

EXPERIENCES OF RISKS AND WARNINGS WHILST SEEKING ASYLUM

Mhari Gordon, PhD Candidate
Prof Ilan Kelman & Prof Carina Fearnley



Research Rationale, Aim, & Questions

Asylum seekers and refugees are generally found to be more vulnerable to risks in their country of asylum. Various reasons contribute to such vulnerability, such as limited access to information, experiences of language barriers, and xenophobic discrimination. This is of concern, as these experiences may act as pre-defined limitations in dealing with risks.

This study aims to understand if and how warnings are inclusive for asylum seekers and refugees.

1. Which types of risks, and to what extent, do asylum seekers and refugees experience?
2. What are asylum seekers and refugees' experiences of warnings to risks?
3. To what extent is the warning process inclusive of risks experienced by asylum seekers and refugees?



Methodological Approach & Methods

The methodological approach for this study is Constructive Grounded Theory. This approach focuses on marginalized voices, actions, and stories.

Interviews, art-based workshop, and research journal methods are being used to triangulate data and findings.

- Lived experience and key informant interviews are being used to capture input from personal experiences, local and national government initiatives, policy makers, and local and international NGO initiatives.
- The art-based workshop aims to produce a short story to represent asylum experiences, encounters of risks, and ways of overcoming these.

London & Wider UK Context

Refugees: approx. 580,000 people in refugee-like situations.

Risks: Discrimination, human trafficking, kidnapping, modern slavery, insecurity, trauma, and forms of mental health impacts.

Natural Hazards: earthquakes, extreme temperatures, extreme weather, flooding, landslides, pathogens, space weather, tornadoes, tsunamis, vegetation fires, and volcanic ash and gases.

Information Dissemination: Primarily English-only, top-down approach, information and access to resources and services are scattered, Met Office alerts/warnings (colour and level systems) for weather-related hazards, and text alert system tested in April 2023.



Image 2: Diagram London Skyline

Risks and marginalisation created and sustained by asylum and disaster policies

Socio-Economic-Political

- Basic human rights not met
- Limited access to resources, services, and facilities
- No right to work or income; livelihood instability

Physically

- Accommodation/dispersal
- Spaces (with acts of discrimination)
- Migration (immobility)

'Slow forms of violence'

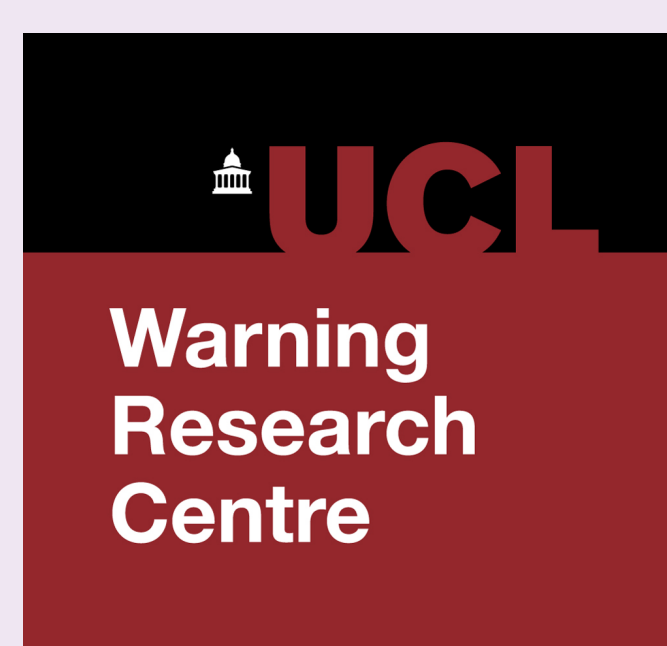
J. Darling, 2023

Risk and Disaster Policies/ Frameworks

- "Invisibility"
- Migrants lightly mentioned in 2015 SFDRR
- UK National Risk Register 2023 identifies migrants in 'vulnerable groups'

Key Initial Research Findings

- *Information and warnings—of risks—is scattered*, amplifying the already complicated asylum process.
- *Local charities* attempting to bridge individuals to needed services, i.e. food banks and health services.
- Greater London Authority working with *community leaders*, i.e., faith leaders and borough resilience officers, to improve preparation and response to risks; especially with *hard-to-reach* populations.
- *Lack of representation and participation* of asylum seekers and refugees in issues concerning them, i.e. policies on migration, emergency response, and climate change.
- Specific *volunteer organisations* for marginalised groups emerged during crises, i.e. COVID-19 pandemic and Ukrainian refugees' arrival in the UK.



Images: 1: Deevybee (2021) *Linking responsibility for climate refugees to emissions*, Blogspot. Available at: <https://deevybee.blogspot.com/2021/11/linking-responsibility-for-climate.html> (Accessed: 06 February 2024)
2: Darco (no date) *London Skyline Images*, Adobe Stock. Available at: https://stock.adobe.com/sk/search?k=london%20skyline%20vector&asset_id=382609208 (Accessed: 08 June 2023).