtual Taiwanese NGO, finds support for the notion that increasing employees' sense of well-being can successfully form a bridge that can connect social capital tendency, organisational culture and employees' knowledge-sharing behaviour
Twersky 2013	Bypassing the beneficiary as a source of information and experience, (so) we deprive ourselves of insights into how we might do better; Perhaps we don't really trust the beneficiaries' point of view. Maybe we're fearful of what they might say.....listening to beneficiaries is both the right and the smart thing to do
Beneficiaries enabling accountability dialogues	
Chu and Luke	Three-level framework involving consultation, partnership and delegated control (micro-enterprise, Vietnam)
Wellers & Jegers 2017	Organizations that are not paying attention to accountability towards their beneficiaries possibly undermine their own performance. Exploring local partners' involvement in local and 'northern' policy making, looked at local partners(as representatives of the eventual beneficiaries) ; those partners "hardly involved in decision-making at donor level
Crack 2013	Third wave of reforms (needed) to strengthen the institutionalization of dialogic and peer accountability, the implementation of (stakeholder) dialogues to empower intended beneficiaries; observers remain sceptical about its potential of implementation due to high opportunity costs and a lack of skills. Words like 'beneficiary' should be expunged from the language of accountability, since it is encoded with norms that implicitly undermine the rights of primary stakeholders to expect that INGOs should be answerable for their actions
Actors facilitating beneficiary participation and KS	
Le and Lei 2018	Organisational trust a pre-condition for knowledge sharing , whether trust in colleagues or organisation leaders
Weir & Hutchings 2005	In Chinese and Arab cultures, managers and organizational members will share knowledge with those with whom they already have a trustful relationship
Wellers & Jegers	When staff members are accessible for questions; 'when staff and partners are willing to find compromise; 'when the NGO does not only employ international staff members; when local staff members leave the NGO, informing new staff members thoroughly'
Kingston 2018	Typology of 'beneficiaries' evaluation process mechanisms ; included individual, group and wider sources (e.g. annual meetings), verbal and written sources, discussion meetings, emails, telephone feedback lines, emails and surveys.

Majumdar 2017	Facilitators in the first phase deployed a discourse that was carefully co-produced with its beneficiaries..but second stage failed to include diverse stakeholder interests, objectives, and voices....
Crack 2013	Cultural knowledge is key to respectful listening and dialogue
Buffadi 2017	Citing Jones 2012, role of knowledge intermediaries in organisations - <i>informing, linking</i> roles, matchmaking roles (across heterogenous actors), engaging users in framing activities and building adaptive capacity; may be an organisational post or a function that different individuals and organisations could fulfil, including those involved in producing and/or using knowledge
Qureshi et al. 2018	Knowledge sharing in conditions of extreme poverty - boundary workers “creating space for recipient groups to engage in syncretism – or the reconciliation and unification of differing beliefs
Wu and Zhu 2012	Five elements required for knowledge sharing to occur: value of the source knowledge, willingness of the source to share knowledge, media richness of the communication channel, willingness of the recipient to acquire knowledge, and the absorptive capacity of the recipient
World Bank 2016	Time spent capturing and sharing knowledge needs to be recognized as “real work”; and no particular threshold” for becoming a knowledge sharing organisation The hows” of KS includes examination of incentives and organisational structure, with the overwhelming focus on staff and employee; while ‘communities of practice’ are supportive and relevant, these are understood as “also known as expert networks’ Discusses “defining knowledge worth capturing” (ibid.54); proposes criteria for a potential knowledge resource; it should be relevant—meets a demonstrable internal or external need;. narrowly focused; worth sharing—artfully conveys insights or lessons learned ;easy to capture ; easy to validate and at risk of being lost Discussing knowledge assets notion – ‘and their need to be designed for relevance, search-ability and share-ability ; still the question is asked, ‘do we know what knowledge resides in our organization?’
World Bank 2015	“Identifying the development goal” that knowledge exchange is seeking is the “anchor” for the process; question posed is “What beneficial results do the stakeholders, including key beneficiaries, seek to achieve?”
INTRAC 2017	Managing beneficiary feedback on the ground - do thorough context analysis before deciding on a particular feedback system, engage with external stakeholders , including establishing referral protocols ; that there is sufficient scope in the programme design to make changes and respond to requests to increase or reallocate resources; negotiate with the donor if necessary

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS OVERVIEW

The Research Questions

The research questions for Phase one of the research are restated as follows:

1. How and to what extent, if at all, do young women beneficiary/trainees in the GGateway (Gaza) programme report their coping, adaptive and transformative experiences , arising from or associated with their programme participation in the Gaza setting?
2. What knowledge derived from young women trainee's GGateway programme participation are they able to share or would wish to share with their programme providers and /or programme funders , to help enhance the programme's effectiveness and further development?
- 2A. In what ways and in which directions are trainers' perspectives on the GGateway programme's development expressed, with particular reference to knowledge sharing?

The research question for phase two of the research, discussed above, is restated as follows:

3. How do young women beneficiary/trainees report their experiences post conflict (after May 2021), in relation to their programme participation with GGateway and the extent of their social resilience?

The pilot study

As a small scale pilot study, working in a single organisation, the focus was on the feasibility of the research design and method, (van Teijlingen and Hundley,2001), such as testing research protocols and recruitment strategies. Kim's (2010) review of the importance of pilot studies in qualitative research widens these considerations to include the opportunity for researchers to expand, or narrow their proposed research topics and gain a clear conceptualisation of the focus of the topic (ibid.). She goes on to examine the researcher challenges that appear in sharp focus in pilot work, that of translating the lived experiences of participants into " a researcher's language"; and the existence of the "unavoidable gap between what insiders truly experience and the researcher's reconstruction of that experience, no matter the degree of care with which the study may have been undertaken," (ibid., 200). In part, the research partnership was seen as a means of acknowledging and to a degree closing this "unavoidable gap"; as it was in the wider rationale of Kim's approach to pilot work, that of helping to develop "culturally competent research practice" (ibid., 190).

This latter concern went beyond ideas of exploring and then modifying interview questions or approaches. It stressed the importance of pilots' use when a depth of understanding, rather than a broad perspective was being sought (Malmqvist et al., 2019) so as to increase confidence in the data that is being presented; and to face up to the challenges in any substantive study. A further key aspect of pilot use in qualitative research is the awareness of local constructions of concepts, developments and events, themselves functions of factors such as physical location socio-economic context for the pilot case; which is discussed below.

The Gaza context and research methods challenges in conflict zones

Asking our research questions in the singular conflict zone of Gaza, our research design and methods needed to take into account literatures on research methods challenges in conflict zones. This literature continues to expand although there is "no single, agreed-upon definition of what constitutes violent conflict; the term may refer to civil war, ethnic war, and interstate war at high and low intensities as well as violence that falls short of war" (Avis, 2019, 1). Its triggering events include high levels of poverty and exclusion, regime dissonance, poor governance and repeat violence. (2018). In the Gazan context, we drew directly from the insights of Leuenberger (2015), derived from research in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. She suggests that "conducting research in politically and socially unstable contexts puts into stark relief the advantages of conducting participatory and collaborative research. Such approaches provide researchers with networks of trusted local protagonists, offer more in-depth insights into traditionally marginalized and frequently misrepresented social groups, whilst also generating knowledge that may facilitate beneficial social changes for local communities" (ibid., 19).

Overall, we aimed for the approach identified by Bøas, et al. (2006, 77), that methods should be pragmatic, conducted with empathy towards people on the ground, "characteristic of the ground-up, human-centric approach, focusing on coping strategies"; and that of Mohmand et al. (2017), who stress that in fragile and conflict affected areas, important research principles include cultural sensitivity and empathy. We hoped that sensitivity in asking questions would be enhanced by collaboration, following Goodhand's (2000, 8) emphasis that "researchers have to be constantly aware that while they are present for only a short time, their questions and the discussions they provoke may reverberate for a long time afterwards".

The experiences of implementing the research plan at a distance interviews and created further research challenges. First, the experience of conducting interviews online , with all the possibilities of on-line exchanges” eclipsing” the expected opportunities for “immersion, ‘contexting’ and trust-building ‘ in face to face fieldwork (Mwanbari et al., 2021) was a research limitation. It was however mitigated greatly by the agency of GGateway as a research partner. Mwanbari et al. (ibid.) argue that” moving research online and the ‘digitalisation of suffering’ risks reducing complexity of social phenomena and omission of important aspects of lived experiences of violence or peace-building”. However, this argument is made in the light on the onset of Covid-19 .Unlike those researchers required to recalibrate their research to online exchanges by the exigencies of the global pandemic, our research had been designed this way from the beginning, since Gaza is closed to external academics. Whether this (inevitable rather than enforced) ‘distanced’ research process resulted in a ‘distant’ set of research findings is a question all for all parties, especially what degree of ethnographic immersion, if any, was achieved by this default research approach. (This is not least as all respondents, by virtue of their GGateway affiliations were already significant IT and web users.)

The unpredictability of events, discoveries and disclosures is emphasised in conflict research scholarship , together with their ethical implications and this provided to be the case int this research. Fuji (2015), drawing on research experiences in Rwanda and Bosnia, argues for the possibility of ‘turning unplanned moments’ into data (though assuming a ‘field’ relationship.)This is the “accidental ethnography (that) involves paying systematic attention to the unplanned moments that take place outside an interview, survey, or other structured methods,” (Ibid., 525). Our research project was initially designed around a series of individually-focused in-depth on-line research interviews conducted by a sample of young women trainees (‘beneficiaries’) within GGateway’s programme, supplemented by an online group interview with GGateway trainers; with transcripts analysed thematically for knowledge sharing insights. However, ‘unplanned moments’ for the research design began at the point of the completion of the round of GGateway beneficiary interviews, where Zoom exchanges captured respondents’ apparent calmness in continuing their interviews that were accompanied by the noise of missiles (incoming and outgoing) in their immediate vicinity. (One respondent, for example, was observed merely rising to close a window, explaining ‘the noise’, and then resuming the interview).

This upsurge in violence, lead to an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, between 10-21 May 2021, According to Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Over 11 days, 261 Palestinians were killed, including 41 women, 67 children, and three people with disabilities, most in Israeli strikes. At least 130 were civilians. Over 2,200 Palestinians were injured. Ten Israeli citizens and residents were killed by rockets launched by Palestinian armed groups, and 710 others were injured," (OHCHR, 2022).

A ceasefire was negotiated after eleven days of fighting with both sides reportedly claiming victory. Concerned for the safety and security of our research respondents and research partner, these were life threatening and livelihood threatening circumstances, when the rationales, opportunities and likely routines for knowledge sharing (other than in relation to safety and security) might vanish overnight; or begin to return as the immediacy of the conflict ended, whether or not pro tem.

The two research phases

In the light of these developments, our research project was re-designed into two phases: phase one, conducting and analysing GGateway trainee/beneficiary and trainers' interviews, conducted remotely; and phase two, re-visiting trainee-beneficiary respondents' perspectives in the immediate aftermath of the upsurge in conflict and its cessation. To do this, we obtained permission from City, University of London's Research Ethics Committee for an extension of the original phase one focused study, seeking to turn "unplanned moments into data" (Fujii, *ibid.*). Phases one and two are considered separately, with the alternative method used for phase two also described.

PHASE ONE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS, ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Partnership working; collaboration with GGateway

Both the questions and the literatures concerning conflict zone research emphasise the value of collaborative working with research partners, not solely as a matter of securing research access, but offering the potential for practice as well as scholarly , value to arise from the research , and the recognition of research partners in the field as experts, for whom doing research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ was vital. For example , we intended that sensitivity in developing and asking interview questions would be enhanced by such collaboration, recognising Goodhand’s (2000, 8) emphasis that; “researchers have to be constantly aware that while they are present for only a short time, their questions and the discussions they provoke may reverberate for a long time afterwards”.

The overall research design accorded with the requirements of the funder (UK Government’s Global Challenges Research Fund), for research relevant to the needs of selected ODA countries (including the OPT), and for the establishment of equitable research partnerships in those countries. The research partnership with GGateway sought co-create research processes and tools appropriate for distance-research between us in both a pandemic and post-pandemic time.

Our prior GCRF-funded research, (Harrow and Sola, 2022), on knowledge sharing among local foundations in Jordan and Palestine/West Bank had demonstrated the fluidity of boundaries and interdisciplinarity in youth empowerment programmes and strategies between cultural beliefs and values on the one hand and those of the need for economic and entrepreneurial stimulation for young people to create sustainable and peaceable communities on the other. As a collaborative research partner, GGateway; was an exemplar organisation, with its social and social business and regional outsourcing hub successfully attracting growing donor funding from inter-governmental and philanthropic sources, including the World Bank.

Even before the current global health restrictions, there were major research access challenges for all external researchers, consequent on Gaza’s ‘closed’ (blockade) nature. A full distanced research approach, using remote web-based technologies for individual and group interviews, and knowledge exchange was required, facilitated by GGateway, both reflecting the extensive pandemic and post-pandemic global travel and movement

limitations , and the pre-pandemic position of Gaza, being very largely closed to field researchers. Our joint working was thus also designed to respond to the challenges of research and practice access facing Gaza especially.

Operationalising the partnership

Familiarisation with the organisational detail of GGateway, alongside available documentary material and GGateway's web presence, was underpinned by two preliminary interviews with two GGateway senior leaders, the Co-founder and the Programme Manager. Conducted conversationally and online, the content of these interviews was not intended to be integrated into the research findings to be derived from trainee and trainer participants. Rather, they were undertaken to help set the GGateway scene, for research design purposes.

The GGateway Leadership interviews focused therefore on the wider context of challenges facing beneficiaries in Gaza, how GGateway understood and responded to the Gaza context challenges to better support the beneficiaries; and on the development of programme practices. The following excerpts from the GGateway Leadership interviews provide a range of wider and deeper perspective of Gaza realities, around the question 'What is it like to live in Gaza?'

"As well as the empty buffer zone surrounding Gaza, homes often lacking hot water and are reliant on charging batteries for generators. This means that Gaza is very noisy – the sound of power generators running , for example, between public buildings, in the streets, which also means little space, grey buildings, very little greenery. (Along side high unemployment and loss of businesses), all these experiences are the core of daily life that supports deep sadness among individuals; life in Gaza runs in circles and those circles are closing in and getting closer all the time ."

