

# FINAL REPORT

## Seizing the opportunities & overcoming the barriers for refugees wanting to set up their own businesses in North East

Research funded by ONE NorthEast  
in association with  
Regional Refugee Forum North East



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The Development Agency  
for the North East of England

# CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	2
Executive Summary	3
Background and Purpose	4
Method and Scope	5
Principal Findings	6
Workshop	13
Recommendations	14
Notes of Caution	16
Acknowledgements	16
<u>Annexes</u>	
Annexe 1    Research Programme	17
Annexe 2    Interviews	18
Annexe 3    Workshop Attendance	19
Annexe 4    Workshop Notes	20
Annexe 5    Statistical Data	24
Annexe 6    Bibliography Web Links Notes	25

# FOREWORD

From: Daoud Zaaroura  
Director, North of England Refugee Service

Refugees of many nationalities have come to live in the North East in recent years. Coming to the UK has been a culture shock . Welcoming so many different nationalities has been a culture shock for those born and raised in the Region.

I am confident that these newly arriving communities represent an opportunity for us all.

Whatever the reasons for leaving their home country, most refugees are resourceful and enterprising people whose priorities are a sense of security, the opportunity to achieve economic independence and a desire to contribute to prosperous, stable communities. Many find it difficult to get work. Others experience difficulties with the language and the business culture. But they want to learn and they are willing to work hard.

The North East Region lacks entrepreneurs. Many refugee migrants bring with them the skills, experience and determination to be successful business people and to employ others.

This report is one of the first to look specifically at the experience of refugees who choose self-employment or want to start up their own business. I am grateful to ONE NorthEast for sponsoring the report. I am glad that many at the Workshop committed themselves to positive action to support new businesses led by refugees.

I strongly hope that the energy created by this report and its recommendations is harnessed to convert those opportunities into reality.

The refugee communities in the North East whom I represent, and the Region where we all live, will prosper together if the findings of this report are acted upon.

March 2004

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ◆ All would-be entrepreneurs face a number of hurdles to overcome. Individuals from disadvantaged communities in our Region will typically find these hurdles more demanding, and may encounter extra challenges.
- ◆ This research has identified that the particular barriers which refugees starting-up their own businesses in the North East may typically encounter include:-
  - Language (paragraphs 22 – 26)
  - Business Culture (paragraphs 27 – 29)
  - Accessing Appropriate Advice and Support (paragraphs 30 – 35)
  - Money (paragraphs 41 – 43)
  - Racism (paragraphs 44 – 45)
- ◆ There are both macro-economic and micro-economic arguments supporting the benefits to the Region of new businesses created and led by refugees (paragraphs 17 – 21).
- ◆ There are skills and resources within refugee communities with potential to support new business ventures and business opportunities within the communities themselves.
- ◆ The principal findings of this research were presented and discussed at a Workshop on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. A number of action steps were proposed which have formed the basis of the Recommendations.
- ◆ 19 Recommendations are proposed in paragraphs 55 - 73. They are grouped as follows:
  - For immediate action and not requiring new resources
  - For immediate action and implying new resources are required
  - To be taken forward by ONE NorthEast and the Regional Refugee Forum North East

# BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1. This report was commissioned by the Strategy Team of ONE NorthEast following a meeting between members of the Regional Refugee Forum North East and ONE North East, and informed by research brief written by Georgina Fletcher, the co-ordinator of the Forum employed by the North of England Refugee Service (NERS)
2. The Terms of Reference of the research set out the aims as:

To assist One NorthEast to identify the special needs of refugees and asylum seekers to establish themselves as entrepreneurs and creators of employment, and appropriate responses to those needs

- What are the barriers to enterprise start-up experienced by refugees/asylum-seekers in the NE?
- What is the scale of demand for such services?
- What issues are unique to refugees/asylum-seekers?
- What issues are shared with other disadvantaged communities in the NE?
- Are there special needs within the refugee community itself –eg women?
- What are the possible solutions – either self-identified or identified by others?
- What is the experience of refugee communities elsewhere in the UK? Are there best practice examples to follow?

