



**AkiDWA**

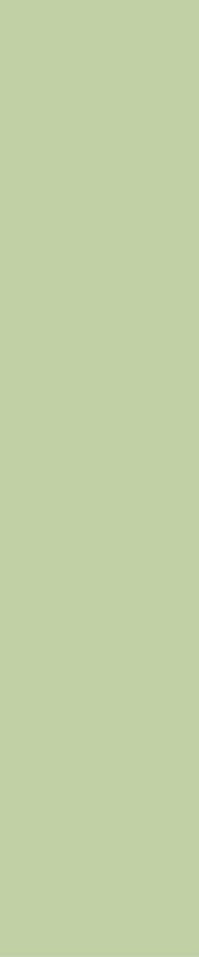
AKINA DADA WA AFRICA

# ***ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT***

## **2021**

**AkiDWA@20**

**Promoting Dignity, Respect and Justice for All**



## Acronyms

SM	Dr. Salome Mbugua, AkiDWA Chief Head of Operations
IDPAD	International Decade for People of African Descent
DSGBV	Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
DP	Direct Provision
IOM	International Organisation for Migration Mission in Ireland

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## Introduction

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 of a just society. One 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 2021 and based on AkiDwA's *Strategic Plan 2019-2021: Shaping the Future*. It is written in line with the four strategic objectives outlined therein: Voice, Equality, Community, and Organisational Development. This reporting year was the final year for AkiDwA's strategic plan, and strategic review meetings and consultations with some of the stakeholders were carried out before the end of the year to help inform the development of a new strategic plan. AkiDwA's core objective is to advance education and address the poverty facing migrant women, by setting up a drop-in-centre to relieve hardship for women immigrating to Ireland, particularly those coming from the continent of Africa. This is done by providing information, offering counselling (including therapeutic services for survivors of war, FGM, torture, and other processes that disempower women), and enhancing social opportunities.

This year, AkiDwA marked its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, making 2021 a significant year for the organisation. Many activities took place to mark the occasion of celebrating two decades of great work. Such activities included the delivery of a master class series, 46 workshops and 6 conferences, in addition to over 20 training sessions and fundraising activities such as the establishment of a Bursary Fund for women in Direct Provision (DP), and the production of a memoir, cookery book and other promotional material. Between April and December, AkiDwA held 14 masterclasses with over 700 participants attending. Many other meetings were held during the year, including major conferences, workshops, and seminars. Meetings were also held with members on a biweekly basis, to discuss health, social and economic issues. Over 40 meetings were organized and held by the organization in 2021, reaching more than 2,000 people.



## i. Strategic Objective 1: Voice

*AkiDwA's first strategic priority is to present the voice of migrant women and their families to the political and administrative system, the media and the public. This will be done through **policy** documents, submissions, information campaigns, research, briefing documents, seeking places on bodies of influence and engagement with policymakers.*

- *AkiDwA will be pro-active in this **calendar of events**, presenting information, evidence, views, policies and research in a timely manner to influence these milestones. A key objective is that policy makers have a much improved understanding and awareness of the issues affecting migrant women, adjusting policies to suit their situation.*
- *AkiDwA will seek **representation** or improved representation on...[advisory committees, monitoring bodies, state boards and other high-profile locations].*
- *requires that AkiDwA adopt a **communication strategy** which will support its work in political representation, brand promotion and in raising funds.*
- *Traffic will be constantly **monitored and the outcomes published** in annual reports. Citations in the media and Oireachtas, as well as references in policy reports, will be tracked.*

(AkiDwA Strategic Plan 2019-2021, p8)

In order to achieve the strategic objective on migrant women's Voice, a number of key actions were taken throughout 2021 which helped to present the voice of migrant women and their families to the political and administrative system, the media and the public.

### 1.1. Political Input and Representation

In 2021, AkiDwA had substantial engagement with policymakers and represented the views of migrant women to bodies of influence such as the Citizen's Assembly, the Anti-Racism Committee, the Justice Committee and via a number of policy documents, submissions and briefs.

#### 1.1.1. Meetings with Public Representatives and Recommendations made

To commemorate AkiDwA's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, **meetings were held with key policy makers** and public representatives throughout the year. Such meetings took place with, for example: Minister for Justice Helen McEntee; Secretary General of the Department of Justice, Oonagh McPhillips; Minister for Children, Equality Disability, Integration and Youth,





Roderic O’Gorman. The objective of these meetings was to communicate work carried out by the organisation over the past 20 years, to share and discuss lessons learned, to highlight gaps in public policy which have an impact on the experiences of migrant women, and to articulate strategies for shaping the future of policy in Ireland – ie. policy that enhances equality, integration, and respect of migrant women’s human rights.

Some of the **recommendations presented** in these meetings include the following: **firstly**, the need to carry out an urgent review of all governmental policies and laws (including those on violence against women, citizenship, nationality, immigration and asylum) in order to assess the discriminatory impact that present policy and legislation has on marginalised women. This was flagged as crucial to understanding how this cohort’s enjoyment of gender and racial equality is affected. **Secondly**, it was urged that the State increase support for second generation migrants and to establish a task force which would assess the challenges and needs of this cohort and to create strategies for their enhanced support. **Thirdly**, policymakers were implored to establish statutory footing for the guidelines regarding (1) habitual residency and (2) access to Refuges for women experiencing domestic abuse who are seeking international protection, or have other immigration statuses. These guidelines are currently subject to ministerial discretion, and AkiDwA called for such right to apply for legal residence status on the above-mentioned grounds to be enshrined in legislation. **Fourthly**, to recognise female genital mutilation (FGM) as a ground for seeking asylum, as well as provision of specialised services for women and girls who are victims/survivors of FGM. **Fifthly**, AkiDwA advised that these actors support the formation of a government-led National Action Plan (NAP) on FGM, to spearhead work in this area in Ireland. **Sixthly**, it was encouraged that funding be provided for AkiDwA’s work across the areas of integration, SGBV and Sexual, Reproductive and Mental Health.

### 1.1.2. Anti-Racism Committee

AkiDwA has been involved with the Anti-Racism Committee working towards the development of the National Action Plan on Racism in Ireland. The Committee’s Interim Report of 30 November 2020 was published on 21 April 2021 by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth and the Committee has opened a public consultation to run for 12 weeks from Wednesday 21 April to Wednesday 14 July 2021. AkiDwA is currently working to produce a submission to the committee and staff has been involved in high level consultation meeting. The organisation has also been attending INAR Network meetings and discussions to progress same.

Between May and June, AkiDwA appeared three times before the Anti-Racism Committee and contributed positively to the development of the new National Action Plan on Racism. The final meeting was jointly held with National Women Traveller’s Forum, NWCI and AkiDwA and focused on intersection of gender and racism and oppression. AkiDwA’s

chairperson, Oluchi Porter, gave an opening remark in this event. AkiDwA has additionally sent a written submission to the Committee.

### **1.1.3. IHREC and IDPAD**

Through the request and intervention of AkiDwA's Chief Head of Operations and Strategy, Dr. Salome Mbugua (SM), the IHREC held two meetings in April with the leaders and youth of African Descent following the death of George Nkecho. The meetings were to ensure the voices of people of African descent (PAD) and their concerns and fear regarding racism in Ireland are addressed. The Commission has agreed to look into developing IHREC actions for the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) to recognise and to collate data on PAD experiences in Ireland and undertake a number of key strategic activities. The IDPAD Ireland steering committee, of which AkiDwA is a member and co-chair, has recruited an intern. The group registered as a company in March and will be receiving funding and running the affairs of the group. AkiDwA previously received funding on behalf of the group however the organisation is yet to receive final payment from the department in order to clear all pending transactions which include payment on production of promotion material, registering of the company, website etc. A meeting was held with staff from the department in charge of the decade to discuss the launch of the decade, however the steering committee declined from this since there is still no clear and concrete actions developed by the state for the implementation of the decade in Ireland.

### **1.1.4. Presentation to Justice Committee**

AkiDwA was invited by the Justice and equality committee in the Dail to give a presentation under the theme "Minorities engaging with the Justice System" in November. SM and AkiDwA's Development and Education Officer presented to the committee on behalf of the organization. The presentation focused on the challenges faced by migrant women in relation to their engagement with the justice system based on their race, gender, and background. Such factors engender more limited access for migrant women to resources, recognition, respect, and representation. The presentation gave an outline of issues and examples that hinder migrant women from engaging with justice system, particularly with respect to their experiences in areas such as: lack of engagement, representation, treatment by Justice System personnel, access to information, immigration and asylum, domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, access to housing, employment, health, also specific issues of access for migrant youth, due to labelling and racial profiling.

#### **1.1.5. Citizen's Assembly**

In February AkiDwA was invited to make a presentation and input on SGBV to the Citizen Assembly on gender equality. The organisation's presentation made recommendations which pertain to achieving equality for migrant women in Ireland, particularly concerning sexual violence, FGM and human trafficking. Amongst the recommendations proposed, the first flagged the need to recognise sexual violence experienced by women fleeing conflict situations during transit from their countries of origin as a severe violation of their human rights and dignity. The associated need for access to tailored services and support which are culturally appropriate was also raised. Moreover, it was recommended that the State recognise FGM as a ground for seeking asylum, and that there should be provision of specialised services for women and girls who are victims/survivors of FGM. In this light, it was also advised that there be support for the formation of a government-led National Action Plan (NAP) to spearhead work on FGM in Ireland. Finally, it was recommended that women who are victims of human trafficking should be recognised as a special cohort of victims of gender-based violence, who will require specialised interventions and supports (psychological, physical etc) to ensure their continued wellbeing for an undefined period of time to ensure their social functioning.

#### **1.1.6. Other Government/ State-Body Consultative Meetings / Dialogues**

AkiDwA appeared before the Oireachtas Women's Caucus with Action Aid, where they represented the National Steering Committee on FGM to discuss the ongoing work to tackle FGM in Ireland, and the importance of state developing a national action plan on FGM.

AkiDwA participated in a DSGBV audit conducted by Higgins and O'Malley and commissioned by Department of Justice. The audit was part of the national review of the DSGBV structures.

AkiDwA attended a meeting organised by Irish Aid this year to discuss the development of Global Citizenship Strategy. The new Irish Aid Global Citizenship and Development Education Strategy will feed into overarching national plan. This is important for our work as we have partnered with DFA on various projects including the current Women Together for a Better World project.

SM participated and gave a presentation in a dialogue on Equality on a Shared Island coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach. In the panel exploring inclusive representation on the Island, she highlighted the importance of embracing political participation as a right as affirmed by article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), which enshrines the rights of all citizens to "take part in the conduct of public affairs". She cited the CEDAW call for states to apply appropriate measures to end discrimination by application of temporary special measures, where she re-

emphasized the importance of measures such as quota systems and seat reservations, which can be applied to address structural gaps and inequality.

Facilitated by DSA Ireland, AkiDwa attended and participated in their series on *Migrant Organisations and Irish Development Efforts: Addressing Challenges and Opportunities for Synergistic Cooperation*.

#### **1.1.7. Policy Submissions**

AkiDwa made a submission to the Department of Education as part of its review of the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant. The organisation's recommendations included firstly, addressing specific challenges faced by migrants in providing rigorous documentation that is called for in the application process, such as significant translation and legal fees. Secondly, tackling issues with the complexity of the immigration landscape and confusion over eligibility in the application forms in the context of the binary of EU/Non-EU student and the nuances of employment/education permissions under various residency permissions. Thirdly, acknowledging that the income threshold is a primary concern for prospective migrant students since the SUSI grant takes gross income into account for eligibility reckoning, rather than net or residual income and taking suitable action in response.

AkiDwa was invited by the Joint Committee on Justice to make a written submission to the Committee on an elective topic Minorities Engaging with the Justice System, and AkiDwa completed this request with their submission of the 20th of August 2021. Consisting of two sections, section 1 dealt with the experiences of migrant women as a minority group engaging with the structures and institutional apparatus of the Justice System in Ireland. Section 2 then dealt with a number of key thematic areas under which migrant women often engage with the justice system and for which the justice system often assumes legal responsibility, including: (A) immigration and Asylum, (B) DSGBV, (C), all forms of media and communications, including new technologies - including abuse and hate speech (D) Health discrimination (E) Employment (F) Education, Accommodation, Inclusion and Participation. A number of recommendations were made to the committee in each regard, and AkiDwa was subsequently invited to participate in a public hearing as described in 1.1.4 above.

#### **1.2. Research Undertaken**

Forced and early marriages, impact of right to work for women asylum seekers, gauging knowledge, attitude and understanding of FGM among migrant community are some of the key ongoing research in AkiDwa to be completed this year, outcome will be shared in 2022.

### **1.2.1. Independent Reviews**

This year, AkiDwA was involved in an independent review of refugees in Ireland. The review was to establish baseline information about the current provision of refuge and other forms of safe accommodation for people experiencing domestic violence, and to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes emergency domestic violence accommodation and other forms of safe accommodation, as well as to identify challenges and potential solutions in future provision that would address the current shortfalls and progress the achievement of Istanbul Convention obligations. According to the completed review, Ireland has an overall shortage of emergency accommodation spaces and an uneven spread of access. There are only Units/Family Places located in 17 counties and there are 10 counties with no Units/Beds within the republic of Ireland.

An independent evaluation on FGM work in Ireland was also undertaken, by a consultant who conducted interviews with a comprehensive range of relevant stakeholders working on the issue of FGM in Ireland (eg. healthcare professionals, policy makers as well as members of the organisation and women who have undergone the practice. The consultation has been completed with the outcomes ready to be shared.

### **1.2.2. Research on early and forced marriages**

To progress the organisation's work on DSGBV, AkiDwA has started exploring other areas on this subject. In 2020, AkiDwA undertook baseline research on the trafficking of migrant women in Ireland to help broaden the understanding of its prevalence.

Early and forced marriages is global phenomena and while this issue is under-researched in Ireland, it has been happening. The hidden nature of this issue makes it difficult for reporting and providing support to the victim. According to a report by the Journal (Oct, 2016), over 400 minors were married in Ireland between 2004 and 2015. The report further noted the Garda National Immigration Bureau were investigating a number of cases of forced marriage involving migrant children as young as 12 where the girls were typically trafficked into the country and coerced into marrying older men. In 2019, the Irish Examiner reported a case of a father who supported his 16-year-old daughter's Islamic marriage to a 29-year-old man against her wishes. In order to fill the research gap in this area, in November 2021 the organization engaged a consultant to undertake research on this area. The purpose of this research is to gather information on early and forced marriages in Ireland. The research will help increase awareness on the dynamic of this issue, inform responses, and support and advance AkiDwA's work on DSGBV.



### 1.2.3. Children in State Care

AkiDwA has commenced research on Children in State Care in 2021. This research is part of a project that is funded by the UN and aims to investigate the causes of the alarming number of migrant children taken into state care. Other elements of this project are discussed in section 2 of this report on Equality.

### 1.3. Communications Strategy

Several social media campaigns ran throughout the year to increase AkiDwA's visibility amongst the general public, but below are some examples of the most notable with the first uniting all.

#### 1.3.1. #AkiDwA20years

The communications strategy for the year 2021 Centres around the logo and associated hashtag that were designed as a meeting of the staff and volunteers for the purposes of celebrating and fundraising for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. "AkiDwA@20" was the design chosen for the logo (as is displayed on the cover of this report and in the footer of each page). The hashtag that was created and written into each social media post for events and campaigns associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year was #Akidwa20years.

#### 1.3.2. International Women's Day (and Collaboration with IOM)

The communications teams at AkiDwA and IOM Ireland collaborated during International Women's Day (IWD) week to deliver a series of sort videos on social media forming a series called "IWD Women Who Lead", with five women of migrant background, spread across different sectors being asked about what leadership means to them, how they lead, who inspired them and what they would advise their younger selves. For the Duration of IWD month, AkiDwA posted daily inspirational quotes from women from around the world.

#### 1.3.3. Let's Talk Mental Health Quotes Campaign

A specific social media campaign that ran during the Health and Wellbeing week 21-25<sup>th</sup> Jan, was the "Let's Talk Mental Health" quotes campaign. AkiDwA compiled and published Mental Health Quotes on social media for the whole week, written by women living in Direct Provision, extracted from the report *Let's Talk: Migrant Women Mental Health*.

#### 1.3.4. World Refugee Day Thought and Wellbeing Puzzle Interactive Campaign

To Mark World Refugee Day 2022, AkiDwA sent out a call on social media to ask people to share their thoughts and feelings about what "refugee" means to them. Collaborating in this way, a "Thoughts and Feelings Puzzle" was built, with people sending messages to us,



elaborating with short stories and poems on the thoughts and feelings that we gave as prompts based on AkiDWA research, as well as coming up with their own.

#### **1.4. Press Releases, Publicity and Citations in the Media**

AkiDWA appeared on RTE digital press, additionally the organization was invited for interview by Kildare FM radio, to enlighten listeners about FGM. Between August and October 2021, training was provided to 110 students in Dundalk Institute of Technology, Trinity College School of Nursing and Midwifery and Technical University of Dublin in Grange Gorman.

A French broadcasting channel invited AkiDWA to engage in a discussion on migration. SM participated in the live TV discussions where she spoke about migrant women immigration and the importance of addressing and supporting women victims of gender specific harm.

The collaborative project between AkiDWA and the Herstory Movement gained press interest and was captured by RTE and a few other printed media.

The Door to Work press release prepared by AkiDWA with PayPal and issued by PayPal reached a wide audience through LinkedIn, attracting 3207 views and over 100 likes.

To mark international day of zero tolerance on FGM the organisation issued a press release and held an online webinar on 6<sup>th</sup> February.

#### **1.5. Calendar of Events**

##### **1.5.1. Master Classes**



To mark 20th anniversary AkiDWA organised and held 17 master classes, over 700 people participated in these master classes. The first master class was delivered by Dr. SM and was an introduction and analysis of AkiDWA work in the last 20 years, *Striving for Equality: Two Decades of*

*Building Resilience*. All 17 of the master classes reflected on issues which the organisation has worked hard to address in the last 20 years. For example, the second masterclass covered the topic of the feminisation of migration, and was led by Lalini Veersamy, Chief of

Mission with IOM. It looked into the contribution that migrant women are making in Ireland and countries of origin. The third class, presented by Ola Majekuduni, looked at intersectional feminism and explored the diversity of women in Ireland, issues facing women, and the importance of all women getting engaged with debate and discussion on equality.

#### **1.5.2. International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM**

The organisation's work on FGM continues to be delivered and coordinated by the migrant women health coordinator, an online conference "***Protection of Women and Girls from FGM in Times of COVID-19***" was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February and speakers at the event included the Garda who led the investigation of the first investigated case of FGM in Ireland. Other speakers were from UK and Ireland, over 50 people participated in the event and €68.64 was raised through Eventbrite voluntary ticket contributions.

#### **1.5.3. International Women's Day**

On 8<sup>th</sup> March and to mark **International Women's Day**, AkiDWA and the IOM held an online webinar entitled ***Women Leaders Breaking the Glass Ceiling***, panellist were women ambassadors, video was also produced profiling migrant women and their contributions in Ireland. Additionally, AkiDWA held event ***Beyond Bias and Barriers*** on 12<sup>th</sup> March which focussed on contributions and achievement made by women in Ireland and as well challenges and bias hindering them from progressing, speakers were prominent women who have advocated for equality and championed women movement in Ireland in the last two decades.

#### **1.5.4. 'Lifting the Stigma' Conference**

On 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021 AkiDWA held a hybrid conference entitled *Lifting the Stigma on Migrant Women*. Over 110 people attended on Zoom and 35 attended physically at the in-person element held at EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum. There were very great speakers on the day including: AkiDWA's current Chair Uruemu Adejinmi; the European Network of Migrant Women; Ivana Bacik, TD; Sinead Gibney, Chief commissioner for IHREC, professors from Maynooth university; NGO representatives etc. The conference was undertaken as part of EU project called Forum with six other members from around the EU.

#### **1.5.5. International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict**

On 19<sup>th</sup> June to mark International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, AkiDWA, in collaboration with Wezesha, held an online international convention entitled "Voices from the Ground", with speakers from Nigeria, Palestine, DRC, Ireland, Sudan and Kenya. 102 participants attended this online event which was in support of AkiDWA's work



on Women Peace and Security with the Department of Foreign Affairs' Conflict Resolution unit and input provided in this regard. A follow up conference will be held in future looking into the localisation of the WPS agenda.

#### 1.5.6. Other Events

On 15<sup>th</sup> May, to mark **International Day of Families**, AkiDwA and Black and Irish held an online event. AkiDwA collaborated with Glencree and other organisations to mark **Africa Day 2021**. Staff spoke about our work and a video featuring SM entitled Dear Ireland was featured. A conference with migrant youth in Ireland was held by AkiDwA to mark **International Human Rights Day 2021**, funded by the DCDEIY. Young people from DP centres and members of the AkiDwA Young Migrant Women's network spoke during the event. The director of IHREC gave a keynote speech during the event.



## 2. Strategic Objective 2: Equality

*The second strategic priority for AkiDwA is a set of interconnected equality issues that cover integration and social inclusion – embracing diversity, addressing racism, discrimination, FGM and other health issues, domestic violence, and the situation of asylum seekers. This is a broader one than ‘voice’, one which includes inter-agency working with a broad range of people, services, agencies and NGOs. (AkiDwA Strategic Plan 2019-2021, p10)*

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

### 2.1. FGM

AkiDwA continues to raise awareness and deliver training on FGM, in the last three months of 2021, training was delivered to TCD School of Nursing and Midwifery as well as Dundalk Institute of Technology, focusing on maternity care and FGM.

The 3rd edition of the Handbook on FGM for Healthcare Professionals was printed in October 2022. Five thousand copies will be distributed and circulated widely, including electronically, and a copy has been placed on the AkiDwA website. The HSE is supporting AkiDwA with the dissemination of this handbook.

In terms of inter-organisational links, AkiDwA is a member of End FGM network, based in Belgium, participates in various committees, staff Participated in online conference *Migrant women and GBV: Sharing and sustaining the ACCESS project led by GAMS*.

Meetings were held with the Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services (ODVSS) to discuss the delivery of training on FGM and culture. Both organisations will develop the training for managers and staffs of direct provision centres in Ireland in June.

AkiDwA was invited to speak in the launch of ENOMW on their report on mental health, our input focused on how FGM affects women and especially the role played by trauma and its impact on the mental health of women and girls, this meeting was important in creating

awareness about the long-term consequences of the practice of FGM and offered the AkiDwa an opportunity to talk about its work on FGM to a European audience.

AkiDwa is a member of the End FGM EU network and in the last two months of 2021, participated in various meetings, informing work and policy on this area. These included the launch of interactive EU map on FGM, jointly held with Fundamental Rights Agency.

## **2.2. DSGBV**

### **2.2.1. FORUM EU project**

FORUM is an EU funded project, which is a European Union (EU) partnership operating across seven EU countries, including Ireland, with the aim of engaging citizens to fight stigma against migrants (Third Country Nationals). Forum's vision is one of widespread civic participation and the promotion of tolerance and understanding as part of Europe for Citizens Programme. AkiDwa is a key partner on this project and will organise three key activities which include round table discussions and seminars on SGBV, a conference on the stigmatization of migrant women and working with volunteers in dismantling racism.

AkiDwa held a first round-table discussion on DSGBV for 2021 on the 28th of June, titled *Protecting Migrant Women from DSGBV by Reviewing, Amending and Applying International, EU and National Laws and Policies* with Irish NGOs working in this area, as well as representatives of IOs such as the IOM coming together to share and discuss challenges faced by migrant women in Ireland affected by DSGBV and articulate strategies to address the problems. A report with findings and themes that emerged in the discussion was subsequently compiled.

AkiDwa held a second-round table discussion *The New Normal: Handling SGBV through the lenses of Covid 19*. There were great discussions with participants and panel speakers from the UK and Ireland. To date, three actions have been delivered and a midterm report was submitted in December. Work with volunteers on the topic of racism is also on-going. The project finishes in September 2022.

### **2.2.2. Meeting with GRETA on human trafficking**

AkiDwa was invited by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which monitors the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, to participate in a monitoring meeting in December. The organization shared the outcome of its research on trafficking undertaken in 2020. AkiDwa highlighted the need for support for the victim and the need to consider trafficking as form of DSGBV.

AkiDwa also participated in the launch of Pavee Point's Domestic and Sexual Violence Toolkit.

### **2.2.3. Project with ENOMW on health, undocumented persons, and DSGBV**

AkiDwa was involved in several projects and collaborations with the European Network of Migrant Women (ENOMW). Staff contributed to the production of a publication and research, some of which was funded. SM participated in a two-day meeting in Brussels on DSGBV in late November.

### **2.2.4. Other DSGBV Collaborations**

AkiDwa participated and made contributions to the webinar of Ireland's Consortium on Gender Based Violence, which looked into Disability Inclusion in GBV. At the invitation of IOM, AkiDwa spoke and delivered training on SGBV to over 100 families. The participants were newly arrived refugees and the objective was based on Child Protection. The organisation attended and contributed to discussions hosted by the International Protection Office; the meeting looked at issues affecting people seeking international protection. AkiDwa staff participated and gave presentation in the Alcohol Forum Webinar where the focus was on impact of alcohol and substance abuse from a migrant perspective

Upon the invitation of the NWCI, SM participated and spoke in an online conference 'Beyond Exploitation', which is Ireland's civil society campaign for equality and freedom from sexual exploitation, informed by the Equality Model. Central to this model is Part 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 2017 which ensured that the selling of sex by individuals was decriminalised in Ireland. At the same time the Equality Model reduces demand for sexual exploitation by making it illegal to pay for sex, to pimp someone for sex, and to run a brothel. The Equality Model has reinforced Ireland's commitment to human rights and equality. The vast majority of the sex trade in Ireland is highly organised and criminally run, and this law is a part of an international response to reduce sex trafficking. Speaking at the event SM highlighted the impact of the trafficking of women. The majority of women who are trafficked are migrant women and the impacts of this experience on them can include harms of a physical, mental and well-being-related nature, particularly with women sometimes experiencing confinement and lack of access to food. SM emphasized the need to cut the demand for buyers of sex, with recommendations including criminalising the buying of sex and providing support to survivors - including immediate assistance in accessing safety & security (house, food, medical assistance- trauma).

### **2.3. Mental Health**

Dr. Caroline Munyi, Migrant Women's Health Coordinator represented AkiDwA in STAND Spring Webinar series titled Taking Action for Mental Health. And as well delivered a mental health talk which was posted to our Instagram for our followers. This was our contribution to the mental health week in May. She delivered DSGBV session to refugees in Roscommon through an invitation from the local HSE management and represented AkiDwA in ODVSS online conference where we presented on Migrant experiences of DSGBV, mental health and the barriers which migrant women encounter in a bid to access services.

### **2.4. Reproductive Health and Outreach**

AkiDwA's work on Reproductive Health and outreach is funded by the HSE under the Crisis Pregnancy Programme. As part of this project AkiDwA's Migrant Women's Health Officer continued to visit women in Baleskin Reception Centre regularly, while hosting online sessions and providing information multiple times per month with around 23 women attending each session.

Additionally under this funding, the project on men's sexual health, focusing on men living in DP centres, continued to be advanced by the consultant with responsibility for this programme. The consultant has been visiting 13 DP centres around Ireland, where he distributes condoms and information to men in the centres. He also held 9 online sessions with men between August-October 2021.

SM also participated and spoke in a campaign outside the Dail on the building of the new maternity hospital with a call for the maternity hospital to be public and secular.

### **2.5. Addressing Racism**

#### **2.5.1. Community Alliance Against Racism (CAAR)**



On 21st March 2021, AkiDwA held an online seminar to mark International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, entitled *Let's Share the Weight of Racism*. There were over 70 participants in this webinar who expressed an interest in establishing a community-led intervention to address racism. The main outcome of this event was that the concern for victims of racism to be supported within communities in Ireland emerged as a clear issue for action. There was a wish to have a platform where people could share their experiences and articulate

solutions for addressing racism in Irish society. On conclusion of the webinar, it was agreed that AkiDWA would establish such a platform moving forward – and so the Community Alliance Against Racism (CAAR) was formed. CAAR has set up a community-led intervention group to support victims of racism in Galway and Dublin. To this end, it has recruited and provided training to eight ‘community champions’ to lead their drive. It has engaged with the Garda Integration Unit to further their agenda, attained an alliance with 10 community groups, and most notably, developed strategies and a work plan for their national campaign against racism.

Some of the goals of the group are to undertake nationwide campaigns against racism that are championed by youths from across different communities in Ireland, and to deliver anti-racism trainings to different bodies, including public services, statutory and non-statutory groups, voluntary groups, as well as the community at large. CAAR was launched on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and had great speakers lined up to speak during the event, which included - Minister Roderic O’Gorman, Secretary General DJ, Chief Commissioner of IHREC, the Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin and a panel with representative from three local authorities, academia and experts. It was facilitated by Bashir Otukoya, Assistant Professor at UCD and a member of the Anti-Racism Committee.

### **2.5.2. Other Anti-Discrimination Efforts**

Nengi Benstowe, AkidWA YMW, represented and spoke on behalf of AkiDWA at the Le Cheile rally. The objective of the group is to challenge the growth of the far-right, who, in recent months, have begun to organise in communities and streets across Ireland - North and South. The group is committed to building a movement for a society based on the principles of real social solidarity and economic justice. They recognise the unity of working people, the marginalised and oppressed, regardless of colour, creed, gender, cultural background or sexual orientation, as key to achieving a better future for all.

## **2.6. Integration and Social Inclusion**

### **2.6.1. Women Together for a Better World**

AkiDWA was awarded funds by the DFA in July to continue with Phase II of this project. A project officer commenced in September 2021 and with the project set to end in May 2022. Two groups, in two counties (Monaghan and Longford) received training. The project officer additionally organised awareness raising sessions about SDGs online.





### 2.6.2. In From the Margin

This project is aimed towards elderly migrant women and those with language barriers who are interested in setting up entrepreneurship project. There are 15 women in total participating in the project from Monaghan and Cavan, Tralee, Dublin, and Westmeath. All participants will receive tablets, sewing machines and materials. Funding was received from DCC, the group will receive training from PayPal on quality production, marketing and they will be supported with the creation of a website where there will be marketing and selling products. SM has been holding meeting with the women and training with PayPal will commence in January 2022.

### 2.6.3. Children in State Care

As described in Section 1 on Voice, AkiDWA has begun research on Children in State Care. As part of this project, several other activities will be delivered in 2022, which include 6 information and discussion sessions with African/migrant parents, the documentation of 10 stories of children's upbringing, 2 round table discussions with policy makers and front-line service providers, and a conference to share learnings, to be held in 2022. To date, 3 meetings have been held with the migrant community and a consultant was engaged in July to advance this project.

### 2.6.4. Discrimination and Gender Equality

SM was invited to participate and speak in a conference in October in Cyprus on the the role of foreign policy in advancing gender equality. Entitled 'Addressing the Challenges: Pushbacks and Obstacles Faced by Women', the conference was held by the Council of Europe. The conference provided rich insights into the success, the setbacks and the current challenges countries face in advancing women's rights and gender equality, and articulated the instrumental role that foreign policy can play at different levels. SM urged state leaders to acknowledge the diversity of women in Europe and to bring new voices to the diplomatic table, which are informed by the reality of women's situations and needs, and with their full participation. SM argued that a new, more assertive voice is needed to bring new topics into the discussions including, inter alia, women's empowerment, violence against women and trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation of migrant women. She noted that significant gaps remain in relation to having a full picture of gender inequalities in several areas which include migration, and that there is a **serious lack of data regarding women and girls' situation on the ground**.

### 2.6.5. All Island Women Forum Meetings



AkiDWA is a member of the All Island Women's Forum, convened by the NWCI, and the meetings are held on a monthly basis. SM represents the organisation in these meetings. In February 2022, the group will meet physically for the first time in Belfast.

#### 2.6.6. Webinars and Trainings on women in politics

AkiDWA was invited to participate in and chair a webinar organized by the NWCI on 'Increasing Women's Political Participation: Tackling Social Media Abuse'. SM chaired the meeting. Research and statistics demonstrate that gender-based targeting of women politicians is a major challenge in increasing political participation and maintaining a functioning democracy. A 2016 report published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union revealed that 80% of interviewees had experienced psychological abuse in connection with their political work. Migrant women contesting local elections in Ireland have also confirmed horrifying online abuse when canvassing.

Training funded by Kildare County Council on introduction to **civic engagement** took place in October and November, **14 women participated** in this training and was delivered by Dr Caroline Munyi and Dr Salome Mbugua.

#### 2.6.7. ASPIRE Project

The Assessing Supports for the Political Inclusion of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women in Ireland (ASPIRE) Partnership project, led by Maynooth University, and with the National Traveller Women's Forum and AkiDWA as partners, funded by the Irish Research Council, is in its final stage. The three organisations held the first ASPIRE webinar with experts from the USA and the UK, sharing about Black women's experiences of political office in the United States and about Traveller, Gypsy and Roma women's experiences of governance in Scotland. Preliminary findings from the ASPIRE project were also shared.



## Strategic Objective 3: Community Development

*The third strategic priority for AkiDwa concerns its link to the community of migrant women and their families, through capacity building, representation, grass roots activities and building social capital. This work also involves training, employment, workplace integration, business and entrepreneurship. It includes working with families and youth. This is an important consultative, empowering and mobilising role. It aims to build the confidence and skills of migrant women and their families so that they are empowered to represent themselves both as a group and individually. (AkiDwa Strategic Plan, 2019-2021, p13)*

There were many meetings held during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, including major conferences workshops and seminars, meetings were also held with members on biweekly basis, to discuss health, social and economic issues. Overall, the organisation held over 40 meetings in 2021 reaching more than 2000 people

### **2.7. Training and Capacity Building**

#### **2.7.1. FGM and Reproductive Health Trainings**

AkiDwa's Women's Support Officer visited several centres during the year and held training on reproductive health online, covering areas which include contraceptive, pregnancy STI and SGBV. Men sexual behaviour programme which aim is to compliment women reproductive health, ordered 40000 condoms and distributed 35000 along with information in 25 accommodation centres.

An event was organised by EC for the purpose of engaging migrant youth and to provide training on communicating difficult SGBV-related subjects, such as FGM. There were short presentations of poems and music and 29 participants took part in this event.

#### **2.7.2. Door to Work Trainings**

Door to work project supporting migrant women to improve their prospects in accessing the labour market was quite successful. The project, funded by PayPal, was supported by over 100 mentors and volunteers. 27 women from different accommodation centres enrolled



and 25 of the women completed the project. Participants were supported with the loan of a Tablet and Internet extender, to enable easier access in accommodation centres where Wifi is typically very weak. Out of the 25 completing, 18 were able to find jobs. As part of **Door to Work project**, AkiDwa helped to organise a meeting with two other organisations, Dress for Success and Equal Ireland, and in doing so, collaborated with them on their recruitment drive for their employment project called *Together Changing the Future*. Over 50 people attended and participated in the meeting and the majority linked up with the organisations and registered for the training.

### 2.7.3. In From the Margin Trainings

The project aims to support migrant women with low literacy level and language barriers as well isolated migrant women. 15 Participants have been identified from Cork, Cavan, Tralee, Wicklow and Dublin. Each participant will receive a tablet, and 10 women will be supported with sewing machines to help progress the project. Meetings have been held with women in Monaghan and Cavan five times as assessment sessions. PayPal will provide training to the women for the production of high-quality products, packaging and marketing.

### 2.7.4. Training for Community Champions Against Racism

As part of advancing work with Community Alliance Against Racism (CAAR), AkiDwa continues to support the project with the coordination and recruitment of champions and by delivering training on understanding racism and its impact on society. To date, **training has been delivered to 14 champions**. In December 2021, 8 champions received training and the participants were mainly young people, but there are also people over 35 years-of-age who are interested with the Community Champions programme.

### 2.7.5. African Children in State Care Meetings

Funded by the United Nations, the project focuses on African children in State Care and will help to capture learnings which can be shared with other EU countries by the UN. **5 out of 6 sessions with migrant parents have been held online**, with a physical meeting aimed to take place in March 2022. 3 of these meetings were held in November and December 2021, 10 stories with information on the upbringing of women and their experiences of bringing up children in the host country will be produced, and 2 round table discussions are planned

to take place with policy makers and front-line services, with the project ending in May 2022.

#### 2.7.6. North/South Partnership Programmes

AkiDWA's collaboration project with Hapani Sharing is Caring commenced in September 2021, and on 11th of December, the first physical exchange meeting was held in Belfast. The Sharing is Caring project is funded by community foundations and will finish in August. In this first meeting, over **40 participants, 30 from Hapani and 11 from AkiDWA**, started off with mapping issues and challenges facing migrants both in the North and South of the Island. The project's aim is to *support women participants through learning and sharing, while also changing the way in which cultural differences are perceived and practiced by front line service providers*. The vision of the programme is that such providers will become more aware of different identities, backgrounds, cultural practices, needs and challenges that service users have, especially flagging gender-specific harm affecting migrant women, and that with this understanding, they will provide culturally appropriate services. Overall, the project hopes to empower migrant women with awareness and information and will improve their access to services and support.

**6 meetings** in total will be held with migrant community, 3 led by each organization. **Two high-level meetings** will be held with policy makers and frontline services, NGOs and professionals. A **guide will be produced** at the end of the project with information on working across cultures, with tips for front line services which will be aimed at helping to improve cultural sensitivity and understanding while working with diverse groups.

#### 2.8. Networking and Grassroot Mobilisation (Building Social Capital)

Every AkiDWA event and training mentioned already in this section and elsewhere in the Report offers an opportunity for members and attendees to come together, develop social connection and to learn. Below are some examples of particularly noteworthy networking and mobilisation opportunities.

A conference entitled *Let's Share the Weight of Racism* was held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021. There were 67 participants in the event and a community intervention alliance group has been established, responding to the recommendations from the participants for further action. The objective of this group will be to offer a platform to share experiences, provide support and work to ensuring access to justice for victims of racism.



On 21<sup>st</sup> February, AkiDWA held an event to mark International Mother Language Day, *My Language, My Heritage, My Pride*. There was a good response from the community and over 20 people contributed to the video produced for the occasion that featured people saying greetings in different mother tongues. The event was well attended on Zoom, with music, Spoken Word poetry and discussions held. Prizes were also given to those who actively participated to boost engagement.

### **2.8.1. AkiDWA 20th Anniversary Recognition Dinner**

To celebrate the work of the organization in the last 20 years, a celebration and recognition dinner was planned with hotel booked, awards were printed, and some people bought tickets. Unfortunately, with increase of COVID-19 cases, the event was moved to February 26th 2022.

### **2.8.2. Information Days supported by IOM**

Two information days, funded by the IOM, were held in Dublin and Limerick in 2021. The aim of these events was to create awareness of services and opportunities available to migrants and showcase the work of the organisations present. 15 organizations participated in the two events and provided much needed information. Examples include information on employment from Home Instead and information on psychological support by Black Therapists Ireland. **Over 70 people attended both events**, however turn-out in Limerick was poor. With funding support from the IOM and the remaining funding from Coca-Cola, an art therapy/information day will be held in November.

### 3. Strategic Objective 4: Organizational Development

*Achieving sustainability is the key organisational task of this plan. The routes to achieving sustainability lie in: Working to achieve core funding...Working to achieve project income from different sources...Diversification: generation of new or reinforced revenue streams... Support of volunteers, interns (e.g. for research) and social employment. AkiDwA has in some cases developed a referral agreement and or where relevant MoU's with relevant organisations and agencies, [AkiDwA] could develop specific agreements ...with partners in the area of employment, housing services, and domestic violence services in relation to referring people through the drop in service..... Continue to work with and strengthen relationships with groups and organisation at local, regional and national level. (AkiDwA Strategic Plan, 2019-2021, pp. 16-17)*

In terms of everyday running of the organisation, throughout 2021, AkiDwA continued to hold weekly team meetings with the staff in November and December, support and supervision meeting were provided to staff and volunteers.

#### 3.1. AkiDwA Governance and Strategy

##### 3.1.1. Development of the Post-2021 Strategy

A consultant was engaged in October 2021 to work with the organization in developing AkiDwA's next Strategic Plan. The consultant has held meetings with stakeholders and will be presenting the draft to the board meeting in January 2022. The strategy will be launched in March of that year.

A strategic review day was held with a consultant drafting the strategic plan for the organization in November 2021. It was titled *Living our Values, Collaboration, and Strengthening Governance Strategic Day*. In attendance at this 2 hour meeting were staff, the board, members and the advisory committee.

##### 3.1.2. Pobal Charity Trustee's week

In September 2021, AkiDwA was asked by Pobal to consider participating in events as part of Charities Trustees Week, providing an opportunity to highlight the excellent and often



unseen work of charity trustees, with a theme “Building Resilience During and Post COVID-19”. Oluchi Porter, former chair of AkiDwA, represented the organization and presented during the meeting. In her presentation, Oluchi highlighted some of the approaches that AkiDwA undertook to ensure resilience during the pandemic, which include the following: (1) Communication - the organisation ensured there was consistent communication amongst all stake holders (staff, board, partners, members, funders and supporters), this was done through phone calls, emails and newsletter, online meetings and email. (2) Risk Management - where the board in their meetings were able to identify risks and as well articulate management of those risks. (3) Flexibility - which meant accommodating women based on availability for meeting, and meeting physically and as well as having extra board meetings to discuss emerging issues.

### **3.1.3. Annual General Assembly Meeting 2021**

On 2nd October AkiDwA held its 2021 AGM online on Zoom and over 52 members participated. After the AGM business, an external consultant led discussions on the development of AkiDwA’s new strategic plan. During the AGM, seven board members were elected: Dami Aramide (DA), Luzia Antonio Berechet (LB), Uruemu Adejinmi (UA), Thais Muniz (TM), Tahereh Fardintabrizi (TF), Colletta Daliken (CD) and Beth Kinyua (BK). An induction meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> October and election for executive roles took place same day, with the following taking key positions: UA as chairperson and BK as Assistance Chair, TF as Company Secretary and DA as Treasurer. The board noted the request and information from Colette who is no longer able to join the board due to relocation to Africa, therefore the AkiDwA board remains with 6 trustees moving forward.

### **3.2. Diversification of Funding Streams**

AkiDwA received huge publicity through the campaign *Emily’s Hair Cut to Stop “The Cut”*, with the campaign raising over €6,000 within one month. The funds collected will go towards providing psycho-social support for women who have experienced FGM. AkiDwA will work with Black Therapists Ireland in the delivery of this service and both organisations will sign a MOU.



### **3.3. Collaborations**

#### **3.3.1. Training on cultural competence to organizations**

As a result of the round-table meeting held by the organisation in June with frontline service providers on SGBV, two of the organizations that attended are currently undertaking cultural competence training, provided by AkiDwa. The organizations are paying AkiDwa for the delivery of the training.

#### **3.3.2. Information and Open Days supported by IOM**

Great learnings emerged on the day which include: the need for information which is accessible to people seeking international protection (especially those for whom language barriers pose a challenge); the use of symbols in and the translation of documents is necessary; the need for training service providers, especially on cultural sensitivity, is needed; awareness must be raised on issues affecting migrant women such as domestic and gender-based violence and support for overcoming them needs to be enhanced support on mental health issues among migrants, particularly those living in the DPs needs to be increased; and lastly, the need for inter-organisational planning was identified and the pre-planning sessions with organisations participating in the information day was beneficial.