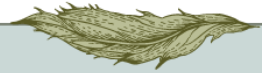


Case study -
West Cork Development Partnership

SICAP - A Psychosocial response to the Ukrainian crisis

Agenda



Introduction – context
Network - community response
Goal 1 and Goal 2 supports
Obstacles/lessons
Summary

Introduction - context

On February 24th 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine from Belarus to the north, the Russian-annexed Crimea Peninsula to the south, and its own territory to the east.

This war has resulted in the displacement of millions of Ukrainian people.

This case study will outline how the SICAP team delivered their supports during an unprecedented demand for services from 1,000+ people who have relocated to the West Cork/Bandon Kinsale area





Initial response

The community development approach



SICAP response

A community meeting with held in each major town in the West Cork area and Bandon.

The Developmental Officers were present to co-ordinate these meeting and to register the response from the community. Collaboration with other groups included CETB, local Family and Community Resource centers, County Council, Employability and the Red Cross. The main themes were

- Conversational English Language – Failte Isteach
- Befriending
- Transport
- Fundraising

Fundraising

Local community church group



Miscommunication



Clear communication

Munster Arms Hotel opens its doors to Ukrainian refugees

Up to 50 Ukrainian refugees, mostly women and children, have taken up residence in Bandon's Munster Arms Hotel. Already 10 children have started in local primary schools, with a smaller number attending second-level schools in the town. All of Ireland is outraged at the barbarity being visited on the people of Ukraine and it is only right that we give them town. A Cead Míle Fáilte as they leave their families and homes in their war-torn country. We in Ireland know more than most about leaving our native shores. Our history is laced with stories of emigration, loneliness and separation. We depended on the UK, America and Australia to open their doors, and their hearts, to the Irish. The push factors for us were hunger, lack of opportunity and deprivation. The Ukrainians have been pushed out of their country by a horrific war, with women and children treated as military targets. Many held highly skilled jobs in Ukraine, have good language skills and wish to give back to their new community. With a national labour shortage, could it be of mutual benefit to our Ukrainian friends and local business owners if they take up employment while they are here? **We visited the Munster Arms Hotel recently to meet some of the new arrivals. All spoke sincerely about their gratitude for the welcome they have received. They also spoke movingly of their families and friends left behind and their determination to return home when it is safe to do so. These are extracts of our conversations, published with their permission.**

By Tricia Tyson & Editor

Tanya, an English language teacher from the southern port of Odessa



Tanya – fled first to Bucharest in Romania, before coming to Ireland with her two young children. The English teacher hopes to find a job in West Cork.

I didn't know so much about Ireland before I came here, but already I love your nation. I have two children, aged eight and six. I was a teacher in an international school for more than 10 years. To live in an English-speaking country has always been my dream, but not like this. If I didn't have children I would have stayed in Ukraine. My parents and grandmother are still in Odessa. Sometimes I am speaking to my father on the phone and he is out walking in the park and it feels normal and then he says 'Oh listen - there's a rocket going overhead'. I never believed the war would happen, but on 24th February there were explosions and the windows in my home were shaking. I took

be there for just one or two weeks. I really wanted to go home and my father was telling me that we would be safe, but I realised I must think of the children and what would be best for them. My work was gone, their schools were gone, so I left my car in Moldova and took a bus 400km to Bucharest. It was very hard but I am so glad I made this decision, and grateful to the people here who have been so kind and hospitable. I want to work and have already had several interviews for jobs teaching online with international language schools in Dublin and Cork. My sons go to Scoil Phadraig Naofa and love their teachers. My 8 year old says it is even better than Ukraine. I miss Ukraine and my family and my life. We all had houses, jobs, cars, family and friends. Our children had classes and sports teams and lots of after-school activities. I could work long days and into the evenings because they had so many clubs to attend. Now it is very hard to work when they finish school at 2.30pm and have nowhere to go and nothing to do. We try to stay strong and resilient, especially for the children, but it is very hard sometimes. We are so lucky to be here in Bandon. We have gone out a few times to look round, and people from shops and cafes have already been to the hotel to drop off vouchers for us to have coffee and treats. It means so much to all of us and we thank you.

