An Audit of Refugee Skills and Qualifications in Wales

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WRC EQUAL Team;

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the skills audit of refugees in Wales the first of its kind. This report details the findings and the recommendations arising from this important research examining the skills of the refugees, their employment situations and the barriers they face in accessing mainstream education, training and employment opportunities.

The Inclusion Department carried out the skills audit that confirms empirically the unemployment among Welsh refugee population is 64%. They face personal and structural (institutional) barriers such as:

- Recognition of overseas qualifications and experiences
- Access to employment, education and training
- Lack of English for Speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes
- Lack of childcare
- Difficulties in applying for jobs

Though the country is moving towards full employment refugees are experiencing a high unemployment rate which is unacceptable by any standard. This is a waste of human resources of skilled people as over 60% of the respondents have further or higher education qualifications, 27% of these have university degrees.

Conducting the skills audit was one of the objectives of Welsh Refugee Council Equal Project. The achievements of the project are stated in our booklet: Equal Project in Action – refugees rebuilding their lives.

I am pleased to manage the skills audit and humbled by its findings particularly the case studies showing individuals who through sheer hard work and tenacity have rebuilt their lives in Wales despite all the difficulties and barriers they faced. I trust many other refugees will follow their steps as they are highly motivated and keen to improve their employability and well-being.

The report offers a number of key recommendations, which aims to ensure that the multiple disadvantages that refugees are facing to be tackled by the Welsh Government and relevant agencies. There is a need of joined up working among public bodies to address the varied and complex needs of refugees as evidenced in the report. Therefore as recommended in the report and in Welsh Refugee Inclusion Strategy step an all Wales refugee education, training and employment working group led by Welsh Assembly Government is to be established.

I trust you find this report both enlightening and thought provoking and that it be a useful source of reference material for your work.

Eid Ali Ahmed
Deputy Chief Executive and Inclusion Director
## Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APLE</td>
<td>Accreditation of Prior Learning and Experience</td>
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<td>AWEMA</td>
<td>All Wales Ethnic Minority Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIA</td>
<td>Border and Immigration Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMA</td>
<td>British Medical Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>Black and Minority Ethnic</td>
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<td>DPIA</td>
<td>Displaced People In Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELR</td>
<td>Exceptional Leave to Remain</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<td>HP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Protection</td>
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<td>ILR</td>
<td>Indefinite Leave to Remain</td>
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<td>JCP</td>
<td>Job Centre Plus</td>
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<td>KWA</td>
<td>Kurdish Welfare Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSC</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Skills Council</td>
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<td>NAM</td>
<td>New Asylum Model</td>
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<td>NASS</td>
<td>National Asylum Support Service</td>
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<td>NVQ</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualification</td>
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<td>PAT</td>
<td>Positive Action Training</td>
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<td>RCO</td>
<td>Refugee Community Organisation</td>
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<td>REF</td>
<td>Race Equality First</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVW</td>
<td>Refugee Voice Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Somali Advice Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBASSG</td>
<td>Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>Somali Integration Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOVA</td>
<td>Supporting Others through Voluntary Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWIC</td>
<td>University of Wales Institute Cardiff</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAC</td>
<td>Voluntary Action Cardiff</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAG</td>
<td>Welsh Assembly Government</td>
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<td>WCVA</td>
<td>Wales Council for Voluntary Action</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
<td>Welsh Refugee Council</td>
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<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Mans Christian Association</td>
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Executive Summary

Introduction
This is a summary report on the Refugee Skills Audit for Wales conducted by Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) and funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) Equal programme. The report sets out the background and objectives of the project, the main findings and a series of recommendations to address barriers to refugee employment in Wales. The full report is available on Welsh Refugee Council website at www.welshrefugeecouncil.org.

Background to the WRC and EQUAL project
Set up in 1990, Welsh Refugee Council was founded in partnership between individuals, including refugees and representatives of refugee communities, voluntary organisations and statutory bodies. Originally operating from the Cardiff office WRC has expanded its operations and has established cluster offices in Wrexham, Swansea and Newport.

WRC EQUAL project is an initiative aimed at supporting refugees into employment, training and enterprise. The project is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and its primary goal is to provide capacity-building opportunities to improve the prospects for refugees competing in the job market and accessing employment.

Aims of the EQUAL project skills audit
This is the first Refugee Skills Audit to be undertaken in Wales and it aimed to identify the skills, qualifications and experiences of refugees living in Wales and to identify the barriers they face in securing employment. The full aims of the research project were to:

- Identify the skills, qualifications and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales and disseminate this information to relevant agencies
- Identify training and employment opportunities as well as means of enabling refugees to maximize their potential
- Present the skills and qualifications of refugees in a positive way to local agencies and public to promote the qualities of refugees in order to fill employment gaps
- Provide a baseline of information and evidence of needs for development of new initiatives
- Identify barriers facing refugees in their employment quest and to take positive action to address those barriers
- Use the information collected in a way that dispels some of the myths surrounding refugees

Methodology
The research used four key methods to gather the information:
- A literature review
• A questionnaire for refugees
• A series of focus groups
• Case studies

The literature review was conducted to extract and draw together the key learning points and good practices from available literature on refugee education, training and employment.

The questionnaire was designed to be easy to complete and was piloted before general distribution and was translated into the main refugee languages.

Focus groups were organised in Cardiff, Swansea and Newport to validate preliminary results from the survey and to further explore the main issues and barriers facing refugees when seeking employment in Wales.

Representative case studies were also gathered to highlight individual cases that the EQUAL team came across.

**Main Findings**

The findings below are based on a response of 363 questionnaires from Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham:

- The vast majority (89%) of refugees in Wales that responded to this questionnaire were aged under 40
- 75% of the respondents were male and 25% were female
- A total of 32 nationalities were represented in the survey and the top five identified responses were Kurdish 25%, Somali 18%, Iranian 12%, Sudanese 8% and Eritrean 8%
- A total of 27% of respondents had university qualifications, 33% had attended a course of further education, and 24% had only secondary/high school qualifications
- A total of 61% respondents had attended an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course since they had arrived in the country
- The most commonly stated reason for not attending ESOL classes from those that had not attended was the lack of availability of courses 28%, followed by respondents who already had good English skills and did not need tuition 21%
- The five greatest barriers to employment identified were lack of Language and or computer skills, difficulties in applying for jobs and attending interviews, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, searching for job vacancies and lack of references
- In their country of origin, 22% of respondents were unemployed and the remaining 78% working for employers, self employed or working in a family business
- Current employment status of respondents shows a 64% unemployment level amongst refugees
- The focus groups and case studies also highlighted individual cases of refugees and the barriers they have faced in using their skills and experiences appropriately in the UK. In particular one comment from an individual during the focus group brought to light the difficulties that refugees face:
“I was the owner of a large factory and had more than one hundred people working for me before I had to give it all up and flee my country. I lived very well and I could afford anything I wanted. Here I have to live off handouts and I can’t get a job.”

**Conclusion**

WRC EQUAL project skills audit was designed and implemented to provide a ‘snap shot’ of the skills and qualifications refugees have in Wales and to develop an understanding of the barriers they face in accessing education, training and employment opportunities.

A total of 60% of refugees in Wales have further or higher education qualifications, 27% of these have university degrees. It has also been shown many refugees left full time employment to come to the UK only to face considerable barriers when they look for work in the UK.

The research identifies a 64% unemployment rate amongst refugees in Wales. This represents a conservative figure given the considerably higher unemployment rate amongst refugees in other parts of the UK.

The lack of ESOL classes was identified as the largest barrier facing refugees. The main reason given for not attending ESOL classes for those that needed them was the lack of availability of courses as the reason they had not attended at 28%.

**Recommendations**

1.0 **ESOL**

1.1 Extra ESOL provision should be culturally appropriate to the needs of users and be made available at more locations and at different times to allow those in work or looking after children

1.2 A national drive to recruit more ESOL tutors from BME and refugee backgrounds should be encouraged. This will empower refugees and tutors can be role models for other refugees

1.3 A national ESOL strategy should be developed independent of the Basic Skills Strategy

1.4 ESOL classes should run alongside the New Asylum Model to aid early access to mainstream education and training programs and employment opportunities

2.0 **Language Provision**

2.1 A fast track system should be developed to run in tandem with further and higher education courses designed around the course of study with practical and technical language assistance

2.2 Further language provision and support should be made available for trainees to run in tandem with training programs such as NVQ’s and modern apprenticeships
3.0 Pathways to developing skills
3.1 A national scheme to enable refugees to access established training programs such as NVQ’s and modern apprenticeships providing financial support to employers and refugees
3.2 Financial incentives and intensive business support should be provided for refugees setting up in business

4.0 Overseas Qualifications
4.1 A consortium should be established for the accreditation of prior learning and experience (APLE)
4.2 Establish mechanisms to give formal recognition of transferable vocational skills of refugees including assisting refugees through skilled trade examinations

5.0 Employment
5.1 Job Centre Plus and Employment agencies should review their services to make them more accessible to refugees, particularly in terms of translation and interpretation facilities
5.2 More effective co-operation between employment agencies, JCP and employers is needed to provide a more holistic approach to helping refugees into employment
5.3 Awareness raising and cross cultural sessions should be organised with employers and agencies providing employment support services
5.4 An all Wales refugee education, training and employment working group should be established by WAG, JCP and education and training providers

6.0 Asylum Seekers
6.1 Inclusion should start from day one with asylum seekers being included in mainstream training and education programs and having the right to work

7.0 Volunteering
7.1 Policies and initiatives should be put in place to encourage refugees and asylum seekers to volunteer in fields that are in keeping with their skills and qualifications
7.2 Initiatives should be put in place to help highly qualified refugees integration by implementing coaching and job shadowing schemes
7.3 Targeted information, advice and support should be provided for refugees and asylum seekers to access the wide range of volunteering opportunities available

8.0 Refugee Inclusion
8.1 The action plan to be developed under WAG Refugee Inclusion Strategy should be well resourced and effectively monitored to make the needed difference
9.0 **Positive Action Training**  
9.1 Positive Action Training Models (PATHs) should be developed to work alongside the Race Equality Schemes under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

10.0 **Further Research**  
10.1 Further extensive research needs to be conducted into issues surrounding refugee education, training and employment in Wales
1.0 Introduction

1.1 Definitions of Legal Status and history of asylum process

Until 1996, there was no legislation specifically passed that dealt with the UK asylum policy. In that year the first Asylum and Immigration Act was passed and was followed by the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 with its main aim being to reduce the flow of applications, ease councils of the financial burden and relieve housing and social pressures.

To relieve specific councils who had experienced the most significant burdens the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 the ‘dispersal’ programme obliged asylum seekers to be transferred to regions outside the South-east. In order to manage the dispersal programme, the National Asylum Seekers Support Service (NASS) was established in April 2000.

According to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who

“Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country”.

Individuals who have made applications for refugee status and are awaiting a decision from the Home Office are referred to as ‘asylum seekers’.

The terms ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’ are often confused with one another but have different legal definitions. There are also different types of refugee status awarded to individuals.

Humanitarian protection comes from the European Convention on Human Rights to which the UK is a signatory. Article 3 of the Convention prohibits torture, intrusion and degrading treatments. Sending someone back to a country where this would occur would also breach article 3.

Humanitarian protection is granted to asylum seekers if it is accepted that they face a serious risk in their home country. Humanitarian protection normally allows the asylum seeker leave to stay in the UK for three years, although in some cases it is for a shorter period. After three years, they can apply for an extension or Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

Discretionary leave is granted outside the immigration rules in very limited circumstances to people who have been refused refugee status but who do not fulfill the criteria for humanitarian protection.

Until April 2003 applicants whose circumstances did not merit a grant of asylum under the Refugee Convention, but whom the Home office felt should be given leave to remain in the UK on humanitarian grounds or compassionate grounds were granted ‘exceptional leave to remain’. This applied when a case was accepted under the Human Rights Act 1998 or the UK’s obligations under the 1984 UN Convention Against Torture (which the UK ratified in 1988). ELR has now been replaced by two new forms of limited leave: ‘humanitarian protection’ (HP) and ‘discretionary leave’ (DL).
Indefinite Leave to Remain is granted to individuals who have been granted continuing status after the five year qualifying period.

The ‘New Asylum Model’ was announced in Annex 2 of the Government’s five year strategy for asylum and immigration ‘Controlling our Borders: Making Migration work for Britain’ published in February 2005.

The new system has been introduced in order to speed up the asylum application process and to improve its quality by allocating applications to individual ‘case owners’ who handle that application throughout the asylum process.

1.2 Background to the WRC

The Welsh Refugee Council is a national refugee charity for Wales. It was established with the support of partners including refugees, refugee communities, politicians, voluntary organisations and statutory bodies. In 1990 Welsh Refugee Council was set up in a small Cardiff office, with funding from the Home Office. The budget was £30,000 per year.

The Welsh Refugee Council is an independent charity that empowers refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives in Wales. The charity provides advice, information and support for asylum seekers and refugees in four cluster areas across Wales covering Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham.

The charity also provides specialist services in areas such as housing, health and employment and is actively involved in policy development and lobby for refugee’s rights.

Set up in 1990, the Welsh Refugee Council was founded in partnership between individuals, including refugees and representatives of refugee communities, voluntary organisations and statutory bodies.

Originally operating from the Cardiff office the WRC has expanded its operations and has established cluster offices in Wrexham, Swansea and Newport. As the predominant refugee and asylum seeker support agency the WRC is responsible for providing the One-Stop Services in Wales, a service contracted out by NASS. The WRC also provides services such as advice and support, casework, plus advocacy and representation in areas such as welfare, benefits, housing, health, education and employment.

As well as helping individual refugees and asylum seekers, the WRC is also involved in community development and capacity building for RCO’s, volunteering and adult guidance and advice in education, training and employment.

The 1999 Immigration Act resulted in a dispersal process that sent more asylum seekers to Wales and WRC faced rapid and unprecedented challenges. Over a six-month period WRC expanded dramatically as larger numbers of clients were accessing new services. The number of staff increased five-fold to 18 staff members, the organisation’s budgets increased ten fold, and new offices opened in Swansea, Newport and Wrexham.
From a one-person organisation in 1990 to a staff of over 50 in 2007 Welsh Refugee Council has expanded to empower refugees and asylum seekers rebuild their lives in Wales. We continue to work with a wide range of partners and have supported thousands of refugees and asylum seekers from across the world.

1.3 The Welsh Context
The exact number of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK has become a topic of great discussion amongst politicians, service providers and journalists alike. Unfortunately there are no exact figures available and the many organisations and research projects have provided different figures. Home office statistics for the UK show that during 2006 23,520 applications for asylum were received. Of those applications 2,170 were granted refugee status and 60 were given humanitarian protection (Home Office 2007).

Migrants, including refugees, have been coming to Wales for centuries and at the peak of the coal trade, areas of Cardiff were home to more than 50 nationalities (Cowell R & Thomas H 2002).

In 2000, the UK government introduced its dispersal policy and one of the ‘cluster’ areas to which asylum seekers were sent to was Wales. During 2004, 2232 asylum seekers were dispersed to Wales, comprising of 231 single males, 56 single females, and the remainder being made up of families with dependents (Cardiff County Council 2005).

Although these figures show the number of applications received for asylum and the number of dispersals to Wales they are not an accurate indicator of the number of refugees living there. Once asylum seekers are granted status they are free to move around the country and there are no methods for recording this. Refugees from other parts of the country are also free to move to Wales.

Despite this there are some estimates of the refugee population in Wales. A report by Cardiff City Council Accommodating diversity throughout Cardiff (2004) stated that Cardiff has a settled refugee population of over 6,000. In another study, the Welsh Refugee Council estimated that there are currently under 10,000 refugees in Wales (citation in Employability forum 2005).

1.4 Background to WRC EQUAL project
The EQUAL funded project currently under implementation in WRC is an initiative aimed at supporting refugees into employment, training and enterprises. The project is funded by the ESF and has as its primary goal, the provision of capacity-building opportunities and the improvement of prospects for refugee capabilities to compete in the job market and generally in accessing employment resources.

WRC is one of 15 organisations in the Curiaid Culon Cymru Partnership lead by the All Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA) working on the project. The WRC EQUAL project is involved in a number of initiatives designed to help refugees into employment and training though volunteering and work placements. Over 50 refugees have been working in a number of organisations as volunteers and in tailored work placements, 19 of whom have gained fulltime paid employment. The project has also provided training
for 11 refugees to work as trainers and champions in the labour market to train members of their own and other communities. The ‘training of trainers’ course has been provided by Dr Alan Dowler of People Solutions International and upon completion the 11 individuals gained expertise in how the labour market works and the psychology of gaining employment.

1.5 Aims of the EQUAL project skills audit

• To identify the skills, qualifications and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales

• To disseminate this information to relevant agencies, including education and training providers, employers, employment agencies, voluntary and community groups, commissioners of services, strategic bodies and the general public

• To identify training and employment opportunities and requirements to enable refugees to maximize their potential

• To present the skills and qualifications of refugees in a positive way to local agencies and the general public to promote the qualities of refugees in order to fill employment gaps

• To provide a baseline of information and evidence of needs for development of new initiatives

• To identify barriers facing refugees in their search for employment and to take positive action to address those barriers

• To use the information collected in a way that dispels some of the myths surrounding refugees
2.0 Methodology
2.1 The Questionnaire
The skills audit questionnaire (Appendix 1) was developed to be completed as easily and as quickly as possible in order to make completing the questionnaire as desirable as possible whilst capturing as much information as possible. In order to engage with refugees who have a limited understanding of the English language and for those clients completing the questionnaire themselves, the questionnaire was translated into French, Kurdish, Somali and Arabic.

The questionnaire consisted of mainly tick box questions and covered areas such as:
- Age
- Gender
- Country of origin/ethnicity
- Level of education
- Attendance of English language courses in the UK
- Level of language proficiency (including English) – spoken, written and read
- Previous employment history (before and after arrival into the UK)
- Views on current position of employment
- Barriers preventing employment
- Future aspirations
- Vocational skills

In order to reach a diverse range of clients a variety of techniques were used to collect information. These included postal surveys, recruiting volunteers to complete questionnaires from members of their community, leaving questionnaires with partner agencies for their clients to complete, distributing questionnaires at events organized for refugees, and conducting outreach work in cluster offices and isolated communities.

In order to gain an adequate response from individuals who were not using the facilities of WRC and other agencies, 400 questionnaires were sent out to community leaders and individuals. Using this method, clients were free to complete the questionnaire at their own convenience. Volunteers were also recruited from a variety of communities to work as researchers, visiting members of their own community and completing the questionnaire with them. These volunteers were given guidance as to how to conduct the sessions, and to engage with as broad a demographic as possible to include women, the youth and elderly. This method of data collection allowed a greater degree of trust between members of the community and project staff. By using members of the community, several barriers were broken in that participants were more willing to talk to someone they knew. This method of collection proved successful more than any other method used.

During visits to partner agencies dealing with refugees, copies of the questionnaire were left with these agencies for their clients to complete. These agencies included Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), YMCA
In addition to these methods, the development officers attended various established drop in centers and completed the questionnaires with the clients. This method of collection also proved to be very successful as the development officers were able to explain what the questionnaire was for and the benefits of participating in it. The Development Officers attended drop in sessions and ESOL classes in the cluster areas of Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham organized by a variety of organisations including several RCOs, and mainstream organisations such as CSV and the Parade (ESOL providers), Kurdish Welfare Association, Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group (SBASSG), YMCA, and many others. Displaced People In Action (DPIA) also provided the Development Officers with information from their organisations client database to be included in the Skills Audit.

In all these events and information gathering initiatives the Development Officers involved were able to overcome most language difficulties themselves as they spoke fluent Kurdish, Somali, Arabic and some knowledge of Farsi. The questionnaires were designed as such in order to make the process of completion easier relying on simple ‘tick-box’ responses rather than detailed replies to questions. In those cases where language was a barrier when completing questionnaires the Development Officers were able to recruit a volunteer from the drop in centre to act as interpreter during the interview.

By attending various drop in centres and ESOL classes the Development Officers were able to engage with refugees from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances as it was identified that many refugees may not access WRC facilities whilst others may not be available at certain times of the day.

2.2 The focus groups

In order to provide an accurate picture of the barriers facing refugees in Wales, focus groups were also conducted amongst the refugee population in different areas of Wales. In order to include refugees themselves in the process of the focus groups it was decided that they would conduct the sessions themselves. This decision is consistent with the projects philosophy of empowering refugees to make a change for themselves and their communities. Particular refugees were identified who had both the ability to conduct the focus group and the standing in the community to attract participants. Working with the University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC) a two day course was organized in research methodology. Participants attending this course had also attended facilitators training for the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) consultation exercise. Participants were therefore experienced in both conducting consultations and conducting research in the way of focus groups. Focus groups were also attended by Development Officers in order to monitor the session and reimburse attendees with travel expenses. In preparation for the focus groups the EQUAL team developed the tools to be delivered by the refugees conducting the sessions. The focus groups were organized by the facilitators themselves.
and using the skills they had gained from previous training, a group of 6-10 refugees from different backgrounds were invited to attend. A total of four focus groups were organized, two of which were held in Cardiff, one in Newport and one in Swansea. Due to logistical problems and the lack of facilitators in Wrexham it was not possible to conduct a focus group there.

2.3 Case Studies
Representative case studies were also conducted to highlight individual cases that the EQUAL team came across. A total of nine case studies were conducted from refugees of different backgrounds. The case studies have allowed the research to contextualize the information in a way that answers specific questions about the experiences of refugees. A carefully selected set of case studies illustrates the different socio-economic and political motivations in which refugees either choose to settle or are encouraged to settle in Wales.

By collecting information in this way it is possible to understand the choices individuals make and the motivations behind those choices. From this analysis, individual cases were identified to be representative of the refugee community in Wales.

2.4 Responses
The main difficulty experienced by the Development Officers was the high expectation of participants, many of whom expected us to find work for them. Even though an aim of the questionnaire was to help refugees into training and improve employment prospects it had to be made clear that there were no guarantees that the participant would actually benefit personally from completing the questionnaire. This discouraged some refugees from participating in the questionnaire but the vast majority were willing to take part in order to improve their training and employment prospects. Due to the nature of the project and its target audience, asylum seekers were not part of the cluster area and only refugees were able to participate in the project. This was due to the particular rules governing ESF EQUAL funding which restricted the projects participants to refugees and economic migrants.

Given the nature of the New Asylum Model (NAM) and the speed in which asylum seekers are given a decision on their case (up to three months), asylum seekers were invited to participate in the questionnaire and were asked to inform the Development Officers once they had received a decision. The database of responses was also updated regularly by the Development Officers by contacting asylum seekers who had completed the questionnaire for an update on their asylum claim.

Although participants anonymity was assured and it was made clear that no personal details were required if the participant was not happy to do so, there was in some instances a notable hesitation in answering some of the questions. This was particularly the case when it came to the issue of work in Wales when some participants needed reassurance that the questionnaire was solely for the purposes of WRC and no information would be passed to any other agency without the respondent’s permission.
2.5 **Constraints of the research**

As has been previously mentioned, the number of refugees living in Wales is inaccurate and figures that have been provided are only estimates. Once asylum seekers are granted refugee status they are free to move out of the area to which they have been dispersed to and move into other areas in which they want to settle whilst others move to Wales from other parts of the country.

Due to several reasons, some communities may be under-represented in the survey. Firstly, some refugees do not have any formal community organisation or prominent community members. In these cases it was extremely difficult for the Development Officers to engage with communities that had no formal organisation and did not access any of the refugee services. Other communities such as the Zimbabwean and Afghani did not respond to the questionnaire as was anticipated. This results in the noticeable large Zimbabwean and Yemeni communities being under represented in the survey.

Although several female volunteers were recruited to collect information from women in their communities, women are under represented in this survey. A greater reliance was placed on the female volunteers working on the project as both Development Officers were male. To some extent this restricted the places to which the Development Officers could visit as some women would feel uncomfortable being interviewed by a male due to cultural and religious reasons.

In order to receive a larger number of responses, the questionnaires were sent out to community leaders to distribute amongst their community and further questionnaires were left with partner agencies. This meant that individuals would have to complete the questionnaire themselves and return it to WRC office. Without the guidance of the Development Officers, some questionnaires were returned incomplete. In these cases where contact details were filled in, the Development Officers followed up on the incomplete questionnaires.
3.0 Previous research

3.1 Previous Refugee and Asylum Seeker Skill Audits from the UK

It is currently estimated that in the United Kingdom 70% of refugees and asylum seekers who are eligible for work are unemployed (Tomlinson, F. and Egan, S. 2002).

Refugees also experience significant underemployment in terms of their levels of education and qualifications:

“Unemployment among refugees is estimated to be six times the national average, despite the fact that refugees have, on average, higher levels of qualifications (Home Office, 2005).”

The lack of research surrounding the number of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK as a whole has been the catalyst for several regional research projects around the country and a larger UK wide case study by the Home Office.

A skills audit of refugee women in London from the teaching, nursing and medical professions was undertaken by the Greater London Authority (Dumper 2002).

In this research, 40 nationalities were represented, Somalis were the largest represented group (12%), followed by Iranians (8%), Iraqis (8%) and Turkish (7%).

Of the surveyed group 68% described themselves as employed in their country of origin but only 18% described themselves as being employed in the UK.

In this survey, over two-thirds of the respondents (68%) had been educated to University level. It is acknowledged however that given the target of the survey that a high percentage is expected. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents (73%) had studied English since arriving in the UK and 71% said that they wanted to continue attending ESOL classes to improve their English.

Further research entitled ‘An audit of skills amongst asylum seekers and refugees’ carried out on behalf of the Northwest Regional Development Agency (J. Harrison and E. Read 2005). This research found that of the refugee respondents, 52% were male and 48% were female. The majority of respondents in the survey were aged between 25 and 29 years old (29%) and 81% of respondents were under 39 years old. Of the respondents to the survey, 32% felt they were fluent in written and spoken English, 26% felt they had some written and spoken English, and 16% stated they had no English understanding at all.

The survey found that a total of 77% of refugees had attended primary school which was further broken down by gender, 46% of whom were male and 54% female.

68% of refugees had received high school education, 52% of who were male and 48% female. In terms of Further/Higher Education, 26% of respondents, split evenly between male and female, had attended.

In research carried out for the Department for Work and Pensions entitled ‘Refugees’ opportunities and barriers in employment and training’ (A. Bloch...
members of the Somali, Iraqi, Kosovo, Sri Lankan and Turkish communities were asked to participate in focus groups and complete questionnaires. The survey was limited to England and covered several counties.

The survey found that nearly everyone (96%) had participated in formal education before coming to Britain. Fifty six per cent of those who arrived in Britain aged 18 or over had a qualification on arrival of which 23% had a degree or higher. The survey also found that before coming to Britain, 42% of the respondents were working compared with only 29% at the time of the survey.

The survey found that 21% of respondents spoke English fluently, 39% spoke fairly well and the remainder (40%) spoke English either slightly or not at all. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents had studied one or more English language course. Of those that had not attended or completed an English language course, childcare and family commitments were the main reasons given.

The Scottish Executive also commissioned a research project entitled ‘Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland: A skills and aspirations audit’ (L. Charlaff et al 2004).

The study found that 16% of respondents indicated that they could speak English “fluently” with a third stating that they could speak English “fairly well”. Over 55% of respondents to the survey indicated that they had completed college education and approximately 21% had completed university level education. The majority of respondents (72%) indicated that they would like to improve their English language and literacy skills. The study found an employment rate of 8.2% amongst refugees in Scotland compared to an employment level of 70% in their country of origin.

The Centre for Urban and Regional studies at the University of Birmingham was commissioned by Coventry and Warwickshire Learning and Skills Council to undertake a programme of research to help identify the education, training, employment, skills, and services in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Like much of the previous research that has been carried out, this research found that the majority of respondents to the survey were in employment before arrival in the UK (63% in this case) and that very few had worked after arrival with only 7% identifying their last paid employment taking place after they had arrived in the UK (J, Phillimore et al. 2007).

The most extensive skills audit of refugees was conducted by the Home Office and its results were published in July 2004. Entitled ‘Skills Audit of Refugees’ (Home Office Online Report 37/04), over 3,700 questionnaires were posted to people who received a positive decision on their asylum application between November 2002 and February 2003. Respondents were asked to provide information on a broad spectrum of skills and almost 2,000 questionnaires were returned.

Overall, two thirds of respondents were working before leaving their country of origin and less than 5% were unemployed. Half of the respondents had received 10 years or more of formal education and over 40% held qualifications before they arrived in the UK. Unfortunately the survey did not
ask the respondents about their current employment status and any education or training they had received since they had arrived in the UK. The survey found that 31% of respondents were fluent or fairly good in English, this was predominantly made up of respondents from Zimbabwe where 93% stated that they were totally fluent or were fairly good in English.

The research carried out by agencies often highlights the skills that exist in refugee and asylum seeker communities and the benefit that could be gained by allowing asylum seekers to work and improving services for refugees who are allowed to work but face substantial barriers. The information collected by the surveys is not extensive and covers only certain areas of the UK. It is imperative that the qualifications, skills and previous work experience of asylum seekers should be recorded, when they have been provided with accommodation. This will provide essential information of use to local education and training providers and employment services for forward planning and future employment possibilities (Aldridge F & Waddington S 2001).

3.2 ESOL

The provision of English language is widely acknowledged as a key factor in helping refugees in the integration process. Despite its importance there are serious shortfalls in English language training, co-ordination and funding (Griffiths, D 2003). Women are particularly vulnerable to sporadic learning patterns when it comes to ESOL. This is especially the case when the woman has to look after her children or is part of a large family and is expected to carry out household duties. For example, some Muslim women requiring all female classes and a female teacher, often find that availability of such courses is very limited. Phillimore et al (2007) suggest that “childcare facilities for women with young children should be increased and subsidized”. Studies such as this have highlighted the practical need to support refugees with childcare needs and provide tailored learning programs to meet the demands (Home Office 2005). Other research carried out for the Institute for Public Policy Research has found that nearly a third of those who had started a course did not complete it and childcare was the reason mentioned most often (Bloch 2004).

