Abstract

This paper examines the critical need to integrate the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) approach with local knowledge to improve the effectiveness of refugee aid programs. It analyses the foundational principles of the GPC method in conjunction with the valuable insights provided by indigenous knowledge systems, proposing a comprehensive model to align global strategies with local realities. The study highlights the multifaceted advantages of this integrated approach through an extensive literature review and illustrative case studies from various contexts, including Afghanistan, Jordan, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Indonesia. Particular emphasis is placed on the Rohingya refugee situation in Aceh, which serves as a pivotal case study demonstrating the transformative potential of incorporating local wisdom.
into program design. The paper advocates for a participatory model that prioritizes the active involvement of displaced communities in decision-making processes, ensuring that aid programs are culturally competent and responsive to refugees’ specific needs. Key recommendations are provided for a wide range of stakeholders—policymakers, practitioners, organizations, and donors—emphasizing the importance of collaborative partnerships, adaptive program design, and community-led initiatives. The findings suggest that by embracing local knowledge and fostering inclusive participation, refugee aid programs can achieve greater sustainability and effectiveness, ultimately contributing to more resilient and empowered displaced populations.

**Keywords:** Empowerment; Legitimacy; Local Faith Actors; Humanitarian Approach; Integration.

### A. Introduction

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) approach is a framework developed by the United Nations to coordinate and enhance protection services for displaced populations. It aims to ensure timely protection for refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. The GPC operates under shared responsibility, addressing issues such as physical safety, legal protection, and access to essential services.

The GPC method significantly simplifies worldwide initiatives to safeguard and support refugees. However, it is vital to recognise the complex issues displaced populations encounter. Refugees face both immediate dangers of conflict and persecution as well as enduring challenges such as poor living conditions, limited education and healthcare, and the breakdown of communal and cultural bonds due to exile.

placed require a sophisticated and culturally aware reaction that surpasses standardised worldwide methods.³

The need for a harmonised approach arises from acknowledging that a universal strategy may not adequately deal with the intricacies of refugee aid.⁴ Refugees frequently possess valuable local knowledge, cultural customs, and resilience that can significantly enhance their well-being and the effectiveness of aid programmes.⁵ Therefore, integrating global tactics with local understanding is crucial for developing a thorough and durable solution to the issues encountered by displaced communities.

This integration is essential for addressing the constraints of a solely top-down strategy. Global strategies offer important principles but may not completely encompass the complexities of local situations, leading to programmes that are out of touch with the actual circumstances.⁶ By integrating local expertise, including indigenous knowledge, traditions, and community structures of displaced popu-

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lations, assistance programmes can be more contextually relevant and effective.\(^7\)

In the subsequent sections of this article, we delve into a comprehensive analysis of the Global Protection Cluster approach, evaluating its strengths and limitations. We explore the concept of local wisdom in the context of refugee assistance, showcasing examples where integrating indigenous knowledge has yielded positive outcomes. Building on this foundation, we propose a model for harmonising global and local approaches, drawing on interdisciplinary research and real-world case studies. Through this exploration, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on optimising refugee assistance by advocating for a holistic and collaborative approach that acknowledges the significance of local wisdom in the pursuit of effective and sustainable solutions.

### B. Methodology

This study uses a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to investigate the harmonisation of the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) approach with local wisdom in refugee assistance. A mixed-methods research design was adopted to capture the intricacies of the GPC approach and local wisdom. The interdisciplinary approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how the GPC can be harmonised with local wisdom, fostering effective and culturally sensitive programs.

It also incorporates detailed case studies of past and ongoing refugee assistance programs that have successfully integrated local wisdom with the GPC approach, which could offer practical examples of challenges and best practices. Analysing these case studies could provide valuable lessons and actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners. A comparative study has been executed to help identify scalable and adaptable strategies that can be applied in different contexts. Conducting a comparative analysis of regions or coun-

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tries where the GPC approach has been implemented with varying degrees of integration of local wisdom could highlight the factors that contribute to successful outcomes.

C. Literature Review

1. Global Protection Cluster Approach

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) is essential in humanitarian operations, especially in challenging situations, by enhancing coordination, sharing information, and increasing emergency response capabilities.\(^8\) The Cluster Approach emphasises the cooperation of different entities, such as middle power-NGO coalitions, to impact global policy and tackle humanitarian concerns.\(^9\) The application of the health cluster model in northern Uganda and other crises has demonstrated the ability to enhance health coordination. However, it also underscores the necessity for consistent funding, robust collaborations, and political dedication.\(^10\) The Cluster Approach model has been effective in promoting coordination in humanitarian aid, as demonstrated in the response to the Kermanshah earthquake in Iran.\(^11\)

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) plays a crucial role in coordinating and enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts, particularly in the field of child protection. The GPC’s coordination

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\(^11\) Iman Farahi-Ashtiani and others, ‘Cluster Approach Model for Promoting Coordination in Humanitarian Aid; Following the Kermanshah Earthquake, Iran, 2017’, *Trauma Monthly*, 25.6 (2020).
efforts are further supported by the cluster approach, which has been proposed as a solution to the lack of coordinated disaster response in the field of humanitarian logistics.\textsuperscript{12} Protection clusters aim to coordinate and implement preparedness and reaction measures effectively, ensuring that protection is a central component of humanitarian efforts and is considered crucial in any intersection with development and peace initiatives to reach solutions.

The Global Cluster Lead Agency for Protection is the UNHCR. In this role, UNHCR is accountable for overseeing and directing other UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, and intergovernmental organisations that take part in the GPC. Other agencies have been appointed as focal point agencies for particular Areas of Responsibilities (AoRs) based on their thematic expertise, which are: (1) Gender-Based Violence AoR (GBV AoR); (2) Child Protection AoR (CP AoR) and Its Approach; (3) Housing, Land and Property AoR (HLP AoR); and (4) Mine Action AoR (MA AoR).

The GPC approach stands as a critical framework within international refugee assistance, providing a structured and collaborative mechanism for addressing the protection needs of displaced populations.\textsuperscript{13} Numerous studies emphasise the collaborative nature of the GPC, which brings together various stakeholders, including United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and governmental bodies. UNHCR underlines its role as a coordination mechanism, facilitating the coherent provision of protection services to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) globally.\textsuperscript{14} They note the GPC’s significance in ensuring that the diverse needs of displaced populations, ranging from physical safety to access to essen-


\textsuperscript{13} J. A. Ratkovic, \textit{GPS Guidance Package}, 2015.

tial services, are addressed in a coordinated manner.

Critics in the literature debate how effectively the GPC converts its ideas into tangible consequences. The International Association of Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) emphasises the difficulties in achieving smooth cooperation among many stakeholders while seeing the GPC as a developing system.\textsuperscript{15} The GPC is criticised for negative coordination between international and national/local organisations and government agencies. They suggest strengthening the GPC’s role in capacity building, coordination measures, local engagement, recruitment, and simplification of protection coordination.\textsuperscript{16} This indicates a requirement for a more detailed comprehension of the GPC’s influence and possible areas for enhancement.

2. Local Wisdom in Refugee Assistance

Local wisdom, as defined by various scholars, encompasses the knowledge, values, and customs of a local community.\textsuperscript{17} It is a cru-

\textsuperscript{15} ‘Coordination and Collaboration with the GPC: The next 5 Years’ <https://phap.org/PHAP/PHAP/Events/OEV2019/OEV191126.aspx> [accessed 3 March 2024].


cial aspect of identity and personality, particularly in the face of globalisation. In the context of Islamic law in Indonesia, local wisdom is considered a source of law as long as it aligns with the principles of Islam. Local wisdom also plays a significant role in environmental management and cultural development.

