



Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Annual Report 2016

Celebrating 15 Years of Social Justice

Foreword from our Chairperson

Since 2001 Ireland has experienced both huge prosperity and deep austerity. Members of MRCI's actions and campaign groups have been at the heart of our work for over 15 years and have consistently challenged and campaigned for rights and justice in good times and in bad. The blaming of migrants during the crash was curtailed due to their and our collective efforts across civil society.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my privilege to introduce the Migrant Rights Centres Ireland (MRCI) Annual Report for 2016.

The annual report highlights the unique role of MRCI as a community work organisation working with and for vulnerable migrants to advocate for rights.

2016 was another successful year for MRCI but for me two of the key successes was firstly our model of working - we continued to lead the way in Ireland and internationally in community work practice and in support the participation & leadership of low waged migrant workers. The second key area of success is MRCI's Justice for Undocumented group which grew to over 1,400 members and the solidarity shown between all of MRCI's action groups including DWAG and the Worker Justice Group.

MRCI is steadfast in its approach to ensuring migrants have access to services and supports, can participate fully and equality in society and be active agents of change. MRCI's achievements over the past 15 years have had real and lasting impact on the lives of migrants at risk of poverty, social exclusion, exploitation and discrimination and we have been privileged to meet amazing people throughout this time. We look forward to bringing about change through the lifetime of the plan with more inspirational people.

The rise of racism and right wing politics makes it extremely important to stand in solidarity with people experiencing racism, xenophobia and islamophobia. It is therefore important that we continue to collaborate and build alliances with other groups experiencing social exclusion and oppression and to work in solidarity across a range of issues. MRCI is committed to working together to ensure change happens for all groups in society.

The MRCI board, team, leaders and activists are committed to ensuring our work is based on the needs of the community and that we uphold the values solidarity collective action and empowerment to advance rights for low waged and undocumented migrants in 2016.

We want to thank all our supporters and everyone we worked with us to make a better world in 2016.

Hilda Regaspi
Chairperson

Introduction

2016 was another busy year for MRCI. Across the world we are witnessing unprecedented levels of nationalism, political populism, anti-migrant rhetoric, racism and xenophobia. As a result the lives of vulnerable people hang in the balance.

In the past year, the new US president, rising right-wing leaders in Europe and Brexit campaigners have played on people's most basic fears, blaming migrants for all the ills of society. The resulting backlash against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers has been fast, senseless and violent. This deliberate divisiveness threatens the lives of our most vulnerable and is enormously damaging to our communities and societies. We must tackle these harmful agendas head on – urgently.

The UN Summit on Refugee and Migrants (September 2016) and resulting global compacts to be implemented by 2018, mark a watershed moment in the global governance of migration. The promotion and realisation of migrant rights at the EU and global levels is therefore critical for our work going forward. Ireland has a deep understanding of migration and our communities are multicultural, diverse, welcoming and vibrant makes it necessary to lead the way in building a truly welcoming society that strengthens communities and recognises the valuable contribution migrants' make.

MRCI's Drop in Centre was very busy; in particular responding to the needs of undocumented migrants, with over 36% of casework in this area. Strategic case featured strongly this year. The rights of Au-pairs as workers were solidified through a strong legal focus which helped to shape national attitudes through widespread media attention on these rights.

MRCI was instrumental in the introduction of the A-Typical working scheme: Non-EEA crew in Irish Fishing Fleet to respond to the exploitation of undocumented fishermen – although significant problems remain with its operation. We supported over 70 fishermen in 2016 with information about rights and entitlements and through building a fisherman network to highlight exploitation in this area.

MRCI produced ground-breaking and critical data on the situation of undocumented migrants, highlighting the loss of revenue to the State in Ireland. A conference was held in May to launch the findings and to highlight the moral and economic rationale for regularisation. It was very well attended and received good media coverage. The '1,000 Reasons One Wish' art installation and exhibition was another highlight of the year and was supported by Ireland's largest Trade union SIPTU, the Arts Community and the President of Ireland.

In 2016, MRCI developed its new strategic plan 2017 – 2020. Its three pillars will (1) Advance Rights, (2) Support Innovation and (3) Grow Impact over this next period.

MRCI continues to be committed to promoting a strong, autonomous and vibrant civil society at national, EU and International levels. Solidarity is a cornerstone of our work in 2016 MRCI leaders and activists were part of a range of public actions, rally's, marches and events to address racism, austerity, migrant and refugee rights and housing concerns.

Edel McGinley
Director
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

About MRCI

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) is the leading national community organisation working with migrants and their families in Ireland to promote justice, empowerment and equality.

Our Aim is to advance the rights of all migrant workers and their families. **Our Belief** is that lives can be improved when individuals act collectively. **Our Vision** is for an open and inclusive Ireland where migrant workers and their families participate fully and equally. **Our focus** is on promoting the empowerment and inclusion of migrants as at risk of poverty, social exclusion, exploitation and discrimination. **Our Efforts** are inspired by a community work approach which seeks to advance social justice goals by challenging the root causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion.

MRCI is concerned with the inclusion and active participation of migrant workers employed in less-regulated low/minimum-wage work and at risk of poor and exploitative working conditions. We reach out to and support migrants who have been trafficked for labour exploitation, those who are undocumented or at risk of becoming so, non-economically active and underemployed migrants. MRCI approach combines front-line services – information provision, access to rights and entitlements, strategic case work, with building the participation and leadership of migrants through action and campaign groups. Our community work approach build relationships with migrants coming through our service to support their integration and active participation in projects, activities, advocacy, campaigns and policy change.

In 2016, MRCI ran a number of National action groups to build the participation of migrants to effectively advocate to change in Particular the Domestic workers Actions Group, the Justice for Undocumented and Young Paperless and Powerful groups.

Priorities for 2016 included (1) providing up to date information and advice through our Drop in Service, (2) supporting undocumented migrants including young undocumented people to secure the introduction of a regularisation scheme, (3) ensuring compliance and enforcement of employment rights for au pairs, (4) supporting migrant fishermen to regularise their immigration status, highlight ongoing exploitation in the industry and develop a network of fishermen across Ireland (5) support the participation and leadership of migrants in advocacy and policy change.

MRCI DROP-IN CENTRE 2016

At Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, we provide free and confidential advice & support to migrants and their families. This is what 2016 looked like in our drop-in centre.



1,922 PEOPLE

The number of people who came to Migrant Rights Centre Ireland for advice, information and support in 2016. Some cases take just 30 minutes; others can last years.

124 NATIONALITIES

In 2016, people from most countries in Europe and from nations across Africa, Asia and North & South America came through the doors of our drop-in centre in Dublin.



The **5 nationalities** we saw **most** last year: Filipino, Brazilian, Irish, Mauritian and Chinese.

66% FACE-TO-FACE

People can contact us for help by phone and email, but most prefer to speak to a caseworker in person - sometimes you just need to see a friendly face.



MORE THAN 1 IN 8...

of all those who come to us work in care: caring for children, older people and people with disabilities, as au pairs or home care workers, in private homes, nursing homes and agencies.

34% UNDOCUMENTED

For most undocumented people in Ireland there is still no way for them to become regularised - no line they can join, no fee they can pay, no form they can fill out.



MRCI DROP-IN CENTRE 2016

Over the past 15 years, the drop-in centre has been our first contact with many people who have later become extraordinary campaign leaders.



EXPLOITATION: 1 IN 10

Ten per cent of our cases involve exploitation in employment - up to and including trafficking for forced labour. These are some of the most difficult and lengthy cases we handle.

AVERAGE AGE: 35

Most people we assisted in 2016 were in their 20s and 30s - but the oldest was 71, and the youngest was just a few months of age.

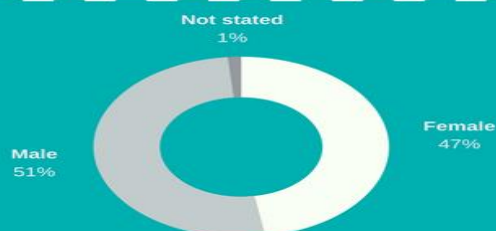


59 FISHERMEN

Their work is skilled, difficult and vital to the Irish economy, but migrant fishermen are often undocumented and regularly exploited. A growing area of work for MRCI.

47% FEMALE

Migrant workers are sometimes seen as exclusively male, but the number of women coming to us increases every year. We also work to be trans-inclusive and open to all.



HOMELESSNESS

1 in 5 of those surveyed are in highly unstable or insecure accommodation: staying with friends, renting without a lease, living in hostels or sleeping rough.

YOUR SUPPORT

It's not just important - it's essential. Our advice, information and support is free to all who need it, and it should stay that way. Go to mrci.ie/donate to support migrant rights.



Most of our cases of trafficking, forced labour and severe workplace exploitation do not come through the drop-in centre and are not represented here - for more on those cases, please go to www.mrci.ie. Thank you to our amazing caseworkers Sancha, Maeve, Alice, Cliona and Iman <3

Migrants Forum

We held four Migrant Forums this year providing information and ensuring a space for the participation of migrants and their families in policy and legislative development.



Pre- Election Migrants Forum part of Migrant Power in Politics - January 2015

MRCI 15 Years Celebration

International Migrants Day December 18th

On International Migrants Day December 18th, MRCI celebrated its fifteenth year fighting for rights equality and justice with and for migrant workers. We celebrated in style with many old and new friends, our leaders and activists which have led the way in fight for rights over this period.



MRCI Justice Gala 2016

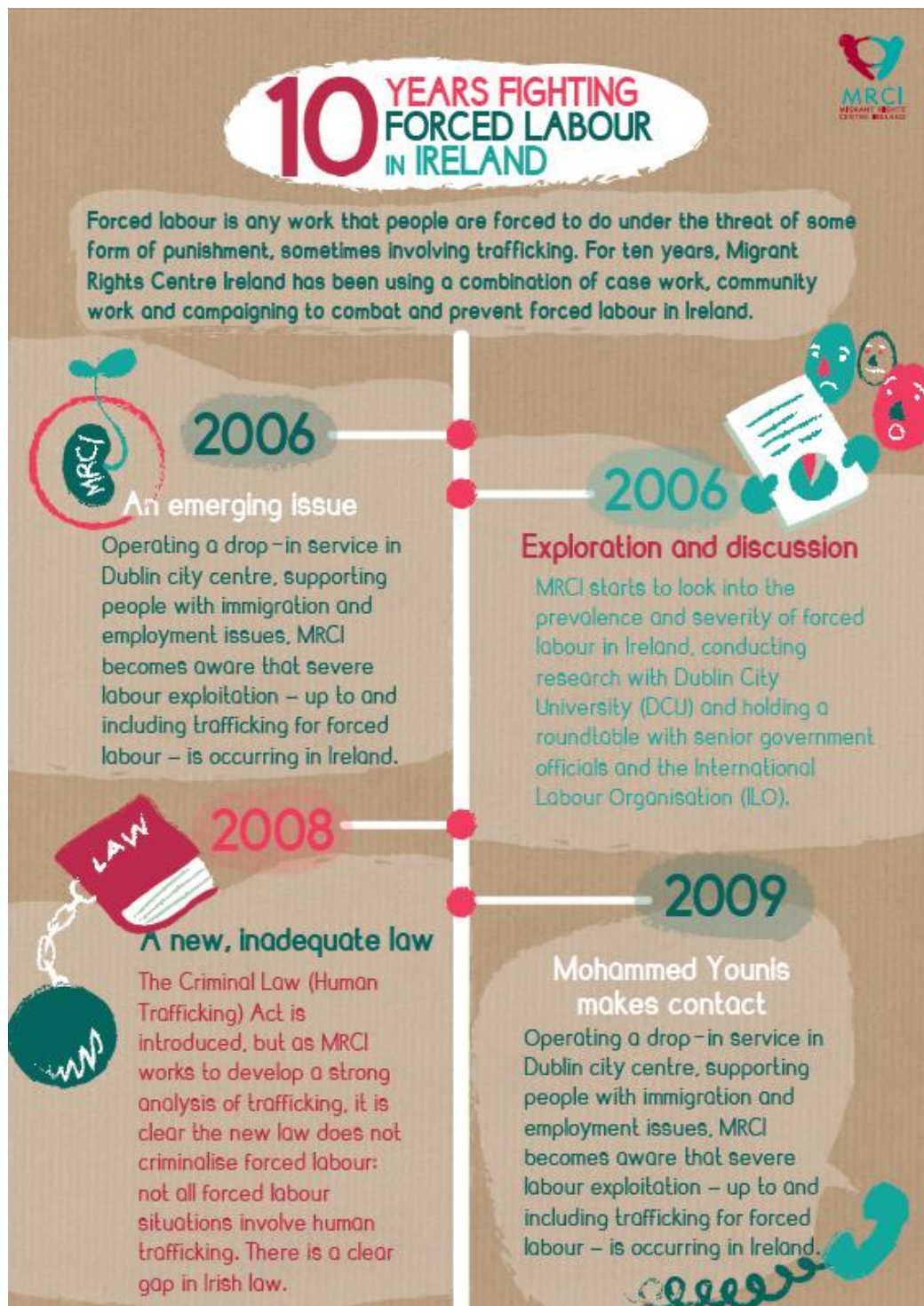
MRCI action and campaign group member celebrated in style at the annual Justice Gala. Sancha Magat was honoured for the work she has been doing in MRCI for over 15 years. Young paperless and Powerful won the Activists Award. We had the best dressed competition which was a really winner with the crowd and an amazing showcase of dancing from around the world. We celebrated 15 years in style.



MRCI's Justice Gala November 2016 celebrating 15 years of MRCI

Forced Labour and Trafficking

On International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, MRCI marked 10 years working on trafficking for forced labour in Ireland. Ten years on, it is clear not enough is being done to eradicate forced labour in Ireland. Its prevalence indicates that it is still profitable, and that the systems created to prevent it are simply not robust enough. To eradicate forced labour, we need an approach that mobilises workers to know and claim their rights, and that targets and changes the behaviour of employers. This, however, requires a new and different outlook. It requires investment in and empowerment of workers, moving from seeing people as just victims of a crime, to seeing them as workers with enforceable rights. The fight continues!



Workplace Rights

Exploitation featured heavily in MRCI's work this year. The exploitation of migrant fishermen continued to be a big area of work in 2016. MRCI was instrumental in the introduction of the A-Typical working scheme: Non-EEA crew in Irish Fishing Fleet to respond to the exploitation of undocumented fishermen – although significant problems remain with its operation. We supported over 50 fishermen in 2016 with information about rights and entitlements and through building a fisherman network to highlight exploitation in this area.



Outreach to migrant Fishermen and to Donegal Integration Forum

Justice for the Undocumented Group (JFU)

2016 was a busy year for JFU, with people from all over Ireland participating in events, activities and the leaders group. This core group met regularly throughout the year to plan campaigns and actions.

MRCI dropped its huge banner - wishing the undocumented in the U.S. a happy St Patrick's Day from the undocumented in Ireland. This was on the St Patricks day parade route and received a huge amount of attention on both sides of the Atlantic and was a key participatory action for members of JFU.



Celebrating our pre St. Patrick's Day street party in support of JFU and undocumented migrants in Ireland and USA

MRCI highlighted the economic and moral rational for the regularisation of undocumented migrants. Support grew across the society and ISME gave an input to MRCI's undocumented seminar, which launched research with 1008 undocumented migrants living in Ireland. This ground-breaking research gave a painted a unique picture of undocumented migrants living in Ireland.



Solidarity is a connerstone of MRCI work. JFU stood with undocumented migrants in America. Justice for the Undocumented sent solidarity in the wake election of Donald Trump as President.



'A Thousand Reasons, One Wish'

JFU members folded 1,000s of paper cranes in 2016. The 'A Thousand Reasons, One Wish' installation was inspired by a Japanese legend which states that anyone who folds a thousand paper cranes is granted one wish. To create the installation, undocumented workers, families and children across Ireland folded hundreds of brightly-coloured origami cranes, all in the hope of being granted their wish - a pathway to papers. This was launched in Liberty hall to highlight the need for regularisation.



President Michael D Higgins, and Sabrina Higgins, call to Liberty Hall Theatre to meet with undocumented migrants living in Ireland and to visit their origami installation.



Jim Fitzpatrick and Robert Ballagh open 'A Thousand Reasons, One Wish' exhibition

The exhibition was highlighted in the media and Alma and Priya shared their powerful stories with the media. More and more undocumented people are stepping up and speaking out, more people are joining Justice for the Undocumented, and more groups are endorsing JFU's campaign.

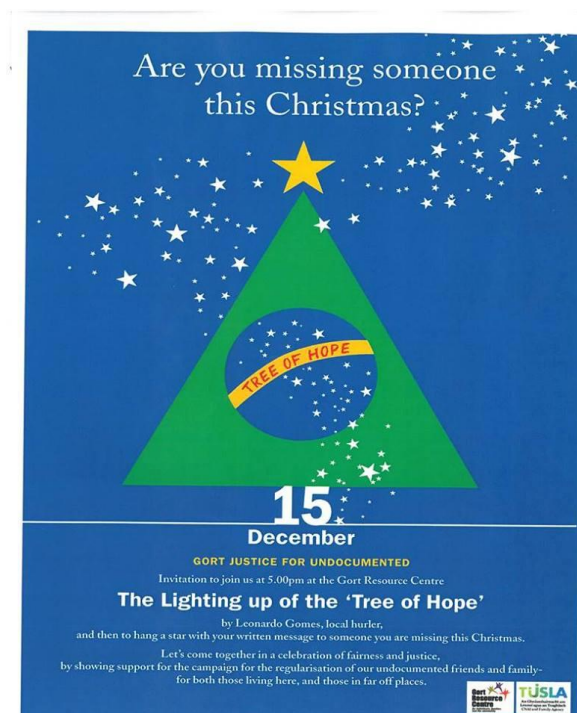


Jayson, Priya with MRCI and the Oireachtas committee on Justice and Equality

MRCI worked hard this year to solidify the support of political leaders and engage with a range of process to bring forward a regularisation scheme. JFU leaders and MRCI presented to the

Oireachtas committee on Justice and Equality and the Oireachtas on Committee on Children and Youth Affairs

JFU leaders joined our lovely friends at Gort Resource Centre are inviting to light their Tree of Hope for someone you're missing. The event highlighted and showed support for the undocumented in Ireland and abroad.



Young Paperless and Powerful (YPP)

The Young Paperless and Powerful project brings together inspiring young people aged between 15 and 23 who are living undocumented in Ireland. All of the young people in the group have grown up and gone to school in Ireland, some have been living here for over ten years. Building on 2015, in 2016 YPP again used creative arts to explore and share their experiences, and engage with politicians and policy makers to call for action and change. The group came together for a truly inspiring spoken word event which highlighting the issues facing undocumented young people. YPP group continue to bravely speak out about their situation and campaign for all young undocumented people in Ireland to have a brighter future. Throughout 2016 YPP leaders participated in conferences, workshops and spoke to the media, civil society organisations and politicians.



YPP Spoken Word Event at Film Base Dublin



YPP win activists of the year Award at MRCI's annual Justice Gala 2016

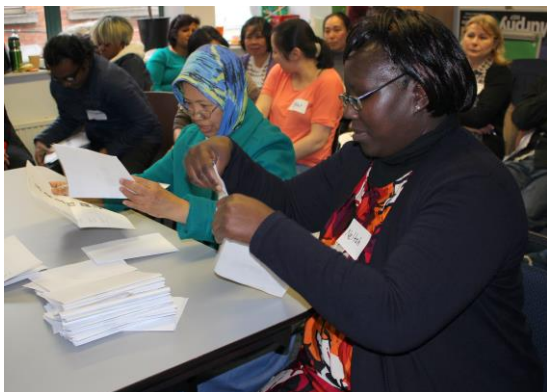
Participation

Throughout 2016 MRCI continued to create the conditions for a broad range of people to participate and take action in our work. Leadership development was supported in a number of ways through the provision of training, participation and being active in campaigns and advocacy. MRCI provided English language classes, communications training, campaign & strategic planning training. Leadership development continues within campaign and actions groups. Justice for the Undocumented grew to over 1,400 members and Domestic Workers Action Group (DWAG) developed new skills in the area of outreach and recruitment, fundraising, group work, research and media.

DWAG, au-pairs, the Worker Justice Group, and JFU met regularly throughout the year and participated in many marches and rallies throughout 2015. These groups organised participation in the min marathon and the 2016 Justice Gala to raise much needed funds for the ongoing work of MRCI.



JFU 2016 summer bar-pe-que



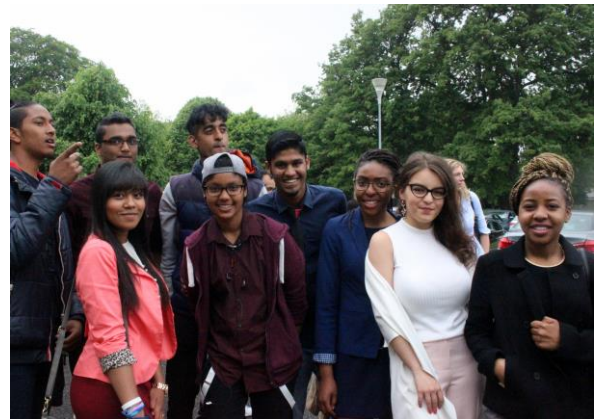
Political Training February 2016



JFU and DWAG at May Day Rally 2016



MRCI activist and leaders getting ready to run for rights in the Annual Mini Marathon



A beautiful day out President Michal D Higgins's International Garden Party

Migrant Power in Politics (MPP)

The MPP project aimed to support and increase migrants' political engagement in the run up to the 2016 General Election and to deepen political candidates understanding of migrant rights issues in Ireland.

Issues migrants feel very strongly about are the urgent need for immigration reform including a regularisation for undocumented migrants, greater protections for vulnerable workers such as au pairs, tackling racism and discrimination – especially in housing, applying for jobs - and protection and progression in the work place. Strengthening the voice and representation of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in Irish politics was a key area which people felt strongly about along with ending the systems of direct provision.



Migrants participating in an event to share their opinions on the upcoming general election and the issues they feel most strongly about.

EU and International Work

MRCI continued to advance rights for migrants and share analysis and best practice at international level.

Undocumented Work/PICUM

MRCI's Director was elected Chair of Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM). Edel and Pablo attended its annual general Assembly and participated in the labour work in group.



Organisational Development and Governance

MRCI developed its three strategic plan 2017 -2020 with the engagement of board, staff and MRCI groups' members, migrants who use MRCI services and in consultation with partners. The plan outlines the vision and beliefs of MRCI and the theory of change which is core to the organisation and gives it a unique place within the labour rights and migrant rights landscape. This plan remains true to and builds on MRCI's theory of change as well as the successes over the last number of years. The plan contains 15 strategic goals under three core themes: the first of which is Advancing Rights. This theme contains strategic actions targeted at improving working conditions in specific vulnerable industries, including fisheries, home care, as well building foundations, through research into issues and innovative solutions, for targeted work programmes in restaurant and agriculture sectors.

MRCI's Board met five times during 2016. The Finance Subgroup met four times and the Staff and Employment Subgroup met three times. All subgroups report directly to the Board. MRCI's Board members in 2016 were Hilda Regaspi (Chairperson), Bobby Gilmore, Pat Raleigh, Anastacia Crickley, Kevin Glackin, Michael O'Sullivan, Bernadette Daly, Rudy Montejo, Bill Abom, Lucy Peprah and Raluca Anucuta. The Finance subgroup members are Pat Raleigh, Michael O'Sullivan, Cathal McAllister and Emma Caparangca. The Employment subgroup members are Bill Abom and Bernadette Daly.

The MRCI Team

In 2016 the MRCI team had a number of team building. These spaces are critical to us to deepen our community work model and develop our collective analysis on relevant issues, while reflecting, planning strategically and collectively in our work.

This work however would not be possible without the MRCI team. Big thanks to Pablo Rojas Coppari, Helen Lowry, Sancha Magat, Aoife Murphy, Edel McGinley, Gráinne O'Toole, Razieh Nikoomanesh, Virginija Petruskaite, Hilary Royston, Dearbhla Ryan and Aoife Smith.

Special thanks are offered to the interns, volunteers and students from NUI Maynooth, who contributed so much to MRCI during 2016 including, Maeve Murphy, Alice Long, Iman Anbar, Cliona Walsh, Eileen Flynn and Kate Hagan.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to the support and dedication of MRCI's Board. Bill Abom, Raluca Anacuta, Anastasia Crickley, Bobby Gilmore, Kevin Glackin Rudy Montejo, Michael O'Sullivan, Lucy Peprah, Hilda Regaspi (Chair) and Pat Raleigh.

A final thanks to the volunteer members of MRCI's Finance sub-group, Emma Caparangca and Cathal McAllister.

MRCI's Funders in 2016

- Atlantic Philanthropies
- Columban Missionary Society
- Foundation Open Society Institute –Public Health Program + Migration Programme
- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government- Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO)
- The Department of Justice and Equality - Dormant Accounts
- The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration in the Department of Justice and Equality- European Integration Fund (EIF)
- The Department of Justice and Equality - Anti Human Trafficking Unit
- Médecin Du Monde France
- Dublin City Council

MRCI confirms its commitment to the principles set out in the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising. MRCI has a feedback and complaints procedure consistent with the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising.