



SOMRA

# Intellectual Output 1

## Executive Summary

United Kingdom



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**The SOMRA project** - Supporting meaningful Occupations for Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum seekers - offers an innovative approach to tackling climate change and refugee crises, by engaging refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (MRAs) in meaningful occupations that transform them into environment role models with a sustainable impact in their new and previous home.

To achieve this, the SOMRA project will facilitate:



Findings for the holistic study report were collected via desk and in-field research – interviews with MRA groups, professionals working with MRAs and NGO (non-governmental organisations) representatives.

## NGOs in the UK

There are about 166 000 charities registered in the UK. Charities carry out a wide range of work in the UK, and elsewhere. There are many 'big name' charities, working nationally or internationally, as well as smaller charities that are active in the local community. There are also many groups and organisations that may not seem like charities but are. Some examples include community groups, churches, environmental groups, and others. Charities can be incorporated or unincorporated, depending on the work they intend to do. Charity regulators (depending on the country of the UK) regulate and keep the register of all UK's charities.

Different NGOs have different purposes. There are many NGOs in the UK working with MRAs and aim to support the vulnerable, as well as environmental NGOs that deal with environmental issues, spread awareness on climate change and promote sustainability. NGOs can establish and participate in networks within and across sectors, such as the environmental sector, and across decision-making levels, from national to international. Different organisations with similar goals can come together to form networks.

## Main NGO networks in the UK:

<p><b>Community Resources Network Scotland</b></p> <p>Promotes the future with no waste, only resources.</p>	<p><b>Eco-Congregation Scotland</b></p> <p>Committed to addressing environmental issues.</p>	<p><b>Scottish Alliance of Regional Equality Councils (SAREC)</b></p> <p>Committed to equality and human rights.</p>
<p><b>Slow Food Network</b></p> <p>Support local artisan food producers.</p>	<p><b>Social Enterprise Network Scotland (SENScot)</b></p> <p>Social enterprise networks in Scotland.</p>	<p><b>Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN)</b></p> <p>Supports community-led action to address the climate and nature emergency.</p>
<p><b>The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN)</b></p> <p>Supports the public sector to drive action on climate change</p>	<p><b>The Ethnic Minority Environmental Network (EMEN)</b></p> <p>Platform for organisations and individuals willing to engage in mainstream environmental decision-making in Scotland.</p>	<p><b>UK Community Foundations (UKCF)</b></p> <p>Brings people and organisations together that want to improve their communities.</p>

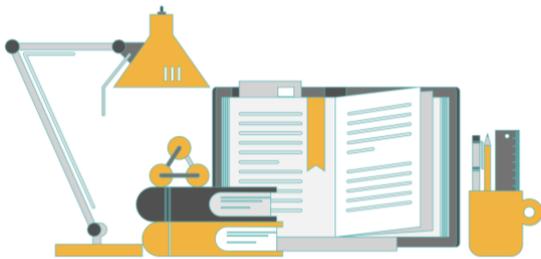
## Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers (MRAs)- Definitions

A person seeking asylum; is who flees their home, arrives in another country, whichever way they can, makes themselves known to the authorities, and submits an asylum application, has a legal right to stay in the country while waiting for a decision.

A refugee: has proven that they would be at risk if returned to their home country, has had their claim for asylum accepted by the government, has permission to stay in the UK either long term or indefinitely.

According to the UK government sources, In the year ending June 2021, the non-UK-born population (including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) was an estimated 9.6 million and the non-British population was an estimated 6.0 million.

## Barriers for MRAs to set up an NGO



**Language.** MRAs that arrive to the new country often do not have good English skills and can experience barriers in communication. Good language skills are not only crucial when trying to find employment, but also integrating into the community. In addition, some families, for example may be illiterate which creates extra barriers and creates the need for additional support. It is quite common that

migrants are put or put themselves in groups with people from the same country. This does not particularly help with integration and language learning, there must be mixing with people from other countries and effort from the migrants to want to do this. One to one mentorship can be extremely helpful.

**Qualifications.** Most working individuals in arriving families had vocational occupations in their country such as carpenter or mechanic. In addition to the language barrier, with refugees in particular, their skills and qualifications are often not recognised. Migrants from the EU often can use certificate conversion service, there is a lack of such services for people from non-EU countries.



**Mental and physical health.** It is not easy to access jobs for men and women because of the language and certification. Inability to continue their old jobs can often frustrate and discourage people which can add to their trauma that they often have experienced in their home countries. Trauma needs a long-term support to heal. If they can heal their trauma, they will be able to overcome other barriers and needs such as social needs, language, and educational barriers.

### Education.

one support help children people to during their journey,



More one-to-one support is needed to help children and young people to achieve well educational however,



often a lack of resources available do not allow this.

**Technology.** If not used previously, technology can be difficult to understand including the computer and other devices, as well as using the internet.

**Racism.** Many migrants, refugees and asylum seekers will often experience racism, even if they have lived in a country for a while. The main challenge is the way the broader community thinks of and behaves towards migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The mindset of a lot of people needs to change because everyone should have an opportunity and rights to food, warm place to sleep and respect, among others.

These are a few examples of the needs and the gaps among others.

## Right to work

**Migrants and refugees** are often able to access jobs and benefits like all citizens, however, especially with the labour market, this can be hindered by a lack of language and skills.

**Asylum seekers** - Working as an asylum seeker differs slightly between countries. In the UK, asylum seekers are not allowed to work unless exceptional circumstances and for countries in the EU, there is a period (slightly differs country-to-country) when asylum seekers cannot work from the arrival date.

## Volunteering

Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer. Volunteering can help gain confidence, learn new skills, and improve language and will help to integrate into the community. There are many volunteering opportunities as a lot of NGOs will usually need volunteers, including working with elderly, youth and children, environment and animals and sports and outdoor activities. To volunteer, unless a position requires certain skills, no criteria is usually required. NGOs will mostly want an individual who has a willingness to learn, a degree of professionalism and ability to follow instructions, respect and diligence, good time management and a personable manner.

## Conclusion

Although, most needs and gaps may be similar between countries, there are also some differences. In addition, different individuals, or groups of individuals of MRAs will have different needs depending on



their situation. Some of the main gaps and needs include successful integration into the society, racism from the community, language, lack in monetary aid and others.

Asylum seekers need more support and resources dedicated to them. This is the group that is the most restricted; not being able to work, being strictly monitored, low monetary aids can affect their mental, physical, and social well-being. Often the asylum process can take years which means that they cannot fully feel like they are part of the society, as well as the uncertainty of their application for asylum.

One thing everyone can do is volunteer, either by being part of local community activities or a bigger organisation. As well as aiding integration into the community, volunteering allows people to gain new skills and increase their confidence. In many cases, confidence is what people need to get started. There are many organisations that take up volunteers in the environmental, animal, working with elderly and youth sectors.

A major issue is the lack of information about how migrants can get involved in voluntary work for NGOs. Language barriers is one of the main factors. Migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers who want to get involved with an NGOs need to actively ask NGOs how they could get involved. This is because NGOs often do not specifically search for migrant volunteers but are happy when they want to get involved as they are a great asset to NGOs.

