

**DÚN LAOGHAIRE REFUGEE PROJECT/TIONSCNAMH DHÚN
LAOGHAIRE UM DHÍDEANAITHE
SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES – 2007
SEÚ TUARSCÁIL BHLIANTÚIL - 2007**

Tax Number/Uimhir Chánach CHY14507
email/riomhphost:dunlaoghairerefugee@ireland.com & <http://www.drp.ie>
45A South Park, Dublin 18

1. Introduction

The Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project (DRP) was established in 2001 to offer practical assistance to asylum seekers accommodated in hostels at Dún Laoghaire. Gradually these hostels were closed, as the number of new arrivals in Ireland fell and in keeping with government policy to disperse people seeking asylum throughout the country.

Large numbers of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum (separated children without a parent or guardian) were accommodated in hostels in Dún Laoghaire and the DRP gave special attention to them from its inception. The organisation now works primarily with these young people, now young adults (called “aged out”), living in Dún Laoghaire Rathdown and the greater Dublin area.

Since June of 2005, the DRP has held weekly meetings at the Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre (DLCTC), which serves as a Drop-in Centre. Both young people seeking asylum and those with residency attend the Centre on a regular basis. In this way the DRP keeps in regular touch with clients in the asylum community¹. The DRP organises and funds programmes - including education and training courses - to assist them.

Since 2004 the DRP has supported a group of young asylum seekers who have been awaiting decisions over long periods on their applications for leave to remain. This is the PLUS (*Please Let Us Stay*) Group.

We are most grateful to the DLCTC who have allowed us to use their premises at York Road, Dún Laoghaire for the Drop-in Centre on Monday evenings every week. Both they and our generous donors have made the work of the DRP possible. Without their support, we could achieve nothing.

The DRP does not rent office space and has NO paid staff, as its policy is that all activities should be efficiently run on a voluntary basis.

The present Annual Report (in English and Irish) and all previous Annual Reports are on the DRP website, along with other basic DRP documents.

¹ In this report, “asylum community” includes:

- asylum seekers still in the asylum determination process;
- persons granted refugee status and so permanent residency;
- persons whose applications for asylum have been refused but who have applied for leave to remain (LTR) on humanitarian grounds or for “subsidiary protection” (see § 4.1);
- persons granted leave to remain (LTR) and so residency, for several years, initially.

2. Main Activities

In 2007, the DRP concentrated on the following programmes and events:

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education & Training Support, mainly at Third Level VEC (Vocational Education Committee) Colleges in Dún Laoghaire and Dublin; |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PLUS (<i>Please Let Us Stay</i>) Campaign; |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drop-in Centre in Dún Laoghaire, as a weekly point of contact for the asylum / refugee community, especially young people with links to the former Dún Laoghaire hostels; |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welfare, Recreational Activities, Volunteering and ‘Befriending’; |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Towards Citizenship; <i>see paragraph 3E in the report</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal Assistance, Judicial Review, Prison Visits and Support at time of and after Deportation or Voluntary Return: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact with other refugee organisations, statutory and non-statutory; |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact with the media, political representatives, NGOs and professional bodies to exchange information/highlight issues of concern; |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual World Refugee Day Celebration in Dún Laoghaire; |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other Activities. |

Further information on each of these activities is set out below. Additionally, the following Annexes are attached:

- Annex I** - Asylum Statistics.
Annex II - Membership of DRP Trust, DRP Association Committee and Volunteers.
Annex III - Summary Account for 2007 and List of Main Donors.

The Report of the Auditors and signed Financial Statements for the Year 2007 (when available) will be inserted separately on www.drp.ie.

3. A. Education & Training Support, mainly at Third Level VEC (Vocational Education Committee) Colleges in Dún Laoghaire and Dublin.

This is by far the most important programme organised by the DRP and the programme that uses most funds. Those whom we support include young people both with residency (refugee status and leave to remain) and those still awaiting residency, some of whom have been in Ireland for as long as six years

In the academic year ended June 2007, the DRP sponsored 42 clients for courses, mainly at VEC Colleges. Of these, six were young mature students preparing for the Leaving Certificate: the others were studying for professional third level courses. On completion of the examinations in June, only two had to repeat a year, because of insufficient English; and one did not finish as she returned to her home country by voluntarily repatriation. The rest achieved excellent results.

For the academic year that began in September 2007, the DRP is sponsoring 41 clients, some of whom began new courses, others who continued from the previous year. Three are young mature Leaving Certificate students. All, except two, of the students sponsored by the DRP in the current academic year are aged between 19 and 24.

Advance preparation in 2007 for the courses for the forthcoming academic year began as early as April. Bryan McMahon (Careers Guidance Teacher) gave valuable information and advice on suitable courses.

The DRP monitors course attendance by the young students it sponsors, keeps in touch with them during the course, helps with any difficulties that arise and, on completion of each course, assesses the results achieved, especially their relevance to the job market.

The professional courses currently being studied include: Childcare, Nursing and Nurse Assistant, Accounting Technician, Travel & Tourism, Computers & Business, Sports Therapy, Sound Engineering, Interactive Media, and Interior Design. These courses will help those who qualify to get jobs, find satisfaction in their work, contribute to society, have families and further integrate into Irish society. If they return to their birth countries they will be in a better position to access employment and support themselves.

The main costs to the DRP for the year 2007 include:

| | |
|---|----------------|
| College fees - along with text books & course equipment | €21,008 |
| Transport Costs to and from College | €01,900 |
| TOTAL EDUCATION & TRAINING | €22,908 |

The main difficulties for the asylum community when accessing third level education include:

- (a) as non-EU nationals, asylum seekers - whether or not they have residency - must pay fees (i.e. they cannot avail of free Third Level Education as is the case of Irish citizens);
- (b) in the case of persons with residency, they must work for pay in order to sustain themselves, with the result that they usually can take only evening classes;
- (c) asylum seekers who have not yet been granted residency and are accommodated at Dublin City hostels, study facilities are inadequate.

3. B. PLUS (*Please Let Us Stay*) Campaign

The DRP continued in 2007 to assist a group of young asylum seekers (single “aged out” unaccompanied minors) who in 2004 made a submission to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (JELR) urging that they be given leave to remain on humanitarian grounds, after their applications for refugee status had been refused. This is the P+L+U+S (*Please Let Us Stay*) Campaign. A copy of the submission entitled “PLUS Appeal – Leave to Remain for Aged Out Minor Asylum Seekers”, prepared in August 2005, is on the DRP website.

An important development during the year was the inclusion by the Labour Party in its “2007 Election Manifesto”, issued on 3 May 2007, in the section “A Fair Place to Live and Work”, of the following sentence:

“..we will grant leave to remain to the small number of aged out minors who remain in the country”.

The manifesto, referring to the asylum process, calls for its “urgent overhaul to bring it into line with best European and international practice”. Among the matters mentioned are “the huge disparity between the numbers granted refugee status at the initial stage and the numbers successful at the appeal stage” and that “unaccompanied minors applying for asylum should have a legal guardian appointed to represent them in an appropriate manner” - a matter raised in the past by the DRP.²

In the whole of Ireland we calculate there are approximately 200 - 250 young asylum seekers in this “aged out” category. In fact experience has shown that slowly some are being granted leave to remain. This is usually after very long delays during which the individual concerned has to cope with the anxiety of waiting in a hostel and, for some, the stress of reporting often at monthly intervals to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) with the possibility of being deported during any such visit.

One of our Dún Laoghaire graduates who got leave to remain (LTR) in August, had spent seven years and two months in the system since he first arrived in Ireland as an unaccompanied minor. Another who got LTR in April had been reporting each month to the GNIB for two years and four months and there are other similar stories. During the latter part of 2007, it appeared that the Ministerial Decisions Unit of the Department of Justice (JELR) was reviewing a number of cases of persons in the aged out category living at RIA hostels for a very long time. We hope that this will result in more rapid decisions on leave to remain.

3. C. Drop-in Centre in Dún Laoghaire as a weekly point of contact for the asylum / refugee community, especially young people with links to the former Dún Laoghaire hostels.

3.C.1. Drop-in Sessions

During 2007, meetings were held each Monday from 19.00 to 21.30 at the Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre (DLCTC). The meetings were transferred to the Old School House from 9 July to 17 September when a new roof was installed at the Training Centre.

Attendance was good throughout the year, with a solid core coming each week and an annual average of over thirty persons per week. These were almost all young asylum seekers – the PLUS Group and others between the ages of 19 – 24. During the year, one or two older asylum seekers attended the Drop-in Sessions and, while they were made welcome, they were told that scarce DRP funding for educational courses had to be reserved for the young, as is, also, the wish of our donors. In addition, a small number of “unaccompanied minors” accommodated at hostels in Dublin city attended from time to

² See par. F3 of Annual Report 2006.

time. We kept in contact, also, with the young mothers formerly accommodated at Kilmarnock House, Killiney, who got leave to remain through the Irish Born Child Scheme.

As previously, the PLUS Group has helped to organise the Monday evening sessions. In this way they gain useful practical experience of formal meetings and are involved in discussions on political, legal and social issues of concern to them.

3.C.2. Visits In and Out

Visits to the Drop-in Centre included:

- Deputy Barry Andrews TD;
- Garda Chief Superintendent, Dave Roche;
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL);
- FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centre);
- UNICEF Ireland (Kay Nolan and Kieran O'Brien);
- Children's Rights Alliance (Maria Corbett);
- Irish Refugee Council (Jyothi, Deo and Emalia);
- Transition Support Project Dublin City VEC;
- Samaritans;
- Southside Partnership;
- ARD Research (Anthony Finn);
- DLR (Dún Laoghaire Rathdown) County Council
- Dún Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures (Fiona Whelan);
- Journalists.

Visits Out included:

- Irish Human Rights Commission;
- Comhlámh: briefing for people thinking of volunteering in developing countries;
- Garda Training Group: providing information on asylum issues;
- Labour Party Conference, Wexford (18/11/07)

3.C.3. What the Drop-in Centre provided:

The numbers attending regularly each week indicated the success of the Drop-in Centre. The Centre provides a regular weekly point of contact for young asylum seekers with the DRP, so that they can seek advice or help on matters of concern to them and it allows them, also, to meet and to mix socially with each other. It is here, also, that the ordinary work of the DRP such as the day-to-day administration of programmes (e.g. the Education and Training Programme), accounting, monthly Committee meetings etc., is carried on.

The Centre makes it possible, also, to organise talks and projects such as the "Get Wise" course (see § 3.E.1(a) below) organised by the Dún Laoghaire Garda Community Liaison Officers and preparation work on the films shown at the World Refugee Day commemoration in June 2007. We mark special occasions there (exam. successes, birthdays and feast days) and held a party on 17 December for Christmas which was close to the Islamic "Great Feast" (Adhha).

An independent evaluation of the Monday Evening Drop-in Centre meetings is at present being undertaken (see §7.5 below) and the DRP will consider carefully its recommendations.

3. D. Welfare, Recreational, Volunteering and ‘Befriending’

3.D.1. Welfare

The DRP has given assistance in cases of real financial need, often when “leave to remain” has been granted and this means moving from direct provision to rented accommodation. We have assisted in particular with the payment for the Residence Permit “Green Card” (€100) and with deposits for rented accommodation. Help has, also, been given to pay for crèche costs for a single parent mother, and other small grants have been made towards mobile phone credits, transport and other basic welfare items. The total amount spent is small, but is important for these young people: if still awaiting decisions on residency and living in hostels, they must survive on a weekly allowance of €19.10 for all needs except food and accommodation. If granted residency, they must manage on a small wage.

3.D.2. Recreational

The DRP has encouraged clients to join the Dún Laoghaire Town Football Club and similar clubs and given support for transport.

Various cultural outings and events for young people took place during the year, including:

- Andrews Lane Theatre in February to see a play in which two of our clients acted;
- Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in March for a Céilí with 24 participants. Comhaltas were most helpful and we are very grateful to them;
- Project Theatre in April for a play from Ghana in which one client acted;
- Hill walk in the mountains in July;
- TCD Theatre in September to see another play, also, featuring the same client;
- During 24-26 August, at the Dún Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures, asylum seekers participated in various events including the Burundian Drummers at the Harbour Plaza.

3.D.3. Volunteering:

This takes place mainly in the summer when classes are out and usually involves those still waiting decisions on residency. Cooperation with the new Dún Laoghaire Rathdown “Volunteer Bureau” will be given attention in the future. **It is fitting to record here that in 2007 one of our Committee members, David Hicks, was given a Volunteer Award by the DLRCC.**

In 2007, volunteers took part in:

- ***St. Vincent de Paul: Summer Camp for Inner City children:*** Asylum seekers participated in this Summer School, helped to inform those participating about third world issues and made cross-community links;
- ***Festival of World Cultures:*** in July / August some of the young people distributed publicity material for the Dún Laoghaire Festival (24-26 August).

3.D.4. Befriending;

This system has developed well, with individual volunteers acting as a friend /mentor for individual asylum seekers or a small group of asylum seekers who are often accommodated at the same hostel. This in turn has resulted in visits to some of the Dublin City hostels e.g. Viking Lodge in Francis Street, Camden House and North Frederick Street. A visit was made on 2 December to Mosney, now a hostel, to meet old friends. We were impressed by the good living conditions there.

3. E. Towards Citizenship

3.E.1. Planning Ahead

The DRP recognises the *long term importance* of integration and of helping young people from mainly African countries to prepare for the benefits and challenges of being Irish citizens. Most of our young clients arrive in Ireland with good English or acquire it soon after, so for them language is not a problem in the way of communication. Moreover, those from African countries where Arabic, French or Portuguese are used bring with them valuable international language skills as a resource that can lead to jobs as interpreters and translators. African languages can be of value, also, for the same purpose (e.g. Swahili) and they all enrich our linguistic and cultural capital. Contacts made through education and work (when permitted legally) and through local cultural, sporting and religious bodies are important ways of integrating. During 2007, DRP volunteers, with the very great help of the local Gardaí, discussed a variety of topics aimed at the transition from *seeking* asylum to *attaining* asylum and, finally, becoming *citizens*. Among such actions organised in 2007 were:

3.E.1. (a) “Get Wise Programme”:

During 2007, the Dún Laoghaire / Cabinteely Garda Community Liaison Officers, under Sgt. Angelene Confrey and assisted by Garda John Paul Durkan, organised this programme from the end of January to 11 June. A shorter pilot programme had taken place in 2006. A member of the Garda Drug Squad gave information on drugs and another officer on road safety. Sgt. Confrey, also, arranged for two representatives of the Samaritans and for a Social Worker from Loughlinstown Hospital to give talks. Garda Community Liaison Officers from various parts of Dublin were involved, which helped to establish useful personal links between the Gardaí and those living at the various Dublin hostels. A second similar “Get Wise Programme” was organised in the seven-week period 5 November to 17 December. Certificates were given to those who completed both of the “Get Wise” programmes successfully. During this second programme Sgt. Angelene Confrey invited a member of the Southside Local Employment

Services to talk about job interview skills, CV writing etc., which was a very useful initiative.

The Gardaí have been particularly helpful, underlined by the visit to the Drop-in Centre on 19 February by Chief Superintendent Dave Roche, who invited all participants back to the Station with transport home again at the end. The Garda Community Liaison Officers gave information to clients about recruitment to the Gardaí and in September organised a trip to Tullamore to visit the Garda Training Centre. A good relationship has been established between the local Gardaí and our clients, who often come from countries where the police are regarded as oppressive and corrupt. The Gardaí themselves seem to find the contact instructive and will make use of the input from participants to draw up a standard programme for use throughout the country. The Garda Social Club made a generous donation before Christmas towards our Education Programme, which was gratefully received.

3.E.1. (b) Residency & Finding a Job and Keeping It.

As already stated (3.D.1), the transition period after being granted residency, can be a difficult one for asylum seekers, when they immediately must find paid work, rent lodgings and fend for themselves. During the year, various volunteers with the help of asylum seekers with residency who had gone through this transition period themselves, briefed others in a series of talks with questions and answers. Two DRP members have drawn up an Employment Pack, again with the help of asylum seekers. The advice includes: model CVs (an area identified as needing attention); how to behave and dress for a job interview; advice on job opportunities, FAS etc; and behaviour and relationships at work. Other relevant issues discussed have included rented accommodation, child minding/crèche facilities for mothers, social welfare entitlements and the *habitual residency* requirement, Irish tax system, and renewal of Green Card.

3.E.1. (c) Citizenship.

Information on the political system in Ireland including voting rights (e.g. asylum seekers at Kilmarnock House voted in the local government elections in 2005) is one of the areas emphasised in information sessions. This covers, also, how to apply for Irish citizenship and the rights as well as the duties of citizens. The PLUS Group, in particular, have set out both to inform themselves about Irish politics and our democratic institutions and to inform Irish people on the facts in their countries. Their personal contacts with politicians and other leaders in our community have given them a direct insight on the democratic system in practice. For instance, they addressed the Labour Party Conference at Wexford on 18 November on asylum issues. They were awarded one of the President's Young Citizens Awards in 2006 for their campaign "to help young asylum seekers to become more integrated in the local community".

3.E.2. Developing the Programme "Towards Citizenship".

It is intended to develop this programme to help young asylum seekers cope with the difficulties of the transition from *seeking* to *attaining* asylum and, in the longer term, to integrate as they grow to maturity, achieve a more settled place in Irish society and apply

for Irish citizenship. We will pay close attention to the recommendations in the Independent Evaluation being carried out at present (see § 7.5 below) and, also, to the Report (March 2007) of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship and its recommendations. Much will depend on the interest shown by clients and the time they have available, but their participation in the “Get Wise Programme” is a good indication of their enthusiasm. It has been at their initiative that question and answer sessions were organised on topics such as “What to Do Once You Get Residency”, “Finding a Job and Keeping It” and “How Irish Politics Works”. In addition, “Irish Culture, Language and Traditions” have been discussed, and as a result of such interest, in November, we wrote to Foras na Gaeilge to enquire if they could provide funds to help with basic Irish language classes (as Conradh na Gaeilge did for asylum seekers in Galway).

3.E.3.

All such knowledge about Ireland helps to promote active integration but it could also be of direct practical benefit if tests are introduced in the future, as in other countries, in order to qualify for Irish citizenship. Already the Taskforce on Active Citizenship has called for “a formal ceremony to be introduced, which would mark someone’s admission to Irish citizenship and allow them to publicly demonstrate their commitment to Ireland”. The Taskforce refers, also, to the need for “a more structured part of the process of becoming Irish citizens” to “include completion of an appropriate course as a criterion or requirement for admission to citizenship”. An English language test is also likely.

3. F. Legal Assistance, Judicial Review, Prison Visits and Support at time of and after Deportation or Voluntary Return:

The DRP has continued to provide advice on legal assistance to asylum seekers. During the year, a number of cases involving clients were reopened as a result of judicial review. The DRP has attended in Court in support of asylum seekers on several occasions, in particular with one who, after waiting for more than five years, was eventually granted leave to remain. Attention has been drawn by legal advisors to Section 17/7 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) under which the Minister has discretionary powers to allow an application that has been withdrawn to re-enter the asylum process. In this context, the DRP urges the Minister to give special consideration in the case of vulnerable applicants.

One young Nigerian (aged 19) asylum seeker – Adijat - was deported in December to Lagos. This young woman arrived in Ireland in March 2004 as a separated child aged 15 years and was referred under the Child Care Act, to the Health Services Executive. The latter, together with the Irish Red Cross, tried to trace her family in Lagos, but without success. She claimed asylum in 2005 and went through the asylum determination process but the result was negative and a deportation order was signed. She had attended the Drop-in sessions of the DRP regularly.

When she was asked in November to report to the Garda National Immigration Bureau for deportation, the Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA), supported by the DRP, sent an e-mail on 21 November to the Minister for Justice. While acknowledging the State’s right to carry out a deportation order in respect of unsuccessful asylum seekers, the CRA urged

the Minister to put a stay on the deportation order on the grounds that this young woman, without relatives or friends in Lagos, would be effectively destitute once returned there. The CRA asked, also, for an assurance that the terms of the Ireland-Nigeria Agreement of 2001 on Immigration Matters on assistance to returnees (see § 4.3. below) were being implemented. In addition, recourse was made to independent legal advice but without success.

The young woman was held in custody at Mountjoy Women's Prison for five nights and deported on 4 December, together with eight other Nigerian nationals. DRP members accompanied her to the GNIB each time she had to report there in the three weeks before the deportation took place and visited when she was held in prison. We note here the strong criticism made of the prison conditions in the case of foreign women being held before deportation by the Prison Chaplains in their Annual Report 2006/07.

After deportation, Adijat reported to friends in Dublin that she was admitted without difficulty at Lagos Airport. She is fortunate that her Church in Dublin arranged for her to be met on arrival and we understand that these Church contacts are looking after her. No reception care and support arrangements were provided for her on arrival by either the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) or the relevant Nigerian Authorities (e.g. Federal Ministry of Sports and Social Welfare).

We intend, in so far as possible, to monitor the situation of this young woman.

One other young woman, also a client, opted for voluntary return (Assisted Voluntary Return Programme) to Tanzania with the help of the IOM and follow-up contact has been maintained after repatriation. She has been helped by the IOM to reintegrate and to set up a small shop at Dar as Salaam.

3.G. Contact with other refugee organisations, statutory and non-statutory;

3.G.1. Statutory – the DRP liaises regularly with the RIA (Reception & Integration Agency of the Department of Justice), FAS, VEC, the Gardaí and with other State bodies dealing with the asylum community.

3.G.2. Non-Statutory: this contact includes attendance at the bi-monthly meetings of the *Churches' Asylum Network* (CAN) and at meetings between CAN and the RIA. The DRP is a member of the *Children's Rights Alliance* and of *Integrating Ireland*. Contact is maintained with other NGOs, such as the *Vincentian Refugee Centre*, *SPIRASI*, etc. As in the past, the Irish Refugee Council gives us constant advice and help. In the past year also, new and useful contact has been made with the UNICEF Ireland office. These contacts are invaluable for obtaining and exchanging information about current asylum issues.

3.G.3. Local level in Dún Laoghaire: the DRP is affiliated to the *Southside Partnership Unite Project*, through the Southside *social inclusion group*. Other members include DLR County Council, the Health Services Executive (HSE), RAPID etc. The DRP is a

member, also, of the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown *Anti-Racism and Diversity (ARD) Coordinating Committee* (see 3.J. below)

3.H. Contact with the media, political representatives, NGOs and professional bodies to exchange information/highlight issues of concern about asylum.

