

Factors Contributing to Successful Integration of Afghan Women Refugees in the UK

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Development and Emergency Practice.

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

Signed *Pouneh Gheisari*

Date 29/09/2017

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Statement of Ethics Review Approval This dissertation involved human participants. A Form TDE E1 for each group of participants, showing ethics review approval, has been attached to this dissertation in Annex: 4.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of factors that have contributed to how well Afghan refugee women have integrated into UK society. In other words, the research attempted to contribute to an understanding of what it means to integrate as a refugee, as an Afghan woman refugee, in Britain today. The aim is to draw attention to the literature on refugee integration in the UK and more specifically address the gap that exists in studies on Afghan women in the UK context and how/if they achieve public outcomes in employment, housing, linguistics competencies, education and health, equivalent to those achieved by the wider host communities.

The research built on the importance of finding mechanisms to integrate economic opportunities and refugees' access to assets and skills in countries of asylum, and to shift from an assistance-oriented approach that entails long-term dependency of refugees to more of a development-oriented approach whereby refugees can achieve self-reliance. The literature reviewed was based on rights-based approaches; what refugees are able to do (in terms of skills, knowledge) once they settle in the country of asylum and how much freedom they should enjoy to live the kind of life which they desired to achieve after migrating (physical and mental progress).

The study revealed pointed to two recurrent patterns in factors that had affected the integration process of Afghan women refugees who live in the UK. First, the majority have continued their traditional role in the family after becoming refugees and are stay-at-home moms, while the government seems to lack an effective adequate integration system. The findings show the process of integration should take place equally at level of the individual and the government. In other words, integration is a collective expression of the refugee's ambitions and characteristics and, the effectiveness of state mechanisms. While motivations at the individual level and at the institutional levels might not be the same, they are undoubtedly interrelated.

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr Richard Carver for encouraging me to pursue this specific topic to study. Throughout the entire research, Dr Carver offered me his valuable academic guidance and insights that helped me build on my capacity to develop an accurate and deep understanding of different aspects around the subject of my study. Despite his busy schedule, he made time for me to meet when there was a need and all along, provided me with his constructive feedback on my draft texts. I am especially indebted to him for always encouraging me and giving me confidence even at times when I was doubtful of my ability to fulfil this task. This dissertation would not have been made possible without his guidance, insights and constant encouragements. I express my heartfelt appreciation to our program leader Dr Supriya for her lively classes and always being there to help us. I am also thankful to Dr Barbara Harrell-Bond with whom I had hours of valuable exchange on the issue of refugees in general, and refugee integration in particular. She shared with me her years of experience and invaluable insights in this field, which made me even more passionate to pursue this topic.

I extend my special thanks to Wahida Tahmasi for welcoming me into her community, making me comfortable at her home, and helping me find suitable participants for my research. I am also grateful to Fatima Hashmi for facilitating my contact with someone from Paywand¹ NGO who put me in touch with more participants, helping to diversify my target group.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my mother, Fatemeh Nazari, for her unconditional love and care. She has always been there for me and supported me emotionally and spiritually. It is because of her sacrifices, self-less love and support that I was able to make the journey to the UK to fulfil one of my long-held dreams. Even from afar, I have always felt her strong peerless presence in each and every step of this journey. All throughout the year, she was there to give me the strength of mind to keep going and never give up on my dreams. She is my role model in life for her perseverance and passionate attitude towards life.

¹ Paywand is a London-based NGO which supports Afghan refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in various fields such as accommodation, housing, parenting and mental health.

Acronyms

CA	Capability Approach
DFID	Department of International Development
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
1967 Protocol	1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees
1951 Refugee Convention	1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

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1. Introduction

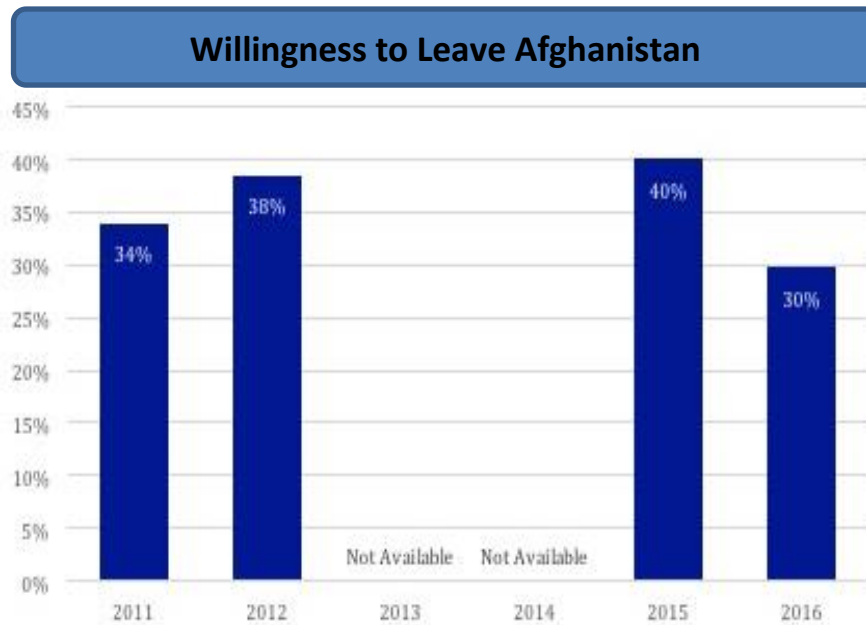
1.1. Research Background

Recent years have witnessed an unprecedented rise in the number of people escaping brutalities of war and trying to find peace and security far from home. UN's migration agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has put the number of migrants and refugees entering Europe by sea just since the beginning of 2017 until July the same year at 112,018 (IOM, 2016). Afghans follow in second place after Syria in terms of the highest number of refugees living throughout Europe, with EU official figures indicating that in 2015 and 2016 around 360,000 Afghans applied for asylum in EU countries after braving a treacherous journey through the Middle East and the Balkans to reach Europe (Eurostat, 2017). There are a number of push and pull factors that drive Afghans to take on these dangerous journeys and face many challenges after arriving in the new country. Traditionally, insecurity and the political situation in Afghanistan have been a major push factor, while security and higher standards of living in Europe have served as pull factors. The dynamics have changed in recent years. A study by Migration Policy Practice indicates that since 2014, a further deterioration in the security condition and lower living standards due to lack of job opportunities and the poor economy are pushing more Afghans to leave their country (Migration Policy Practice, 2016). As a result, the number of Afghan migrants reached its highest numbers in 2015 (Asia Foundation, 2015). Interestingly enough, the number of asylum seekers from Afghanistan in 2016 remained the same as in previous years, pointing to less Afghans willing to leave their country during the mentioned period.

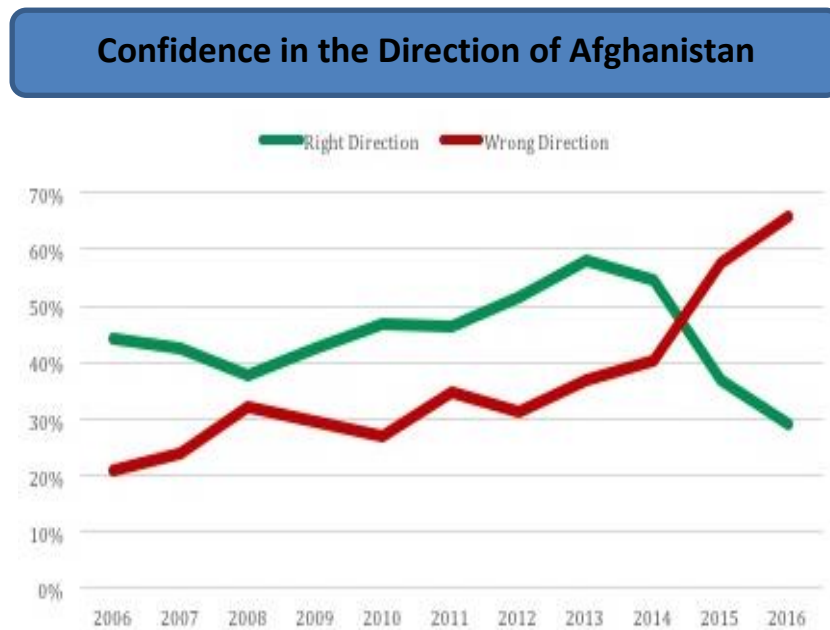
This could be due to many reasons, including dangers of the migration journey (Daily Mail, 2017), the deal between EU and Turkey to deport refugees (BBC, 2017), rising anti-immigration attitudes in Europe, and a deal between EU and Afghanistan stipulating deportation of Afghan refugees from Europe back to Kabul (New York Times, 2016). Studies provide information on demographic specifics of those who are more willing to leave: young, single, educated Afghan men who live in urban areas in Afghanistan (Asia Foundation, 2015

& 2016). A survey in 2016 shows that the level of optimism about the direction Afghanistan is moving towards among Afghans reached its lowest during that year (ibid).

Graph 1:



Graph 2:



Sources: Asia Foundation, 2016

The refugee movement towards Europe has influenced the political and academic discourse and the world has already come to grasp the reality that the refugee issue is not going anywhere anytime soon. More often than not, refugees are regarded as being exposed, unable to maintain themselves and a burden on the host communities. They are viewed as helpless and passive victims of circumstance (Harrell-Bond, 1986, Essed-et-al., 2004). However, an increasing number of scholars stress the need to look beyond such perceptions, and rather view refugees as potential drivers of change and development (Jacobsen, 2005; Harrell-Bond, 1999; Kibreab 1993). Hence, Jacobsen (2001), Polzar (2005), Harrell-Bond (1986), Banki (2004), Kibreab (1989) and Crisp (2003) all argue the importance of refugees managing to attain sustainable livelihoods irrespective of their legal status.

1.1.1. Research Question

The drastic rise in the number of refugees including women, coupled with increasingly protracted refugee situations, which leads to a long-term stay in the asylum country, necessitates identifying mechanisms that would allow refugees to improve their skills in order to grasp economic and social opportunities in the asylum country and become integrated. As UNHCR emphasizes, there is a need to shift from an assistance-oriented approach that entails long-term dependency of refugees to more of a development-oriented approach whereby refugees can achieve self-reliance (UNHCR, 2008). In order to attain this, the core of discussions and policies have turned to rights-based approaches; what refugees are able to do and how much freedom they should enjoy to live the kind of life which they desire to achieve after migrating. The topic of this research is to look into contributing factors towards a successful integration of Afghan refugee women in the UK. Based on the above, the following main question and five sub-questions are formed to look into this topic:

Main question:

What factors contribute to the successful integration of Afghan women refugees in the UK?

Sub-questions:

What is the refugee's educational background and current status?

What is the refugee's occupation background and current status?

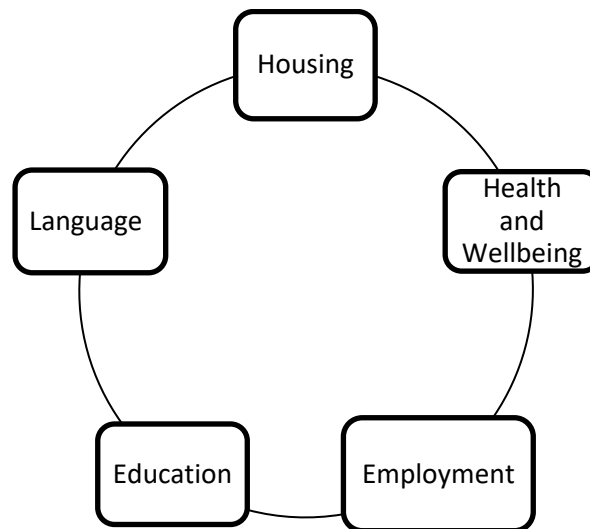
What is the level of the refugee's English language?

How does the refugee assess UK healthcare system and housing policy?

1.1.2. Aim of the Research

This dissertation seeks to gain an understanding of factors that have contributed to how well Afghan refugee women have integrated in the UK society in terms of language, education and employment as well as access to services such as housing and health in the UK. In other words, the research attempts to contribute to an understanding of what it means to integrate as a refugee, as an Afghan woman refugee, in Britain today.

Picture 1: Factors Contributing to Integration



The aim is to draw attention to the literature on refugee integration in the UK and more specifically address the gap that exists in studies on Afghan women in the UK context and how/if they achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, linguistics competencies, education and health, equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities (Home Office, 2004). The research will attempt to shed light on how Afghan women who live in the UK as refugees have managed to socially and economically connect with members of the new community and engage in the society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (ibid).

1.1.3. Significance of the research

It is the common understanding that mainly Afghan men, and not women, take on migration journeys (IOM, 2014). Afghan migration is historically dominated by men because they are the breadwinner of the family and therefore, it is considered their responsibility to opt out and search for a job to provide for their family. In contrast, women migrating for work has

traditionally been unacceptable in the Afghan society and Afghan women mostly migrate accompany male relatives (DRC, 2017). However, the same report by the Danish NGO also reveals that recently Afghan women also make the migration journey. And yet, the subject of Afghan women and migration continues to remain an understudied topic. Many questions remain, including who migrates? How they make the migration journeys and where they migrate to? Another question is how and if they are able to fit in the new society. The latter will be addressed in this study. The study is significant in that it aims to achieve an understanding of the actualities behind the process of integration for a specific category of refugees in the UK as there seems to be little research focusing on them and how local integration is playing into protecting their rights.

1.1.4. Limitations

My initial main concern was to frame the research questions and pose them to the participants in a way that would not cause them any distress and make them feel uncomfortable so that they would be dissuaded to give honest and accurate responses. I am thankful to my supervisor for guiding me through this process.

Being an Iranian, it did not prove easy in the early stages of the research to find my way into the Afghan community and identify participants. Historically, relations between the two neighbours have gone through many ups and downs; one notable issue being Iran's harsh immigration policies with respect to Afghan migrants in that country. For example, first contact with the Hazara community leader in Oxford through Fatima Hashmi², to whom I was introduced by Dr Barbara Harrell-Bond³, proved futile. As soon as told of my nationality, he said he could not be of any help. However, eventually and through Fatima, I came in contact with members of the community; the first being Wahida who facilitated my contact with other Hazaras. Then through other Afghan acquaintances, I reached out to refugees living in London and Birmingham who were mostly Pashtun. One problem was having to do some of the interviews through Skype as commuting proved difficult at times.

² Fatima did her master's thesis on Afghan Hazaras in Oxford at Brookes University.

³ Barbara Harrell-Bond, OBE, is a leading figure in the field of refugee studies. She founded the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University.

Except for a few instances when I had to try to refrain from engaging in discussions around political issues regarding Iran and Afghanistan brought up by one or two participants, which did cause a bit of frustration, I felt comfortable throughout my encounters with the participants who welcomed me to their homes and were candid with their responses.

Another challenge I came to encounter was finding it difficult to understand the Afghan accent. Although Persian is the language spoken in both countries, the accent by which Afghans speak Persian Dari was at times difficult for me to understand. Help came by those who had lived in Iran as migrants or those with milder accents. They patiently supported me throughout the research to fully understand refugees' responses to my questions or remarks made during group discussions.

Given that I had never done research on this topic and at such scale, finding relevant information and constructive research methods seemed a daunting task at the beginning. The journey was easier through the constant support, advice and feedback I received from my supervisor.

1.2. The Convention and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees gives the internationally recognized legal definition of a refugee as:

'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it' (UN, 1951).

The refugee protection regime gives the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) its mandate to perform its activities in favour of refugees. At the same time, it is firmly founded on treaty and customary law obligations, particularly those enshrined in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and also draws on principles and standards articulated in other international instruments or through court processes in a variety of jurisdictions. It has faced criticism in recent years, however. Joanne van Selm, for example, says the treaty is outdated in relation to present migration challenges since causes of most refugee movements have changed over the years and are now mostly rooted in internal conflicts and violence based on ethnic, tribal and religious divides while Millbank critiques the Convention, for example, for not taking into account various political, financial and social impacts that the large number of refugees induce in host countries, for not considering provision of assistance to refugees until they arrive in a state party to the Convention, and does not stipulate burden-sharing among states (van Selm, 2003 ; Millbank, 2000).

Still, the 1951 Convention bears heavy legal, political and ethical importance. It is the legal basis on which principled action can be based to ensure refugee rights. It also gives shape to a universal political consensus among nations to forge cooperation and share responsibility to protect refugees. The ethical value stems from the commitment which states party to the Convention declare which is to protect the rights of a vulnerable population. The 1951 Convention, thus, is a landmark in setting the standards for the treatment of refugees and for defining the fundamental concepts of the refugee protection regime.

It is also worth mentioning two important bodies of law related to refugee protection ratified at the EU level. The 2013 Dublin Regulation⁴, sets the criteria for determining which Member State should be responsible for reviewing a person's asylum application. The main objective was to ensure that asylum-related regulations and practices applied by different EU states are derived from the same standards. Another recently taken measure in refugee-related law at the EU level has been ratification, by the Council of European Union, of the Qualification Directive⁵. The purpose of this Directive is to bring into line the criteria which EU Member

⁴ For more information on the 2003 Dublin regulation, see: <http://www.unhcr.org/4a9d13d59.pdf>

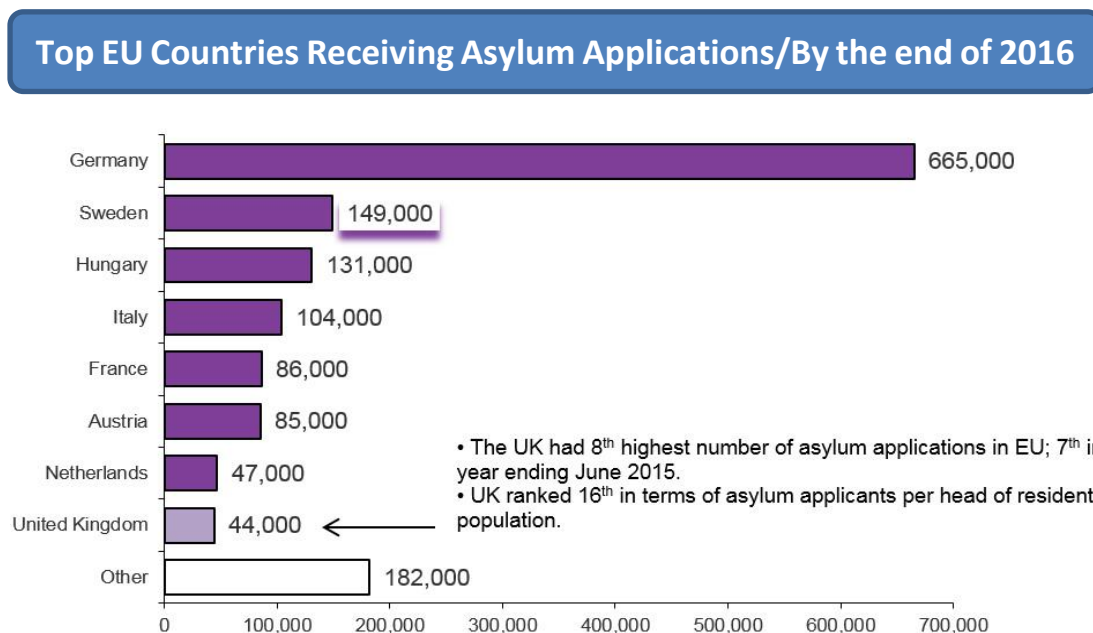
⁵ For more information on the Qualification Directive, see: <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=4aa508692>

States use to define a refugee and thus, protection these persons should be entitled to. To what extent the Directive has achieved its objectives has drawn many critical discussions.

1.3. UK Immigration and Asylum Policies

During last two decades, UK immigration and asylum policies have become subject of heated debates in public policy (Orchard, 2014). Media’s coverage of the migration numbers and consequences, and directions of discussions that have taken place at the public and political levels have caused anxieties about increasing number of arriving refugees, portraying refugees as a burden on the host society through taking advantage of the welfare system (McDonald and Billings, 2007). Many a time, reasons for seeking refuge in a country has not much to do with welfare and living better economically, but rather, the “democratic and free” society which a destination offers refugees to live in (Spinks, 2013:22).

Graph 3:



Source: UK Home Office, 2016

UK has signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and has incorporated its elements in its domestic regulations under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act - 1993 (Hynes, 2011). However, the White Paper entitled Fairer, Faster and Firmer introduced a comprehensive and

integrated strategy for immigration control (Home Office, 1998). The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, inspired by the Human Rights Act 1998, was seen as a drastic and radical overhaul of the immigration and asylum system (Clayton, 2014) which came the result of the accumulation of asylum claims.

1.4. Afghanistan: Context and Historical Background

Afghanistan (land of the Afghans) is a Muslim country with an almost 35 million-strong population (World Bank, 2016). Years of domestic and international conflicts have plagued the country's economic structures and security-wise it remains a dangerous place. It is one of the poorest countries in the world and in the Human Development Report for 2016, UNDP placed it 169 among 188 countries (UNDP, 2017). The World Bank (WB) in 2016 noted a sluggish economic growth for Afghanistan, while the security situation was termed as "dire" by the UN in the same year (WB, UN, 2017).

As mentioned before, deterioration in the security situation, aggravated poverty and rise in unemployment rate are singled out as the main reason behind the continued out-migration in Afghanistan (World Bank, 2016).

Picture 2: Map of Afghanistan



Source: CNN, 2016

1.4.1. Afghan Women's Migration

International migration of Afghans has historically been male-dominated. As the breadwinner, it is the responsibility of the man to migrate in search of work to provide for his family. In contrast, migration of women for work is not acceptable in the Afghan society and they migrate mostly by accompanying other family members (IOM, 2014). The initial big wave of migration started during the Soviet invasion which continued with the subsequent outbreak of civil wars. The emergence of Taliban in the late 90s resulted in large out-migrations from Afghanistan, including women (Migration-Policy-Institute, 2016). A report by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) says that although still fewer Afghan women migrate compared to men and while the concept is still not accepted by the society at large to allow women leave on their own, such instances do occur (DRC, 2016). Data indicates that higher level of education motivates Afghan women to leave their country in search of economic opportunities abroad and a better life (IOM, 2014).

Graph 4:



Source: BBC, 2016

2. Methodology

2.1. Introduction

This research is based on a qualitative method, using more than one data collection technique; namely, semi-structured interviews, group discussion and participant observation. Each method will be discussed in detail in this chapter. Given that time was a limiting factor, the multiple data collection techniques were adopted to allow for observing different aspects of refugees' responses to questions and interactions with the interviewer. Such an approach, according to Festinger et al, allows for a proper study of a specified community (Festinger et al, 1963). Elaborating on a set of combined research methods, Cohen and Manion refer to the concept as "triangulation" in which different methods overlap and/or complement each other to a certain extent, allowing for a balance to occur and thus, raising the chances for getting more accurate account of interviewees' stories by outlining the complex and intricate human behaviour (Cohen and Manion, 1986).

I started interviews and discussions by giving the participants a brief introduction about the research topic. Given that refugees and migrants always feel vulnerable and at times anxious about risking their legal status in the host country, I reassured them that I will not disclose any information that might pose any such risk and will not make mention of any names, should they not wish to, throughout the research (Fisher et al., 2002).

