

# The Reception, Orientation and Integration of Resettled Refugees in the Irish Context



Oifig an Aire d'Imeachtha  
*Office of the Minister for Integration*



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## **MOST Project Report, Ireland**

The Reception, Orientation and Integration of  
Resettled Refugees in the Irish Context

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On behalf of the



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## Foreword

Those of us who have had the privilege of visiting refugee camps and settlements around the world have some insight into the challenges faced by those seeking new lives away from country, family and friends. The insight, however, is partial. We cannot put ourselves into the shoes of those who travel the refugee road. We cannot imagine packing our life's belongings into a few suitcases and hurtling through the skies to an unknown and relatively unknowable land of strange climate, strange language and from the refugees' perspective, even stranger people!

But yet, in the context of our resettlement programmes, we must try to find a way of understanding the hearts and minds of our refugees. We must reflect and consider how different their lives are going to be and question our own assumptions about living in a society where, unlike the refugee world, scarcity of resources and opportunity is not an endemic part of everyday life.

If we have the wisdom to realise that we cannot stand in their shoes, then perhaps we can help them to put on new shoes which will help them to walk a new terrain and tread a different path. Such new shoes can be fashioned from the kinds of programmes which focus on the critical period before, during and after these momentous times in their lives. It is in this context that the Irish section of the MOST Project is now presented.

In showing kindness to those who have been suffering deprivation, there is a corresponding responsibility to be clear about both the limitations and the breath of the opportunities which will be available to refugees in their new home. Unreal expectations can seriously damage resettlement programmes and thus we must strike a balance between our duty to be hospitable on the one hand and a corresponding duty both to describe the challenges being faced and to ensure that they are understood. Shared understandings lead to good preparation which in turn leads to successful implementation.

Accordingly, we were particularly pleased to be given the opportunity, within the framework of the MOST Project, to focus on ways in which receiving nations can ensure that refugees in a resettlement programme would not only receive a good start, but would have the tools necessary for the best possible start.

As a research partner, we could not set out to define best practice without having full and open access to the current practice in our partner and other resettlement countries. We found the review process enlightening, we are MOST grateful for the enthusiastic and practical support you gave us with this undertaking. The conclusions we present to you in the following sections have a two-fold purpose. Firstly, they represent what we consider to be the best practice models for pre-departure, post arrival orientation and reception programmes at this point in time. Looking forward, we hope this document will serve as good start to a continuous review process on these key aspects of the resettlement process which have a profound impact on the quality of people's lives – both at a personal and professional level.



We sincerely hope that the findings of this initiative will assist new emerging resettlement countries as they build their resettlement programmes in the future.

“Tus maith leath na h-oibre” is a wise old Irish saying which means “A good start is half the work.” This is particularly true for the resettlement process and for the new lives of these courageous people.

John Haskins  
Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI)

February 2008

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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Office of the Minister for Integration.

With thanks,

Louise Kinlen  
National Co-ordinator of the MOST Project, Ireland  
First Western Consulting

February 2008

## List of Abbreviations & Glossary of Terms

CDB	County Development Board
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
ERF	European Refugee Fund
IILT	Integrate Ireland Language and Training
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRC	International Red Cross
OMI	Office of the Minister for Integration (formerly RIA – the Reception and Integration Agency)
MOST	Modelling of Orientation, Services and Training for Resettled Refugees-transnational project funded by the Community Actions Strand of the European Refugee Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RPP	Regional Protection Programmes (of the EU)
Resettled Refugee	Term used to refer to a refugee under UNHCR programme who has been offered resettlement to a third country. Terms “quota refugee” and “programme refugee” are sometimes also used
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the MOST Project in Ireland. The MOST Project (Modelling of Orientation, Services and Training related to the Resettlement and Reception of Refugees) was a transnational project funded under the Community Actions Strand of the European Refugee Fund. It was led by the Ministry of Labour in Finland and also involved partners from Sweden, Ireland and Spain. The overall purpose of the project was to develop comprehensive models for quicker and better integration of refugees, who come directly from crisis situations or refugee camps to the European Union.

Ireland sought to develop a model for pre-departure and post arrival orientation programmes to assist those selected to be better informed of the reality of the resettlement process on the ground. This report outlines the key findings of the research undertaken in Ireland in relation to three principal areas, namely:

1. Pre-departure orientation
2. Post-arrival orientation and introduction
3. Role of receiving communities and the potential of community linkages.

Below some of the key recommendations made in the report are summarised:

### 1) Pre-Departure Orientation:

In the past pre-departure orientation in the Irish context was relatively limited, with the refugees being given a one hour presentation often before the interviews. Key recommendations arising include the following:

1. It does make sense to provide a pre-departure orientation for people who are still in the camp. This information needs to be clear, relevant and delivered in a way that is easy to understand. Encouraging refugee participation and interaction in the training is very beneficial.
2. The pre-departure orientation in the Irish context should be longer, more comprehensive and address a wider range of topics, including culture, food, norms, realities of life in Ireland, housing etc. The content, duration and method of delivery of the pre-departure orientation should be designed with the particular group in mind.
3. The orientation programme might be more beneficial if delivered after the interviews as people might be more focused on its content, rather than anticipating and worrying about the interviews.

### 2) Post-arrival Orientation:

The post-arrival orientation programme in existence in Ireland is relatively comprehensive and was greatly appreciated by many of the refugees interviewed. There were however a number of recommendations including:

1. The overall feedback on the content of the programme was very positive, however the content of the programme may also need to be varied depending on the needs of the particular group.

2. It was suggested that some more emphasis could be put on the practical application through more visits to various offices etc.
3. Whilst the training for the adults is considered to be very satisfactory, more attention could be paid to the planning of the activities for children and adolescents.
4. As recommended by the Focus Group, the orientation training should incorporate more local service providers based in the town where they are going to live and where possible should include people who will be dealing directly with the refugees.
5. Career planning should be a more integrated component of the introduction and orientation process and could start at the orientation programme stage, with the completion of an initial individualised skills audit.
6. It would make sense for the refugee support worker to be employed and in place at the time of the orientation programme so as to acquaint themselves with the group, their particular issues.

### **3) Moving into Society & Mentoring Programmes:**

A wide range of issues were analysed here including language training, further training, moving into the labour force, the role of women, integration and social contacts and the role of mentoring programmes. These are discussed in much greater detail in the report, but some key conclusions/recommendations include:

1. Women at home with children are a sub-group at particular risk of isolation and are frequently not participating in language or other training programmes.. Other models of training and childcare support should be examined that would allow more women to attend.
2. The overall system of career guidance and transition into the workplace should be better co-ordinated, with a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between the various parties concerned.
3. When offering or suggesting further training courses for refugees, their individual training needs should always be to the forefront and where possible an individualised assessment of their training needs should be undertaken.
4. In the town where a befriending/mentoring programme was organised, social relations with neighbours and others appeared to be more established and the refugees had more confidence in making contact with the local community. Similar programmes would be very useful in all areas in which refugees are settled.
5. Sporting and cultural organisations can play an essential role in helping people to get to know each other through participating in a joint activity. They should be supported and encouraged to help refugees and other newcomers to join their organisations.



6. The environment or neighbourhood in which people are housed plays an important role and efforts should be made to ensure that the existing local population are given an opportunity to build up positive social relations with their new neighbours.
7. Specifically on mentoring programmes, it was found that that they may be organised in a very similar way to other mentoring programmes, but it is important to ensure that respect and tolerance for cross-cultural differences is built into the programme and that there is a willingness on both sides to learn about each other's cultures. It is also important that such programmes do not work in isolation from other support services and that a holistic approach is adopted.





# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### I.1 What is the MOST Project?

The MOST Project (Modelling of Orientation, Services and Training related to the Resettlement and Reception of Refugees) was a transnational project funded under the Community Actions Strand of the European Refugee Fund. It was led by the Ministry of Labour in Finland and also involved partners from Sweden, Ireland and Spain. The overall purpose of the project was to develop comprehensive models for quicker and better integration of refugees, who come directly from crisis situations or refugee camps to the European Union. It commenced in early 2007 and concluded in December 2007. All project results were presented at the final conference in Madrid in November 2007. Each partner country developed a series of specific tasks related to the project and learning was shared at transnational seminars held in each of the countries.

In Sweden the Swedish Integration Board undertook a consultation process, which focused upon quota refugees' experiences and expectations upon arrival and introduction in Sweden.

In Finland the MOST Project aimed to develop ways of integrating immigrants into the Finnish society and labour market more efficiently right from the beginning. The project tried to achieve this through organising language training and work-based training, with the co-operation of public and private sector employers.

The participation of Spain in the project related to their consideration of participating in a UNHCR resettlement programme. They participated in selection/fact-finding missions in conjunction with the Finnish partners to Rwanda and will be hosting the final conference of the project.

Ireland sought to develop a model for pre-departure and post arrival orientation programmes to assist those selected to be better informed of the reality of the resettlement process on the ground. These programmes were developed following consultation with key stakeholders, including recently arrived resettlement refugees, and receiving communities. A pre-departure orientation guide was compiled, which is contained in Appendix 2. Ireland also organised new forms of assistance to receiving communities including the development of community linkages.

### I.2 Research Objectives

This report outlines the key findings of the research undertaken in Ireland in relation to three principal areas, namely:

1. Pre-departure orientation
2. Post-arrival orientation and introduction
3. Role of receiving communities and the potential of community linkages.

One of the main purposes of the research was to obtain feedback and hear the narratives of recently arrived refugees about their own experiences of resettlement, the introduction and language programmes, their social contacts, expectations and experience of mentoring/befriending programmes (if any). This information was complemented and supplemented by focus groups and interviews with key agencies and service providers at national and local levels. Secondary research was also conducted in order to analyse examples of good practice from other countries and to provide a contextual background for the structure and actors involved in the resettlement process at national and international levels.

The key questions posed in this research are as follows:

### **1) Pre-Departure Orientation:**

Is pre-departure orientation useful and appropriate?

To what extent are people receptive to such information?

Does it make the transition easier for refugees or the receiving community?

What level and type of content should be used?

How could the current system be improved?

### **2) Post-arrival Orientation:**

To what extent has the post-arrival orientation been of benefit both in terms of informing and preparing the participants about the realities of life in Ireland?

Has it facilitated the active participation of the refugees in their new community?

Does it reduce levels of stress for recently arrived refugees moving into new communities?

Is the content appropriate and how could it be improved?

Are their organisational aspects that could be improved?

### **3) Moving into the new community and the role of the receiving community:**

What happens after this initial 4-6 week introduction period when the resettled refugees move into their new communities in terms of how they settle, their language learning, participation in their new community and levels of social contacts?

What service providers are involved and how does this impact on their lives? What types of problems are encountered and how are they dealt with?

### **4) Mentoring/Befriending Programmes:**

How could mentoring/befriending programmes be used as a tool to foster more meaningful social contacts and assist the integration process? (This includes looking at what has or has not worked, drawing on examples internationally and from a pilot project in the Irish context).

These questions were posed with the over-arching question in mind of how the participation and independence of refugees can be facilitated throughout the process. It is hoped that the results of this research will help to inform policy makers, agencies, people working with refugees and anyone with an interest in refugee issues.



## 1.3 Methodology

The empirical material collected in this study was based mainly on qualitative interviews and focus groups with key actors. Secondary research material was also used to contextualise and complement the information and provide a basis for comparative analysis.

### 1) Interviews with Resettled Refugees

This formed the most important part of the research and this consultation with the refugees was considered essential in allowing them to tell their stories and give their perceptions of the resettlement process. The researcher undertook 21 interviews with a total of 33 resettled refugees. They were all of Kurdish origin and based in three towns in the West of Ireland. Most of the people interviewed had participated in pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programmes, with the exception of one sub-group that had arrived in Ireland in 2005 and did not participate in these formalised programmes. The interviewees were selected in conjunction with the refugee support worker in each town, with an average of seven interviews conducted in each town. They were selected on the basis of providing a good cross-selection in terms of age, gender, educational background and those perceived as being more or less vocal and confident.

A Kurdish speaking interpreter was provided for all interviews although in a few cases it was not required. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed word for word. This facilitated the use of direct quotes in the report, which gives the research participants a greater “voice” in the research. The interviews were mostly semi-structured in nature, with a guiding list of questions or topics on which the discussion was based. In some cases they were less structured, especially when the interviewee expressed a desire to focus on a particular topic or they had not participated in the programmes to the same extent. Participation in the research was voluntary and the objectives and purpose of the research was explained to each participant and they were all assured of confidentiality. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one and a half hours.

### 2) Focus Group with Service Providers and Agencies

A focus group was also organised that brought together key agencies. Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), service providers and Government officials, all of whom were in some way involved in working with resettled refugees. A total of twelve participants took part, with a list of agencies provided in appendix 1. The objectives of the focus group included the following:

- Share learning and examples of good practice in relation to the integration of refugees;
- Discuss the role of introduction and orientation programmes and how they can be improved/amended;
- Explore issues relating to training and career development and guidance, including English language training;
- Examine ways in which refugees and receiving communities can play an active role in the process;
- Evaluate the role of mentoring/befriending programmes and how they could be further extended;
- Make practical recommendations as to how the current system could be improved.

<sup>1</sup>As introduced at the Finish MOST Project seminar on “Integration through the Work Community”

After a general introduction, the group was divided into different groups, using the Café Learning Method in which each group moved to a different topic every 15 minutes until every group had discussed each topic. The three topics discussed were 1) Introduction Programmes 2) Moving into Society and 3) Mentoring and Befriending Programmes.

### 3) Interviews with Service Providers/Agencies

Whilst the Focus Group ensured a good group discussion around many of the issues, it was also deemed necessary to hold individual interviews with key agencies and individuals involved in the resettlement process. This included staff members from the Office of the Minister for Integration, language teachers from Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), the Refugee Support Workers and some key NGOs. Most of these interviews were carried out face to face and a few were by telephone.

Other sources of research material included participation and analysis of information discussed at the three MOST Project seminars on the topics of Introduction (Sweden, April 07), Receiving Communities (Ireland, April 07) and Integration and the Work Community (Finland, July 07). The MOST Project national steering committee also provided some insights into issues to be highlighted during its meetings. The researcher also participated in some other meetings relevant to the research topics, such as a meeting of service providers in a town where an orientation programme for a new group of resettled refugees was being organised.

The research material was analysed using a thematic approach, in which the themes emerging from the interviews (particularly with the refugee participants) were used as a basis for the organisation and analysis of the material.

## 1.4 Limitations of the Research

There are a few limitations to this research, including the following:

- 1) The interviews with the resettled refugees were mostly conducted through the use of an interpreter. This can sometimes cause difficulties in terms of accurate communication and willingness to speak through someone else. This coupled with the fact that the interviews were recorded could make the situation appear more formal and may have impeded people's ability to speak freely. There was a sense in a few interviews that people were holding back information.
- 2) A sense of gratitude caused some interviewees to be reluctant to make negative comment, seeing this as "complaining". Reassurance usually allayed fears and elicited some further comments.
- 3) The research was conducted solely with Kurdish resettled refugees and did not include other refugee groups, who may have had different experiences.
- 4) Some of the issues raised in this report relate to issues of general service provision (e.g. housing, health, adult education) and are outside the scope of this research and are more structural issues relating to service provision in general in Ireland rather than specifically related to refugees. Nevertheless it was considered important to refer to them as far as they impacted on the refugees interviewed.

Notwithstanding these limitations, it is hoped that this report will provide some useful information on the refugees' experience of resettlement and orientation programmes and highlight some of the relevant issues.

## **I.5 Structure of the Report**

This report is divided into a series of chapters, related to the various themes. The next chapter provides contextual analysis of the review, outlining the various international and national players in the field of resettlement and an overview of the resettlement process as administered by the UNHCR and the Irish Government. Chapter 3 examines some examples of good practice and research carried out in other countries, including the MOST Partner countries. This relates to orientation and introduction programmes, the Finish labour market pilot project, results of the Swedish consultation process and some international good practice relating to mentoring programmes for refugees.

Chapters 4-7 present the results of the review carried out with the refugees and the service providers and agencies. The results are presented chronologically, starting with the experiences in the camp and pre-departure orientation, moving onto the post-arrival programmes, their transition into the new society, language training, social contacts and particular issues that arose in the research such as the isolation of women and the role of housing. Chapter seven focuses exclusively on mentoring programmes, with a particular focus on the pilot organised in Sligo and some of the final conclusions are presented in Chapter 8.







## CHAPTER 2

# THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT OF RESETTLEMENT

## 2.1 The Resettlement Process – Key International Players

### 2.1.1 The UNHCR

At an international level the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is the organisation responsible for the co-ordination of international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It places emphasis on finding durable solutions for the plight of refugees.

A refugee is defined in Article 1 A(2) of the 1951 Geneva Convention as someone who has left his or her country and is unable or unwilling to return to it:

*owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.*

Under the Irish Refugee Act, this definition was extended to also include the following text:

*is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his or her former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*

The resettlement process comes into play when the UNHCR considers that the other two durable solutions of voluntary and safe repatriation to the country of origin or local integration have been exhausted. In order to qualify for resettlement, refugees need to meet one of the specific resettlement criteria, which are: Legal and Protection Needs, Survivors of Violence and Torture, Medical Needs, Women at Risk, Family Reunification, Children and Adolescents, Older Refugees and Refugees without Local Integration Prospects.

There are currently seventeen countries worldwide who participate in resettlement programmes in partnership with the UNHCR. Ireland joined the programme following a Government decision in 1998. The other countries involved are: Sweden\*, Denmark, Finland\*, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom in the EU and Argentina, Australia, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and the USA. Participation in the resettlement programme is voluntary and there is no legal obligation to do so.

\* Partner countries in the MOST Project

The UNHCR operates on the basis of tripartite agreements between resettlement countries, the UNHCR and NGOs. As well as promoting resettlement, the UNHCR tries to ensure that resettlement runs in tandem with a more vigorous integration policy aimed at enabling refugees having durable residence status to enjoy quality of rights and opportunities in the social, economic and cultural life of the community.<sup>2</sup> There is also an understanding that resettlement can also provide potential for the development of professional and skilled personnel who can contribute to the rebuilding of society if they opt to return at some point in the future.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1.2 The International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Established in 1951, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people. The IOM has over 5,000 staff members in 220 field offices worldwide.

IOM's role in relation to resettlement includes assisting the resettlement of persons through the processing of relevant documentation, performing medical screening and arranging safe, reliable and economic transportation. Language training and cultural orientation are also offered at the request of some receiving countries to facilitate the integration of migrants into their new host societies. IOM is represented on the International Steering Committee of the MOST Project.

### 2.1.3 International NGOs

There are a numerous international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) who are involved directly and indirectly in the process of resettlement at national and international levels. The UNHCR stresses the importance of involving such partner organisations, particularly in relation to the reception and integration of refugees. In a few cases NGOs are also involved in the selection of refugees under resettlement programmes.

Two international NGOs which play an important role in the improvement of refugee work policy and practice are detailed below:

#### European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

ECRE is a European-wide umbrella organisation of 78 refugee-assisting agencies in 30 countries working towards fair and humane policies for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. It seeks to achieve this by advocating a humane and generous European asylum policy, strengthening networking between refugee-assisting NGOs in Europe and through developing their institutional capacity. Resettlement and integration are a key part of its strategic policy framework entitled: *Europe's Role in the Global Refugee Protection System – The Way Forward – An Agenda for Change*. ECRE has recently established an NGO network of Integration Focal Points comprising 28 organisations from 19 countries that work on both refugee and migrant rights. In March 2007 the network published 6 policy briefings each containing specific proposals for implementing the EU Common Basic Principles. They were based on the following themes:

1. Vocational training and higher education
2. Introduction programmes and language courses

<sup>3</sup>See UNHCR (2004), *Resettlement Handbook*, p. 116  
<sup>2</sup>UNHCR (2003), *Agenda for Protection Goal 5, Objective 5*

3. Housing
4. Employment and employment support
5. Civic and political participation
6. Assessment of skills and recognition of qualifications.

ECRE has published many other position and research papers relating to asylum and refugee issues, including a position paper under the Way Forward series entitled *Towards a European Resettlement Programme*.<sup>4</sup>

ECRE was represented on the MOST Project International Steering Committee.

### The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the world's largest humanitarian network working to assist refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Their mandate for services provided to moving or displaced people is based on their Fundamental Principles, particularly the Principle of Humanity and Impartiality.

The mission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as documented in the Strategy 2010 is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing its power of humanity. It achieves this through service delivery and advocacy. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)<sup>5</sup> is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation whose exclusive humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. Its specific services delivered to refugees and migrants include the following<sup>6</sup>:

- Reception and accommodation during the asylum procedures;
- Legal assistance;
- Advocacy with a view to ensuring proper treatment and protection;
- Integration and/or re-integration;
- Fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination;
- Humanitarian assistance including food and clothing;
- Disaster response with assistance to refugees and victims of natural disasters.

## 2.2 EU policy on Migration and Refugee Issues

There is currently no EU-wide legislation specifically on resettlement. To date the UNHCR Resettlement Programme is operated on a purely voluntary basis and EU Member States are under no obligation to join the programme. There are however many EU policy and legislative documents dealing specifically with asylum and refugee issues, some of which refer to resettlement as an important tool, particularly as a durable solution.

