

From Volunteer to Business Owner



3 Kitchens

Volunteer • Seek Employment • Become an Entrepreneur

Mabel Chah
Originally from Cameroon
now living in Ireland

Social Enterprise Name
Sligo Global Kitchen

Country
Ireland

Find out more
<https://www.themodel.ie/?event=sligo-global-kitchen>



My Story

I arrived in Ireland in 2013 as an asylum seeker. I remember my first Christmas in Ireland. I felt so lonely and everything was very different. I missed my family, the food and my culture. I volunteered with Sligo Global Kitchen; we welcome people from all over the world to break bread and make connections through food. A highlight for me was when Sligo Global Kitchen (SGK) won the Community Award from the Irish Food Writers Guild. I'm now on the board of directors of The Model, Sligo, where SGK is based.

Motivation

I saw so many people in direct provision who felt the same way as I did. Food is a wonderful way to connect with others, it can help to create friendships, even though we all have different backgrounds

Originally from Cameroon, I missed my home. I was in direct provision and there were no cooking facilities.

I volunteered with Sligo Global Kitchen, an initiative which gives people in direct provision a place to cook and host meals for the wider community.





Challenges

The Covid 19 Pandemic. Our gatherings were forced to stop, like so many others during the pandemic. We missed the connections, but we kept busy. Our members took the opportunity and quiet of those times to upskill and take the Hazard Analysis And Critical Control Point HACCP training in Level 1,2 and Managing Food Allergens Certification.

Finding support: Sligo Global Kitchen was very lucky as it was founded by artist Anna Spearman. Anna was based in The Model Arts Centre, Sligo. This is a wonderful venue with a fully equipped kitchen. Chef Brid Torrades helped to train the volunteers, and all the staff in The Model were so supportive of our venture.

I shared my direct provision experience on Irish national TV in 2019 - [Mabel Chah on Her Experience of Direct Provision](#)

What learning can you share?



The power of connection. Sligo Global Kitchen has been a driving force in connecting new communities with existing communities, through sharing food and cultures. It's very powerful seeing friendships being forged.

The power of volunteering. People in direct provision can feel very isolated and lonely. Volunteering is a great way to combat that and a way to give something back to the community.

Go for funding. Apply for any funding that you can. It can make a big impact in the work you are doing.

The power of training. Sligo Global Kitchen has enabled volunteers and members to become HACCP and Barista trained. One of our community has recently opened a café in Sligo town and many of our volunteers are now working in the hospitality sector.

What are your Future Plans?

To continue volunteering with Sligo Global Kitchen. We have just celebrated our 10th anniversary, which is an amazing achievement for a community group coming from direct provision. We want to pave the way for the new communities coming in.

Beyond food, I am now working as an Integration Support Worker (Employment) at Sligo LEADER Partnership Company, supporting individuals with varying legal statuses, working with businesses and the community to collaborate for future employment opportunities.

Read more about Sligo Global Kitchen on the [Momentum Website](#).

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