Third Country Voices

A research study on the experiences and challenges of third country nationals’ communities and organisations in Malta, as part of the EEA funded project:

‘Developing a Third country national Support Network’

EEA 003/14
Acknowledgements

This publication has been funded by EEA grants. FSM Malta acknowledges the contribution of the EEA funding agency and its national office, SOS Malta, for making possible this interesting research as part of a project of building a third country national network in Malta.

The views expressed in the publication are those of the Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants and do not necessarily represent the opinion or position of the EEA funding agency or its national office, SOS Malta.

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1. Introduction

The bishop of present day Algeria Augustine of Hippo once said that “the world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page”. Living in the 4th and 5th century A.D. Augustine was referring to the limitations in experience and knowledge of those who could not travel. In those days travelling was a major undertaking, and most people were financially and geographically restricted. Comparatively, today’s world is being made more and more accessible to everyone, so that vast quantities of people are travelling daily all over the world. Surely, some are more restricted than others.

If travelling has increased drastically, migration has always been a common phenomenon in the Mediterranean. In the times when great empires occupied maritime space and lands, the Mediterranean Sea was the route for many cargo and military ships. Slaves were transported as cargo on ships and carried to faraway lands to be sold at slave markets. Wars caused the migration of thousands of survivors and military families alike. Push factors for migration in the Mediterranean have included climate change such as drought, hot and cold temperatures, and flooding. Movement has also been caused by the needs of families and people, such as in the event of cross-cultural marriages, in carrier development, and in sports participation. It is no different today. The change today is that we have come to define and categorise people and circumstances, to regulate migration through a system of ‘rewards’ and ‘punishments’, and to uphold people’s dignity through the respect for human rights.

The research finds that many TCNs appreciate and respect Malta and its strategic role in peacebuilding and the strengthening of North-South relations, despite its size and limitations. The majority of TCNs have a sense of peace and amicability towards the Maltese people, and have great appreciation for the hospitality of many Maltese people. The research sought to find out the challenges and difficulties of TCNs in Malta, and found its participants to be competent ambassadors of their people and their countries, promoting peace and understanding between cultures. The interview indicates that Malta is benefiting from the contributions of nations, and can benefit more if it can harness the participation of third country nationals in meeting the challenges and needs of a diverse society.

FSM acknowledges the contribution of several individuals and groups for taking the time to share their experiences, and for their commitment and work in striving to build bridges of integration, cooperation and development in Malta.
2. Research Context

The former Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Manuel Mallia, gave statistics for TCNs, EU, EEA and Swiss citizens in Malta in March 2013 as an answer to a parliamentary question. Minister Mallia said that at that time there were 23,643 foreign nationals living in Malta from 150 different countries. Of these, TCNs amounted to 11,565 while EU, EEA and Swiss nationals amounted to 12,078. The following graph depicts the information given about both groups residing in Malta:

![Graph of Number of Foreigners by Top Nationalities]

Labour statistics were also given by Minister Mallia. In March 2013 there were 15,095 foreigners working in Malta. Of these 9,670 were EU nationals while 5,424 were TCNs (The Malta Independent, 2014).

The EEA funded project ‘Developing a Third Country National Support Network’ is not the first project attempting to bring together third country nationals (TCNs) in Malta. The project leader has knowledge of two other efforts to do so, that however have met with great difficulties and challenges based on the fact that:

a) TCN individuals and groups are highly transient in Malta
b) There are important categorisations of TCNs which deserve attention
The two efforts mentioned above used different methods. One used ‘individuals’ as members, and started with a small number of communities and individuals working with these communities. The other started working with TCNs through organisational and community leaders, but there was inconsistency of commitment among leaders, and those joining were belonging to the same regional groups. The experience of FSM with various TCN organisations and communities was also important in this project research to exploring deeper issues and their causes, such as the tendency for fragmentation and conflict in some communities as well as issues related to gender roles in others. This background drew the attention of FSM to those factors which were leading to demotivation in leaders and workers of TCN organisations, and to segregation between TCN groups.

In this context FSM decided to start working with already established organisations and known community leaders with experience in community development. Effort was made to broaden the scope of the network and involve very diverse groups from the start, so that various TCN groups can have a voice in the research. These decisions were meant to harness the participation of diverse organisations and communities, but had limitations of time in pursuing the participation of all TCN groups in Malta. The first efforts in building bridges across TCN groups and organisations however have been successful, in building the first foundation for developing a network that is represented by different voices. The different voices symbolise the intention of the network, to act as a support for TCNs in Malta, in diverse ways according to the needs, expression and competence of those joining the network.

Categorisation of TCNs needs to be considered, especially those categories that are policy or law-driven, which differentiate some TCNs from others. Some TCNs are asylum seekers, others are refugees, and others are dependent on employment contracts they have signed in their home countries, while others are married to Maltese. The groups do not have the same experiences or the same rights under Maltese laws. The legal differentiation leads to social differentiation of groups, groups that are perceived differently by others and by each other. However other categorisations exist, particularly categorisations of colour. These categorisations are brought about by visibility and invisibility, where persons are assumed and treated differently depending on their skin colour. These assumptions also reflect historic categorisations and reflect how various groups see themselves, whether they are Maltese, TCNs or EU citizens. The assumption that Maltese are ‘European’ for example can be easily contested by comparing several perceptions before and after historic events such Malta’s independence, and Malta’s EU accession in 2004. As these historic events changed perceptions of various groups on the Maltese, so do laws and policies effecting TCNs bring about different perceptions on TCNs. Different perceptions create different expectations, experiences and aspirations, causing inequalities among groups, and reducing the power of some while increasing that of others. It is therefore important to address these power dynamics. Networks are supposed to be inclusive and supportive of diversity, and this requires a certain amount of groundwork to allow for a type of inclusion that makes sense and brings meaning to the participating groups.
Categorisations sometimes cross national and ethnic boundaries. At times social boundaries between mixed groups are stronger than national boundaries. Persons with professional ties may find more in common with each other than with those coming from the same country. Education and background strongly feature in this type of categorisation. Persons with low education achievements may experience life differently, and have different challenges related to employment and living conditions. This leads to different perceptions of groups within the same nationality or ethnicity, on whether the group actually faces ‘discrimination’ in Malta and on whether those discriminated should be represented by the organisation and how. These diverse experiences are also faced by members of the same nationality who have different immigration statuses in Malta. This shows that ‘grouping’ can take different forms, other than what is visible through procedures such as the registration of organisations and the constitution of membership. Networks need to consider these ‘invisible’ variables while working with the visible ones that are more easily recognised. This method increases the chances for sustainability of initiatives such as network formation in an environment that is usually difficult for TCNs to navigate.
3. Research Methodology

The aims of the research were to explore TCN organisations and to find out:

a) a number of diverse communities and organisations in Malta, their history and objectives
b) types of organisational and leadership structures
c) resources within the communities and organisations
d) the challenges and needs of communities, organisations and leaders
e) methods used to mitigate these challenges and their outcomes
f) the experiences and roles of women, and presence in leadership structures
g) causes of conflict within and among groups
h) the present needs of organisations
i) recommendation for network development

In order to reach these aims semi structured interviews, face to face interviews were conducted with TCN organisational and community leaders, using a number of set questions. Interviewees were asked for permission to use a voice recorded, but whenever preferred, note-taking was used to record points made during the interview (see Annex A for interview questions).

The search for such communities was done by consulting NGOs, key local and international agencies, as well as through a desktop and online research. The research considered both those organisations which are formally registered with the Malta Council for Voluntary Organisations, as well as groups and communities which are not registered. This is because one of the aims of the project is to assist TCN groups in organisational development and in eventually accessing the network. The project started with an acknowledgement of the fact that TCN communities have different experiences from one another, depending upon various factors such as language and population, which effect the cohesion within the group, and the integration of the group in Malta. This factor led to the prior intention and plan to facilitate within the project less powerful groups such as minorities, more vulnerable groups, and groups experiencing particular internal conflicts. This strategy is meant to assist such groups in having a voice among more powerful groups.

Research participants were contacted and selected in a standard order. For more formal groups having a website or Facebook page, the person in charge was contacted by e-mail or Facebook. An e-mail was sent with attached information on the project and a request for an interview with an appropriate person from the leadership. Some communities did not have a registered organisation, and did not have a website or Facebook. In this case effort was made to find out if there was an informal leadership structure, and elders and leaders were then interviewed. In some cases, where there was no knowledge about groups, embassies were contacted, informed about the project, and asked to recommend persons or groups which can participate in this project. Many interviewees also recommended other groups and gave contact information of other organisations. This snowball method worked well, however some groups were more receptive than others. Three embassies were also
contacted for information on any groups, communities and organisations they represent in Malta.

The interviews also included questions on the experiences and roles of women in the organisation or group, especially within the leadership structure. Where women were found to be present in the community but not in the leadership structures, there was a request for an interview with a sample of women from the community. This occurred in three interviews, however due to certain limitations only one interview was carried out with women in a particular group. Interview summaries were made for every interview, and gathered to analyse and present the findings.

The limitations of the research were various. Due to a limited amount of time not all the organisations and groups could be engaged in the research. More attention was given to interviewing diverse groups from diverse backgrounds and nationalities, and to include different types of communities. Therefore there was no time to explore other organisations representing such nationalities or communities.

Another limitation was that some particular groups are resistant to research interviews, especially those who have been through the asylum process. Some groups having a large number of members whose asylum application was rejected are discouraged from participation sometimes. This is because of the fear of deportation and the risks associated with increased visibility. Another limitation was time, where it was discovered that many TCN organisations are run by volunteers and leaders with scarce human and financial resources. Often persons lead the organisations in their free time. To mitigate this limitation interviews were done at a convenient time and location for the participants. All the participants were very open about their work and challenges, dedicated their time and were willing to share their information and recommendations.
4. Findings: Organisations

4.1 Organisation/Community/Group characteristics

In the period between 16th September and the end of December 2014 a total of 24 TCN communities, groups and organisations were targeted, contacted or included in the research information. Out of these, contact was established with 20 groups, and interviews carried out with 17 participants. The interviews revealed that most groups were marked by nationality, however:

a) two organisations were either not set up by TCNs, or did not have the interests of TCNs as their main goal
b) two of the nationalities were each represented in two interviews by different groups
c) one group was identified by ethnicity, not nationality
d) four of the organisations did not have a particular TCN group identified by nationality, but focused on region, language, or particular methods for informing, rehabilitating and empowering diverse TCN communities. Some of these however had focused on key populations identified by nationality.

The nationalities/ethnicities represented in the research interviews were Oromo, Ghanaian, Russian, Georgian, Serbian, Somali, Malian, Libyan, Moroccan, Palestinian, Chinese and Filipino. Various Arab-speaking groups were represented by organisations that either concentrate on regional characteristics or that represent their nationality but are inclusive of other Arab-speaking groups. The latter was also the case for some Russian speaking groups.

As a result of the interviews, one focus group was organised and conducted with women in a specific organisation not identified by nationality. These women were involved in the leadership of the organisation, but were also part of a community where women are not represented in leadership. The aim of the focus group was to explore their particular challenges and experiences.

4.2 History, Goals, Activities and Information on the Organisation/Community

The interviews identified 12 organisations registered in Malta with the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, two communities based on nationality/ethnicity and one folk group which were not registered organisations. One of the organisations was registered in the home country under an office responsible for diasporas. The following table shows the year of registration of the organisations registered in Malta:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of registration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not registered</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For those groups that were not registered there were different reasons. One of the groups did not intend to develop an organisation but to simply have a folk group for entertainment and educational purposes. Another group had difficulties in organising due to a lack of time, motivation and direction, and due to the transitioning of several members of the community to other countries. A third community had a long history of conflict based on clans and on the different status of diverse members. This community had attempted to develop a formal organisation but had failed. Various factors contributing to this conflict were explored in the interview.

A number of activities related to the organisational goals were mentioned in the interviews, namely:

- Promotion of cultural awareness
- Education of members
- Advocating for the rights of members
- Organisation of public events
- Integration of TCNs
- Promoting international relations
- Preventing and resolving conflicts
- Peacebuilding among tribes/clans/groups
- Rehabilitation from trauma
- Promoting business activities
- Promoting regional integration through inclusion of similar language groups and organisations

The interview data was gathered and analysed to find the frequency of these various activities among organisations and groups:
The data shows that almost all organisations focus on the integration of their members or of TCNs in Malta. The promotion of cultural awareness and the education of members is also considered very important among organisations and groups. Organisation of events is important for the majority of groups, while half of those interviewed mentioned advocacy as a priority for their community. There were a number of organisations giving a strong organisational focus on the relations between Malta and their countries of origin. Peacebuilding was also given importance in three of the organisations. Two organisations gave importance to regional integration in relation to the countries of origin of their members, and another two to business activities. Conflict resolution was also considered as an important focus for two of the organisations. Activities related to trauma rehabilitation and the integration of new arrivals, were specific to single organisations. However, they may also be a by-product of the major activities carried out by all the organisations, depending on the arriving numbers and mode of arrival.

In addition, six organisations had implemented projects in their home countries, ranging from humanitarian to educational and social projects. Some of these activities can also be interpreted as activities promoting international relations, but others may not fit this category because they do not a strong involvement of authorities and governments.

Questions regarding communication and information sources were asked. As shown below the majority of organisations and groups use facebook as their main source for communication with group members and the general public. Only four organisations had a website, and one organisation used a different application used in the home country.
4.3 Leadership and leadership Structures

The registered organisations had leadership structures which however varied in type and in the way the leadership was elected, appointed or chosen. The following table presents the quantitative information gathered in relation to the number of persons in the leadership structures and the frequency of these numbers n organisations:
The diversity of leadership numbers can be seen from the table, ranging from one to 17. This diversity can be related to various factors. Larger numbers in leadership were found to relate to:

a) Traditional forms of leadership such as elders
b) Leadership based on ethnic/language groups
c) Inclusion of important persons to prevent fragmentation and division
d) Older, more stable organisations
e) Umbrella organisations and platforms
f) Organisations representing large communities and having a large number of members
g) Financial support for leaders and projects
h) A specific focus on events and their organisation
i) Organisations based on competences

Some organisations however did have many leaders in their formal or informal structures, however they were still facing difficulties in articulating their common goals and registering or developing the organisation.

Smaller numbers in leadership were related to:

a) A very limited and focused number of activities
b) Focused strategies simply requiring particular competences
c) A lack of development of membership due to failure to reach initial goals
d) Lack of motivation of leaders and an inability to find replacement on resignation
e) Lack of commitment leading to non-functionality of the organisation
f) Lack of engagement due to fear of deportation
g) Smaller communities in Malta
h) Maintaining control and preventing abuse of leadership positions
i) Difficulties in accessing documents by leaders for signature and registration

On the other hand there were very large organisations which were dependant on a few leaders. These leaders however had the ability to delegate responsibilities fairly well in coordinating events and in representing and reaching the organisational members.

In relation to gender, the ratio of female to male interviewees was 1:2 male. Data collected in the interviews found the following categories of leadership in relation to gender:
These findings reflect various factors. For some nationalities there are no women present, or very few. In some organisations traditional male leadership is practiced and there is therefore a resistance to the inclusion of women. However female leadership was strong among 46% of the groups (5 in total). An interesting finding was the type of leadership exerted by women in these organisations. Particularly in the larger organisations two out of four female leaders experienced resistance to their leadership at the start of their leadership roles. Both women addressed this resistance by using traditionally feminine approaches that favour friendship building and equality over more dominant and authoritarian types of leadership that demand a special respect towards leaders. All four women leaders have a strong focus on cultural, integration, fundraising and awareness raising events and are able to coordinate, plan and organise large events. One of the organisations was also able to form and sustain a platform of diverse organisations, through consensus building and the development of participatory processes.

In contrast, the more traditional and male dominated organisations were facing resistance to change. Some interviewees explained that some men expected to be appointed or selected as leaders, and that they would usually influence members negatively if they failed to do so. Once selected or appointed (chosen), such members usually resisted change and were not committed to work and serve the members of the organisation. Some interviewees explained that the cause was usually related to older men, while other interviewees explained that the problem was the younger generation which had no respect for the elders.

A number of organisations on the other hand had implemented criteria for leadership positions based on the competences of persons to serve the community. For some groups these criteria were professional skills or competences, for others they were a variety of practical skills based on the needs of the community. Three male interviewees explained that their wives had very important roles in the organisation due to their competences and engagement with the community. This was not the case with female interviewees.
The question of leadership could not be separated from the situation of the specific groups represented by the interviewees, both in Malta and in the home countries. Conflicts in the home countries affected the development of leadership and the organisations in Malta. Also, the legal status and work situations of both those with international protection and those who had failed their asylum application had a major impact on groups and their leadership. The fear of deportation was mentioned by all the groups with members who had gone or were going through the asylum process.

In relation to leadership challenges and difficulties, the following data was extracted from the interviews:

a) Fear of deportation
b) Lack of acceptance of leaders
c) Female leaders not accepted in some groups
d) Division among ethnic/regional/language groups
e) Resistance to change
f) Conflict in home countries spurring divisions
g) Lack of free time to develop leadership
h) Lack of financial and human resources
i) Older leaders
j) Young people seeking change
k) Leaders travelling/abroad for a long period of time
l) Lack of motivation and commitment
m) Self-interest and wrong motives in leadership members
n) Need of property for organisation
o) Managing change of organisational direction
p) Lack of access to documents for filling leadership positions
q) Fulfilling formal procedural requirements
r) Stagnation
s) Leaders not well integrated, exploited and in financial difficulties
t) Lack of criteria for leadership roles
u) No system of accountability
v) Feeling of being ‘used’
w) Attacks and threats from other organisations
x) Lack of unity in the organisation or with other organisations representing same community.
4.4 Membership

The research found that membership varied across organisations and groups. More interesting was the diverse perceptions and experiences on membership. The graph below presents the information gathered in the interviews. 7 groups have up to 50 members and less, while 4 groups had between 200-500 members. One organisation had 5000 members because it was made up of several organisations.

Questions on membership revealed cultural and social barriers to the concept of membership in some organisations. Some communities were found to have already a very effective network outside the organisation, where everyone knew how and where to find everyone else. This is because the community was found to be more important than the organisation within the community. Community members supported each other practically and financially, and they collected money every month as a type of ‘social insurance’ to assist those in need such as persons who get sick or persons who lose their job. This is how some communities succeeded in covering the costs of funeral expenses of those who passed away in Malta.

In such cohesive communities the formation of an organisation could be seen as more beneficial to the leaders of the organisation than to the community itself, especially if there is more focus on the organisation than the practical needs of the community. This perception can force members to make exceptional demands on the organisation, or to
expect results which cannot be achieved. Membership was therefore seen as a benefit to
the organisation, but not as beneficial to the members.

In some groups the requirement of filling forms and signing papers was also viewed with
scepticism or suspicion, because of the fear that personal data could be used for other
purposes. This factor created a dilemma for the leadership because although they
recognised that membership is important for creating accountability and coordination in the
organisation, they could predict the response of the people in their community. One of the
organisations started experiencing a reduced attendance after proposing the filling of
membership forms. This was met with criticism and led to a breakdown of the organisation
itself.

Some organisations did not have registered or paid membership, but simply used contacts
and networks. Others charged an extremely low fee annually, explaining that this was a
requirement for registered organisations. Some interviewees explained that they had
started with paid membership but had abandoned the practice because people were
inconsistent and it was impossible to ‘run after people’. One organisation had some fixed
members who were paying membership, while others did not. The reason was that some
people in the organisation were more stable than others. Stability was related to one’s
immigration status in Malta and the state of employment. It was also related to their
availability, level of commitment and motivation.

The inconsistency in attendance and lack of commitment by members was mentioned by
some of the interviewees as a source of disappointment. Some leaders felt that some
people only attended when they needed something for themselves. It was also
acknowledged as a source of demotivation for organisational leaders, and in some
communities this led to decisions which were in the interest of individuals, but which were
detrimental for the development to the organisation.

4.5 Resources and projects in home country

Participants were asked to describe the resources of their organisations or communities.
The resources they mentioned were listed and tabled as shown below. Almost all
participants mentioned people or people’s competences as a major resource for their
organisation. The use of buildings was also considered important, and this question led
many participants to express their need of an office or a building. Many participants used
their homes and apartments for meetings and small educational projects. Some also made
use of church buildings and reached out to the community during religious events.
An interesting factor was that some participants mentioned resources that others did not, even though they mentioned these resources in the course of the interview. For example, there were more than one organisation with successful fundraising activities, but only one participant mentioned this as a resource that can be used to pay for the cost of events or for supporting families in need. In the same way more than one organisation in the sample takes part in the training workshops organised by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), however only one participant mentioned this provision as a resource. More interesting was the identification of ‘food and culture’ and of ‘language’ as a resource, however by one participant although many of the participants organise cultural events on a regular basis.

While there were a number of organisations assisted by their embassies and different entities in their countries of origin, there were different perceptions around this assistance. Some regarded it favourably; others considered that as non-governmental organisations they wanted to work with such entities but also to maintain a healthy distance from political spheres. This was especially relevant for organisations that were inclusive of members from neighbouring countries.

One participant mentioned that women were a resource in the organisation, especially in the organisation and preparation for events, although the organisation is mixed. Another participant recognised the importance of having a volunteer working in the organisation, explaining that such persons could dedicate more time and energy if they could be employed by the organisation.
Four organisations had also initiated or engaged in projects related to their home country. Three of these projects were related to the provision of humanitarian assistance in conflict or natural disasters. One of these projects is still ongoing. Another organisation initiated a social project for single mothers in the home country, with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as assistance from the home country, embassies and local organisations in Malta. The same organisation also participated in a project, hosting similar organisations from other countries in Malta. One organisation assists students from the home country to come and learn English in Malta.

Organisations that are inclusive of diverse ethnicities or nationalities find it more difficult to start projects in the home country; however this was possible for one of the organisations participating in the interviews.
5. Findings: Challenges of TCN communities in Malta, methods applied to mitigate these difficulties and their outcomes

Representatives of TCN organisations and communities in the interviews referred to the following challenges within their communities which they represent. The items were extracted from the data and listed, so that the highest number of challenges mentioned in the research related to employment, organisational development, legal access and access to justice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Number of employment challenges mentioned in the research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment issues</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational development</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal access and access to justice</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs of children, women, families and social support</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties related to status</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties related to culture, language and education</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal and external conflict</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching integration goals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing businesses</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing crime and irresponsible behaviour</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of youth and vulnerable groups</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview respondents explained the challenges faced by their organisations and communities respectively, and related diverse challenges together in how they effect individuals’ lives. It was therefore difficult most times to separate the issues of communities from organisational issues, and to identify issues related for example to employment from others related to other areas. This difficulty shows that the ‘items’ are artificially made, and that in the same way offices, agencies and Ministries provide specific services and deal with specific issues often making artificial distinctions to delineate their scope of responsibility and operation. On the other hand it is important to understand, as this research finds out, that individuals do not look at the scope of responsibility of those who serve them, but to the outcome of their interaction and meeting with such entities. A poor outcome was usually associated with a strong tendency of individuals and groups to rely on their own power to negotiate and mitigate, using their own agency in solving problems. A successful
outcome however strengthened the trust and confidence of individuals and groups in the agency or department providing the service. The following headlines attempt to group challenges according to the way research participants related them, reflecting more of the perspective of TCN organisations on what challenges are faced by their communities and their organisations, the methods that have been used to mitigate these challenges and their outcomes.

5.1 Employment issues, legal access and access to justice

In some communities people found it difficult to find jobs, while others were in high demand for their skills. Some TCN leaders assisted their communities in finding jobs, especially because individuals could experience material and financial deprivations when they were out of jobs. One organisation connected to a particular agency which sent filtered, specific information that was then distributed to the community members. Another organisation used its Facebook page to advertise job opportunities, while others shared information by word of mouth.

Most of the challenges mentioned were related to inequalities and exploitation experienced at work by TCNs, the lack of proper measures for integrating workers who were needed in certain major industries, and for effectively assisting exploited workers to resolve their situation. Another factor was that the system enforced a high dependence of TCN workers on employers, and therefore prevention of exploitation was extremely difficult. Although most departments and agencies available for reporting by TCNs acknowledged these exploitative practices, and assisted those in these situations, there were no preventive measures or plans for rectifying this situation in the long term.

The position of TCN care workers and domestic workers in Malta is one of vulnerability, even though such workers are required in large numbers in order to maintain the care and cleaning industries that are so important in Malta. Many care workers are registered nurses in their home countries but their qualification is not recognised due to minor differences in the nursing programme. In order to rectify these differences nurses have to attend a year of training which is difficult for workers who come here ready with a contract to work with a family or an agency. One TCN organisation has advocated for nurses to have this opportunity in Malta, because the situation is leading to circumstances where foreign carers who are trained nurses in their countries are forced to work with other carers who do not have this training. At times this leads to disagreements between carers, because professionals can recognise better what the patients’ needs are but cannot demand from other carers to change their behaviour. TCN carers often feel exploited in these situations, and frustrated that they cannot care for patients in a better way. They felt they were treated as ‘scapegoats’ simply because others did not want to do their work properly. There were attempts to mediate between groups in these conflicts and to discuss with management, but these efforts were not reciprocated.
The situation of TCN domestic workers in Malta demands urgent attention, especially to how contracts and informal agreements were made. Some workers have confessed that they had to pay a large sum of money to a local agent for them to get a job in Malta. On arrival they were told that they should not follow the contract but that there was a different agreement with the employer they needed to follow. Some contracts had been based on contracts in other parts of the world where the minimum wage and the working conditions are different to those under Maltese Laws. Recently the guidelines for a new contract have been drawn, and organisations are guiding their members on how they can negotiate with their employers. Attention also needs to be given to the need for part timers and relievers especially for carers working with families. Carers need to be given their time of rest, and they also travel to their home countries to see their families. During this time relievers are necessary, and this should be recognised and provided for by policymakers. For some carers they usually have to coordinate themselves in finding a reliever when they have a rest or go out of the house. For carers of clients with certain medical conditions such as dementia this can be detrimental especially when they are constantly taking care of such persons six days a week.

Issues of exploitation and unfair working conditions were mentioned by several organisations in relation to various industries including construction, catering, cleaning and other service industries. Some workers were being paid less than Maltese and EU workers, and they had to work more hours. In one case a worker was deceived by his employer who gave him full time work but secretly declared he was employing the man only a few hours a month. The employer kept some of the pay of the worker, explaining that this was part of the ‘tax payment’ owed by the worker. When the worker found out he left to find another job. Often TCN workers accept these exploitative conditions because they may not find other employers, or because they may meet a worse situation. Their financial and legal stability in the country is heavily dependent on work, and some employers are quick to offer them some stability while exploiting them.

Some organisations had assisted their members in rectifying their situation and addressing abuse and exploitation. They therefore sought the help of local departments and agencies. In one case the procedure was so long and demanding that the victim could not continue the case. In another case the reporting requirement was complicated and not simple enough for persons to understand and fill in. Many cases were brought to the entity but no cases were brought to court. Although these local services provided by departments and agencies give access to legal procedures to TCNs they often do not lead to access to justice. The procedures of reporting put victims at great risk of losing their job, while the system is not ready to support such workers in minimising this risk. Sometimes TCN leaders found that at times dealing directly with employers was more effective than dealing with offices providing assistance for victims of exploitation at work. There were also efforts to make recommendations to such offices, some of which were taken and applied. However the overall outcome did not improve.

Some participants mentioned that TCNs who were residents of EU countries were preferred in some jobs to TCNs in Malta because they did not ask for a work permit. It was considered
obvious that Maltese and EU citizens were preferred in job selection than TCNs since they did not require work permits, labour market tests and other procedures.

Language barriers affected TCNs in employability. Some groups find it difficult to speak Maltese, but there is a need to learn Maltese when working in the service industries. One organisation organised meetings for practicing conversational English to some of its members in order to improve their employability and assist them to integrate in Malta.

In some communities workers were experiencing great pressures to send remittances back home in order to support their family and extended family. Sometimes they sent all their money and were financially in need themselves. At times the money they sent was mismanaged or spent without the person’s agreement. This caused many problems for workers and their families which could not easily be solved considering the living realities faced by family members caused by geographical, cultural and social differences. Some organisations advised their members to save money for themselves and their families in order to have access to some financial security in times of need and also in case they want to start a business on returning to their home country.

5.2 Organisational Development

Human resources were found to be the primary challenge of organisational development (9 out 17 items were related to human resources). Research participants expressed organisational frustration and fatigue related to the impossible task of maintaining organisations without the necessary human resources. In one organisational network the participant was frustrated that the network could not work with similar communities due to the lack of organisational and leadership development. The interviews clarified that many organisational frustration was related to the lack of human resources.

The reasons associated with this lack are:

a) The transient life of key leaders or members with important functions who wanted to move on to another country  
b) The migration of important members and leaders to other countries  
c) The perception of members that they are in Malta simply to ‘make money’ and support their families in the home country  
d) The lack of stability in employment, leading to a lack of time to attend important meetings  
e) Difficult requirements for attending some meetings with important stakeholders (such as ID cards)  
f) Members lacked cultural and organisational competences necessary for organisational development
A major frustration of TCN organisations is that while a small some leaders and workers are focusing on organisational development, the majority of TCNs are preoccupied with the reasons for which they are in Malta. While these aspirations are strong, individuals may feel that they can achieve these goals on their own, with or without the help of TCN organisations. Some interview participants however also expressed the fact that past or current organisations may not be doing enough to reach out to their members, to support them in their needs or to educate the members about the importance of participation and contribution.

In some communities the tendency for members to leave Malta in order to find opportunities abroad was very high. These communities had lost founders and leaders who had made great contributions to the organisation. Some interview participants were focusing on assisting members in gaining stable jobs and integrating effectively in Malta, so that they could have time to contribute to the development of the organisation. Others were focusing on the training of key members, young people and newcomers, in order to mitigate these challenges and build a more sustainable leadership structure. However the expectation was that many of the members and leaders will one day leave Malta.

Other challenges related to dealing with persons intending to use the organisation simply for financial or personal gain. In these situations leaders found it important to concentrate on organisational aims and goals in order to make decisions which reflected the goals of the organisation. Other leaders were more threatened by this behaviour and they felt they had to accommodate the demands of such persons who would otherwise divide the group. In one case leaders were left to fend for themselves in assisting a family in need because of the lack of consensus between the members regarding this decision. This means that while some members and leaders are motivated by community solidarity, others are not. This can bring antagonism and internal conflicts which are more difficult to handle in organisations which do not focus on the needs of one ethnicity or nationality, but on other characteristics of membership, especially the rights of members to social support and representation. It is interesting to hear TCN leaders relate how they have handled such pressures, and eventually resolved these internal conflicts. In some cases some leaders and members acted alone, showing support and solidarity with people in spite of resistance from others in the group. In some cases however these decisions unfortunately led to organisational weakening, shown by lack of attendance and eventually demotivation, abandonment or division in the group.