These include for example a Communication from the European Commission, adopted on 17 February 2006, on Strengthened Practical Cooperation in the area of asylum. In this document, the Commission presents its vision of how Member States should further cooperate on asylum with a view to the establishment of a fully harmonised EU system.

<sup>4</sup>For further information on ECRE, see [www.ecre.org](http://www.ecre.org)

<sup>5</sup>For further information, see [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

<sup>6</sup>These services are provided in specific countries and not necessarily in all countries where the Red Cross operates.

The Hague Programme was adopted by Heads of State or Government on 5 November 2004. It takes up the challenge for taking forward the Common European Asylum System and looks to the establishment of the common asylum procedure and uniform status for those granted asylum or subsidiary protection, based on a thorough and complete evaluation of the legal instruments adopted in the first phase.

The Commission has also been invited by the Council to develop Regional Protection Programmes (RPPs) in close cooperation with UNHCR. Such programmes would comprise agendas of actions (a) to enhance protection capacity in countries in regions of origin and (b) a resettlement programme. A Communication on Regional Protection Programmes was issued in September 2005. A programme of 5 or 6 actions was envisaged, which includes registration and other projects which are focused on the delivery of practical benefits (training, infra-structure building, the provision of equipment etc). As part of the RPPs, joint resettlement programmes are envisaged, to be implemented on a voluntary basis and are seen as an important tool in delivering durable solutions to protracted refugee situations.

The European Refugee Fund (ERF) was established in 2000 and it aims to support and encourage Member States' efforts in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons by arranging reception, integration and voluntary return measures in the Member States and through testing innovative actions at the Commission's initiative. A new European Refugee Fund is applicable as of 1 January 2008. In light of the objectives and priorities of the Hague Programme regarding the development of the Common European Asylum System in its second phase, it introduces support for three new actions: capacity building for the asylum systems of the Member States in general; the voluntary efforts of Member States to provide a durable solution in their territories to refugees and displaced persons identified as eligible for resettlement by the UNHCR and voluntary burden sharing between Member States consisting of the transfer of beneficiaries of international protection from one Member State to another; which grants them a similar protection. The Community Actions Strand of the ERF is based on the work programme of the fund and is published each year. The Commission then invites calls for proposals and/or tenders for transnational actions and actions in the interest of the Community. The MOST Project was co-funded under the Community Actions Strand.

## 2.3 Irish policy on resettlement and integration

### 2.3.1 Resettlement Policy and Practice

The reception and integration of refugees is co-ordinated in Ireland by the Office of the Minister for Integration, formerly the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). On 20th June 2007, An Taoiseach appointed a Minister of State, with special responsibility for Integration Policy, at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Integration Unit of the Reception and Integration Agency now operates as the Office of the Minister for Integration.

The Office of the Minister for Integration is responsible for the development of national policies of integration and to coordinate, support and facilitate the integration of all legally-resident immigrants into Irish society across other Government Departments, services and agencies. The Office is also responsible for the selection and resettlement of programme refugees admitted into the Ireland.

<sup>7</sup>See [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/refugee/funding\\_refugee\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/refugee/funding_refugee_en.htm)

In 1998 the Irish Government agreed to participate in the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme. This Decision was taken following approaches by the UNHCR requesting that Ireland would admit, on an annual basis, a number of “special cases” refugees who do not come under the scope of Ireland's obligations under the Geneva Convention of 1951 as amended by the New York Protocol of 1957. Initially Ireland agreed to accept 10 cases (ca.40 persons) per year and this was later increased to 200, following a Government decision in 2005. Prior to this however, Ireland had already accepted programme refugees as a response to particular situations, including refugees from Iran, Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Since joining the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme, Ireland has accepted resettled refugees both through the dossier selection method in which cases are selected on the basis of dossier (paper-based) submissions by the UNHCR and more recently through in-country selection. To date in-country selection missions have taken place to a number of countries including Jordan, Thailand and Uganda.

The Office of the Minister for Integration is the key agency with responsibility for the co-ordination of the resettlement programme in Ireland. This includes the following key services:

#### **a) Pre-selection and selection**

The Irish Government responds to requests from the UNHCR to take resettled refugees from various locations. The Office of the Minister for Integration, in conjunction with the Departments of Foreign Affairs and of Justice, Equality & Law Reform is involved in pre-selecting groups of refugees and then decides on the most appropriate method of selection. For more dispersed individuals or in emergency cases the dossier method may be used. Otherwise an in-country selection mission is organised to the country in which the refugees are currently being hosted. The Office of the Minister for Integration sends a delegation on this mission who deliver a brief introduction and orientation about Ireland and then interview each of the families in the pre-selected group. A member of the Garda Síochána (police) also participates in this mission in order to facilitate security screening.

Once the interviews have been completed, the delegation reviews all cases and makes a final decision on each one. Once the decision has been reached and the refugees notified of the decision, travel arrangements are made in conjunction with the UNHCR and IOM. This process usually takes a few months and also provides the agencies in Ireland some time to prepare for their arrival.

#### **b) Reception**

Unlike some other countries, the Office of the Minister for Integration is both involved in the selection and the reception of resettled refugees. Once a decision has been reached to take a particular group of refugees, arrangements are put in place for the reception in Ireland. This includes arranging for them to be met at the airport (often by the same delegation that conducted the interviews), accommodation for the first night and transfer to the training centre, organisation of the orientation training (4-6 weeks) and then transfer to the towns in which they are to be resettled. The same Resettlement Team provides training for the receiving communities ensuring transfer of information in regard to the needs of the refugees and the receiving communities. This assists the receiving communities to develop services appropriate to the needs of the new arrivals.

Approximately one year before resettlement takes place, the process of identifying the suitable towns for resettlement begins. Ireland now operates a policy of regional dispersal in which most refugees and asylum seekers are accommodated in towns outside Dublin. In selecting towns, the Office of the Minister for Integration examines criteria such as transport linkages, employment opportunities, general infrastructure and service provision, health services, availability of places in schools and numbers of asylum-seekers/refugees already resident in the town. Once an initial decision has been made about a town or particular county, the local County Development Board is contacted and the details about the suitability of the town(s) are discussed and negotiated. The County Development Board plays a pivotal role in reception of resettled refugees as they are involved in the final selection of the host town, the preparation of service providers and ensuring that the relevant services are in the place for the effective reception of the refugees.

When the refugees first arrive in Ireland, they initially attend an orientation programme in another town (usually Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo) in which self-catering accommodation is provided.

### c) Preparing Receiving Communities

Ireland adopts a mainstream approach to service provision and as such each service provider must provide their service appropriately to the new arrival. To ensure that local service providers are aware of the Resettlement programme and can provide such services the Resettlement Team of the Office of the Minister for Integration provide information and training both for the Management and staff of the various agencies. In the first instance this involves setting up an Inter-Agency Working Group on Resettlement in each receiving community. This Inter-Agency Working Group is a very effective tool to ensure coordination of services at a local level. The Office of the Minister for Integration participates on the Working Group for up to two years and it is an important vehicle for resolving issues arising in the early years of resettlement.

Where exceptional needs are identified the service provider in the receiving community can apply to the Office of the Minister for Integration for a grant for a short term (up to 1 year) targeted service with a view to mainstreaming the initiative in the longer term. Mainstream Government Departments are expected to meet the needs of the new arrivals from existing resources.

### 2.3.2 Promoting Integration – National Policy

Integration policy in Ireland is still relatively new and is evolving as Ireland responds to the opportunities and challenges of increased immigration. A new Minister for Integration was appointed in June 2007 and it is expected that new a new integration policy instrument will follow. The last policy instrument dealing specifically with integration was the findings of an Interdepartmental Working Group set up in December 1998 to “review the arrangements for integrating persons granted refugee status or permission to remain in Ireland”. In its report, *Integration: A Two Way Process*, the Working Group defined integration as follows:

*Integration means the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all of the major components of society, without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity.*

Arising from recommendations in that report, the Reception and Integration Agency was established in 2001.



Other more recent instruments related to integration and anti-racism; include the Irish National Plan against Racism – Planning for Diversity (2005-2008), which was published in 2006. It represents the Government's response to the UN Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001. It aims to provide a more strategic direction towards combating racism and develop a more inclusive, intercultural society. It seeks to bring a "whole system approach" to achieving its aims through integration with many other areas of Government policy. It defines integration as a "two way process that places rights and obligations on state and minorities to create a more inclusive society". Unlike many other policy documents, there are resources allocated to this plan and a number of schemes have been introduced under it, such as a scheme of grants to increase the participation of minorities in sporting and leisure activities. An important instrument proposed in the NPAR is the development of a coordinated approach to addressing some of the issues that arise at a city and county level are Anti Racism and Diversity (ARD) plans. ARD plans have been developed on a phased basis at city and county levels, beginning with a number of pilot areas.

Various other reports and discussion documents have been published by a range of agencies, including the recent Economic and Social Research Institute Study on Migrants Experience of Racism and Xenophobia in Ireland (2006). Whilst the report found that institutional racism was not as high in Ireland as in many other EU countries, it found that over one-third of respondents had experienced racism in public places, including public transport. Of work permit holders, over 30 per cent had experienced insults or harassment in the workplace.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) also produced a report in 2006, with the assistance of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), entitled Managing Migration in Ireland: A Social and Economic Analysis. Whilst offering some positive analysis, the report finds that Ireland's immigration strategies to date had been quite rudimentary and whilst recent legislation and policy papers hint at broader strategies, they "do not set out a bold vision for integrating immigration management with integration and with a larger set of high level strategic objectives".<sup>8</sup>


### 2.3.3 Promoting Integration – International Policy and Good Practice

UNITED for Inter-cultural Action, a European anti-racism network defines integration as:

*...a process of unifying individuals and activities into a new system. It means that minority groups and the majority group develop a new way of living, which includes elements of the values and ideas of both groups. Integration also means that everyone finds a place in society. There are no fundamental divisions between groups.*<sup>9</sup>

ECRE also put forward a definition of integration in 1999, which has been widely adopted at an EU level, which also sees integration as a dynamic two-way process that begins on the day that a refugee arrives in the new host society. They view it as a process of change:

*From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population.*<sup>10</sup>



Most definitions of integration place emphasis on it being a two-way process in which both the newcomers and the host community adapt in some ways to the changes. This differs to assimilation in which the newcomers are expected to adapt and become like the receiving society, often at the risk of losing their own cultural identity and there is no pressure on the host society to meet their diverse needs. Most European countries and the EU now widely accept that neither assimilation nor multiculturalism models tried in the past were effective long-term solutions. The emphasis of many organisations and Governments working in this area is now on integration. The European Commission has recently published an updated Handbook on Integration for Policy-makers and Practitioners (2007). In this handbook it states that::

*Two processes are critical to improving immigrants' outcomes: the elimination of inequalities and the acquisition of competences. These challenges are at the heart of integration policies in Europe.<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup>EU Commission (2007) Handbook on Integration for Policy Makers and Practitioners, p.8.

## CHAPTER 3

# INTERNATIONAL GOOD PRACTICE



### 3.1 Overview

Whilst Ireland has been receiving refugees for a number of years, it is a relatively new participant in the UNHCR quota resettlement programme. Other countries have a longer history of dealing with both refugee and resettlement issues and have developed a range of responses, which could help us in developing new strategies for the future. Some examples of international good practice are presented here, which may be useful for our analysis. These include some examples from the MOST Project countries as well as mentoring programmes developed in a range of other countries.

### 3.2 Facilitating Early Access to the Labour Market in Finland<sup>12</sup>

#### 3.2.1 Background and Rationale

One of the principal activities of the Finnish Ministry of Labour under the MOST Project is the roll-out of a pilot project in which a selection of newly arrived refugees are given access to the Finnish labour market shortly after arriving in Finland through language and practical work-based training.

#### 3.2.2 Project Activities

Two municipalities in Western Finland agreed to participate in the project, which combines both language training and practical work-based training in public and private sector work places. Participants attend language training on two days per week (in a separate venue) and the workplace on the other three days of the week. The teacher also visits each participant at his/her workplace to provide individual language lessons. In some cases the employers have also become involved in the language training element and may agree to teach a number of new words each day. This rhythm of alternating work placement and language training will be reviewed after a number of months in order to assess the level of language retention and may be altered if necessary.

As part of the project, orientation was also provided for the employers before the participants started their work experience. This included information on topics such as:

1. Information about the MOST project;
2. Practical information about the project;
3. Background to the culture of the ethnic group of the participants.

It was also emphasised to the potential employers that it was essentially a practical and language training programme and not mainstream work. The employers were requested to communicate as much as possible with the participants in order to facilitate that learning.

<sup>12</sup>For further information, see [www.mostproject.fi/activities](http://www.mostproject.fi/activities)

#### Initial Review

An initial review of the programme indicated that progress to date had been very satisfactory and in many cases the employers have offered the possibility of a permanent position for the participants. The participants also found that it was a very effective way to integrate into Finnish society. In terms of language training however, many participants found that they learnt more whilst in the classes and those who wanted to pursue higher education opportunities, stated that they might have preferred to concentrate on language learning. nity and are at risk of social isolation, isolation from the labour market and may be at risk of longer-term dependency.

### 3.3 Pre and Post Arrival Orientation in Sweden

Sweden has a long history of accepting refugees and currently accepts a quota of up to 1900 for resettlement each year. The responsibility for the selection and transfer of quota refugees to Sweden rests with the Migration Board. Where feasible, a delegation of the migration board selects cases for resettlement through in-country selection missions but, in case this is not possible, cases can also be selected on a dossier basis. The decisions are normally made at the end of the selection mission. Selection missions last normally between two to four weeks. During selection missions accepted quota refugees receive a cultural orientation programme before their departure. Depending on resources, a delegation consisting of municipality and Integration Board personnel may travel to the country of asylum to organise such a cultural orientation programme on the basic facts about living in Sweden.

Once the quota refugees arrive, they are under the full responsibility of the municipality in which they live. The municipality therefore receives a state grant of approximately 180,000SEK (around 19,255EURO) for each adult refugee and 190,500SEK (around 20,373EURO) for a refugee child resettled in the municipality. The introduction process lasts for around two years and is based on the adoption of individual introduction plans for each refugee and it often involves separate ones for children. The municipality is responsible for drawing up these plans. During the introduction quota refugees are provided with permanent accommodation (in case no suitable accommodation was found, temporary accommodation is provided for a short period) and have access to income support, language training and job search assistance. Their introduction plan often includes elements such as orientation about Sweden and the municipality, and further vocational training. In some instances, NGOs are also involved in the integration process of refugees. Firstly, the municipal authorities can sub-contract NGOs to implement the integration activities so that they become the actual service-providers. Secondly, NGOs may organise activities for refugees complementary to the services provided by the municipalities such as language classes, computer classes and recreational activities.

### 3.4 Swedish research on including refugee voices<sup>13</sup>

As part of the MOST Project the Swedish Integration Board undertook consultations with quota refugees, which focuses on quota refugees' experiences and expectations upon arrival and introduction in Sweden. Introduction in Sweden is not seen as one defined programme, but is rather individualised based on each person's introduction plan. This does however often involve group based activities such as orientation programmes, language classes and recreation activities.

<sup>13</sup>For the full report, see [http://www.mostproject.fi/english/activities/consultation\\_process/](http://www.mostproject.fi/english/activities/consultation_process/)

Some of the questions posed in the analysis were:

- What distinguishes the resettlement path of a quota refugee in Sweden? How can we understand and develop the resettlement process on the basis of the refugee's perspective?
- How can the resettlement process be considered to affect the introduction? What consequences do quota refugees' earlier experiences have for their introduction?
- What challenges, special opportunities or obstacles arise in the work with quota refugees' resettlement and introduction?

The researchers analysed the process of resettlement in chronological order and analysed the effects of each step on each other. They examined the degree of autonomy that the refugees had in the process, their expectations and how these expectations are managed. They found that in the initial stages of the resettlement process the refugees appear to have been dependent on the UNHCR, and only active in the process to a small degree. This was seen in turn to affect their attitude to pre-departure orientation programmes. This led the researchers to question whether information should be designed in order to be more easily absorbed by the refugees and whether the stress in the selection procedure could be reduced so that receptiveness to this information increases.

At the same time, several of the refugees in Sweden said that they would not have wanted more information prior to their departure. They also appear to have been satisfied with the fact that UNHCR has done things for them. It was observed that the passivity and dependent position in which refugees have found themselves tends to be reproduced in the resettlement process and to play a role in their receptiveness to the introduction. The fact that many refugees appear to regard the officials as people who should do things for them, and that they wait for measures and suggestions instead of taking charge themselves was perceived as a problem, given that the introduction in Sweden is based on a wish and an expectation that the refugees will participate actively and will themselves take charge of their own introduction. It was also noted that the refugees had very little interaction with Swedish people throughout the introduction process. This raised the question of how the introduction can be designed to ensure that refugees can to a greater degree come into contact with Swedes and reduce their dependence on the introduction official and how this contact can be organised alternatively.

They observed that even if the quota refugees do not constitute a particularly different refugee group, the resettlement process is an organised chain that can be viewed on an overall basis in a different way from migration and immigration. This chain gives rise to subordination and dependence that has an effect on the refugees' ability to establish themselves in the new society. It has been shown, for instance, that the refugees' lack of expectations and lack of receptiveness to information about the third country and their future situation affects their ability to become independent and take responsibility for their lives in Sweden. This emphasises the importance of seeing the settlement process as a whole when discussing individual phases. What happens at the beginning of the process, and in the refugee status, has consequences for the refugees' future lives, and their opportunities to integrate into the new society.

The Swedish consultation process thus raises many questions similar to that of the review undertaken in Ireland such as the role of the refugee in the introduction process, their receptiveness to information about their new country and the overall impact of the introduction on their ability to lead independent lives. Notwithstanding the different focus, there is scope for comparative analysis between the results and the Swedish findings are used in analysing some of the Irish material, particularly in the concluding chapter of this report. The Swedish findings are very useful for analysing the wider context of introduction and how it fits in to the overall resettlement process and very importantly in allowing the refugee narratives to tell their story of resettlement and giving them a voice that is often lost in the process.

### 3.5 Mentoring Programmes in Australia, Canada, US & UK

Mentoring programmes have a long history in countries such as Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand and they have been adapted to help newly arrived refugees to navigate their way in the new society. They are organised and funded through a wide range of Governmental, non-Governmental and faith-based organisations. Many mentoring programmes focus particularly on the needs of youth and match young people with peers through programmes such as the international Big Brother Big Sister programme.<sup>14</sup> Mentoring is generally defined as a mutually beneficial relationship that involves a more experienced person (mentor) helping a less experienced person (mentee) to achieve their goals. Generally mentoring is on a one-to-one basis, but is sometimes also provided in a group setting or can be between families. Usually mentors act in a voluntary capacity, but in some cases mentors are paid staff (e.g. in companies with corporate responsibility policies).

For refugees and newly arrived immigrants mentoring programmes can be a very effective tool in helping to develop social networks, language acquisition, research training and employment opportunities, understand cultural customs and norms and generally help the building of meaningful relationships between the newcomers and members of the host community. For the host community, they are also an effective way of breaking down barriers, raising cultural-awareness about the new entrants and can lead to a greater sense of understanding and respect between the two communities. They can be an effective integration tool. A research paper by the Refugee Council of Australia on the value of mentoring programmes for refugees and humanitarian entrants concluded that “mentoring can be a powerful settlement tool in so much as it can provide practical assistance through the development of a personal relationship. The intimacy of a mentoring relationship means settlement issues can be addressed on a personalised level within a flexible timeframe. The ability of mentoring to provide support that is holistic, informal and personal makes it ideal for assisting humanitarian entrants with settlement concerns.”<sup>15</sup>

In Australia and New Zealand mentoring programmes are organised for refugees in a vast array of settings and often centred on specific supports such as youth, access to employment, students, health issues, mentoring specifically for women and general programmes to foster social contacts within communities. In the UK, USA and Canada there are also specific programmes, which may be organised by faith communities. In some cases where they are organised by faith communities, mentors may also play an evangelical role in terms of spreading their faith, although many have no such explicit objectives. A few examples of mentoring programmes in different countries are provided below:

<sup>14</sup>See [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org).

<sup>15</sup>Refugee Council of Australia (2005), p. 3.

### **Case Study 1:**

#### **Given the Chance Project, Ecumenical Migration Centre, Melbourne (Australia)<sup>16</sup>**

The Given the Chance Project in Melbourne is a mentoring programme that assists refugees in accessing the labour market through activities such as the development of individual career plans in consultation with the volunteer co-ordinator and the mentor; labour market training focusing on “selling” their skills, on the job work experience with their mentor’s employment agency and personal assistance in learning to network and interview skills. The mentors are chosen very carefully and need to have sufficient life and professional experience to be capable of providing resources to a mentee. They are provided with training on referral services, visa issues and information on the refugee’s country. Whilst the focus of the project is on employment, it is structured holistically and referrals are frequently made to other refugee agencies. Individualised approaches are followed, recognising each refugee’s unique background.

The outcomes of the programme were considered very successful and after one year of the project 73% of the participants were in employment or pursuing training or education courses, a figure much higher than those involved in mainstream job assistance programmes. The more personalised and informal assistance was considered to be more effective than many other mainstream job-assistance services.

### **Case Study 2:**

#### **International Institute of Minnesota – Refugee Mentoring Programme (USA)<sup>17</sup>**

The International Institute of Minnesota is a general refugee mentoring programme that helps refugees to find their “first American friend”. It grew from the recognition that caseworkers and language teachers often do not have enough time to help them with issues such as energy assistance, landlords and housing, their children’s education, and medical services.

