

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

# Summary Strategic Plan

2017  
–2020

**Now more than ever, MRCI's work is essential. The work we do in the next 3 years could shape the face of migration and work in Ireland for generations. The collective action, organisation and innovation in this plan is designed to build stronger communities, better workplaces, and a fairer, more open society for all. *Together, we'll make it happen.***

## A PIVOTAL MOMENT

Across the world we are witnessing unprecedented levels of racism, xenophobia and anti-migrant rhetoric. Right wing politicians in Europe and the US have played on people's most basic fears, blaming migrants for all the ills of society. The backlash against migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers has been swift, violent and senseless. Now, lives hang in the balance, and we must tackle these harmful agendas head on – urgently.

Migration is an integral part of Ireland's past, present and future, and migrants are an integral part of Irish communities, the Irish economy and Irish society as a whole. Our communities are multicultural, diverse, welcoming and vibrant. 17.3% of our population was born abroad, and in 2016 we returned to net inward migration; people from 180 different countries came to Ireland in the year leading up to the last census.

The Irish economy is growing again, but the immigration system is the same complex and flawed structure that was created in an ad hoc and piecemeal manner at the start of the last boom. Europe needs workers, but forces them into irregularity due to a lack of safe, legal migration channels. Brexit looms, and the possibility of a hard border with Northern Ireland has implications for all migrants in Ireland.

As a nation we have the opportunity to be a world leader in the fight for minority ethnic rights and against racism in all its forms. We want an Ireland where children can grow up free of racism and discrimination, free of inequality and injustice, free to be all they can be.

# MRCI

2017  
–2020

# Strategic Goals

**Our goals are grouped under three core areas:**

## **1** **ADVANCING RIGHTS**

**Through organising and building power, we'll take bold strategic action to improve working conditions in key industries where work is precarious, low-paid, undervalued and often dangerous. Each of these campaigns will be driven by a group of workers in that industry.**

- My Fair Home will create the conditions for quality jobs in the homecare sector in partnership with workers, NGOs, service providers and business
- Justice for the Undocumented will continue to campaign for the regularisation of undocumented migrants, including children and young people
- a new Worker Justice Group will lead a wage theft campaign and address workplace exploitation head on
- the Migrant Fishermen's Network will fight for better conditions in the fishing sector
- the Domestic Workers Action Group and the Au Pair Rights Association Ireland will drive regulation and supervision of the au pair industry, to uphold the rights of au pairs
- together, we'll advocate for reform of Ireland's immigration frameworks, while tackling the health and housing needs of migrants in low-paid work
- we'll combat forced labour, trafficking, and severe forms of labour exploitation, identifying and supporting victims through casework and advocacy while working with national and international stakeholders to tackle forced labour in Ireland and across the globe
- we'll connect with workers in agriculture and restaurant work to monitor terms and conditions across these vulnerable sectors

**This plan is part of a long-term vision – working in the next 3 years, but learning from the past 15 years and looking at the next 15. We’ve worked through one boom and bust cycle already, and as the economy grows again we can see the same mistakes happening, the same conditions being created for exploitation and abuse in work and migration. MRCI is here to innovate, to expand, and to act – to prevent the problems we’ve seen in the past, to fight abuses in the present, and to build a more just future.**



## **SUPPORTING INNOVATION**

**We believe innovation based on strong values can solve fundamental problems in the labour market and in our communities. Using new methodologies and for greatest impact, we’re:**

- working creatively with young migrants to increase youth leadership and participation
- developing a new and unique social enterprise run by migrant women working in care
- greenhousing grassroots social change initiatives, sharing our knowledge, experience and skills with new groups with the potential to change the world
- empower migrants to develop their skills and analysis as leaders and spokespeople and to organise for change
- embedding innovation in our national information, advice and support services, so the people who need us most can reach us easily and get help quickly



## **GROWING IMPACT**

**We don’t just challenge the structures around us: we believe in constantly challenging ourselves to do better, increase our effectiveness, and expand our impact for migrant workers in Ireland and further afield. And at this pivotal moment in history, we need to be able to speak directly to ordinary people and help them to take action against racism, xenophobia, exploitation and abuse. To that end, we’re:**

- strengthening our communications infrastructure so we can reach more people more often and more effectively
- building a unique and dynamic supporter network, engaging thousands of people affected by the work of MRCI over the past 15 years
- continuing to showcase our model in Ireland, Europe and internationally, sharing our tools for collective action and solidarity
- working collectively to ensure messages of social justice are part of National and International debate
- doing all this while maintaining the highest standards of governance and transparency across the organisation

**As a responsive and dynamic organisation, MRCI has a proven track record of influencing laws and policies at national and EU levels. Our unique combination of community work, casework, campaigning and advocacy leads to deep and lasting change, and the past 15 years have seen successes at all levels.**

# 15 years of impact

2001  
–2016

**We've changed laws and policy.** Our work has led to the criminalisation of forced labour, the ratification of the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers, the introduction of the vital Bridging Visa, and more. Our campaigns have resulted in life-changing schemes and decisions for thousands of migrants, including third-level students, work permit holders, and undocumented workers. With the support of MRCI, migrant activists and workers have left their mark on the landscape of employment law and policy in Ireland, strengthening rights and protections for domestic workers, mushroom workers, care workers and for all workers.

**We've secured rights and protections for workers on the edge.** Our groundbreaking work with domestic workers has had a wide-ranging impact everywhere from private homes to international policies, as domestic workers came together to fight for their rights. We have ensured undocumented fishermen can regularise their status, and secured the introduction of formal guidelines for domestic workers employed by diplomats. We've gone to the High Court and changed the way victims of trafficking are treated in Ireland, and we've gone all the way to the Supreme Court with Mohammed Younis to fight wage theft and give undocumented workers access to justice.

**We've worked in close partnerships across Ireland and Europe,** connecting with countless other groups working on the frontlines of migration, labour rights, care work and community work. We have partnered with trade unions, universities, community organisations and NGOs to produce innovative research, document emerging labour migration trends, influence policy and become a model of international best practice.

**We've supported migrants across Ireland to organise in their workplaces and their communities** and stand up for justice and equality, collectively. Our community work with undocumented migrants is now intergenerational, with undocumented young people leading the call for regularisation for themselves and their families. MRCI's community work has enabled hundreds to get involved in collective efforts, often for the first time, while deepening the skills and consciousness of politicised and committed activists – all of whom we are privileged to work with.

**We've helped thousands of people to stand up for their rights in the most difficult circumstances,** to leave abusive relationships and exploitative workplaces. We've won over a 1.2 million euro in awards for underpaid workers. Our caseworkers handle 2,000 cases a year, providing support, information and advice on immigration and employment issues to people from all over the world.



Job: DIRTY, DANGEROUS, DIFFICULT  
Pay: EXPLOITATIVE WAGES  
Right to Change Employer: No

WORK PERMIT

WORK PERMIT

Happy  
St. Patrick's Day  
to the  
undocumented  
in the U.S.A.  
from the  
undocumented  
in Ireland



#undociRL  
[www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie)



# How we work

**MRCI is concerned with structural change and addressing the root causes of inequality through collective action, collaborative approaches and community work.**

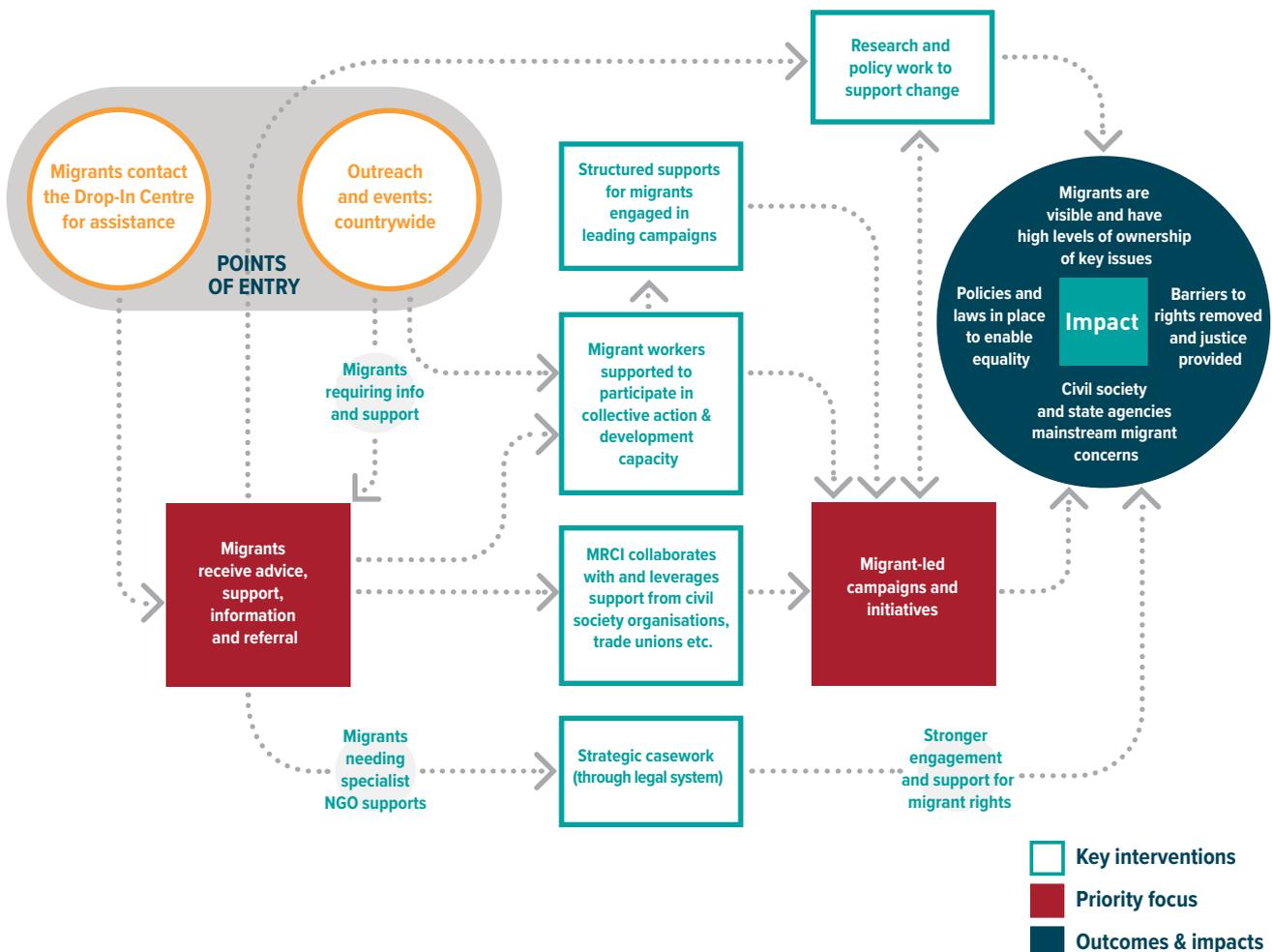
We combine frontline services, policy, advocacy and campaigning with a community work process that builds the critical participation of migrants and seeks to support their leadership on migrant rights issues. All elements of our work are interlinked, informing and strengthening each other.

Through our frontline services and casework, we document trends, generate data, identify opportunities for strategic litigation, and often make first contact with the people who get involved in action groups and campaigns. The data generated informs our work, so we are always armed with facts and figures.

Our community work involves a collective analysis of problems, informing collective actions, addressing root causes and bringing about meaningful change. We see everyone as capable of making change happen – as powerful agents of change, not victims of circumstance.

MRCI’s action groups are born out of the issues affecting migrants and made up of the people directly affected, who are supported through training and skills development to take coordinated action for change. Since 2001, MRCI has established and supported a broad range of action groups, including the Domestic Workers Action Group, the Forced Labour Action Group, Justice for the Undocumented, Young Paperless and Powerful, and Fairness for Fishermen.

This approach, or theory of change, informs all of MRCI’s work and is the key to all of our achievements – past, present and future.



# About MRCI

**Since 2001, MRCI has worked on issues of social justice at the intersection of immigration and employment rights.**

MRCI has a **unique place in the labour and migrant rights movements**, operating in less-regulated sectors. Low pay, discrimination and exploitation are key features of these sectors – areas like as domestic work, restaurants, hotel and catering, cleaning, agriculture and fisheries where workers often feel isolated and powerless, with no clear route to justice. Low-paid work affects workers' health, housing, family life and future plans.

We remain conscious that **our work is part of a broader struggle for a better world for all**, and solidarity – across issues, across borders – is at the heart of everything we do.

**Our vision** is for an open, diverse and inclusive society where migrant workers and their families participate fully and equally

**Our aim** is to advance the rights of all migrant workers and their families in Ireland and globally

**Our belief** is that lives can be improved and change is possible when individuals act collectively

**Our focus** is on promoting the participation, empowerment and inclusion of migrants 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 collectively challenging the root causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion



**Migrant Rights Centre Ireland**  
28 North Great Georges Street,  
Dublin 1

T: 01 889 7570  
E: [info@mrci.ie](mailto:info@mrci.ie)

[www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie)

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 2016-2019 and the following:

