

Cultúr

Strategic Plan

2015-2018



**Celebrating 10 years working with migrants
in Co. Meath to realise their human rights**

Strategic Plan 2015-18

Who we are

Cultúr is a community work organization working across Co. Meath with ethnic minorities including immigrants, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees.

Vision

An equal and intercultural Co. Meath where ethnic minorities and their families are included and respected.

Mission

To promote the empowerment, participation, self determination and rights of ethnic minorities who experience or are at risk of poverty, social exclusion and racism.

Belief

We believe that by working together in solidarity with ethnic minorities and others we can achieve real social change.

We are inspired by our Core Principles and Values

- A commitment to working towards an anti racist and intercultural society
- A focus on an equality framework which is anti racist, anti sexist, with a class analysis and promotes the social inclusion of ethnic minorities
- An emphasis on a community work approach to our work
- A commitment to the empowerment and participation of ethnic minorities
- A capacity and willingness to working in solidarity with others seeking to promote the rights of ethnic minorities through a shared vision and ethos

Theories that inform our work We utilise and embrace feminist and anti racist theories and practices underpinned and intertwined with a class analysis and a clear community work agenda. We are explicit about these approaches in not just what we do but how we do our work.

A Community Work Approach

Community work seeks to achieve social change through addressing the root causes of inequality and injustice. A community work approach is concerned with developing a critical

analysis of society, power within society and the structural nature of inequality and injustice. The manner in which this is achieved is through the participation of ethnic minorities who are affected by policy in the decision making process on issues that affect them in order to formulate or influence policy change. It involves awareness raising, conscientisation, collective action and the mobilisation of migrant voices to affect real social change. A community work approach will underpin the work of Cultúr by actively empowering ethnic minorities to participate in addressing the issues they are concerned with as they affect them.

A Community Work approach includes/promotes:

- Empowerment of ethnic minorities through community work processes
- The development of a migrant analysis on issues impacting on ethnic minorities themselves through building the capacity of ethnic minorities creating an analysis of their situation
- Collective action by ethnic minorities which promotes solidarity and shared identified campaigns and issues
- Ethnic Minorities participation in the planning, development and implementation of strategies impacting on their lives
- Visibility and Representation of ethnic minorities as advocates and leaders at all levels of society

Strategic Priorities and Areas of Work

For the lifetime of this new plan, through consultation with board and staff, a review of our work and the findings and themes emerging from the baseline report on ethnic minorities and the Meath Integration Plan, we have identified the following priority themes:

- **Racism:** promoting an anti racist agenda including the reporting of racism and as a cross cutting theme in all areas of our work
- **Work Place Rights** in key industries namely care work, domestic work and agri-food and building meaningful working strategies with key players including Trade Unions to address these issues through direct work, campaigning and developing innovative models to address work place exploitation

- **Ethnic Minority Women:** Building Leadership among ethnic minority women in the first instance and as a cross cutting issue across all thematic areas and promoting a feminist analysis of the experience of ethnic minority women
- **Using a Human Rights Approach:** this will include working with ethnic minorities as right holders and working with agencies who have roles as duty bearers to support the realization of rights across all thematic areas
- **Direct Provision:** working directly with those in Direct Provision, asylum seekers in the community and refugees
- **Growing our Policy Work Agenda:** across all thematic areas including broader social and economic policy issues that also affect ethnic minorities
- **Representational Work:** Building Leadership among Ethnic Minorities to represent the issues that affect their lives across all areas of our work and representing Cultúr in a wide range of fora

All thematic areas would have three dimensions: community work, human rights framework and policy work

In addition Goal 4 would address the organizational development of Cultúr in two main areas

- Developing a **new fundraising strategy** to secure the future of the organization
- Implementing a **new communication strategy** which would increase the profile of the organization with ethnic minorities, wider public, funders

Strategic Goals

This strategic plan framework will focus on four key areas of work which are:

1. **Community work**
2. **Human Rights**
3. **Policy Work**
4. **Organisational Development**

Goal 1: Community Work

To use a community work approach to engage with and empower ethnic minorities in Co. Meath, building participation and collective action, supporting ethnic minorities as agents for social change on issues identified by ethnic minorities themselves

Goal 2: Human Rights

To use a human rights framework to ensure ethnic minorities are aware of and can exercise their rights as equal members of the community and that duty bearers are made aware of their responsibilities in this regard

Goal 3: Policy Work

To influence and contribute to policy development on issues affecting ethnic minorities, facilitating their equal participation and representation in order to address their needs and interests.

Goal 4: Organisational Development

To continue to develop Cultúr as a valued local community work organisation that has resources, structures and policies to achieve its aims and is accountable to all its stakeholders.

Evaluation and Implementation Framework

An evaluation framework will be developed in the context of this plan facilitating continuous assessment of our impact and progress towards meeting our goals over the lifetime of the strategy. This will include the mapping out of an evaluation framework at board level and monitoring and evaluation processes taking place at regular intervals to benchmark the implementation process for the plan over its lifetime.

Introduction and Background to Cultúr: Reflecting on our past, planning for our future

Cultúr celebrates ten years in existence in 2014 as a grassroots local community work organisation working with ethnic minorities in Co. Meath. This offers us a number of opportunities to:

- Reflect on where we came from, where we are now and where we want to be in the coming three years
- Celebrate our past achievements, mark the many advances we have made in the intervening years and present our current work today.
- The development of this new strategic plan which will present where we are going and how we are going to get there

Policy Context, Anti Racism and Integration Strategies

The basic issues affecting ethnic minorities, unfortunately in some cases remain similar to those in our previous strategic plan. Strides and advances have been made in part due to the work of our organization and many others. While welcoming the government's commitment to a new national integration strategy in 2015, we would suggest that this strategy needs to take cognisance of a number of issues:

- National policy issues relating to ethnic minorities impact locally
- Local integration policies must have recourse to national policy if they are to make any local impact
- Resources need to be ring fenced to implement the strategy
- The legislative framework on immigration needs to be overhauled and updated in a manner that respects and upholds human rights and equality
- A new approach to the asylum process and the ending of direct provision must be part of any integration plan
- An examination of what works internationally and the experience of groups in Ireland working with ethnic minorities is essential to informing any new strategy
- Anti-racism principles and practices and an adherence and commitment to a human rights framework should underpin any strategy

However, a number of concerns remain. The lack of a coherent legislative framework still remains an issue with the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill still not enacted. We welcome the new working group set up to review the asylum process in Ireland and hope it will result in the end of direct provision and a new system that recognizes the rights of asylum seekers and their families to family life and a system that supports their dignity.

When reflecting on the policy context in Co. Meath, the baseline research report on Ethnic Minorities in Co. Meath which was led by migrants, migrants who have received Irish citizenship and are now Irish citizens, Travellers and asylum seekers as peer researchers is an important document.

It is within this context that we are using the term ethnic minorities as an encompassing word to describe the different groups we work with, some of whom have been in Ireland a long period of time, some who are Irish citizens and see it as home.

The findings from that report along with our organizational work have informed this new strategic plan. The Meath Integration Action Plan and its actions over the next five years will also inform our strategic priorities.

Strategic Plan 2014-2016

In 2013 we completed the final year of our first strategic plan. Due to the challenges of funding we have had a gap year with no strategic plan. This has provided an opportunity for reflection on our current work and the challenges that lie ahead. The board and staff are committed to our new strategic plan and we would assert that based on our direct work with ethnic minorities it is reflective of the real needs and issues on the ground. We know Cultúr can make a real impact in the county in the coming years towards realising equality and human rights for ethnic minorities and we look forward to playing our part

Process of developing the new Strategic Plan

At the inception of developing the new strategic plan a discussion took place at board level and an agreed process for the development of the plan was undertaken. This included the following actions:

1. A strategic review of our current areas of work and the key challenges/issues emerging from this which took place over the summer at board level

2. A review of our current vision, mission statement, objectives and organisational work by board
3. A review of the findings in the baseline report on Ethnic Minorities for Co. Meath as the most recent research carried out by Ethnic Minorities themselves on the issues they experience and the Meath Action Plan on Integration. Peer researchers facilitated meetings with one hundred and thirty six (136) ethnic minorities across Co. Meath.
4. Two planning meetings with staff to review the current work context and thematic work areas followed by a joint meeting between the board and staff on the draft plan
5. Drafting and writing of the plan and presentation of same to the board took place in October which was then redrafted following feedback at the November board meeting and staff meeting and the final plan was endorsed and signed off by the board in November 2014

Racism, Integration, Assimilation and Interculturalism: what does it all mean?

In an Irish and European context, discourse around racism, anti racism and rights has been replaced with a focus on '*Integration*'. It is important to note that concepts and how they are interpreted should be interrogated so we understand exactly what we mean by them and who policy makers mean-as very often we are talking about different things.

Terms such as '*Integration*' do not always encompass considerations about racism, rights and recognition of identity and culture. They can be interpreted as those coming to Ireland fitting in with us and what is already there with no expectation on the host country to adapt to a different Ireland with different expectations, identities and experiences. This is often described as an assimilationist approach¹. The previous integration statement by government *Migration Nation* had a narrow focus and was not underpinned by anti racism or a human rights approach and could be described as assimilationist.

While Ireland is and always has been a multi cultural state i.e. there has always been other cultures and ethnic minorities living here, Cultúr works towards an Intercultural Co. Meath.

¹ Assimilation is an adaptation of one ethnic or social group, usually a minority, to another. Assimilation means the submerging of language, traditions, values and behavior or even fundamental vital interests. IOM (2004) International Migration Law Glossary on Migration 2004, (p.7)

Interculturalism can be defined as ‘essentially about the interaction between the majority and minority cultures to foster understanding and respect. It is about ensuring that cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for. It is about inclusion for ethnic minority groups by design and planning not as an add on.’²

In a European context, the current EU framework on Integration developed on the Stockholm Programme proscribes Integration as focused on four key areas or indicators: Employment, Education, Active Citizenship/Participation and Social Inclusion. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) presented what Cultúr believe is a more nuanced and inclusive approach to how integration policies should be framed.

A number of relevant principles in the development of integration policies or more appropriately, equality, integration and anti-racism strategies could include the following elements from the framework below:

- Promotion of positive principles, the values of integration underpinned by equality, active participation and access to rights
- A human rights approach to migration, asylum and Traveller issues
- Compliance with human rights instruments
- Respect for the links between anti-discrimination, integration and social exclusion
- Ensure the participation of the voices of those affected
- Be proactive not reactive
- Enforce existing labour laws
- Ensure anti-discrimination for all
- Ensure policy coherence e.g. housing and the interrelationships
- Be gender ‘sensitive’-feminisation of migration
- Ensure equality in education
- Recognise the global context

(Adapted from ***European Network Against Racism Europe-Working on Integration at a local level***, 14:2011)

² NCCRI www.nccri.ie

It is from this starting point that we will focus on in our strategic plan. The issues identified in the Baseline Report on Ethnic Minorities reflect many of the key challenges not only facing Meath but Ireland. **The most often cited challenges identified by ethnic minorities in the order in which they were most frequently mentioned were:**

1. Dissatisfaction with services
2. Communication and language barriers
3. Racism and discrimination
4. Health related difficulties
5. Cultural boundaries and socio-Cultural relations
6. Housing issues³

In terms of **importance of the issue as described by ethnic minorities** of the above named challenges the order in which they came was:

1. Communication and language barriers (14.4%)
2. Racism and discrimination (9.7%)
3. Housing issues (8.2%)
4. Employment related discrimination (7.7%)
5. Isolation and community exclusion (7.4%)⁴

In total 16 key challenges were identified by 136 ethnic minorities in the facilitated research meetings. These included under the four pillars or themes:

Employment and Financial Engagement

- Recognition of foreign qualifications and experience
- Jobseekers support
- Immigration, fees and work permission
- Employment related discrimination
- Economic recession and money issues

³ Integration Centre (2014) Baseline Study: Participatory Peer Research by Ethnic Minorities living in Co. Meath p66

⁴ Integration Centre (2014) Baseline Study: Participatory Peer Research by Ethnic Minorities living in Co. Meath p78

Education and Training

- Limitations to further education and training
- Education progression in the Traveller community
- Communication and language barriers

Active Citizenship/Participation

- Cultural boundaries and socio-cultural relations
- Isolation and community exclusion
- Youth participation and recreation

Social Inclusion

- Racism and discrimination: as an issue in its own right and as a cross cutting issue in areas such as employment, housing, community exclusion. It included negative stereotyping. This was still the case in spite of many ethnic minorities living in Meath 42% for 5-10 years and 19% living here more than 10 years
- Dissatisfaction with services with issues relating to social welfare, experiences of racism and support services for those living in direct provision most often cited
- Health related difficulties in relation to accessing services in general and access to GP services for those living in direct provision
- Housing issues: including the accommodation of those in direct provision, social housing needs for those on waiting lists and the rental accommodation sector, including experiences of discrimination and racism
- Under representation and negative media⁵

⁵ Integration Centre (2014) Baseline Study: Participatory Peer Research by Ethnic Minorities living in Co. Meath :issues cited p67-78

Appendix 1 Glossary of Terminology used in this document

Assimilation: Assimilation is an adaptation of one ethnic or social group, usually a minority, to another. Assimilation means the submerging of language, traditions, values and behavior or even fundamental vital interests.⁶

Asylum seeker: A person expressing in a manner the wish to seek international protection outside his or her own country⁷

Community Work: A community work approach is concerned with developing a critical analysis of society, power within society and the structural nature of inequality and injustice. It involves awareness raising, conscientisation, collective action and the mobilisation of migrant voices to affect real social change.

Direct Provision: “Direct provision is a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers directly while their claims for refugee status are being processed rather than through full cash payments. Direct provision commenced on 10 April, 2000 from which time asylum seekers have received full board accommodation and personal allowances of €19.10 per adult and €9.60 per child per week.”⁸

Ethnic Minorities: This term is used loosely in this strategy to refer to people who identify themselves as being a member of an ethnic minority group (e.g. Traveller Community or a community with migrant roots). The term is used to refer to those who are seen as different from the ethnic majority population, while also recognising that any such set of attributes is but one facet of a person’s overall personal and social identity.⁹

Ethnicity: “Ethnicity has been defined as shared characteristics such as culture, language, religion, and traditions, which contribute to a person or group’s identity. Ethnicity has been described as residing in: the belief by members of a social group that they are culturally distinctive and different to outsiders; their willingness to find symbolic markers of that difference (food habits, religion, forms of dress, language) and to emphasise their significance; and their willingness to organise relationships with outsiders so that a kind of ‘group boundary’ is preserved and reproduced” (NCCRI 2007)¹⁰

⁶ IOM (2004) International Migration Law Glossary on Migration 2004, (p.7)

⁷ The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration: Terms and Concepts Handbook July 2008 UNESCO page

⁸ Taken from http://www.ria.gov.ie/en/RIA/Pages/Direct_Provision_FAQS

⁹ Taken from The Integration Centre’s Policy Research Resources

¹⁰ NCCRI (2007) ‘Useful Terminology for Service Providers’

Interculturalism: ‘essentially about the interaction between the majority and minority cultures to foster understanding and respect. It is about ensuring that Cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for. It is about inclusion for ethnic minority groups by design and planning not as an add on.’¹¹

Migrant Worker: A migrant worker is a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or who has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a national ¹²

MIN: Meath Intercultural Network is an interagency network, a policy and action based network in Co. Meath and its members include migrants, ethnic led groups, Travellers, asylum seekers, community, voluntary and statutory agencies.

OPMI: The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) was set up in June 2007 following the appointment by the Government of a Minister of State with responsibility for the development of integration policy.

Racism: “Racism is a specific form of discrimination and exclusion faced by minority ethnic groups. It is based on the false belief that some ‘races’ are inherently superior to others because of different skin colour, nationality, ethnic or cultural background. The United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) defines racial discrimination as “Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on ‘race’, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”.¹³

Refugee: A person outside of his or her own country who cannot return to this country because he/she has a well founded fear of persecution or is unable or unwilling to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalised violence or events seriously disturbing public order.¹⁴

¹¹ NCCRI www.nccri.ie

¹² Art. 2(1), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and members of their Families (1990)

¹³ NCCRI Ibid

¹⁴ The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration: Terms and Concepts Handbook July 2008 UNESCO page 17