

## KADE PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT TED KEANE

### “Training on awareness raising in the workplace regarding refugees, asylum seekers, racism and discrimination issues”

#### **Project Basis**

KADE (Kerry Action for Development Education) published a report in 2002 entitled '*Local Issues with Global Connections, the relevance of refugee and asylum issues for local authorities in County Kerry*'.

The report included a series of recommendations to develop and enhance the interface between the Local Authorities in Kerry and the asylum seeker & refugee community in the county. These may be summarised as:

- ⊙ Reflecting on the role of local authorities in developing a more civic society, the report recommended that the local authority in Kerry take a leadership role in creating and supporting a positive climate of tolerance and celebration of diversity in the county.
- ⊙ The local authority needed to continue to meet its responsibilities regarding its legislative obligations and continue its work in meeting the obligations set out under national framework plans.
- ⊙ The report pointed to the role that the local authority has in influencing public opinion in Kerry, and recommended that the local authority promote a positive attitude to refugees and asylum seekers in the county.
- ⊙ The report highlighted the importance of including refugees and asylum seekers in future policy making and recommended that the local authority plan for diversity in a proactive way, including refugees and asylum seekers in the policy making process.
- ⊙ That staff of statutory agencies take part in training and awareness raising programmes on diversity and experiences, needs and backgrounds of refugees and asylum seekers in Kerry.
- ⊙ The need to raise awareness of the global dimension to refugee and asylum issues was also highlighted, specifically in relation to becoming informed about that global dimensions to asylum and refugee issues, thereby increasing understanding and empathy of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the local communities.
- ⊙ A need to build links with and Support for Refugee Support Groups and Development Education Centres in Kerry with a view to increasing communication between local support groups and the local authority.

The report also identified a need for research into activities of other local authorities- to identify what work other local authorities are accomplishing on refugee and asylum seeker issues and learn from examples of good practice.

The Report was initially presented to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) of Kerry County Council (this committee comprises of both elected representatives and staff). The Committee welcomed the Report.

At the core of these recommendations was a need for training to be delivered to relevant staff within the local authorities. KADE decided to seek funding to prepare and deliver a Pilot Programme that would begin to address the training needs outlined in the 2002 Report. Kerry County Council staff had expressed interest in receiving such training relating to the report and its recommendations.

The 2004 Project was designed to function as a pilot, which would be carefully developed and documented and that might serve as a template for further training measures to be delivered to other local authorities.

#### **The Project:**

- ⊙ Aspired to provide knowledge and skills to staff in Kerry County Council, Killarney Town Council, Listowel Town Council and Tralee Town Council about the subject matter contained in the 2002 Report.
- ⊙ Sought to act on the findings of the research by implementing a training project with local authority staff in Kerry.
- ⊙ Aimed to raise awareness and understanding of refugee issues relevant to the functions of the authorities, enhance the delivery of services to this target group, and facilitate the development of a coordinated policy by the local authorities.

This was to be achieved through a series of coordinated actions, from preparatory research, needs analysis, training, evaluation and comprehensive documentation of the learning undertaken. A project advisory group would be formed which would consist of relevant representatives from refugee service providers and representatives, community development organisations, local authority members and KADE Board members.

It was anticipated that:

- ⊙ The level of awareness and sensitivity to refugee issues (economic, social, cultural, etc.) and attitudes within the local authorities would change and become more receptive about immigration and interculturalism.
- ⊙ The level of knowledge about these issues in the local authority would increase.
- ⊙ Service provision by the local authority staff to this sector will become more informed, coordinated and effective, e.g. an action plan for ongoing operations within the countywide council departments would be drafted and information and training contacts and resources would be collated for future reference use.

It was expected that this pilot training project would be made available to other local authorities around the country in subsequent years. An ambitious set of targets and outcomes!

At an early stage KADE identified the project's potential to inform practice and began to plan for the dissemination of its work to other local authorities on completion of the pilot phase. In addition, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) identified the project's potential to inform wider practice, and indicated that the learning which would emerge could become an important tool for the RIA in terms of the agency's work with City and County Development Boards regarding the integration needs of refugees at a local level.

