

**Northern Ireland
Council
for Ethnic Minorities
(NICEM)**

Annual Report

2003-2004

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STANDARD SETTING

Race Equality Audit

NICEM, with the financial support from the Equality Commission, developed the Race Equality Audit in 2001. The Audit has six components: policy planning and development, service planning and delivery, community development, positive action, communication and marketing. The financial support from the Commission allowed us appointed an external consultant to assist us to develop the performance indicators of the six components of the Audit. We are planning to have the official launch soon, as one of our contribution to the racial equality in Northern Ireland coincide our Ten Years Anniversary celebration. The Audit will fit into the Race Equality Forum as the standard setting for the public sector.

The UK National Action Plan on the UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR)

The Executive Director attended the UN following-up regional meeting for Western Europe, which was hosted by Belgium government in Brussels, in December 2003. At the meeting he used his status as the former member of the NGOs Resource Group of the Council of Europe, which prepared for the European process of the WCAR, criticised the Western Europe member states that ignore their obligations under both the Durban Declaration and the Programme of Actions of the WCAR, as well as the Council of Europe's European Declaration and Programme of Action through the National Action Plan (NAP). As a result, little progress has been made in the Western member states, except for a few countries.

The main contributing factor is the impact of September 11 and the dramatic increase in racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, islamphobia, as well as violence attack across Europe with little intervention from the government. And in fact, a lot of political parties had been playing the race card during the general and local government election. The result is that majority of the EU member states are now ruled by the centre right government. This change of geo-political map further tightening up the boundary to restrict migration and asylum flows across the EU region.

At the meeting the UK government representative announced that the UK government would not follow the National Action Plan model, instead using their Race Equality Strategy, which is never consulted with the NGOs. So far no meeting has been held with the UK NGOs Steering Group (the body to work with the Home Office in preparation and follow-up of the WCAR) for almost a year. A meeting propose to meet Home Office official from UKREN (UK Race European Network) to understand the latest development from the government and the role of NGOs, in particular the Steering Group.

In Northern Ireland NICEM supports the government initiative by using the Race Equality Strategy as part of the wider National Action Plan. It is the starting point for the future government policy and practice on race in Northern Ireland, which will

work in line with the NAP. The Strategy is widely consulted and involved with the black and minority ethnic sector prior to the official consultation (the recommendations of the Promotion of the Social Inclusion Working Group on minority ethnic people). It is also a good opportunity to priorities the local issues and concerns that fit into the NAP.

EU Article 13 Project on the development of Strategy of Legal Litigation for European NGOs on the transposition of the Race Directive and religious discrimination (SOLID)

NICEM awarded the above Project in February 2004 from the European Commission to develop a details proposal of a 24 months project implementation period in six months time. This is a specific Project for the capacity building of the NGOs in 25 Member States to identify potential testing cases on racial, ethnic and religious grounds on one hand, to develop national litigation strategy and legal support network on the others. One of the key issues to address is to reconnect the activist type NGOs with legal profession or free- lance lawyers on one hand, with national body (as required by the Directive) such as CRE type body on the others. NICEM is the lead partner of the Project with the core partner, the European Network Against Racism. The other European partners are Interights, European Roma Rights Centre, Public Interest Law Institute of the Columbia University in Budapest, Denmark Documentation Centre and LBR of the Netherlands.

We have almost finalised the proposal, which requires submit by 15 September 2004. A detail Concept Paper of the Project will be published and circulate around NGOs and funders for co-financing purposes.

UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Thematic Discussion on Non-citizens protection

NICEM made a formal submission to the CERD in mid-February 2004 on the thematic discussion on Non-citizens protection. The Executive Director also attended a conference, which was organised by the Social Justice Initiative of the Open Society Institute, prior to the CERD thematic discussion in Geneva, on the same issue. The thematic discussion is followed up the final Report of the Special Rapporteur on Non-citizens protection of the UN Sub-commission of Human Rights in which requests all UN Treaty Body of Human Rights to discuss and to make recommendations in their own area of concern.

The Executive Director also made an oral intervention during the thematic discussion on 28 February 2004 and recommends the CERD to amend their General Recommendations 11 on Non-citizen, which was outdated. As a result, a new General Recommendations 30 is now replaced the old 11 in which it limits the States the use of non-citizen exception under the Convention obligations. It can provide a much better safeguard for migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented persons in terms of human rights protection.

MAINSREAMING RACE INTO GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE

Implementation of the Race Directive & Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland

The Race Relations (NI) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 was implemented on 19 July 2003. The only issues, as well as in the UK, whether the Regulations was fully transposed the necessary requirements under the Race Directive. **We were very disappointed that due to the Direct Rule administration we were forced to follow the UK model in which “colour and nationality” are excluded on the one hand, it creates confusion and a two-tiers legislation to both employers and service providers, as well as to ethnic minority people. The legal uncertainty will create more unnecessary litigation in the future. The only good news in Northern Ireland law is that the transposition of the EU Directives covers public appointment in race, religious, political opinion and gender (not in GB).** The proposed Disability Regulations and Age Regulations will also apply to public appointment (both Regulations will be enacted by late 2004 and 2005 respectively).

Due to our political stalemate the Single Equality Bill has been slipped for two years. A Green Paper (with options) was published in June 2004 for public consultation (closing by 12 November 2004). But the new timetable will delay for another two years. This means that we will not get the law until 2007-8 in which Northern Ireland will be falling into the UK agenda and timetable with the amalgamation of the existing three Commissions (race, gender and disability) in 2006 and consider Single Equality Act in 2007-8.

Regarding consultation, NICEM will facilitate the process for the sector in September 2004 and in partnership with Multi-cultural Resource Centre and Travellers Movement (NI). We are planning to organise three consultation meetings for the sectors in September and October. These will be in Belfast, Craigavon and Derry / Londonderry. NICEM will also develop a briefing paper and a template submission for the sector to add their specific issue(s) within their own community. We will encourage all black and minority ethnic groups to response by using the template.

Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

There is little progress on the Bill of Rights. Due to the political stalemate in Northern Ireland, the political process to engage local political parties on the Bill of Rights is not possible. At the same time, we also witness the Human Rights Commission pushing their final chapter to conclude their proposal. The publication of the Interim Report on the Bill of Rights in April 2004 is towards that direction. It also means that the Bill of Rights will go no-where, unless it gets the blessing from the local politician. We are concerned that the intention of the Commission is to put the cart before the horse, as the purpose of the Interim Report is to impose their views to the political process in which all parties opposed that approach. Otherwise we will risk have the lowest denominator of the Bill if the Commission proposed to give their

advice to the Secretary of State before their term finish by early 2005, without local politician's blessing.

The Council of Europe experts visited the key NGOs, all political parties and statutory bodies in Northern Ireland in late October 2003 on their views on the Bills of Rights. Due to the Executive Director was in Hong Kong during that period, a separate meeting was held in Strasbourg when the Executive Director attended the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities event in early November 2003. We raised our specific concerns on the drafted proposal on minority protection and its implication to equality legislation, in particular fair employment legislation through compulsory monitoring of community background.

Race Equality Strategy and Race Equality Forum

The Forum was started last May and three meetings had taken place. In general the Forum is the process to finalise and fine tune the Race Equality Strategy in which it will requires all Northern Ireland departments develop Action Plan in its own area that cut across the six Strategic Aims. The Forum also has the officials from eleven departments, as well as other statutory bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission, Community Relations Council, etc. Two Working Groups haven been set up: one on Racial Incident and Racism and the other on Language. NICEM have representation in both working groups. The Strategy is not yet finalised until late Autumn 2004. NICEM strongly feels that the process is too slow in finalised the final document.

Core Funding for Ethnic Minority Sector

In the height of the racist attacks in early January 2004 the Minister, John Speller, MP, announced that the existing Core Funding for ethnic minority sector would extend for one year, despite the External Consultant Review Report recommendations, which was endorsed by the Race Equality Forum meeting in December, to continue the three years' cycle core funding for the sector, as well as other key issues such as low capacity building within the sector. NICEM organised a press conference in response to the decision of the Minister. We also organised a meeting for the sector on the issues. It was agreed that we should conveyed the views of the sector to the Minister on his decision and asked for a meeting. Having discussed with the official it was agreed that it is better for the Minister attend the Race Equality Forum meeting in which most of the representatives from the sector at NICEM's meeting are the member of the Forum. The Minister was explained in the May 2004 meeting. He suggested the new funding scheme for the sector should link into the Race Equality Strategy. We agreed on that argument and wait and see the final decision from the Minister on the future core funding by the end of 2004.

Racist Attacks in Belfast and beyond

Over the last twelve months a number of high profile racist attacks that involved with loyalist paramilitaries (more than one group and also involved the BNP offspring in Northern Ireland the White Nationalist Party) in a single small village area became the media attention and national news. As a result, we spent most of the time to tackle the issues in terms of the support of the victims, as well as working with political parties, local community groups to address the wider racism and the local social deprivation issues and related policy change.

The most difficult job is the negative media portraits on these issues in which create the political ground for further sectarian divide. Supposing a neutral race issue becomes party politics and bigotry. Media pays much responsibility on the whole development. Belfast is being portrait as the most racist city in Europe. Put it into the political context that certain groups keep on over use of the media to make public statements and demonstration, as well as to polarise the politician into sectarian politics. NICEM does not agree with that argument and strategies. We issued a joint statement with the Progressive Unionist Party proposing a comprehensive actions need to be taken by different level of work in our society. The negative condemnation without any positive action will not help the issues. It is rather backfire as the result in which it alienates those living in the village area that does not support paramilitary, nor other perpetrators but are demonised by the press. At the practical level, ethnic minority people live in the area will have more retaliation as the result.

At the same time the media kept on reporting new attacks draw the attention to the administration and politician. NICEM works very hard to get all the political parties on our side to tackle the issues through the support of the Race Equality Strategy, the new proposed hate crime legislation (support NICEM's position) and the signatory of the European Charter on non-racist Society (EU Kahn Commission) at the European Week Against Racism by all the political parties in Northern Ireland. We also used the unique opportunity to brief all political parties on these issues. That working relationship proved to be very useful for NICEM's future development as the leading body for the sector to tackle these complex issues in a professional way to get the best interests for the society, in particular with the Police Service (NI) in which we are always very critical on their policy and practice.

NICEM works alongside with the local group (the Greater Village Regeneration Trust) to set up working group to tackle the issues, alongside with UNISON and their members who live in the area (Filipino, Asian and African nurses), the local church groups, Community Relations Council and government department through the South Belfast Partnership Board.

In early March 2004 a most racial hatred leaflet was distributed at a public meeting organised by the Donegall Pass Community Forum and the Chinese Welfare Association regarding the planned Chinese Community Centre in the local area. No one challenged the leaflet when it was distributed at the meeting. The Executive Director was in Geneva at that time attending the UN Committee meeting and had a telephone message from the local education and library board. When we contacted with the person, we were informed that the leaflet was found in a Chinese girl's school bag. She is in nursery class. The leaflet is targeting the Chinese parents. When

we got the leaflet and reported to the police the seriousness of the offence and pushing the charge under the incitement of racial hatred.

Having learnt the experience previously with the media, we would like to hide the issue and avoid the party play sectarian politics. As a result, the Executive Director wrote to all party leaders and requested them to write to the Chief Constable to support using the incitement of racial hatred to charge the perpetrators in order to give a clear message to the society these behaviour is not acceptable. We got most of the party's support and waiting for the forensic evidence for prosecution. By mid-April the Deputy Chief Constable informed us that the evidence is not conclusive to ascertain who owns those equipments. As a result, we lost the case for prosecution.

The Executive Director was invited to speak at the Labour Party Irish Society seminar on the recent racist attack in Northern Ireland on 21 April 2004 at the Grand Committee Room in Parliament. Other speakers included Patricia Lewsley of the SDLP, Opik Lembak of Liberal Democrats, Tony Clarke and Stephen Pound of the Labour Party, also members of the Northern Ireland Grand Committee. The seminar is found to be useful to brief the MP on the issues and our views to move forward. It also assists the Northern Ireland Committee to understand the real situation in Northern Ireland regarding racism, which is always denial and under carpet. The Executive Director also attended the All Party Chinese Group discussed the same on the racist attacks against Chinese on 22 April in one of the Committee Room in Parliament. These profiles give NICEM the leading voice of the issues within the Parliament.

On 27 April 2004 the Executive Director was invited to speak at the Irish Congress of Trade Union Bi-annual Delegates Conference before the motion debate on the recent racist attack, racism and migrant workers. It gives us a unique opportunity to reinforce NICEM-PUP Joint Statement on one hand, to cement further partnership approach with trade union movement on anti-racism in Northern Ireland, as well as the island of Ireland.

On 8 May 2004 the Executive Director was invited to speak at the Democratic Unionist Party Conference on their motion on racism in Northern Ireland. We are pleased to hear the message that unionism does not complacent nor support racism.

Concerns have been made regarding the racist remarks made by the UUP Councillor in Craigavon regarding the planning permission of a local Mosque. As a result, the community relations are too tense and racial harassment and attacks were reported against the local Pakistani community. NICEM was involved with the local church initiative to solve the problem. And the Executive Director was invited to speak on community relations in Portadown organised by the local church groups.

The racist attacks against new migrants workers, in particular Filipino nurses, who work in hospital and private nursing home, and Portuguese workers, who work on meat processing plant, provide another snap-shots of non-tolerance and mono-cultural society in Northern Ireland. Low level of intimidation and harassment are the common norms and experience of the two communities. NICEM works closely with UNISON on Filipino nurses and STEP in Dunganon, who works with Portuguese community.

Hate Crime legislation

NICEM formulated our view and presented to the sector for their endorsement. The proposal from the Northern Ireland Office is more or less adopted our suggestions in the initial consultation, which was based on the Home Office Research and now incorporated in Section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (covered disability and homophobic). The proposal is not based on the old UK law on racial motivated offences, which is proved to be difficult in proving the motives of the perpetrator, but rather based on the aggravated hostility because of racial, religious and sexual orientation background. In our submission, we alert the authority that legislation alone cannot tackle the issue, we need to have policy and practice in place, especially within the criminal justice system, otherwise black and minority ethnic people are still disadvantaged simply because of institutional racism.

We submitted our view on the racial hate crime to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on the Inquiry of Hate Crime in Northern Ireland, with a substantial documents and papers from NICEM. As a result, we were arranged to provide evidence before the Committee on Wednesday, 5 May 2004. Committee. The executive Director and the Policy and Research Worker attended the meeting and the transcript is now available at the Committee website. Our submission and evidence to the Committee convince the Committee to go beyond the law on the Inquiry of the Hate Crime in Northern Ireland. The Committee agreed on our view that we should use this unique opportunity to examine the policy and practice, as well as capacity building and resources for the sector, in particular the Race Equality Strategy and Core Funding for the sector. As the result, the Committee will come to Belfast again to meet other ethnic groups in October 2004.

On the Hate Crime legislation, the Hansard Society to work in partnership with NICEM on the E-forum on hate-crime to assist the Committee to get wider view on the issue.

Public Appointment Commissioner Working Group on Diversity

The Executive Director invited by the Commissioner on her Working Group on Diversity in November 2003. There were three meetings so far and the main objectives of the Working Group is to develop a new policy and practice in Northern Ireland to realise a more diverse background on public appointment, including the issue of capacity building and shadowing method. The Working Group Report will publish by early 2005.

SECTION 75 SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR THE SECTOR

NICEM acts as the focal point for both the sector and the public authorities in the Section 75 processes. The public authorities have recognised NICEM as the umbrella organisation for the sector. We also provide advice, technical support and training for the sector, in particular for small organisation with no staff.

Consultation responses

We submitted our views on the following key consultation documents, which are the priority of NICEM:

Equality Commission consultation on the Review of the Guide and Guidance on s. 75

Equality Commission consultation on Draft Communications Strategy

Domestic Violence Strategy (DHSS&PS)

Proposals for the control of unauthorised encampments (DSD)

Race Equality Strategy (OFM/DFM)

Sexual Orientation Regulations (OFM/DFM)

Taskforce on Resourcing the Voluntary/Community sector (DSD)

Hate crime legislation (NIO)

Formal Complaints

We also wrote to the following public authorities complaining their policy and practice, which are discriminatory. Regarding the Religious Education Review, we have instructed the Counsel opinion to ascertain whether there is a merit to bring the case to County Court based on the new Race Regulations.

- Review of Religious Education (Department of Education)
- Electoral Fraud Act (NIO)

Consultation meetings organised

We also organised the following consultation meeting in conjunction with the public authority to the sector:

- Maternity services (DHSSPS)

- Taskforce on Resourcing the Voluntary/Community Sector Consultation Paper

Training on Section 75

- Black Trainers' Support Network (NICEM programme)
- Accredited Interpreter Training (NICEM programme)
- NICEM staff and volunteers
- Workshop on access to information for black and minority ethnic people for the Community Relation Officer (CRO) of the West Forum

Representation

- Belfast City Council Good Relations Committee
- Higher Level Steering Group on Know Racism Campaign, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Republic of Ireland
- Belfast Local Strategic Partnership
- Women's Support Network
- Equality Coalition
- Human Rights Consortium
- Holocaust Memorial Day Working Group (UK)

Public Awareness on Racism and Multiple- Discrimination

‘Legislation cannot change hearts and minds but it can stop the
heartless.’

(Martin Luther King)

Rationale for Anti-racism Education & Training

Changing hearts and minds to change policy and practice

- UN World Conference Against Racism Declaration & Programme of Action;
- European Conference against Racism: Proceedings from the European Commission against Racism & Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe;
- Northern Ireland Human Rights and Equality Agenda Combating Racism, Multiple Discrimination and Intolerance
- Legislation: National, European, International Standards
- Promoting a culture of human rights, equality and justice
- Moral and professional obligations
- Good business practice
- Race equality and equal opportunities are central to good practice
- Recognise diversity and its strength
- Social inclusion and cohesion
- Fostering good relations

Global Perspective

Raising public awareness on issues relating to racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination, including Islamophobia, is one of the key elements in any strategic plan to combat racism and promote diversity as recommended at the World Conference against Racism ¹. Such programmes can only meaningfully achieve behavioural, attitudinal and cultural change within institutions and society if they operate in conjunction with:

1. The introduction of strong and effective anti-discrimination legislation;
2. The implementation of policies and practices where equality is mainstreamed and;
3. Commitment from the media to avoid conveying oppressive stereotypical images of ethnic minorities and contribute to the education of the general public on issues of racial equality.

¹ In Durban, September 2001(WCAR Declaration & Programme of Action #95 and 97)

Current developments in Northern Ireland: Race Equality Strategy

The Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFM/DFM) has issued a draft proposal for a Race Equality Strategy (RES) to combat racism and racial discrimination. The RES would constitute a national plan against racism developed within the specific context of Northern Ireland (NI)

NICEM and OFM/DFM have gathered the views of minority ethnic people throughout NI. Feedback from individuals and groups was very constructive and will, hopefully, inform future public awareness strategies.

European Perspective

Article 13 Project

Transnational Project on the Development and Implementation of Anti-Discrimination and Diversity Training Measures Within Public Authorities in the area of health and education

All Member States in the European Union have a duty to introduce both the Race Directive and Employment Framework Directive into domestic legislation. To facilitate the transposition process, the European Commission has established a Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination.

As part of the Community Action Programme, **CEJI** in Brussels (the Centre Europeen Juif d'Information /European Jewish Information Centre) and **NICEM** initiated and implemented a two-year (2002-2204) Introduction of Anti-discrimination Training Measures Within Public Authorities project. The training programme was successfully piloted in Belfast (education sector public authorities) and in Berlin (education and health sector public authorities) from May 2003 to July 2004.

The overarching aim of the Introduction of *Anti-discrimination Training Measures Within Public Authorities* project was to **enable public authorities to combat multiple discrimination and promote diversity, and to:**

“Mainstream equality and diversity into policy and practice through positive community relations and participation with the aims of assisting public authorities to eliminate discrimination and provide culturally sensitive, equitable, caring and quality services.”

Vision Statement, October 2001

As a means of achieving this aim, the project has developed a training model on anti-discrimination and diversity issues specifically designed for public authorities. The model is founded on a partnership approach and based on the belief that we cannot fight one form of discrimination without fighting **all** forms of discrimination, including under Article 13:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender

- Race & Ethnicity
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation

Project Overview: Belfast

In Belfast, the project was implemented as the Anti-discrimination and Diversity in Action Programme. Education sector public authorities and voluntary sector organisations representing Section 75 constituents successfully combined their efforts and commitment to implement the vision and principles of the Project.

The project in Belfast was specifically aimed at senior and middle managers working within education sector public authorities. A partnership approach was adopted throughout each stage of the project's implementation and proved to be a significant factor in the project's overall success.

A Steering Group was established to assist in the project's implementation and monitor its progress. The Steering Group included representatives from each of the participating education sector public authorities. Nearly all of the members of the Steering Group participated in the training and were therefore able to actively promote the programme based on their own experience of it. In addition to providing assistance and useful suggestions regarding the project's implementation, the group participated in an action planning session that concentrated on good practice initiatives.

During the first few months of 2003, the Belfast Trainer team conducted a needs assessment, which involved the facilitation of focus groups, interviews with education sector public authorities, meetings with relevant voluntary sector organisations and the collection and analysis of data concerning issues of discrimination in Belfast and Northern Ireland.

The findings of the needs assessment were used to create a Participant Workbook and write case studies for the training programme. Training materials and activities were designed and in some instances adapted to address issues specifically relevant to Northern Ireland. However, the training workshops also addressed issues in a European and Global context with a view to enhancing the participants' knowledge and understanding of anti-discrimination and diversity.

From 2003-2004, six training workshops took place in Belfast. The education sector public authorities who participated in the training programme included: The Department of Education (DENI), The Belfast and Education Library Board (BELB), The Staff Commission, Youth Council, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), and N.I. Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). The training workshops consisted of two consecutive days and one follow-up and action-planning day, which took place two weeks later. Approximately fifty-five senior and middle managers from a cross-section of departments participated in the training workshops.

In keeping with the partnership ethos of the project, all of the training workshops were co-facilitated by a public authority trainer and voluntary sector trainer. This was particularly well received by the participants as it gave them opportunities to experience different approaches and perspectives.

Anti-discrimination and Diversity in Action Training Programme

The key objectives of the training programme in Belfast were to enable participants to:

- Understand duties within the framework of anti-discrimination and equality legislation as employees and citizens.
- Understand the difficulties faced by people who suffer multiple-discrimination.
- Understand how stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination can have an impact on individuals and institutions.
- Develop skills and strategies for challenging discrimination.
- Examine the challenges and benefits of diversity.

The training methodology was based on a highly interactive learner-centred approach, building on the skills, knowledge and experiences of the participants. Activities were designed to stimulate active participation, discussion and reflective thinking. Issues relating to equality, diversity, discrimination and multiple-discrimination were examined in detail in order to provide the participants with opportunities to exchange views and perceptions and to reflect on the impact of these issues in the context of their professional roles and responsibilities.

In addition to considering issues around the mainstreaming of equality and diversity into policy and practice, the participants were encouraged to explore and reflect upon their individual attitudes towards anti-discrimination and diversity. Sectarianism, racism, institutional discrimination and attitudes towards sexual orientation were particular areas of focus. Action planning sessions addressed strategies to promote inclusion and combat discrimination in the context of service provision and employment practices.

Establishment of a Joint Consultative Forum

A key outcome of the Anti-discrimination and Diversity in Action project in Belfast has been the establishment of a Joint Consultative Forum. Consultation is essential to improving and informing the development of policy and practice and the mainstreaming of equality. Effective consultation provides more opportunities for issues to be raised and solutions to be identified than by centralised policy making. Those undertaking consultation need to ensure that the process includes and addresses the views and concerns of all stakeholders.

The need to improve consultative arrangements was identified through the focus group discussions that were conducted as part of the needs assessment component of the project and through the training workshop action planning sessions. The general consensus was that consultation was vital to the planning, delivery and monitoring of services. Moreover, it was agreed that “personal” contact greatly enhanced both the organisation of consultation events and the actual degree of participation in the consultation process.

Further focus groups were conducted with representatives from voluntary and community organisations to discuss experiences of consultation and to ascertain the

level of support for the establishment of a Joint Consultative Forum. The discussions that took place during these meetings indicated a high level of support for the Forum. It was agreed that the Forum would improve the consultation process, provide greater opportunities for constructive dialogue and contribute to the greater involvement of voluntary and community organisations in the policy making process.

