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Exploring Refugees Entrepreneurial Support Organisations in Uganda

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Abstract

Drawing on current development practice and literature on Entrepreneurial Support Organisations (ESO), such as accelerators, incubators and labs, this chapter explores how refugees in Uganda are supported through entrepreneurial approaches. Following an exploratory method, interviews were conducted with proprietors and managers of ESO in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. The findings show that whilst the majority of these organisations purport to follow an innovation discourse, in reality they support refugees through a mixture of inclusion, resilience and innovation-led approaches. Inclusion-led approaches focus on basic language skills, establishing peer relationships and access to survival essentials. Resilience-led approaches nurture livelihood skills, building community ties and access to seed-corn grants. Innovation-led approaches develop entrepreneurial skills, establishing extra-local connectivity and access to micro-finance. The chapter highlights the critical importance of inclusion and resilience-led approaches in developing supportive ESO for refugees.

Keywords: entrepreneurial support organisations; refugees; inclusion; resilience; innovation-led approaches; Uganda

Introduction

Entrepreneurial Support Organisations (ESO) are everywhere (Taylor, 2021; Zighan, 2020; Malecki, 2018; Spigel, 2016). These accelerators, incubators, labs, maker-spaces and science parks, are regarded as unified in their aim to encourage, and make entrepreneurial actors self-sufficient through supporting and developing entrepreneurial behaviours (Bergman and McMullen, 2021). However, whilst entrepreneurship has been increasingly promoted as a strategy for improving refugee livelihoods (Kachkar, 2019; Skran and Easton-Calabria, 2020), it has also been critiqued as a distraction from the real challenges faced by refugees (Kachkar, 2019; Kaiser, 2006).

This chapter engages with these debates by analysing the provision of ESO for refugees in urban Kampala, Uganda. Uganda provides a particularly useful context in which to explore these issues given the promotion of refugee self-reliance by the Ugandan government through the Refugee Act 2006. Given this and the claims being made for entrepreneurship in developing and resource constrained environments, it is important to understand and examine the structures and programmes that claim to support refugee entrepreneurship. Since much of the literature is based on the experiences of refugees in developed countries, the focus here is on ESO operating within a developing host country.

In this chapter, we explore the ways these spaces are constructed, the degree to which they meet the needs of refugees, and how this has been impacted by COVID19. We use this to characterise features of ESO that should form part of our conceptualisations of them in a developing context. Harrington (2017) provides key characteristics of ESO (implicitly operating in developed contexts) to include supportive ecosystems, shared working space, and exposure to possible funding, coaching, mentorship and acceleration / scale-up activities. The aim of the ESO is generally regarded as to provide an ecosystem that promotes and supports entrepreneurial activity.

The chapter proceeds as follows: the first section explores refugee livelihoods; next we set this in the context of Uganda and refugee needs. Based on this, we set out research questions, with an aim to explore the refugee ESO phenomenon in Kampala, Uganda. Following this, we explore the findings around the landscape for refugee ESO, their orientation and the services they provide. Given the major impact of the 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic, we explore how this has had an impact on ESO. Finally, we draw together the findings to highlight the triad of orientations we identify refugee ESO as taking: inclusion, resilience and innovation. Given the needs of refugees and host communities, we recommend a policy discourse that recognises the primacy of the inclusion and resilience orientations, whilst also supporting the importance of the innovation orientation.

Refugee Livelihoods

Refugees are people forcibly displaced by political and religious persecution, human rights violation by ethnic or tribal conflict, wars and natural calamities such as drought, famine and diseases (Dung and Avwunudiogba, 2021; Berchin *et al.*, 2017). Morris (2021) argues that these people are always forced to move in incredibly challenging circumstances that jeopardize their existence. Political and ethnic wars continue to be the leading reason for the growing numbers of refugees in Africa since the independence days of the 1950's and 1960's (Dung and Avwunudiogba, 2021). However, climate change is increasingly recognized as part of the mix of factors displacing people, and that this is likely to increase (Berchin *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, refugees can be regarded as people who are experiencing a risk of emotional or physical harm if they remain in the same environment (Alrawadieh *et al.*, 2019).