*Note:*

*The term Refugee refers to all those individuals who have sought refuge in the UK and have been granted refugee status by the UK Home Office according to the 1951 UN convention. The original Terms of Reference for the study included Asylum Seekers within the scope of the report. It was established early in the research process that because*

- a) asylum seekers (since July 2002) do not have the right to undertake paid work, and*
- b) changes in national guidelines aim to shorten the period of waiting for asylum seekers before a decision is made about their right to stay, it would be more helpful to concentrate upon the issues facing refugees.*

## METHOD AND SCOPE

3. This research was always conceived as an action research project. The objective of research is not academic study in its own right. The report aims to be concise and to inform action and well as policy.
4. The purpose of the research is to enable the new communities of refugees living in the Region, and those who provide business support, to seize the opportunities and to overcome the barriers for refugees wanting to set up their own businesses in the North East.
5. The findings come from conversations with busy people engaged in trying to make enterprises work. The Recommendations in paragraphs 55 – 73 seek to be similarly direct and practical.
6. The research process is illustrated in Annexe 1. It has comprised:-
  - Interviews with 22 refugees (21 living in the Region 1 in London). Interviews with 16 business support agencies and refugee support organisations across the Region
  - Interviews with 5 national agencies concerned with support and employment for refugees
  - Attendance at national conference hosted by the Employability Forum
  - Desk research into best practice
  - A Workshop held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January at which the main findings from the interviews were discussed
7. The research method was reviewed and informed by a Steering Group chaired by Phil Shakeshaft of ONE NorthEast. The interviews and case studies were shared between Philip Angier and Mark Havers.
8. A list of interviews and source documents is set out in Annexes 2 and 6. For reasons of confidentiality, the refugees interviewed are not named. Annexe 2 summarises their gender, country of origin, employment status and where they live.

# PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

## Starting a Business

9. There are challenges and risks for even the most experienced entrepreneur in setting up his or her own business. There are a number of hurdles that everyone must overcome.
10. It is widely recognised that would-be entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds may find these hurdles more challenging (eg the recent Enterprise in Newcastle study <sup>i</sup>). They may have a great business idea, and the skills, determination and enthusiasm to make a success of it. However, many individuals lack experience and self-confidence in compiling a business plan. They may not have the networks and contacts to get good legal or financial advice. They may never have calculated a cash flow statement. They may have limited resources to draw upon for the start-up capital of the business.
11. The importance of offering appropriate support and encouragement to would-be entrepreneurs from under-represented groups whatever their employment and educational background is recognised in the Regional Economic Strategy <sup>ii</sup>. The Business Link network within the Region, and the business support agencies that work alongside them, have acknowledged the need to make the services and support on offer accessible.
12. This research has identified both opportunities and barriers which appear to be particular to members of refugee communities in the North East – ie additional challenges or particular opportunities which are experienced by refugees seeking to set up a new business.

## Why focus upon Refugees?

13. The Regional Economic Strategy <sup>iii</sup> recognised the potential contribution to the Region's prosperity of successful enterprises led by black and ethnic minority people, including refugees new to the Region.
14. Research commissioned by the Department for Work & Pensions <sup>iv</sup> affirms a strong desire for self-sufficiency on the part of asylum-seekers and refugees coming to the UK. Research conducted within the Region by BOW Community Projects in partnership with the Regional Refugee Forum and NERS affirms access training and employment as one of the key factors influencing the decision of refugees to settle in the Region <sup>v</sup>

15. Published statistics from Refugees into Jobs (a London based advice service) covering the period 1997 – 2001 show just over 10% of those seeking advice as wishing to start up their own business<sup>vi</sup>. Statistics from another West London Agency (Refugee Employment Advice) point to approx 5% of enquirers seeking advice on self employment, and only 2% actually graduating to self employment.
16. RETAS (Refugee Employment Training and Advisory Service) offers a one week intensive course for refugees wanting to start their own business. This includes a hands-on approach to business planning and cash flow. Roya Jahanbin has been running the course for two years, mainly in London, but also in Oxford, Leeds and Reading. Of 100 approx participants some 20% have started their own business, and another 20%-30% are still developing/evaluating their business ideas.

*Self Reliance or Self Employment?*

*It would be a mistake to confuse the deserved reputation of many refugees for being resourceful, enterprising and self-reliant, with a wish to become self-employed.*

*Anecdotal data points to a growing number of successful black women entrepreneurs in West London. Some commentators suggest that refugees are driven to set up in business on their own because it is so hard to get a good job. But we did not find any statistical data to suggest that the propensity for self-employment is higher than the 10% quoted in para 15 above.*

*During the period of conducting this research we only encountered first hand evidence of a relatively small number of new businesses started or planned by refugees living in the Region.*

*Some interviewees said that they had not chosen self-employment precisely because they perceived it as very demanding and too risky. Evidence also suggests that others may choose to gain business or trade skill as an employee, or to acquire a qualification first, before branching out to self-employment at a later date.*

Potential Benefits for the Region

17. There are therefore both macro-economic and micro-economic arguments to support examining the encouragement refugees in the Region who wish to set up a new business. For the past two years the Region has hosted more than 5,000 asylum seekers. The Region has the sixth largest population of dispersed asylum seekers in the UK accounting for 6% of the national total<sup>vii</sup>.
18. Statistics for asylum seekers do not include refugees who have been granted leave to stay in the UK. Some estimates suggest a combined population of refugees and asylum seekers in the North East of more than 15,000. If 1 in 10 of those who are economically active is a potential new entrepreneur, this represents a significant opportunity (more than 500 new entrepreneurs?) for the Region with the poorest track record in England for new business start-ups.

19. New refugee businesses have the potential for providing jobs for other members of the community. Refugees experience very high levels of unemployment (approx 36% according to DWP statistics<sup>viii</sup>), and those in employment often do not use fully their professional/trade skills.
20. Some examples of businesses planned or already started by refugees include businesses to meet service needs of their community – eg hairdressing, ethnic groceries, music and culture, translation and interpretation.
21. Thus appropriate support to enable refugees wanting to set up their own businesses has the potential not only to enable the individual to realise her/his aspirations, but also to contribute to the wider prosperity and stability of their community and of the Region.

### Language

22. Language featured as the most significant barrier to starting-up a new business identified by our research. A number of interviewees spoke positively about the language tuition they had received, and without exception they reported that their confidence and proficiency in English had improved since in the UK (All interviews were conducted in English).
23. However, the standard of spoken and written English needed to negotiate a business start-up (compiling a business plan, registering for VAT, negotiating a property lease, talking to business advisers) is more complex than that required for ordinary daily life (eg shopping, travelling, dealing with utility companies).
24. Not only may there be extra vocabulary to be learned, but fluency of self-expression is also closely related to self-esteem and self-confidence. Precisely because many refugees may be uncertain about their ability to communicate their business idea effectively, so that affects their self-perception about their own ability to be successful in business with that idea.
25. It was also clear that some felt that they had failed to communicate their business idea effectively to business professionals in the support agencies (eg business counsellor or economic development officer), and that they had been rejected because of their poor communication skills. [They may not in fact have been rejected – more often the business counsellor was probably seeking more information, but the interviewee had felt rejected]. Thus there was a reticence about seeking outside advice except from those who spoke their mother tongue.

26. Language need not of itself be a barrier to successful enterprise. If the business project involves several members of the same refugee community working together, perhaps only one needs to be able to communicate fluently in English. If the business either employs or serves individuals from a particular community, much of the business will be conducted in their mother tongue.

### Business Culture

27. The next most significant barrier suggested by our interviews is the refugee entrepreneur's understanding the way business is done in the UK. For many, the business culture in the UK is more formal and regulated than they had previously experienced. Regulatory requirements and form-filling, combined with lack of confidence in written and spoken English, can seem powerful barriers in the way of starting a new business.

28. Much of UK business is formalised through written agreements. If you have been brought up in a culture where important commitments are made verbally, and paperwork is for more for show (and often ignored), you will not appreciate the importance given in this country to supply contracts, loan agreements, etc.

29. However, it would be wrong to characterise the experience of all refugees as the same:-

- Those who come from former British dependencies are more likely to have better English vocabulary. They are also more likely to be familiar with some of the key features of English company law.
- Those who have worked in business (especially for a European and US multinational) in their home country may find some aspects of business culture – eg governance, financial monitoring, business planning – familiar disciplines
- Whilst some find the degree of regulation in the UK intimidating, (eg employment law, anti money-laundering formalities), those who have come from former soviet bloc countries find our procedures refreshingly relaxed and flexible!
- For a number of interviewees, disclosure of self employed activities – eg to the tax authorities – is unfamiliar and uncomfortable (because of fears that such confidential information may be misused).

