



LSC PAN LONDON ESF PROGRAMME 1 **CASE STUDY – NOVEMBER 2006**

PROJECT: Skills for the Disadvantaged

The Skills for the Disadvantaged project led by Tamil Refugee Training and Education Centre (TR TEC) combines ESOL (English Speakers Other Languages) and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) training for unemployed Tamils in London, including a significant proportion of refugees.

There is a high concentration of Tamil refugee groups in London which are heavily affected by a lack of English speaking and numeracy skills, low vocational skills, inadequate information about the job market, lack of work experience in the UK, lack of confidence and experience of discrimination. This leads to exclusion from the labour market and to more than a third of Tamils in London currently finding themselves in unemployment.

TR TEC builds on its extensive experience at grass-root level in order to reach this group at particular disadvantage in the London labour market. London-wide promotional activities specifically targeted to this target group drive recruitment efforts including the distribution of information/material through community/religious organisations operating on-the-ground as well as advertisements in Tamil local community radios and newspapers. The most powerful recruitment tool has proved, however, word-of-mouth among the Tamil community.

Acting on a Pan London level makes economies of scale possible and enables to address the needs of this hard-to-reach group, traditionally dispersed across the capital. Pan London provision is ensured through delivery at three learning centres in Gantshill, Wembley and Tooting close to the largest Tamil communities.

Thanks to support from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the London Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the project allows learners to achieve Level 2 and 3 City & Guilds qualifications in ICT and Level 2 AAT Accountancy qualifications along with ESOL qualifications. Provision is

complemented by guidance and counselling on training and employment, job search assistance, seminars, motivation and confidence building, work placements and referrals into further learning. The learners can continue to use the facilities offered at the learning centres (e.g. Internet) and benefit from continued support with searching for a job in the UK even after the end of their course.

The lead partner, TR TEC, was established in 1991 to provide information, advice and training to Tamil refugees and their families in London. Its aim is to assist them to raise their knowledge and skills and to obtain UK recognised qualifications, so that they can find suitable employment or find places in higher education/training in the UK. It is delivering this project in partnership with Oxford College and works closely with a pool of local employers to provide work experience opportunities.

Project delivery

The project has been delivered from January 2005 and will end in December 2006. It is making good progress towards achieving planned outputs/outcomes including:

- 150 beneficiaries engaged;
- 90 beneficiaries achieving NVQ qualifications or equivalent (ICT and Accountancy at Level 2 and 3);
- 90 beneficiaries achieving accredited ESOL Skills for Life qualifications;
- 52 referrals to further learning / training;
- 120 work placements.

The project was awarded additional funding in March 2006 in light of positive progress towards achievements. To date, 169 Tamil unemployed learners have started the training leading to 62 NVQ qualifications, 61 ESOL qualifications and 47 work placements. The project has been particularly successful in reaching women (80% of participants) and in covering the South (51% of participants) and East (35%) LSC areas, in line with concentration of Tamils in the capital.

ESF Matters – Making a difference to people’s lives

The project’s beneficiaries

Arulvani Parathan, Judith Niroshini Albert, Gowridevy Shanmugaratnam, Dharshan Albert have all completed the Advanced Diploma in ICT at the Gantshill centre in North-East London this year. They have also undertaken

work placements with various local employers, including housing associations such as the TCHA Tamil Community Housing Association. All of them have found out about this free opportunity through word-of-mouth or local Tamil press. They all welcomed the support of tutors and feel that the training will help them with their long-term plans. As part of the project, they achieved intensive support from tutors who also speak Tamil; this helps to overcome various barriers, including to ICT.

Judith, 18, found the training "*interesting and the tutors very good*". She wants to become a doctor and is studying Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry & Physics at Dagenham Park Community School following the end of her participation in the project.



Left: Judith, one of the project's learners.

Arulvani is a recent arrival in the UK and she feels that she has been able to gain "*a lot of experience through the work placement*" and to make new friends through the course. She has now finished the training and is actively seeking employment. Dharshan was able to learn about PhotoShop and other programmes during his work placement in a print shop and he has now progressed to further learning.

Some of the learners are already qualified in their home country but need to overcome language barriers in order to find a job in the UK meaning that ESOL support is often an important part of the training. Gowridevy "*would like to work with computers*" and received the English language support she needs as part of the project along with the ICT element. She is currently looking into following a course to become a classroom assistant.

Funding

The project has been granted £305,083 of European Social Funding under Objective Three (Specification 2.2i). The funding has come through the LSC Pan London ESF Programme 1 which is managed by ECOTEC Research & Consulting (www.ecotec.com) on behalf of the London region Learning & Skills Council.

For further information

For further information about European Social Funding and the LSC Pan London ESF Programme, please visit:

www.esf.gov.uk

www.lsc.gov.uk

www.LondonO3.ecotec.co.uk

To find out more about the LSC Pan London ESF Programme, please contact the Pan London O3 Team at ECOTEC (0845 630 8699; LondonO3@ecotec.co.uk).

To contact Mr A Sritharan at the Tamil Refugee Training and Education Centre please phone 020 8554 2963 or email sri@trtec.org. Further information about Tamil Refugee Training and Education Centre is available at: www.trtec.org.

Learning & Skills Council

The Learning & Skills Council is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England (excluding higher education). For any media enquiries about the LSC please contact Ryan Ansah (ryan.ansah@lsc.gov.uk; 020 7904 0796).