

Anila Noor's background is embedded in forced migration; her father migrated to Pakistan in 1947 that initiated her migrant family's history. As a human-rights advocate she wants more positive stories of migrants to be heard. Building on her Masters, the best way for her to contribute was to become a professional refugee researcher. Her work helps to counter her disappointment that refugees' perspectives are rarely included in the policies aimed at them. Her own work with refugee communities has been consistent, and started with her M.A. thesis where she studied Iranian Diasporic Women in Europe (2013). This work continued in collaboration with Dr. Helen Hintjens of the International Institute for Social Studies (ISS), with whom Noor presented papers on various aspects of Refugee and Migration policies and advocacy, both in the UK and in The Netherlands on several occasions.

More Insider Knowledge is Required

In general, Dutch Integration policy of the is based on 'Citizenship and self-responsibility'. This aims to encourage immigrants and refugees to be self-reliant and to build bridges with Dutch society. The emphasis is on their contribution and adaptation to the host society, for example through Dutch language lessons. Although many municipalities express respect for diversity (e.g. in how it provides education and health services by respecting gender and cultural differences), since early 2016 they now focus on pushing refugees in the labour market under the provisions of the "Participatory Law". This unjust act is creating distrust and frustration in many communities of newly arrived refugees.

In the Netherlands, increased attention is required for integration of specific groups such as second generation of migrants and support for settled migrants, new immigrants and refugees' needs rethinking:

- First, it should be acknowledged that refugees and immigrants do not passively receive their "host country" culture. They are often highly educated and willing to contribute more than they are actually doing. The more that is expected of them, the better. Approaching migrants and refugees in this sense would counter my disappointment that migrants' and refugees' perspectives are rarely included in policies aimed at us.
- Being relatively young and skilled, most migrants and refugees can become 'highly-valued Netherlanders' whose contributions could mean more urban prosperity in future. Their skills can be better utilized than is the case for the moment.
- Building on the buddy programs, such as Face the Future (find more information [here](#)), migrants and refugees benefit from carefully tailored advice in seeking work and creating small businesses. This extra cost is rewarded, as local communities (both hosts and migrants) will be able to support themselves and enhance their self-reliance.
- Organizational Partnerships should be built with the arts and the cultural sector.
- Increased number of migrants and refugees should be employed in positions in the municipality. This would help to make them feel generally more included and valued as productive members of Dutch society.
- Media representation should not be polarized and should be monitored by the Anti-Discrimination Unit. The 'Gemeente' (local authorities) should also advocate to include all groups to promote multi-culturalism. Themes of racism, stress and crime, should be explored sensitively. Municipal communication campaigns should include positive image-building, especially in light of polarization in political life.

- Refugee researchers should be given priority in research focused on refugees. Dutch scholars should include migrant and refugee researchers' for more 'insider' perspectives. In this way, a stronger evidence base emerges for municipal policy-making.