The DRP continues to maintain contacts with policy makers and policy influencers. We provide information, also, to persons doing research. Thus, in April, researchers from the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) and the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) visited, and in June, researchers on behalf of the European Parliament and also the One Foundation came to the Drop-in Centre. Media personnel with an interest in asylum keep in contact with the DRP. In September, Niall Foley from the Dún Laoghaire Express (a new local newspaper) visited and as a result published a very positive account of asylum issues and the DRP in October. Other journalists who visited include Colin Murphy, an independent journalist, and Ruadhán Mac Cormaic, The Irish Times.

The DRP will continue to play its part in keeping the public informed of asylum issues as refugees and asylum seekers today make up only a very small part of the large immigrant population in Ireland and so do not attract media attention. At the same time, the worsening human rights and security situation in many parts of the world (Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan/Darfur, DR Congo to mention some) is causing many people to seek refuge outside their own countries.

3.I. Annual World Refugee Day Commemoration at Dún Laoghaire

On 20 June, the Annual World Refugee Day was commemorated in Dún Laoghaire at the IADT (Institute of Art, Design and Technology) in the Carriglea Building, Baker's Corner under the combined auspices of the IADT, DLR County Council, Southside Partnership (who kindly together bore the costs) and the DRP. This was part of the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Social Inclusion Week, which ran from 18-22 June, with the theme "Opportunities for All".

The Director of the IADT, Mr. Jim Divine, opened the proceedings and the Cathaoirleach, Mr. Denis O'Callaghan, and Mary King, Chairperson DRP, spoke. The highlight of the evening was the showing of two films (DVD) made by the PLUS Group as part of the Digital Media Project funded by IADT and Southside Partnership. The first film gave a vivid record of the daily lives of young asylum seekers and the second was a short play, both of which received loud applause. The young people provided music for the evening.

There were also stands showing the work of Comhlámh, the Gardaí, Crosscare Migrant Project and the Dún Laoghaire Volunteering Bureau. Those invited included representatives of the organising bodies, members of the asylum community especially the Dún Laoghaire graduates, our donors, the statutory and non-governmental bodies involved in asylum matters and others who over the years have shown an interest in

asylum seekers in Dún Laoghaire. Over a hundred people attended and the evening was a great success.

On the same day Rita Canavan, DRP Committee Member, was presented (very deservedly) with an award in the category “Education and Youth” at the annual World Refugee Day commemoration at the Dublin Civic Offices.

3.J. Other Activities

Anti-Racism and Diversity (ARD) Plan for DLR 2007-2010.

The National Action Plan Against Racism, launched by the Government in 2005, called for plans at local government level and provision for such a plan was included in the Action Plan of the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Board. A local steering committee was set up in May 2006 under the Chair of Torry Schellhorn of DLRCC. The DRP was invited to participate and did so through its Chairperson, Mary King. All the other members of the steering committee were official or semi-official bodies. The Anti-Racism and Diversity Plan for the County of DLR 2007-2010 was issued in the summer of 2007 under the title “Moving Forward Together”. This Plan is important as for the first time at local official level there is an agreed policy, with specific actions for implementation within a time frame. There is a follow up Coordinating Committee to ensure implementation. The DRP continues to be represented through its Chairperson (and by another DRP Committee member) on the follow up Committee.

4. Irish Asylum Law and Practice, Social Conditions and Returned Asylum Seekers

4.1. Immigration Bill (2007) - Subsidiary Protection.

An Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill was published early in 2007. This draft legislation has important implications for asylum issues and was strongly criticised by various human rights NGOs including CADEC Coalition and the Irish Refugee Council. A new version of the Bill is due to be published early in 2008.

“Subsidiary Protection” is one issue that must be incorporated in the new legislation. Already, the *Eligibility for Protection Regulations 2006* brought subsidiary protection into effect on 10 October 2006 for Ireland, as for all the countries of the European Union. This type of protection applies to persons who have not qualified as refugees but are in need of international protection because they would face a real risk of suffering “serious harm” (e.g. death penalty or torture or a serious and individual threat to life in a conflict situation) if returned to their countries of origin. During the year 2007, a number of clients applied for “subsidiary protection” - some have been refused and others await a response.

4.2. Social Conditions

Among the general issues that continue to cause concern, are:

- **4.2. (a)** the inadequacy of the allowance (€19.10 per week for adults and €9.60 per week for dependants) paid to asylum seekers, which has not increased since 1999.

- 4.2. (b) the abrupt ending of the supervision exercised by the Health Services Executive (Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow) in the case of separated young asylum seekers (unaccompanied minors) under their care in Dublin when they reach 18 and are considered as “aged out. This does not appear to be the case for such “aged out” asylum seekers in Cork, nor is it the case for Irish children in foster care.
- 4.2. (c) the need for some form of “step-down” accommodation (or “half way house”) for “aged out” minors during the transition period, after they are granted residency, when they must immediately become self-sufficient (see § 3. D.1. & 3.E.1 (b) above).
- 4.2. (d) inadequate hostel facilities at the Dublin hostels for young people waiting the granting of residency e.g. as places for long-term stays, facilities for study. On the other hand, we should mention the good conditions at Mosney.
- 4.2. (e) moving young asylum seekers studying for courses at Dublin Colleges from Dublin hostels to accommodation elsewhere in Ireland.

