

Report of exchange programme in Malta



October, 2007

Vinciane Masurelle, Fedasil, Belgium
Johanna Pöykkö, Fedasil, Belgium

Participant Data

Name	Johanna Pöykkö and Vinciane Masurelle
Organisation	Fedasil, Belgium

Itinerary (List of places and people visited)

OIWAS head unit:

Meeting: 10th of October 1,5 hours

- Alexander Tortell, Service Manager
- Elaine Micallef, Head of Care
- Jesmond Debono, Assistant Head of Care – Family
- Sarah Borda Bondin, Assistan Head of Care – UMAs

Observation of the customer care hours: 17th of October, 2 hours

- Solange Kimano, Customer care coordinator

Meeting and observation of customer care work: 18th of October, 3 hours

- Angie Caruana, Customer care coordinator

OIWAS representative in closed centre

Meeting 15th of October, 1 hour

- Amanda Ellul, Coordinator Closed Centre

OIWAS reception centres visited and people interviewed:

- DAR IL-LIEDNA: UAM's, families with minor children and pregnant women, 10th of October, 11.00 – 16.00
 - Charmaine Caciha, Social worker UMAs
 - Josanne Attard, Social worker families
 - Christine Dalli, Care worker UMAs
- DAR IL-QAWSALLA: families with minor children and pregnant women, 11th of October, 9.00 – 21.00
 - David, Coordinator
 - Josianne Vella, Social worker
 - Care worker
- DAR IS-SLIEM: UAM's, 12th of October, 9.00 – 16.00
 - Aloisia Abela, Coordinator
 - Rosa and Bernardet, Care workers

- HAL-FAR OIWAS: families with minor children and pregnant women, 15th of October, 9.00 – 16.00
 - Mario Camirelli, Coordinator
 - Anna Spiretti and Jesmond Grech, Care workers

- HAL-FAR TENT VILLAGE, single men and women and couples, 16th of October, 9.00 – 18.00
 - Mario Cauci, Assistant Care Coordinator
 - Roberto Calleja, Social worker
 - Philip Debrincat, Care worker

- Meeting with representatives of UNCHR, 18th of October, 1 hour,
 - Neil Falzon, Head of UNCHR office in Malta
 - Caroline Bay, Project officer

Table of content

Introduction

1. Country Profile
2. Context of Malta
3. Reception conditions
4. Description of the OIWAS centres

Conclusions

Appendix: Documents

Introduction

The research for this report was done during the Enaro exchange in Malta from 9 to 18 October 2007. The aim of the exchange was to observe how the reception of the vulnerable groups of asylum seekers is organised in open reception centres and to exchange best practices.

During our exchange we were hosted by The Organization for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers (OIWAS), a governmental agency responsible for the reception of the asylum seekers in open reception centres and the focus of the study are the five open centres run by OIWAS.

The report is descriptive and is based on observations and interviews done during the Enaro exchange.

1. Country profile / statistical data

Please provide data on the following for the whole of the country, if available, unless otherwise specified. This information will be used to compile a basic country profile database which can be updated yearly.

General Information:	
Country:	Malta
Organisation, address, website:	OIWAS, Organisation for the Integration and welfare of asylum seekers, Bloc C, Belt Is-Sebh, Floriana, FRN 1700
Governing institution:	Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity
Total number of employees:	60
Annual budget (EUR):	
Daily accommodation costs per one asylum seeker (EUR):	
Asylum grant proceedings:	
Legal duration of asylum grant proceedings:	
Organisation liable for asylum grant proceedings (if other than above)	Refugee Commissioner
Legal regulations governing asylum grant proceedings, their last amendment	CHAPTER 420 REFUGEES ACT <i>AN ACT to make provisions relating to and establishing procedures with regard to refugees and asylum seekers.</i> 1st October, 2001 <i>ACT XX of 2000, as amended by Act VIII of 2004 and Legal Notice 40 of 2005.</i>
Total number of asylum applications during: (indicate numbers and year)	Since 2002: 5004
Total number of granted asylum in accordance with the Geneva Convention during: (indicate numbers and year)	Since 2002: 195
Total number of provided subsidiary forms of protection: (indicate numbers and year)	Since 2002: 2242
5 top countries of origin of asylum seekers: (2007)	1. Somalia 2. Eritrea 3. Ethiopia 4. Sudan 5. Ivory Coast
Accommodation of asylum seekers	
Total of accommodation capacity (number of beds):	2000
Types of accommodation: (more than one answer possible)	<input type="checkbox"/> houses <input type="checkbox"/> hotels <input type="checkbox"/> bungalows <input type="checkbox"/> boats <input type="checkbox"/> caravans x tents <input type="checkbox"/> military barracks x (shared) rooms <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify):
Number of facilities:	5 OIWAS centres and two centres run by NGO's