Mentors in the programme offer general friendship and social contacts to the mentees and help them with specific tasks such as to:

- Explore job training possibilities
- Gather clothes and supplies for babies
- Practise English outside the classroom
- Discontinue unnecessary telephone services
- Get home appliances repaired
- Apply for jobs
- Organise paperwork and sort through mail

Mentors and their friends are matched by location, age, and interest. Mentors visit their friends once a week for the first six weeks and every other week thereafter for a total of six months. Prospective mentors are required to undergo an interview and a four-hour training programme before matches are made. The programme matches men with men or women with women and in some cases matches are made between couples or families.



### Case Study 3:

#### Young refugees and asylum seekers in Barnet (UK)<sup>18</sup>

The Refugee Youth Project works in partnership with a secondary school in the London borough of Barnet to deliver a support and activity project for refugee and asylum-seeking young people in the borough. It became aware of the particular vulnerability of asylum seeking and refugee youth in the area, many of whom are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The research of Save the Children found that:

*"In an environment that is increasingly hostile towards refugees and asylum-seekers, children arriving unaccompanied from abroad are a particularly vulnerable group... Save the Children research has found that many are denied their basic rights and needs"*

The Refugee Youth Project responds to these challenges through a variety of programmes including an identification of support gaps exercise with refugee and asylum-seeking youth, a Summer activity project and has now developed a peer mentoring programme.

The beneficiaries are young people aged 11-18 from refugee or asylum-seeking families or unaccompanied minors seeking asylum themselves. Many of them have lived through trauma and persecution in their own countries and have often been separated from family and friends.

This project enables 16 - 18 year olds who have been in the UK for at least 2 years to act as mentors to newly arrived young people. Young mentors are provided with thorough accredited training. Refugee Youth Project ensures a structured and supportive setting to allow the mentoring relationship to develop. This is achieved through continuing to facilitate after school, weekend and holiday sessions where young people can come to meet and socialise, with the support of trained workers.

This project allows a disadvantaged group of young people access to activities they would not normally have. The young refugees and asylum seekers benefit from the opportunity to socialise with peers in structured youth group settings, increasing their confidence and social skills and helping to remove barriers to educational achievement.

### Conclusions and Lessons learnt from Refugee Mentoring Programmes

Through a study of reviews and evaluations of mentoring programmes in a wide array of settings, the following conclusions or guidelines can be put forward:

1. Mentors can be in a position of power due to their ease with the host society's norms and culture and may also have a financial advantage over the mentees. It is essential that a paternalistic or patronising relationship does not develop between the mentor and mentee. Adequate screening and training programmes can help to prevent this.



2. The clear setting of boundaries, roles and responsibilities is essential for any mentoring programme; Drawing up a contract which both parties sign can be a useful way of ensuring that both parties have understood their role.
3. Careful screening of mentors and in some cases mentees is very important. Mentors and mentees need ongoing supervision and support and in some cases the match does not work and alternatives arrangements may need to be made.<sup>19</sup>
4. In designing mentoring programmes for refugees, their particular needs, culture and background will need to be taken into consideration. This includes making allowances for issues such as:
  - language barriers and communication difficulties
  - refugees may be dealing with a range of complicated issues, which can be traumatic and can prevent them to be able to completely engage despite willingness to participate in the programme
  - need for cross-cultural understanding including issues such as gender roles, family norms and hierarchy, community politics, cultural norms and a basic understanding of the background and trauma that may have been experienced.<sup>20</sup>
5. In some cases programmes are designed where the word volunteering and mentoring are used interchangeably. If a programme is to be based on mentoring, it should be seen as a particular skill and based on the development of a personalised relationship.
6. In the course of a programme, a mentor may come across an issue, which they are ill-equipped to deal with or where it would be inappropriate to do so. In such cases, it is essential to have a referral service, which may be co-ordinated by the programme co-ordinator or the mentors should have relevant training on referral services available.
7. Whilst refugee mentoring programmes are usually based on bridging cross-cultural differences, there have been cases where those cross-cultural differences have made the programme very difficult and in some cases many dropped out. An evaluation of the Ynomrah Sudanese Refugee Mentoring Program in Tasmania found that many dropped out due to substantial problems with the Sudanese mentees operating on "African time" and failing to keep appointments with mentors. A clearer briefing for both mentors and mentees on each other's cultural norms could have prevented this.<sup>21</sup>
8. In designing mentoring programmes for immigrant youth, particular norms and family hierarchies of the immigrant families may need to be considered. In some cultures socialisation of young people outside the family is a matter for parental control and it is essential to fully brief and obtain the consent of the parents before involving the youth in such programmes.

<sup>19</sup>See e.g. [http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff/leptoolkit/immigrant\\_youth.php](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/leptoolkit/immigrant_youth.php)

<sup>20</sup>For further information on cross-cultural understanding, see Refugee Council of Australia (2005) *Australian Mentoring Program for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants*, p.20

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid*, p.8



## CHAPTER 4.

# BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH GROUP AND THE SUPPORT STRUCTURES



### 4.1 Background to the Kurdish refugee group

The Iranian Kurdish refugees arrived in Ireland in 2006 following an announcement from the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in February of 2006 to accept a group of refugees from the UNHCR camp near Ruwayshid in Jordan, under the 2006 resettlement quota. A selection mission was undertaken by the Irish Government in early April 2006.

This group of Iranian Kurds fled from Iran to Iraq (1979 -1981) where they were accommodated in an area known as AlTash. Following heightened insecurity associated with the Spring 2003 military intervention in Iraq, the group fled to the Jordanian border where they lived in the 'No Man's Land' refugee camp. In May 2005, the Jordanian Government agreed to transfer the group to the Ruwayshid refugee camp for security reasons. Under Jordanian law, the group was given temporary protection and, as such, were entitled to a maximum of six months residency after which they are vulnerable to refoulement.

The UNHCR proposed to close the camp later in 2006, thus requiring a strong humanitarian response from those countries involved in resettlement. It was in this context that the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform decided to resettle a significant number of refugees from the camp. In all, these families have spent over 25 years in various temporary camp-like sites and the children have known no other kind of existence.

### 4.2 Profile of Refugees Interviewed

21 in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 33 people in three different towns. All of the interviewees were of Kurdish origin and had come to Ireland as a resettled refugee. The refugees had arrived at three different stages and were resettled to three separate towns. The first group was resettled in Carrick-on-Shannon in 2005 and was joined a year later by a group made up mainly of relatives of the first group. The other two groups were settled in Mullingar and Sligo. The first group that arrived in 2005 had come through a slightly different procedure and were not interviewed by the Irish delegation in the camp, but by the UNHCR. They did not participate in the pre-departure or post-arrival training as organised for the other groups, but participated in some general training about Western society whilst still in the camp and had a less formalised briefing/orientation when they arrived in Carrick-on-Shannon.

The refugees to be interviewed were selected in consultation with the refugee support workers in each of the towns. Selection was based on gender, age, English language competence and confidence levels. An effort was also made to target women who were not participating in language training due to caring responsibilities. In some cases interviews involved more than one family member. Whilst children were often present during the interviews, they were not formally interviewed for the purposes of the research.

A breakdown of the numbers and gender of people interviewed from each of the groups is provided below:

### Breakdown of Refugee Research Group

Place of resettlement & Date of Arrival	Mullingar Sept. 2006	Carrick on Shannon Oct. 2005	Carrick on Shannon 2006	Sligo June 2006	Total
No. of interviews held	7	4	4	6	21
No. of people Interviewed	10	8	8	7	33
No. of Men Interviewed	6	2	3	4	15
No. of Women Interviewed	4	6	5	3	18

## 4.3 Some other actors involved in the integration process

### Integrate Ireland Language and Training<sup>22</sup>

IILT is a not-for-profit campus company of Trinity College Dublin and is funded under the National Development Plan from the Department of Education and Science. It delivers language training to refugees who have obtained legal status after an asylum process, those with leave to remain and programme refugees. The focus of IIILTs work is on (i) the development of language, knowledge and skills to support membership and integration into Irish society and (ii) the identification by participants of immediate language needs as well as possible future areas of employment, with appropriate preparation for this objective. Their overall mission statement is "Through education and training, to empower people of other cultures and languages to achieve a place in Irish society". In addition to language training, IIILT also offers other forms of learning support, such as computer literacy and preparation for work.

IILT provides language training throughout the country, provided there is sufficient demand. This includes courses for the Kurdish refugees in the three towns of Sligo, Mullingar and Carrick-on-Shannon. The role of the teacher goes beyond language training and IIILT's teachers also work closely with the students in helping to explain cultural norms, helping people with skills and knowledge that are relevant for the workplace, identifying possibilities for further training or career development and overall integration into Irish society.

IIILT works in close co-operation with the Office of the Minister for Integration to develop and deliver post-arrival orientation programmes. The material developed and used in the orientation programme continues to be used for many of the discussion topics throughout the year of language training.

<sup>22</sup>See [www.iilt.ie](http://www.iilt.ie)

## Refugee Support Workers

The Office of the Minister for Integration works in partnership with local authorities and service providers to support the resettlement during the first year after arrival. They also provide a range of grants, which includes one year funding for a full/part-time refugee support worker who acts as a link between the new arrivals and the receiving communities. The main focus of the support worker is to identify, through working closely with the refugees, the barriers that exist in the receiving communities that prevent full participation. They work closely with receiving communities in their efforts to remove such barriers. As well as supporting the refugees in practical ways, they work with a range of other service providers and voluntary groups, with a view to the mainstreaming of services for refugees in other organisations.

The Refugee Support Workers were all appointed after the refugees were already in place in their towns and in some cases up to three months later. Much of their work at the beginning concentrated on sorting out practical issues, helping with access to service providers, providing information and assisting when problems or issues arose. In most cases they were also involved in organising a range of inter-cultural events and working on awareness-raising among the local receiving community. Their focus now is gradually shifting more towards promoting self-reliance and ensuring that other service providers are in a position to provide more appropriate and flexible services that meet the needs of refugees and other migrants. They also work closely with a range of educational institutions, including the primary and secondary schools, adult education centres and IILT.

## Inter-agency Groups

An Inter-agency Group was established to bring together all the relevant agencies working with refugees in order to co-ordinate the services provided and adopt a more integrated and holistic approach. The Inter-agency Group is chaired by the County Development Board. Members of the group include agencies such as:

- Integrate Ireland Language and Training
- Partnership Company, including the Refugee Support Workers
- The Reception and Integration Agency
- FÁS (Employment Authority)
- Money Advice & Budgeting Service
- County Childcare Committee
- Gardaí (police)
- Citizens Information Centres/Board
- Sports Partnership
- Voluntary and charitable organisations
- Primary and secondary school principals
- Health Service Executive (representing social workers, public health nurses and community welfare officers, GPs, counsellors and Home Care)
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- County Council – including County Development Board and relevant sections such as Housing.

In the early steps of planning, the Inter-agency Group generally sets up sub groups on issues as education, housing and health who report back to the working group. These sub-groups often disbanded once the issues were deemed to have been resolved. Whilst the Inter-agency groups often focus on particular issues affecting the refugee community in their town, it was also expected that they should develop structures and processes that should allow for the more efficient and effective mainstreaming of services to meet the needs of the newcomers and refugees in particular. In one area the newly appointed Migrant Support Worker of the Partnership also attended the meetings, which will in the long-term help to raise issues relating to migrants in general and not just those affecting the resettled refugees.

## CHAPTER 5

# ANALYSIS OF THE INTRODUCTION PERIOD IN THE IRISH CONTEXT



The information presented in this and the following two chapters is an analysis of the empirical information gathered mainly through interviews with the resettled refugees and the focus groups and interviews with the agencies and service providers. Direct quotations are used from the interviews with the refugees, taken from the transcripts of the interviews. In some cases, specific recommendations from the focus group are included separately.

## 5.1 Pre-departure Orientation

### 5.1.1 Overview

One of the principal aims of the MOST Project was to: "research current practices in all areas of pre-departure and post-arrival orientation and mentoring programmes with a view to developing new models of best practice". The provision of pre-departure training is currently under review and new models were piloted and tested for refugee groups in both Thailand and Uganda. More information on this process is contained in the appendix.

The section below outlines the principal results from the research with the Kurdish resettled refugees in the three research towns. Three groups had participated in some form of pre-departure orientation, delivered by the Irish delegation whilst still in the camp. The first group of Kurdish refugees who were resettled in 2005 did not participate in such orientation, but had some general orientation on Western society, delivered by an international NGO.

The pre-departure orientation delivered by the Office of the Minister for Integration to these particular refugees was relatively basic, usually delivered prior to the interviews by a senior member of the selection team and lasted on average 1-2 hours. In some cases it was delivered immediately after the interviews. It was however, always delivered by the selection team during the period whilst they were in the camp carrying out the selection process. The orientation firstly covered basic information relating to the interview process, practical arrangements for travel and what would happen when they arrived in Ireland. Some information about Irish culture and society and what they could expect was also provided. This included information on rights, responsibilities and status in Ireland, the law, housing and general information on the economy and geography of the country.

A more elaborate form of pre-departure training is being developed through the MOST Project and tested in both Thailand and Uganda. This report here however mainly concerns the analysis of the interviews with the refugees who had been through the process with a relatively limited pre-departure orientation. A guide dealing specifically with good practice in relation to Pre-departure Orientation has also been developed as part of the MOST Project in Ireland (contained in Appendix 2).

## Refugee Perceptions of the Pre-departure Orientation

In each of the interviews the refugees were asked about their memory and perception of the pre-orientation information that they received in the camp and whether this made any sense to them both at the time and when they arrived in Ireland. They were also asked whether there was additional information that they would have liked to receive at that stage. Some of the younger and more literate or educated people expressed a greater interest in this orientation programme and made a number of suggestions about how it could be improved, both in terms of content, method of delivery and timing.

## Poor Memory of Orientation and Emphasis on Leaving

Many of those interviewed had a poor recollection of the orientation session and did not view it as a training session per se. When asked about their expectations of coming to Ireland, for many all that mattered was that they would be safe and free and therefore details on legal systems, housing, landscape etc. did not seem so relevant at the time. This was particularly the case for some older members of the refugee community, who saw it as an opportunity for their children to create a new life.

Interviewer (I): Did they give you any information about Ireland?

Refugee (R): *They brought a map with them and they explained about Ireland but I knew nothing and I can't remember anything they said, just that they were there and brought a map (female, 50s).*

I: Did they talk about Ireland – what type of country it is, our weather, our culture?

R: *Not too much, no (male, 40s).*

*We were in a camp and we had a bad life, lack of electricity, water etc. We were already dead but when the Irish delegation came and told us we were going to Ireland, we were very happy and we knew our life was going to change (male, 70s).*

This is similar to the findings of the Swedish research, where all of the interviewees stated that they did not focus on the new country, but rather on getting away from their problems. It found that “the flight was always a movement away from something, rather than towards something else. The wish to become free and the inability to carry out this wish may explain why the refugees focus upon the UNHCR, instead of their own role. Their focus on “getting away rather than arriving” to something else may also impact on their abilities to absorb information regarding the new situation and the future.” This emphasis on moving away rather than towards something was found throughout the interviews in Ireland, with many refugees emphasising the desire to become free, to leave a prison or a cage and to travel to find somewhere with freedom and security. None of the refugees chose Ireland or Sweden as their destination, but rather they were chosen by Ireland or Sweden. What seemed to matter for many people was that they would be given a new chance somewhere else. This also raises the issue of the passivity of the refugees in the process and the sense that things were being done to them or for them rather than by them.



## Memory and Perception of Content of Orientation

Some of the interviewees who were able to remember the content and details of the orientation spoke about it in very positive terms and gave some very specific examples of what they were told and how it helped them. Many had remembered specific information that they seemed to find particularly relevant to them, but in some cases they are confusing some of the details with the information given during the post-arrival orientation programme. Details that were recalled included issues such as the weather; housing, rights and obligations concerning work and training, democracy and freedom and the rights to education for children.

*R: The Irish delegation had interviews and before then we had 1-2 hours meeting and they had some type of machine that they were using to present and the whole meeting was about the Irish weather, the society, the culture, everything.*

*I: Did you find that useful, did it make sense to you at the time?*

*R: It was very good because when they were explaining about the Irish people and the culture. When we then came to Ireland, we already had something in our mind and it wasn't all a surprise to us. We had already heard about it (male, 30s).*

*I: Was that information useful? Did it make any sense to you at that stage when you were still in Jordan?*

*R: We got lots of information about the schools, the culture, the hospitals. E.g. they said children must be 4 and then they go to school. And they told us about the GP. We have to make an appointment to see the GP. The doctors are treating you the same as Irish people but sometimes you have to wait in a list to see someone. They told us for everything you have to wait in a queue and for everything you are the same as everyone else (female, 20s).*

Some responses about the content were very positive, with many details of the orientation retained and its benefits appreciated.

*R: Yes I got some information from the Irish delegation. First they told us that we can't find accommodation for everyone and that we might have to separate the older ones. And also that we can't live in Dublin as it is quite busy and very expensive. They told us we have the same rights as Irish citizens and we can work and study and we have to do both.*

*I: Before then, had you heard anything about Ireland?*

*R: I hadn't really heard about it but I heard it was in Europe and it was a free country and green.*

*I: Was there anything else they could have told you in Jordan to prepare you for coming here?*

*R: All the information they gave us was good and it was enough (male 20s).*

*R: I got lots of information from the Irish delegation. When we went to the camp in Jordan for our interview, they told us about the life, the weather, the children – they have a right to go to school and ourselves, we have a right to learn English and then we have to start work and we can then apply for citizenship after 3 years. If we have a child in Ireland directly, then they will be an Irish citizen.*

*I: Did they tell you anything about the culture in Ireland?*

*R: They didn't talk about the culture too much but when we talked about the Kurdish culture, they said that the Irish culture is not too different, a little bit, but not too much (female, 30s).*

## Comparison with Practices of Other Countries and Perceived Weaknesses of Orientation Session

Whilst in the camp in Jordan, some refugees noted that the practices of delegations of other countries often differed to those of the Irish delegation. Some, who spoke good English, had also acted as interpreters for both the Irish and other delegations. Comparisons were made in particular with the Swedish and Danish systems in which they described a separate integration unit delivering a longer and more intensive training, which in some cases also included basic language training. In comparison to such systems, some considered the short Irish orientation session to be a little basic and insufficient. One interviewee felt that they had been badly prepared in comparison to other countries and that it was like “starting from zero”.

I: Can you remember also whether they gave you any presentation with material about Ireland?

R: They came and just gave a little bit of information about Ireland, not too much. You know the other missions they came and they did an interview and after that they went home and they sent another mission, especially to teach the refugee about their country. But the Irish government they don't do it all. They do nothing like this.

I: And do you think that would be a good idea?

R: Yes it's a good idea for refugees because they don't know anything. They are in a camp and far from things like Internet. They know nothing about European culture. When we come to this country we see that everything is different. I would like to know how you get your rights in Ireland, how you can work, the way, anything about the law, the culture, anything. Because other missions do like this. We spoke with them in the refugee camp and when they go to those places they do not start from zero. But when we came we started from zero, but others didn't (female, 20s).

This sentiment was echoed by another young man:

*They came from integration offices and they gave more information. I think what (name of trainer) gave us was basic but the others gave more than basic. But I think it would be better to send an integration group after the interviews to do this. The integration group should give more information about the life, the laws and the way of living, the way of dressing, how to avail of your freedom (male, 20s).*

A number of people also referred to wishing to have more information on culture at that stage. This trend was also repeated in relation to the post-arrival orientation. Culture was not necessarily defined as anything very specific, but apart from the obvious physical differences, seemed to be the factor that many found to be the most different or hard to understand whilst trying to settle and integrate in Ireland. Often the responses to what was missing in the programme were simply words like “what culture you have”.

## Conclusions

The ability to remember and absorb the information given during the pre-departure information session varied greatly depending on a range of factors, such as age and education background, awareness of general practice in the selection and orientation of refugees and the state of mind at the time. Those who particularly emphasised the negative life of the camp and the focus on getting away, rather than going to a particular place tended to place less emphasis on the details of the pre-departure orientation and the country to which they would be travelling. This was particularly true for older people who saw the new life as an opportunity for their children rather than themselves.

On the other hand for a number of younger refugees, the pre-departure orientation was considered to be a very important part of the resettlement process and whilst many appreciated the information they received and remembered very specific details, some also noted the gaps and expressed a desire to have a more comprehensive introduction at this stage.

The Swedish research also highlights the impact of providing the pre-departure training before the completion of the selection process, where people may fear that their engagement in the training might influence their selection. They found that “this places the refugees in the roles of objects rather than active agents. Their desperate need to be “rescued” from the problems affects the possibilities for the refugees to raise questions, lay claims, or take a stand in the selection process.” They give examples of situations where people were a little shocked or surprised by information given in the orientation, but were afraid to say so or ask questions in case it might affect their selection. Whilst the Irish pre-departure orientation carried out in Jordan might not have been as in-depth to provoke such sentiments, it is nevertheless an issue to bear in mind and orientation programmes that depend on active participation could be affected by this fear if conducted before the selection process is completed. Similarly the ability to absorb and retain information at this stage could be influenced by the emphasis on getting away and hoping to be selected. This should be borne in mind if developing longer programmes to be delivered before the completion of the selection process.