More stable and older organisations faced challenges related to generational gaps within traditional leadership structures. The latter situation made it difficult for young people to be integrated and especially in bringing in the use of technology in developing the organisation. Reaching certain communities was also a challenge for an organisation serving these communities, while another challenge was to find partners to work with on specific projects. Finally, most TCN organisations found it very difficult to access funds due to the high demand of time and knowledge required for applying for funds. Two participants explained that they had faced challenges in acquiring a building, parish or cultural centre for their community, where they can organise events and activities for their communities.
5.3 Legal access and access to justice

Interview participants revealed that many TCNs did not know their rights under Maltese and EU laws. Most organisations worked directly with individuals and informed them about their rights, often organising group sessions and informing members about seminars and workshops on this subject. As mentioned earlier on, employment issues were the most numerous in requiring legal access and access to justice. The second issue was that of racism encountered by TCNs from Africa.

Access to justice did not always involve legal access. TCNs did not always perceive the law courts as a source of justice, especially because:

a) It was difficult to take cases to court
b) The services required by a lawyer were too expensive for TCNs
c) The free legal services provided by the state were inadequate
d) Individuals did not have time to wait for the long process
e) Individuals could not take time off work
f) The other party was more powerful in terms of connections and legal access (better lawyers, better knowledge of the legal system)

There were a number of attempts by organisational leaders to put forward cases of abuse, exploitation or incidents of racism before a responsible government office or public agency. Although these were handled well by those in charge, according to the laws and guidelines established by the agency or department, the processes were often long and complicated, so that several individuals abandoned the case themselves. This is because such agencies and departments failed to understand and ensure the holistic needs of TCNs facing exploitation or violence. As mentioned earlier in the section on employment, often workers risked their jobs when they chose to report their employers. The Department for Industrial and Employment Relations was mentioned as an office that several TCNs had visited. The office had carried out inspections of the workplace and conditions of employees who brought complaints to this office. It had also notified employers that they would be penalised if it was found that they retaliated and punished their employees who had reported them. In some cases however the retaliation came in areas for which this office was not responsible, such as the renewal of work contracts and some aspects in termination of work. Some research participants explained that departments and agencies had rules and regulations about the scope and remit of their work; however this led to a lack of coordination between service providers, effecting individuals’ access to justice.

Access to justice was seen at times an area which could be served better by TCNs themselves, competent people they trusted or key individuals who also served in particular departments or agencies. Mediation and negotiation was considered to be important and at times more effective than legal measures. Throughout the interviews TCNs acknowledged the fact that in Malta people could have access to many things simply by building relationships, including access to justice. Instead of going through laborious processes that
demanded time and money, they simply engaged with key persons they trusted or individuals with specific functions. Sometimes TCNs themselves called employers and told them to give the money they owed to their friend. Explaining their knowledge of the laws and policies of Malta protecting workers’ rights was sometimes enough for TCNs to convince the employers to rectify the situation. Other times it was persons from offices who mediated effectively, but at times the case had to be pursued in court.

Another difficulty was found in reporting procedures related to acts of racism, especially occurring in public places such as on buses and streets. Reporting methods were found difficult especially because identification details of perpetrators required was sometimes impossible to know, and witnesses were difficult to find. Some participants explained that certain responsible agencies had never put forward such a case in court, and that this outcome alone justified the perception of TCNs that there was no real representation of their needs by these agencies.

The research also revealed that TCN women married to Maltese men and experiencing separation often found great difficulties in re-building their lives and demanding for a proper maintenance contribution from the fathers of their children. One person mentioned that the decisions of the courts as to the amount of maintenance for children in these cases was sometimes ridiculously low, and reflected a biased decision based on the nationality of the Maltese parent. In this case the person pointed out that such decisions were effecting children of Maltese nationality.

5.4 Vulnerable groups, education and social support

Social support was found to be extremely important in most communities, especially the support of vulnerable groups. Information on vulnerability varied among groups, according to group characteristics and also depending on the perception and work of organisations with their communities.

In five organisations interviews revealed that women in their communities were particularly vulnerable. One organisation mentioned the needs of pregnant women for cultural services in accessing health services as a priority, whereby its lack often led to certain complications and health risks. In two of the communities represented by organisations there were several single mothers abandoned by spouses, or having to leave and fend for children on their own due to the incidence of domestic violence. One of these groups was referred to as having a high rate of poverty among women and children due to a lack of access for these women to employment and childcare. One organisation had assisted both men and women in the community as victims of domestic violence; however the number of women was considerably higher than that of men. Two of the organisations dealt mostly with couples where both individuals were TCNs, while the other two dealt mostly with couples where one of the partners is Maltese. The latter two had predominance (over 80%) of TCN women
married to Maltese men. Women and children in these families were more vulnerable than others when there was a breakdown of relationships between the couple, because they lacked the financial, legal and social resources necessary to survive, to resolve or deal with the situation, and to re-build their lives and provide for the needs of their children. One interviewee explained that in Malta people cannot do anything unless they have “money and connections”, and therefore Maltese in the relationship were often at an advantage in such a situation. Women workers who were paid in cash and frequently used buses were prone to pick-pocketing by certain immigrant nationalities in Malta. Some workers had lost their whole salaries to pick pockets on their way to the bank to send money to their families back home. The need for better security on buses and in public places was important for such female workers who were specifically targeted by this criminal group.

One organisation was focusing on the needs of children in the community, because the leader had noticed that many TCN mothers could not help their children in doing their homework, and needed help to understand the school system and the academic requirements in Malta. It was also noted that there were several children who were left to play on computers for many hours, and that this was effecting the social development of children. The organisation assisted these families and parents through parent to parent courses for migrant mothers, and by initiating programmes of social education for teaching children cultural heritage through games and activities. This helped children in developing their social skills and in exploring the culture of their TCN parents. The same organisation organised trips to the home country for young people in the community.

In one interview however the most vulnerable in the community were described as TCN men who were not integrating in Malta, as opposed to those who were. Those integrating usually had better education background and were able to find better jobs and marry Maltese women. Others however could not speak English or Maltese, even though they had lived in Malta for many years. These men did not know their rights in Malta, were often exploited, and were prone to alcohol abuse. A type of segregation existed between the two groups, even though they belonged to one nationality, which further isolated the more vulnerable group. Back in the home country those who integrated well in Malta usually came from cities, while those who could not integrate effectively usually came from very rural, mountainous areas. Even in Malta, geographically the two groups lived and congregated in different areas. The organisation reached out to this group by first encouraging religious leaders to start visiting and serving the spiritual needs of this community, and later by informing and inviting the group to organised activities. In the future the organisation is targeting the educational needs of this community, in order to reduce the barriers of integration between the two groups, and to promote better integration of the vulnerable group in Malta.

The experience of alcohol abuse and poor education background was mentioned by another interview participant in relation to a different community. This time the experience was related to young men who were affected negatively by the experience of war and conflict in the home country. In this group the biggest threat was illiteracy and the lack of access to proper education in childhood. Irresponsible behaviour was common among these young
men, and a few had committed crimes and were arrested. These crimes had increased the already negative perception of other communities on the group. The incidents can easily increase the discriminative practices and behaviours the community already encounters frequently in seeking access to jobs, accommodation and other services. The leaders held meetings and discussed ways to resolve these issues and promote better relationships with other communities. However there was a desire for the better provision of educational programmes for these vulnerable young men.