About 84% of the world's refugees are hosted in low and middle-income countries, where their presence is coupled with poor health and education systems, marginalization and high rates of unemployment (Bakuluki *et al.*, 2020; Kachkar, 2019; Gutberlet *et al.*, 2017). Approximately 82% of these refugees are women and children and about 56% of the refugees are under 15 years of age (Bakuluki *et al.*, 2020). There are also growing numbers of refugees in urban areas (Embiricos, 2020), a phenomenon that has received relatively less attention due to a focus on camps and settlements where refugee populations are often concentrated (Skran and Easton-Calabria, 2020).

There are significant global and local efforts to support refugees, including through a dedicated UN agency, United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Skran and Easton-Calabria, 2020; Kaiser, 2006). As well as the provision of humanitarian support for arriving refugees and refugee populations within host countries, significant resources are devoted to preventing refugee movement, or at least making it difficult (Spigel, 2016; Kaiser, 2006). The circumstances of refugees' departure, along with the conditions they face on arrival, can mean they lack access to adequate means to support their wellbeing or build livelihoods (Embiricos, 2020; Skran and Easton-Calabria, 2020; Kachkar, 2019; Berchin *et al.*, 2017). This can make them dependent on host state support and that of agencies such as UNHCR. This takes place in the context of often experienced hostility from host communities who may perceive a

threat to jobs if refugees accept lower wages (Alrawadieh *et al.*, 2019; Spigel, 2016). Inequalities within host countries may produce a situation where communities see themselves as worse off than refugees (Oner *et al.*, 2020; Bohnet and Schmitz-Pranghe, 2019). This can make it exceedingly difficult for refugees to settle and build their livelihoods. These intersecting economic, livelihoods and social changes can be exacerbated by trauma and loss arising from their departure from their homes (Spigel, 2016).

However, refugees also contribute to host communities (Skran and Easton-Calabria, 2020). Recent research (Okech *et al.*, 2021; Spigel, 2016) highlights how refugees may undertake voluntary work which supports host communities and there is significant evidence of the hospitality that communities extend to displaced population (de la Chaux *et al.* 2020; Bohnet and Schmitz-Pranghe, 2019; Oner *et al.*, 2020). Whilst some of the refugees may be professionals and possess relevant training and qualifications, many nations have stringent policies against refugee employment, which precludes them from engaging in to economies (Feeney, 2000; Spigel, 2016). Even in countries where they are allowed to work, as in Uganda, they may find it difficult to gain employment in formal employment due to language and mobility challenges (Kachkar, 2019; Spigel, 2016; Kaiser, 2006). Since the low and middle-income countries in which refugees are concentrated often already have high unemployment rates, competition for jobs is high. Refugees face further disadvantages in the marketplace, arising from language barriers, unrecognized qualifications, and potential hostility from communities (Kachkar, 2019; Spigel, 2016). Refugees may also find the legal and administrative system challenging (Alrawadieh *et al.*, 2019). A further issue is the concentration of employment opportunities in the informal sector, with the resulting work often precarious and unreliable. Without access to other networks and systems of support their capacity to earn and support themselves and families can be severely constrained (Turyamureeba *et al.*, 2021). As a result, many refugees are unable to earn enough to support their basic needs (Rohwerder, 2016) creating dependencies on remittances from relatives in other countries, the support provided by agencies such as UNHCR, and civil society actors that support refugee communities.

Work and employment present a key approach to enable integration into host communities (Angulo-Guerrero *et al.*, 2017) and being able work is central to meeting a range of challenges associated with being a refugee (Skran and Easton-Calabria, 2020; Kachkar, 2019). When refugees are denied this opportunity to work, it inhibits sustainable livelihoods and the integration process (Zighan, 2020).

Refugees, employment and self-reliance in Uganda

Uganda's refugee policy of 2006 has been identified as one of the most progressive in the world, particularly in terms of its approach to integration (Mwangu, 2020; Rashid, 2018; Rohwerder, 2016). Its refugee policy has made Uganda the third largest refugee hosting country in the world and the first in Africa (Bukuluki *et al.*, 2020). The majority of the refugees in Uganda come from neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia (Bukuluki *et al.*, 2020; Mwenyango and Palattiyil, 2019). As of 2021, there were more than 1.4 million refugees in a total population of about 45 million people.