## Networks and Support

30. Most interviewees look first to family and friends, and then to other members of their community or other refugees for business support and advice. The majority seemed unaware of Business Link or other sources of publicly funded business advice. Some had sought advice from local support agencies (local authority, Project North East) but with mixed success [see Language above].
31. Some respondents seemed to have had better experience going to social enterprise support agencies (eg Community Enterprise Direct, Social Enterprise Sunderland, REGEN School). Arguably these agencies may have more scope for tailoring their service delivery to the needs of the client. With respect to Business Link some respondents were put off by the need to pay towards the cost of advice, others felt that they were not offered the support they needed to create a business plan.
32. Positive experiences of working with support agencies seemed to be the result of meeting helpful individuals, rather than the result of embedded 'refugee friendly' policies and systems at the agency.
33. The support of mentors – be they from under formal arrangements via enterprise agencies or informal arrangements from within the refugee's circle of friends and contacts – was seen as especially helpful to overcoming some of the barriers described above.
34. We found that there may be long-term disadvantages to the community of refugees 'looking to their own' for business support and advice. It may be perpetuate a cycle of under-use of statutory support and training because of lack of awareness of what is available.
35. Since a number of support agencies are required to demonstrate that they are reaching under-represented groups in their delivery of business advice, there ought to be opportunities to bridge this gap.

## Network Strengths

36. As noted above there are potential business advantages in the strength of refugee communities. The rate of employment for refugees is generally poor and many are employed in jobs which fail to use the skills in which they have been trained (Teachers driving lorries, engineers cooking pizzas, electricians stacking shelves). If refugees in the Region are successful in starting new businesses, they are likely to have a ready pool of skilled labour from within their own community to draw upon. In addition language ceases to be an issue when working for an employer from the same community.

37. Equally, a number of the business ideas concern providing goods and services for fellow community members (food, hairdressing, café, social events, interpretation and advocacy). Such services both offer the business a readily identified market, and strengthen the social cohesion of the community in the Region.

### Under-employed Skills?

38. But there is also evidence that, just as in paid employment, refugees' skills may be under-used in the businesses they establish – eg factory manager running a restaurant, a mechanical engineering graduate running a fast food shop, a graduate teacher running a telephone kiosk.

39. It is understandable why individuals may opt for relatively low risk enterprises where they can serve the local community and which require minimal start-up capital. If such business opportunities do not use to the full their professional skills, this is a lost opportunity both for the individual concerned and for the wider community.

40. The language barrier is largely obviated if a business targets primarily customers from the ethnic community from which the founder comes. But this is also likely to restrict the economic potential of such a business.

*The above factors were all confirmed by interviews and evidence from elsewhere in the country. So far our research has identified only two businesses (both outside the North East) which have been established by refugees to sell professional skills – a business consultant and a dental technician.*

*There are some ideas and plans within the Region to promote music and arts, and a café/restaurant to a wider/more affluent clientele in the North East.*

### Money

41. For some the personal financial risks of starting in business are too great. For those that do decide to set up their own business, experience varies from community to community.

42. Some communities support new businesses within their own 'diaspora'. Other community members elsewhere in Britain or in Germany, or even in their home country, provide the money to start up. Other communities seem to have no backers. The lack of even quite small sums of 'seedcorn' money can delay/prevent a business being launched (eg £3,000 required to start an office cleaning business in Newcastle).

43. Refugees as recent arrivals to the UK, no collateral and little or no trading or employment history do not meet most banks' credit scoring criteria.

## Racism

44. Racial harassment is significant issue for the new communities. The daily pernicious influence of racist attitudes is a fact of life for all refugees – petty harassment by officials, resentment of any benefit/help given to refugees, insults and taunts.
45. Racism makes ‘normal life’ more difficult. It tends therefore to exaggerate the impact of the barriers described above, and to erode self-confidence and self-esteem. It suggests that to become a successful black, refugee entrepreneur will take more energy, more effort, more determination than her or his white, English counterpart might have to invest.

