

# Engendering Socio-economic Prosperity of the United Kingdom through Gender Equality: Shelving the UK-Rwanda Agreement on Asylum-Seekers

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**Abstract:** Most women suffer discrimination, which denies them the freedom to engage actively in the socio-economic endeavours of society in consonance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5). This article contends that the United Kingdom-Rwanda Agreement on deportation of asylum-seekers to that country, is brazen demonstration of deportation as a malleable concept misused by politicians and policymakers to achieve expedient political gains. Although the challenges of asylum and immigration are partially pervasive in the UK, the article argues, that the erstwhile Conservative government's agreement with Rwanda as strategy to stem the problem is not only ill-thought-out but a drain on national coffers, which could have been strategically invested in health or education productively. Furthermore, this article holds the view that a percentage of the £700mn paid to the Rwandan government should have been expended to revamp the technical and logistical facilities of Asylum processing centers, as a ploy to integrate the asylum seekers, especially women, to take up essential vacant positions in the NHS, social care services and agricultural activities to expand the economy. The article opines that the UK government should have leveraged the asylum seeker as strategic assets by re-training and assigning them to shore up sectors with dire vacancy challenges, post implementation of the Brexit agreement. Moreover, the article proposes that with society's confidence waning in domestic British politics, coupled with the UK's reputational decline globally, the government endeavours to protect the dignity and human rights of women asylum-seekers to regain some credit as proclaimed by the Labour Party's 2024 elections manifesto. Finally, the paper recommends that securing gender equality enhances SDG 5, thus, the government must thrive to win the British people's trust by instituting an inclusive committee, with a diverse membership of society to deliberate on the issues of refuges/immigration; so that governmental decisions and policies on the topic bear strands of public/community support.

**Key words:** Asylum-women, Aphasias Rwanda, SDG 5, socioeconomics, strategic thinking

**JEL codes:** F

### 1. Introduction

"A renewed outburst of violent disorder broke out in several English towns and cities Yesterday, further escalating

the most widespread far-right violence in the UK for years” (Williams & Uddin, 2024).

The preceding quotation reflects the perennial and vexatious issues characterising asylum-seekers and immigration, confronting the United Kingdom (UK) and its allied western states on the continent of Europe. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2024, violent protestation believed to be orchestrated by far-rights congregated in certain cities and town centres of the UK, to demonstrate against the government’s policy of using public funds to house asylum-seekers in expensive hotels in Rotherham, South Yorkshire and other places (Sinmaz & Vinter, 2024). The violence resembles other public upheavals and protestations in major cities across Europe, exhibiting anti-asylum and immigrants’ sentiments. Similarly, in the US, Donald Trump (Trump) was fiercely revving up anti-asylum and immigration campaigns with a view to appeasing his base; and specifically espoused, that “the world’s criminals are pouring into a town near you and being sent by their governments” (Wolf, 2024, p. 25). Notwithstanding the human rights abuses such comments would have on immigrants and asylum seekers in US, Europe and more particularly in the UK, Trump’s statement was not only irresponsible of him as a former president, but also has the potential of distorting international relations and collaborative efforts by states and organisations seeking to solve the problem. In the UK, the issue of asylum and immigration was a dominant topic which was exploited by selfish politicians in the 2024 general elections, contributing partially to ousting the Conservative government from power (Rahman, 2024). Like their counterparts in the US, both the Conservative and Labour governments have failed over the years to devise cogent and pragmatic policies to tackle the phenomenon but resorted to it as a convenient political weapon. Against that backdrop, this article examines how gender equality is stymied through the proposed UK-Rwanda agreement, initiated by Rishi Sunak’s conservative government to undercut the United Nation (UN)’s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5). For the purposes of this article, the terms, asylum-seekers and immigration, are used interchangeably, while the paper is organised as follows.

First, some literature and the causes of asylum/immigration into the UK is discussed; second, a brief geography of Rwanda is to situate the discussion; third, the agreement between the UK-Rwanda as an offshore strategy to stem refugees is considered; fourth, the perilous state of asylum women is explored; fifth, the status of asylums/immigration in the UK is examined; six, the potential contribution of women asylum seekers to the British economy is engaged; and seventh, some recommendations are proffered to help the government leverage the skills and talents of asylum-women to expand the economy.

