

Developing and harnessing information to inform policy and practice in the migration field

Showcasing Approaches –
Case Study No. 2



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This case study has been produced as part of an independent evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme. It highlights promising practices and lessons for grantees identified during the evaluation. Over 35 years, Atlantic has made grants totaling \$8 billion to advance opportunity, equity and human dignity. Further information about Atlantic and the evaluation is provided at the end of this document.

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Key messages

- **Organisations advocating for policy and practice change can inform the debate around migration, countering misconceptions about migration levels and trends, and expanding understanding of the experiences of migrants.** For example, Doras Luimní and the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, working with other organisations, produced a report on migrants' access to and experience of the Irish social welfare system that received attention and prompted action from the Minister for Social Protection.
- **The impact and relevance of publications and reports can be heightened by consulting representatives of the target audience to understand their needs.** The Integration Centre used the launch of a report on integration in Dublin to discuss its findings with local council members and other relevant parties. What they learned from this event was taken into account when the Centre produced its annual Roadmap to Integration reports, giving them greater credibility with relevant stakeholders.
- **Robust, accurate, relevant databases, including ones that facilitate comparisons between the policies and practices of different countries, can be powerful advocacy tools for policy change.** The Asylum Information Database developed by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles is respected by European institutions and seen as a trusted and reliable information source. Similarly, the European Database of Asylum Law, created by the Irish Refugee Council in partnership with the European Council on Refugees, is a go-to source for case law throughout Europe and helps to harmonise standards of protection.
- **Organisations in the migration field can disseminate their knowledge and share their expertise by providing training for practitioners working with migrants.** For example, the Immigrant Council of Ireland provides bi-annual training to police investigators and detectives. This helps to raise awareness and potentially change behaviours in a way that may benefit migrants.

Background

Information is the life blood of policy change, and is especially vital in policy areas such as migration where debate is often polarised. Organisations that work with and for migrants at local and national levels have access to information that others do not. This could be of value to government entities and policymakers. If presented and packaged in the right ways – in reports, databases and training – it has the potential to change policy, practice and behaviours around migration.

What Atlantic Funded

All the organisations receiving funding support from The Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme developed and harnessed information and evidence to improve policy and

practice. This case study showcases grantees' approaches to this:

- Contributing to studies and reports
- Creating databases
- Delivering training to stakeholders

Lessons Learned

Organisations advocating for policy and practice change can inform the debate around migration

Public and political debate on the topic of migration is often based on inaccurate or incomplete information. Providing better evidence to the public, practitioners and policymakers about issues such as migration levels, the experiences of migrants, or the challenges they face in accessing services and justice is a potentially powerful advocacy tool.

For example, **Doras Luimní** explained the impact of sharing a report entitled *Person or number?* with the Irish Minister for Social Protection. This report described barriers facing migrants trying to access social protection in Ireland and made recommendations to address them. It was produced as a result of collaboration between Doras Luimní and two other organisations (the Irish Immigrant Support Centre and Crosscare) and was based on information provided by six nongovernmental organisations working with migrants.

The Minister for Social Protection agreed to launch the report, and met with the three organisations to discuss the findings. As a result, the Minister established a Migrant Consultative Forum,¹ co-chaired by the Ministry for Social Protection and migrant organisations. The work of the forum has led to the establishment of training sessions for members of staff at the Department of Social Protection and administrative changes – such as changing the design of forms completed by those applying for the Habitual Residence Condition.² Migrants must satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition in order to be eligible for most means-tested social welfare payments in Ireland.

Consulting stakeholders when producing reports makes them more likely to be used

By conducting literature reviews and consulting with organisations active in the integration field, Atlantic grantees created reports on topics relevant to policymakers.

For example, **The Integration Centre** developed Ireland's *Annual Monitoring Report on Integration* in partnership with the **Economic and Social Research Institute**. This report has been widely cited by the Irish government, academic journals and the media. It shows progress on different aspects of migrant integration using easy-to-read "traffic



The Integration Centre's *Annual Monitoring Report on Integration* (left) is geared to members of Parliament and policymakers. The *Roadmap to Integration* (below), published by The Integration Centre, built on responses to its *Annual Monitoring Report on Integration*.



light" indicators. It is specifically designed to target Teachta Dálas (TDs/Members of the Irish Parliament), policymakers and public service workers.