"Uncertainty. ... you can't really plan ahead because everything can change in minutes..... So if you've been living in Gaza your entire life you have already visited every place that you can visit..... So you're basically stuck and the place you are stuck in does not go by the quality of life that you want. So it is very hard for young people to stay optimistic. And I think it's that it is at that point when people become cynical about everything. It's a coping mechanism, I know it is. There are solutions in the foreseeable future, but for now you are alive and you have to do something with your life.what keeps me going what keeps me motivated is the fulfilment that I have in my job."

GGateway colleagues took responsibility for identifying pilot research respondents from among current programme beneficiaries, following partnership discussion on the criteria for respondent selection, and the expectations of involvement.

Appendix 1 shows the invitation letter to beneficiaries. The outline research protocol (Appendix 2) was also circulated, with an invitation for discussion with a named individual from the partnership, online or by email, offering the opportunity to ask questions about the research. A signed consent form, in English and Arabic, was used for participants. (Appendix 3). The beneficiary interviews were supplemented by a group interview of the GGateway trainers, in respect of research question 2A.

The profile of the GGateway trainee/beneficiaries participating is described here only broadly, given the small numbers, to avoid identification. All the young women were university graduates, a minority with two undergraduate degrees or a Master's degree, across a range of subjects, including English language studies, computer engineering, mathematics, journalism, Arabic and education. Their graduation dates ranged from two to ten years' previously. All had major family responsibilities, notably as sole breadwinner; reporting a wide range of family attitudes towards their training and new, complex (free lance) employment opportunities – from deep support (especially from their mothers) to uncertainty, resentment, and some cases, disagreement and hostility.

Interviews were conducted online, facilitated by GGateway. All were led by Dr Yunus Sola; accompanied by a Gaza GGateway colleague, the latter to provide personal support for the beneficiary interviewees where and if needed, and to support with translation into Arabic, if required. Among the beneficiary interviewees, all were likely to have access to good WiFi connections at their home as well as place of work, so that no particular changes from their normal working day, such as additional travel or movement, was required.

An interview schedule was devised for questions for GGateway trainees, currently participating in its programmes, to explore the nature of social resilience, and the extent and direction of knowledge flows and exchanges between interviewees and other actors. No direct questions on 'social resilience' per se were asked. Rather, the introductory and main questions incorporated opportunities for trainees to present personal perspectives, including coping and adaptation strategies and experiences. Table 2 sets out the full interview schedule.

Table 2: Interview schedule for individual interviews with beneficiaries

1. **Introductory Questions:** The role of the subject in the context of the wider role of GGateway in Gaza.
 - a) How do you perceive your role in the context of the wider role of GGateway?
 - b) Do you believe GGateway is making a difference in the programmes it offers? What changes are you seeing as a consequence of GGateway's work?
2. **Main questions** overall: 'what knowledge and know how from your programme participation do you /would you wish to share with your programme organisers and programme funders, to help them enhance the success and impact of the programme, and why?'
 - 1) What were you looking for before you joined GGateway?
 - 2) Why GGateway?
 - 3) What does GGateway do in your understanding?
 - 4) Describe the nature of the training (being a trainer or being in leadership) with GGateway?
 - 5) How does your experience link or match with your initial expectations?
 - 6) What are the key challenges you have faced, or are facing now?
 - 7) Amongst these challenges, did you ever want to give up? When? What happened?
 - 8) Are you able to describe what keeps you going/facing up to these daily challenges? What makes you stand up again and keep going?
 - 9) What are the solutions you have crafted, or to ensure that the programme continues?
 - 10) Can you share or illustrate one example of a problem or challenge, and the solution that you devised to get you through?
 - 11) How do you feedback your experiences/learning to GGateway?
 - 12) What knowledge and know how from your programme participation do you /would you wish to share with your programme organisers and programme funders, to help them enhance the success and impact of the programme, and
 - 13) why?
3. Respondent thanked for participation in interview.

The trainers' group interview, conducted online via Zoom, and supported technically and organisationally by GGateway, was a single event, organised through a formal invitation, mirroring that of the individuals' invitation, and without naming trainers, or their particular characteristics (e.g. length of experience, training also for other NGOs or for GGateway only), to ensure that respondents would remain unidentifiable.

It was designed to unearth, explore further and triangulate stakeholder voices among those working closely and directly with beneficiaries; concentrating on the knowledge sharing opportunities and contributions aspect of the study. This potentially posed challenges if this topic was regarded as sensitive and amplified by a 'public' discussion; so that a balance

needed to be obtained between avoiding difficult discussion and losing the perspectives and views of some participants .

In group interviews “the researcher adopts an ‘investigative’ role: asking questions, controlling the dynamics of group discussion, often engaging in dialogue with specific participants” (Parker and Tritter, 2006, 25). It was distinguished from the role and methodological challenges of the focus group , where “the researcher takes a peripheral, rather than a centre-stage role for the simple reason that it is the inter-relational dynamics of the participants that are important, not the relationship between researcher and researched” (ibid., 26).

The group interview framework used a series of broad headings, from which trainers’ within GGateway’s perspectives, whether broad or in depth, could be explored.

Table 3: interview schedule for group interview with trainers

Welcome : the context of our meeting is the research interest we have in knowledge sharing in NGOs and in GGateway ; you are invited to discuss - ‘before GGateway’: IT employment opportunities, freelancing development, other constraints - ‘within GGateway– ’ its' programmes, knowledge sharing and knowledge flows – by trainers, within and beyond GGateway? - Perspectives on the challenges for women trainees? (trainer insights) - Perspectives on programme developments GGateway, specifically on KS? - Trainer communications with donors? Trainers’ messages for donors? - Trainers’ perspectives on (national, Gaza) policy for donor-funded (IT led) training? - Other education/employment aspects, e.g. universities’ training and development roles? Thanks to participants

Implementing the research design

The experiences of implementing the research plan, through at distance interviews, for us underlined the extent to which distance-interviewing eclipsed the opportunities for immersion and trust building , as well as observation, that face to face interviews provide. The agency of GGateway as a research partner was critical in balancing this experience and limitation. In particular the two ‘pre-interviews’, discussed above, by their level of detail and responsiveness provided an alternative researcher context immersion experience. Their transcripts stand as research data in their own right, Alternatively, unlike those researchers required to recalibrate their research to online exchanges by the exigencies of the global pandemic, our research had been designed this way from the beginning, since Gaza is closed

to external academics; and its practice an expectation of all parties, and only partially a default. The distance interviewing also ran smoothly, both as a result of GGateway's technical as well as research-led facilitation, and as respondents, by virtue of their GGateway affiliations were already significant IT and web users. Including the pilot interview, of the ten invited individual participants, interviews were completed with seven ; while 4 trainers were invited to attend the group interview, initially planned to be held at GGateway's offices.

Analysing the data: (i) the individual interview transcripts

Our methods set out to describe and interpret participants' views; with data drawn only from interview transcripts, the remote process precluding their supplementation by direct observation. With the dual emphasis in interviews on trainees' coping strategies within their changing lives and on their perspectives on their knowledge sharing contributions, actual and potential, and an interview framework that prompted the ;what happened? questions, a narrative analysis approach was indicated.

Bryman (2004, 412) presents narrative analysis as "an approach that is sensitive to the sense of temporal sequence that people, as tellers of stories about their lives or events around them, detect in their lives and inject into their accounts". Here the focus of attention turns to "how do people make sense of what happened", going beyond its most recognisable form of 'life span history' (ibid.).

Reissman (2011, 315) argues for the position of the researcher to be integrated into progressing narrative analysis within interviews , "attending to the researcher relationship, the unfolding interview conversation and the positioning of the story within in it... (interrogating) the influence of the setting , historical context and any other dimensions that shape the speech act", so that interviewers are active participants in the research process. She continues that the "listener/interviewer" cannot be excluded, "if we accept that the research interviewer is a collaborative conversation"(316).

With narrative analysis seen as a "family of approaches", Reissman (2005, 2) identifies four models of narrative analysis, the first of which is thematic analysis. Here , in examining the text, importance is ascribed to 'what is said ' more than "how" it is said, the "told" rather than the "telling". Thus investigators collect inductively create conceptual groupings from the data, with vignettes or cases providing illustration.

From the broad position of narrative analysis therefore, we undertook thematic analysis , as “method for systematically identifying, organising and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set....identifying what is common to way a topic is talked aboutand of making sense of those commonalities” (Braun and Clarke, 2012, 57).

Following the interview and its transcription, we each reviewed the transcription documents independently, shared our reviews and agreed collectively on progress. Braun and Clarke advocate data familiarisation, reading and re-reading transcriptions, to develop initial codes, that is, identifying interesting features found in the data and bringing together the data that is relevant to each code.

The initial ‘searching for codes’ identified codes which grouped around personal/individual lives and the lived environment in which the interviewee found herself.

Table 4: The codes emerging from thematic analysis of individual interview transcripts

Ambitious / expectant / hopeful	(Cautious/committed) learner
Resolute (risk taking)	Education / Training
Responsible/accepting responsibility	Modest
Breadwinner / Financial Independence	Managing/coping with anxiety
Supportive Family	Managing Self Doubt / Self belief
Losing Hope	Sacrificial / thankful
Limited Opportunities	Not give up (persistent)
Local Restrictions	Developing Teamwork
Local Limitations	Problem Solving – technical
Critical / Demotivating community	Programme Reflection
Fairness	Managing Professional Challenge
Lack of Equality	Developing Professional Skills
Gender Based Challenge	Achieving Success
Multiple expectations	Managing Disappointment
Judgemental Community	Overcoming Personal Struggle
Conservative Community	Gratitude
Contradictory behaviours	Building Confidence
Loyal (to country)	Prioritising - Managing multiple responsibilities
Proud Citizen	Self-efficacy
Supportive community	

Selected illustrative extracts, leading to the identification of these codes are shown below in table 5.

Table 5: Selected codes and illustrative extract examples, from individual interview transcripts

Initial code	Illustrative extract from interview transcripts
Resolute/risk taking	After graduating, I was volunteering for two years for a local ngo. The ngo was providing aid for vulnerable households and I worked as a project coordinator. After two years I got promoted as coordinator of the whole department. There was no payment and it was difficult to have zero income after two years after graduation. So I decided to quit. It was a great experience, I learned a lot and it gave me the strength to be in a managerial position. The whole group had the same problem. But we have to talk about our problems. Silence says nothing. We have to raise our voice, we have to say something.
Modest	When I had difficulties in a project my colleague just came to help me and I did same for the my colleagues. So we were very collaborative, we were not jealous of each others success but we celebrated our successes. If one failed we all failed. And if we evolve we all evolve. My colleagues were a big part of the success of the programme. After 2 years of being unemployed, I expected a small job, say 50 USD. but after my first success I was hired to create a Wordpress ecommerce site with an income of 400\$ per month for 4 months. It might even become permanent.
Responsible/accepting responsibility	Oh my God, what shall I do? I have to take care of my family, I have to take care of myself. I have to have a career path. This was my first challenge, I was astray, but thanks to God (Alhumdulillah) I found this training and everything is fine now.
Loyal (to country)	I was very pleased when I saw my colleagues here, in Gaza, at work and create their own path. I was very proud of them and myself also. We don't have to wait to go abroad and say "Oh my God, I'm Palestinian, I am living a miserable life" No. I have a dignified life if I have a chance. I am still searching for scholarships to do a masters and a PhD - all abroad. But I would always return to Gaza for my family and friends. I <u>have</u> to come back here.
Coping with anxiety	Living in Gaza means listening to a lot of pessimistic people. The pessimistic people really affect the graduates. When you leave university you are full of optimism. They say 'how can you say this, do this, you live in Gaza, you have zero experience, you have nothing, you have to cross a long path to have career.' This affects you. I was fighting this. But for me it is psychological. If I believe what they are saying, I will stay with no path and no future. I will just stand there.
Cautious/committed learner	We have a good relation with all our trainers and we did not complain about the trainers. We did not want mess that relationship. The issue was not a personal issue. We are just missing some skills. So we created our own mechanism to report this skills gap.

From this number of codes, it was essential to progress to identifying possible themes under which they might be grouped, which could tell us something useful about the data and which were coherent. The theme is this context is being used as an attribute or descriptor, a

topic that organises a group of repeating ideas that, critically, enable researchers to answer the study question. A theme thus contains codes that have a common point of reference .

The revealing and complex nature of the interview data and the objectives of supporting the idea of 'voice' for the trainees led to initial attempts to 'include everything' or draw too many codes together, notwithstanding Braun and Clarke's emphasis that a good thematic analysis is one which contains themes which do not "try to do too much" (ibid., 66). We sought to present the findings that emerged "from the informants' stories (which)are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience " (Aronson, 1995, 3).

Morvaidi et al. (2016) propose four stages of theme development ; 'initialisation' (reading transcripts and highlighting units of meaning, looking for abstractions, writing reflective notes); 'construction', whereby codes are assigned places in clusters , as the diversity of codes is examined, and defining the themes, to convey the researchers' understanding of their essence; 'rectification', in which the researchers distance themselves from the data, to reduce the chance of incomplete analysis, when discussion between researchers, to help ensure congruence with the nature of the study and the data collection; and ; and 'finalisation', when theme development is brought together as a developing narrative story line.

Pragmatics in the research process – our research completion timescale, combined with the immensely heightened conflict, beginning as our field work completed – meant that we did not follow through Morvaidi et al.'s four propositions in full . For example, in 'rectification', we did not take the opportunity to share our thematic decisions with our interviewees , or followed Aronson(1995) who suggests asking respondents to provide feedback.

Nor did we follow Morvaidi et al., who suggest that " an in-depth literature review is postponed until after most data collection is completed to prevent introducing bias and perceived notions", although they recognise that "this might be difficult for those who have theoretical knowledge of the study phenomenon,"(ibid.,106). In this study context, where we already held some of that prior knowledge, we regarded it as critical to ensure our awareness of the state of the literature concerning Palestinian/Gaza developments and challenges, given the unique circumstances into which we were entering and the proper expectations of our research partner.

Our grouping of coding data from the transcripts into themes, to establish our findings resulted in the development of eleven themes, Table 6 shows the themes identified and the grouping of the codes from which they were comprised.

