



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN PRACTICE

A Guide to Embedding Equal Opportunities into Development Projects

Written by the Refugee Council on behalf of the EQUAL ASSET UK Development and Mainstreaming Partnership

November 2005

The UK Asylum Seekers Mainstreaming Partnership – ASSET UK is part funded by the European Social Fund under the Equal Community Initiative Programme The Dissemination and Mainstreaming phase is co-funded by the National Learning and Skills Council

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The EQUAL programme aims to overcome discrimination and inequalities faced by disadvantaged groups in the UK and European labour market. ASSET UK is a partnership under the EQUAL programme. It consists of eight agencies that work together to promote asylum seekers' skills, empowerment and training in the UK. Led both nationally and transnationally by the Refugee Council, ASSET UK works to develop and disseminate good practice on information, advice and guidance, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); skills audits; volunteering and working with employers. ASSET UK equips asylum seekers with skills that prepare them for the labour market, either in the UK or in their country of origin, should they have to return. The eight agencies are:

Refugee Council



The Basic Skills Agency



LLU+ (formerly the London Language and Literacy Unit), London South Bank University



National Institute of Adult Continuing Education



Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities



Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit, London Metropolitan University



The Sheffield College



Training and Employment Section, Refugee Council

1 Introduction

1.1 ASSET UK was established with funding from the ESF EQUAL Community programme, the Learning and Skills Council and Wales Assembly Government. In the UK Theme I of the Equal programme aimed to tackle discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, particularly in dispersal areas. The strategic objective of the programme is

“To develop an employment strategy which is appropriate to the needs of asylum seekers in the UK”.

Theme I stresses the need to ensure that “tailored provision is made available along the continuum from asylum seeker to refugee” and to “enable asylum seekers to play a more active role in society and to enable those who become refugees to gain more rapid transition to the labour market”.

1.2 A key strategic objective of the ASSET UK Development Partnership, in response to the principles of the Equal programme, was to address a number of barriers to the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers. This document draws on the policies and practices developed by the project to promote equal opportunities for all our participants: paid and unpaid staff and asylum seeker beneficiaries. It is intended to provide examples of good practice that other organisations working on similar projects or programmes can use to develop their own equal opportunity policies and practice.

1.3 Our practice was further informed by the Partnership’s Equal Opportunities Policy which was written with the needs of asylum seekers in the foreground:

‘to ensure that all asylum seekers, both potential and actual users of the services are treated equally and as individuals’.

1.4 It recognised that asylum seekers were not a sub-set of ethnic minorities, nor a homogeneous group and should, therefore not be treated as such.

2 The Equal Opportunities Policy

- 2.1.1 The scope of ASSET UK's Equal Opportunities Policy (Appendix 1) was wide. It encompassed all the activities of the ASSET UK DP; its management structure and practices; staff recruitment and selection practices; provision of services to the target groups; publicity and marketing and all dealings with the asylum seekers.
- 2.1.2 The lead partner, the British Refugee Council, took the responsibility for ensuring the partners implemented the policy. All partners and individual staff members were responsible for the application of the policy into practice.
- 2.1.3 In addition to EQUAL programme requirements, the policy was developed in line with the relevant legislation and guidance including the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (includes discrimination on the basis of gender reassignment 1999); Race Relations Act 1976; Race Relations Amendment Act 2001; Disability Discrimination Act 1995; Human Rights Act 1998 and Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 (which came into force on 1 December 2003) and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 which came into force on 2 December 2003
- 2.1.4. The policy was based on the principles of social equity, valuing individuals and meeting needs. Among other principles ASSET UK sought to ensure the DP:
- (a) Provided appropriate, sensitive and impartial services, which were accessible to all asylum seekers.
 - (b) Ensured that the principle of empowerment was at the heart of the services provided both to the individual and the community represented by the individual.
 - (c) Provided appropriate interpreting and translation services to those whose first language is not English to meet the needs as fully as possible.
 - (d) Met the needs, aspirations and enhanced the skills of asylum seekers.
 - (e) Sought to influence the work and contribution of partner organisations by ensuring that the equality issues and considerations are fully taken into account when developing strategies.
 - (f) Established clear priorities in promoting equality taking into consideration access, participation, retention and achievement.
- 2.1.5. The policy made a commitment to challenge all forms of discrimination that was based on race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or belief, political affiliation and age. It committed to ensuring services took into account and were sensitive to the needs of all diverse groups of asylum seekers.

2.2 Barriers to Vocational Integration of Asylum Seekers

2.2.1. More specifically ASSET UK aimed to redress some of the barriers asylum seekers face in the finding employment commensurate with their skills and experience. As a number of recent reports have shown asylum seekers and refugees are among the most disadvantaged groups in the UK labour market. Well qualified asylum seekers with a wealth of work experience still face numerous barriers to employment when they are granted permission to work. Those who do succeed in finding employment are likely to be in jobs for which they are over-qualified.

2.2.2. Barriers asylum seekers and refugees face are well-known and include

- lack of recognition of overseas qualifications;
- limited English language skills;
- lack of UK work experience;
- lack of knowledge about job search culture and the UK labour market;
- lack of information about employment and training services;
- lack of information about refugee support networks and organisations;
- employers' lack of understanding of eligibility to work;
- confusion over how to obtain National Insurance numbers and permission to work documentation and employers checks;
- as well as race, gender and disability related barriers that they share with others.

2.2.3 Shortly after the project began, in July 2002, the Home Office withdrew the concession that allowed asylum seekers to apply for permission to work if they had waited more than six months for a decision. Not only did this create an additional barrier but meant that the partnership had to change its planned interventions for asylum seekers significantly.

2.3 Barriers to Social Integration

2.3.1 ASSET UK also sought to reduce some of the barriers to social integration faced by asylum seekers. In addition to the limited proficiency in the language of the host country opportunities to integration are restricted by:

- poverty;
- lack of knowledge of opportunities to participate in the local community and appropriate support networks;
- feelings of isolation and disorientation;
- being in short-term accommodation and insecurity about the future;
- fear of hostility from the local community;
- lack of productive activities;
- caring responsibilities.