Access to employment and wider services are seen as important distinguishing features of Uganda's refugee policy, which allows refugees to take employment, cultivate land, move freely, attend school and enjoy the health service (Mwangu, 2020; Rohwerder, 2016; Uganda Refugee Act, 2006). Freedom of movement is particularly important for refugees in rural settlements facilitating access to land for agriculture (Bohnet and Schmitz-Pranghe, 2019). A further impact of the freedom of movement is that over 90% of refugees reside in urban areas in Uganda rather than rural settlements (Clements *et al.*, 2016; Betts *et al.*, 2014; Rohwerder, 2016). This is important in the context of understanding employment and livelihoods. Those who opt to leave the settlements receive limited support (Bukuluki *et al.*, 2020) as they move outside the humanitarian and development systems present in settlement life.

This places greater pressure on refugees' self-reliance, a significant element of the Ugandan approach to refugees. Refugees' self-reliance has been variously defined owing to its importance. In this chapter we adopt Skran and Easton-Calabria (2020) definition which looks at self-reliance as the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or community to meet basic needs with dignity and sustainably. The argument for refugee self-reliance is partly predicated in the idea that it supports

refugees' smooth integration in the host country (Oner *et al.*, 2020). In this regard they will not be identified as competing for jobs but rather as sources of innovation. Oner *et al.* (2020) and Skran and Easton-Calabria, (2020) argue that the refugees' rights to physical space in urban areas enables them to contribute to production. For example, refugees in Uganda are allowed to do business freely (Bukuluki *et al.*, 2020), and Rashid notes that refugees own about 31% of businesses in various industries (Rashid, 2018).

In this context, ESO that support refugee entrepreneurship are significant in Uganda. This is particularly so in urban areas where the refugees have moved outside the support systems of formal development institutions. Entrepreneurship has been celebrated and seen as a panacea for refugee populations, supporting integration and fitting with narratives of self-reliance and that entrepreneurship will reduce dependence on the state and other agencies. However, as is also recognised, entrepreneurship needs to be nurtured and developed, particularly when refugees may be newly arrived and lack the networks, language or understanding of local markets to establish their own business activities.

Previous research into Refugee Entrepreneurship has focused on mobility and the individual's dual-embeddedness within socio-economic networks in host and origin countries (Master and Mauer, 2017). There have however been calls for further research to establish '*systematic evidence on the link between services for refugee entrepreneurship and the expected outcomes*' (Desai *et al.*, 2019). One such key service is the provision of ESO such as accelerators, hubs, incubators and labs. These have traditionally been deployed by Governments, NGOs, Universities and private investors to support emergent entrepreneurs and are regarded as hothouses to develop lucrative opportunities that lead to significant economic outcomes (Tibaingana, 2020). Such places created in host countries in developed countries pay attention to an overarching economic development discourse, having an emphasis on integration and economic participation (Harima, 2009; Desai *et al.*, 2019). In these developed contexts, they have also been criticised as having the potential to displace employment integration initiatives and potentially push refugees into precarious, exploitative and informal forms of entrepreneurship (Desai *et al.*, 2019). Yet at the

same time, wider policy discourses celebrate entrepreneurship as a route to refugee self-reliance, reducing expectations on states and donors to support refugees.

Within Uganda, it is a common phenomenon to find start-ups being supported by ESO to develop their businesses through private sector foundations. The support is given to attenuate the failure rates of new businesses. These are places where business start-ups ostensibly go for support to nurture their business ideas, providing mentorship, coaching and training in business skills. Meister and Mauer (2019) and Tibaingana (2020) have argued that ESO such as these can support refugees through business training and mentorship; access to host country networks; and by providing access to other business support services that provide language skills and translation support. The aim is to expedite the growth of refugee business start-ups and refugee self-reliance. As such, these ESO may play a significant role in re-orienting refugees in economic activities to become entrepreneurs.

Despite the majority of refugees seeking asylum in neighbouring countries in the Global South (Desai *et al.*, 2019), and evidence suggesting such facilities are critical in stimulating refugees' ability to start their own enterprises (de la Chaux *et al.* 2020). Most research into Refugee entrepreneurship relates to host countries in the Global North. Whilst there appear to be many ESO in Uganda there has been no coherent assessment of how these places support refugees. This chapter aims to address this lacuna, developing initial data and conceptualisation of refugee ESO in urban Kampala. The research in this chapter aims to identify the characteristics of refugee ESO in Uganda, why they were created, and what challenges they face.

Methodology

Uganda is recognized as among the most enterprising countries of the world (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2019) and many Ugandans start and run businesses at micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME's) scales. The country has put in a concerted effort to support MSME's, with a skilling program operated by the Ministry of Education and Sports, and agencies such as Enterprise Uganda. Alongside government support, there is also incubation lab support through private agencies and Universities. We chose to focus on exploring Refugee ESO in an urban setting, as this falls outside of the support systems found within humanitarian support institutions that

tend to focus on settlements and camps. Hosting 90% of urban refugees in Uganda, Kampala was chosen as the research focus.

We used COVID-19 safe deskwork to map the current landscape of ESO and conducted online video and phone-based structured interviews with key informants. To draw a sample, we conducted an online search which gave us the existing ESO and contacted the Uganda Registration Service Bureau (URSB) to ensure they were legally registered and still operating. This process identified 47 ESO operating in Kampala and these are shown in Appendix 1. We selected the 15 that explicitly supported refugees as our target sample. All interviews were conducted through online video technology to follow Covid-19 restrictions and follow ethical protocol. Interviews were conducted in English. Permission to record and transcribe the interview was gained from the respondents in line with ethical clearance. The interviews were concluded when we began to receive the same answers from different respondents, resulting in 8 participants in total. All the interviews were conducted by the Ugandan author. The interviews lasted for 35-50 minutes.

As an initial exploratory research into the Ugandan Refugee ESO phenomenon, we were particularly interested in the experience of refugees according to existing, a priori, themes. As a result, data was deductively coded according to predefined themes, being: motivation and creation; service and skill provision; and challenges (including the COVID-19 pandemic). Transcripts were sent to the respondents for validation.

Findings

Mapping Refugee ESO in Kampala

Although there were 47 ESO in Kampala, only 15 (32%) supported refugees. These were not dedicated solely to refugees, and participants in the 15 were mixed between refugees and nationals. Table 1 lists the respondent organisations and shows that for the majority of the ESO the mode of operation encompassed both incubators (pre-startup) and accelerators (post-startup). In principle, the incubator should develop the idea then the accelerator should support growth activity. They all provided services such as coaching, mentorship, working space, marketing, language support, financial management and access to livelihood skills such.

Data from the interviews shows that 70% of the population in these ESO were female. This partly explains why many of the services offered are geared towards traditionally gendered occupations, including tailoring, hair cutting and groceries. This aligns with research which shows that women and girls constitute the majority of refugees (Nara *et al.*, 2019).

According to respondents, refugees' access to and initial engagement with the ESO can take different forms. Many of them come through referrals of those who are using or have used the services before, with wider networks and contacts within the country being key. Some of the ESO advertise their services in the settlements and on other social media platforms while refugees working within the ESO tend to take information to their communities. Less common is for refugees to search online and contact the ESO on their own.

Table 1 Refugee ESO Respondents

	ESO name ¹	Respondent sex	Location	Registration	Mode of operation
1	The Innovation Village	Female	Ntinda Complex 3rd Floor Block B and C	Startup Uganda, URSB, AfriLabs	Incubator, Accelerator, Co Working Space
2	Lazima Nipate Academy	Male	Nsambya Between Human Rights House and Tropical High School Kabalagala	URSB, Social Innovation Academy	Incubator
3	Uganda Response Innovation Lab (Uganda RIL)	Female	RIL Uganda, Save the Children International, Dadiri Close, Tank Hill Road Muyenga, Kampala	Startup Uganda	Incubator
4	Sawa World	Female	Sir Apollo Kaggwa Road, Makerere, Plot 271 Nanfumbambi Road, Makerere Kikoni,, Central, Kampala	URSB	Incubator, Accelerator

¹ Note that the details of these ESO are public domain and have therefore not been anonymised

5	I Profile Foundation	Male	Plot 1 Balintuma Road, Kasalina Estate Kampala - Uganda	URSB, Social Innovation Academy	Incubator, Accelerator
6	Izere Academy	Female	Kamwokya	URSB	Incubator
7	International Rescue Committee	Male	Urban Field Office Bukoto	NGO Forum and URSB	Incubator, Accelerator
8	Creative youth Agency	Female	Muyenga Tankhill rd	URSB	Incubator, Hub

How were these Refugee ESO created?

