

CONTACT DETAILS

Below is a list of organisations working with women from minority ethnic communities, including Travellers, on issues of gender equality and anti-racism.

Pavee Point Travellers Centre
46 North Great Charles Street
Dublin 1
t: 01 878 0255
e: vaw@pavee.iol.ie

**National Traveller
Women's Forum**
1st Floor, Unit 4,
Tuam Road, Galway
t: 091 77 1509
e: ntwf@iol.ie

AKIDWA
19 Belvedere Place
Dublin 1
t: 01 855 2111

ARASI
213 North Circular Road
Dublin 7
e: arasi_@eircom.net

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
3 Beresford Place
Dublin 1
t: 01 888 1355
e: info@mrci.ie

**National Consultative
Committee on Racism and
Interculturalism (NCCRI)**
Floor 3, Jervis House
Jervis Street, Dublin 1
t: 01 858 8000
e: info@nccri.ie

Useful emergency contact details:

**An Garda Síochána
24 hours**
t: 999 or 112
or any Garda Station

**Women's Aid Helpline
10am - 10pm**
Freephone 1800 341 900

**Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
24 hours a day**
Freephone 1800 778 888

Challenging the Misconceptions of Violence against Minority Ethnic Women, including Travellers, in Ireland:

An Information brochure for service providers



This brochure sets out to challenge some of the misconceptions associated with minority ethnic women experiencing violence and to provide agencies, groups and professionals with information on appropriate responses to working with women from minority ethnic groups to address violence against women. Minority ethnic communities in this context mean both Travellers and migrant communities.



The brochure is based on the approach adopted by Pavee Point over the years of working with Traveller women and was developed in consultation with organisations representing minority ethnic women.

It recognises women from all walks of life can experience violence but that there are particular responses in addressing the issue that could be more culturally appropriate and effective for women from black and minority ethnic communities including Travellers.

It looks at the diversity of women and the increasing diversity of groups and suggests that a multi-faceted approach works best.

Challenging the Misconceptions

misconception 01:

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS MORE PREVALENT IN MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS AND IS INHERENT IN THEIR CULTURES

FACTS:

- Violence against Women is not inherent in minority ethnic cultures nor is there evidence that it is more prevalent in minority ethnic groups. Women from every cultural and social background can and do experience violence.

Giving exact numbers on the prevalence of violence against women is always difficult in any community. Incidents are often not reported to the Gardaí or services as there is fear and social stigma attached to being a victim of domestic abuse.

- The assumption of higher prevalence of violence against women in minority ethnic groups can have a negative impact on a woman's capacity to disclose and on the community. By making those assumptions sometimes a woman can be forced to choose between her identity and seeking help.

It is important to find balance between recognising a woman's right to live a life free of violence and affirming ethnic identity and different needs.



SUPPORT SERVICES AND GARDAÍ ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE FOR WOMEN FROM MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

FACTS:

- For many minority ethnic groups, be it Travellers or migrant communities, their relationship with Police* and Statutory Services can be based on fear and mistrust. This puts minority ethnic women under pressure when trying to find support, also because they might fear being alienated by their own communities for bringing Gardaí or Statutory Services into the family home.

To help women of minority ethnic groups overcome these barriers all professionals in the field need to be very aware of their own attitudes which might make it harder for women to seek support.

- Limited knowledge of (and hence access to) the legal system creates added barriers for women from minority ethnic groups when seeking support.
- Minority ethnic women might have inaccurate information about their rights and entitlements which is of advantage to perpetrators and might cause obstacles in the process of finding help.
- Seeking assistance can be especially difficult for migrant women whose residency status in Ireland is uncertain, especially for those who were trafficked into this country for the purpose of sexual exploitation. They are often held in captivity and traffickers withhold their passport and documentation. Unable to leave their place of residence they cannot access support.
- In some countries members of National Police Forces abuse their power which creates fear and mistrust among the population. Those experiences from situations in their home countries might create additional hesitation for migrant women to contact the Gardaí.

Also migrant women may not want to endanger their partner's residency status in Ireland by reporting him to the authorities.

* Use of the term "Police" is reflecting the reality that it is not necessarily referring to An Garda Síochána but to the relationship migrant women, now resident in Ireland, may have had with Police Forces in their country of origin.

misconception 02:

INFORMATION FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE IS AVAILABLE TO ALL

FACTS:

- Violence against women affects women from many different backgrounds. However, the needs of women seeking support will vary depending on factors like ethnicity, class, language and religious beliefs. Language for example can be a significant barrier to seeking support.

For women with limited literacy levels and/or knowledge of English much of Ireland's awareness raising material and information on services will not be accessible. Lack of access to professional interpreters also creates additional obstacles.

- Women who have immigrated into Ireland might be cut off from support systems in their countries of origin, be they formal or informal ones. Therefore access to culturally appropriate and multilingual information is vital.



MANY WOMEN FROM MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS DO NOT CHALLENGE OR RESIST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES

FACTS:

- Resistance of women from minority ethnic groups to violence against women and gender inequality often goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. The vast majority of people in Ireland would have none or very little contact with women from minority ethnic communities. Issues for women of minority ethnic background have also been largely invisible in feminism and anti-racism movements which have often been the base for the development of organisation and services.
- Many women from minority ethnic backgrounds might be too scared to make their resistance known because of the stigma that goes along with being a victim of domestic violence. By giving more support women will also be encouraged to speak out more.
- Women from minority ethnic groups often rely on their own communities and provide informal supports to women experiencing violence. However, this has often been at huge personal costs. This again remains largely invisible to the majority of society.



Appropriate Responses to working with Women from Minority Ethnic Groups including Travellers

ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

- Minority ethnic women's voices should be central in the challenging of violence against women and in the development and design of support services. This should be acknowledged and supported. It implies that a community development approach to the work needs to be adopted.

Support services need to work in solidarity and partnership with minority ethnic groups and women to encourage their participation in developing services to better meet their needs.

PROMOTE EQUALITY AND INTERCULTURALISM

- An intercultural approach focuses on 'inclusion by design' which means that diversity or cultural difference is integrated within the whole organisation as opposed to be seen as an add on or extra to existing supports.

However, to successfully achieve this, an environment where racism can be effectively challenged needs to be created.

A code of good practice which addresses gender and ethnicity equality demonstrates an organisation's solidarity and partnership with those experiencing racism. It recognises that racism exists on an individual and institutional level and is committed to promoting equal outcomes for women of minority ethnic groups.

A commitment to equality also ensures that racist attitudes are being challenged and addressed as they arise. Good standards to deal with these issues involve practice, policies and procedures to ensure the equality of access and outcome for all.

RESPECT DIVERSITY THROUGH CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS

- Services need to recognise and plan for the different needs of women around culture, language, diet, hygiene, family formation, information and religion.

Information and service brochures with contact details need to be available in different languages.

Promoting positive images of women from minority ethnic groups is also essential.

For children appropriate toys that reflect their culture and identity are important. This is very affirming when children are going through crisis and living in a strange environment.

Developing culturally appropriate services involves consideration and collaboration with minority ethnic women, linking with local Traveller and ethnic support groups and being aware that women from many different backgrounds may need to use your service. Depending on the specific group, needs may be different and so will individual needs of each woman.

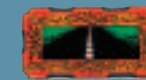
Issues such as disability, sexuality, and religion also need to be factored into any response.



Key points

- 1** Put mechanisms in place to consult and work in partnership with minority ethnic people including Travellers and their representative organisations on their needs, how to remove barriers and how to improve services
- 2** Promote minority ethnic women's participation in the planning, development and implementation of violence against women policies and practices
- 3** Acknowledge minority ethnic women as experts on the issues of violence against women as it affects their lives
- 4** Integrate equality and cultural diversity training into the organisation's training package and ensure that it is being undertaken by all members of an organisation
- 5** Reflect positive images of minority women's ethnicity and culture through the physical environment of the service
- 6** Recognise and plan for diverse needs around language, cooking, diet, family formation, information, hygiene and religion
- 7** Develop specialist expertise towards minority ethnic groups. Raise awareness on how legislation can affect the lives and status of women from minority ethnic groups and their right to live a life free from violence
- 8** Seek and allocate the necessary resources for this work

This brochure was produced by Pavee Point Travellers Centre in consultation with organisations such as AKIDWA and the NCCRI and part funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Pavee Point wish to acknowledge all those who contributed to the development of this brochure.



Pavee Point
Travellers Centre



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM