



## Highlights

- AkiDwA in Brussels to fight FGM
- Salome at Google's Compass Connects Event for women leaders
- At Common Purpose to talk about building diverse teams
- AkiDwA work results in higher standards for accommodation in Direct Provision centres

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## AkiDwA conference on FGM brought survivors, campaigners and policymakers together



Senator Ivana Bacik opened our conference on FGM in October by calling on the Irish Government to commit the resources needed to develop a national action plan to eradicate the harmful traditional practice. A National Action Plan is needed to guide state agencies like Tusla, the HSE and Gardaí on how to build partnerships with communities to eradicate FGM. Senator Bacik was responsible for bringing the Private Members Bill that outlawed FGM in Ireland seven years ago. She told the conference that she had

been inspired to produce the Bill by AkiDwA's decade of campaigning. We heard moving accounts from FGM survivors whose lives have been marked by pain and trauma as a result of FGM, and AkiDwA's Nenette Bouithy presented her research findings on the psychological impact of FGM on teenagers. Nenette's Masters research assessed 21 studies of how FGM had affected women's mental health. She found evidence that FGM can be a risk factor for developing post traumatic stress disorders and other mental health disorders.

However, she also found evidence that women who sought help from holistic care programme reported some benefits from these programmes, even when they chose not to have clitoral surgical reconstruction.

**Dr Edith Iheama** (pictured, far left) from the Mojatu Foundation, a charity based in Nottingham, told us how Mojatu has been working with local and national authorities to make Nottingham Europe's first City of Zero Tolerance For FGM.

Dr Iheama explained how Mojatu works with teachers, youth groups, parents and agencies to debunk the myths that still persist around FGM. Representing the Department of Justice & Equality was **Secretary General Aidan O Driscoll**, (pictured, right) who stressed that the Department's recently completed re-organisation had done much to strengthen its commitment to equality for all. He thanked AkiDwA for decades of useful collaboration and confirmed the need for funding to be allocated to develop a National Action Plan to end FGM in Ireland. The conference focused on the challenges in communicating about FGM and highlighted effective strategies that have helped migrant communities to abandon it.



## Congratulations!

**Graduates of AkiDwA's IDEAL leadership training course received their Certificates at our Open Day in June. This photo shows the graduates with our founder Salome Mbugua, trainers Mick Rafferty and Patricia McCarthy and our Chair Ashimedua Okonkwo**



## AkiDwA visited Brussels to work with the End FGM European Network

In September, two AkiDwA staff members visited our friends at the EndFGM European Network in Brussels. Advocates from campaign groups across Europe met to discuss our shared goal of eradicating the harmful traditional practice of female genital mutilation by 2030. We worked together to develop new guidelines for policymakers and journalists on how to talk about FGM and on promising practice in how asylum policy relates to FGM. We focused on the best ways to protect women and girls arriving in Europe from FGM-practising countries and we discussed a range of new strategies for policy advocacy at national and EU levels with the EndFGM policy team. The visit helped AkiDwA to deepen our international collaboration in the global fight to end FGM through the



## AkiDwA Health Fair is a Solid Success

In September, AkiDwA's first Health Fair drew visitors from far and wide

People came from many parts of Dublin, Balbriggan and Offaly for free treatments, a Pilates class and healthy snacks supplied by AkiDwA

The fair offered information and advice from local and national organisations on the many ways that we can make choices to improve our mental and physical health, and tips on how we can choose activities that can help to promote relaxation and well being. Visitors got free toothbrushes and advice from the Dental Health Foundation on looking after teeth while the Health Reach Team were kept busy testing cholesterol levels.

Almost 200 people visited the fair in St Agatha's Hall, Dublin 1 on September 13th, when we joined forces with Cairde and 17 health-focused organisations to offer advice on giving up smoking, careers, sports and contraception as well as information on living with conditions like Hepatitis C and HIV. Visitors liked the holistic focus and the emphasis on both mental and physical health.

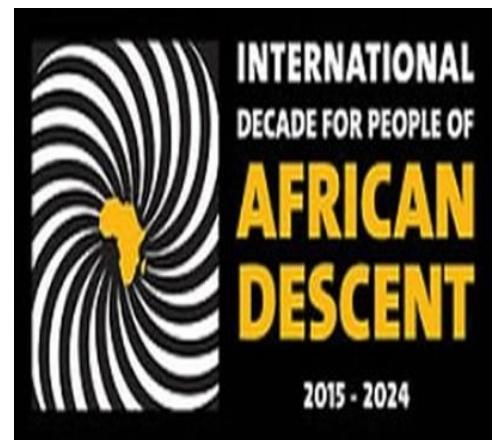


There was lots of interest in treatments like Indian head massage, henna tattoos and the manicures by leaders of AkiDwA's Young Migrant Women Group.



## The UN is checking Ireland's record on tackling racism

In December the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) will examine how well the Irish government has performed since 2011 in addressing its commitments to take actions to combat racism and promote equality. As an organisation active in fighting racism, AkiDwA is one of the many NGOs that have submitted reports to the UN assessing the performance of the Irish Government on tackling racism over the past eight years. AkiDwA's report to UNCERD outlined 26 key recommendations that we think the Irish State should take to uphold the rights of migrant women. Our recommendations cover gender-based violence, employment, health, Direct Provision and international protection as well as plans to celebrate the International Decade for People of African Descent in Ireland. A representative from AkiDwA will be in Geneva to ensure that the voice of migrant women is heard. [Click here for our submission](#)



### AKIDWA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7<sup>th</sup> December 2019 10 am to 2 pm

**Venue:** Community Hall, Killarney Court Community Centre, Buckingham Street, Dublin 1

Agenda	Time	
Registration tea/coffee	10 am	
Welcome & Apologies	10.30	Ashimedu Okonkwo
Opening remarks by the Chair	10.35	Ashimedu Okonkwo
Minutes of last year's AGM	10.45	Paola Maggiorotto
Annual Report for the year 2018	10.55	Salome Mbugua
Financial Report for the year 2018	11.10	Nevenka Fernandez
Appointment of Auditors	11.20	Jules Buckley
Board elections	11.25	Ann Waithira
Presentation on AkiDwA research on Mental health & discussions	11.45	Anne Carpenter
Outcome of evaluation of AkiDwA 's work on sexual & reproductive health and discussion on organisation's position on sex work/prostitution	12.15	Tendai Madondo & Nusha Yonkova, ICI
Forward Looking- work plan 2020	12.45	Salome Mbugua
Close of Meeting.	1.15	Meddy Okonkwo
Refreshments	finish 2pm	

Some photos from last year's Annual General Meeting



Salome spoke at Google Ireland's 5th Compass Connect Leadership Summit alongside other female trailblazers



In September AkiDwA's Head of Operations & Strategy, Salome

Mbugua, spoke about what inspires her at Google Ireland's fifth annual gathering of women leaders. Salome was one of 300 women at the event at the Foundry on Barrow Street who work in not for profit organisations, business, education, media and sport. They were all there to share stories about the inspirational women in their lives, to give tips for overcoming challenges at work and to explain how they combine busy family lives with big jobs. The Compass Connects Summits were started by senior Google executives like Ruth Porat to provide mentoring, networking and inspiration for women who want to progress at work. The 2019 Summit shone a spotlight on women like Irish Paralympic Swimmer, Ellen Keane, who spoke about growing up with a shorter than normal arm, and how one of the biggest hurdles she had to overcome was dealing with her own negative self image, while terrorism expert Louise Richardson, who is the first woman ever appointed as Vice Chancellor at the University of Oxford told us about inspirational women like Harriet Tubman, the slave who escaped her plantation when her two brothers were too afraid to leave with her. Harriet went on to set up the Underground Railroad and rescued thousands more people from slavery, including her two brothers.



Working together to tackle hate crime

Salome Mbugua with Councillor Yemi Adenuga from Navan County Council & Councillor Hazel Chu from Dublin City Council at the launch of the Department of Justice & Equality consultation on hate crime

## In July we celebrated Diversity in Monaghan

One of the best things about our Diversity Celebration in Monaghan Town in July was the way women living in the town's Direct Provision centre were involved in organising the event. They helped prepare the food and led the celebrations at St Joseph's Pastoral Centre. 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



## The Irish Government & the Gardaí 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 has also launched a consultation on new laws that may be needed to punish those who commit hate crimes. AkiDwA will submit recommendations based on feedback from members. You can have your say by contacting AkiDwA, attending a public meeting or fill in a questionnaire at [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie).



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AkiDwA is a charity that supports, represents and advocates on behalf of all migrant women living in Ireland. **AkiDwA** is short for **Akina Dada Wa Africa**, a Swahili phrase that means sisterhood. AkiDwA works for the advancement and integration of migrant women of every socio-economic status and of all ethnicities and religions. For two decades AkiDwA has been working with government departments and state bodies to review legislation and create state policies that have improved life in Ireland for migrant women & their families.

**BRAIN GAIN  
IRELAND**

*A great networking opportunity for migrant professionals and entrepreneurs in Ireland irrespective of their background*

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2019**  
5.30pm - 9.30pm  
Wynn's Hotel 35-39 Abbey Street Lower, North City, Dublin 1, D01 C9F8

Logos: MRCI, The Great Care Co-op, MVODA, hig, ROEGATE

Facebook: //AKINA DADA WA AFRICA  
Twitter: @AKIDWA  
Website: [WWW.AKIDWA.IE](http://WWW.AKIDWA.IE)

## Upcoming AkiDwA Events

**Brain Gain Ireland** Thursday November 28: Wynn's Hotel Abbey Street, Dublin **5.30 - 9.30 pm**

**AkiDwA Annual General Meeting** Saturday December 7 Killarney Court Community Centre **10 am - 2 pm**

**No Woman is Limited: FGM Summit** in Dublin February 2020

## Let's Talk: the AkiDwA report on migrant women's mental health to be released in January

Throughout 2019 AkiDwA has been conducting research on the mental health of refugee women and women living in Direct Provision centres in order to capture their experiences of accessing and using mental health services in Ireland. We recruited a qualified psychologist and counsellor to conduct research and run workshops and support sessions including art therapy. Workshops took place in Mallow, Tramore, Carlow and Portlaoise.

## Talking About Sexual Health

AkiDwA has been running a program of sexual & reproductive health (SRH) workshops for women in Direct Provision centres since July 2018. The objective is to provide women in Direct Provision Centres with information on sexual & reproductive health and to link women into local and regional health services. AkiDwA's SRH workshops have been funded by the HSE's Crisis Pregnancy Programme and will run until December. We reached 225 women in 17 accommodation centres across the country last year and in 2019 we expanded the program to include workshops for men living in ten centres. From July to September 75 migrant women attended sessions with our Women Support Officer Nenette Bouithy in centres in Mayo, Sligo, Tipperary, Kildare, Kerry and Wicklow.



In Belfast for the launch of Ireland's National Action Plan to put Women Peace & Security at the heart of government policy.

## Results from AkiDwA's work to improve standards for people in Direct Provision

In August, the Government introduced new National Standards for Accommodation Centres for people in Direct Provision. AkiDwA spent two years working with other NGOs on an advisory committee set up by the Department of Justice & Equality in 2014. The new standards will apply to all providers of accommodation to people seeking international protection. The new guidelines were produced with input from AkiDwA and other groups representing migrants, following recommendations made in the McMahon Report on Direct Provision, submitted to Government in 2015.