



## ORGANIZATION\*

Sligo Family Resource Centre

## COUNTRY AND CITY/IES

Ireland

## FIELD OF WORK

Cultural understanding, creates links to aid social inclusion, provides information and support to new community members in Sligo

## THE ACTION IS ADDRESSED TO (BENEFICIARIES)

People newly arrived in Sligo from overseas, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and international students (Sligo Institute of Technology). The age range is generally from 18 to 65, both men and women. They also target people from the indigenous population so that real integration takes place and the information sharing and learning is two way.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

- Some of its work to date includes Syrian family befriending service, support to the Direct Provision Centre in Sligo, Craft Workshops, and organising intercultural events, such as the St. Patrick's Food and cultural event, the Annual Intercultural Concert in the Autumn and various other intercultural social and education events.
- They are fostering Inclusion – addressing issues of social isolation.
- It provides support and information to new communities and has organised two intercultural events each year, including St Patrick's Day Event and an International Concert in the Autumn.
- Organises befriending – supporting Syrian families in the area.
- Organises Crafty Friday's workshop.
- Sligo FRC supports those living in direct provision. This includes residents in FRC activities, supporting families through the Family Support Service, coordinating the library and addressing needs as they arise



## MAIN GOALS

Fostering cultural understanding, creating links to aid social inclusion, provides information and support to new community members in Sligo.

## IMPACTS OF THE ACTIVITY

- Increasing of quality life. The main outcome is a better quality of life including enhanced physical and mental wellbeing for the refugees and migrants when they move to Sligo.
- Providing support. Befrienders – volunteers provides support once a week regarding everyday issues, communication with institutions, sorting out paperwork and just being there for support and spending time together.
- Feeling of acceptance, mutual learning of each other's cultures and general multiculturalism.
- Connecting women of different backgrounds, benefitting their mental health and inclusion through creative workshops.
- Consolidating these activities that are a form of non-formal mediation.
- Learning and teaching through befriending and creative processes are the most practical and fruitful methods for inclusion and learning about the ways of the new communities, in our experience.
- Allowing to identify problems. Not all of the activities have funds all the time, which can be challenging since this work requires coordination all the time. Also, many problems become identified through these activities and the service users might expect the Organisation to solve them, but often the Organisation does not have the authority (for example housing issues). So, setting clear aims and boundaries is crucial
- Identifying obstacles for accessing online services. Our target group is unfortunately at increased risk of exclusion and isolation, as their inclusion process was fiercely affected and stopped. Shifting to online versions of services is not always possible due to lack of devices, skills or language barriers.

- Participation: beneficiaries take part in the befriending process in equal terms. In the case of events, that are collaborative and the beneficiaries' feedback is collected by the Organisation.
- Volunteers get upskilled through training.
- Sustainability: “We keep applying to thematic calls for funding. In addition to that, befrienders usually create true friendships with families and continue to stay in contact. Similar with creative workshops, women are able to continue these workshops with minimum or no funding”

#### COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

To date the Organisation has worked with state agencies including the Department of Justice and Health Service Executive Social Inclusion who have funded various projects. There is also a link with the Education and Training Board in relation to English language classes, the local Garda Síochána and Community and Voluntary agencies, including Sligo Leader Partnership, Diversity Sligo, Sanctuary Runners, and Aremoja women's group, At present the Organisation has funding from the Department of Justice and Healthy Ireland, an initiative of the Department of Health.

#### SUSTAINABILITY (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY)

- “We keep applying to thematic calls for funding. In addition to that, befrienders usually create true friendships with families and continue to stay in contact. Similar with creative workshops, women are able to continue these workshops with minimum or no funding”
- Learning and teaching through befriending and creative processes are the most practical and fruitful methods for inclusion and learning about the ways of the new communities, in our experience.
- beneficiaries take part in the befriending process in equal terms. In the case of events, that are collaborative and the beneficiaries' feedback is collected by the Organisation. There is a Facebook page that is an effective communication channel that also collects feedback. The Centre also has open door days each week.
- Volunteers apply often; more and more often volunteers come from the migrant background and a lot of locals are usually involved.
- The Organisation tries to have regular meetings, collect reports and answer all queries.

#### TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability/replication potential: the system of engaging volunteers might be different from country to country and main problems to focus on might differ, but befriending and creative approach can be applied to everything.