While our research has identified provision of ESO for refugees in Kampala and an orientation to meet the skills and development needs of refugees, we also identified a set of structural and organizational factors that are critical to conceptualising refugee ESO.

Some of the ESO were created with refugees in mind, particularly those led by refugees. However, the government of Uganda has a policy of 30% refugee and 70% nationals. This compels all ESO to support both refugees and nationals. Some of these facilities were started by refugees themselves as a way of creating support to fellow refugees, including Lazima Nipate Academy and Iprofile (Hope Hub). Interestingly, Government policy is not always followed, with two ESO (2 and 5), having a 60% refugee and 40% national split.

One of the respondents noted that *"we started out of the need to support urban refugees and youth from slums in our communities"* (5). This suggests that refugee communities need specialised support, revealing a recognised tension between a focus on skills around entrepreneurial opportunities and the skills necessary for self-resilience (Angulo-Guerrero et al., 2017). The female manager of an incubator highlights this tension:

[We] started out of the need to support urban refugees in our communities. We always had a passion of financial literacy and entrepreneurship, our interest was with children in schools. We want to introduce these concepts earlier in children's life so that by the time they get later in life and moving on with these they are better suited for entrepreneurial world. (6).

This shows how ESO provision dovetails with wider strategies to meet the needs of vulnerable communities – in this case, refugees. Indeed, one respondent noted:

the original idea came from a response of the earthquake in Nepal, and so as an NGO then we wanted to offer humanitarian response support to the victims of the tragedy. There was a need to do different things to respond to different situations using a host of organizations (7).

As a result, Refugee ESO were created by refugees and NGOs to support vulnerable communities and help socio-economic integration and self-reliance.

What Services do the Refugee ESO provide?

Whilst the narrative of ESO is often oriented around entrepreneurial opportunity, the focus within these Kampala communities is clearly oriented towards self-reliance. This manifests in the focus on learning English for inclusion, along with livelihood skills for survival and self-reliance.

According to the female proprietor of one incubator and accelerator:

... it's all about how do we empower them to be able to be self-sustaining and to contribute to the larger economies of the host communities ... That is why what we are doing is very important (4).

One of the respondents noted that "you can hardly do any business in Kampala if you can't speak English" (1). English language is critical for communication while doing business with local communities. Moreover, research shows that language barriers limit refugee's potential, reduce their bargaining power, make it difficult to get jobs and expose them to low wages (Shneikat and Alrawadieh, 2019; Fontana *et al.*, 2020). The nearest language among all the dialects spoken by refugees in Kampala is Kiswahili, which is little used in Uganda. As a result, refugees must learn English in order to communicate in business, public offices and directly to customers from outside the refugee community.

Within the ESO the findings show that skills were clearly more in keeping with a sustainable livelihood approach, rather than to unleash entrepreneurial driven innovation. Skills training included: hair dressing; Henna tattooing; art and craft;

tailoring; weaving; music dance and drama; and English language. They also included skill development in business areas more commonly regarded as fundamental for entrepreneurship, such as information technology, marketing and financial literacy.

Distinct entrepreneurial skills were developed in terms of time spent identifying problems within the community and suggesting suitable solutions. These were regarded as particularly important skills where refugees had difficulty accessing the workforce through more traditional means. This evidenced the importance of fitting the individual means (such as skills and resources) of the refugees with the community environmental requirements. The male lead of an incubator highlights that:

... in the normal schooling practice one becomes a job seeker but here we help them to create their own jobs and we do not focus on giving papers [certificates] but rather give skills (2).

This focus on fitting the individuals means with the environment was regarded by some as particularly important:

For the personal development side, we help them discover who they are first, then knowing your purpose, why you were born and all that stuff. Then you can move to the professional development side because you cannot start to be enterprising without understanding yourself (5).