One could therefore be tempted to ask the question about the real value and impact of conducting such pre-departure orientation. If people are so focused at that stage on moving away from something, does it make sense to dedicate time and resources to providing detailed information on the place to which they will be going? Whilst it may appear that the focus for many is on moving away, both the Swedish and this research suggests however that the pre-departure information does register with most people and gives people a sense of reassurance when undertaking the journey and in many cases many of the precise details are remembered and referred to after they arrive in the host country. The Irish pre-departure orientation undertaken in Jordan was relatively limited and many felt that it could have been longer and more detailed. From the point of view of the host country, there may also be merit in having the opportunity to impart important information about the host country, including its laws, norms, culture and rights and obligations of the refugees when they arrive. In some cases it may also provide the refugees with an opportunity to review their decision to come to the country and to establish whether there are any particular norms or aspects that are completely contrary to their way of life.

Despite some limitations, it does therefore seem that it is worth devoting time and energy to providing a relatively comprehensive pre-departure orientation that will provide people with basic information on practicalities, rights, roles and responsibilities, laws and norms, society and culture and basic geographic and political information. At the same time it is important to ensure that the information is not too detailed or complicated and that it does not have the effect of disorienting people through the over-provision of information.

The training methods used are also important and may impact on a person's ability to receive and absorb the information. Interactive and participatory methods help to ensure a greater involvement in the process and help to promote the role of the refugee as an active agent. There should be ample opportunities for people to raise topics that they feel are important and ask questions about the new host society. It is essential that this orientation is separated from the selection process and that the interaction/participation is not hampered by the fear of not being selected.

The implications from this research for future planning of pre-departure orientation might include the following:

1. It does make sense to provide a pre-departure orientation for people who are still in the camp. This information needs to be clear, relevant and delivered in a way that is easy to understand. Encouraging refugee participation and interaction in the training helps them to absorb the information in a way that is relevant to them and encourages them to be more active in the resettlement process.
2. The pre-departure orientation in the Irish context should be longer, more comprehensive and address a wider range of topics, including culture, food, norms, realities of life in Ireland, housing etc. It should also focus on the journey and the practicalities of travelling. People should also be prepared for some possible negatives or the less attractive aspects, whilst still promoting a positive attitude and perception of the resettlement process and their new lives.
3. The content, duration and method of delivery of the pre-departure orientation should be designed with the particular group in mind. Education levels, exposure to Western society and culture, current and past situation, family make-up and ages will all be factors that may impact on the exact nature of the orientation programme.
4. The orientation programme might be more beneficial if delivered after the interviews as people might be more focused on its content, rather than anticipating and worrying about the interviews. Where feasible, it may make sense to deliver it after the selection process to the group that have been selected.

## 5.2 Post-arrival Orientation

### 5.2.1 Overview

The primary interview group i.e. the Kurdish refugees admitted in 2006 took part in a 6 week orientation programme. The programme consisted of 4 weeks general information with associated language and 2 weeks introduction to English language. The group admitted in 2005, some of whom were also interviewed, did not have the opportunity to participate on this type of course. However the 2005 group did receive a one day induction programme in the resettlement location during the 1st week after arrival. This was followed by a similar event organised locally 6 weeks later. The local service providers also provided information on an individual basis as need arose.

Training material for both groups was based on the Beginners Guide to Ireland, which was developed by the RIA as part of the MORE Project in 2005 (a previous transnational project funded under the Community Actions Strand of the ERF). The curriculum that was developed and used with the Kurdish refugees is called “Welcome to Ireland: Induction Course”. It covered eight core areas, which are:

It covered eight core areas, which are:

1. Ireland
2. Health Services
3. Education
4. Work, Training and Adult Education
5. Transport and Travel
6. Shopping and Money
7. Social Welfare
8. Living in Ireland

On the basis of this review, the course is now being updated and includes many of the recommendations made in this report.

The training was delivered by an IILT teacher and guest speakers were invited to speak on various topics e.g. a member of the Gardaí (police), the Money and Budgeting Service (MABS) and FÁS (the employment and training authority). For some topics, the participants may also have visited a particular place such as a shop, bank or doctor's surgery. Interpretation was provided for all sessions.

IILT emphasises that it is important that the content is neutral and that the refugees are informed of all the facts relevant to them, including their rights, entitlements and duties. The orientation programme in Ballyhaunis was relatively short, but the content and the folder they received formed the basis of much of their language training over the coming year and the information was thus continually reinforced.

Most of the refugees interviewed participated in the orientation programme in Ballyhaunis, with the exception of those that arrived with the first group in 2005 and those who were too ill to attend at the time. Two of the women interviewed had also not participated in all sessions due to pregnancy and childbirth.

The post-arrival orientation training was discussed at length during most of the interviews with the refugees, many of whom were very satisfied with everything and found no room for improvement. Many were very happy to provide practical examples of what they had learnt and how they had put it into practice. All of the people interviewed who had participated in the training did so in the past year and therefore its impact was still quite fresh and it was also difficult to assess the long-term impact on their integration and ability to access further training or employment opportunities.

Whilst most of the responses regarding the training were very positive, some made suggestions for improvement in terms of timing and venue, content and delivery methods, which are expanded in the sections below.

### 5.2.2 Timing and Venue

The training took place in Ballyhaunis, a small town in County Mayo with a population of 1 600 people. The orientation programme took place over a period of 6 weeks and people were housed in self-catering accommodation. After this period when the orientation programme was completed, they were then transferred to their respective towns, which were located in other counties. For some participants, the fact that the training was held in a place separate to where they were to be permanently located posed a difficulty. It was also felt by some that holding the orientation in the same location would mean that more of the material could be put into practice. As one young man commented:

*But if you had the orientation in our place in X (name of town), it would be much better because every day we would be able to put it into practice. You could put all that into practice, like getting a medical card, going to the GP. The lessons and the practice would be combined (male, 20s).*

*It's not bad to go straight to the town where they are living. Many other countries are doing that. They are putting them directly into the houses where they are living. That would be better (male, 20s)*

The same issue was raised for children who did not attend their local school during this period, but who had separate training appropriate to their age in Ballyhaunis.

*It's the same for our children who spent 6 weeks in Ballyhaunis – it would have been better for them to go to X (name of town) (male, 40s).*

In relation to the amount of time allocated to the training, some felt it was sufficient, but many would have preferred a longer orientation period, particularly as they felt new in the country and some the information somewhat complex.

*Well maybe the timing was very short. Kurds or refugees like us, they need about 4 months.*

*It was great but the time was not enough, just 20 days. A lot of information and it was a little bit complicated.*

*It's much better if you could have more time, maybe 8 weeks not 6 weeks.*

### 5.2.3 Content

Overall the feedback on the content of the programme was very positive and many people felt that it prepared them for their new life and introduced them to many new facets of life in Ireland. The practical information they received was often perceived as the most important and certain points of information were noted by a number of people. In nearly every interview the participants were asked to give an example of what they found to be useful and how they have been able to put it into practice. Examples given included how to make an appointment with the doctor; filling out social welfare or child benefit forms. Many felt that it gave them a good introduction to Irish life and culture, which was in some ways very different to the life they had known before.

*We didn't know much and it was great and really useful and gave us lots of information about the future life, what we need to do and about the culture and what we need to do in the basic life in Irish society (male, 20s).*

On the other hand, some people felt that it was not that useful at that particular time. Reasons given varied, including:

*That was not too useful. First we didn't really pay attention. We were too new in the country to get that information. It was very soon. Our country is very different. It is not like here. The nature, the freedom, everything – it requires more time to understand (male, 20s).*

One person felt that they did not need to be taught basic facts and that they had a greater ability to learn for themselves. He felt that this increased the risk of creating dependency and carried an assumption that people required assistance with everything.

*I don't want to boast about ourselves, but most things we learnt are because we learnt it ourselves and not because the teacher gave us those lessons. We went to the shopping centre so we learnt that, not because the teacher said "go to the shopping centre (male, 20s).*

On the other hand, another participant saw the advantages to receiving assistance with basic activities such as food shopping:

*It was quite useful because we didn't know how to go shopping and they were teaching us to go shopping and how to buy whatever we want (female, 30s).*

Some people spoke about their disappointment with the reality of living in Ireland, especially at the beginning and felt that the course did not prepare them for the negative aspects, such as housing difficulties, integration difficulties and the risk of anti-social behaviour or racism.

*We could have learnt more about the problems here – like the accommodation. Also the integration with Irish people. It was hard in the beginning. We couldn't know how to. We thought there was no difference, but of course there is a big difference with them (female, 20s).*

Another issue that was mentioned by a few participants was food and knowing how to cook it. Whilst they were given information on shopping, this did not extend to how to cook the various ingredients that might have seemed unfamiliar:

*And also food was difficult for us, like typical Irish things like bacon and cabbage. That was hard for us. In the camp all we knew was chicken and rice. Maybe we need to learn about how to cook. All the time we just bought chicken and rice. We had only been given refugee food. When we went into the shop it was difficult. We saw lots of things and we couldn't use them and we couldn't cook them. We had never seen the food before (female, 20s).*

#### 5.2.4 Putting it into Practice

Many of the interviewees were proud to demonstrate how they had been able to practise what they learnt during the training. This covered a range of activities such as going to the doctor, paying bills, going to the Post Office etc.



*I remember how to use everything in the house, how to go to the doctor; get social welfare (female, 50s).*

*I have been using lots of stuff from the information in Ballyhaunis. They were talking about the post office and I've been there. Or the social welfare and I'm getting that now. I got information about the Gardaí - if we have a problem we have to call them. We got lots of information from Ballyhaunis and we are using it in our daily life (male, 40s).*

For some people however, the information given on the course did not seem to match the reality on the ground when they moved to the new town. This related in particular to discrepancies in various allowances, particularly where housing was concerned (see section 6.6.3 on Housing). Such differences may be explained by the different practices of Community Welfare Officers in each of the towns and increases in rent payable.

*We had lots of information especially from the teacher and when we came to (the town) and started our new life there, between the teacher and the practice it was completely different e.g. he said when RIA finds a house for you, you have the choice to refuse the house three times. But we didn't have any choice. They said every family gets €500 for heating and electricity, but we didn't get that. They said we would pay €13 per month for the rent but in fact it is €26. I don't know whether he gave us the wrong information or whether different cities have different systems (male, 40s).*

### 5.2.5 Ancillary Supports and Activities for Children/Adolescents

The refugees were housed in self-catering houses close to the training venue. During the period that the adults were in training, courses and childcare were arranged for the children and adolescents as appropriate. For the older children this included activities such as a soccer camp with some of the local children, horse-riding, English lessons and computers. For the younger children, childcare was organised in crèche facilities in the asylum seeker reception centre in the town. Whilst the feedback on such activities and facilities was very positive overall, a number of issues were raised by various parties involved in the organisation and from the refugees themselves. These included the following:

- Lack of interpretation in the childcare facility was a particular difficulty, both in terms of communicating with the children and communicating with the parents. Childcare workers were often unable to work out why children were crying and in an instance where a child was injured; it was very difficult to communicate with her and her parents. This also raised issues in relation to consent forms that should be signed by parents when leaving their children in childcare and were not signed or not understood due to language difficulties.
- The children in the crèche facility were often not used to being left with complete strangers and there was no sufficient settling-in period. This caused difficulties for both the children and the childcare workers.
- In some cases older children or teenagers who spoke good English were used as interpreters for the other children and in some cases it was felt that this was not appropriate.



### 5.2.6 Group that did not participate in post-arrival orientation

The first group of Kurdish refugees that arrived in Carrick-on-Shannon in 2005 did not participate in the same formal orientation programme as it had not yet been established at that stage. They did receive some initial orientation and on-going support at the beginning, but not in the same structured way. Whilst most agreed that an orientation programme would have been useful, they did not feel that they had particularly suffered by not having it and they referred to other forms of support and spoke about trying to help themselves. No-one interviewed seemed to pay particular attention to the fact that they did not have an orientation programme and as one interviewee remarked, assistance with finding a job would have been the most useful:

*You get some help from Community Welfare and it was useful at the time, but we had some English and we could help ourselves. The only help we needed was to find a job and we still can't. Nobody came to us and showed us how to find a job and this skill is very difficult- to find a job.*

Some referred to support they received from the Community Welfare Office and the RIA, but seemed relatively vague about who provided it.

I: Can you remember when you arrived was there someone there to help you and show you around – to explain things to you when you first arrived?

R: It was for about 1 month some organisation helped all of us in Carrick and after one month they were visiting us once a week.

I: Was that support useful? Were you able to find out everything you needed to know?

R: We were trying to help ourselves and help our children but we didn't have enough support, but this group was helping us and it was very useful.

One person indicated that a course that focused on health and education would have been useful.

*If you have a group, the course organised by RIA is very useful. Especially if you talk about health and education because all people from different countries, they have a lack of education and health problems.*

For this group, the focus now seemed to be more on the present and some spoke of the need for assistance with finding a job or sourcing further training opportunities.

### 5.2.7 Focus Group and Agency Recommendations on the Post-arrival Training

Many of the issues raised in the interviews with the refugees in relation to the pre- and post arrival orientation programmes were reiterated during the focus group discussions with service providers. Some specific points relevant to the organisation of the post-arrival orientation raised during the focus group included the following:

- Inclusion of a visit to the town in which people are going to live early on in the orientation programme;
- Career planning should start at the beginning, with a skills audit taking place during the orientation programme, to be revisited later at various stages;
- It would be useful to have the refugee support worker involved in the orientation programme;
- Guest speakers from the receiving communities should be included in the orientation programme including local service providers;

- Community linkages/mentoring programmes should make initial contact during the orientation programme;
- The orientation programme should take place where the refugees are going to be living and should be a continuous process, with built-in links to organisations such as the Citizens Information Centres (CICs)/ refugee support groups and voluntary organisations;
- Broaden the involvement in the post-arrival orientation programme to include other individual-based service providers such as employers;
- The orientation programme should include the involvement of front-line staff and not just people in senior or policy positions;
- Ensure that there is not too much information and simplify the information given.

The Focus Group discussion placed a considerable amount of emphasis on the inclusion of a range of local service providers, commencing in the orientation programme and continuing throughout the introduction and integration process. In all discussions the issue of the inclusion of front-line staff both in the orientation training and in inter-agency meetings was considered very important as they were often the people with first-hand experience and knowledge. The need for integrated career planning was also considered essential and many felt that it should commence as soon as possible through a skills audit, results of this would be revisited at several stages and used as a basis for individual career planning. Although IILT uses the Milestone Portfolio, which encourage each learner to identify and express through English prior education, and work experience, as part of language training and the area of CV preparation and ancillary skill and language is often requested by the learners, many felt there was an overall need for better co-ordination of career planning and guidance services.

## 5.2.8 Conclusions and Recommendations for Planning of Future Training

1. The overall feedback on the content of the programme was very positive. Suggestions for improvement include the need for more emphasis on food and cooking, culture and values, employment opportunities, risk of anti-social behaviour and how to deal with it, information on dental treatment and oral hygiene.
2. The content of the programme may also need to be varied depending on the needs of the particular group. The pre-departure orientation programme could also be used as a mechanism to determine the particular training needs of the group.
3. The feedback on the delivery methods of the training was very positive and people were very appreciative of the interpretation and the fact that written translations were also provided. It was suggested however that some more emphasis could be put on the practical application through more visits to various offices etc.

4. The venue of the training posed a difficulty for some refugees and service providers who felt that holding the training in the town of resettlement would be more beneficial and would assist the integration process from the beginning. On the other hand there are obvious logistical reasons why the training is held in a separate location and it is also argued that it provides good generic training that can be applied to other places. Assuming that it would not be practical to organise the training in the town in which they are to be resettled, it may make sense to organise a visit there during the training course so that people can begin to familiarise themselves with the new town.
5. The duration of the training could be lengthened to 6-8 weeks in order to accommodate the extra material and allow more time for the information to be absorbed.
6. Whilst the training for the adults is considered to be very satisfactory, more attention could be paid to the planning of the activities for children and adolescents. The particular concerns in relation to childcare need to be addressed, as does the issue in relation to interpretation for children. The activities for the older children appeared to be enjoyable and well organised, but more forward and integrated planning might be needed to ensure that the training for them was equally focused and beneficial and appropriate to their ages.
7. As recommended by the Focus Group, the orientation training should incorporate more local service providers based in the town where they are going to live and where possible should include people who will be dealing directly with the refugees.
8. Career planning should be a more integrated component of the introduction and orientation process and could start at the orientation programme stage, with the completion of an initial individualised skills audit that would feed into more structured career planning.
9. It would make sense for the refugee support worker to be employed and in place at the time of the orientation programme so as to acquaint themselves with the group, their particular issues and prepare for their arrival in the new community.

### 5.3 First Impressions and Settling into Ireland

All of the interviewees were asked to talk about their first impressions when they arrived in Ireland, what struck them as particularly different, their feelings when they arrived and what it was like to start a new life. People spoke about the different scenery, buildings and many emphasised the sentiment of freedom and security that they experienced when arriving in Ireland. The sense of being a human again and having rights and entitlements also struck many people.

*When we arrived in Ireland, I saw many things like green grass, the rivers, the scenery, the buildings, roads, everything was exciting and it was different and beautiful (male, 70s).*

*In this country it is a green country and we even like the rain! Before we even had to pay for water. And even the people are different. In Iraq there was no respect for people, for humans and here in Ireland I am a person and I have rights. When I was in Iraq my children and myself, we were Kurdish, so no-one respected us, but in this country everyone is friendly to us and it's good (male, 40s).*

Some also referred to the fact that they were met at the airport by the delegation that had interviewed them in Jordan and this gave them a sense of reassurance.

*The first time we arrived in Ireland I met (name) and the other members of RIA. They were waiting in the airport and we were happy with that – to see the Irish delegation again (male, 30s).*

Some talked about a feeling of helplessness when they first arrived and an appreciation for the support they received in the initial stages:

*It was new for us to come to a new country and when we arrived RIA arranged everything for us and they did everything for us because we came and we didn't know anything about this country. And they arranged the house for 6 weeks we were in the house and we didn't pay any bill or anything like that. They did it all for us and we really appreciated that (female, 20s).*

For some, the most important was that their basic social security needs were attended to and they had a right to education.

*When we came to Ireland we first of all we were feeling happy and we saw a different country. We had a house and we had social welfare money and my son was going to English classes. We have a good life (female, 50s).*

For some however, the initial euphoria wore off when people started trying to cope with daily realities and experienced some difficulties settling in their new towns.

*The information we got in the camp about our rights, like going to hospital, school, social welfare and so on. It wasn't real all this information. The money we get from social welfare is not enough to live with. I have a problem to go to school. There is no transport and no-one provided the transport. Two of my children broke their hands and no-one helped them to go to hospital. We had to do it ourselves. We are six people, with two of us getting money and that is not enough (female, 40s).*

*Ireland was more beautiful than I imagined. But at first things didn't go like what I wanted, like education, houses. We had some problems. In (name of town) the houses especially are a big problem (male, 20s).*

*Yes when we were in Ballyhaunis it was very good, but when we came here, there were some difficulties, some people fought. Difficulties to pay the rent and things like that. (female, 20s).*

It would appear that overall expectations of life in Ireland were relatively high and there was a sense that their human rights and dignity would always be respected. Whilst some found this to be the case, for others there was also a sense of initial disappointment when they realised that for many aspects of daily life they were expected to manage their own affairs and find their own resources to deal with specific issues. This appeared to represent a sense of disillusion for a small minority of people who had imagined a greater level of support and security. This applied to areas such as housing, transport, healthcare and in some cases racism and anti-social behaviour.

### Policy Implications/Recommendations

1. The pre- and post-arrival training should place greater emphasis on the realities and potential difficulties people may face when settling in and it is important to prepare people for the curve of initial euphoria to feelings of disappointment that people may face during that period.
2. In areas where people are experiencing particular difficulties (such as housing/health/education), an integrated approach towards reviewing the services provided and removing obstacles should be undertaken. This could be done at a local level through the inter-agency groups.

## 5.4 Sense of Gratitude and Comparison with Life Before

For many interviewees questions in relation to their life in Ireland were often responded to in relation to their life before. Situations were perceived as relative to the past, in most cases with the past being portrayed as negative and the present infinitely better. As one woman remarked:

*Even if you had some problem we would never talk about it and I would never want to talk about a problem here because I had a bad life there and now I have a good life. You have already done a lot for us (female, 30s).*

This sentiment was echoed by others who put the problems they may be experiencing now in Ireland in perspective in relation to their past.

*We spent 27 years in a camp and we had the worst life, so how can I complain in this country? When we were there we had lots of things wrong like tornadoes and the people of Iraq used to mock us and when the Irish people came to the camp they were crying for us and the people around us they were laughing at us. Everything here is completely different. I have nothing to worry about now. There is no danger. I only worry about my children and they have a good life here now (male, 40s).*

This attitude sometimes limited the extent to which people were able to critically analyse their current situation and communicate it to a researcher. It is also important to note that most of the interviewees had arrived in the country during the past year and were therefore at the beginning of the settling period and still very linked to their past situation. Whilst the researcher was made aware that certain individuals had experienced some problems, there was sometimes a reluctance to discuss them and often when asked about particular issues,

the response was “thank you, it is fine; you have done so much for us”. This may also stem from a sense of gratitude and feeling that it would be inappropriate to criticise. As elaborated in the methodology in Chapter I, other issues may include difficulties of communicating through an interpreter, distrust of strangers or people in authority, or unwillingness to talk to a researcher.