Local wisdom in the context of refugee assistance is a complex and often overlooked aspect of humanitarian aid. Wurtz & Wilkinson highlight the need to recognise and integrate the approaches and practices of local actors, including faith-based and refugee-led organisations, in refugee assistance.\(^\text{18}\) Bakewell\(^\text{19}\) emphasises the importance of understanding the local perspective and context in assessing relief interventions, while Horst\(^\text{20}\) underscores the role of refugees themselves as providers of aid, calling for a shift in the perception of refugees from mere recipients to active agents in the assistance process. These studies collectively underscore the need for a more inclusive and nuanced approach to refugee assistance that incorporates local wisdom and perspectives.

The successful integration of local wisdom into refugee support programs is a complex process that requires a multifaceted approach. Dryden-Peterson et al. emphasise the importance of both locally and globally situated resources in supporting refugees’ educational success, suggesting that virtual relationships can be leveraged to provide needed support.\(^\text{21}\) Hynie underscores the role of settlement policies in shaping the social context for refugee integration, highlighting the


need for policies that challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes.\textsuperscript{22} Green discusses the role of immigrant associations and community organisations in Congo in supporting refugees’ labour market integration but notes the challenges of a fragmented support system.\textsuperscript{23} Binkert et al.\textsuperscript{24} focus on the role of local governments in Ethiopia in the sustainable integration of refugees, highlighting the need for clear leadership and coordination. These studies collectively suggest that successful integration requires a combination of local and global resources, supportive settlement policies, and strong leadership at the local level.

Taylor & Sidhu\textsuperscript{25} further underscore the role of inclusive education in facilitating the resettlement of refugee children, with a model of good practice outlined. Bellino\textsuperscript{26} highlight the impact of global policy shifts on refugee education, particularly in the context of national integration, and the role of local strategies and practices in fostering social integration. Taftaf & Williams explore the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) in connecting young refugees with educational opportunities, noting the potential impact of the urban or camp context on the accessibility of these tools.\textsuperscript{27} These studies collectively underscore the importance of considering both local and global factors, inclusive education, and the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{27} Randa Taftaf and Christy Williams, ‘Supporting Refugee Distance Education: A Review of the Literature’, \textit{American Journal of Distance Education}, 34.1 (2020), pp. 5–18.
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role of technology in refugee support educational programs.

The successful integration of local wisdom into community-led initiatives is a complex process that requires a shift in power dynamics and the recognition of diverse knowledge systems. Tschirhart et al. emphasise the importance of horizontal knowledge exchange, particularly among indigenous communities, as a means of empowering communities to address local environmental and social challenges.\textsuperscript{28} Smith further underscores the value of incorporating local knowledge in health promotion, arguing that it offers unique insights and can influence professional and bureaucratic systems.\textsuperscript{29} Bardy et al. provide a practical example of this integration in the context of sustainable development in Africa, where the use of local community resources and indigenous knowledge has led to economic, social, and ecological benefits.\textsuperscript{30} Yamin extends this discussion to the education sector, advocating for the integration of local wisdom values into the national curriculum to strengthen nationalism.\textsuperscript{31} These studies collectively highlight the need for a more inclusive and participatory approach to community-led initiatives, one that values and integrates local wisdom.

Research has consistently shown the importance of incorporating local wisdom in refugee assistance to ensure culturally sensitive, sustainable, and community-driven solutions. Kienzler et al. emphasises the need for culture-sensitive approaches in mental healthcare.

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and cognitive behavioural therapy, respectively. Nazzal et al. highlight the importance of understanding local perspectives and involving the local population in relief interventions. These studies collectively underscore the value of moving beyond a prescriptive, top-down approach in refugee assistance, and instead, embracing the knowledge and practices of the communities being served.

The international humanitarian discourse is undergoing a paradigm shift, with a growing emphasis on the importance of incorporating local wisdom in refugee assistance. This shift is reflected in the call for a more effective localisation agenda, which requires a deeper understanding of power dynamics at the local level. It also underscores the need to consider local perspectives and interests in the assessment of relief interventions. However, this shift is not without its challenges, as the current discourse on localisation is critiqued for its problematic conceptualisation of the local. Furthermore, the role of refugees themselves in assisting is often overlooked, leading to a focus on their needs rather than their agency.

