

DÚN LAOGHAIRE REFUGEE PROJECT

TIONSCNAMH DHÚN LAOGHAIRE UM DHÍDEANAITHE

SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT – 2008
SEACHTÚ TUARSCÁIL BHLIANTÚIL - 2008

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Nóta: tá leagan Gaeilge den Tuarascáil seo le fáil ar ár suíomh gréasáin - www.drp.ie.

1. Introduction: Presentation of Seventh Annual Report

The Seventh Annual Report for the Year 2008 is shorter than past reports. The Evaluation Report “Opening Doors”, published in January 2008, - on the website (www.drp.ie) - contains comprehensive information about the Dún Laoghaire Refugee Project, and the previous six annual reports are on the website.

Our clients are mainly young Africans who have entered Ireland to seek asylum under the United Nations Geneva Convention on Refugees, ratified by Ireland over fifty years ago. The DRP was founded in 2001 by a group of concerned Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown people in order to befriend and support the asylum seekers, then accommodated in hostels in Dún Laoghaire: many were unaccompanied and separated children. Since the closure of the hostels, the DRP has continued to help those, along with newcomers in the wider Dublin area. Asylum seekers, including unaccompanied children, continue to arrive in Ireland from least developing countries, torn by civil disorder – over 3,800 applications for asylum were made in Ireland in 2008. Statistical information on asylum seekers in Ireland can be found on the official websites. The DRP is administered entirely by voluntary workers: it employs no paid staff and has no rented premises. It spends a minimum on its own administration.

2. Main Activities

In 2008, the DRP concentrated on the following programmes and events:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A. Education & Training mainly at Third Level VEC (Vocational Education Committee) Colleges in Dún Laoghaire and Dublin: Public Transport Costs for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• B. 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">• C. Evaluation Report “Opening Doors”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• D. Welfare Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E. Legal Matters, Permission to Remain and Support at Deportation or Voluntary Return
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• F. Contact with statutory, non-statutory national and local Dún Laoghaire organisations on asylum and welfare matters, with the media and political representatives, to inform and exchange information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• G. Annual World Refugee Day Celebration in Dún Laoghaire
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• H. Organisation of DRP, Deed of Trust and Constitution, New Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I. Finance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• J. Annual Programme of Activities and Budget for 2009

3. A. Education & Training mainly at Third Level VEC (Vocational Education Committee) Colleges in Dún Laoghaire and Dublin - Public Transport Costs for Students.

During 2008, the DRP assisted 47 students to enrol in or to continue third level education courses. This is a small increase over the previous year. The assistance included guidance on suitable courses, and payment towards College courses and

examination fees and also a small amount towards textbooks. The majority of these students – young men and young women between the ages of 19 and 24 - were enrolled in Vocational Education Colleges, with two young men and one young woman at University.

The courses, which end with the academic year in May-June and begin again in mid-September, covered practical subjects such as nursing and nursing assistant, health care assistant, architectural technician, laboratory technician, nautical science and business studies including computer technology. The courses included full daytime study and also night-time diploma courses, as young people who have obtained residency (either as refugees or on humanitarian grounds) must support themselves.

We keep in touch with the young students that we support and monitor their progress, and they - and we - are fortunate to be able to avail of the experience of Bryan McMahon (Careers Guidance Teacher). Brian began with his programme of guidance as early as January 2008. At the examinations in June, the success rate was excellent and we reviewed the results in August/September with the participants.

This practical help towards the education of young asylum seekers is the most important of the various DRP programmes and also draws down the most funding. The EQUAL Transition Support Project under the City of Dublin VEC ceased financing student transport at the end of 2007, and the DRP had to supply this need for those young people traveling to and from college, with a small amount also for transport to the weekly Drop In Centre sessions. We should note here the valuable help given by Dublin Bus who donated bus tickets worth several thousand EURO during the year.

The main expenditure incurred by the DRP for the year 2008 for Education includes €21.403 for fees (40.4% of total expenditure) and €14.231 for transport (26.8% of total expenditure) - mainly bus fares to and from college.

4. *B. 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.*

Drop In meetings were held on 51 Mondays - including St. Patrick's Day and the October Bank Holiday - from 19.00 to 21.30 at the Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre (DLCTC); the only exception was during the end of year holiday period. The last meeting in 2008 was the Christmas party on 22 December. We are most grateful to the DLCTC for allowing us to use their premises and for their continued good will and great help.