Table 6: Identification of initial themes, and the codes from which they derive, from Phase One interviews

THEMES	CODES
Ambitious / Has a Dream	Ambitious / expectant / hopeful
	Resolute (risk taking)
Family Responsibilities / Breadwinner	Responsible/accepting responsibility
	Breadwinner / Financial Independence
Family Supportive	Supportive Family
Living in Gaza	Losing Hope
	Limited Opportunities
	Local Restrictions
	Local Limitations
Societal Challenges	Critical / Demotivating community
	Fairness
Gender-imposed limitations	Lack of Equality
	Gender Based Challenge
	Multiple expectations
	Judgemental Community
	Conservative Community
	Contradictory behaviours
Pride in Citizenship	Loyal (to country)
	Proud Citizen
	Supportive community
Education / Training	(Cautious / committed) learner
	Education / Training
Personal Resilience	Modest
	Managing/coping with anxiety
	Managing Self Doubt / Self belief
	Sacrificial / thankful
	Not give up (persistent)
Professional Growth	Developing Teamwork
	Problem Solving – technical
	Programme Reflection
	Managing Professional Challenge
	Developing Professional Skills
	Achieving Success
Personal Development	Managing Disappointment
	Overcoming Personal Struggle
	Gratitude
	Building Confidence
	Prioritising - Managing multiple responsibilities
	Self-efficacy

While these eleven themes encompassed the multiple codes we identified in the transcripts, they offered a still overly-complex analysis framework for the study with its knowledge

sharing focus. Finally, as a ‘finalisation’ process, we converted our initial themes into sub-themes and grouped them into three

Overarching themes, each of which conveyed a strong sense of the interviewees’ narratives. This finalisation is shown in table 7, below.

Table 7: Final themes and sub-themes from phase one interviews with individual trainees

FINALISED THEME	SUB THEMES
life experiences	ambitious/has a dream family responsibilities/breadwinner family supportive living in Gaza societal challenges gender -imposed limitations
life choices and opportunities	pride in citizenship education/training personal resilience
GGateway: knowledge-sharing factors	personal development professional growth

Extracts from the interview transcripts, providing illustrations of the thematic and sub-thematic content are provided in table 8.

Table 8: Illustrations of the thematic and sub-thematic content , from phase one trainee interview transcripts

Final Themes/ Sub Themes and Illustration
Life experiences/ambition I have not finished studying and still need to learn more skills. My focus is not just the IT technical but also the soft skills, communication and networking, which are very important to build a career. TE7 Covid (lockdown) gave me time to stop, take stock and catch up with the studying. I decided I was not going to give up. I kept remembering what it was like being financially independent after graduation. This motivated me and I returned to the training in a stronger way.

Life experiences /family responsibilities

My family believe in me ; They are very encouraging. But my family needs me too. I have to take care of my family and my oldest sister. She graduated from University, but she is not working. So I have take care of myself and my family and yes, it is a huge responsibility for me. I think to be the breadwinner of the family is very difficult. TE7

I have 3 children....They were not aware of what I was doing, but now they understand that mummy works and is working in the office. Now they even help me in the home. TE3

GGateway was the best programme for me and my personal and family circumstances. The programme covers all my travel costs. It takes two hours by bus to reach Gaza City from my home and the cost for the daily return bus fare is not affordable. I cannot volunteer, the family cannot afford the transportation. GGateway allows me to earn while I am in the training. I had to explain all this to the family and only then did they allow me to attend the training. TE5

Life experiences /gender-imposed limitations

As a woman in Gaza it is very hard to get a job. It is normal, usual for graduate women in Gaza to get married. But I do not want that. The community around me is very disappointing. I live in the south of Gaza and all the opportunities go to the men.The easy thing is to stay at home. TE6

90% of the community were not supportive. They were not encouraging and wondered why I was leaving my family and my responsibilities, especially since one of my children has special needs. Also, since my husband is a medical doctor, they could not understand why I wanted to work....But this was for me. I wanted to be financially independent the way I was after I graduated. TE2

Life choices/ pride in citizenship

I would always stay in Gaza and work in Gaza. Even if I went overseas on a scholarship, I would return here. The possibility to stay in another city is considered as a future plan. Gaza has changed. Now, in Gaza it is acceptable and desirable for woman to work, to help her husband and become independent. TE5

I live in Gaza so I am led to think that I do not have the capabilities to work in a decent way. I was surprised at the way I was thinking. I figured that I was totally wrong. It's not about the place, its about me. It's about the way I'm thinking.Sometimes to be honest, I thought of leaving Gaza. Yes, but I love my country. So why I should not invest my skills in my country? Why do I have to go abroad and work for another country. I have to invest in my country. If I leave, if my brother leaves, who will be left in this country? TE7

When you leave university you are full of optimism. They say 'how can you say this, do this, you live in Gaza, you have zero experience, you have nothing, you have to cross a long path to have a career.' This affects you. I was fighting this. But for me it is a psychological thing. If I believe what they are saying, I will stay with no path and no future. I will just stand there. TE4

Life choices/personal resilience

I entered a competition with GGateway for freelancing but at the same time, I was entered for a teaching exam and also I was pregnant and the doctor told me not to travel too much during this period. But the training office is far from my home. I went to my parents home to stay, and the training was close to my parents home so I attended the training. When I returned home, I finished the training. I always had to find solutions to all my personal challenges. I did not share any of these personal challenges with GGateway, only with close friends and the freelance trainer. They were all personal issues. I had to solve them on my own. TE2

I do not care about what the community says. I am looking secure my freedom and be independent. If I allowed the community opinion to guide what I do, I would have stopped training/studying a long time ago. TE1

GGateway; KS factors/personal development

Some of us are a little bit shy and they do not like to attract attention. I understand my personality 100%. I am very polite and I do not want to bring harm to anyone. TE1

I need friends who are supportive but they do not understand. I do have a strong mission in life. I know what I want to achieve. GGateway have been very supportive. TE5

I was overthinking. Can I join the training? Will I succeed? The only way I managed to get passed this was to make a decision to start the programme and prove to myself that I can do this, and I can achieve success and I do my best to reach the peak. This was my turning point and when I began to trust myself, I started the programme and never looked back. So, my first challenge was between me and myself. I learned to do my best and face my fears. TE4

GGateway KS factors/professional growth

I am always proud of my first online client, that first job. It was hard but it was all a personal effort to succeed. And It felt great to be successful. TE6

When I got my first freelance job. I designed a logo for the client and he was so pleased he wrote a wonderful review. He hired me four times and also recommended me to another client and I am working with him now. TE3

When I prepared my first proposal for a client job, I shared it with the training group and they started laughing. They said my proposal was more like a newspaper. After a few minutes my mobile rang and I realised I had just received a message from the client. He wanted to discuss the proposal further and I shared the message with the group. I got the job. This was my first job and also the first job of anyone in the training group and this was a great victory for me. TE2

Analysing the data: (ii) the transcript of the group (trainers') interview

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) emphasise that the scant information regarding how to analyse group interview data, compared to advice on how these should be conducted, while concentrating on the focus group form, (that is with a moderator/facilitator present and concentrating on interactions) . These authors identify the range of likely analysis challenges from different disciplinary perspectives, for example, examining the extent of consent and dissent, and recognising these as such; descriptive 'counts' of categories of view, and scrutinising 'how ' people say things as well as 'what' they say. However, their proposals for a detailed form of conversational analysis however, enabling "allowing researchers to analyse an array of actions and emotions" (ibid.. 15) and examine how participants attempt to portray themselves within the group, could not be implemented, because of limited researcher resources, and the more confined (remote) group interview model in use.

Working from the single transcript , compiled by the field researcher, a thematic analysis was at first considered. However, this would be limited, given the 'one off nature of the event; as well as the likelihood (given the timing) of our being influenced by the themes drawn out already for the individual interviews.

Notwithstanding scholarly advice noted above, the interview framework confirmed our interest, for our wider research questions, in ‘what they said’. To avoid substituting an apparent ‘factual record’ account, we drew on Krueger (1994, cited by Rabiee, 2004, 659,) whose work suggests the a series of pre-established headings as a framework for interpreting data: ‘words’; ‘context’; ‘internal consistency; frequency and extensiveness of comments’; ‘specificity of comments’; ‘intensity of comments’; and ‘big ideas.’ Table nine depicts extracts from the group interview transcript, matching illustrative examples with three of these interpretative headings.

Table 9: Interpretative headings for analysing the group interview transcript; and illustrative extracts

interpretative headings	Illustrative extracts from the group interview transcript
‘internal consistency; frequency and extensiveness of comments	Some trainers are collaborating with other trainers from other organisations - informally - but formally, there is a very low level of collaboration because the organisations compete with each other for trainees, trainers and funding. Some trainers share their knowledge with their own family, community through social media and they have followers from all MENA(regions). Some trainers are reaching their friends and sisters, who, as a consequence, are earning an income and supporting their families. knowledge sharing within trainee groups enables more trainees to access more job opportunities - by giving them confidence to apply; social media is popular tool for sharing learning and online tips. GGateway has very good listening protocols - and when trainers have programme challenges they are quick at responding and providing solutions. GGateway has a wider flow of communication channels but they are not available in all organisations
context	Women face many challenges from the community, clients, but also from parents. (Trainers) do not have meetings/access to donors. Communication is only with Gaza Partners not the direct International donors. International donors really do not know from or hear from the trainers. The reason why donors do not talk with trainers (only with their local partners) could be a trust issue. The political situation in Gaza is complex. If the donors talk to us they do not know who we are...So they do not talk to us. As trainers, our discussions and results are not documented or shared outside of our group, not published, so our thoughts, opinions, ideas do not reach donors.
‘big ideas’	Currently there are hundreds of training opportunities in the market more than the need in Gaza. NDC for example is funding 3 organisations offering and each is offering the same training without any coordination between them.....A national policy is needed. Why is the GGateway programme not run through a local university - with a diploma certification? There should be a Social Enterprise Department in a Gaza University - they should partner with an international university to bring a programme like this to Gaza.

Findings from Phase One: The trainees 'responses

Research Question 1 sought responses to the following: 'How and to what extent, if at all, do young women beneficiary/trainees in the GGateway (Gaza) programme report their coping, adaptive and transformative experiences, arising from or associated with their programme participation in the Gaza setting?'

Within the two broad themes of 'life experiences' and 'life opportunities', the trainees identified the positive interactions between their own individual aspirations and intentions and the GGateway training programme and its results, that were self-sustaining and reinforcing. For example, a sense of 'standing back' is conveyed :

"I was ...very pleased (to see) my colleagues here, in Gaza, at work and creating their own path. I was very proud of them and myself also. We don't have to wait to go abroad and say "Oh my God, I'm Palestinian, I am living a miserable life" No. I'll have a dignified life if I have a chance." ;

While a realist position, concerning the coverage and nature of a fulfilling programme experience was also reported: " I have not finished studying and still need to learn more skills. My focus is not just the IT technical but also the soft skills, communication and networking, which are very important to build a career. Attachment to Gaza itself appeared a strong factor in seeking access to and completing the programme: including an implicit rejection of the idea that 'leaving' is the responsible (if unlikely) career path, and more particularly an outright challenge to pessimistic perspectives on Gaza's future:

"Why do I have to go abroad and work for another country? I have to invest in my country. If I leave, if my brother leaves, who will be left in this country?"

That attachment was both reinforced by their GGateway existence "GGateway gives us hope", and was an additional factor in securing country loyalty, where employment prospects were becoming a given:

"I would always stay in Gaza and work in Gaza. Even if I went overseas on a scholarship, I would return here. The possibility to stay in another city is considered as a future plan."

For some respondents the GGateway opportunity also enabled very personal challenges to be faced and managed confidently , although remaining understood only personally, for example:

"I entered a competition with GGateway for freelancing but at the same time, I was entered for a teaching exam and also I was pregnant and the doctor told me not to travel too much during this period. But the training office is far from my home. I went to my parents home to stay, and the training was close to my parents home so I attended the training. When I returned home, I finished the training. I always had to find solutions to all my personal challenges. I did not share any of these personal challenges with GGateway, only with close friends and the freelance trainer. They were all personal issues. I had to solve them on my own."

For others, the GGateway system was a "healthy place to learn ", and one where the programme practicalities proved a critical fit: " GGateway was the best programme for me and my personal and family circumstances. The programme covers all my travel costs. It takes two hours by bus to reach Gaza City from my home and the cost for the daily return bus fare is not affordable. I cannot volunteer, the family cannot afford the transportation. GGateway allows me to earn while I am in the training". Nevertheless, this respondent also provided a caveat : " I had to explain all this to the family and only then did they allow me to attend the training."

Considerable evidence of gender imbalances affecting both trainees' opportunities and their 'stickability' on the GGateway programmes once begun emerged. For one trainee, the limited or absence of community support for her was "very disappointing. I live in X and all the opportunities go to the men. The easy thing is to stay at home"; with chances of external study options affected adversely by gender considerations: "I applied to two scholarships to Turkey...My income does not cover my costs for a scholarship. And I have to apply with my brother. My family will not allow me to go alone. So even if I get a scholarship, he has to get one too."

Negotiating skills – with one's family and community are reported as required, but also likely to be honed by virtue of being a GGateway trainee. For example, the respondent who reported her difficulties in "balancing my personal home life, my work as a freelancer and the training.... For the first 2 months we were training every day, we had to complete assignments, and at the same time I have a child and I was looking after my family", but grew in confidence when "I got my first freelance job. I designed a logo for the client and he was so pleased he wrote a wonderful review. He hired me four times and also recommended me to another client ", reported also that "my husband is now envious of my

success". Family persuasion, brought about by a trainee's degree of commitment could also work:

"My husband was against the training. ...I was spending 6 hours a day on training and still holding all my responsibilities in the home. I was sleeping only 2 hours a day as I was studying when the family was asleep. But I was happy. After one month, when my husband and the family saw that I was happy, committed, that this was my passion".

Other respondents simply persisted in the face of family pressure, for example:

"During the training with GGateway I was always in front of the laptop and this made my husband complain to his mother. He asked his mother to encourage me to give up the training. His mother spoke with me and I asked her not to tell my husband that she had spoken with me. Then, whenever he came home, or in the room where I was working, I always closed the laptop. I tried working in another room. I also went to visit my family and stayed there for a week and did all my work there. When I came home I made sure I did not open the laptop in front of him but this was a very stressful time for me. Finally, I made it."