2.3.2 While many asylum seekers are highly motivated and capable individuals who have arrived in this country in the face of considerable odds, the continuing difficulties they face, the traumatic events they have experienced and concerns about the families they may have left in difficult circumstances take their toll. Others may have disabilities or debilitating illnesses which further restrict opportunities to participate in the community.

3 The Equal Opportunities Implementation Strategy

3.1. The ASSET UK DP's Equal Opportunities Implementation Strategy (Appendix 3) pursued the following objectives:

- (a) To ensure that asylum seeker participants acquire the essential basic skills that are a prerequisite to mobility, orientation and the seeking of job opportunities by developing, testing and evaluating innovative ways of delivering basic skills and ESOL in comparative settings.
- (b) To develop the skills of teachers (both paid and unpaid) using new resources underpinned by the Adult ESOL Curriculum and teacher training standards; and to develop their awareness of the barriers which asylum seekers face and how they may help overcome them.
- (c) To improve the understanding of asylum seekers of the UK/local labour market and to train advisers and teachers, throughout the UK, to enable them to deliver high quality advice and guidance, in person and through on-line resources.
- (d) To undertake a baseline audit of the skills and qualifications of asylum seekers on arrival in the East Midlands and Northern Ireland, and facilitate appropriate opportunities for volunteering and labour market orientation alongside learning support. Also to map their progress through the different processes.
- (e) To create opportunities for asylum seekers to undertake volunteering to gain basic work experience, and meet members of the host community on more equal terms.
- (f) To work with target groups of employers, facilitating better mutual understanding between asylum seekers and employers of each others' needs.
- (g) To identify and disseminate good practice in work with asylum seekers in the areas of education and training, ensuring that where appropriate it is mainstreamed both within the UK and Europe.
- (h) To influence the development of policy both within the UK and Europe on the support, training and education of asylum seekers with the objective of facilitating their ultimate integration.

4 Examples Of How ASSET UK Put The Policy Into Practice

4.1.1 All the organisations, including sub-contractors, in the partnership already had well-established equal opportunities policies. The DP's policy, however, added value to these by highlighting those issues that were specific to asylum seekers and developed strategies to address specific areas of disadvantage as far as was possible within current legislation. These are described below and further illustrated by case studies.

4.2 Supporting Asylum Seekers To Access Provision:

4.2.1 Wherever possible Partners took their projects to the participants by:

- working in accommodation centres or community centres where asylum seekers lived;
- arranging advisory and guidance visits at venues with good access and convenient to participants;
- providing information and guidance on-line and training advisers, teachers, librarians and other staff on how they may improve access to our target group.

4.2.2 ASSET UK was able to allocate a limited amount of its budget to provide:

- travel expenses and subsistence costs;
- crèche facilities or childcare expenses;
- learning materials and stationery for participants;
- translations and interpreters.

In addition participants were financially supported to attend ASSET UK events where they were encouraged to contribute on equal terms to the partners and delegates; several made presentations at conferences and in workshops.

4.2.3 Wherever possible the project involved beneficiaries in supporting new participants, for instance through encouraging them to use ASSET UK services. A particularly good example of asylum seekers working to help other asylum seekers to access the services comes from TES, where beneficiaries researched and produced an "Information pack" for new arrivals. RAGU also trained four beneficiaries to provide basic IT training to other asylum seekers.

4.3 Using The Web To Improve Access

The Refugee Advice & Guidance Unit (RAGU) developed a range of on-line orientation resources for asylum seekers and provided training for advice workers in dispersal regions on their use. The Information for Asylum Seekers website, www.info-for-asylumseekers.org.uk, is the first UK-wide dedicated website that enables asylum seekers outside London to access information and advice about education and preparation for employment within UK. Key information has been translated in 8 refugee languages. RAGU also established a website supported network of Higher & Further Education institutions and community groups, called HERAN – www.heran.org.uk, to disseminate information, share experience and examples of good practice and to influence and inform policy development in the longer term.

4.4 ESOL And Other Basic Skills

- 4.4.1 Being able to communicate in the language of the host country is a prerequisite for social, vocational integration and achieving equality, so it is not surprising that a substantial part of the DP's activities were concerned with ESOL provision, targeting both teachers and learners with a view to improving provision available to asylum seekers.
- 4.4.2 All the partners jointly and individually disseminated their activities and products widely through advisory visits, presentations, workshops, conferences and staff development days to audiences that included ESOL teachers, with the aim of helping them develop their understanding of asylum seeker needs and the skills to address them. Specific examples include:

LLU+, formerly the London Language and Literacy Unit, London South Bank University provided a range of training opportunities for over 300 staff teaching ESOL to asylum seekers. Teachers from refugee community organisations were given free places on Level 4 training courses. While many asylum seekers are highly educated and qualified, others have had little or interrupted schooling and may not be literate in their own language, further exacerbating their disadvantage. To address this need LLU+ offered specialist modules focussing on teaching English language literacy. Priority was given to teachers from a refugee background enabling them to have high quality training that otherwise they might not be able to afford on the grounds of costs.

The Training and Employment Section (TES) – British Refugee Council

TES recruited teachers with English as a Foreign Language [EFL] qualifications to teach English to asylum seekers in accommodation centres in Birmingham. Teachers were provided with initial and on-going training through supervision and support visits and regular workshops, to ensure that they understood the specific needs of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers who were Anglophone and had teaching experience or wished to become teachers were given training leading to qualifications as language support assistants. TES also ran workshops for other service providers, volunteers and asylum seekers on various aspects of teaching ESOL to asylum seekers.

4.5 Involving Beneficiaries In Project Development

- 4.5.1 All the partners involved participants as much as possible in shaping the project and its products.

