

# LNAR Newsletter



Celebrating Diversity and Promoting Equality  
throughout Limerick and the Mid-West

Issue 2

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FREE

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If you have information about what you believe to be a racist incident, you should report it.

Limerick Network Against Racism (LNAR) is a network of organisations, groups, and individuals that challenges racism and supports those affected by it. It encourages and supports member organizations in anti-racism initiatives, and lobbies for policy change. Members include statutory and voluntary bodies, and the network is open to any person or group that promotes the values and objectives of the network.

The LNAR Newsletter is relevant to all communities in Limerick city and county. We welcome suggestions and contributions, particularly from minority groups in the region, and we encourage readers to tell us what they would like to see in future issues.

We are also looking for a suitable name for the newsletter. We would like to hear *your* suggestions, and we invite school classes, groups, and individuals to get their thinking caps on and to come up with some ideas.

Email your newsletter name suggestions to us at [lnar@eircom.net](mailto:lnar@eircom.net) before July 31st, or text them to 087 8225087.

Remember to give your contact details!



Participants in a Mid-West Development Education Centre (MWDEC) programme who recently completed an 8 week course on mentoring. From left, standing: Luul (from Somalia), Jumoko (Nigeria), Denis (Facilitator), Nabs (Nigeria), Nerus (Nigeria), Nana (Ghana), Fardusa (Somalia), Miaria (Cameroon). In front, Ibi (Nigeria), Amaka (Nigeria), Alice (Zimbabwe)

## Mentoring in the Community

The Mid-West Development Education Centre (MWDEC) has recently completed an 8 week course on mentoring with residents of the Knockalisheen Centre for asylum seekers in Meelick, Co. Clare. Working with the education officer at the hostel, the course was delivered to a group of 15 asylum seeker and refugees.

The aim of the course was to train people to act as mentors within their own ethnic communities and to liaise with others, including the host (Irish) community. Each session focussed on a specific theme, such as health, education, and cultural norms. The sessions combined group work and training input.

According to the organisers, participants and trainers had good fun as well as a valuable learning experience as they explored the differences in culture across the world. The group was made up of people from Europe, Africa and Asia.

Some of the group members will now work on a series of school workshops.

MWDEC is also nearing completion of a European partnership project which comprises organisations from Finland, England, Denmark, Greece and Ireland. These are all working with asylum seekers and refugees. The project, which is known as the Grundtvig Project, has been running for 3 years now. The project teams train and work with mentors from the immigrant communities who in turn help newly arrived immigrants.

According to Denis Bates of MWDEC which is the coordinating partner in Ireland, it has been an eye opener to see how much the partners have in common. He said that it has also been informative to see how we in Ireland differ from our European colleagues in the way we respond to migrants arriving into our country and community.

A group from MWDEC travelled to Oulu in the North of Finland during the St Patrick's Day weekend as part of the project's learning exchange. Although the temperatures were well below freezing in Oulu, the experience was a valuable one for the contingent that travelled across from Ireland.

For more information on the mentoring partnership project visit the website [www.enda.ie](http://www.enda.ie).



Dieudonne Ymedji, from Cameroon, who is a mentor with MWDEC, seated outside the Oulu Settlement Association in Finland.

### My dreams

Lana Radanovic

I am pretty confused. Should I tell you about my dream or the dream that I once lived? It is very hard to explain my previous dream to you, my dear friends - but I will try.

I lived in a country where tomorrow meant more suffering and more tears. Therefore, my dreams became my sanctuary. I took refuge in my imaginary world quite often just because reality was very cruel. I realised, just a few years ago what the tears and fears in my parents' eyes meant. I used to listen to my mother about her dreams and ambitions. To be quite honest, that was always about a safe and pleasant place in the world, where everybody lives like normal and dignified human beings. One moment, a horrible event lifts me into the adult world: my father is fighting for his life - lying in bed, and he could die any second. I realised that life is just like lightning, very bright but lasts a very short period of time. I decided to grab my 'lightning' and enjoy it while it lasts fearing I mightn't get another chance.

