An exploration of local strategies for the integration of migrant workers and their families
The LDSIP is funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
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ISBN 1-904262-14-7

Design: Alison Bums 021 4899136
# Table of Contents

**Foreword**
4

The Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP)
5

**Section 1: Introduction**
6 – 8

Background and rationale for the initiative
6

Methodology
7

**Section 2: The migration context**
9 – 13

Inward migration
9

Categories and schemes
10

Issues for migrant workers and their families
11

Recent policy developments
12

Conclusions
13

**Section 3: Findings, needs, responses**
14 – 24

Findings from the research
14

Addressing the needs of migrant workers and their families
16

Addressing change within the Partnerships
20

Moving forward: the role of Partnerships
21

Key starting points for Partnerships
23

**Annex 1: WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE IN THE THREE PARTNERSHIP AREAS**
25 – 41

Ballyhoura Development Ltd.
25

Background to engagement with migrant workers
25

Current initiatives
27

Issues and challenges arising in Ballyhoura
30

Tallaght Partnership
32

Background to engagement with migrant workers
32

Current initiatives
35

Dublin Inner City Partnership
40

Background to engagement with migrant workers
40

Current initiatives
40

**Annex 2: USEFUL CONTACTS**
42 – 43
Given our long and painful history of emigration, it is sometimes hard to believe that Ireland has become a country of net immigration. No-one knows exactly how many migrant workers are contributing to our economy and society, but we know that 150,000 PPS numbers were issued to migrant workers from May to December 2005 and that, as a society, we benefit from their contribution directly and indirectly.

Over the past number of years, Partnership staff have supported the integration of asylum seekers and refugees and have enhanced their practice and understanding of intercultural interventions. In the early 2000s, the emerging and different needs of migrant workers and their families began to impact on local services. Pobal* data registered an increase in the number of migrant workers in vulnerable situations turning to local employment services for advice and help.

A Pobal / LDSIP seminar in 2003 explored how national and EU policy commitments on employment and social exclusion might be translated into practice by involving local community and statutory players in initiatives that would promote the participation of migrant workers.

Local research, information and other projects were developed, recognising that labour market mechanisms alone are insufficient to address the complex and varied needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable migrant workers. It became clear that, in order to support the development of local communities free from racism and to promote effective integration and cultural diversity, all players needed to participate and be resourced. In recognition of this, the Dublin Employment Pact (DEP) and the Migrant Rights Centre (MRCI) in conjunction with Pobal established an initiative to assist and document the development of strategies in relation to migrant workers and their families at local level by Partnerships.

Pobal offers special thanks to Siobhan Lynam the author of this report and consultant to the initiative. Siobhan facilitated a reflective process of interaction and dialogue with participating Partnership staff and in the steering group, which contributed greatly to the final outcome of the initiative. We join with the author in thanking all those who shared their knowledge, experiences and expertise and provided information and assistance in the development of the initiative.

Pobal would particularly like to thank the following who were on the steering group:

Philip O’Connor (Dublin Employment Pact)
Siobhan O’Donoghue (Migrant Rights Centre Ireland)
Sally Daly (Ballyhoura Development Ltd), Clement Esebamen (Tallaght Partnership) and Peter Nolan (Dublin Inner City Partnership).

Other workers whose participation is much appreciated are: Celine Grocq (Project worker of the Sure Start Project of the Tallaght Partnership), Zuzana Tesarova (Project worker of the FM WEPON Project of the Tallaght Partnership) and Norma Roche (Avondhu Development Ltd., Coordinator of the Integrate Mallow Initiative).

Placing human rights and equality at the heart of integration policy and practice is a dynamic and complex process. This report is offered as a resource for Partnerships and other local organisations to deepen and extend their work with migrants. The lessons from the initiative will contribute to the development of a future social inclusion programme, in line with commitments in the National Action Plan Against Racism.

*Pobal, formerly Area Development Management (ADM).
The Local Development Social Inclusion Programme

The Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) is managed by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It is funded by the National Development Plan 2000-2006 under the Border, Midland and Western and the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programmes.

The LDSIP aims to counter disadvantage and to promote equality and social and economic inclusion. It provides funding and support to local Partnership companies and Employment Pacts.

The Partnership companies and Employment Pacts work in the areas of greatest need in the country. They bring together local communities, Government bodies, the Social partners and elected representatives in partnership at local level. They develop actions to counter social exclusion on the basis of local development plans.

Actions are tailored to meet local needs. While the actions are integrated responses to the multi-dimensional nature of disadvantage, they are grouped into three measures:

- Services for the Unemployed
- Community Development
- Community-Based Youth Initiatives.

Among the target groups of the LDSIP are: the long-term unemployed; Travellers; older people; disabled people; homeless people; ex-prisoners and offenders; low-income farm households; substance misusers; lone parents; asylum seekers and refugees; migrant workers; lesbians, gays and bisexuals; the underemployed; young people at risk; and disadvantaged communities in isolated rural areas and deprived urban areas.

New target groups are added to the programme in response to emerging needs at local level. Migrant workers were first formally named as a target group of the LDSIP in 2004. Under the Services for the Unemployed measure of the programme, there has been a significant increase since then in the number of individual migrant workers supported. Whereas 2.2% of the ‘caseload’ of individuals under the Services for the Unemployed measure were migrant workers in 2004, this figure rose to 5.5% in 2005. This report focuses not on employment-related supports for individuals, but on the strategies being developed at local level for the integration of migrant workers and their families.

1 Pobal’s mission is to promote social inclusion, reconciliation and equality through integrated social and economic development within communities. Pobal is a not-for-profit company with charitable status that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU. Programmes managed by Pobal include: the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme; National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010; RAPID; Rural Transport Initiative; Dormant Accounts Fund; Equality for Women Measure; and the Community Services Programme.
Introduction

Migrant workers and their families have formed the largest single group of new residents in Ireland over the last five years. In recognition of the range of issues confronting migrant workers and their families, in 2005 the Dublin Employment Pact, Pobal and the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland discussed the possibility of assisting the development of integrated local strategies to meet the needs of migrant workers and their families in a local development context.

A joint initiative was agreed with two aims:

- To facilitate and document the development of local strategies in relation to migrant workers and their families.
- To identify practice lessons in local strategies with a view to ensuring their inclusion in post-2006 local development programmes.

The report has four main sections:

Section 1 presents the background and rationale for the initiative, and outlines its methodology.

Section 2 provides an introduction to migration issues in Ireland, including the policy framework.

Section 3 presents findings from the research, briefly analyses the needs of migrant workers and their families, and presents potential responses by Partnerships.

Annex 1 presents a detailed analysis of the work undertaken in three Partnership areas.

Background and rationale for the initiative

It is widely recognised that many migrant workers are vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty and there are many reports of extreme exploitation and isolation. Partnerships are well placed to respond to this situation. In particular they can give visibility to the situation of migrant workers, develop good practice and models for action, lever more appropriate service provision from state agencies and support the collective organisation of migrant communities.

The objective of the initiative was to support the development of local strategies to respond to the needs of vulnerable migrant workers and their families. In setting this objective, the steering group was conscious of the role that Partnerships can play in leading out work with new target groups and their ability to draw together appropriate agencies in the development of strategic responses to existing or emerging needs.

It was also intended that the initiative would identify practice lessons from local strategies with the aim of ensuring the inclusion of such strategies in a post-2006 social inclusion programme.

The structure of the initiative provided for a steering group; three exploratory actions (in a rural area, a suburban area and an inner city area); and a project consultant to support the selected Partnerships, to record and document existing work and the process of developing a strategy locally, and from this information to develop a framework of good practice to assist other local development organisations in producing integrated local strategies.

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2 A migrant worker is a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national. (UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families).
Three Partnerships were invited to participate in the initiative. They were:

- Ballyhoura Development Ltd., the LDSIP/LEADER Partnership that operates in North-East Co. Cork and South-East Co. Limerick
- Tallaght Partnership, in suburban South County Dublin
- Dublin Inner City Partnership.

Methodology

The consultant made contact with the workers in each of the selected areas who were designated by their Partnership to inform the development of strategies for the inclusion of migrant workers and their families. Each was invited to suggest how best the consultant could support them in their work. In order to get a picture of what was currently happening in each Partnership area, the consultant asked for the opportunity to review with the worker any reports, documentation or studies that identified lessons learnt in work undertaken to date with immigrant communities, including migrant workers, in the Partnership area.

Each Partnership determined how it wanted to engage with the project over the period of the initiative and outlined the support that it would welcome. The support provided to Tallaght Partnership was through a series of meetings with the Equality Coordinator of the Partnership who has responsibility for directing the work. These meetings reviewed the work being undertaken, examined the experiences gathered, identified challenges to advancing the stated objectives of the projects, and explored ways of developing a more strategic approach, including integrating the work with new communities into the work of the Partnership. After each meeting the consultant provided a detailed written report, with comments and suggestions about ways forward that could then be considered by the staff of the Partnership and its projects. The consultant also met with the development workers of two of the Partnership’s initiatives and facilitated the review of one of these initiatives, the Sure Start Schools Familiarisation Project.

The support provided to Ballyhoura Development Ltd, involved the consultant in a review of work that was being undertaken by the community development worker, in contributing to and commenting on strategies being developed to advance work with migrant workers throughout the Partnership area, and in commenting on proposals being drawn up to put the work on a more sustainable footing. The consultant attended a number of meetings with the development worker, attended a meeting of the North Cork Immigrant Forum, as well as a meeting with the community development worker of Avondhu Development, who also coordinates the Integrate Mallow initiative.

The consultant also arranged a meeting with the Director of Cairde to explore the lessons arising from using community work approaches with immigrant communities to advance leadership development, group formation, self-organisation and advocacy. The meeting was a response to a need identified by the Tallaght Partnership’s FM WEPON Project and the Ballyhoura Migrant Information Service Project to explore strategies for engaging migrant workers and beginning the process of group formation.

Dublin Inner City Partnership chose to avail of the opportunity provided by the general meetings of the initiative and the general exchange of experience and reflection on issues to support it in determining its strategy in relation to migrant workers.

Cairde is a non-government organisation working to reduce health inequalities amongst ethnic minorities. Cairde initiates programmes and actions which involve community development approaches to tackling health inequality and which address the wider factors that influence health at the community level, including: accommodation; education and training; employment; childcare; financial security; residency status; racism and discrimination.
Prior to meeting with the Partnership staff, the consultant produced – for the consideration and approval of the initiative’s steering group – practice guidelines that might be useful as a tool to facilitate the strategic planning process in each of the Partnership areas. While each Partnership was at a different stage of development in its strategic planning, it was felt that the guideline could be used as a benchmark to support the development of good practice and assist in producing integrated local strategies.

The consultant reported to three meetings of the steering group and presented findings from the process of engagement with the selected areas for discussion by the steering group.

The project consultant supported the initiative for 24 days between September 2005 and February 2006.

4 The practice guidelines are summarised on page 21.
The migration context

Inward migration

Migration has been a constant feature of our global history. Societies, culture, politics and economies have been shaped by the movement of people since time began. Ireland is only too aware of the significance of immigration in our own history. It is believed that in the region of 70 million people claim Irish heritage, with approximately 3 million people living outside Ireland and holding Irish passports.

Global migration patterns have taken on new characteristics in recent decades. This is largely as a result of globalisation, in particular the liberalisation of the market place, the use of new technology, communication systems, the availability of travel opportunities and, most significantly, growing inequality between regions of the world. According to the UN’s Population Division, there are now almost 200 million international migrants, which is more than double the figure recorded in 1980. Almost half of all migrant workers are women.

As already stated, Ireland has historically been a country of high emigration, but the last ten years have seen a reversal, with immigration rates now higher than emigration rates. A sustained period of economic growth in the 1990s has brought unprecedented levels of prosperity and high employment. Significant skill and labour shortages have emerged over the past decade and employers have increasingly looked overseas to fill vacancies. The Irish unemployment rate currently stands at 4.2%, which is the lowest in the EU-15. By the end of 2005, approximately 160,000 migrant workers were in the labour force (8% of the total). Nevertheless, significant labour shortages remain in the economy. According to the Irish Labour Market Review 2005, 2% of manufacturing firms had production constrained due to difficulties filling skilled and unskilled jobs in the past year.

Apart from straightforward labour shortages, there are a range of complex factors influencing the current and future patterns of inward migration. These factors include a move towards a more globalised economy, which in turn indicates increasingly mobile markets and labour flows. The population of the EU is set to decline by 10% in the coming years. Ireland is lagging behind in this decline but is expected to be in a situation where the death-rate will out-strip the birth-rate by around 2030.

The dependency ratio is set to increase significantly, with a reduction in the workforce and an increasing demand for care provision. Inflows into the labour force from education are projected to decline, having peaked in 2000. People are also staying longer in education and taking time out to undertake educational and training opportunities. In addition the pace of increase in female participation in the labour force is set to slow down, largely as a result of the lack of affordable childcare.

The continued existence of structural exclusion from the labour market for groups such as people with disabilities, Travellers, lone parents, early school leavers and older unemployed men is unlikely to alter significantly over the next decade despite activation strategies and commitments to tackle inequalities in the labour market.

With the shift from a traditional manufacturing/industrial base to a knowledge-based and service-orientated economy, there is a corresponding move towards greater reliance on sub-contracted, short-term and ‘agency
type’ employment contracts. Workplaces are becoming less structured, with employees increasingly finding themselves in work situations where their employer is likely to be an agency or agent not directly involved in their day-to-day work.

Finally, as we become more ‘developed’ as a society, the greater the reliance on migrant workers who undertake work that is considered ‘dirty, dangerous and difficult’. This is the trend in all Western societies, generating an ongoing demand for workers willing to take up jobs considered to be undesirable to host populations. Studies have shown that the undertaking of this work (e.g. cleaning and caring) is vital to maintenance of lifestyles and standards considered essential for a modern developed society. However, as the gap widens between the lived experience of those undertaking the work and those using the services, the greater the invisibility, social exclusion and vulnerability to exploitation of the workers.

Categories and schemes
The type of visa required and the administrative procedures that must be followed by an economic migrant coming to Ireland depend upon the nationality of the migrant, the nature and skill level of the work to be undertaken by them, and whether or not the person is an EU citizen.

The majority of non-EEA (European Economic Area) nationals working in Ireland do so on temporary forms of permission to work, of which there are two main types: the work permit and the working visa/work authorisation. There are other categories, for example non-EEA students can work up to 20 hours per week.

Work permits for non-EEA nationals are issued to employers. A job must have been advertised through FÁS and it must be proven that the position cannot be filled from within the EEA region. The permit is issued for a period of one year. In the first 9 months of 2005, just under 20,000 permits were issued (5,579 new and 14,204 renewed).

The work permit only gives permission for the person to be employed for a specific job. To be legally resident in Ireland, a residency permit (stamp) must be obtained from the Garda National Immigration Bureau or local immigration officer. In some circumstances a person can change jobs if they can find a new employer who is willing to apply for a work permit and is granted one. Ownership of the work permit is one of the most serious concerns for all migrant workers employed in this way. Family reunification is limited and at the discretion of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. A person on a work permit can apply for family reunification after residing here at least one year. Many applications are refused on the basis — amongst a number of reasons — of earning insufficient income. A spouse of a person on a work permit or work visa does not have an automatic right to work. S/he must first find an employer willing to apply for a work permit. The Employment Permits Bill 2005 indicates that there will be some changes to the operation of the work permit system in the future. However, fundamental changes are unlikely.

In May 2004 the EU enlarged its membership to 25 states and, by July 2005, 120,000 Irish PPS numbers had been issued to citizens of EU accession countries. In the run up to enlargement, fears were expressed in the EU-15 members states of a possible influx of workers from the new members states taking jobs from EU citizens and migrating purely for social welfare purposes, so called ‘welfare
tourism’. Ireland, the United Kingdom and Sweden were the only countries to allow open access to their labour markets to new member states. Sweden was the only EU-15 member state not to link eligibility for welfare benefits to tight eligibility conditions. The UK and Irish governments introduced habitual residence tests designed to restrict access to social welfare and other benefits. All applicants regardless of their nationality must be deemed to be habitually resident for at least two years in order to qualify for a range of assistance payments.

The Irish Government is of the view that high-skill labour requirements will be met through the work visa system, with minimal use of the work permit system, and that most ‘low skilled’ jobs will be filled by EU citizens, especially migrant workers from the new accession countries. This view is disputed by many sources, including the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), which argues that this approach will contribute to a rise in irregular migration, as some employers will continue to source workers for vacant positions irrespective of their residency status and rules preventing them from obtaining a work permit.

It is unknown how many migrant workers are living and working irregularly in Ireland. The reasons and manner in which a migrant worker becomes undocumented are complex and varied. A sample from the MRCI case management system reveals that out of 378 people who reported that they entered the country on a work permit, 171 had become undocumented by the time they had accessed the MRCI service. Most of these people were undocumented as a result of some form of workplace exploitation. Undocumented workers have no formal rights and are vulnerable to exploitation, social exclusion and marginalisation.

**Issues for migrant workers and their families**

The MRCI has identified a range of difficulties for migrant workers and their families. The operation of the work permit system, which allows the employer to hold the work permit, is particularly problematic. Through this system, employees are placed in a situation of vulnerability. If they experience workplace exploitation or the employer is neglectful of his responsibilities, the worker can become undocumented and have little or no recourse to justice or formal supports. Even when documented, a person originally employed on a work permit has no right to seek access to employment support services on becoming unemployed.

MRCI have noted that migrant workers employed in low-wage, poorly regulated sectors (e.g. agrifood, domestic services, hospitality) are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the area of pay, hours of work, terms of employment, holidays etc. Work in these sectors is in general poorly regulated and non-unionised. Numerous cases have been documented where employees have been forced to pay large sums of money to an agency, where the agency operates a ‘gang master’ system and tells its recruits that Irish labour laws do not apply to migrant workers.

Many migrant workers who come to Ireland to take up employment in the ‘3 D’ areas – dirty, dangerous and difficult – have qualifications and skills in other areas. A consequence of the current migration system is that they experience a high level of deskilling and are effectively trapped in areas of work that do not match their knowledge and training. Access to promotion and progression routes is often denied to these workers as they are perceived simply as temporary workers or are caught in employment situations where they are simply used for their labour and not their skills.
There is also evidence to suggest that migrant workers find it difficult to access training and development opportunities in the workplace. This has a direct impact on their ability to access progression opportunities. Training focusing on health and safety issues, which is a prerequisite for accessing employment in the construction industry, can be accessed through private training companies, but fees are prohibitive for many migrant workers. This impedes access to job opportunities that pay above the minimum wage.

Migrant women face particular difficulties. For example, they are vulnerable to losing their job on becoming pregnant. They also often have reduced maternity leave, unhealthy working conditions and can experience a high level of negativity. In other cases it has been reported to the MRCI that employers tell female workers that they are not to become pregnant.

Access to family reunification for those on work permits is discretionary and there is a lack of transparency in the decision-making process. It has been found that for many migrant workers, living in a family unit and having their family around them determines their well-being and hugely influences their ability to feel part of the local community. Women who are separated from their own family and young children, and who spend large parts of their life living in another family looking after other children, can experience a particular sense of isolation.

There are many difficulties for migrant workers who become sick or injured. It is not uncommon for injured workers to be dismissed and actively encouraged to leave the country. Illegal deductions is another issue that emerges on a regular basis. Employers have to pay €500 for the work permit and it would appear that many deduct this from the employee’s wages or demand payment up front. As pay slips are frequently not provided, it is impossible in many instances to know what deductions are being made and for what reason.

The effect of the Habitual Residence Condition is that many workers from both inside and outside the EU are unable to access social protection if they become unemployed, have children, are injured or disabled. There have been numerous examples of workers finding themselves homeless and without food, despite having made significant social insurance contributions. For workers on a work permit it is particularly difficult to pass the centre-of-interest test, i.e. ability to show that you intend to remain and have reason to remain in the country, as the work permit is only issued for one year at a time.

Migrant workers on work permits, even though they may have lived in the local community for three or four years, have been deemed not to be entitled to put their name on the housing waiting list for local authority housing.

Recent policy developments

A second Employment Permits Bill has been published and, if enacted, will govern the issue of all employment permits for nationals from outside the EEA and will put aspects of the administrative arrangements for employment permits on a legislative basis.

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has also circulated outline policy proposals for an Immigration and Residence Bill in the form of a discussion paper.

A new Inter-Departmental Working Group on Immigration and Asylum has been established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. It will work with existing immigration and refugee agencies, including the Irish
Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), recently established by the Minister, ‘to provide a one-stop-shop approach to migrants’. The working group will oversee the work of the new Immigrant Unit, established within INIS ‘to promote and co-ordinate social and organizational measures across the spectrum of Government, for the acceptance of lawful immigrants into Irish economic and cultural life’. This is likely to have a bearing on the content of local development programmes post-2006.

At EU level, one of the ten priorities of the Hague Programme is ‘integration and maximising the positive impact of migration on our society and economy’. During the next four years the EU will support member states to deliver better policies on integration in order to prevent isolation and social exclusion of immigrant communities. A European Framework on Integration, based on common principles, is to be established to support greater contact between national authorities and exchange of information on integration. The publication of a Handbook on Integration will be pursued in 2006, to provide practitioners (national and local Governments, employers, unions, religious bodies, civil society, migrants’ associations, media, NGOs) with examples of good practice, with a view to driving the exchange of information and promoting policy initiatives.

Conclusions

If the conditions are not created for the integration of migrant workers and their families, the seeds are sown for social exclusion and segregation. If cultural diversity is not recognised and actively supported, racism and xenophobia are reinforced and given a dangerous legitimacy. Many European countries with a history of inward migration are now struggling with these issues due to their failure to develop or implement inclusive integration strategies from an early stage of the migration process.

The conditions under which people can enter and reside in a country have significant consequences for most other areas of policy towards them, such as labour rights, political participation, social protection, education and training. If immigration policy is designed to keep migrant workers and their families in the status of temporary mobile workers, the result is likely to be that settlement will take place under unsatisfactory and discriminatory conditions. When migrant workers and their families do attempt to settle, it is typically they who are blamed for problems that emerge, and they may find it impossible to plan a future as part of the wider society. The result is isolation and emphasis on difference. Local development agencies are ideally placed to reach out, offer support and create the conditions for integration.

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5 In November 2004, the European Council (Heads of State and Government of the member states of the EU) adopted a new comprehensive programme for 2005-2009 on strengthening the EU as an area of freedom, security and justice.
Findings, needs, responses

This section presents the overall findings from the work undertaken in the initiative to date, including recommendations for local strategies for the integration of migrant workers and their families. It builds on the experiences of three local Partnerships (Ballyhoura Development, Tallaght Partnership and Dublin Inner City Partnership), which are presented in detail in Annex 1. The findings also draw on discussions in the steering group.

The initiative has provided the participating Partnerships, the organisations engaged in the steering group and the consultant employed to support the initiative with the opportunity to:

- Jointly identify ways to develop successful actions for the inclusion and integration of migrant workers and their families in a local area.
- Develop conceptual thinking.
- Begin to develop models of work that will advance current understandings of, and responses to, migration issues.

It is the view of the Partnership staff who engaged with the initiative that it has provided a valuable support that has enabled them to take stock of their work to date and explore ways of advancing it. In some cases it will require some time to share the lessons from the review and to gain support within the Partnership for moving the work forward more strategically.

Findings from the research

In the three selected Partnerships, there is wide variation in the extent and nature of activity specifically focused on the integration of migrant workers and their families. Many factors have influenced each Partnership’s approach and their capacity to develop strategies for the integration of migrant workers, including:

- The Partnership’s work towards the social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees.
- The Partnership’s relationships with and support for community organizations and NGOs that initially responded to the needs of new communities in the Partnership area.
- The history of involvement and the leadership shown by the Partnership staff in relation to the social inclusion of minority ethnic groups in the area, the development of anti-racism and equality strategies, and the promotion of intercultural practice.
- The flexibility of the Partnership and its staff to allocate resources to examine how to respond appropriately to the often ‘sudden’ and very obvious arrival into the local community of migrant workers, some accompanied by their families.

The growing numbers of migrant workers in the inner city Partnership area of central Dublin, in particular north of the River Liffey, was evidenced in the increasing numbers of migrant workers attending the Local Employment Service Network (LESN) and presented a challenge to the Partnership. The local development strategy of the Dublin Inner City Partnership (DICP) is to network and support community groups rather than engage in direct delivery of services or initiatives. DICP wanted to develop an integrated response, involving all relevant groups, to impact on policy and practice, particularly in relation to labour market and community development issues.

One of the primary factors which primed the work of the Tallaght Partnership was the presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the area and the large range of strategic and
practical initiatives that had already been undertaken by Tallaght Intercultural Action, with the active support of the Partnership, towards the social inclusion of these new communities and of other minority ethnic groups.

Partnership were unaware of any asylum seekers or refugees resident in the Charleville area of Ballyhoura. However, the research instigated by Ballyhoura Development – and the direct connection with the growing numbers of migrant workers who had come to work in the area – gave rise to the proposal to the Partnership to establish a Migrant Workers Information Service.

Work being undertaken in each of the three Partnership areas in relation to migrant workers and their families is at an early stage of development. The review of the work to date indicates a need to begin to integrate and target the inclusion of migrant workers and their families within local social and economic development strategies. The work with migrant workers and their families appears not to be integral, but to have almost developed in isolation from other social inclusion initiatives.

There would appear to be little contact between or across the measures of the (LDSIP) in relation to extracting and integrating lessons from the work to date with members of immigrant communities and their families, even where cross-measure funding is allocated. Findings from the work to date suggest the importance of discussion at executive and Board level on migration issues, the challenges facing migrant workers and the concept of integration that the Partnership might promote. Awareness of the severity of issues facing migrant workers and their families is essential in constructing appropriate responses. Migrant workers face many challenges in moving to Ireland. They are unfamiliar with Irish society, institutions and public services. Their financial situation is often poor and they often lack proficiency in English. They arrive having left behind the support networks of family and friends. These difficulties are often compounded by wrongly set expectations of their destination, especially if they have been recruited using exploitative or misleading methods.

The needs of migrant workers are complex, but no more so than those of other vulnerable target groups of the LDSIP. However, it is the complexity of the systems and regulations that govern their recruitment to work, and the challenges that face migrant workers who wish to vindicate their rights, which provide some of the greatest difficulties in the integration of migrant workers and their families.

Findings from the work confirm the tendency to view migrant workers as transient. Their residency and employment conditions reinforce the image of migrant workers as units of labour and not people with social, political and cultural needs and entitlements. Despite the reality that many migrant workers and their families will settle in Ireland, their legal status traps them in a temporary situation over which they have little control, from year to year. The experience of other countries indicates that the long-term and inter-generational effects of denying migrants the right and security to settle is detrimental to community cohesion and social inclusion. An emerging issue is that of racism. The action research with migrant workers undertaken on behalf of Tallaght Partnership found that one of the key reasons why highly skilled migrant workers choose to leave Ireland and seek employment in Britain was the hostility that they and their families experienced in the local community. The Equality Authority and National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) are also reporting increased incidents of racial discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.
The intersection of racism and other forms of discrimination, e.g. gender discrimination, poses a particular challenge. Innovative responses in line with the strategic framework laid out in the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) are vital at a local level, and the local Partnerships are well placed to initiate this work.

Addressing the needs of migrant workers and their families

**Acknowledging the diversity within the immigrant population**

One of the lessons from the work to date is the importance of acknowledging that immigrants are not a homogeneous group. The individuals that are often locally referred to as a ‘community’ of migrant workers have no common language or culture, and within the different national and ethnic communities there can be deep social and political tensions. Immigrants like any other category of persons experience differences according to their age, gender, class, national or ethnic origin, skin colour, ability/disability, religious belief, educational background, sexual orientation, family status, responsibility for dependents, and membership of a trade union. In addition immigrant communities experience difference according to their legal status and their employment status. If diversity is not adequately recognized, there is every likelihood that people/groups demonstrating difference from the norm will be considered ‘a problem’ and responsible for their own exclusion. Where there is a proactive approach to accommodating diversity in local communities, everyone benefits.

**Information, support and advocacy**

Clear information is a pressing need of migrant workers who lack information about employment rights and social protection and how to access basic services. The absence of information, support and advice systems places migrant workers and their families in a highly vulnerable position. Local community workers and personnel in community organisations have been studying and acquiring knowledge and information to respond to the information needs of migrant workers. As a result of this activity, and in the absence or under-development of mainstream support services, Partnership staff can find themselves in a position where they act as advocates for migrant workers with the Labour Relations Commission, the Equality Authority, Government Departments and a range of statutory agencies, and find themselves providing services and supports to particularly vulnerable migrants. Often their role is more akin to that of a social worker than that of a community worker, which can detract from their social inclusion brief.

The work to date suggests the need to anticipate migrant workers’ need for support, information and advocacy, and to bring key players together to look at appropriate and effective information and advocacy provision, e.g.:

- Citizens Information Centres, which operate as a one-stop-shop, and which were established not only with the brief to provide information to the public but also to advocate on their behalf.
- Statutory agencies and organisations that have a statutory obligation to provide information that is accessible to the public. Personnel in the local offices of statutory agencies have indicated that information often doesn’t filter down from head office, and that they are not provided with information and supports (e.g. translated information) that could help them to respond more appropriately to migrant workers.
• Trade unions, which have traditionally advocated on behalf of the most vulnerable workers, particularly in relation to employment conditions and social protection.

While Partnerships may fill gaps when services are not in place, a finding from the work to date is the need to mainstream the provision of information, support and advocacy for migrant workers. Partnerships need to adopt a strategy to ensure that migrant workers’ information, support and advocacy needs are met by mainstream provision that is of the highest quality, and to which migrant workers and their families living and working in situations of vulnerability have access.

Language acquisition

In the Partnerships participating in the research, it has been found that language training is not only necessary for cultural adjustment, but is crucial for the social and economic inclusion of many migrant workers and for their families. The experience of language provision raises many issues:

• For many migrant workers, weekly classes are not sufficient. They require support to acquire English as a second language, not just survival English.
• Providing language classes has nothing to do with teaching literacy skills.
• Children’s language skills are not an indication of their intelligence.
• Inadequate language supports at primary school frustrate efforts to integrate.
• The female spouses of migrant workers who have little or no English and spend a considerable time in the home are at particular risk of exclusion and marginalisation.
• The lack of bilingualism in the host society.

As part of the needs analysis and the mapping of the situation of migrant workers and their families at local level, an assessment needs to be made of the language supports and services that are required to support their inclusion in local community life.

Avoiding duplication in the production of information

Many organisations at national and local level, including NGOs, Partnerships, cultural organisations, community groups etc., have produced and translated leaflets and other publications pertaining to the rights and entitlements of migrant workers and their families. Government Departments and statutory agencies have produced and translated at central level a range of documents and information leaflets on the workings of institutions and public services for members of immigrant communities and organisations working with them.

Despite the range of information available, many local groups and statutory agencies are not aware of what is available and often feel that they are the first to present and translate information. This points to a need to ensure that available information is collated and categorised and readily available, for example arranged by topics on a well-designed website. People could then check what is relevant and available for local distribution.

Translation and interpreter services

The lack of translation and interpreter services affects service providers and migrant workers and their families alike. Where adults have little or no English, and when supervisors, teachers or medical personnel do not speak the language of the person with whom they wish to communicate, all sorts of problems arise. Children have been used in schools.
and in doctors’ surgeries to translate sensitive and confidential information and to act as interpreters for professionals and parents alike. Translation and interpretation costs need to be acknowledged as part of the normal operating costs of a service.

Facilitating interaction

The tendency to view migrant workers as transitory workers and residents in the local community, and to see them primarily as economic units, reinforces the isolation that many migrant workers feel. Many have little or no opportunity to interact with the local community or to develop friendships, particularly those whose workplace is also their place of residence (e.g. agricultural workers and domestic workers). The creation of opportunities for social interaction is important because such opportunities can:

- Provide a space for the many migrant workers who experience isolation and have little or no opportunity to interact with the local community or to develop friendships. Creating opportunities for migrant workers to meet with other people locally can also provide a safety net for particularly vulnerable workers. This is particularly important for those migrant workers whose workplace is also their place of residence.

- Develop an awareness and an understanding of the exploitation that exists.

- Build solidarity with the migrant workers who have come to work and live locally and an understanding of the difficulties they face, but also the richness of experience that they can bring to the local community.

- Prevent prejudice and combat racism.

- Generate opportunities for members of the local community to engage in intercultural events.

Community work processes are required to enable self-advocacy

Migrant workers should be enabled to take an active part in the development, organisation and evaluation of programmes and policies affecting them. They need also to be supported to participate in local social and economic development processes and to engage in decision-making structures. Community work puts emphasis on building the capacity of migrant workers to act collectively in identifying their concerns and to engage with service providers and the policy system.

Existing community structures may need to be challenged to reflect the diversity and multicultural make-up of local communities in their activities and decision-making structures. Without this type of progress, local community infrastructure designed to promote inclusion is in danger of being elitist and exclusionary.

Childcare provision and accessible transport, in urban as well as rural areas

Access to childcare and to accessible public transport impacts on the ability of migrant workers to participate in social events, language classes and development and training opportunities. Many migrant workers have no social networks and do not have access to an extended family to help with childcare.
Developing an analysis of the situation of migrant workers

Having baseline data on the situation of immigrants facilitates the planning of appropriate responses to needs. Difficulties have been encountered in each of the Partnerships in gathering information on migrant workers and their families. Different state agencies and Government Departments at local level have produced data in relation to migrant workers and their families who avail of specific services. In Ballyhoura, a request has been made to the statutory agencies at the North Cork Forum to collaborate on an inter-agency basis to codify this information in order to support the profiling of migrant workers and their families and to plan responses to their needs.

Targeting migrant workers

The Partnerships are being challenged to develop new and innovative ways to target and make contact with migrant workers who are not connected to the local social infrastructure. They are not as easily reached as asylum seekers, or as those who have been given residency status or leave to remain in Ireland and who are now seeking to engage in education and training opportunities. Migrant workers are interested to meet on issues that are important to them. The most successful initiatives held in the selected Partnership areas were:

- An information evening on the rights and entitlements of migrant workers.
- A weekly clinic, in the evening time, where migrant workers could come with queries and receive clear and precise information in a language which they could understand.
- Intercultural, sporting and community development initiatives.

Organising and advertising an information evening on the rights and entitlements of migrant workers can provide an important first point of contact with migrant workers in an area. The Migrants Rights Centre Ireland have been involved in such events and have found it a useful first step in supporting migrant workers to participate in further activities, e.g. leadership training programmes and campaign working groups. Presentations on rights and entitlements (e.g. revenue, social welfare, employment rights) are generally followed by a Question and Answer Session and the opportunity for a cup of tea and the chance to informally chat and meet with others after the meeting.

It is important to plan the follow-up to such a meeting. Before the information evening comes to a close, those migrant workers present can be invited to help arrange the next meeting, on another subject. There and then, an appropriate date and time should be agreed with those interested, to meet for the planning session. Creating this opportunity allows those who wish to engage to come forward and become involved, and ensures that information on the meeting will be passed along within the informal networks of migrant workers, and that new ideas will be put forward about how best to target migrant workers who are working or living in the area.

The involvement and participation of the community development worker in these meetings can help develop other ideas to bring migrant workers together, and can help them to develop their confidence to engage more in identifying the issues they would like to see addressed.
Addressing change within the Partnerships

The potential of local Partnerships to help to generate the conditions for the social inclusion and integration of migrant workers and their families cannot be underestimated. Migrant workers and their families live in local communities and, without leadership and action at this level, little progress is possible. Integration and social inclusion will not automatically occur – it has to be enabled. The conditions for integration need to be created. This includes making local services accessible and fully accommodating new members of the local community.

The initiative has reaffirmed the need for and the value of critical dialogue and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and skills within Partnerships at:

(a) Executive level, between the different measures of the LDSIP.

(b) Board level, between the nominated representatives of local trade unions, employers, community and voluntary groups, the state and semi-state agencies, and the farming organisations in rural areas.

Creating the conditions for the inclusion and integration of migrant workers and their families also implies:

- Adopting and actively working with an anti-racism and intercultural perspective at all levels of the Partnership’s work, and providing interculturalism and anti-racism training for all paid and unpaid staff and the members of the Partnership’s Board and sub-committees.

- Raising awareness within local communities of the positive contribution that migrant workers and their families are making to local social and economic development and to enhancing the cultural richness of the community.

- Developing an understanding of the situation of migrant workers in the area, including migration patterns, recruitment processes, residency categories and employment sectors.

Staff development needs

Findings from the work to date indicate that many of the staff in local Partnerships are as yet unfamiliar with the challenges being faced by migrant workers and their families. To ensure the successful inclusion of migrant workers and their families in local development strategies across the ‘measures’ of the current and future programmes, this knowledge deficit will need to be addressed.

It has also been found that where migrant workers are employed by local Partnerships as staff and are expected to work developmentally with migrant workers and their families towards their inclusion and integration in local systems and structures, they would benefit from the support of co-workers who have knowledge of local systems and of community work practice.

The importance of documenting experiences and lessons

Important lessons have been learnt and policy issues identified through the work undertaken in the three Partnerships. Partnerships need to be encouraged and supported to reflect on their work and to document the lessons being learnt at all levels, e.g. in strategic planning, in ensuring the participation of migrant workers, in developing collaborations, in the implementation and evaluation of new initiatives and in the mainstreaming process.
Many of the issues and challenges can then be raised at national level. An example is the challenges being faced by immigrant families (parents and children) and the staff in the local school system in relation to the integration of foreign national children. These issues could inform policy discussions with the Department of Education and Science, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the INTO, and the National Parents Council.

Mainstreaming

Partnerships have provided the opportunity for innovation in the development of creative responses to the needs of marginalised groups. Their key role has not been in the delivery of services but in promoting the mainstream to adopt the innovative processes and practices that have been successfully piloted by the Partnerships, so that mainstream provision can address the needs of excluded groups and strengthen inclusion and equality.

The work to date with migrant workers and their families has identified a number of challenges for mainstream service provision, e.g. the need for flexibility in the opening and closing times of services, provision of English classes in the workplace, provision of English classes on Sundays by the VEC, the provision of information in different languages, provision of translation and interpreting services and a sharing of translation and interpreter services between service providers, the need for targeted supports and access to life-long learning opportunities.

Good practice models for employers that have been identified by the Equality Authority, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the Construction Industry Federation include:

- The translation of all safety-related documents, contracts of employment, quality statements and so forth into the languages of migrant workers.
- One-week induction programme for migrant nurses, before they begin ward training. It covers a range of matters, including accommodation, the local area, transport, how to organise social welfare, occupational health, nursing in Ireland and how it is structured, the tax system and the trade union system. They also receive general information on Dublin and Ireland. (Tallaght and Mater Hospitals).
- Availability in the workplace of an interpreter three days a week at prearranged times, and on call at other times (Derrygold 2004).

Moving forward: the role of Partnerships

The challenge of integration – a holistic approach

The successful integration of migrant workers and their families is both a matter of social cohesion and a prerequisite for economic efficiency. It requires a holistic approach. For the European Commission, a key condition for a holistic approach is to improve the overall policy coherence and synergies between immigration, integration and employment policies at all levels and across all disciplines. Its Communication 2003 336 final states 'while Governments should take the lead, collaboration around policies should involve the Social Partners, the research community and public service providers, NGOs and other civil society actors, including immigrants themselves.' The more recent Communication 2005 389 A Common Agenda for Integration states that one of the principles informing integration
policies should be ‘The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level’. The Commission acknowledges that integration policies need to be planned within a long-term, coherent framework, but should at the same time respond to the specific needs of particular groups and local conditions.

**Role of Pobal and the local Partnerships**

Both Pobal and the Partnerships are well placed to contribute to the creation of the conditions for the social and economic inclusion of migrant workers and their families and to deliver holistic strategies for their integration, especially in the context of the roll-out of the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) at local level.

Partnerships have a key role in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders in local development and have a particular expertise in innovative responses to the needs of excluded groups and those at risk of exclusion. Furthermore, migrant workers and their families live in local communities and, without leadership and action at this level, little progress is possible.

Many of the Partnerships are already engaged in work with migrant workers and their families, some within the wider context of their engagement with immigrant communities, including asylum seekers. Much of this work is being undertaken from an anti-racist and intercultural perspective, in compliance with international human rights standards and national Government commitments. The widely attended conference in Croke Park in March 2005 on the implementation of the NAPAR, hosted by Pobal, the NCCRI and the Family Support Agency, clearly outlined the important role of Partnerships, Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centres in developing anti-racist strategies and diversity plans and provided a framework for actions to meet the needs of migrant workers and their families.\(^6\)

**Strategic planning**

To develop local responses and plan strategies for the post-2006 period, Partnerships should consider the following practice guidelines:

- Developing with the Board and the staff of the Partnership an analysis of the situation of migrant workers and an awareness of the policies and institutions pertaining to their integration.
- Developing a profile of the situation of migrant workers and their families in the local area, particularly focusing on the situation of migrant workers who may experience multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion.
- Defining the core issues of particular relevance for a successful integration strategy.
- Strengthening the intercultural, human rights and anti-racism perspective of the Partnership.
- Working to generate a coordinated, coherent approach across service providers.
- Generating the conditions for migrant workers to collectivise and develop an analysis of their own situation so that they are empowered to engage actively in the development, organisation and evaluation of programmes and policies that affect them.
- Defining key action areas.
- Ensuring a policy dimension to the work, with ongoing documentation of lessons learnt to support dissemination and main streaming.

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\(^6\) A strategy guide based on the recommendations from the conference will be published in autumn 2006.
KEY STARTING POINTS FOR PARTNERSHIPS

1. Analysis

Partnerships need to develop an understanding of economic migration and an appreciation of the difference between migrant workers and asylum seekers. It is important to understand the stages involved in migration – why people leave their country of origin, why they are attracted to the host country and why and how they succeed, or not, in integrating.

How migrant workers manage migration and the different stages of migration is influenced by their gender, age, ethnicity, class background, educational background and qualifications, marital status, responsibility for dependents, nationality, skin colour, religion, ability/disability and sexual orientation.

Partnerships need to develop an understanding of:

> Immigration policy and procedures.

> The differences between work permits and work visas and the different rights and entitlements attached to them.

> The social protection rights and entitlements of all migrant workers.

> The different categorisations of migrant worker:

• Migrants from the former 15 member states of the EU
• Migrants from recent accession countries to the EU
• Migrants from outside the EU (persons on work permits, persons on work visas or with work authorization, persons on study visas, family dependents)
• Undocumented workers.

2. Create a space for people to meet who are isolated

This can happen around their needs. It may be necessary to respond to their greatest need, particularly in the absence of any other structured response. Immediate needs most frequently pertain to: information (employment rights, social protection, tax and revenue issues, family reunification, immigration and residency issues); advocacy/support (securing rights, social welfare benefits, regularising status), and cultural adjustment and social needs (language training, place to meet, dealing with culture shock).

Tap into the informal networks of migrant workers – the main mode of information transfer and mis-information transfer, and also the key dissemination vehicle for information about the activities of the Partnership.

3. Mapping

Begin a mapping exercise of the situation and needs of migrant workers and their families in the local area, and engage migrant workers in the process. This will support an analysis of the issues that need to be addressed to support their social, economic and cultural inclusion and it will facilitate the development of an action plan. Developing the profile and action plan with the active participation of migrant workers and their families will take time.

Experience suggests that Partnerships should be sensitive to the difficulties and the dangers that can often arise when communicating with migrant workers through their employers.
KEY STARTING POINTS FOR PARTNERSHIPS continued

4. Bring together key actors
Bring together key actors, e.g. unions, support agencies, Citizens Information Centres, relevant state agencies. Consider the needs identified. Develop a mainstreaming strategy for effective delivery of information, advocacy and support services.

5. Engage with national organisations
Engage with national organisations that have a focus on promoting the integration and inclusion of migrant workers and their families e.g. the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and the Immigration Council of Ireland.

6. Engage with State agencies
Engage with State agencies in developing service responses to the needs of migrant workers, e.g. employment supports, translation services. Collaborative approaches are an ideal way to meet many needs and can create the conditions for integrated responses to the issues faced by migrant workers and their families.

7. Develop a dialogue with local employers
Develop a dialogue with local employers with regard to maintaining good employment practice. Anti-racism in the Workplace Week can be a useful opportunity to open up dialogue on these issues. Organisations such as Business in the Community have been working to develop good practice amongst employer organisations, as have the Chambers of Commerce, through the DAWN Initiative.

8. Create opportunities for generating solidarity in the local community
Promote dialogue, awareness raising and visibility of issues and challenges being faced by migrant workers and their families. Create opportunities for intercultural and celebratory events.
Annex 1

An exploration of local strategies for the integration of migrant workers and their families

25

Ballyhoura Development Ltd.

Ballyhoura Development Ltd is the company responsible for delivering both the LDSIP and the LEADER Programme in Ballyhoura Country, an area famous for its Golden Vale, which covers the geographic area of South-East Co. Limerick and North-East Co. Cork. This area, with a population of 60,000 people, includes the towns of Charleville, Mitchelstown, Hospital and Croom.

Background to engagement with migrant workers

Towards the end of 2003, Ballyhoura Development began to focus on the development of a strategy to include migrant workers in the area. They first began to consider the Charleville region, as it was evident that migrant workers were now working and residing in the area. The St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) had acted as the key agency providing support within the local region and the VEC had been providing English language classes at the Charleville and District Child and Family Education Centre.

At this time migrant workers were also travelling to Mallow to access the service of Avondhu Development, another LDSIP-funded Partnership. This service had mostly been used by asylum seekers and refugees who had settled in the area, although it was now being used by the increasing number of migrant workers resident in the Mallow area.

In February 2004, Ballyhoura Development commissioned a piece of research into the situation and needs of migrant workers, and the context into which they were arriving in the Charleville area. The research was aimed at providing all relevant information that would enable the Partnership to define strategies to respond to the new needs and challenges being identified.

Identifying and quantifying migrant workers

Initial attempts to identify and quantify migrant workers involved examining information on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment’s website. From this it was easy to identify large employers but identifying smaller employers was more difficult. While there were two main employers in the Charleville area, many businesses employed a small number of migrant workers, which highlighted the need for establishing contact with all the employers. With the assistance of the SVP, it was possible to identify a number of local employers on the list. Further information was garnered from the Garda Immigration Officer.

The following nationalities were represented in the Charleville region: Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Lithuania, Latvia, Malaysia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa and Thailand. This list was not exhaustive.

The main employer in Charleville at this time was Galtee Foods Ltd. Farm Relief Services had worked with Galtee Foods in recruiting the migrant workers. There was also a range of other employers in the catering industry, farming, industrial units, etc.

There was some difficulty in establishing an exact profile of migrant workers in the region. From the available information it was known that the majority of workers were single men, but there was no breakdown by age, family
Due to the lack of a collective identity amongst the group and the lack of a central meeting/information point, these men were a somewhat unseen target group. Therefore it was necessary to provide a service to which they would come.

There was no central point for migrant workers to access information. Anecdotal evidence suggested that individuals were not aware of their rights and that they did not know where to access this information. In addition there was a lack of knowledge of the issues facing migrant workers in the community and amongst service providers. This was problematic for the migrant workers as they had no independent source of support or information source and were dependent on employers to meet these needs.

Working with the VEC at the Charleville and District Child and Family Education Centre would determine whether current language provision for migrant workers was adequate.

The fact that the work permit is held by the employer can be problematic for the employee. This was often raised as an issue in the informal contact with migrant workers in the region and through contact with the SVP. The research found that there was a lack of clarity amongst migrant workers with regard to their rights to family reunification.

The research acknowledged that migrant workers are not a homogeneous group, and that the broad range of people who are classified under the term ‘migrant worker’ do not share a common language or culture. They may also have similar or very different experiences according to their gender, class background, age, ethnicity, religious and political belief, marital status and responsibility for dependents. For the purpose of developing the strategy and identifying the target group, the migrant workers would be referred to by the project as a ‘community’ of migrant workers, though in practice they are only a community in so far as (a) they are not from Ireland (b) they are a group of people living/working in one locality.

**Strategy**

On foot of the research, a strategy was proposed to address the support needs of migrant workers in the Charleville region. It was designed to serve as a pilot. It would be reviewed and lessons would be drawn from practice on an ongoing basis so that the packet of strategies could be adapted for dissemination and implementation over the whole of the Ballyhoura Country.

The proposed strategy included the following elements:

1. An information meeting
2. Establishment of a weekly clinic for migrant workers
3. Training to respond to new needs
4. Production of a directory of services / information provision
5. A sporting initiative
6. Working with employers towards awareness of equality and equal opportunities
7. Networking and working collaboratively with other organisations, including the statutory sector
8. Dealing with prejudice
9. Targeting schools
10. Establishing a committee/forum
Current initiatives

The Information Clinic

The clinic, which opened in July 2004 for a trial six-month period, now operates on Wednesday evenings from 4-8pm and on Thursdays from 9am-5pm. The staff member delivering the project had a background in both community work and advocacy. This meant that she was able both to lead the information and advocacy service and to work on community supports for migrant workers. The human resource costs are met by the different streams of the LDSIP, and the administration costs of the clinic are covered by other funding sources. Ballyhoura Development Ltd made an initial allocation of €4,000 p.a. from the Community Development Measure of the LDSIP to support the initiative. Use of volunteer interpreters is an essential part of the service, as is the sourcing of any translated information that is available.

Migrant workers come to the Clinic to seek advice and information on employment rights, conditions of employment, immigration matters, health and safety issues, social welfare issues, health board payments, taxation, housing, family reunification and education. The staff member has also assisted clients with representation at Labour Relations Commission hearings.

Initially, many referrals came through the Gardai and SVP. Though many referrals still come in this way, clients now access the drop-in service directly. There has been a noticeable increase in users to the service over the last year and, with the free movement of people from the EU 10 states, the client base is largely now made up of accession country workers, though there are a significant number of people on work permits who also use the service. A number of these have become undocumented because of the difficulties with the work permit system.

Links and collaborations

Awareness-raising work is undertaken with service provider staff from FÁS, MABS, the Partnership, HSE etc. A specific training programme was organised in December 2004 on the issue of service provision within a multi-ethnic user context.

The project has worked locally with the VEC on the delivery of English classes, and with the SVP on social/cultural activities. It collaborates with Avondhu Development and with West Limerick Resources, two other Partnership companies delivering the LDSIP in the rural Cork and Limerick region.

The project also has a working relationship with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) and the Immigrant Council of Ireland and participates in the regional meetings of Integrating Ireland.

The project has been involved in several research projects. These have included two research projects undertaken by Dublin City University, a research project of the MRCI on the trafficking of people for work (not in the sex industry), and research by the MRCI on the Habitual Residence Condition. The development worker is a member the Migrant Rights Centre Regional Policy Group. The project refers policy information from casework (without compromising confidentiality).

In February 2005 a Migrants’ Forum was established in Charleville as a local discussion group. It was envisaged that this would feed into an Immigrant Forum for North Cork which was planned for development.
**Project expands**

In September 2005, the project was extended and 20 hours per week of staff time was dedicated to it. The community development worker, who had previously allocated eight hours of her full-time post to supporting the initiative, now took up a 20 hour a week position as a migrant support worker dedicated to the Migrant Information Service. The additional hours available to the project facilitated outreach work.

Capacity-building work was undertaken in other parts of Ballyhoura and assistance was given with knowledge provision. Links were made with Mitchelstown Citizens Information Centre, the SVP in Mitchelstown and with the Family Resource Centre in Hospital, Co. Limerick.

The Migrant Information Service is also supported by a Community Employment (CE) worker and a local volunteer, who are both undergoing ‘information officer’ training with Comhairle. Recently a Polish woman and a Brazilian woman joined the Migrant Information Project in a volunteer capacity.

**Development of the North Cork Immigrant Forum**

In September 2005 the project joined with Avondhu Development in the North Cork Immigrant Forum. It has contributed to the development and direction of the forum and facilitated migrant workers to prepare for and participate in it. Participants in the forum include personnel from FÁS, the HSE (Community Worker, Community Welfare Officer and Public Health Nurses), Gardaí, the Dept of Social and Family Affairs, Dept of Education and Science, VEC, Chamber of Commerce, RAPID Area Implementation Team, Mallow Development Partnership, Cork County Council, Cloyne Pastoral Care of Immigrants, Integrate Mallow, Le Cheile Family Resource Centre, VEC, Charleville Community Enterprise Ltd., SVP Charleville and Mallow, Citizens Information Centre, Mallow Library, West Limerick Resources and IRD Duhallow.

The project presents findings from its work to the forum and generates discussion on the issues that need to be addressed. A small number of migrant workers attended the first two meetings of the forum, but it was acknowledged that the timing of meetings was a barrier to their participation. The forum now alternates between day and night meetings to facilitate participation of all members.

The forum has considered developing policy papers in relation to immigration and inclusion. Currently it is drafting a position paper on language provision and English classes for migrant workers and other members of immigrant communities, which it will present to the VEC to make the case for a dedicated budget for this area. This follows discussion in the forum and an acknowledgement by its members of the difficulties experienced by immigrant communities, the inadequacy in language provision and the ineffectiveness of once-a-week classes. The forum also wishes the VEC to develop progression routes through English and to get away from the current ‘survival English’ delivery. Another key area of policy development is the issue of making employers more aware of their responsibilities vis-à-vis their employees, e.g. health and safety information, language classes etc.

The forum has also identified the need for training that will help sensitise its members and raise awareness of issues in relation to inclusion, integration and interculturalism, e.g. the dynamics of power and racism.
Organisation of information nights

In November 2005, the project organised a series of information nights. These were designed to create an opportunity for migrant workers to come together, get information, raise questions and seek clarification. The information session presentation was based on the queries most frequently presented at the Charleville clinics. The information presented was translated into four languages. Tax information nights were planned for the towns of Hospital (Co. Limerick) and Mitchelstown (Co. Cork) for early 2006. Further information nights will be delivered through volunteers in the four main languages of the service, assisted by an information officer. Plans have already been made to publish, in four languages, a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ booklet from these information nights/sessions.

Responding to training requests

The project has responded to requests for training from migrant workers. Currently neither migrant workers from EU countries that joined the EU in 2004 nor migrant workers on work permits are entitled to avail of FÁS Training services. To qualify for these subsidised programmes, you must have been unemployed for six months preceding the course.

All construction workers are required to complete a Safe Pass Course before they can work in the construction industry. Fees for the course are beyond the means of many migrant workers. To facilitate migrant workers to acquire the necessary ‘pass’, Safe Pass Courses, which are delivered by private companies, have been subsidised by Ballyhoura Development and delivered with an interpreter. To date, two Slovakian groups have participated on Safe Pass courses. Upcoming Safe Pass courses will target Hungarian, Russian and Slovakian workers. A Driver Theory Test training day was organised for a group of local Brazilians. The Migrant Information Project will also subsidise and provide an interpreter for welding, plastering and forklift courses.

Facilitating access to employment support services

A Jobs Club funded by FÁS has begun to operate on one afternoon per week in Charleville. The Job Coach is employed by Ballyhoura Development and this facilitates access for migrant workers to employment support services, with phone/volunteer interpreters when necessary. A local Polish volunteer is assisting in the delivery of this service. The Jobs Club is open to Irish nationals as well as non-Irish nationals.

Supporting the development of a women’s group

The project has identified a group of women in the Charleville area and initial work has been done on animating a local women’s group. Plans have also been made to support the group of women to undertake needs analysis as a first stage in group formation and capacity-building.

Mainstreaming information and advocacy

403 contact/casework sessions with migrant workers took place in the Migrant Information Service between October 2005 and January 2006. In January about 94 clients were seen and it is anticipated that, with the extended service hours, the drop-in service will continue to get busier. The project has as an objective the mainstreaming of the information and advocacy work. To this end two people who are associated with the project, one CE worker and one volunteer, are engaged in the Comhairle Information Officer Training Course.
This is a FETAC-accredited course which takes place one day per week over eight months. They will be fully trained as information officers in May 2006. It is hoped that they will be involved in information delivery and advocacy work in a Citizens Information Centre (CIC) which is being sought for the Charleville community, or in an initiative supported by Ballyhoura Development until the CIC is established. The project is currently engaged with the CIC in Mitchelstown to extend the information and advocacy service to other parts of Ballyhoura Country.

Issues and challenges arising in Ballyhoura

Acquiring resources to support the work

The success of the work to date has generated large demands amongst migrant workers and their families, local community and voluntary organisations, statutory agencies, and employers, for information on the policy context and the needs of migrant workers. One indicator of the increase in demands on the project is the number of contact/casework sessions in the information service. This rose from 43 in September 2005 to 94 in January 2006.

When the work began in Ballyhoura, it was undertaken by the community development worker. A plan has now been prepared to create a full-time position. Resources are being sought to support the position, which would support advocacy work and capacity-building amongst migrant workers. Capacity-building is required so that they can actively participate not only in the Immigrant or Migrant Forum, but can identify needs, gain confidence and agree an agenda in relation to addressing their needs. Capacity-building would also focus on migrant workers’ understanding of decision-making structures and on their skills to participate in and influence those structures, locally, regionally and nationally.

It is hoped that the creation of a full-time post will also support outreach work and the strategic implementation of a package of initiatives within Ballyhoura Country.

Collaborative work amongst statutory agencies

A key focus of the work in the immediate future, which will provide an indicator of progress, is the achievement of greater coordination of service provision between statutory providers to address the inclusion and integration needs of migrant workers. Advances in the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy for a quality information and advocacy service in the area will also provide an indicator of progress. A meeting has been planned between key statutory services to discuss issues arising.

Supporting particularly vulnerable groups

The project as outlined above has already identified a group of women in the Charleville area and is currently developing a focus around which this group can meet on a regular basis. It is hoped that, when the service expands, the project will be in a position to engage in capacity-building initiatives and set up groups in other parts of Ballyhoura.

Through the Information Clinic, the project is involved in assisting undocumented workers. At a national level the project raises the issue of undocumented workers and highlights the precariousness of their situation.
Family reunification and access to housing

Many of the migrant workers resident in the Ballyhoura area have been in the community for a number of years, isolated from their families. In theory, a person on a work permit who has had their work permit renewed by their employer is entitled to apply for family reunification, but many workers who have had two or three renewals of their work permits have had their applications rejected. Family reunification is granted at the discretion of the authorities and the lack of transparency in the decision-making process makes it difficult for some migrant workers to know why their applications have failed.

The Migrant Information Service Project is also addressing another challenge to the inclusion and integration of migrant workers and their families. The local authority has stated that migrant workers on work permits are not allowed to be placed on the local authority waiting list for social and affordable housing. Migrant workers who have been members of the local community for three or four years, who live as a family unit and who wish to make Ireland their permanent home, have been deemed not eligible for the housing list. This situation also arises where work permit holders are the parents of Irish citizens born after 1st January 2005. The parents’ residency is contingent on their work permit status, making them ineligible to apply for housing, irrespective of the status of their child.

Lack of access to FÁS employment services and training opportunities

Work permit holders do not have access to FÁS services and can have great difficulty in sourcing new employment when they leave an exploitative situation. EU-10 workers do have access to FÁS employment services but many have difficulty using a service where there is no standardized use of interpreters or translated information, and their access is limited because they have to be unemployed for a period before they can access FÁS training courses. This is a key barrier to enabling migrant workers to progress from low-paid work and to integrate into the local community. The only option that migrant workers have to participate in training programmes and enhance their skills is to take a course offered by a private company. Supporting migrant workers through subsidising training puts financial and other pressure on the Partnership.

Monitoring the project’s progress

A key challenge faced by the project is the ongoing integration of lessons from the project within Ballyhoura Development, and the acquisition of resources to continue and to expand the work. The outcomes of the work in the Information Clinic are reported monthly in the Chief Executive Officer’s report to the Board of Ballyhoura Development. It is now proposed to establish a monitoring group for the project, which to in its strategic direction and ensure that the lessons from the work and the policy issues emerging are disseminated both locally and nationally.
Tallaght Partnership

Since 1997, Tallaght Partnership has supported initiatives to promote and ensure the inclusion of new communities. Its projects with migrant workers and their families are special actions that support integration strategies. Between 1997 and 2004, it directly supported the development and implementation of a range of initiatives through Tallaght Intercultural Action (TIA), which included research, raising community/voluntary and statutory sector awareness of intercultural practice, participatory action research projects (which included intercultural childcare, education, health and training initiatives), and collaborations with a variety of agencies.

In its Programme of Activities for 2004, Tallaght Partnership outlined a Migrant Workers Project to aid organisational understanding of the issues facing migrant workers in the area and to develop responses to identified needs.

Currently the Partnership itself operates three projects that aim to be inclusive of immigrant communities including migrant workers:

- **FM WEPON Project** funded by the Equality for Women Measure
- **Sure Start Schools Familiarisation Project**, funded through the South Dublin Community Linkage Fund (CLF)
- **Tallazens Project**, which is looking at developing a model of integration through active municipal citizenship by working with non-Irish community leaders and 'information anchor points'. The project currently involves a Community Development and Leadership Course (one year outreach certificate course from NUI Maynooth) for members of new communities, funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and supported by the CLF.

This report presents two of these initiatives: FM WEPON, because it targets female migrant workers; and Sure Start, because of its relevance for the inclusion of migrant workers and their families in the education system.

**Background to engagement with migrant workers**

The Tallaght Migrant Workers Project, established by the Partnership in 2004, aimed to explore the local experiences of migrant workers and their families living and/or working in the Tallaght area. The goal was to reach a new target group of the Services for the Unemployed measure of the LDSIP, to explore ways to provide support, and to assess the degree of social exclusion in active labour market and community-based opportunities. Another objective of the project was to facilitate the development of a local network of migrant workers, to aggregate and articulate the needs of the community.

Tallaght Partnership was the lead agency, with Diversity at Work Network (DAWN) /South Dublin Chamber of Commerce, South Dublin County Council (SDCC) and the Tallaght Local Employment Service Network (TLESN) as partners.

A support worker was engaged on a temporary basis to develop contacts with migrant workers and stakeholders, in collaboration with the TLESN and South Dublin Chamber of Commerce (DAWN Project), under the direction of Tallaght Partnership’s Equality Coordinator.

An action research project was undertaken through consultative forums, focus group meetings and individual interviews, from
August – November 2004, with the aim of documenting the experiences of migrant workers. TLESN provided a grant of €2,000, and a migrant worker from the target group community was contracted to deliver the project.

**Identifying migrant workers in South Dublin County**

Migrant workers were targeted through their employers, by word of mouth and through networks like DAWN and institutions such as SDCC, Tallaght Hospital etc. The idea was to identify migrant workers from various backgrounds and with different employment statuses (work permits, work visas and work authorisations). Initial interviews were done on the phone, when individuals were introduced to the Migrant Workers Project.

One of the outcomes of the work was the establishment of ‘SPACE: Migrant Workers Forum’, which is a local network of migrant workers, with a mission … ‘to promote equality, respect for diversity, full participation, integration and solidarity in communities; by networking and articulating the voices of migrant workers and influencing policy locally, regionally and nationally.’

The establishment of the forum followed a focus group meeting attended by 15 migrant workers. Participants were predominantly male professional workers and visa holders. Chief amongst the concerns they expressed at the meeting were:

- Work permits for spouses – spouses were not able to get jobs and when they did get jobs it took more than a month for work permits to come through.
- Family reunification – they were finding it difficult to bring family members to Ireland.
- The need for an introductory information pack with useful, general information about Ireland.
- Social integration and experience of racism, including institutional racism.

The participants were keen to gain an audience with relevant authorities. However, the continued existence of the forum was challenged by the loss of key members, who left the country to work elsewhere. In the first four months six members left, four to take up work in the UK while two members moved to Africa. They all cited the hostility of the community and unfavourable work permit conditions for their spouses as their reasons for leaving. A key challenge to the network was that these were highly motivated members who were keen to drive the network. Their departure meant that attendance at the network plummeted and it was disbanded.

**Some of the research findings**

The research project provided the Partnership with information about social and economic inclusion issues and the diverse experiences of members of migrant communities who hold work visas and migrant workers on work permits. Furthermore, it highlighted local experiences of discrimination and racism.

The research report provided insights into the experiences and concerns of people on work permits who could not move to another job unless the current employer released them with a release letter that would be used by the subsequent employer to apply for a work permit. It noted that the majority of these workers felt manipulated by their employers. They were expected to work longer hours, were expected to perform duties outside their job descriptions, had slim promotion prospects, and in the majority of cases did not know what was happening in the company until the last minute. Their wages were at or below the minimum wage. Because they were on work permits, they were not entitled to further education grants, and did not qualify for FÁS training programmes or any State-subsidised...
training. Unlike those on work visas or student visas, they could not look for additional part-time work.

It was found difficult to engage single migrant workers in the project. Being single did not mean they were lonely. Many of these workers had established strong social networks, worked longer hours or were going to college. Some did not perceive themselves as needing support. They were happy to talk about their experiences but not to join a network.