Through the Drop In Centre, young asylum seekers keep in regular contact with the DRP, ask advice or help on matters of concern to them and meet and mix socially with each other. Here also the ordinary work of the DRP, such as the day-to-day administration of programmes (e.g. the Education and Training programme), accounting, etc., is carried on. The young people themselves play a full part in the organisation of the meetings, especially those who are members of the DRP Committee and those formerly involved in the PLUS (Please Let Us Stay) Campaign - for PLUS please see earlier Annual Reports.

Attendance in 2008 was good, and varied between 10 and 45 young asylum seekers with an average of 30 each week. As in the past, old-timers brought along new recruits. Some of the new arrivals were separated children: one child was only 14 years old under the care of the Health Services Executive (HSE). During 2008, we had 182 registered regular participants, of whom 61 had residency, some with refugee status.

The local Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers (Dún Laoghaire and Cabinteely) kept in contact during the year by “dropping in”. In February, the Cathaoirleach of the DLRCC, Mr Denis O’Callaghan, presented certificates of completion of the *Get Wise Programme* course given by the Garda in 2007 and that was followed by a visit by the DRP to the Station.

Later, on 17 November, Sgt. Angelene Confrey from Cabinteely gave a presentation on the Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers’ work and arranged for a monthly course on the lines of the Garda *Get Wise Programme* in previous years.

A social worker, from the Health Services Executive (HSE), Separated Children’s Unit, visited on 14 April and said she liked the relaxed and positive atmosphere. Another social worker from the same Unit brought along three of her young charges on 14 July. One of our Committee members introduced a further three young Rwandan minors (under HSE care) at the same meeting.

Other visitors during the year included:

-*Deputy Ciaran Cuffe, TD*, (Dún Laoghaire constituency), visited the Centre in February.

-*Irish Refugee Council*, Jyothi Kanics (who represents the Separated Children in Europe Programme and comes regularly to the Centre) on 25 February gave a presentation on the draft Immigration and Residency legislation.

-*ATD Fourth World* - an international NGO, founded in France in the fifties - that works with disadvantaged young people - Françoise and Philippe, a Belgian couple, came on 3 and 10 March to demonstrate how to make wire sculpture - this sculpture is now in the Southside Partnership’s offices.

-*Irish Association of Young People in Care (IAYPIC)*, Fiona came on 31 March and again on 28 July, when she introduced a 16 year-old Kenyan girl (under HSE care).

-*Immigrant Council of Ireland* visited on 21 April in connection with a research project on trafficking.

-*International Organisation for Migration (IOM)*, two officers from the IOM came on 28 July to explain - as in the past - Voluntary Assisted Return (VAR).

-*National Council for Youth Mental Health* (“Headstrong”), Youth Participation Officer, Nuala Smith, came to talk about the work of this NGO for the mental health and well-being of young people.

-*Milltown Institute*, two lecturers visited on 2 October, as the Institute proposed placing a Zimbabwean student with the DRP for ten weekly meetings.

-*Refugee Information Service* came on 13 October and explained their work.

-*Councillor Jane Dillon-Byrne* on 10 November explained the importance of voter registration for the Local Government elections and the eligibility of asylum seekers.

-*Sara Connington*, a DRP Committee member, gave English classes from 10 November till end year.

The DRP provided sandwiches and light refreshments at each Drop In meeting: in the past we found that some of our young friends arrived hungry. Thanks to the great help of the DLCTC, the cost to the DRP of this important programme is small - €1,292 (2.4% of total expenditure).

5. C. Evaluation Report “Opening Doors”

During 2007, Southside partnership, at the request of the DRP, commissioned and funded an independent evaluation of the “Monday Evening Drop In Centre meetings”. The report, entitled *Opening Doors*, was published in January 2008 – full text on the DRP website. The findings were generally favourable. While stressing the constraints place on the DRP by its voluntary status (e.g. no paid secretariat), the evaluation report made several recommendations for consideration for the future. These included - short evaluations with participants twice yearly to assess their needs and to inform planning, getting more young Irish people to participate, developing volunteer policies, securing funds for educational activities by way of a philanthropic organisation, involving volunteers from the young (mainly African) people’s cultural background, capacity building among the young asylum seekers by involving them in planning, a scholarship for a participant with residency to take a youth work course and bring this skill into the Drop In Centre, and incorporating the Centre into wider initiatives that aim to mainstream the needs of all minority groups.

