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Exploring Coping Mechanisms in Conditions  
of Displacement: The Struggles and Strengths  
of Pakistani and Somali Refugees in Nepal

Fiona C. Thomas



## **ABSTRACT**

Urban refugees (UR) constitute more than half of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2010). Whilst the literature acknowledges the vulnerabilities surrounding this burgeoning group, minimal attention has been paid to the organically developed coping mechanisms and resilience of this population. This study will aim to counterbalance this trend in the literature and will explore the experiences of Pakistani and Somali URs, two of the largest UR populations in Kathmandu, Nepal. Through individual interviews, focus groups, and Photovoice methodology, 24 URs (n=16 Pakistanis; n=8 Somalis), provided accounts of their experiences and their coping strategies. Notwithstanding the frustrations many faced in their circumstances, the findings illustrate how some find ways of coping, most frequently through primary relationships. This study argues that a lack of legal-recognition and erratic opportunities to uniquely contribute to society impede full coping capacity. This perspective is informed by Axel Honneth's theory on the struggle for recognition. In light of these findings, it is suggested that coping is a function beyond the individual and involves the ability to negotiate recognition through not only primary relationships but also through the legal order and through social networks where one feels they have something of value to contribute. Understanding how URs cope by negotiating access to various forms of recognition in the absence of legal-recognition will enable organisations working with them to leverage such strengths and develop relevant programmes.

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# EXPLORING COPING MECHANISMS IN CONDITIONS OF DISPLACEMENT:

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THE STRUGGLES AND STRENGTHS OF PAKISTANI AND SOMALI  
URBAN REFUGEES IN NEPAL

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 THE CONTEXT – URBAN REFUGEES IN NEPAL

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With a steady movement of the world's population from rural areas to cities and towns, it is unsurprising that there is also a changing face to the distribution of refugees globally. Contrary to the iconic image of refugees in make-shift camps, about fifty percent of the world's 10.5 million refugees, are classified as 'urban refugees' (URs) ("UNHCR policy on refugee protection", 2009). URs, that is, those from either an urban or rural background who are now living in an urban area, are becoming more the norm than the exception (EPAU, 2003).

Looking for anonymity or landing in the city by chance, URs face substantial and unique difficulties. Xenophobia and violence, forced eviction, and arbitrary arrest and detention, are just some of the challenges URs are confronted with in cities ("UNHCR policy on refugee protection", 2009). Not only do URs encounter challenges that are unique from those in refugee camps but by virtue of their origins, education and skill-set, they deserve to be handled differently from camp refugees (Ndege, Kagwanja & Odiyo, 2002).

URs in Nepal are no exception to the above. In the capital of Nepal, Kathmandu, there are approximately 290 URs and asylum-seekers from 12 countries ("UNHCR Nepal Factsheet", 2008). From this number, half are Pakistani and about one-third are Somali (Smieszek, personal communication, 7 April 2010); they constitute the two largest UR populations in Nepal. Both groups, like most refugees, fled their homeland because of persecution. The *Ahmadiyya* Pakistanis were persecuted for their religious beliefs while the Somalis feared for their lives because they belonged to minority tribes in Somalia. *Ahmadiyya* were declared non-Muslim in Pakistan in 1974 (Valentine, 2008). This set the stage for subsequent harassment and discrimination from the general population. Barred from higher education, the right to citizenship and the right to travel, many *Ahmadiyya* have fled to other countries seeking refuge (Valentine).

Whereas the *Ahmadiyya* decidedly sought out refuge in Nepal, the Somalis were smuggled there with hopes of ending up in Europe. Both groups are now in a country that is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees ("UN

Nepal Information Platform”, 2010) and are stuck in a legal and political vacuum. In the absence of any legal framework offering protection for URs (or refugees in general), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides a monthly stipend, medical care through specific facilities, and educational assistance (“UNHCR Nepal Factsheet”, 2008). However, URs cannot obtain legal integration in Nepal, they cannot repatriate (i.e. return to their home country) unless they do so voluntarily, and third-country resettlement takes years. They are not allowed to legally work which exacerbates their already tenuous existence. In such circumstances, psychological displacement is often inevitable.

As a review of the literature in chapter two shows, there is no paucity of research on the increased risk of mental illness refugees in developing countries face. Lacking is an effort to understand refugee resilience in conditions of displacement. Through this research, it is my intention to further understandings of not only the struggles, but also the strengths of URs so that these may be leveraged by individuals and organisations working with them.

## 1.2 PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS & THE RESEARCH QUESTION

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My interest in working with refugee populations stems from previous work experiences with non-profit organisations in Toronto and London. In these positions, I witnessed victims of forced migration and intra-state conflict bear the brunt of debilitating physical and mental health (MH) burdens. I learned that refugees, asylum-seekers and immigrants struggle to access the resources needed to address the emotional and mental shock they face upon arrival. If MH issues were not properly addressed for newcomers in developed countries, how dire was the need in the developing world for effective, humanitarian MH programmes for refugees and asylum-seekers?

In searching for organisations working with refugees in developing countries, I was put in contact with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation-Nepal (TPO-Nepal), whose primary aim is to promote psychosocial well-being and MH amongst conflict-affected and vulnerable communities in Nepal. Nepal itself posed as an interesting context in which to work. Although only recently emerging out of their own civil-conflict, it has witnessed an influx of refugees from Tibet, Bhutan, and multiple surrounding countries. With an already over-burdened healthcare



system, there is little attention to MH care among the general population, let alone refugees. Yet, many refugees not only survive; they manage to develop strengths in their circumstances. The increasing number of URs along with the dearth of information on their resiliency is my point of departure.

Against this background, this work seeks to understand the following: *“What are the main challenges facing urban refugees in Kathmandu? How do they cope in their circumstances?”* Through this thesis I accordingly explore the social-psychological consequences of being a formally non-existent person and the coping strategies URs draw upon to negotiate access to modes of recognition in these conditions.

This paper begins with a review of relevant literature on refugee MH. This will be discussed in light of the excessive emphasis on the biomedical diagnosis of mental ill-health and the consequent pitfalls of focusing on individually-based coping strategies amongst this population. Drawing upon work from Skovdal, Ogutu, Aoro and Campbell (2009), I then discuss the importance of understanding coping strategies beyond the individual. My starting point for this paradigm is Axel Honneth’s work on *the Struggle for Recognition*. This will establish the theoretical framework for this research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

---

Substantial literature has documented the MH sequelae of torture, mass violence and forced migration for the displaced. However, there is a paucity of literature on how refugees cope in their circumstances. Where studies do exist, they approach coping and MH for refugees from a predominantly individualistic, biomedical perspective (Emmelkamp, Komproe, Van Ommeren and Schagen, 2002; Matheson, Jorden and Anisman, 2008). Although sparse, there are exceptions to this trend. For example, a study with URs from several African countries residing in Kampala, Uganda found that social support from both, the local population and other URs, as well as financial stability reinforced the resiliency of URs in this context (Muhwezi & Sam, 2004). Similarly, another study illustrated the importance of social-networks amongst URs as a coping mechanism (Willems, 2005). The latter was conducted with URs residing in Tanzania.

In this chapter, I begin by first exploring the vulnerabilities and resilience of refugees in their various contexts. Based on this, I then explore the pitfalls of focusing solely on the individual when it comes to understanding the MH and coping strategies of refugees. I then turn to a theoretical review of the literature drawing on Axel Honneth's theory on the struggle for recognition, which I found to be minimally applied to the study of refugees. The exception to this is a study with resettled refugees in Denmark by Ghosh and Juul (2008). However, to my knowledge, no studies explore the application of Honneth's theory to understanding the factors that enable and inhibit coping within refugee communities in a developing country context.

The literature I aim to contribute to is that of UR mental health in a developing country context. The growing literature on the agency of the oppressed and on the interrelatedness of the individual and the community, inform my discussion of refugee MH below.

### 2.1 STRUGGLES & STRENGTHS OF URBAN REFUGEES

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As the presence of refugees in urban areas increases, the literature on forced migration is beginning to reflect this phenomenon. Studies from Dar es Salaam (Sommers, 2001; Willems, 2005), Kampala (Muhwezi & Sam, 2004), Tokyo (Banki, 2006), and Nairobi (Campbell, 2006)

paint a picture of the clandestine lifestyle many of these individuals lead. Substantial research also acknowledges that the pre- and post-migration stressors refugees encounter are likely to undermine their physical and MH (Matheson, Jorden & Anisman, 2008). Refugees flee for fear of persecution based on race, national origins, religious background and other factors usually beyond their control (United Nations, 1951). Such trauma may subsequently decrease their capacity to cope with acculturation stressors, potentially placing them at increased risk for mental illnesses (Matheson et al).

While much of the literature has focused on the psychological turmoil refugees encounter upon resettlement in a third (usually Western) country, some studies have considered the presence of psychiatric symptoms for those in conditions of chronic-asylum in developing countries (Shrestha, Sharma, Van Ommeren, Regmi, Makaju, Komproe et al, 1998; Van Ommeren, de Jong, Sharma, Komproe, Thapa, Cardena, 2001; Neuner, Schauer, Klaschik, Karunakara, & Elbert, 2004; Keller, Lhewa, Rosenfeld, Sachs, Aladjem, Cohen et al, 2006). Unsurprisingly, many of these studies focus on the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Following the first refugee study to report a diagnosis of PTSD by Kinzie, Fredrickson, Bath, et al (1984), the emphasis of refugee MH care has since focused on PTSD and similar psychiatric ailments (Muecke, 1992).

