

Impact Assessment: The Azadi Project, Athens Workshop (September 2018)



Table of Contents:

1. CONTEXT	2
2. INTRODUCTION	3
2.1. Key Concepts	4
2.2. Purpose of the Evaluation and Guiding Questions	5
3. METHODOLOGY	7
3.1. Limitations	8
4. KEY RESULTS AND FINDINGS	9
4.1. Female Refugees' Integration Approaches through Social Capital Lens ⁹	
4.1.1. Social Capital Framework	9
4.1.2 Applying the Social Capital Lens	10
4.2. Theory of Change	14
4.3. Best Practices	17
4.4. Challenges and Lessons Learned	18
5. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS	19
ANNEX	20
BIBLIOGRAPHY	21

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1. Context - Digital Trends in the Refugee Context:

The pervasiveness and advances of digital technology has resulted in a new social order affecting the daily activities of individuals, institutions and governments (Warschauer and Matuchniak, 2010). However, there are gaps in terms of those who are able to leverage these digital opportunities versus those who are not (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2000). These issues of *physical access* to technology have given rise to the concept of digital divide. For example, high cost of digital infrastructure, language barriers and inequitable access to services for different refugee members depending on their status/power were common issues raised at refugee-settlements (Leung, 2009). Although in the last decade, creative ways of negotiating institutional solutions to technology access have developed in refugee contexts (ibid.). In fact, the advent of user-friendly technologies such as social media and decline in their prices has significantly narrowed the **first wave** of digital divide contributing to a rise in mobile and internet access (Alam, 2015).

In contrast to the first wave, empirical studies stress that simply access to digital technology does not guarantee engagement with these services to facilitate refugee's integration in social, cultural, political and economic life (Andrade, 2016). Thus, the digital divide has been redefined in its **second wave** to distinguish access from *use* of digital & multimedia technology, also referred to as the "deepening divide" (Van Dijk, 2005). Recently, the concern of digital literacy across gender, income and ethnicity, has arisen as a **third wave** of digital divide where different *skill* types and levels result in new inequalities (Alam, 2015). In all three waves, the basic assumption is that there exists a "binary division between information haves and have-nots" for refugees either in terms of access, usage or skills (Warschauer, 2002).

Our field research suggests that while digital divide is a useful concept, it is analytically limited in addressing "the complexities of contemporary relationships between technology, society, and marginalisation" especially in protracted crises and displacement situations (Wilding, 2009). Warschauer (2003) is instrumental in suggesting an alternative explanation that there exists a gradation of digital practices, rather than just two sides (haves versus have-nots), depending on varying social contexts of refugees. Along similar lines, recent studies have evolved beyond the discussion of digital divide to suggest that digital technology is contextually and socially embedded, as just a *magnifier of underlying human intent and capacity*. In Agre's words, "the Internet changes nothing on its own, but it can amplify existing forces, and those amplified forces might change something" (Negrine, 2008). Thus, impact of digital technology depends on how the refugees engage with it in their lives since it is merely a tool that "multiplies human capacity in the direction of the human intent" (Toyoma, 2011). In light of this, the impact assessment will discuss how the Azadi Project is shaping female refugees' capacity and intent towards digital technology.

2. Introduction:

What?

The Azadi Project develops digital economy job skills in refugee women by teaching them technical expertise such as multimedia communications and storytelling at refugee shelters and camps.

Azadi means freedom or liberation in Hindi, Urdu and Farsi. The Azadi project is based on the principles of freedom, resilience and dignity with an aim to facilitate integration and livelihoods.

Why?

The Challenge

In the fourth year of the so-called ‘migration crisis’, there are over 60,000 refugees – more than half of them women and children – waiting for reunification or final asylum approval in Greece. There are almost no facilities or programs at camps that help them constructively use their time of waiting or actively prevent their risk of exposure to traffickers, smuggling networks and prostitution.

While men and women each make up half of the global refugee population, women disproportionately bear the brunt of the challenges with unequal access to education, health care and jobs. Women are often the first responders in a crisis, whether in transit or in host countries playing a significant role in rebuilding and sustaining their communities. Yet, only 4% projects in U.N inter-agency appeals targeted women in 2014, with similar trends in recent years (UN Women, 2015). Female refugees’ priorities and voices are often missing from policies designed to protect and support them.

How?

Our Approach

The Azadi Project helps refugee women by teaching digital skills that facilitate their integration into the local labour force. These skills will also help them to be viewed as productive members of their new host communities, facilitating their integration – both in Greece and potential family reunification destinations. Azadi helps achieve this by providing digitally employable skills and then connecting its participants to local organizations for internships and employment.

By offering digital skills, we help female refugees to pursue educational or employment opportunities that contribute to their future livelihoods beyond the borders where they come from and where they currently reside. This enables them to acquire tools demanded at the global digital marketplace.

Also, many refugees who are fleeing to Europe are educated and skilled professionals. Unfortunately, the jobs available to them in their host countries and communities do not always do justice to their capabilities. Mostly low-wage and unskilled jobs with short or no career paths are available to refugees, and women are generally recruited for gendered roles like caregivers.

Azadi is trying to change that by building skills to help refugee women achieve their true potential and capitalize on the increasing tech-savvy orientation of the millennial generation. Digital skills such as multimedia storytelling and coding will put these women on a career path with opportunity for professional growth.

It's also important to note that, through multimedia storytelling, refugee women are able to take control of their own narrative and change the negative public perception about them.

Our Workshops

Azadi held a workshop in Athens from 17th- 30th September for seven refugee girls and women from Afghanistan, Palestine and Iran. These women are currently petitioning asylum to Greek authorities. The participants were trained in multimedia storytelling, each producing a video, sharing about their own struggles and strengths.

The participants acquired skills of scripting, filming, video editing and website designing - a 360-degree multimedia vision. Azadi has connected these women with organizations for employment, traineeships and further digital education opportunities.

At the end of the workshop, participants graduate with a new understanding and appreciation of the technologies changing their storytelling medium, as well as with different set of skills to engage as digital media content producers.

2.1 Key Concepts:

Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants are often confused terminologies and their meanings are increasingly conditioned with preconceived notions. It is, therefore, important to clarify these concepts from the onset of this assessment. There are various definitions of refugees but the most comprehensive and widely used one comes from the 1951 Refugee Convention:

Definition: Refugee

A **refugee** is a person who has fled their country of origin and is unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Similarly, the parameters of a migrant and an asylum seeker for the purposes of this assessment are as below:

Definition: Migrant

A **migrant** chooses to move not because of a direct threat or persecution but mainly to improve life:

- Finding work
- Seeking better education
- Reuniting with family

For the purposes of this assessment and as revealed by our field research, integration in refugee

Definition: Asylum Seeker

An **asylum seeker** is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker.

contexts is a two-way process as highlighted in the definition below:

Definition: Integration

Integration is understood as the end product of a multifaceted two-way process with three interrelated dimensions: legal, economic and social-cultural dimension. Integration requires efforts by all parties concerned, including preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population (UNHCR 2005).

Azadi project is focusing on multimedia skills for refugee integration so that the female refugees can access the digital freelance economy and alternative livelihood opportunities. We define multimedia technology as:

Definition: Multimedia technology

Multimedia technology refers to interactive online applications that allow people to communicate ideas and information with digital and print elements using graphic, text, video, sound and animation to share their stories.

2.2 Purpose of the Evaluation and Guiding Questions:

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines evaluation as: the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results... to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Evaluation primarily refers to the process of determining the worth, credibility or significance of an activity, policy or programme.

Based on this lens, we define our **impact assessment** as:

The systematic means of measuring the effectiveness of the intervention and examining the significance of changes brought about by the activities, intended to draw lessons to improve and contribute towards the overall goal and vision of the project.

Impact here is seen as the intended or unintended long-term results produced by the project. The key purpose of our impact assessment is to channel learning - in terms of initial findings, best practices, lessons learned and case studies.

Definition: Learning

The process of acquiring new skills, behaviours, values or ideas and adapting existing ones through experience, reflection, analysis and knowledge-sharing.

As described in the previous section, Azadi's work is characterized by multimedia storytelling for female refugees, most of whom are in the process of overcoming a range of shocks and stresses. Through combined learning, analysis and action, our work is a step for refugee women to channelize their resilience capacities and to direct our shared values of freedom and dignity.

To help navigate our impact assessment, the following guiding questions play a critical role:

- What are the key features and goals of the project?
- Why are the project activities relevant?
- Who is the most vulnerable group for our work, and why?
- What background and policies shape this group's long-term growth?
- How are we complementing the work of existing stakeholders in this arena?
- What are the expectations of the target group and stakeholders?
- Which challenges need to be overcome to achieve the aims and expected results?
- What capacities is our intervention helping build, strengthen and evolve?
- How can the project contextualize and adapt the best practices and lessons learned to other situations and systems?
- To what extent did the project achieve its objectives?

Revisiting these questions helped us design our organizational strategies, technical toolkits and next steps appropriately for shaping efficient ways to bridge digital skills with the female refugees' nexus.

3. Methodology:

In order to analyse the interplay of female refugees, their digital practices and integration processes, this impact assessment adopts a participatory action research (PAR) methodology. While all research ultimately aims to generate knowledge and improve practice, in participatory action research this coupling is recognized to be much closer (Brydon-Miller, 2003). PAR is distinct in that it provides a space to combine theory and practice into cycles of action-reflection stemming from the premise that “knowledge are plural” (ibid.). In this process, “knowledge generation is a collaborative process” in which each refugee’s experiences are critical to the outcome (Madon and Krishna, 2017).

The explicit aim of this assessment is to ensure that the female refugees are co-researchers rather than mere subjects to study or examine. That is, the refugees are beyond neutral and impartial observers, they are active agents and facilitators of the enquiry process. This “action” model of PAR has enabled our assessment to engage with a range of mixed qualitative methods, some of which are illustrated below in Figure 1, such as:

- **Workshop and Storytelling:** A two-week workshop held in Athens combined ideation, script writing, storyboarding, videography and editing techniques for female refugees, as outlined above in Section 2. This process enabled female refugees to express their own struggles and strengths in specific ways as well as share their stories, voices and ideas through their own films.
- **Secondary Research, Key-Informant Interviews and Questionnaire:** The team undertook data collection and critical analysis through literature review of both academic and grey literature to gain an in-depth understanding of the context. Expert interviews and questionnaires followed, enabling to understand existing community perceptions, fill knowledge gaps and respond to the unanswered questions emerging from the secondary desk review.
- **Network-Mapping:** Alongside focus group discussions with stakeholders, we engaged in network-mapping to identify the role of specific actors in facilitating refugees’ capacities and understanding which barriers they overcome in what ways. The female refugees themselves also contributed to this process and shared their own support systems in their daily lives. To avoid the pitfall of misinterpretation of the everyday experiences of the refugees, our team conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with each of them. This process has helped us prioritize a set of variables (eg. language, social media usage, gender norms, power dynamics, etc.) to incorporate in our research analysis and workshop planning.



