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ar Chiníochas agus Idirchultúrachas**

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Submission to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

On the Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities in Community and Local Development Strategies

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Introduction

Since the designation of the new Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRAG) in June 2002, this department has taken up responsibility for the administration of local and community development and anti-poverty programmes. Over recent months, the DCRAG has expressed the desire to examine and make more effective and efficient the various frameworks for the delivery of local development and community development, observing the integration of local government and local development systems.

The NCCRI wishes to contribute to the analysis that will inform these actions, particularly in the area of its knowledge and expertise – i.e. racism and interculturalism. This paper aims to summarise the community and local development needs of ethnic minority groups in Ireland at the moment and provide a snapshot of what is in place to meet those needs within existing local and community development programmes. The purpose of this paper is to provide DCRAG with an informed analysis of how ethnic minority groups are included as a target group within Irish social policy and to recommend that work by, for and with ethnic minority groups, as well as a strong anti-racist and equality focus, must remain a priority within a local and community development framework.

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)

The NCCRI is an expert body established as an ongoing structure to develop programmes and actions, and provide advice to address racism and support cultural diversity in Ireland. It is core funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and has a primary focus on working with statutory and non-statutory sectors to develop informed policy on issues of racism and interculturalism. It carries out a number of functions including:

- Policy analysis, advice and formation;
- Information provision,
- Anti-racism training and
- Community Development Support.

NCCRI's Community Development Support Unit

The Community Development Support Unit is funded under the Community Development Support Programme. The key overall aim of the Community Development Support Unit is to create the conditions at both a national and local level, where community development with ethnic minorities is recognised and resourced as a key strategy to addressing racism and promoting interculturalism. This paper is based on an analysis of the CDSU, informed by its work as specialist support unit over the past two and a half years.

Ethnic diversity and racism In Ireland

There are no accurate census figures on the populations of minority ethnic groups in the Republic of Ireland. The paucity of demographic data is also reflected in 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 there are now signs that this neglect is beginning to change. The factors influencing this change are

first, the growing recognition of ethnic diversity in Ireland and second the increasing awareness of racism as a major public policy concern.

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 growing Islamic and Asian communities. There are now refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland from over 100 countries, including Vietnam, Bosnia, Kosovo Rumania, Nigeria, Algeria, Congo, Sudan, Somalia and Kurdistan, with approximately 10,000 asylum seekers applying for refugee status per annum at present.

In addition to refugee and asylum seekers, there are an increasing number of people from non-EEA¹ countries seeking employment and better opportunities as migrant workers in Ireland, including those that are being actively recruited by Irish employers. Government policy has been to encourage such migration, particularly to meet skill shortages in identified professions through employment interventions, such as the work visa programme. 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.

The history of cultural diversity in Ireland has been quite distinct in the European context. Travellers, an indigenous Irish community are Ireland’s largest minority ethnic group with a distinct culture and history of nomadism. In contrast to other European countries, there was no large-scale immigration into Ireland following the Second World War. During the 1950’s 1970’s and 1980’s, Ireland experienced high levels of unemployment and emigration that peaked at different times during this period. These factors combined with restrictive immigration laws in the South and recurring political conflict Northern Ireland to ensure that emigration continued to far exceed inward migration during these periods².

The Legislative Framework

The recent and relatively sudden shift in Ireland’s social profile to a more multi-ethnic society is receiving much attention and is addressed through legislation, particularly Department of Justice-led legislation on immigration. Equality legislation produced over the past five years has been instrumental in tackling discrimination over nine distinct grounds of diversity including race and membership of the Traveller community.

Impact of EU Policy

In addition, all EU member states are obliged to keep in line with a number of EU and Council of Europe directives and conventions on rights and equality such as Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty. Other policies that must be taken into account in member states include those on the harmonisation of migration policies, and those specifically aimed at the rights of minority ethnic groups, such as the EU Race Directive and the Convention Framework on National Minorities. There are a number of institutions at European level that have been established to drive and monitor anti-

¹ European Economic Area comprising EU, Iceland and Norway

² While recent migration to Ireland has been a key factor in highlighting ethnic and cultural diversity in Ireland, it is important that immigration and diversity are not used interchangeably as this denies the presence of minority ethnic groups Ireland prior to the mid 1990’s, which will have consequences for which groups are included in social inclusion measures.

racist and anti-xenophobic policies as well as the inclusion of the rights of ethnic minorities within the equality agenda.

Impact of national policy

A significant number of national social policy measures refer to Ireland's obligation to a) address the needs of Ireland as a multi-ethnic society, b) to tackle racism as a cause of social exclusion and poverty. The current national agreement, *Sustaining Progress* identifies a number of actions under an equality framework including key actions on Traveller focused objectives, as well as an overarching need to 'develop a comprehensive policy framework on migration (immigration and emigration)'. The *National Anti-Poverty Strategy Review (2002)* sets out a number of key targets in relation to Travellers and to Migrants and Members of Ethnic Minority Groups, while the *National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPincl 2001-2003)* included a number of recommended strategies on Travellers, racism and Migrants - mostly in the area of research. The social partnership model has enabled the contribution of the social partners to the formulation of these policies, and the NCCRI and the Equality Authority as well as regional and local expert bodies have been able to inform and influence social policy on ethnic minority issues.

Community Development and Local Development Programmes

Alongside the overall policy and legislative frameworks put in place to address an increasingly multi-ethnic Irish society is the need for strategic actions to include and involve ethnic minorities as valued members of Irish life and to ensure that such groups do not become marginalised as a consequence of their ethnicity. Community development is a crucial element of that strategy.

The Role Of Community Development

The Combat Poverty Agency³ defines community development as a "process whereby those who are marginalised and excluded are enabled to gain in self confidence, to join with others and to participate in actions to change their situation and to tackle the problems that face their community". Hugh Frazer⁴ in *Responding to Racism in Ireland* (2001) draws the links between racism and poverty and puts forward some of the reasons that community development is a necessary approach to address this. Addressing the powerlessness of ethnic minorities, promoting the collective voice of minorities, ensuring the involvement of ethnic minorities in the development of the communities in which they live and challenging racism are just some of the ways in which community development is a key component in the shift towards a more intercultural Irish society.

Research into the community development needs of ethnic minorities

There has been a large amount of research carried out across the country in the last number of years, particularly in relation to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. These range from looking at employment, education and training issues to access to childcare and other essential services, to data collection on racism. Their findings have implications for a number of sectors. Studies carried out by groups such as the NCCRI, Integrating Ireland and academic institutions reflect issues across the board,

³ *The Role of Community Development in Tackling Poverty*, (2000), Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency

⁴ Frazer, H., *Racism, Poverty and Community Development* in *Responding to Racism in Ireland*, (2001), Eds., Farrell, F., and Watt, P., Dublin: Veritas

while focused research carried out by local community development groups has identified key issues specific to communities at that time that can be addressed by local community development strategies. A recent report by Tosach⁵ remarks that the plethora of immigrant support and solidarity groups ‘have made a significant contribution towards the lives and circumstances of refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers’. Among the findings of the report are:

- “The absence of any clear State policy or strategy in relation to the community development needs and requirements of ‘new communities’ ...
- Difficulties for such communities in accessing ongoing core funding ...; and
- A sense of discrimination amongst those groups in terms of accessing state support for their work...”

The report recommends that Government produce clear policy statements and positions as well as a community development support framework that outlines community development with ‘new communities’. The report focuses equally on the need to support existing community development projects to proactively work with ‘new communities’ through funding and training and developmental supports.

While there are clearly a range of legislative, administrative and social services which address the needs of minority ethnic groups specifically and as part of the majority population, what is of concern for the purpose of this discussion is how they are included in local and community development measures. Currently ethnic minorities are named within the two major programmes: the Community Development Support Programme (CDSP) and the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP).

The Community Development Support Programme (CDSP)

The CDSP is the key support nationally for community development. Community Development Projects, Core Funded Groups and Family Resource Centres (now under the Family Support Agency in Department of Social and Family Affairs) have a critical position in local areas because of their geographical location and the involvement of communities in their management structure. The community development analysis that informs their practice is based on their knowledge and experience of:

- the reality of the marginalisation of minority ethnic groups
- Racism as a cause of poverty (this is referred to in detail in the NCCRI’s submission to the National Anti-Poverty Strategy Review in April 2001).
- The value of a community development approach in involving the participation of marginalised groups

The CDSP strategy for work with ethnic minorities includes:

- Resourcing projects targeting ethnic minorities e.g. Travellers
- Extra resources for anti-racism work through the Enhanced Funding Scheme

⁵ Rourke, St., *The Community Development Needs of ‘New Communities’ within the Inner City of Dublin*, (2003), Dublin: Tosach

- The resourcing of a Specialist Support Agency (Pavee Point) and a Community Development Support Unit (NCCRI)
- An Equality/Anti-Racism Subgroup
- A published Anti-Racism Code of Practice for Projects
- The availability of small grants for anti-racism initiatives

There are, however, still ways in which the CDSP can be enhanced to improve its inclusion of minority ethnic groups and promote interculturalism:

- By resourcing minority ethnic groups' projects that are already working through a community development approach. The Bosnian Community Development project is currently the only such project resourced under the CDSP;
- By further resourcing Projects working specifically with minority ethnic groups (including refugees and asylum seekers, Travellers);
- By looking at ways of ensuring greater flexibility in CDSP to secure the inclusion of ethnic minorities;
- By acknowledging the need for pre-development work with minority ethnic groups organisations to ensure equal access to the CDSP. This clearly implies the need to provide appropriate resourcing for this work to be carried out.

The Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP)

The LDSIP is administered by Area Development Management (ADM) and delivered through thirty-eight Area-based Partnerships and thirty-three Community Groups. The LDSIP names Travellers and refugees and asylum seekers as target groups under its Services for the Unemployed measure and under its Community Development Measure – which also includes immigrants as a target group. Travellers and children of ethnic minorities are included in the target groups for the Community Based Youth Initiatives measure too.

The area-based partnerships and community groups have a long history of working on an area level to tackle social exclusion. Implementing the Integrated Local Development Programme and the Local Development Programme for Social Inclusion has led to the accumulation of much experience in providing supports to local groups and facilitating their participation in planning and decision making. It is important that this experience and knowledge of community development issues at area level is not lost in the future. Partnerships and community groups have an important role in the development of marginalised communities through a) building the capacity of its target groups, b) offering technical supports and skill-building opportunities c) providing much needed resources through small grants, staff support, building space or other 'in-kind' contributions.

Summary

An opportunity exists at this time to review and improve integrated community and local development supports. It is vital that all information and expert experience is considered to maximise the potential of an enhanced framework for their delivery. It is clear that ethnic minority groups, whether 'new communities' in Ireland or existing marginalised minorities –i.e. Travellers, are important targets of such a framework. Government must respond to this clear need by developing a strategy that will be highly prioritised within the Community Development Support Programme and the

Local Development Social Inclusion Programme. It also needs to set out clear guidelines for the role of the County/City Development Boards in ensuring and monitoring intercultural actions and the equal and supported participation of ethnic minorities in local planning and decision making.

Furthermore, the equal participation of immigrant support and solidarity groups to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and foster an intercultural society is a community development priority and one that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. This can only be achieved through supporting and resourcing of black and ethnic minority-owned groups and organisations through core-funding.

Recommendations for the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

1. Ethnic minority groups themselves must be targeted for inclusion by the CDSP and mainstreamed through core funding.
2. Additional supports for those projects within the CDSP already targeting ethnic minorities must be resourced. CDPs have direct links with local target groups and are essential in involving and including such groups at local level and feeding those issues to national level through the Programme structures.
3. The LDSIP already name ethnic minorities as a target group and this must remain a priority of the Programme. Partnerships and ADM funded groups have an important role in providing the technical and capacity building supports necessary to involve ethnic minorities in mainstream community development activity.
4. An overall community development framework for work with ethnic minorities must be developed and sufficient resources to deliver it must be put in place as a matter of urgency.
5. Reviews of the new local government structures and their work (i.e. County/City Development Board Strategies and Local Authority policy) must be examined for their inclusion of ethnic minorities within their equality statements. If necessary, guidelines for their specific inclusion must be put in place. In addition, structures for the participation of community representatives must be able to demonstrate how they can include ethnic and other minority or marginalised groups.

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