Moreover, some instances of communities' warming to trainees' subsequent employment and income success was reported: "90% of the community ask how I achieved this independence and they want to learn from me, they want my advice to tell their children". Family support, broadly, for the trainees was however mixed, with support and positive 'push' from both parents reported by a minority of trainee. In balance however was the recurrence of disappointment (rather than anger) of what were seen as "pessimistic" opinions found in communities and directed especially towards women graduates. For one respondent it had been necessary to hear these opinions and then set them aside:

"When you leave university you are full of optimism. They say, 'how can you say this, do this, you live in Gaza, you have zero experience, you have nothing, you have to cross a long path to have a career.' This affects you. I was fighting this. But for me it is a psychological thing. If I believe what they are saying, I will stay with no path and no future. I will just stand there."

Such 'life experiences', in which the GGateway programme offered the opportunities of experiences that were transformative, were nevertheless cross cut by high awareness of overarching family responsibilities, for which income generation was a key part. Thus:

“I have to take care of my family and my oldest sister. She graduated from University, but she is not working. So I have take care of myself and my family and yes, it is a huge responsibility for me. I think to be the breadwinner of the family is very difficult, especially as a girl.”

An underlying sense of sheer relief was also found within the ‘life experience’ and ‘life opportunity’ themes: “[with family responsibilities] I have to have a career”; “I have a job working on freelancing platforms, Arabic and foreign ones. Yes, that is how I moved from zero income - my salary now is \$500. So I am satisfied that I have this income now, especially since my dad passed away 2 years ago so I have to be responsible for my family”.

In order to take on this role successfully however , more than personal commitment and growing self-belief was required. Respondents’ growing abilities to maximise their post training incomes – gaining clients who return again and again, holding retainers from clients, managing their own online profiles for contract purposes – were reported in detail, as to a great extent a function of the global awareness instilled by the GGateway training. At the same time, the practicalities of sustaining this post training employment programme successfully , themselves enabled by the new found earning power were reported very succinctly by one respondent:

“I also needed to find solutions to the electricity power cuts in Gaza that stopped me from doing my work and delayed my submissions to clients. Now, after my new income, I have been able to sign a second electricity contract with a private electricity company to provide me with an external line from a separate generator. I also have an external battery to keep my router working during power cuts. I would not have been able to afford this before.”

Research Question 2 asked “What knowledge derived from young women trainee’s GGateway programme participation are they able to share or would wish to share with their programme providers and /or programme funders, to help enhance the programme’s effectiveness and further development?

Moving from the findings of closely intertwined life experiences and life opportunities themes to those concerning knowledge sharing in GGateway, from personal development and professional growth perspectives showed a greater sense of variation, although an overwhelming commendation for GGateway, if not for all the intricacies of its programme organisation and philosophy.

Trainees acknowledged different reactions to the notion of 'knowledge sharing' within GGateway, more reflecting caution than scepticism and some anxious not to undermine personal senses of thankfulness . An implication that knowledge sharing was liable to require organisational engagement in the form of criticism and thus 'bad news' for someone, was apparent, and one of which trainees were wary. For example:

"Some of us are a little bit shy and they do not like to attract attention. I understand my personality 100%. I am very polite and I do not want to bring harm to anyone."

Moreover, even detailed sharing of personal stories (perhaps as a prelude to reflect on knowledge acquired through the programme) was not necessarily an activity with which some trainees felt comfortable. It was sufficient for GGateway to 'know the basics'. Thus "GGateway did not know my story and struggles. But, being a mother of 3 children was enough for GGateway to be sympathetic and supportive." For another respondent, one with a record of marked career success, reticence in widely sharing those success stories would spill over into formal knowledge sharing;

"I do not like to share my life events on social media, I think it's not right to do this, there will be no privacy, the only people who allowed to know about my successes are my family and close friends - that's what I believe in".

For a further respondent, paradoxically, the nature of the GGateway programme content was itself a springboard to being increasingly willing to 'do networking', within which knowledge sharing can flourish:

"I am normally shy and it is not easy for me to build relationships fast. But the GGateway experience enhanced my personal skills and built my confidence. I am now able to do networking and build new connections."

Among other respondents ,however knowledge sharing (encompassing both knowledge and knowhow)was already the organisational and personal norm , but largely of an informal kind, with three distinct groups . The first was among their immediate families: " I share my skills with my brother. Anyone in the community who asks, I share what I have learned about IT and freelancing" ; though in one case as an explanatory response for the trainee's high level of immersion with her training: "The main people I was sharing my experience with was my family. They were concerned that I was not sleeping and working all the time so I would explain to them what I was doing. So indirectly I was talking to my family and a few

close friends". For a further respondent there was a sense of obligation in knowledge sharing at this intimate level:

"I believe that if I learn something, I have to be grateful and I have a duty to share. I have shared my learning with my sister and members of my immediate and extended family."

The second was among fellow trainees who were their confidantes, and described by a number as the equivalent of families . For one respondent, informal knowledge sharing was spreading to beyond technical knowhow to instances of market intelligence and mutual support:

"We [the trainee group] have become like a working family. We already have the habit of sharing our tech knowledge with each and we have built trust. Yesterday I received an offer of work for a job. I knew I could do the job but when I saw the tech specifications, I realised that a co-worker would be able to do better than myself. I accepted the bid and shared the details with the colleague and transferred the job to the colleague."

The third was among some individual trainers, from whom they were learning and whose responses and validations they trusted, although these instances revolved more around sharing personal challenges and responding to specific trainer based advice. In one example, during training, my mother tested positive for Covid. I had to look after my mother, take care of myself, and work on the project when my mother was asleep. I talked with the trainer and decided to withdraw from the job. But, after his advice, I contacted the client and explained the situation and with some new negotiation skills I got an extension for the job, two extra days. It was enough to complete the work".

Knowledge sharing activities in a majority of the interviews tended to be linked closely to knowledge about problems being shared and thus to specific instances of problem-solving, where the knowledge sharing was in an upward organisational directions. Examples of trainer and GGateway responsiveness in such situations were described in detail, notably about levels and directions of training skills being imparted, for example, citing a "very amazing (female) trainer" when respondents feared that . "trainers would be annoyed that we raised some issues in developing our skills", but who "raised the skills gap with the management, where this gap was resolved. More complex knowledge sharing, providing a mix of problem articulation and alternative ideas for programme content or nature had met with varying or limited success. On one occasion (in considering the balance of technical and

freelancing skills featuring in training) ,this reproduced a recognition of it “not being good to be seen to complain about every problem”, and of the trainee “ensuring a good image” with GGateway.

Pro-active examples of GGateway seeking ideas from trainees were also marked , though with uncertainty for some regarding outcomes, where ‘immediate problems’ were central” There are some surveys, but, we did not answer frankly. At the end, we gathered as a team and told each other which part of the programme was not helping us”. Less surprising was the view that “While we have anonymous surveys to feedback to GGateway, we do not share everything.”

GGateway’s offering trainees opportunities to meet with donors was remarked and valuable but also approached in problem responsiveness “GGateway did nominate some of our colleagues to make a presentation to the donors. The donors were good listeners to our problems”; and in this respect, one respondent reflected that this also had its limitations: “We had a chance but not all of us”.

It was another respondent who articulated a broader conception of knowledge sharing in her statement that

“I believe that the beneficiary or the participant have to be part of improving the programme. I would be happy to talk to GGateway and the donor”

Within the overall thematic scheme of things moreover, the approach of recommendations to GGateway which emerged in the trainee interviews were cast in the sense of improvement (‘advice’ as a number of trainees described it) and enhancement. Together they reflected a broad understanding of organisational success, which was encapsulated by trainees’ own assessments of the ‘improvements’ in their individual lives which have nevertheless brought about major change.

One respondent’s summary encapsulates this:

“The programme has completely turned my life around. Now I have confidence in my future. My children are proud of me. My clients call me again.”

Trainee recommendations, in the form of advice, are shown in table 10, below.

Table 10: GGateway programme recommendations or advice by trainees

- “Make a more thorough assessment of the participant’s needs before launching the program and distribute the groups according to our skill needs. We have diversity in our group. The diversity may be annoying to some of the groups, but sometime it’s needed. We learn from this diversity. Although, we have to take care of categorizing the participants. E.g; not to put a poor skilled participant with an intermediate participant.”
- “Take a look at the variation in skills of trainees in one group as this does effect the progress of both individuals and the group.”
- “Extend the English language training for more than one week (current provision), which was not enough. (The opportunity to learn and practice English language in Gaza is not available.)
- “The soft skills, confidence and skills to overcome fears and challenges is only a small part of the programme and could be developed more. This is especially important for the shy and less confident trainees who need a safe space to practice interacting within a group and later with clients.”
- Do not just focus on income being generated by the trainees as a success factor but also evaluate the personal efforts and ‘soft skills’.
- “The technical part of the programme is very intense. I would suggest it be spread across 3 months. The training material needs to be developed even more and more time needs to be given to it.”
- “(make) the programme look different to the other; (using) inspiration of the young leadership at GGateway
- “Select trainers more carefully. Trainers are the key and must share more knowledge.
- “Give the trainers a taste of the tech skills for each field(e.g. digital marketing, a huge field) before they split into their specialisations.
- “The hosting phase of the programme would have a better impact if the trainees could get on site work experience from a real working environment.”
- “After qualifying as a best achiever, if we want to continue with GGateway we must volunteer with the portal in technical training for two months to move to "the hosting stage" and become a co-trainer. This involves payment of a fee. My recommendation is that GGateway should pay a small stipend for the voluntary two months so that people ...can keep learning and working with GGateway”

Findings from Phase One: The trainers’ responses

Research Question 2A: In what ways and in which directions are trainers’ perspectives on the GGateway programme’s development expressed, with particular reference to knowledge sharing?

Trainers’ responses suggested a degree of satisfaction in being research participants. While GGateway was uniformly recognised as “transforming life ” for Gaza, and exhibiting “good listening protocols”, trainers’ interactions with GGateway tended to concentrate on technical and specific programme development issues, where GGateway were quick to respond and identify solutions, and on curriculum enhancement “where necessary”.

Within the context of strong praise for GGateway’s working patterns (including advocacy for would be trainees’ whose families were doubtful or opposed to the programme’s value),

trainees identified programmatic changes needed, including removal of the training age limit (35 years), and recognition of the limitations imposed by the training programmes being localised in Gaza City , so that “the remote towns and villages have a challenge to access these”, even when travel costs are funded.

Acutely aware of and part of the overall context of an economy linked intricately to freelancing work models and practices, trainers’ own ‘freelance’ activities involved mostly informal exchanges of expertise, within their own families and contacts, some through social media and ,more rarely , with particular groups (for example, one with a group of low-paid doctors). Though widely commending GGateway’s “wider flow of communications than in other organisations”, trainers saw ‘knowledge flows’ (seemingly broader and apparently less specific than ‘knowledge sharing’) occurring in (multiple) freelancing communities, for example though “local events”. However, it was evident that more formal collaboration and exchanges were constrained, “because the organisations compete with each other for trainees, trainers and funding.”

Characteristic of trainers’ working context was an absence of direct contacts with donors, not obstructively so, but with communications as the norm all channelled through GGateway. It was recognised that this absence may be a function of uncertainties regarding the trainers (for example their political and social affiliations and connections, if any). However, it was the trainers’ own status (that is, not themselves funders’ beneficiaries) that seemed central, the facts of which were stated bluntly: “ As trainers, our discussions and results are not documented or shared outside of our group, not published, so our thoughts, opinions, ideas do not reach donors. “Alternative routes to change – for example through GGateway’s mediated connections to donors of trainers’ insights, or direct communications channels with donors – were advocated.

Trainers’ “big ideas” focused on two interrelated areas: national public policy towards donor-funded training combined with donor policy; and the case for (local) universities’ closer engagement with such programmes and especially that of GGateway. The lack of a pro-active national policy to support this training was highlighted and its creation urged, to enhance the resulting employment opportunities³. Donors were expected to ensure that

– ³ Respondents cited the following : “ Among Islamic University Gaza IT graduates in 2017 unemployment was 60%. Last year (2020) survey (showed) the unemployment was 20%. According to an internal survey this was due to the e-work and outsourcing; 80% of graduates in employment were freelancing and outsourcing”. We have not verified these figures.

they “listened to the public sector and academia, to direct funds to needed areas, to make sure (of) no redundancy in the activities”. They were moreover also reminded that “these current programmes are only the first step and donors have not yet invested in the full cycle of support that we need to create impact”. The lack of contextual knowledge sharing was seen to be disappointing since “Donors do not speak with academics in Gaza.” Trainers variously argued that while donors were not connecting with local university research” academic staff were not interested in the NGO field, only in wider research fields”, that “there should be a social enterprise department in a Gaza University” and ended with a question: “Why is the GGateway programme not run through a local university - with a diploma certification?”

PHASE TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS, ANALYSIS , FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The emergence of the third research question

As discussed above, this research project was designed to have only one research phase. However, with the final interviews' completion coinciding with the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza, in and the renewal of physical conflict and danger for all GGateway trainees and staff, (danger which we , as researchers working remotely, were not facing) our thinking was re-directed. First, to the immediate perspectives of our recent interviewees, and subsequently to the now- very evident challenges for studying knowledge sharing in organisations in conflict settings. Our third research question was How do young women beneficiary/trainees report their experiences post conflict (after May 2021), in relation to their programme participation with GGateway and the extent of their social resilience?

Operationalising the partnership: using empathy mapping

For this second phase, we re-contacted trainees , via GGateway for a second round of interviews, to be organised as 'shared meetings', to learn how they were faring , their thoughts and experiences in the light of their prior work and personal plans , rather than as 'Q and A' interviews per se. There was no formal interview schedule, with a conversational guide developed and amended according to the needs of the sharing group and the individual.

Four previous interviewees participated. This was a number that precluded full scale thematic analysis of the transcripts. Instead, following Mohmand et al.'s(2017) stress on the inclusion of cultural sensitivity and empathy as research principles in fragile and conflict affected areas' research, we turned to the broad impression and information gathering technique known as empathy mapping, to capture and analyse the nature and content of these second phase responses.