Figure 1: Participatory Action Research process applied in this assessment

3.1 Limitations and Assumptions:

The findings from this assessment cannot be easily generalized and transferred to other refugee-hosting countries. First, the sample size is too small and limited to a specific context. Second, the sample size did not allow for direct intersectional analysis of religion, class or gender in relation to refugee-digital media nexus. Although vulnerability criteria was prioritized in selecting the refugee sample, this decision was based on an application process rather than a verification of their actual circumstances due to time constraints.

Third, the sampling methods were not random; rather the strategy has been to focus on female refugees recommended by the Azadi Project’s local partner NGO – the Melissa Network, which helped gain trust and build a rapport with the refugees since they have been affiliated with the Melissa Network for 2 to 3 years. Fourth, interviewing is never unbiased and neutral. Thus, in spite of being reflective to avoid tilting the responses of interviewees, certain dynamics cannot be accounted for.

4. Key Results and Findings:

4.1. Female Refugees' Integration Approaches through the Social Capital Lens:

Refugees are not just non-locals but also transnationals, in the sense that their experiences do not confine their social networks to one place rather encourage them to actively participate in social processes across borders (Al-Ali et al., 2001). However, the very label (“refugees”) used to categorize the transnationals is associated with the most disempowered and disenfranchised populations in the world (Malkki, 1997). For example, photographs of refugees in top-selling newspapers, books, media, and online channels portray specific visual representations (location, distance, camera angle and behavior) constructing them as different and “other” (Pandir, 2015). Distant shots, lack of eye contact between the refugee and viewer, using refugee camps and/or wrecked ships as the homogenous background instigate their lack of belongingness (both physically and symbolically). Understanding the visual representations of refugees is significant because they are depictions of how the public perceives them (ibid.).

During the two-week digital workshop in Athens, it became evident that female refugees are challenging these pre-created assumptions and labels while shedding light on the resilience and optimism of their daily lives. Refugee identities are now increasingly mediated, de-territorialized and communities are being constructed through processes of mobility, digital representations (such as social media and mobile apps) and networking, rather than through place-based activities alone (Wilding and Gifford, 2013). Given this context, our team analyzed female refugees' integration practices in Greece through the social capital lens to understand how the existing social structures enable/disable refugees' everyday experiences.

4.1.1 Social Capital Framework:

A research review indicates that international organizations, such as the World Bank, have actively integrated the concept of social capital into their field of sustainable development. Incorporation of social capital in the humanitarian field, specifically in refugee contexts, has been sporadic. In recent protracted crises, refugee camps have transformed from a transitional site of emergency response into more stable locations (Xu, 2015). Thus, few host government institutions, such as the Department of Immigration in Australia, are exploring how the assumptions that underlie their policies need to be modified in the face of complex identities of refugees as well as emergence of social capital and informal networks which can be strengthened at a formal level (Castles et al., 2012).

Intuitively, social capital refers to the relations, networks, norms and values that affect political, social, economic activities and overall functioning of the society. The networks and resources themselves are not social capital – “the concept refers instead to the individual’s ability to mobilize them on demand” (Portes, 1995:12). A general framework for theorizing social capital is built around two key dimensions, scope (macro and micro) and its forms (structural and cognitive), as outlined in Figure 2 below. First, the analysis of social capital at the macro-level includes vertical affiliations and “broader institutional environment in which communities are inherently embedded”, e.g. international/national geopolitical factors (Woolcock, 2002). Second, micro-level approach towards social capital is associated with Putnam (1993) who focuses on horizontal features of social organization “such as networks of individuals or

households...that create externalities for the community as a whole”, e.g. attitudes and actions of local groups (World Bank, 2001). The principal criticism of the macro-micro distinction is that its disregard of communities that are “far more complex than the concept of social capital can capture” involving distrust and contested interests rather than consensual environments that are expected (Zetter et al., 2006). These criticisms cannot be downplayed in the current political landscape of harsh measures to contain refugees.

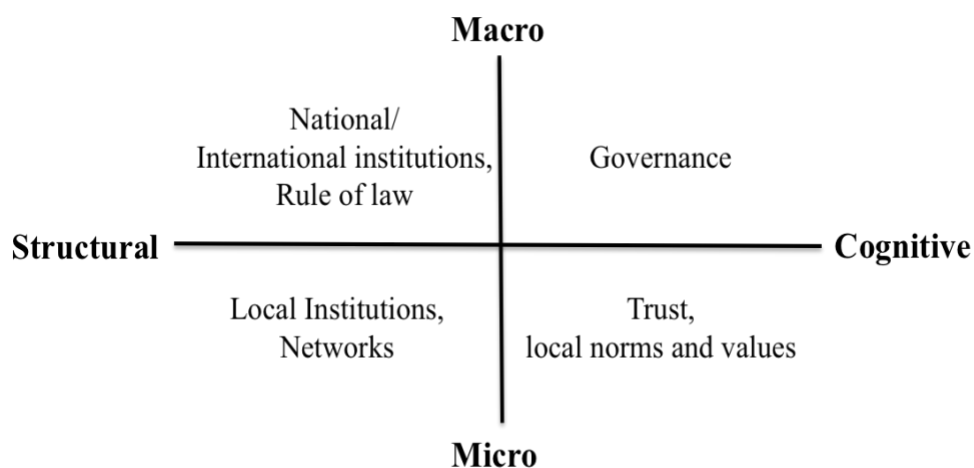


Figure 2. Dimensions of Social Capital (adapted from the World Bank, 2001)

4.1.2 Applying the Social Capital Lens:

This impact assessment examined that mediations between the two dimensions, e.g. refugee’s responses to or resistance against either the macro or micro levels, are crucial to examine. Especially, the female refugees did not have clearly defined support systems to help them transition from one stage of migration to another. In the refugee contexts, social capital makes more sense when analyzed through relational or meso-level interpretation that simultaneously engage with both vertical and horizontal connections.