Research by Muecke in the early 1990s however, spearheaded an alternative perspective; one in which the resilience and agency of refugees is given more weight than their increased exposure to mental illnesses. Careful to give due attention to the vulnerabilities many undoubtedly face, she nonetheless moves towards focusing on the agentic capabilities of refugees. This field of research explores how many refugees, including URs, engage with their foreign context to cope with challenging circumstances (Dryden-Peterson, 2006) and increase resilience (Jacobson, 2004; Grabska, 2006). This is why approaching MH needs and coping mechanisms from a solely individual perspective may not accurately convey their reality.

## 2.2 COPING STRATEGIES BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL

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In addition to emphasising the agency of refugees, Muecke (1992) calls for a move away from the individualised approach to MH care for this population, which means moving away from the all-too familiar diagnosis of PTSD. Although useful in its ability to inform clinicians about what they are working with clinically, such labelling does little to palliate the gravity of the circumstances within which many refugees live. Rather than empowering the individual, it leaves them that much more dejected with a new found problem – that of an untreatable mental illness. Such individualistic approaches enshroud larger factors contributing to refugee suffering. For example, individual counselling could be more iatrogenic than helpful because of the traumatic nature of recalling such experiences (Muecke). Thus biomedical treatment tends to solely treat the illness at hand rather than recognize external factors which contribute and perpetuate these illnesses.

Focusing solely on diagnosis of the individual can result in the subsequent misconception of coping as an exclusively individual activity. In their work with Kenyan young-carers, Skovdal et al (2009), criticise the traditional understanding of coping as an individual undertaking and argue for coping as a function of the opportunities people have for engaging in positive forms of social participation. Kline and Mone (2003) similarly call attention to the limitations of a narrow MH focus and instead argue for a psychosocial approach that takes into consideration the holistic beliefs of individuals. In this effort, I now turn to a theoretical-framework of recognition suggested by Honneth that highlights the intersubjectivity of individuals who cope on a daily basis through the mutual recognition of others.

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## THEORETICAL APPROACH

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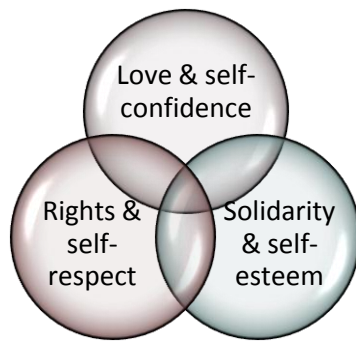
### 2.3 AXEL HONNETH'S THEORY ON THE *STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION*

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Barring a few examples, the refugee MH field has been dominated by a biomedical perspective where the premise of psychiatric and clinical psychological care is based on modifications of thoughts, actions and behaviours required to support coping (Levine, Perkins &

Perkins, 2005). Honneth (1995) goes beyond the individual and emphasises the role of the community and larger structural factors in facilitating daily coping.

Specifically, the presence of his tripartite schema of *love*, *solidarity* and *rights* enable the development of basic self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect, respectively. For individuals to have status in society, the presence of the latter three elements is necessary. Furthermore, these three modes of recognition can only be garnered and maintained intersubjectively, through gaining and giving recognition, to and from others. These relationships go beyond the primary relations of love and friendship to include legal-relations of universal respect for the rights of individuals and networks of solidarity within which a person's unique contribution is valued (Honneth, 1995).



**Figure 1:** Visual depiction of Honneth's theory on *love*, *solidarity* & *rights*

### 2.3.1 LOVE AND BASIC SELF-CONFIDENCE

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For Honneth (1995) *love* forms the precondition for basic self-confidence. Such self-confidence is founded upon primary-relationships consisting of strong emotional ties among a select group. In childhood, these include parent-child relationships and reappear in adult-life as friendships or relationships between lovers. They are tied to the existence of others who reciprocate one's positive self-valuation resulting in trust in oneself and self-confidence. This self-confidence has more to do with expressing one's desires without fearing repercussion than with a high estimation of one's abilities.

### 2.3.2 SOLIDARITY AND SELF-ESTEEM

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*Solidarity* is premised on social appreciation. Here emphasis is on people's unique attributes which are not shared with others (Honneth, 1995). Accordingly, one must feel that they have something valuable to contribute as having nothing of value to offer impedes the development of one's identity (Honneth). The challenge is in maintaining self-esteem in pluralistic and mobile societies where systematic denigration from outside one's community may be a frequent occurrence (Honneth).

### 2.3.3 RIGHTS AND SELF-RESPECT

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Rights and self-respect are inextricably linked in that rights enable one to raise and defend claims illustrating to the individual that he/she is legitimately respected by others (Blunden, 2007). To facilitate the possibility of making claims on equal terms with others, recognition of an individual as an autonomous legal person must be accorded to each subject equally (Ghosh & Juul, 2008). While a person without rights can certainly have self-respect, Honneth (1995) argues that the fullest form of self-respect is only attained through legal-recognition.

Where love generates the psychological foundation for trusting one's desires, legal-recognition earns the respect of others, forming the basis for self-respect (Honneth, 1995). This self-respect enables an individual to view themselves as a 'morally responsible' agent (Honneth). Moreover, there must be respect for the citizens' rights in practice. Thus, an agent's capacity to raise and defend claims can form the basis of self-respect only if this capacity can actually be exercised; such opportunity for participation however, can only be taken advantage of if individuals have a certain social standard of living, which includes a minimum of cultural education and economic security (Honneth).

## 2.4 TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Based on a review of the literature, it was concluded that joining elements of both Honneth's theory on recognition and Skovdal's conception of coping through communities

would provide a useful framework for understanding refugee coping. Honneth's theory, based on the intersubjectivity of individuals, sets the backdrop for understanding coping as a function that exists beyond the individual. An individual's relationship to self is not a solitary development but an intersubjective process in which one's perspective emerges through interactions with others perspectives; it follows then that when any of the intersubjective processes are denigrated, the means to coping will likewise be intersubjective and a product of the community. In the present context, I believe this type of framework will prove essential to developing effective programmes to address the needs of URs.

## 2.5 FILLING IN THE GAP

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In conducting this study, it is my intention to contribute to the literature in three ways. First, as URs in developing countries are an especially understudied population, I hope to add to the current body of knowledge. More specifically, I hope to add to knowledge of the UR situation in Nepal, a topic on which I was unable to find any prior studies. Secondly, I hope to contribute to the emerging literature that seeks to understand the resilience of refugees. As Keller et al (2006) notes, there is a need to understand the different methods of coping with traumatic events, such as those URs are usually escaping. Finally, I offer an application of the theory on recognition in this context, proposing that the extent to which URs have access to each of the aforementioned forms of recognition enables or inhibit coping capacity.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

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As little is known about the coping mechanisms of URs in Kathmandu, an open-ended exploratory inquiry was more conducive to understanding their circumstances than traditional quantitative techniques (Flick, 2009). Qualitative research methodologies have a strong potential of revealing complexity and capturing the richness of collected data (Miles & Huberman, 1994); this was essential in capturing the diversity of opinions and the social milieu that constructs the life-worlds of URs in Kathmandu.

### 3.1 SETTING

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This phenomenological study was conducted from April 6<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in Kathmandu, Nepal. URs here, reside not in camps but in cramped houses and apartments. Many are in a protracted situation, having been in Kathmandu for at least three years.

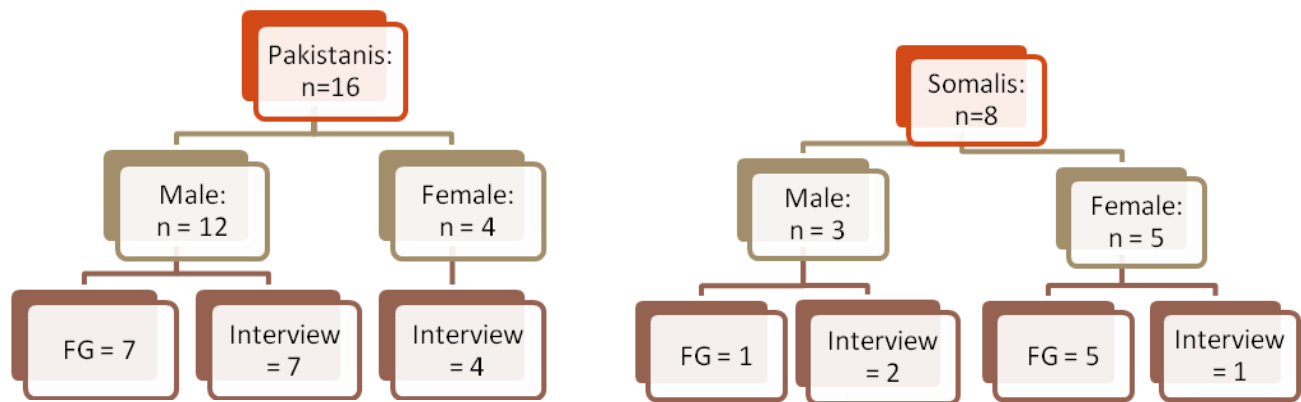
### 3.2 PARTICIPANTS & SAMPLING

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Criteria for participation included being a Somali or Pakistani UR in Kathmandu above 18-years old. Participants were aged 18 – 52 (See Appendix I for participant demographics). Adults were solely recruited because it was expected that they would be able to speak about their journey to Nepal, the challenges they faced, and their methods of coping since arrival.

There were 24 participants: 16 Pakistanis and 8 Somalis. This number is proportional to the UR population as the number of registered UR Pakistanis is almost double that of registered UR Somalis. Fifteen males and nine females participated. Below is a break-down of the number of participants and their participation in focus groups (FGs) and interviews. As two Pakistani males and one Somali female participated in both the FG and a semi-structured interview, there is some overlap in the numbers.





**Figure 2:** Study sample

Through the assistance of Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation-Nepal (TPO-Nepal) and UNHCR's implementing partner in Kathmandu, Propublic, participants were recruited using stratified-purposive and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007). This was done through an advertisement posted at Propublic's community centre (see Appendix II for poster) and through word-of-mouth. Interested participants were asked to sign-up with a social worker at the community centre.

It was decided before-hand that those partaking in the Photovoice exercise would constitute the FG members; this was to ensure discussion about the photos. As there were a limited number of disposable cameras, the first 16 to sign-up were given priority to be allocated to FGs and subsequently, to participate in Photovoice. Initially, I planned to focus on one population (i.e. Somalis or Pakistanis) to simplify analysis. However, on the advice of TPO-Nepal, UNHCR and Propublic staff members, both groups were ultimately recruited to ensure no favouritism was shown.

FGs should generally be conducted with individuals from similar age and social status backgrounds to facilitate discussion (Gilbert, 2008). Fortunately, the first 7 Pakistani males to sign-up were between 30-37 years old with the exception of one who was 23. The 23-year old participated in the FG but was also interviewed separately at his request. For the Somali FG, participants ranged in age from 18-38. Although there was a larger age difference here, all participants participated more or less equally in the discussions. As few Pakistani women

signed-up, we<sup>1</sup> lacked a sufficient number to conduct a FG with. Instead, they were provided cameras and individual in-depth interviews were conducted with them. Four Pakistani women were ultimately recruited through snowball sampling and a gatekeeper.

### 3.3. DATA & DATA COLLECTION

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Data consisted of 14 semi-structured individual interviews, two FGs, verbal narratives about photos, and detailed field notes taken after each interview and FG. One FG was conducted with six Pakistani men and another with six Somalis (five females; one male). It was necessary to keep the FGs segmented for the Pakistanis as it is considered inappropriate to discuss personal topics in the company of the opposite sex within this community. For Somalis, there was no reason to keep the FG discussion gender-separate. I also spoke with two staff members to gain background information on UR coping mechanisms. Individual interviews lasted between 40 minutes - 2 hours and both FGs were approximately two hours long.

The majority of the interviews and the Pakistani males FG were conducted in the UNHCR/Propublic-run community centre; a familiar and convenient location for the participants. A select number of interviews were conducted in participants' homes at their request and a few interviews and the Somali FG were conducted in the TPO-Nepal office.

Each interview started with an explanation of the research, requesting permission to record the interview, and review of the consent letter. The topic guide broadly covered personal experiences of being a refugee in Kathmandu, perceived causes of psychosocial distress, and strategies and resources for coping. It was designed based on a preliminary literature review and went through rigorous rounds of revision based on feedback from various professors in the field of MH and research staff at TPO-Nepal (See Appendix III and IV for semi-structured interview and FG topic guides). It was subsequently translated from English to Nepali for the facilitators who conducted the interviews with the Pakistani participants (who spoke Hindi). As Nepali and Hindi script are the same, facilitators were able to use the Nepali-translated versions to conduct the interviews in Hindi. I used common language where possible

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<sup>1</sup> "we" includes here the facilitators and translators I was working with

to simplify translation; where words in English did not have a direct translation to Hindi, these were discussed with the facilitators so that the appropriate meaning was understood and used.

For the Somali FG, I asked the questions in English and this was translated by the translator into Somali during the FG. While the translator was initially trained to conduct the FG, he ultimately preferred to translate while I facilitated because of his close relations with the community; there was concern that this may introduce bias into the participants' responses. The translator briefly summarised responses for me so that I was able to ask follow-up questions that were tangential to the topic guide. In this way, the topic guide was well-prepared at the outset but allowed flexibility to generate discussion and explore salient issues raised by the participants (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000).

As aforementioned, those participants selected for the FG, participated in Photovoice and were given disposable cameras for 7 days. As a method which enables marginalised groups to communicate and represent their circumstances, Photovoice acted as a tool for eliciting UR perceptions of their life circumstances and coping strategies (Wang, 2006). The cameras were labelled with each participant's name and training was provided. Additionally, the first picture taken was that of the participant so that we would be able to identify who the pictures belonged to in case the cameras got mixed-up.

Participants were instructed to take 10 pictures with the following question in mind: "How do you overcome and deal with difficult situations?" The task they were given was to "take photos of people and things you do that help you overcome and deal with difficult situations and make you feel good." The questions were left broad so that participants could decide the direction of their photography (Wang, 2006). However, more specific questions were also prepared in case participants requested further direction for their photography, which many of them did. These specific questions are as follows: a) What is your life like?; b) What is good about your life?; c) What makes you strong?; d) What needs to change?

With the remaining film, participants were encouraged to take pictures of anything they wanted so that they could obtain something from the research as well. Photos were developed and returned to participants immediately prior to the FGs or semi-structured interviews. Participants were given 10-20 minutes to look through their photos and asked to select their

two favourite ones. In the FG settings, participants shared the photos amongst themselves. Following the selection of their two favourite pictures, participants explained why they selected these photos and what it was about the person/thing photographed that helped them cope. Ideally we would have liked to obtain written narratives of their explanations, but participants were more comfortable verbally explaining their reasoning, and so these narratives were digitally-recorded. With permission from the participants, the two pictures that were selected as their favourites were scanned and copied. All original pictures were returned to the participants.

### 3.4 RATIONALE FOR METHODS USED

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#### 3.4 A) FOCUS GROUPS

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FGs are good for exploring a subject where little research has been done before (Gilbert, 2008). To my knowledge, no research has been conducted with URs in Kathmandu specific to coping mechanisms and very little has been done with URs in other developing country settings. In this way, FGs provided an optimal method for exploring an under-researched topic. The FGs also provided a more genuine social interaction than the in-depth interview: with minimal moderation, participants with shared experiences were able to discuss the challenges they face and the different ways of dealing with their circumstances (Gilbert). Yet, as group dynamics can be affected in the FG by the fact that people were from the same community and knew each other (Gilbert), semi-structured interviews complemented FGs so detailed individual experiences could also be obtained.

#### 3.4 B) SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

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In-depth interviews were ideal for obtaining the perspective of those from different age-groups, genders, and social statuses. Displacement is also a highly personal experience that may at times be challenging or painful to speak about. In the context of such sensitive topics, Lee (1993) recommends individual interviewing as a method of data-elicitation. These one-on-one interactions enable the researcher to facilitate a trusting and open-environment within which participants are comfortable disclosing personal information in detail.

### 3.4 C) PHOTOVOICE

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As a participatory action research method where participants use their photographs to share their life experiences on a certain topic (Wang, Kun Yi, Wen Tao & Carovano, 1998), Photovoice brought life to many of the narrative accounts given by participants. While some participants were sceptical about Photovoice initially, following the process, many anecdotally expressed appreciation that someone was interested to see how they live. In this way, photos can be used to obtain a concrete understanding of coping strategies, providing participants with a platform to generate action (Skovdal, 2011).

### 3.5 ETHICAL CONCERNS

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Research was conducted in accordance with guidelines for research with human-subjects, under the approval of the Institute of Social Psychology Research Ethics board at the London School of Economics. Approval was also obtained from the UNHCR in Nepal. Written, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to conducting the interviews and FGs. Throughout the process, participants were given the opportunity to withdraw voluntarily at any time and to pass on questions they were uncertain about or did not want to answer. All persons involved in Photovoice also provided consent for the use of their selected photos (See Appendix V for consent letter).

As the nature of the discussion was sensitive at times, a counsellor was on call during interviews to provide assistance if needed. Although some participants occasionally became emotional, the facilitators were able to handle the situations and there was never a need to call a counsellor.

### 3.6 ANALYSIS

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With permission from the participants, all but one interview was digitally-recorded. Where interviews were not conducted in English, they were transcribed and translated by the facilitators. The Somali FG was translated and transcribed directly to English whereas the Pakistani FG and interviews were translated and transcribed first to Nepali by the facilitators

and then to English by an external translator. Ostensibly, this translation process may have resulted in some loss of information. However, as I understand Hindi fluently, I sat in for the majority of the interviews and the Pakistani FG and made detailed notes to fill in any information that may have been lost in the translation process. In addition, the interviews were verified by another fluent Hindi speaker to ensure a more accurate translation. For those participants who spoke English, I conducted the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. Comments about non-verbal communication (laughter, frustration, crying etcetera) were added in all the transcripts.

