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ar Chiníochas agus Idirchultúrachas**

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## **National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism**

**Submission to the National Action Plan Against  
Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005  
(NAPincl)**

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## 1. Introduction

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) was established in 1998 as an independent expert body on racism. It is a partnership body, which brings together government and non-government organisations to develop initiatives and to provide expertise in tackling racism and promoting interculturalism. The overall role of the NCCRI is

- To act as an expert body to develop an integrated and strategic approach to racism, to focus on its prevention and to foster interculturalism within Ireland
- To inform policy development and seek to build consensus through dialogue in relation to the issues of racism and interculturalism
- To promote the understanding and celebration of cultural diversity within Ireland
- To establish links with other organisations or individuals involved in issues of racism and interculturalism arising from developments at European Union and international levels.

The United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa in September 2001 placed a strong emphasis on the elimination of poverty as a key element in the fight against racism. One of the key outcomes of the Conference was the commitment by participating countries to develop National Action Plans Against Racism. The development of a National Action Plan Against Racism in Ireland represents a significant opportunity to both build upon and enhance existing policies and strategies to address racism in Ireland and to identify new priorities, aspirations and arenas of work that can be drawn together into an overall cohesive plan.

The National Action Plan will reflect the outcomes of the consultative process undertaken by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform between March and December 2002 which was overseen by a broad based Steering Group representing government and non-government organisations with support from the NCCRI. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is aiming to publish the summary of outcomes of the consultative process during the summer of 2003 which will then feed into the National Action Plan Against Racism.

In the National Action Plan Against Racism there will be a concentration on ensuring economic inclusion and equality, including a focus on poverty, employment and the workplace. There will also be a focus supporting the full participation of minority ethnic groups in Irish society, including a focus on participation in decision-making.

The review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness was published in February 2002 and it included specific chapters on groups vulnerable to poverty, including ethnic minorities. The National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 (NAPincl) presents an important opportunity to address the situation of Black and minority ethnic groups including Travellers experiencing poverty in Ireland. It is vital that this Plan has a strong anti-racism dimension and addresses the interface between racism and poverty. It is also recommended that there is a specific reference to the National Action Plan Against Racism in NAPincl as one of the guiding documents in terms of addressing the needs of ethnic minorities in terms of poverty and social exclusion.

In terms of tackling poverty and social exclusion within ethnic minority groups including Travellers the overall objective is to improve their life experience through the provision of appropriate education, health and housing services and to remove any remaining barriers to their full participation in the work and social life of the country and to ensure they are not more likely to experience poverty than majority group members.

## **2. Context**

### **Racism in Ireland**

The history of cultural diversity in Ireland has been quite distinct in the European context. In contrast to other European countries there was no large-scale immigration into Ireland following the Second World War. During the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s, Ireland experienced high levels of unemployment and emigration. In the middle of the 1990s onwards Ireland experienced inward migration in the form of returned Irish migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and migrant workers.

Although the existence of racism has always been a part of Irish society it is only in recent years that there has been recognised as an important public policy concern and that it deprives people of their basic human rights, dignity and respect. This concern has led to a number of key policy initiatives such as the enactment of equality legislation, the establishment of equality infrastructure in Ireland and the development of the NCCRI as an expert advisory body on the issue of racism and interculturalism.

Different types of racism are evident in the Irish context:

- Racism experienced by Travellers on the basis of their distinct ethnic identity and nomadic tradition
- Racism experienced by recent migrants, which includes migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, tourists and students living in Ireland.
- Racism experienced by ‘people of colour’ and minority ethnic groups, including black people on the basis of their skin colour and ethnic and/or national identity, irrespective of their legal status.
- The intersection between racism and other forms of discrimination including gender, disability and sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup>

There are at least two overall manifestations of racism in Ireland:

- Racism at an individual level which includes assault and abuse directed at people from minority ethnic groups
- Racism at an institutional level. This form of racism, often unintentional, can be caused through ignorance and lack of thought or adequate planning. The outcome of these processes can contribute to failure in or weaker service provision to minority ethnic groups.

### **Ethnic Diversity in Ireland**

The minority ethnic population has significantly risen since the publication of the last NAPS. Although relatively small in size there tends to be a concentration of poverty among these groups. There is no official data on the populations of minority ethnic groups in the Republic of Ireland. The paucity of demographic data is also reflected in

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<sup>1</sup> These intersections were recognised as an important issue in the World Conference Against Racism Programme of Action.

the availability of data related to socio-economic status including baseline figures on issues such as health, accommodation, employment and education. These significant gaps in data are indicative of the low or uneven priority that has characterised policy responses to the needs of minority ethnic groups in Ireland although this is beginning to change.

The largest minority ethnic group in Ireland is the Traveller community with an estimated 22,000 people. There is a long established Jewish community and rapidly growing Islamic and Asian communities. There are now refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland from over 100 countries including Vietnam, Bosnia, Kosovo, Romania, Nigeria, Algeria, Congo, Sudan, Somalia and from ethnic groups that transcend geographical boundaries, such as the Roma and the Kurds. The number of asylum seekers to Ireland has increased in recent years and stands at approximately 10,000 applying for refugee status per annum.

There are also an increasing number of people from non-EEA<sup>2</sup>. It is estimated that there are 40,000 migrant workers in the Irish workforce.<sup>3</sup> Government policy has encouraged such migration particularly to meet skill shortages in identified professions through employment interventions such as the work visa programme. Migrant workers are mainly employed in the agriculture/horticulture/rural environments, hospitals and health services, tourism and IT sector.

There are now more visible populations of 'people of colour', including Black Irish, another EU and non-EU citizens who are living in Ireland who have experienced racism on the basis of their skin colour and ethnic origin.

### **3. Groups Experiencing Racism and Poverty**

#### **Poverty and Minority Ethnic Groups**

There is strong evidence from research undertaken in North America and Western Europe that minority ethnic groups experience disproportionate levels of poverty. The higher level of poverty among minority ethnic groups in Britain has been well documented through various data sources. Evidence from Britain also points to poverty levels being disproportionate between minority ethnic groups.

NAPS defines poverty as:

*"People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalized from participating in activities which are considered the norm from other people in society. "*

As Hugh Frazer points out in his article in *Responding to Racism in Ireland* this definition reveals poverty as primarily the result of structural faults in society and not the result of the failings of particular individuals or groups so we need to assess systems in society such as the labour market, education, health, tax and social welfare systems and provision of public services to ascertain whether they are fair and equitable. This definition also points to poverty involving exclusion and marginalisation from employment, income, social networks, community and decision making which limits people's ability to participate fully in Irish society.

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<sup>2</sup> European Economic Area comprising EU, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein

<sup>3</sup> Dr. P. Conroy/Aoife Brennan: Migrant Workers and their Experiences (2003)

Poverty, marginalisation from employment and economic disparities can often be closely related to racism and can contribute to the persistence of racist attitudes and broader inequalities. Racism and poverty needs to be addressed in a holistic way. The NAPS has a key role to play in tackling the intersection between poverty and racism.

### **Poverty and Minority Groups in Ireland**

It is very rare for official data sources in Ireland to analyse data for demographic or ethnic equality purposes. There is virtually no official quantitative data, with the exception of limited data in relation to Travellers, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. The 2002 census did not have an ethnicity question to cover different ethnic groups in Ireland. The absence of disaggregated data means that it is not possible to define specific targets for ethnic minorities, except for Travellers. Nevertheless there are small-scale surveys and qualitative research beginning to emerge, particularly from NGO's but also from statutory sources that provides a growing body of evidence that poverty levels among minority ethnic groups in Ireland are disproportionately high.

## **KEY ISSUES**

### **1. Unemployment and income adequacy**

Unemployment and income adequacy have been identified in the NAPS as key themes with specific targets. Ethnic minority groups can experience difficulty in accessing the labour market and experience higher levels of unemployment. For those that do access the labour market, they tend to be in low-paid, temporary and unskilled jobs in areas such as catering, health services and tourism industry. Many ethnic minorities are very skilled and qualified people but they can encounter difficulties in accessing jobs that suit their capacity due to racist assumptions about the inferiority of ethnic minorities. In addition their experience in the workplace can be far from positive. Access to employment and income adequacy is a complex issue which is in part determined by government policy, and part related to ethnic minorities overcoming a range of barriers including the barrier of racism.