The research found that a major vulnerability was status-related, for some of the organisations whose members had at some point in time applied for asylum. Those with a rejected application or a temporary humanitarian status face several problems related to ‘visibility’ and ‘fear of deportation’. These organisations were struggling to organise even the simplest of activities, even though most of the members were working in Malta. This vulnerability greatly increased the chances of exploitation by employers who sought to gain from the situation. Even though persons with temporary humanitarian status could work legally if the employer applied for an employment licence for the employee, employers sometimes preferred flexible and unstable arrangements which worked in their favour. The vulnerability of these individuals effected the development of the organisation. Plans to organise cultural activities were sometimes dropped due to the fear of participants, and activities proposed for visiting and supporting persons in detention were discouraged because of the same reasons. In this case the organisations were effected in assisting their own communities because it was described, in its majority, as ‘a vulnerable group’.

5.5 Issues related to language, ethnicity, culture and colour

Cultural factors were found to be important in uniting groups, in developing group solidarity, and especially in the celebration of religious, national and historic events. These factors were also sometimes associated with dividing communities, especially when there were very clear differences between groups in the same community.

These divisions were complex where there were a large number of different groups marked by language and culture. Cultural differences were also found in relation to social class between members of the same organisation or of the same nationality. Those with better education backgrounds had different lifestyles and cultures than others in the same group.

Many times loyalty to the group was stronger than loyalty to nationality or to the organisation that gathered these groups together. This affected the relationship between groups, and the solidarity of members of the same nationality or the same region. It also affected the unity within TCN organisations and organisational development. Competition for jobs, leadership positions and visibility of groups in the media and in representation with authorities in Malta resulted from these internal challenges between groups in the same organisation. Visibility of a group was considered important, especially in promoting the
organisation and community to the Maltese society, the Maltese government, civil society and benefactors who acted as sponsors in special events and in situations of crises. Visibility in the media and through the attendance of events was regarded as an opportunity for the organisation to have a voice in Malta. This was considered very important in communities with multiple groups, especially those represented by more than one organisation. At times the voices or the stories of one group would include information specific to that group which might not be presented by other groups. Sometimes this information was related by key persons in key organisations, or by persons who could articulate this information in a manner which could be understood and later verified through other information sources.

In the case of diverse cultures and language groups within the same organisation, the expectations differed because the social norms of one group were sometimes conflicting with those of other groups. At times some cultural groups were used to more hierarchical structures than other cultural groups. This presented difficulties in the way organisations made and implemented decisions, in coordinating and organising activities, and in the expectations of leaders and members in the organisation. Some groups had tried to replicate the social norms of their cultural group on others, sometimes unconsciously but other times consciously. At times characteristics of social class were also used to impose certain behaviours and decisions which favoured one cultural group over another. This shows on one hand the tendency of persons to demonstrate a strong loyalty to their particular cultural group, and of such groups to gain or maintain power by using the resources and competences of persons in that group. On the other hand it shows the strategic capacity TCN leaders need to have in order to keep such complex organisations stable, and to represent the needs of these various groups and to harness their participation and bring the groups together.

Members of the communities who were married to Maltese persons also represented a different ‘cultural group’ in the research. These members were described as ‘better integrated’ at times, but at other times regarded as a group of individuals who can easily take advantage of the community to gain a better position in Maltese society, especially because they did not understand or share the challenges of TCNs. These remarks give attention to the importance of those who were once TCNs, but later gained Maltese citizenship, or to those who are in the process of doing so. While Maltese society might regard such persons as bridge builders and persons who can represent their communities, TCN communities may regard them as those who have now become Maltese and cannot represent all the needs of the group effectively because they have achieved the same rights as Maltese and EU citizens.

This observation points out again to the great importance given to ‘voice’ and representation in TCN organisations and communities. It also points out to the differences between the external and the internal perception of groups, especially to the fact that most of those external to the groups do not have a thorough understanding of the internal complexities and of how these complexities affect individuals in the group and the representation of their needs. Maltese persons involved in the community because of their marriage or relationship to one of its members, or acting as benefactors or sponsors, might
not always understand these dynamics. At times they may choose to act in the interest of the group of the individual they are relating to, at other times they may be easily convinced by the group which is most articulate, motivated, friendly or hospitable. There are however other times where Maltese persons have acted to unite groups and communities, and where their presence as Maltese brought better cohesion because of their neutrality in issues of cultural divisions.

There were times when it was not persons who brought diverse groups within one community together, but local and international organisations. However the efforts of these organisations were not sustained over time, either because of lack of resources, or because it was not considered the priority of such organisations to assist communities in uniting and developing representative organisations. In one case the reason was that the community itself did not make effort and did not show a desire to achieve this kind of solidarity. These difficulties were especially presented, although not solely, by those organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees. In these communities visibility was viewed with caution. One organisation had purchased several objects from the home country to organise cultural events in Malta, but later had to store these objects and cancel these events because of the fear of its members in becoming more visible to authorities and therefore more vulnerable to arrest and deportation. These facts raise questions as to whether such fear is realistic, considering that many of the members have statuses allowing them to work legally in Malta. Some members of these communities had worked for their employers for several years, some for more than five years, and others had started their own businesses. The research findings clearly indicate that there is fear of arrest and deportation in communities where members have sought asylum in their majority. However the interview findings indicate that the question is one of visibility, since there are other communities with a high number of persons staying and working illegally in Malta, who do not have this fear of deportation. This situation highlights the fact that authorities can search and identify persons for the intention of deportation based on colour, and not on information presented by the authorities in Malta. Members have recounted such incidents in the past which have especially made sub Saharan communities more vulnerable than others. The research has identified a type of fear specific only to black communities, related to procedures of deportation initiated by Maltese authorities. This fact alone can point out to a type of structural violence based on colour, because although other large communities present some of the legal situations common to rejected asylum seekers, they do not present this fear of authorities, and they do not relate situations of arrest or deportation. Such findings present a question as to whether this is enough evidence of racism, or as to what really constitutes racism. The findings also leads to the consideration of how black communities and organisations deal with this fear, how they consider themselves not only in relation to Maltese and EU citizens, but in relation to other TCNs who are more invisible to authorities, and also to consider what is the effect of this fear on the community at large.
The research found that there certain rights and privileges were heavily dependent on the ability of TCNs to find employers who were willing to employ them by fulfilling legal procedures. For many interviewees this employer was more of a benefactor, since most employers were not willing to employ them legally. Some employers accepted to employ individuals legally but then expected the employee to accept lower wages or inferior work conditions to other workers. Some employers expected that they declare less working hours than they actually had employed such workers, which effected the contributions of individuals towards national insurance. Reporting employers was a great risk to individuals attempting to sustain their employment and stabilising themselves in Malta. One interviewee explained that TCNs with Temporary Humanitarian Protection needed to apply yearly for renewal of their protection status; however the requirements were changing every year. Recently these requirements included the evidence that the individual was working legally in Malta. For some TCNs this meant that those who could not convince their employer in applying for an employment licence for them could not have access to their right to THP. Access to other rights related to unemployment benefits and social benefits for which TCNs working legally are entitled were also inaccessible for this vulnerable group. The interviewee explained that for these individuals the situation was that although their work was in demand by many employers, restrictive policies made them more vulnerable and dependant on such employers. Although it was expected of them to rectify their situation in order to benefit from certain rights and entitlements, the power to do so was not theirs.

Another issue mentioned was the fact that there are a number of persons with THP who have lived and worked in Malta for many years, and that these years are not relevant in the consideration of Maltese citizenship. The research here finds an incompatibility between the social and legal realities of persons living with immigration restrictions in Malta. While persons could learn the language, live and work in Malta for many years, restrictions imposed by national laws and policies served to remind individuals of the limitations of their efforts.

Some research participants explained that some of their members faced problems related to changes of passports for those TCNs marrying Maltese. Lengthy procedures with no explanation were mentioned in the interviews, in some cases the names of persons were mentioned as those holding back information or processes from taking place according to the laws of Malta and EU laws without reason. Specific challenges were also mentioned in relation to visa renewal and long term residence. TCNs experienced delays in the visa process and at times flights had to be cancelled and postponed, sometimes more than once. Permanent residents had greater financial requirements but no limitation of stay, however other long term residents who had worked in Malta for over 20 years still needed to renew their visas every year. For those long term resident TCNs who had set up businesses, it was also mentioned that it was difficult for them to employ other TCNs because of the restrictions of their long term residency. Long term residency placed language restrictions on TCNs who had to learn Maltese and English. Courses provided by government agencies

5.6 Immigration status, passports, residency and enterprise
did not cater for TCNs in certain industries who could not attend due to their work requirements.

Barriers to the set-up of businesses were mentioned in relation to:

a) Access to business funds  
b) Expensive requirements and lengthy procedures  
c) Barriers to employment of TCNs  
d) Lack of assistance in access to information  
e) Systematic inconsistencies and inequalities

The latter e) was mentioned in relation to the change of policies, laws and conditions and the lack of prior information on changes that were coming that could affect many people working in certain industries or operating businesses in Malta. Together with these difficulties TCNs could be in a less favourable position to employers who could navigate a system based on connections and close contacts. Some interviews remarked that certain employers seemed to have very fast access to employment licences for their employees when compared to others.

5.7 Mitigating external and internal conflicts through peacebuilding and rehabilitation from trauma

As mentioned earlier some internal conflicts within communities and organisations were caused by the stronger loyalty of individuals to their culture, ethnic or social groups rather than the community which many times was marked by nationality. For regional organisations including diverse nationalities individuals were more loyal to their own group marked by nationality than to the larger organisation.  

The research found that groups were strongly influenced by conflicts within their home countries, especially for groups experiencing recent wars, clashes between tribes and ethnic groups, and discrimination and persecution by authoritative regimes. One of the organisations found it extremely difficult to work with the community because of the fear and mistrust of persons in their own group. Some regions were more affected by this conflict than others, and there had even been clashes within organisations between members of different ethnic groups. Although leaders tried to show an unbiased approach to unite the groups, many organisations were prone to divisions due to these conflicts. Members of certain groups, who felt they were being neglected or underrepresented, or who did not want to work with other groups, sometimes divided from the main group and formed their own organisation. At times this was considered necessary to prevent further conflict.
However these divisions were not always brought about by group conflicts. Some interviewees explained that at times individuals with hidden motives used past or present conflicts to gain personal or group goals. At times these hidden motives included the weakening of the organisation. The reasons were sometimes related to the ‘hijacking of leadership’ where individuals and groups wanted to gain more power in the organisation and the community itself. At other times individuals and groups more vulnerable than others perceived organisations as mechanisms bringing order, and that this was a disadvantage rather than an advantage. For these specific groups organisations were regarded to be more beneficial for the host society and the authorities than for the community itself. The perception was that organisations made it easier for these external entities to understand the community and how it operates. They provided a sort of window into the community. Some groups regarded this as dangerous and unnecessary because:

a) Communities can network and organise effectively without the mechanism of formal organisations
b) Formal organisations removed the capacity and agency of communities in negotiating and surviving in host countries

These issues related to the advantages and disadvantages of visibility and invisibility, whereby several groups related instances where they used visibility and prevented it, according to the interests of their communities. Internal conflicts around visibility also included issues of status, whereby certain groups who were rejected asylum considered visibility as a disadvantage compared to groups who had obtained refugee status or subsidiary humanitarian protection.

In some organisations leadership was also regarded negatively due to past experiences of national leadership which was authoritative and dictatorial. TCNs coming from conflict countries where it is difficult to institute accepted leaders had more problems in accepting organisations and organisational leaders. This was also a problem for organisations representing multiple nationalities and organisations, where the experiences of violence in the home country led to the breaking of certain nationalities from the main organisation.

For some TCN leaders the issue of internal conflicts was more difficult to handle than others. Three female respondents related how they dealt with these particular challenges, using similar strategies. One respondent explained that it had been difficult for the various communities and nationalities in the organisation to trust leadership, however using methods that encouraged members to think of the leader as a ‘mother’ and a ‘friend’ encouraged a positive attitude in the organisation towards meeting and fellowship. The three women organised many activities that brought people together around food, cultural events and celebrations of special days and historic events. The three female respondents gave a great importance to the families in the organisation, and commented on the importance of gender relations and social relations between men, women and children. The strategies they used were a replica of a ‘family model’ that encouraged men and women to work together, and strengthened relationships within the family. Although this model was well accepted and successful in building peace among the various groups and communities, the women gave a lot of their time in organising events, visiting families, assisting and
supporting vulnerable families, and mediating between the members and outside institutions in order to represent well the interests of members. When asked about how they address dissent among members, one of these three female respondents explained that respect was very important in the community. One cannot build peace and at the same time accept certain behaviours among the members of the organisation. In such situations she also took a leadership role, but again as a mother, and corrected behaviours such as railing and gossiping about others. This encouraged members to respect each other. The respondent explained that she made sure members felt comfortable in sharing their concerns. However in dealing with persons who weakened efforts to build peace in the organisation, the respondent explained that usually such persons left the organisation because they could not fit in with the vision: “Some people you need to let go, they leave if they don’t agree with peace.” The female respondents also emphasised the importance of change, especially focusing on the training of members to grow and serve the community. They had a direct approach with members, connecting with them frequently and visiting their homes or inviting them to their home. They also expressed that they left the political issues out of the picture, and continued to work for peace, giving freedom to their members to express themselves and make choices.

The fact that female respondents were so open about these methods does not mean that such methods are they are absent in other organisations. Other male respondents explained that they held education programmes for children in their homes, together with their wives. However the female respondents related their methods especially when addressing peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the organisation.

The subject of trauma was very central to those groups that had direct experience of war and violence in the home countries. Some wars and conflicts affected multiple groups, especially the conflict in Libya. Respondents related the effect of this conflict on their lives, but held various diverse perspectives. There were different experiences related between those who were well integrated in Libya and those who were waiting to leave Libya and move on to a better place. One respondent explained that many times it was difficult to describe trauma and the need for rehabilitation, especially when those effected came to Malta with financial security. It was also difficult to explain differences between those who came to Malta because of recent conflicts, and those who had come to Malta over a number of years due to ongoing conflict in their countries or regions. During the research some activities and meetings were taking place as part of the project. These meetings always invoked persons to share experiences related to conflict and violence. Persons were eager to hear the different experiences of diverse persons and nationalities on conflict, violence and trauma. This strengthened efforts related to one of the goals of the network to build coalition and participation, through efforts to understand and make sense of one’s and others’ experiences. This experience was important for building relationships that foster peacebuilding, healing from traumatic experiences and coalition building that is important in participation and representation.

Conflict with the host society was related to the issues described in other sections. Most respondents were very positive about the hospitality and kindness of the Maltese people.
Two respondents could not understand how TCN organisations can be effective in representing the rights of TCNs to the Maltese authorities. One respondent felt that the treatment of TCNs in Malta was better than in other countries. The other respondent explained that she had so many kind and generous Maltese friends that it would be very difficult for her to see how TCNs could fight for their rights, especially because some restrictions are also faced by Maltese people themselves. The majority of respondents were very positive about Malta, but pointed out that if the Maltese government does not regulate migration and integrate effectively those who are here, Malta can face grave consequences in the future. Some respondents related these consequences to events in their own countries.

5.8 Integration

All respondents gave priority to the integration of their communities in Malta, through their work and also in their responses and explanations. Most of the questions relating to integration have already been mentioned in earlier sections. Various and diverse types of projects had been initiated by the respondents, their communities and organisations, to better integrate TCNs in Malta and to promote awareness in Malta on the diverse cultures and needs of TCNs. Some future projects are in the planning phase for the coming year, to continue educating the public on these cultures, and to build bridges between the Maltese, TCNs and EU citizens.

Some difficulties in integration were related to difficulties in learning Maltese and in some cases also English. The importance of language learning was emphasised, however also the importance of producing material in the diverse languages of TCNs. Different organisations had contributed to this production, in translation of brochures and documents, and in the production of radio, video and online material. These contributions have been strategic in making information resources available to diverse populations in Malta, and in educating TCN groups about their rights in Malta and informing them about access to these rights.

TCN organisations and communities invest a lot of time and money in networking, meeting members and finding out the specific needs of groups in the community. This networking prevents vulnerable persons from facing greater risks by bringing the community together to support them. Most respondents explained that their phones, Facebooks and e-mails were working 24 hours. Many TCNs, especially vulnerable groups, could not navigate the system in Malta, either because it was complex, or because such persons were facing complex situations and conditions themselves. Such persons called the respondents in times of need, to obtain correct information or to engage with persons and places that could help them. Some respondents explained that new TCN arrivals usually have different expectations of Malta, and they had to deal with realities on arrival. Networking and information were considered extremely strategic for the integration of TCNs, in order to
assist such groups in dealing with their expectations and adapting to the realities of life in Malta. One respondent explained his interaction with persons of the same nationality, whom he had observed to be working in certain places and could easily be victims of trafficking. The respondent approached such persons and informed them about their rights and laws of Malta, while also assisting Maltese authorities working in this field by providing translation and cultural mediation services.

Many TCN respondents also pointed out that the Maltese themselves need education on the histories and cultures of the world. They found many Maltese they interacted with to have ideas and beliefs based on very limited information, and that there was a lack of knowledge on world history and current events. One organisation was planning to promote this education through movies, documentaries and discussions with Maltese and TCNs. One respondent also expressed the need of TCNs to interact more with Maltese in their national days, feasts and celebrations. The respondent explained that on such a day as Workers’ Day TCNs should participate as workers and should bring awareness on their experiences of work in Malta. TCNs should also celebrate together with the Maltese on national days such as Independence Day and Republic Day.
6. Gender and TCN organisations

The research considered gender participation in leadership and the particular obstacles women face in their communities and in assuming leadership positions. Findings show that while women are particularly well accepted as leaders in some communities, there are barriers to the participation of women in leadership in other communities. Wherever women were not involved in leadership the research attempted to connect with women in the organisation in order to find out their perspective.

Five communities/organisations were found to have only men in their leadership structures. Two of these did not have any female members, and women from another two communities were not available for meeting. Two women making part of the fifth community happened to be working in leadership positions in an organisation included in this project. The leader of the organisation was informed and the two women were interviewed. The questions asked are outlined below:

1. What are the specific integration challenges women face in Malta and what has been done to address them?
2. How has the organisation assisted women in these integration challenges?
3. What are the organisational opportunities for the empowerment/development of women?
4. What are the prospects and goals of women in the organisation?
5. How can TSN assist these goals/prospects?

The respondents found it difficult at first to think about the challenges of women in their community. They remarked that they were single women, but when prompted to think about their friends or their room-mates they explained that the major challenge of women in their community was that most of them were single parents abandoned by their husbands. Many had to strive to make it financially, and were dependant on social benefits in Malta. When asked about whether the father was maintaining the children, the women explained that these marriages were not taking place as civil marriages but as religious marriages, owing to the fact that some of the men had already been married before in their home countries. The women explained that there was a high rate of divorce among these couples, and that this encouraged a similar type of marriage for women with children facing poverty and deprivation.

Respondents explained that the main push factor for these marriages was the fact that most single women were not exposed to relationships with men outside the marriage relationship. They come from traditional societies where they take care of the home and family, and where arranged marriage by the father is common. In spite of this, women worked and earned money to raise their children, however in Malta this was difficult because of the requirements necessary to access childcare services. Pressure to send money
home was also a push factor for marrying someone who could financially assist the family back home.

The respondents explained that they faced pressure both from outside and from within the community related with the wearing of the veil. They felt they could integrate better if they had to change the way they dressed, but internally they would face persecution by members of their own community. At this point the respondents expressed the difficulties associated with discussing these issues, and the importance of educating organisations and communities about women’s experiences, challenges and rights.

Although the research could only engage with one group of women, it recognises that if there was more time other TCN women in organisations could also contribute information to the exploration of this subject. However this interview was important in confirming that TCN women’s experiences are underexplored and underrepresented in Malta.
7. Conclusion

The major contribution of third country national organisations to this research has been a clearer and broader understanding of the challenges they face, and the ways by which they attempt to meet these challenges. The research participants present a non-uniform discourse where rights are perceived differently, and where the dynamics of self-determination and agency influence and are influenced by the state, national institutions, civil society and also by organisations led by third country national leaders and workers. The relationship between third country nationals and their organisations and communities has also been brought to attention. The voices of organisations and leaders are usually assumed to represent the members, however communities are made up of more varied and contested interests and needs, and organisational processes are selective. One of the elements brought up in this research is the comparison between ‘access to rights’ and ‘justice’. Whereas the usual concern of the host society, in ensuring human rights, is to understand access gaps, the concern of the research participants in the majority was the outcome, the outcome being ‘justice’. In the interviews justice took on different meanings, across a spectrum, where at one end justice included the protection of Malta itself from disorganised migration and ineffective integration; at the other end justice needed to protect human dignity by taking not only legal, but also moral responsibility.

The research component of this project has been extremely important in highlighting certain factors that are strategic to network formation. The research process itself led to an internal discussion as to the criteria for inclusion in the network, which is a basic foundation for network formation. Another important discussion emerged about self-determination in TCN network, especially in relation to leadership formation, the setting of priorities and the long term goals of the network. This discussion was important in alerting the project to important measures that need to be taken for ensuring respect for self-determination throughout the project.

These research findings have also highlighted the present work, challenges and resources of TCN organisations. Such information was not easily found in agencies, organisations, offices and departments that work with TCNs. Various information sources were used, and data collected, however sources had incomplete information. In the short time available for this research project an attempt was made to compile information from a varied spectrum of TCN communities. The research was successful bringing FSM to interact and build relationships with 11 new TCN organisations and communities in Malta.

In forming a TCN support network these conclusions would therefore need to be considered:

a) Diverse language, regional and cultural groups need to be considered in encouraging network participation and in promoting unity through peace building and conflict resolution
b) TCN communities have diverse resources which can be shared
c) TCN communities have developed competences by focusing on the particular needs of their group
d) There is a need for training, networking, sharing of information and resources by TCN organisations in Malta, of some groups more than others

e) Training on organisational development, especially change management, is a priority for TCN communities

f) There is a need to represent the needs of TCNs in Malta through a better social dialogue

g) Addressing structural barriers in employment rights is a priority for TCNs

h) Addressing internal conflicts and divisions is also a priority for TCN organisational and community leaders

i) Resolution of cases involving exploitation or abuse of TCNs needed to consider not only legal access, but other methods that can lead to social justice

j) The promotion of culture and education is important for building effective bridges between TCNs and the host community

k) Integration and regulation in addressing issues related to TCNs is strategic for Malta’s security

l) Inclusive methods of representation need to consider the already existing positive relationships between TCNs and the host society, as well as the needs of the most vulnerable groups

m) TCN women can bring different models and methods of leadership which can be assist the TCN community in addressing various challenges, especially peacebuilding

n) Vulnerable groups, especially of those with social needs, need to be considered carefully in network formation in order to prevent an exclusion which they have already faced in the host society as well as in their own community.

o) The general positive image of Malta as a peaceful and safe country, as well as a country of opportunities, places a responsibility on the network in exploring the methods TCN organisations want to use in representing their communities

p) Conflict, violence and trauma experienced in home or transit countries needs to be considered as it is a large part of the experience and dialogue of some of the TCN communities in Malta

q) Participation, coalition and consensus building need to consider these findings in order to harness the support of the various diverse groups

This research will contribute to the training component of the project, providing information for building the capacity of third country national organisations and the network itself. It has also contributed greatly to the development of relationships within the network and to inspiring further interest in the experiences, aspirations and capacities of third country nationals in Malta.

Reference
