

Women's
Collective
Ireland
Ronanstown

CONNECTION THROUGH CRAFT

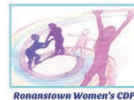


Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Chearta an Duine
agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and
Equality Commission

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under the Irish Human
Rights and Equality
Commission Grant Scheme



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



Ronanstown Women's CDP



transforming violent conflict
building peace



DOMINICAN
JUSTICE OFFICE

Over the course of seven months, a diverse group of women living in The Clondalkin Towers Direct Provision Centre came together to explore the transformative power of textiles in fostering resilience, empowerment, and cross cultural dialogue.

Through a series of collaborative crocheting sessions, our group took inspiration from their own cultural heritage, lived experiences, and hopes for the future. Guided by the principles of solidarity, creativity, and mutual respect, we created a space not just for crafting, but a space for connection.

As you flip through these pages , we invite you to delve into the stories, reflections, and artwork created by our group. The work is a testament to the creativity of the women involved and a celebration of the power of art.





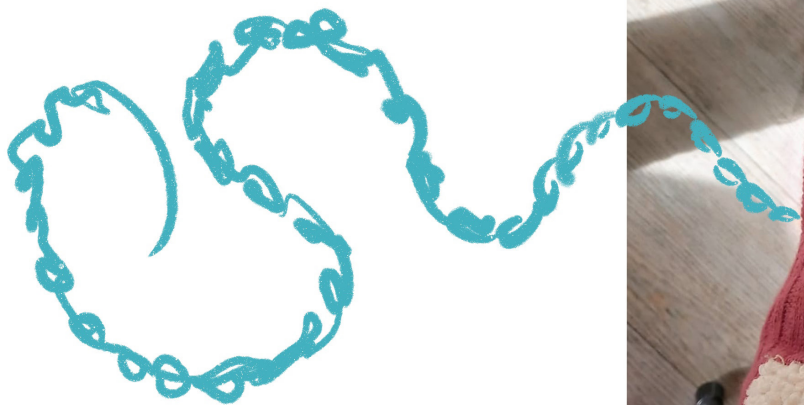
Unseen and often unacknowledged, the invisible labour of women remains a cornerstone of society. Within the context of direct provision, where institutionalised invisibility further obscures people's presence, the need to shed light on experiences becomes ever more pressing.

Connection through Craft aimed to make visible the invisible, challenging the status quo and celebrating the lives of marginalised women.




"I make mistakes...

**But I keep going
anyway"**





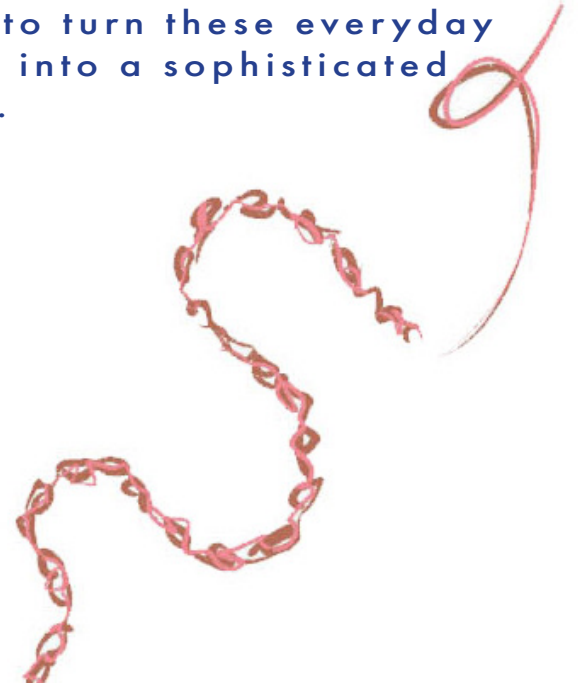


**"When I
crochet, my
mind is
quiet"**



Some women were new to textiles, but others were highly skilled artisans long before the project even began.

With only a box, a rolling pin, kitchen roll, and some markers, one woman was able to turn these everyday items into a sophisticated loom.



Women's Collective Ireland Logo - designed by one of the women who made on her handmade loom.





In celebration of International Women's Day we turned our creativity towards acts of self-care and tokens of appreciation.



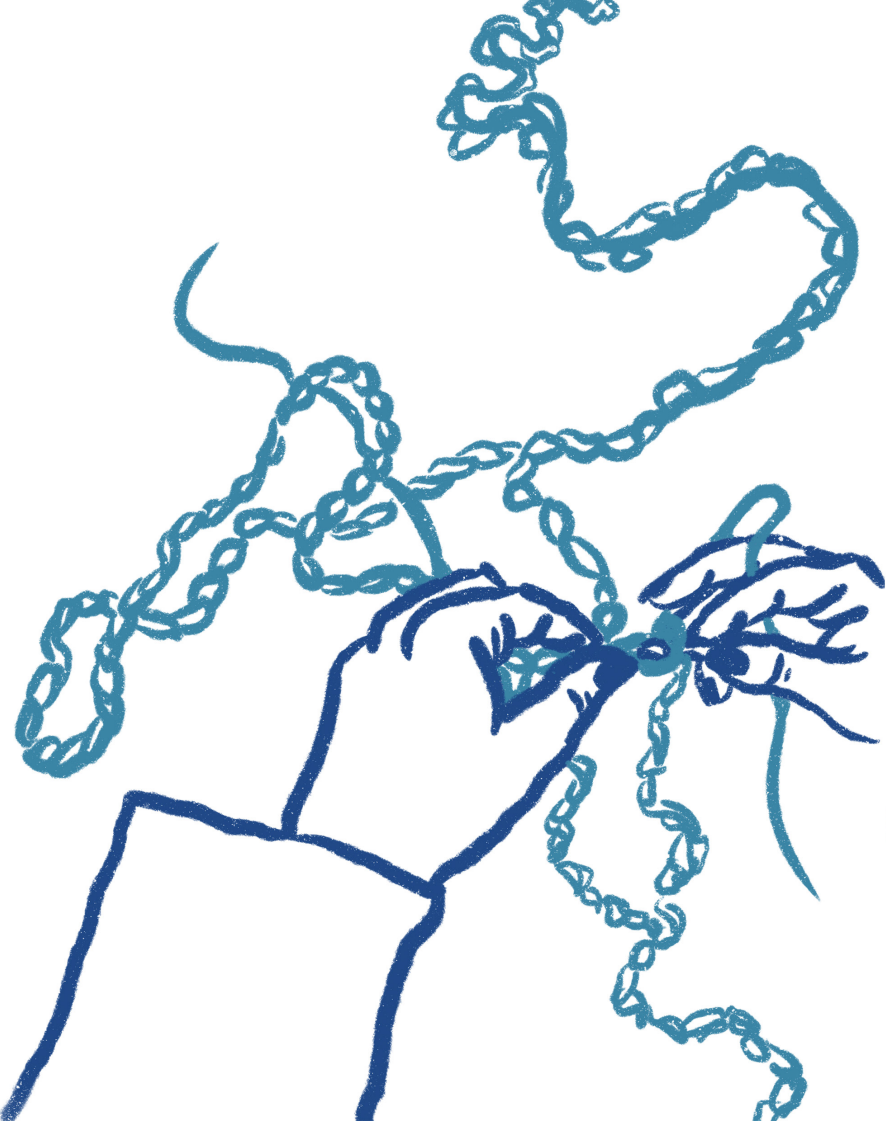
We made bath salts and body oil before finishing the day with a manicure. Homemade remedies gave us space for relaxation and rejuvenation on a day for honouring women.



Every session began with a deliberate focus on self-care and mindfulness. Through a flow of body-based exercises and meditation, we engaged in a holistic array of techniques including Tai Chi and dance, to alleviate stress and promote resilience.

Using a model of refugee accompaniment, we drew from the manual *Capacitar Practices of Self-Care and Trauma Healing for Refugees and Those who Walk with Them* by Dr. Patricia Cane and Kathryn L. Revtyak.





“I don't
crochet
because I have
a big space to
decorate, I
crochet
because it
gives me hope”









We engaged with 52 women over the course of the six month project, from 11 countries around the world.

We built relationships of trust with women of Clondalkin Towers Direct Provision Centre. Attention was given to making the space attractive and welcoming. Soft blankets and colourful tablecloths covered old furniture. Flowers brought nature into the room. Exotic fruit & herbal teas were provided. A colourful centre piece provided a visual focus for wellness exercises. Women living in one room in a communal setting have little space for beauty and comfort.

The women learnt or developed a skill in knitting and crocheting, and used different mediums to learn. We provided written and visual materials to explain the steps involved, and YouTube instructional clips were also shared. Most of the learning was peer-to-peer, with the more experienced women teaching those new to crochet, including many of the project facilitators who were novices. Wool and crochet hooks were given to all of the women living in the Towers. They began to share their newly-acquired skills with each other, and to teach and help each other informally outside of the craft sessions.

We were aware that English was not a first language for many participants and we used translation apps on phones to communicate when necessary.





We were also fortunate that the artist guiding the sessions spoke a number of different languages. However, we found that the women discovered ways to teach and learn from each other that transcended language barriers. This project confirmed that crafting together is a universal and often calming experience that fosters communication and relationships.

In addition to the craft project, we distributed information leaflets on courses and events and shared this information through the residents' WhatsApp group. We used this group to invite women to our craft meetings, and we put up colourful posters in the reception area. Outreach to new women took place in the communal areas inside and outside the entrance of the centre.



Efforts were made to meet and greet new residents and tell them about the programme.

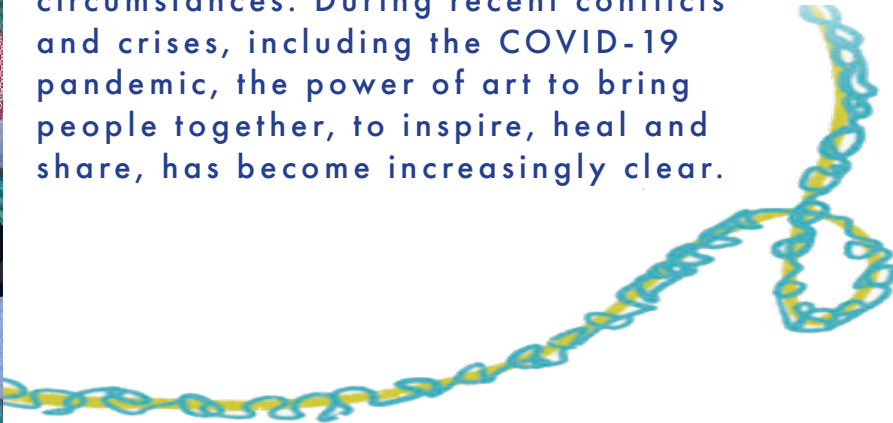
Women from the Towers engaged in the WCI Ronanstown's International Women's Day Event, and some signed up for our Preparation for College Course with the aim of continuing to our Level 7 Women Gender & Social Justice Programme in partnership with UCD.

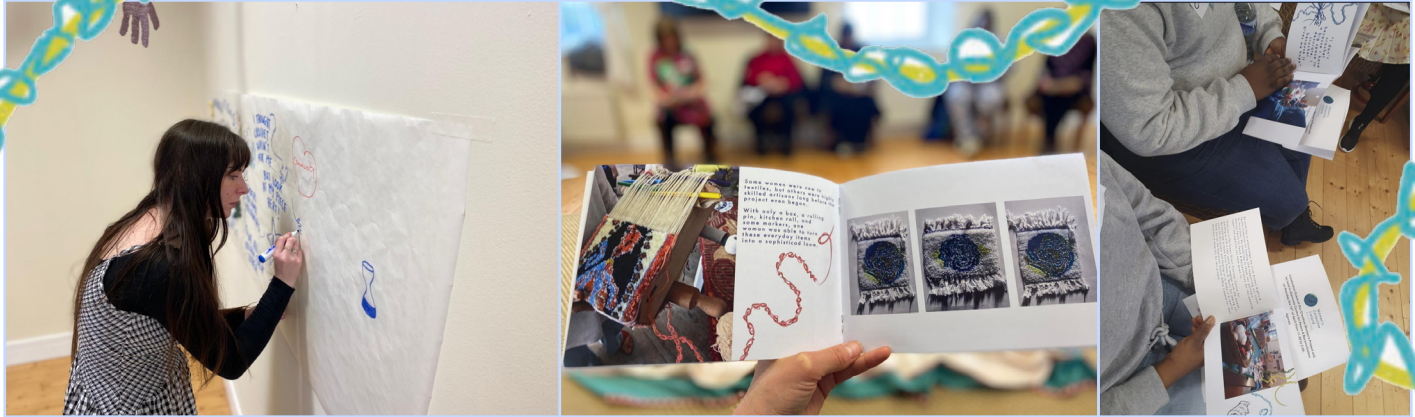
An evaluation and celebration of the project was held at Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Co. Wicklow.





Programme participants and staff engaged in a facilitated dialogue, captured by artist Fiona O' Neill through the medium of graphic harvesting. This day coincided with World Art Day, and the theme this year, "A Garden of Expression: Cultivating Community Through Art," is a timely reminder that art can unite and connect us even in the most difficult of circumstances. During recent conflicts and crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the power of art to bring people together, to inspire, heal and share, has become increasingly clear.



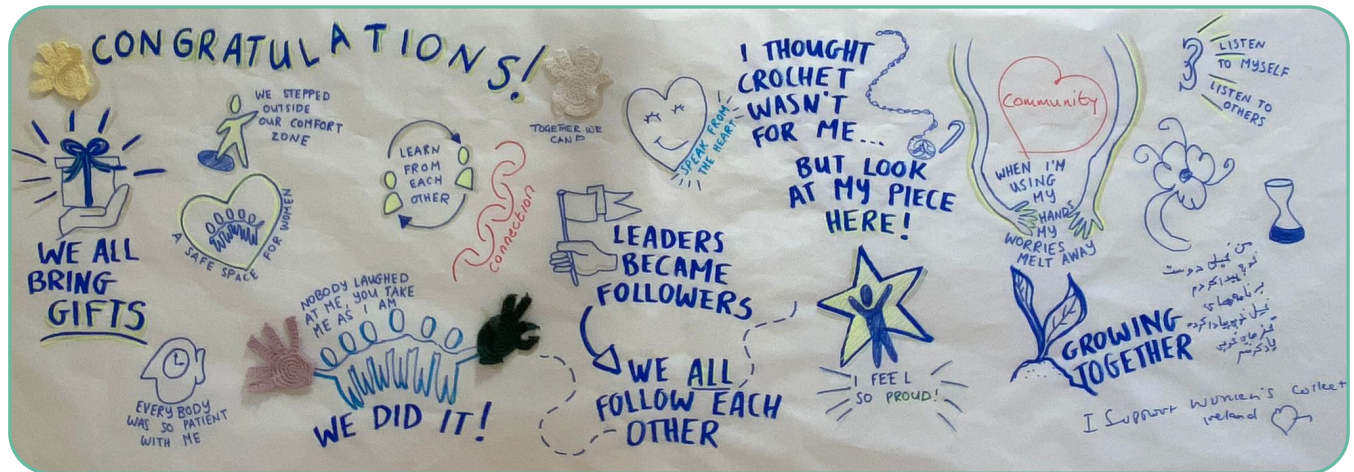


- We held a Voters Education Day on the 30th of April in the Towers where we had over 25 women engage and sign up on the voters register.
- The Art Installation has been showcased in the National College of Art & Design with Artist Fiona O' Neill.
- We hosted a coffee morning on Tuesday the 21st of May for the women in the Clondalkin Towers Direct Provision Centre.
- The Art Installation will be showcased in Clondalkin Library in the coming weeks.



We would like to acknowledge the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission for funding and supporting our vision for this project. We would like to thank our partners Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation for the amazing support and expertise you have given us.

Thank you to The Towers Direct Provision Centre for providing us with a safe space to engage with the women. We would like to thank Artist Fiona O'Neill for seeing our vision for this project and helping us to make it a reality. Thank you to the Dominican Justice Office for their support and involvement in the project, and for their donation of materials.



Thank you to the board of Ronanstown Women's Community Development Project Ltd for applying for this funding and to Women's Collective Ireland Ronanstown staff for delivering this project.

Most importantly sincere thanks to all the women who took part over the last seven months. It was an absolute honour to share the space with you all. Thank you for your trust and friendship and for teaching us so much more than you know. Your strength, resilience and hope is just powerful.

Sinead Mahon
WCI Ronanstown Coordinator

