

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring global professionals

Policy Constraints

Dr John Lever

BA/Leverhulme Funded

Closing Event, 8 April 2021



A BETTER FUTURE?

Understanding Refugee
Entrepreneurship (BFURE)

- **It is widely recognised that the immigration policy environment has become ever more hostile in recent decades.**
- In this context, coordination between local and national policy makers has unravelled significantly, and regional support agencies have been left to pick up the pieces.
- In Yorkshire and Humber, the regional migration partnership (Migration Yorkshire) is now one of the only recognised ways for local agencies across the region to make contact with national policy makers.
- And it's through Migration Yorkshire that many other agencies (i.e. Refugee Council) coordinate attempts to overcome the limitations of national policy through collaboration.





- ❑ **In this fragile policy context, it is often very difficult to engage refugees in what many of them regard as an unpredictable and dangerous policy processes.**
- ❑ Early in the project the Home Office asked the research team to invite all our refugee contacts to an event where they could showcase their entrepreneurial skills and business ideas, but this proved all but impossible.
- ❑ Engagement with local authorities could also be difficult, as refugee support services are often disjointed, fragmented, and overstretched, which reduces access to support services and undermines the impact of provision for refugees.



- ❖ **Refugees face numerous policy constraints in this context.**
- ❖ After being resettled in West Yorkshire in line with VPRS resettlement quotas, many refugees recounted being offered training and employment far from where they have been resettled with their families:
 - *'After a long journey, I managed to start a life with my family here in this town; it's been tough, and now I am expected to start working at a job somewhere else. I can't move again!'*
- ❖ **These issues are controversial and it appears that many refugees often resettle elsewhere to be near fellow refugees:**
 - *'I spent the first two years in the UK doing absolutely nothing. We were deported to an Island in Scotland, which used to be called the Island of Death.'*

- ❖ **Another issue that surfaced related to the threat of benefits trapping refugees in dependency. This is a complex policy issue that brings the cultural complexities of resettling refugees from a country with a strong history of self-employment to the fore.**

- ❖ We heard numerous stories of refugees refusing welfare support, for example, or offers of employment, for these reasons:
 - ❑ *'I would think twice before taking any job. The house that you were given by the council and the benefits they pay for you; it is a serious step to take as you will need to start from Zero.'*

- ❖ These barriers and challenges mean that successful entrepreneurial endeavours are largely self-driven, built around using minimal resources, and dependent on friends and family, and on learning the job 'as you go'.





- ❖ **Two refugees who set up a small café and takeaway in a suburban neighbourhood outlined the issues involved succinctly. After attempting to learn English at college, they gave up benefits and took a loan from friends to build on the cultural skills they had from working in a similar business in Syria:**
 - *'Our experience was limited to food, which is the core of the business really, but this was not enough as we came to understand the other legal requirements as we started the project. We had to move in very small and gradual steps; sometimes having to move backward before we can move forward again.'*
 - Addressing these issues effectively present complex policy challenges. After missing out on a small start-up grant, these refugees eventually received a Government grant during the Covid-19 pandemic, which allowed them to keep the business viable by investing in an online delivery platform.

Summary of Policy Constraints



- It is often very difficult to engage refugees in what many of them regard as unpredictable and dangerous policy processes.
- ❑ **After being resettled in distant corners of the UK, many refugees often resettle elsewhere to be near fellow refugees.**
- ❖ Resettling refugees (on benefits) from a country with a strong history of self-employment can be difficult.
- **Business support is sometimes available, but inaccessible for a range of reasons.**

Recommendations for national policy makers

1. Develop awareness of the cultural knowledge and expectations of refugees.
2. Recognise the skills, knowledge and expertise that all refugees bring to the UK.
3. Foster links between national and local Government to develop inclusive labour market strategies.
4. Support refugee entrepreneurship that provides welfare support and labour market opportunities from within (rather than without) refugee communities.
5. Encourage and support refugee entrepreneurship across all socioeconomic groups, not just those with high growth potential.



University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring global professionals

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring global professionals

Thank You!

BA/Leverhulme Funded

Closing Event, 8 April 2021



**A BETTER
FUTURE?**

**Understanding Refugee
Entrepreneurship (BFURE)**