Incorporating local wisdom in international humanitarian efforts can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Thrupp emphasises the need to recognise and empower local knowledge, while Chin et al. which, coupled with the collision of cultures, indicates the vital need for developing humanitarian knowledge transcending cultures. Given the scarcity of literature addressing such unprecedented issues, this paper thus proposes new, unconventional viewpoints and

future themes at the intersection of knowledge management (KM underscore the importance of cultural intelligence and cross-cultural metacognition in developing humanitarian knowledge. Thrupp discusses the importance of including indigenous knowledge in agricultural development projects, emphasising the need to address socio-political, institutional, and ethical issues while avoiding exploitation by formal institutions. He suggests that efforts to include indigenous knowledge in research and projects are important, but such knowledge is often marginalised due to various factors. Empowerment of people to establish the legitimacy of their knowledge is crucial. Meanwhile, Chin et al. discuss the need for new viewpoints and future themes at the intersection of knowledge management and humanitarian inquiry, emphasising cultural intelligence, cross-cultural metacognition, and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to address disparities between high- and low-income countries in the context of a global public health emergency. She synthesises the importance of cultural intelligence and cross-cultural metacognition in achieving cosmopolitan humanitarian knowledge, calling for further research in developing a normative theory of humanitarian knowledge as a transcendence of cultures.

Furthermore, the literature highlights the transformative potential of collaboration between international organisations and local communities. The transformative potential of collaboration between international organisations and local communities is a complex process. Bryson et al. emphasise the need for cross-sector collaboration to address complex public problems, highlighting the importance of initial conditions, processes, and outcomes. Edwards et al. discuss the role of NGOs in using local delivery to address global challenges, emphasising the need for new relationships and capacities. These studies collectively underscore the potential of collaboration

between international organisations and local communities in driving transformative change but also highlight the need for effective leadership, a global perspective, and new relationships and abilities.

In conclusion, the literature review reveals a rich landscape of research on the Global Protection Cluster and the significance of incorporating local wisdom in humanitarian efforts. While the GPC represents a critical coordination mechanism, there is a growing recognition of the need to complement global strategies with locally grounded approaches. The subsequent sections of this article build upon these insights to propose a model for harmonising the GPC approach with local wisdom, aiming to bridge the gap between global strategies and the contextual richness of local knowledge in refugee assistance.

D. Proposed Model for Harmonizing Global and Local Approaches

In response to the imperative of synergising the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) approach with local wisdom in refugee assistance, a proposed model seeks to bridge the gap between global guidelines and the contextual richness of local knowledge. The model envisions a collaborative and adaptive framework that draws on the strengths of both global and local perspectives. The proposed model advocates for a participatory approach that actively involves displaced communities in decision-making processes. This involves creating platforms for meaningful engagement, where refugees contribute their insights, preferences, and traditional knowledge to shape the design and implementation of assistance programs.

1. Cultural Competence and Sensitivity

Cultural competence and sensitivity are crucial for harmonising local wisdom and international humanitarian efforts for refugees. The study identified various approaches to cultural competence at

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individual and organisational levels, emphasised the importance of refugee participation and perspectives, called for clearer conceptual understanding, and urged further research on the relevance of cultural competence to refugee populations. In particular healthcare settings, the unique needs of refugees must be understood and addressed.\(^{39}\) Healthcare providers lack an understanding of social and ethnic issues in the refugee population, and sociocultural barriers hinder service accessibility and compromise care quality for resettled refugees. A spiritually and culturally centred simulation experience was developed to enhance students’ cultural competence in caring for refugees. A spiritually and culturally centred simulation experience to enhance prelicensure students’ cultural competence and sensitivity in caring for refugees.

Effective communication is a key aspect of cultural competence, requiring an understanding of individual needs within a cultural context.\(^{40}\) This study shows that cultural competency is crucial for healthcare providers working with refugee populations. Cross-cultural communication requires understanding individual needs within a cultural context, and practical tips are provided to improve communication and navigate language barriers. Furthermore, the integration of cultural competence with advocacy for social justice and human rights is essential in caring for vulnerable populations, including refugees.\(^{41}\) Pacquiao states that compassion is the key component for culturally competent advocacy for social justice and human rights protection. This study concludes that: (1) Compassion is identified as the key component for culturally competent advocacy for social justice and human rights protection; (2) Educational strategies for de-

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veloping compassion are centred on collaboration, partnership, and advocacy; and (3) Integration of experiential and didactic learning relevant to culturally competent care for refugees and asylum seekers are recommended.

2. Community Engagement and Participation

Research on community engagement and participation for harmonising local wisdom and international humanitarian efforts for refugees highlights the importance of meaningful involvement and the removal of barriers. It also underscores the potential of refugee-led organisations in providing assistance and the need for their recognition and support. The role of community participation in post-conflict countries is also emphasised, with a focus on the potential of small civic associations to strengthen civil society and enhance democracy. However, there are limitations to refugee participation in promoting gender equality in humanitarian aid, suggesting the need for further exploration of these challenges.

The participation of displaced populations in decision-making processes is a crucial aspect of their rights and well-being. However,

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this participation is often limited, leading to negative outcomes such as decreased food security and environmental degradation.\textsuperscript{47} To address this, indicators and a UN declaration have been proposed to promote refugee participation, and mechanisms for improving social acceptability and communicating livelihood information to decision-makers have been explored.

Furthermore, empowering local leaders and community representatives becomes pivotal in ensuring that the voices of displaced populations are not only heard but also influential in shaping the strategies employed. The empowerment of local leaders and community representatives is crucial in ensuring the influence of displaced populations in decision-making processes. This is particularly important in addressing urban poverty, where local organisations play a key role in finding solutions.\textsuperscript{48} However, the dynamics of empowerment in the context of local environmental hazards are complex, and a partnership approach to decision-making is recommended.\textsuperscript{49} In community development practice, practitioners can either empower or disempower communities, highlighting the need for a critical examination of their roles.\textsuperscript{50}


3. Adaptive Program Design

The need for adaptive program design in humanitarian efforts for refugees is underscored by several studies. Greene et al. emphasise the importance of understanding local culture and context in mental health and psychosocial support programs.\(^5\) Timely literature reviews on traditional health practices, cultural beliefs and attitudes toward mental health and illness can provide international practitioners with crucial background information to improve their capacity to work efficiently and with maximum benefit.

Perera et al. provide a practical framework for culturally adapting low-intensity psychological interventions in humanitarian settings, further emphasising the need for adaptive design.\(^5\) The paper presents a systematic four-step process for culturally adapting low-intensity psychological interventions for use in humanitarian settings, specifically applied to the Problem Management Plus (PM+) intervention for Venezuelan migrants, refugees, and Colombian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Colombia. The results emphasise the importance of cultural adaptation in enhancing the effectiveness and acceptability of psychological interventions. These studies collectively underscore the importance of harmonising local wisdom and international humanitarian efforts through adaptive program design.

4. Capacity Building, Knowledge Exchange, and Resilience

Local capacity building is crucial in humanitarian crises and can be achieved through patronage or partnerships.\(^5\) Patronage or partnership brings a new perspective to the subject of building local capaci-

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\(^5\) I. Smillie, ‘Patronage or Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises.’, 2001 <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Patronage-or-partnership%3A-local-capacity-building-Smillie/dd16becff51d5ab31d31a11ef3be3705ad0e2cb9> [accessed 11 March 2024].
ties in emergency and post-emergency situations. The authors recognise the real trade-offs that exist between aid workers acting quickly amid an emergency, on the one hand, and working to build longer-term local skills. On the other, they find hope and possibilities amidst the prevailing rhetoric and confusion. They critically examine this dilemma from local perspectives drawn from Bosnia, Haiti, Guatemala, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka.

States are reluctant to have new arrivals into their territories. Fauzan concludes that states are hesitant to accept new refugees, leading to uncertainty and a lack of livelihood opportunities for refugees in transit countries. There is a need for capacity building and market intervention through partnerships with private sectors to achieve sustainable refugee management under the SDGs and other global initiatives.

According to Wescott, knowledge exchange among overseas professionals can also contribute to economic development. Overseas professionals can benefit their home countries through social remittances and knowledge exchange. Wescott found that: (1) Developing country governments and international donors are recognising the potential contributions of diasporas to economic development; (2) Attention has been mainly on financial remittances, which are significant compared to official development assistance; (3) Diasporas can also benefit their home countries through social remittances and knowledge exchange, suggesting greater opportunities for gain than currently realised.

Resilience in young refugees is influenced by many aspects. The main findings of the study include the identification of six key

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sources of resilience in young refugees: social support, acculturation strategies, education, religion, avoidance, and hope. These sources play a crucial role in helping young refugees deal with traumatic memories and cope with the challenges of being a refugee in a new country. Social support and education were highlighted as particularly important factors in promoting resilience among young refugees. These findings underscore the importance of capacity building, knowledge exchange, and resilience in harmonising local wisdom and international humanitarian efforts for refugees.

5. Localisation of Services and Collaboration

The localisation of humanitarian efforts, particularly in the context of refugee assistance, is a complex and multifaceted issue. There are many challenges and opportunities of engaging with local actors, such as refugee-led organisations and women’s groups, in the delivery of services. These local actors often face exclusion and lack of recognition, despite their potential to provide meaningful assistance. Gómez further complicates the discussion by questioning the power dynamics and biases inherent in the concept of localisation, suggesting that it may not always lead to a more equitable distribution of resources.57 Libal & Harding provides a practical example of the potential benefits of collaboration between international and local NGOs in addressing the needs of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, emphasising the importance of support from the international community.58 These studies collectively underscore the need for a more nuanced and inclusive approach to the localisation of services, one that takes into account the power dynamics, biases, and potential benefits of engaging with local actors.

The proposed model recognises that harmonising global and

57 Oscar A. Gómez, ‘Localisation or Deglobalisation? East Asia and the Dismantling of Liberal Humanitarianism’, *Third World Quarterly*, 42.6 (2021), pp. 1347–64.
local approaches is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour. It requires a commitment to flexibility, cultural humility, and ongoing collaboration. By actively involving displaced populations in decision-making processes, the model aims to address the limitations identified in the GPC approach, such as power imbalances and potential disconnects between global strategies and local realities. The identified principles and strategies emphasise a shift towards community-driven and culturally sensitive approaches, acknowledging the agency of displaced populations in shaping their futures.

The proposed model for harmonising global and local approaches represents a step towards a more inclusive and effective refugee assistance paradigm. By embracing the strengths of both the GPC approach and local wisdom, the model seeks to create a synergy that not only addresses the immediate needs of displaced populations but also contributes to their long-term well-being and resilience. The following sections of this article delve into real-world case studies to illustrate instances where such harmonisation has yielded positive outcomes or presented valuable lessons.

E. Case Studies

1. Cultural Competence and Sensitivity in Afghanistan Case

Cultural competence is crucial in providing effective and equitable services to Afghan refugees. Cultural competence is widely recognised as important for the provision of effective and equitable services for refugee populations. Lau and Rodgers identified various approaches to cultural competence at individual and organisational levels, emphasised the importance of refugee participation and perspectives, called for clearer conceptual understanding, and urged further research on the relevance of cultural competence to refugee populations. This includes understanding their unique needs and perspectives, as well as the impact of cultural conflicts and loss on their mental health. Alemi et al. highlighted cultural conflicts and

59 Lau and Rodgers, op. cit., p. 130.
loss as antecedents for distress among Afghan refugees, along with unique coping mechanisms.\textsuperscript{60} Quantitative findings showed a moderate to high prevalence of depressive and post-traumatic symptomatology among Afghan refugees. The study emphasised the need for continued mental health research with Afghans, focusing on distress among newly resettled groups, help-seeking behaviours, and culturally relevant strategies for mitigating distress.

Engaging with these refugees requires an understanding of their trauma history and symptoms, as well as the use of interpreters to bridge language barriers. Engaging refugees to develop a positive therapeutic relationship is challenging in primary care. Refugee patients commonly experience mental health symptoms and chronic pain. Crosby argues that successful treatment requires a multidisciplinary approach that is culturally acceptable.\textsuperscript{61} Afghan refugees often have complex needs due to their experiences of trauma and displacement. The development of services to meet the needs of Afghan refugees requires a sophisticated blend of counselling strategies and culturally informed pragmatism. Mehraby noted that the qualitative synthesis described antecedents for distress being rooted in cultural conflicts and loss, and also described unique coping mechanisms.\textsuperscript{62} Quantitative findings indicated a moderate to high prevalence of depressive and posttraumatic symptomatology. These findings support the need for continued mental health research with Afghans that accounts for distress among newly resettled groups, professional help-seeking utilisation patterns, and also culturally relevant strategies for mitigating distress and engaging Afghans in research.

This competence should be informed by a clear understanding

of the refugees’ cultural identity, which can be influenced by stress, acculturation, and changes in personal, ethnic, and social identity. However, the concept of cultural competence in refugee service settings is not always well-defined, and there is a need for greater refugee participation and perspectives in its practice. Effective cross-cultural communication is also essential, requiring an understanding of individual needs within a cultural context.

2. Community-Led Protection Committees in Jordan

The Community Protection Committees (CPC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been successful in promoting rights and protection, particularly for women, through non-confrontational dialogue. However, the challenges faced by local administration units in Jordan, such as capacity building and budgetary problems, highlight the need for effective reform techniques.

In the context of Jordan, the concept of occupational justice is crucial, as seen in a Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program in a Palestinian refugee camp. The challenges of participatory planning and development in Jordan, particularly in refugee camp cities, underscore the resistance from local power structures and the need for inclusive and transparent approaches. Local power structures will resist such a project’s approach because local elites view themselves as gatekeepers to the community.

In response to the Syrian refugee crisis, a project was initiated in Jordan to establish Community-Led Protection Committees (CLPCs) within refugee camps. The committees, comprising both refugees and external humanitarian actors, were tasked with jointly planning, implementing, and evaluating protection interventions. Through regular meetings and collaborative decision-making, CLPCs successfully harmonised global protection guidelines with local knowledge. This approach not only addressed immediate protection concerns but also fostered community resilience and social cohesion.

The success of Community-Led Protection Committees (CLPCs) in Jordan for Syrian refugees is evident in various aspects, such as positive impact of psychosocial support programs on social cohesion between refugees and host communities. The success of Jordan’s policies in facilitating Syrian refugees’ access to the labour market is a key aspect of their integration. The role of community health volunteers in managing non-communicable diseases among Syrian refugees, indicating the effectiveness of community-based health strategies. It shows that CLPCs in Jordan have been successful in promoting social cohesion, facilitating integration, and improving health outcomes for Syrian refugees.

3. Localisation of Legal Aid Services in Uganda

In Uganda, where a significant number of South Sudanese refugees sought protection, a legal aid organisation collaborated with local community leaders to localise legal assistance services. The project involved training local paralegals from the refugee community, equipping them with knowledge of both international and local legal frameworks. These paralegals played a crucial role in providing legal advice, facilitating community workshops, and acting as cul-

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tural liaisons. The integration of local wisdom ensured that legal assistance was culturally sensitive and relevant, addressing barriers that refugees faced in navigating the legal landscape. Challenges included initial scepticism from some international legal practitioners about the efficacy of community-led legal aid. However, the success of the program highlighted the importance of a hybrid model that values both global legal expertise and local contextual understanding.

The success of localising legal aid services in Uganda is a complex issue, influenced by factors such as the capture of resources by local officials, limited citizen participation and accountability in decision-making, and the contradictions of Uganda’s decentralisation program. These challenges are further compounded by the failure of popular justice systems to protect women’s property rights. Therefore, while decentralisation may offer opportunities for local empowerment, it also presents significant obstacles that need to be addressed for the effective localisation of legal aid services in Uganda.