## **2. Literature Review**

As a malleable concept/principle, deportation of asylum-seekers is conveniently manipulated by politicians, policymakers and some civil organisations to pursue an agenda or initiate a campaign, which promotes their selfish interests or secure expedient socio-political results, with prevalence of this development in Europe and United States of America (US) (Ofori, 2021). The controversies of the abounded UK-Rwanda deportation scheme exemplify an expedient objective subtly deployed by people in and of places of authority towards the issue, without leveraging the strategic benefits these asylum-seekers can contribute towards host states. Pre-eminently, the pernicious political debates associated with the 2024 British general elections; including those that characterised the US presidential election, with Trump emerging as the 47<sup>th</sup> president-elect for a second term (Strauss, 2024) is instructive. While such harmful characterisations of immigrants/asylum-seekers prevent open and critical discussions at the national level to secure effective strategies to resolve the challenge, Ofori (2023)

contends that it offers policymakers and public institutions, especially short-sighted politicians, easy and cheap opportunity to feed off the immigration debate, thus denying society the long term and sustainable rewards of immigrants to augment businesses' growth. The contributions of immigrants to any host country, particularly in the spheres of rebuilding the socio-economies of the US and UK post second world and contemporaneously are well documented. However, in pursuit of their geo-political interests in developing regions of the world, the US and UK have repeatedly treated immigration as an existential threat to their existence without openly engaging with stakeholders inside and outside public spaces to find lasting solution to the phenomenon (Shilliam, 2021). The resultant impact of such policy failures among the British, Europeans and their American counterpart has been the exacerbation of the crisis in the affected states (Ofori, 2021). There is an argument that the erratic geo-political strategic formulations within NATO and their allied powers/states, breed foreign conflicts that compound immigration-asylum crises along the borders of European states (Ofori, 2021). This dimension of the immigration argument has received little scholarship, which will be addressed partly in this article. Despite the substantive roles played by immigrants and asylum women to shore up the socio-economic welfare of European states and US, there are still untapped creativity and novel ideas embodied in immigrant women, which ought to be harnessed by their host states to promote sustainable development, including restoration of climate change and environmental crisis (Barber, 2005). Exploiting the issues of immigrants, asylum-seekers and undocumented foreigners in Britain, Europe and US to score political victory do not address any substantive economic challenges nor help to utilise the creative resources inherent in those groups by host states to expand their social, economic and political status (Jones et al., 2022). Rather, they present an opportunity for political agitators to pressurise politicians and their policymakers to devise ambiguous and populous policies which are detrimental to asylum-seekers, thereby designating them as human parasites bent on sapping state funds while compromising social amenities in host states; such thinking not only dehumanises the dignity and human rights of immigrants, but also stifle and constrain them from unleashing their skills to live as dignified humanity (Rosenbaum, 1980; Ofori, 2021). The view that asylum-seekers are burden and strain on the socio-economic resources of Britain is purely a redundant proposition; and obscures the fact that, these peoples are endowed with several academic qualifications, skills, technical knowledge and expertise to be leveraged strategically to boost the British society; especially, in health, education, construction and agriculture (Ofori & Sarpong, 2020). Perusing the literature, one recognises that immigrants/asylum-seekers are not a drain and parasites on the UK's economy to be treated as secondary human beings, but as humanity endowed with creative skills and critical expertise to contribute towards expanding the worth of the UK's socio-economic fortunes. Furthermore, the available literature addresses the general immigrant/asylum — economic dichotomy, however, this article seeks to explore the untapped contributions of asylum women towards the attainment of socio-economic growth of the UK through the prism of the UN's gender equality (SDG 5). Similarly, the word immigration and by extension asylum-seekers, will be used interchangeably throughout this article.

### **3. Increased Asylum-Seekers Into the UK: The Factors**

Many factors are responsible for the rise in asylum numbers to the UK. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2021), the gap in average wages between the rich and poor countries is an enormous cause. For example, the purchasing power of average monthly earnings in Ethiopia was five percent of those in Germany, creating the largest arbitrage opportunity on the planet and enormous potential welfare gains (Wolf, 2025, p. 25).