Respondents to the survey also suggested possible improvements that could be made to the provision of ESOL for refugees. More contact hours and more courses were mentioned most often by respondents (24% and 12% respectively).

The importance of English Language for refugees has been recognized by academics and service providers and various research projects have identified the link between an improved level of English language and a rise in employment probability (Dustmann, C. and van Soest, A. 1998). The type of ESOL provision is also important in providing the correct mechanisms to help refugees into work. Services need to be more widely available and targeted to help individuals into employment providing workplace-based ESOL classes (Employability Forum 2005). Such dedicated work-related provision is likely to be more attractive to potential participants, more effective in securing employment (especially amongst those with
previous qualifications) and may still result in the sorts of language skills that fulfill broader objectives (Bloch 2004).
Ahmed (1996) agrees with Bloch in that the provision of ESOL is not always enough and that more tailored language tuition is needed for more qualified individuals.
‘Although most of those with overseas qualification have some English language knowledge, it is often not specific enough for operating in a professional environment. This means access to suitable jobs is often hindered by insufficient technical and occupational language skills’ (Ahmed EA 1996).
It is clear that ESOL is intrinsic to the successful economic inclusion of refugees however, ESOL still remains under funded and neglected. Phillimore et al (2007) suggest that services should not stop once students complete ESOL courses and that additional support should be provided to help students identify other opportunities such as higher or further education or work placements.
In Late 2006 the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) announced that funding for ESOL courses for asylum seekers aged 19 and over would be terminated and only refugees who are unemployed or on income-based benefits would be eligible for free ESOL.
In response to this the refugee council announced that ‘in light of the current debate around integration, and, in particular, the prime minister's comments about the importance of learning English, it seems utterly contradictory to cut funding for English classes.’
In addition to the cut in provision of English classes, unemployed refugees who cannot speak English well will have their benefits cut if they cannot show that they are learning the language (BBC News 12th February 2007).

3.3 Models of Good Practice
There is a general lack of government policies and processes aimed at getting refugees into work that is in line with their qualifications and experience. Despite this lack of initiative, Full and Equal Citizens (Home Office 2000) suggests that, wherever possible, it may be constructive for refugees to be provided with practical support to return to the area of work in which they have previous experience.
Integration Matters (Home Office, 2005) outlines a list of needs facing refugees in terms of employment and training which should be taken in to account when devising employment strategies:
• Proactive steps taken to combat and confront discrimination and prejudice.
• Development of structured routes for re-training and re-accreditation for those with practical or professional level skills.
• Local availability of English language courses with flexible class times.
• Provision of a level of practical knowledge about the working culture of the United Kingdom and the provision of guidance for the writing of CVs and training for interview techniques.
• The provision of easily accessible and user-friendly information which details services and support available through JCP offices and elsewhere.
- The provision of official documentation confirming Refugee Status, and the level of relevant or UK based work experience currently held by the refugee (available through volunteering and other activities). This should be clearly recognizable by employers, banks and JCP offices to avoid delays in accessing services and needs to be accompanied by the allocation of a National Insurance number with the letter of confirmation.

3.3.1 Access First Employment and Training Project
The Access First Employment and Training Project, a partnership project coordinated by the Oxford based charity Refugee Resource, supports refugees and asylum seekers into work and training that matches their skills and abilities.

Services offered by Access First project include:
- One to one advice and guidance
- Coaching in jobsearch skills
- Training in how to do application forms and CV’s
- Interview practice
- Unpaid work placements
- Information resource area

The project also provided ESOL supported group work in jobsearch, applications and interviews and general information about the British legal issues surrounding employment (Refugee Resource 2005).

3.3.2 Progress 2 Work Centre
Based on the success of the Oxford project WRC EQUAL project developed a partnership alongside DPIA, SOVA, RVW and later REF to establish a similar employment centre based at the WRC offices in Cardiff.

The Cardiff Progress 2 Work Centre was established with similar aims to the Oxford based project and was open to refugees three afternoons per week. The activities that the centre is involved in include:
- One to one advice and guidance
- Coaching in jobsearch skills
- Training in how to do application forms and CV’s
- Interview practice
- Unpaid work placements
- Information resource area

Volunteers are heavily involved in the running of the centre and contribute a significant amount of their time to helping clients who use the services.

3.3.3 Refugees into Jobs
Refugees into Jobs was set up in 1997 with funds from the London Development Agency, the Governments SRB Challenge Fund and the European Commission, and empowers clients by providing them with the necessary tools to improve their employment prospects. The project provides help in the following areas:
• Information, advice and guidance on careers and routes into employment
• Employment services and brokerage liaising with employers and clients to match client skills to employer requirements
• Job search training and job club providing training on how to search for jobs and advertising the latest jobs in the job club

3.3.4 Refugee Doctor Initiative
Other projects around the UK have sought to provide targeted help to qualified refugees from particular sectors in order to meet the demand for skills and professionals in the UK.

The Refugee Doctor Initiative is one such project that has provided help and support to refugee doctors in the UK who are looking to restart their medical careers after sometimes considerable absences.

The British Medical Association (BMA) Refugee Doctor Initiative is a special package of free benefits, available to refugee and asylum seeking doctors as they seek to establish their careers in the UK.

The initiative allows refugee doctors to access BMA services and provides guidance and support to refugee doctors. These include free subscriptions to its magazines, the use of the BMA library and information support and a 24 hour counseling service.

The Refugee Doctors' Database is a project jointly set up by the BMA and the Refugee Council. The Database collects information on refugee doctors in the UK, and uses this to help ensure that appropriate help is offered in the right areas.

3.3.5 The Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors Group (WARD)
In 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government gave funding to the Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors Group to set up and manage an in-house study programme in Cardiff for asylum seeking and refugee doctors in Wales. The programme is run by the school of Postgraduate Medical and Dental education and consists of ongoing International English Language Testing System (IELTS) courses as well as Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) 1 and 2 lectures which are required for non EEA nationals to practice medicine in the UK.

Participants on the project have access to medical textbooks, journals, practice materials and the internet. As well as offering a drop-in facility, WARD provides funding for refugee doctors to take their exams (Welsh Assembly Government 2006).

3.3.6 Time Together
Other projects and initiatives have shown that volunteering is often a vital way in which refugees and asylum seekers can settle in communities often obtaining paid employment as a direct result of their volunteering experiences. In many cases however, volunteering provides individuals with a chance to build confidence and make friends in a new community.
Time Together was set up by TimeBank in 2002, in response to a government white paper that recommended the provision of mentoring schemes to help refugees integrate better in the UK.

TimeBank used its expertise in creating innovative and exciting volunteering campaigns to devise Time Together. The scheme aimed to complement the well-established services already provided by refugee organisations and community groups. Time Together is a refugee mentoring programme that matches UK citizens with refugees to encourage better integration. Set up by TimeBank in 2002 the project now runs in 24 cities. TimeBank has contracted with SOVA to run the project in Cardiff, from April 2006. The objective of the scheme is to facilitate the integration of refugees into British society, build bridges between communities and promote positive images of refugees in the media.

The project was launched in Cardiff in April 2006 with a target of recruiting 40 volunteer mentors and 40 mentees within the first year and 100 volunteers and 100 mentees within a two year period.

3.3.7 Want 2 Work Project
The Want2Work initiative, which was developed jointly by the Welsh Assembly Government and Job Centre Plus Wales, as a direct result of one of the main actions set out in the Assembly Government’s report, ‘Raising Economic Activity’, in turn addressing a key objective outlined in both ‘Wales: A Better Country’ and the ‘Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales 2005’ – that of helping more people in Wales into jobs. The initiative tests a range of measures designed to help those people who are economically inactive and already claiming benefit, but who would like to work, to move voluntarily into sustained employment. The project is based in three areas of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot and the selection of the areas are based on local levels of economic activity. Although the project is not based entirely on refugees, the areas that have been identified are those inhabited by ethnic minorities, including refugees.

The project aims to promote the integration of those seeking asylum and those granted refugee status by the advancement of their education and the relief of unemployment through the provision of advice, guidance, services and support on training, education, employment and volunteering issues.

3.3.8 DPIA Readiness for Work
DPIA Readiness for Work is a service for asylum seekers and refugees living in Wales who need help and advice with finding work or preparing for work. Currently Readiness for Work operates in Newport, Swansea and Cardiff on an appointment basis.

Clients can get help with:
- Job search
- Job applications, CVs and Letter writing
- Interview techniques
- Training and study
• Volunteering and work placements

Readiness for Work also works in collaboration with various agencies and education and training providers to provide and support training courses, ESOL for employment, IT, work readiness training and volunteering opportunities etc.

3.3.9 Positive Action Training
The Centre for Employment and Enterprise Development (CEED) has been in existence in one form or another since 1988 providing positive action and pre-recruitment training, careers’ guidance, and business support services including business start-up. These programs are targeted at addressing the under-representation of Black and other people of ethnic minority origin in employment, self-employment, education and training.

Positive Action training came in 1988 about after it was identified that amongst 230 housing employees, only one was black (Ahmed E A 1989). The term 'positive action' refers to a number of methods designed to counteract the effects of past discrimination and to help abolish stereotyping.

Action can be taken to encourage people from particular groups to take advantage of opportunities for work and training. This can be done when under representation of particular groups has been identified in the previous year.

The Race Relations Amended Act (2000) supports Positive Action measures permitted by the 1976 Act (Section 35), such as the making facilities or services available to meet the specific education, training or welfare needs of particular racial group. This is done by providing English language classes for refugees and seeking to attract ethnic minorities through targeted publicity to inform of opportunities and services provided.
Positive Action is often confused with positive discrimination. Positive discrimination, which generally means employing someone because they come from a deprived group in spite of whether they have the relevant skills and qualifications, is unlawful.

3.3.10 EMPLOOI Project Holland
The EMPLOOI project is based at the Dutch Refugee Council and provides a skills matching service where the needs of the employers are matched with skills and qualifications of job seeking refugees (Ahmed E A 1989).
The project works closely with the Dutch Employment Services and has developed a network of over 80 mentors. They carry out an intensive interview with each refugee, may visit employers with them, go to interviews, help with letters of application, assist with dealing with welfare benefit offices for those refugees wishing to do an internship etc.

They give custom-made advice to individuals and frequently sustain their interest by keeping in touch with client and employer “after sales”, as well as negotiating with individual employers on their behalf. The project is mutually
beneficial. All advisers work in their own way but collaborate closely with the employment office while discussing the tasks they perform with each refugee individually.

### 3.3.11 Employment and Training Provision
Welsh Refugee Council and Career Wales Cardiff and the Vale have created a new and innovative service aimed at promoting and providing quality careers information, advice and guidance for adults with regard to education, training and employment opportunities in a multicultural community setting.

A secondee from Career Wales Cardiff and the Vale is based in Welsh Refugee Council’s Cardiff office for four days a week providing advice and advocacy service to clients. The post holder has been in place as of mid December 2000 and since has developed this service by engaging service users to identify their needs and encouraging them to develop and attain their full potential by supporting them in seeking employment, training and education opportunities. The post holder has successfully linked with service providers and has carried out intensive outreach and established partnership working relationship with other agencies.

### 3.4 Employment as a key to integration
A number of factors affect the employability of refugees. These can include English language proficiency, education, qualifications, length of residence, immigration status, aspirations for migration, age, gender, and social and community networks.

There is also significant research from a wide range of sources to suggest that gaining valuable employment is key to successful integration (Audit Commission 2000). The Home office’s Indicators of integration report highlighted employment as one of the four main domains that are “widely acknowledged as critical factors in the integration process” (Ager, A and Strang, A 2004) and Knox (1997) agrees that there is strong evidence that economic inactivity and long spells of joblessness has a negative impact on that individuals integration. It has been further argued that

“For a refugee, who has been powerlessly dependent on the benevolence of the receiving country, the psychological value of obtaining a job will be greater even than for an indigenous worker” (Robinson, V 1998).

Volunteering often plays a big part in helping refugees integrate into the host community and can often provide the volunteer with pathways into the job market. Lack of UK work experience and knowledge of UK work ethics often hampers refugees in getting a job that is relative to their skills and qualifications.

The role voluntary work can play in enabling refugees to use their own skills, knowledge and autonomy, aiding new arrivals and contributing to their communities is paramount to the development of self-esteem and notions of self-worth. It is suggested that national funding be offered to facilitate capacity building of such organizations (ECRE 2005).
Despite the importance that the UK government places on integration of refugees, some academics believe that the policies have the effect of excluding refugees from society. It is also the case that whilst the Home office believes that integration starts once an asylum seeker is granted status; the actual asylum process neglects the importance of integration whilst the client is waiting for a decision. Welsh Assembly Government on the other hand believe that integration should start from the moment an asylum seekers arrives in Wales but as the issue is not a devolved policy, they can not implement any changes.

“The UK has become a leading proponent of European restrictionalism and has focused its efforts on developing policy that excludes asylum seekers from mainstream society…the high levels of unemployment and underemployment currently experienced by ASRs may serve to exclude them from society in dispersal areas” (Phillimore and Goodson 2006).

Without work, integration will be made increasingly difficult for refugees as the opportunities to mix with local people and speak English are limited. Furthermore due to the dispersal policy, continued refugee unemployment in dispersal areas will further deprive urban areas and work to alienate refugees from the wider community.

‘The consignment of so many skilled and motivated individuals to underemployment or unemployment constitutes a massive loss of opportunity to deprived areas at a time when skills shortages are evident and pose threats to the prosperity of local economies’ (Phillimore and Goodson 2006).

The transition from asylum seeker to refugee is also often made more difficult by lack of communication between solicitors and relevant statutory and refugee specific agencies. With the introduction of the New Asylum Model, asylum seekers can go through the whole process and be granted refugee status within months of application. The fact that refugees enter the job market and seek extra support services such as ESOL so soon after arrival perpetuates the need for the transition from asylum seeker to refugee to be a seamless one. This transition process can be the most important time in a refugees integration process and extra support services need to be provided to make this transition easier (Bloch 2004, WRC Move on report 2007).

Considerable difficulties also arise when employees of education and employment services are not aware of legislation surrounding refugees and asylum seekers. This often results in inconsistencies and misguidance in the provision of services. Aldridge F & Waddington S (2001) argue that “all relevant staff in the employment, careers, benefits and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) services should be provided with clear guidelines about the rights of, and opportunities open to, asylum seekers. At present, different interpretations are made in different localities and by different services”.

- 30 -
3.5 Barriers facing refugees

Through the various skills audits and research conducted around the area of refugee issues, many barriers have been identified that are holding refugees back in establishing themselves in the UK and the job market. Qualitative research carried out has indicated that ‘newcomers’ experiences of job search were generally negative and that individuals tend to feel that there is little emphasis placed on past experience and qualifications...there is no evidence that skilled refugees are making the leap into skilled work commensurate with their skills’ (Phillimore and Goodson 2006). This results in refugees taking low skilled work regardless of their qualifications or work experience.

This is also the case when it comes to refugees with entrepreneurial skills. Research has found that many refugees that arrive in the UK were either self employed or worked for a family business from their country of origin. In encouraging the spirit of enterprise in the UK considerable effort should be made to encourage refugees to establish businesses.

Ahmed E. A (2004) argues that more help should be provided to refugee entrepreneurs and that refugees themselves share many attributes with entrepreneurs.

“The process of becoming a refugee, fleeing one’s own country, taking so many risks and making uncompromising decisions is a classical entrepreneurial decision”.

Refugees also face difficulties in using services provided by employment agencies such as the Job Centre. Research suggests that Job Centre Plus encourages refugees to apply for low-skilled work because it takes less time than trying to explore more suitable options (Phillimore and Goodson, 2001; Phillimore et al., 2003).

English language and literacy has been identified as one of the largest barriers facing refugees by the vast majority of surveys in this field. This is also the case in research carried out on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions by Alice Bloch. In this research it was found that the largest proportion of respondents identified English language and literacy the main barrier to labour market participation (Bloch 2002b).

The same barriers have been identified by employers, a consistent message was that refugee employees were motivated and had a good work ethic. Language difficulties were highlighted as the main problem – very often the only problem in recruitment (R, Williams 2006).

This research conducted by R, Williams for the Back to Work Company identified some of the key barriers facing refugees as:

- Lack of understanding of the UK job market and culture
- Poor application form, CV and interview techniques
- Lack of supervision, support and mentoring
- National re-qualification and re-registration schemes for professionals are not ‘refugee friendly’
- Poor language skills
- Lack of evidence of qualifications and experience
- Lack of accessible information about what is available and what they are entitled to, tailored to their needs
Phillimore et al (2007) also found that refugees face a number of barriers when accessing ESOL. These barriers included the 'accessibility of colleges and the cost of transport, the ability to communicate when registering for a course, lengthy waiting lists, and the need to gain work. Women in particular had responsibility for childcare, which impaired on their ability to study and travel'.

In a survey of 400 refugees the employability forum (2004) found that ‘less than one third of refugees were in employment compared to 60 per cent of the ethnic minority population. Refugees were also disproportionately concentrated in temporary posts, and less well paid than their ethnic minority counterparts. The two barriers to employment identified most frequently by the refugees were English Language and literacy, and lack of work experience’.

Qualified professionals with managerial and administrative backgrounds are the most disadvantaged group in terms of routes to employment. They follow longer routes of postgraduate education, volunteering and so on, yet most are unable to find suitable employment (D Shiferaw & H Hagos 2002). This is partly due to the increased levels of competition with UK nationals that have University degrees, many of whom are themselves unable to find work or are underemployed. Refugee professionals are often unable to provide evidence of qualifications and lack references from previous jobs which provide further obstacles to employment. Unqualified refugees with manual experience are found to experience fewer barriers to employment and are more likely to be employed. The main barrier that this group faces is the lack of English language proficiency.
4.0 Findings and Analysis

4.1 Demographics of respondents

4.1.1 Age of respondents

Out of the 363 respondents to the questionnaire, 27% were aged between 18 and 24, 33% were aged between 25 and 30, 29% were aged between 31 and 40, 8% were aged between 41 and 50 and 3% were aged over 50 years. The results have found that the vast majority 89% of refugees in Wales are aged 40 or under. These results are comparable to other skills audits where 81% of the respondents were aged 39 or under (J. Harrison and E. Read 2005).

![Figure 4.1.1 Age of respondents](image)

4.1.2 Gender breakdown

From the 363 respondents that took part in the questionnaire, 75% were male and 25% were female. Although there is not an even representation male and female respondents in this survey, other skills audits and anecdotal evidence suggests that there are considerably more male refugees in Wales than there are female. Until an accurate and complete census of the refugee population is carried out it will be difficult to accurately assess the gender balance between male and female refugees.
4.1.3 Ethnicity/Country of origin
A wide variety of nationalities are represented in this survey with a total of 32 nationalities. However the vast majority of these nationalities are represented with three respondents or fewer. No assumptions were made of respondents nationalities and individuals were free to be known by their ethnicity rather than their legally defined country of origin.

The top 5 ethnicities/countries of origin of respondents can be seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Country of origin</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>90 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>66 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>45 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>30 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>29 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.4 Location in Wales
Responses were collected from the four main dispersal areas in Wales to assess the refugee population in the cities of Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham.

Of the 363 respondents to the questionnaire a total of 60% were located in Cardiff, 17% respondents were from Newport, 16% from Swansea, 6% from Wrexham and 1 respondent from an area other than those identified.
4.1.5 Education level of respondents

Of the 363 respondents, a total of 5% of individuals had no education at all, 11% have a primary school level education, 24% have a secondary school level of education, 33% have a college level of education, 19% of the respondents are educated to university undergraduate level and 8% have postgraduate qualifications. The results from this survey are not comparable with other research in other areas as it shows that 60% of respondents have further or higher level of education. The research shows that there is a higher concentration of qualified refugees in Wales than in other areas of the UK. When the results are further broken down by gender they show that 63% of female refugees have further or higher education qualifications compared to approximately 57% of male refugees with the same level of qualifications. These results have been further broken down to show education levels of respondents by gender.
The following comment was made by a male refugee during the focus groups held in Swansea. The individual was highly qualified and his comments reveal many of the frustrations that qualified refugees have.