Just the idea that some of my beloved can die made me upset. Then I turned to my dreams. I started to rewind my mother's story in my head: *nice people, pure green grass, dignified humans*. That made me calm again. Then beautiful flowers in rainbow colours came into the dream ... *crowds smiling, children in a field, playing around, running after each other, playing hide and seek* ... and that made me very happy. I started to smile - I wanted to join them, I wanted to play with them. And then from nowhere, sounds of distant gunfire with screams of my parents brought me back to cruel reality. Suddenly, everything had disappeared, and I knew there was nothing to look

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## Legislating Sense

### An Argument for According Asylum Seekers the Right to Work

Amanda Haynes, Department of Sociology, University of Limerick.

In Ireland, we ban asylum seekers from working. In doing so, we act contrary to both our own best interests and those of our asylum seeking population. We deny asylum seekers and ourselves the benefits of their labour force participation. Legislating to harness this potential for mutual benefit, is legislating good sense.

Irish law states that asylum seekers are not permitted to "seek or enter employment or carry on any business, trade or profession ...". Yet there is no clear evidence to support the assumption underlying this legislation, i.e. that denying the right to work reduces the numbers of applications a country receives.

A review of asylum policy across Europe conducted for the UK's Home Office confirms this statement and draws on data from France and Germany, which suggest that restrictions on the right to work in those countries have had no discernable impact on numbers of applications. In the case of Ireland, the numbers seeking asylum continued to increase, even after the decision not to extend a once-off amnesty that accorded about 3,500 people the right to work in 1999.

Since 2000, policy has dictated that, denied the right to work, asylum seekers are housed in communal centres where they receive

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**Knockalisheen Reception Centre** accommodates up to 300 residents, most of whom are African or Eastern Europe in origin. Language and computer classes are provided to residents on site by the Co. Clare VEC. The staff includes a coordinator and three part-time tutors who have a wide range of experience in computer technology and English language teaching. They are assisted by a placement student from Limerick Institute of Technology and two local volunteer tutors.

Education is provided for adults through a range of classes and programmes, including certified courses in English, computers, and Intercultural Studies. There is also a Family Learning project to help parents and pre-school children to prepare for entry into local primary schools.

For secondary school students living at the Centre, there is a homework club available. This is hosted by Mary Immaculate College and is run in conjunction with St Vincent de Paul Society. Teenagers also take part in a youth programme which is run in by Clare Youth Services every Friday and Saturday. It is also hoped to start a homework club for primary school children in the Centre.

There is a crèche service available on site which enables parents with babies and preschool children to participate in educational programmes. Physical fitness support is also given to residents through funding made available by the Clare Sports Partnership.

## Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism

John Lannon

The government launched Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) in January 2005. It is called "Planning for Diversity", and its aim is to combat racism and promote a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland. It urges everyone, particularly those in key policy areas, to give reasonable consideration to cultural and ethnic diversity.

As part of the National Action Plan Against Racism, there are plans to implement local Anti-Racism and Diversity plans (ARDs) at city and county level throughout the country. The purpose of these is to put in place a coordinated approach that is consistent with the aims and objectives of the National Action Plan. This approach covers protection against racism, economic inclusion, equality of opportunity, recognition and awareness of diversity, and full participation for everyone in Irish society.

ARD plans are intended to provide a

coordinated approach for local authorities, public service providers and development agencies looking at ways to ensure that their policies and services are inclusive of the whole community. They are intended to meet the particular needs of people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and Travellers. They will be used to coordinate responses to racist incidents, and to ensure that there are opportunities for social, sporting and cultural initiatives to promote interaction, understanding and respect.

ARD plans are already in operation in Galway City and Fingal County, and funding has been provided by the NPAR towards the development of ARDs in Roscommon, Dublin Inner City, and Louth. The Galway and Fingal plans are both action focused, and contain a range of measures based around the 5 themes of the National Action Plan Against Racism. They have also both established steering groups, and have begun broad consultative processes.

### Overall Guidelines for the Development of ARD Plans

- The ARD should provide a three year strategy and identify and prioritise a range of realistic and practical measures that can be implemented at local level;
- It should seek to be consistent with the intercultural framework of the National Action Plan Against Racism focusing measures across the five themes of protection, inclusion, provision, recognition and participation;
- It should involve a wide range of stakeholders in its implementation including local authorities; key service providers; social partners and the community and voluntary sector, including those groups representing minority ethnic communities;
- It should identify and prioritise new systems and practices to be developed within key service providers to enhance their capacity to promote equality, combat discrimination and accommodate cultural diversity.

### Focus on LNAR Member

## Southill Community Development Project

The Southill Community Development Project has been in existence for almost ten years. Based in Southill, Limerick, it has been responsible for the set up and support of many successful local initiatives in the area. These include the Southill Family Resource Centre, the Southill Domestic Abuse Project, the After-schools Club, and the local Drugs Task Force.

Nuala Renninson has been the Southill Community Development Project coordinator since early in 2006. Prior to taking up that position, she had worked in the Project as administrator for over six years. In this issue of the LNAR newsletter she tells us about the Project, and shares some early observations as Project coordinator.

The Mission statement of the project gives an insight into exactly what community develop-

ment is about. It says: "Community development is about the active involvement of people in the issues which affect their lives. It is a process based on the sharing of power, skills knowledge and experience.

The Project is currently working on a number of issues that affect the local community. These include environmental issues (mostly waste management), housing issues, and anti-social behaviour. The Project works on these in partnership with residents groups and statutory and voluntary organizations in the area. We have also been trying to work on disability issues for several

years - looking to find an aspect of this huge area that we could focus on that would enhance, improve or support local people who are in some way disabled, or who are caring for a disabled person. We have set up a group to work on this in partnership with another Community Development Project, Our Lady Of Lourdes, to which we welcome new members.

Other issues that Southill Community Development Project is working on relate to education, equality and drugs prevention, and domestic abuse.

My appointment as Project coordinator left a vacancy for a

Project Administrator. This position was advertised in the local newspapers; the advertisement was very well received with over sixty inquires and over thirty people formally applied for the position. An observation made during this process was that most of the enquiries and applications we received from non-Irish nationals were all in reply to the advertisement in the Limerick Leader. This may have been due to the inclusion in the Community Notes Section which in recent times has included notes from many different nationalities. We now have successfully recruited a very experienced Project Administrator in Mary Fitzpatrick, a local resident who has worked in this field for in excess of ten years. Following Mary's appointment the Project has a full complement of workers again; in addition to Mary and I there is development worker Caroline Keane, and Southill Domestic Abuse Project worker, Wendy Goggin.

Southill Community Development Project can be contacted by phoning 061-313025



Southill Community Development Project Staff. (Left to Right): Wendy Goggin, Nuala Renninson, Mary Fitzpatrick and Caroline Keane

## Immigration In West Limerick

West Limerick Resources (WLR) originated from a local initiative undertaken by individuals and groups in West Limerick to establish a rural resource organisation that could collectively address the issues, changes and challenges impacting on the community and life of the area.

Still driven by its original mission, it has developed its role, resources, expertise and partnerships. It now administers a number of programmes including the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) and Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), the FAS Jobs Club, the Millennium Partnership Fund, the Rural Social Scheme and other programmes which compliment the work of the company.

Since WLR's inception, the local demographic profile of West Limerick has changed considerably. This has been partly due to the large influx of migrant workers from all over the world. In the past year alone over 600 immigrants

applied for and received PPS numbers in the area. One very significant feature of the population growth of West Limerick is the increasing numbers of labour migrants from the Baltic States. Among these were over 30 Latvians, 130 Lithuanians and 220 Polish workers.

In addition, a Holding Centre for refugees and asylum seekers was developed at an old boarding school at Foynes. This was the first such development in West Limerick and the Partnership engaged with the group to support them. However, a number of the planned activities had to be cancelled when the participating clients were suddenly removed from the centre. The resulting limited outcomes had implications for how the Partnership can support a mobile group such as these, and for the use of resources.

Although the majority of immigrants have the same rights as Irish Citizens, non-Irish groups in West Limerick face difficulties integrating into Irish soci-

ety. These include language difficulties, accessing employment & training, recognition of skills & qualifications, education, childcare, accessing mainstream services, health issues, accommodation, naturalisation and citizenship, as well as family reunification. WLR is working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to develop a model for integrated delivery of services to migrant workers and their families in rural areas. Actions in 2005 included English language support and job preparedness.

The increasing numbers of migrant workers accessing the WLR Rural Employment Service and JOBSCLUB has implications for the design and scope of that service in 2006. Planned actions include the provision of migrant clinics in Glin and Newcastle West as well as working in cooperation with Limerick County Development Board to develop a Co. Limerick Migrants Forum.

## The North Cork Immigrant Forum

In September 2005 Ballyhoura Development Ltd joined with Avondu Development Ltd to establish the North Cork Immigrant Forum. The forum was established to provide a unique space where representatives from immigrant communities could meet and share ideas with service providers from across the region. The forum is still in the early stages of development and is adapting to accommodate the needs of participants.

The Forum is currently drafting a position paper on language provision and English classes for migrant workers and other

members of immigrant communities. It will use this to lobby the VEC for a dedicated budget for this area. The Forum also wishes the VEC to develop routes of progression through English and to get away from the current 'survival English' delivery.

Another key area of policy development is the issue of making employers more aware of their responsibilities vis-à-vis their employees in areas such as health and safety information, supporting language classes, promoting good employment practice etc. The Forum has also identified the need for training that will help sensitise its members and raise awareness of issues in relation to inclusion, integration and interculturalism.

## Sunflower?

Diana Storm

Erect I glide in humanity  
Radiating flawless confidence  
Proud, YES proud! Haughty?  
Outwards looking in  
Perhaps, it would seem.

Sunflower reflects Positive Emergence.

Consumed in its golden petals  
Intoxicated sweetness lingers ...  
Slowly infiltrating my sensory  
I am the Walking Sun.

Behind the 'Grey Door'  
Sobriety takes firm hold ...  
Steadfast, bittersweet, reality  
Floods my consciousness  
The sun swiftly fades  
The façade - my shield.

## Colours

Diana Storm

Life is a risk, come make a wish  
These are the journey days  
To embrace the change ...  
Diversify your secluded space ...  
Halt! Your noxious hate.  
Try not to perceive change  
As risk and uncertainty;  
Embrace the New colours ....  
Dispel apathy with its brutality  
Relay empathy, smile with philanthropy.  
Love and harmony, peace and unity  
Open your hearts; let's unite!  
What's the fighting for?  
Segregate, debilitate, the New ...?  
No! Appreciate cultural diversity.

Ballyhoura Development Ltd & Avondu Development Ltd are also supporting capacity building for migrant workers. This is intended to facilitate the workers' effective participation in the work of the Forum, and in advancing its objectives.

## The Catacombs Basement Resource Centre, Augustinian Priory, O'Connell Street, Limerick

The Resource Centre offers English Language classes, computer training courses and an Art Studio to asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers. It also provides practice space for integrated music groups, Gospel choirs and ethnic expression. The Catacombs is a place to mix and make new friends, especially during the limbo time when asylum seekers await a decision on their status.

For English Classes contact John O'Brien at 087 2719 189

For Computer Courses contact Zoran at 085 1125 397

For Art Classes contact Jean-Ryan at 085 7057 765

For information about the choirs call Donat at 087 4132 961

## What's In a Name?

Juan Carlos Azzopardi

"Cad is ainm duit?"

"Juan Carlos Azzopardi is ainm dom."

"What? Where did you get a name like that?"

Since my first day in National School and throughout my life I've had this conversation - what's your name and where did it come from? As a child in rural Ireland my name was very unusual and "foreigners" were rare. Older people seem to find it difficult to remember and pronounce so I was called anything from "Martha's boy" to "the Spanish kid" to later on Mrs Reilly's decision to always greet me with "How's Elvis?"