Transcripts were coded in accordance with Attride-Sterling's (2001) thematic network analysis, using the qualitative research software package, Atlas ti (Scientific Software Development, 1989). I followed Attride-Sterling's description of thematic network analysis even though it is based on grounded theory because it enables methodical summary of themes relating to the research question without stifling the multiplicity of views and experiences illustrated by the participants.

When analysing the FG transcripts, the group, rather than the individual, was the unit of analysis (Gilbert, 2008). Analysis was not conducted on the actual photos taken during Photovoice. As mentioned, participants provided verbal accounts of their pictures. As these narratives facilitated the discussion, they were analysed and coded as part of the interview instead of separately.

A systematic and iterative process was followed to interpret and code the data. This consisted of several stages: first, transcripts were read to gain familiarity with the data; second, text segments from the transcripts were identified as codes; third, basic themes were derived from exploring the various issues discussed within the coded segments; fourth, basic themes were grouped under broader, more abstract organising themes; and finally, organising themes were grouped under global themes, which ultimately encompassed the analysis. To accurately reflect the data, these stages were repeated several times to produce the most concise and logical coding-frame (See Appendix VI for coding framework).

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

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In this chapter, I delineate each of the global themes and discuss their content through participants' quotations and the photographs and narratives from Photovoice. Specifically, through coding and thematic mapping, four global themes and twelve organising themes emerged. The first theme contextualises the vulnerable conditions within which URs develop a set of coping strategies. The subsequent three themes - love, solidarity and rights - are consistent with components identified by Honneth (1995) for the development of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-respect, respectively. Although the search for coping strategies was predetermined, Honneth's theory was applied *posteriori* based on the findings.

This chapter will thus discuss the various mechanisms of coping through *love*; coping through *solidarity* where possible; and the inability to cope through *rights*. As many of the views garnered were similar between Somalis and Pakistanis, I will report the findings simultaneously. Where differences exist between groups, they will be noted. Together, the global themes tell a story about URs strengths and their sufferings. To understand how Honneth's theory of recognition is relevant to the UR struggle, it is first necessary to grasp the context within which their vulnerabilities are experienced.

### 4.1 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: PERCEIVED VULNERABILITIES

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Some of the challenges URs face echo the challenges all refugees face. Other challenges are more unique. In this case, vulnerability is characterised by discrimination, daily stressors, unfulfilled expectations, and lack of control, culminating in generally poor MH. I discuss these in detail below.

## GLOBAL THEME I: VULNERABILITIES



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### 4.1.1 DISCRIMINATION

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Discrimination is a stressor that has followed both groups from pre-displacement to their current location. It is because of discrimination that both groups fled their homelands, yet in Nepal, they continue to live in fear of abuse as a result of their religious beliefs or skin colour. As a Pakistani male participant articulated:

P9: They are trying to label us as terrorist. They don't even treat us like humans. We are treated like this just because we are Muslims. Pakistan does not consider us as Muslims and other countries behave with us badly because we *are* [emphasis added] Muslims...We are in crisis from both the sides (47).

For Somalis, the challenge is two-fold. Like the Pakistanis, they are discriminated against because of religion. However, it is their visible differences that put them at increased risk.

P18: It is even difficult to roam on the streets, people start staring at you, they will start calling you names like *kala*, *habsi* ['black' in derogatory tone] (Somali female, 20).

Discrimination infused multiple aspects of URs lives from searching for housing to shopping in markets. Amidst this discrimination, it is important to note that some refugees



spoke of the kindness of their landlords or their slow integration with the Nepali populations. These instances, however, were experienced by a minority of participants.

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#### 4.1.2 UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

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For most interviewees, there exists a discord between how they imagined their lives and how their reality has manifested, revealing a common thread of unfulfilled expectations. Seeking refuge, many envisioned a better life that included more than just protection. When describing one of the photos he took, a Pakistani male talked about feeling as though his life has been crumbling:



P5: This photo describes my life...when the home is not looked after well, it starts ruining like this. I am also gradually ruining like this. I have ruined my education...I am losing my future. I am also turning to ruins like this building...Not just my limbs but my mental condition is also ruining (35).

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#### 4.1.3 DAILY STRESSORS

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Compounding the discrimination URs face and the weight of their unmet expectations are the daily stressors they encounter. A frequently mentioned issue was that of finding and keeping housing:

P22: The landlord told me to vacate the house within seven days, or they throw us out. The Nepalese don't want to let us their flats because of our colour. They ask us, 'what do you do here?' And when we tell them that we are refugees they refuse to let the flat....From the morning till evening we go out to look for a house everywhere in the city. Even with the help of Somali community it was difficult for us to find a house (Somali female, 52: FG).

Separation from family left behind was another predominant issue for both groups:

P9: We don't have tension regarding food but when we eat we remember our past. I think about what my children must be eating and what they must be doing (Pakistani male, 47).

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#### 4.1.4 LACK OF CONTROL

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From the reasons surrounding their displacement to their current status in Nepal, many felt they had little control over the direction of their lives. Speaking about coming to Nepal, one Pakistani male discussed the little choice they had:

P5: All these Ahmadiya Muslims who are here didn't come to Nepal with their will...We came here only to save our lives (35).

Lack of control in their present day was frequently reflected in fatalistic attitudes:

P24: People used to be so desperate but I think now they are all disappointed. They used to protest to the government but I think they have all surrendered. They're tired. Let's wait for things to happen instead of making it happen (Somali male, 29).

Lack of financial independence, coupled with the inability to work, exasperated their frustrations:

P8: Living cost is very expensive here in Nepal. They give me NRs. 4000. But we have to pay NRs. 5000 for the rent...we are always in-debt for previous month (Pakistani male, 24)

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#### 4.1.5 MENTAL HEALTH

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Anecdotal comments outlined the challenges to maintaining mental well-being under such circumstances:

P20: When we are at home alone, it is all about thinking, painful thoughts. Sometimes you cannot sleep because of those thoughts...wondering what the future holds for you (Somali female, 30: FG).

In these situations, there is a clear need for psychological services. In the words of one participant:

P12: Refugees are in a lot of tension. Instead of solving MH problems later on when it has become complex, the problems should be solved now. There is no use trying to help after a person has been severely mentally-ill (Pakistani male, 35).

The challenges discussed above are critical to understanding the platform upon which coping mechanisms emerge and may facilitate an appreciation for why certain mechanisms are more effective than others. Drawing upon Honneth's theory on the struggle for recognition, I now turn to the strategies URs employ when trying to access the three forms of recognition in conditions of formal non-existence.

#### 4.2 COPING STRATEGY I: LOVE (PREREQUISITE FOR BASIC SELF-CONFIDENCE)

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Following Honneth's (1995) conception, love is understood here as "successful affectional bonds to other people" (p. 104). Such bonds are largely constructed through relationships with supportive friends and family members in Nepal. These relationships functioned as a mode of resilience for many. They provided a buffer against the vulnerabilities mentioned in the previous section and reduced anxiety through psychological support.

Religion also played a similar role in people's lives and functioned as a significant coping mechanism. I elaborate below how belief in a higher being may fall under love, based on Honneth's understanding of the term.

##### GLOBAL THEME II: 'LOVE'



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#### 4.2.1 COPING THROUGH OTHERS

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Coping through others was a sentiment echoed by both groups:

P12: Our community has been living like a family. Everyone comes together whenever anyone faces trouble. This helps to lessen the tension...I think we have been able to live here in this condition for this long because of this system of helping each other (Pakistani male, 35).

P20: We are happy when we come together – Somalis as a group when we come together – when we come to the community centre, when we come together in our homes, when someone is sick and we come together, we feel happy (Somali female, 30: FG).

For those with children in their family, they were mentioned repeatedly as a significant source of support. A concrete example illustrating this point is that the majority of photos taken during the Photovoice exercise were those of participant's children.



I like this picture because my children are smiling which makes me feel peaceful (P4, Pakistani male, 34).

This was the first day of school for my younger child and the older child was going to school in the new grade. I love my children a lot. I was very happy at this time (P14, Pakistani female, 36).



Parenthood then, seems to counteract the everyday psychological insecurity individuals face.

Honneth (1995) elaborates on the concept of love in the development of friendships. In particular, he speaks of friendships as the “shared experiences of an unselfconscious conversation or an utterly unforced moment together” (p. 105). Such friendships went beyond providing psychological support and reducing anxiety during trying times; they also functioned as a motivator for improving skills where possible:



P17: This photo is my friend. He is teaching me. He is reading English to Somali dictionary. He is staying near my home. That time we have electric[ity]. We are also watching television – football. They are making some remarks about the teams. Some vocabulary we don't know so my friend says, 'come...come. We look in the dictionary'. So he teaches me like this. We like to watch football and this way, we also learn some vocabulary (Somali male, 36).

Solace, and subsequently, a relationship of recognition were thus found through the existence of others who reciprocated feelings of esteem (Honneth, 1995).

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#### 4.2.2 COPING THROUGH RELIGION

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While the previous section discussed the importance of the physical existence of others, I will now explore how belief in a 'non-concrete being' (i.e. God), can function as a powerful coping mechanism. Many mentioned the respite they found through the cathartic process of prayer:

P16: When I cry while praying I feel very relieved (Pakistani female, 31).



P6: This picture is of Holy book Quran. I feel that my tension is a bit relieved when I read this (Pakistani male, 37).

In extreme instances, participants talked about their thoughts of suicide. Simultaneously however, many of them mentioned how religion and God acted as a buffer for these thoughts:

- P9: Sometimes I have thoughts of committing suicide. How long can a person live with such problems? Then, I look at the sky and remember him [indicating to God]. He is the one who gave us life so we will die by his will (Pakistani male, 47).

Belief in God does not necessarily result in the type of positive reinforcement seen in primary-relationships, such as love and friendship. Yet, emotional support was frequently derived through prayer and belief in a higher being. Religion may not directly provide mutual recognition but this belief facilitated feelings of worth.

#### 4.3 COPING STRATEGY II: SOLIDARITY (PREREQUISITE FOR SELF-ESTEEM)

As Honneth (1995) argues, self-esteem develops when one distinguishes themselves from another based on having something valuable to offer. In this way, there is the opportunity to develop one's identity through his/her individuality, resulting in self-esteem and self-realisation. For URs in Kathmandu, self-realisation expressed itself more frequently as a desire than through actual opportunities.

#### **GLOBAL THEME III: 'SOLIDARITY'**



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#### 4.3.1 DESIRE FOR SELF-REALISATION

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Several participants spoke of their frustrations regarding their inability to legally work. While this particular finding is discussed in detail in section 4.4, here I bring attention to the thwarted desire it created for URs. Beyond leading to precarious financial circumstances, the inability to work meant, for many, the inability to use well-developed skills or to develop a new skill-set:

P1: Right now we are living the lives of a beggar. We are living on an allowance that we are given which is like alms to us. We do not like to take allowance but we have no choice. We wish we had a job and could earn and use our skills...we used to be self-sufficient people (Pakistani male, 39).

This desire, and consequent frustration from an inability to manifest it, was especially apparent amongst youth:

P10: Every person has their own will. They have their own thoughts. I wish I was given some authority to work and contribute (Pakistani male, 23).

Sometimes the desire for self-realisation was made evident through comparison with others who were perceived to have realised their potential.

P8: There are good Nepalese as well. The boys of my age go to office. They earn well and have good food to eat. Their health is also good. When I see them I compare myself to them and wonder if anyone would give me work (Pakistani male, 24).

An additional frustration was the issue of developing self-realization but not having the opportunity to exercise it. The same participant quoted above mentioned:

P8: I have learnt computer software and photo-shop. I do not know when it is going to yield results.

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#### 4.3.2 OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-REALISATION

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Although limited, when opportunities for self-realisation presented themselves they enabled people to feel they had something valuable to offer:

P16: I was very happy when the community centre opened. I used to feel very lucky and I think that I would work as a volunteer. I didn't even think much about settling down anywhere else. The staff members of UNHCR also gave me the opportunity to work in the programme for the children...I made different things for the children and parents in the winter camp. I was very excited. I used to go there at 1 and come back at 5 but I did not feel as if I was working (Pakistani female, 31).

Others showed appreciation for the opportunities the community centre offered:

P23: Even though I cannot foresee what is coming, but as an individual I see they have done something good. My frustrations are decreasing. Now there's a computer class, there could be another one for mechanics, so if they start that education class, we may be happy about it (Somali male, 18: FG).

Another avenue through which some, especially male youth, found the potential for self-realisation was through engaging in sports. One participant repeatedly mentioned his passion for playing football and noted how it acted as a coping mechanism. As part of the Photovoice exercise, he captured an image of himself playing football, which is depicted here.

P2: I can't stay away from playing football. When I play, I feel fresh (Pakistani male, 23).

Another participant mentioned how his skills in homeopathy helped him feel good by taking care of his community members:

P9: I pass my time by doing homeopathy...When a patient comes to me for treatment and tells me about his painful story I forget about mine because I feel good helping him (Pakistani male, 47).

These quotations illustrate the sense of worth individuals develop when able to contribute in a valuable way to their communities. The ability to achieve self-realisation however, needs to be met with the equal opportunity to exercise it; an opportunity that usually makes itself available through the legal-recognition of an individual.





#### 4.4 COPING STRATEGY II (ABSENCE OF): RIGHTS (PREREQUISITE FOR SELF-RESPECT)

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The first global theme I discussed in this chapter was in reference to the vulnerabilities URs face in their circumstances; the latter two global themes revolved around the extent to which URs have access to two key elements of recognition, that of love and solidarity. When available, these two elements facilitated their coping ability and helped maintain basic self-confidence and self-esteem. Lacking however, is the ability of URs to maintain self-respect as obtained through legal-recognition; this systematic failure consequently impedes full coping capacity.

##### GLOBAL THEME IV: 'RIGHTS'




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##### 4.4.1 INABILITY TO EXERCISE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

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The inability to exercise moral responsibility was most often reflected in URs inability to work; a direct result of their lack of legal-recognition in Nepal:

P1: We are not allowed to work here. It is difficult to pass the time doing nothing all day. When we stop working our hands and mind also stop working. We feel much tensed when we have a lot of leisure (Pakistani male, 39).

Many mentioned resorting to illegal (labour) work for the sole purpose of generating additional income. Such work was largely possible only for the Pakistanis. Even if Somalis

wanted to work illegally, their physical differences from the local population prevented them from doing so as they would be at increased risk of getting caught by the authorities.

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#### 4.4.2 “STUCK”

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A general sense of feeling ‘stuck’ pervaded discussions. From the three potential options of repatriation, third-country resettlement, or legal-recognition in Nepal, none seemed realistic in the near future for most participants. One participant, a Master’s graduate and community centre teacher, could arguably be expected to have substantial esteem acquired through his valuable and unique skills. However, as his photography and narrative below illustrate, such esteem remains insufficient without the opportunity for further recognition:

P5: When I was taking pictures a thought suddenly crossed my mind that these goats represent all the refugees. We are in a similar condition...Before English language class began in community centre I used to spend all my time in my room. But now I have started to come to the community centre. For 4-5 years I stayed in my room just like that. The community centre has been a few things for us but until a permanent solution is found nothing much can be done (Pakistani male, 35).



Likewise, Somalis expressed a similar frustration with not having legal-recognition in Nepal:

P22: You cannot work, you cannot go for high school, you cannot go to university...before we lose our mind, let these countries [referring to the resettlement countries and the Nepalese government] make a decision about us (Somali female, 52: FG).

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#### 4.4.3 MINIMAL SPHERE OF LIBERTY

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Many URs attempted to assert their claims either through protesting or other collective means. However, as the dialogue below from the Somali FG shows, there was frequent interference in their sphere of liberty when URs attempted to exercise their claims:

P20: We were protesting to either side till they called the police on us, and the police were not even respecting us as women (female, 30).

P22: for 40 days we were sleeping outside (female, 52)

P20: we did whatever we could. Even some of our youth have made a hunger strike.

P19: I was one of those who made the hunger strike. The police arrested us and we were in custody for 10 hours. We didn't even do anything - they accused us of blocking the road but we didn't (female, 38).

While the latter example is of police interfering in URs' sphere of liberty when asserting their claims, the example below is that of an UR having insufficient interference from police and thus being unable to exercise his claims when facing discrimination from the local population. When asked if he sought police assistance to protect himself from abuse, he responded:

P11: The law has only been written [here]; they do not implement it. Even if someone kills me no one is going to do anything. The police comes very late that too only with sticks. The public here are not scared of police (Pakistani male, 24).

This lack of legal-recognition forms the basis upon which full coping capacity is impeded. Despite their vulnerabilities and in the absence of formal recognition however, URs draw upon the strengths of each other and religion and find ways to derive value as uniquely contributing members within their community. Without underestimating the challenges URs face, it is imperative that these strengths are not disregarded and instead leveraged to facilitate greater coping capacity.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

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*“...to recognise one another as legal persons means more today than it possibly could have at the start of the evolution of modern law” (Honneth, 1995: p.117).*

Honneth’s high valuation on the need for legal-recognition was repeatedly emphasised by participants. This study was framed by my interest in not only the vulnerabilities but also the resilience of refugees, and influenced by my experience of individuals as active social actors rather than passive victims of circumstances beyond their control. My intention thus, was to understand the social-psychological consequences of being a formally non-existent person. The findings in the previous chapter illustrate that even in a legal and political vacuum of formal non-existence many found the ability to give meaning to their lives. As Muecke (1992) eloquently notes, “...refugees present perhaps the maximum example of the human capacity to survive despite the greatest of losses and assaults on human identity and dignity” (p. 520). In this vein, I sought to understand how this capacity to cope is developed and what factors contribute to resilience.

Resilience of other diverse populations who have been subject to various life stressors can be useful in the study of resilient refugees (Muecke, 1992). I particularly drew upon the work of Skovdal et al (2009) who approach coping as a function of one’s community, rather than solely of the individual. To understand which specific factors facilitate coping, I drew upon Honneth’s theory of recognition. This suggests that for coping strategies to develop, mutual recognition from primary-relations, social-networks and the legal order, need to be present. In this study, participants coped with the absence of legal-recognition by drawing upon recognition from the former two. Specifically, in the absolute void of institutional recognition, participants turned to obtaining recognition primarily through their immediate networks (*love*) and where available, through avenues to contribute something valuable to a larger project (*solidarity*). In the following section, I discuss my empirical findings as they relate to the literature in light of the latter two modes of recognition.

