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# Daring Voices

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Evaluation of the One Foundation's support of advocacy in children's rights, immigrant rights and mental health reform in Ireland

The **One** Foundation



# Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the input of a number of people interviewed by me in the course of this evaluation, most of whom must remain anonymous as a condition of their engagement - thank you. Thanks also to the One Foundation Team and Board who provided access to records and participated in interviews, and to grantees from each of the advocacy areas who were very helpful and forthcoming. Finally, Finbar McDonnell, Hibernian Consulting, Dublin who provided invaluable help with the final draft, and the support of Professor M.V. Lee Badgett, Director, Center for Public Policy and Administration, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA.

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**“Daring Voices” was commissioned by One Foundation to document and share lessons learned on funding advocacy on social change issues – children’s rights, immigrant rights, and mental health reform - in Ireland over a ten year period, 2004-2013.**

# Foreword

The nine lessons drawn out by the author have relevance in an Irish, European and, we believe, in an international context.

## Why did we commission this evaluation?

One Foundation came to funding advocacy through a learning journey. Having funded services on these issues for a number of years, we came to a realisation that a foundation could fund social services for many years, but that funding advocacy provided the opportunity to end the problem that requires the services. While this is hardly a revelation, it did take a journey to arrive at the decision as a foundation to allocate specific funds to advocacy on the issues we cared about most – children’s rights, immigrant rights, and mental health reform. Our commitment to funding advocacy grew as time passed, to the extent that at the half way point of our limited life of ten years, in 2008, three of our eight goals were advocacy goals, and a total of €14.8 million or 19.8 % of our funds was spent on them over ten years.

As we started this journey, we found a dearth of literature from which to learn, especially publications based on actual experience. “Daring Voices” is our contribution to this gap.

## What have we learned?

We are now more convinced than ever that funding advocacy can offer the opportunity of powerful impact on either mainstream or edgy issues, and at real value for money.

## What are the challenges?

Timeframes are inherently elastic, but the author’s focus on identifying, aiming for, and capturing “incremental wins” on the journey is a useful contribution to addressing this. While the author legitimately focuses on the need for patience, there can also be quick wins to be identified by the smart funder or advocate.

Attribution of success (or failure) is the ultimate challenge in funding advocacy, a point well developed in this report. In the end, success has many fathers. Social change is a team game, and collaboration (of both funders and advocates) can add real value, a value which can be diminished by the need for clear attribution. One Foundation has never sought attribution, and indeed much of our work has been co-funded equally with The Atlantic Philanthropies. Funder collaboration, another under-researched topic, is addressed more fully in “When Aims and Objectives Rhyme: How Two of Ireland’s Largest Foundations Found Common Ground and Built a Shared Portfolio of Nearly €60 Million Without Compromising the Features That Make Them Distinct” available on [www.onefoundation.ie](http://www.onefoundation.ie).

“We are pleased to welcome this report as a contribution to the field, and hope it can inspire more people to support advocacy and address the root causes of problems and not simply ameliorate the effects or treat the symptoms.

Advocacy gives a great return on investment, significant social impact can be achieved improving the lives of many now, and into the future .”

The One Foundation Team, August 2013



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# Executive Summary

In a ten-year timeframe, 2004-13, The One Foundation invested €75 million, of which approximately €15 million (20%) supported advocacy work.

This evaluation analyses the outcomes and impact of The One Foundation's investments in NGOs working in the Irish policy context to advance the following advocacy goals:

- i) make children's rights real;**
- ii) make immigrant rights real;**
- iii) build political will on mental health in Ireland.**

In a ten-year timeframe, 2004-13, The One Foundation (OF) invested €75 million, of which approximately €15 million (20%) supported direct advocacy work.

The report draws on meetings with OF Team and Advisory Board members; interviews with grantees and 'bellwethers' (key informants with insights into the policy change process); and desk research (OF and grantee records). The evaluation uses a case study approach and a common framework of analysis (Quinn-Patton, 2008) to assess effectiveness in the three policy areas with a focus on how the work contributed to incremental wins towards achievement of ultimate advocacy goals.

## **Children's rights**

The research shows that the OF provided valuable support to NGOs working on advocacy to improve the lives of children and young people and their families. Activities conducted (with OF assistance) supported advancements in legislation and changes to structures and systems. While many organisations contributed to ensuring that a 2012 referendum amending the Irish Constitution to affirm the rights of children was put to, and passed by, the Irish people, several bellwethers noted the key role played by support to advocacy organisations by OF and The Atlantic Philanthropies. The report traces the advocacy steps of a OF grantee, the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA), that contributed to this point of impact. It provides examples of CRA's work in crafting legislation, its lobbying tactics, and its monitoring work (a scorecard system to rate progress on children's rights). While the 2012 referendum result is currently (June 2013) the subject of a High Court challenge, it will likely provide a legal framework for future case law and advocacy efforts. In addition to advocating for a referendum, OF's grantees successfully argued the need for structural and systemic changes to improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families. Given current resourcing challenges (due to Ireland's difficult fiscal situation), and historical inertia (in relation to implementation of agreed policy in times of plenty), this suggests a need for continued advocacy to monitor realisation of proposed changes.

## **Immigrant rights**

On immigrant rights, the support of The One Foundation helped the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) to develop a proven track record of influencing policy to advance the rights of vulnerable migrant workers and their families. MRCI demonstrated the benefits of a community work approach to mobilising migrants to be active advocates in campaigns and media work, while working 'back rooms' to leverage political capital for change, using a strong evidence-base to substantiate proposals. Nuanced readers of the policy context, MRCI forged a strategic relationship with the Trade Union movement and mobilised allies in the community and equality sectors in Ireland and with allies abroad. A concern with national and EU policy processes provided horizontal and vertical advocacy routes and points





of advocacy influence. Achievements include reforms in secondary legislation ('bridging visa'), labour law (forced labour) and State practices (inspections), solidifying the link between migrant workers and the trade union movement (ensuring long term support), and raising awareness of the benefits of Ireland's new inter-cultural society. With the re-emergence of emigration after 2008, linked to the sharp economic contraction and a rise in unemployment to over 14% of the labour force, the climate of opinion towards migrants changed as illustrated by a reported rise in racist incidents (MBL poll, 2012). New legislation promised in 2013 (Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill) may bring clarity and transparency, although some campaigners expressed concerns the legislation may be restrictive rather than innovative.

## **Mental Health**

From 2006, The One Foundation catalysed the area of mental health advocacy by strategically funding organisations to build political will to implement the government's stated policy A Vision for Change. Over time, its investments in Amnesty International Ireland (specialists in campaigns and lobbying), Mental Health Reform (to build a sectoral advocacy platform) and Headstrong (to demonstrate a model of integrated mental health services for young people within the community, Jigsaw), supported development in a traditionally neglected area of social policy. The impact of advocacy work by grantees was evidenced by the extent of political engagement (a documented increase in parliamentary questions), establishment and operation of a cross-party Oireachtas group and greater political engagement. In 2011, the Fine Gael/Labour government included three of the campaign's objectives in its Programme for Government, 2011-2016. These include a review of the Mental Health Act, 2011 against human rights standards, and establishing a cross-departmental group on mental health. The government has closed virtually all of the Victorian institutions that housed people with mental conditions. While significant public resources to support community-based mental health supports have not yet been forthcoming, reform has begun.



The evaluation highlights the valuable role that The One Foundation played in supporting NGOs to advocate to advance social change. From a philanthropist's point of view, it shows that major social impact can be achieved with relatively small amounts of funding. However, expectations must be framed in realistic terms. Since the funding of advocacy is considered a higher risk than funding services (because of unpredictable variables), factors influencing advocacy success from a funder's perspective include identifying suitable NGO(s) to support and backing the right leader to build relationships across various constituencies to ensure a critical mass of support for the desired change.

The evaluation documents the lessons learned in relation to grantees' advocacy. These are discussed in the case studies using the Quinn-Patton (2008) framework of advocacy effectiveness. More general lessons regarding support of advocacy, tactical issues and advocacy drivers were as follows:



**1. Philanthropic support of advocacy can enhance policy-making processes**

The One Foundation's support of NGO advocacy work was important precisely because it was independent of government and therefore enabled advocates to persist with arguments on the need to improve policy, structures or practices. The OF's commitment to multi-annual funding resourced grantees to develop and implement advocacy strategies that included the systematic gathering or commissioning of evidence-based research to further substantiate claims for change. In the case of mental health advocacy, its investments supported grantees to push government to implement its stated policy, and in the case of children's rights, to address its acknowledged responsibilities. This is particularly important in a country like Ireland without a strong tradition of think tanks or resources to support advocacy and change.



**2. Supporting advocacy can be risky and time consuming but, if successful, can generate significant longer-term impact**

Advocacy activities can take a long time to establish the momentum for change. Progress can be stalled by unanticipated policy bottlenecks - human, political or economic impediments to advancing the claims for change. For example, national economic difficulties hampered delivery by government of promised resources from

the annual health budget in support of mental health reforms. Timing is important and campaigns may make little progress until conditions are in place for change to occur. However, the successful passage of the children's referendum demonstrates advocacy's potential for longer-term impact. The education arising from advocacy campaigns also underpins longer-term attitudinal change and reforms.

### **3. Achieving policy change takes time and funders need to be patient**

The timeframe for the OF support for change in the three areas outlined was a ten-year one. Yet in many ways this is a short horizon. It takes time to gear up organisations to drive for this kind of change, to build data to support their cases, to shape their image, to engage with politicians and the public etc. Also, organisations cannot be expected to get everything right and must have time to make some mistakes and learn from them. In the case of immigrant rights for example, the reversal of migration trends from inward to outward changed the advocacy context and challenges considerably in the space of a decade. Advocacy organisations like MRCI had to recalibrate strategies to build momentum within a changed environment. Therefore, funding organisations must exercise their oversight in a patient and subtle manner.

### **4. Sectoral coalitions, while ideal for advocacy, are not always possible**

While sectoral coalition building is often important to ensure a critical mass of support for change, building agreement between multiple players in an advocacy area is a complicated process that cannot be rushed or falsely stimulated. For example, immigrant organisations required time to establish their sectoral strategy because many had emerged in response to the unanticipated rise in numbers of migrants entering Ireland. Therefore, in some advocacy areas, the best that can be attained in a limited life investment is campaign collaboration, as illustrated by the successful passage of legislation on forced labour in 2013. Such cooperation may also lead to cross-learning and potentially longer-term cooperation.

### **5. A dedicated advocacy organisation representing member organisations in a given sector enhances advocacy impact**

In only one of the three advocacy goal areas, children's rights, was there an established umbrella organisation, the Children's Rights Alliance, whose mission was to lobby on behalf of members. Its representative status strengthened its hand with government, staff forged working relationships with civil servants and with politicians across party lines, produced high-quality analytic submissions and coordinated a two-way flow of information that influenced the solutions proffered for change. While many organisations and individuals contributed to the successful holding of a referendum, the influence of the CRA can be traced from 2006 to the point of impact in 2012.

### **6. Credible data communicated with real-life examples, propels advocacy**

Claims for major change not only require robust evidence-based research (preferably a combination of in-house and independently commissioned data), but also a communication strategy that is flexible and creative. Campaigns that foreground the narratives of those directly affected (e.g. mental health service users

and immigrants) and draw on polling data to demonstrate growing public support for change (as evidenced by the MBL polling data) contribute to advocacy traction. Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) played new and important roles in mobilising supporters around campaign efforts in all three advocacy areas.

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### **7. Leadership is critical to successful advocacy**

Advocacy is hugely influenced by the capacity of leaders to collaborate with colleagues to build agreement on shared advocacy activities. Within children's rights, for example, CRA's leaders lobbied on behalf of members behind the scenes. They did not assume a public profile, nor claim advocacy wins. They also forged relationships across political parties and with public servants so that the issue gained traction over time in the system. Strategic NGO leaders who build strong, working relationships rather than promoting only their own organisation's interests, seem most adept at advancing advocacy goals.

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### **8. Advocacy capacity is enhanced when organisations review performance regularly, learn from mistakes, match tactic to opportunity and alter approaches accordingly.**

No one style or approach can be relied upon to advance the advocacy issue. Organisations must have a toolkit of approaches to suit contexts and opportunities. The case studies show that NGOs supported by OF undertook a wide range of approaches to achieving their goals. Tactics may change following performance reviews. For example, when Amnesty realised that its approach to lobbying of officials in the Department of Health was perceived as overly aggressive (at a time when Amnesty needed access), the organisation softened its approach. Therefore, regular reviews can not only improve advocacy but also influence the tone of a campaign at a particular time.

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### **9. Supporting rigour of management, analysis and evaluation in NGOs ultimately supports the achievement of their goals.**

Some of the organisations funded by OF were small, e.g. employed fewer than 15 people. In the Irish NGO sector, they may have had a tradition of relatively low, and volatile, funding. As such, strategic planning, organising and overseeing sustained advocacy campaigns, working at a strategic policy level, and reporting back to OF on outcomes, was organisationally challenging. The rigour involved undoubtedly led to organisational capacities being built, which should last as a spin-off benefit of the decade of focused advocacy work.

# 1

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## Introduction

The One Foundation (OF) was co-founded in 2004 by Declan Ryan and Deirdre Mortell to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in Ireland and Vietnam. The foundation will have invested €75 million, mostly in non-profit organisations, over a ten-year period between 2004 and 2013, in part via co-investments with another limited life foundation operating in Ireland, The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP).

During its first five years, OF commissioned a range of research on children's issues in Ireland to scope the field, and invested in NGOs to build organisational and advocacy capacity and to improve services. Following a review in 2008, the foundation identified its advocacy strategy and goals for maximum social impact in its remaining years. To achieve these goals, a final series of strategic investments was made in a small number of high-performing organisations.

In June 2012, the foundation appointed an External Evaluator to review its advocacy investments. While several investments in 2004-2008 were considered retrospective advocacy investments (as the service delivery organisations involved also did advocacy), the main focus of the evaluation was on the three advocacy goals named in mid-2008:

- ii) to make children's rights real (CRs);**
- ii) to make immigrant rights real (IRs),**
- iii) to build political will on mental health (MH).**

This evaluation report analyses the outcomes and impact of the foundation's strategy, investments and supports (including non-monetary supports, e.g. business planning) to achieve these advocacy goals.

The report draws on data gathered between June 2012 and January 2013. Evaluation research activities included a review of OF records (2004-12), meetings with OF Team and Advisory Board members, media reviews, and interviews with grantees and bellwethers (i.e. key actors in the advocacy areas to assess activity and predict future trends such as civil servants, politicians, NGO leaders, academics and philanthropic personnel). Most interviews were conducted in person between June and September 2012. However, some advocacy areas were changing considerably during the evaluation, e.g. a referendum on children's rights was held in November 2012. Therefore, additional interviews were completed up to January 2013. However, the scope of the evaluation was relatively limited, i.e. the guidance was for 20 days of fieldwork and 10 days for data analysis and write-up.

The report has five sections. The remainder of this introduction defines advocacy, provides context on the One Foundation, and summarises the evaluation methodology used. Sections 2-4 present case studies on the work of grantees to achieve the advocacy goals in children's rights, immigrant rights and mental health. Advocacy effectiveness is analysed using Quinn-Patton's (2008)<sup>1</sup> framework to highlight lessons learned. The Evaluator had previously applied this framework in an evaluation of the Marriage Equality Campaign in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Section 2 profiles the Children's Rights Alliance's advocacy efforts 'to make children's rights real.' Section 3 considers the advocacy approach taken by The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland 'to make immigrant rights real.' Section 4 differs slightly in that it combines an analysis of the foundation's investments in three organisations - Amnesty International Ireland, Mental Health Reform and Headstrong - 'to build political will on mental health'. Section 5 presents the general learning points emerging as distinct from those lessons discussed in the sections on each advocacy goal area. It highlights concerns reported regarding the sustainability of advocacy work and the need for future philanthropic support.

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1. Michael Quinn-Patton, 2008, Evaluating the Complex ([www.aidontheedge.files.wordpress.com/patton\\_oslo.ppt](http://www.aidontheedge.files.wordpress.com/patton_oslo.ppt)) and Advocacy Impact Evaluation, Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation, Vol. 5, No. 9, March 2008.  
2. O'Carroll Associates & Hibernian Consulting, Marriage Equality: Evaluation Reports, 2010, 2011. See [www.marriageequality.ie](http://www.marriageequality.ie).

## 1.1 Advocacy avenues for social change, Ireland

To properly assess the advocacy effectiveness of the organisations funded, it is useful to clarify what the term means and to discuss advocacy avenues in the Irish context. The word has its root in the Latin, *advocare* – to summon or call to one’s aid. In this report, advocacy is taken to mean what the Innovation Network considers a “wide range of activities conducted to influence decision-makers at various levels.”<sup>3</sup> Advocacy represents “the strategies devised, actions taken, and solutions proposed to inform or influence local” regional and national level policy decision-making processes in a democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Influencing the policy decision-making processes in Ireland requires an understanding of the structures and possibilities for input (see Appendix 1). The Irish policy context may differ from other policy contexts in terms of scale and accessibility of elected representatives, due to Ireland being a small society with significant networking, and an emphasis on clientelist politics where people expect politicians to ‘deliver’ locally. Political parties have policy preferences and are elected by the people to promote those preferences. However, individual politicians elected to serve in the Oireachtas, the national parliament, represent their constituencies. Since a concern of most politicians is re-election<sup>5</sup>, a politician’s focus can sometimes (or often) be on more short-term, local concerns, rather than long-term policy in the national interest.

**Advocacy represents “the strategies devised, actions taken, and solutions proposed to inform or influence local” regional and national level policy decision-making processes in a democracy.**

Within the legislative policy process, there is a tension between what is deemed feasible/possible politically and advocates’ capacity to communicate an argument for change effectively. In such a dynamic, change is often incremental. This must be understood to properly assess advocacy impact. In addition, irrespective of changes of government, as different political parties with particular policy preferences are elected by the people, a constant factor in the policy decision-making process is the presence of civil and public servants in government departments and agencies. While these advocacy targets can be difficult to access, it is important for advocates to establish a close working relationship with them since they contribute to debates on policy positions in critical ways and manage the implementation of programmes to achieve policy aims. It can be assumed that public servants in key positions may hold policy preferences, stated or unstated, that influence the process. Advocacy organisations must therefore also dedicate

<sup>3</sup> The US-based Innovation Network is a valuable advocacy evaluation resource. See [www.innonet.org](http://www.innonet.org).

<sup>4</sup> Heather Weiss, 2007. Harvard Family Research Program. [www.hfrp.org](http://www.hfrp.org).

<sup>5</sup> Niamh Hardiman (2012) *Irish Governance in Crisis*, Manchester University Press

time to informing and shifting public opinion to bring pressure to bear on these players, an issue that underscores the central role of communications in all advocacy work. The emergence of a policy preference is often the result of effective communication, requiring convincing evidence, lobbying and access.

## Change is often incremental.

Ireland is a small, highly networked country, where NGOs can access decision-makers and thereby influence policy to bring about legislative and social change. Measures by the state to promote and financially support NGOs to be involved in policy and decision-making processes had been in place for decades.<sup>6</sup> The voluntary and community sector engaged in national social partnership processes with the Irish government, Trade Unionists, business and farming interests to address issues in relation to Ireland's economy and society.

However, by 2002, when the new Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs took responsibility for all such funding schemes, the funding patterns shifted more towards support of organisations providing services and away from advocacy organisations (perceived as sometimes too critical of government policy) (Harvey, 2003). Therefore, the OF decision to support NGOs in advocacy work addressed a gap in support and was a timely contribution to Ireland's social change processes. Its support became even more important mid-way through its lifetime, in 2008. With Ireland's economic recession, the partnership approach to policy-making collapsed and the state infrastructure to monitor and support rights and equality (e.g. Equality Authority, the Human Rights Commission) was downgraded. Essentially there was a changed advocacy playing field that required all players to re-think their game plan to leverage social change.

### 1.2 The One Foundation – Approach and Advocacy Goals

The One Foundation, named after the U2 song, "One,"<sup>7</sup> was set up to improve the lives of children in Ireland (and Vietnam). The co-founders settled on the concept of a limited life, venture philanthropy following a review of available models. The foundation also commissioned research to scope the field of children and youth issues to inform the range of possibilities for possible intervention.

The co-founders looked to The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) as a blueprint for their idea: *We followed their coat tails. They were the big player and we were the new kids in town* (EI:5). AP had been active in Ireland since 1990, at first anonymously, and later openly building the capacity of Irish universities and supporting the work of NGOs in areas such as human rights and children's issues. While AP was much larger in scale (\$8 billion globally compared to OF's €85 million), the idea of a limited lifetime foundation took hold. The One Foundation would be active for one decade, 2004-2013. By the end of 2013, all operations would stop. However, because OF was set to close before AP, the smaller foundation could not benefit from the exit learning of the bigger player.

In addition to AP, the other major influence was the US-based, New Profit model of venture philanthropy ([www.newprofit.com](http://www.newprofit.com)). OF adapted this approach for the

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<sup>6</sup> Freda Donoghue (1998) *Defining the Nonprofit Sector – Ireland*, John Hopkins Policy Studies.

<sup>7</sup> U2's song "One" ends with: "One life but we're not the same/we get to carry each other/One/One."



Irish context, referring to it as both active philanthropy and venture philanthropy. In essence, the idea was to transpose the tools and methods used by venture capitalists (who invest in business ideas for monetary profit), to the non-profit sector, where the return would be in terms of social impact. Active philanthropy, as practiced by OF, involved the following: A high level of engagement, tailored financing, multi-year support; non-financial support to help build strategic and operational capacity, and an emphasis on performance measurement.

In addition to an Office Manager, the foundation had four Team members who were referred to as Portfolio Managers, extending the metaphor of financial investment. Each organisation being considered for investment underwent a process of due diligence, prior to any commitment to invest. This detailed assessment was followed by a period of business planning, facilitated by consultants from leading strategy consultancies such as McKinsey and Monitor UK. A commitment to invest in the resulting plan was dependent on several factors, including a clear mission fit with OF goals, a credible strategic plan and a strong CEO to deliver the plan.

Once an organisation was selected for funding, the active philanthropic approach sometimes translated into involvement on boards, or participation in recruitment of CEOs, but always involved performance measurement systems. Such proximity to the organisation's people and its operations facilitated the allocation of tailored investments, multi-year funding and suitable non-monetary support (such as access to networks or specialists), all with the aim of building the organisational capacity.

However, OF's investment language did not always fit easy with advocates in the Irish context. For some it was a God send, for others, the support was tainted with neo-liberalism. Grantee feedback is included in the case studies. As one bellwether concluded: *To be honest, people were less worried about ideology and where the money was coming from and much more focused on getting the money and on getting results. We all see the roadblocks* (EI:25).

In terms of its investment strategy, OF's approach in the three advocacy goal areas under consideration evolved as its understanding and knowledge of the fields grew, based on collaboration with NGOs, consultations with field specialists, and based on commissioned research. By 2008, the half-way point in its lifetime, OF acknowledged it was *at a critical juncture in terms of future impact and needed to assess the best future course* (EI:1). A strategic review process, facilitated by McKinsey consultants, led to a more focused strategy to *get the maximum bang for our buck in the final five years* (EI: 4). The foundation identified four programmes and eight impact goals for achievement between 2008 and 2013.

## Programmes (4)

- 1. Children and Families** – Families living in disadvantage are supported so that their children have the best start in life.
- 2. Integration** – Minorities are integrated into Irish society so that their children have the same rights and opportunities as others' children.
- 3. Youth Mental Health** – Young people have the resilience to make good choices and can get help when they need it.
- 4. Social Entrepreneurship** – A flourishing social entrepreneurship movement where the next generation of social entrepreneurs has the practical and moral support they need to grow and thrive.

## Impact Goals (8)

1. Improve young people's resilience; 2. Build political will on mental health (AGA); 3. Improve mental health system outcomes for young people;
4. Make children's rights real (AGA);
5. Make effective family support programmes available nationally;
6. Make multi-denominational education a real option in Ireland;
7. Make immigrant rights real (AGA);
8. Build the field of social entrepreneurship in Ireland & Vietnam.

[The evaluation concerns only Advocacy Goals 2, 4 and 7]

Larger sums of money, and more strategic supports were offered to those organisations whose work matched OF's goals and were considered high-performers based on OF's performance assessment (it used a Balanced Score Card system for ongoing monitoring of outcomes). Amounts invested are discussed in the case studies. The strategic shift flagged at this point was a concerted commitment to support and promote high potential, high performing advocacy and systems change organisations and efforts.

In addition to identifying its eight advocacy goals across its four programmes in 2008<sup>8</sup>, OF commissioned Wilson Hartnell consultants to conduct an Advocacy Gap Analysis produced in 2009 to identify "if grantees had enough and the right capacity" to achieve their goals. Two key findings from this process were:

- i) organisations with the ability to identify an advocacy opportunity and move on it fast were often most successful;
- ii) sectoral capacity in the advocacy goal area was linked to "maturity of the issue," i.e. if the issue was a relatively recent one such as immigrant rights or an established issue such as children's rights.

A final point on OF relates to the question of a philanthropic organisation's right to intervene in social change processes in any democracy, OF has identified three roles regarding what it frames as its legitimacy:

8 Alistair Hodgett & Aoife Sweeney, Wilson Hartnell (Ogilvy PR), Advocacy Gap Analysis, 2009. See [www.onefoundation.ie](http://www.onefoundation.ie)

**1. Innovation** - Philanthropy can fund and finance innovation, provide risk capital, *something no government in the world finances because governments are conservative with taxpayers' money, and they need an evidence base to allocate* (EI:1);

**2. Supporting Voices** – to “amplify the voices” of the most marginalized, or those at an early stage of self advocacy. The logic is that since children and most migrants do not have votes, it is hard for them to have their rights addressed without advocacy, as is also sometimes the case with people suffering mental health problems (especially in an institutional context);

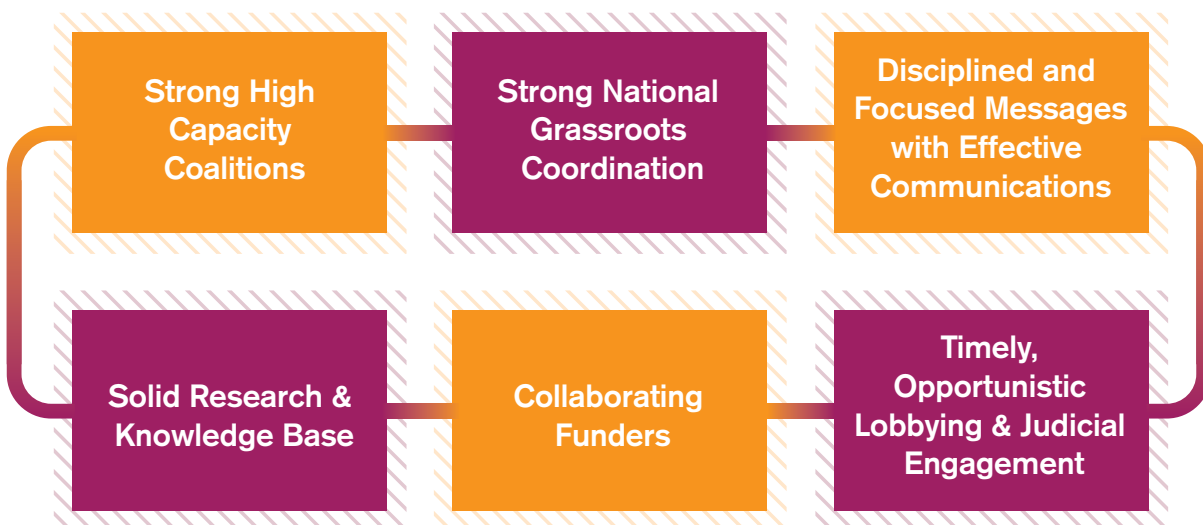
**3. Humanitarian Role** - Universal and therefore non controversial. From OF's point of view, the advocacy goal areas identified were non controversial: *we're about children mainly*, (EI:2), *and our advocacy positions are largely aligned with social policy* (EI:1).

### 1.3 Evaluation Approach

Given the complexity of advocacy processes, the ambitious goals set by OF, and the limited timeframe to effect change (10 years), the report's narrative is fundamentally about incremental policy wins - points of achievement on the journey towards the ultimate goals.

The evaluation draws on a review of the relevant OF records (2004-2012), media reviews, interviews with the foundation's Team and Advisory Board members and interviews with grantees and bellwethers. Of the total interviews (33), 8 were with OF people (4 Team, 4 Advisory Board), 9 with OF grantees, and 16 with bellwethers (including policy-makers, civil servants, politicians, academics, members of the media and staff of philanthropic bodies). Given the scope of the evaluation (20 days for fieldwork and 10 for analysis and write-up), the focus is on documenting key lessons learned in the three policy areas, and is not a full evaluation of OF work in Ireland over a ten-year period.

#### Framework for Effective Advocacy (Quinn-Patton, 2008)



The evaluation uses Quinn-Patton's (2008) framework above (Advocacy Impact Evaluation) in its analysis of advocacy effectiveness - a framework applied in the Irish context in 2010 (O'Carroll Associates and Hibernian Consulting). As such, it assesses advocacy based on six interconnected factors (as shown), each dynamically interacting and proven to contribute to effective advocacy efforts. Case study sites selected in consultation with OF provided a deeper understanding of organisations' advocacy experience. The case studies sites were: Children's Rights Alliance, The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and the blended case study for the mental health advocacy goal concerns the work of Amnesty (Ireland), Mental Health Reform and Headstrong. In each case, the evaluation recognised the learning from partial advocacy wins based on political realism, or compromise, or put another way, what was politically feasible at the time.

**Other methodological factors were:**

The need to understand that policy processes and priorities shift based on external factors such as the economic recession and political uncertainty when certain changes may no longer assume the status they had at the outset of the initiative;

The need to capture learning from advocacy measures outside the normal channels such as direct lobbying of individuals, without threatening the players involved. With that in mind, all interviews were digitally recorded, though quotes used are not attributed, but are identified by the use of italics and an interview code: EI:X.

The matrix below provides an overview of the evaluation approach, outlining the inputs, number of grantees in each advocacy goal area, the criteria used for assessment of advocacy effectiveness and finally, the format of the final evaluation report.

**Matrix 1. One Foundation Advocacy, 2004-2013, Evaluation Approach**

<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Grantees (17)*</b>	<b>Assessing Advocacy impact</b>	<b>Evaluation Data &amp; Output</b>
Total OF investments 2004-2013: €75 million  Total investment in 3 Advocacy Goals: approx. €15 million  CR = €5.2 million IRs = €4.8 million MH = €4.8 million  Plus Supports: Engagement (e.g. board) Performance Assessment Business Planning Networks	Children's Rights (5* organisations/ projects)  Integration (6 organisations)  Mental Health (6 organisations)  Activities, outcomes, impact 2004-2013	Quinn-Patton (2008) Criteria:  Strong high capacity coalitions  Strong national grassroots coordination  Disciplined and focused messages with effective communications  Timely, opportunistic lobbying and engagement  Solid research and knowledge base  Collaborating funders, strategic funding	Data: foundation records, media reviews, interviews with grantees, NGO leaders, civil servants, politicians, academics, media and philanthropic reps etc.  Case studies x 3 advocacy goal areas (with one blended case study) that form the core of the  Final Report i.e. narrative analysis of OF Advocacy Support

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# Making Children's Rights Real

The following is an overview of the position of children in Irish society highlighting inadequacies in state supports for vulnerable children and their families. A discussion of the One Foundation's advocacy goal and strategy follows, and a case study of the Children's Rights Alliance assesses advocacy activities and effectiveness, and presents lessons learned.

## 2.1 Children, Ireland

For OF, the core of its efforts from 2004 to 2013 related to improving the lives of vulnerable children. In the early 2000s, child poverty was a real and documented issue in Ireland, despite the fact that the state provided a universal monthly children's allowance for each child, irrespective of family income<sup>1</sup>. As Fintan O'Toole concluded, at a time when Ireland was ranked the most globalised nation in the world (Globalisation Index, 2003), "for many families, even at the height of the boom, the wolf was at the door."<sup>2</sup>

In 2005, the government's Combat Poverty Agency reported that some 148,000 children were living in consistent poverty in Ireland, which means living with a family income of less than 60% of the median income and lacking other basics such as adequate heating, warm meals, and a good strong pair of shoes.<sup>3</sup> Parental unemployment was a key factor contributing to childhood poverty. Additional factors compounded the problem, including poor quality parenting, nutrition, neighbourhoods, housing and so forth. Economic and social issues in combination with a cycle of adult unemployment, intergenerational poverty and breakdown of traditional family and community supports were at the centre of childhood disadvantage in Ireland. Other barriers to addressing change in child poverty were more directly reflective of longstanding policy shortcomings such as insufficient investment in health and education, and systematic weaknesses such as insufficient numbers of service providers to support children in need and limited, affordable childcare.

Barnardos, the main NGO in Ireland delivering programmes to help children and their families via community-based centres and national services, concluded that: "Children living in poverty live life in the margins, excluded from opportunities and often unable to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Poverty affects every aspect of a child's life having short and long term consequences on their health, education outcomes and life chances."<sup>4</sup>

Children's issues were not a political priority and, without a vote, children's voices and issues were seldom heard in political processes. Advocates were required to speak for children to ensure their voices and needs did inform the political choices. While it is true that children do not vote in any country, a further possible factor of relevance in Ireland was that the Irish Constitution (1937) largely ignores children, apart from referring to their education rights. In addition, the constitutional position reflected the primacy of the family over the individual historically, in line with Catholic church teaching, a major influence at the time.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between the Catholic church and the Irish state was a close one through the 20th century and many vulnerable children were entrusted by the state into the care of religious congregations. Reports of appalling abuse of children in industrial schools (and elsewhere) were not much heeded until recently.

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- 1 See Understanding Childhood Deprivation in Ireland, Dorothy Watson and Bertrand Maitre (ESRI) and Christopher Whelan, UCD, ESRI, Dublin, 2012, [www.esri.ie/publications](http://www.esri.ie/publications).
  - 2 Fintan O'Toole, *After the Ball*, 2003. See pages 4-5, Foreign Policy Magazine's Globalisation Index, 2003 based on three measures – economic integration, technology, political engagement and personal contact.
  - 3 *Ending Child Poverty*, 2005. Combat Poverty Agency. Dublin.
  - 4 Barnardos lists key statistics from the EU SILC that chart trends for 2008-2011 in relation to consistent poverty, deprivation etc. [www.barnardos.ie/child-poverty.html](http://www.barnardos.ie/child-poverty.html)
  - 5 The Irish Constitution's main architect, Eamon de Valera, consulted regularly with the future Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid during the drafting process. See Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, Profile Books, 2004, p.369.

In February 1996, Louis Lentin broadcast his Dear Daughter documentary on RTÉ about Christine Buckley's experience in Goldenbridge residential school from 1950 to 1964. Her allegations against the Sisters of Mercy caused a wave of media reports. This was followed by two documentaries by the late journalist Mary Raftery. Findings from her investigations were broadcast in two TV series – States of Fear (April/May 1999) and Cardinal Secrets (2002). All three documentaries aired on the national broadcast network, RTÉ, shocked the nation.

## Children's issues were not a political priority and, without a vote, children's voices and issues were seldom heard in political processes.

Raftery's documentaries expanded the investigation beyond one case to expose the systematic abuse of children and cover-up by the Irish government and Catholic church. As a result of her findings in the States of Fear documentary, the Irish government established the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA) in 1999 to investigate the extent and effects of abuse on children from 1936 onwards in the 60 residential reform and industrial schools in Ireland, run by religious organisations, but funded and supervised by the Department of Education. The Commission's findings were that children were treated like prison inmates and slaves, subjected to physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and ritualised beatings. Since it appears that the majority of children in institutional care were from poor families, the documentaries demonstrated how social class was a major factor in how the State cared for its children.

The broadcasting of Cardinal Secrets in 2002 led to the setting up of a Commission of Investigation into clerical abuse in the Roman Catholic Dublin Archdioceses from 1974-2004. Published in 2009, the report found that secrecy and avoidance of scandal were the main priorities of the church and that the complaints of parents and children were ignored.

Responsibility for children lay within the remit of the Department of Health and Children (1997-2011). While each successive Minister with responsibility for children since 1998 introduced some measures to improve the situation for children, issues arose in relation to implementation consistently. For example, Minister Mary Hanafin, TD, introduced a National Children's Strategy (2000); Minister Brian Lenihan, TD, advanced the idea of referendum; Minister Barry Andrews, TD, brought in the universal pre-school year (a successful and much lauded measure), and under the watch of the current (full) Minister, Frances Fitzgerald, the children's referendum has been held and a Child and Family Agency is being developed. Therefore, politicians and policy-makers have sought to put in place some changes to improve children's lives, including establishing an Office of the Ombudsman for Children in 2003.

However, pockets of progress in relation to legislation to protect children have often proved inadequate in practice. For example, despite the existence of the 1991 Child Care Act (that requires the state's health authorities to identify children not receiving the necessary care), throughout the 1990s a series of abuse scandals were reported in the media that highlighted instances of abuse of children in the family home (1995, McColgan Case) and in organisations where adults interacted with children, such as the Irish Amateur Swimming Association (1993). In addition, according to Harvey (2011), detailed guidelines to protect children, contained in the document *Children First* (1999 revised in 2011), were not operational, data on services for children were patchy and in disorder, and the government did not appear to seek advice from NGOs providing grassroots services and supports. Despite the existence of the government's Children's Services Committee and a Prevention and Early Intervention Programme, Harvey also notes that it remains unclear to what extent the measures have any impact on the lives of children.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, OF work to improve the lives of children took place in a context where Ireland needed to seriously address its policy and practice in relation to children, child poverty and protection.

#### 2.1.1 Advocacy Goal 4 & Strategy – 'Make children's rights real'

This advocacy goal – to make children's rights real - is at the heart of all of The One Foundation's (OF) activities and its operations: *It is embedded in all of our work and our advocacy* (EI:1). It was the primary motivator for the establishment of OF, based on the two co-founders' experience of working with Barnardos (Ireland's main NGO supporting children and families through a range of services). Declan Ryan was Chair of the Barnardos board for a number of years, and Deirdre Mortell was responsible for Barnardos' fundraising and public campaigns.

During its strategic review in 2008, OF explored the causes of childhood disadvantage to chart a course of strategic intervention. Given the enormity and complexity of the underlying problem of disadvantaged children, and with a five-year timeframe, OF concluded a significant barrier to effecting change in the area and to improving the lives of disadvantaged children was the fact that children's rights were not included in Ireland's Constitution. In addition, two other target areas were identified for advocacy impact: policy implementation and service delivery. The idea was to change policy and thereby influence the direction of the state's resources towards ensuring improved structures and systems to support children's wellbeing. Therefore, all three targets were to address the main issues - an absence of any legal or constitutional basis for children's rights, inadequate implementation of government policies and poor practices in terms of services. In the final analysis, the bull's eye – 'to make children's rights real' - was to embed children's rights in the Constitution while also seeking to improve policy and practices in order to maximise positive outcomes for disadvantaged children.

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6 Brian Harvey, *A Way Forward for Delivering Children's Services*, a report for Barnardos, 2011. [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)



## OF work to improve the lives of children took place in a context where Ireland needed to seriously address its policy and practice in relation to children, child poverty and protection.

### 2.1.2 Investments, 2004-2013

*Initially the idea was to invest a million into each organisation, but it was clear that many, many NGOs were institutionally weak and underdeveloped. There was a real weakness in terms of leadership and organisational capacity. That had to be strengthened first. That was the starting point. (EI:21).*

Investments made up to 2008 were to build organisational capacity to either scale up or to grow advocacy capacity. For example over €5 million was invested in Barnardos between 2004-2008, of which 25% was designated in support of advocacy activities. Barnardos is the premier, national, respected programme-based service organisation, whose activities aim to “mitigate the disabling effects of disadvantage.”<sup>7</sup>

While the investment was directed at ensuring that Barnardos provide more and better services, advocacy outcomes were also expected, a factor that influenced the CEO selection process: *[The OF] helped put a really bright person in place in Barnardos* (EI:5). The CEO appointed (Fergus Finlay) was a nationally-recognised advocate on social justice issues, who had served as Senior Advisor in a previous government. He therefore knew first-hand the internal machinations of politics and government, parliamentary procedures and civil service operations. With OF's investment, Barnardos added further to its advocacy capacity. It employed an Advocacy Director (Norah Gibbons, an internal appointment), another nationally-respected children's rights advocate, someone who had worked in the area of child protection in UK and in Ireland and was subsequently appointed to numerous government committees and advisory bodies.

Next to Barnardos, the second highest investment in 2004-08 of over a half million euros was to the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA), an organisation where advocacy is the primary activity. CRA is a coalition of more than 100 organisations (including Barnardos), working to secure the rights of children in Ireland by campaigning for changes in law, policies, services and for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. With OF's grant, CRA developed a strong business plan, put in place performance measurement systems, and developed its governance and management systems. These improvements were to shore up the advocacy work, in particular lobbying (with civil servants and representatives of all political parties) to build political will, as well as offering potential solutions, conducting research and monitoring progress.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

Three smaller investments were made in 2004-2008. In the area of Migrant Separated Children, research was commissioned to determine the extent and nature of the problem to establish equity of care for these children, because this vulnerable group was absent from national migrant data.<sup>8</sup> The investment in Best Place was for a new initiative to embed and realise children's rights at community level.<sup>9</sup> By 2009, two additional investments were made in Longford Women's Link (working with migrant, refugee and asylum seeker women and their children), and Stand Up for Children (later Campaign for Children, to educate the public about children's rights).

#### Organisations, Investment Amount, Children's Rights Advocacy, 2004-2013

Organisation	2004-2008 € Amount, % advocacy	2009-2013 € Amount, % advocacy
Children's Rights Alliance	517,800 (100%)	1,269,200 (100%)
SUFC	-	703,500 (100%)
Separated Children	139,000 (100%)	285,000 (100%)
Best Place	108,462 (100%)	-
Barnardos	1,288,250 (25% of 5,153,000)	790,680 (44% of 1,797,000)
Longford Women's Link	-	151,600 (20% of 758,000)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€2,053,512</b>	<b>€3,199,980</b>

#### 2.1.3 The Push for Advocacy Impact

Advocacy investments accounted for 31% of spend in the area of Children's Rights during the first five years, and 66% in the remaining five years. The matrix below illustrates the investment shift and reflects the evolution in OF thinking on the importance of supporting advocacy as opposed to services:

#### Total Investments €, Children's Rights AGA, 2004-2013

	2004-2008	2009-2013
Total CRs investments	6,533,162	4,812,700
Advocacy investments	2,053,512 (31%)	3,199,980 (66%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€11,345,862 of which advocacy accounted for a total of €5,253,492</b>	

Several factors influenced OF's change in focus. These included a sense of urgency with only five years remaining and a strong push by members of the Advisory Group *I was pushing the agenda, even though Declan was not keen because advocacy was very public* (EI:21). An important insight was that by supporting services, OF might be allowing government to shun its service

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Finn & Hilary Curley, 2007, Missing: Research into Separated Children Gone Missing from State Care. [www.onefoundation.ie](http://www.onefoundation.ie)

<sup>9</sup> Research conducted by Middlequarter, Ireland and academic Roger Hart, USA, resulted in a plan and tools for working with children from an early stage in urban communities.

responsibilities: *you could keep providing services forever, whereas if you changed legislation you guaranteed long-term change* (EI:5).

The naming of the goal, to make children's rights real, reflects the evolution of OF's thinking and its appreciation of the potential value of advocacy in terms of achieving constitutional change and policy implementation, thereby ensuring better long-term outcomes for children. The objectives and indicators of achievement of the goal (2008) were:

#### **Law and Constitution**

– secure children's rights in Constitution - via a referendum on children's rights.

#### **Policy and Implementation**

– ensure children's rights in policy – implement the recommendations of the Ryan Report Implementation Plan 2009.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Practice and Service Delivery**

– improve delivery of children's services.

With the clear identification of its advocacy strategy, objectives and outcomes, OF doubled its advocacy investments. The Children's Rights Alliance became the primary advocacy driver in OF's portfolio for 2009-2013, reflected in the investment of €1,269,200 (100% dedicated to advocacy), compared to a €790,680 investment in Barnardos (44% of its total grant of €1,797,000). Both NGOs had different and complementary advocacy styles that used public and private advocacy routes to advance children's rights.

CRA's senior management (Jillian van Turnhout, CEO and Maria Corbett, Legal & Policy Director) combined skills in political lobbying and policy analysis with CRA's representative status (100+ members) to conduct successful elite advocacy at ministerial level, with civil servants and other state insiders. CRA's advocacy was not targeted at changing public attitudes. While Barnardos was primarily involved in service provision (supported under a separate OF goal), it had a CEO with a public presence and very good communication skills. Barnardos' Advocacy Director was a respected national expert in the area of children at risk, someone who liaised directly with the minister's office. Therefore, high performing advocates amplified the call for change on children's rights.

Additional investments made under this goal were to complement the advocacy work conducted by Children Rights Alliance and Barnardos. For example, the 2011 investment in Stand Up For Children (SUFC) was made in partnership with The Atlantic Philanthropies to educate the public about children's rights. Retired High Court Judge Catherine McGuinness, the first person to identify the constitutional gap in terms of children's rights, became chair of the organisation.<sup>11</sup> Finally, exceptional investments were also made. For example, as plans for a new Child and Family Agency (CFA) were being formulated, OF partnered with AP and the

<sup>10</sup> Ryan Report Implementation Plan – [www.dcy.gov.ie/RyanImplementation](http://www.dcy.gov.ie/RyanImplementation)

<sup>11</sup> Catherine McGuinness. Report of the Kilkenny Incest Investigation, 1993. Government Publications.

department to support the agency's development. This exceptional investment was made because of the strategic importance of the agency and the opportunity to "get it right the first time," in order to support vulnerable children and their families. Finally, in 2012, OF supported the Child Care Law Reporting Project (with AP and the department) and the Children's Law Centre.

## 2.2 Key Achievements

### Law & Constitution

Referendum passed in 2012, though the result is subject to a High Court challenge, children's rights will likely be embedded in Ireland's Constitution. Legislation approved to allow Court Researcher to monitor proceedings of District Courts and to report annually on findings.

### Policy Implementation

Senior (Cabinet) Minister for Children in government. Incremental moves on the Ryan Implementation Report, more Social Worker posts, "Children First" policy revised, universal pre-school year.

### Structural

Steps taken to establish a new dedicated Child and Family Agency, change management processes taking place, new monitoring and accountability systems for support of children and families.

### Practice/Service Delivery

New HIQA (Health Information and Quality Authority) standards/monitoring system in relation to child protection and welfare (July 2012).



### 2.2.1 Referendum on Children's Rights - Advocacy win

On November 10th 2012, the people of Ireland voted to strengthen children's rights in the Irish Constitution after what was described as a lacklustre campaign, attributable primarily to the fact that the 'Yes' campaign had widespread support among Irish voters: *Who was going to be against children's rights?* (EI:8). Some 58% of those who voted supported the referendum, with 40 of 43 geographic constituencies supporting the change. The fact that the government prioritised a referendum on children's rights in the context of an economic recession was generally accepted as evidence of advocacy impact. The result provided: *A unique opportunity ... We have failed earlier generations [of children]. This is a positive legacy for all generations to come.* (EI:31)

The amendment, with several provisions,

- a) recognises the rights of the child;
- b) recalibrates the trigger for State intervention in the family where the welfare or safety of the child is negatively affected, and
- c) enshrines the State's duty to pass laws to make adoption available to all children. In addition, in certain judicial proceedings, it makes
- d) the best interests of the child paramount and ensures that the child's views are heard.<sup>12</sup> In an Irish context, this is a radical shift in locating children at the centre of judicial decision-making and acknowledging their right to have their voices heard in matters affecting them.

Subject to a positive outcome from the current High Court challenge, the result requires the parliament (Oireachtas) to legislate to make these provisions happen in practice. Some parts of the amendment wording are specifically "limited to judicial proceedings, and to the family law setting." Therefore, OF and AP partnered with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, to financially support the development of a Child Care Law Reporting Project (each partner provides a third of the costs).<sup>13</sup>

According to Professor Ursula Kilkelly, the change (pending) to the Irish Constitution provides enormous advocacy opportunities for children's rights in the future: "Skilled advocates and lawyers can use the Constitution to ensure the legal system works for children by holding the State to account and providing an effective remedy to children whose rights are ignored or violated."<sup>14</sup> There is also the potential to draw on established UN and European law to argue for more expansive children's rights (work being undertaken by the Children's Rights Alliance).

### 2.3 Case Study – Children's Rights Alliance ([www.childrensrights.ie](http://www.childrensrights.ie))

This section discusses the work of one of OF's grantees, the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA), to understand the actions taken to contribute to the achievement of the advocacy goal, and lessons learned during the campaign. The focus is primarily on CRA's work in relation to the referendum, not all of its advocacy work.

<sup>12</sup> The Children's Referendum will insert a new article 'Children' in the Constitution. It will be numbered Article 42A and will be located between Articles 42 and 43. There are four parts to Article 42A: (42A.1), (42A.2 – with two parts, 42A.2.1 and 42A.2.2), (42A.3) and (42A.4 – with two parts, 42A.4.1 and 42A.4.2).

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Carol Coulter will monitor and report on the proceedings of the district courts where childcare cases are heard involving applications by the HSE for orders to protect children. [www.childlawproject.ie](http://www.childlawproject.ie).

<sup>14</sup> Professor Ursula Kilkelly, Irish Times article, November 7, 2012.

### 2.3.1 Background, Activities & Milestones

Established in 1995, the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) is a coalition of over 100 organisations working to secure the rights of children in Ireland. The core focus of CRA's work is to advocate for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by Ireland in 1992). The organisation aims to improve the lives of all children under 18 through "securing the necessary changes in Ireland's laws, policies and services." A core (founding) objective of CRA was to have the Irish Constitution amended to strengthen the rights of children.

Key CRA activities in pursuit of its goals have been to:

1. build consensus with member organisations (on the contents of Shadow Reports to UN, to push for change in Ireland, and in relation to wording of a potential constitutional amendment);
2. advocate within government (to build agreement on the need for a referendum and to inform the wording of the amendment),
3. advocate outside government (with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to "influence their recommendations to the Government of Ireland in favour of an explicit acknowledgement of the constitutional rights of children").

CRA's success in building political will across political parties is evidenced by the fact that the momentum for change continued to build under four different Ministers for Children and Youth Affairs (Brian Lenihan, Brendan Smith, Barry Andrews and Frances Fitzgerald), and through three different governments. In addition, the elevation of current Minister Frances Fitzgerald to full ministerial status (as recommended by CRA), with a seat at Cabinet, is further evidence of advocacy impact. The diagram below captures the main elements of CRA's advocacy approach alongside key milestones on the journey to this historic, significant advocacy win.

#### Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) 2005 - 2013 Key Milestones

- 2006 – UN Shadow Report; Referendum announced; Draft 1, wording;
- 2007 – Oireachtas Committee appointed to agree wording;
- 2010 – Draft 2 wording;
- 2011 – Full cabinet Minister for Children, committed to referendum;
- 2012 – September wording announced; November referendum passed.



From the outset, OF support was critical to CRA's path to advocacy success. It participated on the panel to recruit a new CEO in 2005 to lead the organisation through a new phase of organisational development and campaigning. This person, Jillian van Turnhout, was subsequently appointed to Seanad Éireann (the upper House of Parliament) in 2011, a move interpreted by many observers as evidence of CRA's successful advocacy impact. *It was the Taoiseach's (Prime Minister's) call ...to have her shepherd the referendum through the Seanad (EI:1).* Legal/policy analyst Maria Corbett prepared robust policy submissions that explained complex legal matters in accessible terms. The current CEO (Tanya Ward) has been Deputy CEO of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), and is an experienced legal human rights advocate/scholar (a specialist on the Irish judiciary). This will be important because: *It's how the courts interpret the wording that will impact on the practice on the ground (EI:6).*

Up to the successful passage of the referendum on children's rights, much of CRA's advocacy work took the form of insider lobbying, i.e. direct engagement with government Ministers, civil servants and politicians with a view to raising their awareness and informing them of possible routes to effect change, crucially through holding a referendum. Perceived as a player across all parties, CRA informed party political policies, monitored government performance (using a scorecard system), and contributed to drafting the final legislation. Elite advocacy at UN level provided additional leverage to prompt the Irish government in the direction of a referendum.<sup>15</sup> *There were times we felt we were really out on a limb, that the push for a referendum could collapse us. They [The One Foundation] told us all along 'We'll watch your back. Just keep doing what you're doing.' We knew they really wanted the referendum to happen. It gave us tremendous confidence. (EI:7)*



<sup>15</sup> Work in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child continues to be the backdrop for activities. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's monitoring body for the UN Convention examined Ireland's progress in 2006 and called on Ireland to incorporate children's rights into its domestic law – Concluding Observations of the Committee, U.N. Doc. CRA/C/IRL/CO/2, 29th September 2006.

### 2.3.2 Key Achievements – Advocacy wins & Impact:

2006

—  
CRA submits Shadow Report to UN, based on input from member organisations, and presents case for a referendum: *From Rhetoric to Rights, Second Shadow Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Children's Rights Alliance, 2006.*

Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan, TD asks the CRA in its capacity as the main umbrella body for children's NGOs, to consult the sector to inform the government's formulation of wording for the constitutional amendment.

2007

—  
CRA submission: 'The Constitution and Children: A Position Paper on the Proposed Referendum on Children's Rights, 2007,' outlined core principles.

The government published its proposed wording in 2007' (influenced by CRA's submission), prior to General Election. All political parties now committed to referendum.

The new Government established an Oireachtas Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children to facilitate an examination of the proposal for a constitutional referendum, to build consensus on amendment wording, and to make recommendation to the Oireachtas. Children's rights discussed in this high-level parliamentary forum for several years, with significant inputs by the CRA to the committee's three reports.

2010

—  
Third report of Joint Committee with all-party agreement on a proposed referendum wording. Government refers this to the Attorney General and senior civil servants for review.

2011

—  
In January, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs disseminated a proposed amendment wording to NGOs and all parties,

2011

—  
General election campaign, each of the political parties manifestos contained a commitment to a referendum, a promise that was subsequently contained in the Programme for Government in March 2011.<sup>16</sup>

**In November 2012, the referendum was held, and passed.**



Therefore, from 2006 onwards, it is possible to track a growing momentum for change, reflected in the substantive steps taken to build consensus around the idea of a referendum and its wording. Remembering that The One Foundation support began in 2005, the investment (along with that of The Atlantic Philanthropies, the other main funder) contributed to building the capacity of the organisation, and improving its advocacy until September 2012, when the referendum was announced. At that point, CRA shifted gear into serious campaign mode to build on its earlier advocacy work.<sup>17</sup> The following section discusses CRA's advocacy effectiveness, and lessons arising from the experience, using the Quinn-Patton analytical framework.

### 2.3.3 Advocacy Effectiveness

#### **A** Strong High Capacity Coalitions

The Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) membership is located throughout Ireland and includes a wide array of organisations, mainly service providers, including national representative bodies, local youth groups, human rights and disability groups. CRA is first and foremost an advocacy organisation with a mission to influence policy formulation and implementation. Its role as a representative body has given the organisation added advocacy legitimacy, and facilitated access to government, especially when the idea of a referendum was being promoted and negotiated: *Government love consortia. They listen when there's a mandate* (EI:9).

CRA successfully facilitated agreement by its members on a Shadow Report, submitted to the UN in 2006, following a series of workshops and individual consultations.<sup>18</sup> This document presented a unified, agreed position for constitutional change and was the catalyst for spurring the government to commit to the referendum. CRA was the only NGO invited by government to hear the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, TD, announce his intention to amend the Constitution (November 2006). On the basis of its engagement in the UN review and monitoring process, CRA was approached by the Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan, TD, and asked to consult with other NGOs working on children's issues regarding referendum wording. The resulting document "The Constitution and Children: A Position Paper on the Proposed Referendum on Children's Rights" was presented to the Minister in 2007.

## **Government love consortia. They listen when there's a mandate.**

Many of the principles advocated by the CRA in its submission were reflected in the subsequent bill produced by government "Twenty-eighth Amendment of the Constitution Bill 2007." This demonstrates the government's recognition of CRA's mandate, the quality and credibility of its policy submissions, but also provides evidence of CRA's policy impact at national and UN levels on behalf of its member organisations.

<sup>17</sup> See Summary of Referendum Campaign Activities, [www.childrensrights.ie](http://www.childrensrights.ie)

<sup>18</sup> From Rhetoric to Rights, Second Shadow Report, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, CRA, 2006.

In the intervening years, civil servants and politicians continued to consult with CRA in recognition of its status as coalition leader. Its response to the Ryan Report (2006), 'Learning from the Past,' influenced the government's implementation plan. Based on the submission, CRA was granted a seat on the inter-departmental monitoring group for the plan, the only independent body participating: "The role of the Alliance in bringing together and speaking for a broad membership is highly valued by senior civil servants and political leaders."<sup>19</sup>

Examples of CRA's efforts to build a strong coalition to advance children's constitutional rights were in evidence in 2010 and again in 2012. In 2010, CRA collaborated with Barnardos under the banner of "Saving Childhood Ryan" (a group of eight organisations) to promote findings emerging from an opinion poll on public attitudes to the proposed referendum.<sup>20</sup> The poll demonstrated widespread support among the Irish people for the proposed referendum (62% of respondents reporting they would vote in favour of it). Once the referendum was announced, CRA assumed a much more public profile. It developed and disseminated a suite of materials to explain why a referendum was needed, engaged with various media, and conducted briefings with parliamentarians and key advocacy targets. Its Constitutional Working Group (formed in March 2012, before the referendum announcement) ensured a two-way information flow with member organisations during the campaign. Members were updated regularly via email, briefings, and phone calls. Some 77 member organisations adopted public positions calling for a "Yes" vote, and CRA arranged media training for 25 organisations.

CRA also participated in the "Yes for Children" campaign. This coalition consisted of a number of children's organisations that came together to campaign jointly for a yes vote.<sup>21</sup> Despite agreement to collaborate under the "Yes for Children" campaign banner, some bellwethers reported that "solo runs" by certain member organisations diluted the public perception of a unified campaign force.

The main lesson emerging is that CRA's legitimacy as an umbrella body (representing over 100 organisations and 300 individuals supportive of children's rights) provided valuable insider advocacy access to parliamentarians and policy makers because it presented a unified sectoral position on avenues for change on children's rights. CRA's wide membership base provided a nation-wide platform for mobilisation once the referendum campaign kicked into gear. By contrast, its engagement with the short-lived "Yes for Children" campaign coalition (September-November, 2012) did not contribute substantially to its advocacy effectiveness.

## **B** Strong National Grassroots Coordination

As mentioned earlier, CRA's membership spans a range of service providers, professional bodies, human rights groups etc. Members were consulted for the UN Shadow Report in 2006, and are consulted during the preparation of its annual Report Card, which rates the government's performance on its commitments to

<sup>19</sup> Compass, 2011: 21.

<sup>20</sup> Barnardos commissioned the poll. Other NGOs in the group were CARI, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, ISPCC, Irish Association of Young People in Care (renamed EPIC), One in Four and Rape Crisis Network, Ireland.

<sup>21</sup> Irish Association of Young People in Care (renamed EPIC), One in Four and Rape Crisis Network, Ireland. Barnardos, the Children's Rights Alliance, ISPCC and Campaign for Children came together in September 2012 as "Yes for Children." This was not a legal entity but a loose campaigning coalition. See The Irish Times video of the launch [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB01aqoxIEA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB01aqoxIEA), CRA CEO.

children. Each member has a vote at the AGM, including voting in the Board of Directors. Therefore, strong national-grassroots coordination is at the heart of the organisation's work. Members are kept abreast of policy developments and Dáil proceedings via CRA's information sources (emailed to members and available on the website): a quarterly Newsletter, weekly Oireachtas Monitor, occasional Policy Briefings and Press Releases etc.



During the campaign in 2012, members were provided with a host of information sources for use in local campaign-related activities (see Summary of Referendum Campaign Activities). These included: A summary explanation of amendment wording; Frequently asked question; Short guide to the children's referendum; Nóta treorach maidir le reifreann na leanaí (Referendum note in the Irish language); Analysis of the children's amendment; Note on the children's referendum and disability etc. The Campaign Toolkit and a Resource section of the website were used by members to support the referendum and "get the vote out," especially in the final days leading up to the vote. The Constitutional Working Group was formed in March 2012 in order to deepen engagement with and seek members' views and ideas for the referendum campaign.

To further promote voter mobilisation, CRA member organisations were offered information leaflets, posters stickers and badges for a "Yes" vote, and members were encouraged to add the campaign logo to email signature, a Facebook ribbon and countdown clock. For example, as part of the campaign, CRA offered three simple ways for member organisations and others to become involved: 1. Pledge – your vote and encourage family and friends to do likewise; 2. Share – this email with your colleagues, friends and family; 3. Vote – on 10th November 2012. CRA media training allowed a range of different members to call for a yes vote. CRA also devised a "Connectors" project to spread the yes message through influential stakeholders and organisations. It engaged in a series of meetings, photo-calls, and also held briefings to explain how the referendum would impact positively on the specific sectors, for example, early years, legal and disability.

Therefore, one advocacy lesson emerging is that established two-way systems and processes for national grassroots coordination and input in representative

organisations expedite exchange of ideas, information flow and critical mobilisation mass for campaigns and thereby contribute to advocacy effectiveness.

## **C** Disciplined and focused messages and effective communications

The main focus of CRA's messaging and communication's efforts in the early years was in relation to policy makers – senior civil servants and politicians in government and to a lesser extent, the general public. CRA's direct insider lobbying was enhanced by a capacity to communicate solutions, without laying claim to the wins publically: *Some organisations are better at promoting word of their access and influence* (EI:13). Inputs to crafting and drafting legislation needed to be played down rather than communicated more broadly in order to preserve CRA's working relationship with government.

Within statutory circles, CRA is seen as a considered voice, a resource for those working in the area of child welfare and children's rights. Its messages are thought of as *respectful of the state and the barriers it faces* (EI:10). Senior civil servants have developed a relationship of trust and mutual respect with senior CRA staff (CEO, Jillian van Turnhout, Legal & Policy Director, Maria Corbett). This has resulted in *a layered understanding, identifying the blockages* (EI:10) which was a crucial factor when drafting the appropriate wording for the amendment to the Irish Constitution.

CRA used an annual Report Card to communicate to a wider audience the Irish government's performance against its stated commitments to children in a range of areas from education to poverty.<sup>22</sup> Again, the level of collaboration with government in development of this advocacy tool was important. Senior civil servants reviewed the assessments before they were rated or released to the public. *We did run it by the civil servants, a chapter on each area, to check if we got it right. They had no idea what grade we'd give* (EI:7). The end result was subject to independent scrutiny by an external assessment panel. Therefore, facilitating a government preview helped to validate the findings and strengthen the organisation's message on the need for reform. CRA has scored the government's commitments to children's rights as outlined in documents such as Social Partnership Agreement: Towards 2016; the Programme for Government, 2007-2012; and the Ryan Report Implementation Plan, 2009.

For example, Report Card 2013 covered the following main areas – Children's Constitutional Rights, Right to Education, Right to Health, Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, Right to Protection from Abuse and Neglect, and Right to Equality and Non-discrimination. CRA rated the government's progress in relation to subcategories and made recommendations for improvement – e.g. Implementation of the Ryan Report (B- grade), Child and Family Agency (B-grade) and Children's Rights Referendum (A grade).

Not all civil servants were pleased with the Report Card system and some reacted negatively to being blamed for not meeting standards when they

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<sup>22</sup> The Report Card was adapted from one used in the USA by the organisation Children Now, California, who were one of The Atlantic Foundation's grantees.

said it was their political masters *pulling the strings* (EI:11). Others were less impressed by CRA's concentration on the referendum at the expense of maintaining pressure on government (via its communications' systems) to provide services in support of children and vulnerable families: All my life I have worked for improved and efficient services... *Legislation won't make that happen. Implementation of the Ryan Report recommendations will. Work with the mainstream. Improve the services. The outside money [from foundations] will be gone soon.* (EI:10).

To maximise the impact of the annual Report Card findings, CRA conducted follow-up meetings with individual politicians and with party leaders. During these meetings, CRA used short briefing documents that conveyed various political party's stated policy positions and also offered solutions, i.e. avenues to be pursued for change: *Here is where you can make a difference. This is what your policy statement is. Give it to them. Then back again to make the case* (EI:6).

CRA's referendum campaign activities involved production and dissemination of information materials and commentary, on-going engagement with member organisations (messaging and media training), targeted external engagement (briefing with key advocacy targets), media coverage, maintaining an online presence, production of videos with member organisations etc. However, as part of joining the "Yes for Children" campaign, the organisations involved, including the CRA agreed to a single media contact and to only press release as "Yes for Children." This policy was followed by CRA, even though at times the staff found it frustrating.

During the campaign CRA participated in media interviews and debates carried in various traditional media outlets, produced a high number of opinion pieces and had a consistent presence and following in new media (Facebook and Twitter). For example, as of April 2013, CRA had 2,977 followers on Twitter and 4,097 Facebook followers. The national TV and radio agenda-setting shows were prioritised such as "Drivetime," "Morning Ireland," "News at One," and the current affairs TV programme, "Prime Time." However, the degree of consensus on the need for a referendum meant that CRA's communication's work was "a hard sell." *Too much consensus meant that the media lost interest. A little more controversy could have sparked more public interest. Instead, the general feeling prevailed that 'Ah, sure, it will pass.'* (EI:13)

Twenty-five member organisations received media training. Visits to the website spiked with 1,999 visits on 9th November 2012, the day before the referendum. The referendum page received 21,712 views in 2012. A set of short videos created with members was uploaded to the website and YouTube channels. This was a cost-effective way to develop clips for multiple dissemination opportunities. However, the Supreme Court Judgment (on the Thursday before the Saturday vote, with a moratorium on media reporting from 1pm on Friday) confused the public and the media. The Court's finding was that the government's information booklet on the referendum was unlawful. This finding had a negative impact on voter turnout.

The key lesson emerging from the CRA's communications' experience was the benefit of having several strategies to boost the communications effort and ensure

messaging “hits” landed on multiple advocacy target sites: from training member organisations to ensure multiple voices on the issue throughout Ireland, to on-going updates to the website and a constant presence on social media etc., activities that were part of the campaign information and communication's work that contributed to widespread information and awareness-raising and mobilisation (see Summary of Referendum Campaign Activities).

## **D Solid Research & Knowledge Base**

OF supported grantees to commission or gather data to advance advocacy arguments. The area of children's rights in Ireland posed a particular problem because of the paucity of data. Therefore, CRA's annual Report Card was both a mechanism for rating performance relative to government's commitments, but also a means by which to solicit data from government in response to the ratings given. *The Alliance just kept on rating certain areas poorly until the information was released* (EI:1). This strategy enabled CRA to produce trend data from 2009-2012 in relation to progress in major areas affecting children's lives like education and health, and thereby contribute to the knowledge base. As one policy-maker reported, *They [CRA] have quality inputs and materials, budget submissions and scorecard...even if we don't like all of it* (EI:10).

Much of CRA's advocacy work in relation to the content of the constitutional amendment was carried out in a confidential manner and in consultation with legal experts such as Geoffrey Shannon (the government's Rapporteur on Child Protection). It is possible to trace the imprint of CRA's language and submissions in government policy documents. This level of cooperation and collaboration provided a comprehensive analysis that would not have been possible otherwise. During formulation of the amendment wording, in addition to written submissions, meetings were held with the Minister's advisors. *[NGO] Advocacy was very closely watched...during the period ...for a leak* (EI:6). The irony is that while many of CRA's submissions and research inputs to government were subsequently used, they cannot be directly attributed. Examples viewed during the evaluation, however, demonstrate how parts of CRA policy submissions were replicated in government materials. *The wording does not go as far we would have liked but a satisfactory compromise was struck that is stronger than the option we understood was being considered prior to our intervention.* (EI:6).

## **The Alliance just kept on rating certain areas poorly until the information was released.**

In addition to its contributions to emerging legislation, CRA's research contained in its submissions had a positive impact on structural changes. For example, CRA has advocated for a separate, senior (cabinet level) Minister for Children, and outlined the brief in some detail. The appointment of a dynamic Minister, committed to reform in 2011, brought added value to CRA's propositions for change. A critical step taken by the Minister was to begin the process of establishing the Child and Family Agency with its own dedicated management, reporting, performance assessments, accountability and resources.

The government has actively sought CRA inputs on many occasions because its knowledge is respected. In many respects, CRA's policy analysts were pragmatic advocates. As a senior policy-maker reported, *Their submissions [to government] are done well, thoroughly and quickly...and they are used. That's effect (EI:31).* CRA provided the intellectual analysis for the politicians and the civil servants who often did not have the time to explore policy issues and solutions. Their submissions were evidence-based, substantive and were perceived as having merit. *By continually monitoring and making public the issues for children ...[CRA] has helped to bring children's rights to the fore in Ireland (EI:31).*

Therefore, in relation to the role of research and knowledge to advance advocacy, the lesson is that government is likely to avail of and apply findings when they address existing gaps in knowledge, are of a high quality, and where there is consensus among member organisations in relation to findings. This was evidenced by the successful uptake of some of CRA's submissions around the wording for a referendum.



## **E** Timely, Opportunistic Lobbying and Engagement

Throughout its years working to advance the idea of a referendum on children's rights CRA sought to build relationships with civil servants in government departments and with representatives across political parties. Access was key. *They had the relationships to cut the deal and get the amendment over the line (EI:27).* CRA was perceived as having a "dream team" because of the CEO's skill as a lobbyist combined with the policy analyst's capacity to research and produce well-crafted submissions (often with inputs by external specialists) on complicated legal issue. Therefore successful insider lobbying required high quality legal and policy analysis, compiled in well-researched submissions, to maintain and sustain the advocacy relationships. These factors have been reported time and again during the evaluation as a major plank in the organisation's success. CRA's team is highly regarded by government and civil servants. *Civil servants expect people to be on*

*the ball. Sometimes [NGOs] are right and sometimes the state is wrong. It's a fluid thing. If you lose respect for one another, there's no progress. (EI:10).*

CRA's lobbying strategy went into a different gear following the election of the government in 2011. The appointment of the CEO, Jillian van Turnhout, to the Seanad was interpreted as an advocacy success – i.e. the placement of a key policy player to ensure passage of the referendum. A designated Senate seat symbolized the importance of the issue.

The new CEO, Tanya Ward, had a different set of relationships in government circles, forged during her work with ICCL. Maria Corbett, Legal and Policy Director, and Deputy Chief Executive, was a consistent and respected presence in policy processes. Therefore, CRA's lobbying continued, with an additional well-placed insider in the Seanad. In 2012, CRA liaised directly with the Minister's office on the wording of the referendum. Written submissions went back and forth and influenced the referendum wording. *You have to understand the difference one word can make – [in drafting of the amendment] shall instead of may. That's absolutely major (EI:6).*

A lesson from the lobbying experience was the need to carefully read the dynamics of government. For example, there was reported tension between political advisors (who wanted change) and civil servants (charged with reducing costs in a recession and therefore not looking to widen their department's obligations). This dynamic will become more pronounced as implications of the amendment wording are revealed in practice and case law. For example, bellwethers reported that civil servants in the Departments of Justice and Education appear less inclined to meet with NGOs. Therefore, further lobbying will be required to address policy bottlenecks and to give meaningful effect to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **F** Collaborating Funders, strategic funding

The One Foundation (and The Atlantic Philanthropies) invested significant resources and supports in CRA. The investments transformed the organisation into a professional NGO, with a clear vision, mission and strategic plan: *The business model brought professionalism...a concern with outcomes rather than activities (EI:6).* The certainty of funding over a number of years imbued CRA with a confidence in its mission, enabled it to develop advocacy capacity and strengthened its hand in negotiations with government: *Funding from Atlantic and One gave us credibility – government knew philanthropy was backing us (EI:7).* It is anticipated that AP will continue to fund CRA to the end of its tenure in 2016.

### 2.3.4 Conclusion

*Without the existence of the Alliance, and without the support of One, this amendment would simply not have happened (EI:31).* The One Foundation supported the Children's Rights Alliance to be its lead investment to 'make children's rights real.' CRA advocacy has supported unquestionably the concept of a referendum to enshrine children's rights in the Irish Constitution. As the referendum result remains subject to a High Court appeal, the process is not totally complete. However, many bellwethers anticipate that as a result of the amendment, the State must put the safety and welfare of the child at the centre of major decision-making in relation to child protection and in supporting struggling families.



Up to 2,000 children in long-term state care may be afforded the opportunity to be adopted and given a second chance at a stable family. The amendment provides that the best interest of the child must be the paramount consideration in care, adoption, guardianship, custody and access proceedings. It ensures that a judge must listen to the views of a child when making decisions in these proceedings. In addition, it sets a new benchmark for how Ireland views and values children and provides a legal framework by which the nation can improve its practices and policies to move beyond the stories of abuse that have emerged in recent times.

CRA's contribution to this success was vital and significant, work that by its very nature was covert, based on building close working relationships with civil servants in many government departments and with politicians across various parties. The organisation's status as a representative body facilitated advocacy access, as did the quality of its policy submissions, but the organisation could not publicise the extent to which its submissions to government successfully translated into policy because to do so might jeopardise a productive working relationship and the end goal. While OF's grant ends in 2013, CRA will most likely continue to be supported by AP, under its Children and Youth programme. This will enable CRA to continue its advocacy on behalf of children's rights at least until 2016, though most likely, given resources available, on a smaller scale, and as a more compact organisation. Nonetheless, CRA can claim to have made an historic contribution to advancing the rights of children in Ireland. The organisation can trace multiple advocacy wins from 2006 onwards, work conducted with OF support, that successfully propelled the idea of a referendum on children's rights to the point where it became a reality.





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# Making Immigrant Rights Real

This section opens with an overview of Ireland's changed migration landscape, followed by a description of The One Foundation's (OF) thinking on measures to effect change in response to a growing immigrant population, and the investments made to achieve its goal – to make immigrant rights real in Ireland. A case study of an investment in the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) follows to provide a deeper understanding of some advocacy approaches taken, their impact, and lessons learned.

### 3.1 Migration – Ireland

From the late twentieth to the early twenty-first centuries, Ireland (Republic) experienced a dramatic change in migration patterns - emigration flows reduced to a trickle as unprecedented numbers were drawn to Ireland because of its thriving economy. “The potent combination of economic growth, a property bubble, and a relaxed immigration regime’ led to a ‘rapid increase in the number of migrants moving to Ireland.”<sup>1</sup> With the global downturn in 2008, patterns reversed again, and Ireland became once more a country of net emigration. While many migrants returned to their places of origin, a significant number had settled, and have stayed in Ireland.

The 2011 census showed that “non-Irish nationals” accounted for almost 12% of the population. In a little over a decade, Ireland, with its population of 4.5 million people, had gone from a largely homogeneous population to one of ethnic and cultural diversity. These changes occurred during OF’s limited lifetime. The table below provides an overview of main national groups living in ROI from 2002 to 2011. A significant number of migrants entered from EU/EEA nations and were therefore entitled to work in Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Ireland (Republic, ROI) – Top Ten National Groups, 2002, 2006 and 2011**

Rank	2002	2006	2011
1.	UK (101,257)	UK (112,548)	Poland (122,585)
2.	USA (11,135)	Poland (63,276)	UK (112,259)
3.	Nigeria (8,650)	Lithuania (24,628)	Lithuania (36,683)
4.	Germany (7,033)	Nigeria (16,300)	Latvia (20,593)
5.	France (6,231)	Latvia (13,319)	Nigeria (17,642)
6.	China (5,766)	USA (12,475)	Romania (17,304)
7.	Romania (4,910)	China (11,161)	India (16,986)
8.	Spain (4,347)	Germany (10,289)	Philippines (12,791)
9.	South Africa (4,113)	Philippines (9,548)	Germany (11,305)
10.	Philippines (3,742)	France (9,064)	USA (11,015)

Sources: CSO, 2003 and 2012 in Gilmartin (2012:9). ROI, Republic of Ireland not including NI.

The table shows trends of relevance to the evaluation. For example, the number of migrants from Poland (an EU member state) almost doubled between 2006 and 2011 (63,276 to 122,585), workers who were entitled to freedom of movement within the EU. Non-EU/EEA migrants, officially termed TCNs (Third Country Nationals) also arrived in increasing numbers. For example, the number from Nigeria doubled between 2002 and 2006 (8,650 to 16,300), while the number

1 Mary Gilmartin, The changing landscape of Irish migration, 2000-2012. National Institute For Regional and Spatial Analysis, Working Paper Series, No. 69, October 2012.

2 European Union (EU) member states, currently at 27. European Economic Alliance (EEA) countries are Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. No records of entry and exit of EU nationals are retained by the Irish state and therefore numbers are CSO estimates.

from the Philippines more than tripled in the period 2002-2011 (3,742 to 12,791). In the context of over 4.5 million people, the number of migrants entering Ireland was relatively small. In addition 80% of migrants to Ireland from 2006-12 had EU nationality, and were entitled to live and work in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, one study found the Irish media's stance to be "largely negative," focused on "issues of control and security" and portraying immigrants as "exploited workers or victims."<sup>4</sup>

Migrants whose country of origin was not EU or EEA, such as those entering from the Philippines, had to seek permission to enter through work or study visas, and their movements were "carefully monitored."<sup>5</sup>

Legislation to deal with the emerging situation in relation to work permits came into force from 2003 onwards.<sup>6</sup> By 2009, with the economic downturn, and unemployment at over 14%, the government "tightened up" its work permit legislation, a move that had a direct impact on vulnerable migrant workers. Work permits could generally only be availed of for occupations with annual salaries of €30K, except in "exceptional" cases.<sup>7</sup> For example, in Domestic Work and Care in private homes, new applicants were no longer eligible for permits. Work permits were issued to the employer, not the migrant, and required regular renewal for the migrant to remain "in status." When granted, permits were issued for two years initially, then renewed for three years, by which time, the migrant could apply for long-term residency.

The pattern of work permit allocations reflected the reversal of migration trends – a decline of 8% to 7,271 recorded in 2010-2011.<sup>8</sup> According to recent figures, there has been a 70% decline in the number of foreign nationals seeking work in Ireland since 2006.<sup>9</sup>

Similar patterns of increase and decrease in numbers of immigrants were recorded for another category – refugees and asylum seekers. Asylum seekers, who constitute a small proportion of overall migrant flows, live in Ireland while their application is processed. Ireland does not have a single procedure for assessment of protection claims - refugee, subsidiary protection and leave to remain cases are decided on separately.<sup>10</sup> In fact a small percentage of asylum seekers, approximately 10%, are granted asylum or leave to remain, with the overall refugee recognition rate for 2010 as low as 3.4%.<sup>11</sup> During the application process (which can take several years), asylum seekers and refugees are accommodated in Direct Provision Centres (often underused hotels or hostels), and given a weekly allowance of €19.10 (with €9.60 per child). They have no right to work or to social protection. A report by the Irish Refugee Council documented serious shortcomings with the system and described direct provision as "State-sanctioned child poverty and exclusion."<sup>12</sup>

3 Gilmartin op cite.

4 Helene Perold, 2010, Media, public storytelling and social justice. FOMACS Forum on Migration and Communications.

5 Gilmartin op cite. Ireland's borders are staffed by members of the Garda Síochána/Police. No record is kept of EU/EEA migrants, because of their right to freedom of movement within the EU.

6 Employment Permits Acts were introduced in 2003 and 2006. In 2012, special provision was made to allow migrants from Romania and Bulgaria to access work permits. See [www.djei/labour/workpermits](http://www.djei/labour/workpermits).

7 Positions with an annual salary below €30k must be advertised for six days in the media and lodged with FÁS (the government's national training body) for eight weeks, before a work permit is issued to a migrant worker.

8 ESRI report commissioned by the Integration Centre, 2012.

9 CSO figures reported on Morning Ireland, 1 March 2013.

10 Gilmartin, 2012.

11 Joyce, 2011 cited in the ESRI, Annual Monitoring Report on Integration, 2012 for the Intergration Centre.

12 Irish Refugee Council, 2012, State Sanctioned Child Poverty and Exclusion: The Case of children in Accommodation for Asylum-seekers. Of the 5,098 residents in Direct Provision, over a third are children.

In addition to specific pieces of legislation to address areas such as work permits, legislation on forced labour and trafficking was passed in 2013. The General Scheme of Criminal Law, the Human Trafficking (Amendment) Bill will ensure victims are protected and employers prosecuted. Most important, however, is the Immigrant Residence and Protection (IRP) Bill, which has been drafted and re-drafted over several years. At one point, prior to a change of government in 2011, the IRP Bill had over 700 amendments, following consultations and submissions with relevant parties. The Department of Justice has pledged that the IRP Bill will address procedural and processing gaps and make clear and transparent the terms for immigration and family reunification, employment etc. The current Minister for Justice decided to draft a new bill, promised in 2013, a process that has been described as *taking place very much behind closed doors...highly sensitive* (EI:24). There is also a rise in racist incidents according to a poll conducted with Irish politicians (almost half of whom felt there was an increase from 2011 to 2012).<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, during OF's limited lifetime, Irish society had to adapt to an unprecedented inflow of migrants, the vast majority of whom had every right to enter, live and work here. Nonetheless, government systems and social services were unprepared and inexperienced in dealing with this scale of inward migration. Legislation needed to be hastily developed in response to emerging issues. Ultimately, social policy responses lagged behind developments. Media coverage - an important indicator of how immigration is understood by the general public and politicians - highlighted the challenges rather than the contributions of migrants and their families.



<sup>13</sup> Millward Brown Landsdowne (MBL), 2011 and 2012 for the Integration Centre, Attitudes towards Immigration and Immigration Policy Among TDs. Available on The One Foundation website.

### 3.1.1 Advocacy Goal and Strategy – “make immigrant rights real”

The advocacy goal identified by OF during its 2008 review was “to make immigrant rights real.” The other goal in the Integration programme was – “to make multi-denominational education a real option in Ireland.” This evaluation was concerned with the advocacy goal, though clearly measures to ensure a diverse, non-denominational education that could impact on the advocacy goal. The aim was to have “minorities integrated into Irish society so their children have the same rights and opportunities as others’ children.” To ensure good integration outcomes for the children of immigrants, OF investments needed to have an impact on legislation, immigration systems, and national/local policy and processes.

Immigrant rights are protected in Ireland, as evidenced by the following:

1. Immigrant Rights appear in legislation
2. The immigration system is fair, transparent and accountable
3. Immigrants have access to information on their rights, entitlements and services.

### 3.1.2 Investments, 2005-2008 and 2009-2013

OF sought to secure long term improvements in the lives of immigrant children by investing in organisations already established and working with adult migrant populations and their families. Investments and supports were provided to support integration at national and local levels; to enable migrants to access their statutory rights and entitlements (through information and support provided via grantee organisations), and to encourage statutory agencies to revise their services in light of the needs of this new constituency. Legislative change was required for a fair and transparent immigration and asylum system.

OF’s process for selecting grantees, common across all its programmes, was particularly challenging among immigrant rights NGOs. Certain NGOs did not make it through the due diligence and business planning processes central to OF’s venture philanthropy approach. The selection process sparked debate about performance within NGOs generally and the need for a focus on outcomes as well as activities. *There were a lot of tensions. Organisations wanted cash, but found the model we were introducing tough – business planning was very engaged, we made them jump through hoops, to develop both a strategic and operational plan and then made them pitch it to our board.* (EI:4)

## Legislative change was required for a fair and transparent immigration and asylum system.

Four organisations were selected for funding for 2004-2008: The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (vulnerable migrant workers and their families), Integrating Ireland (a national network), Irish Refugee Council (asylum seekers and refugees) and The Irish Traveller Movement. Three other organisations were also funded: NASC, in Cork city, (information and legal advice), Refugee Information Service and Longford Women’s Link (mother and child programme for migrants in direct provision). These early investments were made to build organisational capacity in addition to

improving services and supports to migrants. The grants were to *professionalise how they were doing their business. Get them to step up their game* (EI:4). A major piece of research commissioned and published by OF collated all available data on migrants in Ireland for the first time.<sup>14</sup>

By 2008, immigration and integration policies had not changed dramatically. In addition, with the economic recession, the context for advocacy work to advance immigrant rights had become more challenging. OF decided to support a small number of NGOs who were emerging leaders working with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers: Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Irish Refugee Council and The Integration Centre, with two city-based NGOs, NASC (Cork) and Doras Luimní (Limerick), as the regional/local arm to the advocacy effort. All five NGOs were deemed to have developed “*trusted working relationships*” (EI:4) with advocacy allies within the sector, the civil service, local authorities, politicians, equality allies etc. In addition, they could provide a strong evidence-base and casework to demonstrate the impact of legislation and immigration procedures. Grantees were actively supporting the Citizens Information Centres (local information centres operated by a mix of some paid workers and volunteers, financed by the state) via the provision of training and information to enable the mainstreaming of these points of reference/support for migrants’ rights. All five organisations were working with local authorities to develop and implement local Integration Plans.

**Table 2. Immigrant Rights – Grantees & Amounts, 2005-2008 and 2008-2013**

	2004-2008	2009-2013
MRCI	363,000	367, 110
Irish Refugee Council	535,380	628,495
Integrating Ireland	337,238	1,205,000
NASC	118,500	9,613
RIS	52,500	228,900
ITM	184,200	345,000
LWL*	50,000	120,000
ITM		248,250
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€1,640,818</b>	<b>€3,152,368</b>
	<b>€4,793,186</b>	

Source: OF records. OF moved LWL to its Children’s Programme in 2008-9.

### 3.2 Key Achievements – Advocacy wins and Impact

There is no doubt that progress in relation to making immigrant rights real has been spasmodic at best, with the most important advances established in the early years

<sup>14</sup> Prospectus, 2008. Analysis of The New Communities Sector in Ireland.



of the foundation's work. Once the recession took hold in 2008, high unemployment rates and a reversal of migration patterns seriously challenged the advocacy efforts of grantees. Nonetheless, activities of the five NGOs have contributed to the following achievements in relation to each of the OF objectives identified above. These achievements point to gradual wins towards the main advocacy goal – to make immigrant rights real - in terms of legislative change, statutory services and supports and integration measures:

### Improved Legislation

Objective 1. Immigrant Rights appear in legislation)

Some legislation has been enacted with increased protections (e.g. on worker exploitation and means of redress). The government has delivered secondary legislation on forced labour and trafficking, and there have been advances on migrant workers' protections. An Immigration Residence and Protection Bill is pending and should at least provide clarity and transparency on terms and conditions of immigration, residence and protection measures for immigrants.

### Improved Services & Supports

Objective 2. The immigration system is fair, transparent and accountable

There has been significant mainstreaming of information on immigrant rights. For example, from a base of zero in 2009, 80% of Citizen Information Centres (CICs) around the country should have received training on migrant issues by end 2013.<sup>15</sup>

### Improved Integration Measures

Objective 3. Immigrants have access to information about rights, entitlements, and services

There has been a marked increase in the number (and quality) of local integration plans, from a base of 10% in 2009 to an anticipated 88% of local authorities having plans by end 2013. Local authorities have also committed to on-going assessment of targets in the plans, as evidenced in the cities of Limerick, Waterford and Cork.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to improvements in legislation, services and supports, and integration measures, grantee activities have contributed to the following factors that are important in terms of the sustainability of immigrant rights.

**Stronger Sectoral Advocacy** - There is a more coherent immigrant NGO sector that at the very least collaborates on certain agreed advocacy issues, campaigns and actions - for example, in relation to legislation on forced labour and the new IRP Bill.<sup>17</sup> There is also an exchange of information on national and local strategies. A number of highly regarded leaders have emerged as spokespersons on immigrant rights. Advocacy links have been established with allies in Europe, in the US and in the UN, transnational advocacy connections that allow a two-way exchange of good practice.

**Evidence-base** - There is now a substantial body of evidence on immigrant experiences in Ireland in employment, social services, immigration procedures etc. All grantees have contributed to the body of evidence according to their area of specialization (worker rights, asylum etc.) either through a combination of in-house data gathering processes, and/or commissioned research. For example, a number of OF grantees have collated evidence and collaborated in a shared

<sup>15</sup> For information on Citizen Information Centres (CICs) see [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)

<sup>16</sup> The Integration Centre, Integration Plans, Waterford, Cork and Dublin. [www.integrationcentre.ie](http://www.integrationcentre.ie)

<sup>17</sup> NGO Coalition Briefing Paper on IRP Bill, 2010. See [www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie)

analysis of trends to substantiate claims for change to the Department of Social Protection's practices.<sup>18</sup>

**Social cohesion** – While it is difficult to attribute social cohesion benefits to the cumulative effect of grantees' work, their contribution alongside that of many organisations working to promote integration, equality and anti-racism was best framed in terms of what has not happened: *Ireland hasn't had the race riots that have happened in other countries* (EI:1). As another interviewee reported, social cohesion is a critical consideration for future stability: *If we don't get it right, it will bite us later* (EI:26).

**Appreciation of Ireland's permanent diversity** – Despite some serious setbacks raised in the FOMACS report on media representations, public discourse has advanced at the very least in a positive direction to reflect a growing appreciation of diversity, an awareness of the permanence of Ireland's multiculturalism, and an intolerance of racism. However, recent opinion polls highlight the need for continued vigilance and demonstrate how fragile the base of support is for migrant rights given renewed net emigration.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.3 Migrant Rights Centre Ireland – Case study ([www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie))

MRCI was selected as the case study site for several reasons including its commitment to building immigrants' capacity to advocate for their rights, its use of creative advocacy strategies and because of evidence of government "take up" of solutions it proposed.<sup>20</sup> (The author worked with MRCI as Independent External Evaluator from 2006 to 2011).<sup>21</sup>

#### 3.3.1 MRCI – Background, Activities and Milestones

Established in 2001, the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) is a national organisation that seeks to promote the rights of migrant workers and their families in an intercultural society. In the early years, direct support and advice was provided to migrants via a Drop-in Centre in a city-centre basement location, operated by two Catholic nuns with funding provided by the Columban Fathers. Following receipt of OF's first investment in 2005/6, MRCI moved to a more substantial, city-centre office base, and completed a strategic planning process. Throughout the years MRCI has combined the provision of information and advice with advocacy work conducted at local, national and transnational levels.

MRCI's founders and board members have a shared social analysis, informed by experiences of working on issues of ethnic and racial diversity in Ireland and abroad. The organisation's former Chair, Bobby Gilmore (a Columban priest), has a global perspective informed by experiences working in the Philippines and in the UK.<sup>22</sup> Another board member, Anastacia Crickley, has also worked with the Irish abroad, and is a long time advocate for Irish Traveller rights. She has held or holds positions on European and UN equality, rights and anti-racism committees. The

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18 Crosscare, Doras Luimní and NASC, 2012. *Person or Number? Barriers Facing Migrants Accessing Social Protection*.

19 MBL polls, 2011 and 2012 commissioned by The One Foundation. See [www.onefoundation.ie](http://www.onefoundation.ie)

20 The term migrant is used to describe both emigrant and immigrant mobility in a globalised world.

21 Quarterly visits and reports were completed as part of this formative evaluation process. See [www.ocainternational.com](http://www.ocainternational.com)

22 Fr. Bobby Gilmore spearheaded a campaign to release the "Birmingham Six," Irish migrants wrongly accused of terrorist activities. See [www.mrci.ie/about-us/our-board/](http://www.mrci.ie/about-us/our-board/)

organisation's Director, Siobhán O'Donoghue, shares this history of community work with Travellers in Ireland. She worked with the Community Workers Co-operative and represented the community sector in national policy making fora in 1990s. Their commitment to community development as a route to mobilising migrants to become their own advocates was a factor that contributed to the organisation's effectiveness and imbued its processes and practices: *We look at people as agents of their own destinies rather than as objects of our need and we try always to meet the hope in migrants' eyes (Bobby Gilmore, 2011).*

Community work is described as a process that *is all about grassroots engagement* (EI:23). In MRCI's case, the aim is to ensure the participation of migrants in the work of the organisation at all levels. It also facilitates migrants to take an analytic journey - to move beyond a focus on individual needs and concerns to a focus on conditions affecting all migrants - thereby enhancing their understanding of social processes and spurring collective action for change to benefit all: "the creation of conditions for the critical participation of migrant workers in the work of MRCI and in society in general." In practice, this has translated into activities to create collective spaces that build participation and empowerment (via Campaign Action Groups and a Migrant Forum), and facilitate opportunities for collective action for change (via campaigns and advocacy efforts).

**We look at people as agents of their own destinies rather than as objects of our need and we try always to meet the hope in migrants' eyes.**

**(Bobby Gilmore, 2011)**

From 2009 onwards, MRCI sharpened its strategic focus by concentrating its work on advocacy, community work and leadership. It refined a Case Management System (CMS) as the main evidence-based data source for the organisation. Findings were used to inform lobbying and campaign activities, media releases and policy papers. MRCI facilitated the most vulnerable migrant workers to organise and build collective capacity in labour sites such as agriculture (Mushroom Workers), and private homes (Domestic Workers). Leaders from these groups were supported via special training programmes and processes to become the backbone of MRCI's public campaigns and lobbying activities.

### 3.3.2 Key Achievements – MRCI

**Migrant Worker Activism** – MRCI developed a strong, grassroots base of thousands of worker activists that continues to mobilise on issues of concern. MRCI produced the first comprehensive resource guide to support community work with migrant workers in Ireland. Migrant Leaders graduated (25) from a Community Work diploma programme developed by MRCI in partnership with a university (NUI Maynooth).

**Information, referrals and training** – MRCI provided quality information and referrals to over 5,000 migrants and their families annually, and training to community groups, NGOs, Trade Unions, state agencies, An Garda Síochána (Police), Citizen Information Centres etc., on the critical issues facing migrant workers and their families.

**Public Awareness Raising** – MRCI maintained a high profile in the media, and used creative approaches (e.g. quilt exhibition and audio record of exploitation in a private home) to bring the experience of migrants into the public domain, consistently highlighting practical recommendations for change and emphasising the shared experience of vulnerable (undocumented) or exploited Irish migrants abroad

**Bridging Visa** – Successfully campaigned for a Bridging Visa scheme to regularise migrant workers who became undocumented through no fault of their own.

**Work Permit Scheme** – Successfully campaigned for reversal of 2009 changes in employment permit policy that would have forced thousands of migrant workers and their families to leave Ireland, or become undocumented.

**Residency Protection** – Successfully campaigned to allow work permit holders with 5 work permits to access secure residency without need for further work permits, while awaiting outcomes of long-term residency application.

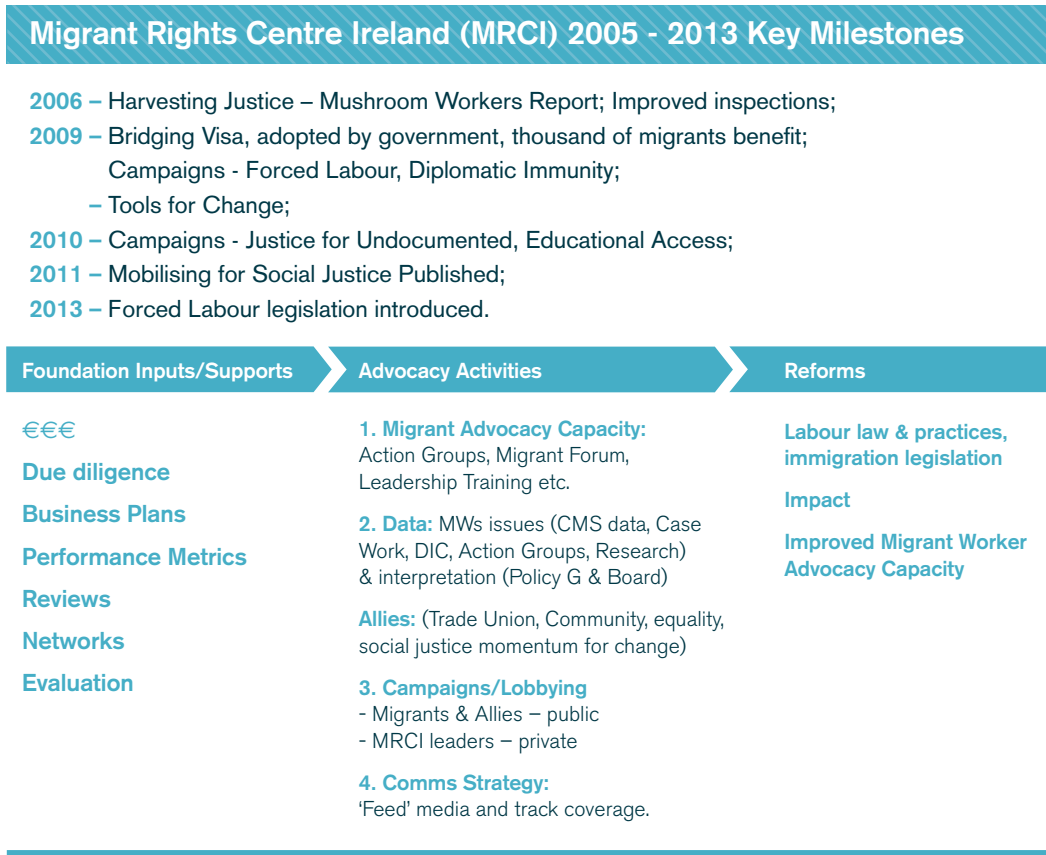
**Over €2 million in legal judgments and awards** – MRCI assisted hundreds of exploited workers to achieve settlements and judgments for back pay and other violations of employment rights.

**Improved conditions for vulnerable workers** – With the trade union SIPTU, highlighted exploitation of workers in mushroom-growing industry, organized workers and established a Registered Employment Agreement to improve pay and conditions. With ICTU, lobbied for a government Code of Practice to protect domestic workers' rights and outline employer obligations (ongoing).



### 3.3.3 Advocacy Effectiveness

The diagram below lists key milestones and advocacy approaches used by MRCI.



According to several bellwethers interviewed for the evaluation, MRCI has been ranked as one of the leading advocacy organisations in Ireland. One bellwether described their advocacy in these terms: *MRCI are one of the best NGOs to blend approaches to advocacy, though they don't admit it. They promote themselves as being totally committed to the community development approach, but did not always use it. Instead, they used the preferred backroom approach – the leaders meeting the politicians – and the campaign approach, and the protest approach. They adjusted as necessary. This shows real advocacy maturity.* (EI:24)

The organisation has applied a number of advocacy approaches tailored to respond to shifting economic and political sands. The following discussion considers MRCI's advocacy effectiveness using Quinn-Patton's criteria, and provides examples of lessons learned.

MRCI are one of the best NGOs to blend approaches to advocacy, though they don't admit it. They promote themselves as being totally committed to the community development approach, but did not always use it. Instead, they used the preferred backroom approach – the leaders meeting the politicians – and the campaign approach, and the protest approach. They adjusted as necessary. This shows real advocacy maturity.

## **A** Strong high capacity coalitions

In research commissioned by OF in 2009, Wilson Hartnell noted that large-scale immigration was a recent phenomenon in Irish society, and as a result, young NGOs had limited capacity. The first step was to build organisations. In MRCI's case, this work took place in 2005-08.<sup>23</sup>

Alongside this work, The Atlantic Philanthropies and OF combined efforts to spur a sectoral coalition met with some resistance. Questions about the legitimacy of migrant-led or Irish-led organisations and different approaches were issues that *caused no small amount of friction and distracted from the work at hand* (EI:23). These factors challenged efforts at coalition-building.

For MRCI, a first step in building a strong coalition was to bring migrants from different places of origin together as workplace allies. For example, mushroom workers came from several Eastern European countries where the only common link besides work was the Russian language. Members of the Domestic Workers Group were from the Philippines, Africa and South East Asia. Facilitating a movement from a concern with individual needs to an analysis of the collective position took time. Within three years, several groups of the most vulnerable workers were in place and were being supported to build their capacity: a Mushroom Workers' Group (later re-named Agricultural Workers Action Group), a Domestic Workers' Action Group, Forced Labour Action Group and a Migrant Forum.

While building connections between migrant worker groups, MRCI strategically targeted links with the Trade Union movement, considered a natural ally. For example, from 2006, one of the mushroom workers was appointed as a full-time SIPTU organiser in the Cavan-Monaghan area. A SIPTU representative attended Sunday meetings of the Domestic Workers Group (to sign up members, collect dues etc.), and SIPTU continues to collaborate on shared campaigns. Migrant worker issues were placed on the agenda of the annual conferences of the national trade union body, ICTU. At one point a national Trade Union leader described MRCI as "the conscience of the Trade Union movement." By 2012, Bill Abom, MRCI's Deputy Director left to become a full-time trade unionist, further solidifying the organisation's work with the movement.

Illustrating the growing trend towards transnational migration advocacy and activism, MRCI aligned itself with European and International immigrant advocacy bodies and rights-based fora (e.g. PICUM undocumented, European Network against Racism OSCE, Anti Slavery International, ITUC, International Domestic Workers Association, ILO), including the USA (e.g. America's Voice, ROC, Restaurant Opportunities Centre, Caring Across Generations, Rutgers University in New Jersey). These global coalitions informed MRCI's advocacy strategies and provided examples of existing legislation in other jurisdictions with longer histories of immigration. They also provided information on additional points of future leverage for change in Ireland via EU Directives and UN human rights instruments. In 2013, MRCI collaborated with the Boston-based (Irish government supported) Irish International Immigration Center in a joint effort to promote the regularisation of undocumented immigrants in Ireland and in the USA. Therefore, MRCI's values informed activities to solidify coalitions with like-minded national and transnational allies and advanced the organisation's advocacy capacity. In that sense, the

<sup>23</sup> Building a Strong Foundation, 2008. External Evaluation, O'Carroll Associates.

organisation used multiple points of advocacy influence. As the context changed with the recession, and restrictive measures were announced on work permits, Trade Union and equality allies were called upon to support lobbying activities.

While MRCI mobilised organisations with strong community development, equality and rights-based goals to engage in public actions, campaigns and lobbying, it was sometimes perceived as less inclined to build an immigrant sector coalition. MRCI recognised this and made a concerted effort from 2010 onwards to work with broadly aligned organisations on specific campaigns in pursuit of shared advocacy outcomes – e.g. forced labour. For example, MRCI, ICI and IRC all sat on the consultative forum for the government’s anti-human trafficking unit and worked successfully to develop campaign plans for legislative change on sex trafficking and trafficking for forced labour. Legislation in this area was successfully passed in early 2013, confirming potential benefits of sectoral collaboration.

The main lesson here was while strategic alliances with movements with a shared social analysis can be important to advocacy efforts, they should not be developed at the expense of sectoral alliances. Recent success on anti-trafficking legislation demonstrates that policy-makers responded positively to a strong, high capacity immigrant coalition (MRCI, ICI and IRC). Otherwise policy-makers may perceive the sector as *deeply divided because they can’t agree* (EI:27) and discount proffered solutions for change.

## **B** Strong national grassroots coordination

In MRCI’s case, advocacy was driven by the flow of information to and from migrant workers, their families and migrant worker groups. Issues emerging were documented via the database (CMS) and became the basis of casework, campaigns, policy papers and lobbying.

For example, in the early years of OF investment, MRCI’s work to establish a Mushroom Workers Support Group (MWSG) brought the issue of exploitation within the industry to national prominence via its report, “Harvesting Justice” (November, 2006). In the space of one year, the Support Group expanded its membership and activities across counties Monaghan, Cavan and beyond. With MRCI’s support, the group employed a full-time development worker, a former mushroom worker, and a part-time co-ordinator. MWSG established contact with over 450 migrant workers in the region and supported a Core Group of 18 emerging leaders via a training programme in group development, social analysis, English language tutoring, and Strategic Planning to develop into an independent representative organisation – the Agricultural Workers Association Ltd. (established 2007). Project impact was reported on several levels: improvements in the lives of individual workers (terms and conditions of employment, increased connections with the community etc.), development of a worker-led group, and greater inspection and compliance within the industry.

Similarly, MRCI established the Domestic Workers Action Group in 2004, following a study of 20 domestic workers (“Private Homes: A Public Concern”), often vulnerable and isolated migrant women working as nannies, housekeepers and elderly caregivers in private homes. Members were supported to attend regular Sunday meetings in Dublin, and receive information on rights and entitlements. Their call for a legally binding set of standards for regulating domestic service

resulted in a code of practice, negotiated with government and promoted by Trade Unions. By 2012, the group had over 250 members with a core group actively involved in campaigns, media work and lobbying. The Trade Union movement is the group's key advocacy ally – all are individual members of SIPTU.

The key lesson here is that a national organisation's efforts to build and support collective advocacy capacity can take place at local or national levels, depending on what is suitable, but must be coordinated. Attention to national grassroots coordination ensures advocacy is informed by the experience on the ground and can result in the mobilisation of advocates and allies around campaigns.



### **C** Disciplined and focused messages with effective communications

In MRCI's case, effective external communications were related to the quality of its internal communication systems – the flow of data from its case management database and from the various migrant groups (all sources of live issues and trends). MRCI substantiated its arguments for change by drawing on credible, evidence-based data on issues affecting migrant workers. In addition, the organisation identified the need to communicate MRCI's distinctive focus and community work approach and enable the participation of migrant workers in communications activities. MRCI used a range of creative activities to communicate messages of exploitation and the need for reform, from the Domestic Workers Action Group drama "Acting Out for Hope and Change," to the Restaurant Workers Action Group flash mob (at the Restaurant Association of Ireland's Annual Ball).



With the recession, MRCI organized a conference to communicate what was happening in Ireland in a global context. Entitled “Fair Play: Are fair and decent working conditions for migrant workers possible in a changing labour market?,” the conference (2009) hosted a number of internationally renowned speakers on the issue of globalisation and the labour market.<sup>24</sup> Invited representatives of enterprise, National Employment Rights Authority, Ethical Trade Initiative, UK, for example, attended. The conference received considerable media coverage and MRCI logged media hits and cross-referenced data with its media database to identify journalists active in the area and advocacy targets. The work of a Communications’ Officer was crucial in analysing and improving the organisation’s communication’s systems.

The conference solidified relationships with trade unions and the Department of Trade Employment and Enterprise. At the conference the Department announced its intention to make changes to the work permit system in light of the unfolding economic recession. Allies with a stake in employment and work permits backed MRCI’s call to hold changes to the work permits. SIPTU released a joint press release - *It took that relationship to a whole new level, and IBEC [the employers’ national body], initiated real talks with us (EI:23)*. The activity showed the value of facilitating fora where the connection between local issues and global processes can be debated and informed by practices elsewhere, specifically in countries with longer histories of immigration, and confirmed the benefit of including all interested parties in the debate, including employers. The permit changes were subsequently introduced and then reversed as a result of national campaign led by MRCI.

A key strength of MRCI’s leadership has been its ability to conduct nuanced readings of the policy context to determine what is feasible politically, and based on this, identify points of pressure and apply appropriate advocacy tools. For example, MRCI used a playful, positive protest at the start of a new Dáil session in 2011 to advance its campaign message on the need for work permit reform. As members of the new government approached the gates of Leinster House they were met by members of the Restaurant Workers Action Group dressed in white chef uniforms, bearing croissants and coffee. It resulted in widespread media coverage and raised awareness among new politicians and the public regarding work permit reform. Images of the Taoiseach smiling in the midst of the campaigners were carried in print and electronic media.

Central to all messaging and communications’ efforts was the work of a Communication’s Officer who issued press releases, tracked media (traditional and social), produced daily summaries of news on migrant issues, produced publications on specific issues and campaigns and analysed trends that were discussed at Policy Group and Board meetings. However, with MRCI’s budgetary cutbacks in 2011, the position of Communication’s Officer could no longer be sustained. Nonetheless the communications and messaging work to bolster advocacy continued, as demonstrated by the January 2013 launch of a film with SIPTU, “Food for Thought,” highlighting poor working conditions of 120 migrant restaurant workers, and the production of a simple guide to the changes in the employment permit system in April 2013. Throughout the OF’s investment period MRCI’s Director and

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24 Speakers included Paul Mason, BBC Economics Editor and Professor Janice Fine, Rutgers University, USA

(former) Board Chair frequently appeared on national news media, often reminding audiences of the link between migrant workers' issues in Ireland and the experiences of Irish emigrants abroad.

In addition to a strong media presence and dedicated Communications Officer to coordinate multiple communications outputs for different advocacy targets, the MRCI case illustrates several advocacy nuggets: the importance of foregrounding migrants' experience and migrant messengers (to provide evidence of the impact of policies); the benefits of organising creative, dramatic activities in public spaces to deliver campaign messages; and, in recessionary times, the value of working with allies to develop communications products.

## **D** Solid research and knowledge base

It took MRCI several years to design and develop a suitable and appropriate system to document information on migrant workers' lives from multiple sources: Drop-In Centre, Case Work, the various migrant worker groups, and the outcomes of referrals to other organisations. On-going analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings, conducted at the Policy Group and Board meetings, informed the direction of campaigns. By 2011, MRCI could demonstrate that it was providing information and referrals to over 5,000 migrants and their families annually.

Drawing on case work data, MRCI developed and progressed several successful legal cases involving workplace exploitation (with the assistance of a part-time barrister) that were heard at the Labour Court. In total, MRCI estimates that it has helped several hundred migrant workers to achieve settlements and judgments for back pay and for violations of their employment rights (of over €2 million). The organisation's documentation of cases of exploitation was sufficiently credible for a government agency, the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) to conduct follow-up investigations in certain industries and for Trade Unions to become active in organising workers. MRCI also demonstrated cases where migrant workers became undocumented through no fault of their own, in instances where the employer had failed to renew a work permit, to advance its claims for reform. The campaign was *driven by data* (EI:1), and provided a solution – a Bridging Visa. The list below provides examples of research commissioned or conducted in collaboration with other parties.

## MRCI's Research (Sample), 2004-2012

2006

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CRA submits Shadow Report to UN, based on input from member organisations, and presents case for a referendum: *From Rhetoric to Rights, Second Shadow Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Children's Rights Alliance, 2006.*

2004

—

*Private Home: Public Concern (20 migrant workers); Social Protection Denied (impact of the Habitual Residence Condition).*

2006

—

*Harvesting Justice: Mushroom Workers Call for Change (workers Cavan/Monaghan); Realising Integration: Migrant Workers Undertaking Essential Low Paid Work in Dublin City.*

2007

—

*Life in the Shadows: An Exploration of Irregular Migration in Ireland;*

2008

—

*Exploitation in Ireland's Restaurant Industry; Enabling Equality; Tools for Change: A Resource for Community Work with Migrant Workers and their Families in Ireland*

2009

—

*Challenging Myths and Misinformation on Migrant Worker (jointly with NCCRI)*

2010

—

*Trafficking for Forced Labour;*

2011

—

*A Framework for Tackling Forced Labour (with ICTU); Mobilising for Social Justice; Overcoming Barriers for Equality for Children of Non-EU Migrants.*

2012

—

*Who Cares?: The Experience of Migrant Care Workers.*

**Note: See [www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie) for complete listing and information on policy papers and submissions.**

MRCI submissions to government (e.g. IRP Bill, Regularisation of Undocumented, Work Permits etc.) formed the basis for policy briefing papers. For example, the 'Overcoming Barriers' research informed its submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection in 2012 on conditions pertaining to children of non-EU parents charged foreign student fees to access third level education.<sup>25</sup> Research was sometimes conducted with academic partners - a strategy that gave further substance to the claims for change and contributed to outcomes. For example, *No Way Forward: No Going Back* first researched the problem of trafficking for forced labour and was prepared with Dublin City University. More recent submissions to government used a rights-based framework to argue for Ireland's compliance with international instruments such as the Implementation of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2011.

The main lesson was the value in combining in-house data and analysis (from workers' exploitation to unequal education access for migrants' children) with research from other sources to substantiate claims for change. *They [MRCI] put faces to the hardships [suffered by migrant workers] and at the same time they delivered the reports to show the stats...the hard facts (EI:25).*

## **E** Timely, opportunistic lobbying and engagement

MRCI's lobbying strategy evolved during 2005-12 as it came to understand points of leverage and advocacy targets. It assessed lobbying strategies, discussed progress with allies, identified points of give and policy bottlenecks. It prepared information for briefings with politicians and civil servants who had limited experience initially of immigration, and brought migrants to meet policy makers.

However, the experience of lobbying Irish civil servants varied by government department or agency, and individual. Civil servants have learned to adapt to the growing demand for engagement with civil society. *There's been an evolution in thinking within government departments and civil servants, a total contrast to how it was perceived ... when you didn't get to speak with civil servants (EI:26).* However, civil servants offered an opportunity and a challenge to MRCI's advocacy efforts. Since migrant worker issues concern both the Depts of Justice (concerned with matters of security) and Enterprise Trade and Employment (concerned with business, employment etc.), MRCI needed to be in touch with the civil servants and politicians in both of these. In theory, NGOs who are professional and provide credible evidence of the need for change should find civil servants willing to engage. Officials in Enterprise and Employment proved more engaging because the change sought (e.g. improved inspections of employment sites), was mutually beneficial. These officials also received delegations of migrant workers. MRCI built strong relationships with NERA (National Employment Rights Authority), who investigated MRCI claims of worker exploitation. However, MRCI had limited success lobbying the department with most power on immigration matters, the Department of Justice, though other migrant organisations reported otherwise. An immigration policy bellwether interviewed reported that the Dept of Justice was *notorious for its heavy handedness. They were a law unto themselves (EI:25).*

<sup>25</sup> See Migrant Education Access, [mrci.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Access-to-education-Briefing-Note.pdf](http://mrci.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Access-to-education-Briefing-Note.pdf)

In the early years of support from OF, MRCI successfully lobbied for two pieces of legislative reform: the Bridging Visa (2007 campaign), and the Work Permit Reform (2009 campaign). The Bridging Visa was an innovative scheme that has influenced strategies elsewhere, including the USA.<sup>26</sup> MRCI's lobbying message was simply that migrants through no fault of their own had fallen out of status. In lobbying politicians the strategy was to turn the spotlight onto rogue employers who profited from migrant labour and yet failed to honour their obligations. This convinced politicians and found favour with the public. The campaign not only called for change, but offered a solution. During the recession, MRCI successfully lobbied to reverse the policy of changes to employment permits (2009), arguing the proposed changes would force migrants to leave or become undocumented.

While MRCI had positive working relationships with state agencies such as NERA and the Garda National Immigration Bureau, it caused controversy with a 2010 publication: "Hidden Messages: Overt Agendas".<sup>27</sup> This was perceived as highly critical of government and civil servants because it exposed the gap between political rhetoric and harsh policies on migrant rights. Since MRCI had paid for the report with EU funds administered through a government agency, government sought return of the funds because, in its view, the research was not included in the original proposal. The perception was that the incident was an "ill-judged" policy tactic.

Despite MRCI's mixed record of lobbying State actors, it bolstered its national advocacy by lobbying abroad. It participated in PICUM (an international undocumented migrants' body) whose strategy informed its Irish work. Board members participated in national and European fora, where emerging practices were debated on EU labour, asylum, Community Strategy Directives, economic migrants etc. This concern with national and EU policy processes provided horizontal and vertical advocacy routes and points of influence. *They [MRCI] now have a seat at the UN [Stacia Crickley]. That's influence! (EI:24)*. While this UN appointment has nothing directly to do with MRCI, the perception, reflected in the quote, is that the organisation has attained this point of advocacy access, albeit via one of its board members.

MRCI also brought pressure on Trade Unions to leverage political capital with the Labour Party, and engaged in direct contact with political leaders. There is no doubt that MRCI also "worked the back rooms." As one policy observer reported: *They're probably best at lobbying. I think it shows they are more than just community development. They lobbied hard and well behind closed doors. They used the trade unions... pushed Labour and Sinn Féin" (EI:24)*.

Therefore, MRCI conducted insider and outsider lobbying, ensured migrants attended meetings with politicians and government officials, learned from negative experiences, identified policy bottlenecks, re-grouped and changed tack when necessary. In addition, they used links with EU fora to leverage change in Ireland. Its lobbying was particularly successful in its early years of support from OF and less so in the recession.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum, Washington, D.C.

<sup>27</sup> Niall Crowley, the report's author, resigned as CEO of the government's Equality Authority in 2008, in protest at the government's decision to cut the Authority's budget by 43% .

In 2012, MRCI learned a lesson about the limitations of its advocacy, under current law, to counter injustice where the migrant is undocumented. The High Court Judgment in the case of *Amjad Hussein v The Labour Court (2012)* overturned an earlier Labour Court advocacy win because the claimant was undocumented.<sup>28</sup> The High Court found that the Work Permit Act of 2003 prevented an undocumented worker from securing redress under labour law.

## **F** Collaborating funders engaged in strategic funding

OF collaborated with The Atlantic Philanthropies on a joint funding strategy to advance immigrant rights in Ireland. The strategy was to *carve up the turf according to specialist areas* (EI:4) and assign grants accordingly - asylum seekers (Irish Refugee Council), trafficking and citizenship (Immigrant Council of Ireland) work permits and the undocumented (MRCI), with Doras Luimní and NASC working on all three areas regionally. OF supported all but one of these organisations, ICI. The joint funding strategy provided multi-annual, core support to enable a strategic response on legislative change and integration of migrants. Both foundations had a shared target of a reformed IRP Bill (still forthcoming, ten years later, in 2013) to bring clarity to immigration policy. It was assumed that grantees would collaborate on campaigns of common interest. In the early years, this did not happen to the extent anticipated.

Both foundations assessed performance and effectiveness in different ways. For example, AP relied on the on-going learning from a formative evaluation process, whereas OF used the Balanced Scorecard to discuss progress and measure performance. *[AP] is a lot more hands off...active but not directive. The [organisation's] leaders own decisions and progress is informed by the learning emerging from evaluation* (EI:24). By comparison, several grantees reported difficulty applying the Balanced Scorecard system promoted by OF, and used for quarterly reviews. As a grantee reported: *The scorecard system was daft and totally open to abuse. If you had any sense at all, you'd make sure not to set the targets too high. To be honest, we gave up on it* (EI:23).

MRCI has reported on the benefits of regular contact with OF team members, board participation and in particular special grants provided at important times. For example, OF funded MRCI's 10th anniversary film which was screened at an event attended by President Mary McAleese in October 2011.<sup>29</sup> When OF awarded MRCI's Director, Siobhán O'Donoghue the Captain Cathal Ryan Award for Social Innovation (a scholarship of €25,000 in 2011), it was interpreted by one bellwether as *An endorsement of her boldness in taking on all quarters* (EI:27) - a direct reference to her advocacy leadership.

The key lesson learned by MRCI was that contact with the two foundations afforded the assurance of strategic allies and committed resources to advance its advocacy strategy over a number of years, key factors when challenging government. In addition, OF management and governance requirements improved the capacity of the organisation.

<sup>28</sup> "Award to migrant quashed over illegal job status." Irish Times, September 1, 2012. [www.irishtimes.com](http://www.irishtimes.com).

<sup>29</sup> MRCI's 10th anniversary film provides an insight into the organisation's approach and work with migrant workers and their families in Ireland: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ugEQgo\\_ORw&feature](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ugEQgo_ORw&feature).



### 3.3.4 Conclusion

OF's support of MRCI's work enabled the organisation to successfully advance immigrant rights in a number of important areas directly related to the advocacy goal – to make immigrants rights real. MRCI developed a proven track record of influencing policy to advance the rights of the most vulnerable migrant workers and their families in Ireland. The organisation demonstrated the benefits of a community work approach to mobilising migrants to be active advocates in campaigns and media work (ensuring long term advocacy capacity on migrant rights), while also working the “back rooms” to leverage political capital for change, using a strong evidence-base to substantiate proposals. In addition to activities conducted in Ireland, MRCI built vertical advocacy routes via EU fora, with allies in the USA, and latterly at the level of the United Nations.

Achievements include reforms in secondary legislation (“bridging visa”), labour law (criminalisation of forced labour), and State practices (inspections), solidifying the link between migrant workers and the trade union movement (ensuring long term support), and raising awareness of the benefits of Ireland's new inter-cultural society. Factors that contributed to advocacy effectiveness included: strong leadership capable of providing a nuanced read of the context; strategic alliances; a shared social analysis and a community work approach to organising and mobilising; migrants' active involvement in campaigns, lobbying, and media work; a strong evidence-base, and high quality (and creative) communication products.

The re-emergence of emigration after 2008, linked to a sharp rise in unemployment to over 14% of the labour force, challenged MRCI's advocacy because the climate of opinion towards migrants changed significantly. However, the passage of the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Bill in 2013, following a campaign MRCI conducted with broadly aligned organisations, demonstrates what is possible, even in challenging times. New legislation promised in 2013 (Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill) may bring clarity and transparency regarding immigration rights, although some campaigners expressed concerns the legislation may be restrictive rather than innovative.





# 4

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## Building political will on Mental Health

This section opens with a description of the mental health social policy context and what OF sought to achieve. Analysis of advocacy performance and impact follows in a blended case study of three organisations: Amnesty International Ireland, Mental Health Reform and Headstrong.

## 4.1 Mental Health, Ireland

When OF became active in the field of mental health in 2006, quality services were unevenly available for those who needed them, including children, young people and their families. With no comprehensive national information on mental health problems, OF estimated from available data that one in four of all people in Ireland were affected by mental ill health either directly or through a family member. Depression accounted for almost 70% of mental health illness and for almost 50% of hospital admissions relating to mental health. Recorded suicide (one of few mental health indicators tracked), had doubled in 30 years, and was reported to be the biggest killer of young men aged 15-24. In 2004 alone, there were 400 deaths by suicide.<sup>1</sup> Children's mental health services lacked dedicated staff and waiting lists were long. For example, the Health Services Executive's 2007 review (the main agency responsible) found 3,598 children waiting for assessments, 1,000 of whom had been waiting more than a year.<sup>2</sup>

This assessment was substantiated by findings of the Inspector of Mental Health Services (2006) that mental health provision was ad hoc, with deficiencies in community mental health teams.<sup>3</sup> Successive governments had failed to develop community-based services, which resulted in over-reliance on in-patient units. Also, children continued to be treated (inappropriately) in adult facilities.

Poor and inadequate services and treatments were the result of many factors, not least a decline in the proportion of the state health budget specifically designated for mental health – from 9.1% in 1998<sup>4</sup> to 7.7% in 2008.<sup>5</sup> Responsibility for development of health policy, including mental health lay with the Department of Health, with the HSE (Health Services Executive) the main agency responsible for service delivery.

In 2006, the Irish government published what was seen as a progressive policy, "A Vision For Change" (AVFC). However, the policy had not been implemented or funded. AVFC called for a shift from the (hidden) treatment within Ireland's Victorian institutions of containment to provision of supports in an open community setting, with an emphasis on recovery.

At the time, Amnesty was advocating for reform. It had identified mental health as an area of Irish social policy where its human rights approach could give added value because mental health was, it concluded, a neglected policy area,<sup>6</sup> with 'serious and multiple infringements of human rights.'<sup>7</sup> From 2003 onwards, Amnesty had pioneered public information campaigns framed around the right to mental health.<sup>8</sup>

1 This overview draws on data contained in The One Foundation's internal documents used during TOC analysis and Amnesty International Ireland's submissions to the foundation.

2 Written reply to parliamentary question, 19 October 2007, Jan O'Sullivan TD, referenced inter alia at <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2008/04/17/00019.asp>.

3 Mental Health Commission, Annual Report 2006, including Report of Inspector of Mental Health Services.

4 A Vision for Change p.260

5 See WHO (2008) Policies and Practices for Mental Health in Europe: Meeting the Challenges. [www.euro.who.int/-data/assets/pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/-data/assets/pdf)

6 Mental Illness: The Neglected Quarter, 2003, All.

7 Cooke & Montgomery, 2009.

8 The overall aim was to make real Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that every person has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.



#### 4.1.1 Advocacy Goal & Strategy – “build political will on mental health”

In 2008, OF named its mental health advocacy goal “to build political will on mental health.” The root problem it identified was that “people with mental health problems in Ireland are subject to significant stigma and lack appropriate, accessible and effective services and supports.” Some barriers to change were easy to identify. There was a poorly organised mental health lobby with limited effective campaigning history. Significant social stigma was attached to mental health. These factors contributed to a perceived lack of political will to designate State resources to address reform. Within the State’s vast public health system, mental health was relatively neglected, and mental health services perceived as beholden to special interests with large political capital (e.g. drug and insurance companies). With an agreed reform policy, One Foundation decided to support organisations working to ensure implementation and resourcing of AVFC.

Given this analysis, the strategy for change identified in 2005 (during OF’s work with McKinsey) required three levers, working together: one to address the campaign, lobbying and evidence deficit; a second to “support an innovative project in a selected region to help it become a centre of excellence;” and a third was to “support mental health NGOs, service users and their families to become public advocates.”

The assumption was that all three levers working in synergy would build political will on mental health and thereby change statutory provision to a community-based recovery model, and ultimately ensure a statutory right, enshrined in legislation, to timely and effective mental health supports. Therefore, to achieve its advocacy goal, OF “sought to increase political will on mental health” (as measured by the frequency and content of Oireachtas debates, and via political polling), and crucially, “realise the adoption of a proven solution” as a national programme (funded by the state). The evaluation uses these indicators in its discussion of performance and impact.

#### 4.1.2 Investments

Strategic investments were made in three organisations, each representing one of the three levers to effect change: Amnesty International Ireland (Amnesty, from 2006), Mental Health Reform (formerly the Irish Mental Health Coalition, from 2006), and Headstrong (the foundation established Headstrong in 2006 and

supported development of its Jigsaw model). Other investments were made in national youth organisations to build youth resilience (for example, BeLonGTo, an LGBT youth support organisation), but these were not direct mental health advocacy investments. In broad terms, the strategy translated into investments in:

**Amnesty**, based on its advocacy/campaign/lobbying experience and its capacity to build alliances around shared campaigns;

**Mental Health Reform** (formerly the Irish Mental Health Coalition) in order to build collective capacity in the sector and form a common platform, and finally,

**Headstrong** (to demonstrate an effective community-based mental health solution, i.e. Jigsaw).



OF invested almost €5 million to achieve its advocacy goal, “to build political will on mental health,” as illustrated below.

**Table 3. The One Foundation Investments – Mental Health Advocacy Goal**

	2004-2008 €	2009-2013 €
Amnesty International Ireland	590,600	2,301,190
Irish Mental Health Coalition/ Mental Health Reform	211,288	800,000
Headstrong		953,910*
	801,888	4,055,100
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>4,856,988</b>	

Note: \* This amount represents 12% of a total investment of €8 million in Headstrong for the period 2009 - 13. An investment of €2.25 million in Headstrong, 2004-2008, was not advocacy related.

Amnesty was to catalyse the issue in the Irish context through its lobbying and campaign work while supporting the building of alliances in a sector considered fragmented. Once the sectoral alliance was in place and its advocacy capacity strengthened, Amnesty would revert to its role as human rights watchdog, monitoring and safeguarding rights. Meanwhile, Headstrong's Jigsaw model (of co-ordinated, community-based mental health supports for young people) would be developed with OF early investments, and eventually funded by government.

An outline description of each grantee organisation follows with a brief summary of the outcomes and impact of activities conducted in pursuit of this advocacy goal

### Amnesty International Ireland ([www.amnesty.ie](http://www.amnesty.ie))

Amnesty International Ireland (Amnesty) has a long track record of success in advocating for reform.<sup>9</sup> OF began supporting Amnesty in 2006 (with a grant of €85,000 and a further €50,000 a year later) to build on the success of its 2003 campaign, and to “raise mental health to the level of a priority campaign” with a general election approaching. Amnesty's next proposal (2008-2011) was granted (€5 million) to: get into the game quickly with a well-proven campaigning organisation and catalyse the area of mental health (EI/1). Of the total investment of €5 million in mental health advocacy, OF invested €3.2 million in Amnesty making it the main driving force working to achieve OF's mental health goal.

Amnesty's dedicated mental health advocacy unit spearheaded a campaign based on three objectives, two of which related to legislation, one to systems change:

- i) the Department of Health and Children (DoHC) review the 2001 Mental Health Act against international human rights standards, regarding the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
- ii) DoHC publish legislation for appropriate community-based services, and
- iii) improve inter-departmental practices on mental health. *We had never had such resources for one campaign area before. It was exciting* (EI:19).

Within the advocacy unit, designated posts (four, later five) were tailored to ensuring a strong knowledge base to inform advocacy activities to achieve these objectives: Campaign Coordinator (experienced in campaign strategy development), Legal Officer (national and international law), Policy Officer (mental health service provision), Advocacy Officer (experienced in training groups and individuals in advocacy skills), and Communications Officer (experienced in media and social marketing/public awareness campaigns). An “Experts by Experience Advisory Group” (EEAG) was constituted to inform the rights-based approach of the work and advocacy activities. Where gaps existed, outside specialists were contracted to contribute to the effort. For example, Amnesty commissioned an economics consultancy, Indecon (2010) to research the affordability of reform (i.e. move from institutional to community-based care) including developing a performance assessment framework.<sup>10</sup>

Alongside data-generating activities, Amnesty conducted an anti-discrimination social marketing campaign aimed at the public, and worked to ensure there was a media focus on mental health issues. It was active in building a sectoral alliance via its work in co-founding and facilitating the Irish Mental Health Coalition (the

<sup>9</sup> Disclosure – the Evaluator has been a lifelong member of Amnesty International.

<sup>10</sup> Indecon Report, 2010. Accountability in the Delivery of A Vision for Change: A Performance Assessment Framework for Mental Health Services. [www.amnesty.ie/reports](http://www.amnesty.ie/reports)

precursor of Mental Health Reform) and the Children's Mental Health Coalition. Amnesty's lobbying concentrated in two complementary directions - on training NGOs and individuals to build advocacy capacity, and direct and indirect lobbying of politicians and state agencies. The unit's work largely continued in this direction until 2011, when a policy officer transferred from Amnesty to Mental Health Reform to contribute to its enhanced lobbying and campaign capacity. In 2011, a Policy Officer was recruited specifically on children's mental health, as this was a core focus of Amnesty's work in 2011-2013.

### **Irish Mental Health Coalition/Mental Health Reform ([www.mentalhealthreform.ie](http://www.mentalhealthreform.ie))**

OF's investment in the Irish Mental Health Coalition (IMHC) was to strengthen coalition-building within the sector and build an advocacy platform. Founded in 2006, IMHC was re-constituted in 2011 as Mental Health Reform (MHR). Members include NGO's in the mental health and allied fields, service user groups, social workers, clinical psychologists and families of people with mental health issues. OF invested €0.3 million in IMHC in 2010 to develop the mental health sectoral alliance over three years – founding members were: Amnesty, Bodywhys (eating disorders), Grow (depression), Irish Advocacy Network and Schizophrenia Ireland. This grant increased to €0.5 million in 2010 to support the newly constituted Mental Health Reform over three years to 2013. In total, the amount invested in MHR was in the region of €1 million.

In addition to building a sectoral alliance, IMHC/MHR's activities were focused on advocating for reform of the mental health system and the right to mental health services. It published and circulated twin documents "Guiding a Vision for Change - Manifesto" in 2011, which set out MHR's position on how to achieve full implementation of AVFC and the "Agenda for Action," which set out 18 "asks" under three key components:

- 1) Promotion of the Recovery Ethos,
- 2) Modernisation of the Mental Health Services, and
- 3) Increased Accountability, Transparency and Governance.

In its re-constituted form as MHR, a "Defend the Spend" campaign in 2011 and a "Don't Drop the Ball on Mental Health" campaign in 2012 both sought to protect the mental health budget from being cut in the recession. MHR engaged in public information campaigns in traditional and social media, and in public protests, most notably, outside Dáil Éireann in June 2012. These activities complemented MHR's lobbying and were conducted in tandem with involvement in an Oireachtas cross-party group on mental health and in the Children's Mental Health Coalition.

### **Headstrong ([www.headstrong.ie](http://www.headstrong.ie))**

Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health was founded in 2009 by psychologist Tony Bates (with OF support) in response to a number of youth mental health issues: suicide was the leading cause of death, one in four were "going through difficult times and felt there was no one to talk to," a lack of support for families; access to appropriate services. In addition, there was a stigma associated with youth mental health, compounded by myths and misunderstandings. Headstrong aimed to: "give every young person in Ireland somewhere to turn to and someone to talk to." The organisation has worked with

communities and statutory services to empower young people to develop skills and resilience to cope with mental health challenges, and with government, media and communities to change the way Ireland thinks about youth mental health.

With OF's investments, Headstrong developed three strands of work: service development (via Jigsaw, to streamline a range of services and supports); advocacy (with government, media, families and schools in addition to supporting young people to advocate for themselves), and research (e.g. the first national study of youth mental health, "My World Survey," to inform programmes and Jigsaw projects). Therefore, in addition to developing the Jigsaw model of community-based supports for young people, the organisation has lobbied government, commissioned research and hosted conferences on youth mental health.

Based on OF's strategy, the Jigsaw model was to demonstrate a solution to community-based mental health supports in order to advance OF's advocacy goal – to build political will on mental health. In practice, the Jigsaw model joins together the pieces of an existing mental health puzzle to provide a community-based solution. Jigsaw sites are designated, youth-friendly spaces, located in the centre of a town or city. A critical factor in Jigsaw's development has been Headstrong's work with communities to build agreement and secure the cooperation of a wide range of mental health providers, youth and community workers. By 2013, Jigsaw sites had been established in seven counties, four initially (Galway, Kerry, Meath and Roscommon) with additional sites in other places almost established or at an advanced stage of development (Donegal, Offaly, Dublin 15, Tallaght and Clondalkin, Limerick and North Fingal). These sites will enable a coordinated response locally to young people's mental health needs, funded by government.

## 4.2 Key Achievements - Portfolio

There was substantial evidence of success in relation to the two main indicators of success for the advocacy goal:

- a) an increase in political will on mental health (as measured by the number and content of Oireachtas debates and political polling data), and
- b) adoption of a proven solution as a national programme (funded by the state).

The following achievements resulted from the combined activities of grantees and demonstrate a number of incremental wins towards achievement of the advocacy goal: Increase in Oireachtas (parliamentary) questions and debates (from 10 in 2009 for Feb./April, to 117 written answers and 3 Dáil debates in 2011), and evidence of a positive shift in political commitment. Establishment in 2009 and operation of a cross-party Oireachtas group,<sup>11</sup> dedicated to Mental Health (20+ members of the Dáil and Seanad). This was the first cross-party group of its nature formed in the Oireachtas. Increase in number of Jigsaw projects supported by government. By 2013, Jigsaw sites in seven counties. Increase in the number of political 'champions' (and inclusion of mental health in general election and Presidential election manifestos in 2011) with acceptance of the benefits of closing institutions in favour of community-based services. Public declaration of personal struggles with mental health by politicians – former Prime Minister of Norway, Kjell Magne Bondevick's Dublin declaration prompted Minister John Moloney to acknowledge his own struggles with mental health, a major step for a serving

<sup>11</sup> The cross-party Oireachtas group on mental health was established in 2009 during the 30th Dáil as a forum for discussion and to increase political focus on the issue.

minister in Irish politics. Growing awareness and political interest in mental health. Poll data (MBL) shows changes in politicians' attitudes: by 2012, three quarters of TDs reported the issue had increased in importance, and the budget needed to be increased. Discussion of poll findings hosted at cross-party Oireachtas group.<sup>12</sup> Three of Amnesty's four objectives for mental health were included in the Programme for Government, 2011-2016. Increase in media coverage of mental health (tracked by grantees). Work by AI and MHR has had an impact on public perception of the issue and shifted debate away from mental illness to mental health. Minister of State portfolio includes mental health and Office for Disability and Mental Health established within the Department of Health and Children to support cross-department policy development and implementation on mental health. New Directorate of Mental Health services established in 2013.

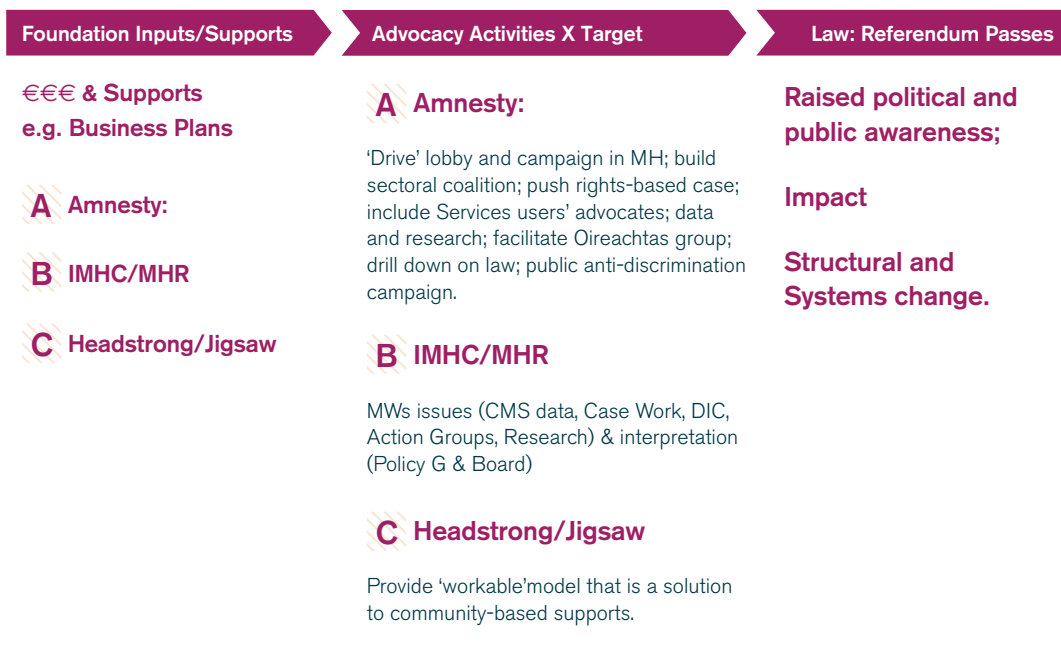


<sup>12</sup> Millward Brown Landsdowne (MBL) political opinion poll was commissioned by the foundation in 2009, 2011 and 2012. See [www.onefoundation.ie](http://www.onefoundation.ie)



## Mental Health Advocacy – Activities, Milestones and Impact 2006-2013

- 2003** – Amnesty’s Mental Health campaign;
- 2006** – A Vision for Change published, IMHC founded
  - Headstrong established
  - Amnesty and IMHC funded;
- 2008** – Amnesty’s Advocacy Unit,
- 2009** – All party Oireachtas Group on mental health
  - Amnesty spearheads public campaign; 2010: MHR established, Indecon report;
- 2011** – Closure of institutions; Programme for Government commitments; Presidential election priority.
- 2013** – investment of €70 million and appointment of 383 staff, HSE MH Directorate formed.



### 4.3 Blended Case Study in Advocacy Effectiveness

The following discussion provides a brief analysis of the advocacy performance and impact of the work conducted by the three organisations in OF's mental health portfolio. While investments were staggered from 2006 onwards, only Amnesty had prior experience of mental health advocacy. In addition, the OF advocacy goal was only named in 2008 when mental health advocacy was at an early stage of development.

#### **A** Strong high capacity coalitions – “A challenging birth”

When OF became involved in mental health advocacy there was no unified national mental health network, although there was a service-users' group and several national organisations represented people with particular mental health issues. Not only were there multiple players, each with their own issues, most were more

concerned with services than advocacy. Therefore, the challenge was to bring unity to a fragmented sector by developing collective capacity to ensure a strong sectoral voice common issues, a coalition-building process that proved to be: *a challenging birth. We almost lost the baby on several occasions* (EI:3).

Amnesty was a founder member and coordinator of the Irish Mental Health Coalition (IMHC), established in 2006. While some NGOs may have resented a human rights organisation facilitating the development of this coalition, the impact of Amnesty's campaign and lobbying (since 2003) could not be denied: it was widely recognised that Amnesty had put mental health issues into the public domain and onto the political agenda. *Mental health was entirely operated by the State. People didn't agitate. Invisibility was a factor in the past. There was social stigma. Their success [Amnesty] has been the disappearance of all that* (EI:18).

Over time, the original five member organisations in the IMHC became more engaged. Building a strong coalition was a developmental process because some organisations didn't get the policy work [or] were naive, resistant and defensive, even fearful about taking on government (EI/19), with others unconvinced of the need to put time and energy into advocacy. They see *government as a source of their ongoing services budget* (EI:17). In 2010/2011, *IMHC was essentially disbanded and renamed as part of the board and organisational development process* (EI:16) that included recruitment of a new Director and strategic planning. OF's grant of almost €1 million enabled transformation of IMHC into an organisation whose very name communicated its mission: Mental Health Reform (MHR).

**Mental health was entirely operated  
by the State. People didn't agitate.  
Invisibility was a factor in the past.  
There was social stigma. Their  
success [Amnesty] has been the  
disappearance of all that.**

Increased collaboration between Amnesty and Mental Health Reform ensured best *possible outcomes, under the circumstances* (EI:19), and did result in building the capacity of the mental health coalition. By 2012, MHR was comprised of 35 member organisations (up from 5 under IMHC). Its reach had extended to organisations working with homeless people, immigrant groups etc. MHR had also become an active member of a new alliance, the Children's Mental Health Coalition (developed by Amnesty with funding from OF). Government invited MHR to participate on several policy committees such as the National Disability Strategy Monitoring Group and the National Housing Standards Monitoring Group. By 2012, MHR was active in campaigns (e.g. MHR's 'Defend the Spend'), its Director was engaging in media work and the organisation had an increased media presence to promote its reform message.

Therefore, the sectoral mental health coalition not only had a difficult birth, it took time and support to develop, and was really only gathering steam in 2012,

a year before the funding commitment ended. Also, MHR's fundraising has been challenging, due in part to the direct advocacy nature of its work, though it has secured funding commitments that should see it through to 2016. Some commentators blamed the confusion caused by the emergence of the Children's Mental Health Coalition (led by Amnesty, with funding from OF), and questioned if it was a duplication of effort.<sup>13</sup> However, the main advocacy lesson emerging is that facilitation by an outside player (Amnesty), skilled in lobbying and campaign work, can aid the development of sectoral capacity and coalitions, because its focus is on advocacy and it is not a competitor for resources within a given sector. However, there is a point when the coalition's strength must ensure its own sustainability.

## **B** Strong national grassroots coordination.

The government's mental health policy document "A Vision for Change" (2006) called for a shift to community-based mental health services and supports. Grantees involved in advocacy required information to stimulate local action and reaction, i.e. action on what was happening in communities and reaction to emerging policy. This two-way link was considered necessary to address gaps in data and to stimulate mobilisation. National-local links also provided information on political risks in advocating for change and allowed advocates to apply pressure on public representatives via local constituency offices. The sweeping reforms in AVFC would have a major impact on local areas. One policy-maker explained: *You have to understand ...mental health is an industry in remote places. It contributes to the local economy and provides jobs. A hospital needs beef and a local butcher gets the business. Several people from the same family might be employed in one hospital. People have to have a credible alternative [employment] and communities need to be involved [in reforms]*(EI: 18).

Amnesty and Mental Health Reform took different approaches to establishing and maintaining national grassroots links. Amnesty's nationwide social marketing anti-discrimination campaign was valuable because it took its message to communities. Also, its "Experts by Experience Advisory Group" met on a regular basis in Dublin and provided valuable information on local processes and developments. For example, research documented the reported experiences of unfair treatment by people experiencing mental health problems and this data formed the backbone of the anti-discrimination campaign.

MHR focused on developing a national network through consultation, linking with member organisations, professionals and the general public. MHR has facilitated four public consultations a year in different parts of Ireland; meet with local groups and engage lead mental health professionals at an area level etc. These links have been maintained and sustained by a strong social media presence. Therefore, MHR has created its own nation-wide connections, and has sought to "capture a different constituency" using an education and awareness raising approach with a focus on the link between professionals, service users/family members and service providers.

While Dublin was the main site of Amnesty's lobbying and campaign work, and the location of national parliament, members and supporters throughout Ireland (from college campuses to local groups) were given online support to mobilise locally

<sup>13</sup> The Children's Mental Health Coalition established by Amnesty and the Children's Rights Alliance in Dec. 2009, with 38 NGOs, including Headstrong. See [www.childrensmentalhealth.ie](http://www.childrensmentalhealth.ie)

(Lobbying Network, Monthly Action, Tools, Tips etc.). From 2011, Mental Health Reform built on this work through widespread consultative activity holding eighteen public meetings 2011-2013, engaging with the mental health community across the country from service users and their families to Executive Clinical Directors of Mental Health Services.

*The [MHR] CEO understands the system and has the contacts (EI:11).*

Unlike Amnesty and MHR, where work to maintain and sustain national grassroots links was only one aspect of advocacy, it was at the core of Headstrong's Jigsaw approach. Each local Jigsaw project involved the development, coordination and support of local providers from Headstrong's national base. *Headstrong is a very valuable tool. Jigsaw demonstrates success and therefore people are convinced. They want it in their towns. They [Headstrong] can't keep up with demand (EI:18).* However, Jigsaw was not a one-size-fits-all project model. It was negotiated and tailored to suit local needs and available supports. In that sense, it demonstrated the value of a commitment to facilitating and coordinating local community-based solutions. By 2013, there were nine Jigsaw hubs providing synergy between mental health providers and youth supports, funded by the State, and used by young people in at seven counties with further hubs in development.

### **C** Disciplined and focused messages with effective communications

Amnesty's anti-discrimination social marketing campaign (2010-2011 repeated in 2012-2013) was an excellent example of effective communications that contributed to advocacy effectiveness. Research conducted by Dublin City University into the experiences of unfair treatment reported by over 300 people with experience of mental health problems<sup>14</sup> informed the focus of Amnesty's anti-discrimination social marketing campaign.

**I can't get a job. I've tried and tried.  
They'll say well where have you been?  
And I'll say I was in a psychiatric  
hospital and you can see it's all  
downhill afterward and you never  
hear from them again.**

**(Amnesty, "Hear my Voice")**

Amnesty demonstrated its campaign experience by using the words of mental health service users to highlight issues and multiple media sources to ensure

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14 Published in a 2010 report entitled 'Hear my Voice' <http://www.amnesty.ie/theresearch>.

maximum message penetration via billboards, bus shelters, newspaper and radio advertisements. It brought into the open an issue previously hidden and raised awareness of prejudice. Advice from a PR company informed the strategies used. In addition, the social marketing campaign empowered people with mental health problems who witnessed their words displayed in places of prominence. Amnesty focused on mental health service users' experiences to inform the messaging activities. It also engaged with media, activists, and other organisations to create public demand for change. The campaign created an environment where prejudices among the public were challenged and people were made aware of the need for reform.

Therefore, the anti-discrimination social marketing campaign resulted in a communications' hit. In the initial burst 2010-2011, posters were carried on roadside billboards (50), at bus shelters (140), in print media sources (12). Campaign advertisements (354) were carried on national and local radio stations. The impact was estimated by external consultants as follows: up to 2.4 million people had seen the print advertisements, over 600,000 people saw the billboards, and approximately 410,000 adults heard the radio advertisement.<sup>15</sup>

According to several interviewees, the campaign had a major positive impact because it put mental health into the public domain. It stimulated debate in public and political circles, framed the discussion around discrimination and rights and prioritised the experiences of users as an evidence base to show inadequacies in the system. It had massive coverage nationally. *It widened the views on mental health, even if it had edginess.* (EI:18). Once the campaign established advocacy traction, politicians were lobbied, inputs made to the Oireachtas Group on Mental Health, and polling data used to demonstrate support for reform.

While Amnesty excelled in bringing the anti-discrimination message to the public, it was Mental Health Reform (MHR) that leveraged the public's political capital. The "Defend the Spend" campaign in 2011 gathered 6,000 signatures. This was followed by a "Don't Drop the Ball on Mental Health" campaign in 2012 that gathered over 10,000 signatories (4,000 online), with canvassing in over 30 locations. In addition, MHR's vox pop "Because it's time" (with the voices of service users, and family members from the Grassroots Forum, Gateway Project and Basin Club) was widely aired on local and national radio. As a result of these activities, MHR was invited to present a Pre-Budget Submission to the Oireachtas Health Committee and to the Oireachtas Finance Committee.

Headstrong, OF's third grantee in the portfolio, also contributed to the communications effort. Through his column in The Irish Times, radio and TV inputs, Tony Bates, the CEO, was a highly regarded commentator advocating reform. While his message was often focused on youth mental health, he also supported reforms common to all portfolio organisations. *He [Tony Bates] has been very convincing. I notice that he is a regularly cited by ministers and is viewed very favourably in the political world and among the general public.* (EI:18)

However, a senior government official found Amnesty's use of rights-based language offensive. *They were preaching human rights at us. It was extremely irritating and a bit precious* (EI:11). Therefore, not all advocacy targets responded positively to the human rights message. The lesson suggests that advocates need

<sup>15</sup> These data are drawn from Amnesty's records and an assessment by Wilson Hartnell PR (Ogilvy), 2011. Wilson Hartnell worked with Amnesty on a number of advocacy-related reviews and consultations.

to be flexible enough to re-frame the message in language that suits the audience. It also illustrates the value of multiple approaches towards achievement of the advocacy goal, in particular, Mental Health Reform's strategy of consultation, education and awareness-raising to build public and political support for reform. Media coverage was a priority for all three organisations (tracked across all media) to keep alive the message of reform and to communicate evidence of public and political commitment to reform (emerging from polls), and workable solutions for locally based supports (as demonstrated by Jigsaw).

## **The lesson suggests that advocates need to be flexible enough to re-frame the message in language that suits the audience.**

### **D Solid research and knowledge base**

As a result of work conducted by grantees, there has been some improvement in research and knowledge in mental health, which has supported reform and contributed to building political will. Prior to OF engagement in the area, data were limited and received minimal media coverage. One interviewee explained: *The Commissioner's Report was the government's main data source on mental health. It informed decisions about services. Even though it was published annually, there wasn't much fanfare in the media* (EI:3). Data were required to substantiate claims for change, while providing evidence of workable solutions. *The HSE is seen as failing and it is failing. We all needed to admit to that and to see some green shoots.* (EI:18)

Two grantees (Amnesty and Headstrong) addressed the research and knowledge gaps by commissioning research or by gathering data. For example, in a creative move in an economic recession, Amnesty commissioned an independent economics consultancy, Indecon (2010), to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the shift from the institutional model of mental health care to a community-based approach. The findings provided evidence of significant cost savings in the longer term and were widely reported as such. However, the approach did not find favour with certain quarters in government because Amnesty did not involve the department in the research process. *That really got up the nose of the department* (EI:19). While Amnesty had submitted an advance copy of the final draft to the department for comment, it was clear that relevant officials were displeased at not being included earlier in the research design and drafting. This lack of government involvement in the research process had the unintended effect of alienating certain civil servants. Therefore, the data did not have the traction anticipated.

The experience offered an advocacy lesson: key stakeholders need to be consulted and if at all possible, included in research processes, to maximise the likelihood of findings being translated into advocacy wins. There will be times when involvement is not appropriate, because of a need to highlight poor practice. However, if the research is conducted to advance claims for change, the relevant departments should not only be given the opportunity to view findings prior to a public launch but where possible/appropriate to be involved at an earlier stage.

Indecon's research provided several nuggets that informed the advocacy strategy, including, for example, *that top heavy reliance on psychiatric nurses in mental health institutions sapped a good proportion of the mental health budget* (EI:19). Closure of the mental health institutions would have a major impact on jobs and a negative impact on the economic life of the towns and communities where they were located. Therefore, reform posed a major political risk to politicians in whose constituencies these were located.

Headstrong's "My World" (2012) survey is another example of commissioned research that addressed a data and knowledge gap. It was one of a number of data gathering activities to inform best practice and quality standards in mental health delivery via Jigsaw sites. The survey, conducted by the UCD School of Psychology, captured the views of 14,500 young people and provided one of the largest national data sets on youth mental health in the world. The main finding was that the most important factor in supporting and promoting positive mental health outcomes for young people was the consistent presence of one adult in their lives, "someone who knows and understands them." This was a finding the Irish public could actually embrace with some degree of hope in the face of mounting levels of despair about youth suicide and increased mental health pressures. "My World" survey findings have already translated into government policy.<sup>16</sup> These examples demonstrate the contribution research and knowledge made to advocacy for mental health reform.

## **E** Timely, opportunistic lobbying and engagement

Mental health "Champions" across various governments were vital targets in the lobbying strategy, none more so than Fianna Fáil's John Moloney, TD, Minister for State (2008-2011), a politician, publican and undertaker, who witnessed first hand the rise in suicides in his constituency. His role as Minister for State and his relationship with the then Taoiseach (his constituency colleague, Brian Cowen) coincided with grantee lobbying and offered a direct line to Cabinet.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of successful political engagement on the issue was the establishment and operation of a cross-party, Oireachtas Group on Mental Health, a first in terms of Irish parliamentary processes. The group was facilitated by Amnesty initially, then jointly with MHR from 2011 until 2013, when MHR assumed responsibility. The Group's purpose is to facilitate debate at regular intervals on structural (institutional to community-based supports) and legislative reform (revised Mental Health Act 2001). Senior civil servants were among those called to present, to inform the debate. Members were given regular updates that enhanced the quality of the debate and external speakers were invited to address the group (e.g. Assistant Director of Mental Health, HSE, Martin Rogan, and former Prime Minister of Norway, Bondevik).

Lobbying impact was also evident in growing support for reform: the issue was raised in parliamentary questions (PQs), Dáil debates (up from 10 in 2009 to 117 written answer and 3 debates in 2011), and in political party policy documents. *The PQs have increased from one year to the next, but there's a saturation point. We've probably reached it [2012]* (EI:27).

<sup>16</sup> Minister for Education, R. Quinn, TD cited its influence on new school guidelines - Wellbeing in post-primary schools: Guidelines for mental health promotion and suicide prevention. According to Susan Kenny (NOSP), the research was 'part of the rationale of working on the guidelines for schools.' Irish Times, 31 January 2013.

A lesson learned was the value of a cross-party approach to widen the political base of support for reform beyond individual political champions to all parties. It resulted in the inclusion of mental health as an issue in the 2011 General and Presidential election manifestos and embedded a commitment to reform in the 2011 “Programme for Government” (three of Amnesty’s four objectives were included).

## **F** Collaborating funders engaged in strategic funding

The OF strategy was to invest in three organisations, each contributing in its own way to achievement of the desired advocacy goal. However, OF’s involvement was more than financial grants to support advocacy work. Grantees reported additional benefits from collaboration including improvements to management and governance, performance monitoring systems, links to wider networks of support, etc.

The most important impact of OF engagement with mental health was to stimulate wider interest and engagement with the idea of mental health reform: *[It] acted as a catalyst to bring serious attention to mental health and push for implementation of the government’s stated policy – A Vision for Change (EI:22).* OF established Headstrong (with Tony Bates), elevated mental health to priority status within Amnesty, and helped the Irish Mental Health Coalition transform to Mental Health Reform (a sectoral network). It piloted a strategic advocacy effort by stimulating sectoral development and provided a solution, a project focused on community-based supports. Following regular reviews, the strategy changed, in particular when it became clear that building sectoral capacity took more time than anticipated. *Mental Health Reform were making slow and steady progress by 2011, but we were worried and decided to continue to invest in Amnesty, beyond our original timeframe of investment. That was a really good idea. (EI:3)*

OF collaborated with each of its grantees in the portfolio in different ways. It trusted Amnesty’s campaign/lobbying experience to be the public face of this drive to catalyse mental health advocacy. Amnesty knew how to keep the issue alive via campaigns on gaps in provision and the discrimination experienced by people with mental health issues. We had regular reviews and worked with them [foundation team] through several versions of our proposals, to tone down expectations. *They managed the relationship very well from a distance. They had a lot of trust in us. We delivered and were accountable. It was very important to have this interest and to have a dedicated advocacy unit (EI:19).* OF worked closely with MHR until it was on a firm footing in terms of management and governance. *They helped to broker the relationship between Amnesty and Mental Health Reform so that Amnesty was gradually exiting and (MHR) was picking up the advocacy work (EI:16).*

Collaboration with grantees was not always successful. On-going monitoring and performance management resulted in some grantees feeling that the pressure to produce results was relentless. The concept of a limited life foundation brings a heightened urgency to get results, in this case, in less than a decade. Process issues – the time and attention required to build relationships of trust – are central to collaboration. Some grantees were of the view that OF did not sufficiently value process work: *It was all about numbers. How many have you got? (EI:15).* The experience points to a possible pitfall of a push for advocacy impact in a short period. *The pressure was never ending. We were all working flat out. It was never enough. (EI:15).* From this grantee’s perspective, OF did not appreciate the time



required to develop working relationships to mainstream innovative programmes. This points to the danger of trying to push projects to scale up (multiply in number), an indicator of success that does not easily translate to performance measurement of outcomes that are highly dependent on social processes. *The pressure was to deliver more ... rather than appreciating the quality of what we were doing. That was deeply disappointing* (EI:15).

#### 4.3.1 Conclusion

From 2006 to 2013, OF catalysed and supported advocacy capacity in the area of mental health in Ireland, an area neglected in terms of social policy, where there was previously little political will to champion change, a situation hampered by public stigma. The primary indicator of successful achievement – to build political will on mental health – was the government’s support for and resourcing of the Jigsaw model. While there is still a major gap in translating political will into a designated mental health budget, the structural change outlined in the government’s policy document has begun: *There’s no going back. Like Cortez, we’ve burnt the ships and must now exist without them (the institutions)* (EI:18).

In December 2012, politicians and the general public were shocked by the tragic death by suicide of the Taoiseach’s close political ally, Minister for State, Shane McEntee, TD, that not only brought renewed focus on mental health as an issue, but also highlighted the major stress faced by politicians in key policy-making positions, especially in an economic recession.

The impact of advocacy work conducted by OF grantees was evidenced by the extent of political engagement, with a documented increase in the number of Oireachtas Q&As, the establishment and operation of the cross-party Oireachtas Group on Mental Health (ensuring sustainability of the issue in parliamentary processes), in politicians’ increased participation in opinion polls and sessions to debate the research findings.

The Fine Gael/Labour government, 2011, included three of Amnesty’s four stated objectives in its Programme for Government. It has committed to:

- a)** establishing a cross-departmental group on mental health (education, housing, employment);
- b)** a “full and comprehensive review of The Mental Health Act, 2001” (in progress at the time of writing) and
- c)** introducing a “Mental Health Capacity Bill” in line with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This win demonstrates political support in principle for reform and rights-based arguments.

The cumulative effect of grantees’ lobbying and campaign activities had been to build public interest and encourage political processes to engage with the project of mental health reform. While there are ongoing issues regarding government resources, the reform argument has largely been won. MHR has received a funding commitment to 2016, in recognition of its success in establishing a unified sectoral voice for reform. However, the sustainability of mental health advocacy beyond 2016 is unclear. Amnesty has now scaled back its mental health focus to a monitoring brief and some low level lobbying on the Mental Health Act review. Ultimately ensuring mental health rights is a long-term project that will require continued advocacy.



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## Summary & Conclusions

During The One Foundation's (OF) ten-year existence, 2004-2013, the advocacy operational environment changed dramatically in tandem with the economic downturn from boom to bust.



The evaluation report has documented the outcomes and impact of support of a small number of grantees working to advocate for change in the area of children's rights, immigrant rights and mental health reform. This work was supported with what one interviewee described as "a very small pot of money" – almost €15 million (20%) of its total investment of €75 million, and a short timeframe of ten years. In these advocacy goal areas, solid achievements were demonstrated from work conducted by grantees in each portfolio that had a positive impact in terms of legislation, policy and practice. Case study examples in each of the three advocacy areas demonstrated incremental wins in the context of the ultimate OF goals.

A referendum to change the Irish Constitution to embed the rights of children was held and passed in November 2012. From 2006, the Children's Rights Alliance promoted the concept of a referendum. Key advocacy strengths were: CRA's "dream team" (a CEO who was a skilled lobbyist, and a legal/policy analyst who produced high-quality, well-researched submissions), its dedicated advocacy role on behalf of its (100+) member organisations (a mandate that government respected and lent credibility to its proposals for change), and trust (in crafting legislation). Its lobbying targets were the UN (to influence the Irish government), senior civil servants (to build political will and contribute to solutions, including amendment wording), politicians in all parties (to build momentum for change) and the general public. While many organisations engaged in the referendum campaign, CRA was able to mobilise its membership to add a range of voices for a "Yes" vote. While the referendum result is currently subject to a court appeal, there is no doubt but that the campaign was a major advocacy win that, in the words of one bellwether, *would simply not have been possible without One. They have been relentless in their pursuit of this* (EI:31).

## They have been relentless in their pursuit of this.

Looking to the future, should the referendum result be upheld, a legal framework for children's rights can ensure the State is held to account: the amendment recognises the rights of the child, recalibrates the trigger for State intervention in the family where the welfare of the child is affected and enshrines a duty to pass laws to make adoption available to all children. In certain judicial proceedings, it makes the best interests of the child paramount and ensures that the child's views are heard. Policy specialists say the outcome creates future advocacy opportunities for children's rights. Meanwhile, CRA will continue to advocate for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights for the Child. In terms of policy and practice, legislation is being drafted to establish a Child and Family Agency, which will involve 5,000 employees, a budget of over €0.5bn and huge systems change. OF also supported two newly established long-term measures: the Child Care Law Reporting project (funded with AP) and the Children's Law Centre.

Major immigration legislation is expected in the second half of 2013 – the Immigration Residence and Protection Bill will, at the very least, make transparent the State's policies and processes on immigration. Secondary legislation has been enacted to protect the rights of low paid immigrant workers in areas of work such as agriculture, domestic care, and restaurant work, and in relation to forced labour. MRCI, an OF grantee, has contributed to advancements in immigrant rights in a number of these areas. Its advocacy strengths have been in the areas

of campaigns, lobbying and supporting low paid migrant workers to build their own advocacy. MRCI advocacy was particularly successful in the early years of OF support. It built a solid case for reform of labour legislation, brought cases to the Labour Court, and demonstrated exploitation of workers in various sectors. With the move away from specific migrant worker-related campaign areas to wider immigration issues such as irregular migration and access to third level education, the organisation lost some advocacy traction. In the context of recession, and a reversal in migration trends, politicians had less appetite for immigration reform. This is all the more reason why the recent legislative success, Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Bill 2013, achieved as a result of a combined campaign with other NGOs, is encouraging. While small gains have been made in political opinion, there are also worrying trends, e.g. the percentage of politicians who perceive a rise in racist incidents has increased (from 28% in 2011 to 45% in 2012, MBL data). There is, however, a slow and growing appreciation among politicians for immigrant rights, an important development. Looking to the future, MRCI's allies in the Trade Union movement and equality organisations will become all the more important to sustaining its advocacy efforts in light of the challenges identified, as MRCI's main sources of funding (OF and AP) will cease operations by 2016. Several bellwethers forecast that the IRB Bill's provisions will be restrictive because of reduced immigration and the economic recession. In addition, major issues continue for asylum seekers in Direct Provision Centres.

## Acted as a catalyst to bring serious attention to mental health and pushed for implementation of the government's stated policy – A Vision for Change.

The most important impact of OF's engagement with mental health is that it stimulated wider interest and engagement with the issue: *[It] acted as a catalyst to bring serious attention to mental health and pushed for implementation of the government's stated policy – A Vision for Change (EI:2)*. OF piloted advocacy efforts in mental health by first funding a campaigning specialist (Amnesty), stimulating sectoral development (IMHC/MHR), and providing a solution (Headstrong's Jigsaw model). Advocacy conducted by the three grantees addressed different points of influence to encourage political processes to engage with mental health reform. There are now nine Jigsaw hubs that demonstrate successful synergy between mental health providers and youth supports. These represent an important best practice resource for future mental health services and supports, providing a model of what is possible in community-based mental health support. As of 2013, the government has closed all of Ireland's Victorian asylums of containment in favour of community-based mental health supports, focused on recovery.

As regards the future, there is still a major issue in relation to the designation of the budget required to give effect to the change to community based supports, although the political argument has been won. The government's commitment to

review the Mental Health Act, 2001 against human rights standards (in consultation with service users, carers and other critical stakeholders) has begun in 2013, as has work to introduce a Mental Capacity Bill in line with the Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities. If enacted, these pieces of legislation will be evidence of further advocacy wins.

The advocacy approach taken by grantees differed in each OF advocacy area due in part to the stage of development of the issue within the social change context. This illustrates the need for flexibility in determining the appropriate advocacy approach. In the area of children's rights, the case of the Children's Rights Alliance illustrates the value of having a national umbrella body dedicated to advocacy with senior management who combine elite lobbying skills with high-quality legal/policy analysis (informed by the membership and external specialists), working with politicians and government outside of the public eye. MRCI's forte was its community work approach that supports migrants to build collective advocacy capacity combined with its ability to determine when to lobby, campaign, or protest, based on a nuanced read of the operational environment. In the absence of a strong, national mental health coalition or advocacy body, an outside player, Amnesty, skilled in lobbying and campaign work, brought the issue out of the shadows, enabled a mental health advocacy platform to develop (MHR), while Headstrong was devising its community-based youth mental health model.

The experiences documented in the report also demonstrate the value of philanthropic support of advocacy in the three areas. The One Foundation's limited life (10 years) approach brought an urgency to seeking solutions to entrenched social problems. Its venture or active philanthropy approach meant a high level of engagement by the team, a due diligence process, business planning, a concentration on management and governance issues, and tailored financing, based on performance reviews. *At the end of the day you only have to ask the question: did they make a difference? The answer is undoubtedly 'Yes.' What happened to Irish children was truly awful. They've [One] made Ireland a better place for kids.* (EI:20)

The One Foundation will cease to exist in 2013 and no other home-grown philanthropy has emerged to date to replace it. The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP), the other major supporter of advocacy will close in 2016. Therefore, there will be less support available to NGOs at a time when advocacy continues to be needed in each of the policy areas discussed in this report. In social democracies like Ireland, philanthropy cannot be a substitute for what government is obliged to provide, but it can be a powerful catalyst for social change. As another interviewee put it: *The problem is not lack of resources, but who has them and what are they doing with them* (EI:13).

The Advocacy Initiative – a three-year project funded by AP – is playing an important role in terms of facilitating debate about advocacy processes and experiences in the Irish social policy context, and in supporting NGOs to build advocacy capacity. This is perhaps an appropriate forum for the critical debate on the sustainability of advocacy following the exit of The One Foundation (and indeed, AP).

## The problem is not lack of resources, but who has them and what are they doing with them.

The evaluation highlights the valuable role that philanthropy can play in supporting NGOs to advocate to advance social change. From a funder's point of view, it shows that major social impact can be achieved with relatively small amounts of funding. However, expectations must be framed in realistic terms. Since the funding of advocacy is considered a higher risk than funding services (because of unpredictable variables), factors influencing advocacy success from a funder's perspective include identifying suitable NGO(s) to support and backing the right leader to build relationships across various constituencies to ensure a critical mass of support for the desired change.

Lessons learned by grantees are discussed in the case studies using the Quinn-Patton (2008) framework of advocacy effectiveness. More general lessons are as follows:

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### 1. Philanthropic support of advocacy can enhance policy-making processes

The One Foundation's support of NGO advocacy work was important precisely because it was independent of government and therefore enabled advocates to persist with arguments on the need to improve policy, structures or practices. The OF's commitment to multi-annual funding resourced grantees to develop and implement advocacy strategies that included the systematic gathering or commissioning of evidence-based research to further substantiate claims for change. In the case of mental health advocacy, its investments supported grantees to push government to implement its stated policy, and in the case of children's rights, to address its acknowledged responsibilities. This is particularly important in a country like Ireland without a strong tradition of think tanks or resources to support advocacy and change.

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### 2. Supporting advocacy can be risky and time consuming but, if successful, can generate significant longer-term impact

Advocacy activities can take a long time to establish the momentum for change. Progress can be stalled by unanticipated policy bottlenecks - human, political or economic impediments to advancing the claims for change. For example, national economic difficulties hampered delivery by government of promised resources from the annual health budget in support of mental health reforms. Timing is important and campaigns may make little progress until conditions are in place for change to occur. However, the successful passage of the children's referendum demonstrates advocacy's potential for longer-term impact. The education arising from advocacy campaigns also underpins longer-term attitudinal change and reforms.

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### 3. Achieving policy change takes time and funders need to be patient

The timeframe for the OF support for change in the three areas outlined was a ten-year one. Yet in many ways this is a short horizon. It takes time to gear up organisations to drive for this kind of change, to build data to support their cases, to shape their image, to engage with politicians and the public etc. Also, organisations cannot be expected to get everything right and must have time to make some mistakes and learn from them. In the case of immigrant rights for example, the reversal of migration trends from inward to outward changed the advocacy context and challenges considerably in the space of a decade. Advocacy organisations like MRCI had to recalibrate strategies to build momentum within a changed environment. Therefore, funding organisations must exercise their oversight in a patient and subtle manner.

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#### **4. Sectoral coalitions, while ideal for advocacy, are not always possible**

While sectoral coalition building is often important to ensure a critical mass of support for change, building agreement between multiple players in an advocacy area is a complicated process that cannot be rushed or falsely stimulated. For example, immigrant organisations required time to establish their sectoral strategy because many had emerged in response to the unanticipated rise in numbers of migrants entering Ireland. Therefore, in some advocacy areas, the best that can be attained in a limited life investment is campaign collaboration, as illustrated by the successful passage of legislation on forced labour in 2013. Such cooperation may also lead to cross-learning and potentially longer-term cooperation.

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#### **5. A dedicated advocacy organisation representing member organisations in a given sector enhances advocacy impact**

In only one of the three advocacy goal areas, children's rights, was there an established umbrella organisation, the Children's Rights Alliance, whose mission was to lobby on behalf of members. Its representative status strengthened its hand with government, staff forged working relationships with civil servants and with politicians across party lines and coordinated a two-way flow of information that influenced the solutions proffered for change. While many organisations and individuals contributed to the successful holding of a referendum, the influence of the CRA can be traced from 2006 to the point of impact in 2012.

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#### **6. Credible data communicated with real-life examples, propels advocacy**

Claims for major change not only require robust evidence-based research (preferably a combination of in-house and independently commissioned data), but also a communication strategy that is flexible and creative. Campaigns that foreground the narratives of those directly affected (e.g. mental health service users and immigrants) and draw on polling data to demonstrate growing public support for change (as evidenced by the MBL polling data) contribute to advocacy traction. Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) played new and important roles in mobilising supporters around campaign efforts in all three advocacy areas.



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## 7. Leadership is critical to successful advocacy

Advocacy is hugely influenced by the capacity of leaders to collaborate with colleagues to build agreement on shared advocacy activities. Within children's rights, for example, CRA's leaders lobbied on behalf of members behind the scenes. They did not assume a public profile, nor claim advocacy wins. They also forged relationships across political parties and with public servants so that the issue gained traction over time in the system. Strategic NGO leaders who build strong, working relationships rather than promoting only their own organisation's interests, seem most adept at advancing advocacy goals.

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## 8. Advocacy capacity is enhanced when organisations review performance regularly, learn from mistakes, match tactic to opportunity and alter approaches accordingly.

No one style or approach can be relied upon to advance the advocacy issue. Organisations must have a toolkit of approaches to suit contexts and opportunities. The case studies show that NGOs supported by OF undertook a wide range of approaches to achieving their goals. Tactics may change following performance reviews. For example, when Amnesty realised that its approach to lobbying of officials in the Department of Health was perceived as overly aggressive (at a time when Amnesty needed access), the organisation softened its approach. Therefore, regular reviews can not only improve advocacy but also influence the tone of a campaign at a particular time.

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## 9. Supporting rigour of management, analysis and evaluation in NGOs ultimately supports the achievement of their goals.


Some of the organisations funded by OF were small, e.g. employed fewer than 15 people. In the Irish NGO sector, they may have had a tradition of relatively low, and volatile, funding. As such, strategic planning, organising and overseeing sustained advocacy campaigns, working at a strategic policy level, and reporting back to OF on outcomes, was organisationally challenging. The rigour involved undoubtedly led to organisational capacities being built, which should last as a spin-off benefit of the decade of focused advocacy work.



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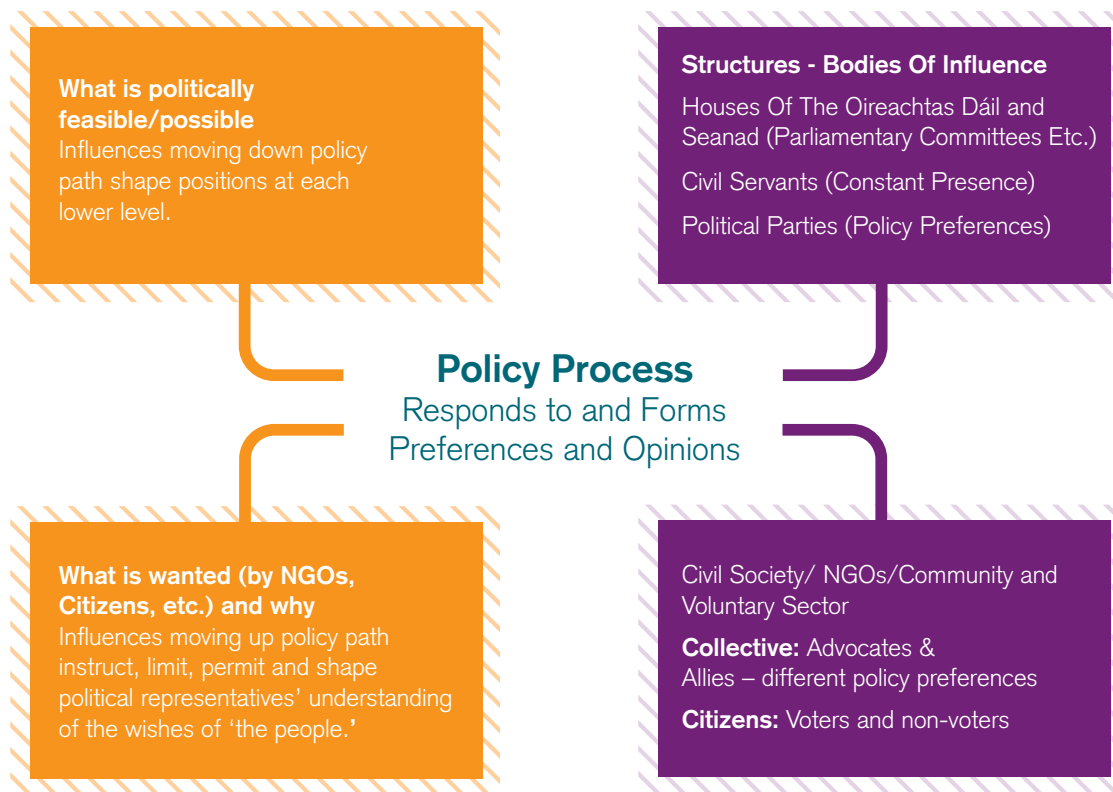
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# Appendix 1 & Bibliography



# Legislative policy-making processes, Republic of Ireland

(O'Carroll, 2010)<sup>1</sup>



1. In devising this schema we draw on classic policy texts: the work of Political Scientist Charles E. Lindblom (1984) in the US context, and Brian Harvey in the Irish context (1998).



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