#### ***Convention and Programme Refugees***

Those with refugee status (Convention refugees and Programme Refugees) have virtually the same rights as Irish citizens to employment, social welfare benefits and to education, training and labour market schemes. However there are indications from research undertaken by employer's bodies and trade unions that people with refugee status experience a number of barriers to obtaining employment including racism and lack of skills.

A study of the Vietnamese and Bosnian refugee community<sup>4</sup> (who came to Ireland as Programme Refugees) in 1999 concluded that the unemployment levels among both communities was much greater than the general Irish population, with a greater proportion of Bosnians unemployed than Vietnamese.<sup>5</sup> Barriers identified by the two communities included language; non-recognition of qualifications; the need to attain new qualifications; and the need for more targeted labour force programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> Refugee Agency (1999) Report of a Survey of the Vietnamese and Bosnian Refugee Communities in Ireland.

<sup>5</sup> This may be because the Vietnamese have been in Ireland longer and they tend to be self-employed.

### ***Asylum Seekers***

Newly arrived asylum seekers are not allowed to work. In general asylum seekers are entitled to supplementary welfare allowance of E19.10 per week (E9.60 per child) and provided with full board and lodgings under the direct provision policy. Child benefit is payable and there is the possibility to receive exceptional needs payment at the discretion of a Community Welfare Officer. A number of groups working with asylum seekers have highlighted the issue that this may have the effect of reducing interaction and integration with host communities and may have contributed to the labelling and stereotyping of asylum seekers while also causing a level of dependency on welfare payments in general.

Reports by NGO's have highlighted that one of the outcomes of the direct provision scheme, combined with the lack of access to employment, is the creation of enforced dependency on the State and the effective denial of the opportunity to earn an adequate income. The consensus between many NGO's is that asylum seekers should have the right to seek work if their claim for asylum has not been processed within the government target of six months and that asylum seekers should have the same level of income support as Irish citizens under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Migrant Workers***

There is growing anecdotal evidence of migrant workers experiencing a range of problems related to employment and income adequacy caused by a range of interrelated factors. These include exploitation by a minority of Irish employers and recruitment agencies, lack of information about their rights, the inadequacy of statutory rights for migrant workers, lack of flexibility provided under the work permit scheme, weaknesses in the State's provision of adequate enforcement of existing labour protection legislation and experiences of racism.

A recent piece of research undertaken by organisations involved in the Anti-Racist Workplace Week<sup>7</sup> give an insight into the situation for migrant workers in terms of employment and income adequacy. Some issues cited include:

- The current work permit scheme is open to abuse by employers as the permits are held by the employer rather than the employee and the employee is not entitled to seek alternative employment with a different employer or to seek support from social welfare.
- Some bogus agencies are posing as employers and sub contracting work permits to companies desperately short of staff or who are seeking cheaper and more flexible employment.
- Some employment agencies are charging a high percentage of an annual wage to support migrants to come to Ireland.
- The treatment of migrant workers as economic commodities without reference to their other economic social and cultural rights
- The denial of the right to change employer or family reunification for spouses and children of migrant workers, has the potential of creating an underclass of 'guest workers' who will never be fully integrated into local communities and will leave such groups open to further exploitation and racism.

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<sup>6</sup> See Galway Refugee Support Group: Asylum Seekers in Galway and the Right to Work 2002

<sup>7</sup> Equality Authority, Know Racism, IBEC, Congress of Trade Unions and CIF

Ireland's economy is increasingly reliant on minority ethnic groups including migrant workers in key sectors including health, agriculture and food processing and tourism.<sup>8</sup> As well as the human and equality imperatives to combat racism there is a strong economic imperative to ensure that the experience of minority ethnic groups in the workplace is positive and staff are both attracted and retained. Aspects of the work permit scheme especially the condition that the employer holds the work permit rather than the worker, leading to fears based on emerging evidence that some employers may exploit this dependency to diminish workplace conditions and employment rights. There were also concerns raised about the potential exploitation of undocumented workers who are particularly vulnerable to poor pay and conditions, discrimination and limited access to public services.