The arbitrage opportunity creates voluntary migration among citizens of the global south who venture into the cities of developed states, seeking asylum rights and protection for socio-economic survival. Without a doubt, economic solace and security needs induce asylum seekers and migration movements along the borders of European states with the UK included. Intricately linked to the economic factors are poorly framed foreign policies by the UK and its allied states to gender destabilisations in African, Middle East and other developing states. While sponsored internal conflicts in developing states are acute and executed to displace populations from the global south, the US and UK, consider it as an opportunity to execute proxy wars with a view to achieving their geo-political interests, culminating in asylum-seeking and uncontrolled immigration across Germany, Italy France and the UK (Mearshimer & Walt, 2007). This ill-informed policy, which is backed by lop-sided strategic initiatives and devoid of achieving true reconciliation between factional states — Israel and Palestine and other states in the Middle East — are not only unjustified in international diplomacy but intended to earn the UK a parochial political gain (Schiff, 2003). Glaring examples of such irreconcilable and inhumane foreign policies are on display in the Midde-East, where Netanyahu's Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) is callously killing and maiming thousands of Palestinians, destroying their properties and basic means of livelihood (Wolf, 2024). Without hope of returning to their home-countries coupled with uncertainties, the viable alternative is to secure asylum in European states, especially the UK. The perennial public outcry against the Conservative government together with its repeated failure to stem and secure the borders led to initiating the Rwanda compact.

Another factor contributing to the increase in population of asylum seekers to UK is the enormous pressure exerted on the application and processing system. In response to the Home Office Affairs Committee on 23 November 2023, former Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, stated that: "there has been mounting pressure on asylum system for several years because of the number of people putting in claims. Some of those claims involve complex needs, safeguarding measures and issues to do with age assessment. Some people are very vulnerable. If there is a modern slavery claim, that requires more resources. Those claims, because of our legal duties, need to be considered fully and robustly, and that takes time and certain level of expertise" (Home Affairs Committee, 2022). Recognising the pressure and its attendant legal implications of processing asylum applications, it is also the case that successive UK governments were ill-prepared to manage the challenges; because the £577 million which the Sunak government paid to Rwanda for resettling the asylum seekers, could have been utilised creatively and strategically to resource new information technology facilities centres to expedite the processing of asylum-seekers with a view to reintegrating them. Equally, part of that money could also be utilised to retrain suitable asylum-seekers to participate constructively in sectors such as the NHS, social care, Construction and agriculture. With that, women and young girls who are often marginalised will be empowered, to contribute to the economy as well as fend for themselves, thereby dwindling the gender gap. One point worth stating here is that different sources quoted varied figures the Sunak's conservative government paid in respect of the abandoned UK-Rwanda agreement; however, irrespective of the variation in the amount, the fact remains that the amount was enormous enough to be invested judiciously to address to the challenges more strategically at home.

Furthermore, the obsession among the UK's political elites for temporal and external redemptive measures is yet one factor responsible for expanding the asylum and immigration crises. Cavendish (2024) explains that net migration in the year 2022 stood at 764, 000 whilst the figure was 685, 000 in 2023. Cavendish also stated that: "yet we have seen no coherent strategy from the government which is obsessed over a relatively small number of asylum-seekers crossing the channel. Failure to acknowledge the scale of legal migration or plan for it, has been running for years" (Cavendish, 2024, p. 14). Partly, Blair's open policy to allow the early accession member states

of the European Union (EU) to the UK has been blamed for the asylum and immigration challenges in the country as well; yet the attraction of offshoring these people to Rwanda, dull the vision of the political elites to expend domestic resources wisely in retraining those vibrant asylum seekers to assume active and participatory roles to grow the economy of Britain. Although the above factors are not exhaustive, the Conservative government opted for Rwanda as a magic bullet to stem the crisis.

#### 4. Rwanda as an Offshore Site/Deportation Base for Asylum Seekers

The Conservative government's policy of deporting asylum-seekers to Rwanda was intended to stem the influx of asylum seekers into the UK; but it ended with the Labour Party's victory at the general elections, ushering them into power on 7 July 2024 (Mckee & Pannell, 2024). Rwanda is a country located in Central Africa, bordered to the North by Uganda, to the East by Tanzania, to South by Burundi and the West by the Democratic Republic of Congo (Republic of Rwanda, 2024). It has a total area is 26,338 km<sup>2</sup> with a population size of 14, 256, 567 and Kigali as the capital city (Worldometer, 2024). Rwanda has a population density of about 445 people per Km<sup>2</sup> with a life-expectancy of 68.02 years (Republic of Rwanda, 2024); while the two major ethnic groups — Hutus and Tutsi — speak English and French as their official major languages. Besides its dark past characterised by the 1994 genocide atrocities, Rwanda has recovered through ethnic and natural reconciliation and currently ranked as the 8<sup>th</sup> business-friendly country in the sub-region of Africa (World Bank, 2024).



