

Shaping the Future

Annual
Report
2017







The political crisis over refugees faced high stakes in 2017, with 68.5 million people driven from their homes crossing the Mediterranean, causing 3,139 deaths or missing individuals in 2017. In November, bodies of 26 young Nigerian women were found floating in the Mediterranean. Migration remains an unavoidable reality with thousands of people risking their lives in search of safety and better lives. Specifically, migrant women and girls face specific challenges and protection risks, including family separation, psychosocial stress and trauma, health complications, physical harm and injury and risks of exploitation and gender-based violence. Women also often serve as the main caretakers for children and elderly family members in these migration journeys and even after settlement in countries of destination and host countries. The burden of caretaking for their families and themselves further deepens migrant women's need for protection and support. Promoting migrant women's access to education, employment and social support are some of the greatest strategies to support these vulnerable groups as they realise their independence and full participation in society.

The 2016 Central Statistic Office indicated that there were 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland **with 50.1% of them being women**, a first time female majority. Migrant women are increasingly becoming a key part of Irish society. With this growing demographic, it's important to acknowledge that migrant women are not a homogeneous group: they come from different countries of origin, ethnic and religious background and hold various immigration statuses. Understanding these different factors help determine an effective integration strategy in the Irish Society. Migrant women in Ireland are increasingly engaged in economic, social and cultural activities. For the past 18 years, AkiDwA as an organisation has worked with migrant women, statutory and non-statutory organisations to advocate for policies and legislations that recognises and support migrant women's presence.

Despite our successes in 2017, the organization also faced some challenges. The final financial contribution from our major funder Joseph Rowntree came to an end in July 2017. With this, it became our key proprieties during the year to review and restructure our work, strengthen our structures and develop policies. Profiling the work of the organisation, reaching out to members and building relationship with stakeholder were also key priorities. AkiDwA managed to hold two main events with migrant women leaders in Dublin and Sligo. Our work and engagement with young migrant women progressed well during the year. AkiDwA will continue to reach out to young migrant women encouraging their involvement in the work of the organisation and as well representing their issue in all public spheres. We must continue to shape the future through the lenses of this group. The year saw AkiDwA delivering activities and projects as indicated on the organisation strategic plan under the four key strategic objectives. AkiDwA has signed code of good governance and in addition policies were developed during the year to ensure the organisation is completely in compliance with charity regulator.

Akina Dada wa Africa-AkiDwA (Swahili for sisterhood) is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland. Established in 2001, AkiDwA mission is to promote equality and justice for migrant women, with a vision for a just society where there is equal opportunity and access to resources in all aspects of society: social, cultural, economic, civic and political.

The main objective of AkiDwA is to engage in the advancement of education and the relief of poverty by setting up a drop-in centre to relieve the hardship of women migrating, particularly from the Continent of Africa into Ireland. This is achieved by providing information, counselling (including therapeutic services for survivors of war, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), torture and other forms of disempowerment to women). AkiDwA is both a Company limited by guarantee not having a share capital; it is also a registered charity.

AkiDwA promotes the equality of migrant women in Irish society, free of gender and racial stereotyping. We apply a holistic approach to integration, promoting a migrant and gender-specific approach to public services, as well as encouraging migrant women's access to mainstream services and initiatives. The organisation employs **three key strategies to achieve its objectives:**

- Outreach and Networking
- Policy work and Research
- Capacity building and developing migrant women's capacity for participation and representation in their communities; and in decision-making structures through training, consultation, focus groups, information provision and research



KEY HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE YEAR

AkiDwA saw numerous successes at both programmatic and organizational levels. Within the framework of our mission and vision, our achievements in 2017 focused on: giving **voice**, advocating for **equality**, mobilising **community** for migrant women in Ireland. We realised these successes through our commitment of advocacy for policy changes, conducting trainings, and educating the public about issues affecting migrant women in Ireland.

