

CENTREPOINT

Newsletter of the Presentation Centre for Policy and Systemic Change
 37 - 39 Terenure Road West, Dublin 6W. Tel: 01 492 7097 Fax: 01 492 6423 Web: www.presentation.ie Email: info@presentation.ie

International Trade Rules - Who benefits?

by Michael O'Brien

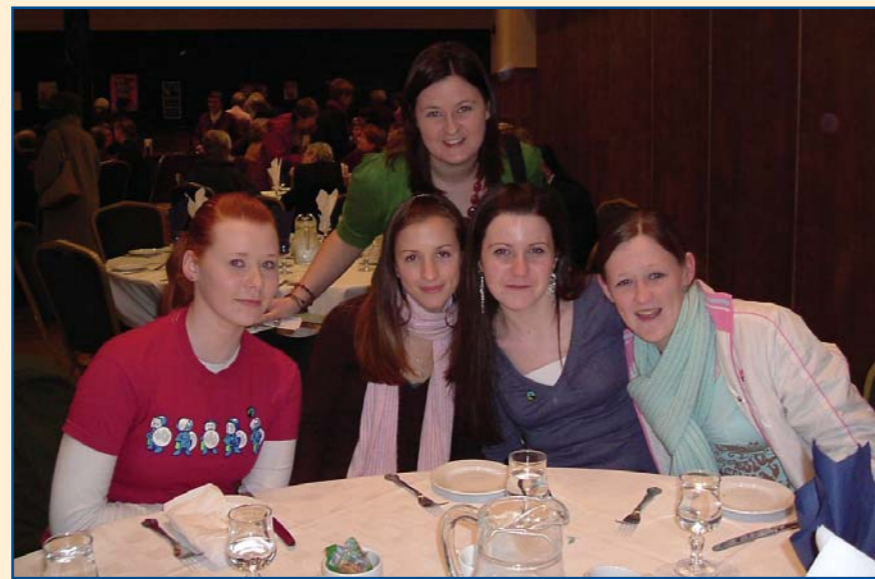
Poverty is the starting point for discussing trade justice. While the world's poor are primarily focussed on surviving, their lives are linked to international trade. Many of the world's poorest people eat food made from imported grain and wear second hand clothing from developed countries or pick coffee, tea, or cocoa which is exported to developed country markets.

Poor people are affected by the trade rules agreed in national capitals and in international negotiations. It is these same rules, which may have undermined the livelihoods of small farmers, forcing them to leave the land and join the growing ranks of the urban poor or force children to work long hours picking cocoa beans and deny their right to an education, condemning them to a lifetime of poverty.

Trade rules reflect the balance of power within countries as well as between countries. It is not surprising then that trade rules have not prioritised the interests of the poor. Given the variation in wealth between people and countries fairness in trade per se is not enough, in that it is not always fair to treat all parties strictly alike. Trade justice implies the agreement of measures to benefit the poorest, to counterbalance the enormous disadvantages that weigh them down from the start.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 global solidarity was very much to the fore, creating a more inclusive world, a less divided world demanded an effective response to addressing inequality. It was in this context that the Doha 'Development' Round, the current trade round was launched. It was called a 'development' round because it was going to address the imbalances, which had emerged in previous rounds and prioritise issues of most relevance to developing countries. The words 'trade justice' may not have been used but that was the spirit in which the round was launched.

Unfortunately, moulding outcomes that would enhance basic human rights, environmental protection and poverty reduction have been overshadowed by a return to the pursuit of interests of the most powerful countries. The pursuit of narrow national interests by developed countries almost led to the complete unravelling of the Round at its mid term



Students from Presentation Secondary School, Clonmel attending the Help Make Free Trade Fair Workshop, March 11th 2006.

review in Cancun in 2003. Cancun was a watershed. The high ambitions and sense of common purpose set out in Doha became history. As developed countries became more entrenched in their positions, ambitions to complete the Round at the Hong Kong Ministerial conference last December were revised. The new deadline of the end of 2006 may prove similarly evasive.