The first Forum meeting, which was held on 1 April 2004, attended by over fifty representatives from public authority, trade union, voluntary and community organisations. The meeting was used to gain a better understanding of respective roles and insight into some of the issues, which consultees believe should form part of the mainstreaming agenda. It was also used to establish structures for the Forum, agree its terms of reference and identify agenda items for future meetings. The agenda included presentations from public authority and voluntary organisation representatives. The main issues to emerge from the initial Forum meeting were:

- concerns regarding bullying of children/young people in an educational environment, in particular peer abuse;
- the need to ensure curriculum development around issues such as citizenship, equality, diversity, human rights and social justice;
- engagement of children/young people in the policymaking and decision making process.

The next Forum meeting has been scheduled to take place on 30 September 2004. The establishment of the Joint Consultative Forum represents a significant achievement of the project's aims as it embodies the principles of good practice and is based on an inclusive partnership approach.

European Roundtable

In June 2004, CEJI and NICEM hosted a European Roundtable that focused on the exchange of good practice in the context of anti-discrimination and diversity initiatives. The 2-day Roundtable event included participants working in anti-discrimination units and experts providing training from Dublin, Rotterdam, Budapest and Brussels, as well as participants from Berlin and Belfast where the project was carried out.

The presentations made at the European Roundtable have been published in a booklet entitled: Combating Discrimination and Promoting Diversity in Public Authorities: Action through Partnership.

NICEM wishes to acknowledge and thank all of those who contributed to the successful implementation of the Anti-discrimination and Diversity in Action project. Particular thanks for their support and commitment to the Belfast Trainer Team, the members of the Steering Group, the Women's Support Network, the Belfast Education and Library Boards and the Staff Commission.

For more information visit:

www.ceji.org
www.nicem.org

www.enar-eu.org
www.europa.eu.int/employment_social

Northern Ireland Perspective (Also UK and Republic of Ireland)

Anti-racism and Equality Training: Ten years of awareness raising

Raising public awareness on racism and other forms of discrimination, not just in the workplace but also at home and in social life, has consistently featured high on NICEM's work programme **over the last ten years**.

An increasingly wide range of organisations and groups has actively sought to implement policies driven by standards of non-discrimination and promotion of diversity as a norm. It has been encouraging to organise training with so many people, with numerous policy-makers in their midst, who display a personal commitment to ensure that cultural change, at organisational level, and attitudinal and behavioural change, at individual level, do indeed occur.

The general feeling also points to the importance of strong leadership, organisational support, additional resources and further training. More particularly, participants find that training facilitates an increase in staff confidence in handling anti-discriminatory and diversity practice issues.

*Congratulations and many good wishes to the (approximately) **9,000** individuals and numerous organisations from all sectors who have participated in NICEM's anti-racism and equality training programmes **since 1994!***

List of Participants for 2003/04

The training and education team at **NICEM** wishes to thank the following organisations (and many others in the process of starting their training programme), their partners and employees for working with us to achieve equality of opportunity and outcome through training.

- BIFHE
- Belfast Education and Library Board: Citizenship Education For Teachers
- Council for the Homeless
- Clanmill Housing Association
- NI Courts Service: presentation to judges
- Childcare N.I.
- Carew Family Centre
- Cranmore Integrated Primary School

- Diversity Matters Project (in partnership with Disability Action)
- East Antrim Institute
- Homestart: Dungannon
- Introduction of Anti-discrimination Measures within Public Authorities: Article 13 Project: Department of Education N.I., Belfast Education Library Board, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Staff Commission, Youth Council and N.I. Council for Integrated Schools, various groups from the community and voluntary sector in NI.
- NICEM: Job skills programme
- NICEM: Interpreters training programme
- NICRAS: NI Committee for Refugees and Asylum Seekers: football team
- Queen's University of Belfast: Multi-cultural Medicine
- Springboard
- Southern Education and Library Board: Youth Service
- St Mary's College and Stranmillis: teacher training
- Train the Trainers: Black and Ethnic Minorities Trainers Network
- Train-the Trainer: Introduction of Anti-discrimination Measures within Public Authorities: Article 13 Project
- University of Ulster at Jordanstown: Community Youth Work
- Western Community Relations Officers Forum: ethnic minorities and the promotion of good relations
- Women Into Politics: Let's Talk Politics
- Women Resource and Development Agency
- Women's Information Group
- NI Youth Conference Service

Anti-discrimination and Diversity Train-the-Trainer Trainers from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups: Support Network

A new group of 11 Trainers from minority ethnic communities and/or working with those communities have been following an extensive and on-going training programme covering anti-discriminatory practice, equality, human rights, training skills, legislation and computer skills. The course is primarily aimed at **building the capacity** of Trainers from community groups who have already developed understanding and awareness of issues affecting these communities.

Congratulations to the Trainers who have successfully completed the Trainer qualifications awarded by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD Certificate in Training) and Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (BIFHE Certificate in Training Practice). They will also complete the tailor-made programme on anti-discrimination and diversity for Trainers developed by NICEM.

“Anti-racism & Equality in Action” Training Manual and Workbook

Large-scale organisations have generally preferred to avail of the intensive Train the Trainer Programmes and use of NICEM’s material. Cascading the training within the organisation both speeds up the process of training delivery and is more cost-effective.

As a matter of good practice and overall effectiveness, organisations are encouraged to opt for co-facilitation between their internal Trainers and Trainers working in the field of anti-discrimination in the voluntary sector.

NICEM’s TRAINING: methodology and approach

Most participants have felt it more effective to deal with the multiple dimension of discrimination as well as with single identity issues.

The training sessions examine issues around the mainstreaming of equality and diversity into policy and practice. Information about UK and European anti-discrimination legislation and Equality legislation specific to NI is covered in the programme. In addition to focusing on employment and service provision issues, participants have the opportunity to explore and reflect on individual attitudes and values. The emphasis on professional as well personal exploration enables the participants to gain greater awareness about the challenges and benefits of diversity.

Activities are designed to stimulate active participation and interaction, discussion and reflective thinking.

Concepts of diversity, equality, discrimination, multiple discrimination and anti-discrimination are explored in detail. This is to give all participants opportunities to

exchange views and perceptions, and to reflect on the meanings of these concepts in a safe environment. Issues of institutional and societal discrimination, as well as racism and other “isms” are key components of the training programmes.

NICEM’s TRAINING: Participants’ Feedback

Feedback from most participants has been very positive. The general consensus is that the training sessions are stimulating, informative, challenging, useful and well facilitated. Participants find the emphasis on interactive and experiential learning conducive to an open and stimulating exchange of ideas.

Participants’ Comments

- “Good use of my time.”
- “Thank you for the opportunity to learn about and address issues of equality and diversity in a secure and professional environment.”
- “This was a valuable and stimulating course....a tremendous amount of information in a short period of time.”
- “Very enjoyable and informative”
- “Very thought provoking programme. Led to a lot of self-examination and increased my awareness of many equality issues.”
- “A worthwhile learning experience for me.”
- “An excellent course. Well structured and professionally delivered.”

Events / seminars

- Diversity Matters (training project with Disability Action)
- Thanksgiving celebration and fundraising with the NI Committee of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS)
- Roundtable with European NGOs, MEPs, Irish Government representatives and Office of the NI Executive in Brussels
- European Roundtable on Good Practice within Public Authorities: at the Senate in Brussels
- Signing by political parties in NI of the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-racist Society: European Commission office in Belfast
- Contribution to the conference on Hate Crime: probation service trade union
- Launch of the Black and Minority Ethnic Trainers Network and award ceremony: Belfast City Hall

Representation

- Board Member of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, Republic of Ireland
- Member of the Steering Group on a National Plan against Racism, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform
- Human Rights and Education Forum
- Chairperson of the Black and Minority Ethnic Trainers Network

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

Capacity building is an essential strand of community development and of social inclusion strategies. It involves working with community groups to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet their aims and objectives – whether it is to deliver services to their community or contribute to policy and strategy development in their interest area

INTRODUCTION

During the year 2003-2004, NICEM Capacity Building Team has experienced a number of changes in staff and has seen the completion of two of our key projects, the Ethnic Minorities Health Advocacy Project funded by the Community Foundation NI through the Investing in Healthier Communities programme and the NICEM Volunteering Development Project funded by the Active Community Initiative from the Department of Social Development. These projects were particularly successful in encouraging a higher level of participation from black and minority ethnic minority groups and individuals in both the general work of NICEM but also, in developing new relationships with wider the wider health and volunteering sectors and these relationships have continued and strengthened since the end of both projects. The role of NICEM is often to act as a bridge to encourage the wider participation of ethnic minority individuals and groups in mainstream services, we consider that both of these projects have been valuable assets to the sector as a whole and have encouraged many individuals not previously engaged with the work of the black and minority ethnic sector into the field. NICEM's own volunteering programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund (previously known as the Community Fund) continues to support our own volunteers until November 2004

Both projects were successfully completed and have both created new opportunities for development both in the field of health advocacy and improvement of services to ethnic minorities and cultural competence with services and also for volunteering with a particular focus on employment skills and employability. We look forward to working together with other agencies in order to take forward what we have learnt from these projects in the coming year.

2003-2004 has also seen the winding down and completion of our general capacity building project supported by the Big Lottery Fund, through direct advice and support to individual groups. Capacity Building services for minority ethnic organisations will continue to be delivered to groups, however through a more structured programme based on the implementation of quality assurance action plans within organisations, tailor made according to their size and capacity.

Following the development of NICEM's five year strategic plan during the summer of 2003, all projects within the Capacity Building Team began the process of streamlining their work and focusing on strengthening the work of ethnic minority groups either in the early stages of development, serving the needs of minority ethnic women, addressing the needs of more vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers and refugees, working with young people and developing stronger links with communities outside Belfast.

NICEM'S GENERAL CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

Our direct advice and support to groups has continued with the work of assisting and advising groups on securing funding for a wide variety of purposes including initial set up costs, promotional events, securing staff positions, sourcing funding to carry out specific projects with young people, securing funds for the development of volunteering schemes, health related projects and events and general running and administrative costs for organisations.

We also continued our work on advice on developing constitutions, becoming a registered charity, planning projects and acting as a link between minority ethnic groups and other agencies with services and support to offer on specific programmes for example Wheelwork and New Belfast Community Arts Initiative arts based programmes with young people.

Organisations which have participated in the team's work over the year include

- Al-Nisa Association NI
- Mandarin Speakers Association
- NI Pakistani Cultural Association
- NI Pakistani Community Association
- Belfast Islamic Centre
- NI Muslim Families Association
- Indian Community Centre
- Belfast Jewish Community
- Strabane Ethnic Communities Association
- Sikh Cultural Centre (Derry)
- Northern Ireland Filipino Association
- Latino America Unida
- Bangladeshi Welfare Association
- Afro-Caribbean Support Organisation NI
- Interact NI
- World Wide Women @ North Down

The Capacity Building Team thanks all those groups and individuals who have been involved in our work and hope we can continue to work together for further development of the sector.

As organisations have grown and secured funding during the year, particularly for paid staff within, the Capacity Building Team has received increasing numbers of requests for support on organisational management issues such as advice on and involvement in recruitment procedures, general guidance on the introduction of essential policies and procedures to support the management of staff and their work within organisations.

This growing need has informed the future direction of the Capacity Building Team , together with more focus on developing relationships and supporting groups and individuals outside of Belfast. The urgent issue of financial sustainability with the sector and over reliance on external dwindling funding sources will be addressed by NICEM over the next two years through not only improving the organisational management within the black and minority ethnic sector but also through promotion

of and supporting the development of the social economy and community enterprise initiatives, generating income for organisations.

Training sessions organised for the black and minority ethnic sector over the year have included

- Series of workshops on employment and employability skills in NI for individual minority ethnic people new to Northern Ireland
- Training on Managing Volunteers
- Training on Budgeting and Financial Management
- Management Committee skills training
- Anti-racist practice in Community Development

Future direction for building the capacity of organisations in the Black and Minority Ethnic Sector

NICEM's future capacity building work with black and minority ethnic organisation now be carried out with individual groups which have agreed to participate in the NICEM Good Governance programme, supported by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. This programme will support groups to design and implement their own action plans on organisational development and management including development of appropriate policies and procedures supported by the delivery of appropriate training to support the practical implementation of policies within the organisations.