For instance, the proliferation of new and informal social networks are examples of meso-structures that mediate between the two dimensions and compensate for the lack of host-state welfare programs towards refugees. That is to say, “these marginalised populations internalise social capital to fill the chasm left by withdrawal of state support” (ibid.). Characteristic of such networks is the accumulation of social capital in new forms often created to “perform an essentially defensive role in an environment of hostile immigration policy” (ibid.). In these contexts, social capital unfolds through “not only what you know but also *who* you know” (Harriss, 2002). Our research finds that meso-level processes provide the potential to alter some aspects of the macro and micro-level dimensions, and thereby influence social capital practices in contemporary refugee contexts.

Loizos (2000) shows as social capitalists, refugees “turn to one another to reconstruct their networks in exile” by carrying a “package of customs, beliefs, and practices from before their dislocation which continued to serve them in diasporic adjustment”. It is important to

acknowledge unequal power relations as much as integrative outcomes of social capital. In our assessment, we apply the meso-level of social capital via three categories (Figure 3). Woolcock (2000) explained them as: (1) Bonding social capital – refers to intra-community relationships with families, friends and those sharing similar demographic characteristics (2) Bridging social capital – includes inter-community links between different geographic, ethnic and occupational backgrounds (3) Linking social capital – comprises of ties with formal organizations such as local authorities, police, banks and schools.

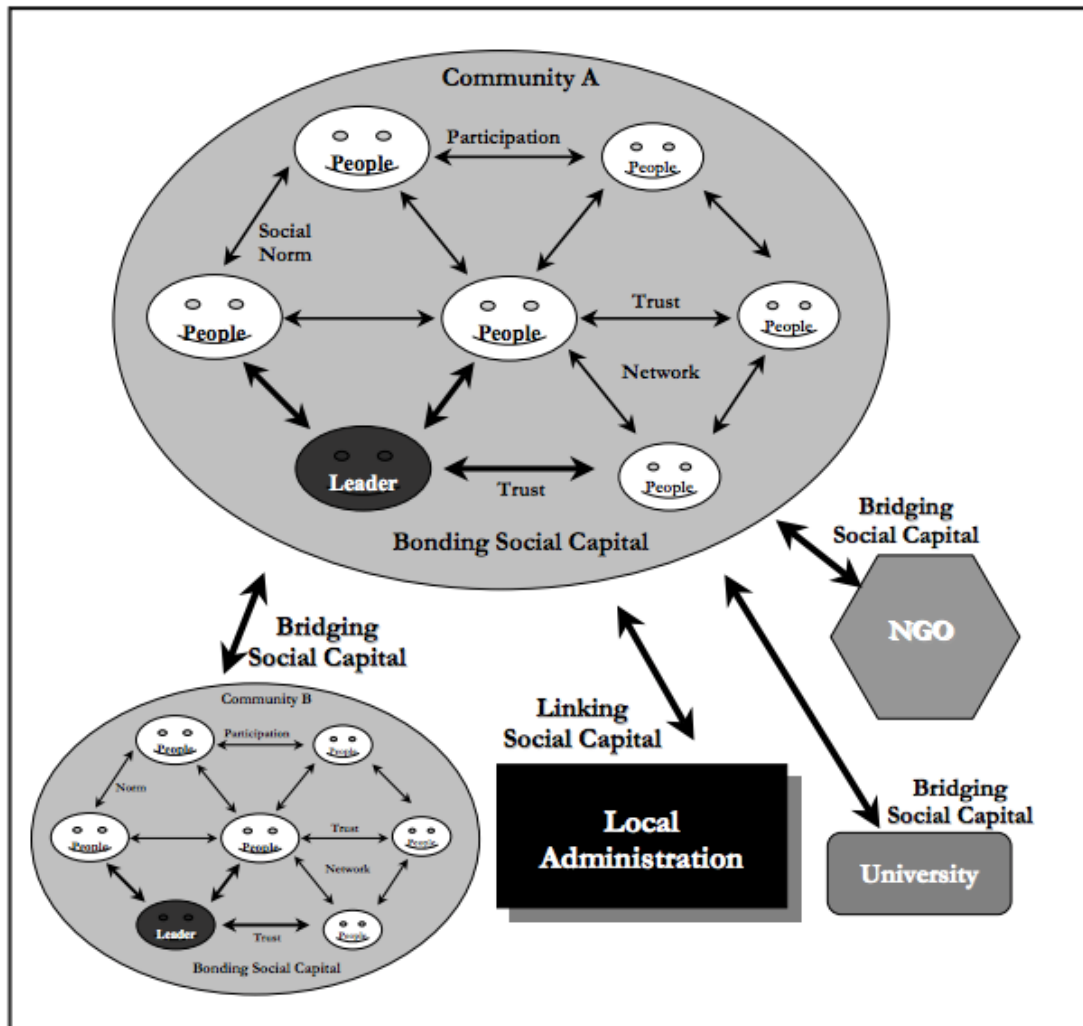


Figure 3: Different Directions of Social Capital (Nakagawa and Shaw, 2004)

Our research shows that the temporal and spatial properties of integration have changed with increasing geographic mobility and spreading of digital platforms, as seen in the contexts of our female refugees. This implies that citizenship is no longer confined to “civil, political and social rights, but that there are also what we might term mobility rights” (Cass et al., 2005). The female refugees and their networks have access to smartphones and use different social media apps (as described in the Azadi Project’s Market Research document) that enhance their bonding-bridging-linking social capital.