The NCCRI has continued to highlight the inadequacy of rights and protection afforded to migrant workers in Ireland. The forthcoming Employment Permits Bill 2003 which seeks to put the system of work permits on a statutory footing, is an opportunity to address these shortcomings and to implement a more planned and managed migration policy including projections and supports in key employment areas.

### **Travellers**

Social exclusion, racism and poverty experienced by the Traveller community have been documented in the reports of NGO's and government initiatives. This is evidenced by indicators such as high morbidity and mortality rates, the appalling conditions on some sites, in particular temporary and unofficial sites, and the low participation rates in secondary education. Travellers experience both high levels of unemployment and a range of factors that militate against self-employment including access to insurance and insecurity over accommodation.

The Government Task force on the Traveller Community (1995) identified many of the reasons for the low participation of Travellers in employment including low pay and poor work conditions, need for training, cultural factors and lack of acceptance by 'settled' counterparts'.<sup>9</sup> The report emphasised the need in the immediate term to develop strategies to increase development of Traveller community enterprise within the social economy and on the employment of Travellers in the public service, particularly within those areas providing services to or contact with the Traveller community.

The Task Force Report emphasises that despite some popular prejudices there is a significant and distinct work ethic within the Traveller community and Traveller culture and way of life values enterprise and financial independence. A number of features stand out as central to the Traveller economy, including nomadism, focussing on generating income, the family as the basis economic unit, flexibility and the importance of the home base for economic activities.

The progress made since the publication of the Task Force report on issues such as income adequacy and employment have been recognised as being very disappointing by NGO's. The governments own monitoring committee to oversee the implementation of its recommendations noted Travellers access to the mainstream

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<sup>8</sup> The FAS Irish Labour Market Review 2002 highlights the fact that the Irish economy will have an ongoing need for migrant workers.

<sup>9</sup> Government Publications. (1995)Task Force on the Travelling Community. Executive Summary p19.

labour market continues to be very low and difficulties stem from the discrimination Travellers experience in school, in training courses, accessing and/or in the work environment; nomadism and the desire for self employment.<sup>10</sup>

Direct and indirect discrimination at an individual and institutional level is clearly identified as factors impacting on unemployment and income adequacy and both types of discrimination is usefully defined within the Task Force Report in a way that can be applied to other groups experiencing racism. The equality legislation in particular the Equal Status Act 2000 and the decisions of the Equality Tribunal have begun to significantly address both types of discrimination experienced not only by Travellers but also other ethnic minority groups.

### ***Black and minority ethnic groups in Ireland***

There has been very little research carried out into the poverty experienced by Black and minority ethnic groups in Ireland except when their legal status is one of a refugee and asylum seeker or a migrant worker. It is important to emphasise that there are black Irish and other EU citizens living in Ireland who are not migrants or asylum seekers.

There is even less research available about this group in terms of unemployment and income adequacy, which is not surprising giving the absence of disaggregated data on which to measure and benchmark their socio economic status and their progress or lack of progress towards equality with other ethnic groups, including the majority population.

We can look to research in Britain which has documented the socio economic experience of black people in Britain. Issues that have emerged include:

- Black people and minority ethnic groups in Britain have experienced institutional racism in issues such as recruitment, access to promotion and the experience of higher levels of unemployment.<sup>11</sup> This discrimination can occur in all professions.
- The institutional racism they experience is often subtle and can be both intentional and unintentional. Patterns can only be proved through adequate data and research.
- Women from black and minority ethnic groups are even more disadvantaged and have been concentrated into low paid and low skilled jobs, particularly low paid jobs in the public services such as health services.

### ***Women from Minority Ethnic Groups***

Women from minority ethnic groups sometimes experience additional barriers in accessing employment and also experience higher levels of poverty, often because of family commitments. Minority ethnic women should be specifically included in a national childcare policy and significant policy initiatives linked to children including the National Children's Strategy.

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<sup>10</sup> Department for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. First progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Coordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community.

<sup>11</sup> Braham, Rattansi, Skellington. Ibid particularly chapters 3,4,7,8

### **1.1. Unemployment and Income Inadequacy: Recommendations**

- Access to English language training where necessary, access to information on their rights and entitlements in their own language and, where appropriate, translation services.
- To ensure that all minority ethnic groups can access training opportunities relevant to their needs and assist their integration into the labour market.
- To look at the issue of non-recognition of qualifications
- To review the current policy in Ireland in relation to migration in particular the work permit system
- To target ethnic minorities including Travellers access and participation in all levels of employment as part of an overall government employment strategy
- Greater enforcement of existing employment legislation in tackling poor pay and conditions among all workers including migrant workers and workers from minority ethnic groups
- Effective action against rogue employment agencies and the provision of accessible information on workplace related rights and responsibilities
- The development of a whole organisation anti-racism and diversity strategies and data and monitoring mechanisms in both the public and private sector
- To address the additional difficulties of Traveller and refugees in obtaining insurance. Targeted measures should be put in place to ensure that minority ethnic groups are aware of and encouraged to access and participate in business, enterprise and social economy initiatives.

### **2. Health**

The National Health Promotion Strategy 2000-2005 recognises that there exists within our society many groups with different requirements which need to be identified and accommodated when planning and implementing health promotion interventions. The Strategy acknowledges the challenge involved in being sensitive to the potential differences in patterns of poor health among these different groups and it aims to promote the physical, mental and social well being of individuals from these diverse groups including Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers.

The National Strategy on Traveller Health was launched in February 2002 and provides a comprehensive overview and set of priorities to address Traveller health status, including the development of primary health care initiatives in partnership with NGOs working with Travellers. The Irish Health Services Management Institute in partnership with the NCCRI has developed a range of initiatives focussing on supporting cultural diversity and tackling racism in the health sector. These initiatives include the development of guidelines on cultural diversity in the health sector, anti-racism training and awareness initiatives.

Again issues around understanding of, access to and participation in health care services by ethnic minority continues to be of concern. An increased focus on primary health care strategies in recent health related policy statements is a welcome step forward as it aims to take into account the context in which people live and the impact that this has on health. There is also the need for health and psychological services to develop a stronger focus on the victims of torture coming to Ireland as asylum seekers or refugees. Strategies for the incorporation of the needs of minority ethnic groups in the strategic and customer action plans for all health boards should be developed.

In relation to a national health policy, there should be an explicit mention of minority ethnic groups in existing and future health strategies. The commitments on health in the NAPS Incl should seek to include this dimension.

### **2.1. Health: Recommendations**

- Ensuring that health and social services are planned and provided in ways that make them accessible and relevant to the needs and cultures of ethnic minorities coupled with gender sensitivity
- The need for data collection to guide strategic initiatives in this area
- Participation of ethnic minorities including Travellers on health advisory committees
- The development of primary health care initiatives in partnership with NGOs working with ethnic minorities and Travellers

### **3. Accommodation**

Addressing the accommodation needs of people from different ethnic communities is a factor in tackling poverty and social exclusion. Ethnic minorities can experience discrimination in accessing adequate accommodation which can lead to the uptake of poor quality housing in deprived, possibly hostile areas where accommodation is cheaper. This can lead to the further marginalisation of new communities and compound deprivation and isolation.

Issues include:

- The delay in developing additional units of accommodation for Travellers by the local authorities and concern about the current and future implications of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002.
- Asylum Seekers and aspects of the accommodation/dispersal strand of Direct Provision including use of large-scale accommodation centres or isolated centres and the variation of standards between centres.
- The discrimination experienced by Black and minority ethnic groups in the private rented sector
- Segregation in housing has not yet evolved in Ireland but its existence in other countries and its link with poverty has reinforced social exclusion in some circumstances. This issue must be carefully considered taking into account the needs of ethnic minorities such as proximity to families and cultural tradition.

#### **3.1 Accommodation: Recommendations**

- The needs of minority ethnic groups should be included in all major policy initiatives and reviews related to accommodation.
- The establishment of a new agency or office to ensure that local authorities fully implement Traveller accommodation plans and a review of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 to ensure that Travellers on accommodation waiting lists are protected from eviction or to ensure adequate temporary accommodation is provided in agreement with all parties concerned.
- In terms of the social exclusion aspect of NAPS Incl. the Direct Provision and Dispersal should be reviewed with the participation of all groups representing the interests of refugees and asylum seekers. A clear strategy on standards in relation to all aspects of Direct Provision should be published and complaint mechanisms within centres should be enhanced. The participation of groups in

the development of accommodation policy can be facilitated through the establishment of the Refugee Advisory Board.

- A special focus on particular accommodation needs of families, pregnant women, unaccompanied minors and extended families such as in the Roma community.
- The need for greater regulation and enforcement of minimum standards in private rented accommodation. Ensuring wider access to low cost social housing and the need for local authorities to address racist harassment as part of estate management policies.
- Strategies to address homelessness should take into account the needs of all those who are homeless, including people from minority ethnic groups and to take into account issues such as discrimination in the private rented sector as an additional factor leading to homelessness.
- Targeted initiatives with local authorities and social housing bodies and estate agencies in the private rented sector on all aspects of housing management policies.

#### **4. Education and Training**

Institutional racism occurs when there is a supposition that the education system that meets the needs of the dominant white majority is sufficient and there is inadequate provision made for the particular educational and training needs of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities can experience a range of barriers such as language barriers and lack of access to information on their rights and entitlements in the educational sphere. To overcome this educational institutions and initiatives need to specifically target ethnic minorities.

The role of education is key component of any strategy aimed at addressing poverty, racism and developing a more inclusive and intercultural society in Ireland. There have been significant developments at a policy and practice level that have the potential to provide an important basis for future progress in building an anti-racism and intercultural dimension to education policy in Ireland.

##### **4.1 Education and Training: Recommendations**

- Anti-racism and intercultural programmes should be developed at all levels of training and education.
- New education and training policy should be proofed to ensure that it is inclusive of the needs of minority ethnic groups.
- The development of a “Whole School Approach” to addressing racism and promoting interculturalism<sup>12</sup>
- Educational institutions need to target diversity of education needs and draw on good practice in Ireland and abroad
- To take into account specific barriers experienced by women and other groups identified in equality legislation
- Accessibility to reduced and free fees by non-EU nationals, including refugees should be reviewed and assessed
- FAS in partnership with representatives of minority ethnic groups and other training and education bodies should draw up a strategy focussing on access to

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<sup>12</sup> See NCCRI: Guidelines for Developing a Whole Organisation Approach to Address Racism and Promote Interculturalism (2003)

vocational training for minority ethnic groups that would define future strategy.

- The need for data collection in this area
- Participation of ethnic minorities including Travellers on education and training advisory committees
- Standardisation of qualifications and experience
- To ensure that mainstream educational provision takes into account different cultural traditions, addressing issues of racism and racial bullying in schools in a proactive manner and providing more educational opportunities within ethnic minority communities.

#### **4. The Interface between Racism and Poverty**

The identification of the intersection between poverty and racism commenced in 1997 when the predecessor of the NCCRI, the National Coordinating Committee for European Year Against Racism submitted a report to the Interdepartmental Committee ‘Towards an Anti Racism Dimension in the National Anti Poverty Strategy.’ This Paper concluded that not only do disproportionate levels of poverty persist among most minority ethnic groups, but there is also a causal link between racism and poverty.

There were theories that sought to advance the belief that the consequences of poverty such as drug abuse and social welfare dependency were somehow part of the culture of minority ethnic groups, and therefore minority ethnic groups were responsible for their own poverty. These theories have now been discredited as it has been recognised that the key factors in determining the poverty experienced by minority ethnic groups are not internal characteristics, but structural inequalities experienced by such groups over many years and the impact of racism in both direct and indirect ways.

From this brief overview of issues contributing to the poverty and minority ethnic groups in Ireland it is clear that the causes of poverty and the relationship between poverty and racism are both complex and multidimensional. Racism can impact on poverty in different ways, for example a person may not get employment or accommodation that enables them to take up employment, because of direct discrimination by an employer or landlord, contributing directly to poverty.

Other ways in which racism can impact on poverty may be more difficult to identify without adequate research and consultation with the groups experiencing racism. For example, a minority ethnic group may in theory be able to access a particular state service, but in practice may not because the service does not recognise the specific and additional barriers faced by minority ethnic groups in accessing such a service. These barriers can include lack of accessible information or knowledge of rights, lack of resources to avail of such services or their geographical remoteness or lack of cultural sensitivity by the service provider concerning the services provided.

The historical legacy of racism also needs to be considered in relation to poverty. A group that has experienced racism over many years will likely show of multiple disadvantage because of discrimination in key areas of concern such as education, employment, training, accommodation and health services. In short a whole series of mechanisms that serve in combination to disadvantage minority ethnic groups.

Some of the key issues arising out of this brief review of poverty and minority ethnic groups in the previous section are as follows:

- There is increasing evidence that Black and minority ethnic groups in Ireland, including Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and migrants experience disproportionate levels of poverty.
- Racism is a major factor in contributing to the disproportionate poverty experienced by minority ethnic groups at both an individual and institutional level.
- Government policy can have both a direct and indirect effect on the levels of poverty experienced by specific minority ethnic groups.
- Women from minority ethnic groups experience specific and additional forms of racism and often experience higher levels of poverty among majority and minority ethnic groups.
- The complex and multi dimensional nature of the interface between racism and poverty is best highlighted in the issue of unemployment and income inadequacy through discrimination in recruitment and promotion policies, in retention in times of economic downturn in mainstream employment, in non-recognition or transferability of qualifications and skills gaps.
- Inadequate protection afforded to and the potential exploitation of migrant workers
- The inadequate access or provision of quality education training and employment services is a significant barrier to people from minority ethnic groups who need on going support.
- Inadequate support of the development of the potential of the social economy and penetration into mainstream employment

### **Data Collection**

The extent of such poverty and basic data on the demographic profile of minority ethnic groups are largely absent. The historical absence of data is further compounded by missed opportunities, such as the failure to include an ethnicity question in the 2002 census. The failure to provide such data means, first, there is no accurate way of estimating the full extent of need of minority ethnic groups in Ireland or to inform future planning and resource implications. Second, there is no comprehensive system of benchmarking at regular intervals indicators of poverty such as issues such as incomes, employment status, dependency ratios within a family and particular community, tenure of accommodation and location. There is an urgent need to develop baseline data in order to plan for the needs of minority ethnic groups and to benchmark progress over a period of time in relation to issues such as employment, health, education, training and accommodation.

### **Access to Public Services**

Access to quality public services has a key role in constructing a more inclusive society and combating poverty, key services that include health, accommodation, education and training at national, regional and local levels. All service providers, both public and private, need to develop strategies to tackle racism and promote cultural diversity as part of a wider quality customer service and equality agenda. The potential for institutional racism is great and can result in a weak or inconsistent service provision to minority ethnic groups. One cannot assume that services are accessible with equal outcomes for all without taking into account that some groups have additional or a diversity of needs not being met through existing provision.

Mainstreaming seeks to ensure that the needs of minority ethnic groups are included in the planning, implementation and review of the major activities undertaken at a policy and organisational level and the proofing of policy and implementation strategies for their impact on minority ethnic groups. Anti-racism needs to be a strategic objective of each government department which can include anti-racism training for all staff, development of an anti-racism policy and collection of data on ethnic minority groups and monitoring their take up of public services.

The Quality Customer Service strand of the Strategic Management Initiative which aims to promote better service delivery in the public sector includes important commitments to equality and diversity and the NCCRI would recommend a new statutory duty to promote equality which should include a strong focus on access to, participation in and outcomes for minority ethnic groups in service provision. These provisions can be extended in time to semi-state and private sector delivery. All provisions should have a particular focus on women and other groups protected under the equality legislation (e.g. disability groups)

### **Community Development Approach and Increased Participation**

It is important to emphasise the role of community development in tackling poverty and racism and promoting social solidarity among groups. Community development is about empowering individuals who experience poverty and racism and ensuring that their voice is heard. There is a need to promote the development of organisations and networks among ethnic minorities groups so as to allow them to articulate their needs and appropriate responses to those needs, so they can influence and change public policy. It is imperative to encourage the participation and involvement of all groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion in various fora where policies and programmes are developed so as to build social solidarity and a respect for difference and diversity in society.

It is important that NGO's representing minority ethnic groups are adequately resourced to enable them to participate in programmes to address poverty and racism and to provide greater participation in the decision making that effects their lives.

## 5. Key Recommendations

This submission has attempted to highlight the key issues with regard to poverty and racism within ethnic minority groups and to identify new actions that have the potential to specifically impact on the racism/poverty interface. These include:

- The need for the NAPS to be strengthened and enhanced with the development of institutional structures to implement the National Action Plan Against Poverty and the adoption of specific poverty reduction targets. NAPS Incl should have synergy with existing strategic initiatives aiming at addressing social exclusion with an express mention of the forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism.
- The development of a more integrated equality and poverty proofing mechanism, to tackle barriers to the integration of new communities. This involves the elaboration of mechanisms to ensure that all key policy developments which have the potential to impact on minority ethnic groups should be poverty proofed. This should include policies towards Refugees and Asylum Seekers, migrants and black and minority ethnic groups including Travellers and the addressing of cross cutting themes such as gender and disability.
- Measures should be put in place to ensure that all relevant programmes focusing on poverty and social exclusion should be inclusive and impact on the needs of all potentially excluded groups including minority ethnic groups. Of particular relevance is the inclusion of an anti-racism and intercultural dimension into the National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion and specific programmes such as Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, RAPID, Clar, the Community Development Support Programme and the work of agencies such as Area Development Management (ADM) and Combat Poverty Agency.
- There should be a requirement and appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that broader socio economic policy instruments including the Annual Budget, the National Development Plan and the Social Partner Agreement should be inclusive of and proofed for impact on minority ethnic groups.
- The urgent need for data collection systems to collect ethnic equality data that should reflect the needs of different ethnic groups and in particular the different forms of racism identified in this submission. There should be a specific inclusion of ethnic equality questions in all national surveys, including the census and the surveys used by the NAPS with data gathering and monitoring on the outcomes of mainstream policies on minority ethnic groups
- Particular attention should be given to community development supports for minority ethnic groups through for example the community development and local development programmes as well as targeted EU and other national programmes. The community sector has played a key role so far. All dimensions of the NAPS Incl. should involve the active participation of minority groups in Ireland. Social partner organisations including employer/business bodies, trade unions, farming bodies and the community and voluntary sector have played a vital role in developing and participating in anti-racism and intercultural strategies. This role should be acknowledged and enhanced in NAPS Incl.

- Ensuring that the Community Development Support Programme expands its support of minority ethnic groups to cover new communities in Ireland based on recent research.
- NAPS Incl. at local level: Building a stronger focus for local government bodies in combating racism and building interculturalism through area and county based partnerships and the possibility of expanding the work and remit of Social Inclusion Units
- The consideration of a statutory duty on statutory agencies to promote equality of opportunity and accommodation of diversity *and* tackle poverty based on similar duties introduced into legislation in Northern Ireland and Britain. This would mean that every Government Department would be obliged to include a specific anti-racist dimension with a focus on minority ethnic groups in their annual progress reports on their anti-poverty commitment as part of a mainstreaming objective in service provision and policy development
- The allocation of resources to NGO's representing minority ethnic groups to enable them to participate in programmes to address poverty and racism and to participate in real terms in decision making that impacts on their lives.
- The active promotion of a whole organisation approach within the statutory and non-statutory sectors through anti-racism and intercultural awareness training, development of anti-racist, intercultural and equality policies and practices and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
- There is a need for further research into the interface of poverty and racism in Irish context
- The recognition of the vulnerability of migrants has been recognised in a European wide context and in the guidelines of NAPS Incl. The social exclusion experienced by migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, departing and returning emigrants and other ethnic minorities require integrated responses. Such responses could be cross-departmental or targeted initiatives with a variety of actions and interventions. The NCCRI welcomes the fact that the Programme of the Irish Presidency of the EU includes a conference on migration and the NCCRI would be happy to support this initiative.
- The establishment of a small working group to consider the development of a clear anti racism dimension into the NAPS. This working group could seek to identify how the NAPS could give visibility to the racism/poverty interface and would ensure that minority ethnic groups in Ireland are fully included under the NAPS.

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