At **NIACE** for instance, asylum seeker volunteers have participated in the work of local forums to help agencies to understand the difficulties they face and how to overcome them. Raising awareness in this way has enabled other asylum seekers in the region to access courses, volunteering opportunities and services that otherwise they would not be able to. They have also supported some of the beneficiaries to set up refugee community organisations and helping them in developing working relations with statutory service providers. NIACE volunteers have participated in team meetings, helped shape the work of the project and contributed to evaluation and dissemination.

- 4.5.2 RAGU began its project by consulting widely: around 50 asylum seekers participated in advising on website development through focus groups in Leeds, Sunderland, Washington, Middlesbrough, Birmingham and London. The groups provided input on content, appearance, language and tone. Feedback from website influenced website development throughout the project.
- 4.5.3 At NICEM one of the ASSET UK beneficiaries has been appointed to become one of the organisation's Trustees.
- 4.5.4 The Basic Skills Agency involved participants in trialling, evaluating and commenting on Citizenskills and other materials as they were being developed. In Cardiff two participants were members of the sub-contracted partner's, the Parade ESOL Service, project steering group.
- 4.5.5 Sheffield College too set up a steering group of asylum seekers that would enable them to help in shaping the programme and guide them in finding the best ways to find and encourage beneficiaries to take up volunteering opportunities.

4.6 Ensuring Materials Incorporate Principles Of Equal Opportunities

4.6.1 ASSET UK set itself high standards in ensuring that any resources produced took account of the partnership's equal opportunities policy. It was able to draw on the experience partners had of producing guidance, teaching and learning materials. To ensure the project was compliant with the Disability Discrimination Action, ASSET UK developed an Accessible Information Policy, which set out the guidelines for partners to follow. This may be downloaded from www.asset-uk.org.uk.

The Basic Skills Agency worked to incorporate Equal Opportunities practice in both the design and content of the resources it produced. In addition to consulting on content, asylum seeker learners were asked for feedback on the design of the Citizenskills, a multimedia resource. The resource was designed to support integration and encourage active participation in the community and, by doing so, counteract some of the barriers to social integration that asylum seekers face. Citizenskills provides basic information on rights, responsibilities and opportunities as a stimulus to developing English language skills to find out about and get involved in local activities. It includes tasks that require learners to use different sources of information: to go out to find out for themselves and report back to their co-learners; to invite speakers from voluntary organisations, the police, local councillors, self-employed workers, trade union officials and many others. As much as possible Citizenskills reflects cultural diversity and a range of different needs.

5 Monitoring And Improving Equal Opportunities Procedures

- 5.1 In addition to producing a policy the DP established an Equal Opportunities Task Group to develop a self-assessment tool to monitor its implementation and to:
- ensure consistency and active implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy;
 - identify and remedy any shortcomings.
- 5.2 The Task Group produced a very detailed self-assessment questionnaire which trialled early in the project. Partners found this somewhat unwieldy so we have revised it and reproduced it in Appendix 1 as a model that new Development Partnerships could adapt for their projects.
- 5.3 Issues identified through self-assessment and review. The need
- for translated information, not just in the main refugee languages to ensure that the most linguistically isolated groups have access;
 - to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to transport and childcare costs;
 - to liaise with organisations that use volunteers to ensure that there are opportunities that do not require Criminal Record Bureau checks as these are not always obtainable by asylum seekers (see RAGU website for advice);
 - to provide induction training for staff new to the area of work on the issues that affect asylum seekers.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Our Equal Opportunities Implementation Strategy proved to be a very useful vehicle for translating the policy into practice. The clear and consistent focus of the strategy on the specific objectives of the partnership ensured the DP implemented measures aimed at addressing the needs of, and empowering, the target groups.
- 6.2 We hope that ASSET UK Development Partnership's approach to developing and implementing an Equal Opportunities Policy is a model that can be adapted and used by partnerships working with asylum seekers and/or refugees in the UK or in other EU countries. Some EQUAL partnerships in the UK, Sweden and Denmark have already used it as the basis for developing their own policies.

PROMOTING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Self Assessment Tool

1. Introduction

Equal opportunities, together with empowerment, innovation, transnationality, partnership working and mainstreaming, is a key principle of EQUAL Programme. Each Development Partnership (DP) has a duty to ensure all its activities are carried out in line with the principle of equality of opportunity. ASSET UK partners take pride in, and maintain a tradition of, promoting equality of opportunity, each in their own way. The partnership, however, wishes to ensure consistency in practice and to have a clear indication as to how each partner is implementing the DP's Equal Opportunities Strategy and Implementation Plan.

This document is a practical tool to help all partners to undertake equal opportunities self-assessment and, in so doing, make it possible for the partnership to:

- (a) Ensure consistency and active implementation of its Equal Opportunities policy.
- (b) Generate evidence to be able to judge to what extent the partnership is successful in implementing its equal opportunities strategy and implementation plan.

The self-assessment process involves:

- (a) Identifying strengths and weakness.
- (b) Action planning to remedy identified weaknesses within a defined time-scale.

The partnership is committed to the following guiding principles for conducting self-assessment. The DP will:

- (a) Make the self-assessment process an integral part of strategic and operational planning.
- (b) Involve DP staff at all levels, making sure they are aware of the objectives and procedures of self-assessment.
- (c) Involve beneficiaries, giving them the opportunity to express their views anonymously.
- (d) Track progress in remedying weaknesses and consolidating strengths.

2. Reporting And Development Planning

Self-assessment reports should:

1. Use the proforma below as a checklist.
2. Use the box on the right of the question to identify strengths and weaknesses according to the key below:
 - (A) We are very confident about this; we have evidence that work is established and that staff/beneficiaries/volunteers understand their roles/responsibilities.
 - (B) We haven't done much on this yet but we know what to do and how to go about it.
 - (C) We still need to do it.
3. Use the NOTES section to :
 - (a) highlight examples of good practice that may be worth disseminating.
 - (b) note plans for improvement actions with dates and responsible person.

3. Partnership Equal Opportunities Self-Assessment Proforma

Equal Opportunities Policy and Practice

(a)	Does the development partnership have an agreed Equal Opportunities Policy, procedures and action plan which are in line with the UK equality legislation and meet the requirements of EQUAL?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(b)	Are your Equal Opportunities policy, procedures and action plan understood and supported by all staff, sub-contractors and employers; and beneficiaries, promoted by word and example; applied to all project activities; monitored to ensure effective implementation and reviewed regularly to maintain their relevance?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Leadership, Management and Development

(a)	Have you ensured equality of opportunity in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defining and agreeing the vision of your partnership? • allocating roles within the partnership? • agreeing transnational and mainstreaming plans? • staff recruitment, induction and training? • management of the partnership? • allocating resources? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(c)	Does the project involve beneficiaries in project management?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(d)	Does your DP have a clear policy and procedure for dealing with complaints that is agreed and understood by all partners?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Services to Beneficiaries

Does your project:		
(a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote equality of opportunity to service users? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure your promotion and publicity material attracts all the target groups of beneficiaries? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure procedures for selection and assessment promote equality of opportunity for beneficiaries? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure staff and beneficiaries are protected against discrimination and harassment? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that complaints from beneficiaries are addressed promptly? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Teaching and Learning

Does the project		
(a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess the language and occupational skills, knowledge, prior achievements, preferred learning styles of beneficiaries on entry? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use the results of initial assessment to prepare a realistic training and development plan for each trainee? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> give all beneficiaries an induction to their programmes, policies of your organisation including Equal Opportunities Policy and inform them of their rights and responsibilities? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> give appropriate additional support to beneficiaries with learning difficulties or disabilities? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regularly review progress and support needs with beneficiaries, advise them on next steps and provide them with further support? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(f)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> give beneficiaries up-to-date information and advice on opportunities for progression? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Staff recruitment, selection and development

Does your project:		
(a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have documented procedures for the recruitment of staff, induction, appraisal and professional development that comply with Equal Opportunities legislation? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide training to ensure project staff can work effectively with trainees who have diverse needs and experience? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have sufficient staff with the skills, knowledge and qualifications to deliver services to asylum seekers? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure equality of opportunity in career progression or promotion for all project staff ? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a policy in place to ensure staff are not subjected to harassment, bullying or any other degrading treatment and preserves their dignity at work? 	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Ethos and Environment

(a)	Do all beneficiaries have access to accommodation, equipment and facilities, which help them to access your service(s)?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(b)	Does the project ensure all staff and beneficiaries are consulted about the quality of the service(s) you are delivering to them?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(c)	Does the project clearly demonstrate that it values and celebrates multiculturalism and diversity?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Outputs and Outcomes

(a)	Does your project have clear priorities and plans for carrying out its equal opportunities role, including quantified and time-bound targets for removing inequality in the delivery of your service(s) in terms of age, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?
(b)	Does your project ensure parity of outcomes for all beneficiaries with due regard to age, gender, nationality, race and disability?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Evaluation

(a)	Does your project have in place mechanisms for encouraging feedback from diverse groups of beneficiaries on the quality of the services you provide to them?	
Notes/Action:		
By whom?		By when?

Appendix 2

EQUAL Choice

EQUAL Access

EQUAL Opportunities

Policy for EQUAL

UK Asylum Seekers Development Partnership

April 2002

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Development Partnership (DP) is committed to the provision of equal opportunities. The DP has developed a policy that aims to ensure equal opportunities for all who work for and use the services. In taking this objective further, the DP will do so without prejudice and discrimination.
- 1.2 The policy will promote equality of opportunity for all asylum seekers and will endeavour to meet their needs in an empowering and inclusive manner. The vision is to creatively ensure that all asylum seekers have the opportunity to go as far as their talents, efforts, skills and knowledge will take them as well as creating an environment of further development and positive achievement.
- 1.3 Equal opportunities should not be considered as treating 'everyone the same', instead its remit is for a careful assessment of how the individual particular needs can be met within the boundaries of what the project can provide.

2.0 General Statement

- 2.1 This policy is first and foremost for asylum seekers. It is to ensure that all asylum seekers, both potential and actual users of the services, are treated equally and as individuals. Asylum seekers are not a sub set of ethnic minorities. Nor are they a homogeneous group and they should not be treated as such. They come from a range of countries, cultures and religious and political backgrounds. Further they have fled from, and continue to endure situations, which cause particular barriers to integration and learning. Activities will be designed and delivered in a manner, which ensures that all individuals will be given full opportunity to benefit from the services and the learning opportunities that are provided.
- 2.2 Equal Opportunities is an overarching term used to address the barriers that prevent full social, economic and political participation. The concept of equality will be adhered to all without discrimination on the basis of:
 - Gender
 - Marital or family status
 - Physical disability
 - Learning disability
 - Learning difficulty – for e.g. dyslexia
 - Mental illness
 - Race, nationality or ethnic origin
 - Age
 - Immigration Status
 - Language
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Person with or without dependents
 - Economic Status
 - Political beliefs
 - Religious beliefs

In addressing the differing needs of any group of asylum seekers, consideration needs to be taken of people who may

- Be without qualification
- Have underachieved at school or received any formal education
- Not had any work experience
- Need help with English as a second or additional language
- Need help with literacy and numeracy
- Wish to train in non traditional areas
- Experience difficulty due to alcohol or drug abuse
- Have emotional difficulties
- Have behaviour difficulties
- Be isolated from their community
- Experiencing difficulties due to homelessness/inappropriate accommodation.

2.3 The emphasis on Equal Opportunities stems from an explicit commitment to include all social groups, to discourage discrimination and to value diversity within an empowering user led function.

3.0 Scope of Policy

3.1 This policy applies to all of the activities of the EQUAL DP, its management structure, employment practices, services provision, publicity, marketing, all staff working for the DP, and all dealings with the asylum seekers.

3.2 The lead partner, the British Refugee Council will be responsible for ensuring its partners implement the policy.

3.3 All partners and individual staff members will be responsible for the application of the policy into practice.

4.0 Linking Policy Into Statutory Requirements

4.1 To ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the ground of race, sex and disability in the provision of services or against job discrimination, this policy is in line with the relevant employment legislation, anti discrimination legislation and good practices guide.

4.2 The relevant legislation and guidance includes:

- Race Relations Act 1976
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (includes discrimination on the basis of gender reassignment 1999)
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2001
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice

5.0 Underlying Principles

- 5.1 The underlying theme will be of social equity, valuing individuals and assessing needs. There will be an underlying ethos, of fair and equal behaviour, recognising that discrimination, harassment and abuse (physical and or emotional) will not be tolerated.
- 5.2 The DP will constantly seek to raise awareness of the particular needs of asylum seekers and that these needs can not be met under general approaches for ethnic minorities.
- 5.3 The DP will :
- Provide appropriate, sensitive and impartial services, which are accessible to all asylum seekers.
 - Create and maintain a cooperative environment between staff and asylum seekers that is free from harassment and victimisation. An environment that promotes good relationships and creates conditions that will ensure full development of the asylum seekers.
 - Endeavour to provide opportunities for asylum seekers to further develop a multi cultural dimension that will reflect the diversity of all the users
 - Ensure that the principle of empowerment is at the heart of the services provided both to the individual and the community represented by the individual.
 - Maintain an ethos of respect and dignity in all interactions
 - Be sensitive to the needs of those whose first language is not English. Appropriate interpreting and translation services will be used to meet the needs as fully as possible. These will follow established good practice.
 - Meet the needs, aspirations and enhance the skills of individuals both within the learning experiences and through vocational qualifications.
 - Enhance the choice and control for asylum seekers in their lives
 - Work actively towards eliminating all forms of unfair discrimination both direct and indirect
 - Seek to influence the work and contribution of partner organisation by ensuring that the equality issues and considerations are fully taken into account when developing strategies.
 - Ensure the best possible fit between the needs of the asylum seekers, the teaching programmes, other additional provision and the learning environment. This is to be achieved by accommodating the provision to what the asylum seeker requires as opposed to maintain the expectation that the asylum seeker will adapt to the services provided.
 - Identify specific or additional needs; providing resources and appropriate support.
 - Ensure that the asylum seeker's preferred learning styles are met and thereby set up fair access to appropriate assessments.
 - Establish a clear overview of priorities in promoting equality taking into consideration access, participation, retention and achievement.

-
- Value people and their differences, enabling all employees and asylum seekers to achieve their full potential creating vitality within the organisations and service provision.

The principles encompass the model of good practice, promoting mainstreaming functions and prioritising equality of opportunity in all its functions. This remit will include working with the local organisations within the structure of promoting equality.

6.0 Equality In The Delivery Of Services

6.1 Access to learning opportunities and other services can be hampered by a number of social economic barriers. These include

- Childcare costs
- Lack of access to childcare arrangements
- Financial hardship
- Emotional and physical isolation
- Responsibility for school age children or other relatives
- Lack of confidence
- Negative experiences of learning
- No previous formal learning experience
- Language barriers
- Communication barriers
- Public transport costs
- Lack of transport or mobility

6.2 Programmes can be developed taking into account an overview of the local barriers encountered by asylum seekers.

6.3 The quality of services will be based on the principles of equality whereby taking action is to ensure that the services are equally accessible to all. Furthermore, the services will need to be appropriate to the differing needs of all sections of the asylum seeker communities.

6.4 The delivery of the services would include ongoing monitoring and regular analysis. This will become the basis for appropriate action that can be taken to eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination and thereby promote equality of opportunity.

6.5 The delivery of services will include:

- Ensuring the design takes into account the ethnicity, background, language needs and other relevant needs of all asylum seekers
- Allocating asylum seekers to teaching programmes, employers and other services fairly and equitably. If appropriate, evidential information will include the reasoning behind the allocation of the services.

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- Assessment outcomes that show how the needs have been identified and the resources allocated appropriately.
 - Services that encourage a positive attitude to ethnic, cultural, racial, sexual and disability diversity.
 - Steps to ensure that all forms of planning, preparation and delivery is inclusive and draws on areas of interest both to the individual as well as to all users of the service.
 - Promotion of equality in every context and challenging of discrimination promptly, fairly and consistently.
 - Positive and active steps that include the views of asylum seekers, to confirm that all resources are inclusive.
 - Resources that promote a greater understanding of diversity and, if necessary, create an environment to challenge when inappropriate. This would need to take into consideration resources that are used in the areas of displays, books, videos, advertising, marketing and teaching materials. Images used will avoid any form of stereotyping.
 - Information published in a manner that gives asylum seekers a greater understanding of the services that are on offer.
 - Fair and equitable admission processes and other selection criteria.
 - Provisions made for asylum seekers to take time off for religious observations and other appointments, and to accommodate childcare arrangements, transport services.
 - Evaluations of services that include the views of the asylum seekers and adhere to the principles of equality.
 - Setting up procedures and practices whereby asylum seekers can develop the self-confidence to make the transition to a work situation.
 - Recruitment processes that will, if necessary, use interpreting services.
 - Pace and methodology of learning that accommodates the ongoing needs of asylum seekers and is sensitive to particular problems that may arise. For example if an asylum seeker has experienced discrimination from one of the other agencies and requires further support.
 - Ongoing support and training to individual members of the community who wish to develop their interpreting skills
 - Setting up a support structure specifically for asylum seekers who may feel isolated. Creating a networking forum where there is an exchange of information, identifying the roles of other agencies and raising awareness of accessing specific community based resources.

6.6 The above information can be consolidated into 9 Cs.

- ✓ Consultation and Choice – Identify needs and constraints. From the research and consultation process to develop appropriate programmes. To offer a breath of opportunities with a varied programme to allow for a range of choices to be made.
- ✓ Convenience – Allocation of days, timing of sessions that would fit into an asylum seekers schedule.

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- ✓ Confidence and Comfort- Friendly welcoming environment. Explaining the process and procedures, creating an arena where questions can be asked. Recognising that there could be a difference in the systems format from the asylum seekers country of origin to the system set up within UK.
 - ✓ Creating a caring environment.
 - ✓ Challenging discrimination promptly, fairly and consistently.
 - ✓ Complaints –where asylum seekers are made aware that they have the right to complain with out having the fears of repercussions of taking forward a complaint.

7.0 Complaints Procedure

7.1 All complaints from staff and asylum seekers of discrimination, harassment and abuse will be treated seriously and sympathetically. Proper immediate steps will be taken to protect the complainant. The investigation will be carried out objectively and if necessary independently, by someone with sufficient authority to effectively handle the matter in the following process.

- Giving priority to establishing what happened
- Supporting the complainant
- Developing and implementing disciplinary and complaints procedures
- Ascertaining the most appropriate route of complaint, either formal (through personnel procedures and policies) or informal (organising three way meetings with the manager, complainant and alleged harasser)
- Recording all incidents and outcomes
- Monitoring the effectiveness of above measures

7.2 The Complaints procedure will be in line with other procedures of the organisation.

7.3 Staff will be trained to deal effectively with the complaint format.

7.4 A support mechanism will be available for the alleged harasser.

8.0 Equality Practices

8.1 In seeking to overcome all forms of unfair discrimination and prejudice, there is a commitment to making equality of opportunity a reality for all in the provision of service. There is a recognition that many will be in more than one of the following groups and therefore are likely to be at an addition risk of further discrimination.

8.2 Racial, Ethnic and Nationality Equality

There may be discrimination based on colour race, ethnicity or nationality. Racism can show itself overtly (when a person is treated less favourably) or in a subtle way by means of process, attitudes and behaviour. This amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racial stereotyping.

The commitment to challenging all forms of racial discrimination includes

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- Defamatory or abusive comments
 - Racist innuendos or jokes
 - Racist material
 - Physical, emotional or psychological harassment (unwanted behaviour) of individuals or groups on grounds of racism.
 - Victimisation – when a person is discriminated against for taking action or for supporting such action by another.

The aim is to ensure that the needs, experiences and perspectives of the asylum seekers are fairly reflected within the strategic development of all programmes.

8.3 Gender Equality

It is acknowledged that both women and men can be discriminated against because of responsibilities towards childcare, marital status or economic status. Stereotyping suggests that men or women should or should not, can or cannot do certain tasks, jobs, or activities solely on the grounds of their gender. There is recognition that some women may face additional forms of discrimination. This may result in being denied equal access to services, employment and development opportunities.

To establish and maintain non-discriminatory practices, necessary steps need to be taken to combat sexism and this is through curbing unacceptable behaviour that includes:

- Use of sexist language
- Sexist Comments
- Sexist behaviour
- Using sexist material in the programmes

The aim is to ensure that practices and procedures take particular account of the needs of the men and women and how their development process can be hindered by the stereotypical images.

8.4 Lesbians and Gay Men

Lesbians and Gay men may be discriminated against because of their sexuality. There is a commitment to providing fair treatment and equal access to services, employment and development opportunities.

To establish and maintain a non-discriminatory practice. To take all necessary step to combat expressions or acts that undermines grounds of sexual preference.

This includes:

- Use of anti gay or anti lesbian material
- Use of anti gay or anti lesbian language, attitude or behaviour.

Action will be taken to ensure that lesbian and gay staff and service users are able to work within an environment that values them as individuals and is free from harassment and discrimination.

8.5 People With Disabilities (Physical Or Learning)

As including individuals who have physical and mental disabilities, the target group will include many that have suffered torture and abuse. This is an incredibly dehumanising experience and in itself will be a barrier to them accessing learning. Some will also have physical and mental disabilities.

The needs of people with disabilities will be taken into account in all areas of activities. The views of the disabled service users will be sought and reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that services and other opportunities are fully accessible.

Comments, behaviour and material that indicate discrimination towards people with a disability will not be tolerated. Where barriers to access and other services are identified, action will be taken to overcome.

8.6 Age Discrimination

Age discrimination can affect both young and older people who have their abilities, ideas, practices stereotyped because of their age.

Development of services will take into account and be sensitive to the needs of particular age groups of asylum seekers.

8.7 Religious and Political Beliefs

The rights of individual and groups will be upheld and discrimination will not be deemed acceptable because of religious or political beliefs, as long as the expression of these beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

Where members of the community have particularly religious needs, all reasonable and practical steps will be taken to accommodate them.

8.8 Positive Action

It is lawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976 to provide training and special encouragement for people of a particular racial group or to either sex. It is also lawful to address any special educational, training or welfare needs identified for a specific racial or gender group.

Special encouragement may include targeted advertising and recruitment literature.

9.0 Equality In Employment

- 9.1 There is a value of a workforce whereby people from differing backgrounds are encouraged to bring fresh ideas and perceptions enabling the opportunity to deliver high quality services. A workforce that reflects, at all levels of the organisational structure, diversity and equality. Action will be taken to eliminate any unfair discrimination in all policies, practices and procedures. A safe, secure and accessible working environment will be provided that values the identities and cultures of all the employees.
- 9.2 The aim is for Equality of Opportunity in all areas of employment, including recruitment, selection, training and development of staff. To ensure that all recruitment and selection procedures operate in a fair and non-discriminatory way so that those best able to do the job are appointed.
- 9.3 Further, employee's views on good practice will be taken into consideration. Monitoring will take place on the basis of age, ethnicity, disability and gender in exploring the make up of the workforce. This will link into ultimately ensuring that the recruitment strategy focus will be based on meeting the needs of the asylum seekers.
- 9.4 Cooperation of all employees is essential for the success of this policy. However, ultimate responsibility for achieving the policy's objectives and for ensuring compliance with the relevant Acts as well as the various codes of practice lies with the key members of the DPA.
- 9.5 Behaviour or actions that go against the spirit on which this policy is based will be considered serious disciplinary matters.