Average length of stay of asylum seeker in asylum reception facility:	
Asylum seekers has possibility to live in private housing:	x yes (remark: in this case do not receive financial support) <input type="checkbox"/> no
Asylum seeker's freedom of movement:	x without restriction <input type="checkbox"/> restricted: daily registration <input type="checkbox"/> obligatory permanent presence in asylum facility <input type="checkbox"/> detention
Services provided:	
Types of catering:	x individual cooking (open centres) <input type="checkbox"/> catering provided <input type="checkbox"/> combined
System of provision of financial and material aid:	<input type="checkbox"/> cash <input type="checkbox"/> payment in kind x combined
Asylum seeker's access to the labour market:	<input type="checkbox"/> no x yes, specify conditions: (see further in the report)
Lessons of local language available:	x compulsory (in one of the centres for UAMs) x voluntary <input type="checkbox"/> none
Vocational training available:	x yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Extent of health care provided:	x standard – same as health care provided for citizens <input type="checkbox"/> different, specify:
Obligatory initial medical examinations:	<input type="checkbox"/> none x lung X-ray (TB) <input type="checkbox"/> venereal diseases <input type="checkbox"/> taking of biological material samples <input type="checkbox"/> other, specify:
Vulnerable groups:	
Definition of vulnerable groups – please indicate the categories which are considered vulnerable in the reception system:	x Unaccompanied minors <input type="checkbox"/> Single women x Pregnant women x Families with children <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly x Incomplete families (single women with minor children) <input type="checkbox"/> Mentally handicapped <input type="checkbox"/> Physically handicapped/disabled x Victims of trauma and other people with mental health problems <input type="checkbox"/> Others, specify
Please indicate number of asylumseekers for each category a) the whole country	
Unaccompanied minors	40
Single women	70
Families with children	132
Elderly	40
Incomplete families (single women with minor children)	26
Mentally handicapped	25
Physically handicapped/disabled	20
Victims of trauma and other people with mental health problems	Not provided

Others, specify Single men	1420
----------------------------	------

1. Malta Context: From Crisis to Management

Since 2002 Malta, the smallest EU Member State, is confronted with an unprecedented migration pressure and has rescued some 8000 migrants, most of them coming from Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan, with smaller numbers coming from Congo, Nigeria, Niger and Ivory Coast and arriving by boat from Libya. For these migrants, Malta is a transit country, as continental Europe stays the first choice in the search for a better life.

Faced with this operational challenge, the Maltese government took a series of ad hoc initiatives. After a first generation of emergency measures, Malta is now building on the past experiences to further develop and structure the asylum and reception system. Legal and organizational improvements already took place and paved the way for a more efficient system in respect of international, European and national legislations and in regard to the specific Maltese context.

In the coming years, Malta will pursue its efforts and further uphold the national legal basis, and invest in institutional and organizational reinforcement and capacity building, through its own resources but also through available European funds. In parallel, the country will be following the positions of European partners towards the plea it launched in favour of European solidarity and the installation of a burden-sharing system.

Malta is for the moment in a status-quo position as national elections are due to be held early next year. The government's ability to properly manage the migration issue, both at national and international level, will certainly have an impact on the Maltese population, where migration becomes more and more sensitive.

Legal Context

The Refugee Act, 2000 (amended in 2004 and 2005).
Reception of Asylum Seekers (Minimum Standards) Regulations, 2005

Institutional Context

Up to 2002 UNCHR was responsible for the asylum procedure and reception of the asylum seekers in Malta. In 2002 these tasks were taken over by the Maltese government.

The Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs is the lead ministry for migration. It is responsible for arrivals, procedure and management of closed centres. The Office of the Refugee Commissioner is responsible for the treatment of asylum requests. The Office falls under the Ministry of Justice but benefits from a semi-autonomous status. A Refugee Appeals Board is responsible for the appeals.