There did however seem to be a genuine sense of elation about life in Ireland in comparison to life before. This was particularly true for older people who may have a greater memory of life before the time in the camp and possibly felt they had lost more during those years. A number of analogies were used to describe the comparison between life in the camp and life now such as living in prison, a bird set free or being born again the day they arrived in Ireland

*All my life I was in a cage because I was in prison. We only had 1 km<sup>2</sup> (male, 20s).*

*When I was in Iraq and in Jordan, I thought I was in a prison because we had a lack of everything, like electricity, work and anything and when I arrived here I was feeling great and feeling like I was born again (male, 40s).*

*We were in a camp and we had a bad life, lack of electricity, water etc. We were already dead but when the Irish delegation came and told us we were going to Ireland, we were very happy and we knew our life was going to change (male, 70s).*

*When we came to Ireland, we felt that we were born again. All the children said the day they came to Ireland is their birthday (male, 60s).*

Only one interviewee expressed the sentiment that life had not dramatically improved for her since arriving in Ireland. This seems to be due to specific circumstances where the person felt very frustrated about some particular issues.

*We hope you will do much better for them. Those people in the camp need a lot of help. But personally it didn't make much difference to my life, between here and the camp in Jordan. The only difference is that my children can go to school (female, 40s).*

These voices compare very similarly to the Swedish research, where the analogies of a caged bird or prisoner set free and the sense of elation on finding out about the promise of freedom and security were referred to by the interviewees. Similarly they also found that the sense of immense gratitude was central in all the interviews and they found that the satisfaction and gratitude towards the introduction teams could be understood both in relation to the vulnerability of their new situation and the refugees' expectations that they would have to manage on their own, without receiving any support. They found that many of the refugees were surprised by the fact that they received assistance with an apartment and social welfare, even if they were told about these practicalities during the pre-departure orientation. They also concluded that this sense of gratitude could impede a refugees' ability to become an active agent in the process.<sup>25</sup> The question needs to be asked how the support and assistance that people need on arrival and during the initial stages can be provided without creating a system of over-gratitude, passivity or dependence. There may be ways in which the introduction process could be organised where people are encouraged and motivated to play a more active role rather than to always have the sense that things are done for them.



## CHAPTER 6

# MOVING INTO SOCIETY AND INTEGRATION

### 6.1 Language Training

#### 6.1.1 Overview

When the resettled refugees have completed their orientation programme, they are then brought to the town in which they are to be settled, provided with housing, children enrolled in schools and the adults over 18 attend English language training. This training is provided by IILT and last for 12-18 months, depending on the particular circumstances. Language training centres were set up in each of the three towns and the students were separated into two or three different levels, following an assessment of their standard of English. IILT follows a model of learner autonomy – as outlined in the European Language Milestone Portfolio – Euro Pass. In such a model the learners negotiate the content of the course and the themes and materials reflect those needs. The introduction material used in the initial orientation programme often provides a basis for the material used and discussed in the language training throughout the following year.

The students attend language classes for four hours every day and are expected to do some additional study in the afternoons/evenings. In most of the centres language courses are organised in the mornings only, which in practice often means that women find it difficult to attend if they have small children at home, unless alternative childcare arrangements are provided. In two of the towns some child care is provided through a grant from the Office of the Minister for Integration, but many of the services do not accept babies and only pre-school children are accepted.

All of the language courses in the three towns are held for the Kurdish refugees only as there are not significant numbers of other people who qualify for the language tuition, although efforts have been made to advertise the classes to others who may qualify.

#### 6.1.2 Language retention

For many of the participants in the language training, such a structured learning environment is a new experience and they may have had very little experience or memory of formal schooling. The language training teachers and organisers often refer to a six month “bedding down” period in which people need time to settle and process the events and changes that have occurred in their lives. They point out that in some cases language retention during this period can sometimes appear to be minimal.

The older refugees in particular spoke of their difficulty in learning a new language and a sense of being tired and not having the energy to do so. This was even the case for one forty year old who stated:

*Because of our situation in Iraq we had no education in Iraq and it is a bit late for us. Our mind finds it hard We are tired. If I had spent 27 years in Ireland I would be able to speak a language even other than English (male, 40s).*



Some also spoke about the seemingly very long hours that were spent in language school and the difficulties they had in concentrating at the beginning, with one young person referring to it as being “like a prison” at the beginning.

The lack of opportunities to practise English frustrated some people, with the situation presenting a somewhat vicious circle as those with little English often said they could not talk to anyone because they did not have much English. Similarly many preferred to watch Kurdish television stations rather than English-speaking ones. This raises questions of motivations and incentives for some who did not feel that they were absolutely required to learn the language. Some said they were unable to improve their language skills because they did not practise it with anyone. For some it seemed that they were not necessarily forced to talk to people and this made it difficult to make the first steps.

*In Iraq when you went shopping you have to talk to someone, to ask for everything you want. But here when you go shopping, you don't need to talk to anyone. Everything is self-service and there is no need to talk. I have told the people in school about this, that I don't get much chance to practise (male, 40s).*

The difficulties of practising English in a mono-cultural class were also referred to as this limited the possibilities for discussion both inside and outside the classroom.

*We have an English course but it is not really useful because there are only Kurdish people in the class and we don't use English too much. We don't have any daily practice and sometimes even in the class we are using the Kurdish language (female, 30s)*

On the other hand, some students seem to have made huge progress in the past year and in some cases were able to conduct their interview through English. These cases were rare (4 people of those interviewed) but in some cases people were very pleased because they had made their first steps of progress and were confident to undertake some daily tasks through English. Those who appear to have made the most progress in learning English were the younger people, who also found more reasons and motivation to learn the language.

*When I arrived I didn't know a single word, but since I have been going to the English course I am doing well. Sometimes I am doing my job like shopping or going to the doctor and I do it through English (male, 30s).*

### 6.1.3 Role of the Teacher

Both IILT and the students confirmed that the role of the teacher extends far beyond that of simple language instruction. IILT's mission statement is “Through education and training, to empower people of other cultures and languages to achieve a place in Irish society.” IILT teaches the language of the host community through learning the language of practical, everyday situations to make what is learnt in the classroom real for the learners. The content of the programme is often dictated by the students needs and much of it builds on the content of the orientation programme. For many of the Kurdish refugees, the teacher plays a central role in their lives and is often the first person they speak to when they need assistance with a wide range of daily issues, such as helping them to understand letters, filling in forms, seeking further training or work opportunities or dealing with issues about their house.



Most interviewees spoke very highly of their language teachers and often praised their assistance in a wide range of areas. One person remarked how they felt free in the class and felt able to ask the teacher so many things about Irish culture, and they were always given honest answers.

*I have not learnt so much. I am studying with people who were my students in the camp. IllT helped me a lot not so much in terms of the language but in other ways. My teacher helped me to get the Access course and many other things. She is a very kind woman and is really a teacher of all life issues. We ask her everything and she helps in every way (male, 20s).*

*During the English language course, the teacher gives us lots of information about how to fill out a CV, fill out forms, lots of practical things. At the beginning, when we got a letter from somewhere, we all went to the teacher and he helped us. Not just with language, but in lots of other ways (male, 20s).*

#### 6.1.4 Attendance of Women

As referred to earlier, the attendance of women at language classes was not as high as that of men, with eight of the eighteen women interviewed not attending language tuition, in comparison to just two of the men. In the places where childcare was more readily available, the attendance was higher, but very few women with children under the age of two were attending language classes, unless they had a mother/mother in law who was looking after the baby. The families interviewed on the whole tended to be very large, with many having up to eight or nine children. Of the women who were attending, their attendance tended to be a little more sporadic and they were sometimes not able to attend during school holidays, when one child was sick and in the cases of the younger single women with good English, they were often called on to translate for other family members. One of the teachers described this as more of an issue for girls than for boys as the girls were perceived as being more involved in family life.

The eight women not attending language classes were interviewed in their homes and were asked about whether they would like to participate in classes in the future. Some had attended for a short period, but were unable to continue e.g. when their husband became sick or when they had another baby. Some had a sense of regret about not being able to learn the language and communicate with people, but also placed importance on being with the children. On a practical level, it was often too difficult to attend the classes and the fact that they were only held in the mornings generally meant that only one parent attended and where such a choice was made, the man always attended the classes. This may also be due to cultural norms and the role of the woman as the primary caregiver in the home.

*R: I didn't go to the course that often but I have learnt a little. Sometimes I can understand but I can't speak at all. I would love to do some courses, to continue my English classes, but because of my children I can't do it. Maybe in the future.*

*I: Or what if you could do it at a different time, e.g. in the evening or when your husband comes home and you could go out.*

*R: I was trying to arrange a different time to go to school, but there is only one course at the same time, so it didn't work out. Of course I would like to go to English course, but I can't do it because I have children and I have to look after them as well (female, 30s).*

Some of the men also spoke about their wives and agreed that it was not practical for them to attend.

*Before the baby was born my wife went to some course but after the baby was born she stopped (male, 30s).  
We were thinking about a crèche for her but not for now. She is too small and there is not a different time for  
English classes in this town. Only one of us can go to the school (male, 30s).*

### 6.1.5 Conclusions and Policy Implications

There appears to be a high level of satisfaction with the model and delivery of language training, especially considering the participants' backgrounds and possible experiences of trauma and upheaval. Most of the students who are attending are satisfied with the language training per se, even if sometimes they feel their own progress is slow. The purpose of this research was not to evaluate the language training, but rather to examine it as one element of the introduction and integration process. It is therefore beyond the scope of this report to provide any in-depth analysis of the training and its effectiveness in terms of language retention. In terms of the organisation and structuring of the training however, a number of issues emerged, which could be examined in future planning.

1. Both the language participants and some of the teachers/organisers expressed concern over the short period allocated to training (i.e. one year) and that for programme refugees in particular; a longer period of training was required. From observation of the level of English of many of the participants who had almost completed one year of training, it seemed that one year was not sufficient. This time period is under review and it is hoped that it will be extended to at least 18 months or 2 years in some cases.
2. The method of funding for language classes needs to be reviewed and should be based on a per class (not per capita) basis, with extra funding per capita when classes go over a minimum number. The current system does not always meet the costs of language provision in rural areas. This has been reviewed to reflect actual costs of establishing and running a dedicated centre specifically to meet the language needs of a target group.
3. The mono-cultural group classes could possibly slow down language acquisition and also hinders opportunities for interaction with other people outside the Kurdish refugee group. This is being broadened however in some areas where more eligible migrants are joining the classes. More flexible models should be considered that allow for greater diversity of students in language classes.
3. Whilst the role of the teacher in terms of assisting the refugees with many aspects of their lives is very welcome and appreciated, in some cases there is a need for a clearer definition of roles and setting of boundaries between all the agencies involved.

4. The poor attendance rate of women is a cause for concern, particularly if the language training is not necessarily to be continued on an on-going basis in those towns. Other models of training and childcare support should be examined that would allow more women to attend. This could include some training organised in the evenings, playgroups/crèche linked to the language school or mother and toddler based training. Whilst classes that included babies might not be the most effective in terms of language acquisition, the socialisation aspect for women and their young children also needs to be considered.

It should also be noted that a review of English Language Training for Adults is currently being carried out by the Department of Education and Science in co-operation with the Office of the Minister for Integration and is due to report in mid 2008.

## 6.2 Further Training

Almost all the refugees interviewed were still at the period of language training and only a few had progressed to full-time further training or work. Many realised that their language training in itself would not be sufficient to secure a job and that some form of further training would be required. Some of the people aged between 18 and 25 had high ambitions and expressed an interest in high-level professional careers such as doctors, pharmacists etc. The teachers and support workers however expressed some concern in relation to unrealistic expectations in terms of students being able to reach these goals within a reasonable timeframe. For some older teenagers and young adults, the distinction between regular secondary level schooling and adult education was not always clear and in some cases there were disagreements between various actors as to what was the most appropriate form of education or training and sometimes the refugee felt caught between the conflicting advices that he/she was given.

*At the beginning I thought no we didn't get those opportunities, chances. For me I thought of going back to education, doing leaving certificate, not other things. But I was not allowed to. I can do my leaving cert but I am too old to go back to school. My teacher suggested that I try to get an access course in (name of university) and they accepted me. I think that is a very good substitute for leaving cert (male, 20s).*

Many people said that they wanted to complete their language training, maybe do some further training and then get a job, but had very little idea of what exactly they wanted to do. From the interviews and focus group discussions, it emerged that in many cases there is a gap in knowledge about the further career and training options that may and may not be open to people. A number of people said they would like to do a computer course after their English training, but were not specific about why they wanted to do it, or what career path they had in mind.

For those who had worked either in the camp or beforehand, there was also a sense of let-down as they were not necessarily qualified to continue working in those positions here. That applied to a young woman who had been a teacher in the camp and felt that she had not been encouraged.

*R: Yes I was a teacher in Jordan but unfortunately when I came here I went to FÁS many times, but the lady said to me. We can't accept you – never.*

*I: Really, did she say “never”?*

*R: Never yes. And when we were in Jordan, they said to me this is a hard job for you. You can't get it, never. And when we came to Ireland they said to me you can study for 3 years and then maybe (female, 20s).*

This also applied to some people who had worked as drivers, carpenters and bakers and were unsure as to how they might obtain work or training in those areas. This role of career guidance seems to be undertaken on an informal basis by the IILT teachers who discuss various career options with the students and help them to apply for various courses. Whilst they are in language training however, they are considered to be full-time students and are not technically eligible to participate in other publicly-funded training. In practice however, this has not posed any major difficulties to people wishing to pursue other options in the afternoons.

The co-ordination of training and career options and the provision of information appears to be relatively informal, with IILT and the support workers both playing a role. In some cases there was also a perception that some other training institutions were eager to find refugees to participate in their courses in order to boost their numbers for funding purposes etc. The question of what was really appropriate for each individual in such cases might not necessarily be to the fore. The refugees are all registered as unemployed and in receipt of an unemployment assistance payment, which is equivalent to a job-seekers allowance. As such they are obliged to either be actively seeking employment or attending an approved course to improve prospects of employment in the future. The English language course run by the IILT is recognised as such an approved course and the participants are allowed to receive the jobseekers allowance. However many automatically receive letters about attending interviews or further training options from State agencies that use the list of those in receipt of unemployment assistance as a basis for their mailing shots. This tends to cause anxiety among some of the refugees who felt that they were being obliged to attend interviews or training that they were unable for.

As the refugees are considered to be unemployed, participating in courses other than the language training could mean some change in their employment status and an alternative source of subsistence may need to be found. This was of concern to one interviewee who felt that the advice she was given was conflicting.

*Next year I want to go to X (name of college). I spoke to the principal three times and I would like to study the certificate level 5. She said you can't join the college; you would lose your social welfare money. And when I went to social welfare they said, no you won't lose your social welfare. You have to go to the College. I don't mind, I want to cut my social welfare money, do part time work (female, 20s).*

## Implications for Policy

1. Whilst individual teachers have provided excellent career guidance to many of the refugees, the overall provision of career guidance and assessing the suitability of training and career options may need to be better co-ordinated, with a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between the various parties concerned. It is essential that competition between agencies for spaces does not have any negative impact and that the best interests of the individuals concerned are also to the forefront.
2. The anomalies in relation to social welfare payments and language and other training should be clarified and rectified where possible, whilst still ensuring that the refugees have adequate income during the period of language training. Refugees participating in language training should not be used in mailing shots to those on the general unemployed list.
3. When offering or suggesting further training courses for refugees, their individual training needs should always be to the forefront and where possible an individualised assessment of their training needs should be undertaken. The language teachers should also be involved in assessing their level of English and their ability to participate in further training.
4. The specific needs of women and their training options should also be considered. They should also be given adequate opportunities to participate in language training before being obliged or encouraged to pursue further training options.

## 6.3 Finding Work

As most of the people interviewed had arrived in Ireland in the past year, the majority were still in language or other training and they had not commenced full-time work. Of all those interviewed, one man who had arrived in 2005 was in full-time work and a few other young men had found part-time work. Finding work was a bigger pre-occupation for the group that arrived in 2005 as some of them were no longer in language training and were trying to seek work. One woman spoke about her difficulties in finding work despite having some qualifications and good English. She could not understand why she could not find work and insisted that she needed more support in finding a job, with Curriculum Vitae preparation and making contacts with employers.

*It's not about the qualifications, it's about the cv and I have one but when I'm applying for a job I can't get it.. Someone who doesn't speak English can find a job, but I can't and I speak some English (female, 30s).*

*I: Was it easy to find a job?*

*R: Not really, I applied to 10-12 places and I finally got this one. I think there are more things to be done to help the refugees, to make easy to integrate into the new community. Such as trying to find them jobs (male, 20s).*

Whilst finding work for many people was not the immediate preoccupation, they were nevertheless conscious that they would need to do so in the near future and were worried that they would not succeed when the time came. For some this fear was based on not being able to speak enough English or not having any work experience. Some had been given some jobs to do in the camp, but overall they were not entitled to work legally and had very limited work experience. Feedback from agencies also cited difficulties in finding work as a potential problem for programme refugees, owing to a wide range of issues, including lack of experience, low literacy and education levels, poor English, lack of a culture of work and discrimination on the behalf of employers.

This research did not examine the issue of access to the labour market in great detail, but a recommendation emerging is that, job-seeking skills should be strengthened through training initiatives and links with employers and employers representatives should be fostered where possible. As recommended by the Focus Group, career planning should start as early as possible and should be integrated and co-ordinated with other services. The evaluation of the Finnish work-based training pilot should show some interesting results in terms of the benefits or risks of introducing refugees to the work place at such an early stage.

## 6.4 Interpretation

In a number of interviews the refugees referred to the issue of interpretation both in terms of the expectations to provide it within their own community and the need for outside professional interpretation. Under the current system, interpretation is provided by the Office of the Minister for Integration during the orientation training and for the first 2-3 weeks following resettlement in the community to ensure that the refugees are linked with all of the mainstream service providers. After this initial period mainstream service providers are expected to provide their services appropriately. In practice very few services provide interpretation and most people are required to find their own means of interpretation or do without. This often means relying on one family member who speaks good English and in many cases children are used as interpreters, which is inappropriate in many settings. In some areas however funding was provided to the local implementing partner to provide for an interpreter in exceptional circumstances where it was inappropriate for a family member to interpret and no interpretation was provided by the service provider. A review of Interpretation and Translation Services is currently being carried out by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) on behalf of the Office of the Minister for Integration.

The support workers all confirmed that they conduct most of their business through the family member with good English who then interprets for the rest of the family. This person is often a child in secondary school or one of the young adults in the family. For the people who had made good progress in English or who had a good level before they came, this often meant that they missed their English language classes as they needed to provide interpretation both for family members and others who required it. In many cases this was for hospital or doctors' appointments.

*I: Do you help the other Kurdish people here?*

*R: Yes, because many of them have no-one to translate. My attendance in my English class has been about 92%, because the rest of the time I have been going to the hospital to translate. It is like a voluntary work (male, 20s).*

*We are all alright now and we don't have any problems but we did have a problem in the beginning and (name of refugee) helped everyone (male, 40s).*

*Yes, they always need an interpreter and there is none in Sligo. Like my Mum I am always acting like her interpreter. She was pregnant and there was no interpreter. I went with her all the time and also for some of the other women (female, 20s).*

Whilst it may be argued that providing interpretation from within the community is a good way for people to become involved and to help each other, there may be situations in which it is necessary to have professional outside interpretation, especially in delicate and confidential situations. This applies particularly to health appointments and issues where children may be concerned (e.g. parent/teacher meetings).

## 6.5 Integration and social contacts

### 6.5.1 Overview

Integration is a long process that requires a sustained effort on both sides. It may take several years for someone to feel integrated and settled in a new society. The interviewees had mostly spent one year in Ireland at the time of the interviews and were therefore just at the beginning of the process. Whilst it was beyond the scope of this research to assess their overall integration, some effort was made to observe their levels of social contacts with non-Kurdish people and a sense of belonging to the new community. In the interviews everyone was asked about their social contacts with neighbours, whether they had joined any groups or clubs and whether their children had made new friends. The level of social interactions with the local Irish or non-Kurdish community varied between the three different towns and it appeared that in Sligo where a befriending programme had been organised, people seemed to have made more contact with Irish people, had visited more people's houses and had more visitors and also had a greater sense of confidence about making contacts with other people. The physical layout and geography of Sligo may also play a role as it is a larger town than Carrick-on-Shannon and Mullingar and the refugee families were living in dispersed locations, which may mean that people rely slightly less on their own community for social interaction than for in Carrick-on-Shannon with 80 Kurdish refugees who mostly live in close proximity to each other. This means that there is less interaction with the receiving community.

Notwithstanding that, in all towns people expressed their difficulties in making friends and integrating in the local society. Language difficulties were often named as the main reason for not being able to get to know people.

*We didn't really integrate with the neighbours because we can't speak English. We can't mix with them or with other people around (female, 30s)*

Integration was perceived as being easier for children who picked up the language more easily, mixed with their peers at school and often played with the neighbours' children. Many parents were very proud of this and saw this as a means to get to know people themselves, even if it were a little more difficult for the adults.



