



Syria

accelerator  
lab

**MAGENTA**  
choose *better*



©UNDP - Syria - Zuhir Al-Fourati

# *Women Inheritance Rights in Syria*

## Barriers Mapping Report

Submitted To: UNDP  
Date: 16 February 2023

# Table of Contents

<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>APPROACH</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>STEP 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION – BEHAVIOURAL JOURNEY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>STEP 2 TARGET BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>STEP 3 BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS: BARRIER MAPS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>BARRIER MAP PER FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>8</b>
SISTER	8
SON-IN-LAW	10
BROTHER	11
MOTHER	12
FATHER	13
<b>MAP OF KEY BARRIERS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>STEP 4: DESIGNING INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>17</b>
NARROWING DOWN POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS	17
REDUCING RISKS FOR HARM	17
TARGETING INTERVENTIONS AT DIFFERENT ACTORS	18
GOING BEYOND LEGAL INTERVENTIONS	19
<b>SHORT-LISTED INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>19</b>
THE FATHERS: LEGACY, RESPONSIBILITY AND HYPOCRISY	20
THE SON-IN-LAWS: REDUCING INFLUENCE	22
THE BROTHERS: MEDIATION AND REFRAMING RESPONSIBILITIES	23
THE COMMUNITY: SURFACING AND SHIFTING INHERITANCE NORMS	24
THE SISTERS: SUPPORTING (SOME) WOMEN TO CLAIM THEIR RIGHTS	25
CONCLUSION	27
<b>ANNEX 1 : DATA COLLECTION TOOLS</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>FGD DISCUSSION GUIDE</b>	<b>28</b>
INTRODUCTION	28
SCENARIO	30
WAY FORWARD	32
CONCLUSIONS	32
<b>KII DISCUSSION GUIDE</b>	<b>33</b>
INTRODUCTION	33
SCENARIO	34
WAY FORWARD	37
CONCLUSIONS	37

# Background

This Barrier Mapping report is the main outcome of the analysis carried out by the MAGENTA team as part of the project with the UNDP Syria Accelerator Lab on designing behavioural insights interventions to support women's access to their Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Rights. It is informed by a rapid desk review of existing literature, a co-exploration meeting with the UNDP field staff and the analysis of primary qualitative data collected in Aleppo (2 FGD with women, 2 FGD with men and 3 KIs with Lawyers).

This document synthesizes the approach followed for the analysis, provides an overview of the behavioural drivers for the typical different family members who are involved in the inheritance process and options for interventions for UNDP. It is anticipated for UNDP to select one priority intervention among the recommendations and MAGENTA will facilitate a workshop to support UNDP staff in designing further the intervention for piloting after the end of this consultancy.

Current estimates conclude that only 7-10% of houses in Syria are currently registered in the name of women<sup>1</sup>. However, if inheritance was split according to Sharia law, this number would be significantly higher despite men inheriting twice the share of women, as a large proportion of land constitutes amiri land where assets are split in equal shares. Thus, only a small proportion of women inherit their full share at present. Whilst land ownership in and of itself does not necessarily lead to equality in ownership (which can be defined as “(i) women and men can acquire rights that are (ii) equally secure; (iii) women and men can equally enjoy and exercise their land rights; and (iv) women's and men's land rights are equally protected when threatened.”<sup>2</sup>), it is a necessary step towards achieving broader societal gender equality aims.

From a behavioural science perspective, inheritance in Syria is complex. Inheritance involves many actors (e.g. members of the family incl. The father, mother, brothers, sisters, son-in-law, as well as community members) who have different needs and interests that are often in tension with one another. In addition, the case of inheritance is also one where understanding interactions between people – be those discussions, negotiations, or implicit hints – is crucial to understanding the problem to be solved. However, these interactions are difficult to research and hard to observe, and one is reliant on individual accounts of these situations – which are likely biased and by definition subjective. This is also the case as the moment of inheritance is one where strong emotions, including grief, are experienced, and where family dynamics are exposed and members are likely to feel vulnerable.

---

<sup>1</sup> Guidance Note on Gender and Housing, Land and Property in Syria, UNDP & NRC (2022)

<sup>2</sup> The gender gap: assessing and measuring gender related land inequality, Scalise (2020) (retrieved [https://d3o3cb4w253x5q.cloudfront.net/media/documents/2020\\_9\\_land\\_inequality\\_paper\\_gender\\_gap\\_en\\_web\\_spread\\_DICXcBr.pdf](https://d3o3cb4w253x5q.cloudfront.net/media/documents/2020_9_land_inequality_paper_gender_gap_en_web_spread_DICXcBr.pdf))

Thus, improving inheritance outcomes for women in Syria is dependent on many different actors changing behaviours, in complex and hard-to-research circumstances. This report aims to shine a light on some of the complexities and likely interactions between individuals, and based on this analysis provides potential interventions that could contribute to shifting behaviours in a positive direction.

## Approach

Taking a behavioural science lens to the problem of inheritance in Syria follows an established behavioural science process:

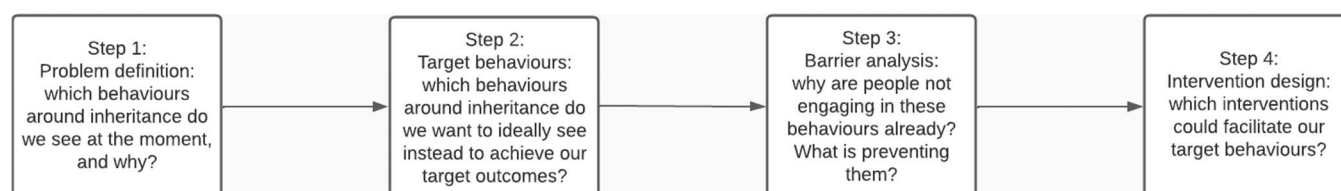


Figure 1: Traditional behavioural science process applied to the problem of inheritance in Syria.

A key to defining the problem here was that rather than merely analysing individual behaviours there was a need to also capture interactions between individuals. Therefore, when analysing current behaviours we focused on highlighting interactions across the main actors, based on a review of the existing literature as well as focus groups ran (Please see *Annex 1: Data collection tools*).

In order to analyse drivers of current behaviours (and potential barriers to target behaviours), the Behavioural Drivers Model<sup>3</sup> was applied. This model analyses barriers on 3 levels: psychological, sociological, and environmental level. As there is at present no single behaviour that constitutes the problem, we chose a behavioural model that would allow us to capture *general* drivers to multiple (and hard to define) behaviours rather than those behavioural models (e.g. COM-B) that have a stronger focus on identifying barriers to single behaviours.

<sup>3</sup> Petit, V. (2019). The Behavioural Drivers Model. UNICEF. URL: [https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/5586/file/The\\_Behavioural\\_Drivers\\_Model\\_0.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/5586/file/The_Behavioural_Drivers_Model_0.pdf), 20.

# *Step 1: Problem definition – behavioural journey*

In order to gain an understanding of current behaviours, we captured likely current (known) behaviours of the key family members involved in the inheritance process (family's father, the mother, the brother(s), the sister(s)) and the community more broadly. The behavioural journey (*Figure 2*) highlights current behaviours across 4 potential stages of the inheritance journey:

- 1) **Pre-inheritance:** where the father is still alive and conversations might be taking place between family members
- 2) **Circumstance change:** where the father has fallen ill or has passed away and concrete arrangement for the inheritance process are made
- 3) **Takaroj:** where the sisters are often asked to waive their full rights, and where there might be a financial compensation for her (Murada)
- 4) **Registration:** where the division of property is officially registered

Note that the behavioural journey in *Figure 2* is meant to show *most* problematic behaviours that may happen as part of a family's inheritance situation. Whilst these behaviours wouldn't necessarily be expected to occur within the same family, the broader set of behaviours appears to be established across the Syrian population. **In addition, these are profiles of what a *typical* family member *might* do – the precise behaviours will differ for each family.**