## 5.1 LEVERAGING LOVE

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Alongside support derived from religious belief, support from close relations was frequently mentioned as a coping strategy. This resonates with findings from Tanzania (Willems, 2005), South Africa (Amisi & Ballard, 2005), and with refugees in Western Europe (Brune, Haasen, Krausz, Yagdiran, Bustos & Eisenman, 2002). Such primary relations functioned as a mechanism of attaining basic self-confidence and contributed to daily coping capacity. This is not to imply that those with close networks do not experience difficulty in Kathmandu, but that obstacles are met with greater ease where one receives validating recognition from others. For example, many participants mentioned that shortly after arriving in Kathmandu they immediately searched for others from their community to help with acculturation in their foreign surroundings.

Although not mentioned by Honneth (1995), I include religion as an element of *love*. As a coping strategy frequently reiterated by participants, it provided meaning to life circumstances, helped develop self-confidence, and played a key role in how participants coped with adversity. One way of combining *love* and *solidarity* to better serve refugee needs was practically recommended by a participant:

P24: The management should organise some gatherings. For example, today is Friday and most of the refugees are Muslim and we go for prayer so organise some tea after prayer so we can gather and talk (Somali male, 29).

As the above quotation illustrates, many URs have insightful suggestions regarding how their needs could be met; these suggestions should be listened to and integrated wholeheartedly.

## 5.2 LEVERAGING SOLIDARITY

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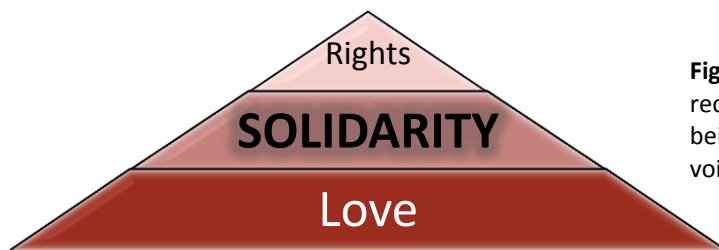
Whilst the presence of a close-network strengthened coping capacity and the absence of legal-recognition limited it, this stark duality was less clear when it came to solidarity. There was almost a unanimous *desire* to ‘do something’, that is to use skills and contribute valuably in some way. However, such opportunities presented themselves infrequently. When the opportunity to contribute was made available, many participated and spoke of the value they derived from the experience. From personal observations at the community centre, I saw URs

teaching computer and English classes, fixing furniture, translating and participating in other such activities that exhibited each of their unique capabilities. Honneth (1995), discussing Hegel's perspective on solidarity, speaks of it as "the most advanced form of mutual recognition realised" (p. 91). This is because solidarity represents an amalgamation of both preceding types of recognition. With *love*, it shares the aspect of emotional attachment and care whereas with *rights*, it shares the cognitive perspective associated with universally equal treatment (Honneth). With an omnipresence of *love* amongst URs and the long road to achieving some form of legal-recognition, *solidarity* represents a challenging, yet effective coping mechanism to leverage.

### 5.3 SOLIDARITY: RESERACH & INTERVENTION IMPLICATIONS

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Although the social context of URs does not neatly conform to the diagram below, I provide it as a guide to understand the level of presence of each mode of recognition as informed by the data. Here, *love* is found at the bottom of the pyramid, depicting its frequency as a form of resilience; *rights* is shown at the tip, depicting negligible presence. *Solidarity* falls in the middle as a common desire for many but a realised potential for only a few.



**Figure 3:** Levels of Honneth's elements of recognition amongst URs in Nepal: From love being most strongly present to an almost absolute void of rights

As mentioned earlier, URs, by virtue of their background and skills, have the potential to uniquely contribute to their social context (Ndege et al, 2002). They may bring with them new or different skills, knowledge of markets in their home countries, and useful business experience (Jacobson, 2004). For instance, self-settled refugees in Nairobi were found starting their own businesses, many of which employed local Kenyans and refugees (Jacobson). The demographics of participants in this study reflect similar characteristics. Many included teachers, farmers, auditors, master's graduates, lawyers, and small-business owners – the extent of skills that can be leveraged here are indisputable. For this to happen though, the

appropriate opportunities need to be made available (Ndege et al). In Kathmandu, opportunities presented themselves, albeit usually in the form of teaching or providing translation services for UNHCR and for those receiving counselling services through TPO-Nepal. As anecdotally mentioned by one of the staff members, the challenge to providing further opportunities lies in recruiting URs and having their qualifications legitimately recognized as many URs lack proper documentation. Yet, in such circumstances, we must turn to creative ways of leveraging this mode of recognition. As one participant mentioned:

P24: There is someone in the front office [of the community centre], we can do it. There is someone doing clerk work, like printing, some refugee can do it. You don't have to hire someone from outside (Somali male, 29).

As Jacobson (2002) notes, appropriate programmes can help host-states realise the potential of refugee resources. Furthermore, programmes that cater to the different skill-levels of URs should be established. Some participants spoke of the frustrations of computer classes combining those with very basic-skills and those with more advanced proficiency. There was also a demand from URs for more education, reflecting a further desire for self-realisation:

P16: Studies are very important. It is necessary to continue the education in whole life. I don't think computer course can be considered education. It is just for increasing the knowledge (Pakistani female, 31).

P21: not only the basic education, but also some higher education (Somali female, 21: FG).

The Kampala Urban Refugee Children's Education Centre (KURCEC), whose goal is to provide primary-education to UR children, illustrates an example of how UR needs were turned into self-sustainable realities (Dryden-Peterson, 2006). Organically initiated, URs there now have an avenue through which they can promote self-reliance. In Kathmandu, UR children fortunately have access to primary-education through UNHCR funding. However, youth and young-adults<sup>2</sup> long for, and lack access to, more. Field observations and comments broached by both youth participants and adults illustrate their unique challenges and desires:

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this study, I define youth and young adults as those between 18-29 years of age

P24: For those who came here at a very young age – 16, 17 – a very important part of their youth is taken away and they can't do anything about it. That is what makes people so frustrated. For those with small children, they go to school...but for the others, there is nothing.

Programmes, be they vocational training, sports activities, youth clubs or further education, are undoubtedly needed for this portion of the population and while lessons can be drawn from organisations like KUREC, they need to be relevant for URs in this context. Importantly, such programmes should not underestimate the importance of individualised therapy as some acknowledged the value and spoke of it being very helpful. In this way, programmes that seek to develop esteem and build resilience should be developed alongside individualised therapy for those who find it valuable.

While I have delineated some of the needs articulated by URs, that if met could potentially increase their esteem within their community, further studies should explore these concerns in-depth. Ultimately, what is needed is something more sustainable than just transient opportunities. Providing them with critical opportunities now will facilitate self-reliance in their current circumstances as well as in the event of a durable solution. Indeed, under the right conditions, the skills of URs will enable them to not only become self-sufficient but to be beneficial to their host society.

### 5.4 STUDY LIMITATIONS

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As with all small-scale exploratory studies, care must be taken in accepting the trends outlined in this paper, especially because of the relatively small sample size and the specific location of the study. Participants were purposively sampled through the UNHCR/Propublic community centre and this may have biased the sample. There are likely many URs who come to the centre infrequently and may not have heard about this study. To circumvent this issue, we asked participants to spread the word so that others, who were not present at the time, could learn about the study. Participants also only consisted of URs registered with UNHCR. There may of course, be URs in Kathmandu not registered but in the given time constraints, it was not possible to search for and recruit non-registered URs. Due to time and resource constraints again, I focused on recruiting two ethnic groups; this of course neglects the experiences of URs from other backgrounds. Alternatively, an in-depth study of just one group



may provide detailed analysis of their unique experiences. As mentioned, I also faced difficulty in recruiting sufficient Pakistani women. Future research needs to give ample time for recruiting hard to reach populations. Lastly, participants were asked to sign-up by their own accord; this in itself may have biased the sample as those who signed up may be inherently more vocal.

While Photovoice is a good process to use in communities that have been subjected to traditional forms of data collection and research fatigue (Castleden & Garvin, 2008), using this methodology also presented some limitations. Foremost amongst these is the danger associated with raising a community's critical consciousness but not providing the necessary means to enact change (Wang, Yi, Tao & Carovano, 1998). In this study, it was frustrating for URs to speak about things they wanted changed but were unable to act on. Notwithstanding this limitation, Photovoice opens up new spaces for marginalised populations such as URs so that their perspectives can be seen and heard. It can also be a strong tool for influencing policymakers and for informing others about the population studied. For example, photos from this work were shared with *Ahmadiyya* community leaders in London to bring light to the situation of URs in Kathmandu. Notwithstanding the limitations present in this study, the findings show that URs in Nepal are able to draw on various coping strategies to navigate their circumstances. Critical consciousness is already present; necessary now are avenues to act upon their desires.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

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Refugees, especially those in developing countries, are often seen as lacking agency. The result is that they are seen as destitute victims and more detrimentally, as a burden on the host community. Contrary to this perspective, URs have been found to be highly educated and possess skills that could be economically beneficial to the host community (Jacobsen, 2004). The reliance on the former perspective threatens to efface the existence of the latter.

The aim of this research was to emphasise the importance of recognition in understanding and promoting coping and resilience. To do so, I focused on URs in a unique context of non-recognition. Of course, while this research has focused on the resilience of URs, many participants spoke of their vulnerabilities. It is not my intention to overshadow the bleak reality that many of the participants face. Instead, in line with the work of Dryden-Petersen (2006), focusing on the few positive instances in the midst of uncertainty is a purposeful attempt to promote research and policy-setting that is forward-thinking rather than reactionary for URs globally.

Approaching the study of URs with Honneth's theory on recognition enables us to understand the different types of recognition that facilitate coping and build resilience among those URs who access the social and symbolic resources to help them cope. While Honneth has been criticised for being too abstract in his meaning of recognition (Ghosh et al, 2008) using his work as a theoretical-framework nonetheless provides useful pointers to the different social-psychological resources that facilitate/impede coping strategies; these can have implications for policy and practice. Ultimately, programme and research interventions need to enhance existing coping abilities by acknowledging URs as agents. However, this does not mean that focusing on the agency of URs detracts responsibility from the host government or from other agencies (Skovdal & Andreouli, 2010). External support is vital but should be designed in a way that builds resilience and facilitates coping (Skovdal & Andreouli).

It is thus time to not only acknowledge the significant vulnerabilities the displaced may face in their circumstances but also the mechanisms with which they cope and how this may result in resilience. A perspective that recognises refugees as competent social actors has the

possibility of enhancing the agency of URs (Skovdal & Andreouli, 2010). To effectively support URs, we need to award them the much awaited recognition as both potentially vulnerable individuals in need of safeguard and as competent social actors. Given the opportunity, URs can challenge existing notions of themselves as burdens within Nepal. Indeed, with the appropriate structures in place to facilitate initiatives in line with UR needs, there is the potential for URs to become agents of social change and moreover, assets in Kathmandu.

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## APPENDIX I – PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Ahmadiyya Pakistanis left Pakistan because of persecution as a religious minority. They sought out Nepal for refuge. Indeed, most had done their research and selected Nepal because it was close to Pakistan, thought to be affordable, and because the UNHCR office was there. Yet, despite having wilfully left, the general sentiment of the Pakistani URs was that they had minimal choice under the circumstances.

Somali participants, on the other hand, were smuggled to Nepal in hopes of going to Europe. Their lives were in danger because of the ongoing struggles in Somalia and more so because of their minority status. They thus paid smugglers thousands of dollars to get them the necessary documentation to go to Europe. Sadly, the ones who ended up in Kathmandu were most likely scammed; the smugglers brought them there, put them up in hotels, and then disappeared leaving them with no money. The smuggler may have also been caught by the authorities but in reality, no one knows why they were abandoned in Kathmandu. Through word of mouth, they came to know of UNHCR's offices and other Somalis in the similar situation.

**Table 1:** Participant Demographics

CODE	SEX	AGE	INTERVIEW/FG	BACKGROUND	Language Interview/FG conducted in
P1	M	39	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P2	M	23	Interview/FG	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Nepali
P3	M	30	FG	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P4	M	34	FG	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P5	M	35	FG	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P6	M	37	FG	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P7	M	33	FG	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P8	M	24	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P9	M	47	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P10	M	23	Interview/FG	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P11	M	24	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P12	M	35	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi

## Exploring Coping Mechanisms in Conditions of Displacement

CODE	SEX	AGE	INTERVIEW/FG	BACKGROUND	Language Interview/FG conducted in
P13	F	31	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P14	F	36	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P15	F	35	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P16	F	31	Interview	Ahmadiyya Pakistani	Hindi
P17	M	36	Interview	Somali	English
P18	F	20	FG	Somali	Somali
P19	F	38	FG	Somali	Somali
P20	F	30	FG	Somali	Somali
P21	F	20	Interview/FG	Somali	English/Somali
P22	F	52	FG	Somali	Somali
P23	M	18	FG	Somali	Somali
P24	M	29	Interview	Somali	English

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APPENDIX II – RECRUITMENT POSTER

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## **RECEIVE A DISPOSABLE CAMERA!**

**GIVE US FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICES FOR YOU**

**Are you a refugee from Pakistan or Somalia above 18 years old? If so, we are interested to hear about your experience of moving to Kathmandu. Your feedback will help us improve our services.**

**As part of the study, you will have the opportunity to take photographs and share with us a day in your life. The photographs will be yours to keep. Please note, there are only a limited number of cameras so please sign up soon. Food and snacks will also be provided for your time.**

**Please contact Anju Pandey or Smita Ranjit to sign up for this study by APRIL 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010.**

**\*ALL RESULTS ARE 100% CONFIDENTIAL\***

## APPENDIX III – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

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### ***Life history questions***

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
  - a. Name
  - b. Education
  - c. Where are you from?
  - d. What was your occupation back home?
  - e. Age (if comfortable to tell)
  - f. Marital status? (co-habiting and unofficial marriage)
  - g. Who do you live with?

### ***History of displacement***

1. What led you to move to Nepal?
2. When did you arrive in Nepal?
3. Could you share your experiences of moving to Nepal? (difficulties faced on the way, etc)
  - a. What opportunities have opened up as a result of coming to Nepal?
  - b. What opportunities have been closed down as a result of being in Nepal?

### ***Personal Experience as Refugee***

1. Can you tell me a little bit about living here as a refugee?
2. What is your daily routine?
  - a. How do you pass your time here?
3. What are the major challenges you face in Kathmandu? (food, shelter, living conditions, education for children, health services, inability to work...etc)
4. What are the things you enjoy about being in Kathmandu?

### ***Perceived causes of psychosocial and mental health problems***

1. What makes you unhappy or distressed?
  - a. Can you give some examples of things that make you unhappy or distressed?

### ***Resources and coping***

1. What do you think is a good way to reduce your worries?
2. Before coming to Nepal, what would you do if you were worried or had a problem?
3. Now, what do you do when you have problems or challenges?
4. What do you do when your family faces such problems or challenges?
5. What is available in your community for you to turn to when you are upset?
6. Who is there to help you deal with these circumstances? (traditional healers, imams, friends etc)?

***Perception on outside support***

1. Outside of your community, what services are there to help you deal with any challenges you face?
  2. How do they help you?
2. If respondent does not mention TPO's name; have you heard about TPO Nepal?
3. Do you know what TPO Nepal does?
4. Have you or your family member received any services from TPO Nepal?

***IF YES***

5. What do you think about TPO's services?
6. What do you like most about TPO-Nepal's program?
7. What did you get from these sessions that you were not able to get from your personal resources?
8. What difficulties have you experienced while receiving services from TPO's counsellors (language, confidentiality, gender of counsellors, etc)
9. In your opinion, what do you think TPO can do to improve its current services?

***IF NO***

10. What support services have you received from other agencies?
11. What reasons have prevented you from receiving services from TPO-Nepal?
12. Were your personal resources enough to help you adjust when coming to Nepal?

***Unmet need***

1. What activities or things outside of your community would help you and your family to deal with your circumstances better?

***Future hope and aspiration***

1. What are your fears for the future?
2. What are your future hopes, aspirations, and expectations?
  - a. Returning back, reintegration in Nepal, resettlement in another country?

## APPENDIX IV – FOCUS GROUP TOPIC GUIDE

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### **Selection of photos (20-30 MINUTES INCLUDING CONSENT)**

- Select 2 photos showing the following:
  - o How do you get by?
  - o Something or someone who is important to you

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Introduction of TPO, researcher and research
- Purpose of FG
  - o Forms the basis of academic dissertation
  - o Want to understand more about the strengths within the Pakistani and Somali population so TPO can design programmes accordingly
  - o No one has done research with urban refugees in Kathmandu and so hopefully, this research will slowly bring light to your circumstances
- Confidentiality maintained. Also ask them to maintain the confidentiality of their friends
- Voluntary participation
- Photos → may be used at a conference if they are okay with it?
- We might ask emotional questions but there is no pressure to answer
- We might also ask obvious questions but we are trying to understand your interpretation of things
- Ask them not to discuss privately with the person beside them but to discuss with the group

### ***Life history questions (when asking participants to introduce themselves)***

1. Name
2. What do you do when you are worried or upset?

### ***Photovoice session (1 HOUR)***

1. Display everyone's top 2 pictures for discussion
2. Ask them to categorise photos into things/people that help them deal with their circumstances.
  - a. If people in photos, find out more about how that person helps them deal with stress. Ask others if this is the same for them. Do the same for 'things'.
3. Leave other categories open for discussion
4. If abstract pictures, delve into more detail

**\*BREAK\* - IF NEEDED**

***Personal Experience as Refugee (1 HOUR)***

5. Can you tell me a little bit about living here as a refugee?
6. What are the things you enjoy about being here?
7. What are the major problems you face here? (food, shelter, living conditions, education for children, health services etc)

***Resources and coping***

8. What cultural, religious or traditional things are available in your community to help reduce stress?
9. What is the best process among the ones you listed, to reduce stress within the community?