## WORKSHOP

46. The principal findings were presented at a Workshop of invited practitioners and representatives of refugee communities on 22<sup>nd</sup> January at the Sunderland Bangladeshi Centre (see Annexe 3 for attendance list)
47. Following a brief presentation of the research findings by Mark Havers and Philip Angier, and plenary discussion moderated by Ambrose Mann, five Key Issues were proposed for discussion in break-out groups. (It was agreed to combine the issues concerning unemployment and aspirations).
48. Within the break-out group participants were asked to identify:-
  - What needs to be done in the Region
  - What are the first steps
  - What can you (ie participants) do
  - Who else needs to be involved
49. All participants were then asked to identify key priorities for action using colour coded post-it notes:-
  - Green – denoting actions to which the participant commits personally
  - Pink – denoting actions which someone else needs to take on within the Region
  - Yellow – denoting actions/solutions which lie beyond the Region but which are nonetheless important.
50. More than half of the 53 Post-it's were green – indicating a willingness of those participating to commit themselves/their organisations to action.
51. The post-it note exercise is aimed both to spark some immediate action and to inform the Recommendations of the final report.
52. A transcript of the notes from the break-out groups and summary of the post-it notes appears as Annexe 4.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

53. The following issues were highlighted in the research findings and at the Workshop:-

- Language
- Accessing appropriate Business Support
- Raising Aspirations
- Positive Attitudes to Cultural Diversity

54. Drawing upon the research findings and participant responses from the Workshop, we recommend the following:-

### Recommendations for Immediate Action without new resource implications

55. Regional Refugee Forum North East and Business Link to work together design/implement 'knowledgable referrer' scheme to improve access to/take-up of business support services –

**Action: Business Link TyneWear+ Regional Refugee Forum**

56. Members of Refugee Communities Organisations to collect/provide evidence of poor practice and channel it through Regional Refugee Forum North East for action–

**Action: Regional Refugee Forum**

57. Business Link working with ONE North East and Regional Enterprise Forum to sensitise agencies providing business start-up support to these issues highlighted by this report –

**Action: Business Link TyneWear+ ONE NorthEast**

58. Link those organisations which have expressed willingness to provide mentoring/support– eg In Biz, Scrap Douglas, Social Enterprise Sunderland, Scarman Trust, Angier Griffin –

**Action: Angier Griffin**

59. Fast-tracked support through In-Biz for refugees with previous business experience –

**Action: In-Biz**

Recommendations for Immediate Action which imply new resource implications

60. Promote an improved range/availability of vocational courses for refugees –

**Action: Gateshead College & ESOL Forum**

61. Promote the development of a course in ‘English for Business’ -

**Action: Gateshead College & ESOL Forum**

62. Pilot project to demonstrate ‘refugee enterprise model’ funded by ONE North East -

**Action: ONE North East**

63. Directory of support/advice agencies available to community leaders/those working with refugee communities –

**Action: Business Link**

64. Provide focal points within Region for support of refugee businesses –

**Action: Business Link**

65. Best practice models of business and job creation by refugees (to include analysis of business case for providing support) – Research to be funded by ONE North East -

**Action: ONE North East**

66. Establishment of Skills Assessment Centre (funding bid to be taken forward through Gateshead College)

**Action: Gateshead College**

Recommendations to be taken forward by ONE North East and the Regional Refugee Forum North East following publication of the Report

67. Mapping exercise of extent of under-utilisation of refugees’ skills/work experience

68. Provide greater incentives for students to attend vocational/business courses

69. Ensure that Equal Opportunities is used as guiding principle in terms of language needs and access to appropriate support/advice

70. Raise with Sub Regional Partnerships economic development potential of refugee entrepreneurship

71. Positive communication campaign about potential and contribution of the refugee community members within economic life of Region (to be linked to 65 above)

72. Investigate possibility of forming a Business Club for refugee entrepreneurs

73. Investigate sources of seedcorn capital for refugee entrepreneurs

## NOTES OF CAUTION

74. We believe our research has been sufficient to identify major themes, but recognise that the size of our interview samples are small. We have also relied upon other sources for statistical data from outside the Region.
75. We have met far more men than women. We recognise that in some cultures it is not expected that that women will take on the role of business entrepreneur, but we know that our findings lack a fair representation of women's voices.
76. For simplicity much of this report will refer to the needs of 'refugees' – making little distinction between the many different nationalities. Our interviews have included refugees from 12 different countries. There are people from 104 different nationalities living in the Region. When making generic comments about the needs of refugee communities, we wish in no way to demean the different needs and capacities of the various communities.
77. We are aware that some refugees and asylum seekers are absorbed, willingly or unwillingly, into the 'informal economy'. Our research has not covered this area.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