The Azadi Project’s training has strengthened and channelized these connections in structured ways, as illustrated below in Figure 4:

Bonding	Bridging	Linking
<p>Families and friends in the <i>home country</i> of the refugees have specific perceptions and ideas about the host countries, which in turn influence the refugees’ transition and integration process. Through the Azadi Project training, female refugees made films to share their everyday routines in Greece and learned how to choose the best media channel for sharing these.</p>	<p>Refugees face challenges in their <i>host communities</i> not because of their identities but rather due to the way they are identified by the society, peer refugees, NGO colleagues, religious leaders, interest groups, etc. Our participants were determined to tell the world that there is more to them than just the word ‘refugee’. During the Azadi training, the female refugees learned to develop digital stories with creative visuals, shoot and edit their own videos as well as strategize content on digital platforms to share their own narratives of resilience and strength with those around them.</p>	<p>Azadi trainings facilitated linkages between female refugees and key local as well as international <i>authorities</i>. On 21st September 2018, Melissa Fleming, the UNHCR Chief Spokesperson, spoke virtually with our participants. The female refugees shared their emotional stories and everyday concerns in a candid way. Ms. Fleming expressed the power of individual stories in capturing people’s imagination while creating empathy and encouraging action. She shared her genuine insights and support with the participants who felt inspired to take on the responsibility of being effective advocates – especially for those in their community who may not always have access to relevant decision-makers.</p>
<p>There is a common myth that refugee women are shy or scared of technology. However, in reality, our participants are like any other tech-savvy millennial. They love technology and in fact they have found ways to innovatively use it to communicate better with their close ones. Our two-week training encouraged our participants to creatively interact with their own family and friends to further</p>	<p>During our Athens training, we invited relevant local organizations working in the multimedia space such as the Social Hackers Academy, Solidarity Now and Solomon to engage with the refugee women. We further helped our participants to apply for internships in these organizations, connect with relevant mentors as well as facilitate their</p>	<p>On 30th September 2018, the female refugees presented their films as their final digital media capstone project to journalists, UNHCR staff members, schoolteachers and local authorities. The refugees graduated with a new understanding and appreciation of digital technology to channelize their storytelling skills.</p>

<p>design and shape their digital stories. These interactions have eventually strengthened our participants' ties and bonds within their immediate support system.</p>	<p>application process to join coding courses. These experiences have empowered our participants to show that they also can enter the skilled labor market and contribute as productive members in their host community.</p>	
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Figure 4: Applying Social Capital Lens to the Azadi Project

Our impact assessment highlights that integration means more than coexistence in confined borders for refugees who are managing belongingness in multiple de-territorialized networks with diverse social connections. Our digital media training offers them new ways to approach integration while facilitating their own narrative change, storytelling and communication strategies.

4.2 Theory of Change:

Based on the findings in the above section, our team developed a Theory of Change (ToC) for the Azadi Project as a visual representation of our logic model to drive sustainable change in the lives of vulnerable displaced population with a focus on women and girls. A theory of change expresses the cause and effect linkages or chains of connection between the intervention (e.g. our digital media trainings) and the desired end-result (refugee integration). ToC is most useful in complex environments (such as forced displacement and protracted crises) because it simplifies and enables to break the intervention up into a set of steps helping to achieve the overarching goal. We use the theory of change framework, as depicted in Figure 5 below, to design the most effective digital media programs that accounts for the complexity of all agents engaged: the refugees, host communities and stakeholders we engage with.

Our ToC Framework highlights that to ultimately achieve sustainable integration of refugees, our work cannot be viewed in isolation and it involves multiple variables as portrayed in the different steps of Figure 5. In the long run, livelihood competencies, skills development, professional training, creative communication and multimedia storytelling techniques together play a critical role in the overall resettlement and integration process. To accomplish this, with the help of our local partner in our Athens workshop, we selected women who are already refugees or seeking asylum status rather than newcomers so that we can support them in all the five steps, including long-term outcome and impact that we outlined in Figure 5.

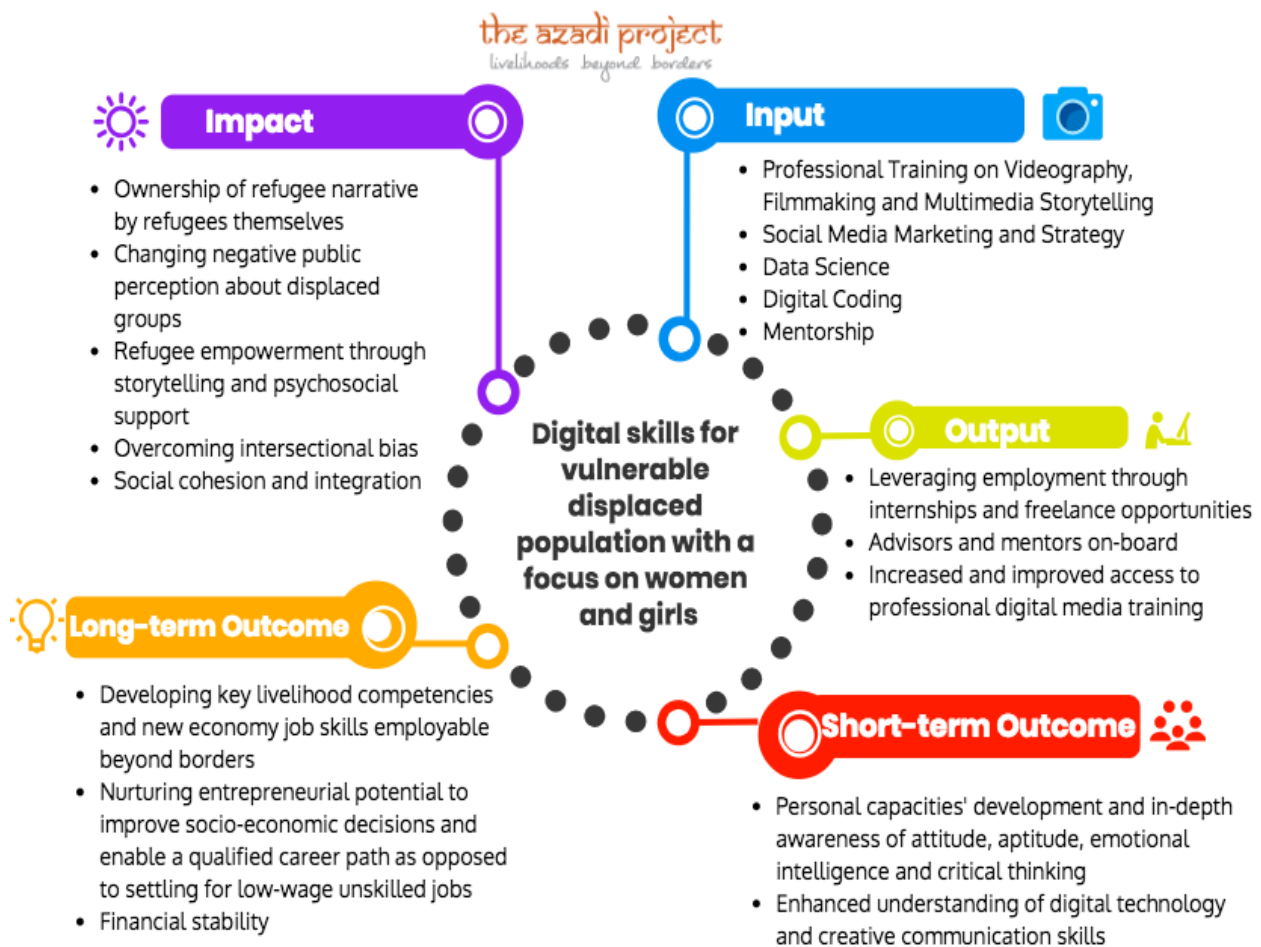


Figure 5: Theory of Change Framework for the Azadi Project

During our sessions in Greece with the female refugees, we realized that integration is facilitated when people interact in educational, professional and social spaces. One of the biggest challenges is that that most refugees find work in organizations and NGOs working for refugees. This is where they work, socialize, and take language courses (as we analysed above in section 4.1.2 on how refugees form informal networks and social capital). While all of this is crucial, this limits their social interaction with the non-refugee community. By providing digital skills to refugee women and helping them find employment opportunities, Azadi is facilitating their entry into a skilled labor market where they interact professionally and socially with other host community members. It is also helping host community members see refugees as talented and professionally capable-people who can help make their cities and countries stronger and more vibrant.

We also learned about the scale and scope of how women refugees particularly are facing intersectional bias. They are marginalized on the basis of their gender, status, ethnicity, culture

and color. They have been further vulnerable to smugglers and traffickers. Our participants found Azadi groundbreaking because it gave them the tools to overcome intersectional bias. We knew that trauma is a deep and serious issue and requires the attention of trained professionals and therapists. Addressing trauma or psychosocial counselling is not Azadi's focus. Still, during our Athens workshop, it became clear that the sessions can become very therapeutic for participants. The women opened up about their lives and the hardships they had faced. They shared their stories with each other in a safe space and drew strength from each others' failures and triumphs. The culmination of the workshop was especially very emotional - they screened their [films](#) before family and friends, demonstrating that, despite all the violence, political problems, and life-threatening journeys they had endured, survived and thrived. Here is the link to their films - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBUzVszh9F4UpE58qQJ46CA> .

At the end of the two-weeks, our participants expressed how they feel confident in stepping away from gendered roles, low-wage or unskilled jobs to enter a career path with opportunity for professional growth. The digital media skills had boosted their autonomy, dignity, strength and resilience and motivated them to be a powerful force in their host community. We have connected four participants to engage in a digital media traineeship at Solomon, supported two participants to join a coding training and one participant in a business course.