Mary is an engineering project manager from near Dnipro, in Central Ukraine



Mary – was an experienced project manager in a wide variety of industries in Ukraine. She loves Bandon because of its educational facilities and hopes to pursue a PhD course at UCC.

I want to say a big thank you from my heart - I didn't expect this help. Not just help, but support. Home is not safe for my children. I have three children. My 19 year old son is a student in Ukraine but he will fight if he is needed. My other son is now at St. Brendan's College in Bandon and is very happy there. I was an engineer for 15 years and worked as a project manager on social and educational building projects in Ukraine. Now I am trying to go to UCC and I would like to get a job here. I only realised one week before the invasion that it would happen, but by then it was too late. We know we are safe here but we still panic when we hear the sirens, even though we know they are not for the bombs. Don O'Sullivan, the hotel owner,

children still run to us and ask 'Mummy, what's going on?' I would like to stay in Bandon. It is perfect for my children and we are so grateful to be here and for the children to be safe and happy.

16 year old Michael is from Kharkiv in the north east of the country, scene of some of the fiercest fighting of the war



Michael (Michael) – was all set to study Computers in University when he finished school. He is now attending Bandon Grammar School and is loud in his praise for the school's support.

I am so thankful to be here - Irish strangers are more friendly than some of my friends! There was a lot of bombing in Kharkiv right from the start and we spent several nights in the basement, but I still didn't believe there could be a war in the 21st century. I was finishing school and planning to go to university to study coding and computer science. I woke up one day and knew I stayed in Ukraine there would be no more education. My father said I should come to Ireland with my uncle. My family has a

Russian border but who knows if that is still there, so my parents and my little sister (10) went to my grandparents' house. I speak to them every day. Darren Priest helped me find a place in Bandon Grammar School and I am really happy there. Darren, Jimmie O'Neill and Shannon and Clare have all been so helpful. Thank you to all the people supporting us - we have good accommodation, good food, and the staff in the hotel even made us Borscht, our special Ukrainian soup. A lot of the food was very spicy and hot to us when we arrived but the staff asked us what we wanted and now they cook us food we are used to. But I really like your potatoes!

Maryam is from Kiev and four generations of her family are together now in Bandon



Maryam is a qualified Beautician and looks forward to continuing to practice in Bandon, if an opportunity arises.

We came to Ireland because my father has a cousin here. I am with my daughter Sophia, who is 4 and a half, my mother, father and my grandmother. I worked in a beauty parlour in Kiev, mostly doing hair and beauty treatments. I would like to get a job here but first I must find a school for Sophia. She is making friends but is still a bit afraid and doesn't want to be away from me. Don O'Sullivan has been so welcoming and kind, especially to the children. He lets them play and run around the corridors, even though we tell them not to. I am scared about what happens when we have to leave the hotel. Where will we go? Are there houses for us? We just don't know. But for now it makes me so happy to see Sophia playing with other little children in safety and peace.

Aleksandra is a charity worker from Zaporizya, near Mariupol. The entire area was reduced to rubble with millions of residents forced to flee



Aleksandra – spent three nights in a bunk bed on the floor of the Community Hall in Clonsilla before coming to Bandon. She was working with a charity before fleeing Ukraine.

I have one daughter, who is 9 years old and has just started school. In Ukraine, we lived in an area with lots of factories and pollution so we love the Irish air, which is so cool and clean. My daughter spent three weeks in our basement. It was horrible. Now we are here, we see birds and sky. It is like a dream to us. I worked for a charity based in a synagogue, on a project with underprivileged families, but I never expected to need help myself. I put my daughter in the car and drove two days to reach Berlin. When we arrived in Ireland, we were sleeping on folding beds in the Community Hall in Clonsilla, which we were most grateful for. I could not believe my eyes when we came to the hotel and saw the room with our own bed and bathroom. My mum, stepfather, family and friends are still in Ukraine. Many of us feel the war has not even started properly yet, so we are very lucky to be here and to have so many good people around us.



Valentina and Iryna at the hotel. Iryna has already found a job at Kevin O'Leary Centre, Inishannon.

Editor's Note: It was a wholly enriching, even if heartbreaking experience, for Tricia Tyson and myself to interview these lovely Ukrainian people. They are so appreciative of the wonderful hospitality and friendship they have received and wish to contribute to Ireland by using their skills in a meaningful way. We also wish to point out that the Munster Arms Hotel continues to function as normal for lunches, evening meals, funerals, christenings and all special occasions.