Key highlights during the year:

- AkiDwA delivered training to over 600 frontline service and healthcare professionals. As a result of lobbying the organisation managed to get access to deliver training to the Gardai on FGM two times during the year.
- On 6th February, 2017 AkiDwA, together with twelve other partners from the European Union, published a web-based knowledge platform on FGM. The web-based platform has an e-learning course available in 9 languages, with country specific information covering 11 EU member states, as well as 'live knowledge' including webinars and an online discussion forum.
- In July 2017, through advocacy and several meetings with the Detective Superintendent at Garda National Protective Services, Ireland developed an Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS) code for FGM.
- AkiDwA was appointed to join the Standards Advisory Group to build upon the recommendations contained within the McMahon Report.
- During the year **The Sexual Offences Act 2017** was passed by the Irish Government, bringing great achievement for the Turn Off the red Light Campaign of which AkiDwA has been a member since 2009.
- Two projects were launched namely Sense of Self and Voice of Inclusion.
- AkiDwA held Open days in Sligo and Dublin with more than 300 people attending.
- Seminars of Female Genital Mutilation were held in Dublin and Cork.
- AkiDwA undertook 2 major research one focusing on Migrant Women & Employment; and the other one Migrant Women Access to Health.
- AkiDwA provided capacity building for Members (Women in Social Engagement (WISE) and Migrant Women to the Fore).
- A new Facebook Page was created and the number of followers in Twitter increased and now with over 1942 followers.





AkiDwA got the opportunity to present the work of the organisation in Ireland and at the European level. Board members, staff and volunteers participated in conferences, seminars and meetings held with policy makers, statutory and non statutory groups. AkiDwA appeared in printed and broadcasting media which include drive time, Newstalk, Near FM, Irish times and Metro Eireann. Through the invitation of European anti poverty network, a presentation on situation of migrant women was presented to the participants during their AGM in November 2017. AkiDwA participated in a conference held by Little sister of Assumption in June and Zuhur presented in the conference.

Salome was invited to give a presentation by Equinet Europe which is European network of equality bodies based in Brussels on discrimination. Her presentation focused on challenges faced by migrant women while trying to access services. She also gave a presentation on civic and democratic participation of migrants during Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) - based in Warsaw. Through the European Network of Migrant Women, AkiDwA shared a presentation focusing on refugee girls and women on the move at a conference held in Brussels by Care international. The European institute for gender equality, held a discussion on FGM held in Rome and in this meeting we highlighted the need for European Institute for Gender Equality to develop a project with influential African women as champions of change in eradication of FGM.

A meeting was held with the CEO of the National Women Council Ireland (NWCI) to articulate on how migrant women can be more included or involved in the women movement and the work of the NWCI. NWCI also worked with AkiDwA during the year to develop and propose action for Ireland second national strategy on sexual and gender based violence for Cosc: The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

In 2017, AkiDwA also took part in national discussion relating to women in Ireland. AkiDwA submitted a paper to Ireland's Health Services Executive (HSE) in consideration for the development of the new health intercultural strategy to be published by HSE. The organisation made key recommendations and emphasized how HSE should incorporate them into the next Intercultural Health Strategies. Our recommendations included: **improving access to health information and communication for migrant women, strengthening health systems** such as mental health and psychological support overcome barriers (translations, childcare and transport).

AkiDwA was a member of the Repeal the 8th Amendment and Together for Yes, which is the national civil society campaign to remove the 8th Amendment campaigning for a more compassionate Ireland that provides abortion care to women who need it. In 2017 the organisation submitted paper for the citizen assembly discussing right to abortion. The submission was based on the perspective of migrant women given the fact that the high profile cases of the women who had lost their lives from lack of repealing the 8th amendment were migrant women.

AkiDwA has been active in the network **Turn off the Red Light**, the group held a final and celebratory meeting on International Women's Day in March 2017 with the Tánaiste. The campaign successfully advocated for the introduction of legislation that criminalised the purchase of sexual acts, in addition to criminalising pimping, procuring and trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation. In recognition of the vulnerability of those involved and exploited in prostitution this campaign also called for legislation that decriminalises the persons who are prostituted. The Sexual Offences Act 2017 was passed by the Irish Government and enacted in February 2017. Within the new legislation, there are provisions that criminalise the purchase of sexual acts and decriminalise the persons who are prostituted.

On 6th February, following the successful launch of a partnership with EU to publish a web-based knowledge platform on FGM, The United to END FGM (UEFGM) knowledge platform was launched. This was funded by the END FGM Fund 2012 (END FGM European Campaign), the Human Dignity Foundation, and supported by UNHCR. The United to End FGM e-learning tool was initiated and coordinated by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) in Cyprus in partnership with Italian Association for Women in Development (AIDOS) in Italy, AkiDwA in Ireland and the Family Planning Association Portugal (APF). UEGFM is the result of a transnational project funded by the European Union and implemented by a consortium of twelve partner organizations and four associate organisations across the EU. The web-based knowledge platform on FGM provides easily accessible and culturally appropriate information; and support to professionals to deliver victim support more effectively; help prevent FGM and protect women and girls living with or at risk of FGM, and serve as a resource and education centre. More importantly, it seeks to improve the public and professional knowledge on FGM to better prevent and address this specific form of violence against women and girls, as defined in the Council of Europe Convention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Each of the 12 countries held a launch in their countries, in Ireland the launch was held at EU Parliament and the platform was launched by Senator Alice Mary Higgins. Representatives from the media and Garda Síochána spoke during the launch. Over 60 people attended the launch.



To mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence AkiDwA held two major seminars in November (Cork) and December (Dublin). The seminar in Cork focused on FGM targeting healthcare professionals and front line services. In Dublin we held a seminar 'Dare to dialogue engaging men and faith leaders' that generated a purely new dimension and discussions on the area of gender-based violence, the event was covered by media. AkiDwA will continue to work with faith leaders through Dublin Interfaith forum moving forward.

Training on FGM was delivered to 40 post- primary and primary school Teachers in Portlaois towards end of May, 80 Gardai in Dublin in June and 60 Gardai in Nenagh on 2nd November . On 19th December Meeting and discussions were held with Ann Marie, Gardai superintendent working with AkiDwA on Gardai training and development of information Guide. Orla O'Conner NWCI director Joined in this meeting and discussion were around agreement on terminology and actions to be included in the second national strategy on sexual and gender based violence, administered by Cosc, Department of Justice and Equality.

During the year AkiDwA sat in the working Group convened by Reception and Integration Agency, Department of justice and Equality working on the development of standard as indicated in the Mc Mahon report in regards to reforming the Direct provision system in Ireland. The organisation has been voicing concern and challenges faced by women living in accommodation centres in Ireland and has in previous years produced reports and submissions including the 2010 report 'I am only saying it now, experiences of women seeking asylum in Ireland' and 2012 report No Place to Call home, safety and security Issues of women seeking asylum in Ireland. AkiDwA report was referenced in the McMahon Report; the advisory group will continue to work on the standards.





AkiDwA young migrant women met six times during the year. Their activities concentrated around an innovative project called Sense of Self (SOS). The project emerged from personal experience of an intern from Spain who at the time was struggling with her self- identity the aim is to enable young migrant women develop a positive sense of who they are, and feeling that they are valued and respected as part of a family, community and society.

Four training sessions were held during the year focusing on the theme of '**Who am I?**' The group worked on this question through discussion, writing and art. The objectives of SOS are:

- To share and explore the complexity of one own identity
- To learn various factors that shape own identity?
- To identify and learn more of own identity/identities

Young people are better able to engage and progress in life when they get comfortable with their identity. Complexity of identity is always a challenge to young people which can be additionally complicated for young migrants. This project ended in December 2017.

A second project voice of inclusion (VOI) was established in June 2017. The aim was to create a platform for migrant women where they can articulate and develop strategies on issues affecting them. The objective is to build the capacity of migrant women to represent themselves and their families. Voices of Inclusion project aim was to conduct, meetings discussions and training on different topics that include- women experiences of racism, civic and democratic participation, access to employment and entrepreneurship. As part of this project AkiDwA undertook a mapping exercise of active and migrant women leaders in Ireland. Around 200 women were identified. To complement AkiDwA project on voices of inclusion a high level round table discussion with Influential Migrant Women was held on 19th July 2017. The aim of the meeting was to share achievements, struggles and together identify gaps in order to maximize potential. The meeting was held at the National Women Council of Ireland, with the following objectives-

- To create a platform for sharing and learning mainly of activities, projects and initiative delivered by influential migrant women
- To identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration in order to maximise the potential

26 influential women from different counties including Dublin, Offaly, Laois, Waterford, Westmeath, Wicklow, Meath and Drogheda attended the meeting. The group identified lack of representation and participation of migrant women in public sphere, low employment rates and challenges been faced by second generation of migrants as the key major and urgent issues. Women expressed interest to engage and participate in different levels of decision making and AkiDwA agreed to help in identifying opportunities. On 26 October a second meeting was held with influential migrant women at the IHREC, 13 women attended and training on civic engagement was delivered to the group by Joe O'Brien of ICI, and a follow up meeting focusing on social entrepreneurship was agreed to be the next one.

In May 2017 AkiDwA reconvened the migrant led coalition to advance work on Civic and democratic participation of migrants. Members of this group include, Forum Polonia, AkiDwA, NCP, Cairde, IOM, Wezesha, Places of Sanctuary and ICI. The group met six times during the year. Meetings were held on monthly basis and in November 2017 the group agreed to hold a conference in March 2018. The Department of Justice and Equality agreed to fund and host the event

Two projects aimed at building the civic and political participation of migrants were developed and one completed in 2017. The first project **Migrant women Fora** had 12 women participating. Partners in Catalyst were engaged to run the training. Migrant women Fora focused on understanding of Irish history and becoming an active citizen. The training were conducted according to community development principles which involves an interactive methodology, and covered topics such as Irish history, the famine and the huge wave of Irish emigration, the Irish political system which included the role of the President, the Seanad and the Dail.

The second training Women in Social Engagement (WISE), focused on civic and social engagement and looked into setting up a community group in Ireland the need for a constitution and officers and how to apply for community grants. 18 women participated in the training. Participants discussed human needs and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and how groups arise to meet needs. The participant also carried out an exercise using Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) which is a method of establishing needs in a community using mapping techniques. The final part of the course which involved mentoring by serving politicians proved to be very difficult. Letters were sent to the elected TDs in the constituency where each woman lived enclosing her CV and asked them to give 8 hours mentoring to the participant. However, although a number of TDs agreed to take part on follow up calls only a very small number did.



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AkiDwA experienced some structural and organisational changes during the year including strategic development, staff and membership engagement, and research.

In May 2017, Salome Mbugua engaged in a consultancy level to support the organisation with strategic and policy development. Her role included the development of projects and activities for the organisation, identifying research and policy areas, building visibility and profile of the organisation and designing events and opportunities which builds and brings members and stake holders back to engage with the work of the organisation.

There were four staff employed by AkiDwA during the year and two left in April. We had eight interns and two volunteers; four of the interns were under college placement while four were engaged to work on key activities that include policy, research, young migrant women and community development. The two volunteers supported events and the activities of the organisation. Six staff meetings were held during the year and AkiDwA board met six times (with some of them attending subcommittee meetings or supporting staff). We held our annual general meeting 25th November 2017.

In 2017, over 75 people called into the office, looking for information and support. 500+ others participated in various activities, this include migrant women, members, stakeholders, participants of various training, workshops, seminars and conferences.

With the new European requirement on **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, AkiDwA started the preparation of compiling proper database to help contact all individuals listed and inform them of this upcoming new rule and to find out if the organisation can still retain their information in order for the organisation to comply with the May 2018 deadline been. Social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) was improved and a new Facebook was created, twitter account has been the most used and with over 1,942 followers.

As part of AkiDwA outreaching and networking and raising awareness on our work, two open and information days were held during the year. The board agreed these open and information days should be held in collaboration with migrant women leaders who are running programmes and activities at community level Mabel Cha from Sligo Global Kitchen and Ellie Kisayombe of OUR Table were involved in planning and organising. The first outreach event was held in Sligo on 17th June in collaboration with Sligo Global Kitchen, around 200 people attended the event, AkiDwA made contacts and recruited members, five people joined the community health ambassador programme.

The second one took place in Dublin on 26th June and was held in collaboration with OUR Table. The objective of this meeting was to profile the work of the organisation and to bring the members, stakeholders, policy makers and funders closer to AkiDwA. The guest speaker was Carol Baxter, Assistant Secretary, Head of Asylum Services, Integration and Equality. Over 150 people attended the day. The year ended with End of Year Celebration which all members were invited to join in entertainment and sharing achievements and expectations for the New Year.

The organisation undertook two pieces of research during the year, on employment and health:

Migrant Women & Employment: The research looked into the circumstances and situation of migrant women in the labour market. It found that while migrant women have higher levels of education than the general Irish population, they are generally living at the margin of society, struggling with unemployment, and working in unregulated jobs such as home care. In 2016, 42% of complaints taken to the Workplace Relations Commission under the Equality Acts were because of racial discrimination

Migrant women access to health: The research found that there are gendered barriers as well as barriers to migrants when accessing healthcare services, and that migrant women as a group have specific needs within the healthcare system which are currently not being met, a fact that was reiterated by focus group findings which was held with migrant women as part of the research. According to the research findings women born outside Ireland make up almost 39% of maternal death. Many migrant women struggle to access information about medical services in Ireland; as a result many do not know where or how to receive medical treatment or access to Irish health system (the Irish health system is somehow different from what majority of the migrant women would have been used in their countries of origin, causing confusion with General Practitioner access and hospital access). This generally creates a lower uptake of services among migrant women, and they are more likely to treat either themselves or their families with over the counter medicine. As a result, migrant women are not seeking or receiving adequate treatment when necessary. Within the healthcare system itself, there is a lack of culturally competent services and health service providers are not aware of culturally sensitive issues. Many of the women feel there is lack of understanding of their cultural background and country of origin from the healthcare providers, resulting in misunderstandings, negative perceptions and stereotypes, which then in turn hinder equality and integration. There are further health issues facing refugee women and those in Direct Provision centres. As many as 80% of refugee women suffer from mental health issues as a result of fleeing from strife and the strenuous asylum process.



MEETINGS ATTENDED

- Two strategic meetings were held with, head of Training at Gardaí Unit at Harcourt Street.
- A meeting were held with the Principle officer and Secretary General at the Office of Promotion of Integration of migrants, Department of Justice and Equality- they have as a result agreed to sponsor two events on two areas discussed in our meeting Political Participation of Migrant and People of African Descent.
- AkiDwA attended and spoke from the audience on our work to over 300 people on FGM work at the Irish Film institute.
- AkiDwA attended and presented at European Anti-poverty network AGM ,the presentation focused on poverty implication and support measures for migrant women using the SDGs slogan living no one behind.
- AkiDwA accepted invitation from Trinity College to participate on panel with Vincent Brown on racism in Ireland AkiDwA focus was on migrant women.
- The manager attended training and meeting organised by End FGM Network in Brussels
- The manager also attended EU funding meeting in Brussels held by EU
- AkiDwA Treasurer represented AkiDwA at the AGM of European Network of Migrant women Held In Athens, Greece
- Amaka Okonkwo and Salome represented AkiDwA in the launch of FGM web based platform and Gender equality conference in Malta in February 2017 while AkiDwA chair attended the closing of the project event in Italy.
- Linkages were made with women from Northern Ireland through Institute for conflict research, four women travelled from the North to attend AkiDwA meeting on Dare to Dialogue. Future Collaborations were articulated in the meeting.



Akina Dada Wa Africa Company Limited By Guarantee

(A company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)

for the year ended 31 December 2017

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2017	Total 2017	Total 2016
Incoming Resources				
Generated funds:				
Voluntary Income				
Grants Received		107,104	107,104	126,192
Resources Expended				
Net Incoming Resources available for charitable application		107,104	107,104	126,192
Resources Expended on Charitable Activities				
Admin. Expenses		122,871	122,871	119,321
Total Resources Expended	4	122,871	122,871	119,321
Gross transfers between funds				
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		(15,767)	(15,767)	6,871
Net movement in funds for the year		(15,767)	(15,767)	6,871
Reconciliation of funds				
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2017		148,449	148,449	141,578
Balances carried forward at 31 December 2017		132,682	132,682	148,449

Approved by the Board of Directors on 17 October 2018 and signed on its behalf by:

Ashimedua Okonkwo
Director

Jules Buckley
Director

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BALANCE SHEET

as at 31 December 2017

	Notes	2017 €	2016 €
Current Assets			
Debtors	9	3,500	3,500
Cash and cash equivalents		132,999	148,249
		136,499	151,749
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	10	(3,817)	(3,300)
Net Current Assets		132,682	148,449
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		132,682	148,449
Funds			
General fund (unrestricted)		132,682	148,449
Total funds	13	132,682	148,449

Approved by the Board of Directors on 17 October 2018 and signed on its behalf by:

Ashimedua Okonkwo
DirectorJules Buckley
Director

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