Using and analysing the empathy mapping approach

Developed and used commonly in user experience ('UX') design, UX designers use a visualisation tool called empathy mapping to chart information about their users, offering insights into users and their contexts (Neubauer et al., 2017), in order to improve the outcome of the design of a particular product . In the design context, Knight (2019) distinguishes empathy from sympathy, whereby sympathy entails compassion for the

difficulties of another individual, but lacks the aspect of understanding the feelings of the party to which you are sympathetic.

Lammers (2021), exploring empathy mapping in distance learning, cites the work of Kouprie and Visser (2009), in their distinction between affective and cognitive empathy. (The former is about feeling an emotional response to another, the latter being able to understand another person's situation and imagine it from one's own perspective.) Her consideration of the challenge for designers of distance education - how much empathy is appropriate in what remains a professional context - resonated with us as researchers, in the light of the trainees' recent experiences, which had been reported to and analysed by us, but from such a very safe distance.

In adapting this approach as a working methodology we felt that a degree of visualisation of findings in this second stage would at least be more helpful and more analytical than simply recording what was said, journalist-style. The core of an empathy map appears predominantly as a quadrant, organised around and recording in four sections What do users (trainees) *say*, *do*, *think* and *feel*. We used this quadrant structure (see Figure 1 below), revisiting phase one interview transcripts, to create an empathy map that identified responses prior to the May 2021 violence, and the content of our phase two conversational interview/meetings, to create an empathy map of trainees' perspectives, following the ceasefire.

Figure 1: The quadrant empathy mapping framework for trainee responses

What do trainees <i>say</i> ?	What do trainees <i>think</i> ?
What do trainees <i>do</i> ?	What do trainees <i>feel</i> ?

In adopting – or rather adapting - this approach, we recognised its limitations for this study. Incorporating empathy perspectives into product design, the mapping's key purpose, itself raises challenges, notably how to retain empathy's value on a professional context. Lammers (ibid.) notes that it may be felt that some designers do not emphasise sufficiently with users, but asks whether it is also possible for designers to empathise too much? In designing distance learning products, Matthews et al. (2017) found some designers believing that

direct interaction with learners in this way enhanced their work, others saw this as a threshold that should not be crossed.

Our adaption is to use the empathy mapping concept not to feed in directly to design of a new product (such as a GGateway programme), but as a means of analysing what was being said and expressed directly by our trainees in the context of an upsurge in violent conflict, affecting so adversely their own and their training organisation's lives and livelihoods.

Recognising too the limitations of very small numbers of trainees participating, we considered this framework for analysis as an appropriate means of capturing and reflecting on trainees' responses; and far less dependent than thematic analysis on our own judgment as researchers.

Findings from Phase Two

Using outline empathy maps charted significant degrees of difference between the trainees' perspectives in their personal situation and Palestinian/Gaza contextual situations, pre and post the May 2021 conflict (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Empathy Map One: trainee reports, prior to the May 2021 conflict

What trainees say? As a woman in Gaza it is very hard to get a job. But the community is not supportive and always like to point out the negative about where my studies and work will take me. That my efforts will not lead anywhere. What is the best I will achieve? I would always stay in Gaza and work in Gaza. Even if I went overseas on a scholarship, I would return here. For the future, I hope we can have a chance to travel to another country, but it's not acceptable or possible now. 90% of the community were not supportive. They were not encouraging and wondered why I was leaving my family and my responsibilities, especially since one of my children has special needs. I want to be a maths teacher and an IT freelancer as well . I thought of leaving Gaza. Yes, but I love my country. So why I should not invest my skills in my country?	What trainees think? I did not share any of these personal challenges with GGateway, only with close friends and the freelance trainer. They were all personal issues. I had to solve them on my own. I will be submitting my Masters Thesis next month (June 2021). I graduated in computer engineering 10 years ago and worked for 3 years after graduation. But my career options were zero. The training is essential. It changes lives. Do not stop the training. GGateway has been a very good experience. I have learned how to work as a team and the training was excellent. I learned everything I needed. It is a very healthy environment to learn. The programme has completely turned my life around. We should have a chance to work in better places or just to work in our own country so we do not have to travel abroad. Gaza is very poor when it comes to opportunities. Of course we have a blockade, this is a burden for our skills, our even our minds, our way of thinking. I live in Gaza so I am led to think that I do not have the capabilities to work in a decent way.
What trainees do I applied to 2 scholarships to Turkey. But I was unsuccessful. My income does not cover my costs for a scholarship. And I have to apply with my brother. My family will not allow me to go alone. So even if I get a scholarship, he has to get one too. My Work life balance is better but not perfect. I steal time to study when the children were playing or sleeping. I want to keep learning. My life now is a huge contrast. I now have my own income, my own career and I have clients who return because of the quality of my work and professional reputation	What trainees feel As a woman in Gaza it is very hard to get a job. It was difficult to have zero income after two years after graduation. Now I have confidence in my future. My children are proud of me. My clients call me again. During the freelancing I began to feel relaxed about my own financial needs. My husband and the community are now envious of my success. 90% of the community ask how I achieved this independence and they want to learn from me, I think to be the breadwinner of the family is very difficult, especially as a girl. My husband was against the training. I was studying when the family was asleep. But I was happy.

Figure 3: Empathy Mapping Two: trainee reports, in period immediately following the May 2021 conflict in Gaza

What trainees say To see people who had lost their homes, to see a person whose whole family had died and he was only one left, and to see entire families gone. T This is the 4th war that I have experienced. (Some people say we get used to it, but no one ever can get used to war.) I live in the middle of Gaza City. I was in the center of the falling bombs. Seeing people trapped under the rubble was very difficult to see. This was the most difficult out of the past 4 wars. More aggression and more violence. If I get a chance to study and work abroad I will take it.	What trainees think Even when the ceasefire began we kept asking what we would do, where we would hide when the bombs started again. I just want to live in peace I hope it will not happen again. May we have peace that we have not had since we were born. I would leave. The only reason to return to Gaza is to see family. I want my child to grow up in peace. I am seriously thinking of leaving Gaza. But it may take some time.
What trainees do We did not know what would happen in the next second. We could not sleep, eat. We just sat together as a family and prayed that our lives be spared. Of course, during this time I had some freelance contracts and I could not even touch the laptop. I was blocked and could not do anything. I was just watching the news. After the bombings I cried for one day and one night. The IT company I was working with in Gaza was partially destroyed by the war and had to lose most of their employees. So I lost my job in Gaza.	What trainees feel Every day, every minute we felt we would die, at any moment, at any time. It was exhausting to be in that situation. Children were dying, there were people buried alive, and still alive under the rubble, really, these were very difficult days. Seeing those who died under the rubble, because no one could save them. Seeing children left without their parents. The sound of the rockets falling around me and in my area. I felt that we would be their next target at any moment. We kept asking “why is this happening?” We have not healed. This is a trauma. I cannot describe the experience, it is beyond words. It was awful. I felt that the bombs just wanted to kill us all, everyone, like ethnic cleansing

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Discussion of Findings from Phase One

Phase One (i) The trainees' responses

The opportunity for trainees to participate in this interview round was accepted with alacrity forward following our invitations, and close transcripts reviews suggested a blend of personal 'story telling' – somewhat like responses to 'critical incident' questions – and forward-looking ideas and contributions to GGateway's own development. That development was understood firmly as in the direction of 'improvement' not major change . This was seen as an incremental process that would integrate into GGateway's already existing feedback and information gathering systems, albeit reflecting some formal formality and selectivity in feedback sought.

It reflected one interviewee's already collaborative expectations of new knowledge sharing, that "we beneficiaries must have to be part of the improvement of the programme". As an imperative , this was a feature across all the accounts ; but not strongly pressed as an 'accountability' issue. Rather the depth and difficulty of personal development journeys which were described to us were providing the basis for having some intricate knowledge and ideas that it would be worth cultivating further.

It was striking too that despite the shared profiles of these trainees, as noted above, their individual experiences, in which their knowledge sharing capacity and their practice 'knowhow' was embedded and personalised, were still very different. Contrasts included the length of time from graduation (from over a decade to 'last year'), and to a very varied pattern of coping with family disapproval, from concealing their study times whilst at home, to moving to another relative's house, to engaging their children as supporting their ambition. These contrasts suggest that even among with small number interviewed, female trainees constitute a variety of role models - often a favoured form of demonstrating philanthropic funding impact – not a single role model trajectory, that might be considered in the context of a demanding IT led training programme.

One shared feature was the extent to which trainees were also sharing technical knowledge with husbands, families and friends, making informal dents at best in digitally-based employment opportunities for others , who were 'sub beneficiaries' of GGateway. Whether these sharings occurred from a sense of privilege, personal generosity or responsibility, a

need to demonstrate or convince others of the programme's value, or even under pressure, was not investigated. Our over-riding interpretation here was that trainees, once in the programme, brought with them a sense of pride in personal achievement which they wished to share, and, some cases, an element of having to justify their involvement to families, friends, and the wider community.

We recognise that the phrase 'sub beneficiary' may be thought patronising – even risky if it is assumed that there is always a useful 'trickledown' from NGO training programmes, for which donors can claim further credit. However, these were somewhat unexpected informal knowledge flows, given that they would have to be quite intricate. As described to us, they suggest that mapping beneficiaries of any such programme is a wide not narrow task; and goes beyond just those groups, especially in the context of a 'closed and small Gaza', who would gain generally from community members' enhanced education or employment chances.

Responses were certainly at odds with perspectives citing beneficiary passivity (for good or ill); and trainees were assiduous in applying their thoughts to aspects of their experiences and training, and those of colleagues that would add to GGateway's knowledge stores. Nevertheless, trainees did not always demonstrate extensive pro-activity in knowledge sharing, as the antonym of passivity. Some were wary of raising their difficulties (e.g., training gaps, imbalanced training groups, technical difficulties, the training progression model), so as not to appear ungrateful or unnecessarily hypercritical (with gratitude itself a possible binding agent to an organisation or underpinning a sense of belonging). The 'plenty of ideas and examples' approach, combined with degrees of caution was also likely to be a function of the nature of the trainees' background and ambition – as well as being articulate young women, they were also absorbers of and appliers of new and complex IT-based knowledge, to enhance their employment opportunities at a level well beyond most Gazan young women and even most Gazan women graduates. This is not to imply that they were 'self absorbed' – even though they were open about enhanced income possibilities that they might grasp. Rather that that absorption (or dedication to study and maximising training advantage) might take precedence over highly active involvement in knowledge sharing in KS throughout their training lives.

From social resilience perspectives, trainee findings were emphatic about lives transformed through GGateway training and its post-training outcomes, of elevated employment status,

enhanced incomes and economic credibility with clients ; interlinked to close identification with Gaza as a place, a community and as an essential element in sustaining their plans to contribute to life in Gaza by staying and working in this vital geographical and socio-political space.

Given the complex and trainee independence-directed nature of GGateway's work, this was not surprising (see for example, Korber and McNaughton, 2018, on the conjunction of entrepreneurship and resilience more generally). However, the loyalty to Gaza, enhanced and enabled by GGateway participation, appeared an aspect that created social resilience scenarios for these trainees; as a dual capacity of endurance and resistance, though the latter was expressed in personal not communal terms (as in 'why should I leave?'). It may also be seen as all the more surprising given the experiences of the Pandemic in Gaza, further depleting resiliency resources (Veronese et al., 2021). Whether this could be equated with the (contested) notion of '*sumud*' (Giacaman 2020) was difficult to assess; and possibly made more difficult by the conduct of the interviews in English.

However, if the emerged endurance and resistance is identified as '*sumud*', we begin to understand the context of the GGateway training within the fragility of 'normal' life of Gaza for these young women where "*sumud*" or fortitude, being so engrained in daily practice, is unstated. Training with GGateway, as the responses demonstrate, offered a new lease of life and income stream for the trainees. This latter point is easy to encapsulate and, indeed, reported by GGateway as a quantified measure to the donors. Yet the "*sumud*" with which most of the trainees created their own path to success, given the challenges of career and income in Gaza within a constant state of conflict, is a narrative that, we felt, was not expressed specifically nor explicitly within the knowledge sharing context. Yet, we would suggest, that it is likely to be a significant element for both the trainee and GGateway to leverage and .guide the international philanthropic community to understand, and therefore better target funding towards, the career, family and income challenges faced by young women simply seeking to have a life in the Gazan conflict zone,

Phase One (ii) The trainers' responses

The breadth and depth of insights from the trainers' responses was striking, if perhaps the result of being in this one-off group interview opportunity. The world of the IT platform and employment-focused freelance professional was exemplified in these responses; and the

trainers' own sense of "separation" from donors, perhaps even somewhat at "arms' length" from GGateway, was itself a function that world and its detached or semi-detached work environment. The paradox of donors not talking to trainers was clear, as reinforcing both donors' worries and creating a circular lack of trust: "If the donors talk to us they do not know who we are, ... So they do not talk to us." Yet trainees saw contrasting routes to achieving this contact — one where GGateway acted as "the mediating agent," the other where direct communication channels were established, "where donors seek our feedback and ask questions."

Trust as a factor between GGateway and its trainers in that new route for knowledge sharing was not however raised. Trainers' own praise and support for GGateway in its overall provision was in fact much in evidence, both in responsiveness to trainers' specific needs and in discussing the commitment made by GGateway in persuading families of potential trainees of the programme's value. (This approbation may also reflect the self-selection for the group interview from those trainers most attuned to GGateway's methods).

Nevertheless, that trainers took the opportunity to make detailed programmatic recommendations for GGateway — whether or not they would contribute to enhancing and enabling knowledge sharing — (removing the trainee age limit, reviewing the Gaza City only location) — suggests that trainers saw themselves contrasted with the trainees and thus responding largely informally to knowledge sharing; given that *"GGateway are regularly asking trainees for feedback"*.

The freelance nature of, and the small numbers of trainers taking part in the group interview meant that we did not produce detailed trainer profiles. However, the group included UK doctoral degree holders, IT specialists, lecturers, mentors and translators.

Leaning towards the educator/mentor role was suggested from the positive considerations of the imperative for university-GGateway links, the challenge to donors to communicate with local Gaza academics, and the open-ended question of why GGateway's programme was not either university affiliated or validated. From an organisational KS perspective, trainers may be seen as intermediaries, whether enabling or restricting KS flows from trainees; but this relationship becomes more complex where trainers are also independent (or 'freelance'), while the outsourcing employing organisation is dependent on their training skills and capabilities for the quality of their trainee products. From this study, trainers have an often significant role in developing organisational knowledge sharing attributes, whether

contributing in their own right as enablers of the NGO's 'product', or enhancing trainees' confidence to so share; with trainers' roles in NGOs' KS an appropriate focus for further study.

Discussion of Findings from Phase Two

In reflecting on and comparing the findings from the two empathy mapping exercises, the first and striking perspective is the extent of contrast between the content that draws attention to social resilience within this small group. The second is the emerging parallel discussion, beginning with intra-organisational knowledge (largely pre-conflict) but moving to international and national knowledge sharing questions (in both pre and post conflict settings). In particular, there are reflections on the process of the change of perspectives among trainees, as a result of the effects of conflict, that might be drawn on to better manage and implement the GGateway programme. Paradoxically though, this process change knowledge seems likely to remain within GGateway's crisis management team, and the individuals who experienced the conflict; and so remain untapped and unshared in the context of GGateway programme learning and funder investment strengthening. As one participant explained "it is hard to talk about it" and re-live it.

Phase Two (i) The pre conflict empathy mapping : trainees' perspectives

From the pre-conflict empathy map, the obstacles arising from simply being in Gaza are clear, in particular, with being a woman trying to find work. Gender rights and related opportunities are a huge issue for many women, with cultural barriers extending in what might be expected to be questions of merit and qualifications alone: "I have to apply [for a scholarship] with my brother. My family will not allow me to go alone. So even if I get a scholarship, he has to get one too". Nevertheless there was a strong driving force amongst the young women — they are high achievers, some breadwinners, and many want to be independent young earners. Their immensely strong attachment to Gaza - where they were born and their families are, fuels the desire to have the right to live and work and contribute to Gaza's development. Neither politics or religion — as factor in affecting options and opportunities — were raised specifically by participants, although both factors may have been embedded and therefore unstated within participants' responses.

Trainees were proud of their achievements, highlighting the community appearing to be "surprised" and envious of their achievements. GGateway has crafted a 'life changing'

programme, working for these women, enabling them to attain incomes otherwise beyond their reach. The mapping exercise also revealed the views that some internal mechanisms and processes of GGateway could be improved, for example, trainer selection. While GGateway is responsive to trainee needs, trainees were not always open in expressing all their opinions about their programme experience with GGateway, and as might be expected, trainees are less inclined to complain to GGateway, because of their development opportunities being provided.

This suggests that GGateway may need to consider and experiment with different methods and options for encouraging trainees to share, more fully in contributing suggestions for improvement of the programme. However, given the sensitive and sometimes personal nature of the sharing for improvement, the methods for sharing need to be explored to go beyond surveys to personal reflection interviews that may occur after 'an event'. This does not mean that the sharing is not taking place. Even if it is taking place, this raises the challenge, as for all funded NGOs in Gaza, that only 'success', often quantitative, tends to be reported; and the challenges or paths to success (or failure) narratives, despite their indication of strong potential for improvement, takes time, funds and human resources to capture. This leads to a wider dialogue of how much knowledge sharing is internal and which knowledge, or how much is externally shared? As an indicator, trainees did express views that, GGateway were not reporting on value added skill development (intangibles) among trainees. The examples they highlighted include the examples of independence, self confidence, and the life transformations they experienced.

Phase Two (ii) The post-conflict empathy map findings

The trauma of a conflict (on all sides) cannot be understated. For Gaza trainees to wake and return after conflict to their training and walk through and amongst the rubble and within sight of its aftermath involves a wider discussion regarding organisational leadership/ organisation post conflict learning and resilience, and the nature of an organisational team that is able to experience, learn and relearn after each conflict and keep the programme running for the benefit of all the in the programme, whose need for an income, to feed their families, remains changed.

Comparison between the pre and post conflict empathy maps highlights processes of change that describe trauma and a significant shift in what the same trainees feel, think, say

and do. Alongside the shock of direct experience of bombing, an assessment that this conflict ('the fourth' many have lived through) was the 'worst' encountered. The central feature was a significant shift in the pre conflict commitment to Gaza per se; and, logically, the post conflict intention to leave, if at all feasible. Expressed both as a potential chance which previously would not be sought but would now be grasped, and as longer term plan to fulfil the aim of peace for the individual and her family, this shift had been accompanied by new physical experiences, impacting on the trainees' work.

Being 'blocked', and "unable to touch a laptop", prioritising attention to the news and immediate family cares contrasted to the pride in and deep professional prioritisation given to the trainees' complex work contracts expressed in the pre-conflict contexts'. While the immediacy of contract loss when employers' enterprises were destroyed made such inaction inevitable, a new tiredness, among participants previously so invigorated by their transforming work opportunities, was now detected ; and a seeking for peace "which we have not had since we were born".

In summary, the pre-conflict map made clear that the raft of confidence experienced and expressed by GGateway's trainees, in themselves, in their family's futures, in their professional status and earning capacity, and, critically in Gaza as their valued home location had wholly evaporated. This for us suggested a further dimension to the concept of 'waithood', the experience in which key transitions in life are put on hold for young Palestinians (Kabbani, 2019, 1). Along with its possible link to the sumud/fortitude concept , 'waithood' itself now is under threat, albeit that pragmatically it might remain in force; in this case, the 'waiting for peace' by these participants was to all intents and purposes over.

What might this major contrast mean for GGateway, its Funder and its trainees, current and future? Within Phase 2, our very limited data has prompted questions and challenges; for exchange with the organisational and individual actors. In the aftermath of the May 2021 conflict, learning for GGateway, their funder (and potential funders for income generating projects in conflict zones internationally), was highly probably being lost and rightly neglected in the maelstrom of conflict and its aftermath where saving and supporting human life is the priority for the local and international humanitarian organisations. Yet such a shift in their beneficiaries' perspectives also reinforces strongly UNCTAD's analysis (ibid., 8) concerning donor engagement challenges, where occupation has prevented aid from

translating into development gains; and “damage control, humanitarian interventions and budget support have been taking priority at the expense of development support.”

Nevertheless, how should GGateway adjust its programmes (if at all) to accommodate, facilitate and support trainees next time a conflict begins — and when the conflict ends? What should funders of such programmes expect and what should they ask and require when supporting an organisation like GGateway? How will the funder balance funding for creating jobs with funding for rebuilding after a conflict and funding to support trainees and trainers and GGateway Leadership as they manoeuvre their way through the conflict trauma experience and rejoin GGateway?

On an individual level what does the process of change between the pre and post conflict mean for the individual’s involvement in income generating programmes such as GGateway? Are the motives different after a conflict? If, as the trainees suggested, the individual’s only goal after a conflict is to leave the conflict zone “and not come back” — what does this mean for the GGateway programme? And how can the Funder further support the trainee through an organisation like GGateway? Are they also likely to support a post conflict “exit” for those who would choose this option? Within the limits of this pilot study, we did not incorporate or pursue a formal meeting or meetings with GGateway’s donors. We plan to explore these questions and to extend them into subsequent research.

These questions point further to the challenge of this kind of knowledge sharing, in these conflict zone contexts. This suggested to us also that the theoretical and empirical literatures on knowledge sharing in conflict zones itself needs much increased attention.

The following section presents our discussion that led to our return to the ‘literature review mode’, by an examination more specifically of the limited literature pertaining to KS in conflict zones. It also presents our case that there remain critical gaps in this literature.

Phase Two (iii) Further considerations concerning the KS literature: Developing a focus on organisational knowledge sharing in conflict zones

Discussing our phase one and two findings together, we felt that knowledge sharing within a conflict zone may be significantly less important organisationally, where survival is the key priority. Given this consideration, if knowledge sharing could be crafted to include ‘national and international’ conflict zone learnings from across other local organisations and funding organisations across both Gaza and other international conflict zones, the experience of

GGateway and its people could be better understood , learned from and set in a wider context.

Such an exercise would also be rewarding for future funders of projects in conflict zones who might then facilitate beneficiaries in appropriate and supportive manners which take into account and better accommodate pre and post conflict process/empathy shifting patterns and experiences among beneficiaries.

As an interim approach, we undertook an initial and highly preliminary narrative review of the literature on knowledge sharing as it relates specifically to conflict settings. This is set out below, followed by our argument thus far. Our starting point was the awareness, demonstrated by our field findings that the burgeoning literature on knowledge as critical organisational asset, and for knowledge sharing among organisation stakeholders as a key factor in sustaining that asset, often carries implicit assumptions of organisational stability. This is especially so where stability appears necessary for 'building back better' to occur. (Hollenback and Neuhaus, op. cit.). Again, in examining knowledge sharing's contributions to wider sustainable development goals, and to organisations' own sustainability; Langmann et al. (2021) suggest that in local-level NGOs, knowledge sharing has the potential to offset (organisational) shortcomings, such as small size, and reliance on specific individuals.

Nevertheless, Sergeeva and Andreeva (2016) argue that much empirical research on knowledge sharing tends to downplay context. Their stress on the importance of settings in knowledge sharing research then begs a further question: what is revealed in the literature concerning knowledge sharing in NGOs, where settings are characterised as conflict zones? Further questions follow, prompted for us by our empirical findings. Is formal and /or informal knowledge sharing, if begun, capable of continuing in areas and regions of conflict and high risk, and if so, of what kinds and by whom? Do NGO operations in conflict contexts create imperatives for knowledge sharing, or are the routes, mechanisms, types and practices of knowledge sharing lessened as an organisational priority, or discontinued as an organisational luxury, in the face of security and safety threats of various kinds, whether continuous or discontinuous? To what extent might knowledge sharing expectations and pressures vary in relation to NGO type (International; national or local, externally funded; self supporting, major donor led, multiple donor-supported)?

In their review of thirty-five years of scholarship on NGOs and International Development, Brass et al. (2018) identify six foundational research questions , of which the fifth has,

relevance, again implicitly, for knowledge sharing. This question is ‘how do NGOs interact with other actors in their environments?’. One illustration by Brass et al. a further question being asked by scholars is ‘How do donor priorities and NGO knowledge on the ground inform one another?’ Knowledge sharing per se appears either not prominent, or is subsumed within the very broad field of information exchange. The toll taken by conflict continuing over time, and the complex operating environments to which conflicts give rise, is recognised widely in key areas of provision, such as health. For example, El Nassim et al. (202) examine the impacts of protracted conflicts in the MENA region where research knowledge and skills have often been compromised, yet research capacity needs to be sustained. Chemali et al. (2019) examine burnout among middle Eastern healthcare providers, where burnout is characterised by emotional exhaustion, increased depersonalisation, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment due to chronic emotional stress at work.

Notwithstanding developing literature on burnout among aid workers (for example, among international workers, Jachens et al. (2019), other literature considers an alternative approach to those workers’ experiences of their work. Thus Roth (2015), draws on the sociological theory of voluntary risk taking known as ‘edgework’, involving a clearly observable threat to one’s physical or mental well-being or one’s sense of an ordered existence, to explore the role of risk taking in aid workers’ lives. Based on biographical interviews with people working in the aid field, this work does not argue that people working in aid are seeking out danger, but that aid work requires negotiating the edge “life versus death, consciousness versus unconsciousness, sanity versus insanity, an ordered sense of self and environment versus a disordered self and environment” (Roth, *ibid.*, citing Lyng 1999, 857). Juxtaposition of respondents’ work experience prior and after becoming aid workers suggested that aid work is edgework “in the sense of providing an exciting and stimulating work context which is shaped by questions of life and death as well as a high degree of flexibility and independence,” (Roth, *op. cit.*, 145). People working in aid thus were found carefully assessing the risks they were taking, were cautious, but accepted that in the end there were limits to control risks. However, Ong and Combinido (2018) note that Roth’s work, relating to Western aid workers’ attraction to ‘edge work’ in crisis contexts does not neatly apply to national aid actors in the global South who live in dangerous proximity to risk day to day. These authors’ research characterises local aid workers, employed in digital humanitarian innovation by international aid agencies in the Philippines, post Hurricane

Haiyan, as “entrepreneurial survivors”(op. cit., 87) whose local voices often drowned out by national and international colleagues.

This variety of characterisations of NGO people, confined to employees, rather than beneficiaries of various kinds, contributes to some understanding of such stakeholders’ personal rationales and experiences, from which only very limited inferences can be drawn at best as to their likely knowledge sharing choices and preferences. The lack of direct examination of this topic is very evident. Thus factors relating to barriers to or opportunities for knowledge sharing, or to the heightened rationales for knowledge sharing are found in the literature, but largely tangential to NGO knowledge sharing as a topic in its own right. Thus Watkins et al. (2012, 285) argue that what is distinctive about NGOs (and donors)as organisations “derives from the special uncertainties they face due to the environments in which they operate, the goals they pursue, and the social and material technologies they employ”. Uncertainty, as a built-in organisational challenge , but being magnified in societies experiencing conflict, the threat of conflict or socio-economic and political fragility suggests the need for knowledge resulting from knowledge sharing and exchange as the more pressing, but its practicalities at risk. Zbucnea et al. (2020, 182), for example, surveying NGOs experiencing external environments in states of flux in Greece and Romania, explore how NGO operations “need to enclose the very knowledge created from each day on the field — an asset that is not easily found in any other type of organization”. In earlier work, Fast(2007) examined the more precise nature of insecurity of NGOs in conflict settings, finding four risk factors that NGOs face:(carrying out multiple types of activities and providing material aid; operationality, working with both sides of the conflict; and integrating into the local community; each factor with knowledge sharing (or withholding) implications.

At best, it is the literature’s emphasis of the importance of inclusion of as many “voices” as possible in NGOs’ decision-making and operations in conflict settings that comes closest to considerations of knowledge sharing as an NGO organisational imperative in those settings. This literature includes perspectives ranging from cultural to humanitarian and entrepreneurial NGO work. Thus “reconstructing cultural heritage in conflict zones, and “inclusion of local stakeholders — regardless of their political stances or geographical distribution — in making decisions as to whether or not to reconstruct.....to ensure that

communities feel that they are connected to the future heritage and will serve to enhance the social cohesion of the wounded society,” (Munawar, 2017, 43).