It didn't bother me much and was rarely meant to be hurtful. However I am aware of how much better I felt, and still feel, when people make the effort to address me by my given name and try to pronounce it properly. Nowadays the range of strange and exotic names of people from different countries is much greater. Do we try to learn these names? I find there is a tendency to shorten, change or just ignore them altogether and the new arrivals tend to adopt the changes to fit in. There's no harm in it, people think. After all, what's in a name?

Well actually there is a heck of a lot in a name. A person's name is fundamental in terms of how people see themselves and who they are. A person's name somehow says this is who I am. My own name is very important to me. It is the first step in getting to know me and an essential part of who I am. It connects me to my family history and heritage.

We all know how important it is to remember people's names and how insulting it can be when someone can't remember yours. We also know the time and thought that most people parents give to naming their new baby. For me the respect we afford a person's name says something about the respect we afford to that person in general.

When I was abroad I resisted the hilarious attempts of some to call me "Spanish Paddy" and I'm sure there are many a Vladimir from Russia and Zibiegniew from Poland who have had their identity reduced to "Boris" and "John Paul" since arriving here. Nicknames are fine when we know each other well, but many of us know how they can be used to bully and hurt.

No offence may be intended and we may have difficulty when we first hear someone's name. But if we don't bother to recognise the right of somebody to be called by their proper name, we should reflect on how much easier it is to deny them other rights, respect and dignity. Will "the Quill" Shakespeare (as he was known to his friends) put it well in Othello (the play with "the black guy"): "Who steals my purse steals thrash..... but he who filches me of my good name robs me of that which not enriches him but makes me poor indeed."

*Juan Carlos Azzopardi was born in Gibraltar. After his father's death his mother moved back to Ireland when Juan Carlos was 2 years old, and he grew up in Sligo. He is now living in Limerick and works as Project Coordinator with the Community Development Network Moyross*

## LNAR and Limerick City Community Forum

Limerick City Community and Voluntary Forum is an umbrella group of which every community and voluntary group in the city should be a member. The Community Forum is a voice of the community and is recognised by the City Development Board and other agencies as the body to be consulted on issues affecting the community in the city. There are up to 350 groups currently affiliated to the Forum.

Under a new structuring of the Community Forum a number of networks have been identified to provide representation onto the new committee of the Forum. Limerick Network Against Racism is one of these networks. It is a great opportunity to ensure that the voice of people from ethnic minorities and those who are on the receiving end of racism can have their views aired and build alliances with other community and voluntary agencies.

### What does the Community Forum do?

It sends members to represent the com-

munity on various boards and committees, including the City Development Board, the City Childcare Committee, the Social Inclusion Measures Group and Limerick City Council's Strategic Policy Committees.

It provide a structure through which the groups may raise local issues and concerns at city level.

In 2006 it will be setting up a website for the Forum in which is intended to co-ordinate information from the many different sources and provide easy one-stop access to it.

### Membership

Membership is made up of 350 community groups and voluntary groups in Limerick City. There are 12 issue based networks and 5 geographic networks currently represented on the Forum committee and others will be identified and there is an openness to build new networks, where necessary.

As well as LNAR the other Networks are:

- Limerick City Childcare Committee
- Limerick Community Education Network
- Le Cheile
- Limerick Sports Partnership
- Limerick Youth Forum
- Limerick Women's Network
- Limerick Citizen's Action Group
- Disability Federation of Ireland

The Geographic Networks are:

- Moyross Partners
- Our Lady of Lourdes Social Service Board
- Southill Community Services Board
- St Munchin's Umbrella Group
- St Mary's Community Forum

### The Vision

Limerick City Community and Voluntary Forum is an inclusive, widely representative group which empowers all sections of the community to participate at all levels in decision making.

The Gardai have now put in place Ethnic Liaison Officers throughout the country. Their role is to meet and liaise with leaders of the various ethnic communities in their area, and to inform and assure these communities of Garda services and protection.

