



Church of Ireland
Refugee Working Groups

Supporting asylum seekers and refugees

2nd edition · September 2017



Foreword

The mass movement of people fleeing war-torn countries in the Middle East and Africa has impacted upon many countries around the world. More than 5 million refugees are crammed into temporary camps in the countries bordering Syria while others have relocated further afield, with over 1 million migrants coming to Europe by risking the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean. Both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are playing their part in providing a home for some of those who have been displaced and details are provided within this resource.

Two small working groups were set up to monitor the situation on behalf of the Church of Ireland. This has been a frustrating process as authorities are constrained in sharing personal information by privacy law. Hence the difficulty in offering the practical support that had initially been requested. As refugees become more fully integrated into their new local communities, opportunities will present themselves for Church of Ireland people across the island to offer welcome and practical support. Several positive initiatives, some of them ecumenical, have been drawn to our attention and are to be applauded.

This resource is intended to be informative and encouraging. It is important that we are aware of the efforts being made in both jurisdictions and by our mission partners. We are indebted to all who have contributed to this updated resource for their invaluable assistance.

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Acknowledgements

This is the second edition of the Refugee Working Groups' resource on supporting asylum seekers and refugees. This resource is available for download from the Church of Ireland's online document library: www.ireland.anglican.org/resources

The working groups are grateful to all who have contributed to the resource, including the UK Home Office, the Department of Justice and Equality, UNHCR Ireland, Peter Cheney, Dr Damian Jackson, Lydia Monds, Margaret McNulty, and the Church of Ireland's associated missionary societies.

Photography has been kindly provided by Karen Bushby (Diocese of Connor), David Cavan (Tearfund), Christian Aid, Crosslinks, Lynn Glanville (Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough), the Very Revd Alistair Grimason (Diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry), Annette McGrath (Diocese of Down and Dromore), Russell Watkins (UK Department for International Development) and Sam Wynn (Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross).

Definitions: migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

The term refugee is often the best phrase to describe anyone who has been forced to flee their home. In the processes for assessing refugee status, a number of different categories are used to describe people who are seeking that form of protection.

Asylum seekers and refugees are **migrants** although the term itself covers a much larger group of people. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his or her habitual place of residence.

An **asylum seeker** is a person who has left their country of origin and has formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application for refugee status has not yet been accepted.

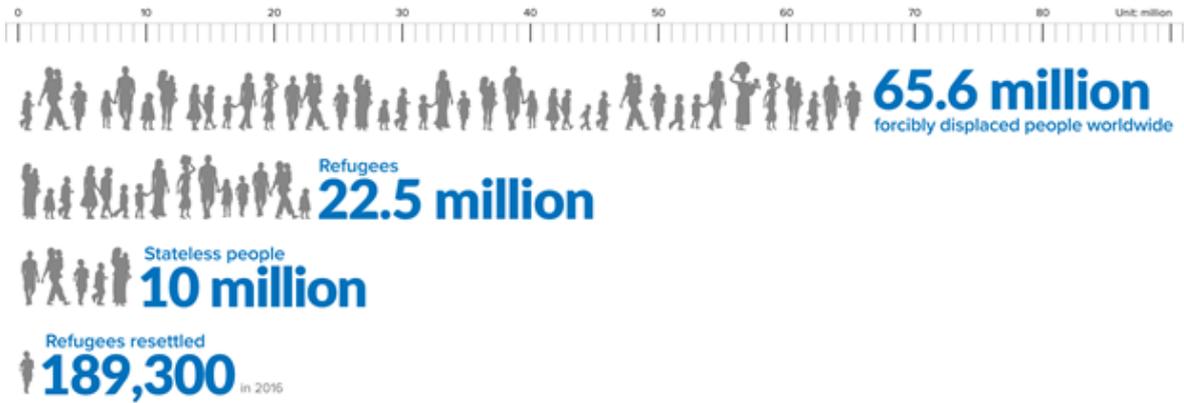
A **refugee** is a person who – owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion – is either:

- outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or (owing to such fear) unwilling to avail of the protection of that country; or
- without a nationality and outside the country of his or her former habitual residence (for the same reasons as above), and is unable or is unwilling to return to it.