4. Rohingya Integration in Aceh, Indonesia

In the aftermath of the Rohingya crisis, where thousands sought refuge from persecution in Myanmar, Aceh, Indonesia, played a pivotal role in providing humanitarian assistance. Local communities in Aceh, known for their history of facing conflict and displacement, demonstrated solidarity and empathy towards the Rohingya. The case exemplifies a harmonised approach where global actors, including international humanitarian organisations, collaborated with local

communities to address the immediate needs of the displaced population. However, the lack of legal standards for refugee management in Indonesia, including Aceh, poses a significant challenge.\(^4\) The government’s refusal to ratify the 1951 International Refugee Convention further complicates the situation, highlighting the need for a comprehensive legal framework to protect and settle the Rohingya refugees in Aceh.

The handling of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, Indonesia, has been influenced by local wisdom and values, leading to better minimum protection for the refugees.\(^5\) This approach has been further emphasised in subsequent studies, which highlight the role of local wisdom in reducing negative impacts and promoting social justice.\(^6\) The positive acceptance of Rohingya refugees by the Indonesian people, based on religious and humanitarian reasons, underscores the importance of community participation and socialisation in refugee policies.\(^7\)

Local fishing communities in Aceh actively participated in search and rescue operations, exemplifying the collaborative spirit essential for harmonising global and local approaches. The Acehnese local government, along with international organisations, implemented programs that considered the cultural and linguistic nuances of the Rohingya, ensuring their integration into the local community. Chal-


lenges surfaced, including language barriers and cultural differences, emphasising the importance of comprehensive cultural sensitivity training for humanitarian workers. Additionally, there were instances of initial scepticism from some members of the Rohingya community about the efficacy of assistance programs. However, through sustained engagement, trust-building, and participatory approaches, the Aceh case highlights the success of harmonising global protection strategies with the local wisdom of a community that itself has experienced displacement.

F. Analysis and Lesson Learned

These case studies illustrate instances where the proposed model for harmonising global and local approaches has been successfully applied in the refugee protection regime. Common themes include the active involvement of displaced populations in decision-making, collaborative partnerships between international and local actors, and the incorporation of local wisdom into program design. Challenges such as resistance from some international actors and initial scepticism highlight the need for ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between global and local perspectives. Trust-building, capacity-building initiatives, and a recognition of the unique contributions of each stakeholder group emerged as critical components in overcoming challenges.

The Rohingya case in Aceh underscores the adaptability of the proposed model in diverse contexts. The active involvement of local communities, including fishermen and Acehnese residents, showcases the transformative potential when global and local actors collaborate effectively. Challenges related to cultural differences and scepticism within the displaced community emphasise the need for ongoing dialogue, cultural awareness, and community engagement.

This case study contributes to the broader understanding of harmonising global and local approaches to refugee assistance. It emphasises the importance of recognising the unique context of each refugee population and tailoring assistance programs accordingly.
The lessons learned from Aceh provide valuable insights for future endeavours, offering a nuanced perspective on the complexities of integrating global guidelines with local wisdom in the context of refugee protection. These real-world examples offer valuable insights for future endeavours in refugee protection, emphasising the transformative potential of harmonising global and local approaches. The subsequent sections of this article build upon these lessons to propose recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and organisations involved in refugee support.

G. Concluding Remarks

This study emphasises the importance of harmonising global and local approaches to refugee assistance, focusing on the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) approach and local wisdom. The GPC framework is crucial for coordinating and enhancing protection services for displaced populations globally. However, its effectiveness can be improved by incorporating indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. The proposed model seeks to bridge the gap between global guidelines and the contextual richness of local knowledge. The model envisions a collaborative and adaptive framework that draws on the strengths of both global and local perspectives. The proposed model advocates for a participatory approach that actively involves displaced communities in decision-making processes. This involves creating platforms for meaningful engagement, where refugees contribute their insights, preferences, and traditional knowledge to shape the design and implementation of assistance programs.

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