

Travelling bright: potential of

This novel project is aiming to assess the challenges and opportunities for refugees and displaced persons to become entrepreneurs, and to remove the barriers that prevent them from doing so.

Background

Becoming an entrepreneur is invariably a demanding and high-risk activity, but the challenges are compounded when one is displaced. A typical barrier might be a lack of confidence in communication, especially when one is conversing in one's second, third or even fourth tongue. Negotiating the complex legal and legislative business framework of one's adopted country is another key challenge.

The research

Since 2013, Cherry Cheung, Senior Lecturer in Corporate and Business law, has been engaged in research on developing a culture of entrepreneurship amongst vulnerable groups. Recently, she has become increasingly involved in research on entrepreneurship amongst refugees and other displaced peoples. In 2018, she began a collaboration with colleagues from the University of Essex, Loughborough University and the Hague University of Applied Science/Leiden University College to develop a one-day, bespoke training camp for aspiring refugee entrepreneurs, through an ESRC Impact grant administered by Essex University.

"The objective is to provide participants with the ability and confidence to develop a business model, employ social media and advanced marketing techniques and consider viable legal formats for their business," says Cherry. "They will also work on a financial plan, and look for funding and partnerships to support them in taking their business to the next level."

realising the enterprise refugees and displaced persons

"As a lecturer in corporate and business law, my role is to work with refugees on the legal aspects of their business. In the camp, I will discuss with them some of the key issues affecting businesses, and talk directly with them about their specific business concerns."

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Cherry says that one of the main challenges of this activity has been finding relevant refugees to attend the workshop. However, by connecting with a Syrian refugee, who was a research student of one of Cherry's collaborators, they were able to draw from his personal network and charities he worked for.

"Alongside the practical workshop, I am also working with teams in Pakistan and Bangladesh to explore the challenges that displaced entrepreneurs faced in starting a business, with some of the work already published as academic research and further publications in development."

In terms of looking ahead, the team plans to carry out research to evaluate the workshop's effectiveness. "We shall talk to the participants to find out how they feel about the training camp, and how we can improve our future delivery," Cherry adds. "We will then, based on their feedback, revise our content for future projects in development. We will conduct follow-up discussions with the participants three months after the workshop to see if they have eventually started a business, and to find out what more we could have done to support them."

Researcher: Cherry Cheung
Research Centre: London Centre for Business and Entrepreneurship Research
School: School of Business

Impacts

- LSBU academic Cherry Cheung is collaborating with colleagues from the University of Essex, Loughborough University and the Hague University of Applied Science/Leiden University College to develop training for refugee entrepreneurs.
- The project has created a bespoke training camp for aspiring refugee entrepreneurs.
- The research on entrepreneurship in the war and conflict context, alongside other work, has already yielded co-authored outputs including one book chapter, two journal articles and a number of working papers for future submissions.
- Cherry is working with teams in Pakistan and Bangladesh to explore the challenges that displaced entrepreneurs face.