*My children are very integrated with the neighbours; they go to each other's houses. My wife and I talk to the neighbours and the people outside, normally just outside, not in the houses, but the children go to the houses and play Playstation etc (male, 40s).*

When probed more about the children's friendships in school, no-one spoke about their children's friends from school ever visiting their house or vice versa. The friendships were usually explained in terms of being on the same football team or playing together at break time.

For the young adults, making friends was often seen as very important, especially for those who had good English and felt there should not be any major barriers to getting to know people. One young man was particularly frustrated after he joined a football team and still found it very difficult to make friends with the other young Irish men.

*R: I joined the Athletic club and the soccer team. I played with each and I left. In Asia when you play soccer with a team. You get to know them really easily and they become your best friend but here I don't know. It's strange. You just know them and say hi at the soccer training or when you see them in town. They say hi to you and say something like come to the training or in the match. But before we had friends in soccer and they come with you and walk with you. But here we don't know how to make friends with Irish people.*

*I: Do you think one difficulty might be that people like to go to pub?*

*R: No that's not a problem because I like going to the pub, but I haven't gone yet because I don't have a friend to go with. It's a problem to go to the first time, but if you have a friend to take you for the first time, it's ok and the next time you are taking him! (male 20s).*

The young men in particular seemed to find it difficult to make friends and sometimes spoke about cultural differences and not really understanding Irish people. Some of the young women seemed to find it easier or at least spoke less about difficulties in getting to know people. A few of the younger women spoke about having many Irish friends and having got to know them through training courses, clubs they had joined or just through other people. For women with children however, the situation was reversed and they generally found it very difficult to get to know anyone and often spent most of their day at home with the children with little social contact.

Many people however agreed that their towns were "friendly" overall and they felt respected, even if it was difficult to get to know people.

*X is a small town and most people know each other. People are friendly here and we feel they respect us here. The same with the football – we played with the Gardaí and since then we have met some footballers (male, 30s)  
We know some people and they are friendly but we can't really speak English so it's difficult.*

### 6.5.2 Joining Sports Clubs and Other Groups

For many people joining a sports or another type of group was seen as a very effective way to get to know people. For many of the young men, joining a soccer team was an important ambition and in some cases became frustrated when they were not accepted to play with certain clubs.



*R: We made a football team and we tried to join some clubs, but they would not accept us because they said we did not have a proper team.*

*I: Why not?*

*R: We were trying to join different teams, 3 or 4 of them, but they wouldn't accept us because we had not played on a proper football team before. They wouldn't take us. But we are playing football just among ourselves. ... If we were accepted by different teams to play football, that would be the best way to integrate (male, 20s).*

*We would like to play football. Football is the best way to integrate with people in this country (male, 40s).*

Efforts had however been made in all the towns to help people to join clubs, with sports days being organised so that people could see all the different sporting activities on offer and make contact with the various clubs. This seems to have been more successful in one town where many young people, including women had joined local sporting organisations.

*R: Yes I play some sports here. I joined athletics and GAA.*

*I: Gaelic football – do you like that?*

*R: Yes, the training is tough.*

*I: Is it a good way to meet people?*

*R: Yes it's the best way to meet people (female, 20s).*

*I like swimming, but when I went to the club they said I have to be a member. But once a week I have been going to Irish dancing. Also there are Irish there and I meet people (female, 20s).*

Such sporting and other activities were viewed however as an activity more for young people and many parents saw them as something for their children rather than for themselves.

*I: Would you like there to be more activities both for yourselves and your children?*

*R: That kind of activity is too late for me and wife, but for my children they have a future (male, 40s).*

### 6.5.3 Anti-social Behaviour / Racism

Despite the overall impression that people felt welcomed and that people were friendly towards them, in all of the towns there was also an underlying fear of racism and anti-social behaviour, often based on particular incidents. This was particularly true for two of the towns where a number of people reported incidents of anti-social behaviour directed against them. Some people also spoke about a feeling of fear and a lack of security. This seemed to be very important to them as for many people leaving the camp signified moving to a safe place.

*Maybe the last thing just about the security. The refugees they feel that they are not in a safe place, about 60% of them (male, 20s).*

*Yes I hear the families saying they are not safe. After the attack with the Polish people, they didn't go to the park because they are afraid to go there. All of them stay at home. I told them it's not against them, but they don't think so (male, 20s).*

Some people also recounted stories about their neighbourhoods where they had encountered various forms of abusive behaviour, both verbal and physical.

*I: So are you happy with the house?*

*R: We are happy but we had some problem with the estate.*

*I: What kind of problem?*

*R: There are some people that are making bad speech to us (female, 20s).*

*When we went to a new area, we had a problem with the children in the area, like throwing stones and they said some things, some comments to the Iranian Kurds, like what are you doing in Ireland what are you doing here and when we answered them we are from Iran, they answered "go back to your xxxx country". So they when they did this, it makes humans angry. This was a problem (female, 20s).*

One man who had his window broken a number of times by neighbouring youths had almost become accepting of the situation and was told that such incidents were not necessarily directed against his family, but many other families in the neighbourhood had experienced similar incidents.

*You can see good and bad everywhere e.g. I went to the GP yesterday and a few teenagers were using bad language and saying I was a Pakistani. But it's normal you can see it everywhere. It's not a big problem. Another 3 times our window was broken and the Gardaí and the support worker know (male, 30s).*

When he went to talk to the parents of the youths about the incidents however, he was told that the problem would go away if he went back to his country, which possibly indicates that the incidents were a form of racist abuse and that the parents did not disapprove.

Sometimes people were also wary of reporting incidents or causing problems with their neighbours.

*One of the neighbour's girls hit our daughter (11) across the head with a shovel and she had to go to hospital and get stitches. We didn't go to the police – we didn't want to cause too much trouble this time. But their parents never came to apologise (male, 30s).*

Such incidents indicate a larger problem of underlying racism among some people, which needs to be tackled. Whilst many of the refugees did not wish to make them sound like major problems, the problem exists nevertheless. The problem seemed to be more prevalent in certain areas, such as large housing estates.

## Policy Implications on Fostering Social Interaction and Positive Social Relations

1. Integration is a two-way process and efforts are also required to engage local communities and help them to get to know their new neighbours. Awareness-raising among local communities about the refugee population and their background and opportunities to meet with them in a relaxed social setting would help to dispel myths and to build up trust.

2. In the town where a befriending/mentoring programme was organised, social relations with neighbours and others appeared to be more established and the refugees had more confidence in making contact with Irish people and had enjoyed the experience of finding out about Irish culture first-hand. Similar programmes would be very useful in all areas in which refugees are settled.
3. Sporting and cultural organisations can play an essential role in helping people to get to know each other through participating in a joint activity. They should be supported and encouraged to help refugees and other newcomers to join their organisations and could also try to organise inclusive social events where people could spend time talking to each other.
4. The environment or neighbourhood in which people are housed plays an important role and efforts should be made to ensure that the existing local population are given an opportunity to build up positive social relations with their new neighbours. Awareness-raising and inter-cultural initiatives could also be organised through residents and local community associations as well as local schools. Most importantly there should be opportunities for people to get to know each other on a personal basis, which could be fostered through forming local sports teams and various neighbourhood events. In cases of anti-social or racist behaviour, a restorative justice or community mediation approach could be used to help the perpetrators and their families to understand the consequences of their acts.
5. Efforts should be made at a number of levels to tackle underlying discrimination and racism and raise awareness among local communities. This could be particularly effective through the medium of youth groups, residents associations etc.

## 6.6 Other Relevant Issues

Having a source of support and information was considered very important, particularly the role played by the refugee support workers in each of the towns and in some cases the Community Welfare Officer. The provision of information within their own community was also an important element, but was often not referred to as a particular source of support or information.

### 6.6.1 Health and Well-being

A number of the refugees had particular health issues, which affected their and their families' full participation in life in their new society. In some cases a relative took over the role of care-giver and felt responsible for the sick person to the extent that they became their spokesperson and the sick person's identity became limited. In one particular interview with two relatives, the person without the illness insisted on answering all the questions even when the other person tried to answer a question. In life in their new society. In some cases a relative took over the role of care-giver and felt responsible for the sick person to the extent that they became their spokesperson and the sick person's identity became limited. In one particular interview with two relatives, the person without the illness insisted on answering all the questions even when the other person tried to answer a question.

*My sister was sick at the time so she does not remember. I am better to talk for her (female 30s).*

For people who were unwell at the time of the orientation training both in the camp and in Ballyhaunis, they were often not able to participate or they could not remember the information. In some cases it seemed that people who had health issues were not expected to participate fully and the family focused on their illness and did not expect them to remember information or have opinions even if they were currently well.

*We got some help but I can't remember what it was because I was sick at the time (female, 30s).*

People who required frequent medical visits were sometimes frustrated by the different health system that they experienced in Ireland, mentioning issues such as long waiting times, the need to make appointments, lack of communication about their diagnosis, lack of transport to the hospital and language difficulties.

*The difference was more about the hospital. In Iraq or Jordan there was no need to wait and wait like there is here. Here it is very difficult to get a direct result, to find out what is the problem, the sickness (female, 30s).*

For some families with small children, they also experienced some cultural and communication difficulties in dealing with the health services (e.g. Public Health Nurses) and what was considered appropriate for children. One mother was distraught because she was told that one of her children was underweight and she and her husband saw it as a direct insult to them and their ability to feed their children.

### 6.6.2 Sources of Support and Assistance

Having a source of support and information was considered very important; particularly the role played by the refugee support workers in each of the towns and in some cases the Community Welfare Officer. The provision of information within their own community was also an important element, but was often not referred to as a particular source of support or information.

*If I have some questions, first I go to the Kurdish people around and if they don't know then I go to (the Refugee Support Worker) or (the Community Welfare Officer) (male, 40s).*

The type of support people quoted as having received from the support worker included assistance with travel documents, general information, assistance with housing issues and in some cases with health issues. They were often viewed as a link to other services, particularly in relation to official documentation.

*(The Refugee Support Worker) is very kind and very friendly. I don't lie. She is very helpful with everything e.g. about 3-4 times she went with my father to see a house. She wrote a letter of support for my father's landlord. For my travel documents also (female, 20s).*

*She is very good. If we need anything we can call her any time. We don't have any big problems here. But if you have a small problem, she is quite useful and also the CWO. She is in her office 2-3 hours per week.*

*If you need anything, she is ready to help us. 2-3 times she went to the GP with us (female, 30s).*

I: If you need to ask someone for help or you have a question, who do you turn to normally?

R: Only (the Refugee Support Worker)

I: So is her support very useful to you?

R: Yes she is very useful and she helps us e.g. I have been waiting for my travel documents for a while. Everyone else got theirs. She has spoken to the Dept of Justice a few times about this (male, 30s).

The refugee support workers described their own roles as being multi-faceted, ranging from helping the refugees to integrate, a mediation role, organising social events, supporting voluntary support groups, arranging personal development courses, career guidance and job seeking skills, helping with further training opportunities, linking with other agencies, encouraging people to be independent and helping people to become involved in groups and activities. Each worker had a particular style and ways of dealing with issues and whilst they all admitted that they sometimes helped people to do particular things e.g. make a visit to the doctor, fill in a form, they all agreed that promoting self-independence was an important goal and was now becoming easier. In some cases this was found to be frustrating and difficulties included language barriers, frustration about language progress appearing to be poor, difficulties in getting women at home to participate in activities, lack of appropriate activities or services and in some cases they expressed frustration that some people seemed unwilling to do certain things for themselves. The role of the support worker however seems to be an essential one, without which many of the refugees would not have been able to access social activities, apply for relevant benefits or travel documents, find out important information and have a key person to whom they could turn to for support.

It is also to be noted that Citizen's Information Centres (CICs) operate in most towns, where people are encouraged to access public information on their rights, entitlements and responsibilities. There is also a dedicated Refugee Information Service, but it currently does not operate in any of the three towns studied. The refugees on the whole did not refer to the information or support they received from the CICs, which may be partly due to the fact that they were not as specialised in refugee issues and in some cases they referred refugees who sought information back to the refugee support worker. The refugees may also refer more to the assistance they received from the support workers as they generally built up a personal relationship with this person.

### 6.6.3 Housing and its importance

In most of the interviews the issue of housing and neighbourhoods were mentioned, even if it was not a specific question. The importance of where people live cannot be underestimated, both in terms of having a sense of pride and satisfaction about the actual house and the building of community relations within the neighbourhood. In one town in particular, housing seemed to cause difficulties for many people. This related to issues such as dissatisfaction with the perceived poor standard of the accommodation, distances from other relatives and the language schools (transport is not provided), the lack of choice in choosing accommodation (despite being told during the orientation that they would have some choice) and some dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood and anti-social behaviour (as mentioned in section 5.7). In one extreme case, this even led some people to go on "housing strike" where they refused to attend the language school until the housing issues were sorted.

*But now they always have problems, saying our accommodation is not good. Some people don't go to school now because they say their houses are not good. If they bring a refugee to see a house and then they refuse it, please don't say they have to live there. Otherwise just bring them directly to the house. Or if you give them a suggestion to see the house, please accept if they refuse. This is very difficult (male, 20s referring to other people's housing issues).*

For one person the dissatisfaction with the housing was seen as an issue that prevented her from being happy here.

*I am not happy here because I have a problem with my house that is smelling (female, 40s).*

*Yes I remember one of the things that the teacher said when we will be moved, we will be given 3 chances with the house, we can refuse the first and second but not the third. When they brought us here, they gave us one option and if you don't like it go live in the street and they don't even count you as a homeless person (male, 20s).*

For people who were older or sick, not being close to relatives was often a cause for concern. The lack of public transport in the towns compounded this issue as most do not drive and in one case it took someone up to one hour each way to walk to the language school. For some the long distances to walk to visit relatives living in the same town also posed a problem.

*We need help from our children and that is why we are looking to move close to each other. We don't drive and they are far away, about 1 hour to walk. It is hard for them to come over to us all the time (male 70s).*

#### 6.6.4 Sense of Difference in Treatment

The Kurdish refugees arrived in four different groups and all but one went through the same orientation programme. They had all lived together in the same camp in Jordan. For some, there was a sense that their treatment in Ireland would be the exactly the same for everyone. Whilst in principle, the basic entitlements (right to language training, housing, social welfare etc.) are the same; the practice in each of the towns may vary slightly, particularly in relation to discretionary or supplementary payments. Many became aware of these slight differences and saw it as an unjust difference in treatment. This was especially the case in one town where some of the allowances given were lower than in the other two towns.

*But when we came we felt different. Because we didn't know the law in Ireland. Like when we came to (name of town) and the others (name of towns) got €500 for central heating, different county councils. But we didn't get it. It is not so important for me that I get this money because I understand that the law is different. But the refugees are always saying why do we not have the same rights here (male, 20s).*

### 6.6.5 Bridging Cultural Differences

The full awareness of cultural differences and inter-generational cultural conflict did not yet seem to be a major issue, but it may be too soon for people to become fully aware of these issues. For many however, there was a strong willingness to maintain their Kurdish culture and many were proud to display Kurdish flags and other artefacts in their homes, which had been banned in Iraq. Most houses also had satellite television with Kurdish television playing an important role. Parents spoke about the importance of their children still speaking Kurdish and learning about their Kurdish culture. In the short time they had been there, that was not yet so prominent, but they were aware that it could become an issue in the future. One young single woman talked about the sense of cultural awareness in her own home.

*R: The parents want their culture and for the children to keep it, but the children might join the new culture and forget their old culture and for the parents this is difficult.*

*I: Is there anything that is being done to keep your Kurdish culture?*

*R: In our homes everyone speaks Kurdish and there is no English. Maybe the next few months maybe some will start talking English at home. We listen to Kurdish music. We don't forget it. It is part of our culture.*

*I: So if you had children you would pass that on?*

*R: Yes because they would learn both cultures (female, 20s).*

For many however, when asked about the Irish culture and any differences they had noticed, they replied that they had not really discovered Irish culture due to lack of interactions with Irish people or poor English.

*I don't know much about the Irish culture because of my English. I don't have any Irish relation or friend. I didn't find out much yet about the Irish culture (female, 30s).*

Those who did refer to cultural differences talked about issues such as young people openly dating, emphasis on holidays and going away, the role of pubs, dress and food. No-one however seemed to have any particular problems with Irish culture, but referred to the differences in a relatively neutral way. Some also saw similarities between the two cultures and found the Irish people to be relatively friendly like the Kurdish people.

### 6.6.6 Sense of Belonging

After just one year in the country, it may be too soon to speak of a true sense of belonging to their new country, but many of those interviewed spoke passionately about feeling at home in Ireland and feeling that they belong here. This was often stated in relation to not feeling welcomed in Iran or Iraq.

*I can't visit my country now and I can't find anything better than this country in my life and I can't even return back to my country for a visit because of the political situation. But I don't want to go back because I love this country. The life is here is different to home and my children never want to go back (male, 40s).*

*I: Do you see your future in Ireland?*

*R: Yes forever. Ireland is my homeland. It's right that Iran is my home but it is not for Kurdish people. We haven't any rights there. And particularly Sligo, I love Sligo. I have a relation of my father who is living in Dublin and when we arrived they said to us we can find a house for you in Dublin. And I said never (female, 20s).*



### 6.6.7 The Risk of Isolation of Women

As referred to in the section on language training, the participation of women in language training and other training or social activities is much lower than that of men and other family members were aware of this risk of isolation for their mothers or wives.

M: What about your mother, is it difficult for her?

S: Yes, because if anyone is coming to visit us, we are all talking, but not her. It is very difficult for her. She cannot speak English (female, 20s).

I: What about the girls - e.g. your sisters. Is there anything they could do?

R: No, they do nothing, they are just at home and school and learning the English language (male, 20s).

*My wife, she has no English and she has no choice as she is at home (male 40s).*

Many women spoke about how they are mostly confined to the house, with few outings and social interaction.

*Every Tuesday I go to the Post Office to collect the money and I walk a little bit. But the other days I stay at home because I have problems with my legs and I am looking after the baby (woman 50s, minding grandchild).*

One of the workers in close contact with the refugees talked about the risk of isolation of women and older people:

*Women at home is definitely an issue. They want to learn English but are staying at home and learning no English. This leads to double isolation. This is also an issue for older people. They often say it is too late. Many of the older people are down in themselves. They are so removed from society here but the ones with English have information and knowledge.*

For those not participating in language courses (i.e. women at home and some older people) their isolation is compounded by a lack of social contacts and no English communication skills. Other refugees and agencies working with them are aware of this fact and some are now looking at alternative ways to address this issue through initiatives such as volunteer tutors in the women's homes. Whilst real barriers to participating in training do exist, cultural issues around the role of the woman in the home may also play a part. These issues would require further research and analysis before any firm conclusions could be drawn.

### 6.6.8 Perceptions of Older People

As referred to one of the support workers, older people are also at risk of isolation and may be left out in a new society, with different values and a completely new language and way of life. For some of the older people, the life in the camp was also compared to life beforehand when they had more. One man reminisced about life before the camp and he seemed to be someone of importance in the community and all this was taken away for him. Whilst he has been given an opportunity to be free again and to have his needs looked after, the transition must still be difficult, especially when he does not speak any English and relies on his family members for everything.



As referred to in the section on language training, alternative forms of training and social interaction that would allow more women to participate in social activities and obtain at least some rudimentary language training would be beneficial and address the issue of potential long-term isolation for both women and their children. Whilst some childcare funding was provided in some of the towns, it was mainly limited to children of pre-school age (over 2) and in practice places were severely limited.

*I am nearly 80 and my eyes don't really work and I can't hear. In the camp I always thought about my past. I was very rich and the Iranian Government left me with nothing and I lived in a camp for 27 years and I have nothing. Thanks to everyone from the Irish Government, we would have died already but you have saved us. I was a tribal leader and I had everything, so many houses, lands, farmers, everything. I left everything. I was upset and sad in the camp. When I came to Ireland, I forgot about everything and I am happy now and I don't worry about everything that I have left (male 70s).*

Some of the older people interviewed became quite upset and emotional when talking about the past and they tended to refer more to the past than the future, saying that the future was for their children, not for themselves. They seemed relieved to know that their children and grand-children had a future, but did not see much of a role for themselves in the new society. This was even true of people who were as young as 40.

*Given that I'm older I don't have much left to do myself, but I am expecting that my children will have a chance to have a future, to study, to get educated, to get a qualification and a good job (male 40s).*

#### 6.6.9 Interactions between two groups of refugees in same town

In one of the host towns Carrick-on-Shannon, two groups of Kurdish refugees were settled. The first group were settled in 2005 and the second group many of whom were related to the first group came in 2006. The first group did not participate in the formal pre-departure and post-arrival orientation, but the second group did. It was expected that when the second group arrived, the first group would be able to assist and support them. When both groups were asked about this support, the response was mixed, with members of the first group mostly saying that they provided a lot of support to the second group and the members of that group not necessarily referring to the support they had received. As one of the second group said:

*The other Kurdish people who came before us – they came with us to go shopping and so on. But it is a small town and we were able to learn everything very quickly so we didn't really need them. We got all the help from RIA and we didn't get any help from the Kurdish people (male, 2nd group).*

On the other hand, one of the first groups talked about the different types of support they provided:

*R: We were helping the new group as much as we could.*

*I: Such as?*

*R: e.g. the GP how to make an appointment and how they have to visit the GP. We were good friends and I went everywhere with them, the hospital the school, wherever they needed help or some translation (female, 1st group).*

*Of course we were helping everyone and we were helping each other and I was using my car for a few months and helping everyone with shopping and so on (male, 1st group).*

Some of the first group also recognised that the second group had a good level of support from the various agencies and did not need so much assistance.

