



Migrant volunteering in the community



volunteer centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Lú

LOUTH

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Acknowledgements

Louth Volunteer Centre have been working with Volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organisations since 2003. Over the past number of years, our work has seen an increasing amount of involvement from the migrant community and some resistance within the Irish community. The aim of this booklet is to provide information to organisations that would like to involve migrant volunteers and who wish to promote diversity within the communities in which they operate. This guide aims to promote the integration of non-Irish nationals in their local communities through their increased participation in local volunteering.

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Introduction to volunteering and migrants in Ireland

Charter For Effective Volunteering

Volunteers can expect to...

- > Know if, and how they are being selected.
- > Respect the values of the aims of the organisation.
- > Be given meaningful work to do.
- > Be committed.
- > Know what is expected from them.
- > Be reliable and give the organisation sufficient warning if unable to turn up.
- > Be offered appropriate training.
- > Be thanked and to have their voluntary contribution recognized.
- > Be punctual.
- > Receive supervision and support.
- > Attend essential training and support sessions.
- > Get something out of the work for themselves.
- > Undertake the work to a high standard.
- > Know who to go to if there is a problem.
- > Be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred when volunteering.
- > Make mistakes and learn from them.
- > Be made aware of complaint and grievance procedures.
- > Be made aware of issues or difficulties will be dealt with.
- > Be treated fairly and not to experience discrimination.
- > Have safe working conditions, including insurance cover.
- > Be informed about, and given the opportunity to play an active part in the organisation as a whole.
- > Be able to say 'no' and to leave without feeling guilty.
- > Be honest if issues or difficulties arise.

Charter For Effective Volunteering

Organisations are expected to...

- > Ensure the volunteering experience is a rewarding one.
- > Ensure equal access and not to discriminate.
- > Define clear, meaningful roles for volunteers.
- > Have policies and procedure for volunteers.
- > Provide all necessary information to volunteers.
- > Be available for volunteers.
- > Provide training where necessary.
- > Thank and value volunteers.
- > Provide insurance cover.
- > Inform volunteers of any legal liabilities.
- > Supervise and to provide support.
- > Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses.
- > Provide a safe working environment.
- > Have procedures in place for dealing with complaints and grievances.
- > Have procedures in place for dealing with issues or difficulties that may arise.

Organisations can ask...

- > For certain qualities and skills in volunteers.
- > For volunteers to understand and buy into the organisation ethos.
- > Volunteers to sign a volunteer agreement or 'contract'.
- > For task to be done in a particular way, to a certain standard and within certain timeframes.
- > For volunteers to see through their time commitment.
- > For reliability.
- > For punctuality.
- > Volunteers to leave if their involvement hinders the organisation achieving its goals.

Principles of Volunteering

- > Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- > Volunteer work is unpaid
- > Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- > Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- > Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- > Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- > Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- > Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- > Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- > Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

Tips for recruiting and retaining volunteers

1

Ask them.

.....
People are waiting to be asked.

2

Involve them.

.....
Women and older people are the most willing volunteers.

3

End the clique.

.....
Think beyond the inner circle.

4

Use wisely.

.....
Link task with available skills.

5

One hour.

.....
Begin with an agreed volunteer commitment.

6

Praise & reward.

.....
Give affirmation.

7

Communicate.

.....
Use your network to recruit and inform.

8

Teamwork counts.

.....
Use the "Task Identification" idea to give people a focused and time bound commitment.

9

Come back anytime.

.....
Have plans for former staff and volunteers..

10

Recognition.

.....
Introduce schemes the recognise and celebrate volunteers who have given dedication service to your organisation over a long period.

Key statistics: non-Irish nationals in Ireland

544,357

The number of non-Irish nationals in Ireland in April 2011

12%

The Percentage of residents who were non-Irish nationals in 2011

320,096

The increase in the number of non-Irish nationals since April 2002

5.8%

The percentage of residents who were non-Irish nationals in 2002

Many migrants are highly skilled with 30% of non-Irish nationals who left education system having achieved at least a degree compared to 23% of Irish nationals.

Many migrants are opting to take up Irish citizenship and call Ireland their permanent home. For instance, between 2005 and 2012 over 50000 non-Irish became Irish citizens.

- > Most volunteers, registered through volunteer centres, are women. However, this is not necessarily representative of the country. Significant numbers of men are involved in the GAA and they wouldn't be represented through volunteer centre statistics.
- > Fewer older people tend to volunteer. However, those who do tend to deliver more hours of input than anyone else.
- > Between 17% and 33% of the adults population volunteers on a regular basis.
- > People volunteer for an average of 5-12 hours per month, although the range is wide; some give less than one hour, whilst others give over 50 hours.
- > 58% of people get involved in voluntary work because they are asked, 36% offer their services.
- > The three main rewards people get from volunteering are the satisfaction of seeing the results, the feeling of doing good deeds and meeting people.
- > 65% of people who don't volunteer at present say they would be willing to use some of their spare time for voluntary work.
- > 72% of people feel that volunteers offer something that could never be provided by paid professionals.

Garda (police) vetting

Garda Vetting is the process by which a Garda Vetting Application authorises An Garda Síochána to furnish a statement to a prospective employer or organisation for an individual who plans to undertake paid employment or volunteer in certain work or activities.

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Bill 2012, makes it a legal requirement for organisations to vet those involved in “any work or activity which is carried out by a person where a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with children and/or vulnerable adults.”

This statement provided by An Garda Síochána advises there are no convictions recorded against the individual, or details of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, cases pending or completed, in the State that are not subject to the administrative filter (see below). Non convictions will be considered for disclosure where the circumstances of an offence gives rise to a bona fide concern that the person concerned may harm a child or vulnerable person.

You should not be discouraged if an organisation requires you to be Garda vetted as this represents best practice and shows that the organisation cares for its clients and volunteers. Remember, too, that prosecution and convictions do not necessarily preclude you from volunteering. Depending on demand, it can take several weeks for an organisation to obtain Garda Vetting on an individual from the time the application is sent to the Garda Central Vetting Unit, so you may need to be patient.

Louth Volunteer Centre is an Authorised Signatory for Garda Vetting and provides a processing service for organisations requiring Garda Vetting.

Safety

.....

“ You need to be in the country for at least 6 months to be able to apply for Garda Vetting and the volunteer cannot start working unsupervised until he or she is vetted ”

Louth Volunteer Centre



How do I apply for Garda vetting?

From January 2015 in line with the commencement of the National Vetting Bureau Act, a new online e-vetting system has been developed. The e-vetting system will allow online submissions and the processing of vetting applications, thus allowing for a more effective and efficient delivery of the vetting service.

The procedure is as follows:

- > Volunteers and Personnel who are subject to vetting will receive a disclosure inviter form from the relevant organisation where they are seeking a position.
- > The applicant completes the Disclosure Inviter form to confirm proof of identity, contact details, job title and current address and returns it to the Liaison Person in the Organisation who validates the form and verifies the identity of the applicant.
- > An invitation request is then sent to the email address of the applicant who fills out their details on an online application form including all addresses for all years to current year and any disclosures of a criminal record if applicable and submits the application via the e-vetting system to the Liaison Person. The Liaison Person will review the form and submit to GVV.
- > Garda Vetting checks on the applicant are carried out following receipt of the online application form at the Garda Central Vetting Unit.
- > Upon completion of the Garda Vetting checks a Garda Vetting disclosure is issued directly to the Authorised Liaison Person in the registered organisation and an email is triggered to the vetting subject advising them the application has been received by the Authorised Liaison Person.
- > An individual vetting subject may obtain a copy of their Garda vetting disclosure from the Authorised Liaison Person in the registered organisation to whom it was issued.

““ *The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 allows for certain minor convictions over 7 years old such as minor road traffic offences to be removed from disclosures. The purpose of this filter is to allow a more balanced, relevant and proportionate approach to Garda Vetting.* **““**

Garda Central Vetting Unit, Tipperary

What is volunteering?

Although the concept of volunteering exist in virtually all cultural groups around the world, some cultures do not necessarily recognise formal volunteering. In such societies, providing help or assistance is seen as a fundamental part of life and consequently they do not define informal volunteering as volunteering.

Additionally, in some cultures accepting volunteer service may have a negative connotation with begging or asking for charity. In such instance, there are implications that those in need of help do not have family or are outside of mainstream society.

Volunteers are people from all walks of life, all ages and stages. What they have in common is the desire to make a difference in their community - and in their own life - by giving their time. Volunteer are involve in virtually every aspect of society including health, education, social service, youth, sports and recreational, culture, the arts and the environment.





Benefits of migrant volunteers for organisations

In research from around the world, managers of volunteer agencies and organisations identified the following benefits of involving volunteers from diverse cultural background:

Cultural Competence

- > Culturally diverse volunteers increase the awareness of different cultures within the organisation and society at large, helping improve organisational, staff and service users' cultural sensitivity in a country like Ireland which has a relative recent intercultural experience. Culturally Sensitive Service Delivery
- > They bring new perspectives to the organisation such as the increased awareness of the way of life, beliefs and values of different cultures, leading to improvements in communication and program design, and more culturally sensitive service delivery.

More Volunteers

- > They help widen the pool of volunteers.

Language Skills

- > They usually bring to the organisation language skills as they tend to speak more than one language besides English and this in turn can enhance your organisation's relationships and communication with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Fresh Ideas

- > They bring new varied life experiences, generate fresh ideas and approach which add to staff and other volunteers' knowledge.
- > A readily available pool of qualified candidates for future staff openings.

Challenging Stereotypes

- > Their involvement promotes mutual respect in that it enhances their own understanding of mainstream Irish society, with the host community in turn also learning more about the 'newcomers' in their midst. This may help challenge any prevailing negative stereotypes about either side.

Social Inclusion

- > They encourage and facilitate the creation of an accessible and inclusive volunteer program that reflects the diversity of Ireland, impacts on all sections of the community and ensures your organisation complies with the Equal Status Act and plays a role in creating more inclusive society.

Welcome Face

- > Their presence shows a more welcoming face of your organisation to volunteers, service users and the general public.

Tips for recruiting migrant volunteers

The following list provides tips and ideas for developing strong recruitment processes for migrant volunteers and will inform your organisation how to engage with those culturally diverse communities.

Be Inclusive

Usually the best way of making the initial contact with culturally diverse communities is through the relevant community leaders, especially through national associations, places of worship, support groups and businesses amongst others.

Do Your Research

Research local demographics, learn more about the ethnic and cultural landscape of our local community and build relationships with them.

Easily accessible resources such as the Central Statistics Office's Census 2011 SAPMAP11 viewer will also show where these communities are generally located in Ireland. There are readily available directories that can be your starting point to accessing ethnic minority communities, for example, Louth Minority Ethnic Consortium and other migrant led groups.

Build Networks

Once you know who is in your area, get in contact and establish relationships with local minority ethnic groups and organisations or those working with immigrants, who have already gained the trust of the migrant communities; include them in your mailing list.

Approach Places Of Worship and Informal Networks

Build relationships with minority ethnic places of worship and their religious leaders to reach out to their communities and build trust. Tap into informal networks such as ethnic businesses, shops, language classes, schools, health centres, internet cafes etc.

Contact Your Local Volunteer Centre

Register volunteering opportunities in your organisation with a local volunteer centre on the Volunteer Ireland website.

Use Ethnic Media

To make your organisation known among immigrant communities, inform various local ethnic media based in Ireland (i.e. newspapers, websites, radios) about your activities, volunteer opportunities and provide them with general information on volunteering. They often have a wide reach within the different ethnic minority community groups. Aside ethnic media, use a variety of recruitment methods such as posters, flyers, mainstream media, the internet, your own website, blog and social media, existing community networks, word of mouth and one to one contactor group presentations.

Translate

Where possible, translate your promotional materials into the language(s) of local ethnic minority communities (or at least more than one language). Ensure that the used language and pictures are welcoming, culturally appropriate and reflect the diversity in your community. Ensure that volunteer leaflets and policies are written in plain English.

Interpret

Try to provide interpretations in different languages during your information sessions or at least provide multilingual printed information about volunteering options in different languages.

Engage Community Leaders

Usually the best way of making the initial contact with culturally diverse communities is through the relevant community leaders, especially through national associations, places of worship, support groups and businesses amongst others.

Meet Face-to-Face

Face-to-face communication is often regarded as being more trustworthy when a 'person' rather than an 'institution' delivers it. Try to recruit a well-integrated migrant volunteer or a team of volunteers from different cultural groups to assist the organisation in developing a culturally diverse volunteering strategy for the organisation. Moreover, to gain the requisite level of trust, there are no better ambassadors for volunteering than those migrant volunteers who have already been recruited.

Explain Volunteering

The concept of volunteering is likely to be interpreted and understood in many different ways across the world. Describe in plain language what it means to be a volunteer, for example using phrases such as 'help your community'. This is where the migrant community leaders or migrant support organisations can assist the organisation by providing valuable feedback on information materials from a non-English speaking point of view. Explain what volunteering in Ireland involves, for example, conveying the value placed on volunteering in this country.

Other things to consider

- 1 Ensure organisational culture is one that embraces and is inclusive of diversity, and that this is reflected in organisational policies and procedures.
- 2 Where necessary and possible, organisations should provide cross-cultural awareness training to staff, both paid and volunteer.
- 3 No assumptions should be made that all cultures are the same, especially concerning gender differences.
- 4 Well-established communities will differ from new and emerging communities in the issues they face, their level of English proficiency, and their experiences with the wider Irish society.
- 5 It is advisable to be flexible in the management and support of migrant volunteers. This may include the need to provide extra support to these volunteers such as establishing a mentor or buddy system.
- 6 Ensure that all volunteers are matched to a suitable volunteer role and are given a clear position description with agreed upon duties and levels of responsibility.
- 7 Creating a welcoming and inclusive physical environment through posters and images that reflect the diversity of the local community can be particularly appreciated by incoming migrant volunteers.
- 8 Ensure that there is awareness of equality legislation and that there are visible policy statements (posters) promoting equality and outlawing racism.

“Most long term migrants want to volunteer for a short time to get experience and then move on. They just want a bit of guidance and lot of them recognise they need some sort of experience in the Irish environment. That is sometimes the motivation for them to get involved in volunteering”

Volunteer Involving Organisation, Dublin

Training for migrant volunteers

Ideally, training should be offered to all volunteers, to enable them to deliver the service required and to invest in their personal development. However, training may particularly be relevant and necessary for migrant volunteers, especially those who are new to the country and are only just adjusting to their new surroundings.

In particular situations , it may be necessary for migrant volunteers to be provided with other types of training such as understanding of Irish society and culture, values and ethos of the host (volunteer) organisation.



“Organisations should be more open, with training programs. They should be open to diversity and new ideas. Some migrants have very interesting and very useful ideas. Say and write black on white: “All are welcome!” Let people know that you are ready to receive them. NGOs, mainstream organisations, and voluntary organisations...in this way, migrants won't be reluctant to approach the organisations.”

Migrant Volunteer, Dublin



It is important and also good practice to offer all volunteers the same training opportunities as paid staff especially where both operate in the same environment or carry out similar roles.

This helps:

- > Volunteers to feel valued
- > Volunteers to develop in the same way as paid staff do
- > Create a sense of 'team' -putting the employment versus volunteer status to one side
- > Promote consistency in the standard of service delivered

Basically, any training should cover the following amongst other topics:

- > Information about the organisation (history, structure, mission and values, etc).
- > Aims and objectives of the organisation.
- > Role of the volunteer in the organisation.
- > Supports available to volunteers.

In conclusion, adequate and quality training should ensure that:

- > First of all, the migrant volunteer is ready and well prepared to deal with the activities that are assigned to him or her. This will help the individual to accomplish his/her tasks and in the process ensure that the volunteering experience is a positive experience.
- > Secondly, from an organisation's perspective, the volunteer is enabled to meet the self-defined quality standards and expectations of the organisation.

Challenging misconceptions about migrant volunteers

Some organisations may sometimes feel that it requires too much effort to involve volunteers from diverse backgrounds. Outlined below, are some of the most common concerns and ways to overcome them.

“People from migrant backgrounds do not want to volunteer for mainstream organisations”

- > Research from around the world has shown that migrant volunteers are often seeking ways to connect with the wider community and to access skills and pathways to employment.
- > They are also seeking volunteering opportunities that allow them to make a genuine contribution, rather than being made to feel a token participant from a migrant background. They just probably need a bit more encouragement.

“Involving volunteers from migrant backgrounds is too demanding on organisational resources”

- > Organisations should remember that creating an environment that is inclusive of diversity and supported by organisational policies and procedures is a vital component of best practice in volunteer management.
- > Networking – particularly consulting with the local community (both mainstream and ethnic organisations) is important as many of them may have already developed internal organisational policies and actions to assist them in their support and management of migrant volunteers. These organisations may be willing to share these resources, and allow them to be used as a guide for the organisation’s own policies and processes.

“Language barriers are too difficult to overcome. How do we communicate with migrant volunteers?”

- > Organisations can ensure that volunteer orientation includes lots of face to face communication, and that enough time is set aside to go through each aspect of the organisation such as internal policies and procedures. While it is advisable to have things provided in a written format as well, it is important to remember that people have different levels of literacy.
- > It is also important to understand that some people from migrant backgrounds are hesitant to ask too many questions, in case they are seen as being impolite. Organisations should try and confirm volunteers’ understanding through seeking verbal acknowledgement.
- > Another way of communicating with volunteers could be to incorporate the use of symbols and/or graphics into your orientation e.g. for occupational health and safety issues, a picture showing the correct way of how to lift can be used rather than a written explanation.
- > Remember to use simple English avoiding the use of jargon and acronyms, and that the most important framework on which to base all communication is one of mutual respect.
- > Accents sometimes also create difficulties and can lead to the wrong impression that the person does not speak good English. One solution would be asking the person to slow down and speak clearly.

In conclusion, it is well worth noting that organisations that effectively involve volunteers from migrant communities are often successful because:

1. They get to know migrant communities within their local area.
2. They recruit volunteers from these communities resulting in an organisation that is inclusive and representative of its locality.
3. They recognise and respect difference and educate themselves about different cultures.
4. They have policies that are inclusive of diversity.

Volunteer Case Study 1

Amaka Mercy Okonkwo



Can you tell me a little about yourself and your background?

My name is Amaka Mercy Okonkwo. I am originally from Igbo speaking part of Nigeria. I have lived in Ireland and precisely in Dundalk for about 13 years with my family.

I have three lovely bubbly children all born in Lourdes hospital Drogheda -Louth. I am a graduate of Development Studies from Kimmage DSC, Dublin. I have other qualifications from Trinity College (Racial and Ethnicity Studies), NUI Maynooth (Equality Studies) and DKIT (Personnel management).

I have worked in different organisations like Louth County Council, Ait na Ndione, AkiDwA (national network of migrant women living in Ireland), Women's Aid, Metro Eireann, Plan Ireland, Louth Volunteer Centre etc at different capacities both paid and unpaid.

Before I came to Ireland I had my masters in Public Administration and worked in a Bank as Foreign Exchange dealer and loan officer respectively. I am a Social Entrepreneur working on a project called eDundalk.com – an online newsletter and advertising site. The project is currently participating on School for Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Incubator 2014 Programme. I still volunteer with AkiDwa and Volunteer Louth.

What attracted you to volunteering?

Volunteering gave me the opportunity to share my time and expertise in order to benefit others and the community. It gives me a strong sense of belonging to my community.

I also saw volunteering as a pathway to a change of career. My experience from volunteering at AkiDwA in 2010 has led to my change of career.

What does volunteering mean to you?

Volunteering to me is a life style. I love God, I love people and I love life. It is impossible to love those without the passion to give and share whatever (talent, time, money, products, services etc) you have with others.

Can you tell me about your first voluntary experience?

My first volunteering experience was in 2005 at radio 98.7 FM -The Word station, Dundalk.

The coordinator of the radio station was impressed with my performance during the interview process and I was selected. I pre- sented a music programme targeted to the young and old people in the community to put a smile on their face.

It was an interactive programme where people used to ring in to request for music of their choice ranging from secular to gospel music to be played for them and I would search through the music folder online to select and play the music. That was amazing! I found my self on the 'air' making people I had not met - and may not be likely to meet in my life - happy!

I found that very fascinating and satisfying. It was my first time working in electronic media organisation as well. It was absolutely phenomenal!

What do you feel that someone from outside of Ireland can bring to an Irish organisation?

First of all I do not see Irish organisations different from organisations outside Ireland. The world has turned into a global village believe it or not and any country or community who refuses to embrace diversity will loose out. There is strength in unity. There is unity in diversity.

Having said that, someone from outside Ireland is educated, qualified, experienced, hard-working and dedicated just like their native Irish counterpart. It is who you are that determines what you are. Demographical change to me is not a key player to one's performance. Inter- national experience and diversity are key performance indicators in any successful organisation or business to- day and that is exactly what people from outside Ireland bring to Irish organisations.

What type of volunteering are you currently involved with?

I still volunteer for AkiDwA where I represent the organisation at different events towards empowering women to achieve their full potentials. The latest event was the National Women Council of Ireland AGM on 6 June in Dublin.

I also volunteer with Volunteer Louth as a Board member where I am involved with decision/policy making and implementation geared towards the success of the Centre and promoting volunteering in Louth. My involvement in the Board has also added international/diverse experience to the Board and management of the Cen- tre. I brought it my expertise in communication skills which I use to promote the work of the centre.

Any other comments?

This is to anyone reading this who have never volunteered or want to volunteer, there can never be a better time than now. Please get in touch with Louth Volunteer Centre or the nearest volunteer centre register your interest, The benefit of volunteering cannot be overemphasised.

Volunteer Case Study 2

Eugeniusz Zabek



Can you tell me a little about yourself and your background?

My name is Eugeniusz Zabek. I come from a town similar to Dundalk - Pszczyna in Poland. In 2000 I finished the last part of my education with Master Degree in Mechanical Engineering and after university I joined six month long army training after which I came to Ireland. At the beginning I lived in Dublin where I was attending one of the language schools and was working part time as general operative in clothing warehouse and as a driver. After 3 years I got a great job as architectural CAD technician and moved to Dundalk.

What attracted you to volunteering?

Unfortunately after further 4 years in that job, the recession started to have a massive impact on the building market and my employer was forced to reduce the number of staff and I became unemployed.

However, I don't like sitting doing nothing, so in the meantime I joined the Polish nonprofit Organization Simul Polonia. I also registered with the Volunteer Centre, by which I was contacted a few days later with an offer to help in Crosscause Charity Shop in Blackrock.

What does volunteering mean to you?

Voluntary work is a great opportunity to do some good deeds that can give lots of satisfaction. Dedicating even a small part of our lives to helping others can have lot of meaning to us but mostly to those who are receiving that help. Volunteering helped me realize that all around the world there are people who are not that fortunate to be born or live in the comfortable lives that we would know and they have to struggle and fight for their own survival, sometimes every single day. To those people we, volunteers, can bring a little bit of joy but most of all, we can sometimes make their lives a little bit easier.

Can you tell me about your first voluntary experience?

As it turned out, the Crosscause Charity was run by a great man with a big heart, Conor Hughes, who for years had been raising money for children and local communities in Romania and Ghana. I liked Conor from the very beginning, having big respect for him and his work and since 2012 I have been involved in running the charity shop, helping sell stuff at local car boot sales and book markets, loading trucks with gifts and all necessary things for Romania and Ghana and also, together with volunteers from Simul Polonia, organizing Bag Packing days in Tesco, Long Walk.

What do you feel that someone from outside of Ireland can bring to an Irish organisation?

Voluntary work gives the opportunity to meet interesting people, often gifted with great passion for what they do, full of energy and the will to help others. They often represent some very diverse backgrounds- various nationalities, religions and cultures. That means they can all exchange different views on the problematic matters and learn from each other's ways of dealing with certain issues.

In my opinion everybody should try to help others in his /her own way. It doesn't have to be a hard physical work like loading trucks or building houses for the orphans, we all should take a look in our closest environment to see if maybe our neighbor, e.g an elderly person- needs some help vacuuming the house or getting rid of an old couch. Those little steps of help can make us better people and can bring some sunshine and brightness in the rainy and grey Irish days to those who may need it most.

What type of volunteering are you currently involved with?

I still volunteer actively with Simul Polonia.

Barriers and challenges to migrants volunteering

This section highlights some of the potential obstacles that can prevent migrants from participating in formal forms of volunteering. This section outlines a number of reasons that may discourage migrants from volunteering.

The main barriers and challenges identified by migrants include lack of information, time and language barriers, racism and diversity issues, misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the volunteering, lack of childcare, lack or relevant opportunities, issues relating to Garda vetting and character references and issues relating to legal status of the migrant.

The main barriers and challenges identified by volunteer centres and organisations and some community representatives included recruitment policy, language barriers, cultural differences and lack of diversity and anti-racism training for staff within organisations, lack of resources, lack of contacts with migrant communities and lack of training facilities and training schemes for first time volunteers and/or migrant volunteers.

Lack of information

Lack of understanding of concept of volunteering

Language barrier

Discrimination, racism and fear of being rejected

Lack of Time, financial incentives and childcare

Lack of relevant volunteering opportunities

Recruitment procedures, requirements and policies

Residence status

Lack of access to migrant communities

Lack of relevant training

Lack of resources in voluntary organisations

Lack of information

“I did not know about the fact that it is possible to get voluntary work in Ireland and still considered as a work experience. I had no access to Internet and I stayed idle for two years until an acquaintance of mine I came across told me that there is voluntary work and where to go to get it. There is not sufficient information especially for migrants on how to access voluntary work anyway.”

Migrant Volunteer, Dublin

Lack of understanding of concept of volunteering

“I do not trust voluntary work. There is no outcome from there, not for the ones who do it, not from the ones who benefit from it! You want to explain me exactly what volunteering means in Ireland, because in my country we used to hate voluntary work which was seen as being equal with obligatory unpaid work.”

Migrant Non-Volunteer, Dublin

Language barrier

“I speak a bit of English, but not enough to be able to ask for work or even voluntary work. My reading in English is not that good and I wouldn't go to try to work, not even in voluntary position.”

Migrant Non-Volunteer, Dublin

Discrimination, racism and fear of being rejected

“I was one day at the counter in the shop and a lady came to me and said “Why are you working here? We don't need you to work here. We are giving enough money to Oxfam that you'll be kept in your own country.” I was practically speechless and in shock then. Why did I go volunteering? ...To face that?”

Former Migrant Volunteer, Dublin

Lack of time, financial incentives and childcare

“I am living far away from the city and I have no voluntary work positions near my place. I cannot volunteer because I have no money to pay for my traveling as I am unemployed.”

Migrant Non-Volunteer, Dublin

“It is very hard to take on volunteer work if you do not have a flexible program as we have no child care facilities. My husband cannot always take the children from school as he is working and if I am volunteering, we have to pay for child care and we cannot afford that.”

Migrant Non-Volunteer, Dublin

Lack of relevant volunteering opportunities

“I’m not interested in volunteering in a role that has nothing to do with my qualification or in a position that is not matching my qualification. There is no fulfilment if you are doing jobs that are much lower than your qualification or profession.”

Migrant Non-Volunteer, Dublin

“Many migrants coming to us looking for volunteering are really disappointed when they find that there are almost no voluntary positions according to their skills or their qualifications. Even if they find something related, it is only quite basic and does not involve many skills or qualifications to do it. They are not interested in volunteering then.”

Migrant Volunteer, Dublin

Recruitment procedures, requirements and policies

“As a migrant you need to be in the country at least for 6 months to be able to apply for Garda vetting and the procedure weeks and in some cases months and the volunteer cannot start volunteering until he or she is vetted and checked. However, it is important to note that migrants are treated differently to a prospective Irish volunteer in this regard.”

Volunteer Centre, Dublin

“At the moment, if unemployed people want to volunteer they need to get an ‘exemption’ to work as volunteers, so they need to get an inspector from the welfare department that must approve for them to volunteer full-time. So if they receive social welfare benefits, they need to get approval from the social welfare officer, in order to ensure full-time availability for volunteering. I think some will not take this hassle; some won’t like to put up with this and then won’t commit to volunteer feeling like, you know..., being always questioned by the Department of Social Protection.”

Volunteer Centre, Dublin

Residence status

“I wanted to volunteer to start understanding better how system works here and how is to be involved in the labour market, but because I have no papers, I am undocumented here, I was rejected. I am now afraid that since I am undocumented and I look for volunteer role this may jeopardise my stay in the country.”

Migrant Non-Volunteer, Dublin

Lack of access to migrant communities

“Generally the migrant organisations didn’t know much about the existence of [our organisation], so we realised we were not visible with migrant groups, with certain migrant groups.”

Volunteer Involving Organisation Representative, Dublin

“They (organisations) need to publicise themselves more. I know about so any people that are waiting, hoping to be useful. I think other volunteers that work in organisations could come and spread the good work they have done as volunteers. When migrant communities know you can do good work for them..., if they can go and ‘sell’ the volunteering experience to others in their community.”

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Migrant Volunteer, Dublin

Lack of relevant training

“No, we do not have such specific training programs for migrant volunteers, and sometimes we may not have any even for local volunteers. It would be very nice to have such training, because we would have more people wanting to volunteer with us and we will recruit many more than we have now.”

Volunteer Involving Organisation, Dublin

“I cannot volunteer if I don’t know what volunteering is about in that organisation. I need to have on-going training because I have never volunteered in my entire life and I came from a non-Irish cultural background. I don’t know what would be appropriate and what is not in the role, if they don’t train me before.”

Volunteer Involving Organisation, Dublin

Lack of resources in voluntary organisations

“There is no funding to help our volunteers with transport or to train them. We would like to have that, but unfortunately we are struggling at the moment with funding.”

Volunteer Involving Organisation, Dublin



Understanding and valuing cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is a work in progress in Irish society, both in terms of diversity in organisations and the development and enhancement of service delivery that has the potential to impact positively on minority ethnic groups.

.....

It is advisable that organisations interested in recruiting long term volunteers also identify a person from a migrant background to assist in the formulation of culturally inclusive policies and practices.

.....

Include statements about valuing diversity and about the organisation's commitment to providing the resources needed to support diversity.

.....

It is important to forge partnerships with migrant organisations and ethnic minority led organisations who may be called upon to deliver crosscultural training.

.....

It is also important to use cross cultural knowledge of new volunteers, which is one way of making the volunteers feel immediately valued and appreciated.

.....

It may be more useful to the organisation to introduce general diversity statements into your organisational documents to help it become normal practice.

.....

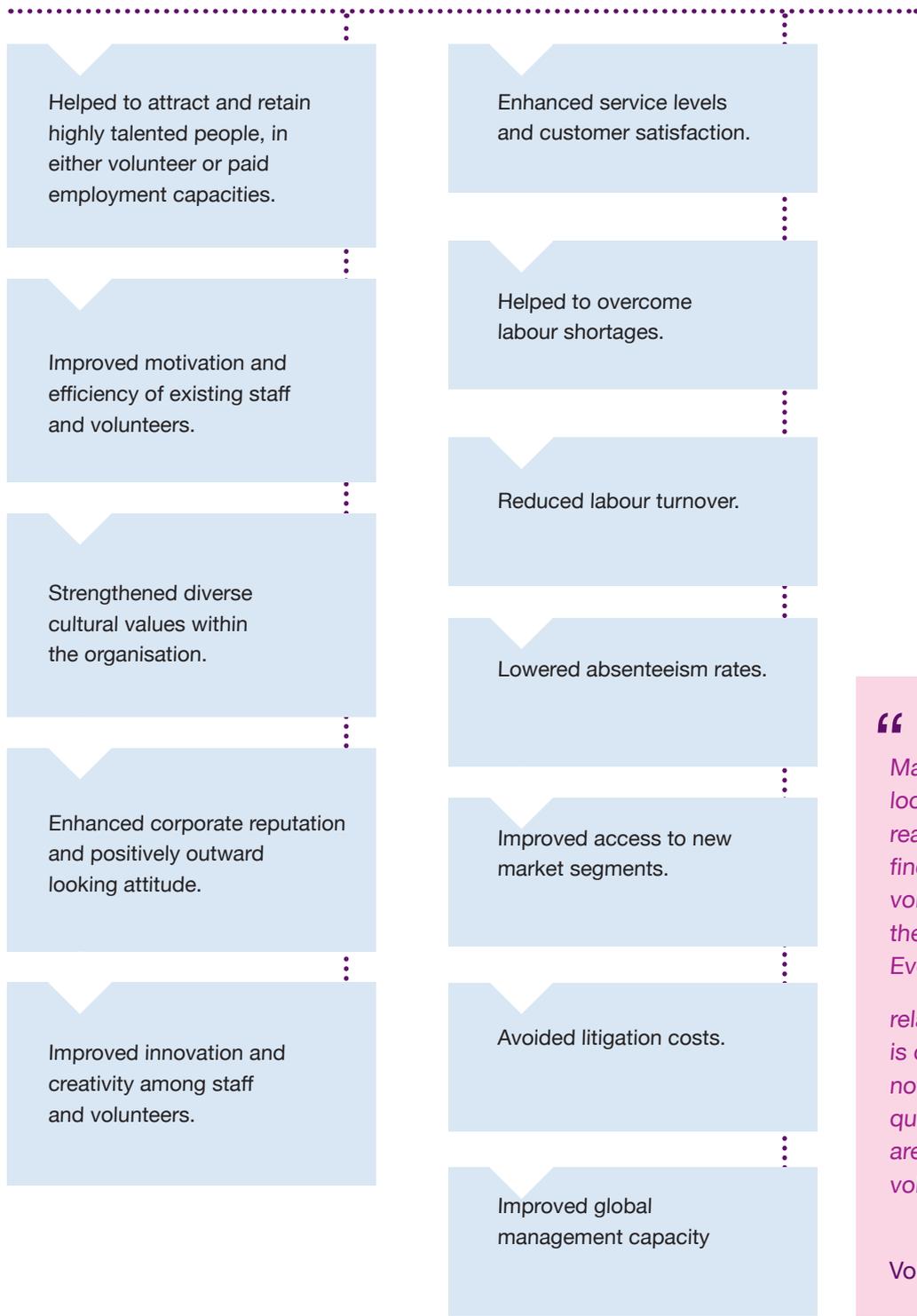
The policies should relate to diversity in general, rather than be necessarily culturally specific. As needs and sensitivities of different cultures can vary significantly, it is perhaps more advisable to keep the policies and procedures relating to diversity as generic and adaptable as possible.

.....

Culturally inclusive policies and procedures should be evolving documents that can be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

.....

The European Commission's 2003 report *The Costs and Benefits of Diversity* highlights the benefits listed below that were gained by organisations who invested time and resources in developing active diversity policies:



“
Many migrants coming to us looking for volunteering are really disappointed when they find that there are almost no voluntary positions according to their skills or their qualifications. Even if they find something related to their skills, it usually is only quite basic and does not involve many skills or qualification to do it. They are not interested in volunteering then
”

Volunteer Migrant, Dublin



Intercultural communication tips

Working across cultures is a new experience for many people. Intercultural communication can be a dynamic and creative affair but occasionally due to the inability to interpret people correctly it can be a challenge. Building an understanding of other people's cultures, their communication styles and behaviours can go a long way in improving relationships and being more successful in an intercultural environment.

Even without trawling through lots of books, articles or even taking part in an intercultural communication workshop it is possible to implement some basic principles to help improve one's intercultural communication skills. The following intercultural communication tips are provided to help people working in international and multicultural environments get some basic insight into dealing more effectively with people and not letting culture become an issue.

Source: Kwintessential's Intercultural Communication Tips.
Retrieved from: kwintessential.co.uk



Be patient

Working in an intercultural environment can be a frustrating affair. Things may not get done when expected, communication can be tiresome and behaviour may be inappropriate. Having patience helps move beyond such issues and helps address how to avoid similar incidents in the future.

Establish rules

Sometimes if working in a truly intercultural team it may be necessary for all to take a step back and set down some ground rules. i.e. how do we approach punctuality, meetings, communication, emails, disagreements, etc? It is always a good idea to try and develop the rules as a group rather than have them imposed.

Ask questions

When you don't understand something or want to know why someone has behave in a certain way, simply ask. Asking question stops you making assumptions, shows that you did not understand them and helps build up your bank of intercultural knowledge.

Respect

The foundation of all intercultural communication is respect. By demonstrating respect you earn respect and help create more open and fruitful relationships.

The written word

Sometimes people who do not have English as their mother tongue will read more proficiently than they speak. It is a good idea to always write things down as a back-up.

Organisational checklist for cultural diversity & awareness

Organisations, especially charities and NGOs continually face the challenge to develop the capacity to provide opportunities to volunteers with limited English language skills. While being aware of the growing needs of these diverse communities, such organisations struggle to meet their needs due to limited resources.

Organisations interested in integrating a multicultural component into their volunteer program or to help assess the effectiveness of existing volunteer programs in being open and welcoming to people with limited language skills can utilise a self- assessment tool which provides a framework to assess the organisations' ability to accommodate volunteers with limited language skills and to suggest what changes could be made to more effectively serve migrant volunteers.

The following self-assessment tool can be used by any organisation that seeks to self-assess if it is ready to work with migrant volunteers and migrant communities as a whole.

Each self-assessment area includes a number of questions. Choose the answer that most closely reflects the situation in your organisation. For example:

	YES	NO
<i>Do the staff members receive any orientation/training about working with volunteers?</i>		

> If most of the staff in your organisation receive orientation/training... Answer YES

> If only a few staff in your organisation receive orientation/training... Answer NO

The questions are scored differently to reflect the impact of each issue.

There is no value assigned to Don't Know.

Please record your answer anyway. You may find that the Don't Know answers offer your organisation a handy guide to the key areas that need consideration and might be otherwise overlooked.

To self-assess the opportunities in your organisation, you will need to find the answers to all the questions. Use this guide as a check list.

The Staff	Yes	No	Don't Know
Are there staff members who speak language other than English in the organisation?			
Do staff members receive any orientation/training about working with volunteers?			
Do staff members receive any orientation/training about working in a culturally diverse workplace?			
Do staff members receive any orientation/training to help them overcome communication barriers due to language?			

Specific Volunteer Opportunity	Yes	No	Don't Know
Would fluency in a language other than English be an asset?			
Would volunteer provide some specific expertise, which would not be available otherwise?			
Are there staff members whose mother tongue is not English in the department/area where the volunteer would work?			
Are there other volunteers whose mother tongue is not English in the department/area where the volunteer would work?			
Would it be possible to provide the volunteer with the appropriate orientation/training to perform the specific functions of the position?			
Would limited knowledge of English from the volunteer cause excessive additional work to the staff or other volunteers?			
Would there be any additional resources available to support this volunteer placement?			
Would there be any significant risk of irreparable harm due to miscommunication?			

The Organisation	Yes	No	Don't Know
Are you aware of the demographic changes in the region and have they affected your organisation or the services it provides?			
Are the current clients, staff and volunteers representative of the community or area your organisation serves?			
Does your organisation have anti-racism, equality or access policies?			

Volunteer Recruitment and Induction	Yes	No	Don't Know
Is the outreach/recruitment process suitable for potential volunteers with limited English language skills?			
Is the intake process suitable for volunteer with limited fluency in English?			
Is the orientation process suitable for volunteers with limited fluency in English			
Is the integration process to fit volunteers into the day- to-day work routine suitable for volunteers with limited fluency in English?			
Are the language fluency requirement routinely assessed for each volunteer opportunity?			
Would most clients/patients accept a volunteer with limited knowledge of English?			
Have there been any prior successful placements of volunteers with limited fluency in English?			
Is there a process to match every volunteer with a 'buddy'?			
If you were to weigh on a balance the resources used to integrate a volunteer with limited fluency in English against the specific benefits generated by the placement, would you find that it is worth the investment?			

This project is supported by the Louth Minority Ethnic Consortium's 'Integration of Target Communities' programme as part of Resource Allocation project funded by EU PEACE III Programme as awarded by the County Louth Peace & Reconciliation Partnership.

