

The Constitution of Igbo Community Northern Ireland

Article 1

Name of the Association

We the Igbo people of Nigeria living in Northern Ireland, in order to promote the welfare and general wellbeing of our people in accordance with our culture, history and tradition, have decided to come together in one accord with mutual respect and brotherhood, to form an association of Igbo people here in Northern Ireland.

We shall be known and addressed as Igbo Union, Northern Ireland.

Article 2

Aims and objectives

The aims of the union is:

To encourage one another in a foreign land during hardship and joy mostly the vulnerable.

To help one another in moments of sickness, bereavement, hardship also in celebration.

To promote our language, culture and traditions and blend with the local community.

To promote the psychological and social wellbeing of the community as is customary with Igbo in other towns and cities within Nigeria and in the diaspora.

As we are predominantly Christians, our union is founded on biblical principles of being our brothers' keepers in love and in unity and in the knowledge that there is strength in numbers.

Article 3

What we are

Igbo union is a social and voluntary association of Igbo people of Nigeria who live in Northern Ireland. Our memberships are drawn from Igbo speaking people in the former Eastern and Mid-Western regions of Nigeria.

Article 4

What we are not

The Igbo union NI is a Non profit, non Governmental organisation

It is not a political association nor a pressure group. Igbo union NI is a non-religious organisation.

While we recognise that individual members may have divergent political and religious affiliations, the union rejects any attempt to use the union platform for political and religious purposes or agenda.

Article 5

Purpose of the union

The purpose of the union in Northern Ireland is to promote the welfare and social wellbeing of our members through social and recreational events.

To advance the arts, culture and heritage of the Igbo community in Northern Ireland and to the welfare and social wellbeing of members of this community through social and recreational events and through providing welfare assistance to relieve them from financial hardship insofar as is charitable according to the law of Northern Ireland. We will do this by encouraging one another in a foreign land by promoting our language, culture and traditions, advancing education, promoting community development and citizenship, promoting environmental protection and improvement.

Article 6

Section 1: Membership

All members agree to be bound by the provisions of this constitution.

Membership is open to all adult Igbo people (male & female) from age 18 with Igbo ancestry or origin and any other person(s) who may be co-opted as members (subject to our rules and regulations) and upon payment of all stipulated membership and monthly dues.

Non-Igbo people (Nigerian or Foreign) who are married to Igbo people can join the union as associate or co-opted members provided they are willing to conduct themselves with the same love and respect expected from our members, and also abide by the tenets of the union and all other ideals which we represent or what we

stand for. Conferment of such membership, however, shall be contingent upon the approval of our union members through a simple majority vote.

Co-opted membership may also extend to individuals from our host community who have helped the union in one way or another or in the promotion of ideals.

Article 6

Section 2: Categories of Membership

1. Full financial Members: These are members who pay full monthly dues and levies and are entitled to full benefits.
2. Student financial Members: These are members who are students. They pay half of monthly dues and levies. These members are entitled to half of the full benefit.
3. Distant members: These are members who have been full financial Members before their relocation and wish to keep their membership.
4. None financial members: These are members who are unable to keep up with their financial obligations to the union, ie owing monthly dues for a period of three months or more. A member is also deemed to be non financial member if his indebtedness to the union is £50 or more.
5. All new members have probation period of six months from the date first registered.

Article 6

Section 3: Method of Application

Any aspiring member should be personally present during the meeting. He would be interviewed by the president or his appointee. If approved by the members present, registration fee would be accepted from the aspirant.

Article 6

Section 4: Membership fee (Registration)

Membership fee is £10.00 only until further review. Students pay half of that, which is £5.00 only.

Section 5: Monthly dues.

1. Each member shall pay a monthly due of £10 or £100 per annum. This amount is subject to annual review.
2. Student dues : Each student member pays half of whatever the full members pay.

Article 6

Section 6: Non-Financial members

There are some members who could because of some reasons and criteria become non-financial members.

Criteria for being a non-financial member(s) are:

- (a) Terminal illness : No further payment is required but membership remains.
- (b) Loss of employment before retirement: Here, payment is held off until member regains employment.

Article 6

Section 7: Expulsion

The Igbo union NI reserves the right to expel any member who is found guilty by the court of any criminal activity (e.g. 419 or advance fee fraud, use/sale of illegal drug, theft/robbery), or in breach of our non-political/religious stance.

