

Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme

Evaluation Research Report

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Table of Contents

Section One: Introduction	3
Aims and Objectives	4
UNHCR Resettlement Programme	4
The Rohingyas: Context and Background	6
Methodology	18
Management Structure of the Resettlement Programme	24
Section Two: Main Findings	33
Religion	34
Language and Education	42
Employment and Training	52
Housing and Transport	59
Health	66
Welfare	76
Children and Young People	79
Volunteers	98
Social and Cultural Needs	107
Section Three: Conclusion	121
Conclusion	122
Appendices	130
References	131

Section One

Introduction

Aims and Objectives of the Research

This research report, on behalf of the County Carlow Development Board, aims to provide a systematic assessment and evaluation of the Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme.

Data was collected to explore the opinions and inputs of relevant stakeholders in the area in order to provide useful feedback about the effectiveness and value of the project. It aims to qualitatively document the key learning from the programme, to highlight areas of success and achievement and to indicate areas in need of greater attention. In addition, it aims to assess the current level of need of the Rohingya community and to make recommendations for the future development of the Resettlement Programme based on the main findings of the research. It is intended that this document act as the first comprehensive account of all of the initiatives that took place in the first year of the Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme as well as contextualising the project within the most recent and relevant social framework.

The UNHCR Resettlement Programme

The Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme is part of a UNHCR Resettlement Programme process which is co-ordinated in Ireland through the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI) in the Department of Justice and Law Reform (DJLR). The programme is facilitated by the Carlow County Development Board and its member organisations in Carlow with St. Catherine's Community Services chosen as the implementing partner.

Ireland is one of 19 countries worldwide and one of 9 countries in Europe that participate in organised resettlement programmes which are a humanitarian response to the particular needs of programme refugees. In general, resettlement programmes provide displaced

people with the opportunity to build better lives for themselves and their families in a new environment. The UN uses resettlement programmes as an important tool of international protection (UNHCR, 2009).

In November 2008 County Carlow was asked to take into their community 15 families of Rohingya refugees who had been living in camps in Bangladesh under the protection of the UNHCR. The refugees were accepted for resettlement in Ireland following a selection mission by the OMI team to Bangladesh in September 2008.

This community is internationally recognised as being one of the most abused and vulnerable communities worldwide (OMI, 2009).

The families came to Ireland as **programme** refugees. Section 2 of the Refugee Act 1996 outlines the definition of a refugee:

A refugee is someone 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 outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. Where it is established that a well-founded fear of persecution exists, the applicant will be granted refugee status.

The legal framework for the Resettlement Programme is stated in Section 24 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended). This states that a 'programme refugee' is a person to whom leave to enter and remain for temporary protection or resettlement as part of a group of persons, has been given by the government.

The Rohingyas: Context and Background

The following section sets the context for this report by giving an overview of the experience of the Rohingya in Burma, presenting narratives of the Rohingya about Bangladesh and finally providing a profile of the Rohingya community in Ireland. It is not intended to act as a comprehensive account of their situation or indeed present the group as a homogenous collective. Moreover, it is designed to act as a preliminary outline of some of the concerns that have arisen in their lived experience and introduce a context for some of these issues. A constant emerging request from the research was from service providers who believed that further information about the background and experience of the families would help them in their approach to their work. While it was felt this information was most needed in the initial stages of the Resettlement Programme, the vast majority of interviewees still believed it would be of immense benefit at this point in time as well.

The plight of the Rohingya people first came to the attention of the international community in 2009, when stories about the 'boat people' were covered in the media. This story concerned over a thousand Rohingyas who had fled Burma by boat, as has been a regular occurrence for many Rohingyas over the last few years. It was reported that hundreds of the Rohingyas had been towed back out to sea by Thai authorities and left to die, while others were detained in Thailand. This created a new interest in their plight, placing the situation of this ethnic group firmly on the agenda of the international community for the first time (ICHR, 2010: 15).

Rohingya in Burma¹

The Rohingyas are a Muslim minority group residing in North Arakan State in Western Burma. It is estimated that there are approximately 800,000 Rohingyas in Arakan State and many hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees in other countries, most notably over 200,000 in Bangladesh. In 1992, the Nay-Sat Kut-kwey Ye (NaSaKa) was established in Burma. The NaSaKa is a border security force consisting of members of the police, military intelligence, internal security, customs officials and the Immigration Department. It operates in the North Arakan State and according to recent research carried out by the ICHR (2010), it is the primary perpetrator of crimes against the Rohingya.

Between May 1991 and March 1992, approximately 270,000 Rohingyas sought refuge in the Cox's Bazar region of Bangladesh. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees established a series of camps to address the needs of the fleeing Rohingyas. Since this time there has not been as big a movement of Rohingya into Bangladesh. Part of the function of the NaSaKa is to ensure that such an exodus, which would attract the attention of the international community, does not happen again. Instead, the NaSaKa oversees the more gradual movement of refugees from North Arakan into Bangladesh.

In 2010, the Irish Centre for Human Rights (ICHR) in NUI Galway published a lengthy report arguing the case that there is prima facie evidence to prove that crimes against humanity have been committed against the Rohingyas in Burma. They present the legal and policy

¹ The name change of Burma to Myanmar has been the cause of much controversy and discussion in recent years. When the name was changed in 1988, the United Nations accepted it. However, some countries including Ireland, the UK and the USA have refused to accept it and in opposition to the anti-democratic regime in power, continue to refer to the country as Burma. For this reason, and for the fact that the families themselves refer to the country as Burma, for the purposes of this evaluation that is the term that will be used.

context for this argument under four main headings, a summary of which is presented below.

1. Forced labour

The imposition of forced labour on the civilian population in Burma has been documented for many years and the Rohingyas in particular are forced into five types of labour: portering, maintenance and construction work for the military, NaSaKa and police, cultivation and agriculture; construction and repairs of infrastructure; and guard or sentry duty (ICHR, 2010: 41). This labour can often be accompanied by extortion, harassment and physical abuse. The ICHR report maintains that as a result of the extent of the forced labour, the crime of enslavement², is currently being committed against the Rohingya population of North Arakan State (2010).

2. Deportation and Forcible Transfer

Displacement is a well-recognised phenomenon in Burma with over 200,000 Rohingyas fleeing across the border into Bangladesh in 1978 and a further 270,000 fleeing in 1992. A steady stream of refugees into Bangladesh, and other destinations, continues to this day. In addition to this, forced relocations, evictions and land confiscations are widespread in North Arakan. At the core of this forced displacement has been the persistent refusal of the Burmese government to recognise Rohingya identity by excluding them from the list of 'national races'³. The 1982 Citizenship Law meant that Rohingyas can never become full citizens of Burma and have effectively been reduced to a stateless status. One of the most discriminatory consequences of this is that since 1994, newborn Rohingyas have not been

² As provided for in Article 7(1)(c) of the Rome Statute (1998).

³ This list of national races includes 135 other ethnicities

provided with birth certificates or any form of documentation, creating a situation whereby, as far as the Burmese legal system is concerned, they do not exist (ICHR, 2010: 112). This 'stateless' status has a serious impact on their identity as they are unable to contribute to, or feel a part of civic and political society. This effect on their identity and how it has manifested itself in their new life in Carlow will be discussed in the Religion Section of this report. It is worth noting that the ICHR report (2010) argues that these systematic deportations and forcible transfers could be potentially considered as ethnic cleansing.

3. Rape and Sexual Violence

Reports from a variety of non-governmental organisations and United Nations bodies and representatives include a common view that rape and sexual violence is an endemic problem in Burma, especially for ethnic minority women and girls. Authorities regularly fail to effectively investigate alleged cases of rape, which leads to the inability of those affected to get justice for these violations. Victims, their families and witnesses of rape have reported being threatened, intimidated and physically abused because of their allegations.

The rapes and sexual violence carried out by the military, NaSaKa forces and sometimes the police, appear to go beyond isolated, random and individual cases. Female-headed households are particularly vulnerable and at risk of becoming victims during forced labour and when the men are absent. During forced labour, there is daily contact with soldiers and NaSaKa forces which puts the women in vulnerable positions especially while working in barracks or bases or while in detention. The trauma caused by these violations and more specifically the stigma attached to these crimes, especially in traditional societies, makes it difficult for NGO's to ascertain the extent of the abuse. The long-term effects of this trauma are introduced in the Health Section of this report.

Persecution

Arbitrary detention accompanied by extortion, severe travel restrictions and limitations on marriage are among some of the frequent occurrences of persecution of the Rohingya.

Permission to marry is granted every year to a limited number of Rohingyas and this particular human rights violation has consequences on family life when unregistered children have to grow up with no legal status. Extortion and detention are also often associated with the marriage restrictions.

Further persecution along religious lines is highly relevant in the context of this report and characterises some of their current levels of need in this area. The Rohingya are exposed to widespread restrictions on their freedom of religion, including obstacles with respect to the maintenance of mosques and schools, which has a further detrimental impact on their right to education (ICHR, 2010: 15). While the practise of Islam is not expressly forbidden in North Arakan State, the Burmese authorities have prohibited the construction and maintenance of mosques and in some instances has forced communities to destroy them. Indeed, many of the Rohingyas in Carlow mentioned the widespread restrictions on their freedom of religion as one of the main reasons for their flight from Burma. Many mosques and Islamic schools were destroyed at this time and it was forbidden to rebuild them or even to fix them. It is in this context that the presence of a mosque in Carlow becomes so crucial and this will be further discussed in the Religion Section of this report. It also warrants mentioning, that as a conservative Muslim group, major aspects of Rohingya life, such as birth, death, marriage and education are dominated by religious orthodoxy (ICHR, 2010: 133).

Rohingya in Bangladesh

There is no report about the Rohingya in Bangladesh that contains the same level of detail as the Irish Centre for Human Rights account of the situation in Burma. Therefore, this section will outline in general terms the status of the Rohingya in Bangladesh, as well as including some of the narratives of the families in relation to their life in the camps. Since the mass exodus of Rohingya from Burma in 1992, hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh in past decades and many are still living there in a variety of formal refugee and makeshift camps.

The Rohingyas in Bangladesh are primarily situated in four main areas. There are two official camps in the Cox's Bazar District, a makeshift camp in the surrounding area where there are about 20,000 Rohingyas living without basic amenities and finally the Leda settlement, where Rohingyas from a squatter camp were recently relocated with the support of the European Commission. The situation in Bangladesh is by no means stable. As of the beginning of 2010, it was reported that Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies have been pushing back unregistered Rohingyas into Burma and arresting others for immigration offences (ICHR, 2010).

In the focus groups, the families touched on some of their experiences of living in the camps, where they had spent an average of 16 years:

It was like a prison cell. My life was like a bird that has to stay in the cage and you can't go out from that (Rohingya male, 2010).

If someone was cooking, the smoke was always coming in your nose from the camp. Very unhygienic environment (Rohingya male, 2010).

There was no freedom in the camp. No movement, no school, no madrasah (*Islamic school*). (Rohingya male, 2010).

Life is horrible in the camps (Rohingya female, 2010)

Even though it was not information that was primarily sought, the families in the focus groups regularly brought the conversation back to their experiences in the camp and in particular to the family and friends they had left behind. They recounted stories relating to incidents of sexual assault, injustice, corruption and crime and expressed genuine concern⁴ for the people who remained in Bangladesh.

All the families there are in danger, there is always crisis and life is troubling in the camp (Rohingya female, 2010).

Some incident is happening, always happening the small things. Relatives to come and join us here. They'll be happy and their life in happiness. (Rohingya female, 2010).

The Rohingya community in Carlow came from two refugee camps, Nayapara and Kutu Palong. An article on Reliefweb (2007) described the camps as having 'sub-human conditions' without sanitation or healthcare. The camps were in a small piece of land close to a main road with limited access to food, social services and international assistance (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The average educational attainment of the adults is 2.24 years. Of the adults in the group, only 21% had some experience of a formal education. 8 adults had no education at all. 3 adults stated that they had an informal education which consisted of home learning or private tuition (OMI, 2009).

At the moment, it is thought that somewhere in the region of 200,000 unregistered Rohingya refugees are currently located in the Cox's Bazar region of Bangladesh, with additional numbers in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the United Arab

⁴ The concern for the safety of those left behind in Bangladesh was a significant finding from the SPIRASI workshops as well.

Emirates and Japan (ICHR, 2010). Resettlement programmes for Rohingya have taken place in Ireland, the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and Norway.

Rohingya in Ireland

National Refugee Orientation Centre, Ballyhaunis

When they initially heard they were to be resettled in Ireland, the Rohingya families were very happy, but nervous as they did not know anything about Ireland prior to their arrival here.

We were very happy. We knew that we were going to have a good life after a hard life so we were really, really happy. But we don't know how far Ireland is or where is Ireland (Rohingya male, 2010).

We thought Ireland was beautiful. There was a happiness, but also feeling cold and a bit afraid and anxious (Rohingya female, 2010).

Didn't know anything about Ireland when we first came in but we were excited (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Upon arrival in Ireland, resettlement refugees are temporarily housed in the National Orientation and Training Centre in Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo. New arrivals receive 8-10 weeks of an orientation programme which informs them about Irish life, rights and responsibilities, language and culture. However, it is important to note that some of the Rohingya families were resident in Ballyhaunis for a much shorter time period than this, as a result of different arrival dates. Children under the age of 18 participate in an induction programme to prepare them for entry into mainstream education. While in the orientation centre the refugees also undergo medical screening, attend the GP and receive general training to prepare them for independent living, such as learning how to use the bank or post office. They are also linked in to various services and receive presentations from a range of organisations such as an

Garda Síochána and representatives of the Resettlement Steering Committee. While there was certainly concern from service providers about the amount of information the families were expected to take in during this time, it is important to note that many stakeholders commented on how useful their trip to the centre had been for their forward planning and development. It also afforded them the opportunity to meet the families in advance of their move to Carlow and to start to form a relationship with them.

The families were very impressed with Ballyhaunis and spoke about how much they enjoyed it and how much they learnt there:

Ballyhaunis was a good thing, there is a mosque we go on time and pray there. All Rohingyas under the one roof, we altogether and every second we can meet each other. I very much liked Ballyhaunis (Rohingya female, 2010).

Very good experience at the beginning. All in the one group, able to play sports, see each other all the time. So we like Ballyhaunis more (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Back in the camp, we don't know a lot of things. We came here and we learnt a language. We learn about the country and we learn about the Irish people. So lot of experience (Rohingya male, 2010).

We learnt a lot of English, which we never speak before. Now we have English. We learnt about the rules of the road, how and where to walk. We learnt the name of the foods (Rohingya young person, 2010).

What I learnt were the rules. About managing children. Back in the camp, back there, we never hold them by the arm when we are going places. In here, in Ballyhaunis when we are going shopping or places we hold the children's arm and tell not be to messing. But we came and we learnt that here. I also learnt that back home, children go to school on their own. In here, we learn that one of the adults have to accompany them to school (Rohingya male, 2010).

While in Ballyhaunis, in two months, what we learn was unbelievable. Incredible learning. We still cannot believe that much we learn in Ballyhaunis. Also, about children, going to the school, about the school, coping with other students in the school (Rohingya male, 2010).

As a result of the extent of the information sharing, and bearing in mind the average educational attainment of 2.24 years among the adults, many involved in the Resettlement Programme suggested that for a similar group in the future, the length of time in Ballyhaunis could be extended, in order to allow them time to get used to their new surroundings and fully comprehend all the new information.

I think the time in Ballyhaunis should be extended by a few weeks (Service provider, 2010)

Families would have wanted more time there if they could – they really liked Ballyhaunis (Service provider, 2010).

Carlow

When the families travelled down to Carlow on 29th June, 2009 they went straight to St. Catherine's Community Services where a meal had been organised and where they were introduced to staff and community representatives. This was described by many service providers as a very successful way to introduce the families to their new community. They were then taken to their houses and given an overnight food package. It is important to remember that everything in advance of their arrival in Carlow was planned on 'perceived need' (Progress Report, 2010). However, shortly after their arrival in Carlow, it became apparent that their actual needs were a lot more basic than had been previously anticipated. This will be discussed in greater depth in later sections of the report.

The Rohingya community consisted of 64 people on arrival in Carlow:

Profile on Arrival

Adults (over 18)	23
Teenagers 13-18	14
Children 2-12	23
Babies (Under 2)	4
<i>Total</i>	64 people

Profile Now

Adults (Over 18)	24
Teenagers (13-18)	16
Children (2-12)	22
Babies (Under 2)	5
<i>Total</i>	67 people (3 new babies born)

Throughout the data collection for this report, various representatives of the Rohingya community expressed high levels of appreciation and gratitude to everyone who was involved in helping their relocation. They also spoke in positive terms about how they viewed their new home:

Here in Carlow, we got the freedom, we are very open-minded and outgoing, want to learn everything. Everything is free and fresh, we have freedom. (Rohingya male, 2010).

It is very good, we like Carlow (St. Catherine's, 2010a).

Recommendations

- For future resettlement programmes, it is recommended that all individuals are resident in Ballyhaunis for the same amount of time.
- The sections about Burma and Bangladesh should be edited and adapted as necessary and used as a guide for service providers, stakeholders and members of

the local community seeking further information about the background and experience of the Rohingya community.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach and the research tools chosen for the evaluation on the Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme, designed to take place over a thirteen day period. Great care was taken to ensure that the methods chosen were context-appropriate and capable of representing the broad spectrum of experiences evident among the respondents. As no up to date or wide-ranging information was yet available about the experience of the Rohingyas in Carlow, it was felt that a variety of methods would need to be called upon in order to cast the net as wide as possible and generate a successful exploration of the subject matter.

Research Design

A qualitative methodological approach for the operational plan was chosen because its flexibility, greater emphasis on process and description of context lends itself well to researching a complex topic like this. At its most basic, qualitative research is concerned with words rather than numbers (Sarantakos, 2005) and in a fundamental way, this is highly relevant to this project where no in depth analysis of narratives or opinions had yet been collected. Qualitative research is also concerned with:

an epistemological position described as interpretivist, meaning that in contrast to the adoption of a natural scientific model in quantitative research, the stress is on understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman, 2001: 265).

Given the highly specific nature of the respondents in this study, i.e. members of the Rohingya community and stakeholders involved in the Resettlement Programme, the principle sampling method was that of a purposive nature, where candidates were

strategically targeted on the basis of their relevance to the research. Due to the distinct geographical area of the study, it was decided to combine this approach with snowball sampling as well, where initial respondents were asked to recommend potential participants in the area, from which the sample grew. Snowball sampling enjoys a good reputation for results in the field of ethnic and racial studies where the existence of defined communities is prevalent (Gunaratnam, 2003).

Data Collection

After an initial preparatory phase which included a comprehensive period of desk research leading to an integrated literature review, interviews were selected as the principle tool of data collection.

Interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings (Sullivan, 2001: 121).

In total, sixteen face-to-face interviews and eight supplementary phone interviews took place during the data compilation. A semi-structured approach was taken to the questioning in order to allow fluid interaction between the researcher and the respondent. In addition to this series of interviews, a group interview also took place with seven members of the St. Catherine's Childcare Centre staff.

Interviews were then supplemented with a series of four focus groups. Focus groups allow people who are known to have a certain experience in an area to be interviewed in a relatively unstructured way about that experience. In this context, the technique allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of not just *what* the respondents may feel about the Resettlement Programme but *why* they are of that opinion as well. Participants in

the four focus groups were broken down into the following categories; Men, Women, Teenagers and Volunteers. The respondents were presented with an environment in which they felt safe and comfortable enough to bring up elements of their experience and opinions amongst others who may have a similar understanding of the subject area. These meetings were extremely well-attended and lasted from between 50 – 90 minutes. They followed a moderately structured approach in order to put the emphasis on listening to the narratives and experiences of the participants and because of this, many diverse issues were raised. It is worth noting that the Rohingya community were very grateful for the opportunity to have their voices heard.

Finally, ethnographic research in the form of participant observation at certain events and meetings was also used to complement the formal research. It was decided that interview styles utilised during the research should vary slightly depending on circumstances and context and as a result, this method afforded the researcher the opportunity to engage with participants in a more informal way. This method of data triangulation was used to enhance the data, to ensure credibility and to test validity. It is interesting to note that the amount of information generated during the data collection phase was immense and is indicative of the sheer number of agencies, individuals and initiatives that were involved in the Resettlement Programme since December 2008.

Ethical issues

Given the highly personal nature of some of the research, it was imperative that the data collection was conducted in an ethical fashion and that principled sensitivity to the rights of others was displayed. The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants was guaranteed and the principle of informed consent was adhered to as well. Prospective participants were

given as much information as possible about the project before they took part and in the case of the Rohingya community, the message was very clearly communicated that the evaluation was being carried out by an independent external researcher and that it would not necessarily have a direct impact on their circumstances in the future.

One issue that should be addressed in this section however, relates to how some first-hand information has been presented in the report. The focus groups with members of the Rohingya community were conducted with the aid of an interpreter, as it was felt that this would greater facilitate the communication of their views. Having reflected on Marshall and Rossman's (2006) comments on transcribing and translation, it was decided to represent the quotes in the first person in English in the final report, in order to facilitate the reader.

Challenges

A number of challenges presented themselves during the relatively short timeframe for this evaluation research. Firstly, the time period for the research, set during July and August meant the researcher had difficulty accessing many service providers who worked on the resettlement programme, as they were away on holidays. This was particularly relevant for the sections on Health and Formal Education, where it was not felt saturation point was reached. The extension to the submission deadline from Pobal was greatly appreciated in this regard. In relation to theoretical saturation, it was felt that more time with the families themselves could have strengthened some of the sections in the report. However, unfortunately due to the short timeframe for the research, this was not possible to organise. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that future research is needed into the narratives of the Rohingyas, as the Resettlement Programme is developed for future phases.

Whereas large parts of conversations about minorities are generalisations about ethnic minority groups or ethnic relations, personal stories provide concrete information, which can be used as supporting evidence for a more general conclusion. The weight of the evidence is epistemological (Van Dijk, 1993: 126)

In a similar way, it was not possible to include members of the local population in Carlow in the data collection and so it is also recommended that future research into the programme should include elements of measurement of public opinion, as advised in the Irish Government's Statement on Integration (2008). An important aspect of integration is to establish the state of public opinion on the various issues that arise in the field and Ireland is one of the few European countries who has not conducted a national survey of attitudes to immigration. Up until recently, such national surveys were not thought to be necessary in Ireland given the relatively small-scale migration into the country. 'However, the position now, is that a more focussed survey, geared to Irish conditions, is necessary in order to gauge the state of opinion from time and to better inform policy making' (OMI, 2008: 57). This action could be of benefit to the future strategic development of integration initiatives in Carlow.

Data Analysis

An inductive grounded theory approach to data analysis was employed, namely 'theory that was derived from the data, was systematically gathered and analysed throughout the research process' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 12). Full transcripts of the recorded interviews and focus groups were produced and studied in depth in order to develop a concept indicator model. This model was then used for the systematic post-coding of data during analysis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While it may appear unusual to include recommendations in the methodology section, considering the methodology played a significant part in the approach for the report, it was felt that it was important to provide suggestions for any future research that may take place.

- Further qualitative research is needed into the narratives of the Rohingyas in Carlow, which should take the form of semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis. This is especially recommended in relation to the teenage members of the community, as it was felt that saturation point in relation to their issues was not reached in this particular research piece.
- The timeframe for this evaluation had such a significant impact on the logistics of the data collection, it is strongly recommended that if future research is commissioned in relation to this programme, it should not take place between the months of May and August as a result of the difficulties in accessing service providers during the summer months.

Management Structure of the Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme

The Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme is part of a UNHCR Resettlement Programme process which is co-ordinated in Ireland through the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI) in the Department of Justice and Law Reform (DJLR). The programme is facilitated by the Carlow County Development Board and its member organisations in Carlow with St. Catherine's Community Services chosen as the implementing partner. The overall aim of the Resettlement Programme is to meet the needs of the resettled refugees through the provision of an integrated and culturally appropriate service (OMI, 2009).

Ireland has a mainstream model of service provision when it comes to refugees. Although integration on a Resettlement Programme is co-ordinated by the local authority in the area, they are assisted by the Resettlement Steering Group, which plans for local settlement and integration. The Steering Group is made up of representatives from all service providers and NGO's in the locality. This section gives an overview of the main stakeholders involved in the Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme and the Interagency approach that was employed to tackle the vast workload involved in this project.

According to the Programme of Actions (POA), the main workload of the project was to support the integration of the 14 Rohingya families into their new life in Carlow. The specific objectives were concerned with:

1. Building group capacity of men and women within the Rohingya community
2. Meeting the short term support needs of the families in the first phase of the resettlement and initial volunteer and staff training
3. Provide opportunities for young people to integrate with the local community

4. Provide awareness and cultural integration with the local community

From the very beginning of the data collection phase, the success of the Interagency approach to the Resettlement Programme emerged as one of the main contributing factors to the overall success of the programme. The commitment, dedication, synergy, exchange of ideas and general positive outlook that was evident in the Interagency approach was referenced by many of the research respondents.

The Interagency approach of the Rohingya Resettlement Steering Committee

Feedback from work on the socio-economic profile of Carlow (Beston, 2009) suggests that services need to commit to working in partnership to ensure the needs of specific target groups are being met. It was suggested that inter-agency work in Carlow needs to be promoted as part of the core work of all organisations and not seen as a supplementary or additional aspect. It was emphasised that all key organisations need to work together to address social exclusion and to secure the funding needed to develop innovative responses to needs. It is interesting to note that it was exactly this type of cross agency co-operation which was evident in the work of the Steering Committee and sub-groups. For a full list of the agencies involved in the Steering Committee, please see Appendix 1.2.

I have been involved in many interagency groupings, all of which have had their strengths, but I have to say the energy and positivity that existed in this one really stands out and has been sustained throughout the whole time of the work (Service Provider, 2010).

The credibility of St. Catherine's and the genuine interest that the agencies brought to getting into this work really stood out. Everyone was very open to what should be included and everyone was always listened to. The dynamic of this programme was very unique (Service Provider, 2010).

A comprehensive approach was very evident in the work of the Steering Committee. The minutes and Co-ordinator report from every meeting act as a useful guide to monitor and chart the progress of the programme and the external assistance that was availed of contributed to the professionalism of the work. Support from outside organisations such as The Kilkenny Sudanese Resettlement Programme and Dublin-based SPIRASI were availed of on a regular basis and links were made with agencies in the UK, such as the Horton Housing Association who work with Rohingya refugees in Bradford.

The Steering Committee met on a regular basis starting in December 2008.

The Steering Committee meetings were very well-organised and very well attended. It was great to get the support of everyone and it was interesting to hear the feedback on how the different projects were going (Service Provider, 2010).

There was a very strong interagency approach. A lot of people knew each other already from Traveller Interagency group and there was good learning from that as a result (Service Provider, 2010).

The voluntary support from people on the Steering Committee has been amazing. They were really pulling together and supporting that. I mean, the work shouldn't have to have been voluntary but so much of it was and everyone has gone more than the extra mile (Service Provider, 2010).

Steering Committee members worked extremely hard on all aspects of the Resettlement Programme, usually having to deal with short timeframes and strict deadlines:

Even just the short period there was to organise school places for the children, there was a huge amount of work to be done and people just put their heads down and did it. People on the ground worked very hard and there were so many big achievements like that considering it was really only a relatively small amount of people working on the ground making things happen (Service Provider, 2010).

Everything was in place and we experienced no real hiccups. Everything that could have been planned for was, and everything that was planned for happened. Everything that could be expected to work has worked (Service Provider, 2010).

Subgroups

There have been numerous sub-groups established over the course of the Resettlement Programme, for example in areas such as Education, Young People and Housing. One of the more immediate ones that was set up was in the area of PR and it was generally felt that they did an excellent job of anticipating media interest and communicating the main aims and objectives of the programme clearly. The PR group ensured that information that was being reported about the resettlement was factual and accurate and that local population in the town were clear about who the families were and where the money was coming from for the project. The communication strategy also included briefing the elected councillors and school principals as soon as possible and keeping them informed about developments. They provided support to the committee when it came to getting positive media coverage for events, most notably the birth of the first Rohingya-Irish baby and the Welcome Reception event in Seven Oaks in December 2009.

The way things were managed was a big success, the fact that there was no real negative publicity. There was one bad article but it was really managed well and they nipped it in the bud (Service Provider, 2010).

You've only one chance to make a first impression and it was a big success the way that it was managed (Service Provider, 2010).

There was also a sub-group set up to manage the Volunteers and Befriending programme. More details about this aspect of the programme can be found in the volunteers section of the report. The Befriending and Orientation sub-group worked on initiatives like devising a map of the town to act as a tool for the families getting around in the first few weeks. The Finance sub-group oversaw issues relating to the expenditure on the project. It is interesting to note that there is also a newly formed Health and Well-being sub-group which has been

set up as an initiative of the VEC. The significant aspect of this group is that members of the Rohingya community are represented on it and can now begin to have a practical say in how decisions about future phases of the programme are developed.

Training

Training was organised for Steering Committee and frontline staff. Cascade training was organised in order to assist staff from various groups to be able to communicate effectively with people for whom English is not a first language and these were supplemented by SPIRASI training sessions later on in the year.

Very good, very informative (Service Provider, 2010).

Second lot of training, where we did group sharing of experiences of working with the community was very informative. At times, the training didn't match up with the reality of actually working on the ground but it was still good. It would appear that the community were a lot more needy and needed way more support than first thought (Service Provider, 2010).

I would definitely recommend that there would be a need for further interagency training, especially in the area of anti-racism from a community development point of view (Service Provider, 2010).

St. Catherine's Community Services as Implementing Partner

As has been outlined above, the level of work and commitment displayed by members of the Steering Committee within a very successful Interagency Approach cannot be understated. However, it is also important to note that a lot of the everyday organising and work on the ground was done by the implementing partner, St. Catherine's Community Services. St. Catherine's mission 'to provide quality services responsive to local needs, based on equality, diversity, justice and inclusion with a view to empowering and enriching

individuals, families and communities in Carlow and its environs⁵ and their positive reputation for working in this area, made them ideally suited to taking on such a role. The experience of St. Catherine's is unique in the context of resettlement programmes because it is not usually the case that a community organisation would act as the implementing partner. However, due to the dedication of the staff, the facilities and the established relationship with many local agencies, having St. Catherine's as the implementing partner was deemed by all research respondents to have been an overwhelming success. It was felt that future refugee resettlement programmes will be able to learn a lot from the experience of St. Catherine's.

There was a very strong implementing agency in St Catherine's. The pilot of using community services as the main agency has worked very well. They had the contacts, had the facilities and rooms and served as a natural base for the families. Other organisations can learn a lot from what they did (Service Provider, 2010).

You have to give credit to St Catherine's and credit to the workers and all that they have done. People have not been shy about making a contribution and saying very clearly what they can do. It has been a very pro-active approach that they have taken (Service Provider, 2010).

Most significantly, the families themselves speak in very positive terms about St. Catherine's and the support that they have received from them:

Very helpful. Can't pay back the support we have got.

Very happy with support.

Very happy with the support

Very happy with support

(St. Catherine's, 2010a).

⁵ Mission Statement of St. Catherine's Community Services, taken from www.catherines.ie

Resettlement Worker and Intercultural Worker

High praise for and sincere gratitude to the Resettlement Worker and the Intercultural Worker who were based in St. Catherine's were common themes of the research. 'We were really fortunate in recruitment for the people in the positions of Resettlement and Intercultural worker' (Service Provider, 2010).

The Resettlement Worker was responsible for identifying key services that needed to be provided, identifying agencies to help with the delivery of these services and monitor the progress in this area. More than that, they co-ordinated every single aspect of the resettlement support, from supporting access to language training, providing access to childcare, linking and integrating families into local services and programmes and supporting access to counselling (Progress Report, 2009).

The Resettlement worker, if they were not there, it would not have worked at all. Services would have been bombarded with lots of small and trivial things. Having the resettlement worker was crucial (Service Provider, 2010).

St. Catherine's overseeing everything went very well, the resettlement officer being based there was a good idea and that role should definitely continue for the foreseeable future (Service Provider, 2010).

The Resettlement Worker was brilliant, we could not have asked for more support., We really need them to continue as a point of contact for the whole programme (Service Provider, 2010).

The focus of the work of the Intercultural Worker was slightly different as they worked solely on issues directly relating to the families. They provided translation and cultural support to the families as well as providing translation services to service providers in sectors such as health, education, welfare etc. The position was also responsible for developing intercultural competencies among service providers and was credited with

keeping communication difficulties to a minimum during the first year of the Resettlement Programme.

We simply would have been lost without the help of the Intercultural Worker (Service provider, 2010).

If there is one message that I would want to get across in this evaluation, it is that the presence of the Intercultural worker was absolutely crucial over the course of the year (Service provider, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the beginning of the data collection, the vast majority of respondents in the research highly commended the professional and comprehensive work that was done as a result of the Interagency Approach. While it may be unusual to have a Community Services Organisation as the Implementing Partner on a Resettlement Programme, the general consensus was that this was an excellent choice and that other programmes around the country can learn a lot from the experience of St. Catherine's on this project. The Resettlement Worker and the Intercultural Worker were both identified by all respondents as having played a crucial role in providing essential support to all stakeholders in the process. Finally, it is important to note that the work of all of the organisations and individuals in this multi-agency approach took place in the context of difficult circumstances in terms of reduction in staff and reduced resources available. The huge commitment of all of the stakeholders involved becomes all the more significant in the context of these budgetary cutback and constraints.

- More work is needed to provide comprehensive training courses to future workers on the Resettlement Programme that includes detailed information relating to the specific context of the Rohingya situation.
- More tailored training to be delivered to relevant stakeholders in particular with the focus on religious rights
- Further briefing sessions for service providers are needed now that more is known about the families
- Production of an information booklet with basic information for stakeholders is needed
- More interagency training with a focus on anti-racism should take place
- The positions of Resettlement Worker and Intercultural Worker should continue to be supported and resourced

Section Two

Main Findings

Religion

Introduction

The inclusion of this section on religion as one of the earlier sections in this report is designed to clearly emphasise that issues in this area continue to be a priority for members of the Rohingya community in Carlow. In all other areas of their social, economic and cultural life, their basic needs are being met, but here, according to the vast majority of respondents in the research, there is still a lot of work to be done. From the very beginning of the data collection with the families themselves, requests relating to a mosque, an appropriate burial place and access to Islamic classes were brought up immediately and constantly referred back to in the context of other topics.

We have all the facilities and we thank the Irish government. One thing we are thinking of is one prayer place and one burial place. Mosque and burial place are very important. Also, religious school for religious study, one hour after school (Rohingya female, 2010).

It is important to mention however, that these issues came up frequently for many service providers as well, who believed that the effects of their religious rights not being met should not be underestimated. One service provider relayed a story where upon meeting the families for the first time in Ballyhaunis, the first question he was asked about Carlow was whether there was a Muslim burial place. This indicates very clearly that this has been a priority for the Rohingya community since before they even arrived in the area. In more recent times, the families showed great initiative and empowerment by requesting a meeting with the staff of St. Catherine's in order to discuss these issues in greater depth.

Context of Rohingya experience

Before the specific religious needs of the Rohingyas in Carlow are presented, it is important to have a look at the bigger picture and get an idea of the underlying reasons why their identity is so intrinsically linked to their practise of Islam. As was outlined in the Context and Background section, a major manifestation of the discrimination against the Rohingyas are the extensive limitations placed on their freedom of religion. In Burma, while the practise of Islam is not officially forbidden, the construction of new mosques and the maintenance of existing mosques has been prohibited and in some instances, they have been completely destroyed. The Irish Centre for Human Rights outline in their research how many Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers referred to the widespread denial of their freedom of religion as the primary reason for their flight to Bangladesh (ICHR, 2010). This came through very clearly in the focus groups as well:

We had to leave Burma because can't practise our religion. We then had to leave Bangladesh. Will be happy in Carlow when we finally have our own mosque and our own burial place. That will be when we say we have everything (Rohingya female, 2010).

We had to leave our country because of religion. We have no rights to practise our religion down there. To make Allah happy, we have to practise religion and have to believe in religion. Food is not everything. Religion is your main life (Rohingya female, 2010).

When a group have been discriminated against on the basis of their identity, as is at the heart of the Rohingya experience, it is understandable that this identity takes on a greater focus in their lives. In Carlow, there have been many understandable changes to their linguistic, social and cultural identities. These compromises in so many other areas of their lives are ones which the families have adapted to willingly and agreeably and are interested

in learning how to combine both Rohingya and Irish traditions. They just want to ensure that they are in a position to maintain their identity as a Muslim as well.

We want to integrate in Ireland and learn Irish traditions, but we need a mosque as well (Rohingya female, 2010).

It warrants mentioning again that in Burma, Rohingyas were forcibly displaced from their homes primarily due to their religion and as a conservative Muslim group, religion impacts on so many other areas of their everyday life. They have been persecuted on the basis of their religion and now, in their new home in Carlow, they want the chance to practise their religion freely again.

In the wider picture, research shows that religious establishments can provide their migrant members (especially refugees and asylum seekers) with extensive support in their daily lives, in particular with coping with social exclusion. Ugba (2007) found that for the majority of migrants surveyed, their church membership compensated for the lack of recognition and reduced social status they experience in wider society. This can be seen to be relevant in the context of Carlow. A representative of the local mosque outlined in interview how he has built up a rapport with the Rohingya families and often does mediation and counselling type activities with them as the need arises (Service Provider, 2010). It is also worth noting that many religious institutions can be very willing to help out with integration initiatives and should be involved, where possible, in the future development of the project.

Mosque

At the moment, all Muslims in Carlow gather in a local house for prayers and religious celebrations. The house is in a residential area, does not have a minaret⁶ or indeed the traditional separate prayer areas for men and women.

One mosque, is not proper mosque. (no minaret) Only a house, no special rooms for men and women. Too far to get to. Only small house (Rohingya female, 2010).

Ballyhaunis had a much bigger mosque, we were able to go to mosque after the English class, quickly pray and get back to class. Don't have that opportunity in Carlow. Too far. It's a small house. Looking for bigger one and in a convenient place (Rohingya male, 2010).

Can't concentrate on other things. The main issue is that we don't have a mosque. If we have a mosque we will have happiness together (Rohingya male, 2010).

More significantly, this mosque is not sizeable enough to be able to cater to the needs of the estimated thousand⁷ Muslims in Carlow. This can lead to considerable health and safety issues when it comes to Friday prayers, special occasions during the year and the holy season of Ramadan. This is something to bear in mind for the future as research in the Blanchardstown area (Ní Chonail, 2009) points to the lack of a mosque in the area leading to many logistical problems in relation to parking and access to houses for residents when religious gatherings are taking place in housing estates.

A particular talking point among the Rohingya community is the fact that during several presentations in Ballyhaunis, in addition to their briefing in Bangladesh, they were led to believe that there was an official mosque in Carlow before they arrived. This is an issue that

⁶ A minaret is a typical architectural feature of an Islamic mosque which is used for the call to prayer

⁷ Respondents in the research estimate the number of Muslims in Carlow to be between 500-1000. Further research is needed to quantify these numbers and this is an initiative that representatives of the Rohingya community in Carlow are now involved in following a meeting in St. Catherine's.

has been raised with many service providers over the course of the year, in the SPIRASI workshops and in the focus groups for this research as well.

On the one side is our religion, our faith, our tradition, our culture, On the other hand we are living here in a new country and we have to follow the new culture. And learn to integrate in the new culture. That is no problem. But the Government brought us to Carlow where there is no mosque (Rohingya female, 2010).

Government had a hard job to bring us over here. They give us everything to make us happy. But the last thing we need is the mosque (Rohingya female, 2010).

The nearest official Mosque is in Dublin and for formal rites of passage such as birth ceremonies, coming of age ceremonies and marriages, this would necessitate travel to Dublin for these ceremonies to be officially recognised. This is problematic for the Rohingyas as travel options are limited due to financial constraints.

Burial place

As was outlined in the earlier profile of the Rohingya experience, the 1982 Citizenship Law which was passed in Burma did not recognise Rohingya ethnicity in its list of national races, thus effectively reducing them to a stateless existence. In addition to the practical effects this has had on their citizenship and residency entitlements, it also has an impact on how certain rites of passage, in this case, funerals can be conducted in Ireland. Due to the lack of an official Islamic burial ground in Carlow, many non-Irish Muslims in the area send their dead back to their country of origin for final burial. However, the stateless nature of the Rohingya in Burma, combined with the fact their refugee status gives them no such rights in Bangladesh, means this is not an option for the families now living in Carlow. It can also be argued that this psychologically has an impact on the Rohingya, as having a fitting final

resting place becomes all the more significant in the context of their transient existence thus far.

Burial place. Most important thing. Heard from other Muslims there is one in Naas In Kildare. If people died here, they get sent back to their own country. We don't have any other country. So we can't send them back to home countries like other Muslims in Ireland. So it would have to be local (Rohingya male, 2010).

It would be good if we had a burial ground with a mosque altogether in a kind of community complex (Rohingya male, 2010).

It should be noted that one of the Family Days organised by St. Catherine's was a cultural tour of the Islamic Centre in Clonskeagh which included a visit to a Muslim Burial Ground in Newcastle. This was acknowledged to have been a very successful trip.

Islamic classes

In addition to feeling the need for a mosque and burial place, the Rohingya community were very interested in the opportunity of accessing Islamic study classes, where the study of Arabic and the Koran would have an important focus.

In Burma, one thing we don't have, never have the chance to learn any religious studies. No Islamic studies. In Bangladesh in the camps never had the chance either. Now, in Ireland, the government give us the opportunity to learn English and other education, but the one thing we don't have yet is religious studies which is very important. We want to learn about living here but about traditional religious things as well (Rohingya male, 2010).

We need to learn English, but it is not everything. We also need to learn about our own traditions as well. Don't mean to say it is not important, English is really important as well, but we have to learn Arabic also (Rohingya female, 2010).

Future impact

The most obvious and immediate way in which Religion will have an impact on their future is the fact that many of the Rohingyas feel they will not be able to stay in Carlow if their needs are not met.

We like to stay in Carlow, but only if there is a mosque and burial place (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Very happy here, but there are no Islamic studies facilities, if this is not provided may need to move from Carlow in the future. Also looking for mosque in Carlow. (St. Catherine's, 2010a).

A service provider working very closely with the families feels that a lot of them will gravitate towards Dublin in the future if it does not look like it will be possible to get a mosque in Carlow.

The OMI needs to know in the future that if you have a group of devout Muslims, you will need to have appropriate services in place to meet their needs. If some of the Rohingyas will leave Carlow because of this, it will have a serious impact on the future of the programme (Service provider, 2010).

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that the vast majority of the members of the Sudanese community who were resettled in Kilkenny in 2008 have remained in the area since this time. Many service providers felt it would be a pity if the Rohingyas felt that they were unlikely to stay in Carlow in the long-term, as a result of their religious needs not being met.

Women

While the data collection was not comprehensive enough on this issue to warrant outlining specific findings, there were several informal and anecdotal observations that confirm other research reports (Ni Chonail, 2009; UCC, 2009) call for a national study regarding the

experience of Muslim women in Ireland. It is felt that the wearing of religious dress, the 'abaya', makes the women a more 'visible' group than other migrant women in the town which may leave them in a vulnerable position (Service Provider, 2010). The impact of this 'visibility' and the effect of the 'double discrimination' migrant women face on account of their gender and ethnicity will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is interesting to note that at every juncture of the research the lack of a proper mosque, appropriate burial ground and access to Islamic classes came up as a significant issue for the families and service providers alike. It was even one of the first questions raised with Minister Mary White T.D., when she paid a visit to St. Catherine's in July 2010. Many service providers were clear that as it stands, religious rights are not being met and while no coherent solution to this problem has been suggested, they believe that the impact of this on the families should not be underestimated. It is important to record that plans for a proper mosque being built in Carlow is likely to be one of deciding factors in whether or not many Rohingya decide to stay in the area.

- It is recommended that representatives of the Rohingya community formalise consultation with relevant stakeholders in the area to promote discussions about the situation regarding the mosque in Carlow
- At a national level, there is need for further research into the needs and experiences of Muslim women in Ireland.

Language and Education

Language

The issue of language barriers and the continuation of language provision was constantly cited by all respondents in the research as being an immediate priority in both the short and long-term. Competency and fluency in the language is always acknowledged to be the main factor in migrants settling in well to a new country and in the context of a resettlement programme it becomes even more important. Language is often considered in the Irish context as one of the main means of differentiation, an example of the divide between 'them' and 'us', a means of inclusion and exclusion, a means of identifying members and non-members. The Rohingyas in Carlow speak Chittagonian Bangla as their first language and as a result, are the only minority linguistic group of their kind in Ireland.

Communication Barriers

Service providers and stakeholders in the Resettlement Programme brought up the language barrier as the most immediate challenge they had to contend with.

Language was a huge issue, without the interpreter it was virtually impossible to communicate with the families. We were struggling for a while before he came and then the period with no interpreter at all was very difficult (Service Provider, 2010).

One of the main reasons for such communication problems was the fact that very few of the group could speak any English on arrival in Ireland.

No words before, learn them all here (Rohingya male, 2010).

It is interesting to note that while language levels have improved considerably since arrival, a few service providers noticed a lack of confidence while speaking to members of the Rohingya community on the phone that did not exist when communicating with them in a

face-to-face context. This is a phenomenon that is not unique to the Rohingya community as many new language learners experience lower confidence levels while speaking on the phone (ICI, 2007). This observation is included here only as a recommendation for service providers to bear in mind for the future, as they may find that the best method of communicating information to the families is through a face-to-face meeting.

It is important to stress, that in language learning, much like in all other areas of their social and cultural life, the Rohingya community are not a homogenous group and according to anecdotal evidence, that individual levels of language attainment have varied greatly.

However, there is a major perception among the overwhelming majority of research respondents that on average, the Rohingya men have a better standard of spoken English than the women. It is important to note, that some of the men had basic English upon their arrival in Ireland and as a result were starting at a different level than some of the women.

While this is evidently not something that can be quantified in this report, it was a commonly-held belief of many participants in the research and an observation that has been recorded in the minutes of Steering Committee meetings as well. As a result of its prevalence in the data collection and its regularity of occurrence in the data analysis, it was therefore deemed necessary to report this finding in an informal way in this report.

Rohingya narratives in relation to language

Members of the Rohingya community themselves had a lot to say about their language levels and hopes for the future:

For me, I know how to say basic stuff in English. Even not always able to communicate easily, I know the names of a lot of things (Rohingya female, 2010).

At the moment, not basic, a little bit more than basic. We can communicate. The opportunity that the Irish government give us, if that continues, maybe we learn more quickly. We are looking for continued support for that (Rohingya female, 2010).

The adult members of the Rohingya community attend English and socialisation classes in Carlow VEC for twenty hours every week. These classes build on the orientation and training programme which took place in the National Refugee Orientation and Training Centre in Ballyhaunis. The men and women spoke about the classes and teachers in the VEC in extremely positive terms:

Very happy with the English classes (Rohingya female, 2010).

Very good the classes. Very enjoying the classes (Rohingya female, 2010).

Love the classes, hate to miss my class (Rohingya male, 2010).

Like speaking English in the class, really enjoy. Enjoy learning English (Rohingya female, 2010).

Homework is got from the class as well. If we have difficulties the teachers go through them again the next day. They have a very hard job, we like the teachers. (Rohingya male, 2010).

The Rohingyas regularly speak about their aspiration to be fluent in English and look forward to the day when they can organise everything for themselves.

Doing our best, working very hard (Rohingya male, 2010).

When we learn to speak very well, everything will be good, want to learn as quick as possible (Rohingya female, 2010).

Want to be able to speak the same as the Irish person. Want to speak really good English (Rohingya female, 2010).

However, despite their commitment and enjoyment, there are still numerous challenges that they face:

Learning a lot of English, Still very basic, need help to make GP appointments or visits. Can speak now. A lot. Much better to speak and understand. Still some way to go (St. Catherine's 2010a)

Sometimes we have to challenge ourselves. We use body language to describe or to understand. Still very difficult to understand at times. Out of ten words, we only understand two (Rohingya male, 2010).

Having lots of notes and different handouts every day, would prefer a book. Better if a book. Book would be easier (Rohingya male, 2010).

It's hard to learn but we love to learn (Rohingya female, 2010).

The Transversal Nature of Language

Language proficiency can have a serious impact on how migrants progress in other areas of life as well. In terms of education, given the necessity of a capability in English in order to participate in the Irish education system, language competency constitutes 'an essential pre-requisite of integration' (NESC, 2006:190). This is particularly relevant for the young people and children, whose experience of language in formal education will be outlined in a later section. In more general social terms, language can be a barrier to migrants getting on and succeeding in Irish life. Recent research relating to migrants in the Dublin 15 area shows that while language was certainly perceived as a barrier to 'us' understanding 'them', it was also perceived as a barrier for 'them' to function in society (Ni Chonail, 2009: 55). Similarly, in the UNHCR report (2009) the overwhelming majority of participants (98%) felt that being able to speak English well was an important factor for integration.

In terms of employment, the ESRI study (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008) on immigrants at work, highlighted the importance of language skills. They detected that English language skills are positively linked to earnings and that migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds are subjected to an occupational gap, whereas this is not the case for those

from English speaking backgrounds. It also warrants mentioning that current integration discourse on a national level views language fluency as an essential requirement for successful integration and *Migration Nation*, clearly states that criteria for Irish citizenship in the future could be contingent on the proficiency of skills in the spoken language of the country (OMI, 2008). This underlines the importance of prioritising the provision of training in English language skills for the Rohingya community in the future.

Education

Education is central to the future cohesive integration of the Rohingyas in Carlow. In the case of the young people, the narratives and recommendations in relation to formal education and the school experience will be outlined in the Children and Young People Section. The rest of this chapter will instead deal with the future focus for informal education supports for the adults. Experience of formal education in the group were very limited, with an average educational attainment of 2.24 years. Of the adults in the group, only 21% had a formal education. 8 adults had no education at all and 3 adults stated that they had an informal education - home learning or private tuition (OMI, 2009)

Never had chance for education. Only in last three years, they established any school in the camp, but before that never had any opportunities to learn any education (Rohingya male, 2010).

While it was known in advance that the group had little or no formal education, it consistently came up in interviews with service providers that they were still surprised at the reality of the situation.

The level of education background could not have been anticipated. There was a huge amount of work to bring them up to speed even about little things like electricity, nobody could have anticipated how much work would be involved getting them organised in this way. But what is great is that they are very interested in learning (Service Provider, 2010).

The big piece of information which would have helped me understand them better, was the fact that they had no basic education. Either from Burma or from Bangladesh. As a result, when they came here, the information that they were getting here, in terms of the formal education and other information it was a bit of an overload for them. But I couldn't understand when I was trying to help them and show them how to do things, that they weren't always taking it in (Volunteer, 2010).

They still need to be encouraged about certain things. The way I look at it, they have learnt so much in one year, they will learn a lot more in the next year. They were never going to learn it all, or be capable of taking it all in in one year. They have come such a long way in one year (Volunteer, 2010).

Support Groups

In addition to the language and socialisation classes put on by the VEC, separate support groups for the men and women were also organised by Carlow County Development Partnership and St. Catherine's Community Services.

Women's Group

The women's group, organised by the CCDP, in particular was identified as a great source of support for the Rohingya women. The classes took place over a 12 week period and lasted for two hours a session. The women's group, as well as the men's, started meeting once a week in 2010, rather than once a month, in order to deal with the extra demand of issues coming up and the women were included in the consultation process about what the content should be. Over the course of the classes they learn about Irish culture and cookery methods. Cooking on a budget was emphasised and they shared information about how to purchase and prepare good quality but inexpensive dishes. On one occasion they had a

picnic with traditional Irish picnic foods and nutritional information about the food was shared with them (Progress report, 2010). Nutrition and Health and Safety in the Kitchen were also topics that were concentrated on, the women had never had a fridge before and learnt how to clean it and maintain it. Attendance of the group was very good with an average of ten women attending every week.

When asked what they would like to learn more about in the Women's Group were it to continue, the main topics were under the general headings of cooking and general household maintenance.

I would like to learn more about baking; pastry, cakes, bread (Rohingya female, 2010).

Would like more instructions regarding cooking etc. (Rohingya female, 2010).

More things on DIY – changing Light bulbs, electric, fixing. For example about the fire alarm how to fix it when it making noise, not making noise. More information about gardening (Rohingya female, 2010).

The women also requested driver theory classes and were very clear about the fact that they wanted to get the same opportunities as the men and did not want to get left behind in their learning. This was very clearly voiced in the focus group and also expressed to staff of St. Catherine's over the course of the year. An introductory session with Carlow Women's Aid was also run as part of the Women's Group, which then led onto individual support sessions. Other areas covered in the group related to promoting a holistic approach to stress management by learning to give hand massages.

This group displays high levels of stress due to their traumatic background and the stress management advice was of great benefit to them. Several members of the group voiced their difficulties with stress in their lives and received mutual support from the rest of the group and the tutor (St. Catherine's Progress Report, 2010).

In addition to this benefit, there was a general consensus that a lot of personal development was evident as a result of the women's group. 'Have started to express their feeling and participate more' (Progress report, 2010). The women were observed to be very close-knit and supportive of each other (Service Provider, 2010). As the group became more vocal, organisers were able to respond to that and so as a result can plan to tailor to their needs.

Would like more English classes as well. I can cook and keep the house, appreciate the group as we are learning something (Rohingya female, 2010).

Enjoy it because am very bored at home, want to keep busy (Rohingya female, 2010).

A clear finding emerging from the research is that if the Women's Group is going to run again in the future, a more flexible approach to childcare is needed. Existing provisions for childcare curtailed the type of trips that could be arranged as part of the class.

For example the day the picnic was organised they had to be back from where they were going within two hours. Even if they wanted to go for a walk or for outings, you couldn't really go out of the town because of the tight schedule for childcare (Service Provider, 2010).

Men's Group

The men's group was initially set up in the same way as the women's group and input from the men about the content of the course immediately was met with request for extra English classes. However they then asked for assistance with the driver theory test, learning more about computers and they had an interest in mechanics as well. They were very focused on the future and trying to improve their practical skills in order to be prepared for the job market in the future. Job training was high on their agenda, this will be outlined in further detail in the section on Employment and Training in this report.

Personally, I believe that if they give us some training for the job. I would love that. Something on computer class, accounting, how to calculate (Rohingya male, 2010).

At the start, the driver theory course and general road safety was outlined for eight weeks for two hours a week. It is interesting to note that a request for Driver Theory Education came up for the Kilkenny Sudanese Resettlement Programme as well. In Carlow, some of the men had driving experience in their country of origin and it was a significant aspiration of theirs to be able to get their full license in Ireland. However, after a few weeks it was felt that language levels were not at a sufficient point where this information was of benefit to them and when the attendance levels began to drop off, the group began to look at developing computer skills instead. Despite the fact that some of the men had computers at home, their computer skills were still very basic. The 14 week programme revolved around learning more about basic word programming, graphics, internet, file management, working with digital images, email and PowerPoint. The computer classes were regarded as being very successful, although at times there was disparity of opinion among the men about what level it should be pitched at.

Would prefer something like bicycle repair, practical work, computers are difficult (Rohingya male, 2010).

Like the computer class, could not use computers before (Rohingya male, 2010).

Happy in the beginning, but then too basic (Rohingya male, 2010).

For me, was very basic, basic understanding, was looking for something more advanced (Rohingya male, 2010).

The men's group was generally considered not to have been as cohesive as the women's group (Service provider, 2010). This was put down to a number of possible factors, for example, the difficulty of the Driver Theory classes and the change in instruction mid-way

through the course. Service providers suggested there may be some cultural differences evident in this regard as well:

A similarity was noted between the Boy's Group and the Men's Group in terms of their lack of consistency (Service Provider, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Language and Education are issues of great importance and ones in need of sustained attention. Limited language proficiency and low levels of education are some of the most immediate causes of social exclusion and can impact on people in many social, economic and psychological ways. As opportunities in these areas improve, the families will begin to feel empowered and confident enough to participate in all areas of Irish life.

- It is recommended that the provision of long-term language support to the Rohingya community in Carlow is necessary to promote meaningful integration into Irish society.
- The use of plain English in literature from service providers should be promoted for the future and if possible, a plain English version of this report should be produced for the families.
- The success of the Men's Group and the Women's Group should be capitalised upon and future meetings which include content relating to parenting classes, Tenant's Rights and Responsibilities and computers should be organised.

Employment and Training

Introduction

Being part of the workforce and feeling economically independent is a very important indicator of a successful integration process, indeed employment is one of four priority areas outlined in Migration Nation⁸ (2008). However, specific information in relation to employment and employment related issues did not feature very strongly in the data collection for this report, due simply to the fact that none of the adult Rohingyas are currently in paid employment. However, what did emerge very clearly from the research is that this is an area of life which will soon be in need of serious attention, as the Rohingya community will need sustained support from local agencies as they prepare to enter the labour force. While more data collection is undoubtedly needed in this area, this section of the report is intended to act as a preliminary guide to potential considerations in this area.

Rohingya narratives in relation to employment

All of the adult members of the Rohingya community clearly expressed a strong desire to attain paid employment in Carlow in the future. However, there was some disparity about levels of readiness for work.

As soon as possible. I am ready (Rohingya male, 2010).

I am ready right now. Start immediately (Rohingya male, 2010).

Not ready yet, a bit more time to improve my English (Rohingya male, 2010).

It depends on the person (Rohingya male, 2010).

⁸ Migration Nation (2008) is the Irish Government's main statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management.

When asked what type of employment they would be interested in, both the men and women were in agreement they would be grateful to get experience in any area at all:

We would like to do any job (Rohingya male, 2010).

Any job (Rohingya female, 2010).

Anywhere, I will work anywhere (Rohingya female, 2010).

When pressed for further details about their interests, many diverse areas came up. Both the men and women expressed very real interest in working in the community and learning more about community work. This can be seen as real testament to the high esteem in which they hold the work of St. Catherine's Community Services. Their desire to give something back to St. Catherine's was also evident.

I would like to work in St. Catherine's (Rohingya female, 2010).

I would like to work in St. Catherine's also (Rohingya female, 2010).

Everybody wants to work in St. Catherine's! (Rohingya female, 2010).

Other areas of interest that came up for the men were working as a barber, tailor, chef, painter, bike mechanic, car mechanic and in the fire brigade. For the women, there was a significant amount of interest in working in childcare and the vast majority of the women were interested in knowing exactly what training, accreditation and qualifications were needed for such a sector. Also mentioned was working as a babysitter, in an office, cleaning or working in Tesco. As it stands at the moment, there are a few of men currently looking for work, but the women do not feel their language skills are developed enough yet for this (Service Provider, 2010).

Potential Barriers to Employment

The CSO (2006) figures indicate a relatively lower percentage of the population in employment in Carlow (53%) compared to the national level of 57% (Beston, 2009). This indicates a problematic local work environment to begin with. When you also factor in the recent recession, the state of the local employment economy is something that service providers working on future phases of the Resettlement Programme may have to bear in mind when planning actions in the area of employment. Gaining access to the labour market can be complicated even for refugees who have qualifications, or are trying to get their qualifications recognised. In the context of the Rohingyas, it is even more important to prioritise support in this area as their lack of formal qualification may act as a significant barrier to entering the workplace.

The Equality Authority carried out research in relation to ethnicity and discrimination in the Irish labour market. It was found that migrants were three times more likely to experience discrimination while looking for work than Irish nationals. Within this group, black respondents were seven times more likely to experience discrimination. Overall, black respondents reported more difficulties looking for work than any other ethnic group in the survey (McGinnity and O'Connell, 2008). Narratives of black migrants in the Blanchardstown area (Ní Chonaill, 2009) refer to their own 'visibility' and how this can lead to discrimination in the employment sector. It is apparent that categories of visibility (Gray, 2004: 141) are a factor in establishing identity and over the course of the research, many respondents commented on how 'obvious' the families were around the town and how 'visible' they were in comparison to other migrants (Service Provider, 2010). The visibility of the Rohingyas in Carlow, especially in relation to women in religious dress, might be something

that stakeholders have to take into account when more members of the community begin to look for work.

Language is another obvious barrier to employment. As we saw in the language section, it can be a real barrier to succeeding in the workplace. A recent ESRI study detected that English language skills are positively linked to earnings and that migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds are subjected to an occupational gap, whereas this is not the case for those from English speaking backgrounds (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008).

It is also worth mentioning that women in general may face additional barriers and challenges when they look for work, and issues such as isolation, lack of accessible childcare and the experience of domestic abuse are ones that are specifically mentioned in the Socio-Economic Profile of Carlow (Beston, 2009). Further details of how these apply in the context of the Rohingya women will be outlined in later sections of this report (Health, Children and Young People). Moreover, according to the Gamma Report (2006) there is an unusually high rate of female unemployment in Carlow at 9.6%. These rates are above the national female unemployment rates of 6.0%. The percentage of women participating in the Labour Force in Carlow (49.9%) is lower than the national rate of 52.8% and all of these factors suggest a need for targeted supports and considerations to the Rohingya women will be needed when they begin to look for work in Carlow.

There may be a need for anti-discrimination efforts and to find innovative ways of ensuring employment, including mentoring arrangements and measures to address challenges faced by women in this area (UNHCR, 2009: 28).

Planning for the Labour Market

A common concern of refugees is their struggle to get administrative assistance in the formal recognition of their qualifications. The UNHCR (2009) outline some further information in relation to this. However, this is a bigger concern for refugees who have gone through the traditional asylum process rather than programme refugees, and is not relevant in this context due to low level of education attainment among the Rohingya community. However, this does mean that the practises of up-skilling and job training become even more urgent for the Rohingya adults. In the focus groups, the desire for job-related training was evident:

Never had any job experience so would like job related training (Rohingya male, 2010).

Any training for any job (Rohingya female, 2010)

Again, we would like job training, we learn lots in the classes, but no degree will happen at this age we just want to get any we can (Rohingya male, 2010).

Service providers also recommended that provision of education and career guidance is needed for members of the Rohingya community. In particular, practical based courses like health and safety, first aid, vocational English classes and other such courses that will improve their chances of getting a job. Many of the stakeholders working closely with the families expressed an interest in seeing them be able to up-skill and perhaps hone some of their existing skills as well.

I really want to see them be able to develop their skills and use the ones that they already have. I know there is one woman who is a very good seamstress. Another woman is very good with henna. There is a chef and another man with cooking experience. We should support them in their skills they have. I really want to see them move on to the next stage where they can start to earn their own money (Volunteer, 2010).

Work experience was one such way in which stakeholders and the families thought would be of help in developing confidence in the work place.

Even if they just got work experience, like four hours at the weekend or something. It's moving them on to the next stage where it is not just education and learning more stuff but halfway towards work where they could see themselves being able to work and get a job in the future. It would very important for their own self-esteem (Volunteer, 2010).

It is interesting to note that there have been developments in this regard, with one woman from the Rohingya community now waiting to be placed on work experience in St.

Catherine's Community Childcare Centre and other members progressing onto education courses where work experience placements are a component (Service Provider, 2010).

Volunteering is another important way to get to know the local community and can be used as a key tool for promoting integration. Limited volunteering placements could be used to familiarise Rohingyas with the workplace, enable them to develop workplace skills and learn new skills for when they access labour market. However, it is important to note that additional supports would be needed for this initiative to be successful.

Given the continued needs of the community a "supported volunteering" programme might need to be put in place to assist any Rohingya volunteers to settle in to their volunteering roles (especially if they are unfamiliar with the expectations that would be placed on them as volunteers) and to help with any extra language support needs, training requirements .. and cultural differences. Without this support, many Volunteer-Involving Organisations in Carlow will not have the capacity to fully involve volunteers with extra support needs (Service Provider, 2010).

Research suggests this could be something that the families would be interested in themselves:

Yes, interested in volunteering in the future. Show us what to do. (Rohingya female, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Lack of work can lead to social exclusion. Investment in employment training for the Rohingya community can provide them with real skills as well as strengthening their existing knowledge bases. The community demonstrate a real appetite to work and contribute to Irish society and supporting them in this will be an important focus for the future development of the Resettlement Programme.

- Employment training courses with a focus on practical skills should be provided for members of the Rohingya community in Carlow
- Measures to utilise and expand upon existing skills among the Rohingya community should be developed
- Evidence suggests that the Rohingya women may be in need of targeted supports when they begin to look for work, in order to overcome the additional barriers they may face
- Work experience options should be pursued for individual members of the Rohingya community interested in gaining informal employment experience
- The feasibility of 'supported' Volunteer placements in community organisations for members of the Rohingya community should be explored
- Training could be facilitated as part of the Men's Group and the Women's Group etc.

Housing and Transport

One of the areas that was in need of the most immediate attention in the initial phases of the Resettlement Programme was undoubtedly the area of housing. Housing is mentioned on the Office of the Minister for Integration's website as being a priority area for refugees and this was certainly the case in this context, as service providers worked extremely long hours in the early stages to ensure that houses were sourced and furnished in time for the families' arrival from Ballyhaunis. It was collectively decided to access the houses for the Rohingya community through the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) as local authority social houses would not be available to meet the needs of the family sizes and these would be more readily available in the private market. In addition, this form of accommodation had been utilised successfully by other Local Authorities.

Initial Settlement

Planning for the early stages of housing settlement was severely affected by delays in confirmation of arrival date, exact family numbers and household breakdown details. This had a practical impact on the planning stages, in particular when it came to sourcing larger houses, i.e. those with four or five bedrooms.

We had a rough idea of how many were coming, but in the early stages had no idea exactly how many and so it was hard to finalise housing. It was really only when they were in Ballyhaunis that we got the final numbers which was hard (Service Provider, 2010).

This lack of precise information about how the household number should be divided, led to a communication breakdown on the very first day the families arrived in Carlow. Two individuals who had been allotted their own house were reluctant to leave St. Catherine's to go to this residence as they had anticipated living with another member of their family

instead. Service providers pointed to this as a serious problem not just due to the stress it caused the families, but because of the resulting overcrowding in that house. In the future, service providers felt it would be important to insist on having the family breakdown supplied to them at as early a time as possible. This way, they can plan to accommodate families who do or do not want to live beside each other and be realistic about what can be achieved during the allotted timeframe.

The other noteworthy problem that arose in the initial settlement period revolved around the suitability of some of the houses that were sourced. Four houses were deemed to be of an unsuitable nature and replacements needed to be found as a matter of urgency. This was subsequently resolved and any currently ongoing minor issues with the houses are outlined in the below section.

However, sourcing the houses was just the beginning of the work that needed to be done in this area. Furnishing and equipping the house with basic amenities would be the next challenge.

We learnt from the Kilkenny resettlement that when the families arrived from Ballyhaunis the house should not just be ready, but that it could be lived in as well. That you would have teas towels, knives and forks, etc, that you could walk in the door like it was your own home and all the small things we take for granted would be there (Service provider, 2010).

As a result of the delay in accessing the accommodation, the staff of Community Welfare worked very hard to make sure that the houses were ready for the families to walk into.

We were given various arrival dates which was not helpful as it had an effect on how the council got the accommodation. This had an effect on getting the houses ready to move in as it was very late in the day when we were getting access to the houses. Accommodation must be sourced early, about a month to six weeks in advance. Even if no one is in the house for that amount of time so be it, it gives people time to

assess the house, see what is required and what is already supplied by the landlord and what is still required (Service provider, 2010).

Staff were working long hours trying to get bedding, electrical goods, all sorts, sourced in time. There was a lot of difficulty, only got it done at the eleventh hour (Service provider, 2010).

In addition to the practical need of getting the houses ready, from a logistical point of view, the exact addresses were needed in order to have plenty of time to source doctors, arrange medical cards, welfare entitlements and to place students in the nearest schools. The delay in finalising the houses details, therefore had a knock-on effect on service provision in other areas.

Advice from the Kilkenny Sudanese Resettlement Programme suggested that service providers be aware that there is a tendency for programme refugees to compare what they have been given to that of other members of their group. This is a phenomenon that arose in Carlow as well.

When they went to houses for first time, they compared them to the houses that the others had. How many bedrooms, how many bathrooms, what distance it is from the town etc. We had been warned this would happen and it definitely did (Service Providers, 2010).

In Ballyhaunis, the house they showed in presentation, it didn't look the same. Outside looks lovely. When you go inside, don't like it so much. Compared to other families, was not as nice a house (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Rohingya narratives in relation to Housing

The members of the Rohingya community spoke at length about their houses:

House very happy with it, don't want to move (Rohingya female, 2010).

Very happy in the house, the kitchen is bigger than the whole place in the camp before. Very happy (Rohingya male, 2010).

Back in Bangladesh, the facilities for toilet in camp, or in the village, were not good you had to walk a little bit from the house to get to the toilet. Usually after toilet, weren't able to wash hands, it was a very unhygienic environment in the camps. Much more hygienic environment in the house we can wash hands before meal, after meal. Also, catering in the house, not enough space in the camp, here it is nice for when people come to visit. You could not have a special guest before in the camp, it was very overcrowded (Rohingya male, 2010).

I did have some problems in my old house, but now I have a new house and am very happy. Really appreciated, thanks to the Irish government (Rohingya female, 2010).

Everything is fine. Example: Toilet facilities, back from where we came in camp in toilet, walk from house to another place, certain place, now we have the facility in one house now. In camp there is a water crisis, one pot of water for maybe all day. Here is no crisis (Rohingya male, 2010).

Love my house (Rohingya young person, 2010).

No problems with the house. Beautiful house (Rohingya young person, 2010).

However, it is important to note that not all of the respondents have had a positive experience in this area and shared some of their complaints in this regard:

During the night, people come and bang the door. Kick the door (Rohingya female, 2010).

Never had a chance to choose house, no Hoover, no fridge freezer (Rohingya female, 2010).

Living very far from the town. Not happy too far (Rohingya female, 2010).

Location of houses

An important factor in deciding where to locate the houses was that they had to be within walking distance of the schools for families with children. Most of the schools in Carlow are in the town centre which is also where most of the older houses are situated. As a result, some families were housed in residences that were built nearly eighty years ago, in comparison to other families who received houses in developments built much more recently.

If we were to redo it, we would try and get all of the houses the same age. We were confined to where we could choose the houses as a result of the locations of schools. It was and still is a stumbling block (Service Provider, 2010).

A typical indicator of integration according to the UNHCR is that there is no ghettoisation of foreigners or persons of foreign origin (UNHCR, 2009: 8). NCCRI (2008) similarly warn against such geographical clusters due to their negative effects on integration in the long-term. Bearing this in mind, great care was taken by the service providers to ensure that the housing sourced for the Rohingya families was spread out over a geographical location in the town. This was seen as a success by many stakeholders:

The way in which families were dispersed around the town worked quite well. It avoided lumping them all together and gave them the opportunity to meet other people (Service provider, 2010).

While the Rohingyas cited the distance between some of the houses as making it difficult sometimes to visit their friends, (see below section on transport), there was a general consensus that this practise of dispersal should still be highly recommended because even though the tendency to cluster geographically may provide the families with social support in the short-term, it may exacerbate existing spatial concentrations of disadvantage in the long-term. This is something that service providers in this area should be very aware of, especially in the context of any future moves or transfers, as this is still a possibility in at least two cases.

There are recommendations for transfers for two families who have legitimate complaints. Hopefully this will happen in the near future (Service provider, 2010).

Ongoing Housing Issues

After the initial period of settlement passed, most of the families settled well into the houses. However, some minor issues are ongoing. Maintenance, repairs and appliances in the houses continue to be the main problems in this regard.

They came in, they had never been in a house. There were no rules whatsoever, and there are still not to a certain extent. Need to be encouraged to do stuff themselves. Learnt so much in one year, they will take on more as they go on. There was so much coming at them in the beginning they were never going to be able to get all of it anyway (Volunteer, 2010).

The Carlow Volunteer Centre has recently recruited a volunteer who is going to assist with minor repairs and maintenance for the Rohingya families. It is hoped that this will reduce demands on landlords and eventually empower the families to have confidence to do their own repairs. Other minor issues that have arisen over time relate to contracts with the landlord and isolated boundary issues with neighbours. It warrants mentioning that with the exception of these minor incidents the 'neighbours have been positive, overall it was a good reception and many of them made a big effort to help them settle' (Service Provider, 2010). Similarly, despite initial concern about the wear and tear of the houses, the landlords were identified as being 'very tolerant, very patient and worked well with us' (Service Provider, 2010).

A final observation from service providers in housing relates to the specifics of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, which as has been outlined already is a long-term housing solution. Houses for the Rohingya Community were sourced through this scheme, however it is important to bear in mind, that in the future, this method will not be available for the

young people of the Rohingya community, who will instead have to go through the normal procedures in this sector.

Transport

It is important to note that lack of public transport is a problem for the wider population in Carlow. In the Socio-Economic profile of Carlow, transport was identified as a fundamental barrier to accessing services in both urban and rural areas in the county (Beston, 2009: 35) and public transport to local areas certainly emerged as a significant issue for the men and women in the focus groups as well. The primary mode of transport for the young people is on bicycle and there have been ongoing problems over the course of the year in relation to damaged and stolen bikes. These will be discussed in greater detail in a later section of the report. Other challenges related to the to the financial cost of travel and the lack of viable transport options.

It can be very hard to move around and very expensive. A visit from house to house in a taxi can be 18 euro. (9 euro each way) There is no public transport between our houses. We have to pay for taxi to the doctor sometimes as well. Walking in the rain happens a lot (Rohingya male, 2010)

They have to walk a lot all around the town. Sometimes by the time they get to St. Catherine's they have dropped off a kid in one school, another kid in the crèche and to playschool, then they walk down the town, then they are back up again to collect the kids, then some of them are back for the women's group, back for the men's group so you know it's an awful lot of walking that they have to do. They must be very tired by the time they home and you know they wouldn't be used to that type of walking because they never would have had to do it before (Volunteer, 2010).

It should be acknowledged that a transport support strategy was also put in place at the start of the resettlement programme. Arising from information given to the OMI at initial briefings, it was recognised that for an adjustment period, the families would require

support with transport due to costs involved for hiring buses to bring them to training venues and other related locations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering that both housing and transport are fundamental basic needs for all members of the local population in Carlow, it is unsurprising that many issues have presented themselves under these headings for the Rohingyas this year. The amount of time spent on housing issues by various stakeholders in the Resettlement Programme should not be understated.

- It is important for future resettlement programmes to know that best practise in this area involves sourcing the houses in plenty of time and making sure exact information about the families is available in plenty of time as well.
- That families identified for transfer should be relocated in the near future
- Future housing policy and plans should be considered in the wider context of the Rohingya situation
- For future resettlements, local authorities should source the houses at least one month in advance of the families arrival in order for staff of Community Welfare to have sufficient time to furnish the houses.
- Transport Recommendation: Driver Theory Education classes should be re-introduced when language levels improve.

Health

Given the hardship and adversity faced by the Rohingya community prior to their arrival in Ireland, it is understandable that the areas of health and health related issues would feature strongly in this report. However, it should be observed that it may be difficult to present a comprehensive account of priorities in this section, due to the less than sufficient amount of health care professionals available for interview during the data collection period.

Furthermore, this is definitely an area where significant issues arose over the course of the year, however due to ethical and confidentiality issues, it may be difficult to outline some of the specific findings. This chapter, therefore, acts merely as a preliminary indication of issues arising in this area and this is something the Resettlement Programme Steering Committee should be aware of going forward into the next phase of strategic development.

Issues arising

Resettled refugees experience a relatively high rate of both physical and mental health problems as a result of their pre-migratory experiences (UNHCR, 2009), and this was certainly the case in the context of the Rohingya community as well. While initial screening had been provided for the families while they were resident in Ballyhaunis, they never had access to high quality healthcare in the past and as a result, service providers spoke of the sheer volume of hospital and doctor appointments that were still necessary during the first few months of the Resettlement Programme.

I'd say there was a doctor or a hospital appointment nearly every day for the first three months (Service Provider, 2010).

Furthermore, while pre-screening had also taken place in Bangladesh, the information sharing was limited to health care professionals; service providers in Carlow suggested that some of this information would have been useful when it came to arranging appropriate supports in areas like housing and education.

Various vaccinations, eye-tests for the adults and dentist appointments were some of the more straightforward health requests that families were assisted with at the beginning of the resettlement. Stomach complaints and chest infections were common complaints around this time as well. For more serious or complex issues, regular referrals to St. Luke's Hospital were made over the course of the year.

Some dietary issues arose for the families, who would not have had a balanced diet in the past and still had a lot to learn about healthy eating and how to access nutritional food in their new environment (Service Provider, 2010). The mothers were acknowledged to have been 'excellent' to work with as regards the health of their young children (Service Provider, 2010). In addition, they were very grateful for the support they received and very open to taking the information and advice on board. It is essential to note, that without the support of the Intercultural Worker in this area, service providers acknowledged that their work would not have been possible.

Ongoing visits and support from the Carlow-Kilkenny Parents Support Programme have been arranged for all families with children under 5. It is important to mention that some incidents which would be considered to be Child Protection Issues in Ireland came up over the course of the year, however it is not possible for reasons of confidentiality to outline

them in this report. Some respondents suggested that these incidents relate to cultural differences in relation to child-rearing practises that might be acceptable in one culture but presented challenges in Ireland (Service Provider, 2010).

Service provision

In the area of health, it has been recognised that it is important to provide services in a culturally sensitive manner to meet the needs of new communities (UNHCR, 2009: 78).

However, during the research, the families and many working closely with them pointed to an unsatisfactory level of service provided to them on many occasions. A report by the UNCHR (2002) says that this is a common occurrence for refugees in receiving countries where healthcare professionals are unaccustomed to dealing with a patient group that have such specific needs and who have had disrupted access to health care in the past.

Rohingyan unhappiness with the health system appeared to be primarily resulting from lack of adequate interpretation, providers having a poor understanding of their health needs especially those related to their pre-migratory experiences and prejudice from service providers (SPIRASI, 2010). Many of the members of the Rohingya community felt that service providers appeared 'not interested' and 'dismissive' (ibid) on certain occasions and reported finding the process 'daunting' and 'confusing' (Rohingya female, 2010) at the start. In the focus group, they explained how they found it difficult to understand how the health system worked and why both waiting times for visits and waiting lists for appointments seemed very long and that Halal food was not always readily available during this time. The journey to the hospital and the availability of transport to the hospital was also a source of stress for some of the families, although they have now become more familiar with what is involved (Service Provider, 2010).

From the point of view of the service providers, many pointed to a disproportionate amount of their work time being taken up with dealing with issues relating to the Rohingya community in comparison to that of other service users. Existing workload constraints in the HSE meant they did not have the time for longer consultation periods that might have been desired and the additional time that was needed to consult with the interpreter. This strain on resources within the Health care sector is something that respondents felt should not be underestimated.

I would have to say about the amount of time that they took up for the workers here. And with the interpreter it took even longer. There was huge work, there should be some provisions and extra hours built into our timetable. As a result, it gave us a big backlog of cases and put us under pressure in other areas (Service provider, 2010).

It was a huge amount of extra work. I had to give them more time than other clients because of language barriers but I have to say the interpreter always ready and willing to help (Service provider, 2010).

They definitely require more home visits than other clients, but they were very warm and appreciative of the help (Service provider, 2010).

The assistance of the Resettlement Worker was outlined here of being of great assistance when it came to organising many logistical issues and any queries service providers might had.

The management has been brilliant. Very open and accessible to discussion. Nothing was too big for us to ask her to organise for us (Service Provider, 2010).

Communication and Translation

For many refugees, the health services are often the ones they first come into contact with in the new country and for that reason, communication and sensitivity are of vital

importance in this area. As has been the case in many other sections of this report, the language barrier had a significant impact in the provision of health services to the Rohingya community. When it was not possible to use the usual translation methods of the Resettlement Programme, interpretation was requested through the HSE. There were some issues with this service as the language and dialect provided was not always the correct one and the level provided was sometimes queried (Service Provider, 2010). The high level of technical language proficiency required to communicate medical terminology and the negative consequences of poor communication in a health care context was stressed by one service provider during the research. Phone translation was often the main method of interpretation used and again issues relating to quality and incorrect dialect arose. It was also evident that many HSE staff were not aware of the specific entitlements that exist in relation to interpretation. There were additional concerns about the sensitivity of issues involved in some cases and the appropriateness of having male translators from the HSE assigned to individual female cases. Also, while the great level of trust that has built up between the families and the Intercultural Worker was mentioned on more than one occasion by the respondents in the research, for gender-specific medical issues, it was still considered best practise to have a female interpreter on these occasions (Service provider, 2010). However, it is important to note that many efforts were made to provide a female interpreter, however, due to lack of availability, this was not possible.

Mental Health

The Intercultural Health Strategy (2008) recognises the specific needs of refugees. It highlights the special challenges attached to the estimated 35% of refugees living in Europe

who experienced torture in their pre-migratory state. It further acknowledges that many of the problems develop and/or increase after their arrival due to a variety of stressors, including social isolation, culture shock, language barriers and a lack of understanding about services. It was obviously not possible to do justice to the complexity of the mental health of the Rohingyas in such a short timeframe of this project, however, some narratives and preliminary findings are introduced here in order for service providers to begin to formulate a holistic approach to healthcare.

Issues arising

SPIRASI outline some of the conditions that may affect refugee wellbeing which include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks, substance misuse, Obsessive compulsive disorder, suicide (2009). As has already been outlined in the Context and Background Section, the Rohingyas previous experience of persecution and harassment has had a profound effect on them to this day. Service providers working closely with the families could not help but notice their distress:

The Rohingya community demonstrated high levels of pre-migratory trauma, grief, loss and bereavement. (SPIRASI, 2010)

They seem very vulnerable, very frightened, very traumatised (Service provider, 2010).

The community were very agitated, very stressed and they were constantly being bombarded with new information from lots of people (Service provider, 2010).

In the focus groups, the adults themselves also alluded to how the pressure of their previous experiences has manifested itself in their new life in Carlow.

We were the past eighteen years in the camp without freedom. The whole community is depressed. We don't know what we are saying sometimes, because of

the stress. Lots of pressure on us our hair is all gone from the stress (Rohingya male, 2010).

We have been in torture, in stress, in a dangerous place. Sometimes the anger is coming because we suffer from that (Rohingya male, 2010).

The SPIRASI team identified evidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) presenting in symptoms of depression, poor concentration, anxiety and flashbacks from experiences relating to killing, rape and torture (2010). SPIRASI point to well-documented evidence that the integration process will be negatively affected, if the Rohingya community is not given the time, space and appropriate service in responding to issues of trauma and torture.

A lot of their trauma is stopping them from moving forward. They need coping mechanisms to recognise what is going on (Service Provider, 2010).

In addition to the stress endured in their pre-migratory experience, the vast changes in their lives as a result of the relocation and integration process can result in tension for many resettled refugees (UNHCR, 2010). Suicide, parasuicide and suicide ideation are all problems that have presented themselves for resettled refugees (ibid) and service providers were very clear on the fact that staff should be made aware of these issues and receive appropriate training prior to the start of the Resettlement Programme.

Women

The Rohingya women were identified as having specific support needs as a result of past traumas in Burma and Bangladesh and ongoing feelings of vulnerability in Carlow (SPIRASI, 2010). These particular needs were known in advance of their arrival in Carlow and so a

service level agreement was arranged with Carlow Women's Aid to provide money for them to access specialised counselling and support.

The women were quite oppressed and it emerged that they were still the subject of some domestic abuse in the community here as well (Service provider, 2010).

Workshops were planned around the topics of self-care/ stress relief, domestic violence and support work. The aims of these were to build trust between the Rohingya women and CWA and to open a dialogue about women's experiences to create with the Rohingya women culturally sensitive ways of talking about, exploring and developing strategies to address relationship difficulties (Carlow Women's Aid Proposal, 2009).

However, when the women arrived in Carlow, the basic practical and emotional support that they needed was far more intense than had been first anticipated (Service Provider, 2010). As a result, it was felt that the women should not access this programme until they were ready for it and their confidence had increased to such an extent that they would get the benefit of such specialised services (Service Provider, 2010).

It was not until the summer of 2010 that a site visit was arranged and 16 women and their children went to Carlow Women's Aid for a visit. This was followed up by a session in St. Catherine's outlining the nature of their work and the subsequent uptake and demand for the service was huge (Service Provider, 2010). As a result, confidential sessions with Carlow Women's Aid were delivered in May 2010 and the women were given a space to address some of the issues that were arising for them. From an early stage, work was also done with the Carlow and South Leinster Rape Crisis and Counselling Centre. Service providers have stressed that the women are only now in a position to begin to access such services and the long-term support and counselling that will be needed cannot be underestimated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As well as being a fundamental human right, physical and mental health are a vital resource for integration, as they provide refugees with the tools to meet some of the many challenges in their lives. If it is sensitively delivered, healthcare can help to rebuild trust in others, the motivation to care for oneself and one's feeling of self-respect and dignity (UNHCR, 2002: 192). As a result of their exposure to traumatic events, resettled refugees are at higher risk of developing psychological problems (ibid) and as result, the focus for the future should be on supporting their emotional and personal rebuilding.

- Planned programmes and specialised services with Carlow Women's Aid should be supported and resourced.
- Support for healthy eating programmes and initiatives should be provided.
- Gender-appropriate translation services should be provided where possible.
- SPIRASI support service should be in place for resettlement programmes outside Dublin.
- A member of the Steering Committee who has psychological and psychiatric expertise specific to trauma is required for future phases.

Welfare

Many recent research reports into migrant experiences of engaging with Social Welfare Departments suggest that there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of getting their knowledge levels up to an acceptable standard and making the process a more accessible one. The Migrant Rights Centre maintain that many migrants do not feel they know what their exact entitlements are in this area (MRCI, 2007) and a recent survey by the UNHCR found that 91% of refugees feel there should be a greater amount of clearer information available to them about service provision in this area (UNHCR, 2009). However, research carried out for this report reveals that great care was taken in this area to ensure that the process of setting up members of the Rohingya community in Carlow with welfare payments was well-organised and well-executed.

Initial Service Provision

Social welfare payments were processed on the day the families arrived from Ballyhaunis in St. Catherine's before they were even taken to their houses. This meant that there was no gap in their payments as they were available from the Department at this time and ready for them on arrival. This special arrangement took a lot of pre-planning and organisation and many service providers commended this as an initiative that worked well and was worthwhile. There were few reported problems in the initial stages of welfare provision and according to Steering Committee minutes, 'the adults showed great independence and self-reliance in relation to social welfare from an early stage' (Minutes, 2009).

When the Budget in December 2009 resulted in changes to the Social Welfare Payments, St. Catherine's responded quickly to this confusion and organised presentations for the families

with information about the new rates and entitlements. This was facilitated by the Carlow Citizen's Information Centre which on many other occasions during the year were contacted for clarifications about welfare issues and were deemed to be have been very helpful in this regard (Service Provider, 2010).

Money Management

While there was no in-depth questioning during this research on general money management, a few observations and issues came to the fore. The Rohingyas expressed real gratitude for the money they receive and look forward to the day they can earn their own money through employment. When discussions about finances became a little more detailed, there was a diversity of experiences evident.

Money is okay for living, not okay for saving (Rohingya female, 2010).

Happy with the money, we are managing okay (Rohingya male, 2010).

Personally, I can't save any money (Rohingya male, 2010).

Different for everybody. Some people are saving some money (Rohingya male, 2010).

Gas bill is different every month. Depend on the month if we can save (Rohingya male, 2010).

While great efforts were made by St. Catherine's, the volunteers and many other stakeholders to prepare the community for some of the bills they would face, there were still some unexpectedly high charges which caused anxiety for the families during the year. In particular, the fuel charges and heating bills after the especially harsh winter caused some consternation when they arrived.

Average electricity bill is very high, families find very hard sometimes (Rohingya male, 2010).

While employment issues have been discussed in more detail in a previous section, it is important to note here that plans for future work have an impact on how the Rohingya community view their welfare payments.

When you work, the social welfare is gone. So we have to make sure that when we get a job that it is more than social welfare at the moment, otherwise it is very hard. We will have to pay the bills, pay the rent (Rohingya male, 2010).

Resettled refugees have been identified as being vulnerable to 'potential welfare dependency' as well as the 'poverty trap' (UNHCR, 2009) and this is something that stakeholders should be aware of going forward.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While the process of initially setting up the payments and subsequent organisation of these payments was generally acknowledged to have gone quite smoothly, this is still an area in need of certain attention. In particular, as the families circumstances change in the future, it will be necessary to ensure that rights and entitlements in this area are still communicated clearly to them. In addition, many service providers referenced the problem of 'information overload' and suggested a need for refresher courses in this area at some point in the future.

- Refresher courses on rates and entitlements should be organised for the Rohingya community in future phases of the programme
- Money management training to be built in to other initiatives

Children and Young People

In this section, the lives of the young people of the Rohingya community will be examined in greater detail by accounting for experiences in the area of childcare, school and youth services.

Childcare

The Rohingya families received childcare support for the first year of the resettlement programme, with children under the age of 5 attending childcare in St. Catherine's for twenty seven and a half hours a week. The provision of organised childcare was designed to be a key feature in terms of moving the group on to other forms of structured and informal training, and to be able to take part in local events. Providing this childcare was also essential in terms of the integration of the children in to local community structures and to prepare them for the transition in to the structure of the formal education system. English language support for children under eight took place in summer 2009 and was deemed to be very successful. Furthermore, the Women's English classes were provided in St. Catherine's for first six weeks to facilitate access to childcare, breastfeeding and separation issues.

Research indicates that that the parents have been very happy with the services provided to them in this area:

Very good service

All the children are very happy in childcare and playschool

Very happy

(St. Catherine's, 2010a).

As one service provider put it:

Childcare is only an issue when they can't get it and get to things because they have to mind the children. But the quality of it they seem to be very happy with (Service provider, 2010).

Service providers in the area of childcare shared some of their experiences of working with the families, what they deem to have been overall a 'great experience' (Service provider, 2010). However, there were certain challenges that presented themselves in the initial stages of the resettlement.

There were some issues about clothes at the start. The difference between clothes and pyjamas, changing clothes in the different seasons and having fresh clothes and general hygiene as well. It has improved a lot but there are still times recently where they came in pyjamas or shoes which were too big or too small or boys wearing girls clothes (Service provider, 2010).

We had to explain a couple of times that when it comes to collecting the children, it has to be someone who is over 16 that comes to get them, as on a couple of occasions a younger child would come to the door. But that has happened with a few of the Irish families as well (Service provider, 2010).

We can see that some of the younger kids are picking up some bad eating habits, so it would be good to be able to do more with them on healthy eating and stuff like that (Service provider, 2010).

Children initially interacting with each other was a slow process, but it is better now (Service provider, 2010).

Inevitably, the language barrier presented itself as well:

Language barrier was tough at the start, we went for some training with Cascade which was helpful and gave us stuff to think about. Although the training was very

general and it would have been good to have specific information about the families themselves which would have helped us in our work with them (Service provider, 2010).

We were lucky to have the translator when we needed him. Helped a lot with communication with the parents (Service provider, 2010).

Staff also spoke about the many successes that they identified over the course of the first year of the resettlement:

It has been amazing to see them thriving over the year, especially the way their language is coming along. They are really playing with us this now, we see a massive difference. They play very well and have a great imagination. Their art is amazing and they love skipping (Service provider, 2010).

They are really enthusiastic for learning. You can see them really trying and practising their words themselves, learning their words and looking at the letters and copying down posters (Service provider, 2010).

School

Efforts in education are critical to preparing young refugees for active participation in society. Experience in school in Carlow provided the young people of the Rohingya community with an important cultural encounter which equipped them with both formal and informal information about life in Ireland. On a national level, Irish schools have a reputation for promoting an understanding of cultural and religious diversity and the celebration of interculturalism is becoming an important part of school life. A recent large scale investigation into the experience of migrant children found that school was a key factor in children's wellbeing and vast majority of the respondents reported positive

experiences there (UCC, 2009). In fact, many of the education service providers consulted for this report pointed to the high levels of cultural diversity already evident in their schools as a crucial factor in helping them in their efforts to provide support to the Rohingya young people.

Issues arising

While the schools were mentioned by the service providers as having been very helpful and flexible in their contact with the resettlement programme and while the majority of children and young people now appear to have settled well into their schools, the initial period of settlement was not an easy one. Issues in relation to interaction with other students and incidents of bullying during this time were mentioned by several respondents:

At the beginning did not like school, run away from school, now we don't run from the school (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Yeah like the students. At the beginning time, there were some problems with them, but now we are friends (Rohingya young person, 2010).

They sometimes hit us, make fun of us, but now we are happy. We are getting on very well (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Told the Teacher, then they sorted it and nothing happened after that (*no more incidents*) (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Parents also pointed out some difficult experiences for the young people. This issue will be further discussed later in this section.

There is an issue of teenagers. They have a new language and are new to the country. They are in the higher class and they are still not coping. Not coping with subjects and language. We get lots of letters and notes from teachers, sometimes don't understand (Rohingya female, 2010).

Service providers working closely with the young people also commented on the problematic time some young people had at the start of the school year.

They were very aware of the perceptions that other young people had of them and could be very sensitive about it. They mentioned that the other students would sometimes pass remarks about them on the street. They used to call it 'bad talking' (Service provider, 2010).

The bullying of migrant students also came up as an issue in the recent ESRI report (2009) about diversity in Irish schools. It states that a positive school climate is essential for fostering social integration. It is interesting to note while the schools who participated in the research had an Anti-Bullying Policy or a Code of Behaviour, none of them had an official Anti-Racism Policy. Recent research in the area of Intercultural Education (Tittley, 2009) points to the necessity of schools formalising their best practise in this area in order to create a more open and inclusive learning environment.

Rohingya narratives in relation to school

The Rohingya young people, in keeping with education policy were all placed in age-appropriate classes and with the exception of Gaeilge and in some cases, Religious Education, followed the same curriculum as their peer group. In the focus group, they talked about their experiences:

Everything is good about school. (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Very happy with the school (Rohingya young person).

Some teachers are really helpful and we like the teachers and we like the English. (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Like it, but it is hard. The accent is hard to understand sometimes. (Rohingya young person, 2010).

It is interesting to note that the majority of the young people were interested in continuing studying when they leave schools and shared some of the aspirations in this regard:

I would love to go to college when I finish school (Rohingya young person, 2010).

I want to do more English study (Rohingya young person, 2010).

I want to study more and become a banker (Rohingya young person, 2010).

A doctor (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Integration

Education is a social process in itself and the young people settled in well to the formal and informal aspects of school life:

They have settled in extremely well, they are mixing well with their peers. We don't see them as any different to any other child in the school. Their language teacher and class teacher are very happy with them (Service provider, 2010).

The school ran an international food day and the students participated in that and brought stuff along to it (Service provider, 2010).

Through PE and at break times, sport was seen as an important factor in getting to know other students in the school and integrating well (Service provider, 2010).

Afterschool we do homework and play some sport. The we do shopping at weekend or visiting friends. We get together and go to the park (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Age was a factor identified by many service providers as one that influenced how well the students settled in school:

The younger they were, the better they settled (Service Provider, 2010).

The fact that they are so young in Junior Schools, especially in Junior Infants, all children are new to the school at that stage and can take time to settle in (Service Provider, 2010).

Parents were also mainly happy with the experience of their children in the schools:

Yeah, the teachers are fine. Very happy with the parent teachers meeting (Rohingya female, 2010).

Religion

While the majority of schools in Ireland have a religious ethos underpinning school life, all students have a Constitutional right to not attend religious education classes should they so wish.

While there was a minor issue in relation to religious dress for one girl at the start of the school year in 2009, this was resolved after continuous dialogue with the school. The families did not report any significant issues in the area of religion in the schools.

They facilitate our religion. No problem, no complaint (Rohingya female, 2010).

When they doing religious class in some schools they sometimes go for extra English class. They are happy (Rohingya female, 2010).

Religion class was seen as a place potentially where the young people could share their experiences and allow their classmates to understand more about their culture. However, opinions were not homogenous on this issue:

In religion class, we learn about Islam, as well as all world religions and the teacher asks questions (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Sometimes when they ask us questions, other boys make fun of us (Rohingya young person, 2010).

It feels good when they ask question about Islam and our culture (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Language

The Rohingya young people received a combination of in-class and external language support in the schools last year.

They had no English whatsoever when they came to the school and were provided with language hours. In primary school, they receive in class support so they don't miss out on activities during the day (Service provider, 2010).

The current provision of two years of language support is considered sufficient for conversational English, but it was felt that if migrant students are to make a successful transition to third level education, they will need longer support to achieve a higher standard of English language attainment. It is interesting to note that one of the main findings of a recently published education review (OECD, 2009) is that unlike most other OECD countries, first-generation immigrant students in Ireland, on average, achieve education outcomes similar to their Irish-born peers. However, there is a significant gap in achievement between those who speak English at home and those who do not.

Service providers in the area of education also spoke of the disproportionate amount of their work day that was spent working with the Rohingya students but this was something that they were happy to do and felt it was very worthwhile. Teachers noticed a difference in language levels even after the summer and one spoke of increased confidence levels evident among students where in some cases they were happy to get up in front of the class and make a speech having previously been very shy (Service provider, 2010). Accessing the translator in the initial phases of the resettlement was seen as a crucial resource for schools:

In terms of what worked well for us, the translator was a vital component in the successful integration of the students. The access to the translator was of huge

benefit to the school. As a result, there were no real problems communicating with the parents and relaying information back to them (Service Provider, 2010).

It is interesting to note that the younger students who were not exempt from Gaeilge were very interested in the language, 'happy to be learning it' and 'proud of the few phrases they could say' (Service provider, 2010).

Boys and girls, speak few words of Irish. They love it (Rohingya female, 2010).

Teenage Boys

A common concern for many of the resettlement programme stakeholders working closely with the families was that among the young people, the group of older teenage boys were presenting with some challenging behaviours. Minutes state on several occasions about how the majority of the young people are settling in well to school with the exception of some of the older boys (Minutes, 2009) and service providers in interview often brought up similar concerns they had about their well-being and what the future will hold for them. It is interesting to note that learning from the Kilkenny Sudanese Resettlement Programme indicates that they had a similar problem with some of young male adults (18-21).

Meeting the needs of the young adults has proved difficult, agencies are quite concerned about this group falling through the gaps and feel there was not enough forward planning done for this particular age group. The Steering group need to prioritise this age group in the next phase (KSRP, 2010).

Issues arising for teenage boys

A common opinion shared by respondents in the research was that the policy of placing the boys in age-appropriate education groupings had not been a successful initiative in this context.

A few of them who are fourteen and up. They have no education and all of a sudden they are in later stages of school. It doesn't make sense (Volunteer, 2010).

When they have had no education in the past, you cannot expect to go into mainstream classes with 24 or in some cases 29 other students and expect everything to be okay. The school are not in a position to provide them with one on one in that situation. It's not good enough and most importantly, it was unfair to the boys themselves to put them in that situation (Service provider, 2010).

Service providers in the area of education spoke about how 'pleasant' the boys were and how they were not 'bold' or 'disruptive' at all. However there were serious issues in relation to attendance in the school which was described as 'atrocious' (Service provider, 2010) and that a disproportionate amount of work time was spent on issues relating to a few specific individuals. This has the knock-on effect of having an impact on their own education and service providers noted that in relation to one or two individuals 'little or no progress was made in the area of language learning as a result of absenteeism' (Service provider, 2010). It is interesting to note that in the focus groups, some of the other Rohingya young people also spoke about this issue of absenteeism:

A few of us are not going to school and the rest of us are blamed for it and being given a bad name for the community that they don't go to school (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Outside of school, some service providers mentioned incidents of low-level anti-social behaviour, with boys 'hanging around street corners', 'getting into minor altercations', with fears that in the future this 'could be considered intimidating behaviour' (Service provider, 2010). The cultural context to the boys behaviour was also noted. In particular, the fact that in their traditions, at that age they were considered to be an adult. In traditional Burmese society it would be common for boys and girls to be married when they are teenagers and take on responsibilities of running their own households.

We have to come to terms with the fact they are nearly adults, male adults and they don't care about being told what to do by a teacher or even their own mother or father. They might even be married at this age already at home and be starting their own family (Volunteer, 2010).

You have to remember as well that they are coming from a culture where at 17 it would not have been unusual for them to be married. They are getting to a point where they reckon themselves they could be or should be the heads of households. It's just a different mindset (Service provider, 2010).

The lack of a father figure in some households was also cited as a potential problem and many respondents expressed concern that they were dominating their mothers.

Some were definitely taking on the male role in the house and at times dominating their mother and telling her what to do (Service provider, 2010).

It is important to note that the gap in service provision for these older teenage boys was noted on several occasions by stakeholders in the Resettlement Programme and meetings were organised on several occasions to try and articulate the needs of the teenage boys and identify potential supports for them in the future. In addition to special Steering Committee meetings, several meetings were arranged with the schools for the parents, teachers and young people in order to go through school procedures and enhance communication in

various areas. The Resettlement Worker worked very closely over the year with the Education and Welfare Officer, the various schools, families and youth services. Recently, education progression plans have been made as regards the situation of a few of the boys. There is optimism among service providers that these new plans will be successful and enable the boys to reach their potential – ‘We are hopeful that this path will be the right one for them and they will settle more this year’ (Service Provider, 2010).

Future approaches

Some respondents felt that while it was important that the boys remain in education for as long as they could, there should also be an acknowledgment that formal education is not for everyone and providing targeted supports for employment should also be explored.

I think we need to work out an alternative for the ones that school is not going to work. And to get them engaged with something. Whatever that is, because there are lots of Irish students it doesn't work for, school is not for everyone, what do you do with them. We need something in place for them. We should go from where we are, not from where we would like to be (Volunteer, 2010).

Good for the whole community for them to get training on employment issues – the community scheme that was recently announced where people work in the community for the dole, that could a very good one for them (Volunteer, 2010).

With the older men, when we get them in some sort of employment setting, they can act as a role model for the younger guys. If this was to happen as soon as possible, it could be very beneficial (Service Provider, 2010).

As was outlined above, school presents young people with the opportunity for both formal and informal learning. It is the policy of the Department of Education to place young people who arrive later into the system into classes with others their own age. While inclusion into age-appropriate classes was felt to certainly have merits in terms of social integration, it was felt that this should not happen at the expense of academic advancement (Service provider,

2010). As one service provider put it ‘Just because they are in a uniform does not mean they have integrated’ (Service Provider, 2010). As a result, many respondents suggested this Department of Education policy should be reviewed in special cases and that periods of intensive individual English language supports for newly-arrived young people who would otherwise struggle if placed in senior classes, should be introduced.

Youth Services

The positive relationship that the Carlow Regional Youth Services (CRYS) developed with the young people over the course of the year was commended by many of the respondents in the research. CRYS offered a wide range of planned programmes and activities for the young people of the Rohingya community and managed to establish a trusting and meaningful relationship between them and the staff. It was felt that the Youth Services are familiar to dealing with young people that are socially excluded and may have poor attendance in school. The young people were frequent users of the Vault⁹ and felt very comfortable there:

Really like coming to the Vault (Rohingya young person, 2010).

Want to keep coming to the Vault for two years (Rohingya young person, 2010).

We go to the Vault. Like the food in the Vault (Rohingya young person, 2010).

In the Vault we enjoy it, playing games on computer, listening to music. When we get together in groups and have discussion (Rohingya young person, 2010).

⁹ ‘The Vault’ is Carlow’s first youth café set up by Carlow VEC and Carlow Regional Youth Services for the young people of the Carlow area (www.carlowys.ie).

Summer Programme

Shortly after the families arrived in Carlow in 2009, a summer programme was developed for the young people, in order for them to begin their initial integration into their new surroundings. Representatives of the Youth Services were members of the Steering Committee from the start and one also went on the initial visit to meet the families in Ballyhaunis. During this time, the young people were asked for their input about what content they would like to see in a summer programme and from that an eight week programme (25 hours a week) was designed. Young people attended the programme from 10am – 2pm and their daily timetable included such activities as sport, structured English lessons, games in English and group work. Staff observed that the young people initially had a tough time responding to the rules and working in mixed gender groups, but showed commitment and hard work in developing their team-building skills, their motor skills and overcoming these obstacles. In addition to the planned programme of activities, some day trips were organised as well for example to see the local dolmen, to the bowling alley and to the swimming pool. Advance planning on a regular basis on the part of the CRYS was a very important part of the programme. They observed how the young people responded to activities and games on a daily basis and carried out an evaluation at the end of every day. As a result, they were able to plan for the next day and respond to issues as they arose. The attendance for the summer programme was deemed to be ‘excellent’ by staff and many commented on how the young people were very eager to learn and experience new things. An obvious success of the programme was deemed to be the benefit to their language learning:

We noticed a huge difference in their English by the end of it. Many of the staff who had not been involved in the middle weeks could not believe the change in them

when they came back at the end. They are very interested in learning English and they should get as much support for this as possible (Service provider, 2010).

In addition to the summer programme, seasonal youth programmes were run at the Halloween, mid-term and Easter which included sport activities, arts and crafts and English language support. This provided the Rohingya young people with the opportunities to interact with their peers from the wider community and engage in activities such as GAA, music and drama.

Mentoring programme: A volunteer mentoring programme was also run during this time, where young people from the area provided peer support and guidance to the Rohingya young people. This was designed to assist their social and personal development and enable the young people to meet their peers in a more social and informal setting. 28 mentors from a range of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds took part in the programme and they were given support by CRYS in the areas of Leadership training, communication, intercultural awareness, facilitation skills and learning how to organise games and activities. Youth services commented that without the support of the mentors, it would have been much harder to implement the summer programme and other aspects of their work and their support and input into planning was very valued. However, staff also acknowledged that while the primary role of the mentors was to befriend the young people, at times their other responsibilities could be quite vague and due to their own personal and education commitments many were unable to stay involved in the programme after school started in September 2009.

Homework Support Clubs

In September 2009, the young people began to attend their formal education institutions and also had access to separate homework clubs for additional support with their new learning responsibilities. One group was for primary school students aged 8-12 and had eleven participants and the other was for post-primary students and had 13 participants. Students worked in these groups for two hours at a time. During these sessions, the young people would usually be split into two separate groups, with one doing a structured English lesson with the English teacher and the other doing an activity. Examples of such activities include arts and crafts, writing letters, making posters, painting mugs etc, with special effort being made to incorporate English language learning as well. Staff noted how talented the girls in particular were at arts and crafts, especially when it came to using fabric paints, 'they were amazing' (Service provider, 2010). Staff commented about how much the young people enjoyed learning English and the dedication they showed to their language learning and their desire to become fluent in the future and the progress they made in this area in terms of sentence construction and increased confidence levels.

Love the English class and help for homework (Rohingya young person, 2010).

The behaviour in the club was noted to be good from the young people, they showed understanding that homework was a necessary part of learning and responded well to the routine and structure of the group (Service Provider, 2010). However, staff noted some disparity about homework when it came to different students, in different class levels and in different schools. Some of the students were getting homework, some were not and some were getting different homework to that of their classmates. As a result, this led to some difficulties in the class.

It depended on the school. If the school was working well with them, they were working well. If they were lost in school, they had no motivation. It would be great if the teachers and the afterschools could link more. Sometimes we would know from the young people what was going on in school, sometimes we would talk to the teacher after school. It would be great if we could formalise that process a little more. For example, if the teachers knew they were coming to afterschools on particular days, they could make sure they had homework those days (Service provider, 2010).

Participation in the homework club has led to increased confidence and the ability to improve their written and verbal communication. It is planned that the Homework Club will continue next year for one day a week.

Additional support structures: Girls and boys youth groups met up separately on a weekly basis for counselling sessions with Folláine counselling service. They had access to 76 hours over a 10 month period. During this time, they met in the safe environment of the Youth Services and were able to develop a trusting relationship with professionals in the area. Issues were addressed on both an individual basis and as a group, and then young people who were identified as being in need of further support were referred on to other organisations and agencies. 'The young people have become stronger as both a group and individuals through having a space to discuss issues with counsellors and youth workers' (Progress Report, 2010). In addition to these sessions, the boys and girls have separate groups that have been set up to provide them with support in more general areas. 'Both groups are focusing on integration issues, personal development, recognising emotions, feelings and teamwork. The girls group are also looking at behaviour and dress code. So far the boys have been slower to engage in a group-work setting but are now beginning to see the benefit of the group' (Progress Report, 2009). Service providers felt that the girls were easier to engage from the beginning and are now more interested in activity type groups.

Bike Safety

An ongoing concern for many of the stakeholders involved in the research was that of bike safety for the young people.

Sometimes they are on the bikes and on phones at the same time. All of sudden, they are hugely visible and sometimes their knowledge of traffic isn't great. Initially it was very bad, but it has improved a lot (Volunteer, 2010).

Bike safety classes were organised by an Garda Síochána and Carlow County Council and very well attended. They focused on practical cycling safety and the workshops ran for six Monday afternoons. Service providers felt that while the classes were undoubtedly helpful, there is still work to be done in this area. In the context of recent vehicular fatalities in Carlow and the upcoming shorter winter evenings, it was suggested these classes be re-run in the near future (Service Provider, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is important to remember that, much like the adults, the young members of the Rohingya community are by no means a homogenous group, and there are vast differences to be seen in terms of ability, need and interests. In relation to childcare, parents were very grateful for the support that it provided them and it was identified as an important way for the young children to integrate into the local community. Experiences of school were mixed, with the majority of young people settling in and schools demonstrating great flexibility in relation to their commitments to the students. While some challenging behaviours have been identified in relation to the teenage boys, it is hoped that changes in their educational

circumstances will prove more beneficial to them this year. Young people showed great interest and commitment to their endeavours in Carlow Regional Youth Services. It was in this informal setting that they were able to learn more about Irish culture and traditions and many of the youth workers commented on their natural curiosity and interest about Ireland. The Vault was also acknowledged to be a place of support for some of the young people who had not engaged well in school.

- Staff and Management of Schools should have Anti-Racism and Intercultural Awareness Training within a specific education context
- At a national level, it is recommended that all schools should have an Anti-Racism Policy
- The Governments Intercultural Education Strategy will be launched this month and education stakeholders should familiarise themselves with new discourse in this area
- The importance of sport in the lives of young people should be acknowledged and future development of the project should explore accessing support from national organisations with experience of organising intercultural sporting pursuits (Show Racism the Red Card, Sport Against Racism Ireland).
- Bike Safety classes should be re-introduced
- Individual and targeted supports from the relevant agencies should continue to be provided to the teenage boys who have been identified as not engaging with school.

Volunteers (The Befriending Programme)

The benefits of social support for resettled refugees are well-documented (UNHCR, 2002) and the Befriending Programme certainly stands out as one of the major success stories of the Resettlement Programme in Carlow as a result of the social support it afforded the Rohingya community. This initiative was co-ordinated by the Carlow Volunteer Centre with the assistance of the Befriending Sub-group which included representatives from Carlow VEC, St. Catherine's, Carlow Regional Youth Services, The Integration Centre (formerly Integrating Ireland) and Carlow Community Development Partnership.

The Volunteers in Carlow helped the families build connections with their new community and helped to foster mutual empathy and cultural understanding. They served as a vehicle through which the Rohingya community were able to access wider social networks and develop closer supportive relationships.

Evidence shows that the earlier effective social supports are put in place, the more they prevent problems occurring later in the resettlement period when they become more complex to address (UNHCR, 2002). The Volunteers in Carlow were involved in the Resettlement Process from the very beginning. Publicity efforts were put in place to recruit volunteers including posters, media releases, web-based advertising. Sufficient numbers were recruited, interviewed and selected in advance of the arrival.

As time went on, more volunteers were added to the programme in order to help with the demands on their time.

There were two separate recruitment drives. Ran a second recruitment and training in the autumn after some of the initial volunteers had to finish up for which there was a reasonably good response. You could argue it was a harder sell than some of

the more mainstreaming befriending programmes, like befriending the elderly etc (Service provider, 2010).

The volunteers responded to the recruitment drive for a variety of different reasons:

I feel very fortunate, God has given me a lot, I wanted to give something back and help someone less fortunate than me (Volunteer, 2010).

I have been involved in other types of volunteering and other types of work, but I thought I wouldn't get this type of opportunity again (Volunteer, 2010).

I had more time of my hands as a result of getting sick. I was inactive and so wanted to volunteer on various activities. Also, I wanted to challenge some preconceptions that I had about Muslims (Volunteer, 2010).

I have always done voluntary work, I was interested in volunteering abroad, but with the recession, I thought there is plenty of work to be done at home to give a little back to people that have been less fortunate than ourselves (Volunteer, 2010).

Training

Every effort was made to ensure that as many bases were covered with the training for the volunteers as possible. Over a six week period (six sessions of two and a half hours each), training was delivered in the following areas: Cultural background and information, the political history of Burma, the issue of boundaries, the role of the Volunteer, Child protection, intercultural communication, Cultural Transition and Stress and Communication skills. In addition, a guest speaker was brought in to share their personal experience of resettlement and a representative of the Mosque provided an overview of Islam.

There was not much specific knowledge in advance about this group so we received general training about working with people from a very different culture and how you might deal with them. It was very good and interesting, not much specific knowledge about the Rohingyans themselves which was scary at the time, because you didn't know how different they were going to be and how that was going to manifest itself in the work (Volunteer, 2010).

The majority of the volunteers and indeed service providers as a whole found that the training provided was very helpful, but that it would have been better to have more specific information about the Rohingya community and also to have the language training before they had started working with the families.

The majority of the language training came at Christmas, so it would have been better to have this a bit earlier. We had been told in the training that we should not dumb down our language, but at that stage people were already developing bad language habits, leaving out extra words and things like that. The Cascade training was very good, very interesting, but might have been of more benefit if we had it earlier (Volunteer, 2010).

What I thought about the training was, in the initial group that was training, about twenty to start off with. I thought we needed more specific information about the Rohingya refugees and indeed about Burma. We still do. We have asked for it at the last evaluation as well. I think we gave up a lot of our time for the training, but I think we could have been given a little more (Volunteer, 2010).

The big piece of information which would have helped me understand them better, was the fact that they had no basic education. Either from Burma or from Bangladesh. As a result, when they came here, the information that they were getting here, in terms of the formal education and other information it was a bit of an overload for them. But I couldn't understand when I was trying to help them and show them how to do things, that they weren't always taking it in (Volunteer, 2010).

However, there was also an understanding that people involved in the Resettlement Programme process were all in the same boat as regards lack of information and they were doing all that they could do disseminate what few details were out there.

More knowledge would have been helpful but that knowledge wasn't there at the time and so what can you do? (Volunteer, 2010).

In addition to the training, very comprehensive guidelines were also issued to the volunteers, to make sure they were familiar with how the operational process should work. These included always working in pairs, never visiting a family where children are present

without the children parent or guardian present and not giving or accepting donations or gifts. Furthermore, volunteers were urged to respect the religious and cultural identity of the families and not to discuss the private or personal details of the families with anyone outside of the programme (Carlow Volunteer Centre, 2010). The issue of boundaries came up on many occasions over the course of the Befriending Programme and service providers responded to this issue by organising additional training sessions on this subject-matter for the Volunteers. It was recommended that any future training for new Volunteers would include a comprehensive session on this issue as well. It is important to mention that the ongoing management of the Volunteers was taken on by the Resettlement Worker once the training had been completed. Considerable support is provided to the Volunteers by the Resettlement Worker through regular Volunteer meetings (facilitating peer support) and providing support via phone calls. It is acknowledged that this on-going support greatly assisted the retention of volunteers in the programme and the need for such a contact person would be crucial in any future Resettlement Programme (Service Provider, 2010).

Support given to families

In the immediate post-arrival period, the families were recognised to have intensive support needs and the support given to the families by the volunteers during this time was therefore varied and wide-ranging. Some of the areas highlighted in the focus group included technical support with appliances in the home, for example the washing machine, light bulbs and plumbing, cultural support in the form of explaining things about Ireland, practical support with the household management in terms of kitchen hygiene, organising bins, help with shopping etc. In addition to this, much help was needed preparing households with

children for school, especially in the run up to new school terms. But of course, the most immediate and pressing area in need of assistance was in relation to communication issues.

They have all gotten on brilliantly. It was never going to happen a year. It could be frustrating sometimes because some of the things you want them to get a handle on you want them but it doesn't always happen just because you want it to. But there was so much they needed to learn, it was never going to happen in a short time. (Volunteer, 2010).

Since July (2009), I have visited the family once a week. In pairs, we do whatever we can for them. You help with the house, things we take for granted, show them how to use some of the appliances. It was very important to talk to them as they were only starting to learn English at that point. Just about anything they had an issue with. All the issues were different. You had to be pretty flexible in your approach to whatever they needed. Practical based issues were the ones that came up the most (Volunteer, 2010).

Challenges

The Volunteers encountered many challenges over the course of the Befriending Programme, many as a result of the gap between what were the perceived needs of the families at the beginning of the process and what turned out to be their actual needs.

From feedback talking to other people involved in other volunteering programme around the country, for example the Congolese, their level of need for help and assistance seems to be poles apart from other people in similar enough situations (Volunteer, 2010).

Language and communication was obviously a huge factor for them to contend with as well. Communication about everyday issues was further hampered by the low levels of educational attainment on the part of the Rohingyas.

Made it very difficult and frustrating at times. Mentally exhausting to sometimes try and achieve the smallest thing. But we got there. And it was great fun at times (Volunteer, 2010).

They didn't have a word of English and we didn't have a word of Bangla. One was as bad as the other! (Volunteer, 2010).

Cultural differences played a part in their involvement with the families also. One or two of the volunteers mentioned how it could be frustrating sometimes the parameters that they had to work within. They found it hard at times to 'resist giving advice' especially sometimes when they didn't like 'the way some of the older boys treated women' (Volunteer, 2010). They also felt a lot of 'nervousness' and 'trepidation' (St. Catherine's 2010a) at the start of the programme. They described it as being difficult to see the families struggle with issues like isolation and the lack of religious support they were expecting. Both of these issues are looked at in greater depth in other sections of this report.

However, in the face of all of these challenges, what really came through in the research was the respect and admiration that the Volunteers had for how the families approached their new lives.

New country, looks different, different food, faith, people, learning how to live in houses, social welfare how you do this etc. The sheer amount of stuff they had to take in was challenging for all involved on all levels. They dealt incredibly well with everything, it would have had to be overwhelming at times. They were a great help to each other as well (Volunteer, 2010).

Benefits of the Befriending Programme

It was not just the families that benefitted from the Befriending Programme, it was a mutually enjoyable experience.

Relationship has changed. Was a volunteer, now a friend (Volunteer, 2010).

Primarily, the relationship that has developed between the families and the volunteers does appear to be a genuinely close relationship. Volunteers have remained extremely committed. There is usually quite a high turnover in volunteer programme, but in this case they are still a very core active group. The regular

support meetings and the ongoing training have been a successful part of why this happened (Service provider, 2010).

Volunteers had many glowing things to say about how they would view their involvement in the programme. They found the experience 'rewarding', 'enjoyable', they were 'proud to be a part of it'. Moreover, it afforded them the opportunity to see 'the world through someone else's eyes, it 'showed them how to give' and gave them the 'gift of friendship – which is still giving' (Volunteers, 2010).

I am really happy with the fact that we were part of helping them to settle, sometimes you look back and say did I actually do anything, but just the fact that they have gotten more settled and we were a part of that. We are their friends (Volunteers, 2010).

You are a friend now. There for the good days and the bad (Volunteer, 2010).

The families themselves were delighted with the volunteering programme and anecdotal evidence would suggest that they recognised the fact that the volunteers were working in a different capacity than other stakeholders in the project. They knew that the volunteers had a different motivation than those that were working in an employed capacity and that really they were there as their friends.

Very happy
Happy when they come, though not often enough
So happy, very good people, concerns about the future and continuation of support
Very good volunteers we get a lot of help
Very happy
Very good, come every week, good for the children's English
Very happy
My daughter loves their visit
I am very happy, they dance and sing (St. Catherine's, 2010)

There was a 'huge amount of buy in and support' when it came to the Befriending Programme (Service provider, 2010). The message that was sent out to the families and the

local community was that they were very welcome in Carlow and 'that type of messaging is much more powerful than an article in the paper' (Service provider, 2010).

Future of the programme

Finding ways to move the relationship between the families and the volunteers forward is a concern for all those involved with the befriending programme:

Always looking for activities that they could do with the families. Arts and crafts with children, looking for resources, training to carry out art. First aid. Gardening and music. Activity focus. Have to be creative all the time. Don't want to be going shopping with them all the time constantly looking for new things to do (Volunteer, 2010).

See a real need to continue with the volunteer programme, volunteers will really need support as well. There needs to be a contact person to support the volunteers. To provide for activities, to move on to a more befriending programme that sees people as more equals, rather than the helped and helpes (Service provider, 2010).

Hopefully organise a joint project where families and volunteers work together side by side in a skills exchange (Service Provider, 2010).

I would like to change it a little bit. I think the Rohingyans have moved on so much with basic stuff that I would like to help them in some other way. I don't know exactly yet. Maybe... at one stage it was talked about doing some gardening work or something like that with them. I wouldn't mind assisting them with that as a project. The level of support given needs to broaden out a bit and adapt over time (Volunteer, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Supportive social relationships help to prevent the marginalisation of refugee communities and should be considered an integral part of any Resettlement Programme. The Resettlement Programme in Kilkenny also reported that their Volunteering programme was a huge success and that the Sudanese families all engaged with and benefitted from the befriending programme. The Befriending Programme in Carlow was successful due to a

number of factors including the considerable advance planning and the structures that were put in place to enable the volunteers to do their work. It is also essential to note the personal commitment and energy of the volunteers themselves.

- That the Befriending sub-group of the Steering Committee should be continued
- For future resettlement programmes, it is recommended that training in relation to language issues should take place before volunteers meet the families and the more general training should be ongoing throughout the process
- Support and resource a member of the Rohingya community to be able to deliver a presentation about their background and culture and religion to volunteers

Social and Cultural Needs

The social and cultural pursuits of the Rohingyas may not appear to be the most pressing area of concern in their daily lives as basic needs in the areas of health, language and education continue to take priority. However a holistic approach to integration should continue to be adopted in order for wants as well as needs to be met and the spheres of social and cultural life must be addressed in order for a comprehensive strategy for the future of the programme to be developed. The cultural differences that have arisen for the Rohingyas in the first year of the resettlement have been immense and so this section will outline some of the main areas that service providers should be aware of when planning for future initiatives.

Social Life

Refugees can experience a sense of isolation for many reasons. This may include lack of contact with family members back home, a sense of not belonging to the community where they live and general uncertainty about the future. Some sections of the refugee population may be more vulnerable than others, for example women who stay at home, single mothers, older people or people with illnesses. Isolation and poor social networks were recognised as a fundamental problem facing people in both the urban and rural areas of Carlow according to the socio-economic profile (Beston, 2009).

As has been already outlined in the Health Section, many respondents in the research frequently referred to the traumatised status of the Rohingya and the persecution and discrimination they have endured in the past. Learning from the Kilkenny Sudanese Resettlement Programme stated that keeping people occupied outside of their classes and

helping them establish a life here is a really big priority and something that other resettlements have found to be a real challenge (KSRP, 2009). As a result, it is fair to say promoting healthy social and leisure pursuits among the community is not a straightforward endeavour.

It should be acknowledged that refugees' normal life cycle has been interrupted by difficult experiences and therefore adapting in a very new and strange environment is not always easy. While supporting refugees in all areas of life, provision must be made to compensate the gap between the former and the new lives of the refugees (SPIRASI, 2010). Many service providers pointed to the unsuitability of Irish socialising norms and to the fact that they have been separated from the support structures they are accustomed to. The Rohingyas do not go to pubs or restaurants in the same way that Irish people do and an emerging observation from the research is that the Rohingyas tend to socialise exclusively within their own community and within their own homes, in particular for special occasions and family events. Over the first year of the Resettlement Programme, great efforts were made to ensure that several events and outings were organised for the families in order for them to feel more at home in their new surroundings.

The most obvious example of this is the Welcome Reception and Intercultural Exchange that took place on the 9th December, 2009 and was co-ordinated by the Carlow County Development Board. The evening consisted of formal speeches, followed by a buffet meal and an intercultural exchange involving music, song and dance. Three members of the community got the chance to speak publicly and share their feelings with the audience. 'The impact that it had was that the families understood that the event was for them, they were the guests of honour and they really felt welcomed in Carlow' (Progress Report, 2009). The

welcome event was seen as powerful statement of intent on the part of all the local stakeholders involved in its organisation by showing that they recognise the value of having the Rohingyas in the town and the contributions they make to Carlow. The event was very well attended and received a lot of positive coverage in the media.

It was all run very well especially the Christmas party (*Welcome Reception*) that everyone was invited to. Everyone enjoyed it. The social element worked very well and it will be along social lines that the integration will happen in the future (Service provider, 2010).

Other intercultural days, intended to promote intercultural understanding are planned for the future.

In addition to the Welcome Reception, a series of Family Fun Days were planned to provide the families with enjoyable and informal outings. Trips were made to Oisín House; Killeslin and the Dome; Kilkenny; Tramore Beach; Dublin Zoo and the Islamic Cultural Centre and Burial Ground in Newcastle. There was very good attendance from the families as well as from the staff of the childcare centre and youth services, as well as many of the volunteers and the trips were deemed to be very successful. Another event that was mentioned as having a huge impact on the families was the visit of Minister Mary White T.D. to St. Catherine's in July. The families appreciated the opportunity to meet and speak to the Minister and they really enjoyed the experience.

The fact that the Rohingya community were able to meet the Minister in such a way, coming from a country where their own government disowned and persecuted them, is a highly symbolic thing (Service Provider, 2010).

Culture and Leisure

As has been outlined in the Religion Section, the Rohingyas are a conservative Muslim group and as a result, their religious identity has a clear impact on other areas of their social and cultural life. An obvious example of this can be seen in relation to food habits.

The food we eat and the food that Irish people eat is very different. Mostly rice and curry, and meat which is halal food. But there is no halal food in Carlow and we have to go to Dublin (Rohingya male, 2010).

They were funny sometimes about the food, asking if it was halal food. If the older children said not to eat something, the younger ones would not either (Service provider, 2010).

The families showed great enterprise by organising trips to Dublin to get halal food in bulk and get it delivered back to Carlow. They buy a lot of frozen food and store it in freezers for the month. However, some concern was growing among the community at the rise in food prices in the shop in Clondalkin that they go to:

At the beginning, a bag of rice was 20 euro and now it is 28 euro. Prices have gone up very quickly over the year. The shop has raised prices a lot. They say it is because of the international market, all prices gone up. Also, it is 300 euro for the cost of travel to get the food (Rohingya male, 2010).

Another area of cultural interest relates to sport, the families have organised to play football amongst themselves and this has been enjoyable for them. Their real interest lies in cricket and St. Catherine's and CRYs have arranged a number of trips to Bagenalstown Cricket Club which were regarded as successful and enjoyable. At the moment, the boys and men are playing cricket in the County Carlow Football Club and have organised themselves well in this regard. Sport endeavours are important, not just to increase health and physical fitness,

but to promote teamwork and camaraderie that can result in a heightened sense of belonging for refugees especially.

Society is a game that we must play to be fully involved members, but games are a microcosm of society where people learn and play society with each other (Horna, 1994)

Therefore, it is important that an effort be made in future phases of the Resettlement Programme to continue to enable the families to participate in sports endeavours on a regular basis and initiatives like Girls soccer in the CRYs and the Men's soccer in the VEC continue to be supported.

Cultural Differences

Service providers participating in the initial stages of the Resettlement Programme, recounted that many people were very nervous in the early days of the Resettlement as they 'they did not know how to act around the families and were afraid of inadvertently insulting their culture' (Service Provider, 2010). While many significant differences exist between Irish and Rohingya culture, many respondents also spoke about their surprise that more such problems did not arise in the early days. 'Did not anticipate that there would be so few problems in that regard as there were. We were expecting big time more issues to arise' (Service Provider, 2010). Anecdotes about cultural differences in relation to greetings, timekeeping, family celebrations and gender roles were all shared by respondents with the common conclusion that there was high level of mutual 'fascination' and 'curiosity' between groups.

As has been mentioned in a previous section of the report, many aspects of the social and cultural lives of the Rohingyas are determined by religious orthodoxy, including marriage. Over the course of the year, many legal and administrative issues in relation to marriage

arose for the Rohingyas in Carlow. The recognition of 'Talaq' divorces and the impossibility of legally remarrying in Ireland were some concerns for the families and for service providers working closely with them. As this is currently a concern for many other migrants in Ireland, it is recommended that legislative review is needed in this area. Parents in the Rohingya community were also concerned about being able to find suitable Muslim partners for their children in the future.

Prejudice and Discrimination

In recent research, colour was widely recognised as a signifier of difference (Ni Chonail, 2009) and groups who were deemed to be more 'visible' than others as a result of their 'non-white' appearance, experienced higher levels of discrimination. In November 2006, the ESRI published Ireland's first large-scale, nationally representative survey of immigrants' experiences of racism and discrimination. 35% of those surveyed reported that they had experienced harassment on the street or in public places, 32% of work permit holders reported insults or harassment at work and 21% reported discrimination in access to employment. The visibility of racism in all sectors of Irish society has been highlighted in other reports (Lynch, 2008) and by the rise in the number of racist incidents being reported to the Gardai (66 in 2004, 180 in 2007) (Watt, 2008).

In the focus group, the families outlined some of their negative experiences in Carlow:

Irish people are very good. But again there are good people and bad people. Good people always give more help. Bad people...sometimes we do have some incidents, bad language and stop on the road. There have been some racial incidents. Community should be told about this new different ethnic group in Carlow (Rohingya female, 2010).

Personally, I was unhappy, I have been hit by local boys (Rohingya male, 2010).

Sometimes people kick the door. Some girls go shopping, grab hair and clothes. Some abuses, yes (Rohingya female, 2010).

Where possible, the Rohingyas said they try not to react to these incidents:

Because, in Burma, we were tortured and life was horrible, here, if people do something wrong to us, if it is only a small thing, we try to forget (Rohingya male, 2010).

Respect them, believe they respect us. We don't do anything to them. Want to continue to get their respect and hope there will be no more problem (Rohingya male, 2010).

While in Ballyhaunis, they train us that if someone hits you, you don't do the same thing back. Back home we would have smashed each other. Even if we want to here, we don't do that. We want to live peaceful here (Rohingya male, 2010).

Crime

Many of the members of the Rohingya community have also been victims of minor crime over the course of the year:

Lots of bikes stolen sometimes from houses (Rohingya male, 2010).

Bikes stolen, nearly ten bikes stolen even when they are locked. Some bins stolen as well. In one house, cement was put into the lock. Suffering, not doing anything aggressively back. In another area, they throw bottles or stones at window, window smashed (Rohingya male, 2010).

When some boy hit my son. Very unhappy about this kind of incident (Rohingya female, 2010).

The families appear more inclined to report these incidents to St. Catherine's first before taking it any further:

Tell people in St. Catherine's (Rohingya female, 2010).

We report to St. Catherine's and rely on them to tell the guards. (Rohingya male, 2010).

We don't have the English to speak to the guards ourselves (Rohingya female, 2010).

At times, there appeared to be a feeling of dissatisfaction among the families that some of these incidents had not been resolved and that they need further information about the criminal justice system and how it works.

Incident still ongoing, bikes are stolen, when going to the park we are targeted by other teenagers. We go to the guards, and guards were looking for proof. Who they were, where do they live. They say with no proof, we can't do anything (Rohingya male, 2010).

Support from an Garda Síochána

It should be noted that on many occasions the Rohingya community spoke of their gratitude to an Garda Síochána and the positive relationship and trust that has developed between them over the course of their first year in Carlow:

In one year, we make a lot of mistakes, but we have learnt lots as well. But the Guards have forgiven us and explain everything to us. We get on well with the guard and have very good relations. It is a small town, we all together. Respect each other. (Rohingya male, 2010).

Like many frontline service providers, an Garda Síochána have demonstrated immense levels of commitment to their work in relation to the Resettlement Programme. Their involvement in the bike safety classes for young people, the regular 'check-ins' they conducted with the families in the initial stages of the resettlement and a tour of the station that was organised for the teenage boys were all cited as instances of their support in this area. The wide-ranging assistance they gave the families during the severe weather conditions in the winter of 2009 was another example mentioned by many of the

respondents. It was felt that the Gardaí demonstrated good practice in relation to many issues of prevention and that future resettlement programmes can learn a lot to their approach to their work as a member of the Interagency team.

I would highly commend the work of the Gardaí, their prompt responses to requests for assistance and their sensitivity in dealing with the families. They were an integral part of the multi-agency approach (Service Provider, 2010).

Family Reunification

A significant need emerging in this sphere is for further information relating to the entitlement to family reunification. As outlined in the Context and Background section, the well-being of relatives left behind in the camps in Bangladesh is still a cause of anxiety for many Rohingyas and as a result they asked on several occasions what their rights and entitlements are in this context. However, family reunification does not appear to be a priority for governments when it comes to programme refugees. UNHCR report 2009 found that of the three key elements of integration (legal, economic and social) that there is clearly less emphasis on ensuring the legal aspects of integration in current EU and national trends and that no country researched as part of the report emphasised facilitation of family reunification as part of their integration efforts (UNHCR, 2009: 10).

Still have hope about family reunification. Still trying to get in contact with people in Burma and Bangladesh (Rohingya male, 2010).

All the families are in danger, there is always crisis and life is troubling in the camp (Rohingya, female, 2010).

We hope that lots of family members in the camp. Bring more over family members. Still life unhappy. We are now here, now safe, life is dangerous for other family members (Rohingya female, 2010).

We want to know if we can bring family over from Bangladesh (Rohingya female, 2010).

It should be noted that efforts were made by the Steering Committee to clarify the families' rights to family reunification with a representative from the Office of the Minister for Integration who attended a Steering Committee meeting and outlined the potential problems that may occur in the process, including the backlog of applications at the moment.

According to Section 18(3) of the Refugee Act¹⁰, 1996 (as amended) a refugee has the right to apply to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform for family reunification. Under Section 18 (3)(b) a member of the family constitutes the spouse of a refugee and children who are under 18 years of age and are not married. This means it would not apply to members of the extended family, such as siblings, aunts, uncles etc. It is also important to note that Ireland is not signed up to the EU Family Reunification Directive which provide protections relating to the status of spouses and family members in the event of marital breakdown. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform can also grant permission to a dependent member of the family of a refugee to enter and reside in the state. According to Section 18(4)(b) a dependent member of the family is: any grandparent, parent, brother, sister, child, grandchild, ward or guardians of the refugee who is dependent on the refugee or is suffering from mental or physical disability to such an extent that it is not reasonable for him or her to maintain himself or herself fully. But it is unlikely that any member of the Rohingya community would qualify for this method of family reunification as dependency in this context is usually considered along financial lines. It also warrants mentioning that if a refugee becomes an Irish citizen then they automatically lose their family reunification entitlements because Irish citizens do not have a statutory right to family reunification. It is recommended that a refresher workshop on the issue of family reunification be organised

¹⁰ Available at www.orac.ie

for the families in order to remind them of the legal complexities of the issue and to outline that it is a slow and problematic process, of which they have no guarantee of resolution.

Integration

Debates surrounding the concept of integration are complex and multi-faceted. Integration is not a static concept and can mean different things in different contexts. MacEinrí (2007) has noted that dialogue in new immigration societies like Ireland, who only reached their 'migration turning point' (Ruhs, 2005) in 1996, concentrated until recently on who gains entry to a country, but has now shifted towards the topic of integration and the whole issue of what happens to people once they have arrived in Ireland (2007: 215). This is brought up in the context of the Rohingya resettlement because many stakeholders during the research process expressed an interest in learning more about current discourse on integration and how integration can be carried out most successfully. As plans for the future of the Resettlement Programme take shape, it is hoped that some of the points in this section will contribute to the future thinking on what integration means and will be of some assistance to practitioners implementing strategies with the families in the future.

The Irish government, in keeping with literature in the area has described integration as a two way process, 'that places duties and obligations on both cultural and ethnic minorities and the State to create a more inclusive society' (DJELR, 2005: 38). The UN¹¹ also views integration in this way:

Local integration in the refugee context is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process, which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on

¹¹ UNHCR Executive Committee conclusion No 104

the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population (UNHCR, 2008).

However, while integration is clearly a two-way process, it is also important to remember that the host society has a lot more power in this interaction and the government must take the lead in the communication of integration expectations. In the integration strategy produced by the Office of the Minister for Integration in May 2008, there is acknowledgement of the 'leading role the government must play' and the supports they should provide to migrants in Ireland by way of strong anti-racism policies and measures.

In recent years, many think-tanks have designed so-called 'Integration Indicators' which attempt to measure the importance of some of the main factors associated with migrants settling into a new country. These often include speaking one of the official languages of the country, finding employment, adapting to culture, participating in civic life, no ghettoisation in terms of housing; many of which have been outlined in detail in this report.

Some of the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration policy in the EU also stress the importance of these aspects of social life:

- Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrant to contributions immigrant make to the host society and to making such contributions visible.
 - Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration as is enabling immigrants to attain this information.
 - Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens
 - Practise of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the charter of fundamental rights and must be safeguarded
 - Participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures.
- (Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union, 2005).

In terms of the specifics and complexities of the refugee experience the UNHCR Handbook (2002) also formulates nine clear integration goals which are:

- to restore security, control and social and economic independence
- to promote the capacity to rebuild a future
- to promote family reunification and other supporting relationships
- to connect with those who can offer support
- to restore confidence in political systems and institutions
- to promote cultural and religious integrity
- to counter racism and discrimination
- to support development of cohesive refugee communities and
- in doing so ensuring that this is for refugees irrespective of age, gender or other diversifying factors.

The setting of goals is very important for any successful resettlement programme as is the monitoring and evaluation of these goals. According to the UNHCR (2009) the process of integration is a legal, economic and social and cultural one. In the context of the Rohingya resettlement, many of the goals¹² in the legal process have been met and so the focus for the future integration goals may shift to the economic, social and cultural spheres.

Integration should result in the achievement of the necessary competencies of the host society at a practical level and a feeling of belonging at an emotional level. 'The ability to participate in Irish society to the extent that a person needs, and wishes, in all the major components of society without having to relinquish his or her cultural identity' (IWGIRI in ICI, 2007). This idea of not having to relinquish cultural identity is important in the context of the Rohingya resettlement, where the issue of assimilation remains a concern (SPIRASI, 2010).

¹² A legal concern in the context of the future of the Rohingya Resettlement Programme may revolve around the issue of family reunification.

As we have seen, Integration is not a static concept, but clearly a more complex process whereby there are legal, economic and social and cultural considerations. Literature would suggest that Integration can be understood as both as the end result of a process and as the process itself. In Carlow, it might be easier to think of integration as an ongoing process rather than the endgame, as the complexities and the uniqueness of the Rohingya experience have shown that stakeholders have to constantly change and adapt their approach as issues arise. Integration takes place primarily at the local level and as the programme moves into future stages of development, the families should be involved in the consultation process and have significant input into the decision making process.

Recommendations

- There may be a need for a seminar or refresher course with a migrant rights organisation on broader rights and entitlements, especially in relation to family reunification

Section Three

Conclusion

Conclusion

Future Plans

Just over a year ago, the Rohingya community began the process of building their lives in Carlow. This report has documented the main learning from this period and has reflected on the narratives of both the service providers and the families themselves. In this section, it is now necessary to examine the future of the programme and outline some of the possible directions that the stakeholders wish it to take. It is appropriate to commence this process by examining the narratives of the Rohingya community. The Rohingyas are very grateful and appreciative of all the actions that have been taken on their behalf and are largely positive about their future in Carlow.

In Carlow, in the year, there have been lots of problems, some incidents. But we are very settled here. We don't want to move to another place where we have to start again and have more types of problems (Rohingya male, 2010).

We like to stay in Carlow, but if there is a mosque and burial place and a religious school. Maybe move to Dublin in the future if not (Rohingya young person, 2010).

I want to stay in Carlow (Rohingya female, 2010).

Really appreciate all the support. Thanks to St. Catherine's and the Irish Government (Rohingya male, 2010).

It is interesting to note that while the majority of the young people feel very settled in Carlow, they are still think about Bangladesh and spoke of their interest in returning for a visit some day:

I hope to go back to Bangladesh for visit (Rohingya young person, 2010).

We came from Bangladesh, we were born there, really like it, would like to go back for visit (Rohingya young person, 2010).

It also warrants mentioning that during discussions about the future, there was noticeable concern among the families about the continuation of supports from the Resettlement Programme. While funding for the next two years of the programme has been secured since the data was originally collected, it is still important to record how uncertainty about the future impacted on the families anxiety levels.

As single mother, need more support than some families. If St. Catherine's not helping us, who will? Looking for continuation of same support. Happy so far but worried about the future (Rohingya female, 2010).

For one year we have had the support of St. Catherine's and we really, really appreciate that. We have heard that there is no fund coming through for St. Catherine's in the future and we are very worried. For us to be able to manage everything on our own will cost more money (Rohingya male, 2010).

Concerns about future, end of programme, where to go for support. Happy with the service provided by St. Catherine's and hoping it will continue. If support not available in St. Catherine's would not know where to go (Rohingya female, 2010).

Context-Specific Learning

The Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme can be considered unique in comparison to other resettlement programmes for several reasons. Firstly, the achievements of the Interagency committee and St. Catherine's as implementing partner are widely acknowledged to have contributed to the overall success of the project. The quality of planning that was done in preparation for the families arrival and the ongoing stewardship of the Steering Committee ensured that as issues arose, they were reacted to and dealt with promptly and comprehensively. The practical support received from the Office of the Minister for Integration was also appreciated by frontline staff and it enabled them to be clear about their responsibilities to the programme and the accompanying administrative work (Service Provider, 2010). At every juncture, the approach to the work was holistic and

the representatives of all the agencies on the Steering Committee should be commended for the additional time they gave to their duties in this regard.

Secondly, the Rohingyas themselves must be acknowledged as a unique group in the context of other migrant communities in Ireland. The complexities of their cultural history and background, the pervasiveness of their persecution and the intricacies of their identity all contribute to making them unlike any other ethnic group in the country. All of these factors, combined with an average educational attainment of 2.24 years, meant that planning based on their 'perceived needs' in the initial phases had to be noticeably re-adjusted when their actual needs were determined to be much more fundamental. 'At the start of year two, they are nowhere near where we thought they would be' (Service Provider, 2010). This is best illustrated in the way that certain services planned for uptake in the first year of the resettlement had to be postponed until service providers believed that the families were ready for them and that they would be of benefit to them. It warrants mentioning at this stage of the report that the research respondents frequently commented on how they enjoyed working with the families and spoke highly of their 'spirit', 'strength' and 'survival skills' (Service Providers, 2010). Others described them as 'smashing people' and 'just the loveliest people you could meet' (Service Providers, 2010).

Future Development of the Resettlement Programme

Resettlement is not a process that simply ends with the transfer of a refugee and their family to a new country. The integration that happens after the initial phase of the resettlement is crucial to ensure that the refugees are empowered to become independent and productive members of society. As we have seen from the narratives above, the

majority of the Rohingya community have no immediate plans to move from the Carlow area and as a result, the future of the programme should continue to be considered in a long-term context. The following is a review of some of the main factors research respondents believe should impact on the development of the project going forward:

Timeframe: Many stakeholders in the research felt that there should be an acknowledgement that integration on this scale presents real challenges and that a year in this context should be considered a relatively short amount of time. As a result, it was felt that future plans should not be rushed, practitioners need time to review their contributions and plan a realistic vision for the future. 'Integration requires time and must be flexible to be able to enable all members of the refugee community to integrate at their own pace... The receiving community also requires time to make adaptations which will facilitate integration, not assimilation to occur' (SPIRASI, 2010).

Heterogeneity of the families: Throughout this report, it important to bear in mind that while the findings may be presented in a general sense, the Rohingya community should not be considered to be a homogenous collective. In fact, the families originally came from two different camps in Bangladesh and these two separate groups did not even meet each other until the start of the resettlement process. Since arrival in Carlow, individuals have adapted to their new surroundings in different ways.

Some people have settled in better than others. They are like chalk and cheese (Volunteer, 2010).

Like Irish families, every one of them operates differently and it depends on how many children they have and lots of other factors like that (Volunteer, 2010).

As a result, it is felt that the programme going forward will need to offer initiatives and proposals that are tailored more to individual needs.

Current level of need: While there are certainly marked differences in the experiences and capacities of individual members of the Rohingya community, it is also clear that the group as a whole are still in need of assistance in many areas of their lives.

The idea is obviously to empower the families so that gradually they become more independent and self-reliant. The problem is that they are not quite there yet. They need continued assistance and that intense level of support is needed for the next two years minimum I would say (Service provider, 2010).

They still do need help. No doubt about it (Volunteer, 2010).

SPIRASI (2010) outline further details into their distressed state and point to relevant literature in the area which states that trauma can continue to reveal itself even in the later stages of a resettlement process. The families are still presenting as a very vulnerable group and as a result may need sustained support in the foreseeable future.

Dependency concerns: A common conceptual dilemma existed among some of the research respondents who work closely with the families. Simply put, they felt while it is clear the Rohingya community are still in need of a great deal of support in the next phase of the programme, they want to ensure that whatever approach is taken to this support will be conducive to the long-term independence of the group.

We need to find the fine balance between continuing the intense support that is obviously needed and creating dependency for the future' (Service Provider, 2010).

We don't want to pull the carpet out from under them but at the same time we need to plan for the future (Service Provider, 2010).

Learning from other programmes: The Kilkenny Sudanese Resettlement Programme has been a source of great support for many agencies involved in the Rohingya Resettlement Programme. Many stakeholders suggested examining in closer detail some of the approaches they took to the phased-out support for the Sudanese refugees as part of their

exit strategy. This included forming a Sudanese Association in the locality and mainstreaming much of the support they were originally given in the early stages of the resettlement. They also staged a series of open-invitation meetings where people from the interagency work and the local community could come along and contribute to the planning. Some service providers suggested that establishing a similar integration forum could work well in the context of Carlow, where stakeholders could harness some of the positivity and energy that has characterised the Rohingya resettlement and turn it into a broader integration initiative that would benefit the wider community in the long-term. However, it is important to note that research indicates that a lot more support will be needed in Carlow during this phase than was needed for the Kilkenny Sudanese Resettlement, as a result of the context-specific needs of the Rohingya community.

Partnership Approach: The overwhelming majority of stakeholders were in agreement that whatever form the future development takes, it must involve the Rohingya community as equal partners. A key component moving forward is to engage the families in the decision making process and to ensure that their voices are heard. This partnership approach should foster conditions that support their integration potential, where they feel they can play an active part in the planning and have a sense of ownership over the implementation.

Exit Strategy: Again, the majority of stakeholders interviewed were in agreement that while it is essential to think ahead, it might not be possible to formulate an official exit strategy at this relatively early stage of the programme. As the new round of funding begins to be allocated, it is important for all of the above factors to be taken into account to then design an exit strategy with clear goals and targets. However, until the long-term financial support of the programme is articulated and service providers are working in equal partnership with

the families, the exact content of this exit strategy is difficult to gauge. In this context it is important to note that while the commitment from all the stakeholders in the resettlement for the future of the programme is not in question, the long-term sustainability of their efforts may be affected in a climate of budgetary cutbacks and constraints.

Summary position

The first year of the Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme was both a challenging and rewarding experience for the many service providers involved and a hectic, yet gratifying one for the families themselves. Migration Nation (2008) places certain expectations on the migrant individual to integrate into the host society, but this approach might be easier in its conceptualisation than in its implementation. The survey element of the UNHCR report (2009) of refugees in Ireland found that a significant number of participants felt that they had not been sufficiently supported in their efforts to integrate. However, it is very clear that the Rohingya refugees in Carlow have received personalised, flexible and practical support from all agencies involved in the Resettlement Programme. The Carlow Rohingya Resettlement Programme is a unique initiative on the Irish intercultural spectrum and because of this it has elements of complexity to which full justice cannot be done within a short report of this nature. It is evident however, that as a result of the dedication and commitment of all parties involved, it is a programme worthy of unequivocal support in the future.

Appendix 1.1. List of Research Participants¹³

- An Garda Síochána
- Carlow County Council, Housing Authority
- Carlow County Council, Community and Enterprise
- Carlow County Development Board
- Carlow County Development Partnership, Social Inclusion Division
- Carlow Regional Youth Services
- Carlow Volunteer Centre
- Community Welfare
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Health Service Executive
- Integration Centre
- Kilkenny-Sudanese Resettlement Programme
- Local primary and post-primary schools
- Local G.P's
- National Education Welfare Board
- Public Health Nurse Service, Community Care
- Ridwanlilahi Islamic Mosque of Carlow
- St. Catherine's Community Services
- St. Catherine's Community Services Childcare Centre
- The Integration Centre
- Women's Aid, Carlow

¹³ On several occasions, more than one representative of each of the above agencies was interviewed

Appendix 1.2

List of agencies represented on the Steering Committee

- Carlow Local Authorities
- Carlow County Development Partnership
- St Catherine's Community Services Centre
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Carlow Regional Youth Services
- Health Service Executive
- Carlow County Childcare Committee
- Department of Education and Skills
- An Garda Síochána
- Carlow Women's Aid
- Barnardos
- County Carlow VEC
- Carlow and South Leinster Rape Crisis Centre
- National Education Welfare Board
- MABS
- Integration Centre
- Carlow Adult Learning Centre
- Carlow Women's Aid
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Carlow Citizen's Information Centre
- National Education Welfare Board

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