

Migrant Leadership Academy 2020

Evaluation Report

Teresa Buczkowska
7-8-2021

Working for **equality**



Immigrant
Council of
Ireland

Introduction

WHO WE ARE?

The Immigrant Council of Ireland is a human rights organisation and Independent Law Centre. We support and advocate for the rights of immigrants and their families and act as a catalyst for public debate, legal and policy change. Our vision in the Immigrant Council of Ireland is of a society that is fair, respects human rights and diversity and is committed to everyone, including people from a migrant background having the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

[The Migrant Leadership Academy] helped me build confidence and I got lots of support from other participants.

- Gonchighkhand

Migrant Leadership Academy

CONTEXT

Ireland is a very diverse society, 1 in 8 (12%) of us are people of a migrant background. Within our migrant and refugee communities Ireland has a pool of talented and inspiring leaders. They deliver on a great work transforming our society to be a better place for us all, and contributing to the well-being of their local communities. In the last few years we have witnessed an increased growth of migrant and refugee led grassroots movements, community groups, associations and networks. However, many of the leaders work in silos, with no connection to a wider networks or platforms. As a result migrant and refugee leaders have a limited access to resources, support and opportunities for development.

Another important aspect of this topic is the need to address the issue that social justice initiatives and the public discourse on migration, integrating, diversity and anti-racism are still largely led by people who are not directly affected by this issue. The 'Nothing About Us Without Us' slogan first used by disability activists applies to migration issues too. However, engagement of migrants and refugees in the public discourse and campaigning on migrants' and refugees' rights need to be based on fair power dynamics embedded in leadership.

In 2017 we run a successful pilot Migrant Leadership Academy with the financial support of the Community Foundation of Ireland. Amongst the biggest successes of the pilot Migrant Leadership Academy was the Reform Stamp 3 campaign. Members of the Reform Stamp 3 campaign upon completion of the Leadership Academy worked in partnership with the Immigrant Council to implement a vibrant campaign that resulted in a partial changes to the immigration legislation for some Stamp 3 holders. The Reform Stamp 3 campaign was entirely led by women affected by Stamp 3 issues. The engagement of the Immigrant Council in that campaign was to provide expert advice on the legal aspects of Irish visa and immigration regime and sharing access to a national platforms.

Following the successful pilot project, the Immigrant Council of Ireland to the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2019-2022 for a financial support to run three annual Migrant Leadership Academy trainings between 2020-2022.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Migrant Leadership Academy is a six-weeks training programme for migrant and refugee leaders. The overarching aim of this training is to develop the capacity of participants to initiate, design and implement community based justice campaigns. The programme also aims at making migrant and refugee communities stronger and more empowered to speak out on issues affecting them, from isolation and discrimination, to immigration policy reform and more

Prior to the training I found myself operating in instinctual manner however now, I am guided by principles of the course to evaluate which strategies achieve concrete results.

- Tatiana

The primarily objective of the Migrant Leadership Academy is to identify talented migrant and refugee leaders in Ireland and to provide them with a safe space for connection with fellow migrant and refugee leaders. The space serves as a platform for reflection and skills exchange to enhance their leadership potential. The secondary aim was to support migrant and refugee leaders in designing and implementing their own justice campaigns and/or integration initiatives. Lastly, the long term objective was to increase diversity in leadership in the social justice sector by providing the Leadership Academy participants with access to national networks and platforms.

The Migrant Leadership Academy is both a training and a support project. The first segment provides skills training divided into 12 modules. The second segment involves strategy building and one-to-one mentoring of the trainees focusing on their personal development and enhancing their community work. The overarching aim of this programme is to build a well-connected and effective network of migrant and refugee leaders in Ireland.

The training has given me practical tools for improving the impact of my work. It has expanded my network both socially and professionally.

- Megan

The training content was designed in collaboration with [Act Build Change](#), a community training platform focusing on leadership and community organizing. The Migrant Leadership Academy was designed for people who are already leaders within their communities. We wanted to invest in people who have already established networks so that the learnings can be disseminated to a wider group of people. Each candidate was assessed on their application form, and a one-to-one interview with the project coordinator. The selection of successful candidates was based on their motivation, previous community engagement and future projects and initiatives ideas.

Following the completion of the training course each participants was given an opportunity to avail of one-to-one mentoring support by the Immigrant Council to provide assistance in delivery of participants' initiatives as well as to advance their engagement and collaboration with state bodies, and other stakeholders. In addition, participants were invited to join the Transatlantic Migrant Democracy Dialogue (TMDD), a network of Europe and US based network on migrant and refugee leaders. The TMDD organises the Democracy Summit, a 3-day training and peer-learning forum, focusing on democracy, solidarity, anti-racism and leadership. The Migrant Leadership Academy alumni are eligible to apply for the Migrant Leadership Bursary to attend the Democracy Summit.

PARTICIPANTS

Sixty candidates applied for the Leadership Academy and sixteen were selected, all successful applicants were women. The women participants represented a vast diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds, immigration statuses as well as socio-economic statuses.

Region	Number of participants
Africa	6
Asia	4
South America	4
Australia & Oceania	1

North America	1
---------------	---

Tab. 1 Global regions represented by the participants

County	Number of participants
Dublin	8
Galway	3
Offaly	2
Donegal	1
Kildare	1
Laoise	1

Tab 2. Geographical spread of participants

WORKSHOPS CONTENT

The Migrant Leadership training included a mix of lectures, group discussions, exercises and key note speakers. There was twelve sessions that were delivered twice a week.

Session 1: Community Organising and Building Power

Session 2: Story Telling Part 1

Session 3: Story Telling Part 2

Session 4: Speaking to Power: 1-to-1s

Session 5: Speaking to Power: Short Term Influencing

Session 6: Leadership and Dealing with Resistance

Session 7: Political mobilisation

Session 8: Designing Campaigns Part 1 and 2

Session 9: Designing Campaigns Part 2

Session 10: Digital Campaigning

Session 11: Fundraising

When these learnings were brought back to my group they caused us to reassess the path we were taking with our projects, allowing us to redefine our ‘modus operandi’ and ensure that our philosophy was aligned with best practice to achieve our objectives

- Tatiana

TRAINERS

Stephanie Wong – Lead trainer

Stephanie is the director of Act Build Change. Stephanie learnt organising with young people without permanent status. Collectively they secured a London Deputy Mayor for Integration in 2017 (for the first time in history), supporting young people to get access to citizenship. She secured the resettlement of 29 Syrian families and won 4 Living Wage campaigns. Stephanie has supported political candidates to stand and win elections. For three years she taught the practical module in community organising for the MSc Social Development Practice at University College London.

Teresa Buczkowska – Co-trainer and Mentor

Teresa is a Polish migrant woman living in Ireland since 2005. She works as the Integration Manager at the Immigrant Council of Ireland. Teresa is a qualified trainer in diversity management, intercultural competency and anti-racism, and she published both in Ireland and internationally on racism, integration best practices and integration politics. Teresa has been intensively working on facilitation migrant leadership in politics and social justice sector since 2016, and she developed the Immigrant Council’s work portfolio in this area.

Valeria Aquino – Fundraising trainer and Mentor

Valéria is originally from Brazil, and she has over 15 years’ experience working for organisations in the private, public and non-profit sector. Currently, she works for the Integration Officer at the Immigrant Council of Ireland. In addition, she is part of the leadership team, working on fundraising, for the Transatlantic Migrant Democracy Dialogue, a network that brings together migrant leaders in Europe and United States. She is also a Chairwoman at AMBI (Association of Brazilian Families in Ireland) where she is responsible for institutional development and fundraising

Thomas Huddleston – Fundraising Co-trainer

Thomas is MPG’s Research Director. On behalf of MPG, he chairs the EU’s migrant education network (SIRIUS) and the quarterly migration meetings of the EU NGO Platform on EU Asylum and Migration (EPAM). He is also the coordinator of MPG’s Migrant Integration Policy Index

(MIPEX), the European Website on Integration (EWSI), the #VoteBrussels campaign and the Transatlantic Migrant Democracy Dialogue. Thomas obtained his PhD in European Studies at Maastricht University. He is a Senior Fellow of Humanity in Action, and an alumnus of Georgetown University

Kensika Monshengwo – Political Mobilisation trainer

Kensika was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and holds a postgraduate degree from the Sorbonne in Paris. Kensika worked as the Training and Resources Officer and later the Acting Director at the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. He has extensive experience in intercultural training and has worked with government departments, service providers, private sector, media organisations and NGOs in Ireland and abroad. As Integration Officer with the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Kensika was involved in supporting migrants' political participation and monitoring local migrant integration strategies.

Craig Dwyer – Digital Campaigning trainer

Craig Dwyer is the Director of ForaChange, a digital campaigning training platform. Craig works with campaigns and organisations to harness digital and social media as a driver of communication, mobilisation and engagement. He was the Social Media Director for Yes Equality during the Irish marriage equality referendum in 2015 and travelled to Australia in 2017 to work on their marriage equality campaign. Craig is also a part-lecturer at Dublin City University, teaching on the MSc in Public Relations and Strategic Communications.

The facilitators were amazing, very engaging and knowledgeable.

- Luz

IMPACT

The key objectives of the Migrant Leadership Academy was to provide the participants with a safe space to further develop their leadership skills to initiate, design and implement community based justice campaigns and initiatives. In addition of achieving the key objectives, participants also reported beneficial impact in further three areas.

1. Migrant-led campaigns and initiatives

As a direct result of the Migrant Leadership Academy three migrant led justice campaign and integration initiatives emerged. They range from having local and national reach. One of the initiatives was initiated and run by an individual Migrant Leadership Academy participant. Two initiatives were the result of a joint collaboration between a few participants.

Le Cheile Gym

[Le Cheile Gym](#) is a Galway based initiative led by Jannifer Fri, Megan Flynn Dixon and Megan Maria Brown. Le Cheile Gym is a social enterprise which looks to provide free health and wellness to Applicants for International Protection and generates income with full paying membership from Irish residents. Since establishment of the Le Cheile Gym the initiative featured in a two local newspapers, and Jennifer Fri received recognition at the Refugee Entrepreneurship Awards 2021 in the Social Entrepreneurship category.

#WeAreHerToo campaign

[We Are Here Too Campaign](#) is a national campaign led by Ruth Kluvia, Hamda Binte Ajmal, Gonchighkhand Byambaa, Luz Pereira, Elida Sousa, Phathisani Nkomo, Rosey Kunene, and Jenny Kateri. The group led on this campaign under the banner of *Migrant Women na hEireann* to manifest migrant leadership of the campaign and diversity if the campaign members. The campaign advocates for better state support for migrant women victims of domestic violence. Immigrant Council provided it's website as a hosting platform for the campaign. Following the [press release](#) Sorcha Pollack reported on the campaign in the [Irish Times](#). The group also organised a webinar on this topic in December 2020 where the key issues faced by migrant women accessing services for domestic violence were discussed.

Smile Spreader

[Smile Spreader](#) is an online initiative led by Saeda Syeed that provides opportunities for people of different cultural backgrounds to meet and talk about common issues. The platform also organises lectures and panel discussions with activists and social justice leaders.

2. Leadership skills development

In addition to the three new initiatives, participants of the Migrant Leadership Academy reported on the beneficial impact the learnings had on enhancing and further developing their established initiatives. Some participants joined other already existing initiatives in their local area or within their own migrant community, and they applied the learnings to reinvent the existing initiatives to be more responsive to the needs of their community members. There was also a case where a participant set up their own community group to cater to the needs of vulnerable members of their community.

It helped me to understand how to work as ally with other organisations, and how to encourage our volunteers to broaden the reach and impact of their projects within the group.

- Luz

The Migrant Leadership Academy course has developed my awareness of the many challenges presented when it comes to community organising. I realise now that there are many areas in which I must refine my skills to provide effective leadership in my community.

- Tatiana

3. Confidence and connections

The unanimous feedback from the participants was that the biggest benefit to all was an increased level of confidence. Participants reported that following the Migrant Leadership Academy they felt more confident and comfortable in their leadership roles. Participants attributed their increase of confidence to having an access to a dedicated and safe space for connection with other leaders. Having the opportunity to hear other migrant and refugee leaders reflecting on their leadership journeys, sharing stories of success as well as challenges reassured and motivated participants to continue on their personal journey of leadership development.

I think that the opportunity to share a room (even if virtual) and experience with leaders of other organisations it's incredible.

- Luz

It gave me a confidence to move forward, I went ahead and registered my group.

- Ruth

4. Collaboration

Participants of the Migrant Leadership Academy developed very organic patterns of collaboration with each other. Some of the collaboration was established to work on joint campaigns and initiatives. However, many participants provided practical support, advice and motivation to each other outside their joint projects. Participants reported that having an access to this network is a valuable resource for their work. In addition to collaboration within the Irish based network, two participants applied to attend the TMDD's Democracy Summit 2020.

As a result they got connected with Europe based migrant and refugee leaders where they could share their skills and will be able to collaborate on Europe wide initiatives.

I have reached out to half a dozen or so other participants for assistance or input on specific tasks and they have always been wonderful to engage and thought provoking in their input.

- Megan

5. Employment

Many participants reported that partaking in the Migrant Leadership Academy positively impacted on their employment opportunities due to enhanced confidence, new skills and association with national network of social justice activists. Seven participants reported that it had a direct impact on them securing jobs or internships offers.