NICEM has been using the PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) System since 1998, in order to improve the management of the organisation. It has provided a systematic way for the organisation to tackle priority management areas, again according to internal capacity. Although funding pressures often result in project outputs and success taking priority over internal administration and management, by continually keeping our own PAQSSO action plan under review and realistic, we have managed to introduce many management policies and procedures, which have improved the management of staff, services and NICEM as a whole.

We realise that for black and minority ethnic organisations with a small number of staff or no staff these considerations often are not addressed, however pressure to secure resources and produce high quality results mean that they can no longer be ignored and NICEM's new project on good governance supporting the implementation of quality action plans within organisations will work together with groups planning for organisational development in a realistic and practical way, according to their own needs and the needs of their communities but also ensuring that charities fulfil their legal and financial responsibilities. This will improve their longer term sustainability and ensure that groups have the knowledge and skills to compete for resources alongside well established voluntary sector organisations.

NICEM INTERPRETER TRAINING PROJECT AND NICEM INTERPRETING SERVICE

In autumn 2003, NICEM successfully completed the accreditation process with the NIOCN for two training programmes aimed individuals who wish to become Community Interpreters or Bi-lingual Health Advocates.

Course Delivery

The Interpreter Training project since that period has delivered three rounds of the NICEM Basic Training for Community Interpreters and one round of the NICEM Advocacy & Mediation in Health Course, with 51 learners currently having completed or in the process of completing training and another 15 learners beginning in November 2004 due to complete in December 2004.

The courses have proved very popular with learners and languages spoken have included

- Turkish
- French
- Portuguese
- Lithuanian
- Romanian
- Russian
- Turkish
- Mandarin
- Bulgarian

And many more.

The majority of those who have completed the training have gone on to join NICEM's Interpreting Service.

NICEM held an award ceremony in June 2004 for all those individuals who had completed the Interpreter Training, Health Advocacy Training and the CIPD Training Practice course undertaken by members of the NICEM Black and Minority Ethnic Trainers' Network prior to June. The event was held in Belfast City Hall with guest speakers from the Department of Employment and Learning and the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education.

Developing the skills of trainers for future delivery

During the course of training delivery, two members of the NICEM Black and Minority Ethnic Trainers Network, Ximena Arias-McLaughlin and Guiseppina Siriu have shadowed the basic training and the health advocacy training. This has enabled NICEM to build up a pool of skilled trainers capable of delivery training in the future in anticipation of the end of the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership funded project, for future delivery of training on a regional basis.

NICEM in Partnership with STEP have already started delivery of the NIOCN Basic Training for Community Interpreters in the Dungannon area which is due to be completed in Autumn 2004.

This future model for interpreter training delivery will ensure that minority ethnic individuals outside of the Belfast area will also have access in the longer term to skilled quality interpreting services and as the project has done in Belfast, will provide individual ethnic minorities with skills to improve their employability and create opportunities for employment and economic development.

The NICEM Interpreter Support Network

In order to offer continued support to interpreters working in the NICEM Interpreting Service, the Interpreter Training Project has developed a support network which aims to facilitate on-going training, personal support and communication between interpreters and also inform service providers through meeting and consultations.

Membership of the network is open to all those individuals who have completed the NICEM NIOCN accredited training and those interpreters who have completed the DHSSPS NIOCN accredited training for interpreters in the health service and have joined the NICEM Interpreting Service.

Meetings are held on a quarterly basis and guest speakers are invited to meetings in order to broaden interpreters' knowledge of public sector services. All those interpreters attending these additional training sessions receive certificates of attendance as acknowledgement of their participation and presentations organised this year have included the Police Service for Northern Ireland and also a Psychiatrist, Dr Mamoun Mobayed has conducted a session on skills for interpreters during counselling or breaking bad news.

A monthly newsletter is planned for next year to facilitate more regular communication and also disseminate information relevant to interpreters here which NICEM may have received from the UK, Ireland or Europe.

Future course development

NICEM has already begun the process of developing a new training course for community interpreters in Northern Ireland working within the criminal justice system.

We have been working together with Joan Colin, a leading expert in the UK on interpreting within the courts, police and immigration services and the writer of key publications in this field. Together with Joan NICEM hopes to transfer a similar existing Open College Network course from the London Open College Network and develop materials for working specifically within the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. We hope that all relevant public bodies will be involved in the production of materials and will be consulted during the development of the course. The development of this course has become a more urgent issue since NICEM was successful in its tender to provide interpreting services to the Police Service for Northern Ireland on regional basis and we are keen to ensure that such services are delivered to as high a standard as possible.

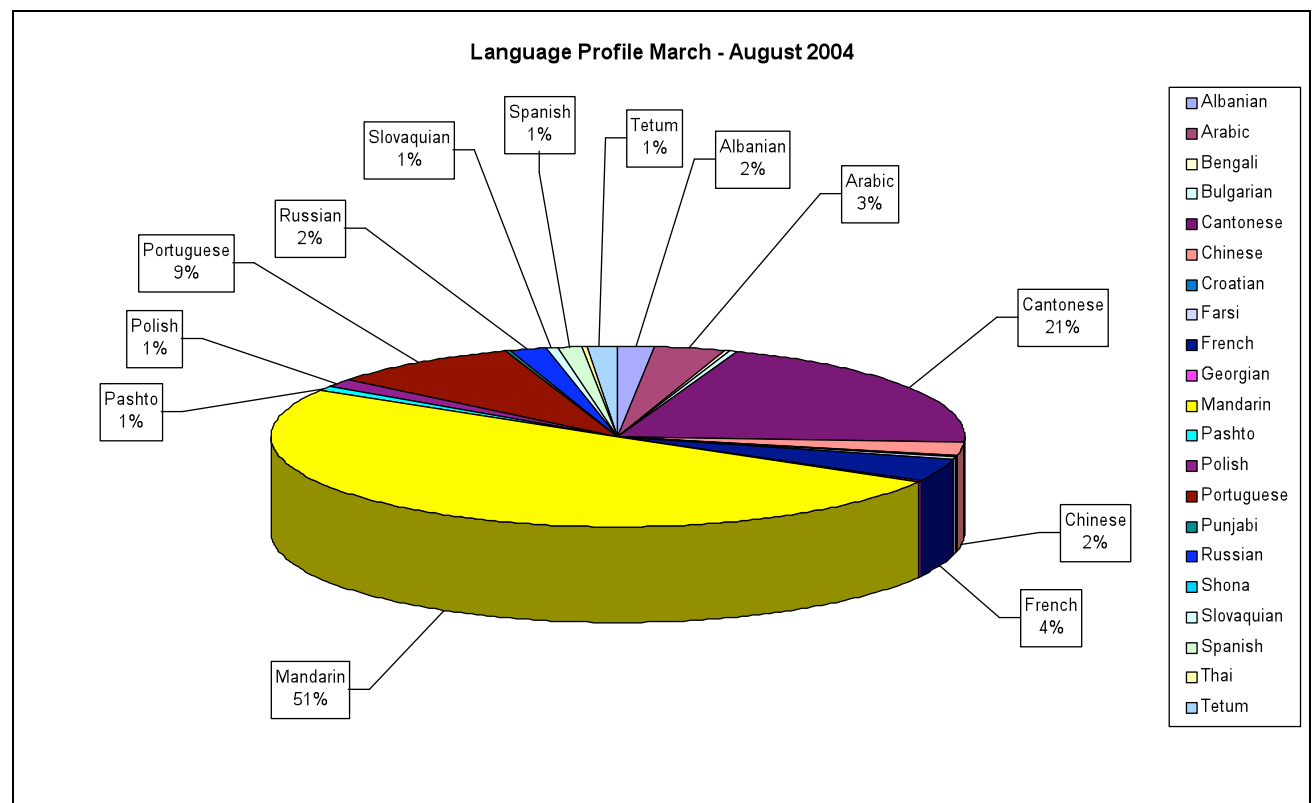
NICEM INTERPRETING SERVICE

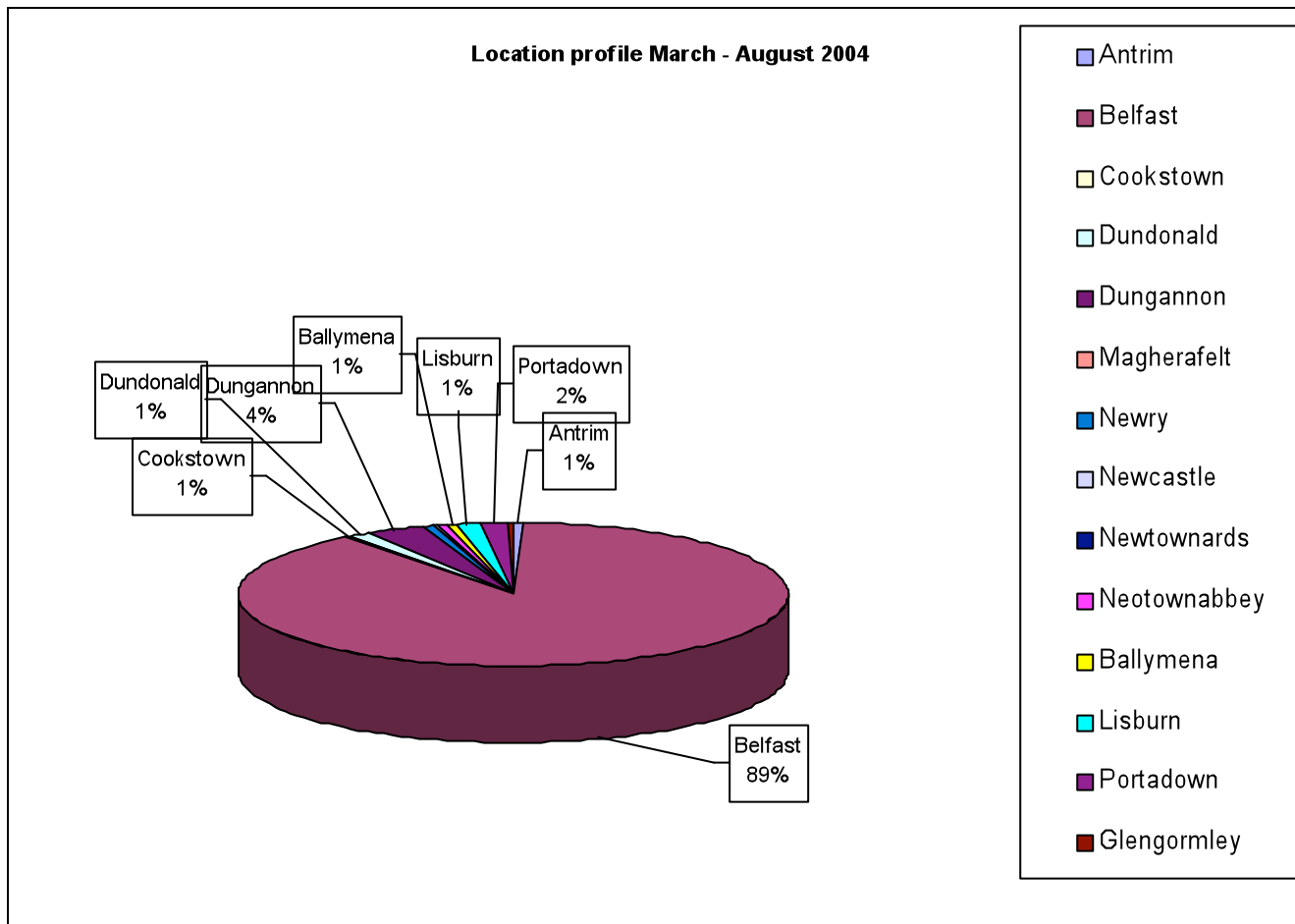
The NICEM Interpreting Service has expanded extensively and quickly over the past year. The demand for interpreting services has increased dramatically as the public sector in particular becomes more aware of the responsibilities it has in relation to equality of access to services for ethnic minorities experiencing the language barrier. Although the majority of requests over the past year have been in relation to Health and Social Services provision, we are increasingly receiving requests from other public sector services now including the Police Service for Northern Ireland.