Funding was secured from the Reception & Integration Agency within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. In September 2004 Ms. Aoife Comiskey Clifford was appointed as Project Officer and she began an extensive research module following a series of briefings from Ms. Mary McGillicuddy the KADE Coordinator.

#### **Research Module**

4 Research Objectives were set by Ms. Comiskey Clifford:

- ⊙ Assess views of statutory/non-statutory agencies on the importance of refugee/asylum issues;
- ⊙ Explore ways in which local government can become more informed;
- ⊙ Inform local government on the possible development of agreed local strategies;
- ⊙ Explore role that Development Education could play in promoting greater awareness and understanding;

Ms. Comiskey Clifford began the research module by compiling significant documentation from her research of updated legislative provisions, Kerry County Council procedures and relevant general information sources.

Ms. Comiskey Clifford, with the assistance of KADE staff, reviewed:

- ⊙ Written information on current relevant facts/information pertaining to refugee and asylum seeker, rights, needs and backgrounds;
- ⊙ Written information on relevant human rights and equality frameworks, specifically in relation to the Equal Status Legislation 2000;
- ⊙ Documentation and reports related to needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Kerry, and publications relating to Kerry County Council's social inclusion policies/strategies, which pertained to engaging with and/or responding to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

At the outset of the second stage of the research module it was anticipated that the departments constituting priority participants would be:

The Library Service	Estate Management	Housing Allocation
Arts and Sports Office	Repairs and Maintenance	Play and recreation
Motor Taxation	Planning	Refuse collection
Third Level Grants	Environment of towns/villages	Communications

*(This listing is not prioritised).*

The second stage of the research module was to conduct a series of meetings with Ms. Yvonne Blennerhassett of Kerry County Council to assess the desired outcomes of Kerry County Council and to formulate an agreed training content to produce those desired outcomes.

Ms. Comiskey Clifford completed a thorough and comprehensive staff Mapping Exercise to determine those departments within the local authority for whom the training would be most relevant. Following completion of the Mapping Exercise and further consultation with Kerry County Council, it was decided that 'front line staff' would be targeted and staff from the following would be offered training:

- ⊙ Housing
- ⊙ Planning
- ⊙ Reception Staff
- ⊙ Motor Taxation
- ⊙ Library Staff
- ⊙ Parks Staff

Ms. Comiskey Clifford provided detailed progress reports to the KADE Coordinator and the external Evaluator during the research module. At this point I would record the careful notes maintained by Ms. Comiskey Clifford of these meetings and she regularly circulated summary reports of these progress reports.

It is my opinion the desired outcomes of Kerry County Council did not allow for all the recommendations of the 2002 Report to be reflected in the training content.

The 2002 Report included what I regard as the most radical and innovative recommendation: that a formal mechanism be put in place whereby the refugee and asylum seeker communities in Kerry would have an input to the development of the policies, procedures and practices of the local authorities in Kerry.

At the outset of the Programme it had been envisaged that one or more individuals from the refugee and asylum seeker communities in Kerry would participate in the delivery of training. It appears to me that the Advisory Group and the Project Officer advised against such participation on the basis that no one within the refugee and asylum seeker communities in Kerry had been trained to participate and that the presence of such individuals might in some way lessen the positive impact of the training to be delivered. (It was not possible to provide relevant capacity building training to such individuals, as requested by Ms. Marilyn Counihan of the Killarney Asylum Seeker & Refugee Support Centre within the time constraints of the Project).

The KADE Coordinator took a pragmatic view that if the training was to proceed then meeting the desired outcomes of the local authority must take precedence over the original aspiration of KADE: to address all the recommendations contained in the 2002 Report.

Another factor that did not become clear until KADE consulted with Ms. Blennerhassett was that Kerry County Council was unable to pay fees for this type of training as it had not been budgeted for. This was not known when the funding application was being drawn up and the funding application anticipated a financial contribution from Kerry County Council towards the training costs. As recently as June 2005 Ms. Renée Murphy of the Training Unit of Kerry County Council emphasised that the local authority was meeting the salary costs of the participants and providing the location for the training and that these did, in fact, constitute a contribution towards costs (in-kind).

In my opinion Ms. Comiskey Clifford is to be commended for involving Ms. Miriam McGillicuddy, a solicitor, to present an overview of the legislation relating to refugees. While this had not been budgeted for, it was important that the participants received accurate information from a practising solicitor who happens to be a member of Tralee Town Council.

Ms. Comiskey Clifford conducted a series of meetings with the asylum seeker & refugee support centres in Tralee and Killarney to obtain input from these service providers to inform the content of the training delivered. Ms. Comiskey Clifford also carefully documented these inputs.

At the conclusion of the research module, Ms. Comiskey Clifford agreed with Kerry County Council which departments would be invited to participate in the training programme.

In my view the research module was conducted in a timely and effective manner by Ms. Comiskey Clifford and resulted in the aims, objectives and desired outcomes of the programme being agreed with Kerry County Council and an informed and focused proposal as to the content of the training to be delivered.

The agreed aims were:

- ⊙ To raise awareness and provide knowledge and skills to staff in Kerry County Council and Town Councils about the subject matter contained in the 2002 Report.
- ⊙ To support the enhancement of the delivery of services to refugees and asylum seekers.
- ⊙ To facilitate the development of a coordinated policy by the Local Authorities in Kerry.

The agreed objectives were:

- ⊙ To support staff in developing a greater awareness, knowledge and skills by carrying out (in consultation with Kerry County Council) a series of coordinated actions: preparatory research, needs analysis, delivery of training, evaluation and comprehensive documentation of the Project.
- ⊙ To inform wider local authority service provision, through the dissemination of the lessons emerging from the project and circulate a final report which would serve as a resource for subsequent actions.

### **Advisory Group**

The Advisory Group was to consist of Ms. Yvonne Blennerhassett of Kerry County Council, the Coordinators of both asylum seeker & refugee support centres, the Chairperson and the Coordinator of KADE and Ms. Comiskey Clifford. The external Evaluator also attended.

Due to external circumstances, it was not possible to convene a meeting of the Advisory Group at which all participants were present. In my view the Advisory Group did not achieve the level of effective input envisaged. This was not due to any lack of interest on the part of the individual members of the Group but reflects the many existing demands made on all participants.

### **Training Session**

One training session was planned, for 10 participants, to take place at County Buildings on 30 March 2005. The content focused on these key themes:

- ⊙ The Project background and context;
- ⊙ Understanding Development Education and steps that might be taken by participants to getting involved in Development Education;
- ⊙ refugees and asylum seekers- working definitions/ The asylum process;
- ⊙ Globalisation;
- ⊙ The presence of refugees and asylum seekers in Kerry;
- ⊙ Why do people leave their country of origin;
- ⊙ The needs of refugees and asylum seekers;
- ⊙ Integration, focusing on elements of good practice;
- ⊙ Mainstreaming anti-racism and integration;

This initial session was delivered on time and all the planned content was presented to the participants. Ms. Comiskey Clifford has stated that participants achieved a high degree of engagement throughout the session.

### **Additional Training Session**

This second session involved 12 participants and Ms. Comiskey Clifford has stated that the degree of engagement achieved and volume of questions resulted in all the planned content not being delivered. A key element that could not be undertaken was the 'hands on' exercise to familiarise participants with the web-based resources available.

It is a reflection of the quality of the training delivered that it was necessary to deliver a training session to a second group of participants and Ms. Comiskey Clifford and Ms. Miriam McGillycuddy are to be complimented on this outcome!

It is to be regretted that resources did not allow for a further session to take place with a third group of staff that wished to participate.

### **Evaluation Design**

The design provided that each participant would be invited to complete a detailed Questionnaire and would be invited to meet with the Evaluator for a follow-up interview.

Despite the clear provision of evaluation as an agreed objective of the process, due to misunderstandings it would appear that Kerry County Council were not aware that participants would be asked to complete a Questionnaire and invited to meet with an external Evaluator and, Ms. Comiskey Clifford was unaware of the intention of the Evaluator to attend briefly at the Training Session to introduce the evaluation process. Accordingly the Evaluator did not attend at either Training Session and Ms. Comiskey Clifford distributed the Questionnaires to the participants on my behalf.

Each Questionnaire was issued with an SAE to expedite a confidential assessment of the programme, to be sent directly to the Evaluator. It would appear that because Kerry County Council were unaware of the existence of Questionnaires until they were produced on 30 March, all completed Questionnaires were routed through the Human Resources Department of Kerry County Council and were not mailed directly by the participants to the external Evaluator. (This must be corrected in any future programmes).

All 10 participants in the first Training Session appear to have completed a Questionnaire. Only 7 of 12 participants in the second Training Session completed a Questionnaire. In total only 4 participants volunteered to meet with the Evaluator.

This is not to suggest that the assessments were not those completed by the participants but these misunderstandings are to be regretted. Perhaps if the Evaluator had met with the participants all of them would have completed the Questionnaire and a greater number would have accepted the invitation to meet with me?

### **Summary of Responses to Questionnaires**

(A copy of the Questionnaire issued on 30 March and 19 May is attached to this report).

- ⊙ 17 of 22 participants completed an Evaluation Questionnaire.
- ⊙ All 17 participants evaluated the programme as achieving its aims.
- ⊙ 16 participants agreed that they had gained a better understanding of the concerns of asylum seekers and refugees in dealing with the department/unit of the local authority that the participant worked in. 1 participant disagreed.
- ⊙ 12 participants would be willing to participate in a if a Planning/Implementation Review group was set up within the Local Authorities in Kerry to prepare and implement changes in Policy, Procedures and Practices.
- ⊙ 11 participants rated the content as 'excellent'; 6 rated content as 'good'.
- ⊙ 14 participants rated the relevancy of the programme to their work as 'excellent' or 'good'.
- ⊙ All 17 participants rated the quality of handouts as 'excellent' or 'good'.
- ⊙ 15 participants rated the degree of engagement achieved as 'excellent' or 'good'. 2 rated it 'Only OK'.
- ⊙ 14 participants rated the presenters' knowledge of the subject as 'excellent'. 1 rated it as 'good' and 1 as 'Only OK'. 1 participant rated it as 'poor'.
- ⊙ 15 participants rated the duration of the programme as 'just right' and 2 regarded it as 'too long'.
- ⊙ 16 participants would recommend the programme to colleagues and would recommend KADE to colleagues as an information source on Development Education issues.

Further details of responses are given in the Appendix to this Report.

By way of general comment only one set of responses was disconcerting. It was clear from the responses given that one participant had no substantive interest in attending and was simply indulging some intellectual curiosity. This may be inferred from the response 'none whatsoever' when asked to rate the relevancy of the content to the participant's work.

### **Future Actions**

One of the aims of the programme was "to facilitate the development of a coordinated policy by the local authorities in Kerry". The following should be noted:

- ⊙ 6 of 15 respondents would recommend changes in policy as a result of their participation in the programme.
- ⊙ 13 of 17 respondents would recommend changes in procedures as a result of their participation in the programme.
- ⊙ 10 of 15 respondents would recommend changes in work practices as a result of their participation in the programme.
- ⊙ 7 of 14 respondents would recommend changes in the interface with Asylum Seekers as a result of their participation in the programme.
- ⊙ 9 of 16 respondents would recommend changes in the interface with Refugees as a result of their participation in the programme.

In this context it is encouraging that 12 participants would be willing to participate if a Planning/Implementation Review group was set up within the local authorities in Kerry to prepare and implement changes in policy, procedures and practices.

Implicit in the Programme was to encourage networking among the participants in the training sessions. It will be very difficult to assess if such networking develops in the medium term. I am advised that Kerry County Council plans to implement an extensive Customer Relationship Management training programme and I would hope that the content of this programme will be informed by the training sessions delivered by KADE.

Ms. Renée Murphy of Kerry County Council has stated that policy is determined solely by central government and the local authorities are obliged to implement that policy.

I would urge the asylum seeker & refugee support centres in Killarney and Tralee to follow-up on this training programme by inviting the KCC participants to visit the support centres over the coming months to learn at first hand of the work being done by the centres and familiarise the participants with the resources available within the centres.

In my view it is incumbent on the asylum seeker & refugee support centres in Killarney and Tralee to pursue the establishment of such a Planning/Implementation Group within the local authority and furthermore to explore in a meaningful way the provision of a mechanism whereby the refugee and asylum seeker communities in Kerry would have an input to the development of the policies, procedures and practices of the local authorities in Kerry. I accept that this may be a lengthy process, but a proactive approach by the Coordinators of the two asylum seeker & refugee support centres may yield dividends in the longer term.

I would recommend that KADE would support this advocacy to maximise the qualitative impact of the training programme.

If future programmes are to be delivered, and I would hope that this would happen, it would enhance the content if capacity building training was provided to a small number of individuals from the refugee community so that one or more such individuals could assist in the delivery of the programme.

I am aware of initiatives undertaken by Limerick City Council following representations by Doras Luimní (the Limerick City-based asylum seeker & refugee support service). Standard documentation and forms were translated into the languages of the majority groups of asylum seekers and refugees. If the local authorities in Kerry have not yet considered such an initiative it should be possible for the two asylum seeker & refugee support centres to lobby for such translations to be made available in Kerry. In this regard it should be carefully noted that 10 of the 17 respondents would recommend changes in documentation.

One specific item that became known from the training sessions was the difficulty created for the Motor Taxation Office by the absence of Date of Birth data on the official identification documents supplied to refugees and asylum seekers.

I am continuing to seek appointments with those who accepted my invitation to meet with me to expand on their individual assessments of the training sessions.

The participants in this programme were drawn from a number of departments within the county and town councils. I propose to seek a meeting with each of the Heads of those Departments in November/December 2005 to determine if any changes have been effected in procedures or practices as a result of this Project.

I would recommend that KADE seek supplementary funding from RIA to deliver the requested third training session as soon as possible. I would further recommend that KADE would enter into early discussions with Kerry County Council to ensure some budgetary provision is made by the local authority to fund delivery of these training sessions to other 'front line' staff that could not be accommodated at this time.

## **Resources**

The Reception and Integration Agency is to be complimented on their decision to fund a training programme to be delivered by a voluntary organisation to the local authority in Kerry. I am advised that this is a unique development.

In my view the Project was under-funded and this may have led to some slippage in meeting RIA deadlines. The original funding application envisaged a financial contribution from Kerry County Council, which did not materialise due to budget constraints, and from two other sources. KADE could not afford to deliver a third training session.

KADE is preparing a CD-ROM containing the PowerPoint presentation delivered at the training sessions together with Ms. Comiskey Clifford's speaker's notes, Ms. Miriam McGillicuddy's handout on legal issues and the Project Officer's final report, together with comprehensive appendices. In my view this should constitute a valuable resource for all concerned to assist in the delivery of this programme to other local authorities.

**Acknowledgement**

Kerry County Council is to be warmly congratulated for their decision to have this innovative training programme delivered to staff. It is clear that Ms. Yvonne Blennerhassett and Ms. Renée Murphy made a significant contribution to the development and delivery of the Project.

Ms. Miriam McGillicuddy made an important professional contribution to the Project and her position as a practicing solicitor was in my opinion of immense value to the participants. It may be surmised that Ms. McGillicuddy's membership of Tralee Town Council gave her an added insight!

Throughout this Project I have attended detailed and focused monitoring meetings with Ms. Comiskey Clifford. At these meetings I had frequent opportunities to experience the meticulous and professional approach of Ms. Comiskey Clifford to the project. Her copious notes, comprehensive files, unrelenting attention to detail and her evident belief in the Project were most impressive.

I would like to record my appreciation for the cooperation and courtesy shown to me at all times by the KADE Coordinator Ms. Mary McGillicuddy, the Project Officer Ms. Aoife Comiskey Clifford and the KADE Administrator Ms. Mary Curtin.

I will be happy to discuss the content of this Report with the Board of KADE. ■

**TK**  
**2005**