Should the round reach conclusion in 2006, then the following check list might be used as a sort of litmus test to determine how successful Doha has been in addressing the poorest countries needs:

- Have the concerns of the African cotton farmers been really heard?
- Has the Intellectual Property agreement been revised in a way which significantly improves poor people's access to medicines?
- Will the majority of export subsidies be eliminated by 2010?
- Will developing countries be able to protect their local markets and small producers?
- Will Least Developed Countries have real duty and quota free market access for all their products to rich country markets?
- Is the aid for trade package made up of additional, untied resources?
- Will poor countries have the policy space to pursue trade policies consistent with their development objectives?

The prioritisation of developing country interests in each of these areas is essential if the Doha trade round is to make a significant contribution to making poverty history.

Action: Keep up to date on trade issues and note that some of the goods that we are privileged to enjoy may be produced in ways that adversely affect the lives of the world's poorest people.

Michael O'Brien is a policy analyst with Trocaire



Michael O'Brien discusses Trade Justice with participants.



Thursday 9th February, Launch of LUL - Learning Using Laptops, Presentation Primary School, Warrenmount, Dublin 8. Fifth Class pupils, l to r, Jessie Delaney, Joslyn Corrigan, Niamh Doyle and Mehwish Janine.

Grand Designs on the Future of Learning

By Yvonne Farrell

When someone mentions billions of euro, you have to force yourself to remember how many millions are involved. Martin Heffernan, of the Department of Education and Science (DES) established the scale of investment throughout the country by the government, when he stated that 4 billion euro (four thousand million euro) is being spent in the five years between 2005 to 2010 on educational infrastructure.

He was a speaker at the conference organised by the Presentation Centre for Policy and Systemic Change under the title 'The 2nd Discovering the Hidden Connections for Learning conference, Learning Spaces - Community Places'. The conference was a waving flag for anyone interested in the future of Irish education.

Continued to pages 4 & 5

In This Issue

- Action Plan on Poverty, page 2
- A Green Community, page 3
- Learning Spaces, pages 4 & 5
- Asylum Seekers & Refugees, pages 6 & 7
- Trade Justice, page 8



Listen to the voice of those experiencing poverty

In a submission for Ireland's National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2006-08, Sr Anne Coffey, Presentation Centre's programme leader for social inclusion sets out priorities for a more just and inclusive society.

The submission is informed by the views and input of people experiencing poverty, exclusion and inequality and of people working with them. These views were received in response to the following questions:

- 'What is the one change in the way things work that would mean most to you?'
or
- 'If you could change one thing in the system you have to deal with - what would it be?'

Priorities to Combat Poverty and Exclusion

- Support systems for excluded individuals and groups to avail of their rights, to contribute to the development of their peers, to access services, to have their voice heard in decisions that affect them and to contribute to the good of others. (outreach, mentoring etc.) Formative evaluation should be integrated in all processes.
- Resources must be made available and ring-fenced so that the delicate work of developing a sense of self worth is not hampered by constant concerns about funding and continuity.
- The main tool of emancipation is life long learning. For this to be realised there needs to be a major increase in resource allocation driven by a vision of a true ecology of learning.
- The growing inequality in Irish society is unfair and destabilising and must be urgently addressed by government policies. There is a new dimension to the inequality in the denial of human rights to immigrant people.
- Government departments must co-ordinate their services for the benefit of simplifying processes for the users of the services.
- Explore alternatives to prison. Commit to rehabilitative processes for young people with difficulties.
- The health of the country can be judged by the care it takes of the most vulnerable members. Ratification of the treaties and instruments of rights is important as a clear statement of intent to realise the targets and objectives of the proposed national action plan.

Copies of the full submission are available by email to info@presentation.ie

Ireland by Numbers: Figure it out!

- 130 000 are enrolled in third level colleges
- 90% of Leaving Cert students from wealthy areas of South Dublin go on to 3rd level.
- 20% of Leaving Cert students from poorer areas of West Dublin go on to 3rd level.
- 5000-plus the number of students who drop out after or before Junior Cert.
- 0.47% of GNP or 675 million euro the amount allocated to overseas aid last year.
- 20% of normal power is used by your TV in standby mode.

Presentation Centre

People are at the centre of our work, especially those who are pushed to the margins of our society. We listen to their voices and together shape responses to unmet social and learning needs. Our vision is a world where all are included and everyone can be fully human and fully alive. We believe in faith that seeks justice and we work with those of all faiths and none. We promote learning innovation, social inclusion and human rights. We care for our earth through ecological awareness. We work to provide practical ways to empower communities and policy solutions for changing systems. The Presentation Centre for Policy and Systemic Change was set up by the Presentation Sisters to plan the future of their work in Ireland.

Review of Work

A Review of the Centre's work for 2004 and 2005 has just been published, if you would like a copy, please email info@presentation.ie

Your Say

Let us know what you think of this newsletter. Your views are welcome.

Write to:

Presentation Centre
37-39 Terenure Road West
Dublin 6w.

Tel: 01 4927097
Fax: 01 4926423

www.presentation.ie
Email: info@presentation.ie

Our Mailing List

You have received a copy of Centrepoint because you are on our database of individuals and groups with whom we would like to be in contact. Centrepoint is free. If you do not wish to receive future copies let us know.



'Waste Barometer, Mountmellick'.

A Green Community Working Together

By Storm Powell

Ireland has a waste management crisis. In 2001, according to the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the total quantity of municipal waste (household, commercial and street cleansing waste) has increased by 46% in the six years from 1995 to 2001. At this rate, the quantity of municipal waste generated will double every 10 years approximately.

Waste treatment in Ireland has relied fundamentally on land filling. But landfill sites around the country are rapidly filling up, no one wants either new landfills or incinerators, and backyard burning is highly polluting, generating three quarters of the dioxin emissions in Ireland to-day.

Bearing this in mind, one small community group in Ireland, the *Mountmellick Environment Group* (MEG) are endeavouring to improve waste management practice in their town and, by their example, are showing how a local community are changing environmental systems in their area in the hope of developing long term systemic change into the future. Through the efforts of MEG, the 4,000 people in the town of Mountmellick, Co. Laois have set themselves the high target of becoming Ireland's first Green town.

The town has just launched an Environmental Action plan that will see all sectors of the community, including businesses, households, schools, institutions and voluntary and community groups, working towards set targets to reduce, reuse and recycle waste. Mountmellick and its residents will now serve as a role model for towns and cities throughout Ireland that are working towards a greener community.

In conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's expert *Race Against Waste* team, MEG has spent the last six months working with the town's residents, business and community sectors to find out the existing waste management practices and the barriers to improving them. The team conducted a series of comprehensive waste audits with local businesses and also distributed 2,000 questionnaires locally. On completion of the findings from these surveys and audits, and following community consultations, an Environmental Action Plan was recently drawn up.

A key objective of this action plan is to develop a best practice model that can be transferred to other towns. In this Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (commenced 1st January 2005), it is worth considering the words of Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, when he said "Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that seems abstract - sustainable development - and turn it into a reality for all the world's people."

Embodying the spirit of Local Agenda 21 (a process which facilitates sustainable development at community level), the people of Mountmellick are determined to embrace this great challenge. The targets set out in the Action Plan were determined by the results of the waste surveys and audits and include:

- Increasing household recycling to 40%
- Increasing household composting to 50%
- Increasing steel and aluminium can recycling to 50%
- Developing a proactive waste prevention campaign.

Business waste is another priority in the Action Plan and it is proposed to support businesses with two campaigns aimed specifically at helping businesses to save money and manage waste better; the 'Small Change' campaign for companies with up to 20 employees and 'Action at Work' for larger businesses.

A 50-foot 'Mountmellick Waste Barometer' has now been constructed in the town square which will indicate improvements in waste management as the project progresses.

Waste is often referred to as simply a 'resource heading in the wrong direction'. Sustainable waste management is a system whereby waste is not viewed as 'useless rubbish' but as a valuable resource for which another use can be found. It means recognising that many 'wastes' are useful, either for the material they contain and/or for the potential product they represent. In accordance with Agenda 21, sustainability should be a key goal of our society

It is certainly a key goal for MEG whose members are a great example of a voluntary community effort, working together to improve the quality and sustainability of the local environment and, in doing so, tackling one of the most difficult challenges facing us today.

Storm Powell is the Community Development Officer, Mountmellick Development Association

Grand Designs on the Future of Learning

Continued from front page

By Yvonne Farrell

Why have the core learning spaces not changed in any dramatic way in decades?

The Department's concerns include: curricular needs, environmental considerations, special needs, user group specific requirements and value for money. Its fundamental aim is to provide quality learning space. While asking the question: "Why have the core learning spaces not changed in any dramatic way in decades?", Heffernan, Manager of the Professional & Technical Services in the Planning and Building Unit, DES, noted the ongoing research being done within the Department by analytical review of peer offerings, research and development in-house, producing Generic Repeat Designs, exemplar schemes, Technical Guidance Documents, engaging in international best practice, particularly through the Programme on Educational Buildings (PEB) at the Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development.

The PEB produces a synopsis of its work every four years in its *Compendium of Exceptional Educational Buildings*. Thirty countries contribute to the OECD Programme and Heffernan was delighted to announce that six Irish schools have been chosen for the forthcoming publication.

Futuristic schools that promote collaborative and problem-solving educational experiences

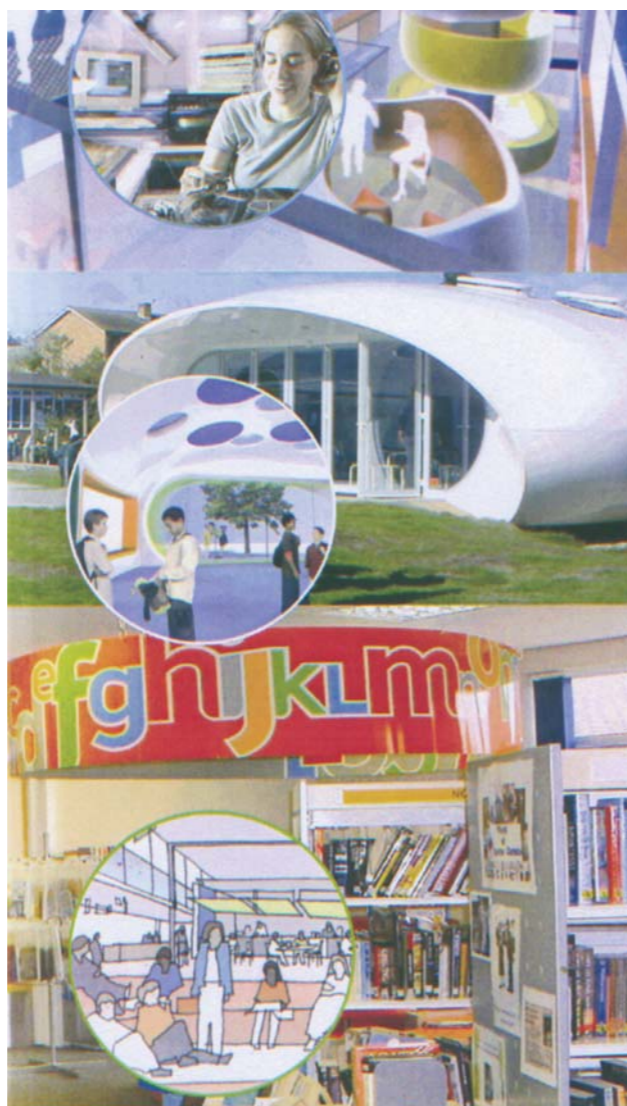
Professor Stephen Heppell, World Education Consultant, believes that learning factories processing robotic learners need to be replaced by futuristic schools that promote collaborative and problem-solving educational experiences. In his view, the Irish education system is now on the cusp of a "big adventure", with three choices: to lead, to follow, or to fail. Failing or following are not seen as options for Ireland in the knowledge-based society.

"The one-size-fits-all strategy is dead – it's about personalisation" says Heppell. He advises moving from assessing people who can rhyme things off from memory to assessing people who collaborate. "In a world of Google, remembering is not as important as it was," he says. He believes we are not noticing the importance of learning in a "virtual world". While northern Europe, Asia and Australia are experimenting with radical new schools and proving that a more creative learning environment can lead to enormous improvements in children's learning, Heppell sees Ireland as remaining somewhat hesitant.

Heal the rift between community and education

Architect Sheila O'Donnell presented three, deeply researched projects of her firm O'Donnell and Tuomey: the multi-denominational primary school in Ranelagh, Dublin; a school complex in Utrecht, The Netherlands and a multiplex primary school in Cherry Orchard, Dublin. In each of the projects, O'Donnell described preliminary discussions, investigating the aspirations of the Clients, studies of the particular and unique locations with educational and social possibilities. O'Donnell noted that during the course of the design of the school in Ranelagh, it was the Architects who raised the possibilities of sharing and overlapping spaces, while the teachers themselves felt that the individual classroom space was the primary base.

What did develop from the design were spaces, which allowed for



more than one use. Corridors were made wide enough to be used as group work areas with the possibility for overlap with adjoining classrooms. Visual connections were made between classrooms and with the surrounding streets, through small protecting courtyards. The south facing sheltered play area is also the location for a food market at weekends, enlarging the school's community role.

In the two-school complex in Utrecht, O'Donnell describes the site as being between a street and a park, with one school primarily relating to the street, the other to the park, with the shared facilities acting as connectors through the centre of the school complex. Carefully considered use of the corridors again provides additional teaching overlap spaces.

The multiplex primary school in Cherry Orchard is a Department of Education and Science Pilot Project challenging educationalists, planners, architects, sociologists. O'Donnell outlined the aspiration to heal the rift between community and education, between inside and outside, both socially and educationally. It is in society's interest that this thoughtful Project is successful.

Users should be at the heart of decision-making

Sean McDougall of the Design Council Learning Environment Campaign, UK, used his first seven images to shock his audience. His thesis is that the Victorian church pews, adjusted to accommodate desks to line students up for education, is the same basis on which classrooms are designed to-day. McDougall calls for a "schools renaissance".

In St. Gregory's School, Warrington, UK, the staff and students of the school were involved in re-inventing the school. McDougall believes that users should be at the heart of decision-making, stating that where people feel involved, there is a much greater chance of something working. "One family, inspired to learn" was the insightful quote of one student of St. Gregory's, which subsequently became the school's new motto.

In another UK school, St. Margaret's, they developed with the students a classroom of the future, which involves learning, sharing and moving. Changing the design and possibilities of the desks and seats, the room allows for versatility. Sometimes placing the teacher in the centre of the room with students clustered around seems right. At other times students are allowed to form their own work areas. Nothing is fixed. An interesting aspect of the classroom is that all the wall surfaces have white boards, including the window walls, where the blinds also act as white boards! This allows the room to be used in the round, giving as much flexibility as possible. McDougall maintains that the existing form of educating has to be reviewed in light of a changing economy.

Are we making new schools, centres of education, in the best possible way?

What was important about this Conference was that it posed questions, which will hopefully affect policy: Are we making new schools, centres of education, in the best possible way? Are we imagining and analysing the future needs correctly, based on real information, from both local and international sources? How appropriate are these international examples for Irish education? By what methods, do we evaluate these examples? What are we doing well? How can we improve? How versatile need our classrooms be? I got the sense that we have to be both open and cautious, brave to think new thoughts, as well as re-evaluating our educational experiences and achievements. What was clear from the conference is that education is both personal and community wealth.

Yvonne Farrell is an architect. She has taught and lectured on Architecture in Ireland, Europe, the Middle East and Asia and is a founding director of Grafton Architects. In the forthcoming publication by the OECD, Compendium of Exceptional Educational Buildings, three of the six Irish schools chosen are by Grafton Architects.



At The Learning Spaces Community Places Conference, Croke Park Conference Centre, March 27th

Martin Heffernan, David Rose, Sheila O'Donnell, Seán McDougall, Stephen Heppell & Ann Marie Quinn *p.b.v.m.*



'Connecting Learning and the Environment,' Breakout session at the Learning Spaces - Community Places conference.

