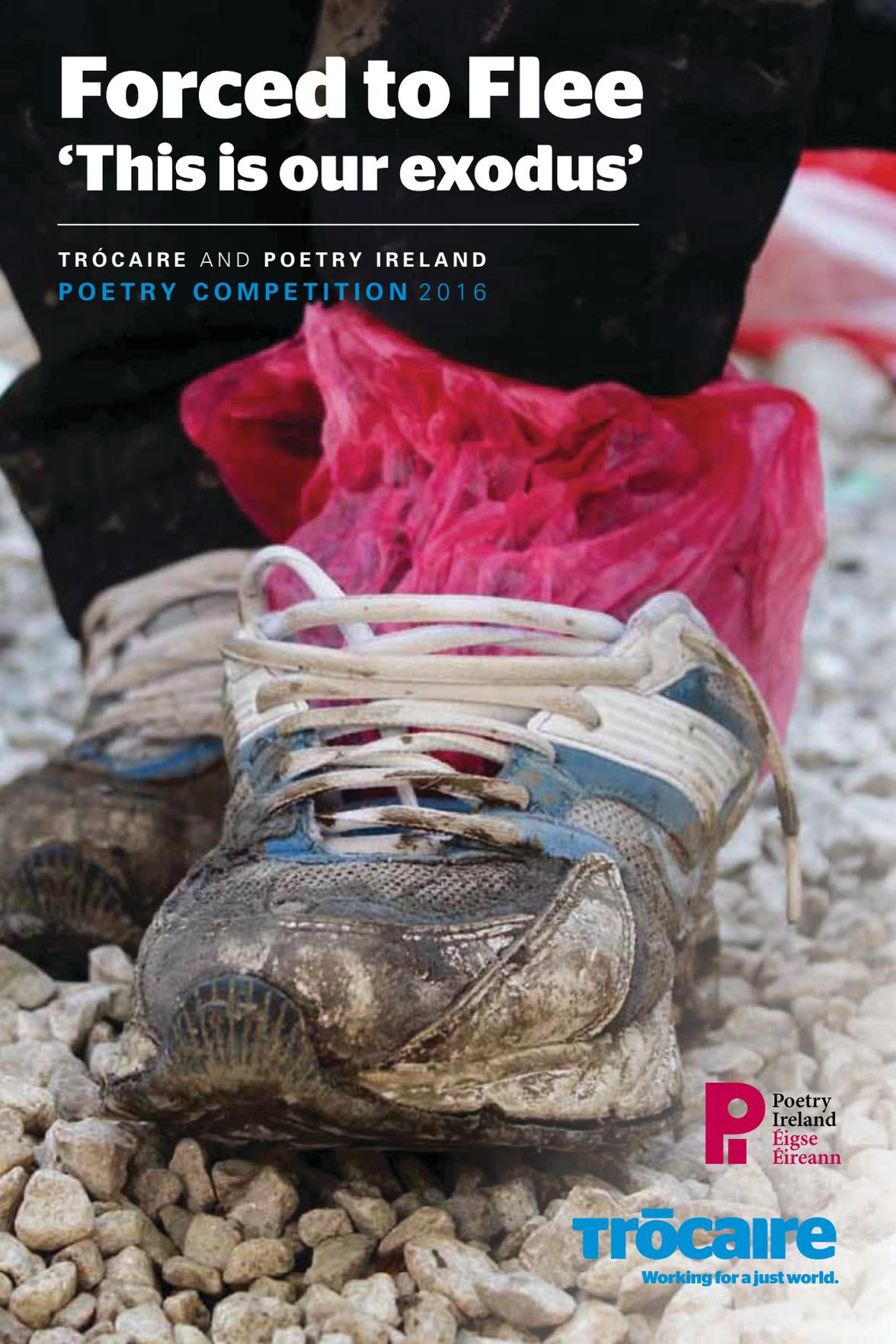


Forced to Flee 'This is our exodus'

TRÓCAIRE AND POETRY IRELAND
POETRY COMPETITION 2016



P Poetry
Ireland
Éigse
Éireann

Trócaire
Working for a just world.

Forced to Flee **‘This is our exodus’**

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Baby Fatima from Afghanistan in Preševu refugee centre, Serbia, where Trócaire's partner, Caritas Serbia, provides food, baby kits and hygiene kits. She had travelled with her family for three weeks to get there.

■ ADULT PUBLISHED POETS

1 st	Cast Away	Nicki Griffin	6
Joint runners-up:	Nature's Refuge	Afric McGlinchey	7
	The Mountain of Butterflies	Angela T. Carr	8

■ ADULT NON-PUBLISHED POETS

1 st	Unto Me is the Journeying	Mairéad Donnellan	10
Joint runners-up:	Moments of Snow	David Keane	11
	Slí Amach	Máirín Uí Cheallaigh	12

■ POST-PRIMARY SENIOR

1 st	Power	Louise O'Hora	14
Runner-up:	Wastelands	Kate Ní Dhubhchonna	15

■ POST-PRIMARY JUNIOR

1 st	Drifting	Romy Fehily	18
Joint runners-up:	On a Road Going Nowhere	Aoife Ní Riain	19
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■ PRIMARY SENIOR

1 st	No Room at the Inn?	Patrick Barrett	22
Joint runners-up:	The Things They Left Behind	Molly McGibney	23
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■ PRIMARY JUNIOR

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	Through the Night	John Dunne	26
Joint runners-up:	Empty Streets	Ciara McCrum	27
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■ NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



A young refugee after registering in Preševo registration centre, Serbia.



Adult Published Category



A mother and her children at the Berkasovo border, Serbia.

NATURE'S REFUGE

The fields and hills are arriving
in droves, skittish and prone
to explode,
though the trees darken
with kindness.

Even in the ruined places,
woods are still present,
enriching the world
with mulch
and invisible spores.

This is the not-speak refuge:
perfect forest,
adding its own scent
to the thrum of rain
and all weathers.

I, too, come here
to rest my bones,
find the wart well; an order
of instinct
that prevails.

Afric McGlinchey



THE MOUNTAIN OF BUTTERFLIES

*... swirled through the air like autumn leaves and carpeted
the ground in their flaming myriads.*

– Dr Fred Urquhart

They arrive with the corn and Dia de los Muertos – one billion butterflies – the souls of the ancestors returning. Discovered in the Sierra Madres, the border of Michoacán, the Monarch’s winter ground, ten thousand feet up in Cerro Pelon. The Mazahua greet the dead with church processions, altars piled high with offerings: fruit and sweet breads; they eat their ghostly fill and sleep, wake at Mardi Gras – corporeal and ablaze – clamour the grey-green oyamel trees, dance in the sun; by night, they cluster to conserve heat, in thickets so dense, from a distance, the woods bleed orange. Exodus in spring – begin the two and a half thousand miles to a land their grandchildren will call home; follow the milkweed north, a storm of wings that fills the ears like rain.

Angela T. Carr





Adult Non-Published Category



UNTO ME IS THE JOURNEYING

Unto me is the journeying.

Quran (31:14)

Baba, my feet are not far off
filling your shoes.
Mama says a man taken from his bed
has no more need for them.
I am to stop watching the door,
laying your place at the table,
I must take your blade and shave
the shadow from my upper lip.
She wraps me in too many clothes;
deep winter coat, your cinnamon scarf,
closes our door on the hot smell of bread.
My satchel is fat with loaves,
a guide to butterflies I took from your bookcase.

Mama says this is not the time for butterflies
so I leave them to sleep between the pages,
I have to stand straight, look ahead,
meet the eyes of strangers.
On the quiet night road
I look for you amongst the men
without sons on their shoulders,
we move in the wake of their breath,
deadwood fires coax us on,
the coast, always just beyond the next camp,
a few more miles to go, raw, weeping,
filling your shoes,
Baba, my feet are not far off.

Mairéad Donnellan



MOMENTS OF SNOW

She breathes in air,
hot and heavy,
that catches in her throat
and tastes of others.
A sleeping hand holds on tightly
in the near pitch darkness
until a jolting change in direction
makes the body of people sway
and the hand awakens.
Looking down,
two dark pools that shine
in the absence of light
stare up at her.
For a moment she thinks back
to a night of snow
near Al-Hasakah
when they shared a bed
to shelter from nature,
not man.
Both hands squeeze in unison;
for each other
and themselves.

David Keane



SLÍ AMACH

Faoi sceimhle de lá is d'óiche,
Aithne cheart a chur ar an rud is ocras ann,
Fo-chraiceann fuachta istigh
Agus muid ag siúl na slí
Ar an oilithreacht is lú beannaithe
Ar díbirt ón áit is dual dúinn,
Ag iarraidh greim a choinneáil
Ar an daonnacht dár gcuid.

Fós féin, nuair a thitim i mo chodladh,
An Isha ráite agam sa dorchadas eachtranach seo,
Motháim arís shawarma is za'tar
In aer na luathmaidne,
Macalla an adhan i bhfuadar an souk.
Braithim anam s'againne ag fanacht orainn pilleadh.

Máirín Uí Cheallaigh





Post-Primary Senior Category

Transition Year, 5th and 6th Year





POWER

Tragedy is heart breaking
Death is a statistic;
We have no tears for the thousands,
Yet we are only human,

A flash of red,
His little head,
At peace,
Resting on the beach,
The waves roll by,
The floods rise,
And we are finally awake.

Louise O’Hora



WASTELANDS

Their disbelieving mouths hang
From dusty faces
As our grass stained lips
Once sunk between hollow cheeks

Their terror filled screams
Agitate the ashy air
As our desperate cries
Once lifted from hungry fields

Their treacherous boats
Sacrifice their loved ones to the sea
As our damned coffin ships
Once did

Their undying hunger for safety
As strong
As ours once was
For food

These tragic coincidences
Haunt our memory
With one vital difference

Our blight was one of potatoes
Theirs is one of men

A sickness of the senses
A sickness of the soul

Kate Ní Dhubhchonna



Caritas Croatia gives food and treats to refugee children from Syria in Opatovac refugee camp, Croatia.



Post-Primary Junior Category

1st–3rd Year



DRIFTING

The rescue boat came slowly in,
Behind it a battered dingy,
In it laid sombre shawls
That once hung on women's shoulders,
Torn chequered head scarves
That once covered the heads of men,
And tiny sodden sandals
Which children once wore and played in,
Now without an owner,
The personal possessions drift.
A little Moses cradle
was placed carefully at the rear,
A baby lay sleeping,
Snuggled up warm, cosy and pink,
Dressed for the voyage of promise,
But no one there to care.

Romy Fehily





ON A ROAD GOING NOWHERE

Nobody knows what it's like
To walk through the night
On a road going nowhere

Nobody knows what it's like
To be denied at a country's border
To walk on a road going nowhere

Nobody knows what it's like
To leave the only place you've known
And to be on a road going nowhere

Nobody knows what it's like
To fear for your life
Sleeping on a road going nowhere

Nobody knows what it's like
To hear the politicians fight
About how to get you off the road going nowhere

But right now it's my home
But right now it's my life
But right now I keep going
But right now I try to survive
On the road going nowhere.

Aoife Ní Riain



THE PROMISED LAND

Climbing over mountaintops
In search of better lands,
Every footfall with a promise
Passed down from man to man.
A legacy that's written
In footprints in the sand
And seas that, at the second touch,
Are parted like a fan.

A nation that was set aside
By the Father long ago,
The hunter's stag, the sailor's isle,
An iridescent goal.
But what is there for those of us
Who have been forced to flee,
Whose cries are only froth and spray
Upon an open sea?

A people merely cast away
Accursed and forlorn,
Doomed to walk the night and day,
Unwelcome in the morn,
Rebuffed and blocked by wire fence,
Between two nations torn,
No land of milk and honey
That they can call their own,

Just a desperate, yearning exodus,
The human struggle reborn.

Michael Lucey



Primary Senior Category

5th–6th Class





NO ROOM AT THE INN?

Trying to ignore the screen in the corner,
Avoiding the papers 'cause I don't want to see,
All of the heartache, the tears and destruction,
The death and the dying, it's too much for me.

Mummies and babies, daughters and sons,
Aunts, uncles and Daddies – well, they used to be once.
Now they're just bodies washed up by the sea,
And picked up by soldiers and shown on TV.

It's hard to imagine from my house on the hill,
Sipping tea, eating cookies, warm and carefree,
That thousands of people just like you and me,
Are in fear of their lives with no choice but to flee.

What does it take to pick up your life and head down that road,
Knowing there's no turning back and nowhere to go,
How many faces will you meet on your way,
Never knowing their fate or the price they may pay.

It makes me recall a story I read,
About a young couple's problems just finding a bed.
I can't help but wonder is our answer the same,
Will we close our eyes, turn our backs, shut the door in their face?

With all that we have and all that we could give,
Are we just going to deny their right to live?
It makes me want to shout out above all the din,
Is there really still no room at the inn?

Patrick Barrett

THE THINGS THEY LEFT BEHIND

They left on a Monday
at a quarter past two
left behind in the rubble
was the world they once knew

The clothes, the toys
The memories left behind
Most of them were happy
But others not so kind.

In the middle of nowhere
It's cold on the boat
No hats, no gloves
Not even a coat

They've left behind some relatives
And all of their good friends
It's quite sad to think
They might never meet again.

There's a hole in their boat
And no tools can mend
The broken hearts they'll have
Until this war comes to an end.

Molly McGibney



WHO AM I?

I stand in line
With all that's mine
My whole life in a black bag
My favourite jeans now like a rag.

Pushed in line all in a row
Televisions film us as if in a show
Still waiting we didn't do any wrong
Nobody wants us how can we be strong.

We do not want this we want a bed
So tired and weary my legs are like lead
The camps are hell full of tears
Is this our life for the next few years?

Gearóid Cronin





Primary Junior Category

3rd–4th Class



THIS IS OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE NIGHT

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

We are going.
We are going because we have no choice.
We are going for a new life.

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

The gunshots are still firing.
The smoke is in the night air.
The boat awaits us on the tide.

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

I look at my mother and father.
I see fear in their eyes.
I feel how they hold me tight.

War came without us knowing.
War came and took over.

This is our exodus.
This is our one hope.
This is our journey through the night.

John Dunne



EMPTY STREETS

I stumbled upon a village one day
Silence filled the air
Empty streets where nobody meets
Made me stop and stare
Animals wandering looking for food
with none to be found
Wind whistling through swinging windows
Makes a sad and gentle sound.

Ciara McCrum



THE JOURNEY

Woken by a hammering
my dream popped, the warm
cosiness disappeared
as confusion raced through my head.

I ran downstairs
the uniformed strangers
clutching mammoth guns,
they said we had to flee
fingers brushing triggers,
my biggest fear in front of me.

Mother and father began
the frantic packing,
this journey had already started.
My heart thumped as we stepped
outside, into sunlit sadness ...

our home, we departed.

Elise Carey-McGibney





Caritas Croatia gives food and treats to refugee children from Syria in Opatovac refugee camp, Croatia.



Petul (11), a Syrian refugee arrives in Preševo refugee centre, Serbia, after a long journey and gets aid from Trócaire partner, Caritas Serbia.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PATRICK BARRETT is twelve years old. He loves tea, farming with his grandad and playing football – in that order! He’s a member of the school debating team because he loves a good argument. His favourite thing to do outdoors is to climb up a tree as high as he can because the world looks different up there.

ELISE CAREY-MCGIBNEY is nine years old and attends St Brendan’s National School in Fenit, Co. Kerry, where she lives with her parents and three brothers. Elise is an avid reader, writes short stories and attends art classes every week. She’s a keen gymnast, Irish dancer and loves writing poetry. Elise won joint second prize this year in the Listowel Writers’ Week Creative Writing Competition (under nines) with her poem ‘Magpie’. Her favourite subjects are English, drama and art.

ANGELA T. CARR is a writer and poet based in Dublin. She is published in literary journals and anthologies in Ireland and the UK, including *Mslexia*, *Abridged* and *Bare Fiction*. Her debut collection, *How to Lose Your Home and Save Your Life*, won the Cork Literary Review Poetry Manuscript Competition 2013. In 2014, she took part in the Poetry Ireland Introductions series and won the Allingham Poetry Prize. In 2016, she was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and commended in the Hippocrates Poetry Prize. She is currently Poetry Editor at Headstuff.org. www.adreamingskin.com.

GEAROID CRONIN is twelve years old. He is in Sixth Class in Dromclough National School in Bantry, Co. Cork. He likes to play football and hurling. He is a member of St Colums GAA club, and has training twice a week. He has two brothers, Michael and Sean, who also play football and hurling. He also enjoys road bowling. He lives on a farm and helps his dad in his spare time.

MAIRÉAD DONNELLAN lives in Bailieborough, Co. Cavan. Her poetry has been published in various anthologies and magazines. She has been shortlisted in national poetry competitions including the Cúirt New Writing Prize and the Doire Press Chapbook Competition. She was winner of the Ledwidge Poetry Prize in 2013.

JOHN DUNNE (SEÁN Ó DUINN) is eleven years old and is a Fourth Class pupil of Scoil Gharbháin, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. His favourite things are Lego, his iPod Touch, football, swimming, cycling, music, drawing, history and reading the Argos catalogue. He lives with his parents, Adrian and Clodagh, his sisters, Emily and Charlotte, his brother, William, and their dog, Bono, in a house where poetry is read and written almost every day.

ROMY FEHILY is fourteen years old. She lives in Ballyclough, Co. Limerick. She attends Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ. She is the middle child in a family of three. She enjoys reading, writing, hockey and athletics.

NICKI GRIFFIN’S debut collection of poetry, *Unbelonging*, was published by Salmon Poetry in 2013 and was shortlisted for the Shine/Strong Award 2014 for best debut collection. *The Skipper and Her Mate* (non-fiction) was published by New Island in 2013. She was awarded an Arts Council Literature Bursary in 2012 and has an MA in Writing from National University of Ireland, Galway.

DAVID KEANE is a writer based in Dublin. He is actively involved in several areas of writing, including poetry, fiction and scripts. Having been included in numerous poetry and short story anthologies, he is currently working on his debut novel. His writing tends to explore the underbelly of society and examines why people do the things they do. He has an MA in Scriptwriting from the University of South Wales. www.davidkeane.net

MICHAEL LUCEY is thirteen years old. He is a student at Willow Park Senior School where he enjoys all sorts of things, including drama, debating, music and sailing. He also enjoys going for walks with his dog, Marty.

CIARA MCCRUM is ten years old. She lives in Raheny, Dublin, and loves dancing, reading, writing poems and having fun. Her favourite subject is history.

MOLLY MCGIBNEY is from Dublin. She's in Sixth Class and has two younger brothers. She likes to think of herself as a thoughtful, creative person. She likes quirky music and always stands for what she believes in. She's a big believer in equality and has been told she is a good people person.

AFRIC MCGLINCHEY'S awards include the Hennessy Poetry Award, the Northern Liberties Prize (USA) and the Poets Meet Politics Prize. She appears in issue 118 of *Poetry Ireland Review*, which features the editor's selection of Ireland's rising poets. Her début, *The Lucky Star of Hidden Things*, was translated into Italian, and her second collection, *Ghost of the Fisher Cat* has been nominated for the forthcoming Forward Prize for Best Collection.
www.africmcglinchey.com

KATE NÍ DHUBHCHONNA (DOHENY) is a Fifth Year student in Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach. She is the third of four children. She enjoys basketball and skiing. She loves music, singing and writing. She hopes to study law in university.

AOIFE NÍ RIAIN is twelve years old. She lives in Clarina, Limerick, with her brother, mother and father. She loves writing and reading. She is a First Year student at Laurel Hill Coláiste FCJ, in Limerick city.

LOUISE O'HORA is a seventeen-year-old student attending Fifth Year in Mount Temple Comprehensive School. She has always enjoyed writing as a hobby from a young age, from poems to stories. When writing this poem, she wanted to target the 'us' in exodus, her observations of our approach to situations like this. The refugee crisis is an ongoing tragedy of which we must be aware. We are in a more powerful position than the refugees and it is our duty to support those who are forced to flee.

Is as Dún Geimhin, Co. Dhoire, do MHÁIRÍN UÍ CHEALLAIGH (MARIAN KELLY), áit a n-oibríonn sí mar phríomhoide Gaelscoile. Tá sí pósta ar Sheán agus tá cúigear clainne orthu. Scriobhann sí sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla.

Ireland is renowned for its literary and cultural heritage, as well as its hunger for justice, and its generosity in supporting those in need around the world.

Climate change is the greatest injustice of our time; those who are doing the least to cause it are suffering the most from its impacts. The initial trickle of climate refugees has swollen with a mass exodus of refugees from conflict. Humanity is on the move as never before in history.

The theme for this year's competition was **Forced to Flee**, quoting Ahmed, a refugee from Iraq, who said in 2015 that **'This is our exodus'**.

A great human tragedy continues to unfold in Syria and the wider Middle East, and in other places across the world where conflict, and climate change, are forcing people to leave their homes in order to survive.

For example, over two hundred and fifty thousand people have died in the Syrian conflict. Twelve million people are homeless and almost five million people are refugees, mostly in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. A river of distressed humanity flows from this conflict, while at the same time, in countries in the global south, the rains no longer come and our global network of great rivers is slowly drying up. Drought and famine threaten the lives of millions more. Meanwhile, in Ireland, lands that were once fertile and green are being swallowed by the rain-drenched flood plains.

Our joint competition is open to emerging and experienced voices alike, from primary school students to published poets, and there is no entry fee. This all-inclusive format is what makes the Trócaire and Poetry Ireland competition unique.

The judges for this year's competition were award-winning poet **Jane Clarke**, **Aidan Clifford** of CDETB's Curriculum Development Unit, and Trócaire's **Trish Groves**.

We hope you enjoy this booklet of winning entries from poets across the island of Ireland.

Éamonn Meehan, Executive Director of Trócaire

Maureen Kennelly, Director of Poetry Ireland



TRÓCAIRE

Trócaire envisages a just and peaceful world where people's dignity is ensured and rights are respected; where basic needs are met and resources are shared equitably; where people have control over their own lives, and those in power act for the common good.

www.trocaire.org



POETRY IRELAND

Poetry Ireland/Éigse Éireann is the national organisation for poetry in Ireland and also runs the Writers in Schools Scheme, the mission of which is 'to empower the participant by facilitating a magical and memorable experience through the imaginative, emotional and intellectual energy and belief in language that the writer brings to the classroom'. We serve all thirty-two counties and receive support from **The Arts Council of Ireland/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon** and **The Arts Council of Northern Ireland**.

www.poetryireland.ie

Cover Photo: Refugees' shoes are worn, wet and muddy after a long journey. These shoes are owned by Ali, a Yazidi refugee who travelled from Iraq to Prešev, Serbia, to avoid persecution. **All Photographs:** Meabh Smith/Trócaire, 2015.