The Integration Centre also developed its own monitoring reports on integration at local authority level (*Monitoring Integration in Dublin City*), as well as an annual *Roadmap to Integration* report that charts changes in policy on topics from education to health, identifying barriers to immigrant integration in Ireland.

The Integration Centre sought to make the findings of the reports more robust by holding a launch event for the first report, in which findings were discussed and further developed, feeding into the wider *Roadmap to Integration* report. Staff presented the research at the Intercultural Cities conference (co-hosted by Dublin City Council and the Council of Europe) and at other venues. These interactions helped improve the content of reports and enhance the Centre's reputation as a key partner on integration work.

Robust, accurate, relevant databases can be powerful advocacy tools for policy change

One of Atlantic's grantees – **The European Council on Refugees and Exiles** – has been involved in the development of a database of information about asylum procedures, reception conditions and detention across a number of European countries – the Asylum Information Database or AIDA. The objective of AIDA is to provide information about asylum for a range of audiences including the media, researchers, advocates, legal practitioners and the public.



The Asylum Information Database (AIDA) is increasingly seen as a trusted information source by key decision-makers

Based on discussions with its key contacts, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles reported that the European Commission and other stakeholders value the information available within AIDA. The European Commission has approached the European Council on Refugees and Exiles and its partners to add more countries to the database and the European Asylum Support Office has invited the Council to discuss how they might use the database.³

AIDA includes information on 16 European Union (EU) member states and two neighbouring states (Turkey and Switzerland). The information is provided by country experts selected by the Council and its partners⁴ who use it to produce reports. AIDA regularly is cited by legal practitioners and courts across a number of European countries. For example, judicial authorities in Belgium, the United Kingdom and Switzerland have relied on AIDA reports to assess the lawfulness of transfers of asylum seekers under the Dublin Regulation.

The European Council on Refugees' growing reputation as a source of reliable evidence has precipitated meetings with other key European organisations. For instance, in June 2013, the Council met with the European Parliament Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Secretariat to discuss collaboration after the implementation of Common European Asylum System (which introduces similar processes for applying for asylum throughout the EU).⁵ In addition, the European Commission has asked the Council to provide technical input on proposals, as well as to provide members of the European Parliament with information and briefings.⁶

Another online database, the European Database of Asylum Law, created by the **Irish Refugee Council** in partnership with the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, provides free access to key asylum and refugee case law from 16 EU member states and other sources.

The case law database has more than 1,000 summaries of relevant jurisprudence in both English and the member state's national language. It enables legal practitioners, decision-makers and policymakers to learn from practice in other EU countries and to increase consistency and quality in the interpretation of EU asylum law. Both AIDA and the case law database strengthen the development of harmonised standards of protection within the Common European Asylum System and highlight areas where there are failings in the interpretation and application of legislation by member states.

Organisations can share their expertise by providing training for practitioners working with migrants

Training activities aim to improve knowledge, raise awareness and change behaviour among practitioners and policymakers as well as to empower migrants themselves. Training delivered by grantees included:



Lawyers — The European Council on Refugees and Exiles trained lawyers through its European Legal Network on Asylum courses. The courses were delivered in three-day sessions in different cities. In 2013, courses were delivered in Lisbon on the International Protection of Refugees and in Dublin on Refugee Protection and the Dublin System. This sharing of information among lawyers addresses the European Council on Refugees and Exiles' objective that legal professionals are well-versed in EU asylum law and can apply the law consistently with international standards.



Detectives — Another Atlantic grantee, the **Immigrant Council of Ireland's Law Centre**, provided bi-annual training to detectives. The training consisted of a module on human trafficking and representation of victims.⁷



Statutory agencies and bodies — The Immigrant Council of Ireland provided staff members in 110 Citizens Information Offices with training on migration issues. **Doras Luimní** provided training to local/regional groups including statutory bodies, gardaí, the Department of Social Protection and community and voluntary groups.



Health care professionals — Atlantic grantee **Akina Dada wa Africa (AkiDwa)** trained more than 3,000 health care professionals on issues surrounding female genital mutilation.⁸



Migrants — The Migrants Rights Centre Ireland delivered training to more than 400 people on employment rights, individual advocacy, irregular migration and forced labour.

Challenges to Developing and Harnessing Information to Inform Policy and Practice ... and What It Holds for the Future

While this case study has highlighted impacts associated with developing and harnessing evidence and information, the evaluation of the Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme has also identified a number of challenges that organisations face in collecting, analysing and using information.



Ensuring the quality of information collected

All grantees stressed that the quality and reliability of information in databases and reports is essential to generating trust and ensuring that high-level stakeholders use the information. For example, while The Integration Centre reported that it has received praise for the quality of its research, it acknowledged that some users have questioned the analytical depth of some publications. A key challenge for organisations is to add value by going beyond purely descriptive statistics. For instance, organisations might add value by conducting or commissioning an analysis that considers trends, visualises data over time and compares findings between countries.



Securing interest and attention from key audiences and translating information into action

Disseminators of information can be hampered by a lack of interest on the part of relevant stakeholders. The experiences of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Migration Policy Group and The Integration Centre suggest it is essential for organisations to first understand what kind of information policymakers find useful and the format in which they prefer to receive it, and then to tailor information collection, organisation and dissemination accordingly.



Measuring the impact of training

Organisations delivering training often do not know whether participants apply the knowledge learned in their day-to-day work, or whether the training has resulted in changes in attitudes or understanding. This can be discovered by seeking feedback from participants in the months following the training and inquiring whether the information learned has altered their practices. Another way of understanding the extent to which training has added value is to invite participants in previous training sessions to present in subsequent trainings, sharing their own experiences of applying the training.

Conclusion

This case study has described four ways in which migration nongovernmental organisations might develop and harness information to inform policy and practice. Some organisations find that collecting data, conducting research and publishing reports positions them as an expert source and establishes new connections and networks to distribute their advocacy material. When organisations invest the time and expertise to develop and own a database of information relevant to the field, they also build their own reputation as a key provider of relevant and quality information. Other organisations package their knowledge and expertise to provide training to practitioners, policymakers and migrants, further informing the field.

The examples provided show how good information, delivered in an accessible and targeted manner, can be a key input for advocacy to change policy and practice.

Endnotes

1. The Advocacy Initiative (2012) Case study 1: Doras Luimní in co-operation with Crosscare and Nasc.
<http://www.advocacyinitiative.ie/resource/case-study-1-doras-luimni-co-operation-crosscare-nasc> Accessed 15 December 2016
2. Doras Luimní Mid-term Evaluation Business Plan 2012-2014 (unpublished)
3. European Council on Refugees and Exiles Progress Report to the Atlantic Philanthropies, November 2013 (unpublished).
4. Asylum Aid (2015) Country Report: United Kingdom.
<http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/united-kingdom#sthash.AU80lbr1.dpufj> Accessed 15 December 2016.
5. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2013) Final report 2010-2013; grant no. 17406 (unpublished).
6. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2010): Final Report 2007-10; grant no. 15615 (unpublished).
7. Integration Centre Progress Report 2013-2014 (unpublished).
8. AkiDwa evaluation progress reports (unpublished).

About this case study and the evaluation of The Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme

Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme

Over 35 years, Atlantic has made grants totaling \$8 billion to advance opportunity, equity and human rights. A limited-life foundation, Atlantic completed its grantmaking in 2016, and will cease operations by 2020.

The Atlantic Philanthropies Migration Programme is a central delivery mechanism for their Reconciliation and Human Rights strategy in the Republic of Ireland. At the heart of the strategy is the fundamental objective of improving access to justice and services for migrants. Atlantic has provided 46 grants to 18 organisations (or initiatives) working domestically in the Republic of Ireland and at the European Union level since 2004.

RAND Europe's evaluation

Atlantic commissioned RAND Europe to undertake a summative evaluation of their Migration Programme. The overarching aims of the evaluation are to:

- Undertake a programme-level review of the work supported by Atlantic up to the end of 2012
- Monitor ongoing progress, developments and impacts up to the end of 2014
- Identify any emerging issues, challenges or opportunities that may be on the horizon for the programme

Full details of the methodology for the research can be found in the final evaluation report available at www.rand.org/t/rr484.

About this case study

As part of the evaluation of the Migration Programme, a series of case studies have been developed to highlight innovative practice, showcase promising practices, and identify lessons relevant to other organisations and grantmakers working in the migration field. The information presented in this case study is based on a review of documentation produced by Atlantic's grantees, and interviews with grantees and stakeholders conducted as part of the evaluation. More information underpinning the key messages included in this case study can be obtained in the final evaluation report.

Contact information

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For further information about this document please contact:

Emma Disley
Associate Group Director, RAND Europe
edisley@rand.org
www.randeurope.org