The DRP Committee is following up these recommendations where possible.

The formal launching of the Report took place at the Drop-in Centre at 12 May. Dr Lucy Gaffney, Chairperson of the Strategic Monitoring Group, implementing the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPR), introduced the Report to the guests, and Deputy Barry Andrews, Minister for Children at the Department of Health and Children, praised the initiative. The attendance of over one hundred and twenty persons included Deputy Ciaran Cuffe, Senator Eugene Regan and Ms Marie Carroll, CEO of Southside Partnership. DLCTC kindly made available not only their premises but also provided the refreshments.

6. D. Welfare Support

Welfare support is needed especially when asylum seekers gain residency and must move within two to three weeks from accommodation provided free by the State to rented quarters. They are then allowed legally to work and must, in fact, find work in order to support themselves: this is often a difficult transition period, especially for single mothers with young children. The type of welfare needs for which the DRP advanced funds in 2008 included rent deposit and rent arrears, payment of ESB arrears, setting up house expenses, subsistence (food) and phone credits. In addition, there is the fee of €150 for the GNIB (Garda Naturalisation Immigration Bureau) “Green Card”, after permission to remain is granted. The DRP informs each recipient that these payments are advances to be refunded to the DRP when possible, though we are aware that circumstances (e.g. joblessness) may well prevent this. The DRP stresses that in all cases help should be sought from Social Welfare first. In the past, the DRP organised recreational activities and encouraged volunteering by our young clients especially in the summer months, but we have found that as they have become established and made their own contacts, such activities are no longer called for.

During 2008, welfare support, including rental deposits, phone credits, Green Cards and other welfare items, totalled €12,576 (12.7% of total expenditure). Repayments in the year for earlier loans totalled €3,065.

7. E. Legal Matters, Permission to Remain and Support at Deportation or Voluntary Return

The DRP continued to provide advice to asylum seekers on getting legal assistance, though not on the complex legal issues themselves. We are very grateful for the excellent help provided in time of need, especially by Daly, Lynch, Crowe and Morris Solicitors (Albert Llussa). During the year, we referred a small number of cases to them, including a young man, one of our Dún Laoghaire “graduates”, who arrived in 2003 and was still waiting a final decision on Permission to Remain at the end of 2008. A small trickle of other young people got Permission to Remain during the year. In April, three young people were among the lucky ones: one of these had arrived in Dún Laoghaire (Old School House hostel) in 2002. In December another young lady, who had arrived in 2002, got her Permission to Remain.

A deportation of a large number of unsuccessful Nigerian asylum seekers, organised by the GNIB took place, on 1 December, to Lagos, Nigeria. One of our young men was involved. Two of our DRP members gave the young man support (and a small amount of cash) before the deportation. We have heard from the young man since his return and he has reported that the Nigerian authorities treated him and the other deportees fairly on arrival and offered transport from Lagos airport to the city. This fair treatment confirms reports on various official websites. None of our clients took part in the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) scheme for Voluntary Assisted Return in the current year. Under its Constitution, the DRP does not extend help to persons outside Ireland. But some of our members keep in touch with earlier deportees, including Adijat who was deported in 2007 – see par.3 F of 2007 Annual Report.

The cost to the DRP of legal assistance in 2008 was €850 (1.6% of total expenditure).

8. F. Contact with statutory, non-statutory and local Dún Laoghaire organisations on asylum and welfare matters, with the media and political representatives, to inform and exchange information

The DRP continued to keep in contact with the various statutory, non-statutory national and local Dún Laoghaire organisations involved in asylum and welfare matters. These are mentioned elsewhere in this report and in par. 3G of the 2007 Annual Report.

9. G. Annual World Refugee Day Celebration in Dún Laoghaire –23 June 2008

As in previous years, the Annual World Refugee Day commemoration took place 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 and the DRP. The IADT and Southside Partnership

kindly provided refreshments. This local involvement accords with the DLR County Council social inclusion policy under the Anti-Racism and Diversity (ARD) Plan 2007-2010 - par. 3J in 2007 Annual Report. Over 90 guests attended.

The Director of the IADT, Mr. Jim Divine, and the DLR County Council Cathaoirleach, Mr. Tom Joyce, opened the proceedings. Ms Marie Carroll of Southside Partnership also spoke. The Master of Ceremonies was DRP Committee Member, Abraham Abdul-Wahid. The theme for the evening was *A Place Called Home*, and various asylum seekers read poems to illustrate that theme. This was followed by a humorous play, involving the mock trial of one of our Committee members on various charges including trying to be deported illegally to Nigeria.

The night was a great success. Many local organisations (Garda, Southside, STAG, DLR Volunteer Bureau etc.) manned stands to promote or explain their activities. The only cost to the DRP was €400 paid to the band for excellent music.

10. H. Organisation of DRP, Deed of Trust and Constitution, New Policies.

No amendments to the Deed of Trust or the Constitution of the DRP Association were made in 2008. Committee meetings (involving Trustees and Association members) took place each month except for March.

A list of Trustees and DRP Association Committee members is attached - Annex.

Niall Coleman and Maureen McCullagh, both founder members of the DRP, resigned as members of the Trust and the Association. The new Trustees are: Joan Gallagher and Andrew McDonnell. They were co-opted, in accordance with Article 10 of the Deed of Trust by the unanimous decision of the remaining Trustees, meeting on 24 July. Liam Ryder is now Secretary of the Trust and the DRP Association. We are most grateful to both Niall and to Maureen for their enormous support from the beginning of the DRP. We will remember Niall for his great work with the children and other young people at the Dún Laoghaire Hostels and, very importantly, for fund raising. We will remember Maureen for her involvement over many years and especially for her initiative to enrol asylum seekers at Kilmarnock House in a course for care assistants at the DL College of Further Education during the years 2004-06. This has resulted in these young people (often single young mothers) being employed for their own benefit and the benefit of many people in the wider community.

Sister Bridget Shannon has resigned from the DRP Committee, but we are happy that she remains actively involved in the DRP.

As follow up to the recommendations in the Evaluation Report (see par. 5 above), a number of new or revised policies have been drafted and adopted, including:

-*Volunteer Policy.*

-*Child Protection Policy*

-*Substance Misuse Policy.*

These policy documents, which complement the Deed of Trust and DRP Constitution, will be entered on the DRP website.

The issues involved have been dealt with in the past when DRP members were helping several hundred unaccompanied minors, as well as adults, in the Dún Laoghaire hostels (par. 1 of the First Annual Report, dated November 2002 - on drp.ie

- mentions the Code of Conduct for Volunteers), but there was need to update and add to these policies according to best practice. Sincere thanks to Vivienne McCann, Liam Ryder and Abraham Abdul-Wahid for their work here.

11. I. Finance

In accordance with the Deed of Trust, the accounts for the year 2008 - which are the *accounts of the DRP Trust* – have been audited independently. CDK Associates, Accountants and Registered Auditors, Dún Laoghaire have acted for the DRP since 2002. The signed Financial Statements for the year 2008 together with the Auditor's Report have been entered on the DRP website. Although we incurred expenditure during the year of over €50,000, at the end of year we had a healthy bank balance of some €45,000, because of the generosity of our donors.

The DRP has been very fortunate in the current year in receiving further large donations from philanthropic trusts, as indeed was one of the recommendations of the Evaluation Report (par.5 above). The Trusts in question are:

- Iris O'Brien Foundation – donation of €15,000 in July.
- The One Foundation – donation of €25,000 in September.

We are most grateful to those responsible in both Trusts for these generous donations.

We received also sizeable donations from the following:

- Treasury Holdings, €1,000, Community Foundation For Ireland €1,000 and Dublin Bus (bus tickets worth €2,100) in January.
- Southside Partnership €2,500 in February.
- Irish Youth Foundation €2,500 in April.
- St. Gerard's School, Bray, €1,000 in May –grateful thanks to pupils and teachers.
- Riverdeep Interactive Training and Hillbillies Golf Society €1,000 each in June.
- Loreto Foundation €3,000 in September and an anonymous donor €10,000 before Christmas.

In addition, we are very grateful for the many smaller but important donations from individuals and organisations, including the carol singers at Milltown Institute at Christmas. Thank you all very much.

