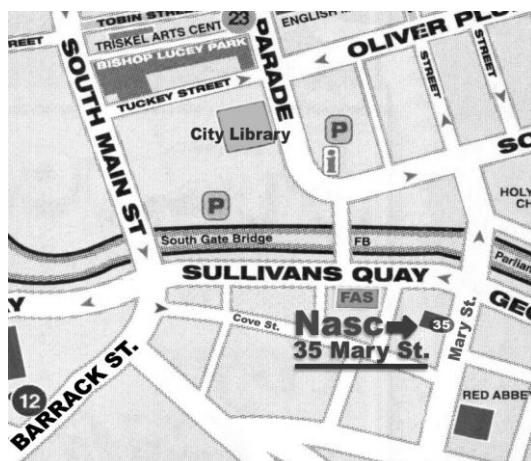


NASC ANNUAL REPORT

January – December 2008



Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, Enterprise House, 35 Mary St., Cork
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1. Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to Nasc's work during 2008 and it would be impossible to name all those involved. We would like to gratefully acknowledge the following people for their contribution in different ways to Nasc this year.

Nasc Board members:

Senator Dan Boyle (Chairperson)
Zeph Okechi Ikeh (Secretary)
Dave Walker (Treasurer) to September
June Barry (Acting Treasurer) from September
Dr. Margaret Lenihan (Human Resources)
Dr. Naomi Bushin
Mariam Olusoji
Rachel Stevenson
Ashok Seedyah
Aki Stavrou
Colm Stanley

Office and Clinic Volunteers / Student Placements and Interns

Our thanks to all who helped in 2008.

1. Aisling Walsh
2. Andrea Barbero
3. Andrea Hoi
4. April Bergin
5. Arthur Chan
6. Chantelle Kumba
7. Chinyere Nwagwuagwu
8. Claire McCarthy
9. Dave Walker
10. Eibhlin Looney
11. Florence Boutloup
12. Judy Halpin
13. Kate Hudson
14. Ludieku Malutiku-Diego
15. Michael Angland
16. Misha Quill
17. Mollie Pereira
18. Paula Garcia
19. Peter Szlovak
20. Raquel Sara Otaro Garrido
21. Robert Habimana
22. Ron Tet
23. Sarah Sheridan
24. Sean Brady
25. Sebastian Ruda
26. Sharon McCarthy
27. Shona Thoma
28. Thomas Livingston
29. Veronica Gomez

Sub Group Members

We would like to thank all our active members in various sub groups and committees:

- The Speaker's Panel
- The Policy Group
- The Women's Group
- The Social and Cultural Group
- The Education Consultation Committee
- The Employment and Enterprise Consultation Committee

Nasc Funders

Atlantic Philanthropies

One Foundation

Trocaire

Irish Aid

Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Office of the Minister for Integration

Musgraves

Community Foundation

FAS

VEC

Nasc Staff

Director: Gertrude Cotter

PA to Director and Drop In Assistant: Marie-Pie Paillot

Administrator: Susan Mackey

Advocacy Officer before April: Amanda Mellet, Advocacy Officer after April: Deirdre Morgan

Advocacy Officer: Fiona Finn

Community Development Officer: Ahmed Amir

Community Development Assistant: Marie-Claire Khah

Policy Officer: Paul Dunbar

Development Education Officer: Clodagh Fahy

Tutors/Facilitators:

1. Guy Bertrand (ECDL)
2. Moawia Eldjack (Computers)
3. Emer McCarthy (Training for Transformation)
4. Aine Naughton (Irish language)
5. Stella (Drama Facilitator)
6. Dave Walker (Jobs Club Facilitator)

Website: Rene Gonzales – a sincere thanks to Rene who did a great job in developing our website

Auditor: Owen Barrett (of Barrett & Associates Ltd)

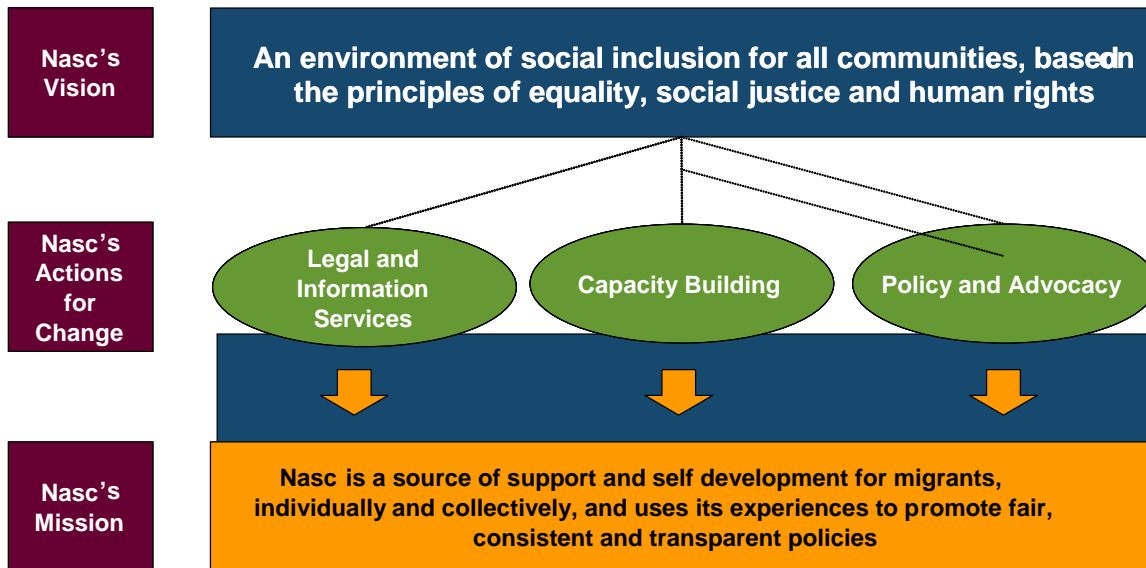
Company Solicitor: John McCarthy (of Noonan, Linehan, Coffee, McCarthy)

Thanks to all our members and friends who helped in different ways!

2. Overview of Nasc's Structure and Work

Strategic and Business Plan 2007-2010

Nasc is a non-profit organisation / NGO with charity status based in Cork. The organisation was founded in 2000 to provide support to migrants living in Ireland, particularly in and around Cork and includes economic migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees and those with 'leave to remain' status. In 2007 Nasc carried out its most significant strategic and business plan to date. This comprehensive document outlines Nasc's new mission and vision, along with our operational and strategic vision for 2007-2010. It was devised with the support of an external consultant and Nasc consulted with members, sub groups, other NGOs and organizations in Cork and around the country. Nasc's vision is as follows:



Governance

Nasc is governed by a voluntary Board of around ten members, four of whom are elected by the membership of Nasc and the other six are people with specific skills as identified in the business plan.

Management

The day to day management of the work of Nasc is in the hands of the Director of Nasc. She is supported in this work by a team of seven staff who work under the three pillars of Nasc's work

Three Work Programmes

There are three pillars to Nasc's work as follows:

1. Personal Advocacy

Free, Confidential Personal Advocacy Service Full Time Four Days a Week

2. Community Development

Nasc is a Community Development Organisation. The organisation is governed by a voluntary board and managed by staff. We have a range of sub-groups whose aim is to support immigrants to develop as a community in different ways. Our sub-groups are open to all members and include the following:

- Women's Group
- Social and Cultural Group
- Speaker's Panel
- Policy and Campaigning Group

During 2008 Nasc also ran courses in ECDL, Irish Language, Speaker's Panel Training and Training for Transformation

3. Policy and Campaigning

A core strand of Nasc's work is Policy and Advocacy work. Much advocacy work takes place for individuals within our clinics but Nasc also has a wider policy agenda which is concerned with identifying problems which affect the community as a whole and taking steps towards changing policies or procedures which impact adversely on immigrants. As part of the strategic planning process Nasc identified five key policy areas:

1. Access and Participation in the Labour Market
2. Access and Participation in Education/Training
3. Family Reunification
4. The Asylum System and Direct Provision
5. Integration

We also worked with other NGOs on a response to the Government's Proposed Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill.

Nasc also ran a jobs club under our "Access to Work" programme in 2008.

3. Context of Nasc's Work 1: Migration into Ireland/Cork – Some Statistics

Permits by Company 2005-2008 (*Source: Employment Permits Section, Dept Trade and Enterprise*)

Permits by Company			
	Year	Issued in Cork	Issued Nationwide
	2008	922	12 969
	2007	1 524	23 604
	2006	1 242	19 557
	2005	1 689	27 127

Work Permits Issued for Cork 2005- Dec 2008 (*Source: Employment Permits Section, Dept Trade and Enterprise*)

Year	County/Country	New	Renewals	Total Issued	Refused	Withdrawn
2008	Country	8481	5086	13567	2288	339
	Cork	632	324	956	148	33
2007	Country	10134	13457	23604	2342	N/A
	Cork	633	891	1524	191	N/A
2006	Country	6289	14258	21395	1123	N/A
	Cork	406	908	1346	107	N/A
2005	Country	7354	18970	27136	1215	N/A
	Cork	457	1192	1689	71	N/A

Work Permits Issued by Nationality 1998-2008 (*Source: Employment Permits Section, Dept Trade and Enterprise*)

Work Permits Issued and renewed by Nationality, 1998 -2008								
Country, Region	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
USA, Canada	1851	1096	1265	1196	1363	1373	1557	213
Australia	768	1 116	1 149	908	927	879	808	410
India	644	845	1 030	1 253	1 724	2 166	4 069	3 334
Japan	176	197	209	235	221	214	208	65
Pakistan	468	840	830	846	822	769	813	362
Philippines	991	3 255	4 042	4 301	4 172	3 850	3 885	2 210
South Africa	637	2 273	2 468	2 031	1 834	1 719	1 461	752
EU 10 States	5 673	13 725	16 606	5 290	260	171	82	N/A
Other Eastern Europe	2 351	8 562	9 974	7 978	6 800	5 552	3 232	1132
Other Countries	4 447	8 412	9 978	10 029	9 011	8 161	7 489	5145
Total	18 006	40 321	47 551	34 067	27 134	24 854	23 604	13 567

Total Allocation of PPSNs by Nationality - EU Accession states from 2000 to 2008
(Source: www.welfare.ie)

