AkiDwA

AKINA DADA WA AFRICA

Annual Report 2024

www.akidwa.ie

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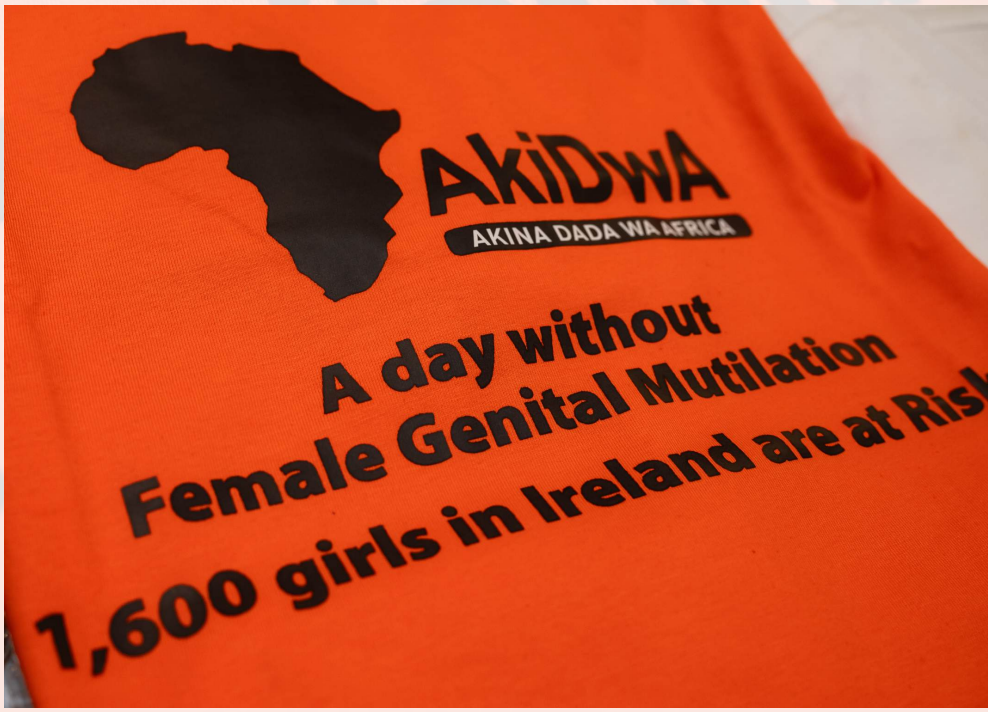


Forward from Uruemu Adejinmi AkiDwA Chairperson

It gives me great pleasure to present AkiDwA's Annual Report for 2024, a year defined by growth, innovation on and deepened impact in advancing the rights and well-being of migrant women in Ireland.

For over two decades, AkiDwA has stood as a beacon for equality, empowerment and inclusion, amplifying the voices of migrant women, challenging systemic barriers and promoting participation at every level of Irish society. In 2024 our mission continued to resonate across communities nationwide, with 9,625 women directly benefiting from our programmes and initiatives.

Throughout the year, AkiDwA's dedicated team delivered sessions in 161 centres across the country, ensuring that even the most marginalised women could access vital support, information and opportunities for empowerment. Through 14 impactful projects, from our longstanding work on the eradication of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to new initiatives such as Ar Bhail, which fosters integration and information-sharing, we have made tangible progress towards a more equitable Ireland.

This year also marked the expansion of our organisational presence, with the opening of a new regional office in Galway, strengthening our capacity to serve communities beyond Dublin. Our work in 2024 was enriched by partnerships with 343 organisations, an enduring reflection of AkiDwA's collaborative spirit and our shared vision of inclusion.

Key achievements such as the launch of the Em n Em Project findings on systemic racism in employment, the Afro Art Festival celebrating African creativity, and our continued leadership in policy advocacy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence demonstrate the breadth and depth of our impact. Each of these milestones was made possible through the dedication of our staff, board, community health ambassadors, young changemakers and volunteers whose commitment and passion remain at the heart of AkiDwA's success.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our CEO and team for their exceptional work, to our Board of Directors for their governance and strategic guidance and to our funders, partners and supporters for their continued belief in our mission.

As we move into the next phase of our Strategic Plan 2022–2025, we do so with renewed determination: to build a society that truly values diversity, recognises migrant women's contributions and ensures equality of opportunity for all. Together, we will continue to make Ireland a place where every woman's voice is heard, respected and empowered.

Message from Dr. Salome Mbugua AkiDwA CEO

The year 2024 has been one of the busiest and most impactful in AkiDwA's history. We successfully delivered activities under 14 projects, addressing our strategic objectives and areas of focus which include economic empowerment of migrant women, domestic and sexual gender-based violence (DSGBV), health and integration.

Through the dedication of our team, 9,625 women benefited from AkiDwA's programmes and services. Our outreach extended to 161 centres nationwide, with 7,416 women participating in training and empowerment sessions, and 1,109 referred to essential support services. Collaboration remained central to our work. We partnered with 343 organisations across Ireland, strengthening networks that promote inclusion and wellbeing. Our FGM awareness-raising and fundraising gala dinner in November, which raised over €5,000, reflected the strong solidarity and support of our partners and community.

Collaboration remained central to our work. We partnered with 343 organisations across Ireland, strengthening networks that promote inclusion and wellbeing. Our FGM awareness-raising and fundraising gala dinner in November, which raised over €5,000, reflected the strong solidarity and support of our partners and community.

In November, we achieved a significant milestone with the opening of a regional office in Galway, expanding our presence in the west. Throughout the year, we hosted four national events, over 60 online meetings, and launched findings from our national employment project. Our work was made possible by a dedicated team of 21 staff, 6 consultants, 4 interns, 12 community health ambassadors, seven community trainers on FGM and 20 young changemakers.

Despite these achievements, 2024 also presented challenges. The rise in far right and anti-immigrant sentiment has created fear and uncertainty among those we support. Proposed asylum and immigration legislation may further impact migrant and refugee communities. Nevertheless, AkiDwA remains steadfast in challenging inequality, hate, and racism, and in ensuring that every person can live free from fear and discrimination.

Our mission remains clear to support migrant women, amplify their voices, and foster belonging for all. I wish to thank the Board of AkiDwA, our staff, volunteers, and young changemakers, especially those from second-level schools who championed work on FGM for the first time in educational settings. I also extend appreciation to all partner organisations that collaborated with us and invited AkiDwA to deliver cultural competence training, an increasingly vital area in our diverse society.