Fig. 1 A Map of Rwanda.

Under the premiership of Rishi Sunak's Conservative government, the choice of Rwanda to resettle and process asylum applications from that country, culminated in the proposition of the Rwanda Bill as an attempt to stifle illegal migration as well as break the business model of the gangs, who ferry illegal migrants across the French channel into the (UK government, 2024). Although the UK government stated among other factors, that its primary objective was to stop the smuggling of illegal migrants into the UK, however, the policy was saddled with criticisms by the then opposition labour party, human rights institutions, political commentators and a section of the judiciary on the basis that it violates the human rights and dignity of the migrants/asylum seekers. For example,

the International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2024), argued that the Rwandan Bill compromises the Refugee Convention, of which Britain is a signatory; and states that asylum seekers have the right to apply for asylum in the UK, and not to be penalised for arriving irregularly. Also, an IRC and YouGov poll conducted in June 2023 revealed that 65% of the UK public support asylum seekers; contending that, the Rwanda bill undercuts the UK's international obligations and is incompatible with the UNHCR's 1956 Convention, thereby calling on the UK government to uphold its responsibility for protecting Refugees (IRC, 2024). No country, developed, developing or underdeveloped, has infinite resources to manage the challenges of asylum indefinitely. However, in the case of the UK, for example, the phenomenon of asylum and immigration has morphed into a political "prey" with which the two major political parties — Conservatives and Labour — take turns to exploit for their political gains. Over the years, Rwanda had been criticised and labelled by western states, including the UK, as undemocratic state governed by a despot, Paul Kigame, for suppressing opposition forces; however, for expedient political reasons, the Sunak government found in Rwanda a solace country to deport and process asylum and immigration applications. (Ofori, 2023). This glaring manifestation of double standards in national policy formulation reveals the expediency and hypocrisy that characterised both the Conservative and Labour governments in resolving the asylum challenge. This calls for an urgent humane and genuine thought-out policy to address the phenomenon in the interest of economic and social stability.

## 5. The Status of UK's Asylum/Immigration

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) report indicates that between 2015-2016, approximately 16,360 refugees had resettled in England and Wales under the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme (VPRS) and the vulnerable children resettlement scheme (VCRS) (ONS, 2021). The ONS report also showed that out of the 16,360 resettled, 52% were males; 48% were females and 50% were those under the age of 18 years with majority living in local authority accommodations (ONS, 2021). With respect to gender equality goal (SDG 5), the above figures mirror the precarious state of women, because often they are unable to escape during famine, wars and severe natural disasters, a phenomenon that further entrenches gender inequality. According to the Refugee Integration Outcomes Data of 2022, most of the UK's asylum seekers are people fleeing war torn countries, political persecutions, natural disasters including famine. Also, the report stated that most of the refugees originated from countries; namely: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen Palestine, Qatar and Saudi-Arabia. As stated in section two above, the causes responsible for asylum and immigration to UK, are partly because of the UK governments' foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East; particularly the blanket support provided to the Israeli government without a corresponding effort to implement the two-state solution, has practically exacerbated the asylum crises within and without the frontiers of the UK (United Nations, 2024).

Despite feeble attempts by the Conservative government to address the challenges of asylum, another report has stated that at the end of 2021, there was a backlog of 83, 535 cases awaiting an initial decision for asylum claims made since the end of 2006 (ONS, 2021). Furthermore, that outstanding numbers have quadrupled since ex-Home Secretary-Priti Patel assumed office in 2019 (Mackenzie, 2022). The backlog of 83, 535 unprocessed asylum applications under the fourteen years of the Conservative government's reign suggests two things. First, it indicates limited political-will on the part of the government to resolve the problem; and second, that the policy and strategies adopted by the government to address the problem is ineffective, thus compounding the crisis. The

conclusive view is that the asylum/immigration issues remain a challenge for the UK; however, it requires substantive creative solutions backed by genuine political-will, rather than the lukewarm policies which have/had been experimented over the years by both Conservatives and Labour regimes. The earlier constructive strategy is addressed to the challenge; the better SDG 5 will be enhanced to minimise gender inequality in the British society. Although Starmer's Labour government has repudiated the Rwanda Agreement, there is still considerable cynicism among the public that Labour, like the Conservatives, are not keen in dealing with the crisis (Atkinson, 2024). However, as proffered in the recommendation (section seven) of this Article, building a genuine trust with the British people by the Labour government will stand it in good faith as well as and serve aid in implementing formidably its immigration and socio-economic agenda favourably.

## **6. Gender Equality in Perilous State**

The path to a prosperous and sustainable development of every state, especially the UK, requires the active, prominent involvement and engagement of its female population, with the inclusion of asylum seekers. Contrary to this fact, women and young girls continue to suffer endemic discriminatory practices which consign them to the lowest ebbs of society (Alston & Robinson, 2005). The United Nation's (UN) report on gender states that "Gender inequalities are still deep-rooted in every society. Women suffer from lack of access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. In many situations, they are denied access to basic education, and health care and are victims of violence and discrimination. They are underrepresented in political and economic decision-making" (UNSDG, 2011). As a developed state with responsibility to protect women's dignity and human rights in the spheres of health care and education, the UK government's lousy attitude to integrate asylum seekers into the economy, has had adverse impact on women's wellbeing, thus widening the inequality gap between women and men; further designating women as dependents on existing meagre resources to fend for themselves and their dependents (CEDAW, 1981). Also, pervasive indifference among successive UK Prime Ministers which manifests as microaggressions have contributed to demonise asylum seekers as parasites with little contribution towards the UK economy (Filds, 2024). This attitude has roots in bias and discriminatory practices against asylum seekers and immigrants, leading not only to harmful treatments and oppressive tactics meted out against these groups of people, but also gender disrespect and acute stress towards women (Field et al., 2024). Besides governmental indifference towards asylum seekers, political statements made by leading public figures across the Atlantic, have played a prominent role in treating women, especially asylum seekers, as criminals and saboteurs on the people's socio-economic wellbeing. For example, former permanent Secretary David Normington was reported to have labelled asylum seekers and immigrants as "terrorists, criminals, illegal migrants and bad guys" (Mackenzie, 2022). Categorising asylum seekers and immigrants as criminals and bad people without according to them dignity is antithetic to sustainable development, particularly gender equality. Humanity is not determined by citizenship or right of residence, therefore, subjecting young girls and women seeking asylum from war-infested countries, which in many cases are caused by the UK's bad foreign policy, undercut the ideals of SDG 5. The reason is that majority of asylum seekers and immigrants, especially women, have rich and diverse educational qualifications, professional skills, and expert knowledge with which to contribute to the UK's economy and themselves (Parker et al., 2024). The potential contributions of asylum seekers toward the UK's socio-economic fabric will remain untapped if the government fails to re-orient officials, institutions and the public to assume a favourable image of asylum seekers.

## 7. Potential Contributions of Asylum Women towards the UK Economy

As a result of the elongated impact of the Russia-Ukraine, including the Israeli–Palestinian conflicts, the UK government granted visas and partial residential permits to some Ukrainians to resettle in Britain, compounding the existing backlog of asylum applications and its associated challenges (Public Policy Exchange, 2022). Although the preferential treatment and the swift way the Ukrainian applications were processed and granted betray a degree of bias and discriminatory tendencies towards African nationals seeking asylum in the UK; however, the potential contributions by these groups of people to the UK's economy should not be glossed over.

First, there is a firm view that "... asylum, if managed well, could provide dynamism that translate into a positive overall contribution to GDP. Successfully integrating only refugees who have arrived in Europe since 2015 into the labour market could add £70- £80 billion to annual GDP by 2025" (McKinsey Global Institute, 2018). The contributory prowess of asylum seekers to the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres of a host-state, such as the UK, has been sacrificed by the conservative and labour governments over many years for expedient political gain, like offshoring them abroad (Goldin, 2018). With the implementation of the Brexit agreement and its attendant departure of most Europeans back to their native countries, the asylum population should engage the British government's attention for socio-economic strategic thinking. The reason is that the need to achieve economic stability post-Covid, the promotion of social equality and integration of ethnic groups within the UK's mainstream economic activities ought to be considered by the government and its key institutions (Open Working Group, 2014).

Second, the global push to achieve the objectives of SDG 5 will remain a mirage without recognising the indispensable contributions of women to bridge the gender gap. As stated above, human worth is not determined by citizenship or resident permits, thus, asylum women's rights and dignity should be protected and promoted by regularising their immigration status to allow them to participate actively and creatively in the social and economic affairs of the British society (Herre et al., 2023). By integrating asylum women into the mainstream economy of the UK, they will become less dependent on state's resources and be empowered to make life-enhancing decisions in recognition of their human rights, political and cultural rights; thus, reflecting the tenets of a liberal democracy of which the UK prides itself. Keeping asylum women in solitary confinements under the pretext of flouting immigration rules exerts undue pressure on government's resources and compromises SDG 5. Researchers have affirmed the positive contributions of displaced people by contending that asylum women could contribute significantly towards a host state's economy when they are properly integrated. They stated thus: "our new findings on the unrealized economic potential of refugee women buttress the strong case for increasing their access to jobs and closing the market gaps" (Paolo & Schuetter, 2019). The same researchers argued further that: "... closing the employment and earnings gaps that constrain refugee women and men would accelerate and not only restrict the achievement of the sustainable development goals but also undercut the effort to promote gender equality through full employment and women empowerment" (Paolo & Schuetter, 2019). The above statements evidence the utility of asylum-seekers because empowering women with job opportunities are critical to securing their socio-economic autonomy as well as liberating them from the explicit and implicit maltreatment from which they flee. That strategic thinking should engage the attention of the British government constructively.

Third, at the cusp of the twenty-first century, most British women and their counterparts in western developed states are determined to secure prominent leadership roles in pursuit of their socio-economic and



political ambitions; as a strategy, to promote gender equality on the global stage Northouse, 2022. The following examples buttress this premise. Tina McKenzie of Ireland's Staffline Recruitment Agency; Elaine Bedell of London's Southbank Centre on creative sector career; Deanna Oppenheimer, chair of hospitality multinational (IHG); Lisa Donahue, co-head of the American and Asia at AlixPartners; and Vivienne Artz, head of the FTSE Women Leader Review. Although the above list is not exhaustive, yet it demonstrates women's capacity to assume high echelons of power and leadership as well as underscores the urgency to frame pragmatic and targeted national policies to promote women's participations in all sectors of engagement to secure the objectives of SDG 5; and more particularly, the socio-economic competitiveness of the UK on the global plane (Northouse, 2103). Relating this to SDG 5, there is little doubt that women can actively contribute to expand the socio-economic fabric of the British society. However, the vestiges of discriminatory practices and policies operating within governmental corridors, public and private institutions continue to stifle women's creative force, thus inducing gender inequality (Nash, 2009). As an advocate of women's rights, the UK has a political and moral obligation to promote asylum women's right to ensure that they are productively and economically engaged in the British system.

Fourth, by creating an embracing working environment devoid of undue criticisms against women in managerial positions, opportunities should be created for women to enter sectors, traditionally designated as male-reserved to promote equality (Northouse, 2022). For example, females' participation in the labour market, often shaped by the cultural and social mores of the British system needs reformation. In this respect, the health sector can play a major role to expand decent working opportunities for women. However, the marginalisation of women within most formal industries, occasioned by government policy, such as the Rwanda scheme not only stifles SDG 5, but is also antithetic to the UK's socio-economic revival post-Covid-19 (Mathonsi, 2024). Despite advancements in technology on healthcare delivery and social support, there is severe pressure on the NHS to recruit people to fill vacant positions as nurses, ward-aids, medical-doctors and allied health workers, to offer substantial care and social support services to protect humanity (High Commission on Health, 2016). Yet, blinded by political aphasia coupled with the determination to achieve political expediency, most asylum seekers are accommodated in expensive hotel and private facilities without any strategic plans to reintegrate them to take advantage of those vacancies characterising the NHS, thus overwhelming the skeletal staff across the institution. The failure to think creatively about using the skills and talents of these human resources, may culminate in public riots as transpired in Rotherham and South-Yorkshire in August 2024. One caveat here is that this article does not support those racist behaviour/acts in any form or shape but is cited as an illustration of poor governmental policy on the asylum matters. Lastly, denying working rights and permits to asylum women because of their irregular entry into the UK, coupled with the archaic application and associated bureaucratic processes is pandering to gender inequality which undermines the UK's economic growth (Nash, 2009).

Fifth, there is little denial that women can participate in sectors designated as male preserved. With the departure of thousands of Europeans back to their native countries post-Brexit, a plethora of vacancies exist to be filled by the asylum seekers, most of whom are young and energetic women with requisite expertise. A report by the Financial Times indicates that the construction industry faces a shortage of 150,000 people to assume various roles to realise Labour government's target of building 1.5 million homes over the next five years (Foster et al., 2024, p. 2). Any serious government desiring to achieve its objective of meeting the housing target would realise the strategic opportunities available in the diverse human resources presented by the asylum seekers in the country (Fosters et al., 2024). Thus, dissipating state resources to offshore asylum seekers, especially women, to Rwanda;

is a bad policy fashioned to waste critical state resources. Confining women and young girls with energy and creative prowess to hotel and council accommodations throughout regions of the UK entrenches gender inequality, resonating with the antiquated thinking of Britain's imperialist policy of centuries gone by Reed & Singh (2024). Sustainable development is not only a global objective, but a national obligation requiring states, the UK included, to ensure that irrespective of immigration status, policies and laws are promulgated by the government to expedite the welfare and integration of women towards the promotion of human wellbeing.

Sixth, asylum-seeking is not a new phenomenon but a century-old practice undertaken by a group of people escaping threatening situations such as persecutions, wars, natural disasters, and severe famine for safety (Brucker et al., 2019). Notwithstanding the political expediencies asylum situations offer politicians, together with the pretext it provides the far-right groups to demonise the immigrant population, asylum-seekers can contribute enormously to consolidate the socio-economic, cultural and political fabrics of the British state in many respects. Some researchers buttressed this point when they argued that "By adapting innovatively and contributing ideas, migrants' advance societies. Migration shaped our economies which embody the collective contribution of diverse peoples. It is no accident that the most dynamic cities are those with a relatively high share of migrants" (Goldin et al., 2019, p. 17). While their unfortunate status makes them no less human than citizens of host nations, these peoples possess good academic qualifications, skills, expertise and experiences which ought to be harnessed by the British government to sharpen the competitive edge of its domestic industries to re-fashion a new economic model of a global stature. However, endemic bureaucratic barriers, supported by governmental inertia, have dimmed the vision of public officials from strategizing these crucial human resources into potent socio-economic powerhouse. With a forward-thinking political leadership, these antiquated British asylum processes and procedures should be revolutionised to achieve a two-pronged benefit strategy for the peoples and the state (Northouse, 2022). First, most of the young women constituting the asylum population can be cross-mentored and retrained to take up diverse and critical roles within the NHS and social services, to shore up declining staff numbers; and second, the government should institute motivational schemes to entice more women to participate in the construction sectors of the economy dominated by men, as a novel policy to generate mutual and beneficial advantages to the state and asylum population (Asgari, 2024).

## **8. Recommendations**

The preceding discussion demonstrates that there is no magic bullet to resolving asylum and immigration crisis confronting the UK. Although the UK's foreign policy, coupled with its internal political exigencies had contributed to deepening its immigration/asylum challenges, the recommendations proffered by this article will offer some wisdom to help the government the challenges considerably.

First, Sir Keir Starmer, the current British Prime Minister, whose Labour party won majority 411 parliamentary seats, to form the new government, and who campaigned to resolve the asylum and immigration challenges should initiate a flagship scheme to address the problems (House of Commons Library, 2024). By flagship initiative, it is suggested that a government-led committee into which experts, citizens, respective government agencies and affected asylum communities, will be invited to openly discuss and recommend modalities/approaches to stem the crisis. Since, successive British governments enjoy wounded reputation on matters of asylum and immigration, it is crucial that Starmer's government endeavours to regain public trust by holding open fora to deliberate and make recommendations to manage/resolve the issues. Second, there is

urgent need for the government to think strategically in devising measures to curb the asylum-immigration challenge in a manner that is mutually beneficial to the asylum-community and the British society. For example, a temporary contract work permit without formal reunion or the possibility of citizenship can be instituted. This strategic scheme will not only provide ready needed skills, expertise and knowledge lacking in certain critical sectors of the economy, but also advance the socio-economic prosperity of those foreign immigrants, thus reforming the bogus asylum seekers agenda (Wolf, 2024). Notwithstanding the prospects of creating a two-tier human society, the temporary worker permit will offer sustainable opportunities for people from developing states to gain economic and social security by taking up such temporary job opportunities, which is much dignified than the current disjointed asylum system (Ofori, 2023). Third, as stated in sections three and four of this article, one-third of the financial resources paid to the Rwandan government to offshore and process asylum applications from that country, should have been deployed strategically to revamp the technological facilities of all centres in the UK; as well as, retrain those vibrant and able-bodied asylum seekers to take up vacant positions in the NHS, constructions, agriculture, education and care-services. The benefits of such strategic policy will not only prop up the productivity of the UK's economy, but also promote the socio-economic fortunes of the marginalised women. Contrary to this initiative, the Sunak's government spent a total amount of £700mn of taxpayers' money on the failed Rwanda deportation Scheme, which has since been cancelled by the Labour party on resumption of governance (Courea, 2024). The Guardian reported that Yvette Cooper, the current Home Secretary, has told the commons that "over the course of six years ministers had intended to spend £10bn on the policy but they never divulged this figure to Parliament. The Home Secretary said she had formally notified the Rwanda government that the partnership was over and thanked it for working with the UK in good faith" (Courea, 2024). The frugality of this policy is not in doubt; however, it further affirms the earlier premise, that successive Labour and Conservative governments had been steeped in adopting short term approaches to resolving the asylum/immigration challenges. Lastly, Labour's foreign policy, which seeks to reposition the UK as a global power will not be achieved with sponsorship of proxy wars in Ukraine, including aiding Israel to destroy humanity and properties in Palestine; instead, it will be realised through honest and open negotiations anchored in international law and regional diplomacy (Barston, 1983; Ofori, 2023), earmarked to respect and enforce international conventions, especially the Refugee Convention (Illegal Migration Act, 2023). Commenting on the Illegal Migration Act, Grogan and Donald have urged the British government to honour its international obligations, stating that the Act sets "a worrying precedent for dismantling asylum-related obligations of other countries, including in Europe, may be tempted to follow, with a potentially adverse effects on the international refugee and human rights protection system as a whole" (Illegal Migration Act, 2023, p. 9). To regain domestic confidence which had been lost during the fourteen-year reign of the Conservative government as well as pursue respectable international relations with its European neighbours and the international in general, an active adherence to the Refugee Convention should be the prime focus of Starmer's reign as an attempt to reset a favourable relationship with France, Italy, Germany and Spain on the subject, including gender equality.

## **9. Conclusion**

This article examined the Rwanda-UK agreement on deportation of asylum-seekers to that country to process their asylum claims. It situated the debate within the context of SDG 5 by exploring that the deportation stifles asylum women's dignity, human rights, skills and expertise, which should be harnessed to expand the UK's

competitive edge on the global socio-economic frontiers. The article also outlined some factors responsible for the increased asylum cases in the UK with a focus on the geo-politics and foreign policy nexus as contributory antecedents. Also, the article engaged with the potential contributions the UK stands to gain from the asylum communities were it to integrate these peoples strategically into the economic fabric. Furthermore, this article discussed the perilous state of asylum women in the UK, suggesting that their continuous confinements will only deepen the challenge of gender inequality to which the UK has expended resources in combating. Finally, as a strategy to reassert its influence and to be recognised favourably on the international stage, this article offered some recommendations to guide the current Labour government to formulate considerate and forward-thinking policies earmarked to end the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as sponsor a dialogue with Russia, with a view to ending the Ukraine-Russia debacle, thus protecting the dignity and human rights of all refugees within and without its borders. With those measures implemented, the Middle East and Africa will become peaceful and the phenomenon of asylum/migration movements along the English borders will stop. Thus, integrating asylum women into the mainstream economy of the British society will promote the objectives of SDG 5 concretely.

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