National governments have the primary responsibility for determining refugee status but the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency) may also do so in a wide number of circumstances e.g. in refugee camps.

In addition, there are a number of groups with similar experiences to refugees and asylum seekers. These include **internally displaced persons** who have been forced to flee their homes in the same way as refugees but who remain in their own country and have not crossed an international border, **returnees** (refugees who have returned to their home country but have not yet been fully integrated into their society), **stateless persons** and **refused asylum seekers** (who may voluntarily return or be involuntarily returned to their home country, or who are unable to return).

If it is decided that a person is not a refugee, he or she may qualify for **subsidiary protection** if there are substantial grounds for believing that they would face a real risk of suffering serious harm if returned to their country of origin or country of former habitual residence.

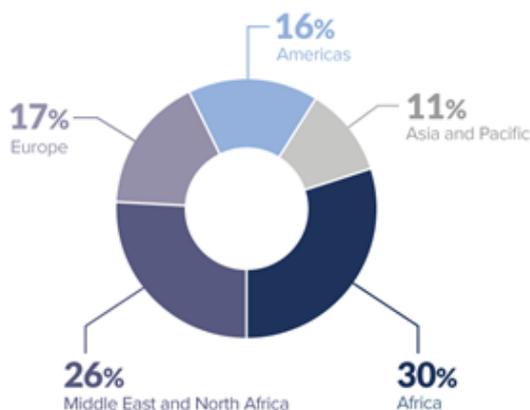


55% of refugees worldwide came from three countries

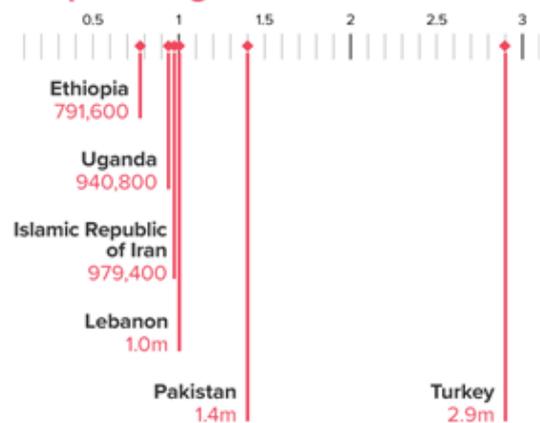


28,300 people
a day forced to flee their homes
because of conflict and persecution

Where the world's displaced people are being hosted



Top hosting countries



Source: UNHCR

Note: Figures are for 2016 and refer to refugees under the UNHCR's mandate (covering 17.2 million persons) unless otherwise stated. A further 5.3 million Palestinian refugees are registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency.

Ireland in context

The following statistics outline the main groups of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons on the island of Ireland (where information is available).

5,731

Refugees in the
Republic of Ireland
UNHCR, December 2016

4,322

Asylum seekers in the
Republic of Ireland
UNHCR, December 2016

785

Refugees resettled from
Lebanon to the Republic
of Ireland
Department of Justice and
Equality, September 2017

552

Asylum seekers relocated
from Greece to the
Republic of Ireland
Department of Justice and
Equality, September 2017

99

Stateless persons in the
Republic of Ireland
UNHCR, December 2016

720

Asylum seekers in
Northern Ireland
Housing Executive,
August 2017

632

Syrian refugees resettled
from the Middle East to
Northern Ireland
Department for Communities,
August 2017



Map credit: Nick Shanks

Regular statistical updates are available from the UNHCR (popstats.unhcr.org), the Republic of Ireland's International Protection Office (www.ip.o.gov.ie) and the UK's *Immigration Statistics* series (www.gov.uk). The Home Office does not routinely publish the figures for the number of asylum applicants and their dependents in Northern Ireland. Migration into Europe is mapped by the International Organization for Migration (migration.iom.int/europe) and the EU's border agency, Frontex (frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes).

Applying for asylum

Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland's asylum process is administered by the International Protection Office (IPO) – an office within the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service. The IPO was established at the end of December 2016, as a successor to the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner.

Asylum seekers must firstly complete a preliminary interview which will be followed by a recommendation on whether or not the application is admissible. The next stage is an international protection interview after which the application is considered in more detail.

Asylum seekers are required to inform the IPO about changes in their circumstances and are currently not entitled to be in work or to seek employment. The Supreme Court ruled in principle, in May 2017, that the bar on seeking employment was unconstitutional; the matter was adjourned for six months to allow the Oireachtas to consider it. Applicants are entitled to legal advice and an offer of full board accommodation (via the direct provision system). This is provided by the Reception and Integration Agency (www.ria.gov.ie) which oversees 32 reception and accommodation centres.

They receive a weekly allowance of €19.10 per adult and €15.60 per child. People who receive refugee status are entitled to work and to receive support through social security and public services, and have rights to family reunification. They are entitled to reside in Ireland for a specified period of not less than three years, which is renewable.

More information on the Irish asylum process is available at www.ipa.gov.ie

Northern Ireland

The asylum process is administered by the UK Home Office. Once an application has been submitted, the asylum seeker will have a meeting with an immigration officer (screening) and then an asylum interview with a case worker.

Asylum seekers are required to inform the Home Office if their circumstances change and will not usually be allowed to work while their claim is being considered. However, they can receive housing, financial assistance (asylum support of £36.96 per week for each person in the household) and help with legal representation. Most asylum seekers live in Belfast.

As in the Republic of Ireland, people who receive refugee status are entitled to work and to receive support through social security and public services, and have rights to family reunification. Refugees are currently granted five years of residence in the UK after which they may seek permanent settlement.

More information on the UK asylum process is available at www.gov.uk/claim-asylum and statistics on asylum seekers and refugee resettlement are published quarterly as part of the *Immigration Statistics* series, available at www.gov.uk



Tents for refugees in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

Resettlement of refugees

Republic of Ireland

Ireland has undertaken several resettlement programmes since the 1950s, accommodating refugees from countries including Hungary, Chile, Vietnam, Iran, Bosnia and Kosovo. In 2014, the Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme allocated humanitarian visas to families of Syrians in Ireland who had been forced to flee their homes. The Irish Refugee Protection Programme was established in September 2015 as a response to the humanitarian crisis that had developed in Southern Europe due to mass migration from the Middle East and Africa.

Ireland has committed to admit 4,000 people and the focus of the programme is largely on families and children. It incorporates the **resettlement** (of refugees recognised by the UNHCR who are living outside the EU) and the **relocation** of asylum seekers living in Greece and Italy (outlined in the next section).

Within the resettlement strand, Ireland committed to accept 1,040 refugees by the end of 2017. As of September, 785 refugees have been resettled and the remaining 255 people are due to arrive by early next year. Ireland intends to accept a total of 600 refugees in 2018.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland played its part in the UK's resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in 1979-1980. The resettlement of refugees in the United Kingdom today takes place through four schemes.

The **Gateway Protection Programme** and **Mandate Refugee Scheme** resettle refugees from a range of nationalities referred to the UK by the UNHCR. Mandate supports refugees who have a close family member in the UK. Gateway accommodated 1,272 people and Mandate accommodated 12 people in 2016.

The **Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme** was set up in 2014 and expanded in 2015 with the aim of resettling up to 20,000 Syrian refugees to the UK. This scheme receives applications from refugees in countries bordering Syria (principally Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey). A total of 15,842 refugees had been resettled under the programme as of June 2017.

The **Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme** was launched in April 2016, with the aim of accommodating 3,000 children at risk and their family members from the Middle East and North Africa. A total of 371 people were resettled by June 2017.

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme gives priority to people with medical needs or who have survived violence and torture, women at risk, particularly vulnerable children and elderly people, and people with legal and physical protection needs.

The Home Office arranges exit visas from the host country and entry visas into the UK. The Northern Ireland Executive is responsible for making arrangements to receive and settle the refugees when they arrive in the region. A total of 632 Syrian refugees had been resettled into Northern Ireland by the end of August 2017. Groups are arriving around every six weeks with a projected total of no more than 2,000 people to be resettled after five years. Information on resettlement under other schemes is not available at a regional level.

Relocation of asylum seekers

Following the mass migration into Southern Europe in 2015, the EU introduced a scheme to relocate asylum seekers living in Greece and Italy to other member states. The UK has opted out of the scheme whereas Ireland has voluntarily opted in.

The Republic of Ireland has pledged to accept 2,622 asylum seekers under the relocation strand of the programme. This includes 1,089 relocated from Greece, of whom 552 have arrived as of September. A further 623 were to be relocated from Italy but this has not been possible, partly due to difficulties in vetting and security arrangements. Another 910 places for asylum seekers, due to be relocated to the Republic, have not yet been allocated by the European Commission.

Relocated asylum seekers are selected as they have a high chance of being accepted as refugees when their applications are processed in the receiving country. A UK Government scheme, under the **Dubs amendment**, operated between May 2016 and March 2017, and accommodated 350 unaccompanied child asylum seekers from Europe. Information on the scheme is not available at a regional level.



Nejebbar and her children Sudai and Shikufa, who have fled from Afghanistan and are living in Greece.

Responding to fear

Migration is an issue which is often associated with fears about security, especially when conflicts cross international boundaries. It is important to acknowledge and respond to the fears of local people about the current crisis and its implications for the UK and Ireland.

The best response to fear is empathy and many fears are overcome when people meet with asylum seekers and refugees and share life together. For example, the Belfast Friendship Club (www.belfastfriendshipclub.org) is a space for long-term residents and people who are new to the city to make friends and help each other.

Church congregations have a natural role in bringing people together in a local community and helping them to understand each other. Indeed, some Protestant congregations in the Republic of Ireland have grown considerably through welcoming refugees as members.

A briefing by the Northern Ireland Executive's Department for Communities on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme outlines some of the vetting and security arrangements for the resettlement of refugees: www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/syrian-vulnerable-persons-relocation-scheme

Any resettlement refugee coming to Northern Ireland will have been through a rigorous two-stage security screening process and considered carefully by the Home Office before being accepted for entry into the UK.

The Home Office works closely with the UNHCR, which has its own robust identification processes in place. This includes the taking of biometrics (photographs and fingerprints), documentary evidence and interviews with the refugees. When cases are submitted by the UNHCR to the Home Office for consideration for resettlement, they are screened by the Home Office to determine whether they are suitable.

All persons who arrive under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme have undergone a security assessment by experienced An Garda Síochána officers, conducted while they are still overseas. This process involves one or more interviews and fingerprinting. They are also interviewed by members of staff from the programme who undertake a vulnerability assessment as well as providing cultural orientation.

There is a relatively small number of asylum seekers on the island of Ireland. In the Republic, most asylum seekers live in the reception and accommodation centres located around the country. Almost all asylum seekers in Northern Ireland live in Belfast in private rental accommodation.

An application for asylum involves regular contact with government departments and agencies. A person can be excluded from refugee status or another form of protection on a number of grounds, including where they have committed a serious crime or where they are considered a danger to the community or to the security of the state.

Asylum seekers and refugees also experience stress and fear whilst living in Ireland. It is easy to assume that a safe location will make people feel better about their situation but for asylum seekers the process is stressful. There is fear about the outcome of their case and the possibility that they may be returned to their country of origin. Enforced idleness can add to these fears and increases anxiety and depression. People live with low incomes and can experience culture shock and isolation, often complicated by language barriers.

Refugees with leave to remain may feel a little more secure but still have many adjustments to make, find it hard to have their qualifications recognised in order to get work and can struggle to feel at home in their new community, especially if they experience negative attitudes and racism.

Within both groups, there will be people who are traumatised by their experiences, grieving for lost relatives or suffering from the after-effects of injury or torture. All need to be met half-way by local people in learning how to fit in. Where asylum seekers or refugees have been housed on the island of Ireland, Christian people have assisted in the integration process – within their congregations and in specialist groups – and Churches are well placed to continue to do so in the current situation.

Supporting asylum seekers and refugees

The Church of Ireland's response

In September 2015, the archbishops and bishops of the Church of Ireland stated their willingness to engage with governments in response to the refugee crisis. A three-fold response was outlined: prayerful intercession for refugees and governments; encouraging parishioners to write and meet with political representatives; and financial support via Bishops' Appeal.

The Standing Committee established two working groups on the crisis in each jurisdiction – chaired by the Rt Revd Patrick Rooke in the Republic of Ireland and the Rt Revd Ken Good in Northern Ireland. The groups have been in contact with the Irish Government's Department of Justice and Equality and the Northern Ireland Executive's Department for Social Development (now Department for Communities) to offer assistance. In the Republic, this has included attending a number of briefings with government officials, who have asked Churches to help by welcoming refugees, offering practical support, and speaking out against xenophobia.

The resettlement of Syrian refugees has perhaps been the most visual reminder of the refugee crisis in both jurisdictions. However, the Church's ability to directly help resettled refugees has to date been limited as they must first receive a very close level of care and support from health and social services.

Following a resolution at the 2016 General Synod, a letter was sent on behalf of the bishops to the Irish Government, asking for the key recommendations of the *Protection, Resettlement and Integration* report to be implemented e.g. by enhancing legal channels for migration and improving the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The report is available at <http://tinyurl.com/ycducx48>

At the 2017 General Synod, speakers encouraged churches located near to reception centres to become involved in supporting people living in those centres and highlighted projects undertaken by dioceses and individual members of the Church. The working groups commend the UK and Irish Governments – and communities across the island of Ireland – for their efforts to date in integrating asylum seekers and refugees and encourage both administrations to keep under review the possibility of increasing the number of resettlement places for refugees. In Scripture, we read of how Mary and Joseph and the infant Jesus became refugees as they fled from Herod. Travelling into Egypt meant leaving everything behind and going to a foreign land where they would depend on the hospitality of strangers. As followers of Jesus Christ, we look forward to welcoming the stranger into our communities as a brother or sister made in the image of God.

A range of parish and diocesan responses have been made to the crisis. The **Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough** are seeking to raise €300,000 over the next three years (2017-2019 inclusive) to help the Irish Refugee Council provide housing for refugees. This project has, to date, secured 10 new properties which will potentially accommodate over 40 people.



Participants in Christ Church Cathedral's series of talks on life in the direct provision system.

Asylum seekers shared their experiences of life in Ireland in a series of talks – 'What's the Story? Lives in Direct Provision' – at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, in September 2017.



A crisis appeal – organised by the **Diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry** in late 2016 – resulted in three containers of warm clothing, blankets, duvets, crutches and walking aids being sent to a hospital in Syria and a refugee camp in Northern Iraq.

St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, hosted the WelcomeFest concert for Refugee Week in June 2016. The cathedral's

Black Santa appeal has supported aid agencies working with refugees overseas and helped the Migrant Centre NI to deliver training sessions for its Belonging Project workshops; these help participants to interact with people from diverse backgrounds in schools, workplace and local communities.

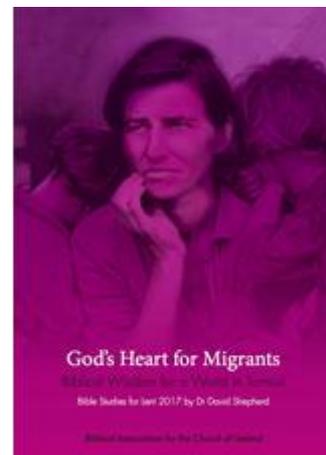
Migrants and refugees in the Calais camp were supported through supplies sent from parishes in the **Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross**, and a visit to the camp by parishioners from **St John's Parish Church, Moira** (Diocese of Down and Dromore).





Cork, Cloyne and Ross Mothers' Union knitted 200 'comfort teddies' for young migrants rescued by the Irish Naval Service, and dozens of teddies were sent by young parishioners in **Monkstown Parish** (Diocese of Connor) through Project Paddington.

The **Biblical Association for the Church of Ireland** published its 2017 Lenten Bible study on the theme of migration, entitled *God's Heart for Migrants – Biblical Wisdom for a World in Turmoil*. The study comprises five Bible studies on the issues involved and is available through its website: www.bibliahibernica.wordpress.com



Support organisations for asylum seekers and refugees

A number of specialist organisations provide support to those seeking refuge on the island of Ireland. Mainstream charities – including Christian organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army and Crosscare – also assist refugees and migrants alongside their other local clients.

In addition, clergy and parishioners whose neighbours include asylum seekers and refugees are encouraged to take up unexpected opportunities to serve as and when they arise e.g. by offering lifts to hospital appointments in rural areas, food banks, helping people to improve their English language skills through classes and everyday conversations, or giving goods for mothers and toddlers.

While immediate support for resettlement refugees in both jurisdictions has been through official channels, both governments have enabled the public to respond as well. The **Irish Red Cross** has been tasked with collecting pledges of accommodation, goods and services in the Republic of Ireland:

<http://registerofpledges.redcross.ie>

In Northern Ireland, the resettlement of the Syrian vulnerable refugees is coordinated by a consortium headed by **Bryson Intercultural**. Offers of support and goodwill are gratefully received and any individual or organisation wishing to provide support is asked to contact Ligia Parizzi on 028 9032 5835 or at lparizzi@brysongroup.org

Assistance can take many forms and may include:

- providing brand new basic supplies and imperishable food;
- vouchers for chemists and supermarkets;
- information on local public services or community-based services;
- helping refugees to get to know local people e.g. through an existing space or a small group of people such as a coffee morning or women's group;
- a free cultural experience or free visit to a local tourist attraction;
- a short supportive apprenticeship or volunteering experience;
- sport, music and dance (for adults and/or young people);
- a large community space that could be offered for free for a day, evening or weekend to host any of the above activities; or
- transport (e.g. a bus or mini-bus) to help to bring refugees to and from their accommodation and events, and also to help distribute donations.

This list (available at www.brysonintercultural.org) is not exhaustive or definitive and people interested in providing assistance are encouraged to suggest any additional form of support or sponsorship that they may be able to provide.

Colleges, businesses and community groups have provided refugees with English language classes, training and work placements to help them to integrate in the longer term and to contribute their skills and expertise to Northern Ireland's society.

A list of suggested items for donation can be found on the **Embrace NI** website: www.embraceni.org

Listings of major support organisations in the Republic of Ireland are provided in the International Protection Office's *Information Booklet for Applicants for International Protection* (available at www.ipo.gov.ie), including the Irish Red Cross, UNHCR and International Organization for Migration.

A number of local support groups have been established in areas where asylum seekers and refugees are housed through direct provision and the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

The Welcome Table – a project run by St Patrick’s Church, Dalkey – gives asylum seekers living in direct provision centres access to a kitchen where a meal can be cooked. Some of the food prepared is eaten together at the end of the day with the local hosts. The rest of the food can be taken back to the centre for use at another time. All ingredients are supplied and there is no cost to those who wish to participate. The parish also provides transport to and from the church:

www.stpatricksdalkey.com/welcome-table

St Mary’s Church, Killarney, supports the **Killarney Asylum Seekers Initiative** which was set up by the community to offer a safe environment and advocacy for those coming to Killarney. The group runs a community garden which produces food for the nearby school: www.facebook.com/kasikillarney

Members of the Church of Ireland, alongside others, volunteer with the **Déise Refugee Response** group which works with refugees accommodated in the Clonea Strand Hotel, County Waterford. This includes welcoming new refugees, operating a ‘shop’ facility to distribute donated clothing, sports training on the nearby GAA pitch, and learning English and Arabic through conversations. More details are available at www.facebook.com/deiserefugeeresponse

Fáilte Isteach is a community project involving predominantly older volunteers who welcome migrants through conversational English classes. It has 107 groups across the Republic with over 1,000 volunteer tutors helping 3,200 migrants:

www.thirdaireland.ie/failte-isteach

The **City of Sanctuary** movement (www.cityofsanctuary.org), which seeks to build a culture of hospitality for refugees, is active in several towns and cities across the island, including Belfast, Dublin, Cork and Derry/Londonderry. Dublin City University is Ireland’s first **University of Sanctuary** – an initiative which includes scholarships for asylum seekers and refugees, volunteering at Mosney direct provision centre, an annual Refugee Week, and a commitment to research into forced migration and related issues.

A listing of support organisations in Northern Ireland is available in *Refugees in Northern Ireland – Some Basic Facts* which is published by **Embrace NI** (a group of Christians from different denominations working together to promote a positive response to people who are seeking asylum, refugees, migrant workers and people from minority ethnic backgrounds). This is available along with a range of other resources on migration from a Christian perspective at www.embraceni.org

Embrace NI can also be contacted at 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6AZ or by telephone on 028 9066 3145. It also administers an emergency fund which supports refugees in crisis, following referrals from other recognised support organisations. To date, a total of £10,533 from this fund has assisted all 632 Syrian resettlement refugees in Northern Ireland e.g. by providing electricity and gas in their new homes. From January 2016 to June 2017, a further £7,847 was given towards meeting the needs of destitute asylum seekers and migrants, other asylum seekers and new refugees.

Ecumenical networks

The **Irish Council of Churches** (www.irishchurches.org) adopted 10 *Affirmations on Migration, Diversity and Interculturalism* at its 2016 AGM:

1. To recognise and appreciate cultural and ethnic diversity as gifts of God, and to ensure that these gifts are reflected in the life of the Church.
2. To foster faith communities where the rights of each person are respected and where scope is provided for each person's potential to be realised.
3. To work towards inclusive communities, paying particular attention to addressing racism and xenophobia in attitudes, actions, practices and policies.
4. To explore and adopt ways of worship, systems of administration and other structures so that they fully respond to and reflect the Church membership.
5. To defend the rights of migrants in accordance with international and national laws and standards on migration.
6. To advocate for the rights of all migrants, and in particular their right to family life.
7. To support and assist migrants in appropriate, practical ways in their efforts to integrate in Church and society.
8. To establish networks with migrant-led Churches and chaplaincies by fostering co-operation and collaboration with them in providing pastoral care and support to migrants.
9. To seek the development of appropriate services for migrants and to draw attention to the need for public services generally to be responsive to the circumstances of migrants.
10. To work together as Churches and to network with people of other faiths and none to promote a greater understanding between denominations and other faiths and none, ensuring the growth of a society based on respect, dignity and equal rights for all its members.

The affirmations were first adopted in 2009 and were reaffirmed in light of the refugee crisis.

Dr Damian Jackson, the Irish Council of Churches' Programme Officer, can provide more information on the how the Churches are responding to migration:

damian@irishchurches.org

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland runs the Churches' Refugee Network (www.ctbi.org.uk/churches-refugee-network) and also publishes news on responses by Churches to the refugee crisis at www.focusonrefugees.org

The **Conference of European Churches** takes a particular interest in migration and asylum issues through the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (www.ccme.be), which seeks to promote meaningful forms of refugee protection.

The **World Council of Churches** has called on Churches to join a pilgrimage of justice and peace, which includes concern for refugees and a call to affirm, sustain, and protect life. Participants are encouraged to share ideas and learn from fellow pilgrims: www.oikoumene.org/pilgrimage

Christian Aid (www.christianaid.ie) originated in the ecumenical response by British and Irish church leaders to the European refugee crisis after the Second World War. The charity is supporting families who have travelled to Greece and Serbia, displaced Syrians and Iraqis in the Middle East, and internally displaced persons in countries such as South Sudan, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Christian Aid has recently linked its work overseas with a campaign called 'Change the story' to encourage the public to change their perceptions about refugees locally. This features the stories of some asylum seekers in Northern Ireland along with a Bible study and suggestions for action: www.christianaid.org.uk/changesthestory



A sleep-out to highlight the plight of refugees took place in Belfast city centre as part of Christian Aid Week in May.

Associated missionary societies

Several of the Church of Ireland's associated missionary societies work with asylum seekers and refugees in a variety of contexts. A selection of these activities and resources produced by the societies on migration is outlined below.

The **Bible Society in Northern Ireland** (www.bsni.co.uk) can channel support directly to other Bible societies working with refugees in their context. For example, the Bible Society in Lebanon provides aid packages for refugee families, which include food, hygiene and cleaning products, and which are given with the offer of Scripture – a children's Bible, gospel portion, New Testament and colouring book.

CMS Ireland (www.cmsireland.org) works with global partners in parts of the world from where refugees begin their journeys i.e. by working with local churches as they identify priorities and work out practical ways to strengthen communities, build hope, offer opportunities and work to bring peace and reconciliation; this ministry aims to create an environment that makes it possible for people to remain in their homelands. CMS works with churches throughout Ireland to raise awareness of the wider global issues which lead to migration and to link them to global partner churches. The agency encourages local churches to get involved in their own communities and with asylum seekers and refugees, helping them to find a place to call home.

The Diocese of Connor has donated £11,000 through CMS Ireland towards alleviating suffering caused by the civil war in South Sudan. This followed an appeal by Bishop Hilary Adeba (Diocese of Yei) in March this year. More than 450,000 people have fled from Yei to camps in northern Uganda. Donations can be made online at <http://tinyurl.com/y7h9hnsa>



Crosslinks missionary Andrew Moody with South Sudanese refugees in Uganda.

Crosslinks mission partners Andrew and Eunice Moody have worked with refugees in South Sudan, teaching local pastors and helping to meet their medical needs. They are currently working with South Sudanese refugees in Uganda and plan to continue their ministry in South Sudan if the opportunity arises: www.crosslinks.org

The **Intercontinental Church Society** has links with Anglican congregations in Europe which minister to refugees and other migrants: www.ics-uk.org

Irish Church Missions is involved in outreach to Iranian asylum seekers in Dublin: www.irishchurchmissions.ie

The **Mission to Seafarers** has highlighted the impact of refugee migration in the Mediterranean on the crews of vessels rescuing refugees and the high level of courage shown by seafarers in those situations: www.missiontoseafarers.org



Life in a refugee camp in Lebanon.

Tearfund works with refugees across the Middle East and North Africa supporting families who urgently need access to safe water, shelter, medical supplies and vital essentials, and providing workshops to help people cope with trauma and temporary schooling for refugee children. Stories can be found at www.tearfund.org and www.tearfund.ie along with information on prayer and giving. Tearfund Northern Ireland has produced a film based on the work of its partner, Heart for Lebanon, and a visit to a refugee camp by **Church Army** officer Jasper Rutherford (www.vimeo.com/138526157). Tearfund Ireland offers workshops on understanding the refugee crisis to interested groups in the Republic of Ireland.

USPG works with the Anglican Diocese in Europe and ecumenically to support refugees and asylum seekers, with a particular focus on Greece. This includes

medical care, legal advice, shelters for unaccompanied minors, education, and the provision of essential supplies. USPG's *Migration and Movement* Bible study course is available at www.uspg.org.uk/resources/study

On the Road: a journey through the Bible for migrants that has been used to speak to migrants in many countries. Copies are currently available – in Arabic, Farsi and French – at £1 each by contacting the Bible Society in Northern Ireland on 028 9032 6577 or calling into its office in Belfast. A short article with some helpful verses is available at www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/bible-verses-about-caring-for-refugees

Bishops' Appeal (www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org) provides funding for humanitarian projects undertaken by the associated missionary societies and others. Recent contributions have included:

- £49,500 to CMS Ireland for their emergency relief in South Sudan and work in five camps for South Sudanese refugees in Uganda (especially with children);
- €35,000 and £42,000 to Tearfund Ireland and Christian Aid respectively for emergency food, water and medical supplies in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia;
- €22,000 to Tearfund Ireland for life-saving medicine and medical supplies to respond to the cholera epidemic in Yemen.

Conclusion

We cannot know with certainty how long the refugee crisis will continue or indeed how it will develop in the months and years ahead. The level of human need, though, is very clear and we would encourage members of the Church to continue to give their prayerful and practical support to people who are seeking asylum or adjusting to life as refugees in Ireland and abroad.

This resource is offered as a guide to inform the Church about the current situation and to outline some of the opportunities to pray, serve and otherwise assist with ministries which support those who face these challenges. In doing so, we help to fulfil Christ's call to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Look, we beseech thee, O Lord, upon the people of this land who are called after thy holy Name; and grant that they may ever walk worthy of their Christian profession. Grant unto us all that, laying aside our divisions we may be united in heart and mind to bear the burdens which are laid upon us. Help us to respond to the call of our country according to our several powers; put far from us selfish indifference to the needs of others; and give us grace to fulfil our daily duties with sober diligence. Keep us from all uncharitableness in word or deed; and enable us by patient continuance in well-doing to glorify thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.