



Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Annual Report 2017

Resilience is Power.

Foreword from our Chairperson

In 2017 we have witnessed the Irish economy growing again and it is clear that Ireland and Europe need workers. However, in Ireland we have the same old, complex and fragmented immigration system put together over decades. This proves to be problematic not only for new comers but for so many people and families who are already here for many years. At European level, we are operating in a space where anti-migrant feeling and racism are on the rise and are fearlessly and blatantly expressed.

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Board of Directors, to introduce the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland 2017 Annual Report.

It is pretty clear that throughout the year MRCI, through their unique combination of community work, casework, campaigning and advocacy followed their commitment to address and act for better workplaces and a fairer and more just society.

More than 2000 individuals were directly supported through the organisations legal advocacy and case work in 2017. Behind each of these numbers there is a person, a story, a family for whom Ireland is 'home'. Many of them have become amazing leaders and activists in their communities and in the MRCI action groups and worked hard to campaign for rights and justice.

One of the highlights of this report for me is the growing strength and visibility of MRCI Action Groups. Secondly, a very powerful picture starts to emerge of more complex and intersectional nature of cases and issues affecting new and existing migrant workers.

It is pretty clear that tackling discrimination and other issues affecting people cannot be done in isolation from other broader forms of isolation and discriminations such as racism and housing to name a few. It is therefore important that we continue to work in solidarity across a range of issues.

We want to thank all MRCI supporters that worked with us for a better and more just society.

Raluca Anucuta
Chairperson

Introduction

2017 was another busy year for MRCI. We finalised our new strategic plan, moved offices, provided advice and support in over 2,000 cases and kept the spotlight on the rights of undocumented migrants and fishers.

We are fortunate that Ireland is one of the most diverse countries in the EU. In April 2017, the CSO released 2016 Census figures as they relate to non-Irish nationals. The total number of non-Irish nationals is 11.6% of the population, while the number of people born outside Ireland is 17.3%.

14.9% of the workforce is non-Irish nationals. Almost half are employed in Food Services, Manufacturing Industries and Human Health and Social Work. Nearly half (46.9%) are classified as non-manual, manual skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled workers, compared with 39.2% of Irish nationals. New CSO data (April 2017), revealed that non-Irish nationals are more likely than Irish nationals to earn the National Minimum Wage or less.

2017 saw Ireland move towards full employment and a return to net inward migration in 2016. This has created a renewed demand for migrant workers. Despite this, Ireland's labour migration framework has remained stagnant.

MRCI's Drop in Centre in particular responded to the needs of undocumented migrants, with over 36% of casework in this area. Strategic casework featured strongly this year with Au-pairs and fishers. We held a number of strategic creative events; "Can You See Me Now" was a particular highlight of the year, as brave undocumented people had portrait photographs exhibited to bring visibility to the campaign.

Housing rights was a key theme in 2017, with MRCI supporting over 40 migrant workers living in the Pines - who were evicted at short notice - to access their rights and to highlight the injustice of their living situation. This trend continued through the year.

We kicked off three important projects. The first to support migrant women's entrepreneurship and to develop a new social enterprise in homecare; the second a new cross border project with MRCI focusing its activities in the border region with workers in precarious sectors and the third to enhance access to compensation for victims of trafficking for forced labour.

MRCI leaders and activists continued to take part in a range of public actions, rally's, marches and events

We are extremely grateful to all supporters and funders in 2017.

Edel McGinley
Director

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 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's 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 builds relationships with migrants coming through our service to support their integration and active participation in projects, activities, advocacy, campaigns and policy change.

Priorities for 2017 include;

- Providing information and support to over 2,000 people through our Drop in Centre,
- Ensuring an excellent range of supports, assistance and advocacy to people who have been found in the situations of trafficking for labour exploitation.
- Supporting migrant fishermen to access their rights
- Building the participation of homecare workers in the regulation of the home care sector
- Initiating the development of an innovative social enterprise in the homecare sector
- Developing campaigning and community leadership skills with migrant workers
- Supporting young people to identify and deliver a social justice campaign as a vehicle for leadership development
- Developing MRCI's cross border project *Crossing Borders Breaking Boundaries* in the border region of Ireland

Drop In Centre 2017

MRCI DROP-IN CENTRE 2017

Over the past 16 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: 37

Most people we assisted in 2017 were in their 30s - but the oldest was 69, and the youngest was just a few months of age.

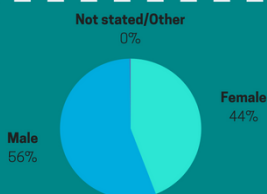


HOMELESSNESS

More than 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.

