



***Final Evaluation and Report 2008  
Integrating Ireland - Minority Kids Funds  
'Enabling minority children access mainstream activities'***

**Background**

In 2007 Integrating Ireland were appointed to manage the distribution of €70,000 of funding allocated to support the accessing of mainstream services by minority ethnic children resident in direct provision hostels through the One Foundation Minority Children's Fund.

The objective of the fund was to encourage mainstream organisations to address the issue of the accessibility of their services and potential outreach strategies in relation to the participation of ethnic minority children. This was in response to the concern that tension between host societies and new communities are only likely to surface with the second generation of minority children who can find themselves marginalised and isolated from mainstream society.

The One Foundation had a number of applicants from Direct Provision centres who by their nature were outside the criteria of the main fund. The One Foundation recognised however, the distinct needs of the children living in those centres. For this reason they agreed that Integrating Ireland should facilitate the establishment of relationships locally with NGO's as a means of ensuring children were supported in accessing local mainstream activities.

Integrating Ireland identified six local non profit organisations that were active locally and in the vicinity of Hostels that had been identified by the One Foundation process, in addition to one direct provision centre that were selected for funding. The funding covered the participation of minority children only in mainstream activities, (children included all between and inclusive of the ages of 5 to 18 years), was to be used only for programme costs, in other words could not be used to fund any core costs of the organisations involved. Due to surplus unallocated funding, Integrating Ireland facilitated a summer sports activities programme itself. All the organisational information is available in Appendix A, attached.

All contracts were signed in May 2008, and most activities completed by December 2008, although in some instances, where the fund attracted further monies, they were rolled over into 2009. An evaluation of the process was conducted in January 2009 and all the necessary documentation is attached in Appendix C.

The children that directly benefited from this fund were all minority children, predominantly African and East European and but with a noticeable minority Asian. In terms of gender the spread was reported to be balanced and the organisations were careful to avoid activities that were gender exclusive. In detail, the activities were targeted at three age groups: up to 6 years (270 children), 7 to 11 (273 children), and 12 to 18 (67). For 112 children the exact age group was not reported (range from 3 to 15 for 46 and no age reported for 66).

The activities offered were plentiful and original. Summer Camps and sport activities were among the most popular to avail of but also cultural events and programmes such as Drama Classes and Music Tuition, “Fix your bike” workshops and in most cases novelty activities, such as circus, cinema and swimming, to name but a few, were initiated. Some organisations included low cost excursions such as trips to local attractions. A full list of all the activities is attached (Appendix D).

The overall feedback taken from all questionnaires is overwhelmingly positive and inspiring. More than 720 children living in accommodation centres were given the opportunity to spend time with their peers on a wide range of activities. In most cases those activities already existed but due to mainly financial constraints the minority children were not able to participate. In some areas little or no activities existed, and the organisations were able to fill this gap for both local and minority children.

Overwhelmingly the grantee organisations stuck to their initial plan of activities, with only slight changes and adjustments occurring, many of which were cleared with Integrating Ireland beforehand. In one case some activities were not followed on at the given time, however the activity was then taken up later the year. In another the original plan was slightly adjusted to fit with the opportunity to work together with the GAA.

All organisations ensured benefit and participation through consultation with parents of the target group. Some of the organisations were based onsite and therefore access was not an obstacle. Linkages were made with existing Sports Associations, Youth Centres and Clubs, other organisations and local activities. Input from the children was sought. In one case a group of mothers researched activities that residents would like to access in the town. They gathered the background information and put together a questionnaire for the residents in the hostel.

The activities fell mostly under existing remits for the organisations. However, the fund enabled the grantees to run activities over a longer period of time and to expand existing remits, to coordinate specific activities considered normal for other children and also to tailor the activities to individual children and specific age groups. For two organisations the work differed from the usual work as the support they offered would normally not include minority children.

The fund enabled the grantees to make a great and positive difference to the lives of the direct beneficiaries and their parents. Not all grantees were able to give feedback about the impact on the local children and their parents or the organisations they went to. However, when feedback was given it was also mostly positive.

All grantees stressed that the children had a great time, a lot of fun and that they were given the opportunity to “feel normal”. They were able to experience their local community in a very different way and to participate in social activities with peers from their school and other schools. The activities provided the children with a sense of inclusion as they were also able to share and compare their experiences and adventures with their classmates. In some cases the activities brought out talents that so far went undiscovered. It also helped their language development, improved social skills and strengthened the child’s self confidence.

The parents enjoyed the time they had for themselves, knowing that their children were occupied and safe. They appreciated the normalising of their children’s activities without having to stretch their very limited budgets. Mostly however they benefited from seeing their children being happy and enjoying themselves.

The local Irish children, too, had a great time and made new friends from backgrounds that are diverse from their own. The children were able to mix freely and exchange ideas and form friendships in a neutral, equal and barrier free environment. The parents interacted with each other at collection and drop of times. In Mosney the two weeks of summer camp for no cost was a great help to some of the single parent families.

The camps benefited from the diversity of children and a very informal but very real and meaningful integration process took place. It provided parents with the opportunity to create good links with services they may not have previously accessed but may need once residency is established.

No program runs without any negative opinion and some of these that were received are noted below in no specific order of relevance or frequency. Camp coordinators in some Cul Camps were reluctant to include non- Irish children in GAA games. They had voiced concerns that the children would not know the games and that it would be difficult for them to integrate. In some camps organisers were anxious that their “normal” groups would not be swamped by the children from the site. However, all camps that participated and where prior negative opinion was voiced, were very quick to acknowledge that their concerns were unfounded in all cases as the inclusion of those children was very successful. In only one case involving over 720 children was there any bullying, which in this case was by Irish children outside the youth club but they were confronted about it and the matter was resolved. Given the numbers of children involved, this level of bullying is probably well below whatever the regular norm.

It was nearly impossible for the organisations to single out which of the activities were the most successful participatory activities and events, especially when organisations concentrated on one or two specific programmes. It was felt though that the summer camps were extremely well received by all parties involved.

As this was once-off funding the organisations had to think creatively about how the children’s future engagement in local activities could be continued beyond the lifetime of the funding provided. This was achieved by a variety of different means. Many groups were able to form good partnerships with other organisations that were sustainable. In the case of MIA (Mayo Intercultural Action) an unintended benefit of

this funding was that alliances were built with youth organisations in the County and now further contacts between these and Direct Provision Hostels are ongoing beyond the lifespan of the fund. The programmes started the building of relationships between the Irish community and minority ethnic children and in some cases were even able to demystify the situation the children are in. The Youth Diversity Day, a meeting with youth from wide range of places and backgrounds in Mayo – Traveller; asylum seekers; refugee; migrant youth; youth from rural and Gaeltacht areas - is now an Annual Event.

New Horizon, another beneficiary group were able to set up The Foroige Club in Athlone which was new and is continuing. Some of the GAA local clubs contacted some of the children that participated in the summer camps living in direct provision centre to register for their weekly training sessions. In one region the Community Welfare Officer bought hurleys and helmets for the children which were then kept for future use within the hostel. This worked really well as some children continue in local GAA events and the equipment is there for their use and the use of future players. A similar approach is planned in Kiltimagh by IRD for musical instruments due to the huge success of their Summer Music Camp in partnership with the Mayo School of Music.

All grantees were highly committed to make this programme work. They put in an enormous amount of their own time and effort on a purely voluntarily basis. They all depended on volunteer involvement and support from the local community for transport, discounts on entry and membership fees and sports equipment. They linked with other organisations in order to cut/ share costs. All of them stated that the overall success made it worthwhile, however it was mentioned by one organisation that they would not be able to run such a programme again under the same conditions due to a lack of core funding.

We asked all organisations whether they had a message they wanted us to bring to the One Foundation. The first and overall response was that they are very grateful for the help given and that they would like to thank the One Foundation for making those activities possible. Feedback from children, parents and organizers was also overwhelmingly positive. There is a need for future projects. One organisation wanted to point out that the allocated sum might not generally be taken to be great but meant a considerable sum of money for them. However, most of the organisations pointed out that money should be made available for administration and transport costs.

#### **QUOTES:**

“Some of the myth and mystique is starting to dispel in relation to Mosney.” (Audrey Crawford, Mosney Accommodation Centre)

“A few weeks ago a volunteer on the site was approached by a young boy getting off the school bus. “Please Miss I am a big boy now. Can I go to the camp next summer please. I am a Big Boy now”. Hopefully we will be able to build on last years successful and pleasing activities. “(Gerry Callaghan, New Horizon)

“Each child attended a summer camp – huge impact on their lives and their parents. This is something they’d always wanted to do to be ‘normal’ but hadn’t had the opportunity to do so. “(MIA)

“...one of the recurring questions I got from the children and their mothers was “what’s happening next” – albeit in a very grateful way for what had gone on before!” (Ciaran Friel, IRD)

“This is the start of building relationships between the Irish community and minority ethnic children, they can start conversing about the reason why minority ethnic children are in Ireland and begin to understand it.” (Josette Newman, Diversity Sligo)

“The camps also benefited from the diversity of children attending, and a very informal but very real and meaningful integration process was in place.” (KNIT)

“Some coordinators of the GAA camp had voiced concerns to the Regional Officers that the children would not know the games and that it would be difficult for them to integrate, however, many acknowledged afterwards that the inclusion of these children was successful and that their concerns were unfounded.” (Regional Officers, Integrating Ireland)

**Lessons learnt:**

The activities were well chosen and integration proved successful. Costs were spread across the maximum number of children for the greatest impact. The programmes had positive effects on the direct beneficiaries, their parents and the local community.

The implementation and coordination proved to be extremely time consuming and depended a great deal on voluntary work and commitment. For this particular project the community was very generous and committed to a wide range of donations, deductions in membership and entrance fees. This cannot be taken for granted and might be an area to follow up on in the future.

The parent’s involvement is crucial and must be implemented with more care in the future. Language difficulties and the ever apparent knowledge of their situation are barriers to be dealt with. It should also be noted that the lack of basic autonomy is one of the most frustrating experiences of parents living in direct provision.

Some barriers relating to the particular circumstances of minority children and their families were lifted in the process of this fund regarding trust, lack of information on play & recreation services. The organisations were able to clear some attitudinal barriers within the child & youth-serving sector but a need for anti-racism and diversity training and information was identified.

The main issue, the lack of money, does still exist and although this fund was able to combat this financial barrier for the term of the project, it is a problem that will continue to exist in the future.

Integrating Irelands Regional Officers noticed that some support groups chose not to take the time to get involved in this programme, but argue that if they saw the results they might participate in future.

## Appendix A: List of all grantees

Name of Organisation		Person in charge	Office Address	Fund received	Direct Provision Hostels
Diversity Sligo	Asylum seeker and refugee support group	Josette Newman	Sligo	€5,670.00	Globe House
East Coast Catering	Carroll Village Apartments	Brian Byrne	Dundalk	€3,500.00	Carroll Village Apartments
IRD Kiltimagh	Arts office	Ciaran Friel	Kiltimagh, Mayo	€6,460.00	Railway Hotel, Kiltimagh
KNIT Project	Kildare, Newbridge Interculturalism Today	Denise Croke	Co. Kildare	€3,900.00	Eyre Powell Hotel
MIA	Mayo Intercultural Action	Therese Ruane	Castlebar, Mayo	€15,527.00	Ballyhaunis Hostel and Railway Hotel, Kiltimagh
Mosney	Mosney Support Group	Audrey Crawford	Julianstown, Co. Meath	€17,804.00	Mosney Accommodation Centre
New Horizon	Athlone Refugee & Asylum seekers support group	Gerry Callaghan	Athlone, Co Westmeath	€10,139.00	Lisywoolen Direct Provision Centre
Integrating Ireland	The Immigrant Network	Niamh O'Sullivan, Seamus O'Leary, Kathy O'Connor, Jipe Kelly	South East, South West, Western Alliance, North East, Border & Midlands	€7,000.00	Various Direct Provision Accommodation Centres across the nation

## **Appendix B: List of all activities**

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Three Day Integrated Youth Camp in Ballyhaunis  
Youth Diversity Day  
Summer Camps in Kiltimagh, Ballyhaunis and Claremorris  
Music Summer Project in Kiltimagh  
Community Family Trips/ CDP youth initiatives in Kiltimagh  
Drama in Kiltimagh and Ballyhaunis  
Accessing clubs and Competitions in Kiltimagh and Ballyhaunis  
Newbridge House and Farm  
Dublin Zoo  
New Grange Farm  
Christmas Party  
FAI Summer Soccer School in Mosney and Athlone  
Samba Festival  
School Summer Camp with excursions  
Cinema  
Swimming  
Funtasia Aqua Park  
Community Games  
Foroige Youth Club Julianstown and Athlone, this included a Summer Spectacle variety show and a range of sports and social development activities  
GAA Summer School, Athlone  
Mixed Activity Summer Camps  
Junior Gym Vouchers  
Trips to stay with Irish people  
Fix your bike day  
Family outing and picnic in Belvedere House, Mullingar  
Family outing to Festival of World Cultures in Dun Laoghaire  
Children's trip to Glendeer animal farm  
Swimming tickets made available to use with friends in the Sports Centre  
Children's art program run by a volunteer  
Soccer blitz, involved coaching soccer skills and a "World Cup" competition  
Mayo School of Music Summer Music Camp  
Giggles Drama Group  
Gaelic football or hurling/ camogie, GAA Cul Camps  
Soccer  
Basketball  
Rugby  
Crèche Summer Project  
Beach  
Circus  
Summer camp in St Anne's Youth centre: Senior and Junior Club, activities included Barbecues, Swimming, Canoeing, Discos, Face painting, Orienteering, Assault course, Karting, Beach soccer and many more  
Let's Go Summer School: Bouncy Castle, Trampoline, Soccer, Crazy Golf and many more  
Cosy Cats: Finger painting, Kite Making, Soccer, Cinema, Aerobics, Bowling  
Lissadell Halloween Festival and Camp: Pumpkin carving, Marshmallow toasting, walk in the woods, fire side stories, visit to Lissadell House, Feeding the donkeys and walking the Wolfhound.

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