To sum up visually, below are the key points on how we tested our ToC framework in our Athens workshop:

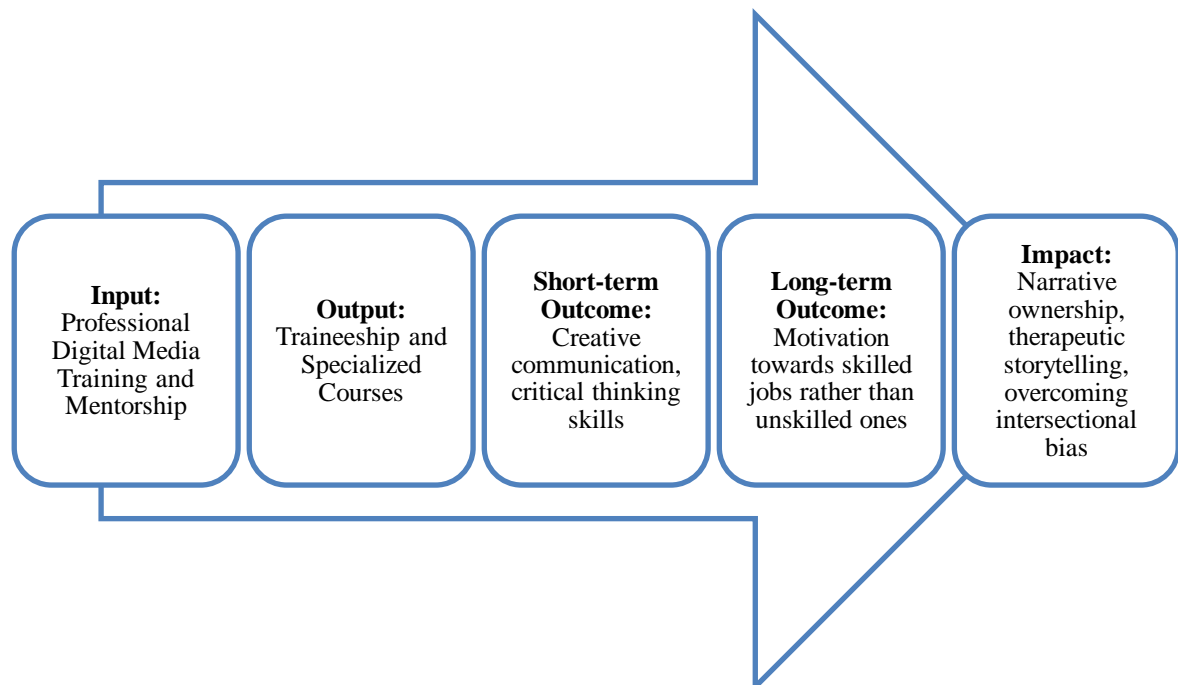


Figure 6: Application of ToC Framework to Azadi's Athens Workshop

4.3 Best Practices:

Our team has identified the following best practices and key ingredients to our success during the Athens training -

- **Collaboration and Trust:** “One plus one equals eleven” is an old Kashmir proverb that conveys how the sum is greater than the individual parts. The Azadi Project collaborated and worked together with a local NGO in Athens, the Melissa Network, which is a community of displaced women from diverse backgrounds in Greece promoting empowerment, communication and active citizenship. They provide Greek language lessons, workshops, childcare, psychosocial support and art therapy to refugee women across the country. The Melissa Network selected refugee women for the Azadi workshop, based on Azadi’s predetermined selection criteria (please refer to the Azadi Project’s market research document for more details).

Prior to Azadi, the refugee women were already affiliated with the Melissa Network, which made it easier to win their trust and build a strong rapport with them during the two-week training. Moreover, the local NGO served as a safe space where the women felt comfortable, familiar and secured to share their ideas and stories freely. The Azadi Project and Melissa Network share a common focus on supporting the integration process of refugee women and pursue this in different yet complementary ways as partners. Our priorities of mutual accountability, local ownership, honest feedback and commitment towards female refugee empowerment facilitated deeper impact and long-term sustainability of our work.

- **Gender Lens:** Instead of having a mixed gender group for the digital media training, we consciously focused on only working with female refugees. Despite research and availability of guidelines, humanitarian responses often fail to include women’s voice and to facilitate women’s equal access to interventions. Females bear the greatest brunt of the protracted crises but are also the greatest hope for bringing long-lasting transformation for their families and communities. Our individual sessions with the females enabled sensitive, deep and valuable discussions to further dig into topics such as gender-based violence, smuggling, human trafficking and prostitution.
- **Age and Language diversity:** The age range of the participants was between 16 to 35 years and 75% of them could speak English very well. This diversity strengthened the social cohesion of the group as they actively helped and supported each other’s journey in multimedia storytelling. For example, the English-speaking participants helped the Farsi and Arabic speakers with translation, while the latter supported the former with video editing. The mutual support and inclusion of each participant in every stage of the training enhanced their self-esteem, connection to peers and positive self-identity.
- **User-friendly digital practices:** “Intuition is the innovation philosophy” – this Apple mantra illustrates why their products can be intuitively used without any instruction manuals. Our team used iPads and different creative applications to train the female refugees in video composition, lighting, editing, etc. The refugees found the iPad user-friendly and easy to explore. Eventually, they felt more confident to use more complex gadgets such as professional cameras and drones. Azadi left an entire camera kit and an iPad with the editing software for the participants who are currently taking turns and sharing it with each other to

continue to develop their filmmaking skills. In fact, one of the females started her own YouTube channel applying her newly acquired skills from Azadi's digital media training. She uses the iPad not just to film her own stories but also teaches other refugee women in her community to use the device.

- **Evaluation process (Annex 1):** Prior to starting the training as well as after, we conducted consultations and surveys with the female refugees to better analyse their expectations, priorities, feedback and knowledge on digital media. Moreover, we invited four media professionals (UNHCR Greece Chief Communications Officer, Solomon Media House Director and two freelance international journalists) to evaluate the participants' final films based on the following criteria: storytelling/scripting; narration/voiceover; filming based on shot composition, lighting and sound; video editing and creativity. The feedback the participants got was very positive and encouraging. The jury was not just moved by their work, but they gave them high scores in technical expertise as well.