Young and Old Learning Together

By Yvonne Farrell

There were three breakout sessions at the Learning Spaces – Community Places conference: 1 Inter-Generational Learning, 2 Connecting Learning Communities, 3 Connecting Learning and the Environment. Two of the initiatives from the intergenerational learning session are profiled below.

Millennium Family Resource Centre, Glengoole, Thurles

The first of two presentations was of a Pilot Project, based in the Millennium Family Resource Centre, Glengoole, Thurles, Co. Tipperary. It charted the fascinating story of an initiative funded by the Presentation Centre for Policy and Systematic Change, working within the community. Under the general title of *Fun Learning Together*, its aim was to promote a fun approach to learning and education, to encourage the notion of parent as primary educator, positive parent-child relationships, inter-generational learning and life-long learning. With the time to say 'Hello' and develop person to person relationships, this highly structured, effective and carefully crafted programme included classes in food nutrition, complimentary therapy, arts & crafts and gardening and special trips. It developed skills, built relationships, removed barriers, allowed parent and child to spend time together in a fun learning environment set up through their own efforts under the project guidance.

Galway Intergenerational Learning

The second presentation was by Mary Surlis, teacher, sociologist, now adult and community officer in NUI Galway. Mary focused on a project she had established, which now has seven schools participating. Initial research funding was provided by NUI Galway, County Council Arts Division, V.E.C., Leader, and IRD programmes are involved.

The Project involves two separate generations: Transition Year Students and Active Retirement Associations / Day Care Groups / Writers Groups / Community Groups / Interested Individuals. When initially approached, there was hostile reaction from both the 16 year olds and the Senior citizens. Mary succeeded in encouraging the two generations to find common ground and with a facilitator, group communication began, creating a framework of expression, fostering and promoting mutual respect. Mary is convinced that the non-hierarchical approach to learning is a highly significant ingredient in this project's success. As well as producing something concrete which the group present in a local context, both groups achieve friendships, shared knowledge, rejuvenation and personal fulfilment.

I found these two projects fascinating, clearly showing how education can link communities. Both Projects are highly structured and deeply influential, both so valuable to society. Their research certainly emphasised the title of the Conference: *Discovering the Hidden Connections for Learning*.

CORI calls for fairness and wellbeing to be focus of new national agreement

By David Rose

Talks on a new national social partnership agreement have been on-going for a number of months now. The CORI Justice Commission as one of the social partners is involved in the negotiations. Their key message is that the new agreement should tackle poverty, inequality and social exclusion effectively and move Ireland towards being a society characterised by fairness and well-being. The new agreement should contain commitments to develop initiatives that would:

- Address Ireland's infrastructure deficits especially on social housing and public transport
- Secure appropriate levels of service provision in areas such as healthcare, education, social care and employment services
- Ensure every man, woman and child has sufficient income to live life with dignity especially through increasing social welfare rates and tackling the 'working poor' issue
- Maximise the participation of all of Ireland's people in their own development and in the development of the wider society.

In its recent publications *Securing Fairness and Wellbeing – Ireland in the Coming Years*, CORI points out that Ireland's population is projected to grow to 4.5 million by 2011 and to 5.5 million by 2030 from its current level of just over 4 million. This highlights the scope of the changes that lie ahead and the scale of the challenges these pose for policy-making today. It also highlights the need to avail of the window of opportunity currently available so that these challenges will be effectively addressed for the benefit of all. According to the Justice Commission a new national agreement should provide:

- A vision that could guide policy in tackling these and related problems in the coming decade
- Commitments to concrete actions to be taken in the coming three years to ensure significant progress is made on addressing these and related issues.

Hearing the Voices of Refugees & Asylum Seekers

Listen to the voices of those experiencing injustice. Centrepoint is committed to hearing the voices of people experiencing exclusion and injustice. This edition features two stories by individuals who have sought asylum in Ireland. Names have been changed to protect the individuals and their families

Fana's Story

“I'm Fana Mohommad, a Muslim Refugee from Bangladesh. I am married and have four children, one boy and three lovely daughters. I escaped from prison in Bangladesh, where I had been tortured for writing and publishing anti-government literature in the local press. The prison authorities started cutting off my fingers one by one, to prevent me from ever again using them to write against that corrupt and unjust government. They had just started when an older guard had pity on me and told me to go out. It was he who left the gate open for me and an uncle hid me until he could buy a passage on a boat. I did not know where I was going until I arrived in Dublin.

My father, who was a Pakistani, was a university professor before the Indian-Pakistan war and we lived in Dhaka, which is now the capital of Bangladesh. My mother came from the Bengal Region of India, which is now called Bangladesh. We still live in Dhaka but were left stateless and homeless because neither Pakistan nor India would accept us as citizens. Ever since that war 470,000 families are forced to live in the Red Cross Refugee camp in Bangladesh deprived of all citizenship rights to this day.

It was in this camp, at a primary school run by Concern, that I first began learning English. You can imagine my excitement on an intercultural exchange programme to Castlecomer Community School, organised by Dóchas Kilkenny Support Group for Refugees and facilitated by Sr Regina, that I discovered that the priest founder of Concern was from the townland of Burnsgrove, outside the town. One of the teachers in the school has promised to bring us there to show us the monument to the memory of the late Father Doheny.

The prison authorities started cutting off my fingers one by one...

Since coming to Ireland I have had no contact with family or friends and they didn't even know where I was. I lived in the asylum seekers hostel in Kilkenny with ninety other men from different nationalities and cultures and who hold different religious beliefs and values. At one stage I had the anxiety of having to share my bedroom with three total strangers, so there was no privacy whatever. This was a very difficult situation and most unhealthy, not only physically, but psychologically and emotionally too.

Although my first experience of Ireland was so elevating and when I walked down the street in Kilmacud, Dublin, I felt I could fly. But that was soon to change. It was my first experience of living in a free country without the continual presence of military force, and it was there that I wrote a poem to my second daughter who had asked me for one as a personal gift for herself alone. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to send her that gift but hopefully some day I will be able to give it to her in person when I will be able to bring my family to Kilkenny.

Separation from our families and homeland leaves us very vulnerable, sad and lonely. During my first month in the Asylum Seekers' Hostel, I became depressed and suffered from ill health due to the change of food and the difficulties of a cold and wet climate, plus the isolation from society.

Deprived of the dignity of work I did not have sufficient resources to provide myself with warm clothes and footwear for the cold weather. The struggle to survive on only €19.00 weekly made the work prohibition rule seem very unfair. The lack of social life activities, naturally contributed towards further isolation and it almost became a pattern for us, to spend the days alone, or in bed at the hostel. Even for me, the dream of liberation was fading and literacy in English as a passport to freedom was looked on as a lesser priority.

Luckily, I was fortunate enough in being spared the tensions of waiting and waiting for the outcome of my personal interviews at the Department of Justice, and I did not suffer the fear of deportation, which others experience over a long span. Three months ago I have been granted my Refugee status, which enables me to live outside the hostel and to seek employment. I am now working with a Halal Meat supplier as I continue my education.

I appreciate the work done by members of Dóchas Kilkenny and am especially grateful to Sr Regina, Theresa Delahunty, and others who have involved us in educational, social, cultural, sporting and other recreational activities to help our integration into the Kilkenny community.

I am very happy to continue as a member of Dóchas and to participate in its schools programme of Promoting Intercultural Locally. I see this as a very effective way of breaking down barriers of isolation and of countering racism.

It is my dearest wish that I can manage to get my wife and family safely out of Bangladesh and settle with them in Kilkenny within the next few years.”

The Agony of an African Lady

Anonymous

“I have experienced so many ups and downs in my life time. Right from the time of my birth, I never had a normal life. I was a girl in a man's world. My mother had just one child. This was not what my dad had in mind. When the abuse on my mother became too much, she left me at the age of 11 to fend for myself. I was forced into marriage at the age of 16. I thought I could make it work with God, as he was my only source of strength.

In Africa male children are seen as the jewel of a family but unfortunately, I was unable to have as many as expected. Due to this fact, I was subjected to serious abuse both verbally and physically. When lost my first baby, nobody sympathised with me or cared about me. My most vivid memory is one where my husband walked into the room as I rolled on the floor bleeding and said, 'the reason for marriage is for procreation and not love. That is all I expect from you.'

When I had my first child, I was abandoned because it was a girl. I was frustrated as I felt I had failed my husband. Fortunately for me I had a baby boy ten months after having the girl. He bought a brand new car for me for that reason. "He is one of my grandsons that will inherit my property," said my father-in-law. I felt I had completed my duty and would finally have a normal life. The straw that broke the camel's back was when I had my fourth child. I was accused of having a child for another man just because there was no family resemblance at birth. Due to this I was subjected to beating and abuse. The abuse was endless to the extent that when I had my fifth child, who is also a girl, I was abandoned in hospital. Hence, I was detained as I had not paid the bills. Later my friend's husband paid the bills and took me home.

My husband allowed me into the house after much persuasion. I was not allowed to do anything of my choice to the extent that his 'boys' always monitored me. I still put up with things like horsewhips, cable wires and belts. Secondly he threatened to drill and maim me if I left

him. "You are my property", he always said. This put endless fear into me. The event that will remain indelible in my heart was when I was pregnant with my last baby. He asked me to get a scan done and give him a feedback. I returned with a heavy heart and tears in my eyes with news of its being a baby girl. "Ha ha ha", he laughed sarcastically, "Yet another girl?" he screamed.

His family members did not give me a breathing space. They and villagers ostracised me because they accused me of killing my father-in-law through witchcraft. The real reason behind my abuse was the fact that I did not have as many sons as they wanted. They channelled all their anger and disappointment towards me because of this.

I began to suffer from depression. The suffering and agony became unbearable as I was seen almost every day with scars and bloodshot eyes. My father could not bear his daughter's pain any longer and so he went into serious deliberation with an Irish priest in one of the local churches. He managed to get me a visa into Ireland. I was immediately admitted to the hospital on my arrival in Ireland, due to severe illness. I had my seventh child but she was fragile and disabled. Before she went to the Lord on the 22 February 2004, she made an important and lasting impact in the lives of many who knew her. The same goes for my five girls and I am so proud of them. Just as the bible says, "The stone that is rejected by the builders will be the corner stone". And I pray that this will manifest in the lives of my girls.

Thanks to the nurses and doctors of Saint Finbarr's, Cork University Hospital, Crumlin Hospital, the Irish community, and Saint Vincent de Paul for all their unconditional love and support towards us.”

Policymaking in Ireland profoundly changed by migration

by David Rose

Demographic changes and high levels of in-migration are profoundly altering the context to practically all policy-making in Ireland. The economy will continue to prosper only if Irish society retains its cohesion and attractiveness. Ireland's society and economy can continue to benefit from social partnership, including co-ordinated wage bargaining at the national level.

These are among the points emphasised by the National Economic and Social Council (NESc) in its seventh 'Strategy' report Strategy 2006: People, Productivity and Purpose. Since 1986, these reports have been key inputs into the negotiation of the social partnership agreements.

The scale of in-migration to Ireland, NESc notes, is adding almost as much again to population growth as natural increase, temporarily improving the age dependency ratio, increasing the proportion of non-nationals in the population, and contributing to population growth in almost all counties. The high level of in-migration must now be factored into infrastructural and regional planning, the development of education and health policies, and a wide array of social policies.

A strong economy and a confident society have ensured that the positive aspects of high in-migration have been dominant in recent years. In-migration has raised Ireland's economic growth rate, contained cost pressures, enabled higher levels of many public and private services to be provided, and increased the size of the domestic market. Appropriate policies now need to be drawn up and implemented which will ensure that any future economic downturn and/or a shock to society would not reproduce in Ireland some of the problems with migration seen elsewhere.

The main role of the National Economic and Social Council, a government think tank, is to analyse and report on strategic issues relating to the efficient development of the economy and the achievement of social justice.