

# **Cork County Integration Network CCIN**

## **Strategic Plan 2011 -2014**



**October 2011**



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# Foreword

We present the Cork County Integration Network Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014 at a time when Ireland is experiencing one of the worst recessions in its history. Whilst there are uncertainties in global and Irish economic outlooks and issues relating to migration, one thing that is certain is the fact that significant societal changes have taken place in Ireland over the past twelve years and the socio-cultural landscape of Ireland has changed forever. This has presented opportunities as well as challenges for learning and benefiting from “other” identities, new ideas and respect for alternative lifestyles and practices.

This Strategic Plan is our commitment to work in partnership across a wide range of agencies – locally, regionally and nationally – to support the development of ethnic minority organisations and help fulfil their aspirations and those of their communities. In a changed and culturally diverse Ireland, ethnic minority participation in decision-making processes is a right rather than a privilege.

It is time to transform integration from a subject of academic debate to real policies and practices that affect the lives of immigrants. There is a need for well thought out strategies to build the capacity of ethnic minority communities to identify their own needs, make demands and engage in meaningful dialogue and decision-making processes. Resourcing ethnic minority groups, far from promoting the emergence of parallel communities, will enable immigrants to acquire the skills and virtues they need to engage with the State and other pillars of Irish society.

It is against this backdrop that we identified key Aims and Objectives to guide the choice and development of the various initiatives

to be implemented over the next three years. Thanks to the participation of many dedicated individuals, community groups and partners, we have made tremendous progress; but much remains to be done. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the members of the Steering Committee on their work. They have demonstrated their commitment and dedication to our cherished dream of building a healthy, culturally diversified and integrated Ireland in which an individual’s self-respect is affirmed through the recognition of his/her right to employment, general economic wellbeing, adequate health care, and the expression of his/her social and cultural identities.

**Issah Huseini**  
**CEO**

**New Communities Partnership**

# Introduction

The Cork County Immigrant Network (CCIN) is a countywide network of ethnic minority organisations and individuals living in the Cork County Area. The CCIN is committed to equality, equity and empowerment of ethnic minorities across Cork County.

The Network seeks to provide a coherent and inclusive voice for ethnic minority groups in County Cork. It also aims to promote the active participation of ethnic minorities in economic, social and civic life at the local, national and international levels. The CCIN wishes to engage positively and in partnership with policy makers and civil society to ensure that the voice of ethnic minorities is heard when policies are being developed and throughout their delivery. In addition, the CCIN aims to create a welcoming communal space that is based on mutual care, where community groups across cultures meet and discuss issues that are grounded in the lived experience of their communities, information exchange, empowerment and capacity development and retention before joining others at the policy table.

The CCIN was initiated by the New Communities Partnership in October 2010; however, securing funding from the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration through the Cork County Council in January 2011 was a major milestone. It gave a strong message of hope to member groups who were increasingly frustrated by the lack of financial support for ethnic minority led organisations. The funding greatly accelerated the work of the Network and enabled it to undertake extensive outreach throughout the County, bring onboard new members and develop this Strategic Plan.

From its inception, the CCIN has embraced the challenge of working collaboratively across many nationalities and cultures to build

understanding, trust and effective working relationship. This is no small achievement, especially with so few resources. The learning from this has much to offer the new intercultural Ireland.

## Developing Ethnic Minority Voice in Cork County

The CCIN believes that integration is about building a society that respects diversity and encourages the full acceptance of people from different cultures. The Network also considers integration as being about meaningful participation in decision making, policy implementation and equal rights for all.

This Strategic Plan is a statement of intent to bring about changes to the way ethnic minority organisations work in Cork County, their relationship with policy makers, agencies, community groups and their involvement in decision making on issues that affect their lives. It also examines the role that ethnic minority organisations can play in developing and implementing a strategy that is likely to produce 'real' change and meaningful impact. Our members are fully aware that with increasing numbers of ethnic minority population in Cork County, new approaches are required to respond to diverse needs, since 'one size doesn't fit all'. Through the CCIN's leadership development and educational programmes, our emerging leaders will take up decision-making roles in the community, while empowering others to do the same. The plan will also create opportunities for ethnic minority communities to connect, engage and link with one another and facilitate a cross-cultural dialogue that is necessary for effective integration. We have learned how to do this within and beyond the CCIN itself.

# Mission, Vision and Values

## Our Mission

To empower ethnic minority organisations to meet the support needs of their communities and promote their full participation in all aspects of Irish society.

## Our Vision

To be a unified and informed regional voice for ethnic minorities, representing, promoting and advocating on their behalf at all levels.

## Values

<b>Equality and Inclusion</b>	<p>We promote equality among our members, partners and between men and women.</p> <p>We work to promote the inclusion of ethnic minorities from diverse backgrounds in all areas of society.</p>
<b>Respect and Celebration of Diversity</b>	<p>We recognise and respect the diversity of all members of society.</p> <p>We share best practices and celebrate success.</p>
<b>Partnership and Collaboration</b>	<p>We promote a two-way flow of information and ensure that partnership-working is embedded within the Network and beyond.</p>
<b>Honesty and Transparency</b>	<p>We recognise the need to be both accountable to all our stakeholders and transparent in all decision making processes.</p> <p>We also ensure that our policies and actions are clear, coherent, consistent and apply equally to all.</p>

# Swot Analysis

A strategic analysis was undertaken at one of the meetings of CCIN to provide an understanding of the environment within which ethnic minority organisations in Cork County operate. The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) exercise also provided a framework for identifying where opportunities exist, and how to avoid weaknesses inherent within the Network or external threats that can limit future growth. Generally, it offers a useful framework for revisiting our strategic policies and practices.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experienced, diverse and committed membership;</li><li>• Unity – the CCIN is united in its aims;</li><li>• Contact and close relationship with ethnic minority communities;</li><li>• Open to learning, sharing and understanding;</li><li>• Represents diverse organisations and community service users;</li><li>• There is a real need for the Network;</li><li>• Provides needed services that would otherwise not be available;</li><li>• Can bring communities together;</li><li>• Giving people, organisations and communities a voice;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of pro-activeness;</li><li>• Expectations are high;</li><li>• Lack of an effective communication strategy;</li><li>• Will need to manage a diversity of views and opinions;</li><li>• Representation will be a key issue because Cork is such a large County;</li><li>• Barriers to services – access and cultural appropriateness;</li><li>• Lack of access to key decision makers;</li><li>• Lack of capacity within member groups;</li><li>• Member groups will be looking to the Network for resources;</li><li>• Lack of funding/resources may prevent participation, even sustainability;</li><li>• Heavy dependence on limited sources of funding;</li><li>• Towing the funding line, e.g. meeting funders' demands;</li><li>• Lack of statistical information on ethnic minority communities;</li><li>• The CCIN lacks prominence and needs to be promoted;</li><li>• The Network needs a clearly defined committee structure;</li></ul>

## Opportunities

- Develop as the voice for ethnic minority communities in Cork County;
- Improve learning and share best practice;
- The CCIN can support, inform and improve cross-cultural understanding and break group stereotype;
- The Network can push ethnic minority issues up the institutional policy agenda;
- Opportunity for smaller groups to be empowered;
- Opportunity to ethnic minority groups to pool resources, e.g. office space, telephone and other supports;
- To be creative and support groups to identify and further develop specialism in their organisation;
- Opportunity to engage the political system by encouraging immigrants to register and vote in all elections;
- Can train and help ethnic minority community groups develop necessary skills;
- Access communities that do not usually get involved;
- Advocate for funding;
- To monitor quality of services provided;
- To challenge barriers on both sides ;
- To improve involvement, communication and effective consultation;

## Threats

- Changing priorities due to depressed economic environment: the CCIN will need to keep vigilant;
- The challenge of ethnic minority organisations accessing funding;
- Completing what is started;
- Access to CCIN: the CCIN must be accessible;
- The County is large and diverse: many different areas to cover; can the CCIN cover the entire region?
- The different tensions between communities;
- Competition for funding and resources;
- Sustainability of CCIN: under-funding;
- Can CCIN be a specialist and meet the needs of different communities?
- Over dependence on limited sources of funding;



# Summary of Key Strategic Aims

Each aim has an associated set of actions that will ensure the delivery of the strategy over the next three years (2011 - 2014).

## Key Strategic Aims

Strategic Aim 1	Build the organisational and membership capacity of the CCIN.
Strategic Aim 2	Provide a coherent and unified voice and ensure ethnic minority groups have meaningful participation in policy and service provision.
Strategic Aim 3	Act as information, communication and networking 'hub' for ethnic minorities in the County.
Strategic Aim 4	Promote integration and celebrate diversity.

“ We want a document to tell our side of the story; not just to highlight our needs, but to show how we can be part of the solution. We need this document to show that we are responsible for our own development and not ready to give away responsibility or expect other people through some idea of social justice to be responsible for us. ”

# Strategic Aim 1

**Aim 1:** Build the Organisational and Membership Capacity of the CCIN.

**Objective 1.1:** Establish a Steering Committee.

**Actions:**

- The network will elect a Steering Committee of not less than seven members and not more than nine;
- There will be a minimum of three women represented on the committee;
- Committee members will be drawn from community organisations within the Network;
- Committee membership is not open to non-representatives of active CCIN groups;
- The process of nominating individuals onto the Steering Committee shall always be in line with the Network's core principles of gender and geographical balance and expertise to input in committee businesses;
- The Committee will liaise with Cork County Council and NCP on issues in relation to staff recruitment and management, funding and expenditure, and planning;

**Objective 1.2:** Provide Capacity Building and Leadership Training.

**Actions:**

- In partnership with other agencies, will provide a leadership education pathway training programme to between 15 and 20 active community leaders;
- Support the emergence, growth and development of ethnic minority led organisations in the County;
- Hold monthly meetings of the Steering Committee to deal with operational issues and, in the case of urgent issues, an emergency meeting can be held;
- Facilitate member groups to review the process whereby they are represented on the Steering Committee, taking onboard recommendations from such a review;
- Support member groups to develop and analyse issues that impact on the lives of minority ethnic communities;
- Develop action plans for specific issues;
- Hold at least six network meetings per year;
- Facilitate the delivery of training in community development, management committee skills, strategic planning and policy development;
- Conduct a six-monthly review of the actions of the Network;

**Objective 1.3:** Build Membership and Engagement in the CCIN to Facilitate Collective Action.

**Actions:**

- Reach out to all ethnic minority groups in the County and ensure they are fully involved with the Network's structures, training programmes and decision making;
- Encourage active participation of ethnic minority women in the Network by paying particular attention to their inclusion on all structures of the CCIN;
- Build trust, cooperation and teamwork within the CCIN by ensuring that the work of Network is grounded in what member groups want;
- Convene an annual conference of ethnic minority groups in the County;
- Hold a consultation process with the CCIN membership and other ethnic minority stakeholders as part of the process of producing a two-year strategy for the Network by December 2014;

**Objective 1.4:** Build the Financial Capacity of the CCIN.

**Actions:**

- Prioritise the issue of funding and other capacity support for ethnic minority led groups in the County continuously;
- Build the financial capacity of the CCIN through incorporation of fund-raising element into activities, events, etc;
- Actively seek resources from funders within national and local government, the EU and philanthropic organisations to support core and programme costs;
- Deliver basic training on managing finances for non-profit organisations to members of the Network;

## Strategic Aim 2

**Aim 2:** Provide a Coherent and Unified Voice and Ensure Ethnic Minority Groups have Meaningful Participation in Policy and Service Provision.

**Objective 2.1:** Facilitate Dialogue and Engagement with Policy making and Service Planning Structures.

**Actions:**

- The CCIN will develop its own policy capacity by entering into dialogue with key local policy development agencies and community development organisations;
- Provide training to members to explain and examine the local authority structure, how policy decisions are made, and how it is connected to the wider political system;
- Promote and support the participation of members in local authority strategic policy committees and other local forums and networks relevant to the work of the CCIN;
- Ensure that representatives have feedback and support mechanism to fully represent the views of the Network rather than those of individuals;
- Actively support the County Council to develop an Integration Strategy for the County;

**Objective 2.2:** Provide a Coherent and Unified Voice for Ethnic Minorities in the County.

**Actions:**

- Provide support to Network members on how they can become active members of their local community;
- Facilitate training and mentoring process that will build empowerment, trust, cooperation, teamwork and leadership across member groups;
- Provide a space to facilitate open discussion to ensure that issues of concern are raised and heard within and outside the Network;
- Maintain regular contact with individuals and member groups and put into effect a programme of actions that best meets needs and leverage strengths;

**Objective 2.3:** Lobby and Advocate on behalf of Ethnic Minority Groups.

**Actions:**

- Work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure that the rights of ethnic minorities are protected, especially in relation to equality of treatment, opportunity and outcome;
- Develop and support joint actions to combat racism and discrimination;
- Ensure that ethnic minorities have equal access to services;
- Work closely with service providers to improve their understanding of cultures, diverse needs and responses required regarding the specific service they provide;
- Seek new ways to model partnerships and referral relationships to reduce duplication of programmes and services to ethnic minorities;

“We need to start engaging in policy decision making – not just turning up to show ‘colour’.”

“Economic integration is fundamental to social, political and civic integration- for us getting a job is not all about work, it means Dignity, Respect, Integrity, Honesty and Sense of worth.”

# Strategic Aim 3

**Aim 3:** Act as Information, Communication and Networking 'hub' for Ethnic Minorities in the County.

**Objective 3.1:** Ensure that Ethnic Minorities have accurate Information on Services in a Variety of Creative Media.

**Actions:**

- Conduct survey to identify gaps in service provision to ethnic minorities;
- Encourage members of ethnic minority communities and representative groups to share information and resources with other members of the Network and to filter information back to their own communities;
- Promote the culturally appropriate sharing and dissemination of information to ethnic communities within the County on relevant issues;
- The Network will seek to engage with SOLAS, VEC, County Enterprise Board and other relevant bodies in relation to the employment and education needs of ethnic minorities in the County;

**Objective 3.2:** Promote Positive Messaging of Ethnic Minorities in the County.

**Actions:**

- Develop a long term communication strategy to promote positive messaging of ethnic minority communities;
- Establish links with community and voluntary groups to raise awareness of local events where positive messaging of ethnic minorities can be promoted;
- Establish links with local schools for outreach work in order to promote a positive immigrant image;
- Build a healthy relationship with local newspapers and develop a weekly/monthly cultural column to promote positive messaging of ethnic minorities in the County;

**Objective 3.3:** Develop promotional materials

**Actions:**

- Develop research projects to provide evidence of positive immigrant contribution to Irish society;
- Develop promotional material on cultural/religious celebrations of different cultures to highlight their commonalities as well as respect their differences;
- Develop a series of brochures on different themes to make information sharing more visual;

# Strategic Aim 4

**Aim4:** Promote Integration and Celebrate Diversity.

**Objective 4.1:** Develop Appropriate Links with Local Organisations and Statutory Agencies to build an Integrated County.

**Actions:**

- Provide opportunity for ethnic minorities to be exposed to Irish culture and history through field-trips, visits, story-telling and linkages with Irish cultural groups;
- Work with organisations/groups to ensure the continuity of dialogue in relation to cultural diversity and integration;
- To provide ongoing social and other opportunities for CCIN members to interact and build mutual respect and trust and knowledge about one another;
- Invite other groups to CCIN activities and meetings, encouraging a two-way flow of information sharing and understanding;
- Ensure that member groups are familiar with the roles and responsibilities of community, voluntary and statutory organisations;

**Objective 4.2:** Facilitate and Promote Variety of Intercultural Events and Raise Cultural Awareness in the County.

**Actions:**

- Hold at least one multicultural event per year (music, dance, etc.);
- Support ethnic minority communities to actively participate in all local sporting events and activities that will break down barriers;
- Develop a photographic exhibition about the new communities' origin countries with emphasis their uniqueness;
- Support and facilitate the delivery of cultural awareness training/workshops to schools, agencies and community organisations;
- Create spaces for ethnic minorities and host community to interact and share experiences in a respectful and friendly environment;
- Organise intercultural social and art-based events to focussing on exploring identities and showcasing other cultures and beliefs;
- Ensure that ethnic minorities participate actively in wider social inclusion events in the County;

The setting up of CCIN and the production of this strategic plan was financed by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration of the Department of Justice and Equality through the Social Inclusion Division of Cork County Council.