“Overseas education and qualifications are not transferable or at least not recognized to be so in this country. This is a problem faced by all and even those who have been through a very similar system of education have to re-qualify.”

4.2 Language
4.2.1 ESOL Attendance of respondents
A total of 61% respondents had attended a course of ESOL since they had arrived in the country and the remaining 39% had not attended any ESOL classes at all. The responses are further broken down by gender in the following figure. This is comparable to research carried out which has shown that 65% of refugees had attended at least one course of English language studies since arriving in the UK (A Bloch 2002).

Figure 4.2.1 ESOL attendance of respondents

The case study of Yarow Aden (appendix 2) further identifies the importance of ESOL to refugees.

“The biggest obstacles facing Refugees and Asylum Seekers are language, computer skills, job hunting, work experience, career opportunities and that even if you are high qualified person it's very difficult to find a proper job, which may lead you to desperation”.

4.2.2 Reasons why respondents have not attended ESOL.
Individuals who had not attended any ESOL classes since their arrival in the UK were then asked for reasons why they had not done so, respondents were also free to identify more than one reason for not attending any ESOL classes.
From the 222 responses given to this question, 21% stated that their English language skills were already good and did not need further ESOL training. In total, 8% identified transport costs as the reason, 14% gave childcare as the
reason, 28% stated that availability of courses/places prevented them from 
attending ESOL, 11% identified inconvenience of course timetable, 14% had 
difficulties accessing information about courses and 4% could not pay for 
courses. Responses were further broken down by gender, represented in the 
figure below. The results of this question show that there is considerable 
demand for ESOL classes as 28% of refugees who have not attended state 
that the lack of courses/places prevents them from attending. This is 
supported by anecdotal evidence from service providers and refugee 
organisations where refugees have had to wait several months before 
registering on a course. There is also a need to provide classes suitable for 
women by providing extra crèche facilities in colleges to allow women to 
attend classes with their children. In research carried out by Bloch, A (2002) 
the lack of childcare provision was given as the main reason why women did 
not attend ESOL classes which is supported by this research where amongst 
women, 25% do not attend ESOL classes due to a lack of childcare provision. 
During the Swansea focus group a female participant talked (through an 
interpreter) of the difficulties that she faced in trying to attend her ESOL 
classes whilst taking care of her children:

“\textit{I am finding it very difficult to find a class where I can study and look
after my children. I am alone in this country, my English is not good
and I can’t speak to my children’s teachers, doctors when there is a
problem.”}

The lack of availability of ESOL classes was given as the major reason why 
refugees had not attended ESOL classes as figure 4.2.2 shows, this view was 
also reflected during the focus groups. Through an interpreter, one particular 
participant from the Cardiff focus group stated:

“\textit{I have been waiting for an opportunity to learn English ever since I
came to this country but I am not given that opportunity. I have been
on the waiting list for 6 months at my local college and there is no
guarantee I will even get a place. The government should do more to
help people like me who want to learn English.”}
4.2.3 English proficiency of respondents
Respondents were then asked to rate their own level of English ability in terms of Speaking, Reading and Writing. In terms of speaking ability, 3% respondents had no understanding of English, 24% had a basic understanding, 38% had an intermediate/conversational understanding and 35% had an advanced/fluent understanding of spoken English.
When asked to rate their reading ability, 3% had no ability, 28% had a basic ability, 37% had an intermediate understanding and 32% had an advanced level of English reading ability.
The English writing ability of respondents are broken down by 3% respondents with no writing ability, 34% had basic writing ability, and 36% had an intermediate ability whilst 27% had an advanced ability of written English. Responses are further broken down by gender in the following tables.

Table 4.2.1 English proficiency of respondents (male)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2.2 English proficiency of respondents (female)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ability of refugees to speak the English language at a high level even before they arrive in the UK does not always make their employment prospects any better. Those that have an advanced understanding of the English language often arrive with higher expectations than others but find that there are other barriers that prevent them from gaining appropriate employment.

This is given in the example of the second case study of Awil (appendix 3);

“I have been trying to get employment opportunity for a long time now, and although, as I believe, I have the skills, knowledge and a reasonable command of English language, I did not get the chance to find a good job”.

4.2.4 Ability to speak ‘other’ languages
Respondents were then asked if they were fluent in any other language other than English and the main language of their country of origin. A total of 52% individuals were fluent in at least one other language, 21% were fluent in two or more languages, 8% were fluent in three or more languages and 1% were fluent in four or more languages.

These figures are further broken down by gender in the following figure

4.3 Employment Status
4.3.1 Employment status of respondents in country of origin
Figure 4.3.1 shows that of the 363 respondents to the questionnaire, 22% were unemployed in their country of origin, 44% were in full-time employment, 1% were in part-time employment, 18% were self employed, 12% were employed as part of a family business and 3% did not respond to this question. The collective results show that 75% of refugees in Wales were in employment of some sort before they arrived in the UK. These
results are slightly higher than similar research conducted in other areas where 63% of refugees were found to be employed in their country of origin (J, Phillimore et al. 2007).

One particular comment from a refugee during the Cardiff focus group highlighted the change in circumstances that many face when they leave their jobs in their countries of origin.

“I was the owner of a large factory and had more than one hundred people working for me before I had to give it all up and flee my country. I lived very well and I could afford anything I wanted. Here I have to live off handouts and I can’t get a job.”

The completed case studies also show that many refugees have left managerial and professional careers behind to start a new life in the UK. The case studies further dispel the myth that refugees come to the UK in search of work.

Case study 3 (appendix 4) shows the work and experiences that Semere was involved in before he arrived in the UK.

“My name is Semere Gebrihiwot. I am an Eritrean. Before I came back to Britain as an asylum seeker in 2006, I had already earned an M.Sc degree in agriculture from the University Of Greenwich, Kent. On completing my studies I have returned to my country and worked for a number of years as a director of a department and later as an agricultural expert with both the government ministry of agriculture and counterpart international organisation including the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the UN”.

Figure 4.3.1 Employment status of respondents in country of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status before arrival in the UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2 Current employment status of respondents

Figure 4.3.2 shows that of the 363 respondents, 64% were unemployed at the time of the survey, 15% were in full-time employment, 12% were in part-time employment, 2% were self employed, 1% were employed in a family business and 6% did not respond to this question.
Many refugees realize that gaining work experience can often be very difficult to do in the UK. In order to get on the ‘employment ladder’ many have to start working in jobs that are not commensurate to their employment. One refugee expressed this as a problem in gaining work experience in the UK during the Focus group held in Swansea.

“Employers prefer British experience and our past work experience in that case is not transferable.”

Another female refugee replied:

“Volunteering is the best approach to provide British work experience to refugees. However it depends on whom you volunteer with as some can be a waste of time.”

One of the major obstacles that refugees face in finding appropriate employment is the lack of UK work experience. Having been in the country for only a short period, work experience from the refugees home country is not always given the recognition that it should. One way in which refugees can overcome this obstacle is by starting their search for employment by volunteering. Case study 4 (appendix 5) shows evidence of how Christian developed his work experience in the UK;

“At the moment I am working with the Equal Project and I am on work placement with Hafod Housing association. There I work in with a community initiative project with the BME community in St Melons, and other parts of Cardiff. I assist in giving them advice and guidance on the troubles they have on a daily basis. My work placement is a great help to me because it gives me the experience of British work that I need”.

Figure 4.3.2 Current employment status of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time paid employment</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time paid employment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family business</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3 Views of respondents on current employment
Of the 112 individuals that were employed at the time of the questionnaire a total of 35% individuals were happy with their employment status and 65% were not. Out of 112 responses, 56% individuals thought that they were underpaid and 44% thought that they were not. These responses are broken down by gender in the following figures.

Figure 4.3.3 Are you happy with your current employment position?

4.3.4 Skills and qualifications match
Individuals were also asked to assess their current employment in terms of their skills and qualifications. From the 112 individuals who were employed at the time, 26% thought that their current job was at a much lower level than their skills and qualifications, 44% thought that their job was at a slightly lower level, 21% thought that their job was at the same level, 9% thought their job was at a slightly higher level and nobody thought that their job was at a much higher level than their skills and qualifications.
4.4 Barriers and future plans

4.4.1 Barriers facing respondents

Respondents were then asked to identify the barriers that they faced in gaining employment or improving their employment prospects. Individuals answering this question were free to identify more than one perceived barrier they faced. The five greatest barriers identified are the lack of Language/computer skills at 173, 118 identified difficulties in applying for jobs and attending interviews as a barrier, 88 identified lack of recognition of overseas qualifications as a largest barrier, 81 identified searching for job vacancies as a barrier and 76 individuals thought that lack of references was a barrier in gaining employment.

One male focus group participant in Cardiff commented (through on interpreter) on the language difficulties that they faced when looking for work.

"My biggest problem is that when I go to look for work at the agencies I can't fill in the forms properly. I am sure that this has a bad impact on my ability to get a job because employers will always prefer people who can speak English"

The view of this particular individual was echoed by another male participant during the focus group held in Swansea.

"I am fit and able to do any job but I couldn't because of language. 3 days ESOL is not enough I can't communicate with society, I can't integrate."

Many of the participants to all focus groups stated that the lack of English language ability was a major barrier to employment for refugees. In all of the focus groups when the issue of ESOL was addressed, the participants
became very emotional and invariably had something to say about the subject. The complete list of barriers is shown in figure 4.4.1

Figure 4.4.1 Barriers facing respondents

The second largest barrier that refugees identified from the skills audit was also commented upon during the focus group held in Newport. In both these cases, applying for jobs and attending interviews proved to be a major barrier for refugees when gaining employment. The male refugee from the Newport focus group commented that:

“I have applied for many jobs myself and been refused straight away, even when I get help in completing the application form when it comes to interviews I don’t know what to do, I can’t answer the questions and I feel like I’m being interrogated.”

The case study of Rasha (appendix 6) further highlight some of the barriers and difficulties that refugees face;

“When the time came, however, I woke up to a different set of realities. I didn’t know where or how to look for jobs. The language, systems and new cultures were also all very difficult to understand at first. My confidence and motivation suffered. In time I realised that I was not sufficiently prepared and lacked many skills and guidance for gaining employment in this country”.

4.4.2 What respondents would like to do next
In identifying what respondents would like to do next, individuals were free to give more than one reply to this question. Finding any job was identified most as the thing respondents wanted to do next at 147, finding a job that matches the individuals skills and qualifications was identified next at 143 and 129 individuals wanted to obtain further training. Figure 4.4.2 shows the responses given to this question broken down by gender.
4.4.3 What would improve employment prospects

In this question respondents were asked to identify the most important improvement that could be made to help them gain employment or improve their employment prospects. A total of 106 respondents identified an improvement in the provision of job search facilities as the most important, 84 thought that improved provision of training by the Job Centre was most important and 69 thought that increased training by employers was most important as shown in Figure 4.4.3.

During the focus groups, Job Centre Plus was mentioned on a number of occasions in all of the areas in which the events took place. The general opinion that was held was that the job search facilities were inadequate to the needs of refugees, many of whom did not know how to use the automated system.

One particular comment made by a male refugee during the Cardiff focus group deserves particular mention.

“Sometimes the Job Centre cuts your benefit if you volunteer. I was volunteering at a very good place and I was really learning a lot, I hoped to get a good job there but when I went to sign I was told to stop it and apply for a job that they found which I could apply for, the job was for a cleaner. I was really upset about that.”
Figure 4.4.3 shows the total responses given to this question broken down by gender.
5.0 Conclusion

The WRC EQUAL project skills audit was designed and implemented to provide a ‘snap shot’ of the skills and qualifications refugees have in Wales and to develop an understanding of the barriers they face in accessing employment and education opportunities.

The research has shown that there is a large diversity of refugees in Wales coming from 32 different countries and that many of the myths that surround refugees are false. A total of 60% of refugees in Wales have further/higher education qualification, 27% of these have university degrees. It has also been shown many refugees left full time employment to come to the UK only to face considerable barriers when they look for work in the UK.

The research identifies a 64% unemployment rate amongst refugees in Wales. This represents a conservative figure given the considerably higher unemployment rate amongst refugees in other parts of the UK.

The lack of ESOL classes has also been identified by the research as an area of work and the largest barrier facing refugees. A total of 28% of those that had not accessed ESOL classes gave the lack of availability of courses as the reason they had not attended. Lack of language and computer skills was also identified as the largest barrier facing refugees in gaining employment. Anecdotal evidence from the WRC EQUAL project and other agencies support these results with many refugees waiting up to 6 months to start ESOL classes.

From the evidence it is clear that the key barriers facing refugees in Wales are language difficulties, transferable skills and qualifications, and accessing employment opportunities. However in order to meet the growing demand for such services, extra provision needs to be put into place by local and national government institutions.
6.0 Recommendations

6.1 ESOL

6.1.1 ESOL provision should be widened to meet the demand of refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. The extra provision should be culturally appropriate to the needs of users and be made available at more locations and at different times to allow those in work or looking after children.

6.1.2 A national drive to recruit more ESOL teachers from BME and refugee backgrounds should be encouraged. This will empower refugees and tutors can be role models for other refugees.

6.1.3 A national ESOL strategy should be developed independent of the Basic Skills Strategy.

6.1.4 ESOL classes to run alongside the New Asylum Model to aid refugees access employment and training schemes straight away.

6.2 Pathways to developing skills

6.2.1 A national program to enable refugees to access established training programs such as NVQ’s and modern apprenticeships providing financial support to employers and refugees.

6.2.2 Financial and business support should be provided for refugees setting up in business.

6.3 Overseas Qualifications

6.3.1 A consortium should be established for the accreditation of prior learning and experience (APLE) for refugees.

6.3.2 Establish mechanisms to give formal recognition of transferable vocational skills of refugees including assisting refugees through skilled trade examinations.

6.4 Employment

6.4.1 Job Centre Plus and Employment agencies should provide a more dedicated service to refugees to allow for language difficulties and cultural differences.

6.4.2 More effective co-operation between employment agencies, JCP and employers is needed to provide a more holistic approach to helping refugees into employment.

6.4.3 Awareness raising and cross cultural sessions should be organised for all sector employers and service providers of refugee skills and qualifications.

6.4.4 An all Wales refugee education, training and employment working group should be established by WAG, JCP and education and training providers.

6.5 Asylum Seekers

6.5.1 Integration should start for asylum seekers from the moment they arrive and should therefore be included in mainstream training and education programs.
6.6 **Volunteering**

6.6.1 Policies and initiatives should be put in place to encourage refugees and asylum seekers to volunteer in fields that are in keeping with their skills and qualifications.

6.6.2 Initiatives should be put in place to help highly qualified refugees integration by implementing coaching and job shadowing schemes so that refugees can work with qualified and experienced individuals from the UK in their area of expertise.

6.7 **Refugee Inclusion**

6.7.1 An action plan to be developed under WAG Refugee Inclusion Strategy should be well resourced and effectively monitored to make the needed difference.

6.8 **Language Provision**

6.8.1 A fast track system should be developed to run in tandem with further and higher education courses designed around the course of study with practical and technical language assistance.

6.8.2 Further language provision and support should be made available for trainees to run in tandem with training programs such as NVQ’s, modern apprenticeships.

6.9 **Positive Action Training**

6.9.1 Positive Action Training Models (PATHs) should be developed to work alongside the Race Equality Schemes under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

6.10 **Further Research**

6.10.1 Further extensive research needs to be conducted into issues surrounding refugee education, training and employment.
References:


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Welsh Refugee Council and Employability Forum (2005) Refugee Employment in Wales, Employability Forum


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Appendix 1 Skills Audit Questionnaire

REFUGEE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE (Skills Audit)
The EQUAL project was set up to improve the employment prospects of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and European economic migrants through combating racism and xenophobia in the Welsh society.
Evidence suggests that many refugees and asylum seekers with permission to work have difficulty finding employment in the UK. We would like to find out more about your skills, experience and qualifications in the hope that we can develop ways to enable you to fulfil your potential and use the skills you have.

If you are a refugee or asylum seeker with permission to work, as well as finding out more about what you can do and what you would like to do, we would also like to be able to identify any problems or barriers that you encounter when trying to find work in Wales.

This questionnaire is entirely confidential so you do not have to give us your name. However, the project aims to provide targeted employment assistance to individuals, in order to do this we will need your name and contact details which will be kept strictly confidential and only used by the Welsh Refugee Council and its partners. If you do not wish to give any personal information please leave any such questions unanswered. However our ability to provide individual help will be limited without a form of contact.

### 1.0 Personal Details:
Name: ___________________________ Tel: _____________________________
Address: _________________________ E-mail: ____________________________
________________________________ Date of Birth: _______________________
Male: [ ] Female: [ ]
Post Code: ________________________ Country of Origin: ________________

Age: 18-24 [ ] 25-30 [ ] 31-40 [ ] 41-50 [ ] 50+ [ ]

### 2.0 Education and Qualifications:
2.1. What level of education have you achieved?
If you have attended and completed a particular course of education then please tick the ‘completed’ column. However, if you attended but did not complete your course please tick only the ‘attended’ column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Attended</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Primary</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Secondary</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Further Education (college)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. University (Undergraduate)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. University (Post-graduate)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. None</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3. Do you have your certificates (or copies) with you in Wales?

YES □ NO □

2.4. Could you please give details of where your education took place? (for example, Cardiff University, Coleg Glan Hafren, please include education from your home country)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Certificate</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Country</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.0 English Language

3.2 Have you received any English language training since you arrived in Wales?

YES □ NO □

3.2.1 If you have not attended any English language training at all, could you please tell us why?

a. Your language skills are already good and do not need further training □
b. Transport costs □
c. Childcare □
d. Availability of courses/places □
e. Inconvenience of course timetable □
f. Difficulty accessing information about courses □
g. Could not pay course fees □
h. Other (please specify)

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3.3 Please give details of your English speaking, reading and writing skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Conversational/intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>□</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Reading</th>
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<th>Conversational/intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Conversational/intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Please give details speaking, reading and writing ability of any languages other than English (for each language please indicate the level of speaking, reading and writing by writing ‘B’ for Basic, ‘I’ for Intermediate and ‘A’ for Advanced).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 54 -
4.0 Employment Details:
4.1 Please could you tell us about your employment status before you came to the UK?

a. Were you unemployed? (looking for work but unable to find work) [ ]
b. Were you in full-time paid employment? [ ]
c. Were you in part-time paid employment? [ ]
d. Were you self-employed? [ ]
e. Did you work for a family business? [ ]

4.2 Please could you tell us about your current employment status?

a. Are you unemployed? (looking for work but unable to find work) [ ]
b. Are you in full-time paid employment? [ ]
c. Are you in part-time paid employment? [ ]
d. Are you self-employed? [ ]
e. Do you work for a family business? [ ]

4.2.2 Please provide a brief description of your occupation or area of work before and after you arrived in the UK. (please include job title, duties nature of business etc).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Duties/nature of business</th>
<th>Dates To/from</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before you came to the UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>After you came to the UK</td>
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5.0 Volunteer/unpaid work
5.1 Please could you give us details of any voluntary or unpaid work that you have undertaken either in your home country or in the UK. This could include work that you have done for friends or family.
6.0 Future Plans:
6.1 Are you happy with your current employment position?
   YES □   NO □

6.2 What do you like or dislike about your present (or most recent)
   job?

6.3.1 Do you think that you are underpaid? (Does your pay reflect your
   skills and qualifications or the job you are currently doing)?
   YES □   NO □

6.4 If you are working, could you please tell us if you think that your
   job meets your skills and qualifications, is your job:
   a. At a much lower level than your skills and qualifications □
   b. At a slightly lower level than your skills and qualifications □
   c. It matches your skills and qualifications □
   d. At a slightly higher level than your skills and qualifications □
   e. At a much higher level than your skills and qualifications □

6.4.1 If you are unemployed or if you think that your job does not match
   your skills and qualifications, please tick all the barriers that you
   think prevent you from securing a job that matches your skills and
   qualifications.
   a. Language/Computer skills □
   b. Lack of recognition of overseas qualifications □
   c. Irrelevance of your past education and work experiences in Britain
      □
   d. Lack of experience in applying for jobs and attending interviews
      □
   e. Not knowing how to search for and find job vacancies □
   f. Lack of references □
   g. Lack of work experience in Britain □
   h. Lack of resources e.g. Travelling expenses, Lunch, Childcare etc.
      □
   i. Experience of racism and/or discrimination □
   j. Any other barriers? Please specify:

6.4.2 Of the above barriers, list the four largest barriers you believe are
   preventing you from securing a job
   __________
   __________
   __________
   __________
6.5 What would you like to do next? Please tick ALL that apply:

a. Find any job
b. Find a job that matches your skills and qualifications
c. Obtain further training to improve your skills and qualifications
d. Improve (if necessary) your English Language Skills
e. Volunteer to work in order to gain work experience
f. Obtain work experience placement with a local company/organisation
g. Other (please expand in the space below)
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

6.6 What do you think would significantly improve your employment prospects and/or your ability to get the job you would like to do in Wales? (Use this space to suggest ways in which services offered by government/employment agencies for refugees can be improved, what is lacking in the provision of services and what needs changing).

Improved provision of job search facilities
Increased training provision by employer
Increased training provision by job centre
Provision of travel expenses
Conversion of your overseas qualifications
Volunteering/work placements to gain experience
Any other suggestions:

7.0 Do you have any vocational skills?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you do not have any formal qualifications but have vocational skills that could be transferable into the job market, or if you have formal qualifications but have unrecognised work skills please complete the attached Vocational Skills Questionnaire. This could include:-

- Automotive
- Catering
- Construction
- Distribution/transport
- Domestic
- Farming
- Manufacturing
- Retail/sales
- Secretarial/admin
- Security
- Other (please specify)

______________________________________________________________
8.0 If you have any other comments or suggestions about this questionnaire or would like to raise an issue not already discussed, use the space below:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

We would be very grateful if you could return this questionnaire to one of the EQUAL team members working at the Welsh Refugee Council at the below address or to your local Refugee Community Organisation.

The above details are held and processed by the Welsh Refugee Council on computer and kept manually in accordance with the above act. The information will be used by WRC for the administration of the EQUAL project and for promoting refugee employment within Wales. Client details will be used by EQUAL staff to match clients with potential employers/training and development programs, no client details will be given to outside agencies without the client’s permission.

Hawar Ameen (Development officer)
Hawar.ameen@welshrefugeecouncil.org

Yasin Hagi Mohamoud (Development officer)
Yasin.mohamoud@welshrefugeecouncil.org

Banire Sy Savane (Admin support officer)
Banire.sy.savane@welshrefugeecouncil.org

Welsh Refugee Council
Phoenix house
389 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 1TP
Appendix 2  Case study 1  
Yarow S Aden

With a Bsc and Msc from Kuwait and London University, I have extensive experience in Geochemistry, Geo-environmental around water, soil and related science. For a decade I was head and chief of laboratory and geochemical department in the Ministry of Mineral and water resources of Somalia.

I have been saved from the disappointment and possible despair and depression, had I not been referred to the Equal project in the WRC. Through it I had been able to accomplish most of what I lacked within a very short time. While there I received the most relevant guidance and advice which has given me the necessary understanding and awareness of the issues and the barriers I was facing.

I had been assisted with updating my CV and at the same time referred to workshops and training programs dealing with the issues and experiences I lacked, as identified through the skill audit exercise that I have had with the Equal team. It had been an empowering experience that helped me maintain confidence in myself during that very difficult period. I continued with the project with sustained motivation until I had been enabled to secure a successful work placement with Earth Science Partnership.

In actual fact WRC under Equal project is like a bridge connection between you and your objectives. The assistance and experience I have gained from the WRC has proven invaluable to me in my pursuit for employment and given me hope that soon I will be able to use my skills and qualifications in job that is in keeping with my field. Many thanks to all employees of WRC for all your help and wish you to continue working together with Refugee and Asylum Seekers to furthers development in their target and objectives.
Appendix 3  Case study 2

Awil Sharif Salah

I have been in the UK, specifically in Cardiff, for about five years. In addition to my previous higher education as well as considerable experience in motor trade and as assistant instructor in a technical college, I have enrolled on local colleges and have successfully completed several NVQ programs including IT as well as a higher education course in Transport and Planning. Despite that, I have been trying to get employment opportunity for a long time now, and although, as I believe, I have the skills, knowledge and a reasonable command of English language, I did not get the chance to find.

This difficulty of finding a job is really killing my confidence, and how to overcome it has become a huge challenge to me, whereby I am now all the time asking myself “why am I failing to obtain a job?” The frustrations I face regarding the employment market is further exacerbated by the pressures excreted on me by the Job centre Plus.

Despite, the fact that I still remain unemployed, I am on the other hand pleased to mention the help and support that has been given to me by the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) and the Somali Progressive Association in Cardiff. Now, through Equal Project program, I am working at the WRC as a volunteer where, within a short span of time, I am involved in several community development training. The WRC offered me voluntary placement in the drop-in centre and arranged training relevant to my needs that helped me understand many things I was not aware of.

Some of these training opportunities which I have already attended and I believe are empowering and enabling me to rebuild my confidence included:

- Training Trainer
- TEFL Teacher
- Program leader’s Course on the theory and practice of adult learning

In fact, I have no better way to describe the work being done by the Welsh Refugee Council Equal Team.
Appendix 4  Case study 3  
Semere Gebrihiwot  

My name is Semere Gebrihiwot. I am an Eritrean. Before I came back to Britain as an asylum seeker in 2006, I had already earned an M.Sc degree in agriculture from the University Of Greenwich, Kent. On completing my studies I have returned to my country and worked for a number of years as a director of a department and later as an agricultural expert with both the government ministry of agriculture and counter part international organisation including the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the UN.

When I was first interviewed by Equal team to fill skill audit questionnaire I have provided all my experience and educational back ground. They have been quick to identify my areas of weakness and the gaps in my skills. I got information and advice from Colleagues in equal team WRC notably the Deputy Chief Executive on the advantage of volunteering and the need to change carrier looking at the job market in Wales for me. I have volunteered since January - July 2007.

The main reason why I started volunteering was to get access to employment through gaining UK experience and to demonstrate what I can contribute to the organisation and society at large.

My Main Duties with the equal team was to:

- Assist integration and inclusion of Refugees in development process
- Carry out refugee skill audit
- Interpret to Clients
- Assist refugees by working closely with the Development officer and the rest of equal team.

*What I gained from the project:*

- Attended training and various meetings organised by Equal Project which can add to my CV and also raised my confidence.
- Have reference
- Gained access to computer telephone and other facilities
- Empowered myself as I was involved in decision making

The fact that I was volunteering with equal team has helped me to gain access to employment. Now I work at the Welsh Refugee Council as a receptionist in Newport office.
Appendix 5  Case study 4
Christian Massengo

My name is Christian Massengo. I am originally from the Congo. I have been living in Wales for the past 5 years. At times I became apprehensive about my future in Wales. My life however has undertaken drastic transformation since I began contacts with the Equal project, in the WRC.

I have learnt about the project through friends who were very positive about its benefits. I was soon impressed with the accessibility and easy to approach attitude of the staff. The advice and guidance I received, following skill audit sessions, have inspired me to not only continue with them but to also chart a course for a future career. I have realised that I needed to fill gaps and undergo skills reorientation in order to prepare myself for employment.

At the moment I am working with the Equal Project and I am on work placement with Hafod Housing association. There I work in with a community initiative project with the BME community in St Melons, and other parts of Cardiff. I assist in giving them advice and guidance on the troubles they have on a daily basis. My work placement is a great help to me because it gives me the experience of British work that I need.

I also work with the Welsh Refugee Council move-on project to act as a link to explain to the staff of Hafod the issues refugees face. In the foreseeable future my intention is to serve on the board of Hafod so that BME issues will be part of mainstream policy of Hafod. My ambition is to work in a housing association because I understand the issues refugees face and I will be able to serve them in this capacity.
Appendix 6    Case study 5

Rasha Al-Dawodi

My name is Rasha Al-Dawodi and I am from Iraq. I left my country because of the ever increasing instability and fear for my life. I arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker in May this year. I must be luckier than most as I was given refugee status only two months later. Before I came to Britain, I had already earned a BA degree in accountancy and nearly completed an MA in business administration. I also had two and a half years of work experience in governing departments and in international organisations.

Because of my qualifications and strong skills I had very high expectations of the future. Although still an asylum seeker, my expectations were that I would land a suitable job as soon as I was given residence status. When the time came, however, I woke up to a different set of realities. I didn’t know where or how to look for jobs. The language, systems and new cultures were also all very difficult to understand at first. My confidence and motivation suffered. In time I realised that I was not sufficiently prepared and lacked many skills and guidance for gaining employment in this country.

Once I arrived in Cardiff, the staff in Bronte House advised me to seek out the assistance of the Welsh Refugee Council and their Equal Project. I was very grateful to the project team for their advice in many areas. They helped me understand the systems, what to do, where to go, and they were always there for me when I needed them. They also helped me apply for an ESOL level one course and do a Training of Teachers course from which I earned a tool kit that has given me all the skills for conducting training. I have now been given a great opportunity to gain valuable experience by working as a volunteer in the WRC. As well as gaining the experience which will help me secure future employment, I hope I will be able to help others who are going through the same experiences.

I would like to assure you all that with a little determination and courage, there are opportunities for succeeding and making progress. Don’t be shy or hesitate to ask for help when you need it, because there are many people around that you can turn to. But please remember it is down to you to decide what you want to achieve and when. I would like to end by wishing you all the very best in your new lives, careers and future.