Nationality	Total
Poland	317,489
Lithuania	73,282
Slovakia	39,440
Latvia	38,786
Czech Republic	22,905
Romania	33,417
Hungary	19,985
Estonia	8,505
Bulgaria	3,722
Malta	1,539
Slovenia	404
Cyprus	177
Total	559,651

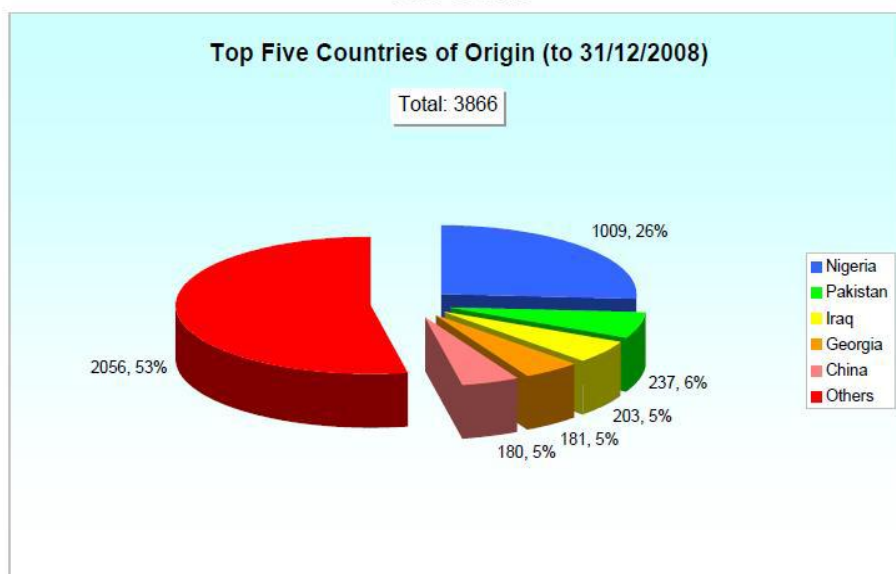
The following figures are from the Reception and Integration Agency, Monthly Statistics Report, January 2009.

Applications for a Declaration as a Refugee, Year by Year

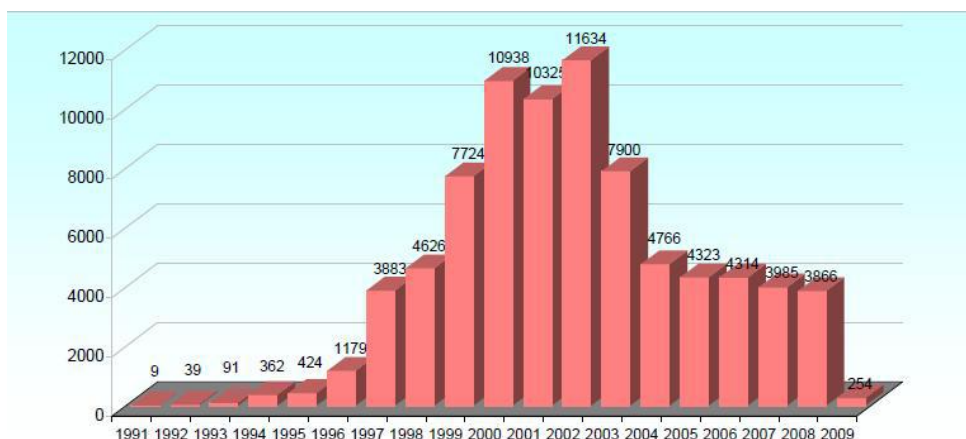
Applications for a Declaration as a Refugee, Year by Year							
Applications	Pre 2003	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
New Applications	11 598	7 483	4 265	4 304	4 241	3 933	3508
Re - Applications	38	417	501	19	73	52	58
Total Number	11 636	7 900	4 766	4323	4287	3 985	3566

Applications for Declaration as a Refugee

Year to Date



Number of Applications Received at ORAC from 1991 to Date



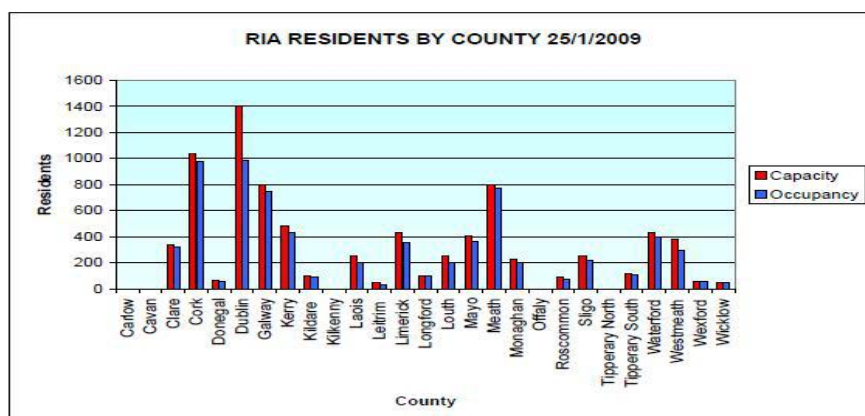
2000	976	864	972	1036	802	677	773	919	963	1098	1096	762
2001	840	706	763	741	838	882	961	983	855	892	904	960
2002	838	763	932	888	795	869	1133	995	1199	1148	984	1090
2003	979	947	892	667	604	661	646	655	611	496	395	347
2004	392	363	501	377	403	324	371	401	466	329	409	430
2005	393	377	489	320	322	315	325	348	372	320	346	396
2006	400	313	438	282	412	278	313	332	422	394	415	310
2007	385	333	347	277	318	316	358	294	318	356	343	340
2008	329	296	299	299	301	329	339	333	360	357	324	300
2009	254											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Applications for Declaration as A Refugee Cases Processed to Completion 2002 to Date

Cases Processed to Completion for 2002 to Date								
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1) Positive Recommendations	894	345	430	455	397	376	295	7

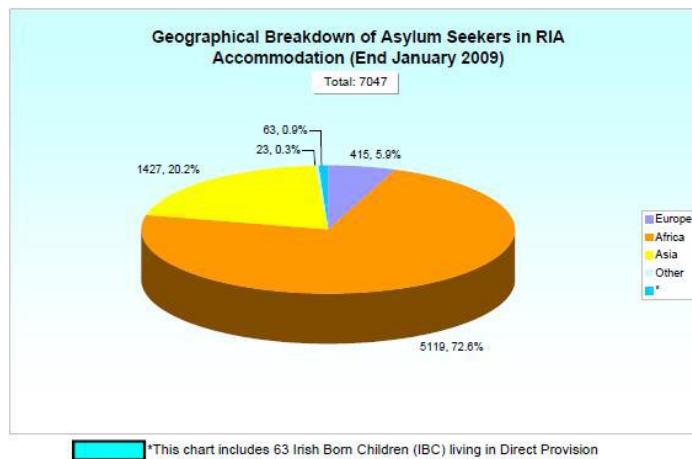
Profile of Status of RIA Residents 2009				
Date	Families *	Single Male	Single Female	Total
End January 2009	3689	2389	963	7041

It should be noted that these recommendations refer to the year in which the recommendations were made and NOT to the year in which the applications were lodged.



RIA Accommodation as at 25/1/2009

ACCOMMODATION CENTRES									
COUNTY	LOCATION	ADDRESS	CURRENT CONTRACTED CAPACITY	CURRENT OCCUPANCY	CURRENT VACANCIES	UNAVAILABLE DUE TO ILLNESS	OTHER UNAVAILABLE	RESIDENT TYPE	ACC. TYPE
Cork	Glenvera	Wellington Road	128	120	6		2	C/S	HOT
	Milistreet**	Milistreet	300	266	0	18	15	F/SF	FC/NH
	An Póc Fada	Main Street, Cobh	40	36	4		0	SM	HOS
	Clonakilty Lodge	Clonakilty, Co. Cork	110	94	0		15	F/C/S	GT



Family Reunification Statistics (Source: Dept Justice, Equality and Law Reform)

Family Reunification Statistics 2001-2008 (30/11)		
	Applications	Dependents
Total Number of Family Reunification Cases Received 2001- 2007	2749	6219
Total Number of Family Reunification Cases Processed 2001 - 2007	2663	6054
Number of cases outstanding	86	165
Total Number of Family Reunification Cases Received 2001 -2008 (30/11)	3131	7027
Total Number of Family Reunification Cases Processed 2001 - 2008 (30/11)	2961	6648
Number of cases outstanding	170	379

4. Context of Nasc's Work 2: Selected Public Policy/Legislative Context 2008

Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2008 - January

The Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill was published on Tuesday 29th January. The Bill's aim was to "restate and modify" current law relating both to immigration and refugees, and according to the Law Society the correct balance between the competing interests involved in these two areas of law has not been attained. The UNHCR and Human Rights Commission also proposed numerous amendments. It went through various stages in 2008. A Dail debate was followed by committee stage. The Dail Committee Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Women's Rights and Defence debated amendments to the Bill for more than 30 hours, often drawing on arguments from NGOs. The Bill will go back to the full Dail sometime in 2009, to debate amendments from the Minister and the Opposition parties, before it goes to the Seanad and President and passes into law.

The Bill contains a number of serious flaws, and has failed to set out fair and transparent rules and procedures on immigration. Among the changes in the Bill NGOs would recommend is the establishment of an independent appeals body for all immigration-related applications, to ensure basic safeguards as well as transparency and fairness. NGOs also advocated that family reunification be included in the Bill, as well as protections for the most vulnerable, including those who have become undocumented or victims of trafficking.

The Immigration Residence and Protection Bill 2008 introduces a single procedure for the determination of protection applications, that is to say applications for refugee status or subsidiary protection. This is an important development and, if implemented carefully, could be a positive one.

However, NGOs are concerned that the safeguards in the Bill are not adequate and, without improvements, a faster procedure could be more dangerous.

Nasc has published a set of policy positions on the Bill which are on Nasc's website. Considerable work was carried out by NGOs in Dublin in lobbying for changes to this Bill. For example the Irish Refugee Council and the Refugee Information Service have lobbied the government and the media on issues such as detention, fair procedure, separated children, victims of trafficking, the protection review tribunal, judicial reviews and the Migrant Rights Centre and the Immigrant Council of Ireland have lobbied on issues such as fair and transparent rules and procedures.

Employment Law Compliance Bill - March

The Employment Law Compliance Bill was published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) on 18th March 2008, with the aim of overhauling the State's employment rights framework.

A welcome measure was the establishment of NERA, the National Employment Rights Authority, on a statutory basis. There is also a new by-law requiring employers to clearly display notices of employment rights for their sector in different languages in the workplace.

However, concerns expressed by the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland about the Bill, included concerns regarding the protection of the labour rights of undocumented workers, and persons who have been trafficked for forced labour, as well as concerns about the barriers which remain for migrant workers in accessing legal redress. MRCI stated that the penalties contained in the Bill do not constitute a strong enough deterrent to those employers who violate employment law, in particular for repeat offenders.

Access to Education for Children of International Students

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform clarified arrangements regarding children of non-EEA students attending State schools: Where the child was already in education for some or all of the 2007-2008 school year, and the parent can demonstrate that they have partially completed their own course, the child will be permitted to remain in education until the completion of their parent's course, provided that the parent's course completes on or before July 2010. Parents may not enrol in new courses or transfer between courses. Where the parent's course ends in the middle of a school year, the parent's registration cannot be extended solely for the purpose of allowing the child to finish the year. First time students presenting for registration with the Garda National Immigration Bureau from Autumn 2008 are

not asked to confirm that they are neither accompanied by children nor do they intend to have their children join them later on.

“Migration Nation”: Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management (Office of the Minister for Integration) - April

The Government’s Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management, was published by the Minister of State for Integration Conor Lenihan in April. It identifies priority areas and makes observations on areas such as education and citizenship. This represents the Government’s first attempt at setting out a strategy for integration in Ireland and as such is a welcome development.

Among the four "key principles" of the policy is a "partnership approach" between Government and non-governmental organisations and a strong link between integration policy and wider social-inclusion strategies. There is also a commitment to create "effective local-delivery mechanisms" that align services for migrants with those for indigenous people. The fourth principle is a policy focusing on avoiding the creation of "parallel societies, communities and urban ghettos".

On education, the document states that the Government will increase the number of language support teachers and give extra supports to schools with large numbers of international students. It will also provide access to English language classes for adults. Under the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill before the Oireachtas, long-term residence will be contingent on language proficiency. The integration statement adds that it would seem "logical" that this language requirement should also apply to those seeking citizenship. It also broaches the idea that applicants for citizenship would sit a test to demonstrate knowledge of Irish society, as well as ceremonies for the granting of citizenship.

Comments in a press release by NGOs after the publication were as follows:

Integrating Ireland: This was a policy area that had been neglected for too long, and Ireland had been fortunate not to have experienced some of the "extreme problems" of other countries, Mr Stavrou said. "It is therefore particularly significant that funds are finally being made available to support future integration initiatives," he said. "However, if the Government is serious about meeting its integration objectives . . . then it will have to seriously review the fiscal resources it has made available to the Office of the Minister for Integration, for they remain woefully inadequate."

Immigrant Council of Ireland: “We are delighted to build on the relationship the ICI has developed with state partners and others, to ensure that Ireland develops an integration policy that maximizes the benefits of immigration, and minimizes any challenges. We look forward to working closely with the Minister and his colleagues in the future to implement the strategy outlined today.”

Nasc: This represents the Government’s first attempt at setting out a strategy for integration in Ireland and as such is a welcome development. The statement also goes on to discuss how services for migrants may be provided in the future. There is a clear emphasis on mainstreaming. However, the manner in which this may be delivered is unclear and Nasc hopes to be involved in the consultation process to see how best to move forward.

Budget 2009 – announced October 2008

State funding of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) will cease as a result of the budget and some of its functions are to be absorbed by the Office of the Minister for Integration, Conor Lenihan.

The state’s advisory body on racism and intercultural affairs is to have all its Government funding withdrawn, while the Office of Integration will see its budget cut by a quarter.

The NCCRI, which employs 13 people, has played a prominent role in advising Governmental and other bodies, recording racist incidents and researching immigration and social integration.

According to the Budget allocations, funding for the Office of Integration itself is to fall by 26 per cent. A report, published by Prospectus Consultants on behalf of the One Foundation, a philanthropic entity, found that many of the 190 migrant organisations in Ireland will face extreme funding challenges when the involvement of Atlantic Philanthropies and the One Foundation comes to an end, in 2016 and 2013 respectively. A large proportion of funding for groups working in the area comes from these sources. "Because these organisations are funded primarily by philanthropy and with various levels of Government support, sustainability is a major challenge," said Katie Burke, director of Prospectus. "Many organisations feel that current Government policy, focusing on providing funding for 'mainstreaming'

services, 'migrant-led' organisations and local groups, is a critical issue . . . "She added that NGOs had substantial experience and understanding of the issues, "and it is important that this is acknowledged and utilised".

Economic and Social Research Institute in Irish Labour Market Report - September

A study of the experience of immigrants in the Irish labour market was published on 10th September by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Equality Authority: Thursday.

The report found a much higher risk of unemployment for all migrants from non-English-speaking countries compared to Irish nationals. The gap was particularly notable among black respondents, who were nine times more likely than their white Irish peers to be without a job when age, sex and education were taken into account. Asian and other groups from non-English-speaking countries were twice as likely as white Irish people to be unemployed.

Language skills emerged as an important factor in occupational attainment. While those migrants who came from non-English-speaking countries were generally more likely to be unemployed, there was no difference between newcomers from English-speaking countries and the native Irish population.

Non-Irish nationals were three times more likely to report that they had experienced discrimination when looking for work than their Irish counterparts, with black respondents seven times more likely to report feeling such discrimination.

Policy/Legal Developments at EU Level

EU Commission Communication on a Common Immigration Policy for Europe - June

On 18 June the European Commission adopted a Communication on "*A Common immigration policy for Europe: principles, actions and tools.*" The Communication puts forward ten Common Principles on how to further develop the common European immigration policy. It calls on the European Council to endorse the ten proposed common principles, together with a set of concrete actions, at the European Council of 15 October 2008. This will feed into a new five-year Programme in the Justice, Freedom and Security area. The common immigration policy will be delivered in partnership between the Member States and the EU institutions and will be followed up regularly through a new monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

The Communication has acknowledged the need for future immigration both in high-skilled and lower-skilled sectors of employment, based on the EU's demographic situation and labour market. The European Commission also outlines its position regarding regularisations, encouraging countries to avoid large-scale regularisations but leaving open the possibility for regularisations on a case-by-case basis.

European Court of Justice ruling upholds rights of non-EU spouses: The "Metock" case - July

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that Irish laws requiring non-EU spouses of EU citizens to have lived in another member state before obtaining residency in Ireland were incompatible with the European Directive on the free movement of European citizens.

The case concerned four couples who appealed a decision by the Government to deport them because the husband in each case is not an EU citizen and has never lived lawfully in another EU state. All spouses concerned are married to citizens of other EU states but were married in Ireland. The ECJ ruling upheld the right to freedom of movement within Europe for EU citizens, and has implications for thousands of couples residing in Ireland. It is expected that the Irish Government will publish new information regarding procedures for residency applications based on marriage to an EU national, in light of this recent ruling.

EU Pact on immigration - October

EU leaders gathered for an EU Summit adopted a 'European Pact on Immigration and Asylum' proposed by the French EU Presidency, on 15th October. The Pact is a political document, therefore a non-legally binding act. It intends to provide the general lines and principles expected to guide future EU policies on immigration, asylum and border management. While the French government's original plans, involving the introduction of compulsory "integration contracts" for immigrants and putting an end to mass legalisations, had to be watered down following resistance from Spain, it nevertheless confirms the

concept of "selected migration" pushed by French President Sarkozy. The Pact therefore sets out a number of basic principles for managing migration and calls on the European Commission to come forward with new proposals in five policy areas: legal and illegal migration, border controls, asylum and cooperation with third countries. Concerns have been raised by many NGOs on a variety of issues, especially over the Pact's primary focus on control of 'illegal' immigration through a security and penal approach. This puts the EU in danger of undermining the fight against racism.

5. Selection of Media Articles of Letters to Paper about or by Nasc in 2008

February 21st, The Irish Times: Letter to the editor by Gertrude Cotter: Attitudes to immigrants

As director of an NGO working with immigrants I would like to express my dismay at recent comments by two Fianna Fáil politicians. Senator Donie Cassidy suggested that foreign drivers in Ireland be limited to a maximum speed of 80 km/h. This is not only completely impractical, but betrays an attitude that depicts immigrants as somehow less capable of controlling a motor vehicle than are Irish road users. I was further exercised by comments from the Louth County Council chairman, Cllr Jimmy Mulroy, who is advocating a reduced minimum wage for low-skilled foreign workers, arguing that the cost of living in their home countries is not as high as in Ireland. Not only would this contravene any number of employment and equality laws, but his sentiments appear to reflect a perception of migrants as mere “economic units”, as opposed to human beings.

In the context of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill which is currently before the Dáil, the above comments are unfortunate and indicate a complete lack of understanding of immigrant issues among some people in positions of power in this country.

March 15th, The Irish Times: Letter to the editor by Gertrude Cotter: Shortcomings in Immigration Bill

I welcome Carol Coulter’s article on the UNHCR’s recommendations regarding amendments to the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill currently before the Oireachtas (The Irish Times. March 13th). The UNHCR’s report is an excellent analysis of the legislation. It includes 76 groups of recommendations for change to the current Bill. (...)

The Human Rights Commission Act, 2000 confers a wide-ranging jurisdiction on the Commission to promote and protect human rights as defined both in international agreements to which Ireland is party and in the Irish Constitution. Its functions include making recommendations to government on measures to strengthen, protect and uphold human rights in the State and to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights. It is therefore difficult to understand how the Department of Justice can ignore the report of a body established by an Act of parliament for the very purpose of making such recommendations.

As an NGO dealing every day with the consequences of poor government legislation and policies, we ask the Oireachtas committee to consider in detail the recommendations of the reports of the IHRC and the UNHCR, which we fully support.

April 8th, The Irish Times: “Adviser on racism says diversity in schools neglected: Integration Minister 'must be' in Cabinet”

The Chairwoman of the steering group of the Government's National Action Plan against Racism has criticised the Department of Education for faltering in its attempts to address diversity in schools.....

Meanwhile, a psychologist told the launch of a campaign for the reform of the asylum process by Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre in Cork, that the State's 'direct provision' system for asylum seekers was causing demoralisation and preventing asylum seekers from integrating.

Consultant clinical psychologist Dr Tony Humphreys said the system repeated the shortcomings of mental asylums-institutionalisation, depersonalisation, increased dependence and helplessness.

'The fact that asylum seekers are five times more likely to be diagnosed with psychiatric illness is evidence of the nature of the asylums provided', he said, adding that individuals needed to be treated with dignity whether they stay or eventually leave Ireland.....

April 8th, The Irish Examiner: “Asylum Centres 'Costly and Wasteful”

The Government's accommodation for asylum seekers is 'costly and wasteful' and 'tantamount to an open prison', a report has revealed. Almost 6,000 people are living in the state's direct provision centres around the country, at a cost of about €66 million per year, while awaiting a decision on their asylum applications. Many are experiencing poverty and isolation while depending on the state for all of their material needs.

That is according to research carried out by Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre in Cork, which yesterday launched a campaign for the reform of the asylum legal process.

One of the cornerstones of the campaign is to get the Government to allow asylum seekers to work, instead of depending on weekly social welfare allowances of €19.10 per adult and €9.50 per child....

April 13th, “Asylum centres condemned as ‘open prisons’ - Civil rights group finds serious failings in how refugees are treated in State accommodation”

A major study by an Irish civil rights group has revealed alarming problems involving State asylum seeker accommodation centres with some described as little more than “open prisons”..... The independent study was commissioned by the Irish Immigrant Support Centre (Nasc)—and aimed to assess the experiences of asylum seekers in Ireland and their reaction to the national DP regime in operation.....

June 20th, Press Release by Nasc, FLAC, Integrating Ireland and the Refugee Information Service: “On World Refugee Day, Organisations call for improved treatment of those seeking protection within Ireland”

On World Refugee Day, groups working with people seeking asylum in Ireland are highlighting the need for better treatment of people seeking protection in this country including those who have fled from countries such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Darfur and Palestine.

June 2008, The Cork Independent: MULTI-CULTURAL CORK - A new column addressing integration and multi-cultural issues in Cork.

This week column is written by Gertrude Cotter, Director of Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, 35 Mary st, Cork.

Nasc welcomes this opportunity to begin a discussion on what we mean by the term “Integration”. Future columns will be written by a variety of groups from around the city and county.

The National Action Plan Against Racism defines Integration as “a two-way process that places duties and obligations on both cultural and ethnics minorities and the State to create a more inclusive society”.

Nasc would add that integration as a two-ways process (adaptation by migrant and host society) places duties and obligations on the receiving society and on inward migrants. It also places responsibility on the state to create, fund and coordinate a more inclusive society.....

July 10th, The Cork Independent: MULTI-CULTURAL CORK

By Nasc Policy & Campaigning Officer, Paul Dunbar

Statio Bene Fide Carinis – ‘A safe harbour for ships’ is the motto on the coat of arms of Cork city. This exemplifies Cork’s tradition as a welcoming city. However, as a society we should be aware that not all of those who arrive in Cork feel welcome. This is particularly the case in relation to asylum seekers who feel excluded and marginalised from Ireland’s increasingly diverse society...

September 8th, The Evening Echo, Country of Origin Series: Monika loves her adopted Cork city

The more I live in Cork, the less I feel like going home. Monika Nowakowska moved to Cork from Krakow in July 2004. A friend has already moved to Cork, so Monika followed, but was surprise at what she found. “Cork was a lot less developed than I had expected. It was much smaller than Krakow and it was expensive”.....

..... Finding fulfilling employment was one of Monika’s biggest difficulties. Getting a job was easy, but finding a career remains difficult. “In Poland I worked as a supervisor in a folk art gallery. When I came to Cork I had a range of jobs before I settled. I worked in the English Market, as a waitress in a casino, in a tanning shop and then in an internet café, where we were paid below the minimum wage- it’s since closed down”.....

..... She said the goal of this ‘Countries of Origin’ project for her is to make people of Cork more benevolent to immigrants.

September 9th, The Evening Echo, Country of Origin Series: “I was pregnant on the streets with my son”

A few years back ‘Felicity’ fled Nigeria and her Ibos culture. She was pregnant with her first child and she was dreading her baby may have to undergo the brutal ordeal of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Felicity, which is not her real name, managed to find a passage to Ireland, but without her husband. After arriving she had her first child, which turned out to be a boy... “I talk to NGOs and students. I’ve been to more than 20 schools in Cork to talk about what it is like to lose your family and come to Ireland. I came here because of my fear of FGM, and I believe my being here and talking about it is the only way that will stop it. If I went back to Nigeria it would be insisted upon by my tribe that my daughter have FGM”... Felicity is an active member of Nasc, The Irish Immigrant Support Centre. “Trying to get asylum is an extremely slow process. I’d like my daughter to have the right to stay here with my son where she will be safe from any attempts of FGM and have access to life-saving medical care.”.....

September 10th, The Evening Echo, Country of Origin Series: “I came here in search of freedom yet I’m not even allowed to work...”

Following months of brutal persecution and a life lived in fear, Burmese refugee Koko Latt arrived in this country in 2002 with the hope of starting a new life... In Ireland, Koko shares a small room with several other asylum hopefuls at an accommodation centre in Cork – unable to work as he awaits a decision on his asylum application here. “I am here now six years. It is a very long time. I am a human being but I have no rights to work, study or travel. It is very hard”... He is still actively involved in many voluntary groups in the city.

These include Nasc, the Cork-based immigrant support centre; the Cork division of Amnesty International and Burma Action Ireland.....

September 11th, The Evening Echo, Country of Origin Series: “I feel at home in Ireland, a kind of peace”

Fearing for his life and fleeing political persecution Patrick Mutombo was forced to leave his beloved African homeland for the uncertain shores of Ireland. Four years later the fate of this man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo still lies in the hands of the Irish Government ... “When I arrived in Ireland I got the strangest sensation, like I was home. I did not know anybody, but I felt at peace,” he said... He found it extremely difficult to adapt to life in an accommodation centre. “It is very hard sharing one room with three or four people. You have to wait if you want to use the bathroom. You have to be very tolerant of each other”. “The food is terrible, and you have no privacy at all. You can get moved around without notice to Killarney or Bantry. You come to your room one day and find a letter from the Department of Justice saying you are being moved. People get very depressed”

October 11th, The Evening Echo: Nasc manuals set to tackle racism

TWO publications to help increase understanding of migrants and promote integration have been launched.

North Meets South and **In Our Own Words** are training guides based on the experiences of people who are immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers living in Cork... Nasc Director Gertrude Cotter said: “Nasc has developed these manuals because of the constant requests for training from a wide variety of organisations, schools and colleges in Cork. “We hope they will contribute to the development of increased understandings of migrants and promote integration.”.....

October 29th, The Irish Times: Letters, Gertrude Cotter, Director, Nasc, (Irish Immigrant Support Centre), Mary Street, Cork

Madam, - We are concerned about the impact of the cessation of government funding to the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI). We are led to believe by the Government that this body has been incorporated into the office of the Minister for Integration. But the reality is that all 12 staff of the NCCRI will lose their jobs. Their experience cannot be replaced by others and in any case the ministry is itself under-funded.....

November 17th, The Irish Examiner: “Immigrant girl, 14, kept in hospital for six months”

A 14-YEAR-OLD African girl, who arrived unaccompanied into the country, was kept for six months in the children’s ward of Cork University Hospital (CUH) because there was no where else to put her... Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, said the case “clearly illustrates that the systems are not in place to facilitate children arriving into Ireland in this situation”.

November 17th, Irish Examiner: “Immigrant support groups ‘refused entry to hostels”

IMMIGRANT support groups are increasingly being prevented from entering direct provision accommodation by managers, it has been claimed.....

.....A spokesperson for Nasc, a Cork-based immigrant support group, said on one hand the Department of Justice Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) funded support groups, while on the other hand it did not allow them access to the people they are trying to help.

6. Report from Nasc Board for 2008

Board Members

In accordance with Nasc's Strategic Plan 2007-2010, in 2008/9, the Board comprised of four people elected by Nasc members and others were co-opted.

Dan Boyle – Chairperson

June Barry – Development Education (co-opted in September 2008)

Naomi Bushin – Secretary to the Board

Zeph Ikeh – Company Secretary (elected)

Margaret Linehan- Human Resources

Mariam Olusoji (elected)

Ashok Seedyah (elected)

Colm Stanley – Legal

Aki Stavrou – NGOs (Director of other NGO)

Rachel Stevenson – Funding

Dave Walker (elected) (resigned from the Board in January 2009)

Humaira Altaf (elected) (resigned from the Board in May 2008)

All Board Members have taken an active role in supporting Nasc's activities during the past year. All Board Members were involved in the external evaluation of Nasc and have carried out duties related to their Board portfolios.

Board Meetings

The Board meets on a six-to-eight weekly basis and is comprised of four elected representatives of Nasc's membership, together with six co-opted members. In 2008/9 the Board met on 16th May, 11th July, 5th September, 8th November, 9th January, 27th February and 3rd April.

Board Training

The Board underwent specific Board Management Training, facilitated by an external consultant, in November 2008. The majority of Board Members attended and those who were not able to were briefed by members who were present.

Specialist speakers have been invited to Board Meetings since January 2008 in order for Board Members to be updated on recent developments in key policy areas.

New Board Members are given induction sessions by current Board Members to ensure continuity and awareness of the role.

Funding

This year, Nasc has secured funding from the following sources: Atlantic Philanthropies; Citizens Information Board; Community Foundation; Cork City Council; Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; Musgraves; Office of the Minister for Integration; One Foundation; and Trocaire. The Board is pleased that Nasc was successful in securing an increase of €25,000 in funding from Irish Aid in comparison to last year. This has been used to fund the post of Education Development Officer. A Nasc funding strategy is being developed and an external consultant has been appointed to oversee this process. Nasc organised a series of meetings aimed at developing a funding strategy for the NGO immigration sector. NGOs from all over Ireland took part in these meetings. There are plans to merge parts of the NGO immigration sector and Nasc is working hard to ensure that the plans are in the best interests of all concerned.

Staff Expansion

Five new staff positions were created in Nasc during the year 2008: a full-time Policy and Campaigning Officer, Development Education Officer, Drop In Assistant and PA to Director, Advocacy and Community Development Officer. In addition, six temporary staff positions were funded, namely: Jobs Club Facilitator; Tutor for Training for Transformation; Tutor for ECDL; Tutor for Drama and Irish tutor. The Board is delighted to welcome these new staff members.