Thorpe (2020, 939), from the location of an Afghan NGO, examines “how development workers and volunteers make meaning of risk in specific contexts”; exploring differences between local and foreign staff perceptions of risk, in fourteen in depth interviews, and offering a gendered analysis of risk for women development workers in Afghanistan”. For NGOs seeking to make life-saving decisions based on the calculation of risk, this paper evidences the need to also create space for the voices of local and foreign staff whose experiences of risk will be highly relational, embodied, gendered and context specific” (ibid.). Further, in their literature review of entrepreneurship in conflict and post conflict, Aldairany et al. (2018, 361), draw attention to the need to examine “ how entrepreneurship in (these settings) could differ from or be similar to stable co texts”; and to the bi-directional nature of the relationship between entrepreneurship and conflict, the former able to play a critical role in such contexts, but those contexts capable of pushing entrepreneurs’ departure.

The size of this gap in the literature — perhaps better described as an absence from the NGO-conflict analysis and discussion — is then both considerable and difficult to interpret. While no literature is going anywhere near citing knowledge sharing in such circumstances as a luxury activity, the likely prioritisation of rafts of formal knowledge sharing structures (meetings, surveys, board-donor events) in conflict settings is unlikely; but perhaps more an indirect casualty of the conflict than a deliberate closure of communications channels. Alternatively, new forms of knowledge sharing may emerge for the first time in conditions of extremis, (for example, about survival and preservation of important organisation artefacts or belongings). However , these are not cited in the literature identified so far, and may of necessity be highly short term in organisational value.

Limitations of the study

Our focus on a single — and singular — pioneering women-led NGO in Gaza, rooted in international development support, funded by a significant external donor and responding, through innovation, to intractable Gazan experiences of chronic lack of employment may raise questions of generalisability. As an exemplary case, however, the extent of close-up context-dependent data offers the opportunity to apply findings on beneficiaries’ knowledge sharing perspectives and opportunities to other OPT based NGOs in this field; and to assess

for example the importance of beneficiaries' concerns about sharing their criticisms as well as their gratitude; and the organisational climates for enabling such sharing to occur.

Moreover, as a pilot study, with an expected feature regarding the small numbers of research participants, generalisability considerations may reasonably be balanced alongside to the learning to be derived from the particular research methods practices in use — as Malmqvist et al. (2019) puts bluntly, 'the mistakes'. Questions surrounding remote research relationships, assessing the extent of the depth of understanding regarding social resilience and intra-organisation knowledge sharing that we attained, the challenge of interpretation of gender perspectives, and our response are discussed below.

Researchers may begin research by addressing an important but often overlooked question: how the research topic would be received by participants involved. For example, when conducting qualitative studies on caregiving for dementia.

The limitations of any study conducted remotely, whether web-based or through exchange of documents, are also recognised widely, for example precluding opportunity to supplement or complement the research process through research observation in real time and over time, and constraints on understanding in interviews. Although we had a triangulation opportunity, in relation obtaining both trainees' and trainees' perspectives, this proved very difficult to achieve with any certainty. In part this was affected by the small numbers, but possibly also by GGateway's selection of interviewees, who it would be reasonable to expect, would be among 'the best', and broadly shared views. Also, for this study, conducted only in English, English was the second language for respondents, and although this was resolved with the use of translation support, deeper probing in some of the interviews themselves was not always possible.

Moreover, gaining deeper understanding in key areas of trainees' experiences was bound to be limited. This seemed especially so in the case of gender challenges contained in trainees' accounts, such as needing permission to leave the house, or unable to take up a scholarship abroad unless a scholarship was awarded at the same time to the respondent's brother. Other aspects of gender challenges appeared unexpectedly, for example the possibility that male relatives would attend trainee interviews. Although we believe that this was avoided we cannot be certain; and this seems an unavoidable possibility in remote 'one to one' interviews, when Zoom and other systems are in use. Of course, some trainees may have wished to be so accompanied, given that we were using a male interviewer; although such a

wish was not expressed to us. We felt strongly that it was impossible as researchers to really live such experiences in a series of single interviews. Similarly, in both pre and post conflict interviews, but especially the latter, deeper interrogation of the word ‘hope’ was always stalled for fear of impacting negatively or destroying respondent aspirations, for example, changing intentions to leave Gaza , to study and work .

Again, while we consulted the literature on research methods and ethics in conflict zones, we faced inevitable limitations as Gaza based conflict developed, with interviews being completed while missile firing took place outside the window. Because the researcher was not in Gaza, and neither of us have experience of living in ‘a Gaza’, we cannot be certain that the extent of our research analysis, and our identification of themes during phase one especially, has given sufficient insight — and sufficient justice — to our research participants’ perspectives. Thematic analysis for this study was dependent on our own analytic approach (we did not invite GGateway colleagues or respondents to comment on our chosen themes; and we have earlier drawn attention to the methodological limitations over empathy mapping use in this setting). Therefore the words and phrases of those participants invite a deeper Gaza-contextual interpretation than we feel we have been able to give.

For any NGO or NPO , time spent in research partnerships, especially where these are independent of any funder requirement (such as project evaluation) means work foregone and costs, indirect or direct, incurred. Although our grant funding was able to provide a limited recompense for GGateway’s costs incurred in selecting, organising and facilitating respondent contacts and interviews in both phases, we are aware that GGateway’s contribution went well beyond any costed time and effort involved, and most especially in phase two.

Such limitations are found across the majority of remotely conducted research, where dependency relationships (found in any research project, at a distance or face to face) , in establishing and sustaining research access and research focus. Importantly however, they must be seen alongside the limitations imposed on a larger scale by the barriers affecting research within and on the OPT, and especially in Gaza Jebril’s “insider/outsider “analysis, published online in December 2021 emphasises with precision the impact these barriers have on any such research, and is quoted here at length, since it so closely mirrors our experience: “the difficulty of accessing Gaza and its turbulent conditions have limited academic research, making it very fragmented” (Jebril, 2021, np). That fragmentation is

illustrated all too clearly in findings of the pre- and post-conflict research phases , where two distinct and particular realities are articulated but also collide, each to challenge the ‘picture’ which the research has been presenting .

Jebriel is blunt concerning the outcomes of such studies . These become “splintered in terms of their time, space, sources and topic focus, making it very difficult for a researcher in any field in Gaza to develop a coherent and comprehensive narrative of the situation,” (ibid.). She further underlines the challenge of the continuously changing political circumstances, “some of which can be so dramatic that they render it necessary to change the analysis of the data that has just been completed. In this race for updates and their implications, the researcher ends up exhausted, but also faced with the reality that the outdated literature they have drawn on may become even more outdated than at the start of the research.”

It is out of the question for us to claim any sense of ‘exhaustion’, in the light of the circumstances being faced by our individual respondents and GGateway as our research partner. Nevertheless, Jebriel’s analysis holds true for us, with its emphasis that research in this particular context must very properly be understood as “exploratory”. For us, this is in the sense of providing a ‘first’ or, at least, an ‘early’ look at a topic or area about which relatively little is known — beneficiary perspectives on knowledge sharing in NGOs; but with the growing awareness that the wider question of organisational knowledge sharing in conflict zones has come to be prominent in its own right; and may be changing the “comprehensive narrative” of organisational life in Gaza that has proven to be so difficult to secure.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The context of the UN Sustainability Development Goals

UN SDGS 8.17, 4 and 5 provided the global context for our pilot research. Yet our research's study period included unprecedented global upheavals and local (OPT) experiences of direct conflict; indicative of immense pressures militating against instead of progress towards those Goals, which have special relevance for Gaza and the OPT. The UN's SDG Progress report (2022) has emphasised the immense impediments in expanding ICT skills (SDG 4), and women and girls remaining disproportionately affected by inequalities, struggling with lost jobs and livelihoods and derailed education (SDG5). "Although youth 17 represented only 13% of total employment before the crisis, they made up 34.2% of the 2020 decline in employment. Meanwhile, both technical and vocational education and on-the-job training suffered massive disruption, forcing many young people to quit their studies" (UN, 2022, 11; SDG 8).

Unsurprisingly, the UN report stresses the "urgent need for scaled up international cooperation to find lasting solutions" (UN, 2022, 27; SDG 17). The report's blunt overview (UN, 2022, 4) that in the efforts to meet the SDGs "we stand on the precipice of a critical moment", either failing to deliver commitments or "turbo-charging efforts to rescue the SDGs", stands as apposite as much for the findings of our limited pilot study as it does for the world, globally.

An 'over-researched' setting and its implications

In the light of these major struggles to meet SDGs globally, our discussion of findings demonstrates the snapshot-like, small scale research, part of the "splintered" type of study, to which Jebril (op. cit.) refers. Following this critique we must also take into account the charge that OPT-based research occurs in an "over-researched" place; with the further limitations that that implies. De Bárcena Myrsep (2022, 81) makes this argument in relation to the OPT West Bank, where " infrastructure, funding opportunities, and constant interest in the conflict has standardised the West Bank as an over-researched field". Here, she highlights "the foreign researcher's position and lack of agency", producing obstacles to research that include auto-ethnography: the colonial continuity of research in the West Bank, and differential power relationships in access to the field (ibid.).

By extension, this charge may be seen to apply to Gaza also. De Bárcena Myrsep 's work, published while our final research report was in draft, has thus raised questions as to whether there is in fact “too much of us” within this research story; and whether we have succeeded fully in “prioritising the experiences of people from this area over outsider top-down narratives about it”, by including our own reflections and decisions, and have been “doing justice to interviewees”, as Jebril (op. cit., np) requires. This is a matter of judgment for our readers, and above all, for our research partners.

The research partnership; questions of normality, locality and partnership working

We also recognise our debt to our research partners, GGateway, for their major and ongoing commitment to our work, with minimal recompense from our funding support, and against the background that their role as a leading, innovative NGO in Gaza's straitened circumstances makes them a 'target' for external research interest. The connections established with GGateway colleagues, trainees and trainers has been the basis for knowledge sharing in its own right with us . These have offered critical insights that have especially drawn our attention to the importance of debating what is 'normal' in their working environment; and of understanding what is 'local' and why it matters in the Gazan context.

The transitory and elusive nature of what is 'normality' for all GGateway's stakeholders has been demonstrated over and over again by our shared research exchanges. On the one hand, trainees' finding and winning contracts with clients, families assured of incomes, high level technical expertise passing successfully to motivated learners ; on the other , planning to leave or abandon Gaza, balancing conservative family and community demands with legitimate career and employment aspirations, and deep dependence on fragile infrastructures (such as transport ,power and human service).

These exchanges have shown us that 'normality' for GGateway's stakeholders is a continually negotiated position, where organisational and personal development still appear to be prominent. Nevertheless, in the light of our phase two findings we raised a series of questions which could be addressed usefully to GGateway's funders, including the World Bank. As set out earlier, these may be drawn together under the broad heading of what GGateway's funders /donors expect to see as 'normality' for their social investment in this conflict zone. In particular, whether, after upsurges in violence experienced in Gaza, it is indeed 'normal' and expected for GGateway and its trainees to pick themselves up and

begin again. In the light of the overarching Sustainability Development Goals which contributed to this research's original rationale, it would be paradoxical if donors' sustainability goals were built solely on such expectations. Moreover, exploring donors' modelling of 'normality' in such settings would begin to address the further paradox highlighted by UNCTAD (*ibid.*), that damage control, humanitarian interventions and budget support by donors have been taking priority at the expense of development support.

The question of the importance of locality for GGateway was also gleaned from our experience of the research partnership as it progressed. Our preparatory leadership interviews emphasised that "We are very proud that we are local. We are not International. People sometimes confuse GGateway as being an international NGO, but we explain to them that we are a local organisation but we try to work with International standards." Whilst this demonstrated a factor in sustaining the social resilience expressions we subsequently heard and found, it has strong links to the 'normality' considerations and has implications for ID-based organisational knowledge sharing. Opportunities for GGateway to share their trainees' knowledge outside their organisational boundaries may well be limited by their emphasis on their local status, given that greater prominence for this purposes seems awarded predominantly to international rather than local NGOs (See Harrow and Sola, 2022).

Our valuing — indeed reliance on — the extensive commitment to the research process and its on-site managerial demands shown by GGateway also underlines the importance of recognising the challenges and the risks in research partnership working as well as the rewards. The extensive research access which GGateway facilitated was itself a reward — but largely we feel, for us. Fransman and Newman (2019) have begun a vital scrutiny and debate concerning the drive for research partnerships between academics and practitioners, (including the Global Challenges Research Fund requirements, which supported this work), bringing critical attention to inequitable, even damaging partnerships, in order to understand and improve partnerships. From a literature which includes advocacy of the 'engaged excellence' that research partnerships bring, Fransman and Newman go on to explore its development in British public policy contexts and to propose "a systematic analysis of the interrelationship between what counts as evidence and dynamics of participation" (*op. cit.*, 523). In analysing seven case studies, Fransman and Newman found (international) NGOs looking to research partnerships as providing research as a catalyst for

change , while academic participants saw research as a means of exploring the types of change that are needed. As researchers, although we already represent the academic/ practice perspective, this differentiation is crucial in any consideration of how our research partnership has worked.

The findings and the literatures

Our discussion of the findings from two research phases, the one unexpected and brought about by the upsurge in what Veronese et al. (2021, 293) as “a context characterised by ongoing low-intensity warfare”, have pointed to both reinforcement from and gaps in the literatures, notably on the nature of beneficiaries in NGO relations, and in the understandings of knowledge sharing in organisations as hitherto and fundamentally a matter of relative organisational and social-contextual stabilities. Benjamin’s (op. cit.) emphasis on beneficiaries in NGOs as prominent organisational actors is critical for this study, which (by virtue of trainees’ responses) also confirms her consideration that NGOs, in reporting to funders, should “lean more toward beneficiaries” (ibid., 1225), in considering outcomes. This was an aspect demonstrated over and over again by the individual, familial and generally confidence-based outcomes that trainees reported in phase one; as well as their stress on the importance of the soft skills they were gaining, seen as largely under reported to funders.

Nevertheless, the overall ambiguity that Benjamin contents surrounds the beneficiary concept remained; reflected in our report’s usage of ‘trainee’ and ‘beneficiary’ interchangeably (because both applied at the same time); and in our suggestions that the trainers, while intermediaries for knowledge sharing, could also be seen as organisation/ funder beneficiaries, yet were not in that spotlight. Given the framing of the phase one interview questions, questions of organisation accountability to beneficiaries did not arise in any detail; directly although perhaps implicitly , as in Chu and Luke (2018), and their study showing a graduated approach to empowering beneficiaries, that incorporated accountability aspects.