Article 6

Section 8: Suspension

If, or when a member(s) goes against the stipulated rules of the Union, the member shall be called to order by the Union's executive. If the member persists in going against our rules, the person will be suspended. The period of suspension will depend on the severity of the offence and will be determined by the executives or a committee appointed to do so.

Article 6

Section 9: Transfer of membership

Membership is not transferable

Article 7

Welfare

Section 1: Bereavement of Member or Spouse

In the event of the death of a member's spouse, the union shall give the sum of £2,000 to the member.

Article 7

Section 2: Bereavement of parents and children of members

A member is entitled to the sum of three hundred pounds (£300.00) as "condolence visit" money upon the death of his father or mother. This is in accordance with our tradition to be our brothers' keeper and to lend a helping hand to a member in need. As Igbos (or Ibos), every father expects his child(ren) to out-live him; however, if any member loses a *non married child*, the union member shall receive the same

entitlement as in the loss of father or mother. Married/adult children of members are encouraged to join the union in their own capacity as adults.

The Union will transport our deceased member home and whereby the family decide to do burial here, the Union will give a token of £5,000.

Any left over money after repatriation of our dead member, the left over money will be shared between our Union and the decease family.

Article 7

Section 3: New Born Baby

When a member has a new born baby, the union will send a two man delegation to present a token of one hundred pounds (£100) to the member. It is our custom to welcome a new born baby with gift.

The Union will visit our member once in childbirth and other children will be based on individual members.

Article 7

Section 4: Marriage and child dedication

When invited to marriage ceremony and child dedication by a registered financial member, every individual who desires shall be free to make a free-will donation or contribution as he sees fit on that day.

The union reserves the right to make a token financial gesture in the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds (£150.00).

Note : Students who pay half of what other members pay are also entitled to half of the full member's benefit.

Article 7

Section 5: Benefit to a member due to loss of employment

For a member who has lost his source of income due to temporal or permanent loss of employment, long term ill health or other factors that qualifies a member as a non financial member, a token of £100 from the Association's purse plus voluntary donations from members shall be given to the member.

Article 7

Section 6: Relocation

For a member relocating from Northern Ireland to any other part of the world, the member shall be entitled to £200 plus a send forth party from the association provided that he has been a registered financial member for at least one (1) year.

Article 8

Meetings

Section 1: Date of meetings

Igbo union meetings shall be held on the last Sunday of the month with exception of January and December.

Article 8

Section 2: Hostings of meetings :

Hosting of the meetings shall be rotated based on the system approved by members. However, new members will host after six (6) months of their membership.

Article 8

Section 3 : Quorum :

For a monthly meeting of the Union to take place, one third of members must be present at the venue of the meeting.

Article 8:

Section 4: Time/Duration of meetings :

Meeting is for a duration of 2.5 hours starting at 3.00pm and ending at 5.30pm.

Article 8

Section 5: Entertainment

It is not mandatory that food must be provided; however, refreshments are to be provided within the host's capacity. Members are encouraged to be prudent and not overspend in the provision of entertainment.

There will be no drinking of alcohol when the meeting is in session.

Article 9

Election of Officers

Section 1: Tenure of office

Election of officers shall be on bi-annual basis, however, no member is allowed to serve more than two (2) consecutive terms in any capacity. A member who served two consecutive terms in one capacity shall be eligible to serve in another capacity if elected.

Article 9

Section 2: Method of election

The election shall be conducted by three members appointed by the union executive. The method of voting shall be by secret ballot.

Article 9

Section 3: Electoral Calendar

Election shall be held on the last Sunday of November (last meeting of that year) following the handover date. On the other hand, the handover date shall be the last Sunday of February after the election (First meeting of that year).

Article 9

Section 4: Eligibility for Elections

A member may be considered to be eligible for election if he has been a financial or student member of the meeting for a minimum period of six (6) months.

The Article 9

Section 5: Nomination for Election

All nominations will start four (4) months before the election and close one (1) month before the election. Nomination on election day is not allowed.

Any member who wish to contest for any elective office shall have one nomination and supported by at least two (2) members.

Nominated member must signify his consent personally on the floor of the meeting or in writing on our WhatsApp platform.

Article 9

Section 6

Vacant office and bye elections

In the event of a vacant office, the president/chairman shall summon a meeting in agreement with the executives to fill the vacant office/post. The office shall be filled through a bye-election.

Article 9

Section 7: Final Decisions

Final Decision on all important matters shall be vested in the monthly general meeting by a **simple majority**.

Article 9

Section 8: Handover

Outgoing executives shall submit a final official report within one month of leaving office.

Article 10

Finance/Bank Account

Section 1: Choice of Bank

The union shall maintain a bank account with any bank of their choice. All money received during the meeting shall be paid into the account not later than two week after the meeting.

Article 10

Section 2: Levies and other sources of finance

1. Members can be levied for events and occassions.
2. The Union will also accept voluntary donations .
3. Members or the Union can raise money/fund through sales of raffle tickets, appeal funds and government funds.
4. Funds can also be realised from lateness fines and registration fees.

Article 10

Section 3: Quarterly Financial Update

1. The financial secretary shall update members with inflow and outflow during the period under review. The figure should agree with the bank statement provided by the treasurer.
2. The financial secretary shall update the members with the list of debtors and the amount each member is owing to date
3. Bank statement shall be presented quarterly by the treasurer to the Union.
4. The finacial secretary is a signatory to our account.

Article 11

Audit

An audit of the union account shall be conducted annually by a qualified auditor. All books including minutes, financial records and bank statements shall be made available and handed over to the auditor not later than 10 days after the last meeting.

Article 12

Executive Responsibilities

Section 1: Offices

There will be seven (7) offices for executive members :

1. The President/Chairman
2. General Secretary
3. Assistant General secretary/.....
4. The Financial secretary
5. The Treasurer
6. Provost
7. PRO

Article 12

Section 2: Functions of the elected officers

1. The President/Chairman shall :

- ❖ Preside over meetings.
- ❖ Work closely with elected officers.
- ❖ Be a signatory to the Union's Account.
- ❖ Ensure that the constitution is maintained.
- ❖ Carry out all other duties pertaining to his office.
- ❖ Administrator to our social media platform.

2. The Secretary shall :

- ❖ Assume the duties of the President in his absence.
- ❖ Call meetings for the Union after due consultation with the chairman.
- ❖ Take minutes of all meeting and circulate to all members using agreed platforms and media.
- ❖ Keep records/register of all members.
- ❖ Attend to all correspondences.
- ❖ Submit annual reports to members where necessary.
- ❖ Be a signatory to the Union's account.
- ❖ In the absence of the financial secretary, takes on his duties.
- ❖ Administrator to our social media platform.

3. Assistant General Secretary shall :

- ❖ Perform all the functions of the secretary whenever required to do so.

4. The Financial secretary shall :

- ❖ Keep record of the Union's Finances.
- ❖ Keep records of incoming and outgoing funds.
- ❖ Keep receipts of income and expenditures.
- ❖ Keep record of all funds to correspond with the account held by the treasurer.
- ❖ Assume the duties of the general secretary in his absence.

Administrator to our social media platform.

5. The Treasurer shall :

- ❖ Collect all monies/dues and keep up to date records of all monies belonging to the Union.
- ❖ Ensure that all monies collected are paid to the bank not later than 10 days after the meeting.
- ❖ Produce statement of account periodically as required.
- ❖ Be a signatory to the Union's account.

6. The Provost shall:

- ❖ Maintain order throughout the duration of the meeting.
- ❖ Collect fines from late comers.
- ❖ Assist in the distribution of entertainment items.
- ❖ Ensure that the venue is safe.

7. PRO

- ❖ Our relationship to the world

ARTICLE 14

Section 1: Levies and other sources of finance

5. Members can be levied for events and occasions.
6. The Union will also accept voluntary donations .
7. Members or the Union can raise money/fund through sales of raffle tickets, appeal funds and government funds.
8. Funds can also be realised from lateness fines and registration fees.

ARTICLE 14

Section 2: BANKING

1. The Union shall maintain one Current Account agreed by majority of the member of the Union.

ARTICLE 14

Section 3: SIGNATORIES TO THE ACCOUNT.

1. The signatories to the account will be the president/chairman, the secretary, the treasurer & the financial secretary.
2. Disbursement of funds – In event of disbursement of funds, 2 signatories out of the 4 to the Account are expected to sign.

ARTICLE 14

Section 4: Quarterly Financial Update

The financial secretary shall update members with inflow and outflow during the period under review. The figure should agree with the bank statement provided by the treasurer.

The financial secretary shall update the members with the list of debtors and the amount each member is owing to date

Bank statement shall be presented quarterly by the treasurer to the Union.

ARTICLE 14

Section 5: Registration with other bodies

The Union can register with other bodies and charities within NI, UK and the Republic of Ireland if appropriate and when the need arises.

ARTICLE 15

FINES AND PENALTIES

Section 1: Lateness to meetings :

Lateness fines start at 3:15 pm on any day of our meeting. Members are expected to send their notifications on our **media page** well in advance or latest one hour before the meeting starts. Any member who does not send in their notifications at least an hour prior to the meeting pays the sum of £2 only as fine. Students pay half.

ARTICLE 15

Section 2: Absenteeism

Absent from meeting attracts a fine of £5.00 only. Any member who will be absent from the day's meeting is expected to send notification well in advance or as soon as they know they will be absent. This is supposed to be at least 24 hours before the meeting starts except in emergencies. Failure to do this results in a member paying a fine of £5 for absenteeism.

ARTICLE 15

Section 3: Long term absence

If a member is absent from the meeting for 3 consecutive months without justifiable reasons, the Union shall write to the member to state that the member is falling short of our rule. If the absenteeism lingers for 6 consecutive months with no reason and no explanation, the person will forfeit his membership and will have to re-register with the Union when he decides to return (Returning member).

Justifiable reasons for absenteeism include:

- Sickness of member or family member(s).

- Being away from Northern Ireland.
- Duty call.

ARTICLE 15

Section 4: Absent during events

If a member is absent from group events without a justifiable genuine reason, the member will pay fine as follows :

In case of absenteeism during members death event - £50.00 fine.

In case of absenteeism during other family member's death events - £20.00 fine.

The executive can impose fine on any member who falls short of our rules and standard in any other situations.

ARTICLE 15

Executive/Member Discipline

Section 1: Vote of No Confidence

When an executive member is not performing the duty/duties for which he elected, the Union can pass a vote of no confidence on the member.

ARTICLE 15

Section 2: Noise and Disruption

If a member continuously disorganises our meetings or makes noise during meetings, the member pays the sum of £1.00 as fine for each occasion.

ARTICLE 15

Section 3: Trustee

A trustee can be removed, replaced, nominated, appointed or resigned if so wish in our general meeting.

ARTICLE 16

POSTING OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING.

There will be posting of the minute of the latest meeting of the meeting at least 24 hours before a new meeting.

The posting will also include the Agenda for the meeting and this is to help members ponder on the agenda and then articulate points and come well prepared for the meeting.

Article 17

CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Where member(s) resort to ill texting and bullying in our platform or verbal aggression of another member, it is an offence.

Members involved in such will be fined . In a case where a member is found guilty , the member will pay a fine of £25.00

* Conflicts outside of the meeting and forum is not within our jurisdiction unless the members involved seek our resolution. Conflicts outside can also be dealt with by friends who could mediate to resolve the conflict on individual basis.

Article 18

DATA PROTECTION

Section 1: Data Usage

The personal information gathered by the Union of members will not be used except for the purpose for which it was meant. The information will also not be shared with a third party without prior knowledge of the member involved.

Article 18

Section 2: Photograph and filming/video of events

You should put up signs informing people if they might be photographed. Gain parental consent before photographing or videoing children. Let people know how their images/photos will be used.

Remember people might have their own reasons for not wanting themselves or their children to be photographed and it is important to respect this. Images are personal identifiable data which are protected under Data Protection Act.

Section 19

POSTING IN THE ASSOCIATIONS FORUM

Any form of racist, political, pornographic, religious and sectarian comment or material is not allowed in the Unions platform.

A committee will be set up to look into such offence and

Depending on the severity, a fine will be levied on such a person.

This fine shall be paid within one month.

Section 20

FRAUD / FINANCIAL MISAPPROPRIATION

In case of misappropriation of the Union's fund, the member(s) involved would be required to refund the amount as soon as possible, if such a person is an executive he will need to step down, if a member, will get a written warning.

For More serious offence, the member may be handed over to Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) if deemed appropriate by the executives.

Section 21

DISSOLUTION / Winding Up: If for any reason the union ceases to be or exist, the fund and any property of the union must be given to a charity with similar purpose.

Section 22

CONSTITUTION CHANGE

Changes to the constitution can be made at our general meetings. Any consensus agreed or reached at the general meeting becomes part of the constitution and is binding on all. No change can be made that makes the organisation no longer a charity. A copy of the amended constitution and resolution adopting the changes will be sent to the charity commission for Northern Ireland.