Refugee ESO appear to exhibit their own entrepreneurial behaviours as entrepreneurial communities by adapting their methods and pathways to the particular circumstances and needs of refugees. They target problems and solutions within the community that they want to solve, then they move to another step of product/service development and marketing. At this point the refugee entrepreneur and their peer-groups develop the prototypes and test them. For instance, one group of Somali refugees identified a need for Henna tattoos within their own community, which the ESO helped them develop as a business. Whilst the livelihood skills may seem mundane and non-innovative, the ESO helped the refugee entrepreneurs identify a need to test the market – creating an entrepreneurial solution to their livelihood needs. Another group identified a niche in cultural performance and communication for international NGOs, and the ESO helped set up a performance troupe and bookings.

After testing they embarked on marketing where they helped the troupe look for customers to grow the market for the products. The aim of the ESO here appears to be to create an entrepreneurial community that is self-sustaining and can offer employment to other refugees.

Once established, these ESO also support acceleration / growth, with one lead noting that

here we ... also start to train them on how to grow the market for their products or service. After growing the market, we then teach them how to maintain the customer ... you know sometimes you can grow the market but you don't know how to maintain the customers (3).

This shows how some of these refugees focused ESO took a community approach to a need, which then led to skills development around a specific livelihood. In turn, these ESO appeared to take an active role in then supporting the growth of these entrepreneurial communities – more so than the traditional focus of ESO on individual entrepreneurs. This highlights that refugee entrepreneurs have different needs ranging from English language skills necessary to access the labour market or operate a business, to the skills necessary to operate that trade. Entrepreneurial skills operate at the ESO level as well as at the refugee level, helping to discover an appropriate livelihood focus for a cohort of refugees, then supporting them develop a business to exploit this.

What are the challenges experienced by Refugee ESO?

In our data, we found some challenges experienced by these Refugee ESO. Whilst the requirement to focus on mix of 70% nationals to 30% refugees makes some sense from an integration perspective, it does not permit a full specialisation of services to the different needs of refugees. Whilst these ESO come from a mix of Government and NGO led initiatives – all of them subscribe to the innovation-led discourse at the surface level. However, the majority are much more focused on inclusion and resilience-led discourses in reality. The innovation-led approach may allow better capture of resources to support the refugees, a more accurate focus on inclusion and resilience could allow support and grants to be better deployed. For example, despite

an emphasis on providing skills training, personal development and empowerment, none of the trainers identified in our research had acquired teaching skills from a recognized institution of higher learning. The trainers were teaching according to their experience but not as education professionals. Here an acknowledged focus on inclusion and resilience skills could possibly have helped in recruiting specialised livelihood trainers.

The challenge of a dominant discourse aside, another challenge faced was the hierarchical approach of many ESO. Whilst the ESO analysed here all included refugees in their focus, some took an exogenous and imposed approach (particularly the Government based ESO), other were endogenously led by a refugee. One way of conceptualising Refugee ESO is therefore to ask whether they are 'for' refugees, or 'by' refugees. In other words, are they about service provision in line with largely externally set agendas around self-reliance, livelihoods and innovation, or do they reflect agendas that emerge from the needs and priorities of communities? In reality, it appears there is a diverse mix and this helps us to start developing more adequate conceptualisations of Refugee ESO and their roles in refugee business lives.

What was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Given the significance of ESO for refugees and the timing of research during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to acknowledge how this affected them. Social distancing regulations to restrain the spread of Covid-1 were instituted by the Ugandan Government that made access impossible for both managers and beneficiaries (Raju and Ayeb-Karlsson, 2020; Bukuluki *et al.*, 2020). This was especially strict during the countrywide lockdown between 30/03/2020 to 15/05/2020. During this time, all projects that were running came to an abrupt halt due to the lockdown. For example, refugee projects that were running in schools closed, whilst others have remained closed since the lockdown affecting their future viability. During the lockdown, many of the ESO received funding from well-wishers and donors, but given their headline focus on 'innovation-led' entrepreneurship, funding has decreased with funders concentrating instead on supporting fundamental needs. This highlights a critical challenge that ESO face, that whilst they are important to refugee livelihoods, their 'in between' status, makes them vulnerable when funding is scarce.

The pandemic made it difficult for volunteers who used to provide *pro-bono* coaching and mentoring of refugees. In addition, the banning of public gatherings since the beginning of the pandemic has significantly affected community engagements. When the lockdown was relaxed the government kept a limit on gathering and regulated the number of people in meetings. Of course, a significant number of refugees who had started businesses prior to the lockdown would have used up any limited resources, returning them to a reliance on hand-outs. Given a frequent reliance on the informal economy and on training and support from actors such as ESO, the loss of these supportive places is particularly significant and likely to have longer-term consequences.

However, there is also evidence of innovation resulting from the pandemic that may bring long-term benefits, where, for example

different projects here had to adapt their ideas to the covid19 reality. You know like the team that was dealing with education for refugees for now there are no schools, now they are thinking of how to digitize their services to provide it online to their beneficiaries (3).

A potential move to virtual mentorship and coaching based on testing virtual platforms, such as YouTube, WhatsApp, may provide longer-term cost and access benefits. However, ESO do not exist outside the inequalities that refugees experience and virtual support may solve one problem, but may exacerbate unequal access to technologies and data amongst refugees.

Policy and Practice implications

Refugee ESO in Uganda are created by a mix of refugee NGO and government led organisations which leverage the 'entrepreneurial self-reliance' narrative. The goal to integrate socially and make refugees economically self-reliant is laudable, however, there is a risk that this narrative may be conflated with that of a 'high-tech' entrepreneurial innovation and this may distract from a more fundamental role.

In the Kampala context, Refugee ESO are delivering a mix of services which may be categorised as: inclusion, resilience and innovation led. The inclusion service is

primarily about developing English language skills and this is a pre-requisite for access to the labour market (and to clarify, this would normally be considered an employability focus, not an entrepreneurship focus) as well as operating a livelihood that permits moves towards self-reliance. The resilience service is focused on developing, or upgrading, livelihood skills and the majority of these may seem basic from an innovation perspective, e.g. hairdressing, performing, tailoring, etc. In this context, this is where entrepreneurial skills can be used by the ESO as facilitator to identify service gaps and match with potential livelihoods training for the refugees. This results in what we might term 'low-tech' innovation, where a new product or service is brought to market that may seem mundane, but fulfils a need great enough to be economically sustainable and provide a livelihood for the refugee.

Hence, the key recommendation of this chapter is for NGOs and supportive policy-makers not to focus on a Westernised 'Silicon Valley' view of entrepreneurial outcomes, but to recognise the primary importance of inclusion and resilience-led approaches operating within an entrepreneurial community. Here the refugee ESO role as a key actor in the local economy is to identify locally needed innovations and support their development and growth within the community. Whilst the innovation-led discourse may be a useful one to help access funding related to self-reliance, it may mask the underlying reality where entrepreneurial behaviours are helping develop and support integration and resilience within the community. A more nuanced view may help protect such vital services during crises, such as the recent pandemic.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the provision of ESO for refugees in urban Kampala. This is important, as extant literature and debate on refugee entrepreneurship experiences originate from the Global North. Refugee entrepreneurship strategies aim to support refugee livelihoods. Although ESO are supporting refugee's entrepreneurial activities, there is a dearth of debates about how effective such an approach is supporting refugees in the Global south. Thus, how refugee entrepreneurs are supported and mentored in Uganda is a critical part of understanding this.

Our research confirms the significance of ESO for refugees; the data we collected reveals how ESO can address particular needs of refugees. In particular, we have

shown how there is a strong emphasis on skills that can support livelihoods, including language skills, which may differ from the provision designed for other communities. Our research shows that the provision of ESO that supports refugees is uneven. We have identified characteristics of Refugee ESO that may attenuate their offer and capacities to support livelihoods, including the limited professional pedagogical training of staff supporting skills teaching, and the exclusion of women from most management roles and the tension between juxtaposing inclusion, self-reliance and innovation narratives of entrepreneurship.

Our data shows how some ESO activities emerge from or are closely related to civic minded action to 'help' as much as from commitments to entrepreneurship. A further axis can be found in the difference between refugee-led or NGO / Government-led ESO. Understanding whether a refugee ESO is 'for' or 'by' provides a critical starting point for analysing its capacities to meet refugee needs. This suggests a need for further research to investigate the drivers of refugee engagement with these ESO and how these articulate with their public presence and operation amongst heterogeneous groups. In particular, greater understanding as to the role of the ESO as entrepreneurial agent and knowledge broker within different refugee communities would help inform the refugee ESO as a distinct model of support.

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Appendix 1 Entrepreneurship Development Spaces in Kampala

Organization	Ownership	Refugee	Type of ESO
The Innovation Village	CK Japtheth	✓	Incubator, Accelerator, Co Working Space
Lazima Nipate Academy	Miriam Feza, Emile Kwilyame Espoir Cubaka Mulondola John Sadiki	✓	Incubator
Uganda Response Innovation Lab (Uganda RIL)	Save the Children International	✓	Incubator
Sawa World	Sheila Ampumuza	✓	Incubator, Accelerator
I Profile Foundation	Aisha Ali	✓	Incubator, Accelerator
Izere Academy	Shamim Nirere	✓	Incubator
International Rescue Committee	International NGO, Gerald Lee	✓	Incubator, Accelerator
Creative youth Agency	Specioza Nakatte	✓	Incubator / Hub
YARID	Robert Hakiza	✓	Incubator, Accelerator
Jesuit Refuge Service		✓	Incubator
Norwegian Refugee Council		✓	Incubator
InterAid Uganda	UNHCR	✓	Incubator
Outbox	Richard Zulu	✓	Incubator, Co Working Space
Social Innovation Academy (SINA)	Tony tonny@socialinnovationacademy.org	✓	Incubator, Accelerator
Renewable Business Incubator	Norges Vel, Norway and Makerere University Kampala	×	Incubator
Venture Labs East Africa	Elton Mutize	×	Co Working Space
Hive Colab	TMS Ruge, Barbara Birungi Mutabazi, Jon Gosier, Marieme Jamme, Daniel Stern	×	Co Working Space, Incubator, Accelerator
Food Technology Business Incubator	Makerere University	×	Incubator
Business Development Centre	Moses Engwau	×	Co Working Space
Makerere University Business School Entrepreneurship Incubator and Innovation Hub	MUBS	×	Incubator
Contract Capital	Caroline Ninsiima, Ojjo Pascal	×	Co Working Space
Yunus Social Business	Prof. Muhammad Yunus, Saskia Bruysten	×	Accelerator
Resilient Africa Network	Makerere University	×	Incubator, Accelerator
TexFad Vocational Business Incubator	Kimani Muturi	×	Incubator
Techbuzz	Kenneth Twesigye	×	Incubator, Co Working Space
Design Hub	Inez van Oord Ineke Aquarius	×	Co Working Space
Artificial Intelligence Lab	Makerere University	×	Incubator
The Square	Nahida and Rahim Mpara	×	Co Working Space
MUK Innovation & Incubation Centre	Allan Lule	×	Incubator
Software Business Incubation	Prof. Hugh Cameron	×	Incubator
CURAD	Apollo Segawa	×	Incubator
UTAMURIC	UTAMU	×	Incubator
Tech Hub	Silver Kayondo	×	Co Working Space
Stanbic Incubator	Stanbic Bank Uganda	×	Incubator
United Social Ventures	Leo Henghes	×	Incubator
TechBridge Invest - Uganda	Oyvind Rideng	×	Incubator, Acceleration
The Jungle	Wabwire Joseph	×	Co Working Space
Uganda Industrial Research Institute	Government of Uganda	×	Incubator
Kanzu Code Hub	Peter Kakoma	×	Co Working Space
The Office Hive	Edmund Mwesigwa	×	Co Working Space
Business Lab Uganda	Inez van Oord Ineke Aquarius	×	Accelerator
Growth Africa	Johnni Kjelsgaard, Patricia Jumi	×	Accelerator
Uganda Green Finance Accelerator	Adelphi	×	Accelerator
UNDP Innovation-AccLab Uganda	United Nations Development Program	×	Accelerator
NFT Mawazo Innovation Hub	Badru Ntege, Elizabeth Ntege	×	Co Working

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WITU - Women In Technology Uganda	Barbara Birungi Mutabazi	x	Incubator, Accelerator
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