12. J. Annual Programme of Activities and Budget for 2009

In accordance with Article 12 of the DRP Constitution, the Committee usually considers its Annual Programme of Activities and Budget Estimates for the following year at its December meeting and also its fund-raising strategy. This was not done this year, as consideration of the recommendations in the Evaluation Report is still under way.

During 2009, the DRP will continue to pay special attention to its programme for education and training, as well as the ongoing needs of asylum seekers / refugees, that keep in contact with the DRP through the Drop In Centre. The grave economic situation in Ireland and internationally will obviously have an adverse affect on the

refugee and asylum community in Ireland: work opportunities for those with residency are likely to become scarce and more competitive. Our funding needs in 2009 should be about the same as in the previous year. In the economic circumstances, we will have to husband carefully the donations we have received, as donors may not be able to give as generously as in the past. We have already introduced policy about streamlining DRP funding policy in order to ensure that scarce resources benefit as many as possible and do so in an equal way. We will face these difficulties if necessary by cutting expenses but, preferably, by making a greater effort to raise funds, including involvement by the asylum seekers themselves in fund raising events.

13. K. Thanks

My sincere thanks, as Chairperson, to all who have taken part in making our work for these young people a success and to the many organisations and individuals in them who have helped in 2008 and over the years.

Most importantly a big thank you to all the young people who attend the Drop In Center and allow us to share their happy and sad times. We have great admiration for their survival skills and ability to live life meaningfully in spite of many obstacles.

Sincere thanks to Gerry and Catherine at the Dún Laoghaire Community Training Centre (DLCTC), York Road, without whose cooperation and support we could do no work.

Southside Partnership (Sandra King and Aileen O'Brien) have helped, advised and supported us for many years: this is a real partnership at Dún Laoghaire level.

Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers – Sgt. Angelene Confrey, Garda John Paul Durkan and Garda Cian Long and all the other Garda officers at Cabinteely and Dún Laoghaire – have given great and continuous help: all at the DRP are grateful.

DLR County Council (in particular Torry Schellhorn and Rebekah Fozzard) and the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (thank you Patricia Byrne and Jim Devine) for great help.

For legal advice, Albert Llussa of Daly, Lynch, Crowe and Morris Solicitors has given generous and invaluable assistance over many years.

The Children's Rights Alliance (Maria Corbett and Ken Reid) and the Churches' Asylum Network (Sr. Joan Roddy) assisted generously again this year as in the past, as did also Spirasi.

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

Our thanks to the Crosscare Migrant Project (Richard King and staff), Ruhama, YMCA (Angier St.) and others who provided support to our young clients.

Our donors, both great and small, private individuals, business firms and charitable trusts, are owed a special debt of gratitude from us and from the young people that we - through their generosity - are able to help, especially with education.

Finally, I want to thank most sincerely all volunteers who have made the year a successful one, for the young people that we support and for all in the DRP. Thank you for the time you give, for your commitment, concern and friendship.

Go gcúití Dia libh bhur n-éacht oibre agus go gcuire Sé an t-ádh agus an t-amhantar oraibh go léir.

Mary King, Chairperson

August, 2009

ANNEX
MEMBERSHIP DRP TRUST (Referred to as Trust)
& DRP ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE (Referred to as DRP)
AS ON 30/12/2008

TRUSTEES	COMMITTEE	OFFICE HELD
Mary King	Mary King	Chair Trust & DRP*
Liam Ryder	Liam Ryder	Secretary Trust & DRP*
Joan Dobbyn	Joan Dobbyn	
Maurice McCann	Maurice McCann	Treasurer Trust**
Andrew McDonnell	Andrew McDonnell	
	Abraham Abdul-Wahid	
	Rita Canavan	
	Sara Connington	
	Brian Gallagher	
	Joan Gallagher	Record Secretary DRP
	Vivienne McCann	
	Aimé Ndarbetse	
	Itayi Viriri	
*The Chair, Treasurer and Secretary hold the same offices in relation to the Trust & Association. The Trustees are solely responsible for money matters.		
VOLUNTEERS - 'ordinary members' acting under the auspices of the DRP	Erik Goodbody David Hicks Peggy Lawlor Bryan MacMahon	Sr Laura Peelo Sr.Bridget Shannon Anthony Wilkie

