



Driving the Equality Agenda Bottom Up Approach

AkiDwA Impact Report **2019**



AkiDwA
AKINA DADA WA AFRICA

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Message from the chair:

Ashimeduwa Okonkwo

2019 was another significant year for AkiDwA. The board and the staff worked hard to progress the vision and mission of the organisation, I particularly would like to thank staff, interns and volunteers who delivered valuable support, activities and projects during the year. With the senior management the board developed organisational policies and became fully compliant with the governance code. The organisation managed to secure key funding from various sources including a three year core funding from the department of community and rural development giving security and ensuring the development of AkiDwA. On 13th March 2019, the organisation launched the new strategic plan- Shaping the Future.



In November 2019, AkiDwA made a submission to the United Nations Committee on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, on the examination of Ireland on its combined 5th to 9th reports. I had the pleasure to travel to Geneva and present the organisation. Our submission had good and valid recommendations which focused on issues previously raised by the committee, these issues and areas covered during our presentation are in line with AkiDwA strategy which include, Gender-based violence, access to employment, healthcare and women seeking international protection.

Gender Based Violence: AkiDwA highlighted that the State should take leadership in fighting female genital mutilation, adopting a National Action Plan on FGM and should set up interdepartmental working group to coordinate national efforts, in partnership with civil society, survivors and affected communities. On domestic violence AkiDwA noted the state should place the 'Victims of Domestic Violence Immigration Guidelines' on statutory footing, protecting the rights of dependent spouses.

Employment: AkiDwA argued the state should adopt a proactive policy to increase the awareness of the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts and should take steps to reduce barriers to the labour market which are more acutely felt by migrant and ethnic minority women, they should reform childcare supports for women entering the workplace.

Healthcare: AkiDwA argued the state should adopt a proactive approach to inform migrant and minority populations of healthcare services available and how to access them. Translation and interpretation services should be more widely available, especially in primary healthcare settings. All front line and healthcare professionals should be trained in gender and cultural sensitivity and must deliver culturally appropriate care. The State should establish specialist trauma care for those who have experienced trauma, conflict and sexual and gender-based violence.

Direct provision: For years AkiDwA has been advocating for better treatment and human conditions for women seeking international protection. Our submission on this area called for the abolishment of direct provision and for the current situation the state to set clear timeframes to complete individual applications and to ensure that interviewers are culturally sensitive and aware of the diverse backgrounds of the applicants, to introduce vulnerability assessments for everyone seeking international protection and to use this vulnerability assessment to deliver targeted trauma-informed and gender-sensitive support to applicants.

In September 2019 we lost Sr Joan McManus who passed on after short illness a phenomenal woman and great supporter of AkiDwA. Sr Joan McManus was very instrumental in setting up AkiDwA, she had deep love and interest in our work and fought discrimination and other challenges with us and was always there to help.

Message from the Head of Operations and Strategy

I am happy to introduce some of the work that AkiDwA carried out in 2019 which was an extremely busy year with so many activities carried out and projects delivered. Our funding doubled in 2019 compared to 2018. The organisation had the opportunity to submit reports and other calls to government departments and to the citizen assembly. The launch of AkiDwA's new strategy in March saw the organisation enter the first year of implementing actions in the strategy which covers four key strategic objectives, Voice, Equality, community and organisational development all of which are discussed in this report. In June 2019, the government announced the establishment of a new Citizens' Assembly to consider gender equality, and to look into the barriers to equality in Irish society and in September the department of Justice called organisations, groups and individuals to make submissions on review and development of hate crime legislations, we also made physical representation before the advisory committee on direct provision led by Catherine Day.



AkiDwA made a submission on hate crime in September which focused on the intersectionality of gender, race and hate. The organisation argued migrant women as mothers quite often find themselves in the position of having to defend their own children from racist abuse, whether it is on the schoolyard, in public spaces or especially, on social media and noted Ireland should develop a comprehensive framework and strategies to address online hate speech, with complementary criminal and non-legal approaches. The victims are always left without help or support, the organisation recommended the state should provide support to victims of racist abuse through counselling or a telephone reporting and information service. Expand the list of protected categories under the Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 in line with the Equality Status Acts to include gender, gender identity and disability.

2019 was local and European Election year in Ireland, AkiDwA with Migrant women na hEireann launched a manifesto with key areas of change for consideration by those contesting. Seven migrant women were elected as local representative and two of these had participated in AkiDwA conference in March.

The organisation managed to present the concerns and issues affecting migrant women on many platforms both at European and National level. We appeared on national media (printed and broadcasting) mainly due to the first FGM case whose conviction was pushed to early 2020.

AkiDwA was heavily involved in the development of Ireland 3rd National Action plan on Women, Peace and security, which I had the honour to chair, the NAP includes a domestic component and there are actions to be undertaken especially on issues affecting women from armed conflict countries. A specific workshop was held with migrant women in Cork to inform the plan on this area. We collaborated with Google Ireland, where an event on gender and racism was hosted by Google in their Docklands office building on 21st of March which is the International day to end racism. During the event, AkiDwA launched the outcome of the survey on women and racism in Ireland. Google staff delivered a session on handling online abuse and online safety. Many participants expressed concern on lack of support for the victims and lack of proper reporting procedures.

During the year the organisation commissioned research on migrant women mental health. The project also saw women refugees and those seeking international protection participate in group counselling sessions, report for this project will be launched in 2020. We delivered reproductive health training to over 600 women in 27 direct provision centres during the year. Additionally a project on men sexual behaviour was implemented to complement women's reproductive health project. Our work on FGM saw the organisation deliver training to hundreds of front-line services and healthcare professionals. AkiDwA received funding on behalf of the committee on people of African descent to embark on the implementation of the International decade (2015-2024).