Board Review of the Year

This has been a very exciting year for Nasc, with many new developments and the strengthening of existing activities. Particular highlights of the year, and Board Members' involvement, are detailed below.

Dan Boyle, Chairperson of Board, and the Gertrude Cotter, Director of Nasc, have held a series of meetings with the Director and staff of the Community and Enterprise section (which incorporates the Social Inclusion Unit) on Cork City Council. These meetings have focused on briefings and raising awareness.

June Barry, Board Member, has worked with the Speakers Panel and Nasc staff to rework and develop two development education booklets – 'In our own words' and North Meets South! These include a CD ROM and work from the Speakers' Panel and UCC students. The booklets and CD ROM were launched in the Clarion Hotel in October 2008.

Margaret Lenihan, Board Member has been involved in successfully recruiting new staff during this expansion period and has assisted in the development of ongoing human resources policies.

Board Members Ashok Seedyah, Zeph Ikeh and Mariam Olusoji have been active on the Speakers Panel, raising awareness of migrant issues. In addition, Ashok Seedyah has helped to arrange various well-attended social evenings for Nasc members throughout the year and has reported back to the Board from Nasc's subgroups.

Colm Stanley, Board Member, has given advice on Nasc's legal case work throughout the year.

Aki Stavrou, Board Member, has given advice and invaluable assistance to the Director of Nasc throughout the year.

Rachel Stevenson, Board Member, has assisted the Director in recruiting a fundraising consultant and has been advising on the development of Nasc's fund-raising strategy.

Naomi Bushin, Board Member has been carrying out the duties of secretary to the Board and has also devised a research protocol for students/academics wishing to carry out research with Nasc.

Key Decisions and Actions by the Board

- Nasc withdrew membership of the Cork Networking Committee in July 2008 in order to concentrate on provision of services to migrants and the development of policy in the areas of migration and integration.
- Nasc underwent the first of its two external evaluations as part of the funding agreement with Atlantic Philanthropies and The One Foundation. The evaluation took place in January 2009. The draft report was received in February 2009 and the Board gave detailed feedback to the external evaluator. The final evaluation report is expected shortly. We are heartened by the positive feedback from our members and clients and we wish to thank all those who took time to speak to our evaluators.

Acknowledgements

The Board would like to thank all the staff and volunteers at Nasc who work incredibly hard to manage and support all the services offered. We give particular thanks to Gertrude Cotter in recognition of her commitment and enthusiasm. Remaining Board Members wish all outgoing Board Members well and look forward to welcoming new Board members in the coming year.

7. Director's Report for 2008

Introduction

My thanks to all staff of Nasc for help with compiling this report of our work for the year.

2008 has been the first time that Nasc has had a real opportunity to deepen and consolidate our work. Having received significant funding in 2007 for a three year plan 2007-2010 we were able, in 2008, to offer a much improved quality of service and deepen our work at all levels. It has been an incredibly busy year and I would like to firstly thank the staff of Nasc who are an incredible team of highly dedicated and hard working people who are a pleasure to work with. I would also like to thank Nasc's Board for their ongoing support and to thank all the volunteers, members, student placements and interns who make Nasc the dynamic, diverse, interesting place that it is.

I would also like to thank all those organisations who offer us support and advice and with whom we work with on different projects and campaigns. There are too many to mention but we appreciate very much the ongoing support of other organisations.

Overview of 2008

2008 has been a year of ups and downs for the migrant sector in Ireland. On the positive side the "Metock" case (see below) means that non EEA family members of an EU citizen who apply for a residence card in Ireland no longer have to show that they had prior lawful residence in another EU member state. There were also some positive developments in relation to de facto couples. While this is not legislated for improved administrative procedures have been introduced. The length of time it takes to process family reunification cases has also improved somewhat. On Integration Policy the appointment of a Junior Minister for Integration was a positive move, however it does feel, towards the end of 2008 that the potential of that junior ministry has not been reached.

However there remains many challenges. 2008 saw the announcement of a budget which would see significant cuts in funding to agencies such as the Equality Authority and the closure of the NCCRI, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. It is noteworthy that at the first sign of recession that agencies dealing with equality and racism were amongst the first to be affected. All 12 staff at the NCCRI lost their jobs. While the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill has been introduced there are still many serious flaws, and it has failed to set out fair and transparent rules and procedures on immigration. The Office of the Minister for Integration's statement on Integration remains just that, a Statement. It in no way provides an adequate framework for a national or local integration strategy which meets the needs of migrants in a modern society. Indeed towards the end of 2008 and as the recession became more evident, there began a notable change in attitude by policy makers as evidenced in meetings between NGOs and the Department of Justice (these are outlined below).

For Nasc as an organisation we have gone from strength to strength. We have been heartened by the positive feedback from members and clients about the quality of our services and our work. This has come through in an evaluation which was carried out by an external evaluator of Nasc. Considering that Nasc has only been in receipt of significant funding since mid-2007 we are happy with the work we have done since that time. It has been an incredible achievement to reach over 3000 client visits a year, run two campaigns, develop research documents and policy positions on a range of areas and develop our sub groups to the level of high engagement that exists towards the end of 2008. The fact that we have vibrant engagement by our members and waiting lists for our services points to an organisation which is not just functioning but is needed, relevant and responsive to the needs of our clients.

Funding

This year Atlantic Philanthropies and One Foundation continue to fund Nasc's core costs. We were also lucky enough to secure increased funding from Irish Aid and Trocaire and for the first time we were able to employ a full-time staff member as Development Education Officer. I would like to welcome Clodagh Fahy to our team. We also received project funding from the Office of the Minister for Integration (Jobs

Club and Social and Cultural Group), the Community Foundation (Speaker's Panel Training), Cork City Council Arts Office (Film on Family Reunification), the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (ECDL Training), the VEC (Training for Transformation), FAS (CE Scheme staff – welcome to Moawia El Djake).

The reality is however that Nasc, like most of the organisations in this sector, faces a serious funding crisis in a few years time. Our major funders will leave the country in 2013 and 2016. For this reason Nasc has been leading a process for the country as a whole for NGOs in this sector. During 2008 we had several meetings at Nasc to discuss a joint strategy for short term and long term action around attracting funding to our sector.

In addition Nasc has employed the services of a consultant to devise a funding strategy for Nasc.

Organisational development

New Staff

Nasc welcomed five new full-time staff, a Policy and Campaigning Officer, Development Education Officer, Drop In Assistant and PA to Director, Advocacy Officer and Community Development Officer. In addition, six temporary staff positions were funded, namely: Jobs Club Facilitator; Tutor for Training for Transformation; Tutor for ECDL 4; Tutor for Drama; Tutor for Leadership Course; and Facilitator of Street Theatre. Nasc welcomes five new staff, Policy and Campaigning Officer Paul Dunbar, Ahmed Amir, Community Development Officer, Clodagh Fahy, Development Education Officer, Marie-Pia Paillot, Drop-In Assistant and PA to Director, and Advocacy Officer, Deirdre Morgan. Advocacy Service Assistant Moawia El Djake joined us in early 2009.

Trainings attended by Nasc staff or Board members

Training on Employment Rights, Training on Equality Tribunal, Training on role of new National Employment Rights Agency, Workshop on Accommodation Issues, Leadership Programme, Cork Community Television Workshop, Workshop on Theatre for the Oppressed, Development Education training, Intercultural training, Website Training, Financial Training, Facilitation Training, Board Training, Diploma Community Development Course at UCC, Organisational Development Mentoring, Leadership Training, Media Spokesperson Training, Local Elections Training, Financial Training

Improved Communications

Improved funding has enabled us to strengthen all aspects of the organisation including not just our core activities but also to think more about the development of the organisation as a whole. For instance our external communications have improved considerably, we have developed a branding style which is becoming well recognised and we are able to communicate information about our events to a wider audience and on a more regular basis. Internal communications have also improved although there is room for improvement in how our sub groups relate to one another. Our information leaflets are now being distributed every month in main organisations and public places in town, i.e. libraries, Garda Station, FAS, YMCA, CIC, Welcome English, Centre for the Unemployed, Refugee Legal Service and all the Direct Provision centres. Organisations throughout County Cork contacted us and express the needs of Nasc information for their services users. For each event Nasc is organising, posters are distributed to local main organisations, public places and Direct Provision Centres at least one month in advance. All Nasc events, activities, trainings are advertised to our membership by email or post.

Improved Newsletter

The newsletter is published quarterly and sent by post or email to our membership and other organisations in Cork and around in Ireland. For each issue, around 300 copies are printed.

Consultants

We have been able to employ the services of a number of external consultants including an organisational development mentor, a funding strategy consultant and an external evaluator.

Internal Systems

Our database, filing and other systems have now become far more professional and we now have systems that can help us to record, analyse and understand our client base better so that we can respond more accurately to actual presenting issues.

Outreach And Networking

Nasc has been outreaching to communities such as Blackpool and Carrigtwohill. 2008 was difficult in terms of outreach to asylum hostels in the Cork because the owners of the three Cork hostels did not allow Nasc and other NGOs into the hostels. Towards the end of 2008 we negotiated a situation whereby we can have outreach sessions near but not inside these centres. This means of course that we cannot always get full information to potential service users about the services and activities we and others can offer them. Despite this we have many members in our various sub groups and as clients, who do live in these centres.

We have networked very successfully with a wide range of organisations and agencies in Cork and around Ireland, the details of which are contained in different sections in this report. However, Nasc made a decision to no longer participate in the Cork Networking Committee of the Cork City Integration Strategy Monitoring Committee due to a different policy perspective on different work priorities.

Some of the groups we have networked with are:

Local Networking

Cork City Council, Local Councillors, South West Region of Integrating Ireland, Common Ground, Cork City Library, Ethical Development Action (EDA), Community Garda Officer, Carrigtwohill Community Council, Cork New Community Partnership, Cork City Council Social Inclusion, Cork Community TV (CCTV), Blackpool Orchard Court Resident Group, Cork City Football Club, FAS, Nigerian Association, Diaspora of Togolese in Ireland, EDO United Association, IGBO Union Ireland, Cork VEC, Cork Social Housing Forum, Education and Employment Committees, Cork City Education Network, Cork County Council, Cork HSE, YMCA, Intercultural Group of Ireland, Cork City Arts Council, Frameworks Film-making, IONA (Student Group) – UCC, UCC Migration Studies, Applied Social Studies, English for New Communities (ENC) Network, My Cork, UCC Suas Society, Cork Sexual Health Centre, Carrigtwohill Family Resource Centre, Women of the World, Le Cheile, Cork Community/Enterprise City Council, Congolese Group, Angola Group, schools and colleges.