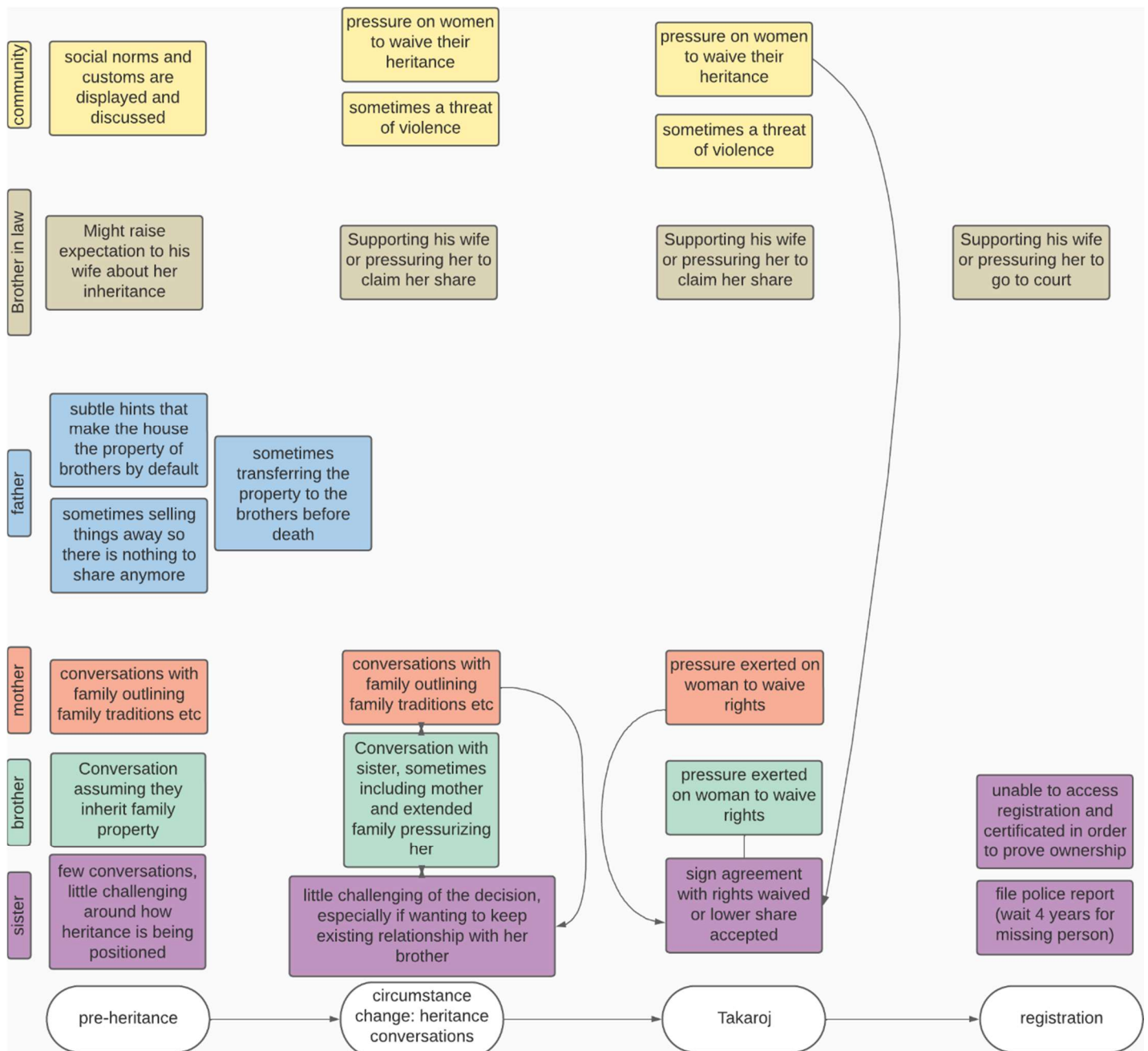


Figure 2 : Behavioural Journey for inheritance

## *Step 2 Target behaviours*

The aim of UNDP is to increase the number of women in Syria who inherit their share of properties according to Sharia law. In order to achieve this aim, there are several target behaviours that one would ultimately aim to achieve. These are:

- a. **Fathers** to follow Sharia law and making a clear division according to Sharia law ahead of passing, and capturing these in their will alongside ensuring the brothers will act on it
- b. **Brothers** to follow Sharia law and contribute to a division of assets according to Sharia law and act on the will of their father (if available)
- c. **Mothers** to follow Sharia law and take active steps to either influence the father to write his will, or support the sister in her claiming of the rights
- d. **Sisters** to follow Sharia law and claiming their rights where it is not adhered to, potentially via legal means

However, whilst these are the behaviours that would ultimately achieve UNDP's aims, there might be additional behaviours that need to occur first to enable these target behaviours. These additional behaviours could for example be:

- e. **Religious leaders** prompting fathers to write their will and take responsibility for his family
- f. **Community leaders** speaking out in favour of a division of assets according to Sharia law
- g. **Son-in-laws** pledging to keep the property of their wives under her control

## ***Step 3 Behavioural analysis: Barrier maps***

The subsequent barrier maps summarize for each of our typical family members, the main barriers to achieving the target behaviour, followed by a map that summarize the key barriers.

Those maps summarize the findings of the analysis phase of the project (rapid literature review, co-exploration meeting and data collection) and will inform the suggested interventions in the following section

### **Barrier map per family member**

#### **Sister**



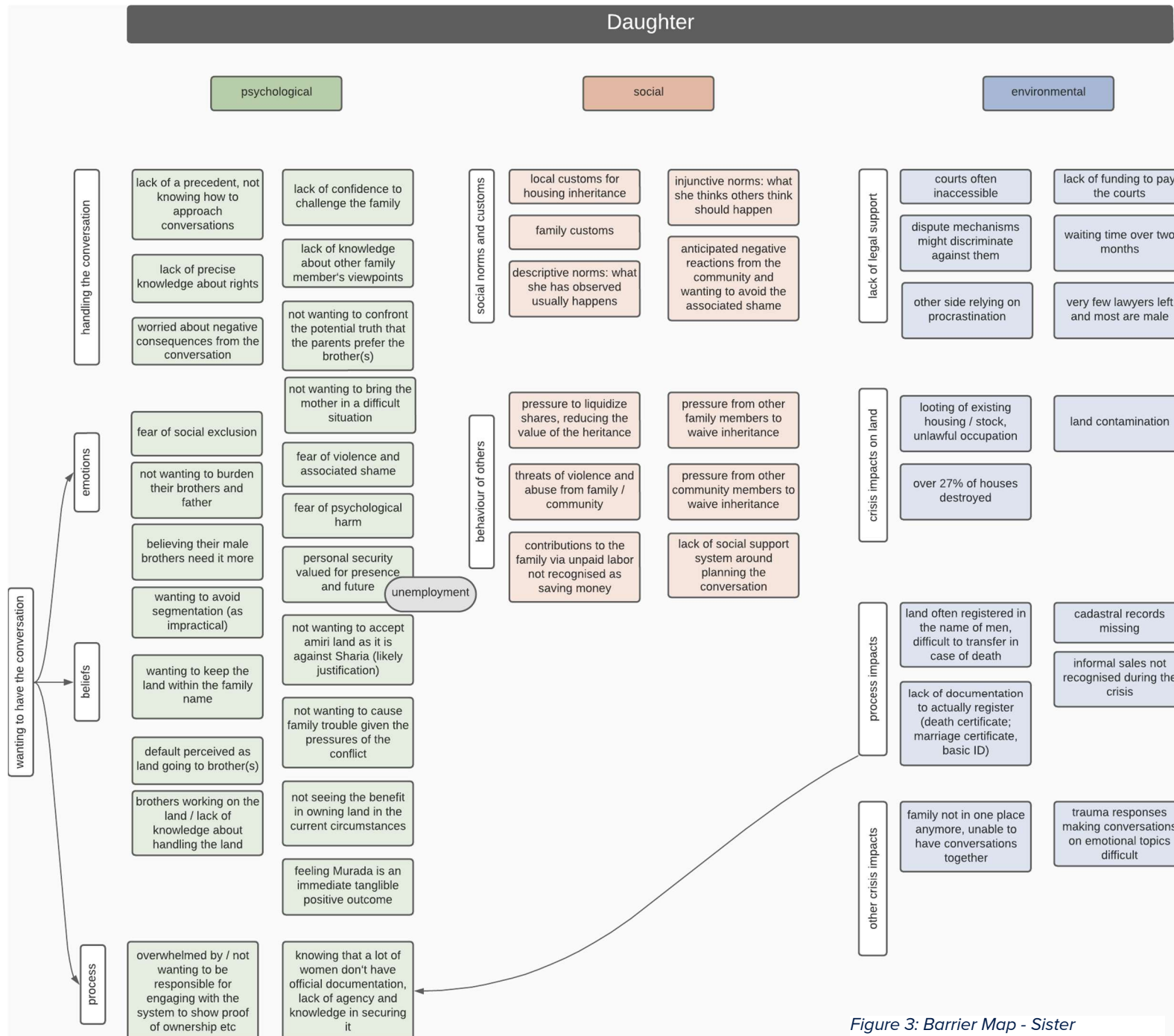


Figure 3: Barrier Map - Sister

## Son-in-law

The sister's husband has been surfaced through the research as a highly ambivalent but key figure in these family dynamics:

- 1) **In relation with his wife (the sister):** There are several different possible behaviours towards his wife, depending on the son-in-law himself, each having different drivers summarized below.
  - a. It is likely her husband/the son-in-law will exert pressure on her to claim her inheritance, to the extent that there are cases where he did not allow her back into his house without the inheritance. This will leave the sister in the middle position between her brothers and her husband ("you can choose between your brother and your husband"). Should she receive her share, he is likely to control the inheritance once it is in her name.
  - b. He could also feel like his wife claiming her inheritance is an attack on his masculinity (as the provider for the family) and he could attempt to prevent her from claiming her rights
  - c. It is possible that he will be supportive of his wife and helps her claim her rights in an unintrusive manner
- 2) **In relation to the father:** the father will be worried that the inheritance will be controlled by his son-in-law. In particular if there is a family business, he would be concerned that the son-in-law will end up controlling parts of it and will have a say in how the business is run.
- 3) **In relation to the brothers:** they will have very similar concerns as the father, despite having likely had a say in picking their sisters husbands in the first place.