44% 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.



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, Iman, Marcelo, Imelda, Filipe & Lauren ♥

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MRCI DROP-IN CENTRE 2017

At Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, we provide free and confidential advice & support to migrants and their families. This is what 2017 looked like in our drop-in centre.



2,155 PEOPLE

The number of people who came to Migrant Rights Centre Ireland for advice, information and support in 2017. Some cases take just 30 minutes; others can last years.

127 NATIONALITIES

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe and almost everywhere in between: in 2017, people from all over the world came through the doors of our Dublin drop-in centre.



The **5 nationalities we saw most** last year: Brazilian, Filipino, Indian, Mauritian and Chinese (and the sixth? Irish.)

68% 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.



20% WORK IN CARE

Of those surveyed, 1 in 5 are caring for children, older people and people with disabilities, as au pairs or home care workers, in private homes, nursing homes and agencies.

1 IN 3 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.



Migrant Rights Centre Ireland • www.mrci.ie • info@mrci.ie

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. The themes covered in 2017 were Minimum wage and low pay, rights for Au Pairs in July and in October we held a for a know your rights forum for Carers. This was a space for carers to get information on employment rights, employment permits and immigration.



Migrants Forum on the minimum wage

Migrants Forum – December 18th International Migrants Day

On December 17th, with organisers activists, friends and families, MRCI held its annual party celebrating international Migrants Day with the theme of 'resilience and hope'. We celebrated individual courage and collective effort of people to their build and organise for a more equal and just Ireland.



MRCI Justice Gala 2017

MRCI celebrated in style to raise much needed funds with another fantastic gala night. With over 300 attendees our hardworking supporters had a great night of dancing and fun. There was wonderful entertainment as always provided by long-standing members of the Domestic Workers Action Group and the Bolivian community dancers. DWAG received the lifetime achievement award for their long years of work on the rights of domestic workers.



Dancers performing at the 2017 Justice Gala

Strategic Casework

Strategic casework and legal advocacy is a key element of our work which supports organisational campaigns and policy development. We deal with immigration, workplace exploitation and human trafficking for labour exploitation, all of which require high levels of support and diverse interventions.

Immigration

- We provided support and representation in a number of strategic cases involving 'change of status' applications and representations to the Minister for Justice and Equality under Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended).

Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation

- We saw a significant increase in cases of human trafficking for labour exploitation being referred for assessment and supports.
- Work continued in order to improve Ireland's current model of identification of victims of human trafficking.
- The Justice at Last Project commenced. This project focuses on the need to enhance access to compensation for victims of crime and ensure that European legislation on the right to compensation is implemented at national level.

Workplace Rights

- The enforcement of Mohammed Younis' award of €92,000 remained outstanding however liquidation proceedings were initiated. This will remain an organisational priority.
- A number of awards were granted in favour of au-pairs before the Workplace Relations Bodies, including one for the sum of €2,446 and another for €3,160. Settlements were also reached in a significant number of cases.
- An award of €65,000 was made to a domestic worker. The award was appealed however and legal proceedings are ongoing.
- The enforcement of awards continued to be hugely problematic and will continue to be an organisational priority in 2018.
- We supported a number of renewals under the Atypical Working Scheme and continued to provide information, advice and support to non-EEA crew on fishing vessels with regard to their workplace rights and entitlements.

Housing

- MRCI supported over 40 migrant workers living in "the Pines" in Dublin who were evicted at short notice to access their rights and to seek alternative accommodation. This highlighted a new trend in over-crowding and sub-standard accommodation that migrant workers are being subjected to.

Migrant Fishers Network

In 2017 MRCI continued to provide information, advice and support to fishers on their workplace rights and the Atypical Scheme through the drop-in centre and outreach. Our Migrant Fishers Network Facebook page grew in this year. MRCI continued to work with the International Transport Federation (ITF) to ensure that issues facing fishers were consistently highlighted in the media throughout 2017.

We presented our analysis and concerns over widespread non-compliance in the sector and problems with the Atypical Scheme to the Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in July.

MRCI supported the participation of fishers to feed into the recommendations ground breaking research *Left High and Dry: exploitation of migrant fishers*. This was launched on December 11th and received widespread media attention. <https://www.mrci.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/MRCI-FISHER-REPORT-Dec-2017-2KB.pdf>



MRCI at the launch of Left High and Dry: exploitation of migrant fishers research

Homecare

My Fair home

Work on homecare was developed in 2017 through the establishment of My Fair Home; a growing network of committed and experienced migrant carers. This is going from strength to strength and we are developing new networks across the country and building relationships and contacts through social media. This work is emerging as the next phase of MRCI's commitment and community work on care. The work is being revitalised and there are now 280 people engaged through social media and in meetings.

Throughout 2017 the group held a number of larger members meetings, and a number of working group meetings identifying core corners, future campaign 'asks'. My Fair Home members were heavily involved in organising and participating in this year's mini marathon, May Day march and MRCI's annual fundraiser gala. A simple but powerful online action was organised as part of International Domestic Worker Day 'care selfies' shared on social media highlighting the valuable contribution migrant home carers make. There is significant overlap with JFU as it is increasingly hard to find documented homecare workers.



Participating in the 2017 May Day Rally with a focus on housing

Au pairs

There continues to be reluctance to recognise au-pairs as workers and there is evidence through continued media reporting and with the displacement of workers. This work was limited due to resources. Two key actions that took place on work with au pairs; engagement with the Low Pay Commission on board and Lodgings, recommending no change to this system and MRCI's Migrants Forum held an Au-pair breakfast in July.

Social Enterprise and Migrant Women's Entrepreneurship

MRCI launched this project and has begun the recruitment and selection process for 25 migrant women to take up entrepreneurship training. This is funded under ESF. Learning to date indicates that there are two levels of people emerging- people with ideas and people who have set up business already and are at more advanced level. We are reviewing and trying to meet the needs of a range of participants. Development of the social enterprise model is not due to begin until June 2018.

Justice for the Undocumented Group (JFU)

2017 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.

JFU welcomed the launch of an important immigration report by the Justice Committee which recommended the introduction of a regularisation with cross party support. This was followed by the first ever Dail debate on regularisation well attended by JFU members and significant political engagement work to get politicians on message.

In 2017 JFU members prepared for the introduction of the scheme, met regularly to plan the campaign and outreach to undocumented. On St Patricks Day JFU with the support of YPP organised a vigil in solidarity with undocumented in the United States. Members read a powerful open letter to the undocumented in the US, welcomed the Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin, many allies and some media.

Over the summer JFU launched 'Can you See Me Now' in collaboration with photographer Liam Murphy. A powerful exhibition of undocumented people showing their faces for the first time in Ireland it went on display for a number of days in project arts and was launched

by Senator Frances Black a champion and member of the Justice Committee. A corresponding high quality spread featured in the Sunday Business post with the exhibition. <https://www.dublininquirer.com/2017/08/09/an-exhibit-gives-irelands-undocumented-a-moment-in-the-light/>



Can you see me now Exhibition



JFU members travelling to Gort for the Gort JFU launch

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.

YPP was two years old in May 31st and they celebrated and marked the day with a party and a video which was shared on social media.

A leadership development course started over the summer with a group of young people. Two documented young people from Young Paperless and Powerful went to Paris with PICUM and facilitated a workshop for migrant youth activists from across Europe. This focused on how we build and show power in campaigning for a pathway to papers for undocumented children and young people.

YPP held a solidarity rally on October 20th - International Day of the Child – to support The Dreamers in the USA at the request of Make the Road New York a sister organisation of MRIC. This was a great event organised by young people.



Participation

Throughout 2017 MRCI continued to create the conditions for a broad range of people to participate and take action in our work. The mini marathon, May Day, visiting project visits, fundraising, the annual gala and International Migrants Day Dec 17th have become staple calendar events for people to participate in campaigns supported by MRCI and in general in MRCI's work.

My Fair Home, Justice for the Undocumented and Young Paperless and Powerful (YPP) youth group provided the main opportunities for people to get involved in collective efforts and platform voice and experiences. Leadership development was supported at a number of levels through the provision of English language classes for key activists, campaign and strategic planning with core members of MFH and JFU and representing these issues at events and in strategic meetings with for example political representatives. Members of YPP participated in a summer leadership development course as well as representing YPP and issues facing undocumented young people at national and international level.



Participating in the 2017 Mini-marathon



Participating in the ATD fourth world- October 17th Day against poverty



Training day with Anat Shenker- Osorio



Solidarity rally for the Dreamers in United States

National and International collaboration and support

Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition (IRMC)

MRCI hosts the IRMC. A coalition coordinator was recruited and started work in April. This work is focusing on safe and legal channels for migration.

Key Actions

- Updated and launched IRMC position paper in September
- Secured agreement from the Government to introduce a Community sponsorship program for Ireland
- Commenced the development of the National Framework for this program



Seminar on Global Compact for Safe and Orderly migration

National Homeless and Housing Coalition

MRCI was part of the May Day rally which highlighted the housing and homeless crisis. MRCI spoke on behalf of the Coalition at the event calling for an investment in Public housing.

Amal Muslim Women's

MRCI is supporting the development of the Amal Muslim women's Association. We met with the board to support their strategic development. This is a commitment under funding received through the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund to support their organisational development.

Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland, Anti-Racism Network Ireland, ENAR Ireland, Amal Women's Association and MRCI

This is a partnership developed to support the learning and leadership within migrant communities, through a series of training and workshop. A messaging session was held with America communication expert Anat Shenker-Orsorio in November. This was well attended and produced some excellent resources on communicating in social justice/campaign work. MRCI continued to advance rights for migrants and share analysis and best practice at international level.

Platform for the International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

MRCI's Director is the Chair of Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and participated in regular meetings throughout 2017.

Communications

MRCI's work was covered in a range of media outlets throughout the year, including the Irish Times, Morning Ireland, RTÉ News, Newstalk and most other major national outlets, as well as by regional and local newspapers and radio stations across Ireland. The coverage of JFU in the Sunday Business Post was particularly notable, as was a deeply moving piece about Young, Paperless and Powerful in the Irish Times. As always, throughout 2017 campaign members were willing to step up and talk openly about their lives, their work and their campaigns in the press and in broadcast media. This takes great courage on their part and requires a high level of trust in MRCI as an organisation and in MRCI team members as individuals, and the stories they share with the media are consistently impactful and revelatory.

Our move from Dame Street to North Great George's Street was communicated in detail on a range of platforms, including to our supporter email list which now numbers over 5,000 subscribers. These subscribers received on average two emails per month from MRCI.

On social media, we increased our Facebook following by almost 20% to 13,627. We have also started to use private Facebook groups to communicate directly with members of My Fair Home and Justice for the Undocumented – these are naturally more interactive than a Facebook page and engagement in the groups is increasing by the week. On Twitter our follower count grew to over 7,700 and our tweets had a cumulative reach of almost 1,000,000 impressions. As well as highlighting our own work, we supported and amplified the work of many other groups and organisations, from the Irish Refugee Council and the Children's Rights Alliance to PICUM, Medicins du Monde, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and US organisations working for the rights of undocumented people in America.

Organisational Development and Governance

MRCI launched its three strategic plan 2017 -2020 this year. This strategic plan was made possible by the engagement of board, staff and MRCI groups' members and migrants who use MRCI services.

MRCI's Board met five times during 2017. The Finance Subgroup met four times and the Staff and Employment Subgroup met four times. All subgroups report directly to the Board. MRCI's Board members in 2017 were Raluca Anucuta (Chairperson), Bobby Gilmore, Pat Raleigh, Anastacia Crickley, Kevin Glackin, Michael O'Sullivan, Bernadette Daly, Bill Abom (Vice Chair) and Lucy Peprah. The Finance subgroup members are Michael O'Sullivan, Cathal McAllister and Emma Caparangca. The Employment subgroup members are Bill Abom and Bernadette Daly.

The MRCI Team

In 2017 MRCI team had a number of team building, planning and development session to ensure impact, facilitate better communication, develop our collective analysis on relevant issues, and deepen our community work model.

Big thanks to the MRCI team for all their hard work and dedications in 2017, Pablo Rojas Coppari, Helen Lowry, Sancha Magat, Aoife Murphy, Edel McGinley, Gráinne O'Toole, Razieh Nikoomanesh, Virginija Petrauskaite, Hilary Royston, Dearbhla Ryan, Aoife Smith, Francis Njnuna, Jane O'Connell, Jane Xavier and Iman Anbar.

Special thanks are offered our interns, volunteers and students from NUI Maynooth, who contributed so much to MRCI during 2017 including, Amanda Ellis, Doha Raguragui, Felipe Vendrame, Imelda Phelan, Lauren Hennessy and Marcelo Figueiredo.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to the support and dedication of MRCI's Board. Raluca Anucuta, Anastasia Crickley, Bobby Gilmore, Kevin Glackin, Michael O'Sullivan, Bill Abom, Lucy Peprah 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 2017

- Atlantic Philanthropies
- Columban Missionary Society
- The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government- Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO)
- The Department of Justice and Equality – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
- The Department of Justice and Equality – European Social Fund
- The Department of Justice and Equality - Anti Human Trafficking Unit
- The Department of Justice and Equality - Dormant Accounts
- Special EU Programmes Body- PEACE IV
- Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI)
- Carmelite Fathers
- Médecin Du Monde France
- The Community Foundation of Ireland
- 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.



2017 St Patricks day solidarity rally with the undocumented in the US