



Women's  
Collective  
Ireland

**Women's Collective Ireland work directly with women on the ground from disadvantaged communities, to build women's confidence and self-esteem through Feminist Community Education.**

Women's Collective Ireland (WCI) are a national women's community development organisation advancing marginalised women's equality through Feminist Community Education. Through our 17 rural and urban-based grassroots women's community projects, WCI represent and work directly with women experiencing disadvantage.

### **WCI's Definition of Feminist Community Education**

WCI define Feminist Community Education as an inclusive, informal, lifelong-learning process rooted in collective empowerment, consciousness-raising, and the active challenging of social inequalities. It is provided by the community, for the community, in the community. This model is person-centred, and recognises and values life-experience in a way that builds confidence and enables women to develop, and make informed choices, and work collectively, to challenge and influence policy, and to bring about positive social change. This feminist foundation model is embedded in our community education delivery.

### **WCI's Approach to Feminist Community Education**

WCI believe Feminist Community Education is a powerful catalyst for social change. Our approach is rooted in feminist principles, and a commitment to women's equality. We achieve our strategic goals: "Reaching out and engaging women", Supporting women's empowerment and participation through feminist community development", and Voicing the issues affecting grassroots women and increasing visibility" through our supportive approach which focuses on:

- **Lifelong learning:** providing second-chance education which is accessible to grassroots women in their local area. Our programmes range from first steps to accredited third level programmes.

- **Social inclusion:** ensuring women's access to education and progression is not hindered by barriers such as childcare, by offering supports to facilitate full participation and progression into employment and leadership roles.
- **Gender equality:** raising awareness on the social inequalities that exist in society, provides women with the tools to critically analyse their lived experiences and question social and political structures that maintain the status quo.

### WCI's Model of Feminist Community Education

WCI provide a unique model of Feminist Community-based Education that is participant-centred and accessible, and delivered in an open, friendly, inclusive, and supportive environment, and designed to meet the specific needs of the grassroots women we engage with. Our feminist model enhances critical consciousness, awareness of power relations, and increases social and political knowledge by focusing on:

- **Consciousness-raising:** WCI empower women to analyse their experiences, understand power dynamics, and become critical of the unequal society in which they live.
- **Participant-led:** WCI's programmes are driven by the needs of the women we work with, ensuring that the education is relevant and empowering.
- **Collective action:** we prepare and invite participants to engage in collective action for social change, fostering skills and building solidarity so that women can take on leadership roles in their community, and influence policy.
- **Feminist lens:** all our programmes and activities are shaped by a feminist and gender perspective.

### WCI's Broader Impact

WCI's work extends beyond the classroom. This situates WCI's work as not just impactful locally, but as a key influencer nationally.

- **Academic collaboration:** our collaboration with various academic institutions around the country, such as the Women Gender and Social Justice Programme with UCD has enabled us to develop an outreach partnership with universities. This outreach work breaks down traditional barriers, enabling women to gain knowledge and skills in a supportive, familiar environment which can facilitate progression to further education and employment.
- **Policy and Advocacy:** we hold representation roles on various national platforms such as Aontas, bringing the voices of grassroots women to the forefront of policy discussions, and contribute to local policy, and national strategies on equality, social inclusion, and lifelong learning.