

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE IRELAND

• To Accompany • To Advocate • To Serve



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE IRELAND

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Annual Report

2009



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JRS Ireland Head Office Staff

National Director

Eugene Quinn

JRS Ireland Dublin Office Staff

Dublin Office Coordinator

Nicola Morris

Integration Officer

Elizabeth O'Rourke

Detention and Outreach Officer

Sr Majella Dennehy PBVM

Language Acquisition Officer

Sr Eleanor O'Brien RLR

Project Intern

Stephen Hayes

Administration Support

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Trustees

Fr Tom Layden SJ

Fr Noel Barber SJ

Fr Leonard Moloney SJ

Fr Jim Corkery SJ

Auditors

Donal Ryan & Associates

Registered Auditor

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Charity Number

CHY 17317

INCOME

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Irish Jesuit Province | 185,567 |
| Publications | 2,944 |
| Donations | 3,286 |
| Grants | 11,431 |

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| Total income | 203,228 |
|--------------|---------|

EXPENDITURE

| | |
|-----------------|---------|
| Staff Costs | 141,248 |
| Overheads | 41,359 |
| Direct Services | 26,477 |
| Advocacy | 6,497 |
| Networking | 2,702 |

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Total expenditure | 218,284 |
|-------------------|---------|

Income - Expenditure 2009

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| Net movements in funds | - 15,056 |
|------------------------|----------|

**Introduction**

The year 2009 continued to be an extraordinarily turbulent period internationally and locally. Ireland plunged into deep recession, reeling under the burden of simultaneous economic, fiscal and financial crises. In line with international trends, the number of persons seeking asylum in Ireland fell for the sixth consecutive year. Nevertheless, the needs of families and individuals seeking asylum and living in Direct Provision continued to demand a response from JRS Ireland.

The changing face, and indeed faces, of Irish society present immense opportunities but also significant integration challenges. In 2009 JRS Ireland were committed to intercultural actions and integration activities that sought to enhance the lives of all residents, both local and migrant, and to celebrate the diversity that is now part of everyday life in Ireland.

I would like to acknowledge the work and contribution of JRS Ireland staff members who moved on during 2009: Michael Ancheta, Fr Rory Halpin SJ, Sr Ann Horgan and Fr Brendan MacPartlin SJ. However, none of the many services and activities delivered in this report would have been possible without the tremendous work and dedication of current staff: Sr Majella Dennehy; Nicola Morris; Sr Eleanor O'Brien, Elizabeth O'Rourke and Stephen Hayes.

The visit of the Father General, Fr Adolfe Nicolas SJ, to launch the 2008 JRS Ireland Annual Report was a moment of great celebration and a source of tremendous inspiration to all in JRS.

Another important development was the strengthening of strong reciprocal links with Irish SJ Schools. Collaboration during 2009 included TEFL projects in Clongowes, Pedro Arrupe Award project with Crescent College Comprehensive students, social placement of Gonzaga students in the JRS Dublin Office and intercultural football matches in Belvedere.

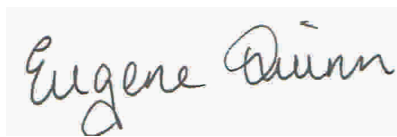


Among the other highlights and achievements during 2009 were:

- Maintained strong weekly presence in five Direct Provision Centres in Dublin and two in Limerick
- Throughout the year provided football outreach to residents from Mount Trenchard in Foynes, County Limerick and expanded sports outreach in Dublin
- Participated in the Detention in Europe of Vulnerable Asylum Seeker (DEVAS) and the Advocacy Network on Destitution (ANDES) research, comparative studies in EU Member States which will be published in 2010
- Very successful Intercultural Summer Programme of events in which 142 children participated in Dublin and 24 children in Limerick
- Hosted JRS Europe AGM in October 2009 in Clongowes College
- Obtained funding of €238,000 from Irish Aid for a JRS School Construction Project in the Central African Republic
- Significant contribution to development of the Limerick City and County Integration Plan 2010-12 in JRS Ireland Director's role as joint chairperson of the Limerick Integration Working Group