## Brother

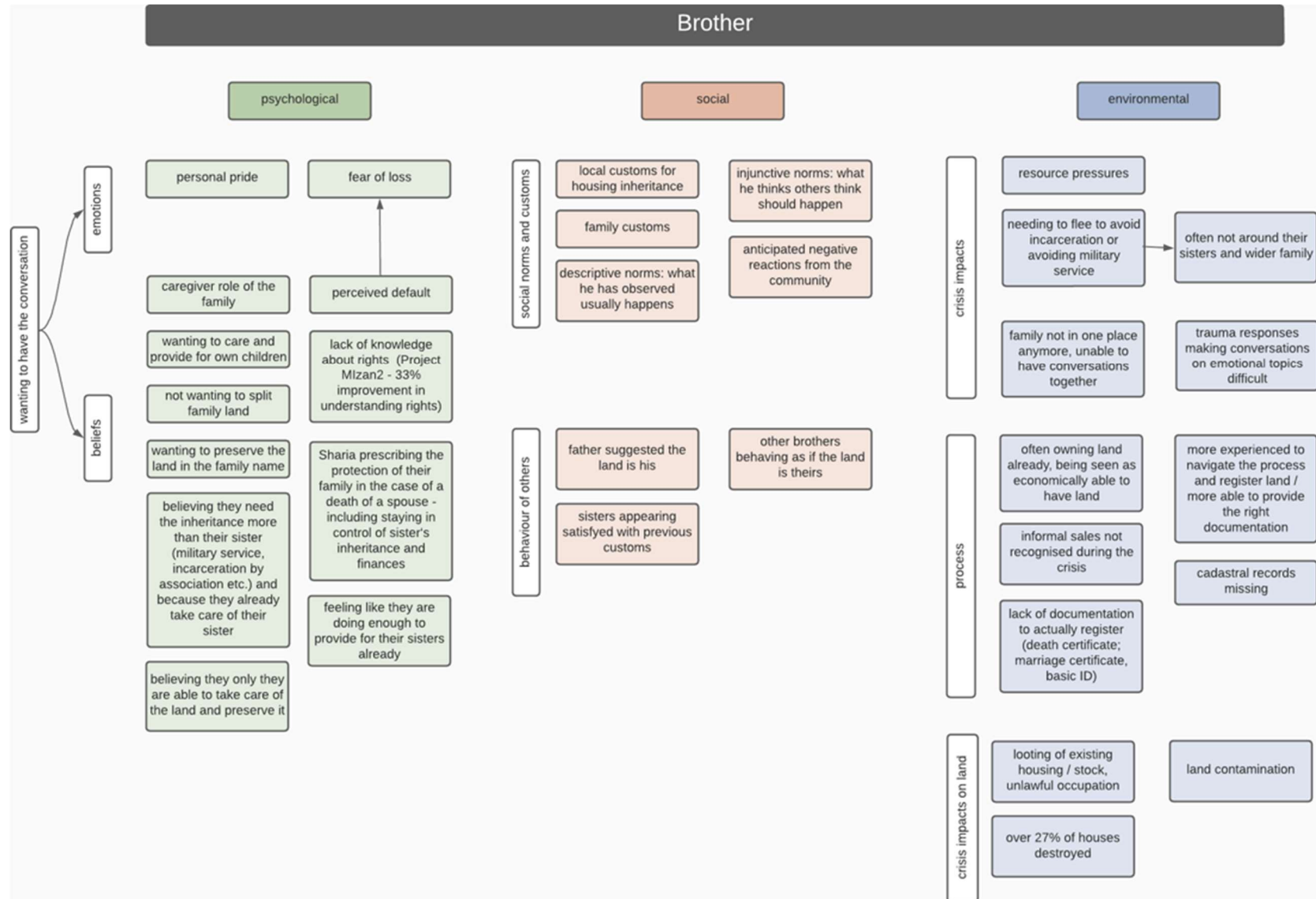


Figure 4: Barrier Map - Brother

## Mother

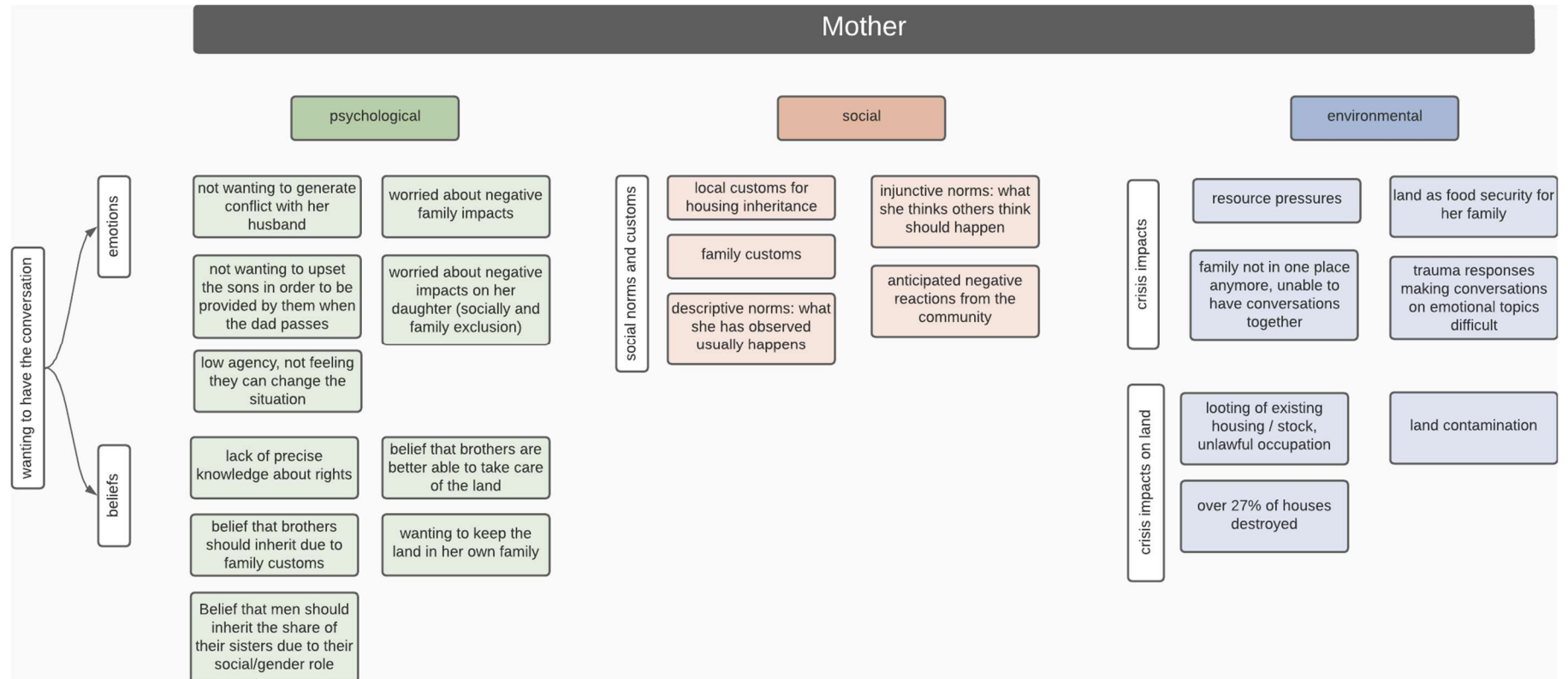


Figure 5: Barrier Map - Mother

# Father

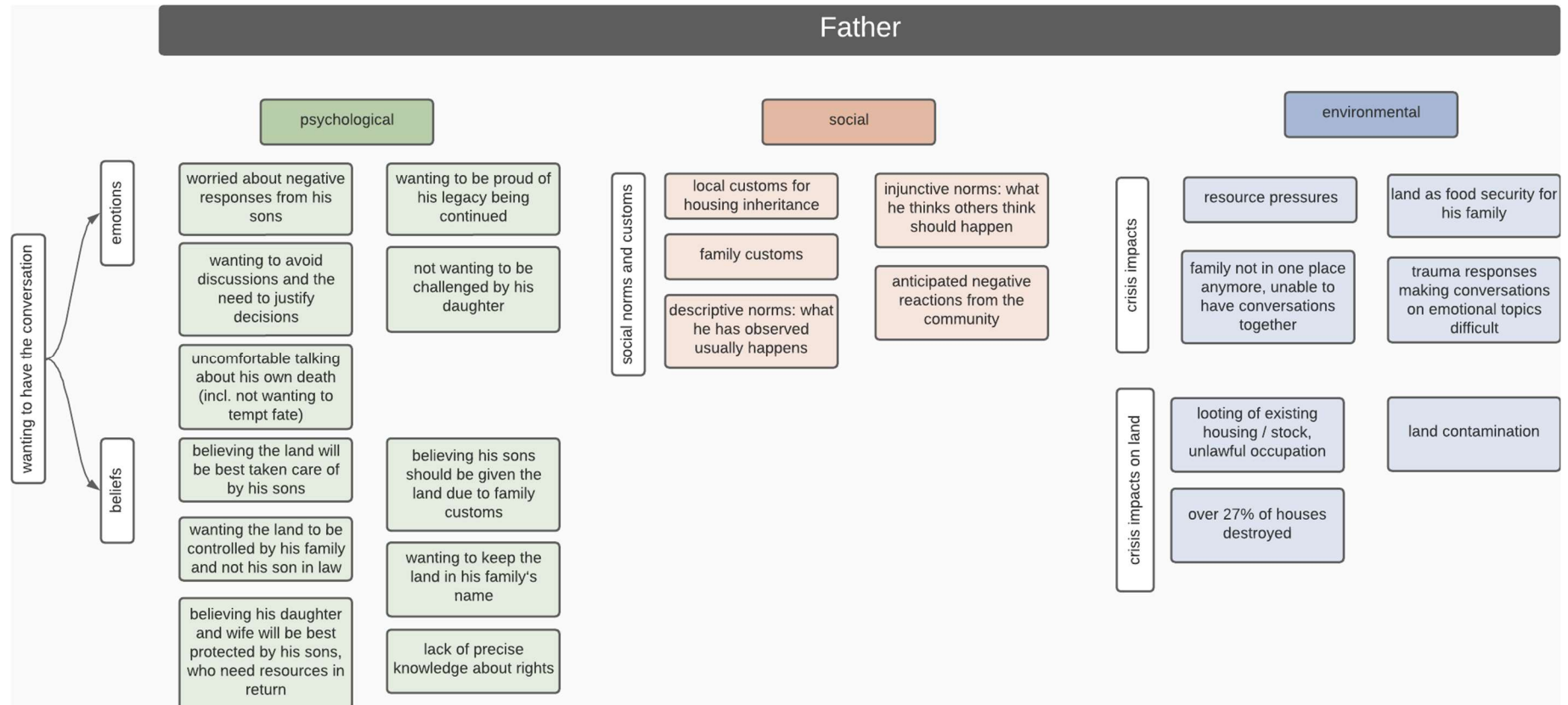


Figure 6: Barrier Map - Father

## Map of key barriers

Whilst the behavioural analyses demonstrated that there are a lot of factors specific to the individual actor that impact behaviour, there are also shared factors that shape the situation more broadly. Interventions should therefore ensure that these broader sets of barriers are taken into consideration when designing interventions, as particularly psychological level barriers are shaped significantly by sociological and environmental factors that can quickly cancel out any potentially positive impact of an intervention aimed purely at the psychological levels.



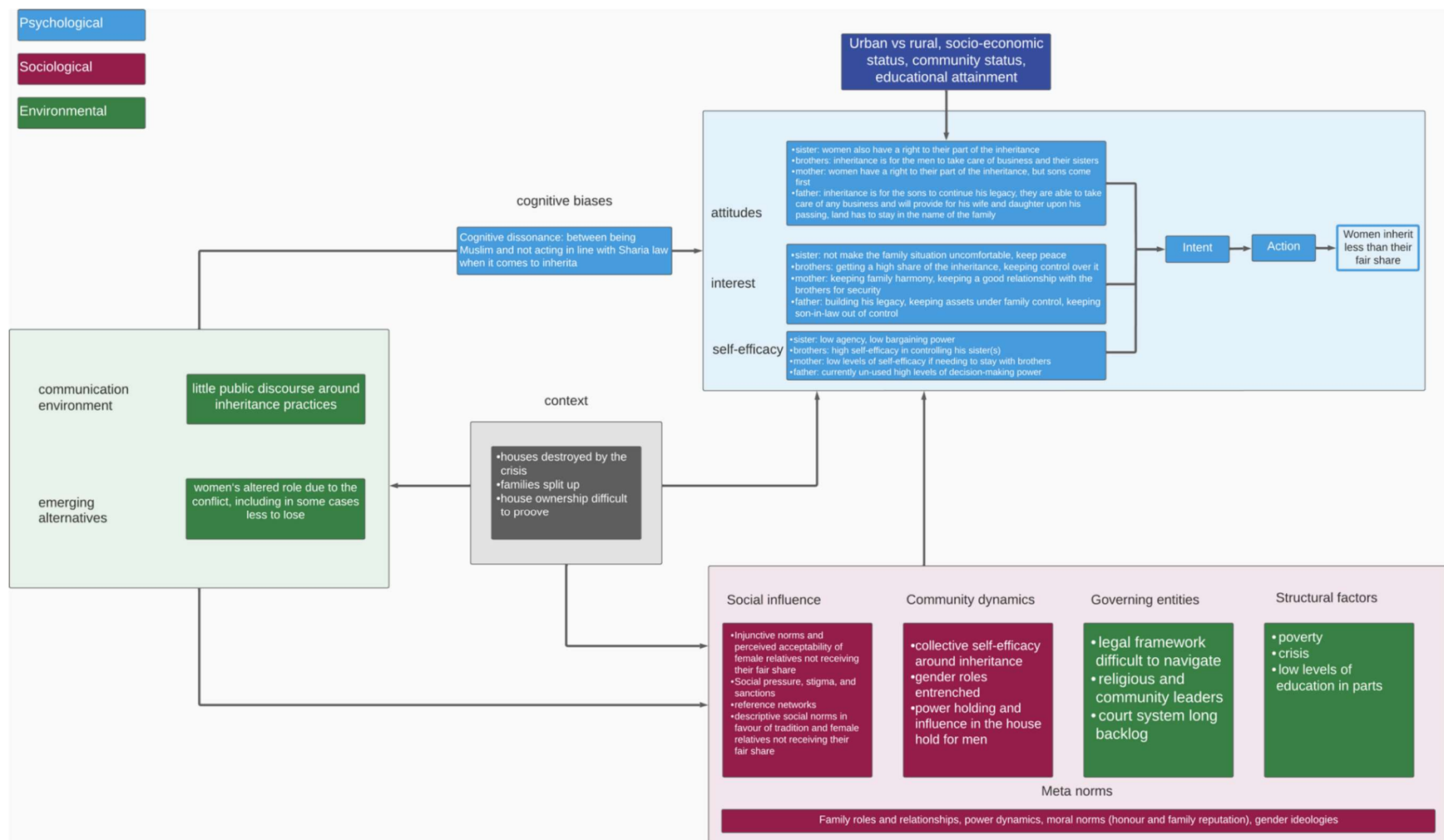


Figure 7 : Key barriers map

One behaviourally important consideration is the tension between being Muslim on one hand, but not adhering to Sharia law when it comes to inheritance, on the other hand. 87% of Syrians identify as Muslim, and for most of them Islam constitutes a

strong part of their personal and social identities. However, when it comes to inheritance many families report adhering to family or community traditions rather than to Sharia law.

This tension between being religious and taking actions that go against the law of their religion likely induces **cognitive dissonance** – a difference between beliefs (pro Sharia) on the one hand and behaviours (against Sharia law) on the other hand. When someone is subject to cognitive dissonance, there are different strategies that might occur psychologically to reduce this state:

1. Family members in favour of dividing assets according to tradition might reduce cognitive dissonance by *rationalising their behaviours*, often overjustifying their actions: from ensuring that assets stay in the family to keeping the son-in-law out of their family business, to the brothers deserving a greater share because they are taking care of their sister.
2. People might also compartmentalise, by not directly comparing their actions as being against Sharia law, which allows them to participate in family traditions without feeling they are challenging their religious beliefs. The lack of arguments *against* a division according to Sharia law might be evidence that compartmentalisation is happening, at least for some people.