Methodological limitations as well as challenges had to be taken into consideration, which mainly concerned finding willing interviewees, proper data collection and ethical considerations. Snowball sampling was used to identify participants. Given the limited time I had and the fact that I did not know anyone from the Afghan community, it allowed me to quickly locate participants. This method poses a limitation too which is allowing for limited diversity in the target population as participants tend to put the researcher in touch with members of the same community they are part of.

2.2. Research Methods

2.2.1. Participant Observation

Participant observation enables the researcher to, as Bryman puts it, listen, ask and experience the research questions by becoming involved in an environment where participants are socializing in a natural flow and to partake in social interactions among them. Attention was also paid to Walliman's caution that for this method to produce proper results, it is necessary that the observation takes place on a constant basis. (Bryman, 2004; Walliman 2006). Although I did not have the chance to spend much time with the interviewees prior to carrying out the research, the common language and culture, as well as the fact that I had previous experience working with Afghan refugees in Iran, helped to integrate and easily connect with Afghan women who showed a lot of generosity by inviting me to their homes, celebrations such as birthdays, lunch and dinner gatherings as well as an Iftar (when Muslims break their fast during the month of Ramadan).

Except for minor instances, I did not witness extreme reactivity on the part of the interviewees. Neither did I feel my presence influenced their behaviour and responses that would, as Jacobsen and Landau say, compromise the findings (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). I refrained from taking notes all the time, but rather listened and engaged more in conversations while at times jotting down key words and phrases from time to time, thus not risking loss of focus on both sides. After the end of each session, I immediately wrote down my observations and interviewee responses in detail. The intention was to maintain trust and not make individuals feel uncomfortable with the information they were giving me⁶ by constantly taking notes.

2.2.2. Group Discussion

I had one group discussion which consisted of women of Afghan various ages, various length of stay in the UK as well as employment and education status (past and present). The session lasted for a few hours and focused mainly on the journey they had to go through once settled

⁶ Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt speak of objectifying and making interviewees feel uncomfortable. See DeWalt K., DeWalt, B. (2011), 'Participant Observation: A Guide for Field workers', pp 163.

in the UK in terms of learning the language, receiving education, training for a job as well as the quality of health services and housing they have been provided with as refugees.

The objective of using a group discussion was to provide for obtaining in-depth information around research questions, within a “relatively homogenous group” (Hughes & DuMont, 1993), which here consisted of Afghan refugee women, in order to improve the quality of findings obtained from other methods applied in the research. This specific method allowed to study people in a more natural flow of conversation than face-to-face interviews (Marshal & Rossman, 1999) in order to further expand and improve results gained through participant observation (Morgan, 1988).

2.2.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

Cohen says using both individual and group interviews enhances the strengths of both methodologies (Cohen, 2006). The questions drafted for the one-to-one interviews for this research was of semi-structured nature, involving more general and open-ended questions, especially at the onset of the interview. This allowed for more specific questions to emerge, which in turn facilitated exploring, deeply and in more detail, the research question (Gillham, 2000 and Ritchie, 2003). The more specific questions which established during the interviews gave both sides the flexibility to go into details when needed (Keller and Conradin, 2012). The main purpose was to get the interviewees talk freely and openly (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007), while making sure I got in-depth information on the research topic.

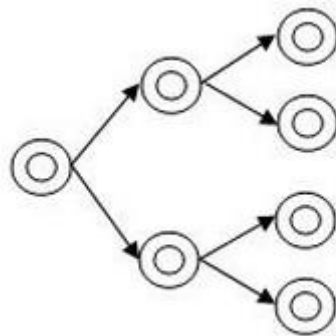
Throughout the interviews, I tried to ask as few questions as possible to allow the participants the freedom and time to talk and express more.

2.3. Sampling

Snowball sampling was employed to find suitable participants for this research; a method which Vogt defines allowing to identify research subjects. He explains the process as one subject providing the researcher with the name of another subject, who then gives the name of another one, and more names follow (Vogt, 1999). Snowball sampling works through capitalizing on social networks of potential interviewees identified (Spreen, 1992) and takes advantage of ‘bonds’ or ‘links’ that exist between the primary subject and others within the same circle of social and family contacts (Berg, 1988). Access to Afghan community residing

in the UK, and more specifically women, was not easy as I had been living in the country as a student for less than a year and had not met any Afghans. Meeting Dr Harrell-Bond in one of the module lectures offered a unique opportunity to make my first contact, which eventually proved to help expand potential contacts (Thomson, 1997). As mentioned before, one limitation of snowball sampling is that contacts put the researcher in touch with other contacts with the same background, thus limiting diversity in target population.

Picture 3: Snowball Sampling:



2.4. Ethics

One, if not the most, important issue to keep in mind was not to cause any feeling of distress or anxiety among interviewees who came from a difficult context like Afghanistan and might have had difficult refugee experiences. Given possible emotional and mental pressures that my questions might have brought on them, I paid constant attention to respondents' facial expressions and behaviour, and did not press with any issue that they seemed uneasy to talk about. Also and as mentioned, given that refugees might feel anxious about risking their legal status in the host country and therefore, refrain about giving honest answers, I explained to them the subject and purpose of my research, reassured them that they will remain anonymous if they wished to and that I will not intentionally disclose any information that might pose any such risk.

The commonalities between Afghan and Iranian culture and traditions helped me blend in fast in the community and lowered chances of any unintentional disrespect. Aware of the nature of historical and current relations between Iran and Afghanistan, I refrained from engaging in discussions that were not related to the topic of my research, especially of political nature. Language was generally not a barrier except in instances where the accent

made it somewhat difficult to fully understand the responses in which case I requested the participant to repeat or asked another person's help to accurately explain to me the remarks.

2.5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter explained different qualitative data collection methods employed in the research which include participant observation and focus group as a way to gain in-depth and exhaustive understanding of responses made by interviewees, as well as semi-structured interviews which provided the general basis of discussions around different themes and trajectories arising from open-ended questions. The face-to-face interviews also gave the opportunity to respondents to give information they might not have felt comfortable to share at the presence of others.

I found methods applied in this research useful for gaining an insight into the topic of my study, while I believe that use of life history interviews, provided time allows, can complement other methods and help the researcher delve even deeper into refugee experiences. The next chapter will look at the findings and analysis achieved through data collections.

The next chapter will view refugee integration from the perspective of rights-based approaches as the conceptual framework for this study.

3. Review of Literature

3.1. Introduction

The increasingly protracted refugee situations and a rise in the number of refugees in millions, more than ever, necessitates the importance of finding mechanisms to integrate economic opportunities and refugees' access to assets and skills in countries of asylum. As the UNHCR has emphasized, there is a need to shift from an assistance-oriented approach that entails long-term dependency of refugees to more of a development-oriented approach whereby refugees can achieve self-reliance (UNHCR, 2008). For example, Jacobson and Fratzke single out the right to work and freedom of movement as essential components to refugee rights, and maintain that despite having been clearly defined under international law, these rights are often restricted in countries where refugees seek asylum, especially in contexts where the labour market is already oversupplied and there is a high level of unemployment among citizens of that country. (Jacobson and Fratzke, 2016).

Given that the objective of this study is to explore what factors contribute to the successful integration of a refugee population in the UK, two rights-based approaches; the Capabilities Approach, and the Sustainable Livelihood Approach, plus the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, will be reviewed to see how debates have taken shape towards factors that have been identified to help refugees become active members of the host communities. Based on these conceptual frameworks, existing literature will be reviewed relevant to refugee rights to access labour market and health services.

3.2. The Conceptual Frameworks

3.2.1 The Capability Approach Perspective

The Capability Approach (CA) set out by Sen is framed around ethical values based on which social agreements ought to be assessed according to the degree of freedom (capabilities) people enjoy to achieve what they desire. Those achievements, Sen says, are a set of valued functionings (Sen 1980; 1984; 1985b; 1985a; 1987; 1992; 1993; 1995; Drèze and Sen 2002). In Sen's view, there is a diverse range of human capabilities; from basic freedoms such as

“free from hunger” to more intricate ones “achieving self-respect” (Sen, 1989). His focus on the quality of life individuals from all walks of life should be entitled to, is the core of his discussions. He argues that in all social evaluations and policy designs, focus should be on what people are able to do to live the kind of life that they value.

Table 1: Three Key Terms of Capability Approach

Functionings	Things which people value in ‘doing’ and ‘being’, for example a good job, being in a safe environment, having access to education.
Capabilities	Freedoms enjoyed by a person to achieve ‘functionings’ – turning assets into opportunities.
Agency	Refers to the ability of a person to achieve results that are valuable to him/her.

Source: Alkire, 2009

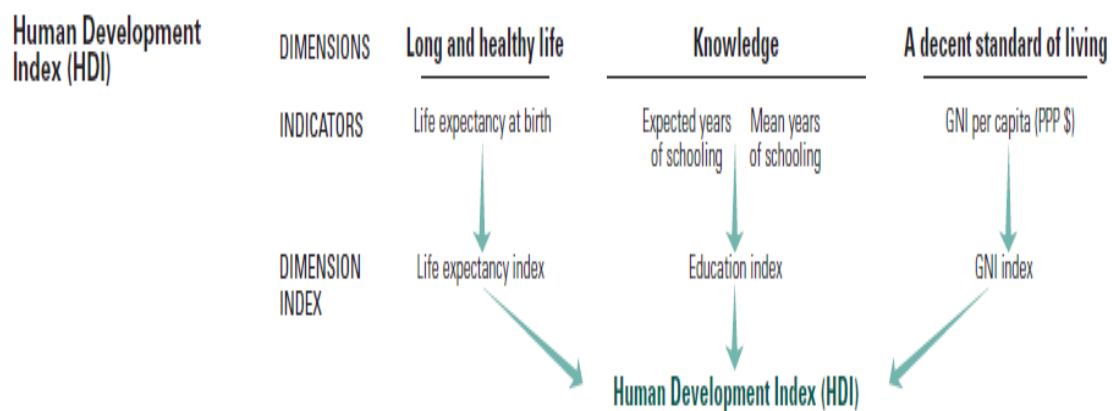
Martha Nussbaum’s version of the Capability Approach differs from Sen’s in that she proposes ten basic entitlements such as, for example, bodily integrity that are a prerequisite for anyone to fulfil a meaningful life, which Nussbaum also portrays as a foundation for the requirements of “global justice” (Nussbaum, 1997). Her approach revolved around individuals being dignified free beings who are given opportunities to shape their own life, rather becoming passive beings “pushed around by the world” (Nussbaum, 2002). Both Sen and Nussbaum recognize and value the inherent and realizable capabilities in every human being that give rise to the obligation to help her or him realize capabilities. Nussbaum’s approach has been shaped around a universal obligation to protect human beings and provide them with the necessary arrangements, through concepts such as human rights, social justice and equality, and meaningful freedom to allow for fulfilling their capabilities that ultimately feed into human development (Nussbaum, 2002). Fukuda-Parr and Kumar seem to agree on the human development paradigm; they say the “focus (of the Capability Approach) is on what people are effectively able to do and to be, that is, on their capabilities” (Fukuda-Parr 2003; Fukuda-Parr and Kumar 2003). For Robeyn, the Approach puts the human development concept “in

a comprehensive and integrated manner” since “much attention is paid to the links between material, mental, spiritual and social well-being, or to the “economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of life” (Robeyn, 2003). The Capability Approach gives human beings, under any circumstances and with any legal status in a given context, the entitlement to certain freedoms; that they should be able to choose the kind of life they want to live, for example become an active member of their community, practice their religion or not and enjoy a decent living through health and employment opportunities.

3.2.2. Human Development Framework and Migrants: the Labour Paradigm

On the relation between human development (HD)⁷ and Capability’s Approach, Alkire is of the opinion that HD is actually founded on this specific concept and is inspired by Sen’s phrase; that the objective behind development is to expand people’s capabilities. The simpler version of this, according to Alkire is where Sen interprets development as “expanding people’s choices” (Alkire, 2002).

Picture 4: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX



Source: UNDP

The Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) entitled ‘Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development’⁸, looks at the phenomenon of migration through the lens of the Capabilities Approach, underlining the positive

⁷ Human development has been defined freedoms enjoyed by people to have long, healthy and creative live. Within this framework, people not only benefit from such development, but are also its driver, individually and collectively. For more information, see: http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/idpd/idpd2011_hdr.ppt

⁸ Mobility can potentially improve human development among those who stay as well as those who end up in destination places. See: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/8/UNDP_OHDR_Klugmann.pdf

contribution the refugee populations can make to the economy of both the countries where they come from and where they become refugees (UNDP, 2009). Focusing on the mobility factor as a freedom (capability) reiterated by the Capability Approach, the UN Report says human mobility is fundamental to development and “a natural expression of people’s desire to choose how and where to lead their lives” (Newland 2009; UNDP 2009).⁹ Of the report, Castles says it makes a direct link between economic efficiency/social equality to reduced and eliminated barriers to human mobility (Castles, 2013).

The UN Report has, however, drawn scepticism from some who say it exaggerates what different refugee populations and patterns can bring in terms of development, not only for refugee workers themselves but also for their host communities. Gamlen and Wickramasekara say it misinterprets the Capability Approach altogether and questions its practicality for establishing meaningful and integrated migration and development strategies. (Gamlen 2010; Wickramasekara 2008 and 2011). Ruhs, for example, speaks of compromises (trade-offs) that migrants have to make when entitled to human mobility as a freedom in exchange for a loss of their civic rights, inferring that refugee workers might be forced to trade off some of their rights in order to access employment markets, for example, opting for lower salaries in an effort to maximize their chances of getting into and/or settling down in destination countries (Ruhs 2013; Ruhs and Martin 2008). Ruhs’ concern seems to be primarily related to low-skilled refugees, where he believes that the willingness to absorb such refugee labourers prepared to make trade-offs with their rights leads to fewer social and employment protections in destination countries. He argues that economic benefits in refugee-receiving countries are the primary driver for how balanced policies towards migrant labour regulations and human rights are in those countries. The more rights are granted to migrant workers, the more economic and social costs incurred by host governments, which, he believes, not only leads to closing doors to migrants, but also more trade-offs on behalf of the refugees (Ruhs, 2013).

⁹ Nussbaum’s ten central capabilities are: 1) life, 2) bodily health, 3) bodily integrity, 4) senses, imagination, and thought, 5) emotions, 6) practical reason, 7) affiliation, 8) other species, 9) play, and 10) control over one’s environment. See: Nussbaum, Martha (2000), ‘Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach’, Cambridge University Press.

3.2.3. The Migration-Development Nexus The Capability Approach entwines development and human rights together, a factor that has prompted scholars and policymakers to use the Approach as a premise for human development framework, also when specifically focusing on the migration-development nexus. The rise in migration movements, particularly in the recent years, has given rise to an increase in migrant job-seekers, and therefore, heated debates on the rights of migrants and how they can be incorporated into the “migration-development nexus”; a concept taken up by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as far back as early 2000s that looks at migrants as a potential source of development (IOM, 2003). In 2011, the IOM published its annual report on ‘Labour Migration and Human Development’ in which it credits an “orderly and well-managed” labour migration for helping to eliminate labour shortages and facilitating upward mobility in host countries. While adhering to the interdependency between migration and development, the report does not consider migration the only driving forces behind human development, and neither puts any claim that development is only dependent on migration. Yet, describing development as a dynamic process, the IOM report frames it around the concept of the Capability Approach by stressing that development implies growth, empowerment and advancement, all of which strengthen human capabilities and as such “choices” persons, including migrants, are entitled to so that they achieve a life of dignity and equality that they desire. (IOM, 2011). As shown throughout this study, and as affirmed by Gierger and Pécoud, the link between migration and development is not so much clear-cut as the dominant paradigm supported by many policymakers and scholars (Geiger and Pécoud 2013). They rather support the idea that there seems to be an intricate link between human rights and development that the latter cannot be obtained unless migrant workers are entitled to their rights. The argument is that that ensuring migrant rights with the aim of promoting their ‘freedoms’ unleashes the development capacity of migrant workers. Böhning also takes a only rights approach by giving priority to migrant workers’ rights to have free and fair access to the employment market rather than being only allowed to contribute to the macroeconomic growth in the country of destination (Böhning 2009).

3.2.4. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

International human rights law (IHRL), beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, takes on a non-discriminatory approach towards access to fundamental human rights, to the extent that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are the cornerstone of the IHRL. The universality aspect of the UDHR Declaration lies where it asserts that “every” human being has a set of fundamental rights that are non-negotiable. Article 1 states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and Article 2 says “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind” (OHCHR, 1948). The non-discrimination nature guarantees the rights of persons “women and men, migrants and indigenous people, youth and elders, of all races, religions, political orientations, and economic and social backgrounds” to accomplish common human “freedom and dignity”¹⁰. It lays the foundation for a number of major human rights-related legal instruments including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which guarantees “everyone” rights such as employment, social security, health, education; elements needed to allow persons to lead a dignified life. For the purpose of this study which aims at exploring (in addition to the role of education, religion and housing), how the status of refugees’ health and employment can play a role in the process of their integration, mention is made of Article 12 of the ICESCR which protects everyone’s right to enjoy highest possible quality of physical and mental health. Article 6 obliges signatory states to respect person’s right to employment, while Article 7 specifically addresses women’s rights when speaking of fair wages and working conditions, which the law explicitly cites shall not be “inferior to those enjoyed by men”. The 1951 Convention does not overlook the issue of the right to employment for refugees. It calls on states to create the same circumstances for them to engage in employment as accorded to nationals of that country. In their book that provides legal source guide to this specific Convention, Leckie and Gallagher say these rights, are not “optional extras” but are essentially of crucial importance to human security, happiness and fulfilment (Leckie and Gallagher, 2006).

3.2.5. ICESCR for Refugees; the Right to Health

¹⁰ Ibid

The right to health for refugees is enshrined in the principle of equality and non-discrimination in Article 2(2) of the ICESCR¹¹, implying that the treaty promotes incorporating a rights-based approach in drawing up and implementing health policies for migrant populations. Writing on migration and health, Bustamante highlights notions of human dignity, equality and non-discrimination as fundamental to the ICESCR's approach in regards to access, by all persons, to health services, including freedom from discrimination on the basis of sex and gender (Bustamante, 2008). Based on the same notion of human dignity, Paragraph 9 of the General Comment¹² related to Article 12 of ICESCR takes 'the right to health' to a level higher than just being healthy but instead, achieving the highest achievable health standards that manifests itself in a range of social and economic factors, including adequate nourishment, proper housing, access to potable water as well as a considering safe and healthy working conditions. Studies on mental health of women refugees show that migrant domestic workers may face risks to their mental health well-being due to factors such as unfair treatment, forced isolation, feeling that their identity has been undermined and that their expectations of life as a migrant will not be met (Anbesse, Hanlon, Alem, Samuel, Whitley, 2009). Clapham and Robinson point to the poor health status of migrants even before reaching the host country, saying that although in the early stage, migrants' physical and mental health status could improve after arriving in the country, limited healthcare and burdens of a migrant's life contribute to an eventual deterioration of their general health well-being (Clapham and Robinson, 2009).

A report for the World Health Organization (WHO) says there exists limited evidence specifically elaborating on the health status of asylum seekers and refugees, which makes it difficult to develop an assessment of how limited and/or difficult access leaves an impact on the health status of refugees (Bradby, Humphris, Newall, Phillimore, 2015). Other researchers who have studied health of women refugees have pointed out that proof as to their poor health is mostly limited to maternity and mental issues (Wangdahl, Lytsy, Martensson, Westerling, 2014). Studying factors linked to mental health among refugees, Porter and Haslam claim signs of mental distress are more prevalent among women refugees compared

¹¹ See also General comment No. 20: UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4a60961f2.html>

¹² See Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights General Comment 14 in relations to Article 12 of the convention on the right to highest attainable standard of health at <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838d0.pdf>

with non-refugees (Porter, Haslam, 2005), mainly caused by simply being a woman, or being of old age, coming from a traumatized past, lacking social support as well as pressures and stresses that come during and after the migration journey (Gerritsen, Bramsen, Deville, van Wiligen, Hovens, van der Ploeg, 2006). Employment and education, both before and after migration, have also shown to leave an impact on refugees' health status (Hermansson, Timpka, Thyberg, 2003) which show their effects over the longer term after the refugees settle in the host country (Masma, Moller, Buhmannr, Bunch, Jensen, Hansen et al, 2008). The same report released by the WHO says in addition to the healthcare system in the host countries, the overall legal and policy structures in place, specifically those related to asylum procedures, leave an impact on access to health services (Bradby, Humphris, Newall, Phillimore, 2015). The latest iteration of the Dublin Regulation¹³, enforced just back in 2013, regulates procedures on reviewing an asylum claim throughout Europe. In this sense, the document is crucial because in countries where refugees are given a legal status and there is a working healthcare system, the legal status facilitates access to health services (Kennedy, Murphy-Lawless, 2003). While the quality of health systems throughout European countries where most refugees choose to settle down is varied, in the case of the UK, it has been said that dispersal policies can cause disruptions to accessing general services (Watters, Ingleby, 2004 and 2015).

3.2.6 Sustainable Livelihood Approach

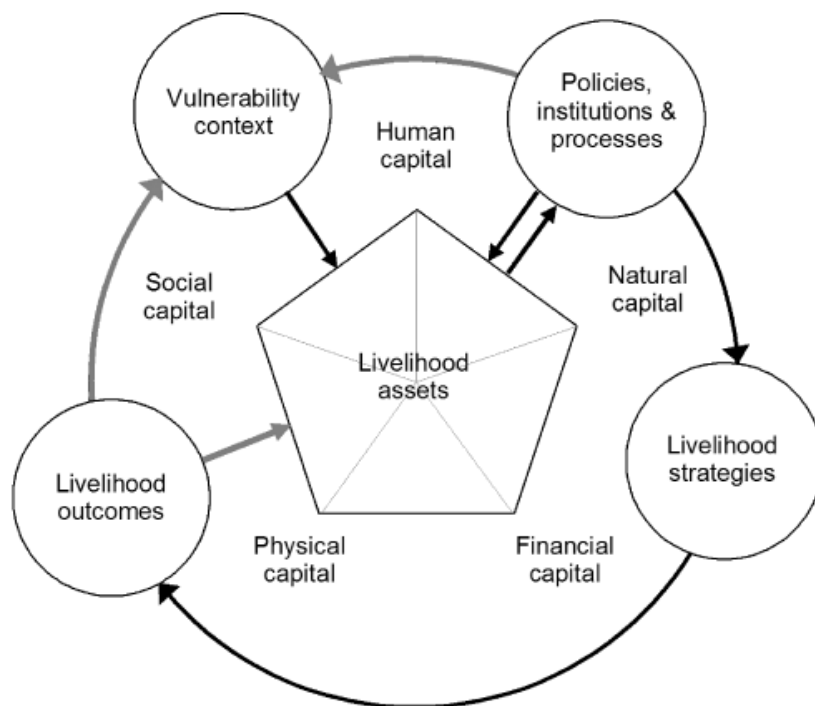
The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) is primarily concerned with people and their strengths, called assets. For DFDI, Kollmair and Gamper as well as Serrat, livelihood assets are (skills, knowledge, education, health, ability to labour), social capital (networks, membership of more formalized groups, relationships of trust, reciprocity and support), natural capital (land, forests, water, biodiversity, etc.), physical capital (basic infrastructure such as transport, secure shelter and buildings, water supply and sanitation etc., and producer goods such as tools, equipment and different technologies) and financial capital (wages, pensions, savings, remittances, debts, etc.) (DFID 1999; Kollmair and Gamper 2002; Serrat 2008). SLA strives to explore how people can utilize their strengths to achieve constructive and meaningful livelihoods. The approach has identified five types of assets or capitals which

¹³ For more detail on the 2013 Dublin Regulation see: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51d298f04.html>

act as the basis for constructing livelihoods: human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital and financial capital. The notion of 'Sustainable Livelihoods' has worked as the basis for a number of different related approaches and has been adapted by different organizations whose work is focused on development.

The British Department for International Development (DFID) has taken up Chambers and Conway's definition of livelihoods: "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base." (DFID, 2000). As mentioned, the approach is primarily concerned with people and their strengths and in doing so, it seeks to understand what those strengths are and how people manage to transfer their strengths to gain better livelihood outcomes. Speaking of factors that influence development, Kollmair et al highlight the importance of conditions in which people live as well as the existing inhibiting factors that would not allow for implementation of sustainable livelihood policies. Understanding the inhibiting factors is important, because in their view, it helps for the strategists to achieve a realistic understanding of strengths and assets of the people for whom development is designed for and also by contributing to policies aimed at eliminating the limitations by reinforcing existing strengths (Kollmair et al., 2002).

Picture 5. Sustainable Livelihood Approach



Source: DFID

DFID says in operationalizing livelihood approaches in different contexts, it strives to promote livelihoods through giving poor people access to assets to build their livelihoods on and by supporting design and implementation of more effective policies in the public and private sectors as well as within social structures (DFDI, 2009). Carney is of the belief that if people are equipped with effective assets, they will be better able to contribute to bring changes into the existing structures and policies to make them responsive to their needs. (Carney, 2000).

3.2.7. The Self-Sufficiency Factor for Refugees

Haan highlights the Importance of understanding the link between migration and sustainable livelihoods because migration is not only a result of poverty many a time, but also inequality in sharing assets which could continue in the country of settlement (de Haan, 1997). Among many scholars, Jacobson and Fratzke are also of the opinion that given protracted refugees situations, it has become more than ever important to ensure refugees have access to livelihoods and economic opportunities as a long-term solution, which could in turn decrease costs for host countries (Jacobson, Fratzke, 2006). They credit the livelihood approach for the

ability to create and increase self-reliance among refugees that would enable to maintain decent living and reduce their dependency on government and aid agencies.¹⁴ After all, achieving progress and prosperity and a better life is one of the primary motives when people migrate. The concept of sustainable livelihoods for the refugee populations optimizes in achieving self-sufficiency which requires assets that range from financial belongings to human which manifests in being in the healthy state of mind as well as social networks which refugees build for themselves. Migrants can even stimulate social and economic changes in their host communities by investing in physical and social capital (Castles 2002, Sanaa and Massey, 2005).

Within the refugee framework, it is the UNHCR which is in charge of designing and implementing sustainable livelihood programs for refugees, aimed at increasing their chances of getting employed. For years, the refugee agency, as well as other humanitarian actors, adopted care and maintenance approach, created on the notion that refugee situations are temporary and that they will soon go back to their own countries. The care and maintenance response, used by the UNHCR and other humanitarian actors, eventually proved ineffective in the wake of increasing challenges at the social and economic levels that arise from refugee situations. More often than not, one of UK leading development agencies OXFAM has said, the care and maintenance did not meet refugees' basic and long-term needs, especially when the host country and humanitarian donors were facing budgetary shortages and it ignored development-centred needs and potentials which did not equip refugees with adequate skills and knowledge to contribute to the upward mobility of their host communities (OXFAM, 2012). On such programs, McHugh and Challinor say the primary aim is to develop their skills and provide them with education which count as prerequisite for building on their livelihood assets (McHugh, Challinor, 2011).

As mentioned before, sustainable livelihood programs for refugees are mainly aimed at maximizing human or financial capital of refugees to improve their, not only economic, but also overall well-being through facilitating their access to labour markets, education and healthcare. The recent emphasis to help refugees achieve self-reliance through livelihood

¹⁴ Jacobson and Fratzke mention the case of Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya: The Human Cost of Funding Shortfalls. Available at: [https://www.care-international.org/files/files/publications/Emergency-costs-of-funding-shortfalls-for-the-Dadaab-refugee-camps-2012\(1\).pdf](https://www.care-international.org/files/files/publications/Emergency-costs-of-funding-shortfalls-for-the-Dadaab-refugee-camps-2012(1).pdf)

program has been described by Jacobson and Fratzke as a recognition by the international humanitarian community, the UNHCR in particular, of how such programs play an important part in the successful integration of refugees (Jacobson, Fratzke, 2006). Livelihood programs allow individuals and households to care for themselves through enhanced earnings, knowledge and skills. Framing it around a rights-based approach, Caverzasio says livelihood programs encourage governments to prevent abuse of refugee rights while restoring their dignity to have adequate living conditions (Giossi Caverzasio, 2001).

3.3. Concluding Remarks

Reviewing the existing literature on the Capability Approach, the Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, and the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, with a view towards refugee potentials and challenges, provided a glimpse into the premise on which many debates around refugees and their rights as well as related policies and strategies around refugees are generally taking shape today. As the number of migrants around the world keeps increasing and the subsequent rise in related costs, debates within policy and scholarly arenas have turned to how to integrate human rights, which form the basis of all three approaches, into migration and development initiatives in order to achieve successful refugee integration in the local community. All three approaches see expanding human skills and capacities as having the central role for refugee integration, and ultimately prosperity and development. Host community concerns about the impact of refugee populations on local economies and resources frequently lead to restrictions placed on refugees by host governments, which become barriers to protection of their rights. As such, the existing literature shows that scholars and policy-makers increasingly promote rights-based approaches, especially those that serve host communities as well, because they can stimulate the local economy and generate overall benefits. In addition to restoring dignity of individual refugees, rights-based approaches and those promoting self-sufficiency of refugees, it was said throughout the text, can also serve to build connections between refugees and local institutions, while preventing the former falling into poverty and reliance on government assistance. In the same line, it was demonstrated that most humanitarian organizations, and increasingly development agencies, are agreed on the need to shift from an aid-oriented response to programs that promote refugees rights by allowing them to build on their self-reliance and capabilities.

The next chapter reviews the various literatures on the definitions and processes developed on local integration of refugees in the host country.

4. Refugee Integration

4.1. Introduction

UNHCR encourages states to find permanent, or “durable,” solutions when faced with mass refugee inflows into their countries. In doing so, the UN body has identified three solutions, one of which is local integration of refugees. As the topic of this study is to explore factors that lead into successful integration of Afghan women refugees in the UK, it is worth dedicating a chapter to how integration is seen as a durable solution to refugee situations, at the academic and policy levels. The focus will be on how refugee integration has been defined and its processes described. There will be a review of key factors identified within a wide spectrum of academic work that are believed to facilitate meaningful and constructive interaction between refugees and local communities. Given that many refugees shun registering for a legal status and opt for de facto integration, another section will provide a brief review of this concept and its key features.

4.2. Integration as a Durable Solution

The UNHCR is mandated to search for durable solutions in refugee situations, especially those situations that end up extending over a long period of time. The first paragraph of UNHCR’s statute seeks ‘permanent solutions for the problems of refugees’ and goes on to enumerate three durable solutions: namely, refugees being resettled in a third country, being voluntarily repatriated to their own country but only after the causes for which they left have been resolved, and local integration¹⁵. UNHCR describes a protracted refugee situation as one in which 25,000 or more refugees find themselves in a state of limbo for five or more years; meaning that for various reasons, mainly security, they cannot or are not willing to go back to their home countries (UNHCR, 2004). What becomes of primary concern in such situations is

¹⁵ See UNHCR’s Statute, 428 (V) at <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/excom/bqares/3ae69ee64/statute-office-United-nations-high-commissioner-refugees.html>

potential neglect of refugees' basic rights, including their economic and social rights as well as psychological needs in the country where they want to settle (ibid). The issue has been the focus of policy-makers and academics for years; 'local integration' as a potential durable solution to such impasse (Crisp, 2004; Jacobsen, 2001; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Dryden-Peterson and Hovil, 2003). One of the 'durable solutions' endorsed is to accommodate refugees in protracted situations through local integration¹⁶, whereby refugees are granted asylum and are eventually integrated into the host society.

The argument put forth is that local integration makes refugees self-reliant and enables them to better interact with the local population at various levels, including economic and social. The interaction, says the UN agency, can contribute to upward mobility of the local community and therefore, refugees can be considered as an asset rather than a burden (UNHCR, 2002). The issue when speaking of local integration for refugees is that it obviously refers to those persons who are defined by the international law as refugees and therefore, can fall under UNHCR's mandate¹⁷. It is for this reason that states are encouraged to facilitate, where and when possible, granting of a legal status to such persons that would entitle them to certain rights (UNHCR, 2003).

Kibreab says integration occurs through a process of incorporating legal, economic, social and cultural rights of refugees in their new country that culminates once they are offered citizenship (Kibreab, 1989). Refugees with this status enjoy a range of human and civil rights, often referred to as 'refugee rights', which are enshrined specifically in Article 34 of the Refugee Convention:

"The Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation¹ and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings" (UN, 1951).

¹⁶ UNHCR has all along pushed against the notion that refugees should give up their own cultural and social values and become discrete in the host community. See: UNHCR, 4th Meeting: Global Consultations on International Protection EC/GC/02/6, 25 April 2002.

¹⁷The mandate is to offer protection to refugees, once requested by governments or the United Nations itself. The responsibility includes giving assistance for voluntary repatriations, facilitating local integration or re-settling in a third country.

In 1950, the then UN Secretary General wrote a report upon dissolution of the International Refugee Organization to pave way for the UNHCR to take over. The report emphasized on allowing refugees to lead an independent life in countries of asylum (UN, 1950). This meant that refugees would no longer be looked after by an international organization once they were integrated specially in the economic system of the asylum countries since integration will enable them to provide for themselves and their families. The emphasis on the necessity of local integration continues to date. In 2005, UNHCR's Executive Committee underscored its importance, which it described as a "burden-sharing activity", while calling on the refugees themselves to also make to effort to adapt to their new community and strive for self-reliance as a way of achieving integration (UNHCR, 2005). However and in practice, the UN has not been consistent with its emphasis on local integration as priority has every so often turned to the two other durable solutions namely, assisting with voluntary repatriation and facilitating re-settlement in a third country.

4.2.1. Local Integration; Definitions and Processes

Most definitions of local integration focus on economic, social and political features of refugees' lives and how they interact with their community. For Crisp, the definition falls within the legal framework in which refugees are entitled to a wide range of rights; from employment to freedom of movement and access to health and public services (Crisp, 2004). Integration within an economic process, as such, constitutes becoming less reliant on government assistance through achieving sustainable livelihoods to the point of ultimately achieving self-reliance. UNHCR and Crisp credit local integration with enabling refugees to live among or together with the host population and becoming active members of the asylum country. In doing so, both emphasize non-discrimination and fair treatment as important factors in helping refugees achieve meaningful integration (UNHCR 2004, Crisp, 2004). This definition is drawn from Article 34 of the 1951 Refugee Convention. This specific article calls on states to assist in "naturalization of refugees". For UNHCR, local integration works as a lasting solution to providing refugees with access to basic civil, social, economic and cultural rights once they have been granted a legal status. The Organization even views access to some degree of political rights, within the rights-based approach, as part of the process towards refugee integration (UNHCR, 2004). In Harrell-Bond's view, integration refers to a situation in

which host and refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same economic and social resources with no bigger frictions than that which exists within the host community (Harrell-Bond, 1986). Kibreab's definition of integration does not go far from that of Crisp and UNHCR. He also looks at the process from an economic, social and cultural point of view. He, however, goes as far as saying that integration should happen irrespective of the situation in refugees' home countries which implies refugees, at any rate, stay in the host society permanently after obtaining a legal status or citizenship in the country of asylum (Kibreab, 1989).

Proponents of refugee integration argue that local integration is important for protecting refugees' rights. Jacobsen encourages a policy of state-assisted integration which sees both the government and the local population work together with refugees to achieve integration in the latter group, which she describes especially important in protracted refugee situations (Jacobsen, 2001). Bakewell and Polzer are among those who favour an understanding of this (integration) process based on an 'actor-oriented' approach; an analysis of actions taken by refugees and the host community to identify key determinants that lead into successful local integration (Bakewell and Polzer, 2005/). Polzer goes for a broad and flexible understanding of how integration process works and is achieved, which she argues should transcend many of the assumptions and practices that the international refugee protection system has established to date. She favours a contextual analysis of integration in which refugees, just like other social actors, negotiate for access to power and resources, describing it as an essentially refugee- and host-driven process which is often hindered, rather than assisted, by intervention from outside (Polzer, 2005). Polzer's view, then, necessitates studying integration as a process that is directed by local actors; perhaps starting with refugees themselves. She is of the opinion that the definition of refugees' local integration should opt for understanding the process through actors involved and what may assist or restrain their efforts towards integration. Other definitions of refugee rights and integration, the Convention itself and institutions can shroud the reality of how refugees negotiate and achieve integration (ibid). In her view, local integration is a manifestation of how local relationships function, in the absence of specific refugee protection interventions (ibid).

Banki proposes understanding integration as an intermediate solution which she describes as refugees being able to take part in the economic and social life in their second country, with relative freedom. Freedom of movement, land ownership, participation in the local economy and activities towards gaining self-sufficiency as well as access to services such as health and education and dispersal housing policies by the host government are factors that Banki singles out as contributing to this intermediate solution. Along the same lines as Jacobsen, 2001; Polzar, 2005; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Banki, 2004; and Kibreab, 1989; Crisp pays importance to refugees managing to attain sustainable livelihoods irrespective of their legal status and creating social and economic links with the asylum country (Crisp 2003). Kuhlman introduces indicators that can be used to measure successful refugee integration in the new local community. Among others, he refers to refugees maintaining their own identity while also adjusting psychologically to their new environment. Like Harrell-Bond, Kuhlman says one indicator of successful integration is when friction between host communities and refugees is not worse than that which exists among the host population itself (Kuhlman, 1991).

4.2.2 De Facto Integration or Self-Settlement

There is an argument that most refugees are settled among the local population on a spontaneous basis, thanks to their own initiatives and efforts, assisted by local actors as well as factors such as having access to the job market and other basic rights. Jacobsen describes this as an “unofficial” process which occurs when refugees have been living among the local community for some time, are accepted by it and thus, become self-reliant (Jacobsen, 2001). This distinction between local integration and de facto integration is that in the latter case refugees, for whatever reason, decline to register with UNHCR and abide by its rules. Hovil did a study on de facto integration in Uganda where she found out that despite the Ugandan government not recognizing the legal status of refugees in that country, the refugees had managed to achieve a good level of integration within the social structure of the society and by accessing employment (Hovil, 2002). Van Damme focused on Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees who lived in Guinea. He argues that many self-settled refugees there had managed to establish their own way of coping with their situation and become relatively self-reliant. The degree of achieving this de facto integration, according to Van Damme, depended on

factors such as the number of refugees living in one specific area and how much they were accepted by the local population (Van Damme, 1999).

4.3. Concluding Remarks

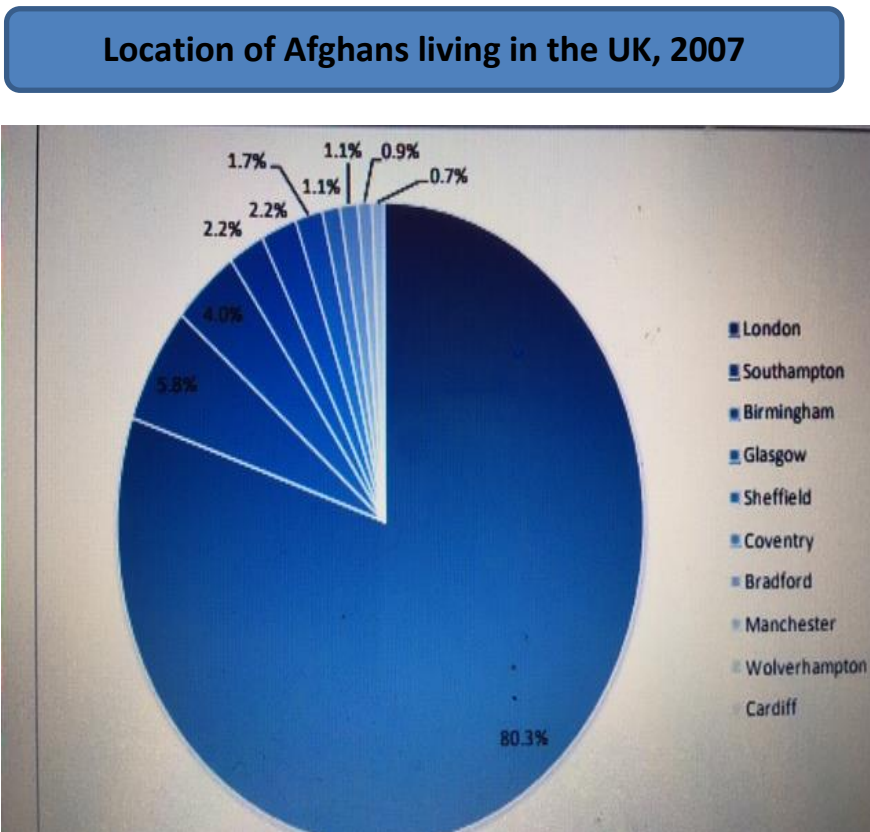
This chapter reviewed the existing literature on how local integration and its processes are defined. It also pointed to today's large bulk of policy and academic processes which support implementing policies to facilitate local integration, especially in cases of protracted refugee situations, while also advocating for greater rights for refugees to enable them to attain self-reliance and sustainable live-livelihoods in their now home. In the next chapter, I will present my research findings.

5. Findings

5.1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to focus on factors that can play a role in successful integration of a specific category of refugees in the UK: Afghan women. I used combined research methods; namely, semi-structured interviews, group discussion and participant observation to allow for observing different aspect of refugees' responses to questions and interactions to the interviewer. Using triangulation of the results facilitated cross validating my data and provided me with more comprehensive and balanced representation of the situation. I interviewed 18 women, organized one group discussion with six of them and attended a gathering at one of the participant's house which gave me the opportunity to observe their discussions about the specific topics related to the research which I put forth to them.

Graph 5:



Source: IOM, 2017

The iterative-inductive approach was employed to analyse the data collected, based on what O'Reilly describes is the kind of data collection, analysis and writing that are not "discrete phases but inextricably linked". In his words, the approach allows for the researcher to steadily move forward and back at the same time during data collection as well as writing and analysing the data (O'Reilly, 2012). In using such a method, the researcher focuses on the most important elements identified and reverts back to the most important information that emerged during the process and has the chance to make further investigation into this information. The findings have been categorized and made into titles based on the sub-questions formed to look into the main topic of this study.

5.2. Language

Language is a key indicator of and contributor to refugee integration, and thus wellbeing, in the host society. It allows refugees to communicate with the host country nationals, learn about the new culture and customs, and familiarize themselves with the country's laws. Perhaps from a refugee's point of view, the main objective of developing a good command of the second language is to, eventually, find proper employment and to achieve sustainable livelihood. Within a broader perspective, however, language does not only facilitate refugee access to labour markets, but also education, healthcare and other public services.

My observations showed that except those who had arrived at a very or relatively young age, the majority spoke none or very little English. All had, at some point, attended English teaching classes organized by the government, but none had continued to reach a good level to be able to communicate well in the society, and had dropped out. My interviews with some of the women who have been attending English classes for several years showed me they are still relying on English-speaking family members and/or interpreters. For those who had stopped learning English, I was told of different reasons for lack of interest. First, they did not find the classes useful because of non-diversity of attendees; meaning as other participants were mainly Afghan, they were speaking to each other in their own language before, during and after each session. Second, the classes were held for two hours, twice a week. They did not find the classes intensive enough and did not find the method of instruction putting

enough pressure on them to learn the language. They found other non-Afghan students having better basic level of English knowledge than them and this affected their self-confidence. “We come from poverty and low educational backgrounds. It hurts my confidence to sit next to someone who has a university degree and can already speak some English.” The remark indicates that English lessons provided by the government are not intensive or frequent enough and do not suit women with different background. During group discussion, the feedback provided by refugees suggested their English improved more rapidly when they were put in classes with other nationalities who had the same level of English, otherwise there was a tendency to speak in their native tongue. Therefore, there seems to be a need for the government to more carefully tailor these classes to the needs of specific groups, especially women. The problem seems to arise because the government uses a “one size fits all model” for refugees with all sorts of backgrounds.

The government uses a “one size fits all model” for all refugees

Another and most important reason, as mentioned by the participants during group discussion, was having to take care of the family. As Afghans tend to have big families, most women interviewed said they found it difficult to leave their children behind at home go to English classes. This issue was recurrently brought up during the interviews. When asked why they did not put the younger children in the kindergarten during class time, I was told children below a certain age are not accepted in the kindergartens. As a result, they took the youngest ones with them to classes which naturally made it impossible for them to concentrate. Family life and their traditional family role as a full-time mother and wife also left them with little time to practice at home. Childcare and caring for other members of the family were among major barriers to learning English. One interviewee told me she did attend English classes since her arrival in the UK almost a decade ago, but found it difficult to learn because first, the classes were only twice a week and second because her job was to take care of the family, which meant she did not have to necessarily deal with English speakers all the time, not necessitating that she learns the language to more than the basic level. I was told a way to deal with the language barrier for them is adolescent children. During the group discussion, younger members of the family told me they help their mothers out and accompany them as interpreters when there is a need to communicate with others, from basic matters such as

running errands to going to doctor appointments. As younger refugees learn English faster, it seems their families become dependent on them to communicate with the host community.

Results from participant observations showed mothers expressing dissatisfaction about not being able to help their children with their homework, communicate with other mothers and specially teachers. One specific area brought up by the refugees as the most for causing frustration when it comes to the language barrier was the difficulty to communicate with health providers. One refugee whose husband had died of cancer quickly said she believed even the presence of an interpreter did not help with proper communication between the two sides and therefore, timely diagnosis and treatment. Sounding the same frustration, a few others were of the opinion that the language barrier leaves refugees unable to communicate properly with healthcare providers and therefore they receive poor treatment, especially when it comes to specialist care. However and in general, although most admitted the language barrier caused frustrations to some extent, for example, leaving them dependent on other members of the family to handle even basic matters, not much urge or motivation was seen among them to learn the language and to reach a level to make them fully self-sufficient. Afghans, perhaps like many refugees coming from other countries, have close-knit communities, and therefore only socialize among themselves. Women organize gatherings among themselves, do not attend events and/or celebrations related to the host country and prefer their children to stay within the boundaries of their home country's culture and traditions, and this extends to preferring their children to befriend and socialize among themselves. My understanding from participant observation and group discussion sessions was that they do not see it as a serious problem that, because of the language issue, they are disconnected from the rest of the community. Strong inter-community ties have created dependencies that in this case seems to have play a role in the absence of motivation to learn English.

Needless to say, the problem of language does not exist for those who came to the UK at an early age or those who eventually obtained education and a job. My interviews with a few participants who had acquired a good level of English skills indicated that they were able to obtain education, find proper jobs, had a better understanding of British culture, and as a result, were generally more satisfied and felt more fulfilled with their life as refugee. They

pointed to an important issue; they ruled out the assumption that living in this country would automatically put one in contact with British and/or native British speakers and therefore, over time, facilitate learning the language. This, I was told, holds especially true for women who come from traditional societies like Afghanistan whose role is defined mainly within family life and therefore, do not come into meaningful contact with the host community to learn English simply through sporadic contact with English speakers. A young woman who migrated to the UK two years ago mentioned funding cuts by British government for classes (refer to 'Further Education New Horizons: Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth', 2010) as a discouraging factor, while another mentioned lack of proper information dissemination by the government, especially for the new-comers, regarding such classes. "Unlike most Afghan women, I travelled to the UK by myself as a young woman and had to make it on my own. I did not know the language at all. I could not rely on the Afghan community because I was not interacting with them since, in those years, for a woman to migrate on her own was not accepted among Afghans. I was all alone. Having escaped from war and poverty, I was eager to learn English and to find a job. But it was not easy for a newcomer to access information as to where to find English classes and how to enrol, or even how to find a first-entry job." The remarks were made by a now professional mother of two who migrated to the UK 15 years ago. While she noted that the situation regarding information dissemination on English classes and vocational trainings have improved to some extent such as through NGOs, still, she said, there is not a practical and systematic structure in place within the government to reach out to new comers and provide them with the necessary information.

The overall result drawn from my direct interviews, participant observation and group discussion showed refugee women do feel the drawbacks of the lack of English fluency, instigating social isolation and barriers to employment. Lack of childcare was also seen as hindering women's access to services and activities.

In order to have a clearer view of what factors into English knowledge of the participants, I employed the Likert Scale¹⁸ and asked all of them to rate their current English level (speaking, reading, comprehension and writing), on a scale of one to five (one being the lowest and five

¹⁸ Likert's scale is used to represent a target group's attitudes/reaction to a topic.

being the highest rate). I categorized their responses in relation to four specific groups I determined: non-working, working, the age of migration (+/-25). The following charts represents a link between each category and the level of English skills.

Five Point Likert Scale Survey

Table 2: Non-working women

	Language Skills	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Speaking	X				
2	Comprehension	X				
3	Writing		X			
4	Reading		X			

Table 3: Working women

	Language Skills	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Speaking			X		
2	Comprehension			X		
3	Writing				X	
4	Reading				X	

Table 4: Migrated before the age of 25

	Language Skills	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Speaking		X			
2	Comprehension				X	

3	Writing				X	
4	Reading				X	

Table 5: Migrated after the age of 25

	Language Skills	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Speaking	X				
2	Comprehension		X			
3	Writing		X			
4	Reading		X			

5.3. Education

In a country like Afghanistan, conflict has been a main determining factor of whether people can get schooling. Years of war and displacement have not only disrupted a huge number of people's education in the country itself, but also for those who migrated to the neighbouring countries where, for various reasons, they were not able to resume their education or did not have proper education.

From group discussion, I understood that the education level of those who migrated to the UK directly from Afghanistan depended on whether they were of school age when the hard-line Taliban was in power or in the post-Taliban era. Most of those falling in the first category did not receive proper education and had not even finished high school. They said strict rules imposed on girls and women during those years prevented many from going to school and tradition meant they got married and had children at a relatively young age. They had eventually left the country either with their family or had reunited with their husbands later in the UK.

The same holds true for those who had first migrated to Iran and Pakistan and then sought refuge in the UK. I found out that in both of those countries, whether living in a refugee camp, in designated areas for refugees or among members of the community, they experienced isolation from the society and did not receive proper education; either they received limited education or finished high school but did not go to the university. They had married at a young age and had children. They said the situation with getting education as a refugee in those countries is even more precarious for girls because if there is a chance, parents prefer to send their sons to school and for girls to get married and have a family.

My interviews and participant observations showed both groups have continued their traditional role in the family and not pursued an education in the UK. More than any other factor involved for lack of motivation to pursue an education (other than language), I believe is the mentality and culture that still exists in sections of Afghan society which considers a purely traditional family role for a woman. This role continues even in the new country and even after being exposed to a new culture. The culture of dependence on their husbands does not encourage these women to develop their skills or obtain education as prerequisite for eventually getting a job, attaining livelihood assets and becoming self-sufficient and independent.

“Back home I was doing great in math and literature. I received high grades in both, but here the language was an issue and also my education certificate which did not satisfy entry requirements for the same level I was studying in my own country. I felt like I was put in an uncomfortable situation because everyone in class was younger than me. I felt lonely most of the time and did not speak with anyone.”

I also interviewed participants who have obtained higher level education in the UK. They said getting any level of education for any refugee who often has to start from scratch when she lands in the new country is difficult, let alone for those who do not know the language or come from countries where their degrees are not approved, like Afghanistan. One told me education was her top priority when she migrated to the UK, but since she spoke little English, she was placed in lower level classes in school and spent most of her time studying English.

“Back home I was doing great in math and literature. I received high grades in both, but here the language was an issue and also my education certificate which did not satisfy entry requirements for the same level I was studying in my own country. I felt like I was put in an uncomfortable situation because everyone in class was younger than me. I felt lonely most of the time and did not speak with anyone.” Another told me in the early years of her life in the UK, she decided to work part time instead of pursuing education because her legal status did not allow her to get government funding for college and so she could not pay the course fees, and she also wanted to support her family. She said even today, lack of a concentrated system to provide refugees with advice, guidance and information, not recognizing qualifications from the country of origin, and the lack of support within the system deprives refugees from having easy and equal access to higher level education in the UK. Another one told me due to her legal status (the details of which she did not wish to disclose), she has been unable to attend university for two years because she is considered as an international student, meaning she has to pay higher fees and her status does not make her eligible for a student loan. She also said since she does not have the right to work full time in the country, she has not been able to earn money to pay for university fees. She pointed to the drastic rise in the number of refugees arriving in the UK in the recent years, many of whom are young and aspiring women from many countries including Afghanistan, saying access to good quality education and training can provide these women with the skills to succeed.

5.4. Employment

Employment as a means of integration allows refugees to participate in the society economically and socially and become self-sufficient. Women comprise a big part of the refugee population and their numbers are rapidly increasing. A joint survey by the EU Commission and the Organization for Economic Cooperation (EU-OECD, 2014) points to higher unemployment rate among women refugees, driven to some extent by factors such as having no or low level of education (EU-OECD, 2014). An article published in the Refugee Women’s News links lower participation of refugee women in the labour market to a combination of structural, community and individual factors (Refugees Women’s News, 2014).

As one of the challenges refugee women face for integrating in the labour market, France Terre d'Asile refers to low-paid jobs, negative stereotyping, their fear of facing discrimination and the limited knowledge of the host country's language (France Terre d'Asile, 2006).

Most of the women I interviewed proved to be a relatively homogenous group in terms of employment background and current employment status. They came from not only Afghanistan, but Iran and Pakistan as well. The majority never held a job in the country of origin, either upon their own will or due to legal issues. Most had gotten married at a young age and had soon given birth, and had either travelled to the UK with their husband or joined them after the latter had settled in the country. Majority's role and job has mainly been to take care of the family as a wife and a mother which goes back to the predominant household composition as well as traditional and cultural norms in the Afghan society. This seems to carry onto life as a refugee. And subsequently, most of them have never had a job in the UK, and have been relying on their husbands and state benefits. Some of them did express interest in finding a job. These said that, aside from family duties, language is as a major obstacle as well as lack of job-related information and trainings suited for unskilled refugees. The men, I was told, have the same problem when they arrive; they want to be trained in vocations such as construction work and plumbing, but do not know how and where to get the training.

From the group discussion, I got the general view that most of them are ready to go for the most basic jobs such as working in a hotel as a cleaner or as a cook, but the language problem leaves them no confidence. When asked if the government puts any pressure on them to find a job, they said that from time to time, they receive a letter asking them to get employed, and reminding them of the possibility that they might lose state benefits. Also when asked if there are any follow-ups by the government on this matter, they said it only goes as far as sending the letters. One specifically said she has been here for seven years now and keeps receiving such letters. "I have never had a job since coming to the UK and I still keep receiving them," one mother of three mentioned during the group discussion.

Prolonged uncertainty over their legal status, not knowing the language and unfamiliarity about the UK system in general, coupled with a lack of child care as well as family

responsibilities, were singled out as factors affecting their will and aspirations to look for employment. During one of the interviews, one Afghan lady who travelled to the UK some 10 years ago on her own, eventually managing to obtain a university degree and being a career told me the longer these refugees are excluded from the labour market, it is less likely that they would ever become economically active. “They are disconnected from members outside their immediate community altogether.

Prolonged uncertainty over legal status, not knowing the language and unfamiliarity about the UK system in general, coupled with a lack of child care as well as traditional role of Afghan women within the family affect their aspirations to seek employment.

Even those who come with qualifications and relatively good command of English encounter problems, she cited, adding that the UK system does not recognize qualifications from most other countries especially from a country like Afghanistan and what is lacking is fast-track learning ways here to obtain the necessary skills and qualifications, especially for finding jobs that correspond either with their qualifications or career interests. Another one told me she had previously registered at a job agency and was called for an interview for a shop-keeper job, but was turned down because she did not have the relevant experience and did not know how she could get the qualifications needed. “After five years of living here, I still have no self-confidence to communicate with the public; always thinking I am violating a cultural/social norm or tradition, let alone being confident enough to go for a job.”

In the group discussion, there were a few who had migrated to the UK with their families in their mid or late teens. They went to school and university in the UK. They were employed, but not full time and not in a skilled job. They were of the opinion that the economic situation in the UK and lack of jobs overall is the reason for them not being able to get full-time employment. One university student said she was not much optimistic about getting a professional job after graduation because there are many British people who would be looking for the same jobs and the employers would prefer to hire them, even if she would prove to be a slightly more qualified candidate for the job than them and even if she is herself a British citizen now. The younger generation who have been raised in the UK have no

language problem and have obtained degrees from UK universities. But they do not move out after reaching 18 and continue living with their family in the same house.

Generally, what those who are working seemed to have in common was that they are less than 25 years old, are fluent in English, have obtained a UK degree or qualification, and had been living in the UK for at least 10 years.

Overall, during direct interviews, participant observation and group discussion, my perception was that the majority are not necessarily aspiring to be working women and are content with the role as a mother and wife. My perception was the same when I mentioned that getting a job can help them provide support for not only their immediate but their extended family as well, in the UK or back home. This reason here again, in my opinion, goes back to the traditional role of Afghan women in the family that is mostly defined by them within the framework of child care and family commitments, as well as state benefits they are entitled to. Therefore, I can say that I witnessed a certain level of uniformity in job market experience of Afghan refugee women whom I interviewed, which can be characterized by low levels of economic participation that has affected their chances of achieving sustainable livelihoods on their own and, as such, integration in the host society through employment.

“I became widowed in Afghanistan. Had I stayed there, my life would have been confined within the walls of my house and I would have always been wary of going out, fearing a security incident. I am happy here. I feel peaceful. This is all I want.”

Also, the overall result obtained from the three methods of data collection shows that although traditionally migration has been caused by economics as well as, for example, aspirations to get better education, growing number of wars and situations of violence are becoming a major source of migration. As a result, women who migrate and seek refuge in another country do so for safety and security reasons and are content as long as the destination country provides them with that safety. “I became widowed in Afghanistan. Had I stayed there, my life would have been confined within the walls of my house and I would

have always been wary of going out, fearing a security incident. I am happy here. I feel peaceful. This is all I want,” one told me.

The traditional role of Afghan women in the family and state benefits are factors inhibiting their motivation to seek employment. For such refugee populations, it seems language and training do not end up to be temporary obstacles but rather, the entire situation for the majority turns into permanent unemployment.

5.5 Healthcare and Housing

There was a general satisfaction regarding access to the national health care system in the UK. One of the first things I was told was that refugees understand it is their right when they come to the UK to have the same rights to access healthcare as other nationals residing in the country. I was informed that as refugees, they have had easy and free access to the NHS, and that if they would make any complaints, it would be about the quality of NHS services and the working system in place, but these are not specific to refugees, but rather general issues. They did cite language as a problem.

One told me by the time she had arrived in the UK, she had been through a lot of trauma and was suffering from health problems. She was able to see a doctor and with time, her condition improved. “The doctor helped me realize and understand what my problem and the root causes were. He was very supportive. Although language was a problem, I think if I had not have free access to NHS, I would have been left totally dysfunctional and would not have been able to take care of my children.” Another said she had developed mild depression after giving birth and her situation was well taken care of.

They said if there are some refugees who do fail to access healthcare services is because they do not have the knowledge about what kind of services exists and how to access them. Due to lack of information, some fear that they might be charged and therefore they prefer not to refer to health providers in case of a problem. As they come from areas of conflict they may also have increased health needs due to their isolation

As for housing, I found that Afghan women rarely live by themselves. Girls do not leave their parents' house even after reaching the age of 18. Two reasons were mentioned. One is that unlike the Western culture, Afghan culture does not approve much of girls leaving home until they get married. The second is for financial reasons. Adult single women continue to live with their parents and work in order to be able to help their family out financially. Staying with the family facilitates and raises chances for getting a council house and benefits because, as a refugee in the UK, you are eligible to apply for accommodation for other members of your family if they are living with you. Even women who come to the UK on their own are not left alone to live by themselves, but rather are accommodated by members of the community, especially during early stages of migration.

5.6. Religion

Although religion was not one of the factors I had taken into account as part of my research topic, the issue still did come up recurrently during interviews, the participant observation and group discussion. Participants said observing religious values and beliefs was a coping mechanism and had therapeutic effects on them during times of stresses and desperation which comes often as part of refugee life. They considered it as a protective factor against vulnerabilities they are exposed to in the new environment. Religion offered a sense of belonging to their own community and gave them the opportunity to socialize among each other by participating in religious festivals and rituals.

6. Conclusion

The target population of my study were Afghan women who have been living in the UK as refugees. My interest to see how well they have integrated in the society drew from a number of factors; my own experience from working with Afghan migrants in Iran, the common language, culture and history, and the relative familiarity with the mainly traditional structure of the Afghan society and the role of women within such structure. These factors inspired me to see how they have adapted in an entirely new environment in the UK as well as what opportunities and challenges they have encountered to be able to take on economic and social roles in the host country. The study built on the Capability Approach, the Sustainable Livelihood Approach and the rights-based approach, all of which essentially entitle all human beings to a series of rights which allows them to develop their skills and knowledge to attain self-sufficiency and dignity in life. I used a set of combined research methods; namely, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and group discussion, that overlap and complement each other. Referred to as “triangulation”, this allowed for a more balanced and accurate perspective to develop from participants’ responses. Research questions were developed in view of how well the refugees have been performing in terms of language, education, employment, access to healthcare and housing.

There seemed to be a recurrent pattern in factors that had affected the integration process. The majority have continued their traditional role in the family after becoming refugees and are stay-at-home moms, while the government seems to lack an effective adequate integration system. As for the problem of language, Afghan women rely on English speaking members of the family as interpreters when needed and the government’s policy as to English learning classes for refugees can be characterized as one-size-fits-all. The participants had travelled to the UK from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most of them had not obtained a higher education degree and did not have jobs. As refugees, they had not sought education and employment in the UK. Here again, the cultural mindset, vacuums within the system (e.g. no easy access to vocational trainings) stood out as contributing factors.

Prior to conducting this research, I believed that refugee integration is essentially and primarily the responsibility of wealthy and developed destination countries as refugees are vulnerable, exposed and unable to maintain themselves. Findings of this study, however, ascertain that here we have two parties who should equally take part in this process; the refugees who arrive in the new country carrying with them their own social and cultural characteristics and the need to adapt and, the receiving countries whose people and institutions play a vital role in how interaction with the newcomers take place. It is this two-way interaction that sets the mode and direction of the integration process and can feed into the approach which favors refugee development-oriented policies over those which are assistance-oriented. My research singled out language as the most crucial element that can more than any other factor affect how a refugee participates in the host society. For the majority of Afghan women I interacted with, I found that they were disengaged from the wider community in terms of language, education and employment. Two main reasons can be singled out: first, Afghans have a close-knit society, their women socialize among themselves and stick to their own cultures and traditions one of which is to take care of the family. Second, the government has not come up with solid and durable strategies to motivate and press on integration processes involving effective language learning classes as well as suitable pathways to education and employment opportunities. Refugees expressed general satisfaction with the quality of NHS services and housing did not seem to be a problem for women as the responsibility lies on men to deal with it.

The findings show the process of integration should take place equally at level of the individual and the government. In other words, integration is a collective expression of the refugee's ambitions and characteristics and the effectiveness of state mechanisms. While motivations at the individual level and at the institutional levels might not be the same, they are undoubtedly interrelated. As such, institutions and individuals together create the space for integration to take place or not. Absence of a continuous interplay between refugees and their needs, and government capacities creates a gap that risks making integration a lost cause. Stronger NGO and charities working in the field of refugees can bridge this gap.

It is worth mentioning that in the specific case of Afghan refugee women, it was noticed that when seeking peace and security become reasons to migrate, living just a peaceful and secure life become the ultimate objective.

It would be interesting for a future research to focus on mechanisms that can further empower NGOs between refugee needs and state capacities.

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Annex 1: Demography of Afghans in the UK

While there exist exact number of Afghans living in Germany and the Netherlands, their exact population in the UK is difficult to ascertain. According to the UK Census in 2001, there were 14,481 Afghans living in the country. However, a drastic rise in asylum applications and refugees arriving in the country after year, their actual number is likely to be much higher. A further caution is that dependent children who were born in refugee camps in Pakistan or in other countries often do not report Afghanistan as their country of birth or origin. In 2006, by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) carried a survey the result of which estimated the Afghan population in London alone to stand at 20,000. In 2012, UK Office for National Statistics released a report according to which there were 60,000 Afghan nationals living in the UK. These statistics might not represent an accurate number of the Afghan diaspora in the country given that during 2006 and 2007, 46,000 births of children to Afghan parents were recorded in the United Kingdom. The IOM mapping exercise indicated that London is home to the largest number (between 70% and 80%) of Afghan migrants and small communities of Afghans live outside of the capital, for example, in Birmingham, Bradford, Coventry, Manchester, Glasgow and Southampton.

Source: IOM, 2007; Office for National Statistics, 2013; Jones, 2010

Annex 2: Some of the Most Important Refugee –Related Agreements and their Characteristics

<p>UNHCR Statute</p>	<p>Specifies UNHCR’s responsibilities; provides a definition of refugee; mentions UNHCR’s responsibility to work with governments to find solutions to refugee problems.</p>
<p>1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees</p>	<p>Provides the legal definition of who is a refugee; defines the legal status of refugees, what rights they enjoy and what duties they bear in the country of refuge.</p>
<p>1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees</p>	<p>Removes the temporal and geographical restrictions of the 1951 Convention as to the legal status of a person as a refugee and related protections.</p>
<p>1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa</p>	<p>Is a regional agreement; prohibits discrimination against refugees; includes recommendations for burden- and responsibility sharing among member states; declares the concept of asylum as a purely humanitarian and peaceful act, introduces “absolute” prohibition of refoulement</p>
<p>1974 UN Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict</p>	<p>Calls for measures to end women and children being subject to persecution, torture and degrading treatment; criminalizes such acts as imprisonment, torture, shooting, collective arrests, destruction of houses.</p>

<p>1976 Council of Europe's Recommendation 773 on the Situation of de facto Refugees</p>	<p>Strives to offer de facto refugees protections and assistance stipulated under the 1951 Convention especially those relating to employment, public services and social security; prohibits their expulsion or return, entitles them to adequate housing, calls for recognizing as far as possible their professional qualifications, entitles them to receive language and vocational training for free.</p>
<p>1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees for Latin America and its three successors:</p>	<p>A non-binding regional legal instrument; considers, compared to the 1951 Convention, a broader group of people as refugees.</p>
<p>2013 Dublin Regulation</p>	<p>Sets the criteria for determining which EU Member State should be responsible for reviewing a person's asylum application; aims to ensure that asylum-related regulations and practices applied by different EU states are derived from the same standards.</p>
<p>2013 EU Qualification Directive</p>	<p>Bring into line the criteria which EU Member States use to define a refugee and thus, protection these persons should be entitled to.</p>

Source: Mole and Meredith, 2010; Kinnear, 2011; UNHCR, 1984, 1974; Zimmermann, 2011; Refworld, 2017, Goodwin and McAdam 2007; Simeon 2010,

Annex 3: Questionnaire

Date of Interview

1. How long have you been living in the UK?
2. How was your English knowledge before becoming a refugee in the UK?
3. How would you rate your English language knowledge now on a scale of one to five (one being the lowest and five being the highest rate)?

	Language Skills	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Speaking					
2	Comprehension					
3	Writing					
4	Reading					

4. How did you find state assistance in terms of language classes?
5. What was your education level before becoming a refugee?
6. Did you obtain an education degree in the UK?
Yes No
7. What level of education degree did you obtain in the UK?
BA MA PhD
8. Did you have any vocational knowledge in the country of origin?

9. Did you receive any vocational training in the UK?
10. How did you find state provided assistance in terms of vocational training for refugees?
11. Did you have a job before coming to the UK?
12. Have you ever had a job ever since becoming a refugee in the UK?
13. Is the similar to what you had in the country of origin?
14. Has the government been assisting you for finding a job?
15. How do you assess access to NHS services?
16. Have you used council housing? How did you apply? What were the procedures?

Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment

Ethics Review Form E1

This form should be completed by the Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Student undertaking a research project which involves human participants. The form will identify whether a more detailed E2 form needs to be submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics Officer.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University **Code of Practice for the Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants**, available at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Research-ethics/>, and to any guidelines provided by relevant academic or professional associations.

It is the Principal Investigator / Supervisor who is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review. Note that all necessary forms should be fully completed and signed before fieldwork commences.

Project Title: Factors that Play Into Successful Integration of Refugees in the UK- the Case for Afghan Women

Principal Investigator / Supervisor: Dr. Richard Carver

Student Investigator: Pouneh Gheisareh-Dehi

		Yes	No
1.	Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent? (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, unconscious patients)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	If the study will involve participants who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under the age of 16, people with learning disabilities), will you be unable to obtain permission from their parents or guardians (as appropriate)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Will the study require the cooperation of a gatekeeper for initial access to groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students, members of a self-help group, employees of a company, residents of a nursing home)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X <input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Are there any problems with the participants' right to remain anonymous, or to have the information they give not identifiable as theirs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Will it be necessary for the participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time? (eg, covert observation of people in non-public places?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X <input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Will the study involve discussion of or responses to questions the participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	X <input type="checkbox"/>