### Ethnic Liaison Officers in Limerick City and County

Roxboro Road Garda Station [061-214340]: Garda Tracey Corcoran, Detective Garda Michael Murphy

Henry Street Garda Station [061-212400]: Garda John Reilly

Askeaton Garda Station [061-601630]: Garda Cathy Healy

Abbyfeale Garda Station [068-31100]: Garda Dermot Brosnan

Ardnacrusha Garda Station [061 345136]: Garda Eugene Long

Cappamore Garda Station [068-381202]: Garda Helen Holden

Newcastlewest Garda Station [069-20650] Garda Pat Morgan

Suzanne Kyle has been the coordinator with DORAS Luimni, the Limerick development organisation for asylum seekers and refugees,



since December 2005. We look at her role at DORAS, and her early impressions of their work.

Suzanne has over five years experience in community development work. After graduating from college, she spent a year teaching Traveller children in Waterford. She returned to college to do a H. Dip. in Community Work in 2000 following which she spent 18 months with the Ballybeg Community Development Project as a development worker. She then spent two and a half years coordinating a women's community

Tuesdays mornings are also busy, when a solicitor from the Refugee Legal Service comes to Doras to meet clients about their cases.

While DORAS staff spend a lot of their time addressing the needs and requirements of those seeking political asylum in Ireland, they also assist people who have refugee status or have been granted leave to remain in Ireland for other reasons. In fact the transition from asylum seeker to refugee is one which Suzanne highlights as a particularly difficult one for many people. When a person has to leave a hostel - sometimes after many years of living in the institution with nothing to do - and integrate into the wider community, they can be faced with a multitude of problems. These include having to find accommodation, or not having their qualifications recognised when they look for a job. "More supports are needed, and it is an area that needs to be explored and ad-



Some of the DORAS staff (from left), Suzanne Kyle, Jenny O'Grady, Ella Noonan, and Sr. Teresa.

education project with Kilkenny Community Action Network (KCAN). In December of last year she took over the role of DORAS coordinator, replacing Eileen McGlynn who had moved to Canada a few months earlier.

According to Suzanne, the DORAS drop-in centre at the Redemptorist Church is a vital element of their work. Any asylum seekers or refugees who need assistance with their cases or with any issues they are experiencing can come to DORAS for support. On any given day there will be a steady stream of clients arriving, but particularly on Mondays and Thursday mornings when DORAS offers a legal support service. Fridays and every second

dressed more" says Suzanne.

DORAS is linked into the government's National Action Plan Against Racism, in terms of strategic planning and through the funding of specific projects. They work with a number of organisations to promote interaction between all communities, and to develop understanding and respect for different cultures. They also work with local authorities and statutory bodies such as the Department of Health and the Gardai to ensure that their policies and services are inclusive of the whole community, and that the particular needs of minority groups are taken into considera-

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## Services provided by DORAS

**Drop in centre:** Any asylum seekers or refugee who needs assistance can come to DORAS for support.

**English classes:** Those who wish to improve their English language skills can attend classes on Monday and Thursday mornings. These classes are run entirely by volunteers.

**Computer classes:** These take place in UL Access Campus on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, and Our Lady of Lourdes community centre on Friday afternoons. Most of these classes are also run by volunteers.

**Legal Support:** DORAS offers a legal support service for those who have queries about a legal issue. This is available on Monday and Thursday mornings in DORAS and on Thursday afternoon in Knockalisheen Centre.

**Refugee Legal Service (RLS):** A solicitor from the RLS comes to DORAS every Friday and every second Tuesday to meet clients about their cases. This service is very important as it saves those seeking asylum from having to travel to Galway where the RLS is based.

**Women's Development Group:** Meeting once a week, this provides an opportunity for asylum seeker and refugee women to come together for time for themselves and to explore issues that affect them. Recent activities included talks from guest speakers, flower arranging, stress management and a trip to Bunratty Castle.

**Accommodation Support Work:** DORAS provides support for those with refugee status who are seeking accommodation. This takes place on Thursdays and Fridays.

**Music Therapy:** Mothers and toddlers attend a music therapy group on Friday mornings. Two music therapy sessions a week also take place in Knockalisheen.

**Art classes:** These take place during the week in the Augustinian church basement.

**Outreach services:** A member of staff visits each of the hostels every week to meet with the residents and offer support with any issues they may be facing.

**Anti-racism workshops:** DORAS provides workshops in schools, colleges and other organisations. These aim to raise awareness of the asylum process in Ireland and of the issues affecting immigrants.

**Sports:** Soccer training takes place once a week for asylum seekers and refugees. The group has participated in local and national events such as the Sports Against Racism Tournament last November.

**Special events:** DORAS marks special events throughout the year such as St. Patrick's Day, International Day Against Racism and International Women's Day.



Amanda Haynes and Sr Ann Scully of DORAS pictured at the launch of DORAS's new DVD. The DVD, entitled "Refugees and Asylum Seekers: The Asylum Process in Ireland" is an invaluable teaching aid in second level education.

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room, board and an allowance of only €19.10 per week for adults and 9.60 a week for children. A study on the experiences of asylum seekers found that although 92% of respondents living under this system of direct provision said that they felt it necessary to supplement the food provided for themselves and their children, 69% stated they were unable to afford extra food. Despite calls for a significant increase in the weekly allowance provided to asylum seeking adults and children in budget 06 none was forthcoming. Families and individuals may spend extended periods living under this system. In November 2005, 32% of those living in direct provision centres were found to have been awaiting a decision on their application for over two years.

Successive studies have highlighted the negative impact on asylum seekers of living in enforced unemployment. Yet, while applicants are denied the right to work the Irish state issues thousands of work permits, visas and authorisations in order to facilitate employers in meeting their demand for labour (over 11,000 in 2004). The Irish Business and Employers Confederation, Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed have all supported calls to lift the ban on asylum seekers employment. In response to the publication of 'The right to work = the right to dignity' in 2001, Aileen O'Donoghue, Assistant Director, Social Policy, IBEC stated that "... we have a situation where employers are experiencing serious difficulty in recruiting staff yet

the government is precluding individuals who are able and willing from participating in the labour market. This situation cannot be justified from an economic or social perspective." In the face of the complacency generated by EU enlargement regarding the importance of non-EU workers to the Irish labour force, Martin Ruhs of TCD warns that as the living standards of the new EU members states converge with those of Ireland, their citizens will increasingly remain in their home countries. The long-term need for additional workers to supplement the Irish labour force is unlikely to be met within the EU.

Asylum seekers possess a diversity of skills and experience from which the Irish economy could be benefiting. A study conducted in Cork found that of a sample of 77 men and women almost 60% has attained a certificate, diploma or degree before coming to Ireland and about 12% had learned a trade or undertaken an apprenticeship. A UK-based study similarly found that 85% of their participants had some education or training qualifications and 80% had been in paid employment before coming to the UK. Asylum seekers' areas of expertise included medicine, teaching and engineering. While the decision to accord asylum seekers the right to work should prioritise human rights, the case can equally be argued on its economic merits.

Giving asylum seekers the opportunity to be economically active, to provide a decent living for their family and contribute to the local and national economy makes sense. It makes

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forward to. I didn't cry. I remembered feeling a great pain in my chest and an overwhelming hatred towards a new day because there was absolutely nothing from my dreams. I dreamt each frightened, sick, and lonely child will have parents who can provide a safe place for them. Inside my head, I kept hearing my mother saying, *Love and be loved. Obtain several skills, just for your own soul. Look around you and listen. We are here only for short period of time.* So I wonder why people destroy each other and other human values.

I looked around and all I could see were fields covered with holes, created by artillery shelling. People wandering around without any purpose or meaning, and children playing war games. I ran to my room, to my world, to my dreams: *Fields covered with green grass. I am running on that field without falling into those holes. A butterfly flies amongst the most colourful flowers ... not my parents' blood or tears. Streets filled with people who walk and smile - not endless columns of people who are on the way of no return. I laugh, not scream. Here, there is love - not hate.*

I am in the Republic of Ireland for almost fourteen months. Sometimes I realize I dream with open eyes. I look around and I can see fields covered with soft green grass just like in my dreams - and people with wide smiles on their faces, and different bags full of goods. I see people who have great and warm heart, and who also treat others like human beings. Then I began to shake and overwhelmed with fear. I am afraid that someone could wake me up, I am afraid that this is only my dream. I keep expecting someone or something to break that dream, like before....

I dreamed of a world on my palm, which always flies away from me - and my parents with smiles in their eyes though I always see a faded smile on the corner of their lips, something that looks like a normal smile. I dreamed of a gentle and warm hug from my sister still, I always get a trembling and tearful hug due to the fact that we were surrounded by war and hate. This made it quite difficult for the family to be together at all times.

In my dream I had lots of friends, whereas in reality, I didn't because of religion. The people who are around me support and love me because of who I am, whereas in reality, I experience pure jealousy and envy.

There is just one real dream: my parents, my sister, and our bond. This gives me strength to keep dreaming, and maybe, just maybe, I will live my dream.

Right now, my dreams have a shape; I can see the world on my palm. Even more, I will see the world with my own eyes - and I will go to the Big Apple, someday. Finally, my parents have a smile on their faces, and I can see a sparkle in their eyes. My sister starts to sleep normally without any fear of what will happen tomorrow ..., knowing the fact that we will be together, no matter what. Steadily but surely, I'll get some new friends. I'm no longer afraid to express myself. Now I have friends who are happy when I am happy - and who will try to help me whenever I find myself fearful.

Now I am sure that I do not dream of a life. Now I live the dream!

Lana Radanovic is aged 15, and is a pupil at Salesian School, Fembank.

sense on humanitarian and economic grounds. It makes sense for the families and individuals awaiting decisions on their applications and it makes sense for Ireland. Employers' organisations, trade unions, and advocacy groups have called for the right to work for asylum seekers. 69% of the Irish population support this proposal. It's time we eliminated the non-sense of enforced unemployment and dependency. It's time the government legislated for the right of asylum seekers

(Continued from page 6)

tion.

"We must acknowledge all the local and national organisations, as well as all those who provide funding for the project, for all the support they have given over the last few years and continue to give" says Suzanne. "This help has ensured that DORAS has been able to

support the positive integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland and has allowed us to develop and expand to meet the needs of the "New Irish".

Finally, Suzanne points out that none of the work done by DORAS could take place without the commitment of all the volunteers who work throughout the

year to ensure that the experience of newcomers to Limerick is a positive one.

DORAS is based at the Redemptorist Church, Mount St. Alphonsus, Limerick. Phone: 061-310328

## What To Do If You See Or Experience Racism

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) has a system for reporting racist incidents. If you have information about what you believe to be a racist incident please fill in the form below, and send it to:

The Director  
NCCRI  
20 Harcourt Street  
Dublin 2

or fax it to 01 4785778.

You are also encouraged to report the incident to the relevant authority responsible for investigating the complaint; for example: the Gardai (racist crime), the Equality Authority (discrimination in the workplace, the provision of goods & services, etc.), local authorities (graffiti, harassment on local authority housing estates etc.).

The Equality Authority can provide advice to people who feel they have been discriminated against on grounds such as 'race' and membership of the Travelling Community. They can be contacted at 01 4173333.

### Reporting Organisation or Individual Information

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of person filling in the form: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Victim Information *Please do not include information that would identify the victim e.g. address, name.*

Place of residence: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender:  Male  Female

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Legal Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity (*More than one box can be ticked*)

Black  White  Traveller  Indian  Chinese  Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### Information on the incident *Please include all relevant information.*

Date and Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

What happened? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you reported the incident to the Gardai?  Yes  No

Have you reported the incident to another authority?  Yes  No

If Yes, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

Which further action is/was envisaged or taken? \_\_\_\_\_

### Character of the incident *Please tick all that apply*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to public places/shops   | <input type="checkbox"/> Media portrayal                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation                   | <input type="checkbox"/> People wearing offensive badges/insignia/tattoos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attacks/Physical abuse          | <input type="checkbox"/> Policing issues                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Racist comments or other cultural disrespect     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment sector/pubs       | <input type="checkbox"/> Racist graffiti                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government agencies             | <input type="checkbox"/> Racist jokes                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health sector                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Social and personal contact                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hostility at place of residence | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job market                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal abuse/Name-calling                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Workplace  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____    |   |