As we look ahead, we will continue to work collectively toward an Ireland that is inclusive, equitable, and compassionate where every one has the opportunity to thrive.

AkiDwA Background

Formally established in 2001 as an organisation, AkiDwA (Swahili for sisterhood) is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland focused on the promotion of equality and justice for migrant women in Irish society. AkiDwA's core objective is to advance education and address the poverty of migrant women by setting up a drop-in centre to relieve hardship for women immigrating, particularly from the continent of Africa into Ireland. AkiDwA is a registered charity in Ireland (CHY 17227) and registered with the Charities Regulator as Akina Dada wa Africa (RCN 20063641). AkiDwA also operates as a company limited by guarantee without capital shares (370089).

For AkiDwA, 'migrant women' includes not only recent immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, but also migrant workers, students, trafficked and undocumented women, as well as those who have acquired Irish citizenship but still define themselves as migrants due to their linguistic, racial or cultural backgrounds.

AkiDwA is committed to building an integrated society where everyone is valued, treated with respect and dignity, and enjoys equal opportunities and protections. AkiDwA applies a holistic approach to integration, championing a migrant and gender-specific approach to public services, as well as encouraging migrant women's access to mainstream services and initiatives. AkiDwA employs several strategies to achieve its objectives including outreach, networking, research, policy work and capacity building.

AKIDWA'S MISSION IS TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND JUSTICE FOR MIGRANT WOMEN IN IRELAND.

AKIDWA'S VISION IS FOR A JUST SOCIETY WHERE THERE IS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES IN ALL ASPECTS OF SOCIETY: SOCIAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, CIVIC AND POLITICAL.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, AkiDwA has gained recognition as a leading NGO for highlighting issues faced by migrant women in Ireland. AkiDwA focuses on three principal thematic areas: **Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV), Health, and Integration.** A variety of the organisation's projects and activities address and encompass these areas, all designed to support and enhance the organisation's five strategic objectives as outlined in AkiDwA's *Strategic Plan 2022-2025: Moving Forward Together, Bigger and Better:*

- Voice
- Equality
- Capacity Building & Collaboration
- Service Provision & Community Development
- Organisational Development

Operations

The organisation is governed by a Board of Directors from diverse backgrounds and professions who meet six times per year. A General Assembly is held annually, where AkiDwA staff share and discuss annual and financial reports from the previous year with members and stakeholders. The work of the organisation is also supported by an advisory committee made up of both migrants and indigenous people with different backgrounds and expertise. AkiDwA's operations serve all of Ireland, with its main office in Dublin and newly-established regional office in Galway. AkiDwA works both externally with migrant women, stakeholders, and partners and internally with staff, board, and members to ensure AkiDwA achieves its mission and objectives guided by the following values and principles:

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

AkiDwA in 2024

The following sections outlining AkiDwA's activities and projects delivered in 2024 are divided by AkiDwA's five strategic objectives of Voice, Equality, Capacity Building & Collaboration, Service Provision & Community Development, and Organisational Development. These areas largely overlap, and many of the organisation's initiatives and activities fall under numerous objectives. This report covers highlights from 2024, which display our progression, achievements, and areas for growth.

AKIDWA IN NUMBERS 2024

21 STAFF MEMBERS,
12 COMMUNITY HEALTH AMBASSADORS ENGAGED IN DELIVERY OF ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

7 CONSULTANTS,
4 INTERNS,
20 YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

9625 WOMEN BENEFITED FROM AKIDWA PROJECTS

7416 WOMEN PARTICIPATED IN TRAINING SESSIONS & ACTIVITIES

1109 WOMEN REFFERED TO OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

161 CENTRES REACHED

RAISED OVER **€5,000** AT NOVEMBER GALA SUPPORTING FGM SURVIVORS

GALWAY REGIONAL OFFICE ESTABLISHED

4 NATIONAL EVENTS & **60** ZOOM MEETINGS

PARTNERED & COLLABORATED WITH **343** ORGANISATIONS

Voice

As the challenges migrant women face persist, a strong voice is necessary to compel action. AkiDwA's strategic objective of 'voice' is to present the voice of migrant women and their families, to the political and administrative system, the media, and the general public. This is achieved through promoting leadership, decision-making and capacity-building in migrant women; encouraging the telling of one's own authentic experience; spotlighting marginalised voices; and emphasising the importance of intergenerational links within storytelling and sharing. AkiDwA actualises these commitments by representing the voice of migrant women and presenting the shared experiences and challenges through campaigns, demonstrations, conferences, reports, and media. In 2024, AkiDwA made great strides in amplifying the voice of migrant women, particularly in relation to the troubling circumstances of direct provision centres, barriers to accessing employment for migrant women, and a need for increased awareness and support services towards Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Campaigns and Advocacy

During the year, AkiDwA participated in, spoke at, and delivered presentations at various meetings and events across the country, amplifying the voices and experiences of migrant women. The organisation participated in a demonstration for George Nkencho on 2 May, following the decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) not to prosecute the officers involved in the fatal shooting of the 27-year-old in December 2020. Participants called for the DPP's decision to be reconsidered and for greater accountability in such cases.

In April, AkiDwA joined the European Citizens' Initiative #MyVoiceMyChoice campaign, advocating for safe and accessible abortion services for women across Europe.

AkiDwA also took part in the global "UNITE to End Gender-Based Violence" campaign during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in November and December. As part of this initiative, our CEO participated in a panel discussion with Concern Worldwide and Ernst & Young, sharing insights on AkiDwA's work in addressing gender-based violence. The organisation also contributed to the "Ireland for All" campaign, promoting equality, solidarity, and inclusion across communities.

Conferences & Meetings

On February 6th, AkiDwA, in partnership with the British Embassy Dublin, held a panel discussion marking the UN International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM. Discussions involved AKiDwA Young Change

Makers, community trainers, and staff, as well as government agencies and law enforcement from the UK and Ireland.The event highlighted the important role of education and awareness-raising to prevent and protect women and girls at risk of FGM and other forms of DSGBV, such as early and forced marriages and trafficking.

AkiDwA was invited to and spoke at the Women's Parliamentarians Conference held on April 12th in Dáil Éireann. We shared the contributions of migrant women in Ireland and profiled AkiDwA's work. We also presented to the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).

AkiDwA participated in the NGO Forum organised by the Department of Justice, which addressed Ireland's position on the new EU Migration Pact and initiated discussions on strategies for its implementation and management.

Dr. Salome Mbugua joined the National Women's Council of Ireland in a briefing session with members of Oireachtas at the Irish Parliament Buildings on their report, *Sex for Rent: Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment in the Rental Housing Market*, on October 8th.

On December 4th, AkiDwA joined Probation staff members at the Richmond Education and Event Centre, raising awareness of the unique challenges faced by migrant women during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Dr. Salome Mbugua led an insightful workshop on domestic violence within migrant families.

On December 9th, AkiDwA participated in the 2nd Refugee and Migrant Health Conference hosted by the University of Limerick, bringing our unique perspectives and representing the voices and experiences of migrant women's health, specifically highlighting FGM as a health and migration issue, along with approaches for discussing it sensitively.

Voice

Projects

The organisation continued the implementation of the Unheard Voices Project, which was initiated to capture the experiences of women seeking international protection and living in Emergency Accommodation Centres (EACs). The project aimed to document these women's experiences, amplify their voices, and inform policies and practices affecting their lives.

As part of the project, AkiDwA conducted focus group discussions with women residing in EACs, delivered awareness-raising sessions, and carried out both survey and desk-based research. The project concluded in 2024 with the development of a testimonial booklet featuring personal stories from 10 migrant women living in emergency accommodation, along with a comprehensive report of key findings and recommendations, to be published in early 2025.

Under the CHAT Plus Project, AkiDwA's Young Change Makers produced, in collaboration with WE the People Communication Company, a short film entitled Heal the Scars based on a powerful spoken word piece written by an FGM survivor, the film's aim, as well as the entire project's, is to raise awareness on FGM in Ireland.

As well as the film, AkiDwA showcased additional content created by the Young Change Makers, who also led a post-screening discussion panel at the premiere of the film at the Irish Film Institute in June.

The Young Change Makers also produced a podcast episode for International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, interviewing guest speakers to learn more about FGM. The episode hears from a midwife, a community volunteer, and An Garda Siochana. This podcast dives headfirst into the health, protection, and lived experiences faced by millions of women around the world.

Voice

Media & News

AkiDwA and Garda sciochonna continued to collaborate on The Operation Limelight awarenss campaign's on FGM, in 2024 launch of the campaign held at the Cork Airport was featured on RTE. Operation Limelight seeks to highlight the serious risks and long-term health complications that women and girls face due to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the law against the harmful practice. An Garda Siochana's Operation Limelight at the Cork Airport aimed to raise awareness of FGM and the risk of FGM poses to young girls in Ireland. It was an incredibly successful day, as the Cork community deepened its understanding of FGM with questions from airport staff, airline attendants, students, doctors, and more. Operation Limelight has been run in the Dublin and Kerry Airports.

AkiDwA appeared on RTE news in July during the launch of the National Women's Council of Ireland's Report, Perinatal Mental Health: Listening to Women and Shaping the Road Ahead. Recommendations from the report include early intervention, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed care, and data collection by the National Women's Council. In her presentation, AkiDwA CEO Dr. Mbugua highlighted the unique perinatal mental health needs of migrant women, which are often heightened by the medicalisation of pregnancy, strain of resources, and social isolation and/or lack of community network due to factors such as pre-migration trauma, racism, and cultural barriers. She emphasised the need for tailored support, culturally competent care, and community and peer support to enhance emotional well-being and reduce isolation.

In June, AkiDwA was featured in the Irish Journal and Irish Examiner in articles addressing the increased need for protection and awareness around FGM, as well as medical support services for survivors. The pieces highlighted the organisation's research and work on FGM, including the Chat Plus Project and Heal the Scars film.

Equality

Ongoing global conflicts, widening inequalities, rising anti-immigration sentiment, and growing economic instability continue to threaten migrant women's rights, protections, and access to safe and fulfilling lives. Protecting and promoting these rights remains fundamental to AkiDwA's mission.

AkiDwA's objective on equality focuses on addressing issues critical to the long-term inclusion and advancement of migrant women in Irish society. These include racism and anti-racism, economic empowerment, access to services and supports, female genital mutilation (FGM), women's health, and domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence (DSGBV). The organisation advances these priorities through multiple projects, advocacy initiatives, and research efforts, while continually amplifying the voices of migrant women.

Influenced by both national and global equality frameworks, AkiDwA collaborates with a wide range of organisations to promote and safeguard equal rights and opportunities for all. The year 2024 was particularly significant for equality work at AkiDwA, marked by the launch of several key projects — including CHAT Plus, Join Our Chain, EmpowerHer, and Musika — all aimed at magnifying critical issues such as FGM, women's empowerment, and inclusion.

Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV)
In 2024, AkiDwA continued its engagement with Cuan, the newly established DSGBV agency, and delivered the Victim Support Project, providing essential assistance to migrant women in Ireland, particularly those affected by domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence.

The Victim Support Officer offered ongoing one-to-one support through information sessions, referral and signposting services, court and accompaniment support, advocacy, and women's support group activities. AkiDwA also participated in NGO forum meetings hosted by the Department of Justice, contributing to national dialogue on policy and practice in this area.

In addition, AkiDwA's DSGBV project aimed to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the services available to victims through the delivery of workshops and training sessions for migrant women's groups, frontline service providers, and community organisations across Ireland. In 2024:

- 1,887 women were supported.
- The project worked with 82 partners.
- Staff accompanied one client to Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) and three clients to court.
- Successfully recruited and trained four community safety volunteers (CSV) as part of its newly established CSV network; the volunteers provide links for victims of crime to AkiDwA's victim support service.

Equality

AkiDwA consistently contributed to the Department of Justice (DoJ) quarterly meetings for the Victims Forum group to discuss emerging issues, continuously holding the Department accountable for commitments to zero tolerance against DSGBV.

Following up on our joint policy dialogue conference in July of 2023, AkiDwA, in collaboration with Galway University, held a roundtable discussion, Engaging with Media and Challenging Gender-Based Violence - Migrant Women's Perspectives on March 22nd. Chaired by Susan McKay, Press Ombudsman, the event included the launch of the report Stories of Migrant Women in Ireland: Surviving Gender-Based Violence. Some of the challenges identified included stereotypes, language used, and a mistrust in how stories of migrant women survivors (of DSGBV) are framed. Additionally, we noted the lack of coverage dispelling myths and misinformation about migrants, and positive portrayals in stories of their contributions, often lost in common narratives.

In December, AkiDwA participated in a roundtable discussion with the Immigrant Council of Ireland on forced marriages, sharing issues faced by migrants who've experienced DSGBV. We highlighted specific barriers informed by our victim support project, as well as noting the importance of including other forms of DSGBV, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

AkiDwA attended the Violence Against Women All-Ireland Working Group meeting in June, bringing migrant issues to the forum. This group, facilitated by the National Women's Council, consists of representatives from organisations across the North and the Republic of Ireland. The aim is to identify gaps, challenges, share best practices, lessons learned, and make key recommendations to improve support and reduce barriers to women seeking protection against violence in Ireland.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

AkiDwA's FGM work in Ireland has progressed significantly in 2024, reaching 3,415 beneficiaries, delivering training and awareness-raising sessions in 30 accommodation centres and partnering with 80 organisations and agencies. The Project's objective is to promote the eradication of FGM in Ireland and focuses on three areas of:

- Community engagement: support and delivery of activities with communities affected by FGM in Ireland
- Training for frontline and healthcare professionals: upskilling, training, and educating frontline workers and professionals on FGM
- Policy engagement: ensuring policy makers understand and acknowledge FGM as a form of DSGBV, as well as set strategies towards prevention and support for those affected

Equality

In March 2023, AkiDwA, along with three other EU organisations, commenced with the implementation of the CHAT Plus project, focused on changing attitudes around the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by engaging young people to become the driving force in its elimination in Europe. Akidwa recruited 20 young people who underwent in-depth training on the topic of FGM at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in September 2023.

Utilising their knowledge, the Young Change Makers (YCMs) carried out training and events in their own schools and communities to raise awareness around FGM throughout 2024. They organised roundtable meetings with diplomats, delivered impassioned speeches at conferences and designed a behavioural change communication campaign aimed at the Irish public and the affected communities. They produced six TikToks, an informative health literacy comic, a podcast and a short film 'Heal the Scars.' The awareness campaign tools were shared with the public for the first time on May 14th during a meeting at the Dáil with TDs and Senators.

In addition, the YCMs:

- Organised a coffee morning for migrant women in the Islamic Cultural Centre
- Spoke to over ten businesses from the local community
- Coordinated information sessions and meetings with over 2,300 professionals
- Organised an Art exhibition at the Olivier Cornet Gallery in Dublin, displaying art pieces created by secondary school students around Dublin and Wicklow
- Organised a bake sale in Mount Temple Comprehensive School on International Women's Day, raising €300 for Akidwa's FGM Project

Equality

On November 30th, AkiDwA held An Evening of Impact for AkiDwA fundraising dinner gala at the Hilton Hotel Dublin Airport to raise awareness around FGM and generate funds in support of counselling services for survivors of FGM.

During the event, we had the honour of presenting our Young Change Makers, that through community outreaches, informative meeting, training, and content creation, they have helped AkiDwA to spread the message of prevention and elimination of FGM. The sold-out evening was hugely sucessful with donations generated over €5,000. We ended the night with a powerful music and dance performance by Dancers for Freedom.

Employment

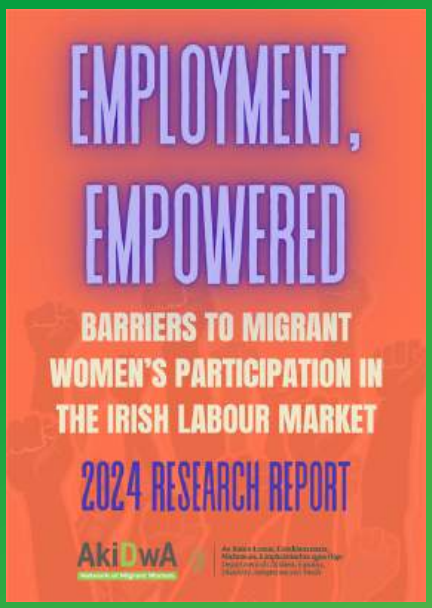
AkiDwA, in partnership with LinkedIn, held an International Women's Day Conference: Inclusion Without Borders: Unlocking Potential - Advancing the Irish Economy through Migrant Women's Inclusion, on March 13th, with over 100 attendees. Panellists and keynote speakers included stakeholders, policy-makers, politicians, researchers, NGOs and migrant women engaging in conversations around inclusivity and integration, breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for migrant women in the Irish workforce. Inclusion without borders means that to achieve true inclusion in the labour market, we must advocate for policies that recognise the qualifications and skills of migrants, irrespective of where they were obtained. Our Young Change Makers were also there to assist in the event and took part in the fruitful discussions.

Equality

AkiDwA's "Employment - Empowered" (EM & Em) Project was launched in 2023 after securing funding from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEIY). This project aims to foster dialogue about systemic, implicit, and explicit racism with stakeholders across various Irish employment sectors to illuminate: migrant and ethnic minority women's lived experiences of racism within Irish employment; patterns and sources of implicit or explicit bias in the employment ecosystem; and concerns of Irish employers regarding recruiting women from migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds. The project will collaborate with stakeholders to create and begin implementation of potential pathways to reduce racism and bias in different sectors, encourage local Irish employers to join AkiDwA's ongoing Capacity Building Training Programme as work placement or mentorship sites thereby giving migrant women the chance to apply their skills to their communities.

- Interviews with 22 migrant women were held
- A cross-national advisory committee was established to help with the project's implementation, with the first meeting held in April
- Two survey questionnaires were circulated widely to Community Employment Schemes and Civil Society Organisations with 129 responses and 126 migrant women responses
- Nine focus groups were held in six counties with a total of 135 women participating
- Three job and services fairs were conducted across three counties, reaching 160 migrant women and 18 employers

The findings were launched at AkiDwA's conference, Bridging opportunities: Employers and Migrant Women's Employment Challenges in Ireland at the EPIC in Dublin on October 4th. The event highlighted challenges faced by migrant women in the Irish labour market, alongside employers' perspectives. The research outlined barriers migrant women face in the Irish labour market, including visa restrictions, underemployment, and non-recognition of foreign qualifications



Equality

Despite many holding third-level qualifications, they are often employed in roles below their skill levels. Survey results show challenges, including language barriers and lack of employer awareness, especially around asylum seekers' work rights. Our CEO Dr. Salome Mbugua called for reforms to reduce deskilling and improve support for migrant women. The event featured insights from Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Director Deirdre Malone, and migrant women sharing their own experiences. Discussions explored services from organisations like African Professional Ireland, LinkedIn, Irish Refugee Council and other more 'bridging opportunities' for Migrant Women in Ireland. The follow-up project based on key research findings, EM & EM II has received financial support from the same funder and will be carried out next year

Advocacy

AkiDwA was invited to and spoke at the Women's Parliamentarians Conference held on April 12th in Dáil Éireann. We shared the contributions of migrant women in Ireland and profiled AkiDwA's work. We also presented to the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).

On September 9th, Policy and Programme Support Coordinator Aoibhinn had the privilege of attending the Budget 2025 Breakfast Briefing in Longford, alongside Councillor Uruemu Adejinmi, Chairperson of AkiDwA, where they engaged Minister of Finance Jack Chambers, discussing key areas where financial support is most needed in Budget 2025 to empower and uplift migrant women in Ireland.

AkiDwA participated in the NGO Forum organised by the Department of Justice, which addressed Ireland's position on the new EU Migration Pact and initiated discussions on strategies for its implementation and management.

Dr. Salome Mbugua joined the National Women's Council of Ireland in a briefing session with members of Oireachtas at the Irish Parliament Buildings on their report, *Sex for Rent: Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment in the Rental Housing Market,* on October 8th.

On December 4th, AkiDwA joined Probation staff members at the Richmond Education and Event Centre, raising awareness of the unique challenges faced by migrant women during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Dr. Salome Mbugua led an insightful workshop on domestic violence within migrant families.

Cultural Competency Training
Cultural competency training sessions were delivered to frontline services and professionals in various counties, including Waterford, Laois, and Galway. We also conducted a session for Local Authority Integration Team officers from all 31 counties in Ireland. Cultural competency training proves a vital resource for community support staff and organisations in understanding how to best support survivors of FGM.

Direct Provision
AkiDwA participated in a roundtable discussion on issues affecting women and families living in emergency accommodation centres in May, focusing mainly on Synge Street. The discussion was facilitated by COOP participated JRS, Ruhama, IRC, and Sonas.

Capacity Building & Collaboration

AkiDwA's third strategic objective of Capacity Building & Collaboration is to support migrant women's development of skills, confidence, and spirit of independence. This is achieved through the provisioning of development programmes that enhance both personal and professional growth. AkiDwA also works to build partnerships with industry leaders, employers, corporate bodies, trade unions, and education providers to create meaningful employment pathways for migrant women. AkiDwA fosters collaboration by connecting migrant women with mainstream organisations and with other women, encouraging mentorship, leadership, and solidarity across communities.

Women HUB Project
Established by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) the Women HUB Project was established to address the growing mental health and psychosocial support needs of international protection applicants (IPAs) in Ireland through well-being activities with women and children.

AkiDwA was invited to collaborate on this project in 2023, mainly focusing on supporting women. This project creates mobile "Women's Safe Hubs" and supports migrant women and their children who are IPAs living in state-provided/contracted accommodation. The Programme Coordinator establishes a routine in two centres, Dundrum and Synge Street, ensuring the delivery of activities focused on linking women and children to individualised services and supports in the community to improve wellbeing and integration,

Capacity Building & Collaboration

as well as offering information and training to the women on the areas of AkiDwA's expertise.

- 623 women were supported through information sessions, activities, and outings
- 188 women were individually supported through drop-in clinics and referrals to other services
- 28 information sessions were held during the year
- 12 art therapy sessions and four recreational activities were provided

Join Our Chain

Established through the European Network End FGM EU, the Join Our CHAIN project is a tri-nation collaborative project dedicated to the prevention and elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Early and Forced Marriage (EFM) among affected communities in the EU member states of Germany, Italy and Ireland. Both practices are forms of gender-based violence that are often intertwined. The project tackles FGM and EFM committed against women and girls through continuous community empowerment, training, and capacity building of key professionals and relevant stakeholders, all promoting a community-based and gender sensitive approach. Eight community trainers were recruited and received training on understanding coercive control, the law in Ireland, court orders, support services, and supporting a survivor.

AkiDwA launched the Intervention CHAIN (IC) Manual at the Hibernian Hotel in Mallow on June 20th with 74 participants from the community and key stakeholders. This essential guide is used as a tool to train key professionals—healthcare workers, nurses, midwives, doctors, social workers, education professionals, and gardai—on addressing the critical issues of FGM and EFM, including proper consultation and referral processes for women and girls affected by FGM/EFM.

- 220 healthcare professionals and frontline services received training including students of Nursing and Midwifery at St. James Hospital, Galway University, and Trinity College Dublin
- 34 community members participated in meetings organised by CTs
- Meetings were held with 44 community leaders
- Four community events were held, reaching 311 participants

Join our CHAIN

Capacity Building & Collaboration

Employment & Entrepreneurship

Implemented in late 2023, the EmpowerHer project is a unique employment program designed to provide dedicated solutions to challenges migrant women face in securing employment in Ireland. By identifying the crises that migrant women experience in everyday life, in liminal cultural, social, and institutional spaces–EmpowerHer seeks to unlock maximum potential amongst participants and clients by combining educational and experiential knowledge, as well as verbal and non-verbal tacit skills. The project officer facilitates individual screening sessions, group meetings, mentoring programs, and additional training opportunities, enabling and empowering migrant women to better access employment, specifically of their preference, within the Irish labour market.

- 370 beneficiaries were reached through information sessions, client support, referral/signposting, community outreach and other events with various stakeholders such as job fairs, CV clinics and volunteer fairs
- 180 clients were reached in direct provision and emergency accommodation centres
- 19 in-person information sessions were held on topics like CV building, job searching and interview techniques

AkiDwA's entrepreneurship project, Musika, aims at developing women's skills and talent, helping them to establish entrepreneurship prospects, and improving their social and economic skills. AkiDwA engaged a project officer this year to support the twelve active members from different counties across Ireland. The group presented at numerous events in 2024, including at AkiDwA's Afro Art Festival and Sligo Africa Day.

On the 3rd of August, AkiDwA hosted Musika Market Day platform for these women to turn their handcrafting skills into thriving businesses; a variety of unique handmade items, with food and drinks available. Diverse Voices Though Art for Self Sustainability - workshop with over 40 women - providing skills, developing talents and strengthening women capacity. Social media accounts were created to help profile the group and market their products, and consultant was engaged for six months to work with women to improve the quality of production.

PayPal continues to support Musika, currently helping develop a website. Through this project, 31 activities (mainly trainings) were held to improve products, packaging and marketing. 203 total women participated in the project and AkiDwA collaborated with four partners.

Capacity Building & Collaboration

Together for a Better World Project
In its fourth year, AkiDwA continued to deliver activities under the Together for a Better World project a Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs. The project supports women from migrant and indigenous backgrounds in Ireland to engage in global citizenship education, reflect on their roles and responsibilities as global citizens, and take action toward a fairer and more sustainable world.

During this reporting period, the project reached 866 participants through GCE and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) awareness activities. Of these, 68 participants (65 women and 3 men), primarily from migrant and indigenous backgrounds, completed structured GCE training based on the SDG framework. Participants developed and began implementing community action plans following their training. In total, 16 training sessions were delivered, alongside one action day (72 participants), informal awareness sessions (558 participants), and online sessions (168 participants).

AkiDwA also strengthened partnerships with other GCE organisations and social justice movements. A total of 10 follow-up and preparatory meetings were held with partner organisations, and 18 meetings with women's groups collaborating on GCE initiatives. Notably, AkiDwA co-facilitated a peer learning session with ARD Family Resource Centre, focusing on the specific challenges faced by migrant women and strategies for improved support. The organisation remained an active member of both the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) and Coalition 2030, enhancing AkiDwA's visibility and capacity in delivering GCE programmes.

Unheard Voices Project
Through the Unheard Voices Project, AkiDwA reached women living in remote and often inaccessible locations. The organisation facilitated nine capacity-building sessions across six emergency accommodation centres in three regions, engaging 89 women. Sessions focused on understanding rights, available services and opportunities, and provided peer-to-peer and psychosocial support. A peer mentorship programme was also established, connecting newly arrived women seeking international protection with peers who have lived experience in Ireland.

Democracy and Civic Participation Project
Under the Democracy and Civic Participation Project, aligned with the International Decade for People of African Descent, AkiDwA delivered workshops in Portlaoise, Longford, Galway, and Navan. These sessions aimed to enhance the civic engagement of migrants of African descent by building essential skills for active citizenship and deepening understanding of the Irish political system.

Collaboration and Solidarity
On 25 May 2024, AkiDwA hosted the EU Migrant Women Political Participation Conference as part of the EU partnership project AGENCY: Vote With Her. The event encouraged migrants to register and vote in the European Parliament elections, celebrated migrant women's political participation at the EU level, and featured a powerful photo exhibition by Changemakers from the European Network of Migrant Women, in collaboration with AkiDwA.

The organisation also participated in the National Women's Council Health Working Group, contributing to discussions on marginalised women's access to the Free Contraception Scheme.

In addition, AkiDwA collaborated with the Dundalk Intercultural Women's Group to celebrate its first anniversary and explore areas for future partnership and growth.

Service Provision & Community Development

AkiDwA's objective of Service Provision & Community Development supports both the inclusion of migrant women in the community and service providers in engaging with migrant women to address their concerns through accessible and culturally appropriate services. AkiDwA works regularly with service providers throughout the nation to build their capacity to respond to the needs of migrant women, including targeted training programmes on equality, anti-racism and cultural competency or on specific issues, such as domestic violence and FGM. Service provision encapsulates direct-client and group support with issues including housing, health, IPO interview preparation, emotional and social networking support, FGM, and education and employment guidance.

Established by HSE in 2022, the Peer-Led Support Project aims to support vulnerable women likely to become homeless, those affected by substance abuse or other wider health-related issues. The project employs an officer who collects data and supports migrant women, especially African women at risk. 587 were supported during the year, and staff visited women and delivered sessions in 40 centres on a range of topics. Weekly clinics were held at Red Cow and other centres, providing one-on-one support to residents and brief meetings with the social worker at the centre. There is a concern about drugs and alcohol abuse in the direct provision centres, leading to increased domestic violence and family separation; more training and awareness in this area are needed.

Integration

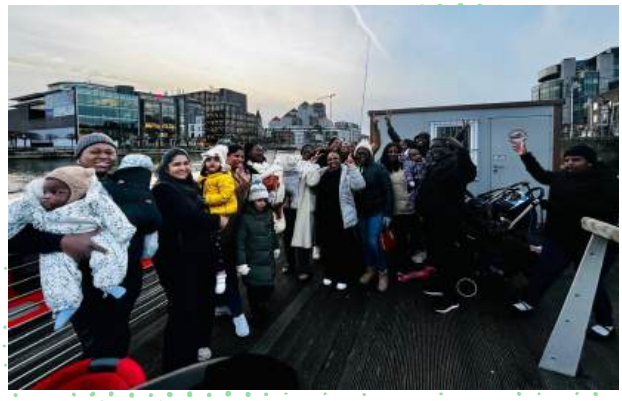
Launching in October, AkiDwA's Ar Bhail Project aims to empower women with the knowledge, skills, and connections necessary to participate fully in the Irish community, while recognising and responding sensitively to their diverse needs and experiences. The project is dedicated to supporting the integration of female International Protection Applicants (IPAs) by providing accessible information on Irish culture, systems, and services as well as interactive and artistic activities that foster cross-cultural understanding and social inclusion within local communitie. The initiative addresses the specific needs of women who encounter heightened barriers to integration, including mothers of young children, women with limited proficiency in English, and survivors of Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) or other forms of trauma. The Integration team's facilitation of cultural exchange outings,

Service Provision & Community Development

support groups, and activity-based sessions–foster meaningful engagement with local communities, reduce social isolation, and strengthen participants' sense of belonging in Irish society.

From October through December 2024, the project reached a total number of 235 participants through information sessions, client support, referrals and signposting, community outreach and collaboration initiatives.

- Launched AKIDWA Little Gems & Mums Club, with its first meeting in November, to bring mothers together to support, share, network, and learn from one another, as well as unwind while engaging in various activities that promote integration into the community. Members include women with young children aged five and below living in Emergency Accommodation Centres in Dublin.
- Recruited and trained community tutors through Fáilte Isteach for free English conversational classes every Monday which started on the 2nd of December 2024; all levels are welcome to attend these informal sessions designed to improve language skills, make friends, and feel more 'at home' in Ireland



AkiDwA held an Afro Art Festival, funded by the DCIEDY under the International Decade for People of African Descent, in MayWynns Hotel in Dublin. Coinciding with Anti-Racism Week, this one-day event aimed at celebrating and empowering artists of African descent in Ireland. The festival included workshops for artists of African descent featuring interactive sessions delivered by an array of entrepreneurship, employment, art, and culture experts. 200 people participated in the day, with nine artists displaying their products. The festival was a powerful platform for those within the Afro art community, as well as a day filled with immense art, culture, and unity.

Support Groups

AkiDwA successfully established a support mechanism for LGBT+ migrant women and has facilitated a monthly social group since January 2024, following a focus group discussion in December 2023. We collaborated with ShoutOut in March to hold a workshop on diversity and inclusion for the group and facilitate dialogue around language and transgender people. Fourteen service users have been supported through this group.

Service Provision & Community Development

AkiDwA continues to facilitate Womandla, a social support group for migrant women affected by violence and has held five meetings to date on topics including mental health, reflections on moving to Ireland, and dealing with anxiety. 69 women have been supported through this group since January 2024**.**

Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Project (SRH) was implemented in 2018 to increase awareness of sexual and reproductive health services, Irish laws (age of consent of marriage and sexual activities) and law on abortion; as well as provide information on access to crisis pregnancy and abortion support/services to migrant women living in Ireland, especially those seeking international protection. AkiDwA delivers awareness-raising training, provides client support and referral/signposting, and collaborates with organisations and groups at local, regional and national levels. Information sessions cover topics of sexual and reproductive health support services, pregnancy, menstruation, and hygiene online and in-person, across several counties.

There is an increased demand for SRH information and services due to the rise in the number of international protection applicants and accommodation centres. There is also a growing demand for hygiene products, especially reusable options. In 2024, the project reached 2,886 women in 56 accommodation centres and partnered with 86 organisations. Over 70 women received more than 150 hygiene products, including pads, tampons, period underwear, and menstrual cups thanks to generous donations from Hey Girls UK and the Hygiene Bank Ireland allowing us to provide essential products to migrant communities and women in need.

A men's sexual reproduction health was incorporated in 2019 to complement the women's project, providing information sessions and distributing condoms. In 2024, 20 sessions were delivered, reaching 2,128 men with 73 centres visited and 61,400 condoms distributed.

The project also held two health fairs, one in Dublin and one in Dundalk. The June Health and Wellness Fair took place at LinkedIn in Dublin with 19 service providers and over 200 participants. While everyone received health information, over 100 participants received health services (health checks/screenings) from SafetyNet Primary Care, HIV Ireland, and the Association of Nigerian Nurses in Ireland. Over 200 IEC materials were supplied.

Service Provision & Community Development

We held the second fair in the Dundalk Sports Center where participants availed of free health checks and information; medical, physical, and psychosocial support; and nutrition and wellbeing resources

AkiDwA participated and contributed the All-Island Violence Against Women Working Group convened by SafetyNet and the National Women's Council (NWC), exploring laws in the North and Republic of Ireland around DSGBV with other partners, including CROI, TCD Centre for for Global Health, NWC Abortion Working Group, and National Screening Services (NSS).

AkiDwA convened, hosted, and supported the NSS Cervical Screening and HPV Vaccination Focus Group Discussion, attended by women from diverse backgrounds. They shared their thoughts and experiences in accessing screening services and made proposals for improvement. They also received information sessions on breast and cervical checks and support services in Ireland

Organisational Development

AkiDwA's fifth strategic objective of Organisational Development is to ensure the organisation runs effectively and efficiently, working towards greater sustainability and growth. Indicative actions to achieve this objective include supporting diverse and effective forms of governance, implementing and reviewing strategies for sustainability, establishing engagement for networks and funding, investing in the team's capacity and training, and ensuring continued organisational relevance and impact.

Strategy & Governance

The Board held six meetings during the year. A mid-term strategic review was conducted and discussed on 10 August 2024 to assess progress on AkiDwA's Strategic Plan 2022–2025: Moving Forward, Together, Bigger and Better. The session involved members of the Board of Directors, the Advisory Board, and the AkiDwA team

Key achievements highlighted included strong organisational leadership, continued growth, increased recognition and demand for AkiDwA's cultural competency work, enhanced LGBTQ+ engagement and inclusion across initiatives, and notable progress in projects addressing FGM.

Organisational Development

Challenges identified during the review included a high workload and growing demand for support and services, legacy dependency on the CEO, limited resources to meet expanding needs, difficulties in reaching international protection applicants due to GDPR restrictions, and the impact of evolving accommodation policies and the dispersal of direct provision centres.

AkiDwA held a very successful Annual General Assembly on November 24th, with great turnout despite red & orange signs weather warnings. AkiDwA staff covered the minutes of the previous AGM, presented the annual and financial reports for 2023, and discussed progress in 2024, with each team member providing project and activity updates. AkiDwA members reflected in groups on AkiDwA's work and representation in 2024, discussing areas for improvement. Some points include a need for: continuous education and mentoring for people in accommodation centres; interpreters and English classes; information dissemination in multiple languages; extension of services to singles; and increased employment and educational opportunities.

Sustainability & Scalability

In April 2024, the organisation engaged Peninsula, a professional HR company, to provide comprehensive human resource and health and safety support. Peninsula offers 24/7 assistance, tailored HR documentation, online HR software, litigation representation, SafeCheck reviews, and expert health and safety guidance. Since the engagement, Peninsula has supported AkiDwA in reviewing employment contracts and the employee handbook, as well as conducting physical health and safety assessments. AkiDwA staff now have access to certified online training, up to six counselling sessions per year, and a range of additional wellbeing benefits.

The organisation's work and activities were supported and delivered by a diverse team of 58 personnel. This included 21 full- and part-time staff members on payroll, seven consultants (one of whom is engaged in an employment-based PhD programme), and four interns. Additionally, 20 Young Change Makers, seven community trainers, and 12 community health ambassadors contributed to programme delivery and outreach.

Organisational Development

Regular support and supervision meetings were held with staff, alongside bi-weekly all-team meetings. Team members also participated in the mid-term review of AkiDwA's Strategic Plan and in the end-of-year review and planning session.

Further key staff engagements and activities in 2024:
Participation in the Women's Aid "Too Into You" campaign on Valentine's Day, raising awareness about violence against women, particularly among young people, and highlighting that abuse can occur even in relationships that appear loving.

A meeting between AkiDwA's CEO and the Moroccan Embassy in February, where Dr. Salome Mbugua met with His Excellency Dr. Lachen Mahraoui, Dean of African Embassies in Ireland, to share AkiDwA's work and explore areas of collaboration. Subsequently, Dr. Mahraoui hosted a meeting at his residence for AkiDwA with Ambassadors from the African region. This engagement was an important advocacy initiative, as diplomatic representatives can play a key role in influencing action on harmful practices such as FGM, given that all represented countries have laws and policies protecting women and girls.

Attendance at the University of Galway's launch of the research report, *Language and Migration in Rural Areas: Experiences of Migrants and Refugees with Language Learning and Use in Ireland's Rural Communities.* The study examined language learning experiences, barriers, and opportunities for migrants and refugees in rural Ireland. AkiDwA contributed insights on how language barriers affect service delivery, particularly the availability of interpreters in rural areas.

In November, AkiDwA had the privilege of joining fellow NGOs and government departments at the European Commission and EU Parliament in Brussels. The goal of this visit was to gain deeper insight into EU migration policies and explore the role of EU institutions in shaping them. The group had the honour of meeting EU Commissioner for Financial Stability, Mairead McGuinness, and engaged in meaningful

Organisational Development

discussions with Irish MEPs Aodhan O'Riordan, Barry Andrews, and Michael McNamara. They addressed key issues migrants face in Ireland, including housing and healthcare.

CEO Dr. Salome Mbugua attended and spoke at HSE Campaign launch on eliminating cervical cancer, highlighting key issues that hinder migrant women to screen, as they often face unique barriers to healthcare, including language, financial, logistical, and informational barriers. AkiDwA champions a culturally-sensitive approach, crucial for building trust. Involving migrant communities in the design and delivery of health services, addressing their unique needs and values, is crucial in the path towards the elimination of cervical cancer.

AkiDwA participated and spoke at the Kerry Women's Centre conference in November, 'End All Violence Against Women And Girls', contributing migrant women's experiences of DSGBV, highlighting the barriers they face in accessing services and the crucial work AkiDwA is doing in this area. This was a great opportunity to discuss our partnership with Kerry Women's Centre through the Together for a Better World project and successfully recruited participants for the GCE training.

AkiDwA attended the launch of Dr. Ebun Joseph's book, *Equity in the Workplace, Stories of Black Irish Women in Academia and the Teaching Profession.* At the event, we saw African women sharing stories of transformation, resilience and economic, social and civic contribution in Ireland despite facing continued systemic racism and discrimination.

AkiDwA took part in Kenyan Cultural Day in Celbridge on July 5th where staff shared about AkiDwA work and met policy makers and public representatives who were very much interested in the organisation's work.

In August, AkiDwA staff participated in the European Network Against Racism Summer Retreat in Austria, focusing on racial justice advocacy under the theme of restorative healing.

AkiDwA attended the Health Expo in Kinsale Road Accommodation Centre, engaging with over 50 women and providing reproductive health materials. We also participated in a TCD NGO engagement meeting.

Organisational Development

The staff review and planning meeting was held on December 20th, where team noted a need for further staff training (e.g., cultural competency, international protection process, trauma); recommended reviewing volunteer policy and setting a volunteer pool coordinator; recognised low attendance of AkiDwA activities by the women in some Centres and proposed the introduction of incentives, such as acknowledging early attendance, food provision, and adjustment of timing. The team also agreed upon a review of staff salaries and sustainability–most of the core funding for staff salaries is project-based and depends on annual renewals, yet salary and retention are critical to engaging and retaining staff.

In March 2022, AkiDwA launched its new strategic plan in Galway, signalling its intention to establish a stronger presence in the region. One of the key actions in the plan was to open a regional office and build connections with local groups and organisations. This vision became reality on December 17th, 2024, with the official launch of AkiDwA's Galway office, staffed by two dedicated team members.

AkiDwA's second office marks a critical milestone, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, addressing the unique needs of migrant women in the western regions of Ireland. This regional presence allows AkiDwA to provide more localised support and gain deeper insights into the specific challenges faced by migrant women in Galway and surrounding areas.

Dr. Salome Mbugua, AkiDwA CEO, received the Concern Worldwide Woman Honouree of the Year 2024. This prestigious award reflects her unwavering commitment to promoting gender equality and human rights, and her tireless work advocating for vulnerable communities. AkiDwA celebrates her leadership, vision, and dedication to advancing the rights of women globally.

Communication & Systems

Vital for increasing member engagement with the organisation and reaching relevant internal and external stakeholders–commitment to communications ensures future scalability in terms of AkiDwA's outreach and advocacy, promoting the organisation's mission and maximising impact on emerging topical issues. Improved communications structure and system was highlighted in the 2024 staff and strategic plan reviews, including the establishment of a communications officer role. A communication strategy recommended for development in the 2022-2025 Strategic Review has yet to be established.

Organisational Development

In 2024, AkiDwA continued to invest in communications and systems (including information and communication technology and training) to improve record-keeping, communication channels, and other administrative functions of the organisation, for enhanced assurance, efficiency, and effectiveness.

- AkiDwA engaged Glitch to provide IT support, replacing previous support from Abacus; all cloud information transfer has been completed, along with improved infrastructure.
- AkiDwA continued usage of social media platforms, Instagram, Facebook, and X, reaching over 2,000 followers on Instagram. The organisation also engaged with LinkTree to better streamline links and resources.
- AkiDwA's website was refurbished and relaunched in June.

Financial Report 2024

Akina Dada Wa Africa Company Limited By Guarantee
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2024 €	Restricted Funds 2024 €	Total Funds 2024 €	Unrestricted Funds 2023 €	Restricted Funds 2023 €	Total Funds 2023 €
Incoming Resources							
Voluntary Income	4.1	80,723	684,993	765,716	25,000	889,977	914,977
Resources Expended							
Charitable activities	5.1	14,794	525,255	540,049	-	507,610	507,610
Activities for generating funds	5.2	18,144	189,605	207,749	-	101,080	101,080
Other expenditure	5.3	53	3,643	3,696	-	14,227	14,227
Total Resources Expended		32,991	718,503	751,494	-	622,917	622,917
Net incoming/outgoing resources before transfers		47,732	(33,510)	14,222	25,000	267,060	292,060
Gross transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds for the financial year		47,732	(33,510)	14,222	25,000	267,060	292,060
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds beginning of the year	15	27,500	380,316	407,816	2,500	113,256	115,756
Total funds at the end of the year		75,232	346,806	422,038	27,500	380,316	407,816

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year.
All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 14 / 10 / 2025 **and signed on its behalf by:**

Uruemu Adejinmi
Director

Luzia Antario Berechet
Director

Akina Dada Wa Africa Company Limited By Guarantee

BALANCE SHEET

as at 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 €	2023 €
Current Assets			
Debtors	9	3,500	3,500
Cash at bank and in hand	10	449,087	435,562
		452,587	439,062
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	11	(30,549)	(31,246)
Net Current Assets		422,038	407,816
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		422,038	407,816
Funds			
Restricted trust funds		346,806	380,316
General fund (unrestricted)		75,232	27,500
Total funds	15	422,038	407,816

Approved by the Board of Directors on 14/10/2025 **and signed on its behalf by:**

Uruemu Adejinmi
Director

Luzia Antario Berechet
Director

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Irish Aid
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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