The report also provided a needs-analysis of female migrant workers and female spouses of migrant workers. This was as a result of lack of engagement by women with the focus groups and the network. The project had intended to engage women in the network and to support them to form their own support group. The research report noted that ethnic minority women face a wide variety of challenges over and above those faced by male migrant workers, including social stereotyping, discrimination, stigmatisation and social exclusion. It identified some elements of the gender dimension to participation, which the researcher felt might help to explain the imbalance in participation of men and women in the Tallaght Migrants Project. The research suggested that the majority of migrant women come from patriarchal cultures and traditions, which impact on the way they participate in local activities and the way they socialize in general. Some of the perceptions captured in the report were:

- Some women felt it was good for their spouse to be involved and saw no need for their own participation.
- Some women thought their working spouses were doing quite well and did not consider themselves disadvantaged.
- Those women who attended the focus group just once felt that their voices were drowned out in what they felt was ‘an all-male affair’.
- The majority of the women did not see the relevance of a network to advancing their goals.
- Some felt quite confident in accessing available services, and felt they did not need to participate in a network to do so.
- Some were not at all enthusiastic about the idea of a group or network, as previous experiences had been rather unpleasant. Some had attempted to be part of larger groups like churches or women’s groups and it had not worked well so they felt fatigued and pessimistic about such interventions.
- Most female spouses of migrant workers supplemented the family income by working in the evenings when their husbands and children were home from work and school. This meant they could not attend evening network meetings.
- Migrant women (and their husbands) were concerned about failure by the local authorities to recognise their qualifications. This not only undermined the confidence and self-esteem of these highly qualified women but also pushed them into unemployment or low-skilled jobs. They felt this left them vulnerable to abuse and dehumanised.

A funding stream under the Equality for Women Measure which focuses attention on women in decision-making provided the opportunity for the Tallaght Partnership to consider the establishment of a female migrants’ forum. The perceptions and needs analysis presented in the research report of the Migrant Workers Forum led to a proposal for a targeted intervention: a female migrant worker capacity-building project, which the Partnership felt was needed to include the voices of women migrant workers in local development. A funding proposal was submitted at the end of 2004.
Current initiatives

The FM WEPON project

In May 2005 Tallaght Partnership was allocated funding from the Equality for Women Measure for its FM WEPON Project (Female Migrant Workers Equal Participation on Networks). The funding was made under the strand aimed at ‘Participation of greater numbers of women in decision-making structures in the workplace and in participatory democracy levels’. The two-year project is funded until March 2007.

The Partnership’s funding application to the Equality for Women Measure outlined the key reasons for the project:

‘The lack of equitable treatment in the workplace was privately voiced by female migrant workers in the cleaning, hotels and catering services who felt least enabled to participate. Some of the issues arise out of the particular vulnerability of female migrant where they are:

(a) the low income sole earners in a household with a male spouse with no employment and or entitlements; and
(b) female spouses of male migrant workers who remain the sole earner in the household. (This is a condition created by the work permit system).’

The Partnership identified other issues and concerns faced by female migrant workers as: ‘Poor work environment and pay, depression and other health issues, sexual and reproductive health issues, excessive and unreported domestic abuse and violence, loneliness and lack of support infrastructure, lack of access to local social services, language difficulties, racism and discrimination, income and household poverty’.

The stated objectives of the FM WEPON project are:

- To develop and build the capacity of female migrant workers to engage equally in the local space, and empower them to contribute their experience and knowledge, aggregate and articulate their views and participate in decisions affecting their lives as strong members of the community.
- To empower female migrant workers to be active local citizens who are contributing positively to theirs and community well being through adequately resourced personal and group development measures.
- To establish and facilitate highly adaptable, skilled and competent mediators and community leaders, to help articulate and promote the idea of the project within the migrants community and externally to local stakeholders, service providers and other relevant bodies.

The project is directed by the Equality Coordinator of the Tallaght Partnership. A project worker was employed in August 2005 to work part-time (20 hours per week). A steering group for the project was established in September, comprising a representative of the Tallaght Special Project for the Long-term Unemployed, the Community Platform, the Ireland-India Council, Women Together Tallaght Network and the project director and project worker.

A leaflet to introduce the project was printed for circulation to potential participants. Contact was made with women on the street in the Town Square, in local communities, at the Tallaght Hospital and by telephone. The project worker spoke with women about the project, gave them the leaflet with introductory information about the project and her contact details, and invited them to attend an informal meeting. The project worker also sought contact information so that she could inform women about the launch of the project.
Four women attended the first meeting, in October 2005, which was arranged to take place from 4-5pm in the Tallaght Library. The Library provided a discussion room for the meeting and coffee was provided. The women who attended the launch were in the main the spouses of migrant workers who had come to Ireland with their children under the family reunification procedure. One of the women was engaged in paid work. The needs and concerns expressed by the women at this first meeting related to:

(a) Work permits. The women felt that Government should honour applications for the renewal of work permits, that work permits should be available for the spouses of migrant workers, the waiting time for processing work permits should be shorter, and the work permit should allow greater flexibility for migrant workers.

(b) Affordable Housing.

The women welcomed the chance to meet and they agreed to hold a monthly meeting in the Library between 4.30 and 5.30. The project was publicly launched in November during the South Dublin Social Inclusion Week. At the launch event, a number of invited guest speakers made presentations on issues facing women migrant workers. A further informal meeting of women took place in November and was attended by a fifth woman, who had recently arrived in Tallaght and is the spouse of a migrant worker.

The FM WEPO Project is still at an early stage in its development. Staff are currently exploring ideas for making contact with women in Tallaght, including making contact with churches. The major challenge which the project has set itself is to respond to the varied needs of women migrant workers on work permits and with visas, as well as the female spouses of migrant workers in Tallaght. Staff are reflecting on whether meetings should be arranged at different times to suit women’s different working hours and also whether it might be better and more appropriate in the initial stage of the project to meet separately with spouses of migrant workers and women workers, given the differences in their concerns and experiences.

There has been no specific targeting of women migrant workers to date nor have contacts been made with women migrant workers in the workplace. However, a contact has been made with Tallaght Hospital. The project worker was invited to introduce herself and the project every six weeks at the induction day of the programme which is delivered every six weeks for agency contracted nurses prior to their placement in nursing homes and other care institutions.

A key challenge for the project is to draw on the lessons and experiences elsewhere of work with women migrant workers, particularly in relation to initial contact strategies and the use of community work processes. Community work processes would aim to facilitate the women to identify and analyse needs, set their own agenda, and build their capacity to advance their agenda in a local development context. The project could also benefit from sharing some of the lessons and the challenges presented in the work to date with the community development staff of the Partnership.

It is also important for the FM WEPO Project to begin a mapping exercise to ascertain the approximate numbers of women migrant workers in employment in the Tallaght area and to begin to build a picture of their situation. Contact could be instigated with employers, trade unions and the Chamber of Commerce to begin the mapping process. Informal networks of women migrant workers could also be targeted to support engagement with other women.
The Sure Start Schools Familiarisation Project

This project, which was established in October 2004, had a number of objectives as outlined in the Tallaght Partnership’s Programme of Activities for 2004: ‘to work with 10 families to develop an Introductory Programme that

- Facilitates better understanding of the school system and
- Works with schools to support parents and children starting school in Tallaght’.

The project was also established ‘to build the capacities of parents and children to

- Engage with the educational institutions that result in a positive outcome for them and
- Ensure that children are less exposed to risk of non-attendance, and parents participate actively in the education of their children’.

€35,000 was secured from the Community Linkage Fund of South Dublin County Council for one year. The project is managed by the Equality Coordinator and employs a project worker in a half-time post (20 hours per week).

A steering group was established involving the principal of St. Mark’s JNS, the School Completion Coordinators of St. Mark’s and Killinarden, the Home/School/Community Liaison Coordinators of St. Anne’s and St Aiden’s JNS, the Intercultural Education Coordinator of Tallaght Intercultural Action (TIA), the VTOS Coordinator and a representative of South Dublin County Council.

The project worker commenced work in January 2005. Parents were contacted through the St. Mark’s School Completion Programme Coordinator and the pre-school. Leaflets inviting parents to participate in the group were also distributed at the Tallaght Intercultural Action Drop-In Centre. Invitations were extended to parents to meet and discuss issues that they might have in relation to their school-going children. The leaflet provided them with information on the project and the project worker’s contact details.

The recent review of the project, undertaken by the consultant to this report, and which engaged members of the steering group and the parents’ group, provided an opportunity to document the work of the project, to extract lessons from the work to date and to identify the challenges that the project faces in achieving its objectives.

The parents’ group meets in St Mark’s Primary School, where children of 23 different nationalities attend. The school has been proactive in developing actions to promote the inclusion of children and to be warmly welcoming of their parents. Six meetings of the parents’ group have taken place since March 2005 with an average attendance of five parents. Childcare is provided to facilitate attendance. The group has access to a prefab in the school.

St. Mark’s School has produced an enrolment package and introduction booklet for the parents of each child who may wish to be admitted to the school. The Reception and Integration Agency has also produced a comprehensive document on the Irish school system in a series of languages to help familiarise refugees and asylum seekers with the education system. It was felt by the Sure Start Project that a shorter, colour leaflet should be produced and made available for foreign national parents in Tallaght.

A leaflet entitled ‘How to Start School in Ireland’ has been drafted by the project worker to provide parents with information under the following headings: When children start school; The options for children under 4 years;
The types of schools available; How to enrol children in school; What does school cost; What if children need extra support in school.

The leaflet, when it is finalised and proofed by a number of parents will also contain a map of the Tallaght area with a list of primary schools referenced to the map and useful contacts. It is hoped that the multilingual leaflet will be published in early 2006 and made available to parents to help them in the process of enrolling their children in local schools.

Many issues have been raised by parents in their meetings:

- Their desire to share experiences with teachers in relation to their children’s progress.
- The need for English classes for parents, particularly women who are full-time mothers in the home.
- The need to sensitise teachers to cultural differences that could otherwise be misinterpreted.
- The desire to contribute to intercultural events within the school and to participate in end-of-year school events.
- The desire to know about the Parents’ Committee/Parents’ Council in the school and to meet with them.
- The need to understand how children are assessed and how a child’s particular learning needs are or could be addressed.

Sustaining the attendance of parents in the group has been challenging. While 14 parents attended a meeting at some stage between March and November 2005, six attended only one meeting.

The majority of the parents who have participated in meetings have been granted leave to remain in Ireland because they have Irish-born children. They are now concerned to access routes to employment and to acquire skills or credentials that may support them into employment. Seven of the 14 parents who have attended meetings are now engaged in personal development or training initiatives. Four of the parents applied for and were offered places on the Tallazens Project course, the third initiative of the Partnership, which targets members of immigrant communities. The engagement in the Community Development and Leadership course was ‘intended to increases participants’ capacity to analyse and increase the quality of input into different participatory spaces’, but has left them with little time for the parents’ group.

The recent review of the project has identified a series of issues and challenges for the project. The review’s findings, which are being considered by the project steering group, relate to a number of issues, including: strengthening the parents’ group, enhancing the role of the steering group, and achieving greater coordination across Partnership initiatives.

While the primary schools in Tallaght are connected with the Sure Start project, St Mark’s School has been the main focus of the project. A challenge for the Partnership is to engage the other schools in the project. It is acknowledged that for schools with small numbers of foreign national or non-English speaking children the challenges are not so intense. However, social inclusion issues also exist for their pupils and their families and will need to be acknowledged by the school and the education system.

A question that needs to be debated locally is: ‘What are the implications of non-accommodation?’ Currently children are choosing to enrol in the school where they feel most welcome and where supports are provided. It is not desirable that some schools adopt intercultural practices while others do not actively accommodate the diversity of the local population.

7 The integration challenges facing primary schools are similar to those faced by secondary schools as documented in the report ‘Bridges or Roadblocks? School provision and minority ethnic students in Tallaght’, published in 2004 by Tallaght Intercultural Action. The research, undertaken by Alice Binchy within the seven second-level schools in Tallaght, was funded by a grant from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and supported by Tallaght Partnership and RAPID.
A large amount of learning has taken place in the project in relation to the social inclusion needs of new communities in the education system. The lessons merit urgent analysis and dissemination by the Partnership. Findings need to be presented to the Board of Tallaght Partnership in the first instance, and then to local and national interests, including the Department of Education and Science, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Irish National Teachers Organisation, the National Parents Council and other stakeholders. The steering group and the parents’ group need to be engaged in this process of analysis and dissemination.

Examples of lessons include:

- The need to sensitise teachers and other professionals to cultural differences, particularly to what is considered rude or inappropriate behaviour towards adults and amongst young people in other cultures.

- The enormous challenges that are faced by many women in addition to their unfamiliarity with the English language, e.g. isolation and lack of family support, lack of community links, poverty, lack of childcare and access to transport. Many women are at risk of exclusion not only in the new community, but within their families.

- The Department of Education and Science Inspectorate’s lack of role in supporting and monitoring English language provision and outputs, and the fact that there is no blueprint for the teaching of English in Irish national schools.

- The inappropriateness of intelligence and psychological testing in primary schools that is defined by culture and language (tests that use written and verbal instructions) for children who have a different cultural background to Irish children.

- The rules and regulations governing the allocation of Language Support Teachers and the special input in language for children whose mother tongue is not English, e.g. one language support teacher for 15 children, up to a maximum of three teachers.

- The lack of translation facilities and interpreters for schools and the role that children are being asked to adopt in translating sensitive information that the teachers/school authorities would like to communicate to parents and vice versa.

- The lack of resources for English language course provision for parents within schools.

- The absence of dual-language books that would enable parents to follow parts of the curriculum and to read with their children.

A series of actions have been proposed for the year 2006:

- Information sessions on the education system for parents.

- Distribution of the multilingual information leaflet on Starting School in Ireland.

- Translation of the St Mark’s enrolment package, information booklet and admission form.

- Creation of a way to enable direct dialogue between non-Irish families and the school, e.g. a non-Irish families/staff forum.

- English classes for parents with little or no English, with provision of childcare.

- A training programme aimed at training bi-lingual parents to be Community Interpreters for schools.

- Collaboration with the schools to shape the service that will be available to them.
Dublin Inner City Partnership

Background to engagement with migrant workers

Central Dublin has the highest proportion of migrant workers in Ireland. Increasing numbers of migrant workers are attending the Local Employment Service Network in the north inner city in particular. As noted in the introduction to this report, since migrant workers were first formally named as a target group of the LDSIP in 2004, there has been a significant increase in the number of individual migrant workers supported under the Services for the Unemployed measure. This report focuses not on individual supports, but on the strategies being developed at local level for the integration of migrant workers and their families. Dublin Inner City Partnership (DICP) used the opportunity provided by the research that led to this report to support it in determining an integrated response to the needs of migrant workers that would involve all relevant groups.

The DICP designated its Employment and Enterprise Co-ordinator to engage with the DEP/Pobal/MRCI initiative and attend the meetings of the steering group. The DICP engagement in the initiative was also informed by recent research regarding the anticipated employment support needs of disadvantaged migrant workers. Government agencies are currently indicating that a large number of migrants will be needed within Ireland to fill the anticipated (skilled and unskilled) job vacancies throughout the country. There is also a new trend for high-income families to employ female migrants for domestic labour in a highly unregulated sector. As a consequence of the projected inflow of migrant workers, it is inevitable that a large number will become part of the fabric of Dublin’s inner city. It is further anticipated that a percentage of these potential workers will experience levels of socio-economic disadvantage as a result of unemployment and that they will require practical support from the existing DICP service delivery infrastructure.

The DICP 2001–2006 Strategic Action Plan had stated that the Inner City Employment Service will be supported to expand its strategic structures to address the needs of emerging special need groups by providing: ‘Local outreach to unemployed people, particularly targeting hidden client groups...to increase their levels of participation’ and ‘Employment guidance services offering intense local support services for inner city residents who experience significant barriers preventing them from returning to the workforce’.

Current initiatives

The DICP maintains networking links with a range of Dublin-based support agencies and services that assist migrant workers living within the DICP geographical area. The organisations include: the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Polish Information & Cultural Centre, SPIRASI and Cairde. Employment support service issues highlighted to the DICP by these organisations include the need for:
- A comprehensive, local employment-related information service that incorporates data on current employment and equality legislation relevant to migrant workers.
- A referral service to vocational, educational and training service providers to enhance progression into the labour market.
- Liaison with the National Reference Point in the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland in order to improve migrants’ awareness of, and access to, the validation of their existing qualifications.
- The provision of—or referral to—employment-related, technical English language classes.
- The provision of short-term Job Club-type group support for those who are ‘job-ready’ but who require, due to orientation difficulties, the soft skills to support progression into the work place.

At a local level, the DICP’s Employment and Enterprise Coordinator, with the DICP’s Education Coordinator, made contact with a number of local community groups and reviewed reports of work undertaken in the inner city area by statutory agencies. This was done in order to explore the possibility of including migrant workers in post-2006 DICP actions.

A particular action under consideration was one designed to respond to the employment and educational/vocational training needs of unemployed migrant workers. The Partnership intends to target this action on migrant workers on work visas and work permits. While this group have many social issues in common with other migrants (asylum seekers, refugees, those with residency or leave to remain), their status as holders of work permits or visas presents them with particular difficulties in relation to employment. These difficulties, and the way in which the employment infrastructure of the DICP can respond to them, was considered by the partnership staff and presented as the focus of an investment proposal to the November 2005 DICP Board meeting.

The DICP ‘Pilot Service’ proposal envisages that the Inner City Employment Service (ICES) would be augmented to incorporate the following:
- A staff training and development programme specifically designed to up-skill existing personnel to enable them to deliver the local components and support elements of the initiative.
- Translation and interpretation services available to ICES staff when required.
- An integrative and outreach approach to working with migrant groups and migrants to ensure that they have access to the range of inner city support services. If necessary, to carry out research as to how this integration can be achieved.

Additionally, for the initiative to add value to the existing DICP employment support service infrastructure, the active cooperation of the local offices of State agencies, primarily D/SFA, FÁS and CDVEC, would be required to lever additional funding for mainstream education and training supports for migrant workers. The use of this 2006 DICP investment by the ICES infrastructure would be monitored by the DICP Employment and Enterprise Coordinator on a quarterly basis.

The recommendation to the DICP Board was that an allocation of €15,000 be approved to assist the DICP, working in an alliance with its ICES service providers, to develop this pilot service during 2006.
USEFUL CONTACTS

Migrant and Human Rights Organisations

- Emigrant Advice Tel: 01-873 2844 / 872 6171 www.emigrantadvice.ie
- Migrant Rights Centre Ireland Tel: 01-889 7570 www.mrci.ie
  (Know Your Rights translated)
- Immigrant Council of Ireland Tel: 01-674 0200 www.immigrantcouncil.ie
  (specific translated information)
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties Tel: 01-8731377 www.iccl.ie
- Irish Refugee Council Tel: 01-873 0042 www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie
- Irish Human Rights Commission Tel: 01 8589601 www.ihrc.ie
- National Consultative Committee on Racism & Interculturalism Tel: 01-8588000 www.nccri.ie

Relevant Government Departments

- Department of Education & Science Tel: 01-889 6400 www.education.ie
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) Lo-Call: 1890 220 222 www.entemp.ie
- Department of Foreign Affairs Tel: 01-478 0822 http://foreignaffairs.gov.ie
- Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, Immigration and Citizenship Lo-Call: 1890 551 500 www.justice.ie
- Department of Social and Family Affairs Tel: 01-704 3000 (general information & inquiries)
  Lo-Call: 1890 202 325 (to order leaflets) www.welfare.ie
### Other Useful Sources:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Work Permits Section, DETE</td>
<td>Lo-Call 1890 201 616</td>
<td><a href="http://www.entemp.ie">www.entemp.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Permit Call Centre</td>
<td>Tel: 01-631 3333</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Rights Information Unit, DETE</td>
<td>Lo-Call: 1890 201 615</td>
<td><a href="http://www.entemp.ie">www.entemp.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour Court</td>
<td>Tel: 01-613 6666</td>
<td><a href="http://www.labourcourt.ie">www.labourcourt.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rights Commissioner</td>
<td>Lo-Call: 1890 201 615</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Appeals Office</td>
<td>Lo-Call: 1890 747 434</td>
<td><a href="mailto:swappeals@welfare.ie">mailto:swappeals@welfare.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Aid Board</td>
<td>Tel: 066-947 100 (HQ, Kerry)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.legalaidboard.ie">www.legalaidboard.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Treoir</td>
<td>Tel: 01-477 6200 (Dublin)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.treoir.ie">www.treoir.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reception &amp; integration Agency</td>
<td>Tel: 01-418 3200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ria.gov.ie">www.ria.gov.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue Commissioner</td>
<td>Lo-Call: 1890 60 50 90 (PAYE enquiries)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.revenue.ie">www.revenue.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless Persons Unit, Health Boards</td>
<td>Tel: 1800 724 724 to get information if you are outside Dublin. Tel: 01-858 5100 For Dublin, contact No Fixed Abode Unit (part of Asylum Seekers Unit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality Authority</td>
<td>Lo-Call: 1890 245 545</td>
<td><a href="http://www.equality.ie">www.equality.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality Tribunal</td>
<td>Lo-Call: 1890 344 424</td>
<td><a href="http://www.equalitytribunal.ie">www.equalitytribunal.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Garda Racial and Intercultural Unit</td>
<td>Tel: 01-666 3150</td>
<td><a href="http://www.garda.ie">www.garda.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB)</td>
<td>Tel: 01-6669193</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Safety Authority</td>
<td>Tel: 01-614 7000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hsa.ie">www.hsa.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Services Executive</td>
<td>Tel: 045 880 400</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hse.ie">www.hse.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen’s Information Centres (CICs)</td>
<td>Lo-Call: 1890 777 121</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cidb.ie">www.cidb.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comhairle</td>
<td>Tel: 01- 605 9000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.comhairle.ie">www.comhairle.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Organisation for Migration (IOM)</td>
<td>Tel: 01-878 7900</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iomdublin.org">www.iomdublin.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC)</td>
<td>Tel: 01-874 5690</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flac.ie">www.flac.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)</td>
<td>Tel: 01-889 7777</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ictu.ie">www.ictu.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Council for Overseas Students (ICOS)</td>
<td>Tel: 01-660 5233 / 620 5313</td>
<td><a href="http://www.icosirl.ie">www.icosirl.ie</a></td>
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</tbody>
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