Would you like to be a volunteer?

By Mary Rose McCarthy



Almost two months after the first Ukrainian refugees arrived in West Cork, the generous public response to their plight shows no signs of abating. **Jimmie O'Neill** of the West Cork Development Partnership, who is co-ordinating the volunteer effort, says it is important to support those offering help, as well as the refugees themselves. "Volunteers need to feel supported, have structure and know that there is someone they can reach out to with queries. Help and support for refugees will be needed for months to come." It is Jimmie's job to assign people to areas or activities where input is most needed. One such place is the former Bandon Library on Market Street. This has become a central drop off point for donations that are distributed across West Cork. Clothes, footwear, toiletries and hygiene products for children and adults are needed, along with laptops, tablets and bedding. Also in demand for children are copybooks and pencils, Lego and bicycle helmets, but Jimmie has one important caveat: "Please do not donate an item you would not wear or use yourself."

Not everyone can house a refugee family, but Jimmie asks that you consider befriending a family and invite them to your home for a meal. Other practical assistance could include conversational English language classes, introducing people to your town or local area, offer school transport, social supports and social activities. Most have a reasonable command of English, and want to work and make a useful contribution to their hosts. Many children have enrolled in local schools, but it is important that Ukrainians maintain their own language and culture as they intend to return home when it is safe to do so. **If you would like to join the volunteer response team call Jimmie O'Neill 086 7356 340 or email jimmie@wcdp.ie**



Clonakilty Community Hall – supports provided by Cork County Council, SICAP, Civil Defence, Red Cross



Sleeping area

Arrangements for 53 people



Play area

Space provided for the children – activities organised by SICAP



Dining area

Meals organised by County Council through local hotels – distributed by SICAP staff and volunteers/ Space used for Fálte Isteach



Seating area

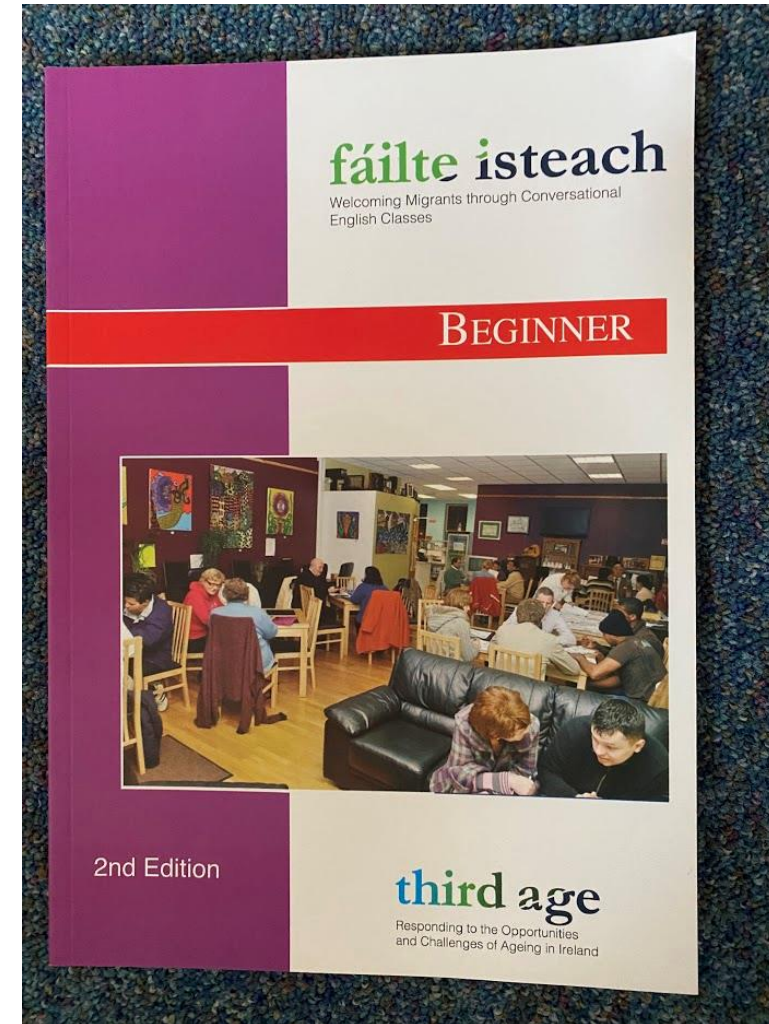
Meeting space for group to liaise with various agencies



Faile Isteach – conversational English Language classes

Following on from a long collaboration with Third Age SICAP increased the number of volunteers from 3 to 30+ in this short time period. Third Age were very supportive in terms of providing the books/resources/training.

Classes were rolled out in each area in addition to the formal English Language Classes which were provided by CETB.



Activities supported by SICAP – Goal 1



Wellbeing

Guided wood walk



Mental Health

Integrative music session



Wellbeing

Surf camp



Mental Health

Equine therapy



Activities supported by SICAP – Goal 2



One to one career support



Lifelong learning



Lifelong learning



Job fair- career support



Exhibition in Kinsale which appeared in National Press

VISUAL ART |

Through Ukrainian Eyes



First impressions last? A photographic exhibition that provides us with a unique opportunity to invite newly arrived visitors from the Ukraine to share what first catches their eye, as they strive to re-establish their lives within our community. Art enabling future conversations?

July 9th+10th

The Granary
11am to 5pm

 Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programme 2014-2020
 European Union
European Structural and Investment Funds

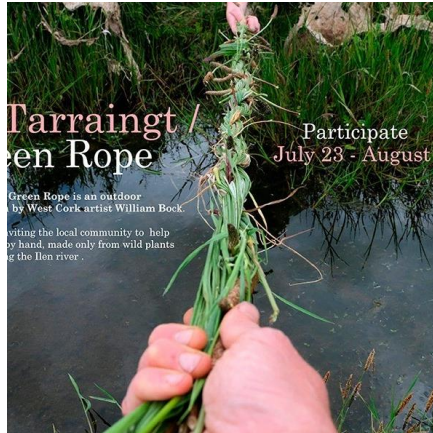
 Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

 pobal
government supporting communities

 SICAP
Sustainable Investment & Community Action Partnership

 West Bank
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Multicultural Activities – Goal 1



Green rope

Collaboration with a local Artist during the Skibbereen Art's Festival



Culture Night

Bantry



Preparation for Independence day

Food and decorations being prepared



Hats for Independence

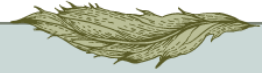
Hand made hats made for Independence Day



Integration – a group of Ukrainian people working with local Tidy towns groups



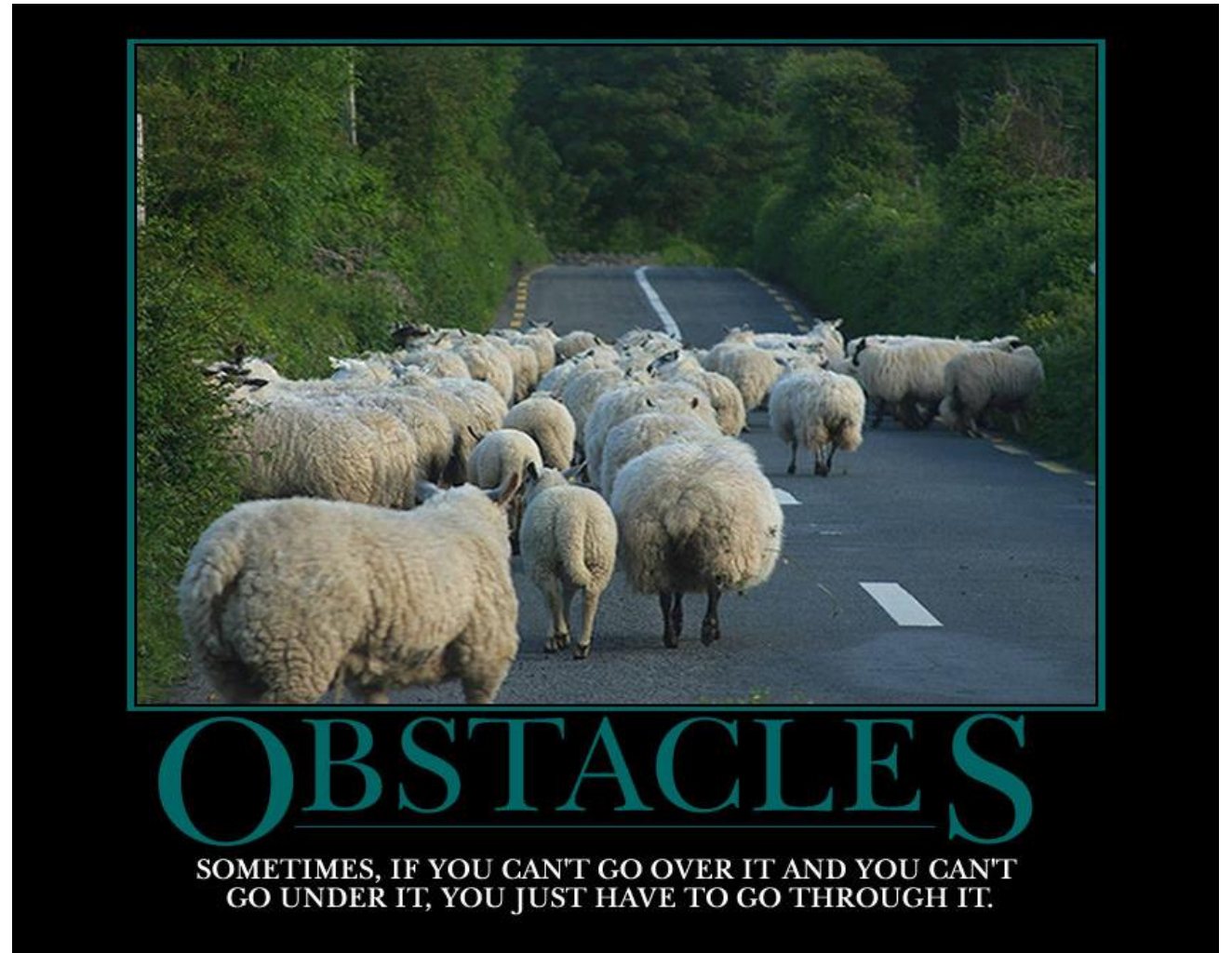
Lessons



- Although the previous slides outline a snapshot of the amount of work that was carried out over the initial 3-to-6-month period, there were obvious difficulties that emerged over this time span. As SICAP staff are perceived as the ‘go to’ people in the community the workload increased dramatically. Also, the people from Ukraine that originally arrived assumed that they were only going to be in Ireland for 3 months and therefore the needs of this population have increased over time.

Issues


1. Communication with accommodation service provider – acknowledged that the staff in this area are under increase pressure with an increase of over 55,000 + people during this time period.
2. Host families – the support that was needed by these families was not undertaken by any main agency. A lot of these relationships broke down in the initial 3-month period, often due to the transport difficulties of placement in rural Ireland as well as lack of support.
3. Groups of people arriving from CityWest and not being aware of rural location.
4. Groups of people arriving and being moved within a short time span and being unaware of follow-on location.




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Issues

Staff at hotels/hostels being untrained in dealing with trauma. These staff would have been previously trained in the hospitality industry and would have clear guidance around tourists as opposed to meeting the needs of a static population.




Transport – placing people in a rural environment where English is not their first native language and there is a lack of availability.



Some private service providers were found to be not providing adequate services, room sharing with nonfamily members.

Issues

The two-tier system that has evolved during this crisis e.g. right to work, driving license swap, access to social welfare. This has caused difficulties for SICAP staff dealing with the individuals accessing the International Protection system seeking asylum in Ireland from other countries.



Differences in the Childcare system between Ireland and Ukraine. This has resulted in Child Protection issues.



Support for volunteers. The role of this group was instrumental in SICAP carrying out this work but the support for these volunteers sometimes daily was provided by SICAP staff.



Summary

The role of SICAP has been highlighted during this current crisis. The team of SICAP has expanded during this year with the introduction of 3 new team members who are Ukrainian. A helpline for people from Ukraine has been set up and is manned by one of the team. The increase of 1,000 + in the population of a vastly rural area has had an affect on the community at large and valuable lessons have been learned.





Thank you



Donna Treya

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