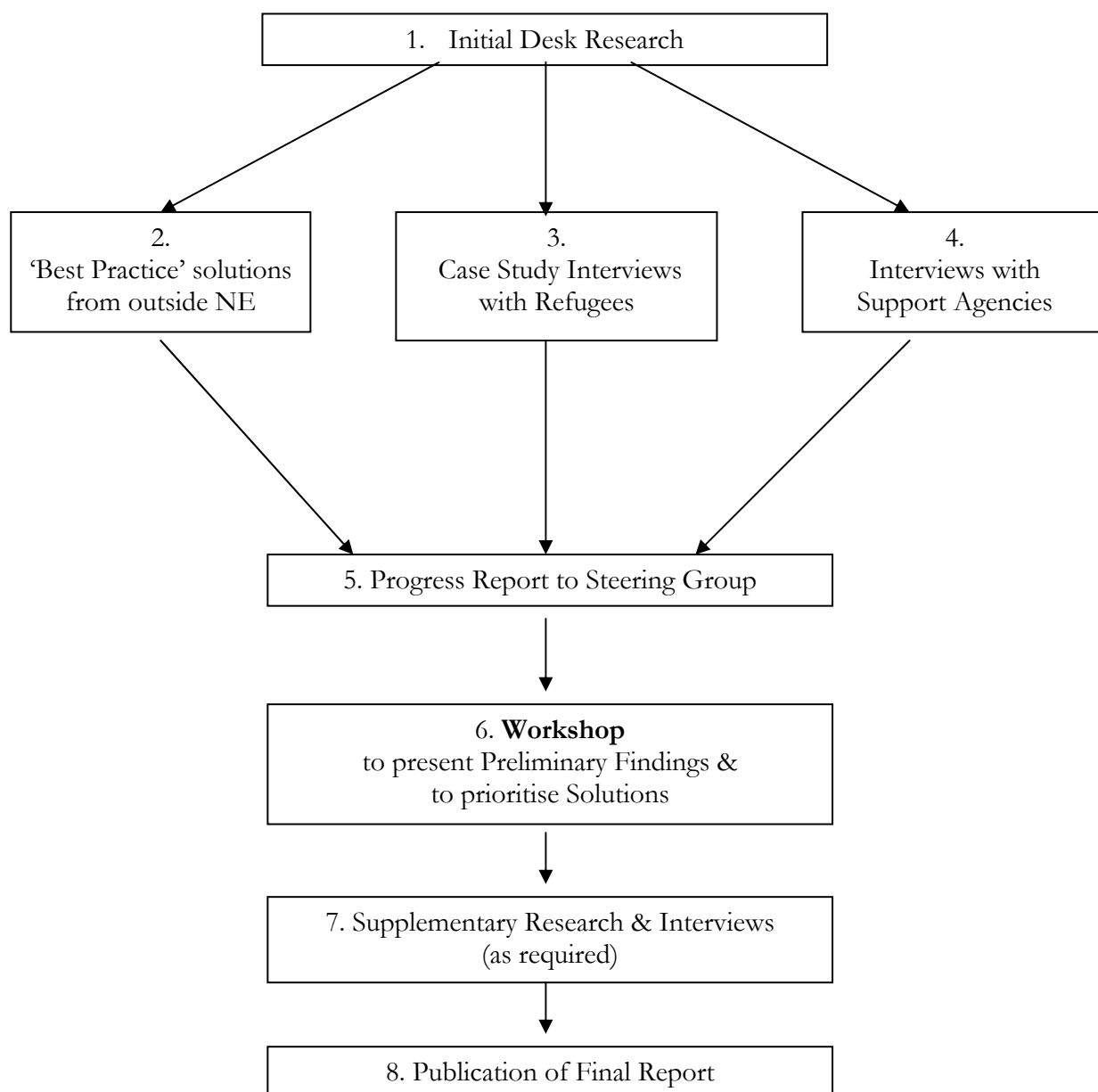
78. I record my thanks to
- my Co-Researcher, Mark Havers
  - my Co-Workshop Facilitator, Ambrose Mann
  - Georgina Fletcher at the Regional Refugee Forum North East
  - the Strategy Team and Steering Group at ONE NorthEast
  - the Sunderland Bangladeshi Community Centre
  - the participants in the Workshop on 22<sup>nd</sup> January
  - and the scores of interviewees who have shared their insights.

Philip Angier  
Angier Griffin

February 2004

## RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Our research plan has followed the Flow Chart set out below.



Interviews were carried out mainly between mid October and mid December

## INTERVIEWS

### Refugees

Interviews were conducted with 22 members of the refugee community.