Background

Established in 2001, AkiDwA is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland. Our 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. This report covers activities and projects which were undertaken in 2019 and based on AkiDwA's Strategic Plan 2019-2021: Shaping the Future. AkiDwA's core objective is to advance education and address poverty of migrant women by setting up a drop-in-centre to relieve hardship for women immigrating, particularly from the continent of Africa into Ireland. This is done by providing information, counselling (including therapeutic services for survivors of war, FGM, torture and other forms of disempowerment to women) and social opportunities. The report below is a narrative of activities and projects undertaken in 2019, in line with the four strategic objectives as outlined in our strategic plan: Voice, Equality, Community and Organisational Development.



Voice

This first objective focuses on representing the voices of migrant women and their families to the political and administrative system through, the media and the public.

2019 was a great year for this activity as Ireland prepared for local and European Election. The ongoing investigation of the FGM first case in Ireland and appearing of Ireland before the CERD committee on Racism in Geneva saw AkiDwA make it in the National News.

During the year, the organisation continued to present women's voices at National, European and international level. Significant interventions were made at the UN level where AkiDwA participated during Ireland's examination by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (UN-CERD). AkiDwA Chair of the Board of Directors, Ashimedu Okonkwo and Head of Operations & Strategy, Salome Mbugua travelled to Geneva and voiced the racial discrimination concerns from a migrant women's perspective. AkiDwA also drafted a formal written submission outlining 26 key recommendations for the Irish State to take action to vindicate the rights of migrant women under the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The recommendations cover gender-based violence, employment, health, Direct Provision and international protection and People of African Descent and are available to read on the AkiDwA website.

On 12th March, to mark the International Women's Day (8th March) AkiDwA held a national conference where we launched the new strategic plan of the organisations covering the following three years: Shaping the Future: Strategic Plan 2019-2021. The Principal Officer from the Office of Promotion of Migrant Integration launched the report on behalf of the Secretary General. Speakers during the launch represented senior staff from various organisations including Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI), National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). The second part of the conference brought together some migrant women political candidates, providing them with an opportunity to share their vision for an equal society and manifestos.

Out of the 21 migrant women who contested in local elections in 2019, seven were elected to local councils. Fine Gael candidates Yemi Adenuga and Punam Rane were elected to Meath County Council and Fingal County Council (Blanchardstown-

Mulhuddart constituency), respectively. For the Green Party, Hazel Chu was elected to Dublin City Council and subsequently appointed as Lord Mayor of Dublin City. Her Green Party colleagues Sophie Nicoulaud and Saša Novak were elected to Dublin City Council and Limerick City and County Council, respectively. People Before Profit Councillor Madeleine Johanson, originally from Sweden, was re-elected to South Dublin County Council for Clondalkin. Also re-elected to her position is Moldovan Elena Secas, a Labour councillor who will again sit on Limerick City and County Council for City East electoral area.

Since 2018 AkiDWA has partnered with Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) to bring together women's organisations to work collaboratively and collectively on issues affecting them. From this, Migrant Women na hEireann was formed as a collective of migrant women working for political change. AkiDWA and ICI supported the group in developing a manifesto for candidates contesting in local and European Parliament elections. This manifest was launched in May at Buswell's Hotel, where migrant women spoke on key areas affecting them and asked all political candidates to engage with migrant women.



Below are some of the actions demanded by Migrant Women na hEireann in their manifesto:

"We are seeking full equality of access in the following areas and proactive efforts to identify and overcome discrimination in the following areas:

- Labour market including wages
- Housing, including fair access to housing supports
- Education
- Women's support services relating to GBV
- Health incl. in particular mental health services and reproductive health services

We are seeking specific policy & legislative progress in the following areas:

- A new National Action Plan Against Racism
- Effective hate crime legislation
- Fair and clear immigration system, including the end of Direct Provision
- Effective approaches to integration
- Pathways to regularisation for undocumented people
- Protection from domestic, sexual and gender-based violence
- Clear pathways to citizenship for children
- Full implementation of the Istanbul Convention”

The organisation received national media coverage presenting views in our work on sexual and gender-based violence and integration. In September, Salome Mbugua, AkiDwA Head of Operations & Strategy (HOS), was key speaker during Google Ireland’s fifth annual gathering for women leaders, attended by over 300 people. The conference focused on leadership building and the importance of making connections with individuals and organizations. This was a great way to introduce AkiDwA. The same month, the HOS also gave the key note address at the Common Purpose conference, focusing on the theme of Cultural Diversity and Inclusion: challenges and opportunities. At the invitation of Trinity College Law Department, the HOS spoke at their conference looking into diversity inclusion and focusing on building an inclusive workplace which attracts diverse talent and drives innovation.

The HOS focused on the reality of challenges facing migrant women access to Labour market and into jobs that match their qualifications. Katie Walker, Policy & Research Officer represented AkiDwA at various meetings and working groups throughout the year including: Mental Health Reform’s Ethnic Minority Advisory Group, Observatory on Gender Based Violence, EndFGM Communications Working Group and Policy Team in Brussels, and the Abortion Support Network.



AkiDwA contributed at a conference organised by Cork Development, focusing on safety and security issues facing women. AkiDwA's input looked into migrant women's safety and security highlighting sexual harassment, sexual exploitation through trafficking, sexual violence and FGM. The organisation also outlined three areas that involve migrant women and girl's safety. These areas are:

Freedom from poverty: to be able to meet their basic needs and those of their families- to cushion them from turning to survival mechanisms which are dangerous to their health and dignity.

Financial security and autonomy: Family income plays a powerful role in the cessation of violence against women. Women's and girls' economic empowerment reduces their vulnerability to situations of violence as they become less dependent on men and better able to make their own decisions.

Self-worth: In safe homes and communities, women have the right to value themselves, to be empowered, to be respected, to be independent, to have their rights recognized and valued, to be loved, to have solidarity with other family and community members, and to be recognised as equal members in society.

AkiDwA took part in the launch of Ireland's 3rd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The Head of Operations and Strategy, Salome Mbugua, spoke during the launch as chair of the working group in the development of the 3rd NAP.

The organisation spoke during the launch of HSE 2nd Intercultural Health Strategy. The strategy has indicated FGM as part of action for implementation.

In May 2019, annual Africa Day celebrations were reduced, cancelling the annual flagship event at Farmleigh, and making local authorities responsible for delivery. AkiDwA wrote to the Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development, Mr. Ciaran Cannon T.D., with regard to the short notice, and the loss of what has become a long-standing tradition for African diaspora in Ireland. The response was highlighted through the national media by the Irish Times in an article and by Metro Eireann. Minister responded to the letter where he indicated they will review same for 2020. AkiDwA was invited to a closed event held by Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, where the Centre facilitated a meeting between selected women and His Royal Highness, Charles, Prince of Wales.

The organisation attended and presented migrant women and their families in many other conferences and meetings throughout 2019. AkiDwA representatives attended a meeting on Domestic Homicide Review policy at Dáil Eireann organised by Sinn Féin. Salome Mbugua spoke in a conference organised by the Campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment, where the objective of the conference was to review progress and gaps after one year since the passing of the referendum. AkiDwA also attended the Wheel

National conference focusing on the interconnectedness and importance of applying the Sustainable Development Goals in our work in Ireland to ensure migrant women are not left behind. AkiDwA also attended a regional conference on Violence Against Women in Tullamore organised by Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services (ODVSS).

At the European Network of Migrant Women, Jules Buckley, AkiDwA Treasurer, was elected to the ENOMW board and Salome Mbugua was elected co-president of the network. AkiDwA participated in an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) roundtable meeting to discuss Guidelines for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in the context of migration. We held a meeting with the Deputy Secretary General of the Department of Justice and Equality to discuss general integration and Direct Provision. AkiDwA also attended two thematic meetings held by the Department of Justice and Equality to discuss the restructuring of the Department, which now has one Secretary General and two Deputy Secretaries General. The Department is now aligned under two pillars, Civil Justice & Equality and Criminal Justice, each led by a Deputy Secretary General.

AkiDwA participated in the launch of Social Inclusion Week with an event organized by Dublin City Council, where Young Migrant Women recited two poems on Loneliness and Childhood. Linking women to speaking opportunities has been a great way of raising awareness on issues affecting the migrant youth, building young people's confidence and as well exposing their talents.





Offaly DVSS linking up with AKiDwA on migrant women report.



Jules Buckley, AkiDwA Treasurer

Equality

To ensure equality of access to opportunity and treatment, AkiDwA focused on equality issues across integration and social inclusion and delivered activities and projects addressing racism, discrimination, FGM, mental health, domestic violence, and support for women seeking international protection.

The launch of consultation on development of hate crime and hate speech by department of justice, development and launch of the 3rd national Action Plan on women, peace and security which AkiDwA head of Operations and Strategy chaired formed some of the key achievement during the year.

In collaboration with Google, AkiDwA hosted a seminar for employees covering Online Racism and Gender Discrimination. The aim of the seminar was

- To bring forward evidence of discrimination (racism, sexism, etc.) via social media through research and testimonies
- To educate and raise awareness of online abuse and present measures to ensure online safety
- To facilitate a meaningful discussion that contributes to a better understanding of online abuse among seminar participants

The event was very successful with over 50 people participating. AkiDwA's research on gender discrimination and racism was shared and Google staff gave training on handling online abuse and online safety.

The organisation made a submission on Direct Provision to the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality Affairs in response to an open call for submissions. Among other things the organisation made recommendations which include -

- Implementation of Reception Conditions Directive in full and introduce vulnerability assessments for everyone seeking international protection. Use this vulnerability assessment to deliver targeted trauma-informed and gender-sensitive support to applicants.
- Any woman, who has disclosed experiences of violence, should be accommodated in an environment suited to her needs and recovery, under the Istanbul Convention, Reception Conditions Directive and basic duty of care to vulnerable residents. In planning for the provision of accommodation space, consider the need for female-only housing and give priority to those with heightened vulnerability and support requirements. RIA needs to be proactive in preventing violence from happening, including minimum numbers of female staff in centres, gender and cultural training for staff and security provisions in centres.

- Address risk factors and barriers to accessing services. Ensure specialist and long-term support services are available for migrant victims of domestic abuse.
- In reassessing models for accommodation, place the dignity, privacy and the independence of the individual at the centre of design. Appropriately private rooms, with independent cooking and washing facilities should be provided.
- Expand the eligibility for work permits to allow more applicants the right to work, i.e. new applicants who have been waiting less than nine months and long-term residents who are still going through applications and appeals. Extend the time limit on work permit from 6 months to 12 months.
- Remove barriers to work including
 - o Avoid rural isolation in future accommodation locations.
 - o Improve transport links for residents.
 - o Allow applicants to hold a driver's licence.
 - o Address banking institution refusal to serve applicants for international Protection.
 - o Educate employers and the public on work permits.
 - o Improve availability of childcare to parents in Direct Provision

The Joint Committee released their report in December 2019, finding what many organisations in this sector know, which is that Direct Provision is not 'fit for purpose' and is in need of 'root and branch reform' of flawed international protection process. They found the current system of 'shared, institutionalised living fails to fully respect the rights to privacy and human dignity of those placed in these centres'. AkiDwA's submission can be read on our website.



The Irish Government & the Gardaí Síochána are taking action to tackle hate crime. In October, Gardaí announced a new strategy for tackling hate crime which hinges around a new definition of what a hate crime is. This means that Gardaí will adopt a standardized approach to recording hateful acts that may result from someone being targeted because they belong to a minority. The Department of Justice launched a consultation on new laws that may be needed to punish those who commit hate crimes. AkiDwA was involved in the launch on call for submissions to the consultation.

AkiDwA convened a meeting with the National Steering Committee (NSC) on FGM on 6th March. As the current National Action Plan on FGM came to an end this year, the NSC will follow up with the office of Minister Catherine Byrne on the development of a state plan on this area.

A pre-consultation workshop was held with women from armed conflict countries living in Cork. Over 50 women attended the workshop. AkiDwA facilitated the meeting and expenses were paid by Department of Foreign Affairs as part of consultation on Women, Peace and Security.

AkiDwA participated in two national consultations organised by Department of Foreign Affairs in the development of Ireland's 3rd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Salome Mbugua has been the chair of the working group having been appointed by the Tánaiste in September 2018.

In 2019, AkiDwA developed a new research project, Let's Talk, which explores issues of mental health in refugee and migrant women. The project was launched in Limerick on 16th May in collaboration with Doras and Limerick County Council. There were great speakers on the day from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Health Service Executive



and NGOs such as Gender, Orientation, Sexual Health, HIV (GOSSH) Limerick. The County Council contributed toward the cost of the event.

AkiDwA was invited by Sinn Féin on May 9th to participate in a roundtable discussion at Dáil Éireann to discuss their policy paper on the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews to Ireland, based on similar mechanisms in the UK and Northern Ireland. In the event of homicide by a family member or intimate partner, Sinn Féin proposes that there be a multi-agency independent investigation into the deaths to build operational learning on what was done right and what was done wrong. SAVE Ireland gave very powerful testimony on their experiences as families of victims of domestic homicide. Ultimately, the discussion reached broader issues surrounding domestic violence and prevention. The organisations in attendance offered strong contributions and the perspective of migrant women was given fair attention, in particular from AkiDwA, ICI and Sonas. AkiDwA was called upon and mentioned several times during the meeting and AkiDwA continues to be the authority on the migrant women's perspective.

AkiDwA was invited by European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to attend and inform a Consultative Forum Thematic Meeting on gender-related persecution. The meeting was held in Brussels in July and Salome Mbugua attended the meeting. The overall aims of the meeting were to: explore how Civil Society Organisations support persons in the EU+ Member States' asylum and reception systems who experienced gender-related persecution; identify the main challenges and good practices, and; discuss if and how EASO could integrate civil society's expertise in possible future work on this topic. More specifically, four main topics were discussed in detail during thematic break-out sessions, including: Women and girls in the EU asylum systems, mitigating the risks of gender-based violence in reception facilities, harmful traditional practices as ground for asylum, and reception conditions for LGBTI applicants.

A meeting was held with An Garda Síochána in May to discuss a toolkit for Gardaí on Female Genital Mutilation. AkiDwA Gardaí contacts agreed to share FGM publications in their communication network and once the publication is completed will be placed in their training section.

There has been a lot of discussion and Dáil presentations regarding Direct Provision and its impact on individuals living in accommodation centres as well as emergency accommodations. AkiDwA has been outspoken especially on lack of vulnerability assessment for women accommodated in emergency centres also due to risk of trafficking. The organisation has also been leading discussions on implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD). The Department of Justice and Equality will award the IDPAD Steering Committee funding which based on the committee agreement in their May meeting will be hosted by AkiDwA; there has been dispute and anger from some of the groups involved.

In September, AkiDwA hosted a very successful health fair day, bringing together many services and organisations to provide information and impromptu health checks. The services included Irish Heart Foundation who carried out free heart health checks and delivered one-to-one advice. In addition, Marie Keating Foundation mobile unit delivered information on the common cancers that affect men and women in Ireland and how to live healthy in order to reduce the risk of cancer. Other services covered the following topics:

Free health checks

- Blood glucose
- Cholesterol
- Weigh-in
- Reflexology

Free health information

- Drug and Alcohol
- Hepatitis C Programme
- Dental health
- Mental Health
- HIV and treatment
- Nutrition
- Diabetes

Free self-care

- Pilates or Yoga session
- Manicure
- Henna
- Indian Head massage
- Neck & shoulder massage



Theraphy Health Information Day



Theraphy Health Information Day

Over 150 people attended the event and expressed positive feedback in relation to the services provided.

Some of the feedback from the participants:

"I only came to check my heart and they told me that I'm doing well... so I'm happy, thank you for bringing all these health assessments right to our door" - Peter

"I always check my cholesterol and my blood glucose and I came for that and everything is ok. I'm fine so I won't be worried. This service is so much needed once and again in our community..." - Monica

"I always get lazy to go and see my GP even when I feel I should check my blood pressure and other important health checks. It's easier when you get a push when its brought right at your community, thank you so much for organising this, I hope you will bring it again soon, its needed" - Mary

The services providers also had this to say:

"It was lovely to see AkiDwA hosting this event and we were happy to provide services. I really enjoyed providing information and test on site many people from the community have benefited from this event"

"We were delighted to be part of this Health Fair; it was a good opportunity to share the message about the importance of good oral health"

With AkiDwA support, a second conference on Promoting Political Engagement of Migrants was held in Cork. The Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Fergal Dennehy launched the event and David Stanton, TD, the Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration, delivered the key note address. 123 people participated in the event. AkiDwA also transferred the €2,200 surplus remaining from the event to the Cork Migrant Centre in agreement with the Department of Justice.

AkiDwA Head of Operations and Services was appointed by Simon Coveney, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to chair the working group in development of Ireland's third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The plan was developed after consultations which consisted of public submissions and workshops. Key focus for the plan was domestic relations, covering migrant women especially women from armed conflict living in Ireland. A pre-workshop was held in Cork in with migrant women and a consultation workshop was held on 17th January with over 110 people in attendance and the final consultative conference was held in Dublin on 23rd January with 100 people attending. The Third National Action Plan was launched in Cork in June and in Belfast in September.

Community

AkiDwA worked with migrant women and men so as to build and support the process of integration.

The organisation delivered training on sexual reproductive health to women and men in accommodation centres, training on women and leadership and outreach and networking with women in Sligo, Monaghan, Tralee and Cork. We also linked up and worked with two county council : Limerick county Council and Waterford County Council.

The year began with delivery of capacity building training to migrant women, supported by Emmet Herbert CPD. Training focused on self-esteem and developing a goal-setting calendar. Thirteen women completed the training. Some of them continue to attend AkiDwA activities and events.



AkiDwA collaborated with Wezesha in their stigmatisation international conference in January. The conference focused on stigma on migrants which the persistence of negative stereotypes and prejudices. The Secretary General of the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission spoke at the conference where the role of AkiDwA was acknowledged in supporting migrant women.

Migrant Women Forum met on 27th April to prepare their policy manifesto. Over 30 women attended the meeting; the discussions on the manifesto were drawn from the previous meeting which was held in December 2018. The group name was changed through the request of one of the members who felt there was confusion with existing of their group, the new name Migrant Women hEireann was adopted in May. The group launched their manifesto on May 9th, with 46 people attending the launch at Buswell's Hotel.

IDEAL project delivered by Catalyst trainers commenced in May with 10 women leaders undertaking the training. The project will help to inform the development of the LEAP training project with UCD Women Studies Centre.

AkiDwA held outreach and support meetings with women around the country, in Longford, Sligo, Monaghan, Baleskin Reception Centre, Hatch Hall and Clondalkin Towers accommodation centres, Tralee and Kilkenny. Most of the women participated in AkiDwA activities and events and some joined the organisation as members. The needs of women vary. Women in Longford requested support in managing their groups and leadership. On the other hand, women in Baleskin requested support in securing volunteering opportunities and outdoor activities to keep busy. The organisation conducted weekly sessions in Baleskin during the year. We began to collaborate with Daughters of Charity Community Services.

AkiDwA met with a representative from the UCD Women Studies Centre, to discuss their outreach women programme for access to education for migrant women. A piloting project facilitated by Catalyst for development started in April with 15 migrant women leaders registered for participation IDEAL Initiating a good introduction on Irish history and political systems Dialogue and Engagement among leaders (IDEAL) Programme will help to inform and structure the project with UCD.

After two years since AkiDwA convened the meeting with the Department of Justice and Equality to discuss issues affecting People of African Descent (PAD) in Ireland the Department agreed to hold public discussions and work towards implementing actions for the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) in Ireland. A national committee was set up in 2019 and AkiDwA is a Co-chair of the steering committee with Africa Centre and ASAI. The steering committee is made up of 12 member's organisations. AkiDwA was appointed by the steering group to apply for funding on behalf of the group to the Department. The organisation received funding in November 2019 which includes salary of one member of staff.

In July 2019, AkiDwA collaborated with Wezesha and Monaghan Integrated Development to host the diversity celebration which started with a friendly football match between a migrant team based in Dublin and the local Monaghan United FC. The day included discussions, an exhibition of materials and art from different parts of the

world. Women living in a Direct Provision centre in Monaghan prepared and hosted the event at St Joseph's Pastoral Centre.

Various meetings were held with groups and organisations working with migrants or migrants issues, including :

- Coalition 2030 - AkiDwA is a member of this group which work on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals
- Crosscare - which are working with many migrants including women who are homeless
- Migrant Ethnic Communities Steering Committee for Dublin Inner City
- Dublin City Council in organizing for Festival of Nations and sport events
- Jesuit Refugee Services and Baleskin Reception Centre to establish a weekly information clinic by AkiDwA
- Clare Women's Network to discuss dialogue between migrant women and indigenous in September
- Intercultural Language services in Ballybough Community Centre
- Social Care Practice, Tallaght Campus - community-based learning to discuss delivering FGM sessions
- Longford Women's Link, for outreach work and networking
- Waterford Migrant Integration Forum and Waterford Integration Services to collaborate with AkiDwA for the launch of our strategic plan on 27th June.



AkiDwA continues to work according to its open door policy to members and migrant women, between July and September we have had over 100 people visiting AkiDwA office, for information, support or visit. Training on women's reproductive health has been delivered to over 80 women in six counties. Outreach and networking has taken place in county Waterford and Monaghan.

In September, AkiDwA carried out focus group discussions among women living in Mallow Direct Provision Centre on mental health and how it impacts on parenting. The tool also addressed the impacts of continued stay in Direct Provision on children. The findings are going to feed into the TUSLA proposal. Intercultural day was held in Monaghan, this was a great event which started with a friendly match between indigenous Irish youth and team Zimbabwe made up of migrant youth from Dublin. There was also a discussion on diversity, inclusion and celebration of culture held at St Joseph Pastoral Centre, hosted by migrant women from St Patrick's accommodation centre, over 150 people participated in this event.

During the year, AkiDwA reached out to the African-Asian Women's group in Longford to share about the work of AkiDwA. The women requested support in establishing groups and on how to apply for funds on leadership. We participated in ART festival organised by Clare Women's Network for two days in October. Our staff spoke during the event and the FGM Art Exhibition was displayed throughout the event. The organisation participated in the Festival of Nations, which took place at Mountjoy Square in August. We had a stand where we shared information about our work.

To mark social inclusion week, AkiDwA, jointly with Wezesha, held a workshop on embracing diversity for migrant youth. The workshop was attended by around 35 young people both men and women and very fruitful discussions were held. Sport opportunities among the youth were identified as key in helping them to keep out of trouble since it keeps them busy. However young women complained of lack of sport opportunities for migrant women and especially youth. Dublin City Council provided the venue and refreshments.

Sexual and reproductive health

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Workshops Project (SRH) was created by AkiDwA in 2009 to increase awareness of sexual and reproductive health services, Irish laws (age of consent of marriage and sexual activities) and law on abortion; besides, to provide information on how to access crisis pregnancy support services and abortion services to migrant women living in Direct Provision Centres (DPCs) across Ireland. In 2019, AkiDwA delivered 76 individual workshop sessions to over 325 women from 26 Direct Provision centres in 16 counties which includes Clare, Dublin, Monaghan, Mayo, Sligo, Tipperary, Cork, Kildare, Roscommon, Kerry, Athlone, Waterford, Westmeath, Laois, Wicklow and Galway. AkiDwA linked women and collaborated with other NGOs and frontline services in each location. This includes AIDS WEST in Ballyhaunis, Ballaghaderreen and Sligo, HSE Health Promotion and Social inclusion in Carrick on Suir, GOSHH in Tralee, ACET Ireland in Wicklow, General practitioners in Newbridge and Monaghan, HIV Ireland in Baleskin, Here2Help in Baleskin, HSE - National Counselling Service in Abbeylisk, The Sexual Health Clinic in Cork, Clare Women's Network in Lisdoonvarna and ANEW Services in Cork.



AkiDwA recognises the role that men play in determining and influencing sexual and reproductive health choices of women and girls and hence has been working to integrate male participation in health discussions. In 2019, the project incorporated training and education of men in Direct Provision centres on sexual and reproductive health. The project aimed to engage men in 10 accommodation centres to gauge and share their understanding of reproductive health, sexual health (HIV, STIs), and to distribute condoms. 220 men participated in the project this year. The majority of the men demonstrated knowledge of sexual health issues, particularly HIV, contraceptives, STIs. However, they did not have an understanding of their role in influencing decision-making and its impact on their female partners or spouses. They also lack social spaces for on-going conversation and support during times of crisis. Most men demonstrated limited knowledge on available support services and also legal frameworks that govern some of the sexual health issues. An evaluation carried out in 2019 on AkiDwA sexual and reproductive health training found that women and men from diverse cultural, socio-economic, religious and age backgrounds perceive the topic differently. The relevance of the issues and willingness to participate in the topics were determined by their backgrounds and perception on the issues. Across all the participating centres, women were more interested in STIs, contraceptives, menopause, communication with adolescent children, and pregnancy crisis. Below were some of the learning noted by the evaluation.

Accessibility - Capacity for reach out to all intended target groups in the mobilization and training phases is affected by language barriers, competing for some of the communities where use of local languages is prevalent. Accommodation centres are spread out, some in very remote areas so it was challenging to reach these in the timeframe of the project. As residents have been granted the right to work, they have to juggle work, family commitments and training opportunities. While the traditional training hours have been 9-5 during a working week, this is not suitable for most residents.



AkiDwA Annual General Meeting 2019



Brain Gain Event, IOM Chief speaking.

Belief Systems - Cultural and religious beliefs have a bearing on perception of sexual and reproductive health issues and participation in discussions around these. These also have a bearing on accessing essential services and information needed to make informed decisions. Sex is seen as a taboo subject and many face backlash due to cultural and religious norms if sex is discussed.

Language barrier - Participation of men and women from non-English speaking countries in sexual and reproductive health initiatives (service provision, training) is limited. They lack the language to express themselves and describe their health needs and conditions. This in turn diminishes their confidence to access essential services.

Social Isolation - Migrant men and women in accommodation centres experience social isolation and mental stress. Due to limited social support systems and mutually trustful and dependent relationships, they experience undiagnosed mental challenges.

Gender and Socialisation - Social construction of one's gender is a key determinant of how they perceive sexual and reproductive health and how they access them. How a woman or man is socialised determines what they are comfortable discussing and sharing hence service provision which ignores this, falls short of addressing their real needs.

Youth - Families with young adults have to grapple with the effects of culture shock and mix of personal identities. This in turn impacts on their capacity to support and guide their growing children in matters of sexual and reproductive health.



Organisation Development

Key outcome in this area is that the organisation managed to get a three years core funding from the department of community and rural development administered by Pobal.

The AkiDwA website was given a renewed design in 2019. During the reporting period, there were 19,360 hits on AkiDwA website - people mainly looking for information on gender-based violence - FGM was the most popular search item, especially because of the first conviction which was going on at the time. We also had visitors drawn in from our work on mental health and the launch of our report Let's Talk. The organisation also got 456 more followers on Facebook; while Twitter got over 700 more followers during the year. The organisation database was improved in 2019, however, in line with GDPR compliance, some of the contacts had to be dropped where they did not confirm with AkiDwA if they would like the organisation to retain their contact and be sent information.

There were seven members of staff, four consultants, three interns and four volunteers. AkiDwA held six staff meetings and three monitoring and review planning sessions during the year. Monthly supervision meetings and update and progress sessions were held with staff, interns and volunteers.

Five board meetings and a general assembly were held, AkiDwA members voted to appoint four new board members, before hearing a presentation by our consultant on the findings of Let's Talk, the AkiDwA research project on migrant women's mental health.



The organisation produced a new strategic plan which was informed by review and evaluation carried out by an independent consultant. The new strategic plan, Shaping the Future has a three-year life span. The organisation hope to collaborate with local authorities and other NGOs in achieving actions indicated in the plan.

In June 2019, AkiDWA completed the journey to compliance with charity governance code and is now fully compliant. All relevant policies have been produced and the organisation will be working on charity code in the coming year. The first report is to be submitted to the Charity Regulator in 2021.

Two newsletters were produced and shared with members and other stakeholders, this was a good way to share about the organisations work and activities going on.

Funding was sourced through grant applications and other activities which include membership and donation. Twelve funding applications were submitted to various funders. AkiDWA secured a 3-year multi-annual funding bringing stability to the management role.

FGM WORK

Since the beginning of 2019 AkiDWA has delivered training to over 600 students at Trinity College School of Nursing and Midwifery, Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (RCSI), Dundalk Institute of Technology and DIT. Training has also been delivered and information distributed to over 450 healthcare professionals and front-line service workers including the Gardai. An Art exhibition on FGM displaying the four types of FGM was held at Trinity College, Dublin. This art exhibition was designed by a student from University College Cork. The exhibition still continues to raise awareness on FGM and has moved to different locations in Ireland latest being county Clare. AkiDWA was involved in the launch of HSE 2nd Intercultural Health Strategy and Salome Mbugua was featured in the promotion video.

AkiDWA work on FGM continue to be supported by HSE, during the year a lot of activities and events were held to progress work on this area which include :

- Delivered training on FGM to healthcare professionals in Trinity College School of Nursing and Midwifery, Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, Dublin City University, Rotunda Maternity Hospital medical social workers, DKIT Dundalk. A total of 650 professionals and students were reached.
- Delivered training on FGM to community groups in Baleskin, Kilkenny, Cork, Mosney, Dublin
- Carried out participatory monitoring on FGM work

To develop, update and print materials on FGM for education and raising awareness :

- Training materials on FGM produced, this include leaflets and templates for teaching and raising awareness, 10000 copies of FGM leaflet were printed

- Strengthen the work of AkiDWA on FGM with the Migrant Community through the Community Health Ambassadors (CHA's) and increase outreach efforts
- 15 CHA's recruited in the period
- 12 CHA's underwent 3 days in-house training in Dublin
- 8 CHA's conducted outreach activities in their communities and in Direct Provision Centres
- All 32 CHA's were offered support individually and in group
- CHA's were part and parcel in the adaptation of the participatory training tools

Strengthen existing links with organizations working on FGM and other harmful practices in Europe in order to share and learn new skills :

- Attended End FGM European Network knowledge sharing seminar
- AkiDWA linked with Mojatu Foundation (Nottingham) and the 2 organisations continue to share skills which are crucial in strengthening FGM work
- AkiDWA also linked with FORWARD UK and National FGM centre where crucial skills and strategies on combatting FGM were learnt.
- Others were EWL, Observatory Committee on Violence Against Women and ENoMW

Engage Youth on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and specific sensitization on FGM issues :

- Out of this exercise, 3 youths were recruited and they became Champions against FGM in their own communities.
- Knowledge Exchange to London took place with visits to FORWARD UK and National FGM Centre

Raising awareness on other GBV and health related issues such as forced marriages and women from armed conflicts and other forms of gender-based violence at local, regional and national level through the incorporation of SDG NO.5 :

- The mapping and research on other harmful practices was commissioned towards the end of 2019.

Review and Evaluation of towards NAP on FGM 2016 – 2019 and work with NSC in a for a Government adopted NAP :

- Continued convening the NSC meetings (5 no.)
- Follow up on the adoption of a government led NAP is ongoing

Hold High Profile Meetings and events at National Level :

- Held a conference on Debunking the Myths around FGM in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)
- CHA training on FGM using REFLECT Action Methodology

Dissemination of materials on FGM

- Materials were disseminated to Healthcare professionals, teachers, and students of nursing and midwifery, medical social workers, social care students.
 - Handbook for healthcare professionals – 740 copies disseminated
 - Guideline on FGM for Educational Professionals – 120 copies disseminated
 - FGM and the Law – 1050 copies disseminated
 - Web based platform on FGM - accessed by over 500 people

Bridging the gap: AkiDwA set to explore FGM practice among affected communities through the linkages between country of destination and country of origin, to achieve this the organisation set to carry out research.

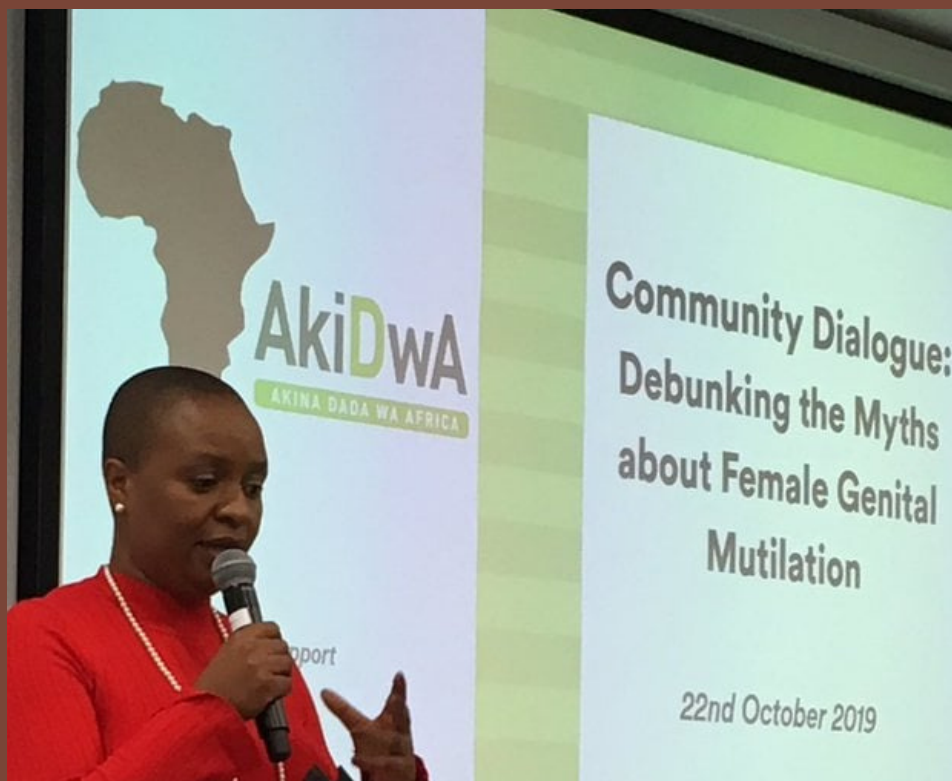
- A researcher was identified in 2019 and this work, as well as evaluation of FGM work in Ireland is ongoing

Main highlight of the year on FGM work was the FGM conference

To mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, AkiDwA hosted a conference Community Dialogue: Debunking the Myths around FGM. Senator Ivana Bacik opened the conference by calling on the Irish Government to commit the resources needed to deliver work on FGM and to develop a national action plan to eradicate the harmful traditional practice. The conference also heard moving accounts from FGM survivors whose lives have been marked by pain and trauma as a result of FGM, and AkiDwA Outreach Officer, Nenette Bouithy presented her research findings on the psychological impact of FGM on teenagers. Other speakers included Dr Edith Iheama from the Mojatu Foundation, a charity based in Nottingham, and Aiden O'Driscoll, Secretary General of the Department of Justice & Equality. The conference focused on the challenges in communicating about FGM and highlighted effective strategies that have helped migrant communities to abandon it.



Conference on FGM in October 2019



Conference on FGM in October 2019

Financial Statement 2019

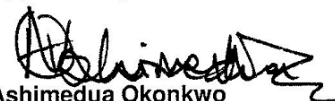
Akina Dada Wa Africa Company Limited By Guarantee STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES


(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the financial year ended 31 December 2019

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2019 €	Total 2019 €	Unrestricted Funds 2018 €	Total 2018 €
Incoming Resources					
Voluntary Income	4.1	241,686	241,686	122,360	122,360
Resources Expended					
Charitable activities	5.1	272,650	272,650	133,068	133,068
Net incoming/outgoing resources before transfers		(30,964)	(30,964)	(10,708)	(10,708)
Gross transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds for the financial year		(30,964)	(30,964)	(10,708)	(10,708)
Reconciliation of funds					
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2019	13	121,974	121,974	132,682	132,682
Balances carried forward at 31 December 2019		91,010	91,010	121,974	121,974

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year.
All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 16 September 2020 and signed on its behalf by:


Ashimedua Okonkwo
Director


Jules Buckley
Director

Financial Statement

2019

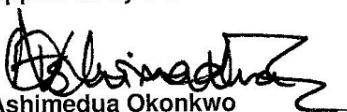
Akina Dada Wa Africa Company Limited By Guarantee

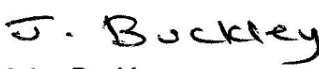
BALANCE SHEET

as at 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
Current Assets			
Debtors	9	3,500	4,339
Cash at bank and in hand		98,013	119,835
		<u>101,513</u>	<u>124,174</u>
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	10	<u>(10,503)</u>	<u>(2,200)</u>
Net Current Assets		<u>91,010</u>	<u>121,974</u>
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		<u>91,010</u>	<u>121,974</u>
Funds			
General fund (unrestricted)		<u>91,010</u>	<u>121,974</u>
Total funds	13	<u>91,010</u>	<u>121,974</u>

Approved by the Board of Directors on 16 September 2020 and signed on its behalf by:


Ashimedua Okonkwo
Director


Jules Buckley
Director



AkiDwa

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



pobal
government supporting communities