3. Some people might also in this situation lean on the perceived social legitimacy of their actions, particularly where they gain social support and validation that their behaviours are not only just, but also expected of them.

Thus, it is likely that in the present state, **the tension that objectively exists is not subjectively perceived**, due to a combination of the protective mechanisms outlined. Previous research has examined how, where cognitive dissonance exists, one can align behaviours with attitudes. So called “hypocrisy interventions” have attempted to demonstrate how current behaviours are in conflict with people’s actual attitudes, and some were successful at changing behaviours as a result<sup>4</sup>, also where cognitive dissonance was elicited in a religious context<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Priolo, Audrey Pelt, Roxane St. Bauzel, Lolita Rubens, Dimitri Voisin, et al.. Three Decades of Research on Induced Hypocrisy: A Meta-Analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, SAGE Publications, 2019, 45 (12), pp.1681-1701. [ff10.1177/0146167219841621ff](#). [ffhal-02475342f](#)

<sup>5</sup> Yousaf, O., & Gobet, F. (2013). The emotional and attitudinal consequences of religious hypocrisy: Experimental evidence using a cognitive dissonance paradigm. *The Journal of social psychology*, 153(6), 667-686.

## Step 4: Designing Interventions

Informed by the findings of step 3, a series of interventions are suggested to UNDP to select from and pilot. The overarching principles that guided the design of this interventions are presented first, followed by the recommendations.

### Principles for designing interventions

#### Narrowing down potential interventions

Within the behavioural journeys that impact inheritance in Syria, any intervention can only impact *either* the stage of pre-inheritance (whilst the father is alive) or be at a time where circumstances change, impacting heritance conversations (incl. takaroj) or engaging in legal challenge. **None of the interventions are legal, nor require legal reforms.** We are leveraging what already exists (such as Sharia law, a sense of responsibility for the daughters, a sense of religiousity) to achieve our legal goals. While laws and policies are powerful, they are implemented by humans who might not be convinced to comply. Therefore, we want to ensure a social basis and agreement with the outcomes (i.e. that daughters receive their fair share according to Sharia law) before suggesting any legal interventions, which can be considered once societal agreements are in place.

