

# The Local Management of Skilled Migration

Case Study  
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Group  
Ireland

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I came here to work not to  
dance!

(Bien Filipino Migrant Worker)

# Irish Context- the role of Partnerships, why are we involved

Immigrants make up 14.7% of Ireland's current population  
Migration growth is likely to account for one half of Ireland's  
population between 2006-2020

Immigrants have higher rates of consistent poverty 13.1%  
compared to Irish nationals 6.6%

Higher employment rate amongst immigrants (71% compared to  
60% of Irish nationals).

Immigrants have higher levels of education than Irish nationals  
with many working below their potential

Growing body of evidence of the impact of low pay, exploitation  
and poor working conditions on the exclusion of some migrant  
workers (NESC 2006)

# Local Context

Avondhu Development Group is a community partnership based in North Cork in Ireland, operating under the aegis of the Dept of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. We are responsible for a population area of 70,000 spread across 44 communities which include 3 Urban centres

Avondhu Integration Project started in 2002 under the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme and is now funded by the Integration Fund from the Dept of Justice,

# Local Context

Avondhu's approach is two-fold: Firstly working with the immigrant community to build their capacity through **Information & Advocacy** clinics and Secondly working with the broader community including agencies to **address the barriers that inhibit participation** of immigrants in the local social, political and economic life of the community

# How did we manage local skilled migration

Building the capacity of individuals through our information and advocacy service focusing on rights, responsibilities and entitlements

Increasing the awareness of local employers about the potential new skills available and understanding how to manage diversity in the workplace

Working with local agencies on developing collaborations

Building links with National Organisations around different policy issues in the absence of current policy

# How did we manage local skilled migration

Development of the “North Cork Integration Forum”

Working in solidarity with other local development groups and partnerships to develop cohesive responses to managing inward migration to the area

Building the capacity of the immigrant community so that they can become involved in directing and influencing policy both locally and nationally

Using a community development approach and focussing on the three R's of community work...Relationships, Relationships Relationships!

# Obstacles & Challenges

Context for labour migration to Ireland is economically driven and employer led, therefore there is an absence of safeguards

Lack of English language competency, highly qualified immigrants but poor command of the English language

Highly skilled workers in low skilled jobs and the impact of this on their mental health

# Obstacles & Challenges

Absence of safeguards on employee rights and entitlements: Significant exploitation happening on the ground and not enough resources to address it, Also very few mechanisms for civil society to influence this

For immigrants who wish to return to their country of origin, there is a dearth of information on procedures and entitlements For example transferring social insurance payments, Tax Refunds etc...

Access to official information and interpretation

# Obstacles & Challenges

Bureaucracy of National Qualifications Authority in getting overseas qualifications recognised and the length of time it takes

Professional Associations also not recognising qualifications and very little provision of suitable conversion courses to practice professions in Ireland

Discretion of individuals in interpreting social welfare guidelines for those who have become unemployed

Naivety of Government to think that employers, faced with the prospect of an abundant supply of vulnerable and understandably compliant labour would not succumb to the temptation to exploit them

# Moving Forward

Conducting a **skills audit** with newly arrived immigrants through Public agencies with the support of partnerships.

Development of a **Quality mark** for promoting diversity in the workplace

Development of **reciprocal employment/living induction pack** for immigrants done in collaboration with both sending and the receiving countries which is given to people well in advance before they leave their country of origin for eg the “Know Before You Go” campaign which is promoted in the public sector but what is role for the private recruitment agencies when their incentive is purely profit

# Moving Forward

Use a community development approach to address the issue of skilled migration to ensure the **holistic development** of the worker not just in terms of economics, but also through **building solidarity in diaspora communities** and **home town associations**, Examine what are the immigrants assets as opposed to needs (ABCD approach)

Increase the number of labour inspectors to counteract workplace exploitation and agencies such as FAS could play a role in **safeguarding the employees** that they have had a role in placing

# Moving Forward

To date, migration has been viewed as a **temporary phenomenon** and **not part of a long-term strategy** to promote economic and social goals. It would be useful and desirable to **develop an explicit policy statement to guide employers, unions and civil society** on whether migrants are expected to return to their countries of origin or expected to remain and become integrated in Irish society. This would inevitably help both partnerships in sending and receiving countries

# Moving Forward

Core need in the regional areas for translation support such as **bi-lingual staff in key agencies** such as FAS, Ireland still very much mono-cultural in terms of service delivery of Public services

Put mechanisms in place for **counteracting racism** in receiving societies especially institutional racism

# Moving Forward

Migrants in Ireland come from more than 100 different countries. The resulting greater cultural diversity could boost Ireland's trade with other countries. Migrants' language skills and their knowledge of business practices in Ireland and their own countries may stimulate the development of new trading relations. **Immigration and increasing diversity are likely to spur investment into Ireland**, particularly in Dublin, where the majority of migrants are living and working.

# Moving Forward

Building **better collaborations between community partnerships from sending and receiving countries** regarding the integration of immigrants

There are some indications that Ireland is not making the best use of migrants' skills and that this is resulting in "brain waste". One study by ESRI estimates that if immigrants were in jobs that fully utilized their educational abilities, immigration would have increased Irish GNP by 3.3 per cent in the five years to 2003, rather than the actual 2.6 per cent.

(Source NES 2006 Managing Migration in Ireland: A Social and Economic Analysis)