*We were living in the same camp and we all know each other and when they arrived in Carrick on Shannon, whatever we could we did for them and whatever we couldn't we didn't do. They also had good help and they didn't need it (female, 1st group).*

One of the agency workers also commented that the second group seemed to be more confident and seemed to have a better understanding of what to expect when they arrived both due to the contact they had had with the first group and the orientation training.

#### **6.6.10 General Advice on Bringing other Resettled Refugees to the Country**

At the end of each interview, the refugees were asked about recommendations they might have about bringing other resettled refugees to Ireland and what supports were needed. Many responded that they would be lucky to receive the same level of support that they received and that nothing more was needed. It is not sure whether they all really believed this or whether it was said out of a sense of gratitude for all that had been done for them.

*You have helped us quite a lot and I'm sure that anyone coming to this country would be very happy with everything you do, especially the course in Ballyhaunis where we got everything we needed (male, 30s).*

Some people however had a few recommendations about what could be done to ensure the easier integration of resettled refugees. These related to issues already referred to in the report, such as racism, timing and housing.

*If you transfer any programme refugee to any place you have to check first the people that are in the city or town – like to be careful of racism. (name of town) is the best place, but some people went to (name of town) and had some problems.*

*Yes my advice is if you want to bring refugees, I hope you bring them in the correct time, not in the time that school has begun. Before they go to school (female, 20s).*

*I have two recommendations. Firstly the English course is not enough time, it needs to be extended. Secondly when the family is going to view the accommodation, they should accept if we don't like the house and we should be given an opportunity to change our mind (male, 40s).*



## CHAPTER 7

# MENTORING/BEFRIENDING PROGRAMMES

### 7.1 Overview

As discussed in Chapter 2, mentoring programmes can be a very useful tool in helping refugees to integrate into the new host society through the development of more meaningful contacts with members of their local community. As the Swedish research showed, refugees involved in an “introduction” process often only come into contact with officials and have very little contact with other Swedes. This can often be problematic in programmes, which are organised exclusively by the State and do not involve other actors such as volunteers or former refugees. A mentoring programme can be organised in conjunction with an official introduction programme and mentors in some cases play some roles that are traditionally carried out by State or other officials, such as showing a refugee around a local town, taking them shopping, helping them to fill in forms. This more informal and personalised form of support can often be more beneficial and efficient. As the report of the Australian Refugee Council concludes “the intimacy of a mentoring relationship means settlement issues can be addressed on a personalised level within a flexible timeframe. The ability of mentoring to provide support that is holistic, informal and personal makes it ideal for assisting humanitarian entrants with settlement concerns”.<sup>26</sup>

In each of the towns where the resettled refugees are located, some attempts to set up a voluntary befriending programme were made. In two of the towns there were some difficulties in organising it due to various capacity constraints, but in Sligo the Sligo Volunteer Centre, an organisation dedicated to co-ordinating volunteering in the town, took the project on board and organised a successful befriending/mentoring programme. The details of this programme and its evaluation and feedback from the refugees are discussed below.

### 7.2 The Sligo Volunteer Centre Mentoring Programme

#### 7.2.1 Overview

The Sligo Volunteer Centre aims to promote and increase volunteering in Sligo Town and County. In the Summer of 2006 they became aware of the group of Kurdish refugees who were moving to Sligo. The Volunteer Centre saw this as an ideal opportunity to link local volunteer families with the new families in order to ease their transition into life in Sligo. They set up a programme as a “befriending programme” between the families and as the co-ordinator explained “The volunteer centre at the time was very new. We wanted to pitch it as a social thing. We didn't have volunteers in place at the time”. It was not officially called a mentoring programme, although it did have many similarities with mentoring programmes as run in other places.

After carrying out research on mentoring and befriending programmes in other countries, the Volunteer Centre co-ordinator put together a programme and a budget and obtained funding from both the Reception and Integration Agency and the Community Foundation of Ireland. Campaigns to recruit families living in Sligo were organised in local media, parish bulletins and posters in public places. A total of eleven local families were recruited and the Volunteer Centre then tried to match each family with a Kurdish family based on the ages of the children.

Many of the families who volunteered saw it as something that would be great for their children and in some cases they themselves had experiences of emigration. A one day induction was organised for the Sligo families to give them a background to the programme and the Kurdish families. The Reception and Integration Agency provided information at this induction. A total of 100 people took part in the programme, made up of 60 Kurdish and 40 from Sligo. The larger Kurdish number was due to their larger family sizes.

## 7.2.2 Activities

Whilst families were matched on a one to one basis, there were also a number of group events held, in order to introduce the families to each other and to provide contact in a larger social setting. In preparation for the Welcome Day where all the families were to meet, the Sligo families were given disposable cameras so that they could make a collage of themselves and their daily life. This was used to introduce themselves to the Kurdish families and to show typical scenes of daily life in Sligo e.g. at home having dinner; in the park with the children.

A series of other events were organised between October and December 2006. These included a facilitated arts and crafts day, an indoor picnic to which each family brought some food, a sports day at which local sports groups showcased their sports and finally a Christmas party. As well as these group events, the families were encouraged to meet up individually and in most cases the families met at each other's houses and often cooked for each other. Some of the events included families sitting with their matched family.

## 7.2.3 Programme Evaluation and Feedback

The Sligo Volunteer Centre conducted an internal evaluation of the programme, which included questionnaires administered to all the families who participated in the programme. According to that evaluation, the projects aims and outcomes were listed as follows:

Original Aims	Actual Outcomes
1. To assist the resettlement of the Kurdish families in Sligo and hopefully give them a positive introduction to their new home.	Families have made a local link. Most relationships are still on-going. Five out of 6 families who responded intend to continue meeting with their family.
2. To integrate Iranian Kurds who may already be in the region by involving them in the Induction programme.	Due to the many Kurdish dialects, it was not possible to find a local interpreter. An interpreter was organised by the RIA as required.
3. Raising awareness among the community in Sligo about the culture and tradition of the Iranian Kurdish people, thereby creating an open environment and assisting to break down the inhibitions people have about people from other countries and cultures moving to Ireland.	Events were held in a number of different community centres, therefore raising awareness among the people from those centres and introducing the services of the community centres to the Kurdish people.
4. Promote a positive image of those from different ethnic minorities.	The community centres where the events were held were delighted to host the group
5. Give the Iranian Kurdish families an opportunity to get involved in being a volunteer themselves in the local community through time.	None of the Kurds have contacted the centre about volunteering themselves. One girl is working in the Centre as part of her Transition Year school work placement.

The evaluation also reported on each of the individual events and provided feedback from both the Kurdish and the Sligo families on the programme. Overall the outcomes of the programme appear to be very positive, despite its relatively limited duration and scope. The recommendations from the participants included issues such as:

- The Sligo families would have liked further information on the history, background and culture of the Kurdish group
- The Kurdish families would have liked to share more of their own culture and similarly the Sligo families would have welcomed an introduction to their culture and traditions
- Both parties commented that some smaller, low-key events would have been conducive to getting to know each other
- Both parties would have liked some outdoor activities and sight-seeing trips.

Some of the issues that the organisers and agencies involved in the process also noted were:

- Language barriers sometimes made communication difficult and those with less English sometimes preferred the larger events rather than the individual meetings between the families where there was more pressure to talk directly to each other.
- It might have been useful to have had some more focused activities with smaller groups e.g. crafts activities for women or activities for teenagers. The large group events were sometimes a bit daunting.
- There were a few cultural misunderstandings between people; such as in some cases the Kurdish families took their commitment more seriously and were likely to be insulted if the Sligo family did not reciprocate in the same way.
- Transport was sometimes an issue when the families met on an individual basis as some of the Sligo families lived outside the town and were unable to arrange transport for the Kurdish families (often with 8-9 children) to their houses.

As part of this review, the families in both Sligo and the other two towns were asked about their social contacts and interaction with Irish culture and the Sligo families were asked specifically about the befriending programme and what it meant for them. As stated earlier in the report, the Sligo families overall had an air of greater confidence about meeting with and initiating contact with Irish people, which could be linked partly to this befriending programme.

The specific responses from the Sligo families on the programme and their social contacts included the following:

*But still we have integrated a little bit with Irish culture and society, because the Partnership they introduced some volunteers families to us and it was very useful.*

Some also emphasised that they had made friends in other ways.

*I: So could you tell me about this family exchange, how does it work, what do you do together?*

*R: We visit each other – maybe one week in one house and then we eat and we speak to each other.*

I: Was this organised through the Volunteer Centre?

R: Yes, but not only. We have other friends.

I: Has that been useful and what about your mother; has it helped her?

R: Yes she has learnt a lot. But my brothers they have a lot of friends in the area. They didn't want to leave the area; they want to stay there forever. The Irish families are very friendly. We had some difficulties in the beginning but currently not.

*There are some volunteer families and we meet every 2 weeks. Sometimes they visit us and we visit them. Again we have neighbours who are very good and we have a very good relation. We visit each other and our children are also playing together. We are well integrated with our neighbours.*

This sense of being integrated and describing it as such was found more in the families in Sligo, where a number of people stated specifically “we have integrated here”, which was not found in the other two towns. It could be a question of language and choice of words, but there seemed to be a greater sense of having more contact with Irish family. This can be said despite the fact that fewer people interviewed in Sligo had joined sports and other associations.

One interviewee from Sligo however spoke about how the relationship with their matched family broke down due to communication difficulties.

*There was one volunteer family and they came a few times in the beginning, but since we didn't have any English, they were getting tired and they didn't come back. We had no way to communicate, so it didn't continue.*

## 7.2.4 Feedback from Focus Group on Befriending/Mentoring Programmes

During the focus group, one of the learning groups focused specifically on the issue befriending/mentoring programmes, where both the Sligo programme was discussed as well as examples from other places. Many of the agencies or services providers who participated in the focus group saw a great value in such programmes and saw them as absolutely necessary.

Some of the participants talked about another befriending programme for refugees that had very limited success and encountered several problems. They saw several reasons for this and used them as examples of what should be avoided. This included:

- People became involved with no boundaries and no clear direction of their role. No induction had taken place and the mentors were not adequately screened.
- Issues of jealousy arose among the mentees, who received very different types of assistance
- Confidentiality was an issue as mentors may not have been fully briefed on confidentiality
- In some cases the motivation behind the mentors' involvement was questionable and there was sometimes a sense of people wishing to impose their own ideas and culture
- There was no awareness-raising or training for both mentors and mentees, which made the process difficult
- Roles and responsibilities were not always clear and mentors often had no-one to refer issues to and sometimes took on roles beyond their brief.

Much of the feedback from the focus group centred also on the need to ensure that the refugees have opportunities for interaction in a wide range of spheres and that they are linked and integrated with each other. This includes the need for appropriate training, links with employers, individualised career planning and befriending in the local community. Some suggested that befriending programmes could assist not only in fostering social contacts, but also in helping refugees in more practical and defined ways such as introductions to employers and providing a linkage to other service providers. It was agreed however that all befriending programmes should have a clear referral service and a co-ordinator who is well linked with service providers who can make the appropriate referrals or give the relevant information to the mentor.

The issue of culture and the risk of imposing one's culture through such programmes was also discussed and some felt that it was important that flexibility was maintained and people did not feel they were being forced to do things a particular way. On the other hand, people raised the issue that in cases of important health and safety issues, a mentor may sometimes feel obliged to intervene or to refer the matter. A supervisor and system of feedback where issues could be discussed in a confidential and professional manner was considered advisable and the distinction of roles and boundaries was considered very important.

Overall it was concluded that such programmes do not work of their own accord and require continued and sustained effort and energy. Relying on volunteers can have its drawbacks and it is usually necessary to have a professional worker to co-ordinate the programme and motivate the volunteers. The vetting and screening of mentor families was also considered to be very important, as well as adequate training and role clarification for all involved. It was also suggested that mentor families should have adequate training on the culture and background of the particular refugee group.

## 7.3 Conclusions

Mentoring or befriending programmes can be an effective tool for inter-cultural communication and integration if managed correctly. They need to be based on building up cross-cultural understanding and organised in an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance and flexibility. Being a mentor can be a very enriching experience, but it is important to ensure that the mentor is able to provide the relevant support required, rather than just having good intentions. Screening and training of mentors is essential. On the side of the mentees, there also needs to be a clear understanding of the programme and it should also be voluntary on their side. Similarly there may also be mentees for whom such a programme is not suitable, especially if they do not enter into it voluntarily or have no desire to co-operate with their mentor.



Mentoring programmes can be organised for a variety of purposes, but tend to work better when there is some specific focus or activity rather than just meeting artificially. In the case of refugees, such programmes could be used to deliver practical supports and in addition to family based programmes, specific mentoring programmes could be used for specific groups. This could include women, youth or could be oriented towards a specific goal such as helping a refugee enter the labour market or helping young people adapt to secondary school or further training. Whilst mentoring programmes for refugees may be organised in a very similar way to other mentoring programmes, it is important to ensure that respect and tolerance for cross-cultural differences are built into the programme and that there is a willingness on both sides to learn about each other's cultures. It is also important that such programmes do not work in isolation from other support services and that a holistic approach is adopted where issues encountered can be addressed from a range of angles, whilst ensuring that the role and boundaries of the mentor are clear and there are structured communication and referral channels.



## CHAPTER 8

### KEY CONCLUSIONS



#### 8.1 Overview

This research has examined the journey and the context of resettlement of the Kurdish refugees who came to Ireland in the past two years, particularly looking at the orientation programmes they have participated in, both before and after arriving in Ireland, how they have settled in their new towns, their language training, overall levels of social contacts and possibilities for integration and finally the potential role of mentoring/befriending programmes. Many similarities have been found with the results of the Swedish research, in which they observed that many of the refugees who came to Sweden under UNHCR programmes may find themselves in a position of subordination or dependence, which can continue throughout the resettlement process. They concluded that:

*According to the refugees, the experiences of refugee status and the contacts with the UNHCR appear to largely concern a position of subordination and dependence towards others. The refugees have lacked the possibility to determine their own lives and take control over their own living conditions. It is because of this that they take, or receive, help from the UNHCR.<sup>27</sup>*

In comparison to some other migrant groups who go to great lengths to try to find independent solutions for their difficulties, programme refugees can be more at risk of becoming dependent on a system where they may be treated more as passive victims rather than active agents in the process. Programme refugees often do not choose to go to a particular country, rather it chooses them. A piece of Dutch research on asylum seekers and refugees who were contained in isolated reception centres and had limited opportunities for interaction with Dutch people also found that:

*The impact of the welfare states, such as the Netherlands, on the lives of refugees is such that it transforms active participants into passive dependents of the state. It does this by creating an isolated form of reception and treating refugees as weak people who are not able to act independently. In this way, refugees waste potentially the most effective years of their lives in a new country in isolation and passivity. An active life in the early years of their exile could help to distance themselves from the past and to put energy into building a new life in the new country.<sup>28</sup>*

<sup>27</sup>Thornsson (2007) Quota Refugees on Resettlement and Introduction in Sweden, Draft Report, p.40

<sup>28</sup>Ghorashi H. (2005), Agents of Change or Passive Victims: The Impact of Welfare States (the case of the Netherlands) on Refugees, in pp 181-198 Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 18, No. 2, Oxford University Press.

This raises the issue of the importance of ensuring that refugees are encouraged to be active and to participate in society from early on and the need to treat refugees as independent persons rather than as passive objects. In organising reception and introduction programmes, the question thus arises how they could be done in such a way that relevant information is imparted, received and understood with the participants playing an active role in the process. It is also important to create a space in which the participants can interact in an active way with the new host society and new dynamics can be established that allow them to put their energy and focus into building their new life. At the same time, the past and their culture and traditions should not be forgotten and opportunities to showcase this culture and focus on the positive elements of their past can be a useful way of easing the transition to the new society and opening up opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. In this concluding chapter, the conclusions on the three themes of the research are summarised, with an overarching question in mind of how the refugees can become active agents in the process and their independence promoted whilst still ensuring a sufficient level of support and assistance.

## 8.2 Reception and Introduction

The reception and introduction phase in Ireland is somewhat shorter than other countries such as Sweden or Finland, where refugees spend up to three years in this “introduction” phase. Similarly the pre-arrival orientation in the Irish context has traditionally been much shorter and less detailed. The level of service provision and assistance may also be at a slightly lower level as there are pressures on many services in Ireland partly due to an unprecedented increase in the population. NGOs and volunteers also play a greater role in the Irish context and in many of the organisations supporting refugees, a community development approach is used, which is aimed at promoting participation and empowerment among the target groups they work with. This could then lead us to ask the question whether the programme refugees in the Irish context are less likely to be passive and subordinate in the process and whether this more limited form of introduction is more likely to promote independence.

There does not appear to be any simple answer to this questions and it would be very difficult at this stage to jump to any such far-reaching conclusions. In this research however, elements of passivity were found, but possibly not to exactly the same extent as was reported in the Swedish research. Many of the refugees interviewed had a clear view about the need for them to participate in society, learn the language, find employment and make friends with Irish people. The post-arrival orientation programme and language training seems to have given them a reasonably good sense of what they could expect to happen to them, what they might be expected to do and what they could do and an overall sense of how they could map out their future. Whilst they mostly had a sense of what would happen, many of the details remained vague and there was still confusion over a number of issues such as housing, healthcare, further training and its relationship with social welfare. The whole area of career guidance and entry into the labour market in particular appears to be an issue that has not yet been sufficiently tackled and many of the refugees who were more advanced in their language learning were aware that this was the next challenge ahead for them, but were not completely sure as to how they would make this next step.

In the Irish research however, the isolation of women with small children or other dependents emerges as a central issue, which has the potential to create a sub-group at risk of complete isolation from the host society and possibly also leading to tensions and changes within the family dynamics as the other members acquire more English and participate more in the new society.

Whilst the content of the post-arrival orientation programme on the whole is sufficient (with a few minor exceptions), the method of delivery could be reviewed in some instances to help the refugees become more active with the emphasis on learning to do things rather than hearing about how they are done. Involving former refugees in the process could also be an effective way of making the information seem more real and showing how people have managed to become independent. Whilst the orientation programmes did include a number of role plays and guest speakers from a range of agencies, the role of the local community in which they are going to live could possibly also be introduced at this stage where practical e.g. through organising a visit either from or to a local community group or introducing the notion of local mentoring or other volunteer programmes.

### 8.3 Integration and the Role of the Host Community

Unlike other countries where all the introduction phase takes place in the same town (orientation, language), the two elements of orientation training and language training are separated both geographically and chronologically. The initial orientation programme of 6 weeks takes place in a different town and then the refugees are moved to the town allocated to them. The content of the orientation programme is however continued during the language learning phase. This phase of language training does not appear to be sufficient for some people, but it is hoped that it will be extended. There is a danger however of people spending too long solely in language training, particularly in single ethnic group classes where opportunities for interaction are very limited. Many complained about the lack of opportunities to practise their English.

The difficulties in organising appropriate further training opportunities and some of the institutional competition and conflict is also a cause for some concern. A more structured and individualised approach to career planning and assessment of relevant training options with the best interests of the individual to the fore would be useful. In many cases after a period of a year of language training, a combined model of language and vocational training could help to ease the transition from pure language learning to other training and employment which would be conducted through English and with people from other backgrounds. Both service providers and refugees suggested that this would be very useful. In order for such a structured approach to be followed, it would be essential for the relevant service providers and Government Departments to develop a co-ordinated, holistic and integrated system with a clear understanding of each other's roles and a clear commitment to promoting the best interests of the refugees concerned. Whilst the Office of the Minister for Integration has made an effort to individualise career planning with its integration contracts, more work is needed to ensure that all the relevant service providers work together and that local and sustained career guidance and support are built into the system. Such an approach could allow for more efficient and effective training and education provision and would help to allow for a more timely entry into the labour force.

It is difficult at this stage to assess whether successful integration of the research group has occurred as it is a lengthy and multi-faceted process. Whilst many of the refugees spoke about wanting to have more social contacts with the Irish community, many had made some contacts outside their everyday contacts with language teachers and officials and it seemed that this level of contact increased as their English improved. Many of those with children living in housing estates found that their children played with neighbouring children, which gave the parents a sense of assurance that their children would find it easier to integrate even if it had been difficult for themselves.

In some cases however, some particular obstacles seemed to be presented as a barrier to successful integration. For those who had particular issues in relation to housing and health, they were often to the fore and impeded their participation in other areas. Whilst this might be understandable to a certain extent with health issues, housing issues were mentioned a surprisingly large number of times. The issue of housing is a wider problem, not exclusive to the refugee population, but further work might be required on assessing the impact of housing on mental health and devising strategies to ensure higher levels of satisfaction with the private rental accommodation provided among both the refugee population and others accessing such accommodation. At the same time, refugees might need to be better prepared during the orientation training for certain potential negative aspects such as housing as many seemed to expect a much higher standard of housing and some were disappointed with what they were given. This raises the issue of managing expectations in relation to accommodation during the orientation training.

One of the striking results of the review was the apparent isolation and lack of participation of women at home with children. They appeared in some ways as a forgotten group and as one agency worker reported “I feel I have not got around to the women yet”. Whilst the research group arrived relatively recently in the country, the isolation and dependence of these women could deteriorate over time as other family members learn English, participate in the workforce and integrate more with Irish society. This also raises issues for the small children who are being raised solely at home with their families and are not learning the English language from a young age. As stated earlier, this is a complex issue and raises questions of culture, the role of women in society and family size. Issues of accessible and affordable childcare and more flexible language training arrangements need to be addressed as well as efforts to increase opportunities for social contact. Whilst some childcare funding was made available in some areas, it was difficult to implement in practice due to limited places and the availability only for pre-school aged children. Outreach voluntary initiatives developed in one town appear to be quite successful to date, but reliance solely on untrained voluntary teachers is not necessarily a sustainable long-term solution. Further research into the structural and cultural barriers affecting the participation of such women may be required.

## 8.4 The Mentoring/Befriending Model as an Integration Tool

The need to increase opportunities for social contacts outside contacts with officials, support workers and language teachers is evident, both from the Irish and Swedish research results. Ireland has a very good tradition of volunteering and people volunteer in a wide variety of settings to assist various causes. Whilst one of the original fears expressed about regional dispersal programmes, was that there might not be sufficient voluntary groups or NGOs to support asylum seekers in regional centres, voluntary support groups for various migrants have been set up extensively throughout the country. The role of these support and voluntary groups vary and many operate on very limited resources. In some cases they have more of an advocacy role and are may focus on improving conditions for asylum seekers, who represent a much larger group than programme refugees. The existence of such groups in so many locations however shows a willingness for people to become involved and to get to know newcomers in their areas.

There seems to be scope for tapping into this potential pool and providing more structured and meaningful opportunities for people to become involved. Some people who are involved in support groups sometimes say they would like to be involved in a more personal way and do not necessarily want to do so much advocacy work. Similarly for people with families, volunteering on their own can be difficult and making it a family activity at the weekend that involves the children can make it easier.

From the research of both the international examples and the pilot befriending project in Sligo, it seems that there is sufficient scope and merit to extend the mentoring model to other groups of refugees/migrants in Ireland. It is essential that good practice guidelines are followed as outlined in this report, with a strong emphasis on the establishment of inter-cultural communication. Such programmes could serve a wide range of purposes such as increasing social contacts for particular groups at risk of isolation (women at home or older people); fostering linkages with employers and the labour market; helping young people to integrate in education institutions or generally providing opportunities for local communities to get involved and get to know their new neighbours in a way that is meaningful and has a distinct purpose. Similar or adapted models could also be used to deal with tensions in some neighbourhoods where some barriers could be broken and common understandings about each other's culture reached. It could be useful to introduce such befriending programmes at an early stage before any misunderstandings or resentment arises. Providing opportunities for people to get to know each other on an individual and personal level, based around practical support and activities is a very useful tool in promoting the ultimate integration of new communities and peaceful community relations.

## 8.5 Concluding Remarks

The resettlement process is made up of many parts, involving a variety of actors, ranging from the international agencies such as UNHCR and IOM to the national Governments through the selection and reception and then the local receiving communities made up of a myriad of governmental and non-governmental actors as well as people living in local communities. Resettlement is a complex process that involves a number of inter-linking events. The research undertaken in Sweden showed how what happens at one stage of the resettlement process impacts on the other stages and that each stage cannot be analysed in complete isolation. They found that:

*The refugees' lack of expectations and lack of receptiveness to information about the third country and their future situation affect their ability to become independent and take responsibility for their lives in Sweden. This emphasises the importance of seeing the settlement process as a whole when discussing individual phases. What happens at the beginning of the process, and in the refugee status, has consequences for the refugees' future lives, and their opportunities to integrate into the new society.<sup>29</sup>*

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 45

As shown here, one of the dangers of the resettlement process can be the lack of promotion of independence and opportunities to be active in the process, starting from the experiences with the UNHCR and the sense of dependency that may develop in the camp. From the point of view of the third country to which people are resettled, what can be done to promote this independence, provide opportunities to start a new life, help integration with local communities and ensure that the refugees' contributions are valued and respected whilst also providing sufficient support and assistance as required. Orientation programmes do not solve all of these issues and are only one element of the process, but are an important way of starting the process of promoting the participation and sense of self-worth of the refugees and giving them a sense that they can play an active role in the new society. Other support structures and service provision also need to be able to adapt and provide flexible solutions so that integration and the promotion of independence can be incorporated into the development, implementation and monitoring of a wide range of policies and services. NGOs and civil society also have a very important role to play in the process and opportunities for forging of linkages and meaningful contact between local communities and refugees should be promoted. Most importantly, the voice of refugees themselves should never be lost and they should be to the fore when developing or implementing policies and strategies.

## APPENDIX I

### List of Agencies Consulted

Ballyhaunis Family Resource Centre

Health Services Executive (Community Welfare Officer)

Integrate Ireland Language & Training  
*(including Outreach Co-ordinator, Academic Manager, Co-ordinator of orientation programme, Centre managers & teachers)*

Mayo County Development Board

Office of the Minister for Integration *(various individuals involved in resettlement process)*

Refugee Information Service

Refugee Support Workers *(in three towns)*

SPIRASI *(NGO working with refugees & asylum seekers)*

Westmeath County Council *(housing section)*







## **APPENDIX 2**

### Pre-Departure Orientation Guide Pre-departure Orientation for Resettled Refugees

#### A Guide

Office of the Minister for Integration Ireland

February 2008

# Introduction

This document is a brief guide to Pre-departure Orientation for resettled refugees. It was developed as part of the MOST Project, a transnational project (Modelling of Orientation, Services and Training related to the Resettlement and Reception of Refugees) a transnational project funded under the Community Actions Strand of the European Refugee Fund. It was led by the Ministry of Labour in Finland and also involves partners from Sweden, Ireland and Spain. The overall purpose of the project was to develop comprehensive models for quicker and better integration of refugees, who come directly from crisis situations or refugee camps to the European Union. Under the project, Ireland sought to review and pilot new forms of pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programmes in order to assist those selected to be better informed of the realities of living in Ireland and to give them more control and say over their own destiny. A full report of the review of these programmes and forms of community assistance has also been published as part of the project and this may be useful for those interested in more detailed information on the resettlement process.

This guide is intended to be used for countries who are new to the UNHCR resettlement programme or who are considering joining it and would like assistance in developing pre-departure orientation programmes. It may also be used by those who have been involved in resettlement for a longer time and are interested in reviewing their practices. It was developed through conducting a comprehensive review of Ireland's original pre-departure programme and the piloting of two new models in Thailand and Uganda. Details on these two pilots are included in the case studies provided here.

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## 1. What is pre-departure orientation?

When refugees are offered a chance of resettlement from the country of first asylum, the country offering resettlement often undertakes a selection mission to that country where they interview the refugees that are being considered for resettlement. As part of this process, pre-departure orientation training may be delivered to the refugees, either during the selection mission or may be carried out at a later stage by a cultural orientation team. In some cases it is delivered only to those who have been selected and in other cases it is delivered to the whole group and may include those who are not chosen for resettlement to that country.

The orientation usually gives a brief overview of the country to which people may be resettled, including basic information on topics such as geography, climate, political situation, education, work, cultural norms, gender relations etc. The content of the programme varies according to each country and may also be tailored to the specific needs of the group of refugees to be resettled.

## 2. What are the reasons for doing it?

Pre-departure orientation training demands various resources and is sometimes very difficult to undertake due to logistical constraints (e.g. in the case of dossier selection, emergency cases, medical cases etc.). There are however many valid reasons for undertaking such training and the review of pre-departure orientation in Ireland showed that its impact is quite strong and many of the participants expressed a desire for further training. The reasons for doing it include the following:

- It helps to alleviate stress and trauma for the participants, particularly relating to the journey
- It provides people with an opportunity to prepare for their new life and may encourage people to seek further information where possible
- It allows the receiving country impart information on realities of life in the new country
- Whilst many positive aspects are conveyed, it can also be an opportunity to pay attention to some potential negative aspects
- It allows for more relaxed and personal engagement between the participants and officials from the receiving community, unlike the interviews where the atmosphere may be more formal

### 3. What potential drawbacks exist?

Whilst in most cases, it makes sense to carry out pre-departure orientation, there are also a few potential drawbacks that need to be borne in mind.

- There can be a number of logistical and resource constraints. It works best with group resettlement, but may need to be more limited in cases of dossier selection or other special cases.
- Resettlement can be a very stressful process for some refugees and they may not be fully receptive to the information. Both the Irish and Swedish consultation processes showed that for many the emphasis was on leaving a bad situation behind and not on where they were actually going.
- If too much information is delivered at this stage, it can be off-putting and defeat the purpose of providing clear and basic information.
- It is important to pay attention to who actually delivers it and in some cases where international organisations or local NGOs are used, they may have very little actual experience of the country and may convey an incorrect message.
- It can be difficult to assess its long-term impact in terms of integration as this will ultimately depend on so many other factors. It has been shown however that having access to relevant and correct information is an important factor.

### 4. Who should deliver it?

It makes most sense for the orientation to be delivered by someone who has experience of living in the receiving country and a good knowledge of its structures, processes and culture. It helps also if that person has a good understanding of inter-cultural issues and who may have experience of living in a different culture and the difficulties that may arise. Where feasible, the orientation can also be carried by or with the assistance of a person with a similar cultural background to that of the refugee group and who has also lived in the receiving country. That person could then act as both interpreter and cultural mediator.

If possible, the orientation should be carried out by someone who is not on the selection team and who the refugees will not necessarily associate with the interviews. This person should be neutral in terms of the selection process and this should be made clear to the participants (especially where the orientation is delivered prior to the final decision being made).

### 5. When should it be delivered?

The ideal timing is when the selection process has been completed and the training is then carried out with the group who have been selected and notified of that decision.

Logistical difficulties may make this difficult, but in all cases it should always be carried out after the interviews as it may influence the interview process and people may be too focused on the interviews and therefore not able to absorb information and participate in the training.

## 6. How long should it last?

The actual length of the training will depend on a number of factors such as:

- The specific needs of the group and their exposure to Western society/education levels etc.
- The resources allocated to the training
- Logistical constraints in bringing the refugees together for the training and other factors such as provision of childcare, catering etc.
- The specific training methods used
- The type of information that the receiving country wishes to impart.

In the case of Ireland, two models were tested, one which lasted one day (Uganda) and another of one week (Thailand). The one week training was an exception and was due to the specific needs of the group.

A general recommendation is that the training should last at least one whole day and should include sufficient time for discussion and questions.

## 7. What topics should be included?

The topics to be included will vary according to the needs of the receiving country and the refugee participants. In countries where the language is very unfamiliar to the participants, it is advisable to also spend some time introducing a few key phrases of the language. The list of topics to be covered should be flexible and there should be scope for participation and the inclusion of new topics. The topics that could be covered include the following (the list is not exhaustive):

- Hopes and fears about moving to the new country
- Political/legal and administrative structures
- Law and order and the role of the police
- Climate, landscape, geography (and how to prepare for the climate)
- The journey and the first few days
- What you can expect when you arrive
- What kind of work/training you can do (and potential difficulties in accessing labour market)
- Education opportunities for children and adults
- Housing and accommodation (important to include photos)
- Health issues and maintaining good health
- Food
- Traditions and festivities
- Religion
- Marriage systems and traditions

- Gender relations & equality issues
- Women & reproduction issues (may be done separately with women)
- The role and value of children
- Transport and travel
- Communication and greetings

## 8. What should not be included?

There is no topic that should absolutely not be included, but it is important to bear the following in mind:

- Keep the information simple and do not provide too much detailed information on any topic.
- Information on Government/political/legal systems should be kept very brief and simple.
- Do not include long lists of names of agencies, programmes etc. The focus should be on getting some the principles across and not on small details (e.g. there is no need to name all the agencies that provide support to refugees).

## 9. What training methods work well?

A number of training methods were piloted by the Irish Office of the Minister for Integration and it was concluded that the following methods work well:

- Visual aids such as photos, drawings, films. These can also be used to stimulate discussion e.g. ask people to look at photos in small groups and comment on what they see. Short videos or photos/stories from refugees already resettled in the country can also enhance the process and provide a more real picture.
- Participatory methods that allow for interaction and encourage people to engage in the training and to ask questions or raise issues/concerns. This can include small group work where time and logistics allow for it.
- Whilst PowerPoint presentations can be used and can be useful for displaying photographs etc., there should not be too much emphasis on written text, unless it is clear that the participants can read and understand the text. If written text-based presentations are being used, the trainer should also make sure that everything is explained and understood by the participants.
- It is important to allow for sufficient breaks during the training and to make sure people do not become tired/thirsty/hungry.
- In cases where children are also in the room, it is important to provide some activity for them such as colouring books and crayons.
- Participants should be fully briefed at the beginning about the purpose of the training, confidentiality and its separateness to the selection process. They should be encouraged to ask questions in a non-intimidating and relaxed atmosphere.
- It helps to include some humour as this lightens the atmosphere.

## Case Study I:

## 1 week Cultural Orientation for Karen Refugees in Thailand

### Overview

A one week cultural orientation programme was undertaken in August 2007 in Ban Don Yang refugee camp on the Thai – Burmese border with a group of 'ethnic Karen' refugees, who were already accepted for resettlement in Ireland. The training programme was conducted by an official from the Integration Unit of the Office of the Minister for Integration and a former resident of a camp along the Thai- Burmese border who is now an Irish citizen.

The experience from the selection mission interviews carried out in June 2007 suggested that the 'ethnic Karen' that were accepted for resettlement to Ireland had little idea of what to expect upon arrival, relatively low education levels and a very different culture. It was therefore decided to pilot a one week training programme that would allow sufficient time to address a wide range of issues and allow plenty of time for discussion around each of the topics. The primary objective of the cultural orientation programme was to provide a realistic picture of Irish life and society, whilst emphasising rights and responsibilities. The group of refugees had been living in the camp for over ten years, where they had no right to work and received their food in rations.

Training was held with two groups each day, with each session lasting ca. two hours. Each day concentrated on specific topics and included a revision activity from the day before and a brief discussion on another topic not in the programme. The training was delivered jointly by the Irish official and the cultural mediation worker, who also provided interpretation. He also gave examples from his own experience of moving to Ireland, which was found to be very beneficial.

Whilst there was a list of topics to be covered, participants raised other issues which they wanted covered including contraception, women's issues and avenues available to persons who feel that their rights have been denied.

Training methods were varied and participatory and there was sufficient time to use methods such as role plays and demonstrations. Photographs and other visual aids were also used to stimulate discussion.

### Review/Learning Points

A self-evaluation was conducted by the trainers and the following points were noted:

- The revision exercises showed that people were more receptive to information that had been demonstrated (e.g. queuing, using cutlery).
- Some of the information was interpreted in a simplistic way and some nuances were not understood.
- Despite the time spent during the orientation, it was still difficult for people to form a really realistic picture of life in Ireland, but it did introduce some basic principles and prepare people.
- The use of the inter-cultural worker was found to be invaluable and the group was very interested in



hearing about his experiences and he was also able to explain things in way that was more easily grasped and had a better understanding of people's fears and expectations.

- No topic appeared to have been taboo or off limits, including discussions about the role of women and domestic violence, older children (particularly girls) moving out of the family home, children and child protection.
- It was very useful to carry out the cultural orientation programme in the camp. It was on the group's own territory and they were in familiar surroundings. It was also easier for the trainers to relate what people's lives in the camp would be like compared with their life in Ireland.
- At the end of the training people were asked about how they now felt about moving to Ireland. Many expressed a sense of relief, excitement and alluded to specific points they had learnt during the training.
- The trainers found it very useful to use a person's own life and experiences as a starting point and to relate the information back to that.
- Small group work was an effective method for stimulating discussions.
- A week was seen to be a long time and people appeared tired by the fifth day.

## Case Study 2

Cultural Orientation for Sudanese Refugees, delivered in Kampala

### Overview

In September 2007 the Irish Office of the Minister for Integration undertook a selection mission to select Sudanese refugees, currently living in various camps in Uganda. Once the interviews were completed, a pre-departure orientation programme was delivered by a consultant working with the OMI and co-ordinating the MOST Project. A representative of the Gardaí Síochána (Irish police force) also delivered some of the training relating to law and order and the role of the police, emphasising their role in assisting people. Training was held with two groups on two different days, with each training day lasting 5-6 hours, including some breaks. The training used a combination of small group exercises, formal presentation and general discussion on the topics. As the time was limited and a large number of topics were to be covered, there was not a large amount of time available for group work etc.

At the beginning of each day the participants were asked to discuss in pairs their hopes and fears about coming to Ireland and to raise any issues they would like to discuss during the training. Many of the topics they raised were to be covered in the training and other topics were then included as required (e.g. dowry system, family reunification).

There were ca. 20 participants in each group as well as a number of children who attended some of the training and local interpreters were used. There was a higher number of females in each group. Some of the questions/issues asked by the participants surprised the trainer such as whether they would still be allowed to have children in Ireland, our dowry/bride-price system and whether they could return home if they were unhappy. They also placed a lot of emphasis on food and whether they could cultivate their own crops/vegetables.

### Review/Learning Points

A self-evaluation was conducted and the following points emerged:

- Despite the same format and content being used in the two groups, the reactions were very different, with one treating many of the issues in a more light-hearted way and the other having some more negative reactions (e.g. about our lack of dowry system) and overall appearing to have a more negative attitude.
- The participants were very relieved to hear that all the topics would be covered again in greater detail during the post-arrival orientation programme.
- At the end of the day the participants seemed to have a better understanding of the practicalities of travelling to Ireland, the initial stages and what they could expect in terms of training, schools, employment possibilities etc.
- The participants realised that there are cultural differences between what they are used to and Irish culture. In some cases this does not mean people giving up their culture, but they were made aware that in certain circumstances they would be required to make some compromises and they would not be able to practise certain cultural traditions.
- Some seemed relieved at the end of the training and certain fears they had might have been alleviated e.g. knowing that they could still have children in Ireland.
- It also gave the trainer an opportunity to find out what were some of the pertinent issues facing the group and could be useful in planning for services when they arrive.
- In a few cases, the training may have caused people to consider whether they really want to move to Ireland and how they could adapt to such a different culture. Whilst it is unlikely that it will cause anyone to withdraw their application, it may help in preparing to deal with certain issues.

A few limitations/drawbacks of the training included:

- The time period of one day was relatively short and did not allow for any in-depth group work or revision.
- It was sometimes difficult to achieve a balance between promoting a positive view of resettlement and preparing for potential negatives.
- Communicating through an interpreter (and in one case two interpreters) can have its limitations in terms of making sure that the correct message is understood and can also cause concentration difficulties as people may not pay attention when another language is being spoken.
- As the training took place before the participants had a final decision on their resettlement application, some were a little apprehensive and this may have affected their ability to participate fully.

## APPENDIX 3

### Reference Material

**Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform** (2005), Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan Against Racism.

**European Commission** (2006), Communication on Strengthened Practical Cooperation in the area of asylum.

**European Commission** (2007), Handbook on Integration for Policy-makers and Practitioners, DG Justice, Freedom and Security.

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**Fanning B & Mac Enri P.** (1999), Regional Reception of Asylum Seekers in Ireland: A Strategic Approach, <http://migration.ucc.ie/regionalreception.htm>

**Ghorashi H.** (2005), Agents of Change or Passive Victims: The Impact of Welfare States (the case of the Netherlands) on Refugees, in pp 181-198 Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 18, No. 2., Oxford University Press.

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**Thomsson D.** (2007), Quota Refugees on Resettlement and Introduction in Sweden, Swedish Integration Board.

**UNHCR** (2003), Agenda for Protection.

**UNHCR** (2004), Resettlement Handbook.

**UNITED for Intercultural Action**, Information Leaflet No. 13



## APPENDIX 4

### Reference Material

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**European Commission** (2006), Communication on Strengthened Practical Cooperation in the area of asylum.

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## APPENDIX 5

### Websites Consulted

Big Brother Big Sister Programme  
[www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org)

European Commission – DG Justice, Freedom and Security  
[www.europa.eu/comm/justice\\_home/](http://www.europa.eu/comm/justice_home/)

European Council on Refugees and Exiles  
[www.ecre.org](http://www.ecre.org)

European Refugee Fund:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/refugee/funding\\_refugee\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/refugee/funding_refugee_en.htm)

Given the Chance Program, Ecumenical Migration Centre, Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Melbourne:  
[www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au)

International Institute of Minnesota (Refugee Mentoring Programme):  
[www.iimn.org](http://www.iimn.org)

International Organisation for Migration  
[www.iom.org](http://www.iom.org)

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement:  
[www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

Mentor: Guidelines for Mentoring Immigrant Youth  
[www.mentoring.org/program\\_staff/eeptoolkit/immigrant\\_youth.php](http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/eeptoolkit/immigrant_youth.php)

Migration Resources Website, University College Cork:  
<http://migration.ucc.ie>

Reception and Integration Agency  
[www.ria.gov.ie](http://www.ria.gov.ie)

Refugee Youth Project, Barnet  
[www.refugeeyouthproject.org.uk/projects/london](http://www.refugeeyouthproject.org.uk/projects/london)

UNHCR  
[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)