#### Reducing risks for harm

The behavioural drivers analysis showed that inheritance in Syria is a situation where there are many actors involved in the final outcome, and where each of these actors are driven by a multitude of different drivers and potential barriers. What's more, some of the barriers and existing behaviours are *deeply embedded* (such as the family's perception that the default of inheritance should favour the brother(s) above the Sharia share). Challenging such deeply embedded views and behaviours that are additionally emotionally laden can carry significant behavioural risks in this context:

- a) **Harm to the sister:** given existing pressures on the sister to accept her lower share, both from within her family as well as from her community (where there have been reported threats of violence), any intervention has to be sensitive to the possible risk of making her situation worse. This could come in the form of social sanctions, conflict, or violence.
- b) **Behaviours that make the situation worse:** In addition, given the amount of power male members of the family hold over the outcome, there is a risk that assets will be even less likely to be shared and the sister loses any financial compensation as well as protection through her brothers (where it exists). This is particularly likely when the brothers (or father) experience psychological reactance, a phenomenon

where people perceive their personal freedoms to be threatened and engage in the opposite behaviour to that intended. Interventions that tell the men what to do, or threaten them with court actions are at particular risk of evoking psychological reactance.

These risks also demonstrate that even if she was to get her fair share via a court, she might lose out in other ways. Therefore, a strategy should not aim to look at her housing rights in isolation to her living conditions and broader consideration to ensure her wellbeing and quality of life is as high as it can be given her circumstances.

A strategy that reduces the chances of harm to the sister should therefore incorporate shifting social norms and behaviours across the entire family and community, over time. This also includes the chance to bring together several interventions with different target audiences in mind, addressing both barriers of women to claim their rights.

## Targeting interventions at different actors

Interventions will need to be targeted at both the father and brothers of the family but also at the broader community to address social norms. It is necessary to go beyond changing the behaviour of the sister as it is clear that even if she actively attempts to claim her rights at different parts of the inheritance process, the interactions she will likely have with family members will prevent her from getting her fair share as well as these actions carrying significant social risk.

For illustration, *Figure 8* shows potential target behaviours of the sister at all stages: from bringing up the topic of inheritance ahead of the father passing, to standing her ground against her brother and mother, to rejecting Murada and not sign the Takaroj, to building a court case. Each of these behaviours have many other barriers in the way (such as the court having a large back log and likely biases inherent in the justice system which might mean a fair outcome is also not guaranteed), but it illustrates the barriers she faces on an interpersonal level, from family members. Therefore, it is clear that any intervention can't just aim to change the behaviour of the sister, it has to include a wider change of social norms and behaviours adopted by the father and brother.

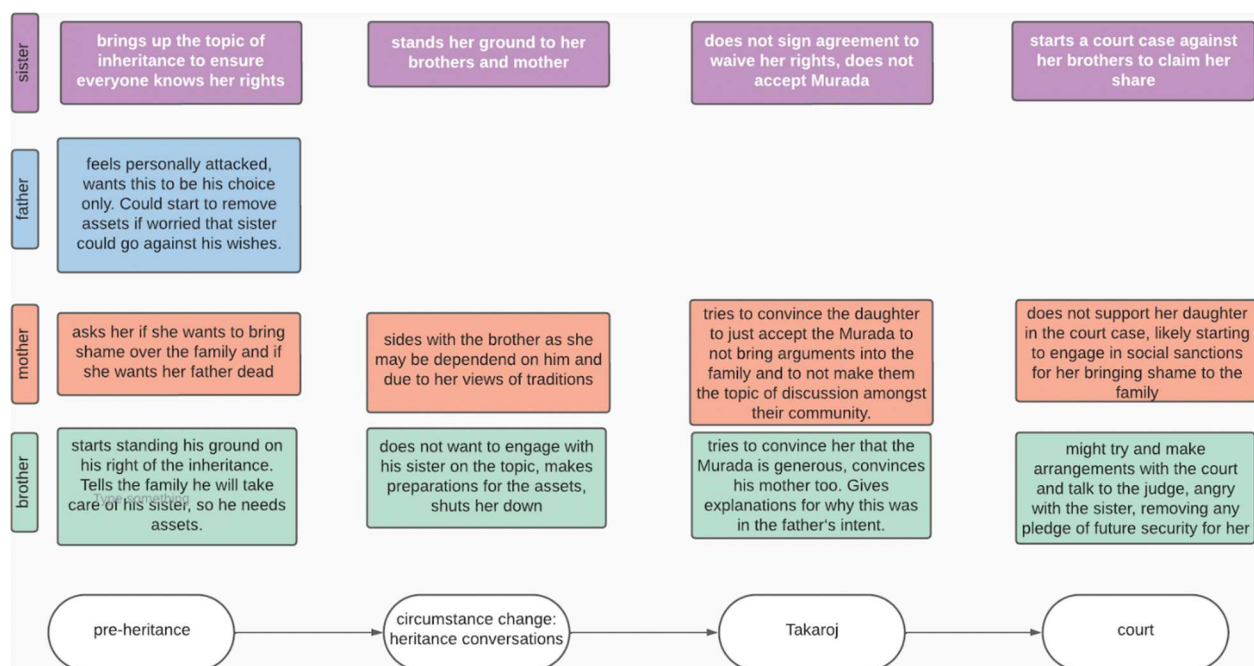


Figure 8 : Potential target behaviours for the sister and interpersonal barriers throughout the behavioural journey

## Going beyond legal interventions

The behavioural analysis demonstrated that whilst legal factors (e.g. sister claiming her rights in court) are an important part of the problem, addressing them alone is not sufficient. As outlined in the key barriers analysis, there are a myriad of factors shaping the overarching problem, amongst them issues of family dynamics and social norms that impact how the role of men is shaped both in society more broadly but also with a view on inheritance specifically.

Therefore, interventions should target different levels of the problem at once (e.g. psychological, sociological) and if legal interventions are considered, a strong emphasis should rest on embedding such a project in wider societal change. This is particularly pertinent as legal interventions in the absence of such considerations carry the risk of both failing to achieve change and of causing behavioural harm.

## Short-listed Interventions

In order to narrow down interventions that can be piloted, we outline **5 short-listed interventions** that target different levels of the problem as shown in *Figure 8*, whilst adhering to the outlined design principles. However, addressing different actors and different levels of the problem might require several bundled interventions to achieve behaviour change and reduce harm.

## The fathers: Legacy, responsibility and hypocrisy

The intervention most frequently mentioned during focus groups was that the father should clearly divide the assets before his passing. Of course, whilst dividing assets in line with Sharia law could mean that the sister is more likely to receive her fair share after his passing and has the potential to dramatically reduce any tension within the family, there is also the risk that the father would not divide assets in line with Sharia law.

However, assessing the likelihood of different outcomes in this scenario, the overall impact of the father writing a will can still be considered positive, as it seems unlikely that asking the father to write a will would lead to a *worse* outcome for the sister compared to him not writing the will, and it could lead to a better outcome if the father favours a division according to Sharia law:

		Likelihood that brothers giving their sister her fair share according to Sharia law
Father <b>against</b> a division according to Sharia Law	Doesn't divide assets	<b>Low</b>
	Divides assets	<b>Low</b>
Father <b>for</b> a division according to Sharia law	Doesn't divide assets	<b>Low-medium</b>
	Divides assets	<b>High</b>

Figure 9 : Assessment of the risks related to the intervention

We call this intervention “legacy, hypocrisy, and responsibility” because we believe that it should take account of these 3 factors specifically:

1. **Legacy:** in order to motivate the father to divide his assets, it is likely that leaving a legacy is one of his key motivators.
2. **Hypocrisy:** outlined earlier, not adhering to Sharia law during the inheritance process is likely inducing cognitive dissonance as it goes against religious personal beliefs. Any intervention should surface this tension and help to resolve it. For instance, Sharia law should be the perceived default of e.g. a service to support fathers to divide their assets with a brief justification required if they choose to go against Sharia law.
3. **Responsibility:** At present, whilst the father has some control over the inheritance process he is not necessarily the one taking responsibility for it. The father often doesn't divide assets or makes his wishes explicit. Instead, he might take actions



outside of traditional inheritance (such as selling assets) or implying that he wants his sons to take care of the family business. The daughter on the other hand is responsible for accepting how the inheritance process ends. She is the one that actively has to accept the Murada and sign away her rights. Thus, at present the sister is the person that ends up with very little control but with the responsibility for ending the inheritance process. Framing the division of assets around not passing on responsibility could be aligned with the father's broader perception of himself as the decision-maker of the family, and his motivation to reducing the potential conflict and burden after his death on his wife and children.

When it comes to the division of assets we suggest examining two possible options:

### **Option 1: Handing over assets before passing**

It could be possible to motivate the father to hand over assets before his passing. This option could be preferable as it removes any potential discussions and negotiations amongst the siblings after their father's death. However, the father would need to trust that he is still able to live on the family premises until he passes away, and such an intervention would need to ensure to sufficiently motivate the father to divide assets according to Sharia law. This could be achieved by adhering to the points outlined above, leveraging hypocrisy, adhering to a sense of responsibility and possibly enabling him to view his legacy before his death. In addition, the father would need to manage conversations with his sons, which may be uncomfortable – so any intervention would need to take account of push-back of the brothers and support the father to handle this situation.

### **Option 2: Setting out divisions of assets intentions**

If the father does not want to write over his assets ahead of passing, he could also capture his wishes in a intention document. The same mechanisms to motivating the father – hypocrisy, responsibility, legacy – would be required. Whilst this intervention could mean the father might avoid any confrontation with the brothers (removing a possible barrier for him to outline his wishes) there is a small risk that the brothers ignore the document and still pressure their sisters after their father passes away.

Summing up, such an intervention could address the following barriers:



Figure 10 : Summary of the barriers addressed with the proposed intervention related to fathers

## The son-in-laws: reducing influence

The influence of the son across the inheritance process was a frequent mention across focus groups. In particular, the father and the brothers are worried that he seizes control over the assets if they go to the sister – both with a worry that he might sell the property but also in the case of family run businesses that he might need to be included in any decisions. And whilst this concern might in some cases be unjustified, there are instances where the son-in-law did take control over assets, and these stories can be enough to serve as a strong motivating factor for the father and brothers to ensure that the property is not under the sister's name to avoid this risk.

To reduce the son-in-law's influence, there are several options that might be explored:

- a) **Setting expectations ahead of marriage:** it could be explored to broach the topic of inheritance before marriage proactively, to ensure that the son-in-law is aware that any inheritance is to stay in the sister's name. If legally possible, this could mean that there is a line in the marriage contract stating that the sister will keep her inheritance. If not legally possible, it could mean exploring an informal MOU about how inheritance will be handled. However, the particular focus here is on ensuring the son-in-law has an understanding of the family's wishes to write over the inheritance to their daughter if it stays in her name, and commits either in written or verbal form to adhering to **Sharia inheritance law** as a condition of marriage. This intervention could have the added value of bringing up inheritance into the collective conscience of the family ahead of time, ensuring that there is an agreed plan in place once the dad passes, and possibly facilitates discussion between the son-in-law and the father and his sons early on.
- b) **Positive case studies:** accompanying this intervention could be the additional use of positive case studies, such as in a campaign, of sons-in-law supporting their wives with their inheritance and keeping it fully under her control. It could surface positive relationships between the brothers, the sister and her husband to balance the perceived risks of sons-in-law. This intervention would also aim to address injunctive and descriptive social norms around what it means to be a husband of a wife who is inheriting.
- c) **Reframing the brother's responsibility:** whilst it is clear that the brothers frequently describe "taking care" of their sister, what exactly this care-taking means is not usually discussed – and in reality, is possibly less supportive than the parents would hope. However, in the case of inheritance there could be a clear case for reshaping the brother's role around taking care of their sister, by helping her to affirm herself to her husband and to ensure the inheritance stays in her name and she maintains control over it. This would have the added positive impact of having the brothers justify their sisters share, which could lead to a change in social norms more broadly.

An intervention such as the ones described above could impact:

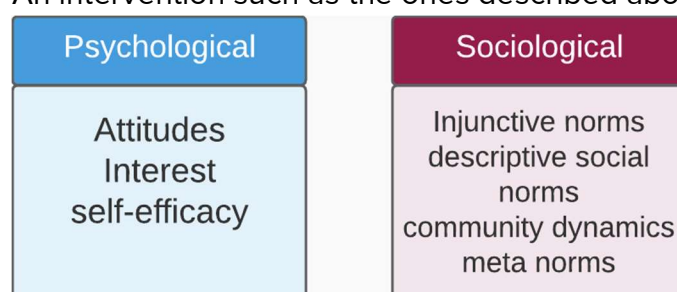


Figure 11: Summary of the barriers addressed with the proposed intervention related to son-in-laws

## The brothers: Mediation and reframing responsibilities

The brother's role in inheritance is undoubtedly a large one. Before the father writes a will, and during the process, they are likely to attempt to influence him to give them the share they feel they deserve and expected. If the father does not write a will, the brothers frequently attempt to influence and pressurize their sister to accept the Murada and sign away her rights to any property.

Some barriers that the brothers may face in accepting inheritance divisions according to Sharia law are addressed in the previous interventions – such as reducing the influence of their brother-in-law, changing social norms and having their father address his wishes clearly in a will.

However, particularly in the instances where the father does not have a conversation with his sons about inheritance and he does not write a will, it is important to attempt to change the brother's behaviours around negotiating with their sisters in particular.

Interventions that aim to impact the brothers could center around:

- a) **Mediation:** to support negotiations and ensure they are perceived as just by all parties, mediation could be offered by respected community members. To incentivize brothers to take part in mediation services, they could be combined with support in navigating the administrative process, which is not always easy to follow particularly due to the impacts of the crises (where documents are missing etc):
- b) **Hypocrisy:** Similar to the hypocrisy intervention aimed at the father, it could also be possible to surface the tensions surrounding not adhering to Sharia law when it comes to inheritance behaviours for the brothers. This could be particularly successful if combined with discussing what “taking care of the sister” would actually mean in reality, as this is one of the core justifications that brothers bring up when explaining why it makes sense for them to get a share higher than outlined in Sharia law. Here, the tension also lies between the ideal of taking care of ones sister but not necessarily agreeing to this when it comes to for example financially supporting her and her children in the case of her husband's death. This puts the brother's actions in tension both with their identity as Muslim and with their identity as the care taker of the family. Highlighting these tensions and offering alternative

behaviours in line with their beliefs could be powerful, particularly if it can also be combined with other interventions.

- c) **Reframing responsibilities:** Related to the brother's image of the care taker of the family, it could be attempted to reframe that taking care of ones sister means to ensure she is getting her fair share – particularly as the details of what it means to take care or protect their sister is currently an abstract ideal rather than concrete behaviours.

These interventions would aim to address the following barriers:

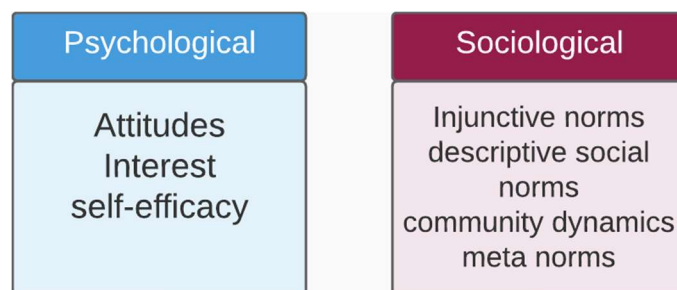


Figure 12 : Summary of the barriers addressed with the proposed intervention related to brothers

## The community: Surfacing and shifting inheritance norms

Whilst most interventions aim to impact social norms at least indirectly (e.g. through changing behaviours in a direction that is not in line with current social norms), in order to have wider-ranging impacts it should be considered to more directly challenge the norms that are associated with inheritance – particularly the norms around the behaviours of men. The behaviours around inheritance, and associated social norms (both what people believe others in their social groups see as desirable behaviours as well as what they actually do) are a particular case. This is because inheritance is both private and infrequent and is usually experienced only once or twice and often later in life. Thus, people are likely to lack **mental models** of what the inheritance process actually involves – not just from the perspective of administrative work, but also from an emotional and family dynamic point of view. And given the personal discomfort with the topic, avoidance leads to even fewer opportunities to discuss and learn about the behaviour and experience of others.

As a result, there appear to be a lot of *assumptions* about how inheritance actually works in practice. This was reflected in focus groups and beyond, where people attempted to categorise people by how they are likely behave (*“The youngest brother is the same as the eldest brother, he can be good or bad.”* , FGD males, 20-49) and with assumptions made about potential factors that shape the inheritance discussions (e.g. rural vs urban neighbourhoods, status in the community etc).

Therefore, an intervention with the aim of impacting social norms should:

- a) **Provide mental models about the process:** in order for people to be able to talk about inheritance, they will need an image of what the process can actually look like, from a realistic perspective. This could involve **case studies** (incl. In a video

format or as part of an edutainment intervention) surfacing how the family made decisions, how it felt, which parts are uncomfortable and how they overcame it. It will be important to be realistic also about uncomfortable parts, so that people are able to prepare themselves and name the discomfort.

- b) **Surface injunctive social norms:** these are norms about what people believe others see as desirable behaviours, or what they “should” do. This could come in the form of messages from community leaders or others about what a good inheritance process in line with Sharia law looks like, and provide reasons on why this is the way to approach inheritance discussions.
- c) **Surface descriptive social norms:** as inheritance is largely private, and as people lack insight into what others are thinking, there will be assumptions made for example about the ease with which some families prefer to act on tradition – whereas in reality there might be discussions about acting on Sharia law instead.
- d) **Bringing inheritance into the public discourse more broadly:** inheritance right now only has one touch-point with people’s lives – that is usually after the father has passed away. However, there are other touch points that intersect with property and the role of women that could be exploited to bring inheritance into the public conscience. UNDP could examine where there are cross-overs in thematic content (be they about the role of women in society, or assets, or family dynamics) that could provide an opportunity to surface inheritance. For example, a UNDP project focused on education for girls could include a “life planning” intervention with the parents, which includes a section on planning for their daughter’s inheritance.

These interventions would aim to address the following barriers:



Figure 13 : Summary of the barriers addressed with the proposed intervention related to the community

## The sisters: supporting (some) women to claim their rights

Whilst it has been suggested that sisters are able to claim their rights in court should the family not give her fair share of the inheritance, in reality this is a difficult and unlikely path for her to take. Whilst some women might not be aware of her rights, addressing this factor alone is unlikely to lead to a successful claim, as she is facing barriers on several levels:

- a) **Her family:** is likely to socially sanction her for any attempt to take her brothers to court, with additional pressure and judgment from her social reference group and

community. This social pressure alone is unlikely to be worth the inheritance for a lot of women.

b) **The court system** itself:

- a. Waiting times are long, as the country's legal system is dealing with backlogs lasting years
- b. The defense is often counting on procrastination as a tactic
- c. Of the limited lawyers that are left in the country, they might share the same beliefs as the rest of the wider community vis a vis women's inheritance.
- d. Perceived dysfunctional system with worries about occurrences of corruption and favoritism

Thus, these barriers together are likely to be too big to be overcome by a single intervention. Therefore, we suggest that supporting women to claim their rights should happen in those cases where the woman has nothing to lose socially, for instance being estranged from her brothers during the crisis.