National Networking

Immigrant Information Network for NGO Advocacy Officers, GNIB, Dept. Justice, Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI), Refugee Information Service (RIS), Irish Refugee Council, Trinity College Dublin, Irish Aid, CADIC, Direct Provision Network, Integrating Ireland, Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), Funding Strategy Network for Migrant Sector, ORAC, Galway One World, Sligo Social Services, FLAC, RIA, Trocaire, Akidwa, Equality Authority, NCCRI, the Wheel, Banulacht, National Women Council, Marriage Equality, National Integration Debate, Centre for Global Education Belfast, National Economic and Social Forum, UCD Migration Studies, Migrant Right Centre (MRCI), National Employment Rights Association (NERA), Mayo Intercultural Action, Galway Refugee Support Group, Show Racism the Red Card, Africa Centre, Doras Luimni, Galway Migrant Service, KASI, Spirasi, Immigrant Support Unit (ISU)

European Network with Representative of different organisation/academic: Spanish Delegation of Service Providers, Norwegian Delegation of City Councillors, European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), European Network Against Racism (ENAR), European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA).

Conferences/Seminars attended by Nasc Staff/Members/Board

Launch of ENAR Shadow Report 2007, Human Rights Celebration with EDA, EU Immigration Policies and Laws Conference in Maastricht, "Together in Diversity" Conference, Roundtable Discussion on Nigerian Community in Ireland with NCCRI & NANI, Leadership/Business and Voluntary Sector Conference, Open IT Conference, National Integration Debate, INIS Customer Liaison Forum, IDEA Annual Conference, IDEA AGM, Integrating Ireland AGM, Africa Day, World Refugee Day, Centre for Global Development through Education Launch, Launch of Minister's Integration Statement, Dublin Conference for Community Sector, Conference on Drugs and Migrant Community, Conference on working with women in Trauma, Dail Debate on Immigration Bill, Press Conference on IRP Bill in Dublin, Atlantic Conference, International Criminal Court Judge Pillay, UCC, Seminar in Human Rights Council, Conference on Integration, Pobal Conference, Combat Poverty Agency Conference, Meeting with CIT, Recognition of qualification, Irish Human Rights Commission conference on Habitual Residency, Nasc stand at EDA Intercultural event, Employer Training Session by Nasc, Asylum Rights Conference by Nasc, Launch of Guide for Migrants on Employment/Enterprise and Education by Nasc, Launch of Asylum Rights Campaign Pack.

Three Work Programmes

The remainder of this report refers to the detail of the work we have carried out in 2008 under our three work areas.

Work Area 1: One to One Advocacy Service

Introduction

The numbers attending our advocacy service has more than doubled in the last year with the number of clients visits reaching 3163, 725 of whom are new clients. Due to the increase in numbers the opening hours have changed and clients are now seen from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm. Nasc provides a daily drop in and appointment service every day bar Wednesday when the office closes to give the advocacy officers an opportunity to do follow up work and work on particularly complex cases.

Moawia Eldjack has also joined the Nasc Team as an Assistant Advocacy Officer. He provides invaluable administrative support and assistance to the advocacy officers. In addition, he is fluent in both Arabic and Russian, which is of great benefit to the service users.

This year has also seen a strengthening in our links and relationship with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service and the Garda National Immigration Bureau. Nasc attends quarterly meetings with both bodies as part of the Immigration Information Network. These meeting are of great value and importance as pertinent issues/queries can be raised at this forum and clarification sought on a number of policy issues. We have access to the heads of the various sections within the departments and we have made a number of valuable contacts. In general, the same issues arise, we are constantly lobbying for policy statements on a number of issues, we have had some success here, for e.g. updating of the INIS website to include the requirements for residency applications for de facto couples, and long term residence, and we now receive or should receive prior notification of any policy changes. We still find that there is a lack of clear policy in a number of areas, and a number of policy changes appear to be ill conceived and ad hoc. This leads to inconstancies and a lack of transparency in the decision making process. Below is a brief summary of the issues discussed at both meetings:

Main issues of discussion in quarterly GNIB and INIS meetings

GNIB

- **Biometric Data/ Fingerprinting:** The policy expanded to include fingerprinting at registration of children from 7 years of age.
- **The rights of dependent children of Stamp 2 (International Students) :** The main emphasis here is that neither children nor Stamp 2 holders have access to public funds. There is differential treatment of children who are below school going age and those above and those who were not born in Ireland will be considered for residency on an individual basis.
- **EU Treaty Rights:** The main issues of discussion were the implementation of the post Metock changes to the decision making procedure and the provision of temporary Stamp 4 to applicants pending the outcome of their application.
- **De facto couples (with an Irish partner):** There were changes implemented in 2008 regarding the provision of residency to Defacto couples (with an Irish partner) to be brought in line with the rights of De facto couples with an EU partner. An new application process was implemented which has a significant effect on same sex couples.
- **Provision of new voluntary repatriation scheme within INIS:** A new repatriation scheme is being administered by GNIB through INIS which is independent of IOM .
- **Bridging residency for work permit holders(Stamp 1) who have been made redundant:** The policy was stated to be that should the holder be working in the State for a period of over 3 years then they will be issued with a Stamp 3 for a three month period. (Which may be subject to renewal for a further 3 months on a case by case basis.
- **Passport Requirement for provision of residency cards for people who have been granted Temporary permission to remain or EU Residency rights:** GNIB have stood firm that since these applicants have ‘no protection concerns’ they must furnish a passport to gain residency. The logic surrounding this harsh policy which often leaves claimants undocumented is a concern with identity fraud.

INIS

- **Acknowledgement letters and Policy Updates:** The need for a better standard of communication on individual cases and general policy changes were consistently highlighted throughout the meetings. Some improvement has been noted.
- **Victims of Domestic Violence and residency needs:** INIS have provided a particular contact to deal with these cases on an individual basis. No official policy has been stated.
- **Family Reunification and Naturalisation:** The right to apply for family reunification as a Refugee remains until a client is actually naturalised. This was confirmed in the INIS meeting.

- **Family Reunification Procedure:** The family reunification procedure was reviewed in 2008 with a significant increase in the speed of the decisions noted. Liam Conlon explained that the processing of family reunification application has improved dramatically. From 7 being processed per month in the first half of 2008 to 140 per month in the second half.
- **Family Reunification and Documentation:** The requirement to provide passports is being rigidly enforced with INIS offering to assist in DNA testing for people who are unable to furnish a passport.
- **Naturalisation:** Any period over one month outside the State is not permissible in order to fulfil the 12 month requisite residency requirement for the year prior to application. Should an applicant be refused on past criminal record it is open to them to reapply with character references although INIS did not clarify how long after a conviction an applicant should wait.
- **Long Term Residency:** Residency stamps in passports are the only acceptable proof of 60 month residency for a Long Term Residency application. When a minor child of Stamp 4 (LTR) holder who is part of the family unit turns 16 and is registered on Stamp 2 the following time spent on Stamp 2 can be considered for the residency requirements for an application for long-term residency or naturalisation
- **Stamp 3 and Education:** INIS have confirmed that there is no issue with Stamp 3 holders attending third level education. This position does not seem to be enforced by GNIB.

Overview of issues arising for Nasc clients for year 2008

Changes to E.U. Residence Card following Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, European Court Judgment on Free Movement of Persons (the "Metock" case)

This year the High Court referred to the European Court of Justice the question of whether Regulation 3(2) of SI 656/2006 – European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) (No 2) Regulations 2006, (which requires that non EEA family members of an EU citizen who apply for a residence card in the State to provide evidence showing that they had prior lawful residence in another EU Member State) was compatible with Directive 2004/38/EC. This Directive sets out the rights of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. It was long thought that the Directive was transposed incorrectly, as this requirement was not in the Directive. On the 25 July 2008, the European Court of Justice held that this requirement was incompatible with the Directive. As a result, The Department of Justice was compelled to revoke the requirement. All applicants who were refused a residence card because they did not have prior legal residence had their applications for an EU FAM residence card reviewed under Directive 2004/38/EC and in many cases a Residence Card was granted. In addition, the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform finally applied the Directive correctly by granting applicants a temporary residence card for 6 months whilst they were awaiting a final decision.

De Facto Couples

Some positive developments here with the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform finally moving to recognise de facto couples. The rights of De Facto couples are not legislated for, as we are still awaiting the enactment of the Civil Partnership Bill. At the moment, an administrative scheme is in place whereby applications for residence for non-EEA partners of either an E.U. or Irish national can apply for residence. The Department are at pains to point out in their correspondence that residency in the state on this basis is generally granted on a “*case-by-case basis*”. In case where residency was granted, again they inform that the grant is an “*exceptional measure*”. We received assurances from both INIS and GNIB that non-EEA partners of Irish citizen who fulfil the requirements would be granted a Stamp 4. However, in three recent successful Nasc cases all three applicants were treated differently. The first two cases were very similar, both had an Irish partner, both had children in the State, and the relationship was of similar duration with evidence supplied. However, one applicant got a stamp 4 and another stamp 3 with no option to change. The third case involved a couple who were not together for 2 years, and had no children together. Here the applicant got a Stamp 3 with an option to apply for a Stamp 4 when the relationship was of 2 years duration.

Whilst we welcome the recognition of De Facto relationships and the speed in which the decisions are made (2-3 weeks in most cases) the disparity and inconsistency between the stated policy and residency conditions granted is of some concern. As it is yet another administrative scheme granted on a *case-by-case basis* in *exceptional circumstances* it is difficult to appeal the decisions. Another issue here is the fact that de facto couples applying under European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) (No 2) Regulations 2006, who fulfil the less stringent requirements (as a 2 relationship duration is not a stated requirement) are granted a 5 year residence permission on stamp 4 conditions. There is a need for greater consistency and transparency in this area.