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the excellent support and assistance I received from the JRS Ireland Council (Sr Joan Roddy, Sr Ann Scully, Fidele Mutwarasibo, Anna Marie Gallagher, PJ Farrell (Social Justice Delegate) and Declan Cunningham (Chair). Also I would like to thank especially the Social Justice Delegate for his ongoing support and encouragement.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to the outgoing Irish Provincial, Fr John Dardis SJ and to welcome his successor Fr Tom Layden SJ. In these recessionary times JRS Ireland remains indebted to the Irish Jesuit Province and all our patrons for their continued generous support.



Eugene Quinn,
Director
Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland



| Direct Services | Beneficiaries | Actions | Volunteers |
|---|---------------|-------------|------------|
| Asylum Seeker Support: Outreach | 407 | 974 | - |
| Asylum Seeker Support: Language Classes | 105 | 403 | 55 |
| Asylum Seeker Support: Psychosocial Support | 57 | 198 | - |
| Asylum Seeker Support: Sports Outreach | 118 | 466 | 16 |
| Integration: Intercultural Education | 27 | 253 | 5 |
| Integration: Language Classes | 198 | 647 | 116 |
| Integration: Intercultural Activities | 386 | 998 | 47 |
| Integration: Employment Rights | 107 | 354 | - |
| Detention: Detention Visits | 133 | 358 | - |
| | 1538 | 4651 | 239 |



Internal Networks

JRS Europe Annual General Meeting: 29-31 October 2009

Over 60 participants from twelve JRS national offices and two Spanish Jesuit migration organisations participated in the JRS Europe AGM, which was held in Clongowes Wood College. The event was opened by the acting provincial, Fr Noel Barber SJ and the Mission Office director (and former JRS regional director for East Africa) Fr John Guiney SJ.

The theme of the AGM was integration. A day and a half workshop entitled 'Pathways to Integration: A challenge in principle, in practice and in policy' was facilitated by Eugene Quinn, JRS Ireland, national director and by Fidele Mutwarasibo, senior research and policy officer, Immigrant Council of Ireland. The workshop was opened by the Minister for Integration, Mr John Curran TD.



Tribute was paid to the excellence of the Clongowes staff and facilities in ensuring the smooth running of the event. The tremendous support and assistance from Ray Kenny, Pat Keenan, Anne Cooke and the principal, Fr Leonard Moloney SJ are gratefully acknowledged.

JRS West Africa: Irish Aid Funding

JRS Ireland and the JRS International Office applied to the Irish Aid Emergency Fund for funding for the construction and rehabilitation of schools in the Central African Republic.

In August 2009 the Minister of State for Overseas Development, Mr Peter Power TD, announced funding of €238,000 for the Jesuit Refugee Service to build schools for children displaced by conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR). Mr Power said the funding from Irish Aid, the Government's programme for overseas development, will make a tangible difference to the lives of thousands of children in the war-torn country.

Irish Aid funding will enable the Jesuit Refugee Service to open schools in areas where there are no organisations working or where the education services are not sufficient to cater for the number of internally displaced children.

Collaboration: Other Jesuit Works

Among the many Jesuit works that assist JRS Ireland in realising its mission 'to accompany, to advocate and to serve' the cause of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Ireland are the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice; Jesuit Mission Office; Slí Eile - Jesuit Centre for Young Adults; Belvedere College; Clongowes Wood College; Crescent College Comprehensive and the Jesuit Communication Centre.

The 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in February 2008 reaffirmed that 'attending to the needs of migrants, including refugees, internally displaced, and trafficked people, continues to be an apostolic preference of the Society'. The Irish Jesuit Province is committed to working with new communities as one of the 'frontier challenges' facing Irish society, which is realised principally through the Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland.



The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international non-governmental organisation, founded in 1980. The mission of JRS is 'to accompany, to advocate and to serve the cause of refugees and forcibly displaced persons worldwide'. JRS programmes are found in over 50 countries, providing assistance to refugees in camps, to people displaced within their own country, to asylum seekers in cities and those held in detention.

JRS Ireland aims:

- To promote improvements in the reception and integration of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.
- To support non-Irish nationals who are in detention under immigration legislation.
- To advocate for a more just immigration system and asylum process.
- To foster a more positive public image of asylum seekers and migrants in Ireland and deepen public understanding of asylum and migration issues.
- To encourage the active engagement of volunteers and to support the work of JRS Europe, the JRS International Office and JRS projects on the ground worldwide.

JRS Ireland works principally in the areas of:

- Asylum seeker support: providing support to persons seeking asylum through direct outreach, language classes and psychosocial support.
- Integration: contributing to integration by providing language support, by running capacity-building courses and sporting activities, by organising intercultural event and by developing intercultural services and resources for teachers and migrant parents.
- Detention: visiting immigration detainees in prisons, organising training for detention visitors and advocating for more just detention policies.
- Advocacy: working for fairer immigration and asylum systems through lobbying, submission of policy papers, education and media work and collaboration with other organisations.

4 National and Regional Challenges in 2010

Ireland: Living in Direct Provision A right to dignity?

The year 2010 marks the tenth anniversary of the introduction of the policies of Direct Provision and Dispersal. The system of Direct Provision needs reform so that any person awaiting a decision on their application for protection can be allowed to do so with dignity and full respect for their fundamental human rights.

A key concern raised in respect of the Direct Provision residents is that the meagre weekly allowance of €19.10 per adult and €9.60 per child (provided in addition to their food and accommodation) places families and individuals in a situation of quasi-destitution. It is worth emphasising in the 10 year period since its introduction it is the only social welfare payment not to have increased. Asylum seekers are not eligible for child benefit, do not have a right to work and have limited education rights.

Ireland is one of only two of the 27 members states which have opted out of the EU 'Reception Directive'. This directive provides for minimum conditions for asylum seekers, especially the right to work after one year waiting for a decision on their application.

The human costs of the policies of direct provision and dispersal combined with the length of asylum process are significant. These are acutely felt by certain classes of protection applicant who are particularly vulnerable, such as victims of torture, people who have been trafficked and those suffering from poor mental and physical health. The long term institutional effects of the direct provision system may destroy an individual's self-confidence and lead to social isolation.

Although the state provides meals in 30 Direct Provision centres around the country, food remains one of the most common sources of contention and complaints by residents. Over the long term, the fact that they are never allowed to prepare a meal for themselves or their families unnecessarily strips people of their dignity.

Clearly, a system which accommodates over six thousand asylum applicants will give rise to grievances, some with and some without foundation. In any event the Reception and Integration Agency has the right to summarily transfer residents to a different centre. Normally a transfer is preceded with a letter(s) of warning to residents in the case of bad behaviour and on other occasions it is requested for administrative reasons, such as hostel closure or downsizing.

Residents argue that if they stand up to what they perceive are poor or unjust practices in the Direct Provision centres they will be labelled as troublemakers and subject to arbitrary transfer.



Aim 5: Volunteers & Networking

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Volunteer Network

JRS Ireland would be unable to provide many of its services without the generous assistance of volunteers. It would like to pay tribute to the hard work, great skills and tremendous commitment of all its volunteers throughout 2009.

The English language services rely on the goodwill and expertise of a huge number of volunteer tutors. Among the volunteer language teachers are students and parents from Jesuit schools, students from Trinity College and many highly skilled persons who have applied directly to JRS Ireland or persons who have come through Jesuit connections (e.g. Slí Eile, the Jesuit Centre for Young Adults).

The homework club in Clondalkin is available each Tuesday and Thursday thanks to the commitment of Stephen Hayes and the dedicated support of Richie Dunne, Suzanne McCabe, Maeve Hynes, Eleanor O'Dowd and many others.

Successful football initiatives were delivered for asylum seekers in Dublin, every Wednesday and Friday afternoon in Trinity College with the support of SUAS volunteers.

The 2009 JRS Ireland summer programme of activities would have been impossible without the generous support of many volunteers, especially Emma Esdaile, Fillipo Aghito Mairéad Comaskey, Andrew Turner, Nuria Huerta and Rosalind Farrell.

The 2009 Easter Egg hunt and Christmas Toy appeal continued to grow and thrive thanks to the drive and determination of Audrey Hogan and the generosity of many of our supporters.



External Networks

JRS Ireland is a member of the Churches' Asylum Network (CAN). CAN provides a monthly forum to exchange information and best practice among faith-based organisations working with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Ireland. The network also lobbies for a more just and humane asylum system and process.



JRS Ireland liaises with many organisations in the sector including: in Dublin, with the Irish Refugee Council, Immigrant Council of Ireland and the Bishops' Refugee and Migrant Project, and in Limerick with Doras Luimní, New Communities Partnership and many others through the Limerick Integration Working Group. The aim is to avoid duplication of services, to share information and to explore more effective ways of working together.

Internal Policy Seminar

On 17 June 2009, JRS Ireland hosted an internal seminar in Milltown Park, Dublin. Senior policymakers from the Department of Justice gave presentations on the current asylum procedure and changes in the process for protection applicants arising from the Immigration, Residency and Protection Bill 2008. Mr Joe Keaney of the office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner outlined in detail how the current procedure operates for asylum applicants. Ms Rhea Bohan of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services discussed subsidiary protection and the emerging jurisprudence. Ms Maria Cassidy indicated how the Single Procedure, which will be introduced under the new Bill, is expected to operate. JRS staff and volunteers were in attendance as well as participants from the Mission Office, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Slí Eile and the Provincial Curia.

Website

In January 2009 JRS Ireland launched its re-designed website www.jrs.ie, which had been built in Joomla, an open source web design package, by the Jesuit Communication Centre.

Publications

There were 1000 copies of the very popular *Interfaith and Intercultural Calendar 2009* distributed. Almost 100 copies of the new, expanded edition of the *School Resource Folder*, for primary and secondary school teachers, were purchased during the year.

**Media**

On the occasion of his visit to Limerick, Fr Adolfe Nicolas SJ, the Jesuit Father General launched the JRS Ireland Annual Report 2008. Over 40 people attended the event in the JRS head office in Dooradoyle. The *Irish Times*, 12 September 2009, carried a report of his speech under the headline 'Human toll of asylum process queried'. It highlighted that the worldwide leader of the Jesuit order had expressed his concerns about the long term institutional effects of the asylum process in Ireland.

The national director of JRS Ireland, Eugene Quinn, was interviewed by the *Limerick Leader* for an article responding to anti-immigrant comments expressed by a politician in the run-up to the local elections in June 2009. A further article profiling the work of JRS Ireland was carried in the *Limerick Independent*.

Throughout 2009, JRS Ireland contributed 13 articles that were published on *AMDG Express*. A further six articles were printed in JRS Europe's publications, *Progrès* and *The Refuge*.



The absence of an independent complaints mechanism, combined with a fear of summary transfer, may lead to the legitimate concerns of residents about their living conditions not being voiced.

A fundamental rethink of the Direct Provision system is required. In the present budgetary environment Government will only entertain revenue neutral proposals. The introduction of an independent complaints arbitration process, allied to even a limited opportunity to prepare some of their own meals, would make daily life in direct provision more bearable.

The introduction of a Single Procedure and the Front Loading of Legal Assistance at the earlier stages of the asylum process, achieved by a more effective use and configuration of existing Refugee Legal Service resources, would hopefully lead to more speedy and better quality adjudication of protection claims.

JRS Ireland believe that respect for human dignity should underpin asylum policy and practice. An asylum applicant's right to dignity is undermined by the length of the asylum process, the denial of a right to work at any stage during their status determination and by the current configuration of the direct provision regime.

EU: An increasing failure to protect

Access to territory for persons fleeing persecution and seeking the protection of a state must be the cornerstone upon which any viable asylum system is built. Over the past decade in the EU there has been increasing border controls, harsher detention policies and greater efforts to outsource asylum determination to states outside the union. The net result of these policies are denying entry not only to those who are not entitled to enter, but also to many who would be entitled to asylum.

Migrants are using increasingly irregular and extremely dangerous routes to get to Europe. For example, Libya does not offer migrants any sort of protection, having never signed the UN Geneva Convention of 1951, and without any effective asylum system. On 6 May 2009, three boats carrying 227 migrants were saved by a merchant vessel and offloaded onto Italian coastguard boats in waters belonging to the Maltese Search and Rescue Zone. These migrants did not have an opportunity to make a claim for asylum. Within 24 hours a decision to remove them to Libya was taken by the Italian government.

JRS Europe argue that until Libya and other countries of transit are truly able and willing to provide effective protection, asylum seekers must be given access to procedures and protection in Europe. Border management must never block access to a fair refugee recognition procedure.

Border EU Member States, such as Malta, feel they shoulder a disproportionate share of asylum applicants. JRS believe that restrictive border control at the cost of human rights is not the answer. Greater solidarity is required in sharing the burden of protection across member states. This requires an urgent review of the operation of the Dublin II regulation, the current mechanism for transferring applicants between member states. A right to dignity must underpin EU, as well as Irish, asylum policies.

2009 Statistics

Asylum Applications:

During 2009, the number of asylum applications fell by 30.4%, to 2,689 for the year, in contrast to 3,866 in 2008. Applications for asylum in 2009 are less than one quarter of the peak level of 11,634 received in 2002. The Refugee Recognition Rate at First Instance fell to 2.5% in 2009 from 6.4% in 2008.

Appeals Stage:

The Refugee Appeals Tribunal rejected 92 per cent of the appeals it ruled in 2009, which marks a fifth successive annual rise in the rejection rate for asylum appeals. In 2009 the tribunal upheld 266 of the 3,253 appeals.

Leave to Remain:

In 2009, 659 people were granted leave to remain compared to 1,272 people who were granted leave to remain in 2008.

Detention:

In 2009 there were 673 committals in respect of immigration issues involving 669 detainees. This represents a decrease of 30.4% on the 961 persons detained in 2008 and follows on from a 16% decrease in this category in 2007. Of those committals, 490, or 73%, were for less than 8 days. The average daily number of persons in custody in this category was 10.

Returnees:

There were 291 deportations to non-EU countries last year and 243 transfers back to other EU states under Dublin II. In addition to these, 539 people who would otherwise have been deported chose to be assisted with returning home voluntarily. This compares with 519 people who opted for voluntary repatriation in 2008.

Policy Developments

The *Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2008*, which sets out comprehensive statutory procedures for the various stages of the asylum and immigration processes, considered over 700 amendments at Report Stage. Despite a record time spent by an Oireachtas Committee at Report Stage the Bill was not passed into law during 2009. (Furthermore, the Government decided in 2010 that in light of the extensive amendments required, the existing Bill should be discarded and the legislation process recommenced.)



Direct Consultation

In March 2009 delegates from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) visited JRS Ireland as part of its thematic review of migrant education provision in Europe. There was a presentation of the services and activities carried out by JRS Ireland in the area of intercultural education and a welcome opportunity to highlight issues of concern. The OECD team was very interested in the collaboration with Jesuit schools in the provision of language classes for migrants. The OECD review will be considered in the Government's development of an intercultural education strategy.

Integration Working Group

The Limerick Integration Working Group (IWG) operates under the Social Inclusion Measures Committees of both Limerick city and county. The IWG was established with the aim of bringing together statutory, community and voluntary bodies to address integration needs of migrant and host communities in Limerick. A key objective of the IWG was to develop an integration plan for both local authority areas. In February 2009 Eugene Quinn, National Director, JRS Ireland was appointed joint chairperson of the Limerick Integration Working Group with a representative of Doras Luimní.

The IWG meetings were hosted in the JRS Ireland office, Dooradoyle. The development of the integration plan throughout 2009 involved the following stages: research and consultation; audit of service provision; identification of key themes; development of action plans under each key theme; and stakeholder feedback on the draft plan.