***Perception on outside support***

10. What activities or things outside of your community would help you and your family to deal with your circumstances?
  - a. How do they help you deal?
11. If respondent does not mention TPO's name; have you heard about TPO Nepal?
12. Do you know what TPO Nepal does?
13. Have you received any services from TPO Nepal?

***IF YES***

1. What do you like most about TPO-Nepal's program?
2. What did you get from these sessions that you were not able to get from your personal resources?
3. What are the barriers/difficulties that you have experienced while receiving services from TPO-Nepal's counsellors (language, confidentiality, gender of counsellors, etc)?
4. What do you think TPO-Nepal can do to improve its current services?

***IF NO***

1. What support services have you received from other agencies?

***Closing***

1. Summarise key points
2. Ask everyone to say something or provide any final thoughts

## APPENDIX V: CONSENT LETTER

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### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**



**Researcher:** Fiona Thomas, London School of Economics

**Contact Info:** 98XXXXXXXX

#### **Background**

Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO)-Nepal is working to develop local psychosocial, mental health and conflict resolution capacity. They are also developing systems that promote community resilience, quality of life and self-reliance through education, research, service delivery and advocacy. As part of TPO-Nepal's work, counselling services are provided for urban refugees. This research aims to build on the current counselling services so that they are relevant for the Somali and Pakistani communities.

Fiona Thomas, who will be conducting the study, is currently a Masters student at the London School of Economics in the UK. This study is part of her Masters dissertation and will also help TPO Nepal's work.

#### **Introduction & Objective**

You are being asked to take part in this study which will involve group discussions and/or interviews. The purpose of the group discussions and interviews is to talk about your experience of being in Kathmandu. Specifically, we would like to know what you do when you are worried or upset. The information from these discussions will help TPO-Nepal design programs that more closely address your concerns.

#### **Study Design**

We will be interviewing participants in a focus group (FG) setting and also in one-on-one interviews. Participants will be given disposable cameras and asked to take 10 photographs of things in their daily life that help them overcome and deal with difficult situations. We will develop the photos and the participants will be able to keep them. Those who sign up after the cameras are distributed will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. Only those participants involved in the FG will get a disposable camera. No cameras will be given for those participating in the one-on-one interviews.

#### **Study Visits**

The group discussions will take approximately 2 hours of your time and the interviews will take approximately 1 hour of your time.

Please note, we will not provide any financial support to you because you participated in this research/study, but we will provide refreshments during our discussion. In addition, the use of disposable cameras is unique to this research study and will not necessarily be used in any subsequent research.



**Risks Related to being in the Study**

While participating in this study, some may feel uncomfortable because we will ask some emotional questions. However, if at any time you would like to stop the discussion, you will be able to. You can also pass on any questions you are not comfortable answering. Finally, you may be identified in relation to your views or quotations; again, you may indicate a preference not to be linked to your specific quotations and to participate anonymously.

**Benefits to being in the Study**

There may not be direct personal benefit from participating in this study. However, the primary benefit to participation is that you will be able to contribute to helping us understand the strengths that already exist within your community. This may help in improving current services provided by TPO-Nepal by finding ways of integrating existing strengths into their projects.

On a larger scale, few people are aware of your circumstances as urban refugees in Kathmandu. I hope this research will also help to bring some attention to your situation.

**Voluntary Participation/Confidentiality**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. We encourage you to ask study staff members if you have any questions so that you fully understand everything about the study before providing consent. All results will remain completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside this study.

**Contact Information**

If you may have any questions, concerns or would like to speak to the study team for any reason, please call: Fiona Thomas at 9849271562.

**Consent**

I HAVE READ THE FORM AND UNDERSTAND IT. I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THE GROUP DISCUSSION/INTERVIEW.

_____	_____	_____
Study Participant's Name	Signature	Date

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

_____	_____	_____
Interviewer's Name	Signature	Date

**Quotation Consent**

You may indicate a preference not to be linked to your specific quotations, or to participate anonymously by checking the boxes below:

- ☐ I wish to be linked with specific quotations or views I have expressed and agree to be listed as an interviewee
- ☐ I do NOT wish my name to be listed among interviewees or linked to specific quotations or views I have expressed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Study Participant's Name                      Signature                      Date

**Photo Consent**

I GIVE PERMISSION FOR FIONA THOMAS/TPO-NEPAL TO USE THE SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS & NARRATIVES FOR THEIR RESEARCH PURPOSES

\_\_\_\_\_  
Study Participant's Name                      Signature                      Date

***\*If participant unable to sign\****

I HAVE EXPLAINED THE INFORMATION IN THIS FORM TO THE PARTICIPANT AND THEY HAVE PROVIDED VERBAL CONSENT:

- ☐ TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GROUP DISCUSSION/INTERVIEW
- ☐ TO BE LINKED TO THEIR QUOTATIONS
- ☐ FOR FIONA THOMAS/TPO NEPAL TO USE THEIR SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS FOR THEIR RESEARCH PURPOSES

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Interviewer's Name                      Signature                      Date

## APPENDIX VI – CODING FRAME

CODES	BASIC THEMES	ORGANISING THEMES	GLOBAL THEMES
1. Beaten 2. Minimal integration with Nepali 3. Ridiculed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- URs face discrimination from the local population in different ways</li> <li>- Lack of local language impedes full facilitation</li> <li>- Pakistanis able to blend in more because of similar phenotype</li> <li>- Somalis look very different from local population and so face substantial difficulties blending in</li> </ul>	DISCRIMINATION	<b>CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: VULNERABILITIES</b>
4. Idealisation of past 5. Misconstrued expectations 6. Lost opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Although URs left their homeland because of persecution, many idealized the life they had</li> <li>- While they left to save their lives, they expected to get more than just security</li> <li>- The more highly educated URs are, the more frustrated they were with their lost potential</li> </ul>	UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS	
7. Housing issues 8. Poor healthcare 9. Health issues 10. Relationship issues 11. Separation from family 12. Home stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On a daily basis, URs encountered difficulties</li> <li>- External stressors frequently resulted in tension at home between family members and spouses</li> </ul>	DAILY STRESSORS	

<b>CODES</b>	<b>BASIC THEMES</b>	<b>ORGANISING THEMES</b>	<b>GLOBAL THEMES</b>
13. Fatalism 14. Financial non-independence 15. Reactive displacement	- URs felt they had little control in their decision for leaving their home-country and now, they feel like they have little control over the direction of their lives	<b>LACK OF CONTROL</b>	
16. Tension 17. Tearfulness 18. Excessive sleeping 19. Lack of sleep 20. Loss of appetite 21. Somatic complaints 22. Self-talking 23. Suicidal thoughts	- URs mentioned various psychological challenges resulting from their vulnerabilities - UR women predominantly had somatic complaints	<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>	
24. Family bonds 25. Coping through children 26. Coping through taking care of community 27. Joint problem-solving	- Coping was most frequently done through others. - If in Kathmandu with family, they functioned as a source of support (if excessive stress was not present at home) - Families solved problems and worked on household budget together and - Single people found comfort in friends, usually those living in close proximity	<b>COPING THROUGH OTHERS</b>	<b>COPING STRATEGY I: LOVE (PREREQUISITE FOR BASIC SELF-CONFIDENCE)</b>
28. Belief in God 29. Coping through religious leader	- URs draw on their faith to give meaning to their circumstances - Belief in a higher being facilitated hope for many	<b>COPING THROUGH RELIGION</b>	

CODES	BASIC THEMES	ORGANISING THEMES	GLOBAL THEMES
30. Higher education 31. Skills development 32. Security insufficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ultimately, URs wanted to be contributing members of society</li> <li>They longed for a reason to wake up in the morning</li> <li>Many spoke of wanting to volunteer, develop skills or further their education</li> <li>Although they had security in Kathmandu, this was not enough to lead fulfilling lives</li> </ul>	<b>DESIRE FOR SELF-REALISATION</b>	<b>COPING STRATEGY II: SOLIDARITY (PREREQUISITE FOR SELF-ESTEEM)</b>
33. Community centre 34. Coping through sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although limited, activities at the community centre provided a space for URs to gain some opportunities (teaching computer/English classes; translating...etc)</li> <li>Some spoke of doing work at home (sewing, providing massages) and the subsequent positive feelings that resulted</li> <li>Male youth predominantly channeled their energy into sports</li> </ul>	<b>OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-REALISATION</b>	
35. Inability to work 36. Inability to volunteer 37. Illegal (labour) work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frustration from inability to use existing skills or develop new ones</li> <li>Some even sought to volunteer but were turned away</li> </ul>	<b>INABILITY TO EXERCISE MORAL-RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>COPING STRATEGY III (ABSENCE OF): RIGHTS (PREREQUISITE FOR SELF-RESPECT)</b>

CODES	BASIC THEMES	ORGANISING THEMES	GLOBAL THEMES
38. Restricted mobility 39. Lack of opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repatriation not possible because of dangers of returning to home country; resettlement takes years; no recognition in Nepal, therefore limited opportunities to work or gain skills</li> </ul>	'STUCK'	
40. Lack of security 41. Insufficient allowance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cannot exercise freedom of speech (i.e. protest) without fear of repercussion</li> <li>- Tight finances limits prospects to leave Kathmandu</li> </ul>	MINIMAL SPHERE OF LIBERTY	