Family Reunification for Refugees

The number of clients applying for family reunification has steadily increased throughout 2008. The main areas of concern for applicants who apply for this procedure are first the retrieval of original documents from their country of origin and second the issue of delay regarding the decision making process. Our relationship with the family reunification section of Office of the Refugee Appeals Commissioner (ORAC) remains good. We have forged some contacts within the Family Reunification Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform but overall a lack of transparency remains. We have witnessed a significant increase in decisions been handed down in the latter half of 2008 with the majority of applicants successfully receiving family reunification.

The difficulties facing an applicant trying to retrieve original documentation from their country of origin

remain. These obstacles are particularly difficult for Somali nationals as there is no effective Government in the region and Kuwaiti Bedoon (Stateless) who are not issued with passports. We have raised this issue with both Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform and ORAC at meetings but they are very insistent on documentation. They stated that it is not their current policy to request, accept, or assist with DNA tests to verify family links. We as yet have not have to pursue a DNA test on behalf of a client.

In respect of the issue of delay: Applicants with decisions pending are still experiencing long wait times. There has been an improvement in the speed of the delivery of decisions for two reasons. First, due to the high profile high court case which was exposed summer of 2008 which concerned an Somali Refugee whose successful application was not communicated to her which resulted in her husband and children staying unnecessarily in a Sudanese refugee camp for three years. Second, due to the decision of Mr. Justice Hedigan delivered on the 19th November 2008 in *Philip Odei Tetty v. Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform*. This case considered the legality of the delay in family reunification decisions and concluded that a two year delay in decision making process in respects of family reunification applications would seem both unconstitutional and contrary to Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Many clients have been referred to Solicitors who pressurise the Department to make a decision or face Judicial Review proceedings in the High Court.

Citizenship

Nasc submits a high number of citizenship applications on behalf of service users. The beginning of 2009 has seen an overhaul of the procedure with the launching of a new Form 8 and a more detailed list of requisite documents. The Citizenship section of the Department of Justice relocated to Tipperary in the latter half of 2008 and is currently staffed by over 60 civil servants. Irrespective of this increase in staff, the issue of delay remains prominent among applicants. The waiting time is now predicted as being up to 30 months.

The lack of any appeal of a negative decision is extremely frustrating for the unsuccessful applicant especially in light of the fact that service users of Nasc have been refused on the basis of very minor offences such as traffic offences and claiming a social welfare payment for over three months.

Unfortunately considering the 2009 restrictive overhaul of the procedure does not bode well for future applicants.

Visa

The main visa applications submitted by Nasc are on behalf of service users who wish to bring family members to Ireland to join them permanently. These service users may be work permit holders, people granted temporary permission to remain, people granted residency based on parentage of an Irish Born Child (IBC'05 scheme), naturalised Irish citizens and EU citizens (or family members thereof granted

residency pursuant to EU treaty rights.)

The Visa procedure has been placed online since September 2008 with the vast majority of countries been required to submit online applications, which are later supplemented with the requisite documents to a designated visa-processing embassy. The threshold to reach to receive a visa is very high with the Department of Justice placing significant weight on the financial viability of the applicant, basically trying to ensure that the applicant will not place a burden on the State. Visa applications must be accompanied with a very detailed list of documents. The reasons given for the refusal of visas have been inconsistencies in the submissions, failure to disclose all relevant facts, insufficient documentation, and a failure to prove a link between the referee and the applicant. Most worryingly the Abuja visa processing Embassy in Nigeria has explicitly stated on their website that withholding of information may lead to a five year bar on any future applications which has a significant effect on applicants if they are teenage minor children who will age out during this period.

Work Area 2: Community Development and Capacity Building

1. Social & Cultural Group:

The Social & Cultural Group offers a social outlet for its members – both immigrants and Irish – and helps to build capacity, develop skills and foster friendship and relationships in the area of social activity, culture and community arts. The aim is to make creative use of different community arts media to enable the group members to express themselves in more accessible ways.

The group's activities have the added advantage of fostering positive integration with the wider community in Cork. The Social & Cultural Group offers a way to look at important issues while meeting new people, experiencing new things and having fun!

Building on and pursuing the announced aims and objectives, the group was involved in several projects during the past year:

Cultural Nights:

This is a new project adopted by the group. It aims to explain and bring the diverse cultures and traditions of the world to the attendance; organisation members and the general public. This is done through a series of PowerPoint presentations performed by any group member on his/her home country, accompanied by refreshments. To date, four presentations were made in two different nights which covered Hungary, Mauritius, Burma and Zimbabwe.

Christmas Party:

Some of the group members were also involved in the preparation of the annual Christmas party. The involved members prepared food, drinks and helped in the organisation of the night in general.

2. Speaker's Panel:

The panel is a programme run by Nasc that provides an opportunity for migrants to relate their experiences of life in their native countries to the broader community in Cork.

Nasc organises training for the speakers so they are able to hold various types of sessions. The training - provided either by Nasc staff or external facilitators – would on average include 5 topics:

- Group facilitation skills.
- Anti-Racism.
- How to facilitate an Anti-Racism workshop
- Public speaking on immigrant and migrant issues.
- How to tell your personal story or the story of your country.
- Development Education.

Country of Origin Project:

The group also runs the “Country of Origin” project whereby using development education techniques; they work with organizations, groups or agencies to raise awareness about “why people come to Ireland” and development or human rights issues within their countries of origin. The objectives are two-fold:

- To increase the public understanding of the backgrounds and cultures of migrants living in Ireland.
- To provide an opportunity for capacity building to the speakers themselves.

Talks and Workshops:

The Speaker's Panel offered their services to the wider community throughout the year, by giving talks and/or workshops. The audience of such events during 2008 were among others:

- Primary schools.
- Secondary schools.
- University College Cork.
- Youth centres.
- Community development projects.
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- Conferences and seminars – International Anti-Racism Day.
- Development Education seminars and events – Common Ground

Development Education & the Speaker's Panel:

Under the said programme, the Speaker's Panel members in co-operation with UCC students and other experts in the field launched two publications – *In Our Own Words* (second edition) and *North Meets South*. The well attended launch took place at the Clarion Hotel, Cork in October 2008.

Additionally, Nasc is a member of a Munster based network called ***Common Ground***, which is concerned with the question of development. Broadly, development begins at home but also embraces the whole world. It is recognition that every individual has a right to enjoy the things supposedly guaranteed to all, such as health, education, shelter, employment, property and food [UNESCO].

During the ***Common Ground*** event in October, a series of lectures, workshops and an exhibition provided many stimulating ideas and were an ideal place to begin the journey of engagement. Members of the panel ran a total of four workshops during the event in October 2008. The issues covered were under the theme of Human Rights & Anti-Racism.

Speakers Panel & the Media:

Often times, stories of migration tend to focus only on the positive examples, leaving many of the stories of challenges both in the countries of origin and here in Ireland left untold. Two journalists from the ***Evening Echo*** collaborated with members of the Panel under the Countries of Origin project to bring forward the other perspective of migration. The collaboration resulted in the publication of four articles. Another article dealt with spending Christmas in Ireland

Members of the panel were also involved with broadcasting media. One member of the panel was interviewed by 96FM. The interview covered his personal experiences living in Cork, especially in the current economic circumstances.

3. Women's Group:

The Women's Group offers support and friendship for its members, providing a safe environment for them to raise issues relating specifically to women. The group organises ongoing activities and trainings as determined by its members.

Whilst the Women's Group up until now has been a valuable source of friendship and support for its members we aim to begin to identify and take action on general women's issues in a broader context.

Having this in mind, the group was involved in the following:

- Classes in Irish Dancing.
- Trip to CircoCopia.

- Trip to Trabolgan Holiday village.
- Introductory session in the Irish Education system.
- Personal & Group Development session.
- Presentation on Akidwa made by their Development & Outreach Officer.
- Introductory session on some relevant aspects of the Irish Legal system.

Workshops, Conferences & Events:

As part of the personal development activities in addition to the above, group members participated in the following:

- International Women's Day event.
- Behind The Veil: Speaking From Muslim Women Perspective conference.
- Hosting a workshop by Nasc in partnership with NCCRI – *Women from Ethnic Communities in Ireland: Having Our Voices Heard*.
- AKidwa Annual conference.
- Akidwa: Past, Present and Future conference.

The group facilitator also met with members from the Cork Women Traveller's Network to learn from their experiences in running groups and explore possible future collaboration between the groups/organisations.

Women's Group & the Christmas Party:

Part of the group had a huge input in the Nasc members' Christmas party. Besides being involved during the preparation stage, they performed Christmas songs – including drumming – and prepared food on the night.

In a show of solidarity, the group also contributed towards the Christmas party held by the Millstreet based group members who were not able to attend in Cork due to transport difficulties.

Work Area 3: Policy and Campaigning

Nasc's primary focus from a policy and campaigning perspective in 2008 was the advancement of each of the five key areas which were identified in the business plan:

- Integration
- Asylum Rights
- Family Reunification
- Employment
- Education

A number of other areas which broadly came under the remit of the policy office e.g. the Jobs Club and the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill..

Asylum Rights

The most critical aspect of this section of Nasc's policy work was to compile, edit and publish Nasc's position on the direct provision system. The campaign pack, entitled 'Cuan Cinnte', was launched on April 2nd in the Clarion Hotel where the main speakers included Dr Tony Humphreys (Psychologist and Author), Robin Hanan (CEO of the Irish Refugee Council) and testimonies from Uche Odinukwe and Godfrey Odiase, two asylum seekers in Cork. The launch was attended by in excess of 40 people. The campaign pack included Nasc's key messages on the issue of direct provision and some key points from research conducted on Nasc's behalf in late 2007.

Two thousand campaign packs were produced and distributed throughout the country to interested parties and groups. Nasc also sent the pack to each TD and councillor in Cork city and county. The campaign pack was also accompanied by a pin and postcard which was to be returned to Nasc to indicate support for the campaign. To date there have been 745 signatures collected for the direct provision campaign and 1,729 for the family reunification campaign.

In addition to the signature collection, Paul Dunbar and Marie-Claire Kah have been conducting film showings in a wide range of venues in order to publicise and raise awareness of both family reunification and direct provision issues. The 'Who are we now' production of 2005 has been employed to highlight the key issues pertaining to asylum seekers in Cork. The showings are then followed by a talk and questions and answers session. These showings will continue into 2009.