The Ministry Family and Social Solidarity is responsible for all issues concerning reception of the asylum seekers. The Organization for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers (OIWAS) falls under that Ministry.

OIWAS

OIWAS is a new organization that has been officially opened on refugee day, June 20 2007. The creation of OIWAS aims at limiting the fragmentation that existed before in the asylum seekers' reception system and pooling human resources from the ministry and the reception centres.

OIWAS is composed of 60 staff members, working in the Head Office (12) or in the centres. (see organizational chart in annex).

OIWAS's main activities are:

- Coordinating the management and care of the open centre network – between residential homes and open centres
- Data collection and the recognition of trends in irregular immigration
- Caring for vulnerable groups of people
- Helping to facilitate the two-way process for the inclusion of Refugees, Temporary Humanitarian and Asylum Seekers into society
- Customer Care
 - The dissemination of information to clients
 - Noting difficulties in accessing services to offer suggestions for improvement
- Project in detention
 - Provision of care and support for more vulnerable groups in detention
- Liaising with UNHCR, IOM and NGO's
 - For the ultimate benefit of our clients
- Assisting policy making functions of the Ministry
 - Our experience on a grassroots level equips us with information about needs and requirements
- Resettlement
- Collaboration with other members of ENARO to evaluate, identify and establish best practices
- Building international contacts for cooperation in burden sharing; with organisations such as COA
- Identifying accommodation facilities
- Accessing EU funding so that we may have the resources to provide services
- Assisting and networking with ministries, government agencies and other partners to ensure the rights of irregular immigrants are clear, written and address the identified needs
- Addressing Racism/Xenophobia
 - through education
 - by providing a platform for inter-cultural dialogue
 - by contributing to public opinion and assisting the Ministry with its communication strategy in this area.
- Combating exploitation in the workplace by encouraging people to obtain a work permit and educating bosses on best practice
- Developing an identity and finding resources to carry out the mission of the organization.
- Providing reception conditions on behalf of the government

- The responsible use of public resources
- Continual evaluation of our service delivery and reception conditions

(Source Website of the Ministry of Family and Social solidarity:
<http://www.msp.gov.mt/services/subpages/content.asp?id=1976>)

Vulnerable Groups

In the Reception Act, minors and families are referred to as vulnerable groups. The other categories of vulnerable groups defined in the European directive are not mentioned in this Act. Eventhough person having a trauma or pregnant women are not mentioned in the Reception act, they are as well considered as vulnerable

Coordination and provision of welfare services in closed centres

Last June, OIWAS applied for European funding and set up a welfare service in detention centres. A full-time collaborator has been designated to open an office in a detention centre. Partners of the project are: OIWAS, Detention services, IOM, ETC (Employment and Training Cooperation) and COA. Welfare services include: social services in the strict sense (social workers etc.), adult education services, skills assessment/CV compilation and cultural orientation.

Reception and Integration

Malta appears to be a second-choice destination for migrants: they arrived here by mistake. This has consequences on mental representations of the migrants, the local community, as well as the reception staff. As mentioned by a social worker, integration does not mean the people will stay in Malta forever. Integration means migrants are able, at a certain moment of time, to easily access services they are entitled to get from Malta. In this context, the definition of reception and integration becomes clearly blurred.

Resettlement

Resettlement activities have been organized to the Netherlands, Ireland, Lithuania, Germany and the United States. It represents 200 persons on a yearly basis. People benefiting from resettlement in Malta are recognized refugees or people in need of humanitarian protection. Special attention is given to people belonging to vulnerable groups (families, minors,...).

Voluntary Return and Deportation

Malta doesn't organize any return, forced or voluntary. The country apparently had bad experiences in the past with people being sent back in dangerous countries (UNHCR, sources). Malta is confronted with a number of operational difficulties to organize return:

- logistical difficulties: no flights organized to countries of origin

- financial difficulties: transport costs are very expensive. They are thinking of organizing some joint repatriation flights at European level.
- legal difficulties: the issuing of documents isn't that easy as the country doesn't count a lot of embassies. Contacts with countries of origin can appear to be very difficult. Malta as a single country cannot do much and underlines the necessity to speak with a common European voice to countries such as Algeria, Morocco and especially Libya.

3.1. General reception conditions

Closed centres as initial reception facilities

Most of the asylum seekers arrive irregularly, by boat, in Malta. They are caught by the boarder guards and brought to the closed centres. In the closed centres they have the possibility to ask asylum. Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs is responsible for the closed centres.

At the moment about 2000 persons are held in closed centres.

At the moment there are 3 closed centres. In the future Malta is planning to open a 4th closed centre. This fourth centre project is called *Pipeline-centre*. The idea is that this centre will serve as an initial closed centre where all new irregular immigrants are brought. During their stay in the *Pipeline-centre* the residents are tested on TBC and necessary medical care will be given by the medical staff present in the centre.

Vulnerable persons are released in the open centres. How long it takes to be released depends on how long the assessment of the vulnerability takes and on whether there are free places in the open centres. Especially during the summer months when influx of the irregular immigrants is high, the time spend in a closed centre might be longer. UAM's, families with minor children, pregnant women and people with a trauma are considered as vulnerable. OIWAS is responsible for the assessment of the vulnerability. According to the OIWAS vulnerable groups are released between two days and two weeks. During our exchange we met an UAM who had spent 7 months in a closed centre. We met as well a family with minor children who had spend 2 months in a closed centre.

For the persons not considered as vulnerable the maximum time to spend in a closed centre depends on the state of their asylum procedure. An asylum seeker, whose procedure is still pending after one year, is released to an open centre. Rejected asylum seekers can be held maximum 18 months in a closed centre. After this period they are released to the open centres.

Medical screening

TBC test in the closed centre.

Open centres

Open centres are managed by OIWAS and NGO's. During our exchange we visited all five OIWAS centres. We did not visit NGO centres and therefore they are not a subject of the research.

OIWAS centres are:

- DAR IL-LIEDNA: Two units: UAM unit and family unit (families with minor children and pregnant women)
- DAR IL-QAWSALLA: families with minor children and pregnant women
- DAR IS-SLIEM: UMAs

- HAL-FAR OIWAS: families with minor children and pregnant women
- HAL-FAR TENT VILLAGE, single adults (men and women) and couples

Families with minor children and adults can normally stay maximum 1 year in an open centre. After this period they are expected to be integrated well enough in the Maltese society in order to be able to support them selves and to live independently in the community.

UAM's can stay in the open centres until they reach the age of 18. After the age of 18 they either start living in the community by them selves or are transferred to the open centres for adults.

Rejected asylum seekers who are released from the detention can stay as well one year in an open centre. At the moment ¼ of the places in open centres are occupied by rejected asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers living in the community

As stated above asylum seekers are expected to support them selves after one year stay in an open centre and to live in the community independently and do not receive financial aid. OIWAS holds customer care hours 3 times a week for the persons living in the community.

Information

During the intake, asylum seekers sign a service agreement. This agreement includes information about their duties and rights at the asylum centre.

Legal services

UAM's have right for a lawyer since the beginning of the asylum procedure. Other asylum seekers have right for a lawyer for the appeal procedures (after the first rejection).

Free lawyers are provided by the state. Asylum seekers can as well ask legal support from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).

According to one of social assistants whom we interviewed, the quality of the legal advice provided by the free lawyers is poor. She prefers the services provided by JRS.

Interpreters

Refugee commissioner provides interpreters for the interviews regarding to the asylum procedure.

In the reception centres other residents are used as interpreters.

UNCHR employs interpreters and is working on a project to train interpreters. UNCHR provides its interpreter services for different organisations working with the asylum seekers.

Asylum procedure waiting times

Normally first decision is given in 4 months. If the decision is negative, asylum seeker has possibility to appeal twice. Total procedure takes normally 1 year.

Dispersal

Malta does not have a dispersal policy for the asylum seekers.

Staff members in open centres of OIWAS consist of:

- Coordinator, responsible for the management of the centre: staff, resources, contact with the OIWAS head unit etc.
- Social worker: responsible for the social welfare of the residents, including asylum procedure. All the social workers have a social workers degree
- Care workers, responsible for the day-to-day assistance for the residents. Care workers are encouraged to follow a care workers course at the university. We met several care workers who were taking this course.

Schooling and education

Minor children of asylum seekers and asylum seekers who are minors shall have access to the education system under similar conditions as Maltese nationals (...) (Article 9 of the reception of Asylum Seekers (Minimum Standards) Regulations, 2005)

This means that the minors from 3 to 16 years old have access to the same school system as Maltese children. Schools do not ask tuition fee. School material and uniforms has to be provided by the students. These costs, especially for the school uniforms, can be quite high. The reception centres help asylum seekers with these costs. Teaching language in Maltese schools is English.

Asylum seekers have as well free access to colleges and universities. During the exchange we met couple of UAM's who were going to start college's this year. Many UAM's choose to work instead of to study. There are various reasons for this: weak or inexistent previous education background in the country of origin, lack of knowledge of English or they prefer to work in order to save money for example to be sent to families in country of origin.

Asylum seekers have access to English courses. In some centres like Dar Is-Qawsalla and Hal Far Tent village the English lessons are organised at the centre. In Dar Is-Qawsalla the English courses are obligatory 4 times a week. In Hal Far Tent village the courses are compulsory. The courses are often given by a voluntary worker and a teacher from the educational service. The residents have access to the Adult education centres which provides different kind of evening courses. The residents of Dal Il-Liedna are encouraged to follow courses in one of these centres.

The asylum seekers have as well access to the courses of the Employment and Training Cooperation (ETC). The cooperation offers vocational training.

Health care

Open centres

The asylum seekers have same access to the public health care as the Maltese citizens.

The asylum seekers do not have to pay for the medical care and the medication in the public hospitals and the public pharmacists.

In Hal Far OIWAS and Hal Far Tent village a voluntary general practitioner holds a consultation once a week. In other centres the asylum seekers go straight to the public hospital.

Closed centres

In closed centres works a team of doctors. If needed the residents are brought to a public hospital for further care.

Mental health care

Asylum seekers have access to mental health care via public hospitals. According to one of the social workers that we interviewed the access rather good. Two of the UAM's who stayed in her centre were in therapy.

Food

Open centres for families

Individual cooking. Resident buy they own ingredients and cook themselves.

Open centres for UAMs

Individual cooking. Ingredients are provided by the reception centre. In one of the centres each UAM cooks in turns for all the residents. In other centre UAMs can freely form groups or cook individually.

Financial support

In open centres residents have right for financial support. Financial support differs for families and UMAs

Families

Adult: 2 Maltese lire a day (about 4.66 euros)

Child: 1 Maltese lire a day (about 2,33 euros)

Residents who work do not have a right for financial support. In order to control this, residents have to sign 3 times a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday between certain hours for example between 11.00 and 11.30). If more than 2 signatures are missing in two weeks time, this resident is assumed to have worked and does not receive money for the next two weeks (support is paid every two weeks). If resident misses more than 2 signatures he has to contribute 0.50 pounds (1.66 euros) a day for the centre.

UAM's

UAM's receive 3 Maltese lire (about 7,5 euros) pocket money per week in centres specialized for the reception of the UAMs.

The difference with families is that the UAMs receive ingredients for cooking from the reception facility.

Clothing

Centres receive a lot of cloth donations from the neighbours and these clothes are given freely to the residents.

Freedom of movement

Freedom of movement in the country is not restricted.

Complaints and participation

The smaller open centres organise residence meetings. During these meetings asylum seekers have a possibility to get involved in the way the facility operates.

Asylum seekers can lodge a written at the management of the centre.

Employment

Legal context:

(1) In accordance with labour market conditions prevailing at the time, the Ministry responsible for issuing employment licences shall determine a period of time, starting from the date on which an application for asylum was lodged, during which an applicant shall

not have access to the labour market.

(2) If a decision at first instance has not been taken within one year of the presentation of an application for asylum and this delay cannot be attributed to the applicant or his legal representative, the Ministry responsible for issuing employment licences shall decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for the applicant.

(3) Where an appeal is lodged against a negative decision, access to the labour market shall not be withdrawn during the appeal stage. (...) (Article 10 of the reception of Asylum Seekers (Minimum Standards) Regulations, 2005)

Practice:

At the moment refugees, asylum seekers, persons to whom humanitarian protection has been granted and even rejected asylum seekers, have access to the labour market.

Refugees and persons to whom temporary humanitarian status has been granted apply for the working permit at ETC and receive a working permit which is valid for one year.

Asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers need to apply a working permit. The working permit can be only granted if the future employer states that he will employ this person. It takes about 15 days to get a working permit. The permit is employer specific (only valid to work for the employer who was mentioned in the application). The working permit is valid for 3 months. The fact that employer has to sign the application, makes some employer reluctant to employ asylum seekers.

In two of the centres for UAMs coordinators and social workers play an important and active role in the employment of the UAMs. During our exchange we participated a meeting that one of the coordinators had together with a possible employer.

3.2. UAM's

Age definition and age assessment of UAM's

In Malta asylum seekers are minor until they reach the age of 18.

If there is doubt of the age of the asylum seeker who claims to be a minor, an age assessment is done in a closed centre. Age Assessment Team (AAT) of OIWAS is responsible for the age assessment. The ATT was established in 2005. The ATT consists of the assistant head of care for UAM's, a customer care coordinator and a social worker. The team interviews the asylum seekers. Psychological and physical developments of an asylum seeker are taken into account. In case that the members of the assessment team disagree about the minority of the asylum seeker, they can ask for Further Age Verification Test - a bone test of the wrist. This test is run by the public hospital. In the future there are plans to test jaw as well. As the bone test is not that accurate, an asylum seeker is given 1 year benefit of doubt. (A 17 year old becomes 16 years). If the ATT agrees about the minority of the asylum seeker, unaccompanied minor is released to the open centre specialized for the reception of the UMAs.

Interview arrangements

Social assistant, who is as well the guardian of the UAM, is always present during the asylum procedure interviews. It is as well possible for a lawyer to be present. According to one of the social workers to whom we talked to, the interviews arrangements are getting better for the children. Guardian has a right to stop the interview.

Guardians

The Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity is the legal guardian of the UAMs. It is usually a social worker of the reception centre who fulfils this role.

Family Tracing

No active family tracing is organised.

3.3. Pregnant women, single parents with minor children, women and families

Assessment of the vulnerability

Vulnerability Assessment Test (VAT) of the families takes more time than of the UAM's. As a statute of the vulnerability is a way to be released from the detention, it often appears that for example men are claiming to be a father of a minor or husband of a single mother with minor children. For this reason if there is a doubt of the family bond, the family is being assessed by the VAT team. OIWAS is responsible for the VAT. The VAT team consist of a social worker, a customer care coordinator and a assistant head of care for families. The VAT consists of several interviews, cross-examinations and a sort of checklist is used. The VAT team can recommend detention service to release a person. This recommendation is usually followed by the detention services.

3.3.1. Pregnant women:

Health

Pregnant women who give birth in Malta and their new born babies receive medical follow-up by an special organisation (same service as for Maltese citizens, like *Kind en Gezin* in Flanders or *neuvola* in Finland). Organisation does home consultations and gives vaccinations.

Information for the pregnant women

Due to the language barrier it has been difficult to motivate pregnant women to follow the courses on giving birth offered in Malta. For this reason one of social assistants we met, had followed a course on practices around giving birth and is now able to inform pregnant women at her centre.

Interpreters

No special interpreters foreseen for pregnant women. In reception centres other residents are used as interpreters.

Material environment for the pregnant women

Pregnant women are received at family centres. If they are single and do not have other children, they often share the room with other pregnant women or single mothers.

3.3.2. single parents with minor children, women and families

Interviews

For the Vulnerability assessment parents are interviewed separately.

Interpreters

At reception centres other residents are used as interpreters. As men tend to speak better English, the interpreter is often a man. The social workers realise that the lack of professional and female interpreters is a problem.

Family friendly accommodation

Family unity is respected in the open centres and normally each family with children has their own room. Only single woman with children have to sometimes share a room with other single woman.

Play facilities

Only in one of the three centres a separate playroom was foreseen at the centre.

Child care

One of the centres was working on a project to start a child care centre in the reception centre. The idea is that this child care offers services for the families living in the reception centre and Maltese families living in the neighbourhood.

At the moment access to child care is not good and this prevents mothers and especially single women to work.

Safety of women

At smaller family centres a staff member is always present and is able to provide safety at the reception centre.

In a bigger centres there is no permanence of staff members during the nights and this causes serious safety problem for the single women who only can count on the help of the other residents. The staff members are aware of this problem.

Sexual health counselling

At one of the reception centres a social worker organise sexual health and family planning counselling to women. Reception centre provides as well free condoms to the residents.

Material support for the new born babies

Centres provide additional baby milk and pampers for the first 6 months.

4. Description of the OIWAS centres

During the exchange we visited 5 OIWAS reception centres and spent a full day in each of them. Visited centres were: Dar Il-Liedna, Dar Il-Qawsalla, Dar Is-Sliem, Hal-Far OIWAS and Hal-Far Tent Village. The aim of this description is to give a general overview of the infrastructure of the reception facilities. The information was gathered by observation and interviews with the staff members.

5.1. Dar Il-Liedna (10 October 2007)

DAR IL-LIEDNA was opened in October 2006 and is situated in a residential area. It has two different units, one for families and another one for the unaccompanied minors. The units are situated in two different floors. The both units have 24 h/ 24 h permanence of staff members.

During the visit we interviewed the social workers of the family and UAM units and a care worker of the UAM unit and a couple of residents.

Staff:

Staff consists of a care coordinator, two social workers (one for both units) and team of care workers.

UAM unit:

Residents:

- Boys from 15 up to 18 years old

Country of origin of the residents:

- Somalia
- Sudan
- Ethiopia

Infrastructure:

Capacity:

- 3 rooms
- 18 beds

Sleeping rooms:

- 6 beds in a room
- Each resident has a closet

Kitchen:

- 1 kitchen
- Gas cooker, fridge and cupboard
- 1 sink

Living room

- Couches
- Television, HIFI installation

Family unit:

Residents:

- Families with minor children
- Single parents with children
- Pregnant women

Country of origin of the residents:

- Somalia
- Sudan
- Ethiopia

Infrastructure:

Capacity

- About 10 rooms
- About 36 beds

Sleeping rooms:

- Families with mother, father and child have a own room
- Single mothers and pregnant share a room (max 2 mothers per room)

Toilet and bathrooms

- Residents share toilets and bathrooms

Kitchen:

- 1 kitchen
- Each family has own gas cooker and fridge

- 2 sinks

Living room

- Couches
- Television, DVD

Laundry

- Resident have access to a washing machine and wash they own cloths

Access to the public transport

The centre has a good access to the public transport

5.2. Dar Is-Quasalla (11 October 2007)

Dar Is-Quasalla was opened in January 2006 and is situated in a residential area. It residents families, single parents and pregnant women. There is 24 h/ 24 h permanence of staff members.

During the visit we interviewed a care coordinator, a social worker, a care worker and a couple of residents.

The centre is a working on a kinder garden project proposal in order to give the mother possibility to work. The kinder garden will be accessible for the residents of the centre and people living in the neighbourhood.

Staff:

Staff consists of a care coordinator, a social workers and team of care workers.

Residents:

- Families with minor children
- Single parents with children
- Pregnant women

Country of origin of the residents:

- Somalia
- Sudan
- Ethiopia
- Eritrea
- Nigeria

Infrastructure:

OIWAS rents the building from the church. Building used to serve as an orphanage. Building is at the residential area.

Capacity:

- 15 rooms, 1 family-unit has one room
- About 50 beds

Sleeping rooms:

- Rooms with private bathroom with shower and toilet
- Rooms without bathroom, residence use bathroom and toilet in the corridor, doors can be locked

Kitchen:

- 1 kitchen for all the residence
- Each family has own gas cooker, fridge and cupboard (fridge and cupboard can be locked)
- Two kitchen tables where residence eat
- 1 sink

Living room

- Couches
- Television

Playroom for children

- Centre is working on a project to equip the playroom. They are applying a funding from a bank which has funding programme for playing facilities. Centre wants to get closet for each child, a television, a computer with the internet connection, chairs and tables.

Internet room

- One computer with internet connection, residents pay one Maltese lire / month for the internet (about 2.5 euros).

Telephone

- One telephone for use. Residents can use it with phone cards.

Laundry

- Resident wash their own cloths with the washing machine, use is controlled, but unlimited

Garden

Transport:

Good access to public transport

5.3. Dar Il-Sliem (12 October 2007)

DAR IL-SLIEM was opened in June 2003 and is the first open centre for UAMs. The centre situated in a residential area in a government building. In the same building is a home for mentally disabled persons and institution for Maltese teenagers.

There is 24 h/ 24 h permanence of staff members in the centre.

Staff:

Staff consists of a care coordinator, a social workers and team of care workers.

Residents

UAMs, both boys (17) and girls (5).

Country of origin of the residents:

- Somalia (majority)
- Sudan
- Ethiopia
- Nigeria

Infrastructure:

Capacity:

- 5 rooms
- 25 beds

Sleeping rooms:

- Sleeping compartments, separated with the sheds
- 5 beds in a compartment
- Each resident has a closet

Kitchen:

- 1 kitchen for all the residents
- Gas cooker, 3 fridge's and cupboard
- 1 sink

Living room

- Couches
- Television
- Table

Toilet and bathrooms

- Residents share toilets and bathrooms (separate for boys and girls)

Laundry

- Resident have free access to a washing machine and wash they own cloths

Transport:

Good access to public transport

5.4. Hal Far-OIWAS (15 October 2007)

Centre is the first governmental open centre in Malta. It was first run by the foundation for social services. In June 2007 the centre became one of the OIWAS centres. According to the coordinator the situation is better now, mainly because they have more resources.

The centre is situated in an old English army barracks in an industrial zone. With the sources from the European Refugee Funds the centre is being refurbished. One of the blocs is already finished. Each home has one flat with one bedroom, an individual bathroom and a kitchen and one 'apartment' with 3 rooms, kitchen and bathroom. The apartment is shared with other families.

Residents:

- Families with minor children
- Single parents with children
- Pregnant women

Country of origin of the residents:

- Somalia
- Sudan
- Ethiopia
- Chad
- Congo

Infrastructure:

Capacity:

- 11 'homes', in each home there are 4 to 5 rooms
- About 130 places

Sleeping rooms:

- Rooms with private bathroom with shower and toilet
- Rooms without bathroom, residents share bathroom and toilet in the corridor

Kitchen:

- Different formulas. In some of the rooms kitchen is in the room, in some 2 or 5 families share the kitchen

Internet room

- One of the residents is running a internet café in the centre. It costs 50 cents per half an hour to use the internet.

Laundry

- Resident wash their own cloths in a washing room. Some of the residents have their own washing machines in their rooms.

Transport:

Fairly good access to public transport

5.5. Hal Far Tent Village (16 October 2007)

Centre is a tent village for adult males and females. It was opened in February 2006. The centre is situated in an industrial zone.

There is an administrative building for the employers where the reception of the residents is organised.

Tent village is not suitable for the persons with medical problems. In the summer the temperature in the tents can raise up to 40 degrees and in the winter drop to couple of degrees above 0.

Residents:

- Adult males and females (singles and couples)

Country of origin of the residents:

- Somalia
- Sudan
- Ethiopia

Infrastructure:

Capacity:

- 35 tents
- About 700 places

Tents:

- Single men and women sleep in separate tents, 24 beds in each tent
- Couples: In couple tents resident 6 couples in each tent.
- Tents have electricity
- Some of the tents are in bad shape and if it rains a lot water can come in

Kitchen:

- No kitchen facilities provided for the residents. Residents have purchased cooking plates themselves and placed them in tents.
- One of the residents is running a restaurant in the centre. At the moment restaurant and kitchen is in a tent. In the future restaurant will move to a building where there is a separate kitchen area and 'dining room'.

Toilets and bathrooms

- There are separated toilets and showers for men and women. Showers and toilets are new and situated in a building close to the tents.

Laundry

- Resident wash they own cloths by hand in a washing room. In the room there are about 30 washing basing for this use. Washing room is new and situated in a building close to the tents.

Transport:

Fairly good access to public transport

Conclusions

Good practices :

- Pregrancy and birth giving counselling by the social assistant
- Kinder garden project for the asylum seekers
- Assistance of the UAMs with employment related issues
- Free access to colleges and universities
- Access to the labour market

Challenges :

- Safety of single women. Especially in Hal-Far tent village this issue should be tackled
- Interpreter services
- Infrastructure at the tent village

Annexe:

Policy document

Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs & Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity:
Irregular Immigrants, Refugees and Integration, Policy Document

Legislation:

REFUGEES ACT, (CAP. 420), Reception of Asylum Seekers (Minimum Standards) Regulations, 2005

REFUGEES ACT, *AN ACT to make provisions relating to and establishing procedures with*

regard to refugees and asylum seekers. 1st October, 2001, ACT XX of 2000, as amended by Act VIII of 2004 and Legal Notice 40 of

Documentation:

Organigram of OIWAS

Websites:

Website of Ministry of the Family and Social Solidarity:
<http://www.msp.gov.mt/services/subpages/content.asp?id=1976>