



At the ICI launch, from left: Shane O'Curry of INAR, Kate Clifford of Rural Community Network, Ade Anjorin of MSCNI, Lilian Seenoi Barr of NWMF, Paul Kernan of Donegal Intercultural Platform, Avila Kilmurray of Social Change Initiative and Jahswill Emmanuel of MSCNI.

## Learning and laughter at launch of ICI Programme

OUR Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme got off to a flying start with a gala launch in Monaghan.

There was discussion, there was networking, there was singing and there was dancing at Monaghan Peace Campus as almost 150 people gathered to see the ribbon officially cut on the ICI Programme, made possible through support from PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Funding of €2,925,134.56 was allocated following a joint application by five partners – North West Migrants Forum, Rural Community Network, Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI (MSCNI), Irish Network Against Racism and Donegal Intercultural Platform clg.

Among those who contributed to the launch were Northern Ireland's First Minister Michelle O'Neill, Junior Minister Joanne Bunting and the Republic of Ireland's Rural Affairs Minister Jerry Buttimer. Musically, the launch was lit up by the fabulous New Land Choir, members of whom travelled from Donegal and country music star Ritchie Remo who had the audience on their feet with a string of well known songs. In her remarks, NI First Minister Michelle O'Neill said the ICI Programme will "support a shared and inclusive future that everyone, no matter where they come from, feels safe, respected and a part of their communities". Her Stormont colleague, Junior Minister Joanne Bunting described

the ICI Programme as "a landmark project that reflects our collective commitment to creating a fair and prosperous future for everyone". Jerry Buttimer TD said the programme seeks to cultivate positive relationships characterised by "respect where individuals are able to live, learn and engage with one another, free from prejudice, hatred and intolerance". The rollout of the ICI Programme, under the leadership of Richard Lynas who has been appointed ICIP Manager, has already begun with workshops taking place in schools and engagements being sought with communities on both sides of the border. You can read the press release in full here: <https://shorturl.at/e40z0>

### In this edition of your NWMF newsletter...

- Eid Al-Fitr celebration marks end of Ramadan
- NWMF website gets a makeover
- New members elected to Board of Directors
- Mixed emotions as members move on



*Our CEO Lilian with contractor Kyle Hamilton and some of our members, discussing the colour scheme for the new carpet in our Intercultural Café.*

# OPENING DATE IN SIGHT FOR NEW INTERCULTURAL CAFÉ

*WORK is continuing on our new Intercultural Café with a launch date of June 20 - World Refugee Day - now earmarked. It has been quite the journey to get to this point but we are delighted to see the project finally coming together. We believe that once completed, the café on the second floor of the Embassy Building (directly below our current headquarters on the third floor), will be a huge asset to all tenants of the high*

*rise property in the heart of the city centre. Once fully operational, the café will be used to train our members, preparing them for the hospitality industry, should they choose to move in that direction. This will be in collaboration with Craft Training to whom we are immensely grateful. On Thursday of last week our members were given a glimpse of what the café will look like and were even invited to*



*choose the colour scheme. Exciting times ahead and a massive thank you to SEUBP and the PEACEPLUS team at Derry Strabane Council for all the support!*

# Eid Al-Fitr celebration

*MANY of our members gathered in North West Migrants Forum on Friday, March 20, to mark Eid Al-Fitr.*

*Eid al-Fitr is an important Islamic festival that marks the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting.*

*The day began in prayer followed by celebrations with family and friends. The gathering at NWMF was filled with gratitude, generosity and joy with friends coming together to enjoy food and drink in an atmosphere of community, spirituality and togetherness.*



*A selection of photos of our members enjoying Eid al-Fitr with us.*





*NWMF staff along with new and outgoing members of the NWMF Board of Directors as well as others who joined our AGM on January 23.*

## ALL CHANGE AS FORUM WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS TO ITS BOARD

THE North West Migrants Forum's Board of Directors has eight new members following the charity's annual general meeting.

In one of the biggest shake-ups in the organisation's history, five long-time board members announced their retirement, a declaration that opened the door for a wave of fresh faces.

After five years as Board chairperson, Marija Stuke revealed that she would not be seeking re-election. Likewise Irina Chernichenko declared her resignation as treasurer, a post she held for five years. Ibrahim Dandousha, Munadel Bazzara and Philip McDermott have also stepped back.

Speaking following the AGM, the charity's Chief Executive Lilian Seenoi Barr said she wished to place on record her sincere gratitude to all the outgoing board members. Replacing them will be individuals from a range of countries and with a variety of skillsets, all of which will be put to good use as the North West Migrants Forum moves into its busiest period since its establishment 14 years ago. The new Board members are Vicky Aldana and Sylvester Ngwa who have been elected as chair and treasurer respectively, Ala Alsygaly, Peter Jennings, Farida Hassan, Imani Strong, Hala Omar and Seun Awonuga.

Welcoming everyone to the team, Lilian Seenoi Barr said, "Our aim has always been to keep moving forward with compassion and resolve. We cannot do that without a Board that is passionate and engaged and that is willing to provide direction, scrutiny and solidarity, through the highs and the lows.

"To all those coming on to our Board, I want to say thank you for recognising the importance of what we do - bringing communities together, defending human rights and advancing a vision of a united and inclusive Ireland that respects difference and celebrates diversity," Mrs Barr added.

# NWMF Chief Executive talks anti-racism with former First Minister of Scotland

COUNTERING anti-immigrant narratives was among the issues discussed when North West Migrants Forum Chief Executive Lilian Seenoi Barr met Scotland's former first minister Nicola Sturgeon.

The women spoke as part of a two-day trip by Mrs Barr and NWMF Welfare Officer Dominic Narthey to Glasgow following an invite from the SNP.

As well as the need to challenge rising anti-immigrant messaging, Mrs Barr and Mrs Sturgeon talked about the need for stronger integration policies.

Mrs Barr described the overall engagement as a "real reminder of what positive politics looks like".

Day one of the visit saw Mr Narthey and the former mayor of Derry and Strabane meet with the National Africans and Black Association to explore issues including:

- Supporting young Black people to build confidence, develop leadership skills and pathways into community leadership
- Strengthening community engagement and collective organising
- Challenging rising anti-immigrant and anti-Black racism
- Progressing and supporting the NWMF's Black Heritage Project
- Mentoring and leadership development for young people
- Joint advocacy and campaigning for stronger integration policies for minoritised communities



*North West Migrants Forum Chief Executive Lilian Seenoi Barr and NWMF Welfare Officer Dominic Narthey with former First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon.*

An emphasis was also placed on east-west cooperation and building a shared, values-led movement grounded in solidarity and anti-racism.

Day two saw the pair of NWMF representatives attended an SNP candidate adoption event where Equality Minister Kaukab Stewart MP was selected to contest the upcoming election. "I was delighted to be there to see Kaukab Stewart MP chosen to contest the upcoming election, alongside inspiring progressives including former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, leader of Glasgow City Council Councillor Susan Aitken and our friend and ally Councillor Graham Campbell," said Mrs Barr.

"We held important conversations about countering anti-immigrant and anti-equality narratives that seek to divide communities and fuel fear.

"We are organising, mobilising and standing with good people who want a future built on equity, dignity and respect for all.

"The advocacy continues and I want to reiterate my thanks to everyone who met us and showed us such warm hospitality. A particular mention must go to Councillor Graham Campbell for organising and facilitating the meetings.

"I look forward to follow-up engagements and building on the work that has begun," Mrs Barr added.

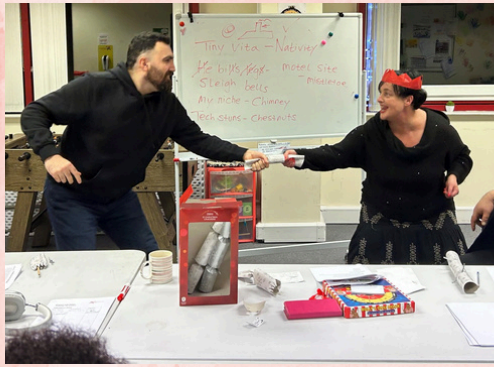
# Thank you and all the best Helen!

**AFTER** almost two years as an English teacher at North West Migrants Forum, Helen Warby announced in January her intention to stand down. Helen was much respected within NWMF, by both her colleagues and her students. Not only did she offer her skills as a teacher, she also volunteered at many of our events.

Helen's colourful, energetic and fun approach will be sadly missed but as the saying goes, all good things come to an end. Thank you Helen and we wish you well in whatever you choose to do next.



*Helen in various roles, including at our awards when she was shortlisted as Teacher of the Year.*



## NWMF welcomes new English tutors

THE North West Migrants Forum is delighted to welcome three new volunteer English tutors to its team in Joi Allender, Jimmy Quigley and Doaa Nabil Ahmed.

Joi, who hails from the USA, Jimmy who is a retired school teacher and Doaa, an Ulster University student from Palestine, all bring with them different skills and styles of teaching. This is fantastic for our members as they strive to master the language and ultimately find employment or commence studying. Joi, Jimmy and Doaa join Ann Daly and Martha McClelland on our rota of tutors and we want to say a huge thank you to them all for coming on board. Giving us your precious time is not a gift we treat lightly.



*Joi Allender who has begun volunteering as an English tutor at NWMF.*



*New NWMF tutor Jimmy Quigley.*



*NWMF is many things, including a place of learning.*

**Class times:**

- **Martha: Mondays, 11am to Noon**
- **Joi: Mondays, 3.30pm to 5pm**
- **Ann: Tuesdays, 11.30am to 1pm**
- **Doaa: Wednesdays, 2pm to 3.15pm**
- **Jimmy: 1pm to 2.30pm**

# Learning and laughter at ICIP launch



**PEACEPLUS**  
Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Northern Ireland  
Executive  
www.northernireland.gov.uk

Two pages of photo coverage from Monaghan Peace Campus where our Intercultural Cross-border Inclusion Programme was unveiled on January 21.



Above, left to right: Anthony Aborisade, Jahwsill Emmanuel and Patience Opinn of MSCNI, Conor McNickle of The Executive Office, Imani Strong and Lilian Seenoi Barr of NWMF, Kate Clifford of Rural Community Network, Paul Sheridan of SEUPB, Shane O'Curry of INAR, Liam Caffrey of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Ade Anjorin of MSCNI, Paul Kernan of Donegal Intercultural Platform, Paul Sceeny of NWMF and Bukola Adewuyi of MSCNI.



INAR representatives with NWMF Chief Lilian Seenoi Barr.



Three schoolgirls enjoy a giggle at the launch.



The stunning New Land Choir who performed at the launch.



Ala Alslygaly, Farida Hassan and Obada Ali.



Country music star Ritchie Remo doing his thing at the ICI Programme launch.



NWMF Board Member Imani Strong who compered the event.



Enjoying the show!



Ministers Michelle O'Neill, Joanne Bunting and Jerry Buttimer.



It truly was a day to celebrate. The partners know the hard work starts now but everyone is up for the challenge.

# Mixed emotions as members move on to pastures new

IT has been a strange few months for us here at the Migrants Forum with five members leaving Derry in search of a future elsewhere. We never like to see people going as they always mean more to us than 'service users'. They are our friends, they are volunteers and they are part of our lives. But we also understand that Derry isn't always going to be final destination for people, that there are other cities to which they might be better suited. It's all part of the journey, for NWMF and for those who come to us for help. In 2025 we introduced our 'Friendship Board' so as not to forget those who have crossed our path.

But also to let them know that they will always be part of the North West Migrants Forum story and that we will be here should they need us again in the future.

To all who have left us in recent months and everyone on the Friendship Board, we wish you only good things.



*Filimon Rezene who has left Derry to start a new life in Glasgow.*



*Abdallah Abujayyab who has gone to Glasgow.*



*Weizerit Gebremariam Haile who has moved to London.*



*Ali Alenizi who has also gone to London in search of work.*



*Farida Hassan who left us for Manchester.*



*Our Friendship Board where we pin a photo of each member who has come to us but subsequently left Derry. Despite only being introduced last year, the board is almost full already.*

# NWMF gets digital makeover

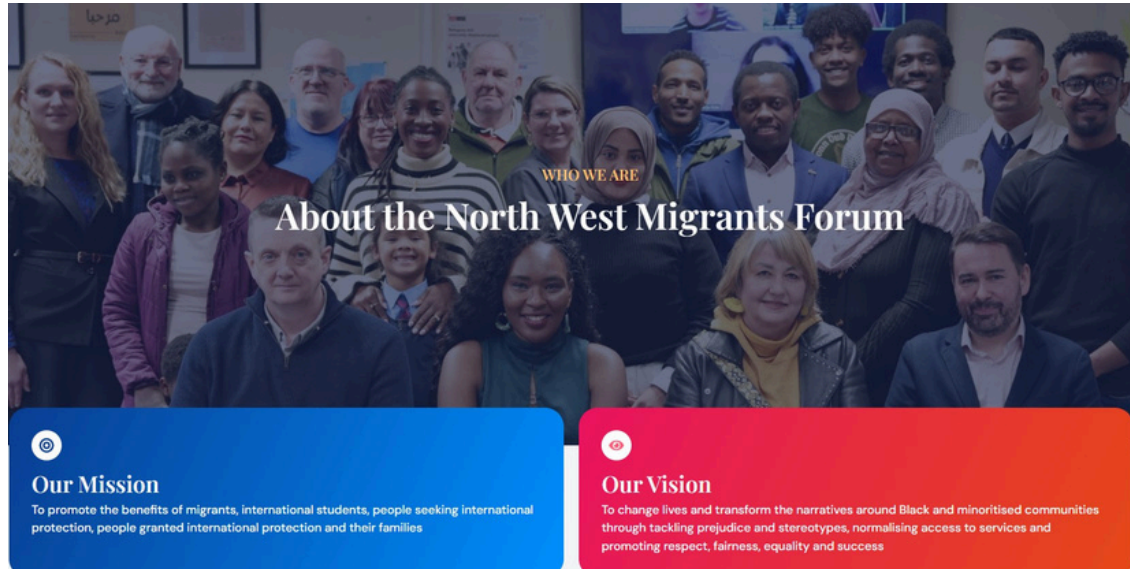
New website gives fresh vibe to all our projects, campaigns, events and activities

IN case you hadn't noticed, the North West Migrants Forum has a new website!

As of January, the team at Fix Kenya Ltd has taken over the design and management of the site.

They have given a fresh new look that accurately reflects all the work that we do as well as colourful coverage of our various events, classes, news and campaigns.

In an age where having a pleasing and easy-to-use website is crucial, we are delighted with what Robert and colleagues at Fix Kenya



*The guys at Fix Kenya Ltd have done a great job in designing our new website.*

have come up with. The feedback has already been very positive and we look forward to our bright and breezy new

online presence helping us to attract more members, keep the general public up to date with our work as well as ensuring a

continued confidence among our funders. If you haven't seen it yet, you can check our new website out today at [www.nwmf.org.uk](http://www.nwmf.org.uk)

## Bits 'n' bobs from here and there...



*Our Welfare and Integration Officer Gaëlle presenting the North West Anti-Racism Charter to Damian Gorman of Children in Crossfire.*



*Two of our younger members, Obada and Abdulrahman, during a visit to Cardiff as part of the Co-Op Foundation's annual Learning Event. With them were our staff members Aynaz Zarif and Dominic Nartey.*

# Remote Scottish island gets to hear about NWMF's work

THE Shed Project and Barn Family Centre in Stornoway welcomed North West Migrants Forum to the Isle of Lewis as part of a visit to explore best practice in community-led support.

Our CEO Lilian Seenoi Barr and our Welfare Officer Dominic Narthey spent time visiting community projects across the island to learn more about how organisations in the Western Isles are responding to local need with innovation, collaboration and care. Staff and volunteers of The Shed Project and the newly constructed Barn Family Centre shared their vision and practice in delivering whole-family, trauma-informed support to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Since its creation over a decade ago, The Shed Project has grown into a hub of relational, early intervention/preventative and community-rooted support. At the heart of everything is a belief that transformation happens through connection, dignity and belonging. As two charities working in very different geographical contexts, the exchange highlighted how learning travels across regions. While NWMF supports migrant communities and The Shed Project serves families across rural island communities in the Western Isles, both are united in their commitment to helping those who may feel isolated, vulnerable or overlooked. Christeen Macdonald, Manager at the Shed/Barn Family Centre said: "It was a real privilege to host colleagues from North



*Lilian and Dominic with some of the volunteers of The Shed Project and The Barn Family Centre during a visit to Stornoway in February.*

West Migrants Forum and to share the heart behind our work. We believe deeply in partnership and collaboration – no one organisation can meet every need alone. When charities come together to learn from one another, it strengthens our collective ability to serve our communities well." Lilian Seenoi Barr added, "It was truly inspiring to spend time in a small town with such heart, commitment and deep care for its community. "At NWMF we believe in community-led solutions rooted in dignity and lived experience and it was wonderful to see those same values so strongly reflected in The Shed Project and Barn Family Centre. What impressed us most was how lived experience shapes

programmes and how service users are supported to grow into project delivery partners and community workers. This is a model we strongly advocate for in our own work. "The visit was inspired by The Shed's clear community-oriented purpose and we were keen to learn how they collaborate with schools, young people, families, community organisations and the council to deliver real impact. "Their social café ( The Shed Cafe) model has given us valuable insight as we develop our own community social café initiative and their youth service, particularly how they complement the school curriculum while working closely with parents was a key learning area for us as we plan our own youth provision," Mrs Barr added.

# Looking ahead...Upcoming events and dates for the diary

ALMOST as if we are solar powered, the sunnier weather sees the wheels of activity gather speed at North West Migrants Forum!

The Summer months have always been a busy time for us with various events taking place.

This year is no different and if anything, it is gearing up to be even more hectic than usual.

Our season of events kicks off with our Cross-Cultural Ceilidh returning to Cultúrlann on May 21. Details are still being finalised and it is funding dependent but rest assured, you'll be the first to know once we have everything ironed out. We will then celebrate Africa Day through our participation in a culturally-themed health and wellbeing day at North West Regional College on May 22.

After that we are into two of our annual flagship events - our Summer Club and our Family Fun Day. Again details of both will be released in due course.

We are also on the countdown to the launch of our Intercultural Café, set to open on the second floor of the Embassy Building on Strand Road.

## Lots going on

Throw into that mix our various other programmes, workshops and campaigns, the continued development of our Black Heritage NI: Hidden History Project, our €3 million Intercultural Cross-Border Inclusion Programme, our Social Café, English classes, our ongoing Common Travel Area lobbying and our role as Secretariat of the All-Party Group on Ethnic Minority Community and you start to get a flavour of just how busy it is around here.

Keep any eye on our website and social media, we post everything you need to know on there!



*If funding allows, our Cross-Cultural Ceilidh will return to Cultúrlann on May 21.*



*Our Summer Club will also be back in July. Are we looking forward to it? You bet we are!*



*And there will be hotdogs, hula hoops and heaps of laughs at our family fun day.*

# A photographic sprint through the last three months

The old saying goes that a picture speaks a thousand words. Here are images of just some of the things we have been up to since our last newsletter.



Our main hall stepped in soothing colours for a sensory session organised as part of our Mothers and Babies Group. Mums and Babies continues every Friday from 11am to 1pm with Western Trust health officials always in attendance.



The team at Civic Dollars joins us to explain what the initiative is about. Civic Dollars is an innovative community currency aimed at enhancing health and well-being through outdoor activities.



Maeve Connolly of Raised Voices CIC paid us a visit to talk about the creation of a Reporting on Migration Toolkit for the media. Maeve asked our members about their lived experiences in NI and the language they would like the media to use when describing them, their community and culture.



**AND BREATHE...**Our members enjoying a relaxing session in the Seven Hills Centre's Sound Bath. The peaceful moments were made possible through funding from Civic Dollars.

## Our shining stars...

*Our Board Members Beverly Simpson and Hala Omar during a recent visit to the Museum of Free Derry where they delivered a workshop to students of Thornhill College as part of our Black Heritage in NI: Hidden History Project, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund. We owe a lot to these two ladies who never let us down.*



# Where possible, we always try to shop local...

These are just some of the stores and businesses we have worked with and supported in recent months

*Danske Bank*

*Holiday Inn*

*Post Office*

*Poundland*

*Centra*

*Tesco*

*Manor Construction*

*B&M Bargains*

*The Range*

*Able & Flinn*

*Doherty's Bakery*

*Foyle Taxis*

*Translink*

*The Works*

*Burlington Projects*

*Hillbilly Chicken*

*Barclay Digital Services*

*Medina Supermarket*

*PNP Solutions Ltd*

*Milkwood Studios*

*Ulster Image Photography*

*iPrint*

*Home Bargains*

*Card Factory*

*J&K Coaches*

*KRH Enterprises Ltd*

*Newgate Arts Centre*

*McGroarty, McCafferty & Co Ltd*

*NICVA*

*O2*

*Peninsula Business*

*Poundsworth*

*Gordon's Chemist*

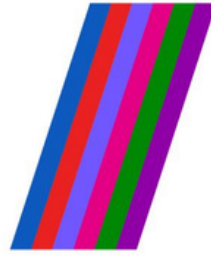
*Boots Chemist*

*Monaahan Peace Campus*

A huge thank you as well to those who made donations directly to our organisation. You know who you are.

We rise by lifting others

Thank you to  
our funders and  
sponsors.  
Without your  
continued  
support none of  
our work would  
be possible



**PEACEPLUS**

Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Northern Ireland  
Executive  
[www.northernireland.gov.uk](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk)



**COMMUNITY  
FUND**



Esmée  
Fairbairn  
FOUNDATION



Foundation



**Housing  
Executive**



**PEACEPLUS**  
Northern Ireland - Ireland

Co-funded by the



European Union



UK Government



Derry City & Strabane  
District Council

Comhairle  
Chathair Dhoire &  
Cheantar an tSratha Báin

Derry Cittie & Stràbane  
Destrict Councíl

We hope you enjoyed our  
Spring newsletter 🌸

Remember, you can always  
contact us on 02871 362184 or  
07912295571

Our website is [www.nwmf.org.uk](http://www.nwmf.org.uk)  
and you can keep up to date  
with our work on...



---

We'll leave you with this seasonal quote from Suzanne Collins's novel  
Mockingjay:

*'What I need is the dandelion in the Spring. The bright yellow that  
means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go  
on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again.'*