In November 14th 2008 Nasc also hosted a public discussion on the issues facing asylum seekers in the Clarion Hotel entitled 'Getting it Right'. The following speakers were in attendance:

- Colm Stanley (Cork-based solicitor and Nasc Board member)
- David Joyce (Policy Officer with ICTU)
- Dr Bernard Ruane (Tralee-based GP)
- Fergus Finlay (CEO of Barnardos)
- Gertrude Cotter (Nasc Director)
- Robin Hanan (CEO of Irish Refugee Council)
- Saoirse Brady (Policy Officer with FLAC)
- Senator Dan Boyle (Nasc Chairman)
- Uche Odinukwe (Resident of Kinsale Road Accommodation Centre)

Niall Crowley, head of the Equality Authority was booked as the keynote speaker but unfortunately had to withdraw at short notice.

The conference was well-attended with in excess of 60 people and highlighted some further issues of concern for asylum seekers, including some troubling reports from centres in Waterford and Carrick-on-Suir from residents of those centres. Nasc has worked to resolve these issues since they were brought to its attention and is intending to meet with senior officers in RIA to discuss ongoing issues in a number of centres.

During 2008 Nasc also coordinated with a number of other agencies in order to initiate nationwide campaign on the issue of direct provision. The other organisations include the Irish Refugee Council, Free Legal Advice Centre, Integrating Ireland, Amnesty Ireland, Galway Refugee Support Group, Akidwa). This campaign has a number of high profile allies and actions are planned for the year 2009.

There is evidence to suggest that the focus by Nasc and other groups on direct provision has prompted the Government to act. For example, in January 2009 an extra 4 judges were assigned to the High Court in order to process a serious backlog in cases. This is a five-fold increase on 2008 where there was only one judge hearing cases related to immigration.

There is also evidence to suggest that those who have been in the direct provision system for a prolonged period of time, usually more than 5 years, have granted leave to remain on humanitarian grounds in the past 6 months. Both Nasc and other organisations around the country have noted this trend.

While it may be difficult to attribute these changes to Nasc's (or any other group's) campaigns, it is a positive step in an area in which the Government have been traditionally intractable.

Family Reunification

The documentary by Frameworks Films on family reunification, Together Again, was launched on the 10th of May at the Triskel Arts Centre. The film was subsequently used in talks both in Cork and further afield. Talks would usually be given to student groups or at arts centres and would consist of showing the film and have Marie-Claire Kah speak and answer questions afterwards. This proved a particularly effective method of raising awareness as the people who attended the talks were very moved by Marie-Claire's speeches. In total, 13 talks were held in 2008 in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Cobh in locations such as schools, libraries, arts centres and church gatherings.

Signature collection for this campaign began in 2007 and continued in 2008. The response from similar organisations was somewhat disappointing in terms of gathering signatures. Signatures were also gathered at each of the film screenings, where appropriate.

In addition to the awareness raising of the film and talks, Nasc has also brought its concerns with the family reunification system to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, Dublin. Both of Nasc's advocacy officers meet with officials from this department on a regular basis through meetings organised by Crosscare, Dublin. Nasc's major concerns include the lengthy processing times, prohibition of IBC status people from applying for FR, and the narrow definition of the family.

In the latter part of 2008 there was a discernible difference in the speed with which applications were coming back to Nasc. It was confirmed to us that extra resources were put in place in the INIS which enabled it to increase its processing capacity. The number of staff employed by the INIS to process applications was considered too low by many in the sector. This, coupled with a number of high profile media reports on delays in the system undoubtedly precipitated the increase in resources and efficiency within the INIS.

Integration

The business plan places integration as the key policy focus for Nasc in 2009, along with a substantially larger budget than the other key areas. However, there was a substantial body of work carried out on integration in 2008, most notably on the theme of local and European elections. These 2009 elections offer the first real opportunity for migrants to engage with the political process in Ireland. Nasc's work focused on raising awareness among the migrant community of their eligibility to vote in local elections, and European elections in the case of EU citizens.

The campaign around the elections began in October with the production of a 4 page leaflet which offered basic information on how the elections work and how to register. The leaflet was also translated into the following languages:

- Polish
- Arabic
- Chinese (Mandarin)
- Russian
- French

- Spanish

The leaflet was then distributed throughout the city and county through the library network and citizens information centres.

In addition to the production of the leaflet Nasc also hosted a training session given by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice as part of their active citizenship programme. A total of 12 people attended the training including Nasc staff, members of Melo groups and asylum seekers. This training then enabled people to go back to their communities and help people to register to vote and to raise awareness of how the system operates in Ireland. Paul Dunbar also gave a training session on the local and European elections organised by Integrating Ireland in Mallow.

A toolkit on the elections was being researched in 2008 and this publication is to be completed and launched by early March 2009 when it will be launched by the Lord Mayor.

In preparation for Nasc's policy statement on integration a number of interns throughout the year were involved in preparing country profiles on integration measures.

Employment, Education and Enterprise

The EEE project comprised a large part of Nasc's work on education, employment and enterprise in 2008. The largest element of this was the strategy document which was launched on April 28th in the Clarion Hotel. The document included a discussion of the current context in and then went on to make recommendations to a range of stakeholders in the field. Nasc then went on to work with these stakeholders in an effort to forward the actions outlined in the strategy. The strategy's actions were based on research and consultation with such groups as the Cork Chamber of Commerce, SIPTU, VEC, UCC, CIT, Enterprise Boards and colleges of further education.

The strategy document was launched by Ted Owens of the City of Cork VEC. Others who contributed on the day included Hafeez Rehman (Ethnic Entrepreneur), Lord Mayor Donal Counihan, Gertrude Cotter (Nasc Director), Paul Dunbar (Nasc Policy Officer), Humaira Altaf (Migration Studies student).

Subsequent to the launch of the strategy the publication was distributed throughout Cork city and county and aimed at organisations who would have an interest in migrant issues.

This event also saw the launch of Nasc's Information Booklet for Migrants. This booklet was published in order to inform immigrants of their rights on employment, education and enterprise and to offer advice in each of these areas. The publication was also made available on Nasc's website in the following languages:

- Polish
- Arabic
- Chinese (Mandarin)
- Russian
- French

This booklet was distributed throughout Cork city and county through citizens information centres, libraries and Fás offices.

Education

Further work was done in conjunction with the education committee in order to forward some of the actions within the strategy. The most significant of these was the initiation of a process which will result in the establishment of a VEC committee which will examine all areas of interest in relation to migrants and education. Nasc had received assurances from the Ted Owens of the VEC that they would take the lead in this area and proceed to establish such a forum. Gertrude Cotter met with Ted Owens on a number of occasions to discuss what such a forum may look like and how it may be comprised, and by whom. As a result, the existing Education for New Communities group is to be developed into a new forum which will have an expanded remit.

Employment/Enterprise

As part of the EEE project commitments Nasc undertook to host a training session for employers. This took place on April 16th in the Clarion Hotel and saw presentations from a wide range of contributors:

- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Permits Section)
- National Employment Rights Authority
- University College Cork Human Resources Representative
- Way Over Yonder (Anti-racism in the workplace training)

People who attended this training session were predominantly staff within human resources departments of companies that had a large proportion of migrant workers.

Nasc's employment/enterprise committee continued to meet throughout the year in order to examine what actions in the strategy may be worked on. Further to this, new contributors to this committee were sought from those who attended the employer training on April 16th. This committee will continue to meet in 2009 to work on the strategy.

Jobs Club

Nasc secured funding in early 2008 from the Office of the Minister for Integration to set up a jobs club. The funding allocated would allow for the recruitment of a jobs club officer for one day per week for a period of one year. Humaira Altaf was employed in this role in May. Mrs. Altaf subsequently vacated the position in October and it was then filled by Dave Walker. As of December 11th, the jobs club had seen 73 clients who had a variety of needs e.g. CV preparation, advice on training, financial assistance and internet searches. All clients who make appointments with Mr Walker go through a consultation and initial assessment of their needs. They are then invited to come back for further assistance and are permitted to use Nasc's facilities in order to search for jobs.

The jobs club has also forged connections with other groups/organisations in the city who may be seeking to employ immigrants or who would have specific language requirements in order to fill positions. Paul Dunbar is also a member of the steering group on the Immigrant Employability Programme (IEP) which runs a similar operation in Cork City Partnership. This programme runs for three days per week and has a budget available to which immigrants can apply for financial assistance for training/courses.

Nasc, in conjunction with Cois Tine and New Communities Partnership, organised a coordinated letter campaign to all TDs in the Cork area and selected Ministers within Government. The letter sought to draw attention to the difficulties experienced by spouse of migrant workers in their search for work. This issue had emerged quite prominently at a number of the IEP meetings and it was agreed that representations should be made to elected officials. The aforementioned organisations all sent letters and all received a response. The TD's responses were positive in the sense that they all committed to raising the issue with the relevant person within their party, or with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Policy Group

The policy group met on the second Tuesday of every month in 2008. A small number of the members became involved in the signature collection work for both the direct provision and family reunification campaigns. This involved making phone calls to other groups throughout the country and sending them postcards or petitions to have signed.

The policy group suffered from a lack of participation and involvement of regular members throughout the year. There are, however, new initiatives under way in order to reinvigorate the group and attract new members.

Other

IRP Bill – The bill was published in February and Nasc, in conjunction with other NGOs throughout the country, worked to publicise the bill and highlight concerns about it. Hilka Becker of the Immigrant Council, Aki Stavrou of Integrating Ireland and Piaras McEinri were invited to speak on the bill at a public briefing. 3 Cork-based TDs were also in attendance (Kathleen Lynch, Simon Coveney, David Stanton). The bill has yet to be passed into law and it is expected that similar events will take place in 2009 in order to inform Nasc's members and clients of any developments.

UN Commission on the Elimination on all forms of Racism and Discrimination (UNCERD) – Nasc were invited by the Department of Justice to participate in a consultation on Ireland's report to UNCERD. Paul Dunbar attended this meeting in Dublin Castle along with a number of other NGO's in the human rights/immigrant/anti-racism fields. The general feeling at this consultation was that it was not a genuine consultation as those who attended had not been given sufficient opportunity to read and reflect on the document in question. The majority of parties present, including Nasc, voiced their disapproval of the process.

Visit of Conor Lenihan, Minister for Integration – Conor Lenihan requested a site visit in Nasc on April 25th prior to launching the Cork City Integration Strategy. Minister Lenihan met with Nasc members, clients and staff for approximately 1.5 hours. He listened to issues raised by staff and members of Nasc and expressed an interest in Nasc's Pobal-funded project.