Demand for interpreting services has also significantly increased outside of the Belfast area and one of the future requirements for the NICEM Interpreter Training Project will be to deliver more training on a regional basis in order to fulfil current and future demands.

Statistics

The service processed 485 requests over the period March – August 2004, which came to a total of 988 interpreting hours.





Quality Assurance within the Interpreting Service

As noted in our annual report for 2003-2004, the NICEM Interpreting Service has been involved in the piloting of a project by the Refugee Council on developing quality assurance systems and procedures in Interpreting services.

We are very pleased to report that thanks to the hard work of the staff within the service and the Interpreter Training project, the Interpreting service now has the following quality assurance processes and procedures in place

- A formal procedure and guidance for booking interpreters, confirming booking with agencies and recording all bookings for monthly statistical analysis
- Written records and timesheets for interpreters and service users to confirm all sessions and signed by representatives of agencies
- A computerised database in place to record bookings, statistics and which generates invoicing and payments for the service (will be updated and improved during Nov-Dec 2004)
- Feedback procedure and form sent with confirmation of each booking
- A NICEM Code of Conduct for Interpreters
- A NICEM policy on the provision of interpreting services
- A detailed register of all interpreters recording qualifications, experience and including security clearance processes for those working with the PSNI
- Photographic ID for all NICEM Interpreters (to be distributed Oct-Nov 04)

- Monthly statistical report on requests including information on languages, locations, service users, number of hours, etc

We are committed to improving and developing the service on a regular basis and began this process during August 2004 when existing interpreters were invited to re-register providing more information and were supplied with the updated policies and procedures for the service. We will also be compiling the results of feedback from service users over the period and will be consulting with interpreters in the service on what could be improved. We must also acknowledge current problems within the service which are predominantly administrative and financial in nature resulting in payments to interpreters being processed very slowly, but hope that administrative changes to be brought in over the next six months will greatly speed up this process.

We have also had to suspend the delivery of written translation to clients over the past year due to a lack of capacity within the organisation. The delivery of translations particularly when required in a number of languages requires a very high level of time commitment to co-ordinate translation, proofreading, typesetting or work on layout if necessary. This time commitment together with the investment in IT which is also required, has meant that we will be unable to fulfil requests for written translations until such time as we secure resources to support this activity.

Two of the greatest achievements of the service over the past six months has been to secure contracts with the PSNI and the Craigavon and Banbridge Health Trust to provide sessional interpreters, and hope that our service will continue to grow and develop contributing to greater access to services for those individuals with little or no English language skills and raising the profile and standards of interpreting in Northern Ireland.

NICEM ETHNIC MINORITIES HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

Funded by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, through the 'Investing in Healthier Communities' programme, this NICEM project had a two fold purpose, to produce a health needs assessment of six of the smaller minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland with recommendations for action which would also have a wider impact on the delivery of services to all minority ethnic groups, and secondly to increase the capacity of minority ethnic communities to tackle health issues within their communities and link effectively with the existing health service providers.

This project reached completion in June 2004 following the successful launch of the report 'Delivering on Equality; Valuing Diversity', written by Dr Angela O'Rawe.

This report maps Health and Social Needs including and evaluation of the specific language, communication and cultural requirements of six of Northern Ireland's smaller Black and Minority Ethnic Communities. It also examines the wider legislative and policy context and in doing, outlines the justification for providing a coherent, culturally and linguistically competent service for all ethnic groups across the region. Recommendations cited in the report following focus groups and consultation with the communities involved were that:

- The health of Northern Ireland's Black and Minority Ethnic Communities must be an integral part of the mainstream agenda, including funding, programme co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation
- The involvement, participation and empowerment of Black and minority ethnic communities are pre-requisite for successful and efficient service delivery.
- There is an immediate need to develop a comprehensive regional monitoring process including all ethnic groups
- Recognition of the health impact of wider social concerns, particularly racism
- Staff training programmes should move from culturally sensitivity to competence
- Develop a clear communication strategy
- The establishment of an accredited system to deliver bilingual health advocacy services, including specialist mental health advocacy, for non-English speaking clients
- Duty of acknowledge and make provision for the unique needs of specific groups
- Prioritise effective access to primary care including GP and dental services
- Address the gap in Black and minority ethnic health promotion needs
- Ensure that current complaints and grievance procedures address cross cultural ethical and legal conflicts in health care delivery

Copies of the full report and the executive summary can be obtained from NICEM.

The second key role of the project was to encourage and support members of minority ethnic community organisations to develop skills within their community to address health issues within the communities and develop effective working relationships with existing health service providers. The project workers organised a number of community based health activities over the period with the

- Belfast Islamic Centre – Accredited First Aid Training for women
- Sikh Community (Belfast) – childcare training delivered by the North Belfast Health and Social Services Trust
- Mandarin Speakers Association – Mental Health information day in conjunction with South & East Belfast Health and Social Services Trust and South Belfast Highway to Health
- Northern Ireland Committee for Asylum Seekers and Refugees – two health information awareness days
- Sikh Community (Derry) – Health Information day
- Bangladeshi Welfare Association – Health information day
- Al-Nisa Association NI – Accredited First Aid Training for members

The steering group for the project met twice over the year and NICEM also organised an action-planning day on the proposals included in the draft report.

The project workers also participated in a newly formed forum for those individuals working directly with minority ethnic communities on health issues. Membership includes NICEM, South Belfast Highway to Health Ethnic Minority Worker and Chinese Community Health Worker, South & East Belfast Health & South Services Trust Ethnic Minorities Community Development Worker. The forum came about to encourage better communication between those working in the sector, promote co-operation on joint projects and to avoid duplication of activities and resources within the sector.

The project was completed in full in June 2003 thanks to the dedicated work of the project staff Jiemin Tomita, Siobhan Molloy and Angela O’Rawe over the past year.

Future directions

Future developments for NICEM in this area with reference to the recommendations laid out in the report include, the development of an accredited training course in Mental Health with a focus on minority ethnic communities. This course will be developed in co-operation with Jean-luc Revest a skilled trainer from London who has developed the course in London and has previously delivered Community Interpreting and Health Advocacy Training for NICEM.

NICEM also plans to focus on the delivery of anti-racism training delivery within the statutory health sector and in co-operation with statutory health sector providers support a programme of assessment and planning for the delivery of culturally competent services.

ACTIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE – VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC SECTOR

This project funded by the Department of Social Development – Active Community Initiative was also completed during this year.

The project was aimed at promoting the principle of volunteering to black and minority ethnic individuals, to increase the capacity of 12 minority ethnic groups to develop and manage their own structured volunteering programmes and secure the necessary resources to maintain these programmes.

NICEM felt that there was a significant gap between the mainstream volunteering opportunities and structures and those ethnic minorities keen to volunteer within their own community and the wider community.

A high level of promotional work, developing close working relationships with groups and supporting their work, has achieved a change in attitudes to volunteering among communities which can be measured by the high number of volunteers now registered within groups, with mainstream volunteering organisations and linking with other volunteering projects such as Millennium volunteers, Dark Horse, Active Age, VOLT and CVS.

Recognition of volunteering within the sector has also been a contributing factor to the success of this project. We held the first NICEM Volunteer Awards ceremony in December 2003, to recognise the contribution of volunteers to the work of the Black and Minority Ethnic Sector. All volunteers were nominated for recognition by their community organisations and all received certificates of recognition. One volunteer was recognised as ‘NICEM Volunteer of the Year 2003’. Selected by an independent panel, Mr Cyril Rosenberg from the Belfast Jewish Community was recognised as Volunteer of the Year for his tireless contribution to his community over the past 30 years.

The project successfully produced a regular NICEM newsletter on volunteering opportunities, support and recognition of the contribution of both NICEM’s own volunteers and volunteers within other organisations working on specific projects. This newsletter also contributed to a wider recognition of the role and benefit of volunteering within the sector.

Supporting volunteering within the sector

Initial objectives for this project were to work with twelve individual ethnic minority community associations and assist in the recruitment of thirty volunteers over the two-year period. When the project reached completion in April 2004, it had worked with over 26 groups on volunteering, involving approximately 197 volunteers, vastly exceeding the original targets.

The project worker has supported over 12 minority ethnic groups to develop their own volunteering programmes with appropriate volunteering policies, procedures and record keeping in place.

As a direct consequence of this work, the groups which participated now factor in detailed volunteer related costs into funding applications, project plans and service delivery.

The Community Volunteering Scheme CVS fund experienced a large increase in applications from minority ethnic groups thanks to the NICEM project worker who assisted groups in their applications to this fund. The project assisted 13 community organisations to apply for funding to support their volunteers under the CVS grant scheme with a success rate of 90%.

Building relationships between ethnic minority individuals and groups and mainstream volunteering support

Following the completion of this project groups continue to support their volunteers and are actively recruiting larger number of volunteers to support their work. Community groups which participated in the work of this project have also maintain links with mainstream volunteering organisations such as VSB and as a direct result of this project, approximately 65 black and minority ethnic individuals have registered with VSB as volunteers over the course of the two year project through receipt of the CVS grants and approximately 60 of NICEM's own volunteers have also registered with VSB.

NICEM's Internal Volunteering programme

The Big Lottery Fund currently supports NICEM's Internal volunteering programme. Original target for this project were to provide a volunteer development scheme for 24 black and minority ethnic individuals, asylum seekers and refugees. These volunteers would undertake a variety of tasks including providing services to 90 clients of the NICEM Asylum Service through befriending and other support services, and volunteers would receive any required support training for the activities they undertook.

The Internal volunteering programme at NICEM attracted many more interested individuals than were expected and indeed demand often exceeded out internal capacity in terms of supervision and administration of the project. Over 100 volunteers have worked within NICEM over the past 18 months of the project, from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and ages. We have also taken 5 student placements, and 6 school-work experience placements over the past year, all of which made a real contribution to the work of the organisation and supported existing staff.

Over the year, NICEM volunteers have worked in the areas of administrative support, development and production of newsletters and website content, teaching English, and organising community activities. NICEM volunteers have also worked together with the Northern Ireland Committee for Refugees & Asylum Seekers in organising family support activities, a week of activities during Refugee week 2004, and residentials to Corrymeela. NICEM volunteers have participated in and completed a wide variety of training courses including NICEM Interpreter Training Programme, ECDL, Volunteer Management, IT qualifications, Childcare, English language, Job

Skills training, Desk Top Publishing, etc. All NICEM volunteers received certificates of recognition at the NICEM Volunteer Awards Ceremony.

The NICEM volunteering project is funded until November 2004, however future plans include the promotion of volunteering within the community sector particularly with the younger generation in order to encourage participation of young people in the work of the black and minority ethnic voluntary sector and develop leadership skills within the next generation.

‘Is it cos I is?’ – VSB Young Citizens in Action Project

NICEM staff worked closely with the VSB this year on a project entitled ‘Is it cos I is?’ a project to develop volunteering opportunities for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds to engage in mainstreaming volunteering work. NICEM and VSB brought together representatives from all communities to share their thoughts and get involved in developing opportunities for young people..

This project also aims to target mainstream volunteering organisations to encourage them to make their own services more accessible to individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds and discussions with volunteer bureaux and community groups have encouraged a number of groups to think more inclusively to relation to their volunteer systems.

Lessons from the project and recommendations for future development in the field

Within the mainstream voluntary sector there is a clear and quantifiable perception of what volunteering is and what it involves, this attitude and perception is often not shared by minority ethnic communities or individuals working on the ground. The various perceptions of what is termed volunteering and its links with different elements of the lives of ethnic minorities such as religion means that traditional methods of large agency intervention and support have not always been appropriate. An approach as individual and as flexible as the communities themselves is needed in order to fully support these groups to participate in mainstream volunteering opportunities.

Recommendations emerging from the project include:

- Formal high profile recognition of the work of minority ethnic volunteers and communities
- Anti-racism training for all volunteer bureaux & agency staff
- A flexible and open ended funding programme for short term and longer term volunteering support.

Thanks to the work of this project we have experienced a rise in the number of individual ethnic minorities engaging in the work of NICEM, and this has benefited the organisation as whole in both the delivery of our services and informing the direction of the work of the organisation.

‘COUNT ME IN’ – NICEM & SAVE THE CHILDREN REPORT EXPLORING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AMONGST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In early 2003, NICEM received funding from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland to conduct a piece of research with young people from minority ethnic groups exploring their experiences of growing up in Northern Ireland and their participation within the community of Northern Ireland.

