

AKIDWA STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

*MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER,
BIGGER AND BETTER*



FOREWORD

Chairperson

For over two decades, Akina Dada wa Africa (AkiDwA) and its partners have delivered outstanding training programmes, research reports and community engagement projects, making great strides towards creating an equitable society for migrant women. AkiDwA's distinctive position as one of the leading non-profit organisations in Ireland was further attested when we were named "Charity of The Year" at The Essence Awards 2021. As we stride forward into our third decade, it is an opportune time for us to consolidate our strengths and identify opportunities for sustainable growth and development to steer the organisation to the next level of excellence.

After extensive consultations with various stakeholders of AkiDwA, a new Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 has been formulated. In the context of changing global trends and increasing need for intervention and support, we considered it a priority to ensure migrant women are valued, our voices heard and the work of AkiDwA supported. Our multi-levelled and connected approach, focusing on specific and emerging issues post Covid, will enable the organisation support migrant women at individual, collective and societal levels as we work to ensure policies are implemented that will impact positively on the lives of migrant women.

AkiDwA's staff and volunteers are fully committed to our strategic objectives including developing targeted projects aligned to key sustainable development goals that will enhance migrant women's position in society. We will continue to leverage our wealth of experience and our research expertise to collaborate with other organisations and stakeholders and embed sustainability across the work of AkiDwA to uphold our position as a leading non-profit organisation.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the formulation of this Strategic Plan. I am committed to working with all stakeholders and I call on the continued support of the entire community to make this plan a success so that we can realise an Ireland where every migrant woman has equal opportunities and access to resources.

Uruemu Adejinmi



CEO

This Strategic Plan marks the beginning of the third decade of AkiDwA. In September 2021 AkiDwA marked 20 years of strength, struggles and great achievements, creating a solid platform for migrant women in Ireland achieving tremendous and significant change in policy, integration, and ordinary lives of migrant women. However, despite all the achievements and the resilience of migrant women, in the last two decades, we are still far from achieving equality due to challenges such as systemic racism and discrimination, inaccessibility to employment, services and support which are hindered by bias and lack of cultural competence among services.

COVID-19 presented a major challenge to AkiDwA. Migrant women in Ireland and globally, were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and associated measures to reduce the spread of COVID such as lockdowns. Some of the measures exacerbated the impact of existing inequalities. For example, women living in direct provision, and their families, were at particular risk of domestic violence due to their living conditions and economic inequalities.

Mental health cases among this category spiked. Children also made us realise the digital divide which before was not the case. This is because children had to be home schooled and many of them lacked smartphones, laptops, as well as reliable internet. Migrant children were not spared from poor mental health outcomes. With the development of this plan, AkiDwA will advocate for equality and anti-discrimination in COVID-19 relief and recovery policies, equal access to associated programmes and supports regardless of immigration status, and targeted programmes to address the specific issues experienced by migrant women. We will also ensure migrant women are involved in policy development and plans for after COVID-19 recovery, as well as any plans and strategies to mitigate adverse effects of future pandemics.

As part of implementing this plan AkiDwA will explore all the opportunities to ensure migrant women have equality of access to opportunities, services and their rights are upheld. We will continue to work with other organisations, groups and individuals in building an integrated society, one in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity and the development of this plan. As the chair of Public Appointment Services, ED&I programme board, I hope to influence meaningful change which will impact on the lives of migrant women and other people experiencing discrimination in our society.

As CEO of AkiDwA I am totally dedicated and fully committed to realising the full ambitions of this plan and I look forward to working in collaboration with others in order to achieve better outcomes for all.

Dr Salome Mbugua



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1. INTRODUCTION

ABOUT AKIDWA

Akina Dada wa Africa-AkiDwa (Swahili for sisterhood) is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland. Established in 2001, AkiDwa has worked tirelessly to promote equality and justice for all migrant women living in Ireland, contributing towards a just society where there is equal opportunity and access to resources in all aspects of society.

Over the past two decades, AkiDwa has gained recognition as a leading NGO for highlighting the issues faced by migrant women in Ireland. The organisation has developed the capacity of thousands of migrant women and communities living in Ireland through our network, outreach, psychosocial support, and training programmes. The organisation will build work undertaken in the last two decades with an aim of achieving further and greater outcomes for migrant women.

The killing of George Floyd and death of George Nkecho in 2020 generated conversation, debate and widened discussion on systematic racism - led by AkiDwa, the Community Alliance Against Racism (CAAR) emerged as a result of such debates - quite often the victim is always forgotten. A holistic approach is needed to address racism, which should include legislative measures, development of policies, education, awareness raising and reparations for community and individual victims of racism. AkiDwa has been involved in consultations and discussions with policy makers working on the development of Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism and hate crime legislation and we will continue to follow up on this.

AkiDwa has always advocated for an end to direct provision and our research and reports on women in direct provision are well referenced. In 2021 the organisation secured a seat for one of our members on the newly established programme board to oversee the implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a new International Protection Support Service, by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. AkiDwa will continue to work with policy makers and NGOs and groups in ensuring there is dignity and respect for all and for the abolishment of direct provision.

While research shows migrant women are highly qualified and educated this does not match their employment prospects, migrant women are largely concentrated in the care work and hospitality industry. Migrant women need to be afforded jobs that match their qualifications. In the last two years AkiDWA has been working with PayPal and they have provided mentoring, career coaching session and training to women; 18 out of the 23 women who completed the Door to Work programme in 2021 got employment and the In from The Margins project is supporting the development of skills and training to improve quality production for art, craft and jewellery, mainly with women who have low literacy and a language barrier.

All our projects aim to build the capacity of migrant women and promote their participation in their local communities, in civic and political structures, government consultations and decision-making processes.

In the last 20 years AkiDWA has collaborated and worked in partnership with other organisations including mainstream organisations in delivery of projects and referrals to ensure the organisation achieves its mission and objectives.



FROM 2019 TO 2021 - RESILIENT, RESOURCEFUL, RESPONSIVE

With a new strategic plan in hand in 2019, AkiDwA set about strengthening and consolidating its position as a unique and powerful national network of migrant women. The breakout of COVID-19 threatened to put a halt to much of this work - a shocking reality shared with many organisations.

COVID-19 presented a major challenge to AkiDwA. Migrant women in Ireland and globally, were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and associated measures, which exacerbated existing inequalities. For example, women living in direct provision, and their families, were at particular risk due to their living conditions and economic inequalities. Globally, "essential workers" are disproportionately from migrant communities. Migrant women are also disproportionately represented in care work, including healthcare and domestic work. These roles and associated employment inequalities, put them at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 and greater risk of job losses and exploitation. Migrant women also experienced the "shadow pandemic", that is the increase in gender-based violence (GBV) over this period. AkiDwA is concerned too that some gains made with respect to FGM may have been lost.

Community organisations across the country were severely impacted in what work they could do and how they could do it. While this was an extremely challenging time for everyone in AkiDwA - members, staff, and all stakeholders - it was also a time that tested and revealed the deep resilience of the organisation through the commitment to sisterhood. It was a time that showed the distinct resourcefulness and responsiveness of the organisation, through the migrant women involved on the ground, its staff, and supporters. While AkiDwA continued to implement its strategic plan, much unanticipated and essential work also took place, from life enhancing to potentially lifesaving action. COVID-19 has shown the contribution made by migrant women and how essential they are to the whole of Irish society and beyond. It revealed the importance of community and sisterhood. Migrant women have been under-valued and their organisations under-resourced. This situation can and must now change.



FROM 2022 TO 2025 - MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER, BIGGER AND BETTER

As AkiDwA moves into its third decade, we are determined to positively impact on migrant women's lives on a greater scale.

AkiDwA is committed to playing its part in creating a truly equal society. We seek to share our success beyond Ireland, acting as a role-model and contributing to positive change for migrant women from the local to the international level. As a values-led organisation, we remain committed to amplifying the voice of migrant women, ensuring equality for migrant women, developing communities so migrant women can contribute and be supported, and growing the organisation.

The coming years will include a focus on ensuring migrant women are valued, our voices heard and AkiDwA's work supported. AkiDwA appreciates the support of funders who have, since 2001, seen the potential in and valued the work of the organisation. AkiDwA in turn values the work of staff and so many volunteers who have always gone the extra mile. We recognise, however, that this cannot be sustained indefinitely. Resources and funding now need to grow.

This Strategic Plan sets out the direction for AkiDwA for the next three years and outlines a range of actions to impact positively on the lives of migrant women. It seeks to ensure the organisation remains relevant, is sustainable and can grow into the future so that there is always somewhere for migrant women to go.



2. VISION, MISSION, VALUES, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVE

VISION

- AkiDwA's vision is for a just and equal society, with equal opportunities and access to resources for migrant women.

MISSION

- AkiDwA's mission is to promote equality and justice for Migrant women living in Ireland and address barriers to equal opportunities.

VALUES

- Equality, justice, and participation
- Integrity, honesty, accountability, professionalism, and transparency
- Respect for personal dignity
- Empowerment, solidarity, and partnership
- Openness to learning

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Voice
- Equality
- Capacity building and collaboration
- Service provision and community development
- Organisational development

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Voice: Present the voice of Migrant women, and their families, to the political and administrative system, the media, and the general public
- Equality: Address equality issues critical to long-term inclusion and advancement of migrant women in Irish society, seeking a positive impact on their lives
- Capacity building and collaboration: Support the development of migrant women through building skills, confidence, and spirit of independence
- Service provision and community development: Support service providers to build their capacity to engage with migrant women and address their concerns, through accessible and culturally appropriate services, and support the inclusion of migrant women through community development
- Organisational development: Ensure the organisation runs effectively and efficiently, working towards greater sustainability and growth.

STRATEGIC APPROACH - MULTI-LEVELLED AND CONNECTED

AkiDwA aims to ensure migrant women's voices are heard and reflected in policy, from the local and national to the international level. AkiDwA works to ensure policies are implemented, to impact positively on equality and migrant women's lives. We ground our policy advocacy work in the lived experiences of migrant women, whose participation we seek to promote across all levels of society. We will work to ensure the organisation remains relevant, is sustainable and can grow into the future.

AkiDwA will work at the individual, collective and societal level, and from the local to the international:

- Individual – Support individual migrant women directly to:
 - a. improves their quality of life and
 - b. identifies issues and impact to inform advocacy and future work
- Collective – Support migrant women's development collectively so they, in turn, can support and represent migrant women
- Societal – Work to impact on policy and service provision, for systemic and sustainable change.

FOCUS

AkiDwA will focus on specific and emerging issues, effecting change in key areas through a range of targeted activities. These include:

- Issues – racism, sexism, intersectionality, asylum and DSGBV (domestic, sexual and gender-based violence), including FGM and Trafficking
- Areas – health, employment, and development
- Activities – information provision, training, advocacy, research, and policy.

3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND INDICATIVE ACTIONS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: VOICE

Objective: Present the voice of migrant women, and their families, to the political and administrative system, the media, and the general public.

Indicative actions:

- Leadership and decision-making - Create opportunities for migrant women to be heard in decision-making through developing programmes to enhance migrant women's leadership, advocate for equal representation and position AkiDwA to be included in key policy and consultative fora
- Tell our own, true story - Develop a complete and positive narrative by migrant women, raising awareness of their talents, achievements, and contributions, as well as the issues they experience
- Marginalised voices - Empower and provide a platform for those most marginalised to have a voice and be seen, including women seeking asylum and their families, and women and girls who have been trafficked. Publish positive and challenging stories of women seeking international protection
- Intergenerational links - Develop a targeted programme with migrant women and girls who may be negotiating cultural differences, including in intercultural families, with a view to supporting a strong sense of identity and self-esteem. Build the organisation's work with the young migrant women's group and ensure their visibility and their voices are heard.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: EQUALITY

Objective: Address equality issues critical to long-term inclusion and advancement of migrant women in Irish society, seeking a positive impact on their lives.

Indicative actions:

- Racism and anti-Racism - through the CAAR project and associated initiatives, AkiDwA will advocate for the recognition and elimination of systemic racism by the State and institutions, and for effective responses to racist incidents that address the specific experiences of migrant women and intersectionality. The organisation will advocate for support for the victim - individuals and families
- COVID-19 relief and recovery - advocate for equality and anti-discrimination in COVID-19 relief and recovery policies, equal access to associated programmes and supports regardless of immigration status, and targeted programmes to address the specific issues experienced by migrant women

- Research for impact – impact on policy through research and advocacy on AkiDwa's priority issues and emerging issues (including anti-racism, integration, FGM and other health issues, domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV), the asylum system and migrant families with children in state care)
- FGM and Women's Health – focusing on FGM, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and key emerging issues, build on AkiDwa's research to date and develop targeted programmes with service providers to ensure migrant women have access to culturally appropriate and specialist services (see also service provision and community development below)
- DSGBV (including FGM and Trafficking) – strengthen AkiDwa's holistic approach and action to prevent and address DSGBV including:
 - Advocate nationally and internationally, to contribute to ending FGM globally
 - Develop awareness and provide training for policy makers and service providers
 - Provide information, referral and other supports for women experiencing DSGBV (often "the first port of call")
 - Collaborate with other organisations working on DSGBV (see also service provision and community development)
 - Encourage greater engagement of men in the movement to end male violence against women, including migrant women
 - International protection and accommodation –
 - Continue to support Akidwa member on the programme board established by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the abolishment of direct provision
 - In collaboration with other organisations, launch a campaign on dignity and privacy for women in direct provision.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: CAPACITY BUILDING AND COLLABORATION

Objective: Support the development of migrant women through building skills, confidence, and spirit of independence.

Indicative actions:

- Development programmes – Provide personal and professional development programmes to migrant women to develop skills, confidence, networks, and mentoring
- Employment pathways and partnerships – Develop links and partnerships with industry and employers, corporate bodies, trade unions and education providers to create opportunities and pathways for migrant women

- Collaboration – Support migrant women link in with mainstream organisations and with other women, indigenous and migrant women, including as mentors, role-models, and champions
- Solidarity – Enhance AkiDwA's leadership and visibility at a European level and internationally, including through promoting migrant women led organisations and continued collaboration with for example, European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: SERVICE PROVISION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Objective: Support service providers to engage with Migrant women and address their concerns through accessible and culturally appropriate services and support the inclusion of migrant women through community development.

Indicative actions:

- Service provision – Work with service providers to build their capacity to respond to the needs of migrant women, including through targeted training programmes on equality, anti-racism and cultural competency or specific issues, including domestic violence and FGM
- Community and stakeholder engagement – Develop joint projects with national structures and local community development organisations (e.g., local community development companies) to increase their capacity to include migrant women, create safe spaces for migrant women and their families, and support migrant women led groups and organisations
- Improve referral systems: Review and update referral mechanisms and systems
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) –Global (migrant and Indigenous linkages): Embed sustainability across the work of AkiDwA and develop targeted projects aligned to key SDGs for women. Increase awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world, linking what is happening in Ireland to broader perspectives
- Safety and Security: Advocate for recognition, support and access to appropriate services for migrant women from war torn countries and ensure challenges faced by women victims of gender specific harm living with trauma are supported under Ireland's current National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Objective: Ensure the organisation runs effectively and efficiently, working towards greater sustainability and growth.

Indicative actions:

Strategy and Governance:

- Support effective implementation of the Strategic Plan through Board engagement, SMART strategies and annual implementation plans, a mid-term review (including needs assessment) and evaluation
- Support good governance through the diverse membership, perspectives, and expertise of the Board; Board induction, training, and development opportunities; conducting regular review of governance processes and structures; and active engagement of the Board in risk management, including timely review of the risk register.

Sustainability and scalability:

- Develop a future-proofed sustainability strategy and aligned funding plan
- Document AkiDwA's distinct model of work, to support growing the national network through a regional presence, including establishing at least one new office/hub across Ireland in the next three years
- Ensure the organisation is relevant, impactful, and sustainable into the longer term, including through regular engagement with the network and members; being open to learning; documenting and demonstrating impact; being responsive; and securing resources through funding and income generation.
- Invest in and support our people/team (staff, volunteers, interns, ambassadors, and Board) – promote leadership, mentoring and role-models; publicly recognise migrant women's contribution to the organisation; provide development and training opportunities; enhance AkiDwA's volunteer programmes through a more structured and developmental approach; and source funding to sustain paid roles into the longer term, ensuring continuity for both service users and staff.
- Communications - Develop a communications strategy, aligned to the Strategic Plan to enable the organisation reach more migrant women and relevant stakeholders (internal and external); promote AkiDwA's mission and message; increase members' level of engagement with the organisation; maximise the impact of AkiDwA's social media; and keep abreast of emerging and topical issues.
- Impact - Integrate a research dimension into all areas of work, as appropriate. This supports quality assurance, evidence-based advocacy, effective referrals, follow-up, early warning/risk identification and impact assessment.
- Systems – Secure resources and invest in systems (including information and communication technology (ICT) and training) to improve record-keeping, communication, and other administrative functions of the organisation, for enhanced assurance, efficiency, and effectiveness.

4. OUTCOMES: WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

- Migrant women have someone to talk to and somewhere to go when they need support.
- Members engage actively in the Network, with migrant women supporting migrant women
- Migrant women are included, accurately represented and their needs reflected in policy, media, and service provision
- AkiDwA is a first port of call for migrant women and policy makers alike
- CAAR is a strong platform where migrant women who are affected by racism can share their experiences, articulate actions, and suggest solutions, working with experts, policy makers, allies, and others in combatting racism
- Systemic racism is recognised by Government, and this is reflected in national policy, with policy makers and Irish society at large working to dismantle racism
- A robust, resourced, and effective National Action Plan on FGM is in place
- AkiDwA is well positioned and contributing to ending FGM at an international level
- AkiDwA develops its leadership at a European level and internationally, including through continued collaboration and promoting Migrant women-led organisations
- Asylum seekers are treated with dignity and respect
- AkiDwA engages with and informs the work of the Programme Board to oversee the White Paper to end direct provision
- Direct provision is abolished, and people are in control of their lives
- Women seeking international protection are empowered to speak for themselves and their families
- AkiDwA has secured resources (people and finance) to open at least one new office/hub in the next three years
- AkiDwA is a household name, particularly within the migrant community
- AkiDwA is relevant and sustainable over time.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: STRATEGIC PLAN AND PROCESS

This Strategic Plan sets out the direction for AkiDwA over the next three years, from 2022 to 2025. The strategic planning process commenced late 2021, combining a review of documents and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The process was facilitated by an independent consultant. Given Covid-19 restrictions, meetings with stakeholders were held remotely.

The stakeholder engagement process included:

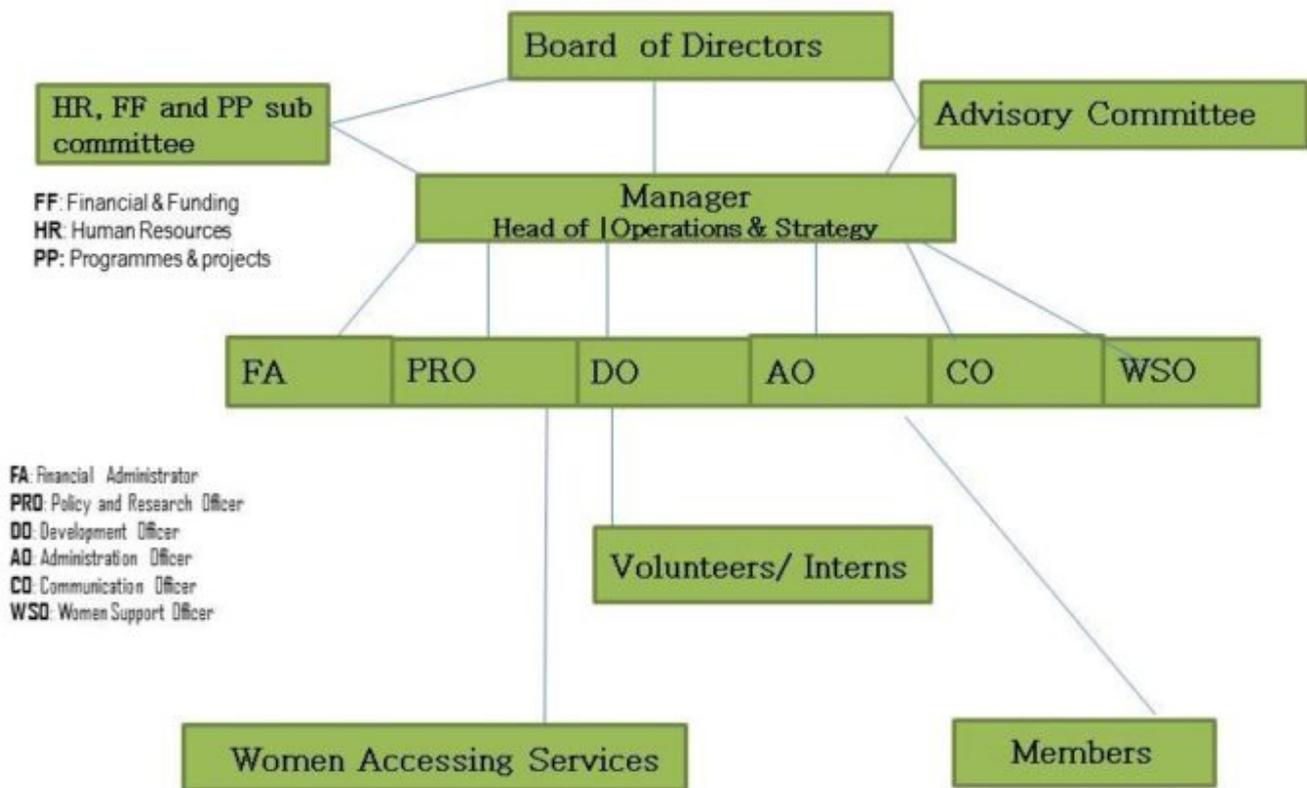
- Members - strategic planning with members, Board members and staff at the AGM
- Board - two strategic planning sessions with the Board
- Team - one strategic planning session with staff and volunteers
- Internal stakeholders - individual meetings and interviews with internal stakeholders including Board, staff, and volunteers
- External stakeholders - a series of semi-structured interviews with external organisations/individuals including national NGO, European NGO, public sector, and funding organisations.

While remote access enabled the process to continue, in previous strategic planning processes the AkiDwA team has travelled around the country to engage with migrant women directly. This personal and direct contact is crucial to the work of AkiDwA and living out the values of the organisation. It is also invaluable for identifying new and emerging issues.

As part of the communications strategy that will be developed under this Strategic Plan, AkiDwA will continue to engage with migrant women directly - both in person and online - so that they are involved in all stages of the implementation, review, and future planning.

APPENDIX II: WHO WE ARE

AkiDwA 2019 Organisational Structures



"We are working together in solidarity, building an integrated society, one in which all people are valued, treated with respect and dignity, and enjoy equal opportunities and protections."

Akina Dada wa Africa

African and Migrant Women's Network

Established in 2001 AkiDwA is a network of African and migrant women living in Ireland. AkiDwA's vision is a just society where there is equal opportunity and equal access to resources in all respects of society: social, cultural, economic, civic and political. Our mission is to promote equality and justice for migrant women living in Ireland. The organisation employs three key strategies to achieve its objectives: networking, policy work, and capacity building. AkiDwA develops African and migrant women's capacity for participation and representation in their communities and in decision making structures through training, consultation, focus groups, information provision, and research.

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