4.4 Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- **Logistics:** The refugee women were all available during different time slots and their schedules clashed with each other. In order to accommodate their schedules, our team organized morning and evening shifts of the training, as well as many one on one sessions. The trainers repeated their sessions for both the shifts. The number of trainers (two senior and one assistant) was apt to facilitate these sessions for the class size of seven participants. To avoid duplication and strategize in the future, we will explore options for complete availability of all participants during weekends and weekday late evenings. The participants' feedback indicated that two weeks is short for digital media training and few extra days would support their social media marketing and practice sessions. We also need to ensure that we have a dedicated space with technical provisions for the full-length of the training.
- **Minimum Standards:** We need to develop minimum standards and compliance parameters for partnership with local organizations. Also, we are creating a code of conduct for our employees and volunteers. Additionally, we will have a creative application system for the refugees to apply to and make our training more aspirational for our participants while gaining their commitment.
- **Team Size:** The ideal team size will include 3 technical trainers, 1 program manager, 1 researcher and 1 M&E staff member. We will also hire a grant-writer to engage in business development as well as an external evaluator to audit our trainings. Additionally, we plan to engage with local volunteers who can support us with communications and marketing during our training sessions. Our participants prefer handouts, printed learning materials and key resources that the local volunteer can further help with.
- **Inclusive Participation:** Feedback from our female participants and direct stakeholders suggest that our training program should expand to include 20% vulnerable host community members to strengthen integration efforts. Female refugees also stressed on the need of bringing digital media skills to male refugees. They explained that providing financial resources to support income-generation is not enough for young male refugees. Furthermore, youth need practical experiences, via trainings and internships, to develop the

skills for leveraging economic opportunities and financial stability. We are currently exploring the options to expand our trainings to these vulnerable groups in inclusive ways.

- **Equipment:**

During this workshop since we had a limited number of filming and editing kits, we had to pair up the participants to share the equipment. This would at times lead to challenges in scheduling for filming and editing slots. The trainers and the participants felt that it would be better to give participants individual training kits.

5. Conclusion and Next Steps:

In our research, integration is an ongoing multidimensional process that can be conceptualized through the social capital lens. This impact assessment analyzed how the female refugees' digital experiences call for a shift from singular labeling and linear media representation of "refugee as victims" to accommodate the diverse local practices that refugees engage in their everyday lives, portraying their strength and resilience. Stakeholders who are investigating measurable indicators need to engage with a more nuanced understanding of how and why refugee groups form social capital and initiate meso-level integration practices. The Azadi Project's Athens training revealed that the value of 'soft' variables such as trust, leadership and social ties should not be underestimated in how different refugee groups "form and shape their identities, and thus how they bridge and link (cohere) to wider society" (Zetter et al., 2006).

Given this ground reality, the Azadi Project's digital media training is supporting refugees to bring their own voice to their integration process. At the end of the Athens training, each refugee woman not only produced a multimedia product but also learned to formulate her own experiences and amplify her voice through the newly acquired skills.

Next steps?

In the next two years (2019-2020), Azadi aims to train 100 refugee women in digital skills and help them with internship and employment opportunities. This will strengthen their voice and agency and facilitate their integration in the host communities.

We are currently in talks with UNHCR Greece and other local partners in the Greek islands of Lesbos and Samos for our 2019 workshops. Thousands of refugees are staying in poor living conditions in these islands. Limited access to basic necessities further leads to conflict and violence. Azadi's digital skills workshop will help refugee women use their time in camps productively and connects them with employment opportunities, empowering them to pursue livelihoods beyond borders and demonstrate their capacity to their host communities. This will help refugee women in shelters and camps use their time more productively, reduce their vulnerability to smugglers and traffickers, and overcome intersectional bias.

Annex 1: Evaluation Inputs on Selected Questions

	Name	What expectation of yours has this training fulfilled?	After these 2 weeks, how will you use social media?	How do you plan to share your stories with the world?	Which digital program or tools are you planning to use in the future?	What was your favorite part of the training?
1	Narges Amini	Digital Marketing	For teaching	Instagram, Youtube	Photoshop	Shoot and edit videos
2	Faribe Amini	Story Scripting, Idea Creation, Basic Videography, Editing, Digital Marketing	Sharing my stories, direct messaging and marketing	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Email and Whatsapp	Photoshop, LumaFusion	Editing videos
3	Bahareh Hosseini	Story writing and scripting	Making more videos and sharing with friends back home and here	Instagram	Photoshop	Editing videos
4	Nour Omran	Story scripting, idea creation, basic videography and editing	Sharing my stories, marketing, creating a network of like-minded people, for teaching	Facebook, Instagram, Youtube	Photoshop, LumaFusion, Filmic Pro	Editing videos
5	Farahnaz Ahmadi	Story writing, idea creation, basic videography and editing	Direct messaging	Youtube, Whatsapp	Photoshop, LumaFusion	Everything!
6	Mahboubeh Tavakoli	Story writing, idea creation and video editing	Making short films to inform people in	Facebook	Photoshop, LumaFusion, Filmic Pro	Individual attention to each of us

			my own country, for teaching			
7	Sakina Hashimi	Story writing, idea creation and video editing	Sharing my stories and direct messaging	Facebook	Filmic Pro	Story Narration

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