The research was conducted by Dr Katy Radford, Research Officer with Save the Children over the period Autumn 2004 and drafting and final writing up was completed in Spring 2004.

Aims of the research

- Are the issues that young people from minority ethnic communities face different from those faced by children from the majority communities?
- What prevents young people from drawing on already existing provisions in the wider communities?
- What would young people like to change?
- What new ways of working can be found to engage more meaningfully with young people from minority ethnic communities?
- What are the key issues that arise on a recurring basis for young people from minority ethnic communities?

Methodology

Representative of minority ethnic community organisations were invited to join the advisory group for the research. The majority of groups did not have the capacity to participate in the advisory group as many are managed on a completely voluntary basis, but representatives from the Al-Nisa Association NI, the Belfast Jewish Community, the Muslim Family Association, the Chinese Welfare Association, Indian Community Centre and the Belfast Sikh Community all met with the researcher and gave valuable input throughout the project.

50 young people aged 10-18 were interviewed over the course of the research, and 13 of these young people went on to participate in 2 further workshops and follow up work with Save the Children supporting the production of the publication.

Some of the Issues Highlighted and Recommendations

- Young people comprise over one third of the minority ethnic population of Northern Ireland
- Aspects of identity including ethnicity and faith, are a preoccupation for all young people
- Young people are keen to ensure that any mainstreaming of their needs recognises that groups and individuals from minority ethnic communities are not homogeneous
- Parental expectations are particularly influential factors in young people's choices.

- Restricted access to culturally relevant art-forms and consumer goods is frustrating for young people
- There are relatively few positive role models for young people from minority ethnic communities working within the service provisions that directly affect them.
- Racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are realities that many of the young people and their families experience on a regular basis.
- Racist abuse and attacks are most likely to be perpetrated in public spaces by one young person or a group of young people against others
- Young people feel that youth clubs and schools do not mainstream their interests nor provide adequate opportunities to access their rights to a cultural identity

16 Recommendations were identified by the research including:

- Government should commit to funding of an accurate profile of the population of children from minority ethnic communities and those with multiple heritages
- All government departments should support and strengthen anti-racist and anti-discrimination training for all staff
- Organisations working directly with and on behalf of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds should be given particular assistance in supporting the strategic development of minority communities and in strengthening confidence raising at an inter-generational level.
- The Department of Education, Department of Employment and Learning and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should ensure that anti-racist practice and anti-discriminatory work should be actively incorporated into play and learning in pre-school provision.
- The Northern Ireland Religious Education core syllabus should reflect much more comprehensively religious pluralism in Northern Ireland and globally. Furthermore, CCEA's review of the educational curriculum should develop ways of mainstreaming cultural diversity through integrating non-Christian faiths and minority ethnic issues into the study of art, literature, and history and not merely confine issues of identity to core subjects such as personal development and citizenship.

Copies of the report can be ordered from Save the Children.

The next phase of work with young people to be carried out during 2005 will be a youth leadership training programme aimed at young people from minority ethnic backgrounds aged 16-25.

ADVOCACY AND ADVICE ON RACIAL HARASSMENT AND ATTACK

Introduction

Racism is an affront to the dignity of the person and it is a breach of human rights when it involves subjecting a person to inhuman or degrading treatment or when it denies a person of his or her right to life. Within each of us is an inherent and fundamental need to feel accepted and to belong and yet racism deprives *everyone* of this need.

Despite the prolific publicity around racist attacks, racism is still very much a taboo subject in Northern Ireland. Victims frequently feel compelled to keep quiet about their experiences. This pressure to remain silent is too often reinforced by a community (BME and local alike) of people that think it is better to keep up the pretence that all is well in the hope that by doing so, one day all will become well and so the reality of racism often continues unchallenged. Inherent in this failure to challenge is a reinforcement of the subtle and insidious message that not only will racism be tolerated but also that the perpetrators will not be impugned.

Many victims of racism are embarrassed by their experiences and often deny that what is happening to them is in fact rooted in racist prejudice. The violence, humiliation and utter rejection of the person are the most destructive and painful aspects of racism and its impact on the individual and its ramifications in society are rarely fully appreciated. Not only does racism attack self-esteem and limit the ability of the person to achieve his or her potential but it also destroys social cohesion, civic involvement and attacks the very fabric of our society. Many victims describe a chipping away of their very personality as they internalise the racism they experience. Family relationships are put under immense strain and sadly sometimes breakdown. People become increasingly socially isolated and marginalized.

Support for Victims of Racial Harassment

Over the last twenty-six months, we have offered victims of racial harassment and violence emotional and practical support. Our service extends to all people throughout Northern Ireland and is both free and confidential. We offer people a safe place to enable them to share their experiences and we help people explore their options for the future and we support people in whatever decisions they make for themselves. People who have used our service have fed back to us that they were relieved to get our help and assistance and that they appreciated not being referred on ad hoc to other agencies and they felt supported. In practical everyday terms our work includes providing listening support, exploring options, responding to client needs, drawing up action plans, helping people prepare police statements, attending interviews, encouraging reporting of incidents where police have not been contacted, liaising with police in providing follow-up support, making applications to the NIHE under homelessness legislation or to reassess points under the Common Selection Scheme,

liasing with Housing Associations, liasing with local community groups and key community representatives, co-ordinating specialist trauma support, making applications for Criminal Injuries Compensation Agencies, make referrals to Ombudsman where there are concerns about misadministration or institutional racism, sourcing and making appropriate and supported referrals, all as appropriate and supporting service user throughout referral process. As well as linking in to other voluntary and public sector organisations, we have also liased with counsellors, Members of the Legislative Assembly and MPs in trying to raise the profile of clients' cases. In real terms, each case is as unique as the person or family unit being worked with and this has meant that the work has been very diverse and challenging. Since the start of the project, we have worked with over **125 clients** and we have further developed the scope of our work and have established better support networks.

Tackling Racial Harassment in Partnership

In the last twenty-six months, we have built up a very wide network of contacts (now almost 600) within other organisations. By way of example, these include contacts within NICEM's member groups, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, Educational Guidance Service for Adults, Housing Rights Association, Mediation Northern Ireland, Sure Start and Victim Support to name but a few. I have also liased with Black and Minority Ethnic Support Organisations across the water when clients felt compelled by their circumstances to leave Northern Ireland.

Throughout the year, we have been focusing a lot of our time and energy on raising awareness around racism in our society. While some people may readily recognise and accept that racism is a problem, many remain to be convinced they have any role in countering racism. However, we have been working hard to promote dialogue and to bring the problem of racism out into the open to be seen for what it is and for what it does to everybody in our society. We have been encouraging people through our presentations to reflect on their experiences of and reactions to racism whether it is as potential or real perpetrator, victim or witness.

Behaviours designed to belittle and demean the humanity of another person always belittle and demean the humanity of the person engaged in such behaviours. Often people involved in racist violence deny the cruelty of their own actions and their actions are only reinforced when they go unchallenged. We have been urging people to confront racism in all its ugly forms. We have been appealing to all people not to ignore those engaged in racism but to recognise their need for help. People engaged in racist behaviours need to be confronted with the serious and damaging impact of their behaviours and any hint of societal approbation needs to be withdrawn. There is no room for any complacency, apathy or indifference.

We have been working with a number of different community groups and representatives in mobilising support for victims and challenging the behaviours and attitudes of perpetrators. We have encouraged people within local communities to learn about other cultures and to offer your support to those affected by racist violence by reaching out with a hand of friendship and solidarity.

We have made numerous presentations to various groups with a view to raising awareness of racial harassment and its impact. Our audiences have included councillors, community representatives, and public sector staff as well as youth clubs and schools.

Encouraging Reporting of Racist Incidents

It is well recognised that only a very small percentage of all crimes committed are actually reported to the police. The reasons for not reporting are manifold and some are more peculiar to certain communities than others. In the main, I have identified a number of reasons for not reporting. These include feelings that the severity of the offence is not such to warrant police involvement, a belief that an investigation will not lend to criminal prosecution so there is no point, fear of reprisal or community disapproval, distrust of or lack of confidence in the police or fear that their report will not be treated seriously. It is very clear that the greater confidence a person has in the police service the more likely they are to report incidents, in the knowledge that the matter will be dealt with appropriately and sensitively. Often unnecessary anxiety is aroused for the victim because the investigation process and follow-up is not clear. I have worked with many victims in supporting them to report incidents to the police and have worked with the police in encouraging the proper recording of racist incidents. I continue to work with the police around issues of third party reporting and lobbying for better training for police officers and the implementation of specialist guidelines for Ethnic Minorities Liaison Officers.

Main Achievements and Challenges

- ❑ Service users have reported feeling understood and supported. They have appreciated having their experiences validated and the practical and emotional support that has been provided to them through the service.
- ❑ The broader community is developing a better understanding of the impact of racial harassment and racist violence through the presentations that I have given.

Global Change – Local Challenge!

- ❑ It is unrealistic to think that the project can properly serve the needs of people throughout all of Northern Ireland. Geographically this poses many too problems.

IMMIGRATION, ASYLUM & REFUGEE SERVICES

Introduction

Every year, in advance of preparing and finalising the NICEM Annual Report, time is taken to reflect on what have been the successes, challenges, difficulties, low points and high points of the year, experienced by the staff, volunteers and service users of the Immigration, Asylum & Refugee Service. In reflecting on the many issues faced by the service, attention is focused on what is happening in the external environment and in particular what gives rise to the need to have such a service in the first place and always the same conclusion is reached – *The World in which is we are living is constantly in a state of change and upheaval, which is not always in the best interests of the majority of people living in it...*

It is not necessary for the members of society in the north of Ireland, to look very far, to find the reasons for the changing migratory patterns in this part of the world. In the morning, as we rise & shine and tune into the news, we hear of the latest death toll in Darfur, western Sudan and as we settle down for the evening, we watch the shocking pictures of people of all ages, living in refugee camps in Chad, having been forced from their homes, by Sudanese government-sponsored militia. The Sudan is just one example of the many hundreds of conflicts taking place throughout the world today, the majority of which are not reported in our mainstream press and media.

People across the globe are being forced to leave their homes as a result of political, religious, racial, gender, ethnic and economic persecution. Numbers of refugees and people displaced as a result of conflict and persecution, are unfortunately on the increase and each time the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, releases statistics, the prospect of seeing a down turn in these figures, remains gloomy.

The migration situation, at a local level, in terms of people seeking asylum is a reflection of what is happening at a global level and over the last year, NICEM's Immigration, Asylum & Refugee Service, has experienced an increase in caseload and enquiries. As was reported last year and in previous years, the circumstances, faced by people claiming asylum in Western European countries, grow increasingly precarious. Access to basic & essential support, a decent & professional standard of legal advice and adequate & very often needed specialised healthcare, is constantly being restricted and removed by government and the media and the far-right are making political mileage out of vulnerable asylum seekers, creating a climate of contempt & fear and scape-goating one of the most disadvantaged groups in our society today.

In attempting to tackle such complex issues and doing so at a time when the whole subject of migration is marred by negativity, it has been necessary for NICEM's Immigration, Asylum & Refugee Service, to pursue a dual approach, by implementing a programme of continued service development & delivery and campaigning in a broader spectrum to challenge negative stereotypes and improve access to services.

Forming partnerships and building upon existing partnerships, with agencies, across the voluntary & community and statutory sectors, continues to be the primary method in effecting change. NICEM's Immigration, Asylum & Refugee Service has secured effective working relationships with key agencies and has been actively engaged in directing, advising and guiding, changes in policies aimed at improved and accessible services for people newly arriving in the north of Ireland.

Despite, the unnecessary hype and the myths & misinformation, surrounding the migration issue, society here, has begun to realise the benefits which immigration has brought and will continue to bring to Northern Ireland. In recognising this, NICEM will carry on with its commitment to providing key advice, support, guidance and advocacy services to migrant communities and the wider community.

Challenges could not have been faced, difficulties overcome and successes achieved, without the Immigration, Asylum & Refugee staff team and volunteers, who have maintained a professional, empathetic, sincere and unwavering commitment to the Service and to the work of NICEM as a whole.

‘One Stop’ – Advice & Support

As ever, the Advice & Support service for people seeking asylum, remains at the forefront of NICEM's Immigration, Asylum & Refugee Services, facing the stark reality of providing a consistent, professional and responsive service to vulnerable individuals and at the same time making sense of the continual changes in legislation and the administration of support to asylum seekers.

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 continue to have a negative impact on NICEM's Asylum Service. Section 55 of this Act has greatly restricted clients' eligibility for the financial support and accommodation provided by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). Clients must be deemed to have made their asylum claim as soon as reasonably possible after arriving in the UK, which was eventually clarified as within three days. Each client was to undergo an interview by the RANS Team (Restricted Access to NASS Support) to decide their eligibility for financial assistance. Unfortunately, only one such visit by the team was made between January 02 and the present time.

As a result, clients have been waiting in Emergency Accommodation, or relying on support from friends and family, for long periods of time. As the only visit to date was made in January 04, there are currently clients who have been living in hostel accommodation for six months.

Following challenges to the legislation a new NASS team was formed to deal with the backlog of applications. The NASS Eligibility Assessment Team (NEAT) was formed in June 2004, but to date there has been no indication as to when they will deal with Northern Ireland applications. Some clients have received final decisions on their actual asylum cases without ever being granted financial support.

All asylum applicants are now to be issued with an Asylum Registration Card (ARC), which serves as proof of their asylum application, as an identity card, and is also

necessary to present at the Post Office to collect their weekly support. In order to receive a card clients must have two appointments with Immigration at Belfast International Airport, firstly to be photographed and fingerprinted, and then to collect the card. However, the team only comes to Belfast a few times a year. As a result many clients do not yet have an ARC, which means they cannot collect their weekly support, and rely on NASS to send Emergency Support Tokens every two to four weeks. There have been many problems with these deliveries, which can mean that people are left without support.

Achievements

Patricia Leong, working with the City Church, set up a Mothers and Toddlers group, which meets once a week. This provides a safe and well equipped environment for children to play, and a place where mothers can interact. It is open to all, regardless of race and religion, and as it is open to asylum seekers and the local community, it provides an opportunity for cultural diversity awareness and integration. The group provides second hand baby clothes as part of its recycling effort, which is also of great benefit to asylum seeking mothers who are on a low income. Subject to funding, it is hoped that various outing may be arranged to give mothers a break from their routine, as well as helping them with practical issues such as grocery shopping in outlets, which may be difficult to reach for those with no transportation.

Róisín O'Connor, as part of NICEM's PQASSO Quality Task Group, took part in a project to evaluate the front line service, which clients receive. The results of this assessment will form part of NICEM's Reception Guidelines, and will also be used to consolidate a feedback and complaints policy. She is also working as part of PQASSO to improve NICEM's policies for all advice workers.

Róisín O'Connor, Patricia Leong, and Moira McCombe of the EQUAL project, worked with the Eastern Board Childcare Partnership to organise a seminar on current service provision for the children of asylum seekers and refugees.

The seminar was held in the Holiday Inn Express on the 1st of April 2004 and was very successful. The feedback from the seminar will be used to improve services, to make them more sensitive to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the wider ethnic minority population.

Róisín O'Connor completed and passed the Law Centre NI Certificate in Welfare Rights.

Future Plans

Due to the ongoing problems with NASS, we have mainly been dealing with issues as they arise and advice and support for individuals continues to be the main aspect of our work. However, in recognition of the need to build as wide a network as possible, to broaden support, every opportunity is pursued in creating links to and connections with external organisations, in order to develop a broader network of support. The Asylum Advice & Support Service will continue with development work to further the objectives of improved access to services and ease of integration for asylum seekers and refugees.

It is part of the plan, to develop work in the educational setting and with public services, to help raise awareness of the issues and difficulties facing asylum seekers and refugees. This work is planned in conjunction with NICEM's Refugee Community Development & Advocacy Service, to focus on the international context and what situations give rise to refugees and this will also be channelled through the media and publicity strategy.

<u>Referrals</u>	<u>09/03 – 08/04</u>	<u>Aggregate Since 04/2001</u>
Total	226	646
NASS Application	48	328
Refer Social Services	9	42
Change of Circumstances	11	32
Did Not / Could Not Apply	30	116
One Stop Service	64	158
Emergency Accommodation (individual)	64	426
NASS Results		
Positive	25	263
Refused / Pending	56	112
Cancelled – dropped out before follow-on	6	27
Moved to Follow-On	20	212
Subsistence Only	7	40
Returns		
Total	2,772	9,735

NASS Related Enquiries	646	1,808
Accommodation Issues (EA&FO)	197	813
Follow-On Briefing	78	438
Voucher Problems	211	679
Health	284	881
Clothing	37	92
Refer / Contact Solicitor	349	937
Immigration Enquiries	391	1,214
Adult Education	12	242
Shopping	15	51
Information on Voucher	105	527
Other	447	2,097
Client Group Makeup		
Unaccompanied Minors	4	12
Singles	125	532
Couples	7	37
Single Parent Families	8	24
Two Parent Families	9	38
Children With Families	28	111

<u>Nationality Individuals</u>	<u>09/2003-08/2004</u>	<u>Aggregate</u>
<u>(Referred to NICEM)</u>		<u>Since 04/2001</u>
Afghanistan	4	20
Albania	0	24
Algeria	9	61
Angola	5	9
Bangladesh	2	6
Cameroon	3	5
Croatia	0	1
Czech Republic	8	22
People's Republic of China	83	310
Congo	2	3
Former Soviet Union (Ethnic Russian)	0	13
Former Republic of Yugoslavia	2	24
India	0	2
Iran	4	24
Iraq	0	7
Ivory Coast	3	3
Kenya	1	3
Libya	2	9
Lithuania	1	1
Macedonia	0	7
Moldova	0	5
Nepal	1	3

Niger	1	4
Nigeria	13	21
Pakistan	9	13
Polish (Roma)	4	22
Romania	0	77
Romanian (Roma)	0	65
Russia	1	7
Serbia	0	8
Slovakia	0	2
Sierra Leone	1	9
South Africa	1	6
Sri Lanka	0	10
St Lucia	0	1
Sudan	5	9
Turkey	0	10
Western Sahara	0	3
Zimbabwe	20	54

Asylum Advice & Guidance – Building Partnerships

Entering into the final stages of European Social Fund funding and the funding from the Department of Employment and Learning, NICEM's Asylum Advice & Guidance Service, has had remarkable success in developing a solid working relationship, with agencies across the voluntary and statutory sector and delivering advice & guidance to beneficiary asylum seekers, in accessing opportunities in education & training, volunteering and many other aspects of career and self-development.

Of course, the service continues to operate within the narrow confines of government policy in respect of asylum seekers, which has resulted in the continued restriction of the activities, in which claimants can participate, whilst they await the outcome of

their asylum claims. In this difficult environment, NICEM's Asylum Advice & Support service has maintained a flexible approach to the sourcing, provision and development of activities and programmes.

Despite the rigours of asylum law and policy, the Asylum Advice & Support service, has taken a pragmatic, yet imaginative approach to the development of programmes and activities.

Accessing key language provision, has been the basic starting point for many, in terms of pursuing a new life in Northern Ireland and in partnership with the Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education, individuals are able, to achieve early access to English language training. NICEM's partnership with BIFHE and Learn Direct has formed a cornerstone of the development and delivery of programmes for people in the asylum process. In addition, Belfast Gems have continued to offer a vital role to NICEM's Asylum Advice & Support service, by accepting referrals of individuals and sourcing training and volunteering opportunities.

The contribution of these agencies and other organisations, including Corrymeela, St. Vincent de Paul, Red Cross, EGSA, VSB & Sure Start, has proved invaluable in terms of supporting individuals but also has consolidated a partnership approach to service development and delivery, which is unique in the context of working with asylum seekers in Northern Ireland.

The Asylum Advice & Guidance Service has worked very closely with EGSA, over the course of the last year, both in terms of a referral procedure and also in the delivery of information to the wider advice, information and education sector, in terms of issues facing asylum seekers and how to offer support and guidance in an educational and training setting. Moira McCombe, as Asylum Advice & Guidance Worker, has delivered several presentations to key audiences across Northern Ireland, focusing on the EQUAL ASSET UK programme here, in terms of contents, delivery and participants. The seminars, organised in partnership with EGSA, have provided an opportunity to highlight the specific issues faced by individuals in the asylum process and also how matters, in relation to advice & guidance and training & education, are being addressed.

Refugee Integration & Re-settlement – Local Response

Over the course of the last year, the main area of the work of the Refugee Integration & Resettlement Worker has been the continued development of links with key statutory providers in Northern Ireland, to ensure that services are mainstreamed and are in place for people granted Refugee status and Exceptional Leave to Remain and that individuals are able to make a smooth transition from Asylum Seeker status to settled status and can access mainstream services without encountering difficulties.

The service has identified serious gaps in terms of the level of awareness amongst key statutory providers, of the particular needs of Refugees, which has, in a significant number of cases, to gaps in service provision. The findings of an

Audit of Service provision, carried out by the Refugee Integration & Re-settlement Service, amongst the statutory sector, indicated that there was a limited level of awareness of issues, affecting Asylum Seekers & Refugees and that this had a subsequent impact on the delivery of services

In response to this, the Refugee Integration & Re-settlement Service has been engaged in a process of consultation and awareness raising. Initially, a briefing paper was circulated to statutory service providers, including health, education and training, social security and housing, to inform on the circumstances of Asylum Seekers & Refugees in Northern Ireland. Regular consultation is held with the Department of Social Development, the Social Security Agency, Department of Education, Education & Library Boards and Health & Social Services Boards & Trusts, across Northern Ireland.

The Refugee Integration & Resettlement Worker has also been working with individual Refugees and people with Exceptional Leave to Remain, in accessing services such as Social Security, housing, Training & Employment Agency and New Deal.

The profile of the service users is as follows:

Total number of cases during the year: 96 (including dependants)

49 awarded Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)

13 awarded Exception Leave to Remain (ELR)

1 awarded Definite Leave to Remain (DLR)

The rest were awarded full Refugee Status

These service users come from China, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Albania, Kosova, Cameroon, Sahara, Iraq, Iran, Algeria, Uzbekistan, Syria, Yemen, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Ivory Coast, Sudan and Uganda.

Refugee Community Development & Advocacy – Challenges & Changes

As supported by funding from the European Refugee Fund, this service consists of two strands that build upon and compliment the work and activities of the Asylum Advice & Support, the Asylum Advice & Guidance and the Refugee Integration & Re-settlement Services. The two strands are:

- *Community Development*
- *Advocacy*

There has been a lot of overlap between these two areas as many of the programmes that have served to enhance the community, support and networking aspects of the lives of asylum seekers and refugees have also provided a platform for them to advocate on their own behalf.

The work has linked closely with the Refugee Integration and Re-settlement project in strengthening links with the statutory and voluntary sector and fostering the development of Refugee Community organisations and groups.

The Refugee Community Development & Advocacy Service, has worked in conjunction with NICEM's Capacity Building services, in order to develop the capacity of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Community in Northern Ireland. The Refugee Community Development & Advocacy Worker, in developing the objective of wider participation, has represented NICEM on EMBRACE, the Conflict Trauma Resource Centre and the Irish Refugee Council.

During the past year, the role of this service has been one of offering continued professional advice and support and technical assistance in the development of refugee community groups.

The football team continues to grow from strength to strength. They have participated in regular training sessions, matches and anti-racism awareness training and leagues. They have received support from the Irish Football Association. They are becoming better known in Northern Ireland and have been in the media on several occasions. Media opportunities are used to speak out against racism.

The Social Evenings have continued alongside the football. The footballers are the main people to benefit from this activity as well as NICRAS members.

The community development course was a great success with participants meeting with other asylum seekers/refugees and the local community. They had opportunities to begin networking with community organisations. I am currently planning a follow-up course as the participants were so enthusiastic about the activities and wanted to develop them further. There will be a section in the new programme which will encourage them to use the skills they have already developed to enhance community support amongst asylum seekers and refugees.

The community development group contributed to Community Relations Week by opening their class up to any persons interested in community relations. From this involvement they were able to meet many new people with similar interests and thereby further their networking skills.

The NICEM Refugee Women's Support Group were involved in many activities throughout the year:

- Arts and Crafts – their creations were exhibited in the summer as part of an arts fair.
- Two courses in politics for ethnic minority women. These courses focused particularly on leadership skills.

Refugee Week. Every year, NICEM has participated in Refugee Week and in 2004, the theme was 'Global Challenge.' A number of activities were organised, with a focus on drawing a connection between what is happening at a global scale, to force people to become refugees and what is happening at the local level, in terms of developing a response.

NICEM's Refugee Community Development & Advocacy Service, worked in planning and co-ordinating activities & events, sourcing relevant funding and securing the invaluable participation of agencies and organisations, from both the statutory and voluntary sector and also had the assistance and commitment of a team of dedicated volunteers.

‘Refugee Week 2004,’ activities included:

- Exhibition and launch, focusing on the political, social and economic situation, in refugee producing countries
- Art competition in schools throughout Belfast and prize-giving ceremony, hosted by Belfast City Council and presented by the Deputy Lord Mayor
- Anti-racism league and training;
- Social events for individuals and families.

Funding for the work of the Refugee Integration & Re-settlement Service and Refugee Week was supported by:

- The European Refugee Fund
- Community Relations Council - £5,000 for community development
- Community Relations Council - £5,000.00 for Refugee Week
- Belfast City Council - £5,000 for community development
- Belfast Education and Library Board - £600 for summer activities

Immigration Advice & Representation Service

With the support of funding from the Voluntary Activity Unit of the Department for Social Development, NICEM has been able to continue to provide direct advice and representation, in respect of nationality, immigration and asylum & refugee related matters. This service is offered to individuals and groups and aims at tackling social exclusion of minority ethnic communities and asylum seekers and refugees in Northern Ireland, by providing access to free, confidential and comprehensive advice and representation. The rigours of immigration law, policy and practice, impact most crucially upon the aforementioned groups and the provision of free and specialist advice and representation aims at enabling individuals to make informed choices and understand the requirements of the complicated and ever-changing UK immigration law and policy.

Whilst the core activity of NICEM's Immigration Advice service, continues to be the provision and delivery of advice and representation to individuals, over the course the last year, the work of the service, has increasingly involved awareness raising in respect of immigration issues, due, in the main, to the fact that Northern Ireland is experiencing significant changes, in terms of immigration issues and migratory patterns. This experience is not unique or in any way isolated to urban areas but is something, which is happening across the north. As a result, the demand for NICEM's Immigration Advice services is increasingly expanding beyond Belfast.

A change in direction is the delivery of advice surgeries outside Belfast. A number of sessions have been piloted outside Belfast, mostly in the Dungannon & South Tyrone and Craigavon & Portadown areas. These sessions have been conducted in partnership with STEP, who, as a result of their work within migrant communities, identified, an increasing demand for immigration advice. NICEM provided the advice and information to individuals and STEP assisted with premises, publicity and translation & interpreting facilities. The surgeries were well attended and advice was given in respect of a whole range of immigration issues. NICEM have also worked closely with Women's Aid across Northern Ireland, in terms of advice in respect of cases, involving complicated immigration situations and have provided an outreach service in attending advice sessions with individuals.

NICEM's Immigration Advice service, has also worked in partnership with NICEM's Black Trainers Network, NICEM's Interpreter Network and STEP Community Interpreter Service in Dungannon & South Tyrone. Participants in both networks expressed an interest in familiarising themselves with terminology and issues relating to nationality, immigration and asylum & refugee issues, as they were increasingly faced with such issues, in the course of their activities as trainers and interpreters. NICEM's Immigration Advice service, delivered several sessions to participants, focusing on concepts and providing a broad overview of law, policy and practice.

This training was delivered strictly on the basis, that none of the participants were purporting to act as advisors or representatives, in recognition of OISC requirements but would be better equipped to tackle myths, misinformation and would be able to deliver their own activities to a high professional and informed standard. NICEM's Immigration Advice Service, will continue to work in partnership with these networks to develop information and materials useful to their work.

Also, over the course of the last year, immigration & asylum legislation, policy and case law, has faced fundamental changes and this has impacted on the way the service is delivered, both in terms of existing caseload and new enquiries. In striving to maintain an effective service and ensure the provision of an accurate and high standard of advice, NICEM's Immigration Advice Worker has undertaken extensive training with key training providers, including Law Centre (NI), Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and the Refugee Council. NICEM has developed an important referral arrangement with such agencies, in particular, working with Law Centre (NI) in terms of referring appeals.

In July 2004, NICEM's Immigration Advice Service underwent an audit by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, in accordance with the requirements of our Level 2 exemption. In all the outcome of the audit was satisfactory and NICEM have been allowed to continue to provide advice and representation up to level 2. A number of issues were identified during the audit and it was a very useful exercise, in terms of re-arranging the service

NICEM Immigration Advice Service – Case load & Enquiries September 2003 – August 2004

Nature of Enquiry (including telephone calls & one-2-one advice)	number
Asylum related matters	425
Marriage / partner	689
Entry clearance / visitor visas	355
Application for British Citizenship (residency & marriage)	209
Applications for Irish Citizenship	71
Work Permit Schemes (worker rights & entitlements)	265
Permit-free employment	48
ECHR & Human Rights applications	84
Domestic violence matters	86
‘Outside the rules’ applications	143
	Total: 2,375
Current live files	279

Networking and Partnership Building

Networking and partnership building have become one of NICEM's core functions and activities in pursuing collective action on racial justice and equality. It is also a practice used to bring knowledge and experience to Northern Ireland and at the same time shares our unique experiences and struggle. Networking also forms the basis of collective action through partnership building. Through our involvement and contribution, NICEM plays a significant role in the UK, on the island of Ireland and in the European Union and Council of Europe.

UK Network

NICEM works in partnership with the key black organisations in the UK focusing on capacity building, race equality, human rights, asylum seekers and refugees, etc. Over the year, our strategic concern is the debate on a Single Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Single Equality Bill. The Executive Director was spoke in various occasions on the subject that sharing the experience of Northern Ireland in both the Equality Commission and Human Rights Commission. We involve with the following organisations:

- Commission for Racial Equality
- UK Race Europe Network
- 1990 Trust
- Runnymede Trust
- Project Fullemploy
- Refugee Council
- National Refugee Forum
- Home Office Minister chairing National Refugee Integration Forum
- UK EQUAL Partnership Board
- Asylum Seeker Skills Audit Task Group
- UK Secretariat of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism & Xenophobia
- Race Equality Unit of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
- Justice
- Home Office NGOs Steering Group on follow-up of the World Conference Against Racism

Irish Network

North-South dimension is a key strategy for campaigning anti-racism on the island of Ireland. We involve work with the following organisations:

- National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism
- High Level Steering Group on Public Awareness Programme on Racism (Know Racism campaign)
- Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland (ARASI)
- Sociology Department of University College Dublin
- Irish Refugee Council

- Human Rights Centre of Galway University
- Irish Congress of Trade Union Task Force on Racism in Workplace
- Irish Human Rights Commission

European Network

NICEM still plays an active role at the European level in terms of working with both the European Union and the Council of Europe on race equality and human rights. We involve work with the following organisations:

- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
- Human Rights Directorate of the Council of Europe
- Anti-Discrimination and Civil Society Unit of the DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission
- European Monitoring Centre on Racism (EUMC)
- Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels
- European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
- Centre Europeen Juif d'Information

Northern Ireland

NICEM has established a strategy in partnership across sectors in order to promote human rights, equality and race equality in Northern Ireland, issues such as Section 75, Single Equality Bill, the Bill of Rights, asylum and refugees, Irish Travellers, etc. These organisations include:

- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Commissioner of Children and Young People
- Committee on the Administration of Justice
- Irish Congress of Trade Union
- UNISON
- Disability Action
- Coalition on Sexual Orientation
- Helped the Aged
- Women's Support Network
- Women into Politics
- Save the Children
- Children's Law Centre
- Law Centre (NI)
- Greater Belfast Community Network
- Childcare NI
- Youthnet
- Northern Ireland Youth Council
- Association of Independent Advice Centre
- Community Change
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
- NIACRO
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Red Cross (NI)

- St. Vincent de Paul

Organisational Development

NICEM Strategic Plan 2004-2009

The draft Strategic Plan 2004-2009 was circulated at the AGM last October for consultation. And the Executive organised the Extra-ordinary General Meeting to adopt the revised Strategic Plan 2004-2009. And we official published in April 2004. The new Strategic Plan will enhance the staff and NICEM to plan our future.

PQASSO

With the support of Refugee Council we continue to monitor and review our policy and practice through the PQASSO process. A number of our staff from various teams involves the PQASSO Steering group under the leadership of Gabrielle Doherty on the review of specific policies of NICEM to ensure fully implementation and improvement.

Over the year, we have reviewed and revised the following policies:

- Core Values
- Equal Opportunities
- Grievance Procedure
- Harassment Policy
- Harassment Complaints Procedure
- Confidentiality Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Pension Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- Referral Policy
- Training and Development Policy
- Role and Operation of NICEM Executive Committee
- Financial Support for member groups/staff/Executive Committee on conference and training

**NICEM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(2003-2005)**

Chair: **Alfred Abolarin**
 Interact

Vice-chair: **Mohamed Kamal Salem**
 Muslim Family Association

Secretary: **Liz Collins**
 N.I. Filipino Association

Treasurer: **Tilak Raj Puri**
 Indian Community Centre

Other members:

Monica Yang
 Mandarin Speakers Association

Cathy Doherty
 Belfast Travellers Education & Development
 Group

Somasundram Pandara Nagarasa
 Northern Ireland Committee for Refugees
 and Asylum Seekers

Co-opted members:

Sadia Suhail (resigned from 1 August 2004)
 N.I. Pakistani Cultural Association

Dr. Katy Radford
 Belfast Hebrew Congregation

Javaid Naveed (from 1 August 2004)
 N.I. Pakistani Cultural Association

STAFF (2003-2004)

Central Administration Team

Executive Director	Mr. Patrick Yu
Administrative Manager	Ms. Nuala Moynagh
Administrator (Asylum Support)	Ms. Eva McKelvey
Administrator (EQUAL)	Mr. Max Petrushkin
Administrator (Interpretation & Training)	Ms. Tanja Tierney
Administrator (work placement from QUB)	Ms. Jing Mei Tang
Administrator (Interpretation & Training)	Mr. Aruna Djalo (from June 2004)

Policy and Capacity Building Team

Co-ordinator of Capacity Building	Ms. Gabrielle Doherty
Development Worker	Mr. Sean Kelly (project finished 31 March 2004)
(Volunteer Development)	Mr. Sean Kelly (currently on short-term contract With NICEM)
Development Worker	
Development Worker (Health)	Dr. Angela O'Rawe (project finished 31 May 2004)
Development Worker (Interpreter Training)	Mr. Ronald Vellem
Co-ordinator of Training (Equality & Diversity)	Ms. Karima Zahi
Training Officer (Equality & Diversity)	Ms. Felice Kiel
Policy and Research Worker	Ms. Tansy Hutchinson
Development Worker (Racial Harassment & Advocacy)	Ms. Marie Keating
Development Worker	Ms. Jolena Flett (part-time covered Marie's maternity leave from 1 December to end of August)
Special Project (Women & Children) (Part-time)	Ms. Siobhan Molloy

Immigration, Asylum and Refugee Team

Co-ordinator of Immigration, Asylum	Ms. Sharon Dillon
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and Refugee Services
Development Worker (NASS)

Ms. Roisin O'Connor
Ms. Patricia Leong
Ms. Moira McCombe
Ms. Lumturi Podrimaj
Ms. Therese Fitzgerald

Development Worker (EQUAL)
Development Worker
(Refugee Integration)

NICEM MEMBER GROUPS

Al-Nisa Association NI
Bangladeshi Welfare Association
Barnardos Chinese Lay Health Project
Belfast Hebrew Congregation
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Travellers Education and Development Group
Belfast Travellers Support Group
Causeway Chinese Welfare Association
Craigavon Traveller Support Committee
Guru Nanak Dev Ji Sikh Community Association
Indian Community Centre
Interact NI
Mandarin Speakers Association
Muslim Family Association
Northern Ireland Committee for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Northern Ireland Filipino Association
Northern Ireland Filipino Community in Action
Northern Ireland Pakistani Cultural Association
Oi Wah Chinese Women's Group
Oi Yin Bangor Chinese Women's Group
Sikh Women & Children's Association
Traveller Movement NI
Windsor Women's Centre Multi-cultural Group