

# ANNUAL REPORT

2008



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"For I was a Stranger and you made me welcome." Matt 25.

## **REPORT ON COIS TINE'S WORK DURING 2008 AND PLANS FOR 2009**

**OVERVIEW:** In 2008 Cois Tine's main focus was on supporting immigrants especially those of African origin. During the year the number of asylum seekers entering Ireland continued to drop with a total of 3,807 new applications, marginally fewer than in the previous year.<sup>1</sup> During 2008 Cois Tine worked to meet its aims and objectives through the services, events and activities outlined below.

**1. Cois Tine provided a Centre where asylum seekers and other immigrants were welcomed:** Usage of our premises increased greatly during 2008 both in terms of groups and also the number of individuals who came to Cois Tine.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the year staff and volunteers were available to respond to the needs of individuals who visited the Centre and to facilitate events and training for various groups. As well as keeping normal office hours Cois Tine also opened on Monday and Thursday evenings and on some Sundays.

**2. Pastoral and spiritual care:** The Cois Tine Multicultural Mass now takes place once each month with members of the congregation being encouraged to attend their parish of residence on other Sundays. A special newsletter which aims to be a point of contact for the congregation began at the end of 2008. The Cois Tine Chaplain has undertaken hospital visits and also home visits. Where Baptisms were requested individuals were referred back to the Parish in which they reside.

**3 Capacity Building for Africans and African Community Groups.** This aimed at helping groups to become established, organised and capable of participating in voluntary and community activities. We worked to achieve this aim in three ways.

**a) Providing Premises and Office facilities:** In 2008 Cois Tine opened outside of normal office hours to facilitate the activities of African Groups and to provide them with premises where they could be based. Work with emerging community groups begun at the end of 2007 was formalised in an agreement to collaborate with the New Community Partnership, (NCP) a Dublin based NGO. Under this agreement Cois Tine provided an office for NCP together with meeting space and shared office facilities for its affiliated groups most of whom were African. An NCP staff member was also based in Cois Tine with the role of coordinating the day to day use of the building by affiliated groups. Collaboration with NCP soon began to bear fruit with a notable increase in the number of groups and individuals using our premises.

**b) Administrative Support.** In the background Cois Tine supported African groups by providing advice on funding applications, organisational matters and administrative support. In particular we made a significant contribution to events such as Africa Day, and to a lesser extent a Nigerian Independence Day event held during the year

**c) Training Provision:** In all, sixteen training courses took place in Cois Tine during 2008. Some were organised by Cois Tine others by African Groups using our premises and some by Agencies such as Ethical Development Action. Courses varied in length, ranging from one day to nine weekly sessions.

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<sup>1</sup>126 fewer than in 2007 to be exact.

<sup>2</sup> In all twenty four groups used our premises for meetings, training or activities during the year. Over four thousand signatures were recorded at Cois Tine's reception desk in 2008 considerably more than the previous year. While many of these were repeat signatures i.e. individuals participating in regular activities or meetings these figures do indicate the increased level of activity on our premises. Note: As our Reception was not always staffed many visitors did not bother to sign in so the actual number of visitors is much higher.

Cois Tine worked closely with Integrating Ireland and Cork City Partnership in the area of training provision. This collaboration took the form of sharing, planning and delivery of training and also sharing costs.

One of the training programmes run was specifically aimed at helping African Groups develop their organisational capacity. This was planned by Cois Tine in collaboration with Integrating Ireland. The programme consisted of three training events which ran in tandem with a grants scheme made possible through a grant provided by the Society of African Missions. The training topics were "Making Grant Applications", "What Funders Want", and "Grant Report Writing and Financial Management". As a result of the training programme thirteen new community groups benefited from training and three groups succeeded in securing grants of €1000 each. Grantees were required to report on the use of their grant and received feedback on the quality of their reports.

**4. One-to-One Support:** This, a core area of Cois Tine's remit remained an important part of our work during 2008 although it must be said we had fewer new clients than in any previous year. Many of clients who came to us in this period have been coming for years. In respect of those living in Accommodation Centres our aim is still to support them as they await decisions. Often emotional and counselling support is all that we can provide. Activities and training also help clients as they wait. Thankfully decisions are being made more quickly than in the past and efforts are being made to clear the backlog of appeals and Leave to Remain applications. As a result a significant portion of our "old clients" are now moving into the community and contact with them was about issues arising from their new status.

**5. Social Activities:** During 2008 Cois Tine organised four day trips; one, to Fota, for mothers and children resident in the Kinsale Road Accommodation Centre. Trips for adults to Garretstown and Killarney also took place. Cois Tine also received and hosted residents from Clonakilty Accommodation Centre while on a day trip to Cork. This trip was organised by the Clonakilty Amnesty International Group. Cois Tine also ran its annual Summer Party – the most successful yet with roughly 250 adults attending not to mention children. Our usual Christmas party was replaced by a New Year event.

We know from the reaction and feedback we receive that the events organised by Cois Tine are greatly enjoyed and much appreciated by our client group. For many, especially those living in Accommodation Centres they are a very welcome change in an otherwise monotonous existence.

**6. Specialist Services – Counselling and Medico-Legal Reporting:** Facilitating the provision of medico-legal reports for asylum seekers, usually those at the appeal stage in the process, was a new initiative begun in 2008. This service is provided through the work of two doctors who examine and interview clients. Cois Tine provided an examination room, received and welcomed the clients, administrative back up and sometimes organised interpreters. This service is run in collaboration with SPIRASI.

Cois Tine is fortunate to have the voluntary services of a qualified Counsellor who by now has had considerable experience of intercultural counselling. During 2008 she provided counselling to thirteen individuals some over an extended period of time. Previously Cois Tine clients also benefited from referral to counselling provided by SPIRASI in Dublin. This service, which specialised in working with victims of torture, is no longer available due to funding cut backs. We hope to help replace some of this service in 2009 – see below.

**7. Outreach:** Cois Tine's outreach visitation to accommodation centres increased substantially during 2008. Now four staff or volunteers visit centers, previously only the

Chaplain fulfilled this role. In addition two of the visitors are female and concentrate on outreach to women and families. This allows a response to female residents whose needs are very different from male residents. Culturally many of the immigrant women do not have the freedom of movement that men do. Because of this and due to a lack of childcare they tend to be more isolated.<sup>3</sup>

**8. Work with the local Church and community involvement:** In 2008 Cois Tine participated in thirteen public events. Work with the Irish community was aimed at promoting Christian perspective and a better understanding of immigrant issues, particularly those affecting Africans.

**The Local Church:** In February Cois Tine organised a Conference on the topic of Liturgy and Worship in a Multicultural Society. This one day event discussed appropriate ways of welcoming immigrants into the church. The day focused on finding an appropriate response to the varied expressions of spirituality now present in our churches and communities and also on how our liturgies and worship can express and celebrate the richness and creativity of our new multicultural reality as well as deepen our own spirituality. Participants shared their experience of working cross-culturally, identified changing liturgical and spiritual needs and explored possibilities of finding a way forward. Following the Conference the very positive feedback we received showed that participants were energized by the discussion and ideas that emerged. The talks and findings of the Conference have been published on the Cois Tine Web Site.

Under the guidance of UCC staff Cois Tine conducted research on the topic of Pastoral Realities for Africans. Over a period of months priests in the Cork City area were interviewed regarding their experience and perceptions of pastoral work with Africans. Findings were collated and distributed to all priests in the target. Further, interpretative work on the data done both by Cois Tine and by UCC staff has yet to be published.

In May Cois Tine assisted in the organisation of the fourth Festival of Peoples Mass in the Diocese. Since the first Festival in 2005 Cois Tine has aimed to facilitate a process interaction between the local parish and immigrant community. The aim of this interaction is not just preparing for the Festival Liturgy itself but to establish something that will last into the future in which the involvement of different cultures in the local parish and in the liturgy is valued and becomes the norm. As a result of our experience over the past four years a booklet on Multicultural Liturgies has been drafted and will hopefully be completed in the near future.

**Community Involvement - partnership and networking:** As in previous years much of Cois Tine's work was undertaken in partnership with other voluntary and statutory groups. In 2008 our links with other organisations expanded, in particular we had a greater level of cooperation with Integrating Ireland, the New Communities Partnership and SPIRASI. Links with Cork Networking Committee, Cork City Partnership, Cork City Council, the HSE, Welcome English and the Gardai continued. Links with New Community Groups also strengthened through their use of our premises.

During 2008 seven articles appeared in the local Media that were either about Cois Tine events or were written as a result of information provided by Cois Tine that highlighted immigrant issues or profiled immigrants in a positive light. Cois Tine also received one of the Lord Mayor's Civic Awards in public recognition of our work with Asylum Seekers.

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<sup>3</sup> Presenting issues that arise during visits to Accommodation Centres are the asylum process, childcare, loneliness due to separation from spouses and the extended family. The passage of childbearing years, forced idleness, a non-productive existence, helplessness and depression are also evident.

Participation in networks, meetings and seminars allowed Cois Tine to provide input from a Christian perspective. We were closely involved in the development of the Cork City Integration Strategy (CCIS) which is a practical blueprint for integration in Cork up to 2011.<sup>4</sup> Cois Tine also served on a number of bodies such as Cork Networking Committee, The CCIS Implementation Group and the Cork City and the Immigrant Employability Steering Group an interagency advisory group supporting a project aimed at increasing the employability of immigrants.

The content of our Web Site, [www.coistine.ie](http://www.coistine.ie) was slowly built up over the year although not to the extent that we would have wished. The website aims to raise awareness of immigrant issues and to promote a Christian response to immigration. In October the system to operate the website was upgraded and we are in the process of coming to grips with the changes. We have deliberately kept the format of the Website simple so that it is easy to navigate and easy to read.

**9. New Initiatives:** In addition to the Capacity Building Programme and the Medico-Legal work already mentioned there were also a number of other new and noteworthy initiatives in 2008. The long standing idea of establishing a Choir finally became a reality in 2008. The Choir has had three public performances so far with more booked in 2009. Another new initiative that emerged, due to demand following a drumming workshop, was the Cois Tine Drumming Circle which meets on a weekly basis. This and the Choir have been very successful initiatives that bring a new integrative element to Cois Tine's work as both groups are made up of many nationalities.

Another new initiative is the provision of a Computer room. In collaboration with the New Communities Partnership new internet linked computers are available. Cois Tine assisted in setting up this room providing some of the equipment and expertise.

**10 Finances:** 2008 was a very strange year when it came to finances. Confirmation of grants applied in January and February came very late. As a result income in the first half of the year was low giving rise to worries regarding our ability to cover costs. In the second half of the year the situation changed dramatically. Not only did grant funds arrive other funding opportunities also arose. In the end Cois Tine achieved its highest income ever for running costs, i.e. €57,048 more than double our income in 2007. A large portion of this was however, secured in the last quarter and was given for projects that will begin in 2009 – see Balance sheet below.

**COMMENT:** In 2008 Cois Tine made a positive contribution on many levels and provided valuable and needed support to many groups and individuals. There is absolutely no doubt in the value and difference that the social and one-to-one support we provided has made to many individuals' lives and while it is more difficult to measure the long term impact of the capacity building work we have done we nevertheless believe that it was worthwhile and necessary.

During the last few years and particularly during 2008 it has become clear that the situation and needs of immigrants have changed. More and more of those who arrived as asylum seekers have now moved into the community and fewer new asylum seekers are entering the asylum process. As a result the services we provide also need to adapt and change. Another factor we have to take account of is downturn in the economy and the consequent reduction in funding available for work with immigrants. These are new realities that we have to take account of in our future plans while at the same time remaining true to our Mission Statement of "Addressing the pastoral, spiritual

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<sup>4</sup> Cois Tine is responsible for one implementing of the "actions" specified in the strategy, i.e. to organise an interfaith event in the City.

and social needs of the immigrant community.. particularly those of African origin.” In future Cois Tine will rely more on its human resources which will be mainly dedicated to purely pastoral activities.

Cois Tine will, in essence, adopt a much more traditional definition of Pastoral Work and focus almost solely on our African client group. In practical terms Cois Tine will reduce its involvement in networking, social/public events, training provision and awareness raising work with the Irish Community. As a result of these changes Cois Tine will need less funds and also a considerable amount of staff time previously used in organising events, fundraising and reporting will be available for pastoral work. The coordinators role will also change. He will, in future, work under the aegis of the African Missions Justice and Peace Directory but will still provide some administrative back up for Cois Tine.

In 2009 Cois will concentrate on the following areas:

**a) Support of Africans and African Groups.** This will be achieved through the use of our premises and a continuation of one-to-one outreach and drop-in office contact with Africans. Collaboration with NCP will continue. Cois Tine will also remain open to other groups using our building for training and other activities that are consistent with our Christian ethos. Thus while Cois Tine will continue, through the use of its premises, support and facilitate other groups the need to commit resources, staff time and materials to running and organising activities and events will be cut to a minimum.

**b) Faith Development of the Catholic African Community and Outreach:** In future Cois Tine will give priority to these areas by dedicating more staff and volunteer time to this work. A new pastoral training programme will begin in February. Most participants will be Cois Tine volunteers with some places being offered to members of Parish Assemblies with responsibility for immigrant outreach in their areas. The programme will provide training on topics such as listening skills, multicultural competencies and pastoral care. The aim of the programme will be to prepare and support pastoral outreach to Africans living in Accommodation Centres and in the Community.

**c) Specialist Services.** Medico-Legal reporting will continue as before while our counselling provision will increase through the work of at least two additional Counsellors. Cois Tine will begin to provide Complimentary Therapies in 2009. These will be especially beneficial to clients who cannot engage in the counselling process due to their lack of English.

Cois Tine continues to adapt to emerging needs. What is outlined above will take account of a changing situation and also allow it to make best use available resources in line with its core remit.

The current downturn in our economy is likely to have a very negative effect on the perception of “foreigners” and lead to an increase in xenophobia that will no doubt focus to a large extent on Africans who are the most visible immigrants. In the coming years there will be a greater need than ever for the Church to preach the Gospel of welcoming the stranger and for our civil leadership to speak out against inequality, discrimination and racism.

We do not yet know how fair, transparent or effective the new Immigration and Residence Bill and the asylum system it ushers in will be. Clearly the new system will aim to deal with asylum applications quickly and avoid all the delays by making decisions speedily and by deporting those refused residence quickly. It is likely that an undesired side-effect of the new law will be an increase in illegal immigration. Some migrants will resort to going “underground” with all the social problems, exploitation and

injustice that this will cause. This situation will demand a new pastoral response from the Irish Church and from voluntary groups. As a result the need to adapt and change will continue beyond 2009.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Our sincere thanks to all who have supported the work of Cois Tine during the last year. Below is a list of major contributors who provided support in kind or financially.

Health Services Executive.	The Mercy Solidarity Fund
The Office of the Minister for Integration	Conrad Hilton Foundation
Cork City Partnership.	Bon Secours Sisters.
The Diocese of Cork and Ross.	SMA Parish Wilton.
The Holy Rosary Sisters.	Douglas Parish.
The Capuchins.	Blackrock Parish
The Dominicans.	Mahon Parish.
The Society of African Missions.	The Garda Siochana

**Our thanks also go to many individuals not mentioned above but who made donations in cash or kind or gave of their time as volunteers. The contributions you made helped the work of Cois Tine during the year. We are sincerely grateful.**

**COIS TINE ACCOUNTS January to December 2008**

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>INCOME</b>	
1. Bank Charges	70	Donations/Gifts	13,914
2. Insurance	408	Fund Raising	610
3. Equipment	3,491	Grants	42,358
4. Housekeeping/Hospitality	2,184	Training Fees	100
5. Building Maintenance	2,724	Other	39
6. Office Costs	5,095		
7. Publications	409		
8. Training	6,953		
9. Staff/Volunteer Expenses	3,813		
10. Staff/Volunteer Training	659		
11. Utilities	1,718		
12. Events/Activities	13,339		
13 Research	2,400		
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,263</b>		<b>57,048</b>
	<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>		
	Balance at start of year	<b>€19,135</b>	
	Income during the year	<b>€57,048</b>	
	Expenditure during the year	<b>€43,263</b>	
	Balance at the end of the year	<b>€32,920</b>	

**Note re Balance: €32,920:** A total of €22,000 of this amount consists of €19,000 received in the last quarter of 2008 that are committed to two projects beginning in 2009. The remaining €3,000 came from a grant from the Office of the Minister for Integration to cover other agreed activities in 2009.