

## **Pastoral Area Schools for Syria Project Update**

As part of our Greystones and Kilquade Pastoral Area Vision of *Living the Gospel through Hospitality, Prayer and Mission*we, as a faith community, are committed to supporting people in need.



One of our outreach initiatives, for the past few years, has been supporting the Schools for Syria Project (S4S) in Lebanon with Fr. William Stuart. Many of our youth in the Greystones and Kilquade Pastoral Area were involved in this project during the summer months, better known as the GKPA S4S team!

In early October, a statement came from the Schools for Syria Project, with information concerning the closure of the school in Lebanon and redeployment of resources. The full statement explaining the situation is available below and on our website.

Fr. William has been in touch with us regularly concerning the situation. He has confirmed with us that the Schools for Syria project in Tyre has closed. The authorities refused Fr. William a visa and the Principal of the school where S4S rented space has been told not to rent space to the S4S charity. There is a similar situation with other aid organisations elsewhere in Lebanon. The children in the S4S Project are now without school as all are Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. Hopefully state schools will reopen for refugees in the afternoons but as yet this has not happened.

Fr. William explained that the "Schools for Syria" name was a working title for the project in Lebanon but the official name for the nonprofit organisation for the past few years is "Displaced Childrens Fund, Ireland," (Company No. 490937). From now on, instead of Schools for Syria, Fr. William will use the official name of their nonprofit organisation "Displaced Children's Fund, Ireland".

Fr. William assured us that monies donated to the fund by parishioners are still there. Funds will be used for a similar project or will be transferred to other projects subject to a decision of the Board of Displaced Childrens Fund, Irl.

Fr. William and his team are determined to continue serving the world's most vulnerable and displaced children. They are currently seeking another project in which to engage but it will be the new year before decisions are taken concerning this. Nothing will happen immediately.



Fr. William is well and safe. He will be in Ireland from November. We are planning for him to come to meet the GKPA S4S team in the coming weeks.

Following the appeal, there was an overwhelming and generous response received from you. Many donations were left into the churches and Kilian House Family Centre during the summer months. There was a huge amount of clothes, shoes, school stationery supplies, toiletries, and footballs received during the appeal. All items were sorted, put into boxes, labelled and sealed by the GKPA S4S team. "Stewie", the project mascot, appeared on one or two boxes too!

A total of 299 boxes were stored locally awaiting transport overseas. These donations were due to be shipped to Lebanon later this year but as the school in Tyre Lebanon has closed, this will not be happening.

Your response to this appeal was wonderful. Finding new homes for these donations was important and essential once we learned of the news in Lebanon. In the past 4 weeks, the Parish Pastoral Council Youth Outreach Team of coordinators considered several options for the donations. Be assured, all donations are going to great causes.



An Outreach Journey July - November 2023





The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) collected 289 of the 299 boxes this week and moved them to a central depot. Some students from Transition Year (4<sup>th</sup> yr.) in St David's helped pack the 40-tonne truck which was packed to the brim. The Society has over 230 local Vincent's charity shops located in every county in Ireland. These shops are a very

important aspect of the service that SVP provides. They are a source of new and lightly worn items at very affordable prices, while providing an income source for the Society which can then be given back to conferences to fund

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St. Anthony's Church Kilcoole, St. Joseph's Church, Newtownmountkennedy St. Kilian's Church, Blacklion, St. Patrick's Church, Kilquade, The Holy Spirit Oratory, Newcastle, The Holy Rosary Church Greystones. 09/11/2023



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assistance to families and individuals who need help. This redirection of resources means that there will be at least one GKPA S4S box per Vincent's shop! What a stretch of a helping hand. However, one question remains unanswered, where will "Stewie" our mascot show up?! Some of the smaller non liquid toiletry items have been

donated to the Team Hope Shoebox Appeal. Larger toiletry items will be donated to the Greystones Family Resource Centre and the Bray Women's Refuge.

While we are very disappointed and concerned about the situation in Lebanon, we are hopeful that a new project will emerge. Your support practically, financially and spiritually for the Schools 4 Syria Initiative has always been so generous. We look forward to hearing about the next Displaced Childrens Fund, Irl. initiative.

The GKPA S4S team of teenagers, parents and grandparents involved in organising, collecting, sorting, packing and distributing S4S boxes has been a great testament of living out their baptismal calling. We look forward to continuing this in the future.

Please keep Fr. William, his team and the Syrian Refugee children in your prayers at this time. Thank you.

Living the Gospel through Hospitality, Prayer and Mission



















## Official communication from Displaced Children's Fund, Ireland, issued October 2023.

Dear supporters of Schools for Syria (now known as Displaced Children's Fund),

It is with heavy hearts that we share the news of our school's forced closure. The immense pressure from State authorities aiming to return Syrian refugees home and the unjust denial of our Principal William Stuart's visa to enter Lebanon have left us with no choice. William, who has poured his heart into this project, not only for refugees but also for the underprivileged in south Lebanon, faces an uncertain future due to the withdrawal of his Residency permit and difficulties obtaining a Work Visa. This treatment of William is sadly not unique, as UNHCR reports similar challenges with foreign nationals assisting refugees in Lebanon.

Our priorities now include:

- 1. \*Equipment: \* We must transfer the excellent equipment donated over the years to a local State School, where it will benefit both Lebanese and Syrian pupils.
- 2. \*Staff:\* Our dedicated staff, under William's guidance, have played a crucial role in educating hundreds of children. They will continue their efforts to transfer equipment, support parents and pupils, and distribute essentials.
- 3. \*Clothes:\* We have a substantial supply of clothing, toiletries, shoes, and toys for our pupils. We plan to expedite distribution to include refugees who didn't attend our school and impoverished Lebanese, working alongside the local Red Cross.
- 4. \*Pupils:\* Our utmost concern is for our beloved pupils. The Lebanese government's policy to displace them and those who assist them is inhumane. We are working to enrol them in State schools and find solutions for undocumented pupils.

  As the 'Displaced Children's Fund,' registered as a nonprofit and soon-to-be-charity, we are determined to continue serving the world's most vulnerable and displaced children. We have received approaches and anticipate more in the future.

  To all our donors, thank you for making a difference in the lives of hundreds of Syrian and Lebanese children since 2018. We will miss you and regret the circumstances of our departure. Your legacy will endure, bringing lasting benefits to all the children you taught, helped, and supported. We will never forget you.

#DisplacedChildrensFund #ThankYouDonors #EducationMatters

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