4.3. Asylum Seekers Who Have Returned to their Countries of Origin

4.3.1. As to Nigeria, there has, in fact, been a clear obligation on our Government “to identify registered and accredited NGOs” in Ireland and in Nigeria that would provide counselling, training and employment for such returned asylum seekers and for their monitoring. This was set out in Article XIX of the Irish-Nigerian Agreement on Immigration Matters, signed at Abuja in August 2001 on behalf of our Government by the then Minister for Justice (JELR). In August 2007, the DRP wrote to the Minister asking what action had been taken under this Agreement, but had received no reply to the questions asked by the end of the year. As we have pointed out in § 3.F above, the Children’s Rights Alliance have, also, raised the issued of the Irish-Nigerian Agreement on Immigration Matters with the Minister for Justice (JELR).

4.3.2. The Department of Justice (JELR) is part-funding a programme for young asylum seekers voluntarily returned to Nigeria, which is sponsored by the IOM (International Office for Migration), and it is possible that this is the Department’s way of fulfilling the Government’s obligations towards the welfare of returnees. The DRP noted that “IOM Dublin had established an agreement” with the Nigerian authorities “to enable social workers in Nigeria” to monitor, in liaison with the IOM in Nigeria, returned unaccompanied minors and that “this programme included, also, young adults aged 18-21” (IOM Newsletter July 2006). The IOM thus reflects the view expressed by UNHCR & Save the Children (Statement of Good Practice, 2004) that young people who have reached the age of 18 remain *vulnerable*. The IOM programmes, however, deal only with voluntary return of these young people. The IOM can offer its services to assist such voluntary returns at any time up to a deportation order being signed by the Minister but only up to that point and not after it.

4.3.3. There is, accordingly, a lacuna as to *involuntary* or *forced* returns i.e. deportations. Our view is that if there is need for a programme to assist and monitor *voluntary* returns, then there is as great if not a greater need in the case of the often sudden *deportation* of “vulnerable Nigerian nationals”. As the IOM will assist only with voluntary returns, an alternative would be for the Minister to amend or temporarily to revoke the deportation

order in the case of vulnerable persons and, so, to allow them to avail of the assistance of the IOM by way of *voluntary* return while the order is suspended. At all events, as the Minister for Justice (JELR) is the agent that signs the deportation order, the responsibility for ensuring the safe return and reintegration of vulnerable persons, so deported, rests in a large measure with the Minister.

4.3.4. The DRP is, in fact, opposed to the deportation of such vulnerable persons (i.e. minors and “aged out” asylum seekers) and we note, as to Nigeria, that the British Home Office (Operational Guidance Note - Nigeria 18/01/07) advises that “minors...can only be returned where they have family to return to or there are adequate reception, care and support arrangements” and, further, the Home Office could not “be satisfied that such arrangements were in place”.

4.3.5. We note, also, the unhappy current state of affairs in Nigeria, where as the US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Nigeria for 2006 states: “Government officials at all levels continued to commit serious abuses” and “the Government seldom enforced even the inadequate laws designed to protect the rights of children”.

4.3.6. On the issue of trafficking, the DRP in a correspondence that has gone on since August 2005, has urged the Irish authorities, especially Irish Aid/Cúnamh Éireann, to take action to select and grant-aid reliable non-governmental child/youth welfare organisations in countries such as Nigeria that provide shelter capacity for trafficking victims, rehabilitation by way of vocational skills-training and anti-trafficking public awareness education campaigns targeting vulnerable children and their families. By trafficking we mean the use of illegal and often dangerous methods of the transport of human beings, internationally, whether willingly or unwillingly in the case of those transported, as in Nigeria the two activities – trafficking and smuggling of persons – are difficult to distinguish and the agents involved are often the same.

4.3.7. We continue to believe that, in addition to international organisations, NGOs should also be used in this connection. Such NGOs are close to the people and are able to monitor local State agencies independently. We believe, also, that Irish Aid/Cúnamh Éireann - which has long experience of dealing with Irish and counterpart NGOs in poor African countries and is responsible for the international cooperation budget - is the Irish State agency best suited to channel such aid *via* NGOs.

4.3.8. Among the suitable candidates, in our view, are the various Irish religious bodies (e.g. via the Irish Missionary Resource Service and Christian Aid Ireland), “Save the Children” and others. We note, also, that “UNICEF supports an active network of NGOs working against trafficking and helping victims” in Nigeria (UK Border and Immigration Agency CIO Report Nov.2007 § 24.7). At the very least, a special allocation could be made in support of the UNICEF programme via NGOs in Nigeria as referred to. We call on Irish Aid/Cúnamh Éireann, with the resources available to it, to take the initiative to draw up and fund a suitable programme. Such a programme, once established and assessed in Nigeria, could provide a model for similar programmes in other African countries

5. Legal Status of DRP Trust and DRP Association: DRP Website

5.1. Deed of Trust and Constitution: The DRP is made up of two legal bodies: (a) the DRP Trust and (b) the DRP Association, governed respectively by a Deed of Trust and a Constitution. By way of a “Scheme of Incorporation under the Charities Act 1973”, the Trust was established as a Body Corporate by the Charity Commissioners on 14 April 2003. Joint monthly meetings of the Trust and of the Association Committee were held in 2007.

5.2. Charities Bill 2007: the DRP welcomes the proposed new legislation, to update the regulation of Charities. The Act provides for the first time for the legal registration of charities. The DRP will ensure that it complies with this legislation.

6. DRP Trustees, DRP Association Committee Members and Volunteers (Ordinary Members) and Sub-Committees

The names of (and offices held by) the DRP Trustees and of the members of the Committee of the DRP Association and of ordinary members (volunteers who are not members of the Committee) of the Association are listed in Annex II. David Fitzpatrick resigned his post as Treasurer in April 2007, as he was transferred abroad. The DRP is most grateful to David for his excellent work on the accounts. Maurice McCann was co-opted as a Trustee in accordance with the Deed of Trust in May and appointed Treasurer in July. This is the only change to the Trustees. The Committee includes, as in the past, members of the refugee/asylum community. Volunteers who are not members of the Committee are made welcome as “friends” at Committee meetings, whenever they wish to contribute to the discussion. There are no Sub-Committees.

7. Funding, Accounts and Organisation

7.1. Annual Audit: CDK Associates, Accountants and Registered Auditors, Dún Laoghaire have audited the DRP Trust Accounts since 2002. The signed Audited Financial Statements and the Report of the Auditors for the year 2006 were furnished to the Charity Commissioners and to the Revenue Commissioners, as soon as received.

7.2. Accounts and Audited Financial Statements: the signed Financial Statements for the year 2007 will be attached to this Report when the accounts have been certified by the Auditors – see § 2 above. Annex III gives a summary of the DRP Accounts for 2007. We spent almost €44,000 in total during the year of which of 52% (including transport to school) went on Education and Training and a further 19% on Welfare. Administration costs (including essential items such as Audit and Insurance) at 4.5% were small.

7.3. Tax Relief: The DRP is recognized as an ‘eligible charity’ for donations (Section 848A Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997) up to 11/11/2010.

7.4. Donors: During 2007, we have been assisted by generous grants from our Donors. We received donations and grants totalling some €43,000.

The fact that our clients no longer live in hostels in the Dún Laoghaire area has reduced the visibility of our work locally. As already pointed out (3.H. above), other immigrant communities, from Eastern Europe especially, have attracted public attention in the media at the expense of the asylum community. Nevertheless, both official and private sector funding continues to be available. We are particularly grateful to the business community and many private citizens in Dún Laoghaire.

Special attention is paid to the wishes of the donors in the allocation of funds and reporting. We respect the wishes of donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Cosgrave Property has supported us with a grant of €10,000 each year since 2004; the Loreto Foundation donated €5,000 in 2007. We are most grateful for these important grants. Treasury Holdings, Dublin Bus (both by way of cash grants and valuable tickets) and the Community Foundation for Ireland are faithful yearly supporters. As to the public sector, Southside Partnership continues to support our work and, also, in 2007 the EQUAL Transition Support Project under the Dublin VEC helped, especially with the transport costs of our students. Unfortunately the Transition Support Project ceased at the end of the year 2007. Local businesses (e.g. Tesco) and local bodies (e.g. Donnybrook Catholic Church) and many private citizens have contributed generously.

Fund raising events during the year included:

- St.Gerard's School Bray – Christmas Charity Bazaar (our thanks to the girls and boys and staff);
- Howth-Dún Laoghaire cross-Dublin Bay swim (first ever such swim, as far as we know) in August (Niall Coleman's son Alan) with sponsorship resulting in €2,000 for the DRP;
- Dublin Marathon, on 31 October, two Committee members – Niall Coleman and Maurice McCann - participated and between them, they raised over €1000.

We received many valuable donations in kind.

The DRP will intensify its effort to raise funds during 2008 to meet ever-increasing expenses. We intend, also, during 2008 to invite our donors to meet with those young people whom they have been helped and, also, with members of the Committee at the Drop-in Centre. A list of our main donors is attached (Annex III).

7.5. Independent Evaluation:

Southside partnership, at the request of the DRP, has commissioned an independent evaluation of the "Monday Evening Drop-in Centre meetings". This evaluation will be finalised in January and it is planned to launch a print version in the Drop-in Centre at the end of March. Our donors (among others) will receive an invitation to the launch. The text will be on our website.

7.6. Website:

The DRP website (www.drp.ie) came into operation in 2006 and continues to be managed by one of the former Dún Laoghaire hostel asylum seekers who has been granted residency and has in the past year completed second year studies (with excellent results) for an educational qualification with the support of the DRP. The website which is bilingual (English and Irish) has produced favourable comment for the detailed information it provides.

8. Annual Programme of Activities and Budget for 2008

In accordance with Article 12 of the DRP Constitution, the Committee considered its Annual Programme of Activities and Budget Estimates for the Year 2008 at its December meeting. The Committee reviewed, also, its fund-raising strategy for 2008.

In general, the emphasis of the work of the DRP will be on education and training as well as the daily needs of asylum seekers/refugees, especially the PLUS Group, that have contact with the DRP through the Drop-in Centre. We will pay attention, also, to the programme “Towards Citizenship”. The DRP Committee will continue to monitor and evaluate each of our programmes as to cost effectiveness throughout the coming year.

We will give careful consideration to the findings of the **Evaluation Report** (§7.5.) and may develop, modify or add to our programmes and activities when that report has been completed and assessed.

9. Thanks

Sincere and grateful thanks and gratitude to our many asylum seeker friends for allowing us to share their sad and happy times, who have shown courage in difficult situations, and who have responded with generosity and good humour to our requests for involvement in local events. We have learned much from you all!

We remember gratefully all those who gave support over the years to the asylum seekers in Dún Laoghaire and Killiney when the hostels were still there.

Our thousand thanks to Gerry and Catherine at the Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre (DLCTC). We are deeply indebted to you.

We are, as always, sincerely grateful to Aileen O’Brien, Sandra King and Niall Sexton and the staff of Southside Partnership who have generously responded to our requests for advice and help

Special thanks to Sgt. Angelene Confrey, Garda John Paul Durkan and Garda Cian Long and all the other Garda Community Liaison Officers who have helped so much and with such enthusiasm.

We thank the various official bodies for their assistance, including the staff of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) and the DLR County Council (in particular Torry Schellhorn). We are grateful to the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (thank you Patricia Byrne and Jim Devine) for great help.

Albert Llussa of Daly Lynch, Crowe and Morris Solicitors has given generous and invaluable assistance with legal matters over the past number of years.

The Children's Rights Alliance (Maria Corbett) and the Churches' Asylum Network (Sr. Joan Roddy) assisted generously throughout the year.

The Irish Refugee Council (Jyothi Kanics comes regularly to the Centre) has constantly responded to our numerous requests for advice, as has St. Breege Keenan of the Vincentian Refugee Centre.

Finally thanks to Crosscare Migrant Project, Ruhama, the Transition Support Project and others who provided support to our clients – quietly in the background and with dedication.

Appreciation, also, goes to the church/faith bodies, to official and institutional sources of funds, to business firms and to many private citizens.

Finally, nothing of what has been achieved would have been possible without the generous, good-humoured and unstinting support of our volunteers – for both the asylum seekers and for each other.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh as bhúr gcabhair, bhúr ndíocas agus bhúr mórchróí!

Mary King, Chairperson, 20th February 2007

ANNEX I STATISTICS

| | ASYLUM SEEKERS IN IRELAND | YEAR 1999 | YEAR 2000 | YEAR 2001 | YEAR 2002 | YEAR 2003 | YEAR 2004 | YEAR 2005 | YEAR 2006 | YEAR 2007 |
|-----|---|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | <i>Number Claiming Asylum in Ireland</i> | 7,724 | 10,983 | 10,325 | 11,634 | 7,900 | 4,766 | 4,323 | 4314 | 3,985 |
| 2. | <i>Unaccompanied minors taken into HSE care</i> | 74 | 273 | 603 | 287 | 276 | 174 | ? | 156 | 130 |
| 3. | <i>Granted refugee status (first instance + appeal)=Total</i> | (166+351) =517 | (211+395)? =606 | (456+478) =934 | (893+1,097) =1,990 | (343+829) =1,174 | (430+702) = 1,132 | (455+511) =966 | (397+251) =648 | (376+202) =578 |
| 4. | <i>Granted 'leave to remain'</i> ** | 38 | 19 | 77 | 158 | 86 | 140 | 137 | 160 | 852 |
| 5. | <i>Refugee Family members reunited in Ireland</i> | 78 | 69 | 162 | 358 | 270 | 576 | 893 | 1625 | 992 |
| 6. | <i>Deportations</i> | 6 | 187 | 365 | 521 | 590 | 599 | 396 | 302 | 134 |
| 7. | <i>Voluntary Assisted Returns</i> | 37 | 248 | 356 | 506 | 762 | 611 | 336 | 227 | 254 |
| 8. | <i>Refused permission to land</i> | ? | ? | ? | 4,417 | 4,827 | 4,477 | 3732 (to Oct) | | |
| 9. | <i>Returned to 'safe country of origin'/'</i> | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 288 | ? | | |
| 10. | <i>Family reunion Applications (dependents)</i> | | | | | | 317 (567) | 556 (1,338) | 483 (1,159) | 373 (787) |

*includes asylum seekers and other categories e.g. overstay visas but excludes parents of Irish born children. Exceptionally in 2005, 16,693 parents of Irish-born children – of whom 10,032 had been asylum seekers – were granted leave to remain under the “Irish born Child” scheme.

Some figures may be provisional, subject to change (e.g. unaccompanied minors) and different methods of calculation. Sources: ORAC, RAT, CAN, DJELR (Annual Reports), ECRE. Some final figures for 2007 not yet available at time of publication.

**ANNEX II
MEMBERSHIP DRP TRUST
& DRP ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE
AS ON 30/12/2007**

| TRUSTEES | COMMITTEE | OFFICE HELD |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Mary King | Mary King | Chair |
| Niall Coleman | Niall Coleman | Trust Secretary |
| Joan Dobbyn | Joan Dobbyn | |
| Maurice McCann | Maurice McCann | Acting Treasurer |
| Maureen McCullagh | Maureen McCullagh | |
| Liam Ryder | Liam Ryder | |
| | Abraham Abdul-Wahid | |
| | Rita Canavan | |
| | Joan Gallagher | Record Secretary |
| | Brian Gallagher | |
| | Vivienne McCann | |
| | Andrew McDonnell | |
| | Aime Ndarbertse | |
| | Sr.Bridget Shannon | |
| | Itayi Viriri | |
| VOLUNTEERS ('ordinary members') acting under the auspices of the DRP -see § 6. | Sara Connington Erik Goodbody David Hicks Peggy Lawlor Bryan MacMahon | Sr Laura Peelo Anthony Wilkie |

ANNEX III

- FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR YEAR 2007
- LIST OF MAIN DONORS

| |
|---|
| FINANCIAL SUMMARY YEAR 2007 (Provisional) |
|---|

| EXPENDITURE | € | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| ITEM | <i>€0.00</i> | % |
| Education & Training | <i>24.7</i> | <i>56.7</i> |
| <i>Welfare Support</i> | <i>10.8</i> | <i>24.8</i> |
| <i>Transport to College</i> | <i>2.0</i> | <i>4.7</i> |
| <i>Legal Help</i> | <i>2.4</i> | <i>5.6</i> |
| <i>Miscellaneous - mainly website</i> | <i>1.5</i> | <i>3.5</i> |
| Administration* | 2.1 | 4.7 |
| Total expenditure in year | €43,579 | |
| <i>*Administration –as follows:</i> | | |
| Audit | 0.5 | 1.1 |
| Bank Charges | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Insurance | 0.6 | 1.3 |
| Phone | 0.7 | 1.8 |
| Postage | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| | | |
| Donations received in year | €43,943 | |
| Credit balance on 31/12/07 | €27,198 | |

| |
|--|
| MAIN DONORS IN 2007 |
| Hicks Foods |
| Cosgrave Property |
| Loreto Foundation |
| Community Foundation for Ireland |
| Treasury Holdings |
| Southside Partnership |
| Dublin Bus Community Support Programme |
| St. Gerard's School |
| |