













Aights Rights Centre Ireland Annual Report





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Message from the Chair

2021 was an amazing year for Justice for the Undocumented. After II years of tireless campaigning, the Irish Government announced a scheme to regularise long-term undocumented people in Ireland. This achievement is a result of the resilience, determination and daily courage of undocumented people who have fought so long and hard to be regularised.

This scheme will allow thousands of people to live securely in their homes, where children can grow up safely, and people can stand up for their rights at work and finally visit family for the first time in many years. We give special thanks to all our supporters and allies who have stood with us over the years.

Our Drop-in Centre team and new triage system enabled us to provide 4,123 information and casework supports to migrant workers and their families. Queries and cases related to delays with immigration permissions and renewals, upcoming regularisation scheme, housing and homeless accommodation, employment rights and employment permits. We successfully closed ninety percent of our cases.

MRCI secured access to the Covid-19 vaccine for undocumented people retaining the "Firewall" between government departments. Together with other immigrant organisations, we secured several automatic temporary extensions of immigration permissions, benefiting thousands of non-EEA nationals. And we worked with the Citizens Information Board to develop a course on trafficking for labour exploitation to train Citizens Information Centre staff on the signs of trafficking for labour exploitation.

In 2021, MRCI piloted an innovative project to empower groups of agri-food workers to improve living and working conditions. We provided targeted education, training and mentoring support to migrant workers and leaders in seventeen meat processing plants. We supported sixty leaders to develop groups in twelve locations to advocate for better terms and conditions and combat discrimination, impacting approximately 1,100 meat workers.

MRCI continued to support My Fair Home to build their network of carers in private homes across Ireland and to access Covid-19 vaccines. As part of our ongoing commitment to rights for homecare workers, MRCI continued to provide organisational supports to the Great Care Co-op to deliver quality jobs and quality care.

Twenty-eight participants graduated our first QQ1 course in Healthcare Supports, and twenty-five women started our second course in March, and completed it by October, graduating with the full award. Such an amazing achievement.



MRCI engaged with Government departments, TDs and the Oireachtas committee to propose alternatives for labour migration to Ireland. Our recommendation of labour market mobility for all employment permit holders after two years, like Critical Skills Permits, was included as a key recommendation in the cross-party Joint Oireachtas Committee prelegislative report on upcoming employment permit legislation.

In April, MRCI teamed up with Leitrim GAA Hurling and Zak Moradi to say No to Racism on their new jersey for 2021's fixtures. Throughout the year we strengthened our digital engagement and organising model and grew our supporter network by over twenty-five percent. We invested in developing a series of user journeys and upgraded our IT systems. We continued to keep people up to date on changes through regular posts on our website and social media. It was also a busy year with submissions and participating in a range of national and EU networks.

These important achievements would not be possible without the amazing work of the staff, team, board, volunteers, community members, funders, donors, and supporters, and we sincerely thank them all. We want to give special thanks to all who took part in MRCI's second Challenge for Change fundraiser in July to raise much needed funds for the organisation.

We look forward to 2022, to supporting as many people as possible to access the new regularisation scheme, to advance equality and empower workers to organise and respond to whatever new challenges the year brings.

Lucy Peprah Chair

Our Vision, Mission, and Values

From its inception, MRCI's emphasis on community work has been critical in bringing about the empowerment and participation of migrant workers on issues that concern them.

Community work is concerned with addressing the root causes of inequality through collective action for change. Core to our theory of change is supporting migrants in low wage work to organise, engage in and lead on issues that affect their lives. We operate a sophisticated structure that combines a front-line service, building the capacity of migrant workers by using a community work process, and engaging in strategic public awareness, policy, and advocacy.

Our Vision



Our vision is for an open, equal, just and diverse society where migrant workers and their families can move, work and live in dignity.

Our Values

- People closest to the struggle are closest to the solution.
- People acting collectively make change possible.
- People lead when they have the tools to do so.

Our Mission



Grounded in social justice, antiracism and equality, our mission is to empower migrant workers in lowpaid and precarious work to secure and advance their rights through collective action.



Our Impact at a glance



After 11 years campaigning by brave undocumented people, Justice for the Undocumented secured a regularisation scheme that will change the lives of thousands of people in Ireland



On St Patrick's Day, our hashtag #undocIrl was trending on Twitter in Ireland



An undocumented restaurant worker got a settlement of €10,000 for employment breaches



MRCI's free and confidential Drop-in Centre provided 4,123 information and casework supports to migrant workers and their families



Over 800 undocumented people joined the Justice for the Undocumented Campaign in 2021, bringing us to just over 3,000 members



Provided support to 24 people who have experienced severe forms of labour exploitation and suspected trafficking for labour exploitation



Engaged 60 leaders to advocate for better terms and conditions of employment in meat processing, impacting 1,100 workers



Our supporter network grew by over 25%



100 people took part in the 31-Day Challenge for Change raising €16,559

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The Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise Trade and **Employment supported MRCI's** recommendation for people on general employment permits to move employer after two years



900 members and supporters sent 4,000 emails to TDs in every constituency across Ireland calling for a broad and inclusive regularisation scheme



Secured access to the Covid-19 vaccine for undocumented people



Justice for the Undocumented – Victory after II-year campaign

After II years of tireless campaigning for rights and recognition by brave undocumented people - the Irish Government announced on the 3rd of December a scheme to regularise long-term undocumented migrants.

The announcement was met with great joy and relief by thousands of workers and families who will benefit from this life-changing opportunity. This will enable people to live normal lives, stand up for their basic rights and feel safe in the place we all call home.





"This is a massive victory for us in the Justice for the Undocumented Group. This scheme was achieved because a group of undocumented people took a big step to come forward and campaign for rights and recognition. We are so proud today to know that all of our efforts and sacrifices have led to this incredible moment."

BILLY, MEMBER OF JUSTICE FOR THE UNDOCUMENTED



"Justice for the Undocumented has been campaigning for this scheme for 11 years, pushing very hard. We started really small, it was us keeping the campaign going, constantly pushing. Now it will change the lives of thousands of people."

KARUNA, MEMBER OF JUSTICE FOR THE UNDOCUMENTED



"This scheme will allow us to live securely in our homes, no longer in fear that the next knock at the door will be someone to take us away. We can stand up for our rights at work, our children can grow up safely, and we can visit our families for the first time in many years."

TJANASI POTSO, CHAIR OF JUSTICE FOR THE UNDOCUMENTED



Highlights in 2021

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- On St. Patrick's Day, Justice for the • Undocumented (JFU) led a social media campaign, asking members and supporters to tweet the Minister for Justice calling for a broad and inclusive scheme. The #undocIrl hashtag was trending in Ireland.
- MRCI and JFU met the Minister for Justice and key civil servants to discuss the proposed regularisation scheme in advance of a public announcement and make recommendations.
- JFU and MRCI, and over 30 ally organisations, made submissions to the Department of Justice to set our clear collective priorities for the scheme.

- A national email action resulted in 900 people sending over 4,000 emails to local TDs. More than 30 TDs responded positively and committed to contacting Minister James Browne and call for a broad and inclusive scheme.
- Open letter sent to Minister Heather Humphreys signed by 25 allies across trade unions, business, NGOs, and civil society, calling for a broad and inclusive scheme.
- Throughout the year, we carried out important advocacy work with government officials to push for the best scheme possible; we met with civil society organisations to prepare for the scheme and coordinate pro-bono legal support for when the scheme opened.
- JFU members sent Minister McEntee a card and flowers welcoming her back from maternity leave and asking her to introduce a broad and inclusive scheme.



During 2021, MRCI's Drop-in Centre continued to operate via telephone, website, email, video calls and face-to-face appointments.

Highlights in 2021



People supported by the centre were in essential job sectors, including care and domestic work, restaurants and catering, retail, and agriculture



Provided free and confidential information and casework supports on 4,123 cases to migrant workers and their families



Over 50% of cases were related to residency and citizenship. Our caseworkers also supported people with issues relating to social welfare, employment, family reunification, housing, and employment permits



90% of cases were successfully closed



An undocumented restaurant worker got a settlement of €10,000 for employment law breaches



We held 5 Migrant Forums, including 2 information sessions about the incoming regularisation scheme for undocumented people



Assessed, screened, and supported 13 people where Trafficking for Labour Exploitation was suspected, and supported an additional 11 people from previous years.

Tackling Severe Exploitation and Trafficking for Labour Exploitation



MRCI progressed anti-trafficking initiatives in Ireland through participation in both Department of Justice and civil society stakeholder groups. We also continued to provide high quality casework on new and old cases, supporting a range of diverse needs.

Highlights in 2021

- Worked with the Citizens Information Board to develop a course on trafficking for labour exploitation to train Citizens Information Centre staff.
- Engaged with Anti-Human Trafficking Stakeholder Group to reform the National Referral Mechanism (focusing on victim identification) and newly convened subgroup on National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking.
- Mohammed Younis, whose case was instrumental in Forced Labour legislation in 2013, made his previous employer bankrupt, and an application via Insolvency Service of Ireland was made to the Department of Social Protection to recoup over €92,000 owed to him by his former employer.

Empowering Migrant Workers

My Fair Home

My Fair Home is a network of over 500 migrant carers working in private homes. It is the first and only community of migrant home carers in Ireland organising for better working conditions for migrant carers in the private home, challenging low pay, exploitation, and isolation.



Highlights in 2021

- Members of My Fair Home developed their Vision and Mission for the network, informing actions and activities into the future.
- Members core group established to lead actions, the direction of the network and build a more self-organising and self-sustaining model.
- The core group facilitated meetings to the wider network and agreed on a set of actions.
- Undocumented members were supported to access Covid-19 vaccines and informed about the upcoming regularisation scheme.



Worker Empowerment in Agri-food

MRCI continued to work with migrants in the rural agri-food sector with a primary focus on meat processing workers. In late 2020, MRCI highlighted in its report *Working to the Bone* major exploitation and mistreatment of migrants in the sector. The majority of this workforce are migrants often with poor access to information and support needed to change and improve their situations. In addition, there has been an exponential increase in the number of non-EEA migrants coming on employment permits into the sector, which adds additional vulnerability and risks to workers.

Over the past year, MRCI piloted an innovative project to empower groups of workers to improve living and working conditions. The project provides targeted education, training and mentoring support to migrant workers and leaders. This empowerment approach teaches and supports people to develop a collective voice and address concerns, giving people the best chance of making sustainable and lasting changes.

Highlights in 2021

- MRCI conducted pre-development and outreach with workers in 17 meat processing plants across 12 counties.
- We supported 60 leaders to develop groups in 12 locations.
- Several of these groups began to engage directly with their employers.
- This resulted in significant improvements to pay, health and safety, anti-bullying, and discrimination measures, impacting approximately 1,100 meat workers.



Making Employment Permits Fairer

MRCI believes that every person coming to live and work in Ireland should have the same set of basic rights and the opportunity to progress and live in dignity. Unfortunately, this is not the case for people on General Employment Permits, who must wait five years before they have the right to freely change employers, making it extremely difficult to challenge exploitation, bullying and unsafe working conditions.

The Government has been considering a new piece of legislation, which aims to make the employment permits system more responsive and flexible. But increasing the flexibility of the system while leaving

Highlights in 2021

- MRCI engaged with Government departments, TDs and the Oireachtas committee to highlight our concerns and to propose a different way for the permits system.
- Our recommendation was agreed and included as a key recommendation in the cross-party Joint Oireachtas Committee pre-legislative report in relation to upcoming employment permit legislation.

workers vulnerable and with limited rights and options could lead to more exploitation and to people becoming undocumented.

This is why MRCI called for changes to this legislation to enable workers to better protect themselves and to make the system fairer. MRCI's ask is simply to provide people on General Employment Permits the same rights as those on Critical Skills Permits. This would mean General Employment Permit holders would have the right to freely change employers, with full access to the labour market after two years instead of five, which would enable them to challenge exploitation and sub-standard conditions much sooner. In addition, it would mean equal rights to have their immediate family with them in Ireland and the right for their family members to work.



The Great Care Co-op

The Great Care Co-op (GCC) is a social enterprise supported by MRCI and led by migrant women to deliver a new model of local and community-based homecare. MRCI continued to provide organisational development and capacity building support to its board throughout 2021.



Highlights in 2021

- The GCC was successful in securing funding from Rethink Ireland Equality Fund which allowed the organisation to hire three new carers and two new office staff.
- The team at GCC worked towards building skills through developing its learning and training model, going deep on skills and training for carers to take responsibility for growth.
- GCC launched the first self-managed team of carers.
- 70+ hours of care were delivered per week.
- Secured a contract with the HSE, guaranteeing work hours for the carers.

Build-Up Activist Academy

Build-Up Activist Academy began in 2020 and wrapped up in 2021.

Participants on the course were members across campaign and action groups in MRCI: Justice for the Undocumented; My Fair Home; Young, Paperless and Powerful; Great Care Co-op. The course covered a wide variety of topics such as labour migration, the Irish political system, campaigning for change, power and values, community work, and so much more.

QQI Training Course in Healthcare for Migrant Women

MRCI and the Great Care Co-op supported migrant women to achieve a full QQI level 5 award in **Health Care Supports to improve** their access to better work opportunities in the care sector.



Highlights in 2021

- 25 participants of the Build-Up Activist Academy, a leadership course launched in 2020, graduated in 2021.
- Participants met with Senator Eileen Flynn and Senator Ivana Bacik.
- Participants met with our US colleagues at United We Dream on the power of storytelling in community organising.

Highlights in 2021

- 28 participants completed and graduated the first QQ1 course in Healthcare Supports.
- 25 women started a second course in March and completed it by October, graduating with the full award, an amazing achievement.

The Bobby **Gilmore Fellowship**

In 2021, we welcomed two brilliant new fellows, Imelda Morano and Albert Bello, Both Mel and Albert have been active members in Justice for the Undocumented for years, and Mel is also currently the chair of the core group with My Fair Home - the private home carers network.

"We are ready for the new challenges ahead, and excited to work with the leaders and members of our different communities to bring our campaigns to Government and fight for change!"

Albert

Addressing Issues Arising from Covid

- Secured access to the Covid-19 vaccine for undocumented migrants.
- Agreed a process with the Health Service Executive (HSE) for people who are undocumented with no PPSN to access the vaccine.
- Provided clear and concise information to undocumented people accessing the vaccine.



"We are so excited about sharing what we learn with others in our community so that, together, we can fight for better working conditions and for Ireland to be a safer place for undocumented families to live and call home."

Mel

- Sick Pay Legislation, Heads of Bill, drafted, in which MRCI made some interventions in highlighting the requirement for medical certificate.
- Together with the Immigration Information Network, we secured several automatic temporary extensions of immigration permissions, benefiting thousands of non-EEA nationals.

Growing Reach

The 3I-Day Challenge or Change

For the second year running, MRCI team, community and supporters came together to raise €16,559 by running, swimming, cycling, doing yoga, lifting weights and more, every day for the month of July.

With nearly 100 members from Justice for the Undocumented and My Fair Home, our community came together once more to take on this challenge with amazing daily photos and videos showing they are fiercel



































No To Racism

In April, MRCI teamed up with Leitrim GAA Hurling and Zak Moradi to say No to Racism on their new jersey for 2021's fixtures.





Racism is one of the worst things you can encounter. It creates a huge divide between people and without its existence we would have a more peaceful, welcoming, and inclusive society. We want to raise awareness and create a community that sticks together as a whole with no divides. We're all human and we all deserve a sense of belonging regardless of race. We want the same team spirit of sports: all for one and one for all."

Zak Moradi

Growing our Supporters Network

In 2021, we strengthened our supporter engagement and organising model to enable people to advance issues of equality for migrant workers.

We invested in technology and new digital approaches to create opportunities for supporters to engage in campaigns and to increase the financial sustainability of the organisation. We invested in developing a series of user journeys, email to target and upgraded our IT systems and processes. We continued to keep people up to date on changes and developments through our regular and accessible posts on our website and social media.

Rise-Up Project

We continued the Rise-Up (Rights, Innovation, Solutions and Evidence **Based Policy for Undocumented** People), a two-year project funded by the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM). MRCI is the lead partner on this project, which aims to share good practice on advocacy and campaigning to improve advocacy capacity towards regularisation across Europe.



Highlights in 2021

- We grew our supporter network by over 25%.
- Over 800 undocumented people joined our Justice for the Undocumented Induction Series.
- Launched our first MRCI-owned email to target action: 900 people sent 4,000 emails to TDs in every constituency in Ireland.
- We published seven blogs by migrant workers, successfully using digital campaigning to amplify their voices.

Highlights in 2021

- We coordinated and delivered a Virtual Learning Exchange with other 9 organisations across Europe, where we discussed how to communicate better about irregular migration, community development and the involvement of undocumented people, sharing examples of good practice.
- We shared campaign tools we have found effective and supported partners to develop their plans to secure regularisations in their own national contexts.
- Gathered evidence for a policy brief highlighting regularisations in Europe since 2009 and good practice in terms of implementation including four case studies.

Submissions, Consultations and Oireachtas Committee **Presentations**

- Submission on Pensions to the Pensions Commission
- Submission to Joint Committee on Enterprise Trade and Employment on General Scheme of the Employment Permits (Consolidation and Amendment) Bill
- Submission to the Third Cycle of the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review for Ireland
- Submission to Joint Committee on Justice on General Scheme of the Smuggling of Persons Bill 2020
- Submission regarding the Public Consultation on Review of Student Grant Scheme, SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland)
- Submission to the Department of Justice on the proposed Regularisation Scheme for Undocumented People in Ireland
- Submission to the Anti-Racism Committee re National Action Plan Against Racism
- Submission to IHREC re Statement of Strategy 2022 - 2024

Networks

MRCI supports and engages across a range of civil society spaces and participates in a range of structures. MRCI is a member of the Irish Network Against Racism, Community Platform, International Young People at Risk, National Youth Council of Ireland, Children's Rights Alliance, National Women's Council of Ireland, Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed, Community Work Ireland, and the Platform for the International Cooperation of Undocumented Migrants.

- Submission re Ireland's draft State report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Submission via questionnaire re Strategy for the HSA (Health and Safety Authority)
- Participated in consultation to inform the Draft National Standards for Home Support Services launched by HIQA (Health Information and Quality Authority)
- Presented at the Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment on General Scheme of the Employment Permits (Consolidation and Amendment) Bill
- Presented at the Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Mental Health
- Presented to Joint Committee on Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth, on Experiences of Migrant Communities engaging with State Bodies, the Health Care System and other Social Services

Team, Governance and Funders

Organisational Development

MRCI continued to monitor and respond to Covid-19 throughout 2021. We commenced our first year of our new strategic plan 2021 - 2024. MRCI held one in person team away day and Christmas celebration, an annual planning day and guarterly team planning sessions.



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We prioritised the integration of Salesforce with the website to better meet the needs of people contacting our services and to integrate our fundraising better. MRCI moved to a new cloud-based solutions, using HR locker to meet staff needs, and migrated the organisation to Microsoft 365 to better protect our work and data.

Our Team

Our small and mighty team at MRCI have been key to achieving everything we did in 2021. With commitment and passion, our staff works tirelessly for migrant rights, community empowerment and justice and equality.

Huge thanks to the team of MRCI which in 2021 included: Aoife Smith, Bill Abom, Bríd McKeown, Caroline França, Edel McGinley, Helen Lowry, Hilary Bizumuremyi, Hilary Royston, Isabel Toolan, Karina Korotkevica, Linda Keitasha, Mairéad McDevitt, Mirela Stoica, Neil Bruton, Sancha Magat, Shane Andaloc, Rhye Reid, Sylwia Nowakowska, Stanley Nwaneri, Tatjana Dobosa and Tian Yu Loyd.

We said tearful goodbye to the amazing Helen Lowry after 17 years working with MRCI. We also said goodbye to three other amazing women, Bríd McKeown, Linda Keitasha, and Shane Andaloc. We wish them all well in their future careers.

We welcomed Sancha Magat back from her year sabbatical. And we welcomed Tatjana Dobosa, Bill Abom, Hilary Bizumuremyi, and Tian Yu Loyd to the team.

Special thanks to our two amazing Fellows, Imelda Morano and Albert Bello, and to Nana Boafo and Rebecca Adeyemo, our fantastic NUI Maynooth students on placement.

One of our team and board's greatest strength lies in its diversity, with people from sixteen nationalities and varied backgrounds. Amongst the many things that unites us is that we collectively fight for justice and equality.



Our Board

MRCI's Board are a source of support and strength, helping the organisation navigate difficult periods and remain focused on our strategic objectives. Our Board met five times in 2021, including the AGM.

We would like to extend a big thanks to Raluca Anucuta who stepped down as MRCI's chair this year. She was a driving force in the success of MRCI for the past six years, we are delighted that she remains on our board. We welcomed Lucy Peprah as MRCI's new Chair. We also welcomed Dee Lowry with HR and employment rights expertise onto the board and the Employment Sub-group.

Special thanks to our Board of Directors Anastasia Crickley, Angelisa Maria Zepra Andara, Bobby Gilmore, Dee Lowry (elected July 2021), Francis Njúgúna, Lucy Peprah (Chair), Michael O'Sullivan, Pat Raleigh, Raluca Anucuta and William Abom (resigned April 2021).

Compliance

MRCI complies with the Charities Governance Code in Ireland and the Charities Regulator voluntary Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public. MRCI has a dedicated

Finance Sub-group and Audit Committee

The overall purpose of the Finance Subgroup is to, on behalf of the Board, monitor the financial management of the organisation and ensure best practice is maintained. The Finance Subgroup met four times during 2021. A big thanks to our Finance Subgroup, Cathal McAllister, Francis Njúgúna, and Michael O'Sullivan.

Employment Sub-group

The Employment Subgroup aims to, on behalf of the Board, maintain and develop excellent employment practice within MRCI. The Employment Subgroup met five times in 2021. MRCI is committed to responding to the needs of our staff throughout Covid-19 in a dynamic and flexible way. The ESG as a result developed a Dynamic Work Guide and put in place a new Flexible Work Policy to make new remote and hybrid working arrangements available to the team. A big thanks to the Employment Subgroup members Lucy Peprah, Angelisa Maria Zepra Andara, Raluca Anucuta and Dee Lowry.

section on company governance on our website to ensure full transparency in our operations. MRCI is fully compliant with the annual requirements of the Charities **Regulatory Authority and Companies Registration Office**

Our Funders and Donors

A special thanks to all our donors and funders in 2021, without which our work would not be possible:

- Columban Missionary Society
- Rethink Ireland Innovate Together
- Open Society Public Health Program (OSF)
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth of European Social Fund-Gender
- Department of Rural and Community Development -Scheme to Support National Organisations
- Rethink Ireland Equality Fund
- National Integration Fund
- Department of Justice Civil Justice & Equality Service Delivery
- European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM)
- Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE)
- Department of Justice Dormant Accounts
- UN Anti-slavery fund
- The Order of Discalced Carmelites
- Community Foundation for Ireland

Special thanks to all those who gave one off and recurring donations to assist the work of MRCI in 2021, without your support our work would not be possible.



Jayson and Tess Montenegro outside government buildings, December 3rd, 2021, the day of the announcement of the Regularisation Scheme. Jayson is a founder member of Justice for the Undocumented.

MRCI is a non-governmental organisation and a registered charity (CHY17071), governed by a board of directors. Our work is made possible by a number of donors and funders, including the Scheme to Support National Organisations 2019-2022.



An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail Department of Rural and Community Development