10.0 Review

- 10.1 The Partnership will review this Policy and Implementation Strategy early on in Action 2. Asylum seekers and their representatives will be consulted on the Policy and Strategy.

Implementing The Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Policy and Themes

This Implementation Strategy needs to be read in conjunction with the DP's Equal Opportunities Policy. The following key themes will need to be implemented in order for the DP's policy to be put into practice:

- An acknowledgement that asylum seekers are not a sub set of the ethnic minority population but have particular needs due to their status.
- An agreed mechanism for taking forward the equality agenda, reviewing the impact of the service provision on asylum seekers and to promoting good practice.
- An ongoing assessment and review process to ensure adherence to the policy.
- The setting of equality targets that need to reflect local priorities, close the equality gaps and ultimately set real and lasting changes.

The DP, in implementing its Equal Policy, will be mindful of the situation from which asylum seekers have come. In particular, it will take into account that asylum seekers may have suffered torture, imprisonment or other forms of ill treatment as a result of their political activities, religious beliefs or even for merely speaking their own language. This may have an impact on how they access and use services. The DP will ensure that it takes into account discrimination and barriers encountered by sub groups within the target group, for instance, people with disabilities.

2. Management Arrangements

The lead partner, the British Refugee Council (BRC) will ensure that the management and development of the partnership is carried out within the context of the policy and that this monitored and evaluated.

The BRC will establish a Task Group made of up members of the partnership and other organisations working with the target group to undertake the detailed development and monitoring of the Implementation Strategy.

The BRC will ensure that the partnership is representative of the client group and that it operates in a manner, which ensures that all partners have equal involvement and status irrespective of size. There are a number of mechanisms by which this can be achieved. For instance:

- Allocating funding for travel for the smaller groups as part of Action 1.
- Offering development support by the Central Co-ordination Team to all groups within the partnership as needed.
- Making additional efforts during Action 2 efforts to bring smaller agencies into the partnership, either as members or in an advisory capacity.

3. Recruitment, Development and Pay for DP Staff

The DP will monitor recruitment, development and pay policies within the partnership to ensure that best practice is implemented.

The DP will ensure that no prospective or actual employee is disadvantaged or discriminated against. All posts funded by the DP will have clear job descriptions and person specifications. Recruitment will be by open advertisement. Where it is necessary to use consultants or agency staff this will be for the minimum amount of time possible. Some organisations within the DP (for instance the BRC) are committed to positive action for asylum seekers and refugees. The BRC has developed a good practice guide to recruitment and selection to ensure that the organisation consciously attracts the highest possible number of applications from asylum seekers and refugees. To monitor equal opportunities within the partnership, all applicants will be sent a form to be filled in a voluntary basis, requesting information about age, gender, disability, country of origin and whether or **not** they are a refugee or asylum seeker.

The DP will ensure that all partners have clear development and pay policies, which do not discriminate against any particular group or individual.

The DP will ensure that all staff working within the partnership are aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

4. Communication and Complaints

The partnership consulted with service users and their representatives as part of Action 1. This process will continue within Action 2 and be monitored.

The partnership will also develop mechanisms for communication and feed back from service users and their representatives. For instance, the Task Group monitoring Equal Opportunities will include outside agencies; focus groups will be established.

The partnership's Publicity Policy aims to ensure that the design and dissemination of materials meet the needs of the target group. The range of dissemination methods will include translating publicity materials to ensure that they reach minority groups within the target group. Wherever possible beneficiaries will be involved in the design of the material and on commenting on their look, feel and effectiveness.

A complaints procedure will be established whereby service users can express concern about services or any specific member of staff. Individual complaints will be dealt with in confidence but the DP will review the number and range of complaints on a regular basis to identify changes to be made.

5. Development Partnership Activities

The sections below outline how equal opportunities will be implemented within the objectives and activities of the DP.

OBJECTIVE 1

To ensure that asylum seekers acquire the essential basic skills that are a pre-requisite to mobility, orientation and the seeking of job opportunities by developing, testing and evaluating **innovative** ways of delivering ESOL, literacy and numeracy in comparative settings.

RESULTS REQUIRED

- Needs led tailored sessions developed to accommodate different levels of participation, using methodology appropriate to the level of proficiency of participants.
- Planning processes and resources that are inclusive and reflect areas of interest relevant to the individuals and the communities that they represent.
- Advertising, publicity and recruitment literature translated into appropriate languages and using content that promotes equality in every context.
- Materials and literature that tackles under representation, under achievement and stereotyping in terms of gender, country/cultural group, age and disability.
- The establishment of strategic partnerships with other key agencies.
- The identification of barriers to learning and piloting of methods to overcome them.
- Staff trained to promote responsibility, ownership and good practice
- Review of teaching materials and methods to ensure their appropriateness for the target group
- Making provision in the planning process to enable participants to attend religious events and other appointments.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- The ESOL/basic skills Task Group will explore ways of incorporating the above targets in project design.
- The BRC and Sheffield College will research user needs and ways of addressing them.
- Sheffield College will develop a model programme for isolated asylum seekers.
- Sheffield College will undertake staff awareness training and extended research on ensuring Equal Opportunities within a college environment.
- All providers to make provision for child care, prayer facilities and travel costs, and support asylum seekers to access other services such as health care.
- Consideration will be given to single-sex classes.
- All providers to ensure that their facilities are accessible to people with a physical or sensory disability and have arrangements in place for working with

clients who have a mental disability or learning difficulty.

MEANS OF REVIEW

- Monitor attendance and take up of services based on gender, age, nationality, disability
- Compare and contrast differences in progress and achievements, based on age, race, gender, disability.
- Feedback from beneficiaries on promotional literature and other materials used.
- Level of user satisfaction, immediate and hoped for in the future.
- Audit drop out rates and the **reasons** for non-attendance.
- Review of complaints.
- Evaluation of Equal Opportunities initiatives carried out by Sheffield College.

OBJECTIVE 2

To develop the skills of teachers (both paid and unpaid) to deliver the ESOL curriculum using a range of new materials and to develop their awareness of the barriers that asylum seekers face.

RESULTS REQUIRED

- The advertisement and recruitment process made accessible to all sections of the community.
- Teaching materials used that is inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- Sharing of practical advice and effective practice.
- Promotion of equality, challenging of discrimination and stereotyping among potential recruits.
- Positive action to widen participation from all sectors, for instance through specialist training and encouragement of under-represented groups.
- Addressing of any special educational, training or welfare needs among prospective participants.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Task Group on ESOL/basic skills to take these issues into account when developing work programmes.
- All providers to ensure that staff training incorporates an awareness of the issues that asylum seekers face.
- All providers to consult on materials being developed with teachers, trainers and beneficiaries.
- BSA, BRC, LLU+ to target asylum seekers and refugees for teacher training.
- LLU+ to run dyslexia awareness courses.

REVIEW

- Analyse data and balance of number of applicants and number of teacher trainees in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, disability and age.
- Analyse whether the applicants needs have been met through end of session and course evaluation. Where appropriate invite further feedback three months after course completion.
- Use evaluation data to inform monitoring, review and development process.

OBJECTIVE 3

To provide orientation for asylum seekers towards the UK/local labour market.

RESULTS REQUIRED

- Ensure optimum access to the range of services available.
- The empowerment of all asylum seekers including those from the most excluded groups

IMPLEMENTATION

- All providers to develop methods of consultation and communication to identify unmet needs of asylum seekers including surveys, focus groups and discussions in meetings and training sessions.
- Sheffield College to pilot an outreach advice and guidance project as a means of reaching excluded groups
- Providers to develop information and orientation information in different languages.
- Providers to consider how best to incorporate the development of self confidence and individual empowerment, drawing in cultural limitations as part of the programme planning.
- RAGU to develop an on-line orientation packs and a means of reaching excluded groups
- NICEM to develop its outreach potential and establish advice and guidance services for asylum seekers.

REVIEW

- Monitor effectiveness of the services take up based on race, gender, age and nationality
- Evaluate the effectiveness of orientation resources through consultation. Explore mechanisms for putting into place changes that have been recommended.

OBJECTIVES 4, 5 AND 6

To undertake a baseline audit of the skills of asylum seekers

To create opportunities for asylum seekers to undertake volunteering so that they have basic work experience and have initial exposure to employers and the labour market.

To work with target groups of employers, facilitating mutual understanding between asylum seekers and employers of each others' needs.

RESULTS REQUIRED

- An improved understanding among employers of good practice in Equal Opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Promotion of equality and the value of diversity in the work place.
- Improved recognition of the skills and experience that asylum seekers bring to the UK.
- Employers supported in their statutory duties and latest legislative development, through training, consultation, management development.
- Encouragement of non discriminatory practices in work placements, recruitment and retention.
- Encouragement of basic skills provision in the workplace.
- Exercise the concept of choice and control from the asylum seeker perspective in terms of doing voluntary work.
- Development of strategic alliances and networks with employers.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Working with employers through existing networks, including the Refugee Integration Forum and the Employability Forum.
- Producing publicity that highlights the skills and experience of asylum seekers and the contribution they can make in through volunteering and in paid employment.
- NIACE and NICEM to identify volunteering and work place opportunities for asylum seekers in the context of their skills audit work. Where possible other providers will do the same

MEANS OF REVIEW

- Audit number of places allocated in terms of race, gender, nationality and age
- Analyse how the skills/qualifications of asylum seekers match those needed in

their volunteer work or work placements.

- Monitor employers' input and commitment to meeting the needs of the asylum seekers
- Review the level and range of volunteer and work placement opportunities available for asylum seekers and the type of organisations and business that have come forward. In particular, audit to make sure no sub groups are excluded, for instance asylum seekers with a disability
- Audit complaints both from the asylum seekers and participating organisations in relation to allegations of discrimination.

5. Equality Performance Indicators

The DP will establish a statistical database for measuring and monitoring progress. Through this process, the take up of services will be assessed and the under-representation of particular groups within the asylum seeker population will be identified. Sources of information include:

- Applications.
- Refusal of services and reasons for rejection.
- Collation and analysis of data on attendance based on gender, disability, race, nationality, ethnic origin and age.
- Newly developed mechanisms for including confidential information (to further assess the take up of services), for example on HIV status, mental illness, experiences and reasons for leaving the country of origin.
- Rates and reasons behind absenteeism.
- Monitoring forms, inclusive within the application format, that elicit self-identification in terms that are relevant to asylum seekers. These forms would form part of the basis for gathering further statistical data, the reasons for which would need to be explained fully to the applicants.

6. Review

The Equal Opportunities Policy and Implementation Plan will be reviewed early in Action 2, taking into account the views of asylum seekers and their representatives.

7. Evaluation

The internal and external evaluations will assess the extent to which the objectives of the Equal Opportunities Policy & Implementation Plan have been met.

In terms of evaluation process, assessment should include

- Involvement of the service user;
- Level of service user satisfaction;
- Progress and progression rates;
- Outcomes, immediate and projected;
- Rates and the reasons for drop-out and poor attendance;
- Number of complaints from the service users.

All of the above would be analysed in relation to age, race, gender, nationality, disability, ethnic origin, and sexual orientation.

8. Dissemination

This will be incorporated in the Development Partnership's dissemination strategy. Particular efforts will be made to ensure that information on good practice in Equal Opportunities is made easily available to smaller, less well resourced groups.