The six priority thematic headings chosen were: language and education; information and training; support for communities; health and welfare; employment; and justice. Under each of these key themes IWG sub-groups developed a context, highlighting integration needs and concerns, and an action plan. The action plans reflect steps over a three-year period to start to address these identified integration needs.

JRS Ireland chaired the language and education sub-group and participated in the supporting communities and justice sub-groups.



Research*Detention: DEVAS*

JRS Ireland participated in the Detention in Europe of Vulnerable Asylum Seekers (DEVAS) research. In partnership with NGOs in 23 EU Member States, JRS Europe oversaw the collection of 685 one-on-one interviews with detainees, including nine from women detained under immigration legislation in the Dóchas Centre. In addition to detainees, the researcher interviewed detention centre staff and other operating within the centres, and conducted a survey of Irish asylum and immigration laws in compiling the national report.



The objective of the DEVAS project was to investigate and analyse the conditions in detention for vulnerable asylum seekers and irregular migrants: how vulnerable groups cope with detention; what additional services, if any, exist in places of detention to deal with the needs of vulnerable detainees; and the effect of detention in exacerbating latent vulnerabilities in the wider population of detainees.

Destitution: ANDES

JRS Ireland participated in the Advocacy Network on Destitution of Forced Migrants in Europe (ANDES) research into what destitution means for forced migrants: how these migrants cope with



destitution, how they are stuck in this situation and what effects it has on their daily lives and general well-being. This research aims to make visible the phenomenon of migrants living in destitution across Europe and shows the links between destitution of migrants and the laws and policies adopted by national governments.

The final report of ANDES will consist of the following three main parts: ten chapters on the social and legal situation of destitute forced migrants in the countries visited (Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), an analytical chapter creating a European picture of destitution and, lastly, a chapter in which the findings of the study are translated into JRS policy positions based on human rights.

Asylum System Reform

The November 2009 edition of *Working Notes*, journal of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, contained an article by Elizabeth O'Rourke (JRS Ireland, Integration Officer), 'Frontloading: the case for legal resources at the early stages of the asylum process'. It argues that the case for frontloading legal advice to asylum applicants leading to better decision-making at this point would result in significant savings, as proceedings at the later stages incur significant financial costs and add greatly to the duration of the process. *Working Notes* is distributed to 1500 policymakers, politicians, media, academic, civil society and church groups.

Outreach*Accompaniment*

During 2009, JRS Ireland continued to prioritise its accompaniment and support for asylum seekers in state-provided accommodation centres. In Dublin there was outreach to 150 asylum seekers in four centres (Balseskin, Georgian Court, Hatch Hall and Clondalkin Towers). In Limerick, there were regular visits to two direct provision centres (Foynes and Knockalisheen).

Sports

In February 2009 football outreach to Mount Trenchard residents started with an open day organised in conjunction with the Football Association of Ireland. Over the year 51 residents participated in weekly indoor soccer sessions in the Foynes Community Centre, leading to better health but also improved relations with the local community. A similar programme engaged 67 persons throughout the season and 16 local volunteers.

**Education and Training Courses**

During the course of the academic year, at the invitation of the accommodation centre staff, JRS Ireland organised a homework club in Clondalkin Towers. The homework club was held twice a week after the children returned from school. Twenty-two children attended classes for a period in 2009.

In Hatch Hall there were 5 personal development sessions and in Limerick 18 training classes organised by JRS Ireland. From September 2009 onwards there was a weekly ECDL computer class in the Dublin office. In total there were 62 individual asylum seekers who completed 234 activities during the year.

In response to a request, JRS Ireland staff provided training on asylum and immigration issues to Salesian Sisters (Dublin and Limerick), Clonburris National School and as part of a course organised by the Voluntary Medical Missionaries in Tallaght.



Language Classes

JRS Ireland provided language support services to asylum seekers and migrants with one-to-one tutoring projects in Belvedere College (morning and evening) and Hatch Hall in Dublin city and in Clongowes College in Kildare.

| Programme Name | Numbers of Beneficiaries | Number of Classes | Number of Volunteer Tutors |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Belvedere TEFL Project | 99 | 311 | 85 |
| Clongowes TEFL Project | 35 | 250 | 40 |
| Hatch Hall ESOL Class | 70 | 153 | 15 |
| Belvedere ESOL Class | 99 | 336 | 25 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>303</i> | <i>1050</i> | <i>171</i> |

Employment Rights

JRS Ireland continued to support migrants, in partnership with Crosscare, to access their employment rights project in 2009. This project provided information, advice and support to international workers who experienced exploitation in the workplace. One hundred and seven individuals were supported through 354 interventions, including representations to National Employment Rights Agency (NERA) and the Employment Appeals Tribunal.



Intercultural Activities

Over an eight week period in July and August, JRS Dublin office coordinated the annual Summer Programme of activities for children and families residing in Hatch Hall and Clondalkin Towers. Among the activities were weekly swimming sessions, art and crafts classes, music and dance workshops as well as trips to the ARK, the National Museum, Collins Barracks, Fort Lucan, Funtasia, kayaking in Monaghan and a family fun day. The year 2009 also involved collaboration with Balbriggan Youth Services and Fáilte Balbriggan. In all, 128 children seeking asylum participated in the programme of events.

In Limerick JRS, in partnership with Doras Luimní, arranged for 16 children from Knockalisheen aged 6 to 12 to participate in a week long 'Let's Go' summer camp in Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick. Eight teenagers from Knockalisheen, Sarsfield Bridge Hostel and Dooradoyle participated in an outdoor activity day on Lough Derg in the University of Limerick activity centre.

Other successful intercultural events during 2009 included the Easter Egg hunt and Christmas Toy appeal.



Detention Visitors Project

Under Irish legislation, detention for immigration-related reasons may apply to non-Irish nationals refused 'permission to land', unsuccessful asylum seekers and non-Irish nationals subject to a deportation order. Minors are not detained in Ireland for immigration-related reasons.

Each week, JRS Ireland staff visit women detained under immigration provisions in the Dóchas Centre (the women's prison) in Dublin. In the course of these visits, support and assistance is provided to detainees in regard to legal, health and psychosocial issues that may arise. Where needed, a JRS Ireland staff member will link detainees with specialist service providers for example, services for those who have been victims of trafficking for the sex industry. Follow-up support is provided where a detainee is released into a direct provision centre or opts for voluntary return to the country of origin. In some cases, post-return contact is maintained.

Support for male immigration detainees is provided by JRS Ireland staff on request from female relatives detained in the Dóchas Centre or from the chaplain in Cloverhill (a remand prison in Dublin).

In total, 133 persons detained under immigration provisions were visited throughout the year. Overall there were 343 visits, an average of over 2.5 visits per detainee.

Case Study Detention

Rachel sought asylum in Ireland in late 2008. Two of her sons, aged 16 and 18, had been executed with other men in Baghdad. She fled Iraq with her youngest boy, Adam. Her husband and two daughters initially remained behind. On arrival, she was detained because she did not have any papers to prove her identity.

“ When I was detained my son was taken away from me. I was sent to a prison. I was very worried and upset about my son and how he would survive without me. I did not know who was caring for him. Sr Majella from JRS visited me each week in the prison. She said that she would check up on how Adam was doing in care. She explained to me what was likely to happen next. Thankfully, after three weeks the Iraqi embassy was able to send papers confirming my identity. I was released into a hostel and reunited with Adam.”

After her release, JRS Ireland continued to assist Rachel and Adam while they lived in Dublin and subsequently in Galway. In mid-2009 they were granted refugee status.

“ After getting refugee status there was so many times I had difficulties but Sr Majella was always there. I just had to call. She helped me find a house in Dublin, a school for Adam and to deal with the landlord. She also helped us when there was a problem with visas to get our family over from Iraq. We are so happy to be safe and to be together again. I would like to say a big thank you to JRS.”