However, this still leaves a very complex court case to deal with, which she would not be able to do on her own. Any intervention should therefore provide a **full front-end support** to women. This includes:

- Explaining her rights so she is fully aware
- Explaining the process
- Providing her with lawyers that can support her throughout the entire process
- Supporting her through the waiting times and keeping her engaged
- Supporting her to navigate the court date, including paper work
- Supporting her challenging the ruling should it not be just

This would mean a commitment for a long time span, to ensure that no women are left alone at some point of the procedure. This is important also because these cases could then serve as a deterrent for other women going down this route, if it becomes known that it is impossibly difficult to navigate and one is left alone.

Importantly, supporting some women would allow for **strategic litigation**, where precedent cases and positive case studies could be utilised to form the basis of a social movement – messages outlining successful claims, or that claims have gone up could be the first of a number of potential steps to build on this intervention.

In summary, an intervention that aims to support a selected number of women to claim their rights in court could, if combined with a strategic litigation approach address the following barriers:





Figure 14 : Summary of the barriers addressed with the proposed intervention related to sisters.

## Conclusion

Addressing inheritance behaviours is a complex undertaking where no one solution will lead to a complete shift in behaviours. However, addressing as many barriers as possible in single interventions can dramatically improve their chances for success, and more extensive interventions can be combined with smaller, less resource-intensive interventions such as leveraging existing touch-points of the UNDP.

# Annex 1: Data collection tools

## FGD discussion guide

### Total Time: 1hr 30 mins

The following document will be used as a guiding tool for facilitators during Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The facilitator should assure participants that all information shared within the discussion will remain confidential. The facilitator will take all potential ethical concerns into consideration before the discussion, considering the safety of respondents, ensuring that participants agree that no information shared in the discussion will be divulged, and obtaining informed consent from participants. The discussion will last between 1 hour and 30 minutes and 2 hours.

### Information about the FGD: *(To be filled by note-taker)*

Date	
Location	
Number of Participants	
FGD Gender & Age	
Facilitation Duration	
Presence of Recording	
Name of Facilitator	
Name of Note-taker	

## Introduction

### Time needed - 15 minutes

The below section will explain how you should introduce yourself, how you will explain the purpose of this discussion, how you will obtain informed consent, and how you will set the necessary ground rules for the discussion.

### *Introduction of the research team and explanation of purpose*

Hello everybody, my name is X (name of facilitator), and this is Y (name of note-taker). We work for UNDP Mizan Project. We are here today to hear your thoughts and perspectives around inheritance, and in particular women's experience in accessing their rights according to sharia. We are conducting those group discussion to understand the fears and hopes that the various family members have about inheritance and how discussions that takes place within families about that topic. The insights you share today are very important and will inform UNDP programs to improve the lives of women who experience violence and their families and communities.

### ***Informed consent procedure for participants in the FGDs***

We are carrying out discussions such as this one to hear from community members such as yourself to understand what you think about inheritance processes and women's experiences about inheritance. Of course, there is no right or wrong answer. Please feel comfortable to express yourselves freely during the discussion, and we ask that all that we talk about here today stays within this group.

As we are **around 6-8 people** who will discuss together it may be difficult for Y (name of note-taker) to capture everything that you share, and your thoughts are very important to us. Therefore, if you do not mind, we would like to record the discussion. If you would prefer not to be recorded, please let us know now and we will respect your wishes. And as you were previously informed, the discussion will last around **1.5 to 2 hours**. When you agreed to participate, you were asked to sign a consent form. If you have not done so, please let me know now.

### ***Setting the ground rules during discussion***

Before we start our discussion, I would like to read out remind us of some key points to remember as we begin our discussion

- **WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.** We would like everyone to participate and highly encourage for everyone to share their views.
- **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.** Every person's experience and opinion is important, whether you agree or disagree. We want to hear a wide range of opinions.
- **WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE.** We want everyone to feel comfortable sharing when sensitive issues come up.
- **WE WILL BE RESPECTFUL.** We want to take turns to talk, so we can all hear your opinions and experiences.
- **WE WILL NOT ASK YOU TO SPEAK ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.** We do not expect you to speak about specific people, or about yourself.

### ***Available support***

If you would like to speak with someone during or following this discussion, we can provide you with contact details of a case worker or a social worker. We can also provide information for services related to the topics we discuss today in case you decide you would like further information or to speak with someone later.

*Is everything clear about the course of the focus group discussion?*

(If everyone says things are clear, proceed with the discussion. If not, make sure to answer all inquiries and questions before starting the discussion).

### ***Building Rapport***

Before we start our discussion, let us introduce ourselves. I would like each one of you to introduce yourself to the group. If you don't feel comfortable using your real name, then feel free to use a different name you prefer.

Thank you for your answers on the scenario and the associated questions. Now we will discuss what could be potential way forward.

## Scenario

Time needed - 55 minutes

Guidance for enumerator (not to be read)	Scenario and questions
Story - Setting the background	<p>Amina is a 45 year-old Syrian woman who lives in Aleppo. She is married and has 2 children (1 boy and 1 girl). Her husband works in the public administration.</p> <p>Her family is composed of her father, her mother, her older brother and her younger brother. Her dad owns the family home, a shop where both of the brothers work in and land outside of the city where they produce olive oil.</p>
Questions- hopes and fears of each family member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think are the hopes and fears of the family when it comes to inheritance?  <i>Follow up questions: are these hopes and fears the same for every family members? How are they different?</i>  <i>Probe for each family : the father? the older brother? The younger brother? The mother? Amina?</i>  <i>If key concepts such as "honour", "legacy", "security", "stability" are mentioned, please ask respondent to explain what those mean to them.</i> </li> <li>How are discussions about inheritance taking place at that moment ?  <i>Follow up questions: is the father talking about it or is he keeping it for himself? Which family members would talk about it?</i> </li> </ol>
Story – a sad event took place	<p>Amina's father passed away a week ago and conversations have started between her two brothers, her mother and their uncle (her father's brother) on the division of assets.</p>
Questions- hopes and fears of each family member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do each family member know the hopes and fears of the others?  <i>Follow up questions: How are they communicated? Is there an element of assumptions among family members of what they others want?</i> </li> </ol>
Story – an offer is made to Amina	<p>The family suggested to Amina to offer her a symbolic small of amount of money to satisfy her. They know that it is lower that what her share in Sharia should be.</p>
Questions- Family's motivation behind the offer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why do you think the family did not offer part of the land or parts of the shop?  <i>Follow up questions: Why does the family think the property shouldn't go to sisters? What is the key reason? Is this reason different for different family members?</i>  <i>What does the land represent ? what does the shop represent? What does the house represent?</i> </li> </ol>

	<p>5. Why do you think the family offered a sum of money lower than her share to Amina?  <i>Follow up questions: What does the family think would happen if his sister would get her fair share?</i></p>
Questions- Empirical Expectations (What I think others do)	<p>6. What would most adult women in Amina's position do in this situation?  <i>Follow up questions: the response it to accept, to ask why? And if it is considered a fair amount?</i></p>
Questions- Normative Expectations (What I think others expect me to do)	<p>7. What would her family expect Amina to do in this situation? Why?  <i>Follow up questions: if it is considered a fair amount?</i></p>
Story - Non-compliance of the main character	<p>Amina is aware of the rules of sharing regarding divisions of assets and she understands that the amount of money suggested is significantly lower than what Sharia provides for her. Therefore, she responds to her family that she requests her share of all assets according to Sharia.</p>
Questions - Anticipated positive or negative reactions to noncompliance	<p>8. How would her family respond to her request?  <i>Follow up questions: Would any family member react differently? What would they say?</i>  <i>Probe for each family: the older brother? The younger brother? The mother? The paternal uncle?</i></p> <p>9. What would people in the community say about Amina's request?</p> <p>10. What would be the consequences for Amina?  <i>Probe the meaning of each consequence: for example "gossip" what does it mean? What are the consequences of it? ...</i></p>
Questions- Sensitivity to sanctions	<p>11. Would the opinions and reactions of her family make Amina change her mind about refusing the small amount of money?</p> <p>12. How did the crisis affect how the opinions and reactions of others would change her mind?</p>
Questions on Exceptions	<p>13. Are there any circumstances where it would be considered more or less acceptable for Amina to refuse the small amount of money and obtain her share according to sharia?</p>
Story Continued - Non-compliance of the main character	<p>Amina's brothers came back to her with another offer: an increased amount of money, still below her share according to Sharia. She declined the offer and reiterated her request. She also explained that she will now go consult with a lawyer to assess her options to go to court.</p>

Questions -  
Anticipated  
positive or  
negative  
reactions to  
noncompliance

14. Could you imagine Amina would go to court against her family to claim her share?

*Follow up questions: what would prevent her from doing it? under which circumstances would she consider it?*

15. Would she expect the court to be treating her fairly?

16. How do you think the brothers would feel and act if Amina's decided to go to Court to receive her fair share?

*Follow up questions: do you think they can imagine it? If not, why not?*

## Way forward

**Time needed - 15 minutes**

17. What could be any solution whereby the concerns of all family members be met **AND** the sister receives her share according to sharia?