19 were male and 3 female.

11 live on Tyneside, 10 in Teeside or Wearside and 1 outside the Region.

The interviewees came from the following countries:- Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Burkino Faso, Central African Republic, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Iran, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

At the time of interview:-

6 were in business/self-employed

4 were employed

5 were students

7 were unemployed

### Business Support or Refugee Support Organisations

Face to face or telephone interviews were conducted with the following -

#### Within the Region

BECON

BOW Community Projects

Business Link Tyne & Wear

Business Link Tees Valley

Community Enterprise Direct

ENTRUST

Gateshead Council

In Biz

Job Centre Plus North East

Job Centre Plus Tees Valley

Regional Refugee Forum

Middlesborough Action Team

North of England Refugee Service

Social Enterprise Sunderland

Street UK

The Scarman Trust

#### Outside the Region

Coresys Consult

Employability Forum

Refugee Employment Advice

Refugees Into Jobs

RETAS

WORKSHOP – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004

## ATTENDANCE SHEET

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ORGANISATION</u>
Phil Shakehsaft	ONE NorthEast
Tracey Mellor	ONE NorthEast
Georgina Fletcher	Regional Refugee Forum North East
Karen Langdon	Business Link TW
Joao Francisco	NEACA
Farzad Egbhal	Community Enterprise Direct
Mordicks Asimba	RETAG
Emmanuel Odonga	RETAG
Tom Bikindou	Gateshead Council
Scrap Douglas	Business Angel
Anne Cullen	Gateshead College
Belinda Sloan	In Biz
John Hall	Street UK
Dennis Oliver	Scarman Trust
Graham Woodford	Consultant
Dr Mohammed Nasreldin	North of England Refugee Service
Harry Clark	Social Enterprise Sunderland
<b>FACILITATORS</b>	
Philip Angier	Angier Griffin
Ambrose Mann	Coresys Consult
Mark Havers	SINE
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	
Daoud Zaaroura	North of England Refugee Service
Indira Sen	ENTRUST
Manoute Seri	ACANE
Gillian Roll	ONE NorthEast
Simon Underwood	BOW Projects
Annisah Miah	BECON
Carol Daniell	JobcentrePlus Tees Valley

## WORKSHOP 22<sup>ND</sup> January 2004

### Break-Out Groups Flip Chart Notes & Post-it's

1. **Language and Business Culture feature as significant barriers. What can and should be done to improve opportunities for those with aspirations to establish their own businesses to overcome the barriers of language and business culture?**
  - *Champions – people with commitment*
  - *2 way process*
  - *Better design – more appropriate/ better learning*
  - *Challenging institutions – Equal Opportunities as guiding principle*
  - *Simplify written information --- Reality checks, and better information exchange*
  - *What can we do? – Examples of good practice...*

#### **Post Its**

<u>Green</u>	6
<u>Pink</u>	1
<u>Yellow</u>	2

2. **Refugees seem to look to their own communities for advice, and generally make poor use of the publicly funded business support services available. What can be done to bridge the gap?**

- *Too many agencies - confusing not just for refugees – needs rationalisation  
(More a question of effective signposting to most appropriate agency)  
Want collaboration between agencies (not competition)  
Structure and process need to be separated out – targeted work, many agencies  
[Business Link Regional Stats:-  
4,500 Pre-start-up interviews lead to approx 600 actual start-ups  
800 – 100 present after have already started trading  
20% via Business Link, 80% via other agencies]*
- *Focus on outreach rather than sit in the office  
Front line staff – ‘customisation’  
Face-to-face, one to one outreach work  
One-to-one delivery of mentoring/ befriending – Cost implications but costs effective?*
- *Need for positive PR in the Region about the potential contribution of refugee entrepreneurs  
(BME communities represent 2% of population but 6% of self-employed – is it that they experience more barriers to general employment?)*
- ◆ *To break into the communities need to identify community activists/ champions, identify the focal points where communities meet, create interfaces. Refugee communities can be partners in making this happen*
- *Directory as a resource for signposting/ reference –but need to follow up and sustain it*
- *Knowledgeable referrals are effective...make sure people aren't sent to the wrong place*
- *Translation of business information pack, legislation, etc into major languages*
- *Websites are not used/ accessed, often because new communities lack reliable access to IT resources*
- *Awareness/ Training for community centre workers/ Refugee Community Org's (RCO's)  
– provide them with contact lists/ information  
Publicity through same channels – using exploiting the network of knowledgeable individuals*
- *We - participants in this seminar – need to be networked too*

**Post Its**

<u>Green</u>	13
<u>Pink</u>	5
<u>Yellow</u>	1

3. a) Unemployment amongst refugees is stubbornly high (which must be a cost to the tax payer). What can be done to help refugee entrepreneurs to identify business opportunities which can provide more and better jobs for members of their communities?  
b) Is it true that refugee entrepreneurs 'aim too low'? If so what might be done to raise aspirations?

Part a)

- *Examine models that work (RDA)*
- *Fast-tracking for experienced business people*
- *Longer Term one to one support*
- *Better informed providers of support*
- *Limited market opportunities, identify opportunities*
- *Capital formation, credit rating*

Part b)

- *Tackling conditioned expectations*
- *Skills Audit*
- *Bigger Networks*
- *Mapping Exercise (RDA)*

**Post Its**

<u>Green</u>	4
<u>Pink</u>	5
<u>Yellow</u>	5

4. **How best can the enterprising skills of members of the refugee communities be engaged to enhance the cultural diversity of the North East Region? How would we support such initiatives?**

*To be both practical and theoretical - to engage with role models from the refugee community  
To work with refugees not for refugees*

*To create demand in the labour market by creating awareness  
To promote 'lead signs' – involve them to increase sense of belonging*

*To engage on issues and activities which will promote these aims*

Practical Action

*Training on cultural diversity*

*Assess quality/ outcomes of initial approaches*

*Provide pathways and advice (RETAG) – information dissemination, learning support, business pathways, needs assessment*

Support

*Involve refugees:-*

- *Participation in strategy and policy discussions, create links with Regional Economic Strategy,*
- *Role models and case studies*
- *Funding support for initiatives - encourage grass roots*
- *Utilise refugee skills and experience*

**Post Its**

<u>Green</u>	5
<u>Pink</u>	4
<u>Yellow</u>	2

## STATISTICAL DATA

There were 5,866 asylum seekers in NASS accommodation in March 2003. This figure rose compared with March 2002 (5,417), but has since declined through the remainder of 2003.

Distribution of Asylum Seekers in NASS accommodation – March 2003	Number	%
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1814	31%
Sunderland	1006	17%
Middlesborough	776	13%
Stockton on Tees	659	11%
Gateshead	520	9%
North Tyneside	469	8%
Redcar & Cleveland	349	6%
South Tyneside	166	3%
Other	107	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5866</b>	<b>100%</b>

Nationality of Asylum Seekers in North East Region (Top 7 in March 2003)	Number	% of Total
Iraq	772	13%
Iran	703	12%
Afghanistan	521	9%
Czech Republic	346	6%
Zimbabwe	306	5%
Turkey	292	5%
Angola	269	4%
<i>104 different nationalities in total</i>		

Source: NECAS Reports 2002 & 2003.

### Sample Data re: Qualifications and Employment Outcomes from London-based Agencies

Total Sample Size: 2132 Clients – 65% male, 35% female

Qualifications		Referral Outcome	
Degree/Post Graduate	35%	Further Education/ESOL	55%
NVQ Level 3	16%	Voluntary Work	4%
NVQ Level 2	19%	Employment	9%
NVQ Level 1	15%	Medical Profession	11%
None	15%	Job Seeking/Undecided	13%
		Self Employment/ Business Start-Up	8%

Nationalities of Clients (Top 7)	
Somalia	Sri Lanka
Afghanistan	Kosovo
Iraq	Zimbabwe
Iran	

Sources: Refugees Into Jobs Annual Report 2002, Refugee Employment Advice 2002/03

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## WEB LINKS

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## NOTES

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- <sup>i</sup> Enterprise in Newcastle, Woodford, Richardson & Shaw, December 2003  
<sup>ii</sup> Realising Our Potential, October 2002 page27  
<sup>iii</sup> Realising Our Potential, October 2002 page29  
<sup>iv</sup> Refugees' Opportunities and Barriers to Employment, Alice Bloch, 2002  
<sup>v</sup> Refugee Housing Project North East, 2002  
<sup>vi</sup> Refugees Into Jobs, 2002  
<sup>vii</sup> NECARS & NERS Quarterly Statistics, December 2003  
<sup>viii</sup> Working to Rebuild Lives, DWP 2003