Workshop 8
People on the Move

Introducing the Topic

Migration has been a part of human history since the first human beings began moving out of Africa at least 60,000 years ago. Movements of peoples such as the Romans, Vikings, Normans and English have become part of and shaped Irish history and lore. The Irish too are known for their migration – what Mary Robinson called the Irish Diaspora is made up of over 20 million people across the globe from Britain and the US to Australia and South America. Irish songs and stories are full of often-painful references to the forced emigration of people – from famine, poverty, war and unemployment.

Over thousands of years human beings have moved in search of food, a more hospitable climate, safety, work, or just in a spirit of adventure. The 20th Century saw the movement of people like never before. The development of mass transportation has made movement more possible but the major reasons have been the need to flee from war, persecution and poverty. The UNHCR estimates that there are currently at least 17.1 million people who can be described as victims of forced displacement, many within their own countries or on the borders of neighboring countries.[25]

Meanwhile, it has been argued that Europe is developing into a fortress. Europe has an aging population and needs workers and Europeans are having fewer children, yet immigration laws are being tightened. The debate around immigration is framed in terms of 'problem' or 'threat' and immigrants emerge as scapegoats for society's ills.

Aim of the Workshop

The aim of this workshop is to give participants an opportunity to explore migration as a global and historical phenomenon, to trace the history of migration to and from their own country and to reflect on the impact of migration on the host country, those left behind and the migrants themselves. This workshop is divided into two parts: the first looks at the meaning and causes of migration and the Irish experience; the second looks at the global refugee crisis and the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland.

Workshop 8 Part 1
Objectives

To enable participants to

- Understand the meaning of migration and related terms
- Explore the Irish experience of migration
- Increase their understanding of immigration into Ireland
- Examine the causes of migration

Materials Needed for Workshop

- Flipchart paper and markers/felt tip pens/colouring pencils, etc.
- Copy of Christy Moore's song 'Missing You' on CD or cassette
- CD or cassette player
- Copies of Handouts 17 & 18
- Very long sheet of paper or several sheets stuck together for the timeline exercise (see notes on creating a timeline)
- Several sets of 'cards' from the Reasons for Migration exercise
- Paper for notes on song 'Missing You'

Part 1 in Summary

1. **Introduction and opening exercise:** what's in a name?
   10 mins

2. **Brainstorm:** migration
   10 mins

3. **Music:** Christy Moore, *Missing You*
   10 mins

4. **Handout 17:** songs our exiles sang
   15 min

5. **Migration and your community**
   20 mins

6. **Timeline exercise:** migration from Ireland
   25 mins

7. **Break**
   30 mins

8. **Timeline:** migration into Ireland
   15 mins

9. **Input:** recent immigration into Ireland
   15 mins

10. **Reasons for migration exercise**
    15 mins

11. **Handout 18:** reading from the *Grapes of Wrath*
    10 mins

12. **Closing round:** 'one thing I love about my home country…'
    5 mins

Total time: 3 hours

3. Music: 'Missing You by Christy Moore

Before playing the song give people paper and pen and ask them to listen closely to the words and to note what type of migration they think the song is referring to and to jot down or draw anything that strikes them. Play the song and ask participants for their responses.

4. Handout 17: *songs our exiles sang*

Distribute the handout and read through some of the lyrics.

¥ **What are the songs about?**

¥ **What emotions are expressed in the songs?**

¥ **All these songs are about the emigration of Irish people or immigration of Irish people into other lands. Why did Irish people move?**

Divide a sheet of flipchart into two columns with the following headings:

(a) reasons Irish people migrated; and
(b) reasons other people migrate.

Write up the reasons that arise from the songs and music in the first column, for example, famine, poverty, political situations, looking for work, etc. Then ask the group if they know of any other reasons people moved within the country or left Ireland.

5. Small group exercise: *migration in your community*

Ask participants to discuss, in pairs or threes, their own and/or their family's experience of migration. Many Irish people have parents or grandparents who migrated from the country-side or the islands, or family who emigrated to different parts of the world. Allow some time for feedback and then divide participants into small groups of four or five. Ask each group to draw a rough map of their community and to place on the map signs of migration to and from their community. People may immediately think of obvious signs of recent immigration such as ethnic shops, restaurants and accommodation centres for asylum-seekers. Remind them to think also of signs

and place-names, places of worship and graveyards, migrant support centres or projects, docksides, memorials (such as the various famine memorials around the country), etc. Allow time for feedback. This exercise may again generate discussion on refugees and asylum-seekers. Let people know that they will be looking at this more closely in the second session; for now the focus is on migration in general.

6. Timeline: *emigration*

How to create a timeline (see Facilitator Sheet 19 for sample):

• You will need a very long sheet of paper or several sheets stuck together.

• You can create the timeline horizontally or vertically. Simply draw a line and enter the dates where you want to begin and end (for example beginning with the arrival of the Gaels and ending in the present).

• There is no need to include all the data here. Include some dates and detail that will prompt your group, for example the Famine and the 1980s. The group can add details as they discuss times when people came or went from Ireland.

• It would be useful to enter immigration and emigration on different sides of the line, or to colour code them.

• Lay your timeline sheet on the floor or pin it along the wall. Ask people to mark times when Irish people left in big numbers. The obvi-ous times are before during and after the Famine, the 1930s-1960s and the 1980s when high unemployment resulted in large numbers leaving to look for work abroad.

The discussion should focus on the following:

• What were the effects of emigration on communities in Ireland?

People who have not experienced emigr-tion may find this a difficult question. Some of the effects included young people leaving, depopulation of towns and villages and schools, businesses and services closing down because of insufficient numbers using them.