18. What do you think about the following solutions?

- What about keeping the land or the house in the name of the brothers (to ensure it stays within the family) but the sister to be able to live in it or rent it and benefit financially from it?
- What about getting the properties and their value evaluated to see what a fair monthly or one off payment would be from him to his sister (taking into account the value that assets will gain over time)?
- What about reframing the share of the sister receive as the brother meeting their responsibility/ commitment to care for their sister?

## Conclusions

**Conclusion, Questions, Thanks and Goodbyes: Time needed - 5 minutes**

Thank you all for participating with us in this discussion today, and for being honest about your opinions. Your input is very important to us and is strictly confidential. I thank you for your time.

Does anyone have any questions or anything they would like to add? (*Listen to any questions and try to answer the best way possible. The note-taker should write down all questions that are being asked by the participants*).

Just a reminder, if you would like to speak with someone there are case/social workers available, and we can provide their contact information in case you would like any information or to speak with someone now or later on. We can also provide information about services that are available should you wish to access any.



# KII discussion guide

## Total Time: 45 mins

The following document will be used as a guiding tool for facilitators during Key Informant Interview (KIIs). The facilitator should assure the respondent that all information shared within the interview will remain confidential. The facilitator will take all potential ethical concerns into consideration before the interview, considering the safety of the respondent and obtaining informed consent from the respondent. The discussion will last between 45 minutes and 1 hours.

## Information about the KII: *(To be filled by note-taker)*

Date	
Location	
Name of participant	
Gender & Age	
Role	
Facilitation Duration	
Presence of Recording	
Name of Facilitator	
Name of Note-taker	

## Introduction

### Time needed - 5 minutes

The below section will explain how you should introduce yourself, how you will explain the purpose of this interview, how you will obtain informed consent, and how you will set the necessary ground rules for the interview.

### *Introduction of the research team and explanation of purpose*

Hello everybody, my name is X (name of facilitator), and this is Y (name of note-taker). We work for UNDP Mizan Project. We are here today to hear your thoughts and perspectives around inheritance, and in particular women's experience in accessing their rights according to sharia. We are conducting those group discussions and interviews to understand the fears and hopes that the various family members have about inheritance and how discussions that takes place within families about that topic. The insights you share today are very important and will inform UNDP programs to improve the lives of women who experience violence and their families and communities.

### *Informed consent procedure for participants*

We are carrying out interviews such as this one to hear from community members as well as from key stakeholders like yourself to understand what you think about inheritance processes and women's experiences about inheritance. Of course, there is no right or wrong answer. Please feel comfortable to express yourselves freely during the interview, and we ask that all that we talk about here today stays within us.

In order to capture everything that you share, and your thoughts are very important to us, if you do not mind, we would like to record the discussion. If you would prefer not to be recorded, please let us know now and we will respect your wishes. And as you were previously informed, the discussion will last around **45 minutes to 1 hour**. When you agreed to participate, you were asked to sign a consent form. If you have not done so, please let me know now.

### ***Setting the ground rules during interviews***

Before we start our interview, I would like to read out remind you of some key points to remember as we begin our interview

- WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU. We highly encourage you to share their views.
- THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. Every person's experience and opinion is important, whether you agree or disagree. We want to hear a wide range of opinions.
- WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE. We want everyone to feel comfortable sharing when sensitive issues come up.
- WE WILL BE RESPECTFUL. We want to take turns to talk, so we can all hear your opinions and experiences.
- WE WILL NOT ASK YOU TO SPEAK ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES. We do not expect you to speak about specific people, or about yourself.

*Is everything clear about the course of the interview?*

(If everyone says things are clear, proceed with the interview. If not, make sure to answer all inquiries and questions before starting the interview).

### ***Building Rapport***

Before we start our discussion, let us introduce ourselves. I would like each one of you to introduce yourself. If you don't feel comfortable using your real name, then feel free to use a different name you prefer.

## **Scenario**

**Time needed - 25 minutes**

As a lawyer or legal practitioner, we would like you to answer the questions based on your experience of what **happens most often** in the community and not on what the ideal should be, based on the existing legal framework.

Guidance for enumerator (not to be read)	Scenario and questions
<i>Story - Setting the background</i>	<p>Amina is a 45 year-old Syrian woman who lives in Aleppo. She is married and has 2 children (1 boy and 1 girl). Her husband works in the public administration.</p> <p>Her family is composed of her father, her mother, her older brother and her younger brother. Her dad owns the family home, a shop where both of the brothers work in and land outside of the city where they produce olive oil.</p>
<i>Questions- hopes and fears of each family member</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think are the hopes and fears of the family when it comes to inheritance?  <i>Follow up questions: are these hopes and fears the same for every family members? How are they different?</i>  <i>Probe for each family : the father? the older brother? The younger brother? The mother? Amina?</i>  <i>If key concepts such as “honour”, “legacy”, “security”, “stability” are mentioned, please ask respondent to explain what those mean to them.</i> </li> <li>2. How are discussions about inheritance taking place at that moment ?  <i>Follow up questions: is the father talking about it or is he keeping it for himself? Which family members would talk about it?</i> </li> </ol>
<i>Story – a sad event took place</i>	<p>Amina’s father passed away a week ago and conversations have started between her two brothers, her mother and their uncle (her father’s brother) on the division of assets.</p>
<i>Questions- hopes and fears of each family member</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. How do each family member know the hopes and fears of the others?  <i>Follow up questions: How are they communicated? Is there an element of assumptions among family members of what they others want?</i> </li> </ol>
<i>Story – an offer is made to Amina</i>	<p>The family suggested to Amina to offer her a symbolic small of amount of money to satisfy her. They know that it is lower than what her share in Sharia should be.</p>
<i>Questions- Family’s motivation behind the offer</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Why do you think the family did not offer part of the land or parts of the shop?  <i>Follow up questions: Why does the family think the property shouldn’t go to sisters? What is the key reason? Is this reason different for different family members?</i>  <i>What does the land represent ? what does the shop represent? What does the house represent?</i> </li> <li>5. Why do you think the family offered a sum of money lower than her share to Amina?</li> </ol>

	<i>Follow up questions: What does the family think would happen if his sister would get her fair share?</i>
Questions- Empirical Expectations (What I think others do)	6. What would most adult women in Amina's position do in this situation? <i>Follow up questions: the response it to accept, to ask why? And if it is considered a fair amount?</i>
Questions- Normative Expectations (What I think others expect me to do)	7. What would her family expect Amina to do in this situation? Why? <i>Follow up questions: if it is considered a fair amount?</i>
Story - Non- compliance of the main character	Amina is aware of the rules of sharing regarding divisions of assets and she understands that the amount of money suggested is significantly lower than what Sharia provides for her. Therefore she responds to her family that she requests her share of all assets according to Sharia.
Questions - Anticipated positive or negative reactions to noncompliance	8. How would her family respond to her request ? <i>Follow up questions: Would any family member react differently? What would they say?</i> <i>Probe for each family: the older brother? The younger brother? The mother? The paternal uncle?</i> 9. What would people in the community say about Amina's request? 10. What would be the consequences for Amina? <i>Probe the meaning of each consequence: for example "gossip" what does it mean? What are the consequences of it? ...</i>
Questions- Sensitivity to sanctions	11. Would the opinions and reactions of her family make Amina change her mind about refusing the small amount of money? 12. How did the crisis affect how the opinions and reactions of others would change her mind?
Questions on Exceptions	13. Are there any circumstances where it would be considered more or less acceptable for Amina to refuse the small amount of money and obtain her share according to sharia?
Story Continued Non- compliance of the main character	Amina's brothers came back to her with another offer: an increased amount of money, still below her share according to Sharia. She declined the offer and reiterated her request. She also explained that she will now go consult with a lawyer to assess her options to go to court.

Questions -  
Anticipated  
positive or  
negative  
reactions to  
noncompliance

14. Could you imagine Amina would go to court against her family to claim her share?

*Follow up questions: what would prevent her from doing it? under which circumstances would she consider it?*

15. Would she expect the court to be treating her fairly?

16. How do you think the brothers would feel and act if Amina's decided to go to Court to receive her fair share?

*Follow up questions: do you think they can imagine it? If not, why not?*

Thank you for your answers on the scenario and the associated questions. Now we will discuss what could be potential way forward.

## Way forward

**Time needed - 10 minutes**

17. What could be any solution whereby the concerns of all family members be met **AND** the sister receives her share according to sharia?

18. What do you think about the following solutions?

- What about keeping the land or the house in the name of the brothers (to ensure it stays within the family) but the sister to be able to live in it or rent it and benefit financially from it?
- What about getting the properties and their value evaluated to see what a fair monthly or one off payment would be from him to his sister (taking into account the value that assets will gain over time)?
- What about reframing the share of the sister receive as the brother meeting their responsibility/ commitment to care for their sister?
- Would you have any creative legal solution you could recommend?

## Conclusions

**Conclusion, Questions, Thanks and Goodbyes:**

**Time needed - 5 minutes**

Thank you for participating with us in this discussion today, and for being honest about your opinions. Your input is very important to us and is strictly confidential. I thank you for your time.

Do you have any questions or anything you would like to add? *(Listen to any questions and try to answer the best way possible. The note-taker should write down all questions that are being asked by the participants).*

Just a reminder, if you would like to speak with someone there are case/social workers available, and we can provide their contact information in case you would like any information or to speak with someone now or later on. We can also provide information about services that are available should you wish to access any.