For this study, trainees and trainers’ willingness to contribute thoughts , experiences and ideas (as knowledge sharing broad understood) to GGateway was expressed widely; albeit hedged by caution for some trainees (the ‘gratitude’ issue especially); and by a certain disappointment by the small trainer group, given inability to access funders with ideas and a

corresponding lack of interaction between and with Gaza academic institutions. (We note, however, that this latter point is itself a complex issue in Gaza).

As channels of knowledge and knowledge sharing, although that knowledge appeared as incremental contributions in the GGateway context, trainees especially confirmed the view of Mooketsane et al. (2018) that as beneficiaries they were in fact a 'pivot' for organisational attention, but not solely in accountability terms but in pro-active contributions of ideas and experiences that were seeking more continuous, perhaps less formal outlets than were currently available to them.

Whether such an ongoing form of knowledge sharing (by trainees and trainers) could progress to the point of obtaining 'beneficiary led aid', as Flint and Natrup consider (ibid.) remains uncertain, not least as the research programme did not incorporate access to GGateway's funders. As some of that knowledge sharing would include uncertainties and organisational criticisms (for example around trainee groupings, expectations across the experience range, formal requirements for moving upwards with the training programme, differential trainer knowledge or commitment), direct access to donors may not be feasible — not as a GGateway barrier, but because of donors ' preference for 'success' in social innovation (see Morrar and Baba, 2022, concerning donor driven social innovation in Palestinian NGOs).

We turn to the absence in the knowledge sharing literature of distinctive attention to what happens to and the nature of KS in conflict zones. We suggest that the case made for NGO organisation knowledge sharing has been rooted too far in Western organisational and management models, tasks and hierarchies to be of very great value to NGOs living with conflict in their daily organisational lives, and where the context of the 'conflict' has become so "normal" and "daily routine" that the local organisations and beneficiaries are able to say that they were born during the conflict and have not experienced anything else. Also that the gap between advocacy of knowledge sharing and the considerations for enabling it to take place (the 'how' of KS) , again largely initially from Western models , has been too thin, or insufficiently adaptable to non Western settings, even relatively stable ones. Thus conflict escalation especially may be the organisational opportunity to discard or just cease knowledge sharing practices, if they were in operation in the first place.

This topic's absence is likely to be a function of the immense difficulty for researchers in gaining, or completing research access for such a study purpose. Nor is the absence of

knowledge sharing in organisations in conflict zones a lone example of such a literature gap. (See for example, Kolk and Lenfant (2012) examining how in business-NGO partnerships literature “insights have been obtained only from research in “stable” contexts”” rather than “conflict-ridden settings”; the latter’s volatility and complexity requiring a greater degree of understanding of the backgrounds of and challenges for such partners).

New approaches to organisational knowledge sharing in conditions of extremis, are thus suggested, to be distinctive from that relating to knowledge sharing in conditions of stability. Such a literature , in those extremis situations may also document and reflect on whether ‘conventional ‘ KS is all but or entirely abandoned, whether it is indeed worthwhile or misleading (perhaps another signal of apparent ‘normality’ in an NGO) , whether it switches focus fully towards organisational survival (in which case , the role of organisational memory may play a more prominent part than technically-led knowledge); with its perspectives prioritising organisational survival and preservation of important organisation artefacts or belongings.

New contributions to this literature lacuna may come from the small scale in depth interviews of NGO ‘people’, a notable feature of a number of studies cited in this section; and with strong researcher recognition that research participation by respondents in such circumstances is itself an act of individual and organisational generosity. Generosity is itself a central element enabling knowledge sharing.

This research, unexpectedly and very sadly, had to adjust itself from “knowledge sharing in a conflict zone” to knowledge sharing “through a conflict”. Even though the researchers were not in the Gaza during the research, the experience was deeply unsettling. It is important to restate this was a pilot study. Given the small scale nature of the study, the findings of this research are substantial and highlight the importance of engaging with the reality of the experience of the beneficiaries (pre and post conflict) that the donor organisations wish to serve, rather than place expectations on NPOs and NGOs from the secondary reality of the international ‘safe zone’ of the donor.

As a pilot, beyond our discussions of its limitations and the centrality of our research partners’ roles in and perspectives on our work, we recognise that as outsider researchers we have been reconstructing our research respondents’ perspectives and accounts. In particular, we are very cautious about the identification of ‘sumud’ contained within our research participants’ responses, whether as a relatively passive form of fortitude , (in

English possibly the equivalent of 'stickability'), or as underpinning the development of activist personas for social change. Similarly while the trainees' described experiences in phase one may be equated with the coping, adaptive and transformative capacities that go to make up social resilience (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013) we are not able to say that in phase two those characteristics were no longer seen in their entirety. Thus it could be argued that the 'coping' elements of social resilience remained, but not through active choice but through lack of any real alternatives. Thus "where will we hide next time?" is both a real and a rhetorical question. On further reflection, the very willingness of the phase two participants even to take part in a further round of research meetings, was itself a signal of coping, and in itself, extraordinary. Given these uncertainties, we suggest that questions of, and expectations regarding, 'sumud' and 'social resilience' generally are for donors to reflect on in detail, regarding the realities and reasonableness of their expectations of NPOs and NGOs and beneficiaries' behaviours and states of mind in operating in conflict zones, notably where rounds of physical rebuilding often feature.

Within that reconstruction, nevertheless, we have identified powerful messages. One of the most powerful of these is that the research participants are not seeking donations but seeking to work and be paid for their work. They want a career and an income to support their families. They want independence and not dependence.

Given that the participants in this research were born in a warring, closed Gaza and most of them have never seen a world outside of the experience of Gaza, this research has connected with a very capable and resilient group of young people who are already asking many troubling questions;

How will a generation of young people born in conflict in Gaza continue to eke out a career and create an income for themselves and their families?

What should international donor organisations who want to fund Gaza focus on to support this next generation in their income generating that is growing and living through the conflict in a closed Gaza?

How should international donor organisations manage their local 'educated, trained and skilled' population? Should they help their beneficiaries migrate away from Gaza as they seek a better life and better income for their children?

What are the improvements in the models of philanthropy in Gaza (and other conflict zones) that international donor organisations need to embrace from this research in order to serve their beneficiaries better?

What happens post conflict? Does everything return to the normal?

It is easy to avoid the unsettling questions raised by this research. We would strongly recommend that, from this pilot a substantive, funded research project (or projects) should take place. This would examine two areas, building on the learning of this pilot. First, the relevance, nature of and opportunities for sharing NGOs' /NPOs' organisational knowledge in conflict zones, with reference to the OPT and beneficiaries' voices; to be addressed to and incorporate responses from these NGOs' donors. Such a study could investigate whether NGOs are unique in Gaza, with beneficiaries likely repositories of under-developed or untapped pre and post conflict organisation knowledge. It could also look to repurposing knowledge sharing and exchange between young people in Gaza, directed towards donor organisations already investing or wishing to invest in Gazan society.

Second, to consider why the problems faced by young people in Gaza, as they attempt to create careers and generate incomes, are not addressed increasingly meaningfully and sustainably by funders; as well as how such changes may be facilitated by funders and donors. Paradoxically, it is possible to infer from this pilot study that it is not only the Gazan population which faces "going round and round in circles, with the circles getting closer and closer" (the perspective from the preliminary leadership interviews). This experience of circularity seems to apply to the donors and funders operating in this conflict zone, given that they are likely to be faced with the continual "non-normal normal" of rebuilding and re-equipping both people and infrastructure, after damage and destruction.

This second study or studies would address the questions which young people have themselves posed during this pilot work, and which we have cited above, collectively, as 'troubling questions'. In part they are troubling because they incorporate the kinds of questions that are a very long way from the conventional research questions, around which bounded research studies can be undertaken. Of these, 'what happens post conflict — does everything return to normal?' is an organisational challenge for donors and NGOs. The young women in Gaza in our study (and the young men) have no other option but to continue to seek the best training options which will offer them the best sources of income to feed their families. If these 'troubling' questions are not answered, then that option will

be likely increasingly narrowed and support yet further departures for Gaza and the OPT, where feasible, and further hasten the de-development already underway. At the end of our pilot study, there remains one question, posed by GGateway trainees who await the next cross border conflict, that encapsulated their despair, that we felt compelled to record:

“where will we hide, next time...?”

Next steps

In the light of, and to follow-up from our pilot, into substantive studies, we recommend the following funded research approaches and related questions.

- An examination of the perspectives of donors who continue to, or wish to invest in Gaza. What does their knowledge sharing look like? What are the overlaps in, and possibilities for, integration of knowledge sharing perspectives between donor, local implementing organisation and the beneficiaries? What are, and what should be, donors’ expectations of organisational or individual beneficiary fortitude and social resilience among those receiving donor investment; and with what implications for individuals, organisations and the value and impact of these donor investments?
- An expansion from this pilot study, extending to include other NGOs in Gaza and/or West Bank. Can the findings of this research be replicated in other NGOs in Gaza and/or the West Bank? How unique are the findings of this research? To what extent would the knowledge sharing findings from this research be of value to other NGOs in Gaza and the West Bank, their beneficiaries and donors?
- A consideration of whether, and how, the findings of this research contrast and compare with knowledge sharing experiences and perspectives of NGOs and donors operating in other international cross border conflict zones? A particular instance would be examining organisations and donors operating in communities within Israel, affected by the same cross border conflict, how they are affected and what, if any, does their knowledge sharing look like?
- A development of a systematic rather than narrative literature review on the nonprofit and non governmental, donor and beneficiary perspectives on organisational knowledge sharing in conflict zones.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Invitation to participate



Strengthening nonprofits' knowledge sharing in a conflict zone: Gaza and the field of youth development.

Research Funded by UK 'Global Challenges Research Fund', 2020-2021.

VERSION 26 February 2021

Invitation to Participate in Research for TRAINEES

Attached:

- 1- Research overview protocol for potential research participants
- 2 - Informed consent

For the attention of ...

Professor Jenny Harrow, Rasha Abu Safieh, and I are delighted to invite you [name] to participate in our pilot research case study as we seek to strengthen and understand knowledge sharing among beneficiaries and funders of a youth income-generating programme in a conflict zone: Gaza.

Our research intends to understand how beneficiaries learn from their programme, how donors learn from their giving, how this knowledge learning is shared within the organisations and through local/regional philanthropic networks.

The research is a collaboration between The Business School, City, University of London, the Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy at Cass, the Academy of Philanthropy, GGateway. The research is funded by "UK Global Challenges Research Fund 2020-2021".

For Kteily Hawa et al (2020), "Palestinians in the Gaza Strip continue to cope with persistent violations of their social, economic, political, and civil rights"; and the literature for this field is found more widely in humanitarian and development studies, rather than in business development, management or futures studies. We hope that this research and your involvement will help us strengthen youth income-generating programmes within the Gaza blockade.

Our research is a pilot study, a case study of GGateway focusing on GGateway's young women trainees and giving voice to this group's knowledge sharing opportunities and potential in their organizational context, as a hitherto untapped resource for widening significantly the knowledge sharing capabilities among income-generating programmes in Gaza; with implications for managerial and funder (donor) learning, programme enhancement and learning.

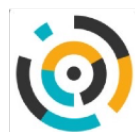
We hope to complete the interviews, online, by mid April 2021. After the research, we will provide a copy of our research paper to you and, if appropriate and practical, a regional presentation for interested organisations. We also expect the findings to be reported at various workshops and conferences around the world such as the Global Donors Forum 2021, and Cass Business School in the UK.

Let me thank you in advance for your support. If you have some questions and would like to discuss your participation in the research, let me know a good time to call you. If you would like to join our research, please read and sign the attached consent form, and return as a pdf. We will contact you for a suitable meeting time for the first stage of the research. The research interview structure will be in the form of three journal style weekly calls approximately 90 mins each in length. Little or no preparation is needed. More information will be provided during the first call.

On behalf of the Research Steering Group, Professor Jenny Harrow, Rasha Abu Safieh and myself, warmest regards to you [and your team].

Dr Yunus Sola, Director, Academy of Philanthropy

Appendix 2: Participant consent form (English version)



**Strengthening nonprofits' knowledge sharing in a conflict zone:
Gaza and the field of youth development.**

Research Funded by UK 'Global Challenges Research Fund', 2020-2021.

VERSION 26 February 2021

Informed Consent prior to Interview (All Participants)

REC reference number: ETH2021-0951

RESEARCH PROJECT: Knowledge sharing among beneficiaries and funders of a youth income-generating programme within the Gaza blockade

Name of principal investigator Professor Jenny Harrow, Field Researcher Dr Yunus Sola

Please initial or tick box

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information (Research Protocol Document, dated 26 February 2021) concerning the above study	
2	I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions which have been answered satisfactorily.	
3	I understand that my participation in individual interviews is voluntary throughout the research process and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without being penalised or disadvantaged.	
4	I understand that data from the interview process concerning me will be anonymised and that I will not be identified individually, in published research.	
5	I agree to the recording of the interview process, for the purposes of confirming and refining the interview content <u>only</u> on the understanding that the recording will not be used as supplementary data, and will be deleted by the Researcher once transcription has been completed.	
6	I understand that I will be provided with a copy of the written transcription of the interview process in which I have participated ; and that I will have the opportunity to withdraw or amend any of the content of that transcript, before it is subject to data analysis by the researchers	
7	I understand that the data analysis process, in preparing for the research report, may include direct quotations, which will be anonymised and therefore not attributable to me as an individual.	
8	I understand that at the conclusion of the research and prior to completion of the draft research report, a focus group will be convened for the purpose of briefing the research participants on research findings.	
9	I agree to maintain the confidentiality of focus group discussions.	
10	I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data at any time up to the date of publication	
11	I understand that I will receive a copy of the draft research report, before its publication, for which purpose my contact details will be retained.	
12	I understand that the published report will be available on open access via the Web, and that this will include the anonymised data	
13	I agree to City recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) explained in the participant information/Research Protocol and my consent is conditional on City complying with its duties and obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	
14	I agree to take part in the above study.	

Signed

Participant Name/Signature

date:

Researcher: Name/Signature

date: