

Migrant Women Community Project on Domestic and Sexual Violence

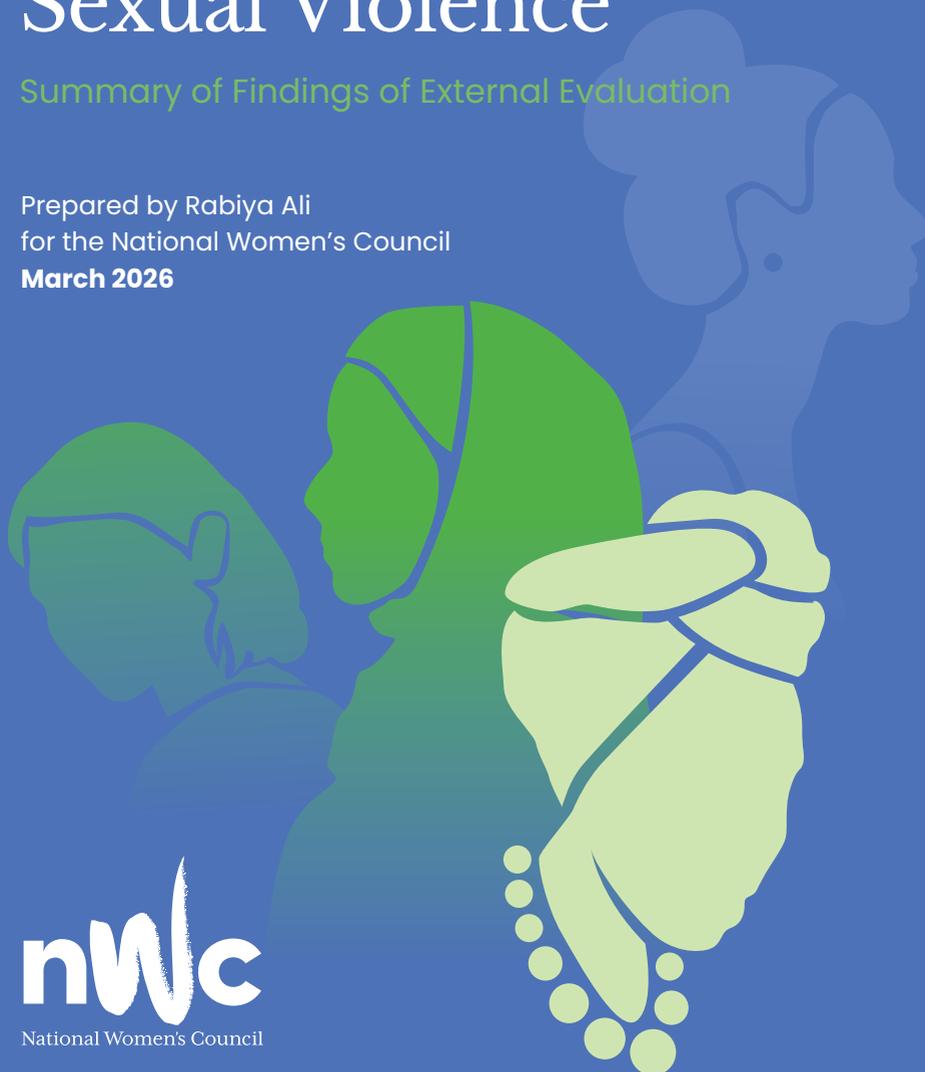
Summary of Findings of External Evaluation

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for the National Women's Council

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National Women's Council



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the members of the National Women's Council (NWC) who gave their time generously to share their expertise in the advisory group meetings and migrant women community sessions. This includes AMAL Women Ireland, AkiDwA, Cairde, Network Ethnic Minority Domestic Abuse (NEMDA), Aoibhneas, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC), Latina Women Against Violence, as well as the Dublin North Inner City Local Community Safety Partnership.

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Thanks to Rabiya Ali for delivering this report. Particular thanks to Ivanna Youtchak, Senior Policy Coordinator (Violence Against Women) at NWC, for leading and overseeing the project and completion of this report, while also acknowledging the contributions of Doireann Crosson, NWC (Acting) Head of Policy.

Context

Data collected by the Central Statistics Office shows how the demographics of Dublin's North Inner City have changed in recent years. The 2011 census indicated that 53% of people living in the area described themselves as white Irish at that time. Just over a decade later, the 2022 census data reveals that this number has shrunk to 36%. This growth in the migrant population has brought with it a vibrance and vitality to the area, when making North Inner-City Dublin their home.

People come from a variety of countries with a multiplicity of culturally diverse attitudes to issues of Domestic, Sexual, and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV). Barriers such as language, fears in relation to migration status, etc., make migrants who need supports less likely to access information and services available to them, leaving them at risk. The lack of information available to migrants is a key gap in the implementation of government policy, especially culturally appropriate and sensitive information about services, support and rights for migrant victims of DSGBV. The existence of these barriers identifies them as a target group in need of tailored measures to protect them from DSGBV and mitigate its effects in a culturally appropriate manner.

Migrant women are not a homogeneous group. This means that access to appropriate supports must be tailored to the diverse needs, experiences, and circumstances of different communities, so that they are empowered to make informed decisions about their lives. Current DSGBV strategies and action plans often fail to integrate culturally appropriate and effective measures to prevent and respond to violence across intersecting identities. This project focused on developing a model designed to address these gaps and strengthen Ireland's response to domestic and sexual violence for migrant women.

Purpose and approach

This pilot project in North Inner Dublin focused on bridging gaps in information and services for migrant women, building on the work currently undertaken by NGOs, to ensure that migrant women who experience DSGBV have adequate accessible information, as well as quality specialist services. The information was delivered in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way, assuring those in attendance that they and their children have the right to be safe; and if they are not, that there is help available for them.

This project builds on NWC's membership, rooting this project with long-term community and national partners based on their knowledge and expertise. Many members work specifically with migrant women, while many others provide frontline DSGBV services (including to migrants).

NWC members who partnered on this project included:

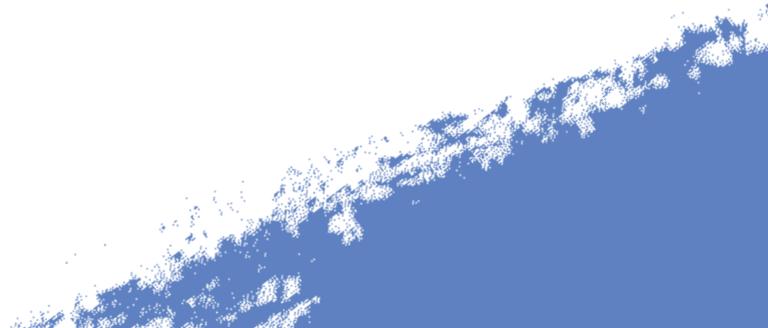
- **Aoibhneas**, a Dublin-based organisation providing inclusive services on domestic violence
- **Dublin Rape Crisis Centre**, providing inclusive services on sexual violence
- **AkiDWA**, working with all migrant women in Ireland
- **Cairde**, working with ethnic minorities, especially Roma women
- **AMAL**, providing services for Muslim women in Dublin and Waterford, including domestic violence
- **Latina women Against Violence** is a self-organised community group run by and for Latin American migrant women who fight against domestic violence
- **Network of Ethnic Minority Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence** Advocates in Ireland.

Methodology

To develop this evaluation report, five consultation meetings were held, which were in the form of semi-structured interviews, conducted by the external independent evaluator. Each interview followed a set template. These comprised discussions with specialist DSGBV service leaders, and migrant led organisations.

Findings

The Migrant Women's Community project included NWC members that support migrant communities and DSGBV specialist services. The member organisations' contributions (through the project's advisory committee and the delivery of the Migrant Women's Community sessions) were essential for the success of the project. They ensured proper representation and cultural diversity and sensitivity when designing training programs for migrant women, by tailoring them to better meet the specific needs. They also ensured a broader spectrum of languages and flexible delivery methods, and fostered trust within the community by encouraging migrant women to engage with services. The project also enhanced the support provided to service users and allowed to reach a broader audience outside their usual focus, by connecting with new women, services and networks.



The relationship between these groups was crucial for building trust and effectively targeting the right people. The project identified the complexities and inconsistencies encountered by migrants and refugees when seeking help for DSGBV issues. Diverse groups of migrant women required varying levels of specialised supports. For example, economic migrants from Latin America have different needs compared to the unique challenges faced by survivors of Female Genital Mutilation or international protection status concerns.

Through these sessions, staff from partner organisations were also trained on issues relating to domestic abuse. For example, Roma peer-support workers gained substantial knowledge of the supports available and how to support a woman who needed referrals to appropriate services.

DSGBV services enhanced their outreach service to underrepresented communities not typically accessing their services and engaged with sectoral colleagues and leveraged connections to improve community awareness of available supports. Furthermore, the enhanced visibility of services ensured individuals knew their options.



Design of community migrant session

The Migrant Women Community sessions' agenda centred on two key parts. Community-based service providers delivered a pre-prepared presentation in English, Arabic and Spanish about how Irish law protects migrant women victim-survivors of DSGBV and locally available services; followed by input from the DSGBV service providers to answer questions raised by the community groups, and on 1 to 1 basis. A group-based activity, 'The Cards Exercise' was run for reflection ('situations' and 'solutions') on how to use the available services according to different needs and how to support people.

A leaflet was produced in English (also available in Romanian, Somali, Arabic, Urdu and Spanish) sharing information on support services relevant to migrant women victim-survivors of DSGBV for housing, employment, health, and domestic violence for participants to bring away with them.

The presentation, leaflet, and exercise were designed to explore various situations and potential solutions that people might face, particularly from the perspective of migrant women. Partner organisations contributed to the development of the information materials.

Location

There was a focus on how to best support and involve migrant communities to address their specific needs. The sessions took place between October and November 2025. Overall, location, timing, and ways of communication had to be adjusted to each community's needs and cultural sensitivities.

The NWC offices were chosen for the in-person sessions due to their central location and good transport links. The AMAL Ireland session had to be changed to a mosque, to adjust to this group's needs. The Cairde session took place online using Zoom to support Cairde's overarching goal to improve Roma women's technology skills.

Delivery of sessions

NWC took the primary responsibility for recruiting participants and developed a poster to promote the sessions in English, Romanian, Somali, Arabic, Urdu and Spanish.

One of the reasons that advertising had to be carefully managed by NWC was safety concerns, especially following bomb threats by increasingly vocal far-right groups in relation to migrant people and the perceived threats to women's safety. Initial events had restricted advertising to ensure safety, and later, NWC restructured their approach to include wider advertising but without disclosing the venue until after registration. There was a learning curve regarding balancing safety with the number of participants.

Each community group presented the slides that NWC had created about mainstream services, translated into the relevant language. The community groups themselves expressed little awareness of those services and welcomed the opportunity to network with them and establish referral pathways, which showed the relevance of the project to connect the DSGBV and migrant services.



Leaflets and materials at the sessions

One key feature of the project was the production of a specifically tailored leaflet to support migrant women from different communities to seek support on DSGBV in their own time and support others, across multiple needs. This resource was translated into Somali, Urdu, Arabic, Spanish and Romanian. Advisory members contributed with their own materials, which were compiled into one resource and tested with them for relevance and cultural appropriateness.

This leaflet brings together, in a single document, the key supports and information available to migrant women victim-survivors of DSGBV. It provides a comprehensive overview of services and information, and it includes forms of violence that are particularly relevant to some communities, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Additionally, other member resources were mapped and included (such as international protection applicants' specific needs).



Outcomes

The project achieved valuable outcomes, such as identifying needs, raising awareness about domestic and sexual violence, and teaching effective communication strategies for the communities involved. The sessions facilitated constructive interactions between services and allowed attendees to provide feedback. Presentations sparked many questions, particularly about anonymity and the availability of supports for migrant women, prompting discussions around racism. Participants expressed a desire for anonymous support options due to their concerns.

The overall turnout was approximately fifty people, including women facing additional barriers and discrimination, as well as women with no previous contact to services, which were the primary target of the project. Some attendees were women living in IPAS accommodation, who had the opportunity to connect with other Muslim women, and received one-to-one advice on their situation regarding violence and family reunification.

Cairde's online session focused on peer support workers, as they were identified as gatekeepers. The selected approach was based on the fear of bringing sensitive issues to public attention due to existing stereotypes and discrimination. As gatekeepers, their knowledge of external services could be a way to help Roma women who expressed fear and concerns regarding confidentiality.

DRCC recognised the importance of supporting migrant women while building relationships with representatives from other organisations. They believed that strengthening these connections improves collaboration and ensures that clients receive the resources and referrals they need, preventing them from falling through the gaps.

Key Learnings

- **There is a demand for this work and engagement.**
There is an appetite for culturally appropriate information and supports on a one-to-one basis. It was also noted that participants could have benefited from more time to engage with services that offer supportive network, particular on a one-to-one basis.
- **Trust is an important factor for success.**
Participation was highest when partners promoted attendance through their existing community networks and relationships.
- **Practical barriers can affect participation and attendance.**
For example, childcare, transport, work, and prayer times.
- **Flexible, safe and blended delivery is important.**
Flexibility on the approach and location, the timings, safety considerations, whether the session was online or in-person, all impacted on the success of the engagement, and to effectively tailor the sessions to each community's needs. Leaflets with the relevant supports in different languages contributed greatly to the purpose.



Key Recommendations

NWC was well-suited to host this project because of its diverse membership of nearly 200 groups, which helped in quickly identifying partner organisations and forming the advisory group. Collaborating with regional Migrant Victim Support Offices would be a great partnership, as they aim to connect migrants with crucial services nationwide. The Migrant Women Community model has the potential to transition into a clinic model by engaging local DSGBV organisations during the regional sessions.

- **Explore the development of a pathway from community to clinic model**

Use the regional sessions to engage local DSGBV organisations and explore opportunities to transition from a community-based model to a clinic-based service where appropriate, to engage migrant-led and DSGBV services directly with migrant women locally.

- **Resource the project with dedicated staffing**

Allocate funding for a dedicated part-time staff member within NWC to coordinate, deliver and sustain this initiative.

- **Strengthen recruitment through community partners**

Community partner organisations should be encouraged to take the lead on promoting sessions directly to their members and networks to improve reach to priority groups. Explore recruiting additional organisations working with migrant and IPAs women.

- **Target participation carefully and mitigate disruption risks**

Community partners should identify and invite participants through trusted networks to ensure sessions reach intended audiences and reduce the likelihood of disruption or hostile attendance. Venue risk mitigation should be included in the risk assessment.

- **Improve access for women in IPAS accommodation**
Build relationships with IPAS centre managers to host sessions on site where possible. If this is not feasible, organise sessions in nearby community venues and provide transport to support attendance.
- **Create safe, culturally appropriate group settings**
Where possible, sessions should be organised with and for women who speak the same language, share or have a similar cultural or minority ethnic background, which can support trust and participation, particularly on sensitive topics like DSGBV. Ensuring the target community is meaningfully included in the design and delivery is important for success.
- **Use a blended delivery model**
Prioritise in-person sessions while also offering online options to include participants who cannot travel and to extend reach nationally.
- **Schedule sessions to suit participants' needs**
Plan session times in consultation with community partners so that timing reflects the realities of different groups (e.g. caring responsibilities, work patterns, transport access).



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