

Annual Report

2008/2009

Our Vision:

A society where equality and diversity are respected, valued and embraced, a society free from all forms of racism, sectarianism, discrimination and social exclusion, where human rights are guaranteed.

Our Mission:

NICEM works in partnership, to bring about social change through partnership and alliance building, and to achieve equality of outcome and full participation in society.

In this document “black and minority ethnic communities” or “minority ethnic people” or “minority ethnic communities” or “minority ethnic group” means people whether they are settled ethnic minority (including Travellers, Roma and Gypsy) or settled religious minority (non-Christian faith), migrants (EU and non-EU), asylum seekers and refugees or other immigration status. It has an inclusive meaning to unite all minority communities.

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Strategic Priorities 2004-2009

1. To create an environment that supports and enables individuals and groups from Black and Minority Ethnic communities to participate fully in accessing their rights;
2. To mainstream ethnic minorities into government policy and practice;
3. To raise public awareness on racism and multiple discrimination and bring about a positive change;
4. To promote equality of access to education, training and employment for Black and Minority Ethnic people; and
5. To ensure that priority areas of works are supported by appropriate organisational structures and resources.

Remarks from Executive Director

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.”

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

This quotation by Charles Dickens reflects most appropriately life in Northern Ireland in 2009. We have enjoyed relative peace since the first cease-fire in 1994. The controversial parades season has come and gone without engendering any major difficulties. The recent killings of two soldiers and of a policeman have brought back to our collective memory the atrocities perpetrated during the Troubles. The car bombing of a policeman's spouse has made us realise more than ever that now is the time to achieve everlasting peace for our future generations.

Ten years after the Good Friday Agreement, three key elements still fail to materialise: namely the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the independent Truth Commission to reconcile the past, which are both key components and institutions in any post-conflict society. Last but not least, the recent deadlock on the transfer of the criminal justice system to the devolved administration is another stumble block.

The Secretary of State keeps on delaying his promise to publish the consultation paper on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland (the original promise was made in Spring 2009). The delay will mean that no legislative timetable can be finalised prior to the General Election next year. We have serious doubts regarding the commitment of a potential future Conservative government to introduce the Bill, not least to say their intention to scrap the Human Rights Act through the British Bill of Rights and Responsibility.

NICEM supports a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, which is key to the enshrinement of the principles of human rights as the cornerstone of peace building in Northern Ireland. We are preparing for a long struggle with other sectors to fight for the Northern Ireland Bill of Rights.

In other key policy areas, the implementation of much needed legislation is dragging on. For instance, the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland, which has been worked on since 2001 (including a Green Paper with options for future legislation), falls out of the radar of the current Programme for Government. We are now far behind the original expected completion date of 2006-2007. We are even further behind the UK bill, which is currently only at committee stage.

From NICEM's perspective, the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland is the best option for our shared future in Northern Ireland. Despite the government's cold feet, we have been organising single equality bill events for eight years. We held our last event in September 2009, focussing on the implications of the UK Single Equality Bill on Northern Ireland.

But the longer the delay of the Bill, the longer the denial of equal protection for ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland compared with Great Britain. This is the sole reason why we appeal for a Formal Review of the Race Relations legislation in Northern Ireland. We get the full support of the All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities by endorsing our proposal. Their initiated a motion debate in the Assembly based on our proposal in May this year: not only did it successfully get through, but it also received the unanimous support from all parties, as well as from the Junior Minister in his conclusion remarks at the debate.

The Shared Future Framework Policy, which was voted down by the Assembly in May 2007, and The Racial Equality Strategy 2005-2010, which was voted unanimously by the Assembly, have been kept in the freezer for more than 2 years. The frozen process means that all departments and their next step agencies do not need to produce their annual Action Plan over the last two years to implement the Race Strategy. Clearly, this is not the intention of the Assembly, which voted for the Race Strategy.

We have been working very hard with officials to resurrect both the Shared Future Framework Policy and the Racial Equality Strategy through the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Paper (CSI). The issues will not be resolved between the two leading parties until the transfer of the Criminal Justice system has taken place.

At the same time, the thawing process is very slow. We were informed that the Racial Equality Forum would be re-constituted later this month, a body that oversees and monitors the implementation of the departmental Action Plan. We still continue to use a pragmatic approach to work with the two advisors of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to resolve the differences on the CSI paper. There is an additional note to the CSI paper. The two latest versions, which were made public in mid-September this year by the two parties, are a progress in itself compared with the 2008 version. Of course, the current differences also reflect the fundamental issues of what values and areas we can and cannot share at this stage.

The economic downturn has deeply affected the relative financial stability economic migrants had found in Northern Ireland

We raise the essential questions: what is our shared future? Is this shared future even really considered by the Do we have one between the born and bread Northern Irish people, who tend to forget about the positive contribution migrants towards have been bringing to our economy?

We have recently heard politicians demand "local jobs for local people", which was intensified by graffiti and leaflets. This gave a form of validation for local people to

take action on their own hands. A period of ethnic cleansing against foreign migrants in South Belfast ensued as a direct consequence of the riots initiated by Polish football hooligans (who did not reside in Northern Ireland) at the end of March 2009. Those who are living in the Greater Village area paid a high price.

The well-organised intimidation, harassment and racist attacks forced around 70 families living in the area out of their homes. Subsequently, the Roma racial incidents in mid-June, which is the common experiences of ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland, morphed into a humanitarian crisis that thrust Northern Ireland, once again, into the global media. It is a hard lesson which shows that we still have not learned from similar incidents in 2003-2004, which were a harsh reminder of our troubled past. Overall racial harassment and racist attacks have doubled in South Belfast (compared with April-June last year).

The recent International Monitor Commission's 22nd Report, which was published yesterday, confirmed "UVF members were involved in a small number of sectarian attacks, including against foreign communities in Belfast, and in rioting at the end of August 2009" (p.20). But we understand that the Leader of the PUP, Dawn Purvis, is working very hard to challenge these attitudes and behaviours on one hand, working closely with NICEM to tackle the core of the issues, and the lack of regeneration in the local areas, on the other.

All these raise issues related to the protection of fundamental human rights and the obligation of the state under both common law and the international human rights law: the physical integrity of a person and respect for one's bodily integrity. Any form of racial harassment and racist attacks are infringing the individual's basic human dignity and physical integrity. We would like to see human rights protection of physical integrity and human dignity included as the key principles in the proposed CSI paper to tackle sectarianism and racism.

We have been appealing to the government for the past 5 years to support the victims of racial harassment and racist attacks. Every time our requests have fallen into deaf ears. We continue to appeal in view of the foreseeable high volume of caseworks. If these necessary measures and steps do not materialise, our government will seriously be breaching the human rights legislation.

In our recent intervention at the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee, our main lobbying focus covered the plights of: Filipino fishermen, who work in a highly exploitative environment; migrant workers paid below the minimum wage and who constantly experience of discrimination in the workplace; asylum seekers and refugees subjected to restrictions under Section 4 funding; Irish Travellers and Roma people who suffer from discrimination in employment and education, as well as poor health and living conditions. We were successful in raising these particular concerns in the Conclusion Observation of the Committee, which highlights the fact that the British government is in breach of the UN treaty.

The impact of economic downturn on migrant communities is concerning. Our

research report, which will be launched shortly, highlights the large scale of unemployment within the Polish community. These experiences of poverty are common among all migrant communities originating from both A8 and A2 member states.

We strongly request that the government set up a crisis or emergency fund to reduce the risk of destitution for this group of people who are unable to access public funds. This falls under basic human rights protection and the government is obliged to give priority to addressing this gap under international human rights legislation.

CONNECT-NICEM, the social economy branch of NICEM, won a major tender for the provision of round-the-clock interpretation services, seven days a week, for the entire criminal justice system. Our ethos of standard setting and benchmark quality assurance ensures that CONNECT-NICEM is the leading service provider in the field. Currently, we have developed a new module on criminal justice for the Open College Network accreditation. We also work in partnership with Queen's University of Belfast to develop an MA in Translation and Interpretation. The programme will run in 2010 subject to the approval and funding from DEL.

Our quality assurance service provides support to our member groups on using PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisation) and now extends to local community groups as demand is increasing. Currently, we have three accredited trainers, mentors and Peer Reviewers who can certify the kite mark for PQASSO. In view of an increasing demand from funders and the requirements under the new Charities law in Northern Ireland, completing the PQASSO training has become a must for the voluntary and community sector.

In December last year, the Atlantic Philanthropies awarded NICEM a major funding project called "Strategic Advocacy Project". The overall aim of the 3 years project is to identify and address issues of socio-economic disadvantage and systemic discrimination, through a strategic advocacy programme focusing upon human rights and equality.

The programme's 'objective 1' focuses on supporting and challenging the institutions to ensure that human rights and equality are maintained and monitored. The programme's 'objective 2' aims at building the case and mainstreaming through evidence-based research to improve policy and practice within departments. The programme's 'objective 3' is based on supporting ethnic minority individuals and communities in taking an effective role in public life through capacity building and leadership training on human rights, equality and good governance. The programme's 'objective 4' deals with strengthening the core of the organisation to deliver and build sustainability. The legacy of the programme will lie in its proven contribution in helping Northern Ireland evolve towards a more equal society in which the rights of ethnic minority communities are respected.

On a different note, this year is a very difficult one for NICEM in terms of finances since our inception. Due to 5 staff members have no funding for more than 6 months

and awaiting for the Atlantic decision, we have chosen to take the risk to sustain our committed staff team, in the knowledge that it might be more expensive not only to lose the expertise gained by our staff, but also to lose precious time in recruiting new staff in the future, which would delay the delivery of the project. As a result, our reserves have been used up and we have incurred a deficit of just over £120,00. Fortunately, our social economy branch created a net income of over £70,000 with a £50,000 deficit in our audited account for the year 2008-2009.

As the economic recession is looming and following a massive cut in public finance after the General Election, funding issues will become the major challenge for NICEM, as well as the wider voluntary and community sector, in view of the new charity status requirement under the new Charities legislation. Our strategy to generate new income through interpretation, translation, training and consultancy activities are a viable option through CONNECT-NICEM, our social economy branch.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our funders, our partners from departments, agencies, NGOs, Trade Unions and social partners, who provide support and commitment to achieve anti-racism and equality for all. I also wish to extend our thanks to the Council of Europe, the EU, the UK and the Republic of Ireland for fighting against racism and human rights protection at all levels.

Thank you also to our out-going Committee members who gave a lot of their time to help NICEM reach its objectives over the years, and in particular NICEM's Chairman, Mr. Naveed, and our Treasurer, Mr. Puri, who have been dedicated and long-serving Committee members. On behalf of the staff team, I would like to present them with a souvenir to recognise their contribution towards NICEM.

We have also appointed a new Deputy Director, Professor Barry Fitzpatrick, in May this year. His expertise will expand and complement what NICEM has been achieving so far.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my dedicated staff team who are so committed and for whom anti-racism is more than a job. Without them NICEM could not deliver successful results and impact so positively on the lives of the ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland.

Patrick Yu
4 November 2008

Work in Progress:

1. Mainstreaming human rights and racial equality into government policy and practice

1.1 A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

NICEM supports a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, which is essential for enshrining the principles of human rights as the cornerstone of peace building in Northern Ireland. A high profile Bill of Rights with rigorous enforcement mechanisms would give a voice to those most marginalised in Northern Ireland's post-conflicts society. We welcome the opportunity that the creation of a Bill of Rights presents as a key step in acknowledging that conflict whilst moving beyond the traditional "two communities' approach in building a more inclusive and increasingly diverse society.

NICEM has been campaigning for a meaningful and all encompassing Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland for more than 10 years along with other civil society organisations. We are very pleased to see that the advice from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to the Secretary of State on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland was published on the International Human Rights Day in 2008. We also found great pride in witnessing the Chief Commissioner handing over their advice to the NIO Minister.

NICEM endorses the advice proposed by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to the Secretary of State and regards it as the best option that we can have in this moment of time, though we acknowledge that there are some areas in need of improvement.

In addition to sustained lobbying work at the UN level, NICEM has continued to actively campaign for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights at the regional and national level. NICEM is an active member of the Human Rights Consortium and we have continued to attend meetings and lobbying events with politicians. We have met with the Human Rights Commission and we have also written to the Secretary of State in support of a Bill of Rights. In addition to this we also made a submission to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in support of the recommendations made by the Human Rights Commission.

NICEM will plan ahead to encourage the sector to give their voice heard through training and support once the NIO published their consultation document.

1.2 Race Relations Order Review and the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland

In our last report we highlighted the current gaps in the Race Relations law. In the absence of any development of the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland, the formal review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 and its 2003 Regulations is the only option that we might have in order to have the same equal protection as in Great Britain.

We subsequently instructed Barry Fitzpatrick, a legal consultant and the former Head of Legal Policy and Advice of the Equality Commission (and now Deputy Director of NICEM), to write up a formal review proposal, based on gaps identified by NICEM.

NICEM has been successful in lobbying the All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities. The Assembly Group endorsed NICEM's proposal of a "Formal Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997" in March and put forward a joint motion debate in the Assembly. The Executive Director also presented NICEM's proposal before the Committee of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on NICEM's proposal on 29th April 2009.

The Committee heard the Executive Director reiterates our position in support of the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland as outline in the government response to the consultation in 2005. In the absence of the Single Equality Bill being implemented in the foreseeable future, the formal review of the Race Relations (NI) Order is the only option available (we have been waiting for 8 years) to achieve equal protection on a par with Great Britain. Justice delay is and justice is denial!

The Assembly joint motion debate on the review of the Race Relations Order was on Tuesday, 26th May 2009. It was recorded "that this Assembly calls on the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to review the current Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, in view of the fact that the current law does not offer the same level of protection as in other parts of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and also given the deficiencies in the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2003". The joint motion was overwhelmingly supported by all parties and was endorsed by the Junior Minister for Equality in the debate.

During the joint motion debate a number of political parties reiterated their support for the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland. On the strength of this commitment, NICEM organised a conference "Equality Bill for Great Britain: Implications to Northern Ireland" on 25 September 2009. We invited expert from London to look at the proposed legislation and section 75 groups to present the current gaps of equality law. We also invited local lawyer, the Law Centre, CAJ and the Equality Commission to joint a Panel debate on the Single Equality Bill, as well another Panel from all political parties.

We intend to publish the Conference Report as our contribution to the ongoing debate on the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland.

1.3 Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) Paper and the Racial Equality Strategy 2005-2010

There has been absolutely no progress made since our last report. The paper that resurrects both the “Shared Future” Framework Policy document, which was voted down by the Assembly, did not materialise, neither did the Racial Equality Strategy, which was voted unanimously in favour by the Assembly in July 2007. We have been waiting since then. Two years on the two main parties cannot agree on some sensitive areas, particularly the overall framework. At the end they chose to put their versions of the papers in the public domain in around mid-September 2009. This is not a good sign considering the logjam in the transfer of the criminal justice system to the devolved administration.

Over 2009 we have noticed some progress despite the differences between the First Minister’s office and the Deputy First Minister’s office. The two papers that are now in public domain are far better than the August 2008 version. This is a slow progress! NICEM will take a more pragmatic approach to work with the Advisors of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to resolve this issue.

On a good note, the First Minister’s office and the Deputy First Minister’s office agreed to re-establish the Racial Equality Forum as we were briefed in mid-September 2009.

1.4 All Party Assembly Group on Minority Ethnic Communities

We continue to provide secretariat support and advice on racial equality issues to the All Party Assembly Group on Minority Ethnic Communities, which NICEM contributed to establishing in June 2008. There have been 9 monthly meetings from September 2008 (recess in April and summer). At each meeting, the average attendance from the Assembly was 4 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and the average attendance from the sector was 12 organisations (excluding NICEM). Issues discussed included the following: the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister’s (OFMDFM) Core Funding Programme for the sector; the Racial Equality Strategy 2005-2010 (RES) and the Community, Sharing and Integration Programme (CSI Programme); Education Performance of Ethnic Minority Young People, amendment to the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, Roma children and young people and recent racist attacks.

The following actions were taken:

1. The OFMDFM Racial Equality Unit sent representatives to the Assembly Group in February and May 2009 to explain the latest development of the CSI Programme. Both politicians and representatives of the sector expressed concerns that the ongoing delay (18 months) in publishing the CSI policy paper would jeopardise the objectives of the entire programme potentially leading to the attached financial scheme being withdrawn. The Group was concerned that this would be particularly detrimental in light of the direct link between the economic downturn and the increase in racist attacks in Northern Ireland. The delay has also resulted in the indefinitely suspension of the Annual Action Plan on the RES as well as the activities of the Racial Equality Forum.

2. In February, the Racial Equality Unit representatives updated the Assembly Group on the funding application process. They also updated the Group in May on the outcome of the funding process. The sector had serious concerns with the designated time frame for core funding, namely one year. Such short funding periods left many groups feeling uncertain about their future. It was also felt that carrying out the extensive application process every year put a strain on the resources of already over stretched organisations.

3. At the February meeting it was agreed to put forward a joint motion for debate in the Assembly on the formal review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997.

4. At the March meeting, NICEM's proposal of a formal review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 was adopted by the Assembly Group. It was also agreed to request meetings with both the OFMDFM Committee and the Equality Commission to establish support for NICEM's proposal. Patrick Yu, Executive Director of NICEM, appeared before the OFMDFM Committee on 29th April 2009 to convey this proposal to MLAs and government officials.

A meeting with the Equality Commission in early July had to be postponed. Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner and Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive, ECNI, made a presentation on legislative reform and advice to estate agents at the Assembly Group meeting of 13th October and answered questions from Assembly Group members.

5. The joint motion debate on the review of the Race Relations Order was held on Tuesday, 26th May 2009. It was recorded "that this Assembly calls on the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to review the current Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, in view of the fact that the current law does not offer the same level of protection as in other parts of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and also given the deficiencies in the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2003". The joint motion was overwhelmingly supported by all

parties and was endorsed by the Junior Minister for Equality in the debate.

6. The Group also endorsed a complaint letter to the Assembly Committee on Standards and Privileges regarding the Minister for the Department of Environment's remarks which advocated "local jobs for local people".

During the November 2008 meeting it was decided that two ethnic minority groups of the Assembly Group should make presentation at each meeting. The Assembly Group decided these short presentations were an effective way to inform both the politician and the sector of the work each organisation carries out and the challenges they face. This has been conducive to exchanges of questions and answers, thereby increasing good communication and knowledge of the issues affecting the groups. In this session nine members of the Assembly Group made presentations: Belfast Islamic Centre, Sikh Association NI, Polish Association, Afro Community Support Organisation NI, Northern Ireland Committee for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, An Munion Tober, Strabane Ethnic Community Organisation and Bangladeshi Association.

1.5 Submission to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on its examination of the sixth report of the government of Britain and Northern Ireland

We submitted our shadow report regarding the British Government's 4th & 5th periodic report to the Committee in April 2009 and attended the subsequent hearing in Geneva on 12th and 13th May. A meeting between UK-based NGOs and the Committee members was held on the 11th May. In attendance were 13 committee members and representatives from over 8 UK based NGOs, the majority of which came from Northern Ireland. An informal meeting also took place with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, in which we asked the Commission brought up our issues in Northern Ireland such as the plight of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller people and asylum seekers and refugees. A separate meeting of national human rights institutions and the Committee took place on 12th May.

As a result we successfully lobbied the Committee on a number of key areas, including the swift enactment of the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland (with specific reference to economic, social and cultural rights); the experience of discrimination amongst ethnic minority and disabled people; recommendations with regard to comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Northern Ireland; the unsafe working conditions and the disproportionately low wages of the Filipino seafarers in Northern Ireland who enter the UK with transit visas (with regard to this situation we highlighted how employers who contravened the law are rarely prosecuted or sanctioned); the need for a review of Section 4 of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act on support and

provision regulating essential services to rejected asylum-seekers, and undocumented migrants; the need to ensure the provision of adequate and secure stopping sites for Roma/Gypsies and Irish Travellers; the review of the provisions of the Unauthorised Encampments (NI) Order 2005.

1.6 Racial violence and the recent Roma crisis in Belfast

In light of remarks made by the Environment Minister, Sammy Wilson MLA (on the BBC Politics Show on 25th January 2009), in support of giving preference to UK citizens over migrants in terms of employment, we wrote a letter to the First and deputy First Minister requesting that a special multi-agency task force should be set up with NICEM and migrant communities to tackle, contain and prevent a spiral of racist attacks as the economic downturn deepens.

The Minister's remarks are in effect increasing racial tension at community level. In fact the graffiti "British jobs for British People", alongside other graffiti stating "Poles out!" on the Donegal Road (the wall of the common area of the Belfast City Hospital), appeared just days after the Minister's remarks. We warned the government not to allow a repeat of the 2003 and 2004 scenario in the Greater Village off Donegal Road and in Donegal Pass in which racial violence escalated. We eventually received a reply in early June. However, no significant action has been taken by the Government.

The Greater Village area in Belfast is notoriously renowned as an area that creates a model for the rest of the province in terms of racist attacks. Paramilitaries (including both the UDA/UFF and the UVF) have had a history of inflaming such tension over the years (not necessarily sanction by their central command).

It is worth emphasising that this issue is not related to the loyalist ideology per se. Historically, the Greater Village area of Belfast has been the choice of residence for Protestant people working in the nearby shipyards and other industrial sites. Due to the areas lack of investment and regeneration, private developer moved in buying those houses and renovated for the purpose of private renting. As this area is close to the centre of Belfast, it tends to equally be the choice of residence for minority ethnic people, particularly the new migrants. Unfortunately the visibility of the diverse migrants living in the areas seems as a threat. Therefore, the Greater Village area is a fertile ground for racial tension.

Immediately after the widely covered riots connected with the World Cup qualifier football matches between Northern Ireland and Poland at the Windsor Park football ground (within the Village area), graffiti appeared on Sandy Row targeting the Polish goalkeeper (who also plays for Glasgow Celtic).

Known Polish football hooligans, who did not reside in Northern Ireland, aggravated racist tension prior to the match. Such violence gave an additional excuse to some Village residents for launching an ethnic cleansing agenda

against local resident migrants. Around 20 families were forced to leave the area the week immediately after the riots. Within the subsequent 3-month period (just before the attacks on the Roma¹ community) more than 55 families (mainly Polish, but also Hungarian, Lithuanian and others) were forced out of the Village area as a result of vicious intimidation, attacks and harassment.

When the attacks on the Roma families were brought to our attention (through the request for an interpreter by the Socialist Youth activists to facilitate a press conference), we were on the ground with the families on Monday, 15th June 2009. There were serious discrepancies between the accounts gathered from the Roma families and the Socialist Youth activists, alongside other local politicians, regarding the time, circumstances, etc of the attacks.

The families told NICEM that their windows and doors had been smashed on Saturday night, but that some of their windows had been stoned occasionally more than a week before the attacks. However, the elected representatives insisted that, based on the information by the Socialist Youth activists, there were ongoing attacks on their houses for a week, which is not consistent with the families' version of events.

On Monday 15th June we met with the families to assess further the risk of attack and to explore the potential options around resolving the problem. At that point in time there were approximately 50 people from the 3 houses which had been attacked. However, the next day, this figure had escalated to 113 people in need of assistance. These additional people stated that they were directly or indirectly linked with the families.

Despite police assurances that the families were protected by a 24 hour patrol at the 3 houses where the Roma families were living, a chaotic decision was made to move the families to the City Church, in the University area, on the night of Tuesday 16th June. For the mismanagement of the situation, NICEM partly blames the politicians and partly blames other outsiders. Roma families were frightened by the intrusion of the media and other people also exacerbated the situation. The next morning the families had to vacate the Church and were moved to the Ozone Leisure Centre, in the South East of the city and reasonably adjacent to the University area.

Belfast City Council called a meeting on the morning of Wednesday 17th June. The way the meeting was conducted and the resulting inability in making any decision caused a lack of overall planning and co-ordination. It also demonstrated an unwillingness from the relevant government departments and/or agencies, particularly the Belfast City Council, to take responsibility for the overall coordination of a crisis of this type.

Both the City Church hall and the Ozone Sports Centre were not fit for the purpose of accommodation, particularly with regard to the health and safety of

¹ The families were made up of Romanian citizens who were exclusively Roma.

the children; over half of the population of those seeking refuge were minors. Eventually the Northern Ireland Housing Executive agreed to house the families in the Elm's Halls of Residence of Queen's University, Belfast.

After the families moved to Queen's, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust took the operation lead on the ground to support the families. This support covered a broad range of services, including the provision of catering and health-care on a 24 hours basis. Organisations such as NICEM and the South Belfast Roundtable on Racism also provided additional much needed assistance.

On Monday, 22nd June, the government, in response to the Roma families' request to return home, agreed to buy one-way flights to Budapest and make the necessary logistical arrangements to ensure their safe return to Romania by bus. The first family moved back to Romania on Wednesday, 24th June and the rest of the families moved back on Friday, 26th June 2009. We also arranged with our partners, the European Roma Rights Centre and the Open Society Institute Roma Initiative in Budapest, in meeting the families at the airport to assist them with arranging appropriate transport to Romania. We collaborated with these Budapest-based organisations to coordinate action with Romani CRISS (Romani Center for Social Intervention and Studies), so that families could be welcomed and supported on arrival in Romania.

We also received a request from the European Commission to debrief their officials on the situation. Over the two-week period, we communicated frequently with OFMDFM, providing them with advice on various contentious issues. We also briefed the Romanian Consul daily on any developments.

One of the problems encountered over the two-week period was that the Roma crisis was hijacked by Socialist Youth activists. They disseminated misleading facts whilst pushing their own political agenda via the media. To ensure that NICEM would be able to re-establish a balance and provide accurate facts to the media (whilst striving to protect the safety of the Roma families), our Communication Officer observed the situation and provided practical support on the ground. NICEM also gave interviews to the media (local, national and international); this included a broadcasted interview with the German World Radio. Specific interview requests were passed on to NICEM's Executive Director and Development Officer/Advisor on racial harassment.

We also assisted journalists from BBC, Guardian/Observer and the Times to write feature article about the Roma situation in their home towns. They visited the families who had returned to Romania; these meetings with media were sensitively facilitated by our partner, European Roma Rights Centre.

The Communication Officer disseminated two press releases during the crisis period, to dissipate inaccurate information that had been passed to the media and to insist on the need for governmental action and pro-activity.

As the regional, national and global media tended to only highlight the sensationalist aspect of the situation, the Communication Officer decided, in agreement with NICEM's Executive Director, to organise a press briefing. This briefing gave a platform for the Executive Director to convey a more in-depth analysis of such attacks on ethnic minorities and the appropriate remedies that should be applied. It also provided the added benefit of enabling the Communication Officer to network effectively with the local media. The briefing was organised on Thursday, 9th July 2009 after all the Romanian families were safely back in Romania.

The briefing was well attended and around 10 media outlets were represented (TV, radio, press), who provided a good feedback orally and in writing. NICEM's Executive Director was extensively quoted in the media reports on the day, which triggered more interest and more requests for interviews during the subsequent week. The Director's profile was strengthened and NICEM's key message was disseminated.

We have also requested the government to hold a debriefing meeting to evaluate the handling of the Romanian crisis, as this is the first time that Northern Ireland had dealt with an ethnically-based humanitarian crisis. Two meetings hosted by the Belfast City Council took place. The first one, on 5 August 2009, was a Multi-Agency de-briefing for response to Roma crisis in June; the second Strategic meeting, on 11 August 2009, covered Hate Crime, Racial and Migrant issues. Unfortunately, these meetings did not result in any public authority acknowledging the relevance of their role and public responsibility in accepting overall accountability in the coordination of such crisis. This succession of unfruitful meetings proved bitterly disappointing. From our perspective it is the best from local government in conjunction with the OFMDFM.

1.7 Baseline Data Project

In January 2009, NICEM appointed Ms. Michelynn Lafleche, the former Director of the Runnymede Trust, to develop a policy paper that would scope the issues on ethnic monitoring. The completed paper formed the background information for the baseline data seminar on ethnic monitoring.

With Michelynn's support, NICEM developed the overall programme, as well as identified the key speakers for the seminar. We also held a meeting with senior OFMDFM officials on 26th February 2009 to brief them on the Strategic Advocacy Project, as well as the idea to develop a baseline data collection mechanism. The brief was well received and OFMDFM agreed to support the seminar by sending an official to open the seminar and participate in it. The purpose of the seminar was to provide an internal discussion within NICEM and debates among Departments and agencies on ethnic monitoring with the view to facilitate follow-up action to pilot ethnic monitoring in key service providers.

The seminar was held on 28th April 2009 at Wellington Park Hotel. It included 43 participants (excluding speakers) from the public sector and NICEM Committee, Advisory Board and staff. The participants had a lively debate on the issues of ethnic monitoring. Departments or agencies did not object to the introduction of ethnic monitoring. The main stumbling block related to where responsibilities should lie and at what level, incorporating the important issue of resources. The seminar also agreed to undertake follow-up action, including publication of the Report, which was published in early July.

A follow-up meeting was set up with the Southern Health and Social Service Board Children Services on 3rd June 2009. It was agreed at the meeting that the Southern Board and the Atlantic Philanthropies funded Project "Belong" would participate in the pilot ethnic monitoring of children services. NICEM will contact the Junior Ministers for a meeting to get their support on the pilot. Due to the Democratic Unionist Party appointing a new Junior Minister and the quietness of the summer recess in the Assembly, it has proved difficult to arrange such a meeting during the July period. NICEM will try to find an alternative means of kick starting the ethnic monitoring pilot by bringing together, in mid-October, OFMFM, the Department of Health, the Southern Health Board and possibly the Belfast Health Trust, which might have an interest in ethnic monitoring of children and young people.

1.8 Employment Research on the Impact of economic downturn on the Polish community

NICEM's Research Officer met with the Polish Association of Northern Ireland's Development Worker in February 2009 to discuss the focus for the research on the impact of the economic downturn. From this meeting followed further consultation with Polish Association of Northern Ireland and NICEM staff. The questionnaire was then drafted. A final version was agreed and translated into Polish in March 2009. In February 2009 NICEM consulted Polish Association on possible means for distribution and collection of the questionnaire.

A number of methods to disseminate and collect the questionnaire were used including through the Polish Association, other Polish community groups in Northern Ireland, NICEM Member Groups and informal contacts from March to July 2009.

In June and July 2009 the Administrative Officer inputted data from questionnaire into a database in preparation for analysis by an external consultant. In June 2009 an expert consultant, Robbie McVey, was identified to analyse data collated. The database of questionnaire results was submitted to the consultant for analysis at the end of July. During July 2009 the Research Officer began the process of conducting a literature review of relevant reports for the final research report and commenced the analysis of qualitative data provided by way of responses to an open-ended question in the questionnaire.

The Research Report has completed and will be launched at NICEM's Annual General Meeting on 5 November 2009.

The Research Officer had informal discussion with the Chairman of the Alliance of Filipino Communities of Northern Ireland at an event in May 2009 about the possibility of conducting a complementary employment research project on the effect of the economic downturn on Filipino workers.

1.9 Education Research: Educational, social and health needs for minority ethnic children and ethnic children and young people

External consultants, Michelynn Lafleche (a freelance consultant now in Toronto) and Professor Chris Gaine (University of Chichester) were appointed in June 2009 to begin the process of producing a scoping paper on the educational, social and health needs of minority ethnic children and young people in Northern Ireland.

The scoping paper was accepted by NICEM in early October. The paper is due to be published in November 2009, when formal consultation with our Member Groups and other stakeholders will occur. A stakeholders forum will be set up to monitor the progress of the research project and will expect the field work in early 2010.

1.10 Testing case

The Executive Director and Deputy Director attended a meeting between the Atlantic Philanthropies funded Public Interest Litigation Service (PILS) and its stakeholders on 26th June. NICEM is actively involved in the development of PILS's policies and practices and looks forward to working with them.

We are currently working on developing the most efficient method to provide advice and assistance to those in need of legal help, including a targeted approach to interacting with our Member Groups and other Atlantic Philanthropies funded organisations. The purpose of this specific approach to test cases is to increase and efficiently respond to the flow of information received at NICEM on cases of human rights abuses, discrimination and harassment.

It is also anticipated that possible test cases will emerge out of the research projects and NICEM's intensified interaction with its Member Groups.

1.11 Section 75 Consultations

NICEM has responded only to priority consultations this year. Responses have been submitted or attended specific consultation meetings to the following consultations:

- Equality Commission's draft Guidance for Employers on "Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment";
- Migration Advisory Committee Stakeholder Forum meeting in Belfast on 19 June 2009;
- Department of Education on its Equality Impact Assessment of Transfer 2010 Guidance: Post-primary School Admission Process for Admission in September 2010;
- Department of Education on "Promoting Equality through the Review of Public Administration";
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's draft Strategic Plan 2009-2011;
- Department of Employment and Learning's Migrant Workers' Thematic Sub-group on "Assessment of Need to continue its operation";
- OFMDFM on "Gender Strategy";
- Department of Employment and Learning on "Disputes in the workplace: a systems review";
- EQIA on Victims Policy of NIO;
- District Policing Partnership;
- Policing in the Community Strategy; and
- Neighbourhood Training Programme of PSNI.

We have also participated in a number of consultative forums and events as members of the various fora listed in the followings:

- All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities of the Northern Ireland Assembly
- Thematic Working Group on Migrants of the Department of Employment and Learning
- Research Study Steering Group on "Economic, Labour Market, and Skills Impacts of Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland" of the Department of Employment and Learning
- Northern Ireland Migration Advisory Committee Stakeholders Forum
- Promotion of Social Inclusion Working Group on Homelessness of the Department of Social Development
- Volunteering Strategy Steering Group of the Department of Social Development
- OFMDFM Children and Young People's Unit Strategy, Planning and Review Group for the 3 year Children and Young People's Action Plan
- Regional Equality Liaison Panel of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Security
- White Paper Advisory Group of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Education Quality Working Group and Children and Young People Service Working Group to shape the policy for the new Education and Skills Authority under the Minister of Education
- Vision sub-group, Governance sub-group and Service sub-group of the Rural White Paper Stakeholder Advisory Group by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Holocaust Memorial Day Advisory Group of the OFMDFM

- Queen's Award for Voluntary Services (QAVS) of the OFMDFM
- Asylum Co-ordinating Meeting of the UK Border Agency -Scotland and Northern Ireland Region
- Equality Coalition
- UNISON Northern Ireland Race Group
- Belfast City Council Migrant Shadow Forum
- Ethnic Minority Health Forum of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- Personal and Public Involvement Steering Group of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- European Programme Advisory Group (Peace III and Interreg) of NICVA
- Joint Consultative Forum for Education Sector
- British Medical Association Patient Liaison Group
- The Gender Advisory Panel of the OFMDFM
- Ad-hoc Women's working group
- Women's National Commission
- Children's Strategy, Planning and Review Group of the OFMDFM
- Human Rights Consortium
- Inter Community Network, Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Great Shankill Community Safety Network
- Independent Advisory Group, PSNI
- NI Anti-Bullying Forum
- NI Policing Board Reference Group
- East Belfast Independent Advice Centre
- Shared Future Housing Steering Group
- Village Focus Group
- Police Ombudsman Working Group and
- Housing Rights Editorial Board

2. Public Awareness on Racism and Multiple Discrimination

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

(Martin Luther King)

Anti-racism and Equality Training

Good policy and practice through education and training is one of our strategies to support the legal framework in standard setting. The law defines what is the minimum acceptable behaviour in our society. Policy and practice are the guidelines for the implementation of racial equality. Without education and training on policy and practice it is difficult to deliver good quality standards at all levels. Only education and training will it buy-in the staff's support for racial equality on one hand, to change the organisational culture through new policy and practice on the others.

An increasing 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. NICEM has found it very encouraging to be asked to organise a series of well-attended training programmes, with a large range of participants including numerous policy-makers 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. Significantly, participants find that training results in an increase in staff confidence in handling anti-discriminatory and diversity practice issues.

Over the last 12 months we provided training to 12 organisations with around 300 participants. NICEM wishes to thank the following organisations, their partners and employees for working with us to achieve equality of opportunity and outcome through training:

Hosford House
Samaritans Belfast
Probation Board
Department of Employment & Learning
Department of Regional Development
Department of Social Development
Department of Environment
Forthspring Youth Workers
Strabane Ethnic Community Association
Northern Ireland Housing Executive Downpatrick Office
Police Services Northern Ireland Minority Liaison Officer
Community Group in Lisburn

Red Cross

We also provided the following organisations and/or schools on public awareness on racism:

Ballymagee Primary School
St. Mary's University College for student teachers
NI Anti-bullying Forum
QUB on Integration and Immigration
Common Purpose
Habinteg

We provided a half day "human rights and equality" training for the Accredited NVQ Level III Community Interpreters' Training Programme which was organised by CONNECT-NICEM in Inishowen and Belfast.

We also provided a three-hours "race relations law" training for the Queen's University of Belfast Social Work students (both undergraduate and graduate programme).

3. Capacity Building black and minority ethnic communities

Subsequently to the funding crisis of 2007-08, the past year 2008-09 has seen a dramatic reduction in the availability of funding programmes aiming to support the core functions of many of the smaller black and minority ethnic community (BME) organisations. However, even with a reduction in staffing across the sector, the BME sector continues to provide a wide range of services to BME communities and the wider community and voluntary sector through participation in many good relations and cultural diversity programmes.

This year at NICEM we supported a number of new emerging community organisations and our membership increased in number and diversity, with the starting up of the Northern Ireland Somali Association, the Multi-cultural Association Northern Ireland, Kropka PL, International European Artists Association and the Portuguese Speakers Association. All of these new organisations are managed and organised through the valuable work of volunteers.

3.1 PQASSO and the Charities Bill Northern Ireland

NICEM continues to promote the use of PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) developed by Charities Evaluation Service based in London, within the BME sector. NICEM now has three qualified mentors based within the organization, as well as three qualified Peer Reviewers in preparation for the introduction of the PQASSO quality mark in Northern Ireland, within the next two years. Issues of governance and management will be increasingly urgent for the sector to address over the coming year.

The introduction of the Charities Bill into Northern Ireland, which will regulate and monitor the registration of charities, will have significant implications for the BME sector, especially small organization with no paid staff. NICEM is aware that many of the BME community organizations, which are currently registered with the HM Revenue and Customs as charitable organizations, exempt from taxation may, in the coming two years, struggle to put in place the systems and regulations expected by the new Charities Commission NI in order to retain the charitable status.

This will have implications for the small organisations in the longer-term: if they are not able to meet the criteria which will be required to successfully achieve charitable status, especially with reference to financial resources and access to public funding. The challenges of dealing with issues of governance can often be seen as detracting from the delivery of frontline services for organisations, however with the introduction of new legislation monitoring the work of charities, it is imperative that the BME sector tackles governance issues and prepares for the future compliance environment which

the new legislation will impose.

PQASSO offers a systematic and impartial way of examining issues of governance, management and services within voluntary sector organisations and provides the standards to which charities should be working towards. NICEM itself has used PQASSO since 1999 and our PQASSO mentoring services are available to our member organisations through our Strategic Advocacy project. PQASSO mentoring services are also available to other BME and voluntary sector organisations as a consultancy service through CONNECT-NICEM.

NICEM continues to support black and minority ethnic groups, with a particular focus on organisational development including guidance and practical support. This involves:

- Assisting communities to organize and develop their community associations, developing constitutions.
- Facilitating recruitment and selection processes for small groups;
- Advising and supporting organisations on internal human resources, staff and management issues;
- Assisting small organisations to plan programmes, identify and secure funds;
- Implementing PQASSO within organisations and providing materials, facilitating meetings of and supporting for the work of their Quality Task Groups;
- Developing publicity materials and publications;
- Facilitating planning exercises for small organizations; and supporting small organisations to fulfill funders' requirements setting up monitoring procedures and submitting accurate and clear monitoring and evaluation reports.

NICEM staff have advised and supported a number of BME groups during the year with combinations of the above issues including:

- Strabane Ethnic Communities Association
- Al-Nisa Association NI
- An Munia Tober
- Indian Community Centre
- Bulgarian Association NI
- Northern Ireland Multi-cultural Association
- International European Artists Association
- Portuguese Speakers Association NI

3.2 Open College Network accredited training for community interpreters

NICEM continues to deliver our accredited training programme for community interpreters and during 2008-2009 delivered 4 of our 12-week training programmes to over 76 new interpreters.

Following successful training delivery in Letterkenny, County Donegal, during spring 2008 we have been approached by a number of voluntary sector organisations based in the South of Ireland to deliver our OCN programme. Again, with local support from the voluntary and public sector organisations in the South of Ireland we were able to successfully, adapt our course to suit the needs of interpreting students in those areas and continue to encourage those interpreters to continue their professional development wherever possible through the higher education courses available at the moment through Dublin City University.

During 2008-2009 we delivered training in Tullamore, Galway and Buncrana, two courses in Belfast with one course also starting in Lisburn in September 2009.

Tullamore, Ireland	Sept 08-Nov 08	14 learners
Belfast, Northern Ireland	Feb 09- May 09	16 learners
Galway, Ireland	March 09- May 09	18 learners
Buncrana, Ireland	June 09 – July 09	21 learners
Belfast, Northern Ireland	Aug 09 – Sept 09	17 learners
Lisburn, Northern Ireland	Sept 09 – on-going	16 learners

Interpreting within the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland

Following the award of a new contract to CONNECT-NICEM for delivery of interpreting services across the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland, we have initiated the development of a number of new OCN accredited training programmes, together with the adaptation of existing units. In partnership with the criminal justice agencies, and our training consultant Joan Colin, we are currently developing the content for a number of units of OCN training focusing on interpreting with the:

- Northern Ireland Courts Service
- Northern Ireland Probation Board
- Northern Ireland Public Prosecution Service
- Northern Ireland Prisons Service

These units will form our suite of training programmes for interpreters currently working within the criminal justice system.

This will be followed in early 2010 by the development of a handbook for interpreters and criminal justice staff working with interpreters across all services.

3.3 Continually improving quality and standards

Over the past 4 years CONNECT-NICEM has recognised the need to monitor the professional conduct of interpreters (adherence to our Code of Practice) and also the accuracy of the interpreting carried out by interpreters in a range of situations.

Through customer complaints and feedback, which we strongly encourage, we have been made aware of breaches of conduct, which resulted in investigation and the removal of interpreters from our register. Customer complaints & feedback are essential elements feeding into our monitoring procedures as unsatisfactory behaviour, or attitudes can only be identified during interpreting sessions.

During 2008-09 we continued our 'spot check' programme and which our staff use to monitor interpreters conduct during sessions, and where possible the accuracy of their language use. CONNECT staff attend random interpreting sessions (with the permission of the client) and observe the interpreter in action. These checks are a tool for improving not only the work of interpreters but also the content and guidance which we provide for interpreters. This has proved useful in identifying where improvements can be made to our interpreter training programmes and provides an opportunity for interpreters to discuss issues directly with staff on site when issues arise.

3.4 Interpreter Support Network and Professional Development Programme

In addition to delivering our accredited training programmes for interpreters, CONNECT-NICEM also arranges regular skills development sessions, as part of our Skills Development Programme.

During 2008-2009 we arranged a sessions with

- PSNI – on Human Trafficking
- Gangmasters Licensing Authority – on legislation and exploitation of migrant workers.
- Northern Ireland Probation Board

These sessions create opportunities for interpreters to build up their knowledge of particular public sector services and gave them the opportunity to improve on their terminology and understanding of services. This enables interpreters to be more effective in their interpreting.

3.5 CONNECT-NICEM

CONNECT-NICEM is a social economy enterprise incorporated in 2002, by the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM). In November 2005, NICEM transferred responsibility to CONNECT-NICEM for the delivery of interpreting, anti-racism, equality and diversity training programmes, as well

as consultancy services.

CONNECT-NICEM is a company limited by guarantee and accepted as charity by HM Revenue and Customs. CONNECT-NICEM is operated as a social enterprise on a 'not for individual profit' basis. Among other services, company profits are used to:

- support work with black and minority ethnic communities and individuals throughout Northern Ireland,
- further improve the standards and professional development of interpreters.

CONNECT-NICEM provides interpreting services, interpreter training and consultancy services.

In March 2009, CONNECT-NICEM was awarded the contract to provide interpreting services to the Police Service for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Court Service, the Public Prosecution Service, Probation Board Northern Ireland. This has since been extended to cover a number of other criminal justice agencies. CONNECT-NICEM is also contracted to provide services to the Northern Ireland Prison Service and provides services to a range of other public sector services and solicitors.

Interpreting requests

CONNECT-NICEM processed requests during the period and has seen a steady rise in requests in 2008-09 to over 5,000 requests, from contracted existing and new customers. Below is an overview of customer sectors and language demand and spread (see graphic presentation in next few pages)

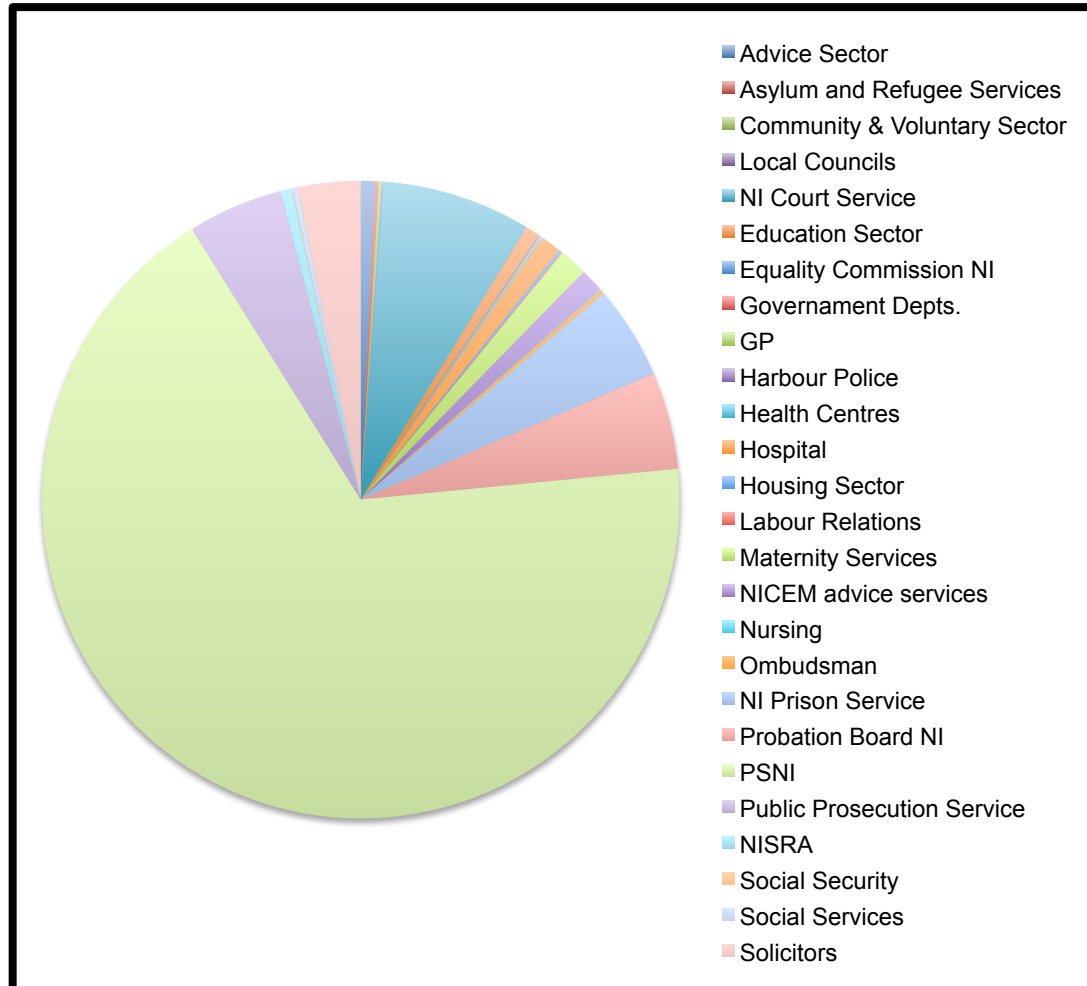
3.6 Representation within the voluntary sector and other committees

NICEM is represented through capacity building staff on the boards of

- Wheelworks (Youth Arts Organisation)
- Voluntary Services Bureau (Belfast) VSB
- An Munia Tober
- CAAN Peace III Partnership

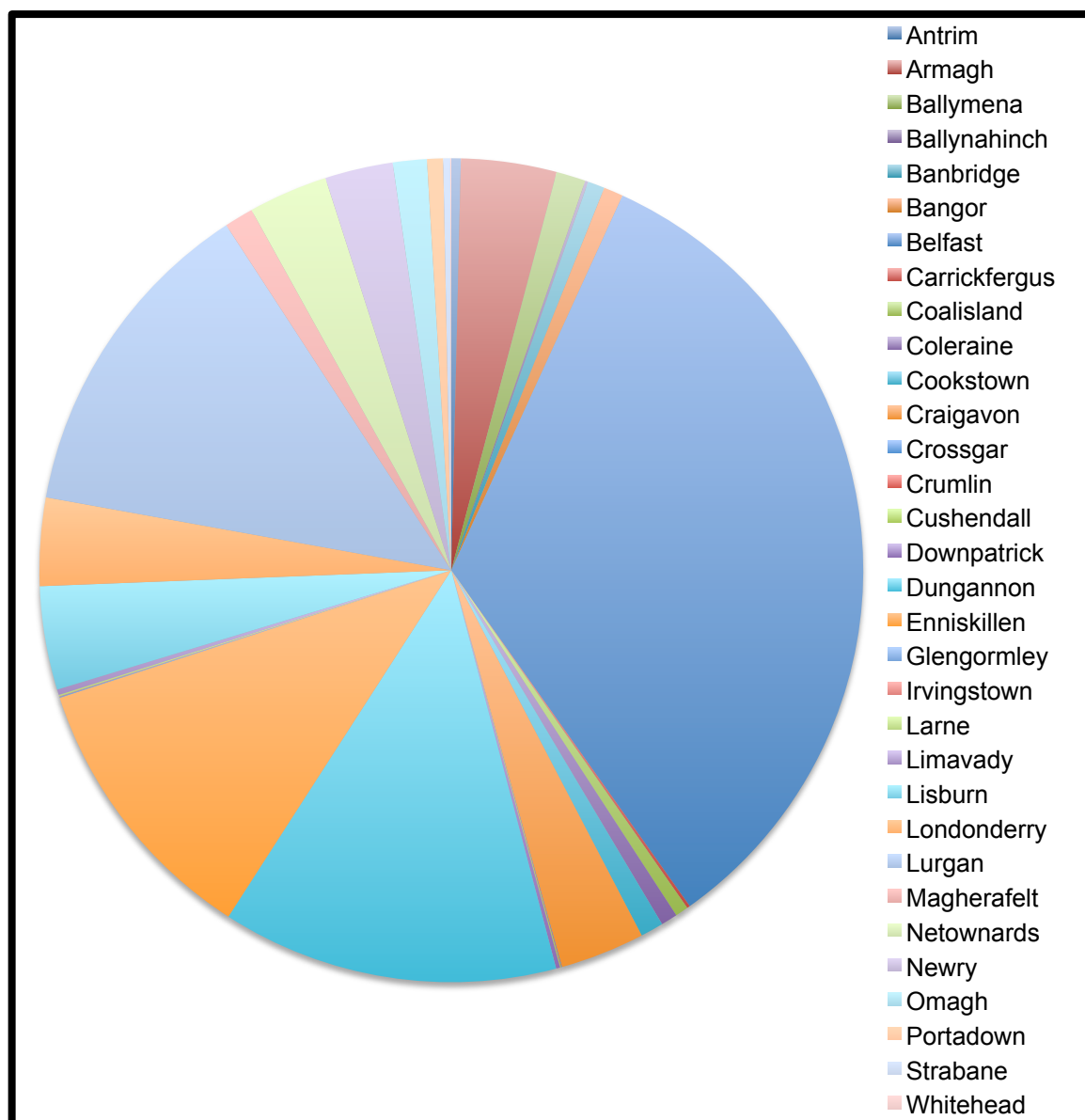
CONNECT-NICEM sessions for the Annual Report Period 2008-2009

Total sessions for the period: 4916



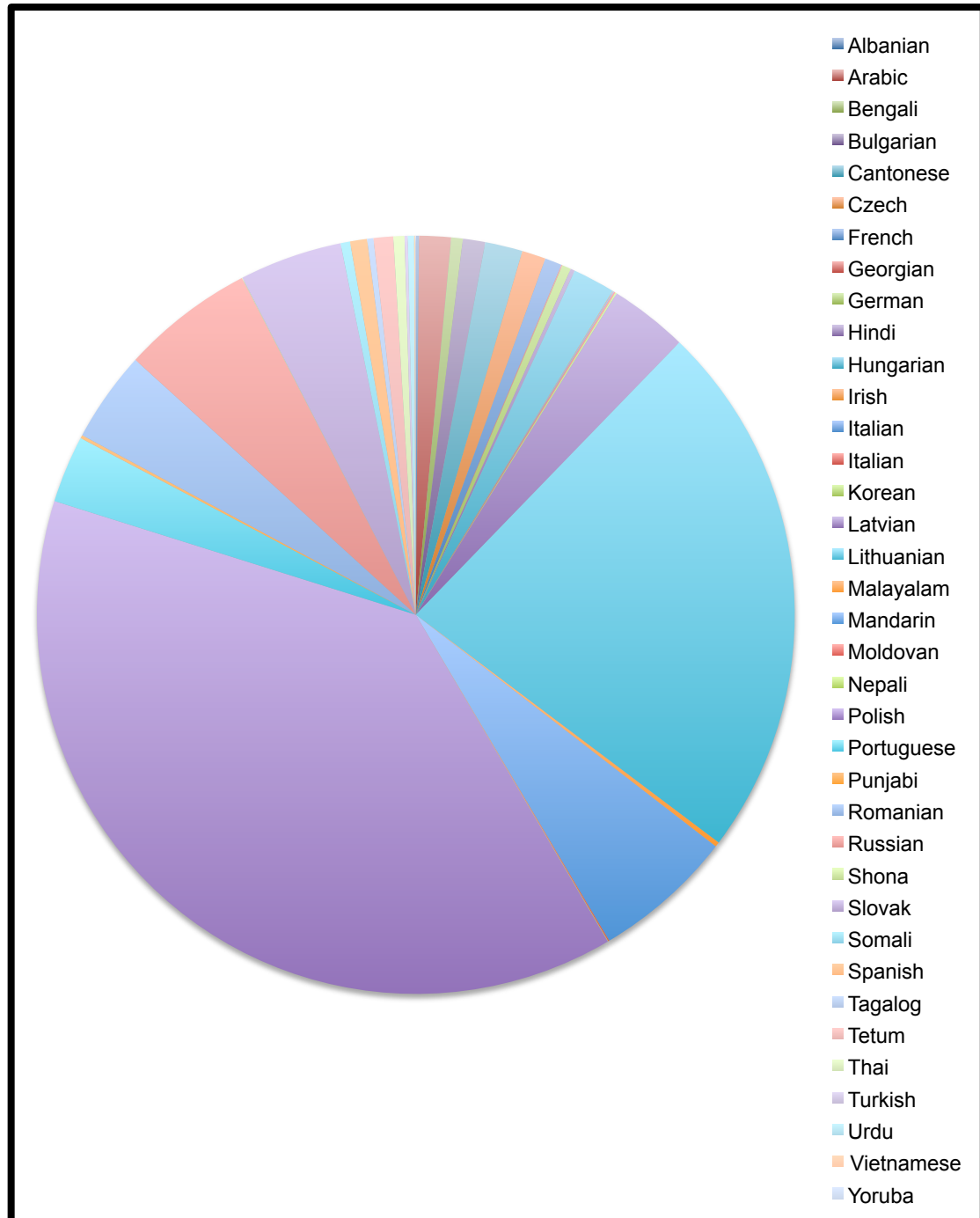
	% of requests		% of requests
Advice Sector	0.69	Labour Relations	0.06
Asylum and Refugee Services	0.20	Maternity Services	1.44
Community & Voluntary Sector	0.18	NICEM advice services	1.18
Local Councils	0.04	Nursing	0.04
NI Court Service	7.59	Ombudsman	0.22
Education Sector	0.71	NI Prison Service	4.74
Equality Commission NI	0.06	Probation Board NI	4.92
Government Depts.	0.06	PSNI	67.68
GP	0.06	Public Prosecution Service	4.82
Harbour Police	0.02	NISRA	0.55
Health Centres	0.06	Social Security	0.04
Hospital	1.02	Social Services	0.28
Housing Sector	0.14	Solicitors	3.17

Breakdown of location demand 2008-09



	% of demand		% of demand
Antrim	0.40	Dungannon	14.33
Armagh	4.07	Enniskillen & Fermanagh	11.81
Ballymena	1.26	Glengormley	0.04
Ballynahinch	0.13	Irvingstown	0.02
Banbridge	0.72	Larne	0.06
Bangor	0.83	Limavady	0.23
Belfast	36.19	Lisburn	4.41
Carrickfergus	0.13	Londonderry	3.75
Coalisland	0.55	Lurgan	14.07
Coleraine	0.70	Magherafelt	1.23
Cookstown	0.98	Netownards	3.38
Craigavon	3.60	Newry	2.89
Crossgar	0.02	Omagh	1.45
Crumlin	0.02	Portadown	0.68
Cushendall	0.04	Strabane	0.30
Downpatrick	0.17	Whitehead	0.04

Breakdown of Language demand 2008-09



	% of sessions		% of sessions
Arabic	1.36	Romanian	3.89
Bengali	0.50	Russian	5.67
Bulgarian	0.95	Slovak	4.38
Cantonese	1.60	Somali	0.41
Czech	1.02	Spanish	0.72
French	0.72	Tagalog	0.27
German	0.38	Tetum	0.84
Hindi	0.18	Turkish	0.14
Hungarian	1.81	Urdu	0.27
Italian	0.05	Albanian	0.14
Latvian	3.34	Korean	0.07
Lithuanian	23.02	Georgian	0.05
Malayalam	0.20	Irish	0.02
Mandarin	6.01	Italian	0.07
Moldovan	0.05	Nepali	0.02
Polish	38.31	Shona	0.02
Portuguese	2.87	Thai	0.47
Punjabi	0.14	Vietnamese	0.05
Yoruba	0.02		

4. Support Vulnerable Groups in our Society

4.1 Migrant Workers

Alliance building with trade union

NICEM and UNISON has been working for partnership to support the nurses and health care workers from Philippine, India and South Africa, as well as more migrant workers from EU A8 countries on low paid jobs such as cleaning and canteen work. As a result a Race Committee was set up for more than a year to support the vulnerable unionised ethnic minorities. Now it is the time to consolidate the Race Committee in order to support and tackle issues arising from their work, professional development and increasingly immigration control regarding their status.

Recent issues include fighting the change of the “Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009”, work permit and visa problems, as well as job related discrimination and/or harassment.

Last year we put forward a joint funding application (ICTU, UNISON, Polish Association (NI) and NICEM) to the Big Lottery under “Reaching the Community” programme to set up a Belfast Migrant Centre to provide support and services to this most vulnerable group in our society. Our application selected for one of the final 20 applications for the consideration by the Board and unfortunately wasn’t successful. We are working a joint application to PEACE III with UNISON and SIPTU.

Advice and Support Services for Migrant Workers

The BME Floating Support Project for Migrant Workers ceased in July 2008 as the Northern Health and Social Service Board did not secure one-third of their shares for 2008-2009 funding. Both the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and NICEM had contributed their financial share to ensure the continuation of the Project up to the end of March 2009. From April 2009 onwards we continue to support one full-time bi-lingual Advice Worker to serve the BME community.

Despite last year funding problems, NICEM continues to support the BME population in Northern Ireland and to other agencies that assist them. Our support involves:

- Provision of welfare rights, helping with benefit claims, ensuring receipt of entitlement, acting as an advocate and assisting in making informed decisions
- Advice and guidance regarding housing
- Orientation and guidance for people settling in new areas
- Identifying, sourcing and referring to healthcare providers. Helping with GP registrations, Dentist, medical cards, first appointments
- Identifying, sourcing and referral to additional training and educational services. Assistance in school enrolment
- Access and referral to immigration and employment rights advice. Referral for the victims of racial harassment and intimidation.

The advice and support staff members continued the focus on generating an interagency approach to tackle issues faced by black and minority ethnic people, particularly migrant workers. We have received many more referrals from different agencies but also made more referrals to other agencies – compared to last year – to ensure best possible support and assistance for the service users.

We are working closely with agencies such as the Health Trusts and Education and Library Boards, employers, local councils, PSNI, Community Safety Partnership, libraries, the Law Centre, the East Belfast Independent Advice Centre, community groups, charities and, importantly various councils' community fora.

Based on high and increasing demand, we have strived to ensure that the Advice and Support to Migrant Workers at NICEM's office continued to run despite no funding available for the Advice Worker. We also provide an evening advice clinic in Newtownabbey every Thursday evening from 6-8pm at the Tesco Community Room at Northcott Shopping Centre. Through these advice we have provided support to the service users with issues involving housing, access to healthcare and education, welfare and employment rights,

English language needs and racial harassment. Between September 2008 and August 2009 we provided advice and took action to support 443 service users (both individuals and family units). The breakdown of their country of origin is as follows:

• Poland	419
• Slovakia	8
• Lithuania	4
• Romania	2
• Hungary	2
• South Africa	2
• Kenya	1
• Czech Republic	1
• Austria	1
• China	1
• Malaysia	1
• Egypt	1
<hr/>	
Total	443

Advice and support to those service users involved dealing with and addressing over 1000 issues. The nature of the cases we were working on is as follows:

◆ Health	92
◆ Education	62
◆ Employment	116
◆ Housing	94
◆ Harassment	32
◆ Immigration	134
◆ PSNI	56
◆ Welfare	356
◆ Inland Revenue	80
◆ Other	97
<hr/>	
Total	1,119

Issues covered under the term *health* involved GP and dentist registrations, appointments, Medical Cards, Travel insurance, alcohol problems, vulnerable adults, ante-natal care and support, birth registration, etc.

The *Education* headline covers nursery and school enrolment, parents' meetings, exams, language learning, parent support, child minding, further education and college enrolment. *Employment* covers rights of employees and workers, maternity and paternity leave, job applications, unfair dismissal, lay offs, unfair deductions, sick leave, etc. *Housing* mainly involves cases of poor living conditions, social housing, private renting and homelessness. *Harassment* covers domestic violence and discrimination. *Immigration* involves Resident Cards, registering employment and passports. Issues under *PSNI* involve summons, road safety, driving licence exchange and community

safety. *Welfare* cases mainly involve benefits and problems that arise from the bureaucratic approach of the agencies. *Inland Revenue* group involves NINO, tax returns and registering arrival in NI and leaving the country. Issues covered under *other* involve banking, electricity, insurance, moving house, etc.

Most of the cases were dealt with by the Advice Worker within one month of the initial meeting with the service user (depending on the nature of the case). We also provided advice and active support through telephone and electronic email to service users and other organisations requiring help and advice.

The most complex and time-consuming cases we worked on involved exploitation in workplace, tax credit and other benefit appeals. The most common cases of exploitation at work cover: being paid below the minimum wage or not getting the overtime pay rate when all local employees are guaranteed both (CASE STUDY 1); no sick pay; no holidays or no choice of booking time off when desired. We have also dealt with cases of discrimination due to pregnancy (CASE STUDY 2). We are also currently supporting a client who was unfairly dismissed (CASE STUDY 3). We have successfully led the tax credit appeal procedures for three of our clients (CASE STUDY 4).

Four appeals regarding DLA and Income Support went to the Appeals Service and we have made referrals to the East Belfast Independent Advice Centre for further support and guidance. We have included some of our case studies to illustrate the issues faced by minorities.

CASE STUDY 1

Three Polish nationals and one Lithuanian national were working in the construction sector along side about ninety local workers. They were all doing the same type of the job and had the same responsibilities. The difference was that migrant workers were paid just the minimum wage and were not paid for overtime whereas everybody else in the factory was getting £3 more per hour and double wages for overtime. To fight for equal treatment they signed up with Trade Unions and slowly managed to 'climb up' but it took some drastic actions, e.g. firstly refusing to work on Saturdays then refusing to work overtime and finally threatening to quit. It took them over two years to be recognized and treated as equals.

CASE STUDY 2

A Romanian lady came to Northern Ireland to live with her boyfriend. She got a job as an accountant in a local company. The employer was in the process of filling in the Work Permit documents and she had been in the job for two weeks when they found out she was pregnant. She was told the post was not available. At the same time her boyfriend broke up with her and she was left

with no resources and no right to benefits due to her immigration status. As she did not get the job her visa had soon expired. Only a local charity was able to help financially but for a very short period of time.

CASE STUDY 3

A Polish national has been working in a local bar/restaurant since 2005. He was contracted to work 30 hours per week as a cleaner. His English was poor when he started. He has been in the job and registered under the Home Office Worker Registration Scheme for three years. During that time he was given more responsible duties and he also received a few letters from the management thanking him for the work he was doing. However, a new manager came and asked him on one occasion to clean the bar outside. The client had to be told a few times what to do as he did not understand the first time. Later that day the manager then came up to him and told him that his English was not good enough to work in the bar. The client tried to explain it has not been a problem yet and that it was just a misunderstanding. The next day he found that his name was not on the rota and when he spoke to the manager he heard it was understood by the employer he himself quit the job. Consequently he lost his job. An application has been made to the Industrial Tribunal.

CASE STUDY 4

The client is a Polish national living and working in Newtownabbey. His wife lives in Poland. His English being poor, he applied for Tax Credit towards the end of 2007 with the help of Polish Community Centre. He was married (his wife in Poland bringing up their daughter) but the information booklet clearly said "You are not a couple for Tax Credit purposes if one of you is under 16 or does not live in the UK"; the Polish Community Centre contacted the Tax Credit helpline and after explaining the situation was advised that the client had to make a single claim. They followed the advice.

In April 2008 his wife gave birth to their second child. At that time he also became NICEM's client. With the help of an Advice Worker from NICEM he completed another Tax Credit claim form and added the newborn on to the claim. When the decision came the Advice Worker noticed that the client was receiving the 'lone parent element' and investigated the mistake.

Having heard the explanation, Tax Credit helpline advisor said a new claim, a joint one, had to be made. Then a letter came from Tax Credit office saying there is an overpayment of £5139.73 that had to be reimbursed by our client. The Advice Worker took charge of the appeal procedures and proved that the situation occurred because the Tax Credits office had altered the rules on "couples" the previous year without advising the claimants. In addition, according to the new rules, if you are married, no matter where the spouse lives, you should make a joint claim. We managed to put our point across and the Tax Credits Office has apologised for their mistake and has withdrawn the overpayment claim.

Nearly half of the service users approached us through the advice clinic in Newtownabbey that takes place every Thursday evening, which NICEM held since January 2008.

Until January 2009 we also held advice clinics in Ballymoney and Coleraine. Advice worker based in these locations have assisted 145 clients and addressed 344 issues between the months of September and January. The nature of the cases being:

◆ Health	18
◆ Education	14
◆ Employment and tax	93
◆ Housing	12
◆ Harassment	5
◆ Immigration	30
◆ PSNI	8
◆ Welfare	143
◆ Other	21
<hr/>	
Total	344

In order to cope with the huge demands we will keep looking for funding opportunities to continue the ongoing support service and achieve the more long-term objective of the integration of migrants through advice, support, capacity building and participation.

4.2 Racial Harassment Support and Advocacy

The Racial Harassment Support and Advocacy continues to provide a comprehensive support service for victims of racial harassment and racist attacks which includes:

1. Providing a safe, confidential environment where they can share and talk about their experience
2. Risk assessment of the immediate situation
3. Advice and support in drawing up action plans
4. Liaising with appropriate statutory agencies advocating on the victim's behalf
5. Assisting with police statements and accompanying to the station when requested
6. Filling out Compensation forms and monitoring application status; including attending appeal hearings
7. Dealing with housing issues and assisting with points assessments and appeals
8. Making appropriate referrals to other support, medical or public bodies

9. Assisting with complaints including support in preparing employment tribunals

The service takes responsibility for 3 new cases per month on average whilst continuing to work on its previous caseload. Over the past financial year the project took action on 75 enquiries about harassment, took on 30 new clients and has a current caseload of 40 active files. So far the service has completed casework and one-time advice sessions for over 400 people. The service recognises the need for support of victims of racial harassment and deplores the limitation imposed by the fact that NICEM has only one worker to carry out such an important and basic services. This need is especially clear as incidents of racial harassment and hate crime continue to increase due to economic downturn deepens.

This was particularly evident in June when we were at the forefront of offering support to 113 Roma individuals who became homeless through racist harassment and intimidation.

We continue to address the issue of limited resources by carrying out on going partnership work with local community groups and councils. We understand and recognise that the most effective way to provide support to victims of racial harassment is through partnership working on a local level and development of a regional network. We feel confident that any future funding we will be able to provide comprehensive support more effectively throughout Northern Ireland.

Indeed this is precisely why we started the Racial Harassment Project seven years ago with funding from Comic Relief for 3 years and then from the NIO for an additional 18 months. The specific support services for victims of racial hate crime are similar to the specialist expertise provided to victims of domestic violence as offered by Women's Aid. Additionally, because we feel the work is a priority we continue to support it through our own limited resources.

In addition to the main work of the project we continue to participate with several groups and forums throughout Northern Ireland to support and influence policy and practice. This includes the work that we do with Anti-Racism training, awareness raising workshops and presentations at conferences. This participation is vital to supporting agencies in their bid to stop racial harassment and attacks.

Participation in community fora

Housing Rights Editorial Committee
Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum
Housing Rights Practitioners Forum
Independent Advisory Group PSNI
Housing Rights Manual Editorial Group
Foyle PSNI BME Engagement Protocol Forum

Policing Board BME Reference Group (Vice Chair)
Greater Shankill Community Safety Network
Intercommunity Housing Network
Hate Crime Thematic Group Belfast City Council
Supporting Communities NI Management Committee
East Belfast Independent Advice Centre Management Committee
BME Housing Forum Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Gingerbread Northern Ireland
Hate Incidents Working Group NIO
Police Ombudsman Consultation

5. Networking and Partnership Building

Networking and partnership building has become one of NICEM's core functions along with promoting activities which pursue collective action on racial justice and equality. We actively use good practice to bring knowledge and experience to Northern Ireland and, at the same time, share our unique experiences and struggles. Networking also forms the basis of collective action through partnership building. Through our involvement and contribution, NICEM plays a significant role in networking and partnership building in the UK, on the island of Ireland and in the European Union and Council of Europe.

5.1 UK Network

NICEM works in partnership with the key black organisations in the UK focusing on human rights, race equality and capacity building. Over the years, our strategic concern is the debate on a Single Equality Bill, UK Bill of Rights, EU Framework Directive on Services and the Commission of Equality and Human Rights. On the Single Equality Bill and the EU Framework Directive on Services we work closely with the Discrimination Law Association (DLA). We invite the vice-chair of DLA to speak at our recent Single Equality Act seminar in September 2009. We also had meetings with the Commission for Equality and Human Rights on the issues of the Bill of Rights debate with both sides of jurisdictions. NICEM is also the Board Member of UKREN. Our partners are as follows:

- Commission for Equality and Human Rights
- Discrimination Law Association
- UK Race Europe Network (UKREN)
- 1990 Trust
- Runnymede Trust
- Operational Black Vote
- Refugee Council
- Monitoring Group, UK

5.2 Irish Network

The North-South dimension is a key strategic consideration for campaigning anti-racism on the island of Ireland. Due to limited staff and resources we were prevented from developing our work plans efficiently in the Republic of Ireland. Instead we focussed on responding to certain needs that had been identified. Based on the partnership working with the Ethnic Minority and Asylum Services of the West Health Executive Service, we agreed to resubmit a PEACE III 2.2 application to capacity building the new migrant communities, and now have a new partner, Inishowen Development Partnership. We also provided Community Interpreter Training in Tullamore in September 2008, Galway in March 2009 and Buncrana in July 2009.

To strengthen our action, we have submitted a tender to Donegal City Council to provide anti-sectarian and anti-racism training for 40 organisations in Donegal. This is a partnership with Inishowen and the Ethnic Minority and Asylum Support Services.

5.3 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 human rights and race equality.

Through the SOLID methodology we have developed locally a new unique programme to support victims of racial violence (PEACE II plus project with funding from Community Relations Council). We have lined up with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) to bring our expertise to Europe to tackle this widespread evil.

The Legal Policy Officer and the Executive Director conducted a short training on victim support in Latvia in November 2008. This was in partnership with the Latvian Centre for Human Rights. We also submitted a PEACE III 2.2 measures application (Europe and Beyond) on the support of victims of racial and religious violence in 4 countries (Latvian, Cyprus, Northern Ireland and Belgium) but the application was rejected (on the basis that the call is not for a transnational project; we had achieved the average required points but completely marked down on the transnational nature). We will re-apply through the future call of the citizenship programme of the EU DG Justice funding programme.

In addition NICEM has written the booklet "Combating racist crimes and violence: testimonies and advocacy strategies" for ENAR. The Executive Director, Legal Policy Officer and the Development Officer and Advice Manager made presentations in the ENAR's training seminar on "Strategies for supporting victims of racial violence" and the launch of the booklet in May 2009. Recently we also provided advice to the People for Change Foundation

in Malta regarding a high profile racial murder and racist attacks during summer 2009. We have agreed to involve Malta as a partner in the new funding application on victim support of racial violence.

Last year the Council of Europe celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minority. NICEM's Executive Director presented a paper at The Impact Assessment Conference "Enhancing the Impact of the Framework Convention: Past Experience, Present Achievements and Future Challenges" on 9-10 October 2009 in Strasbourg.

This is an important milestone for both the Council of Europe and the NGOs who are working in minority rights and protection. Under the leadership of the Minority Rights Group International the NGOs presented a joint NGOs Declaration on the Framework Convention. Since NICEM is the only NGO in Council of Europe to work on the rights of non-indigenous minorities, our voice is crucial to reflect the diversity of the European population.

The Minority Rights Group International has lined up NICEM as the core partner in the DG Justice Citizenship funding application to promote minority rights in Europe. This will give us new resources to train up NGOs in UK to prepare their comments on the UK Report and wider human rights and minority rights training and participation at various Europe and international forum.

We work in partnership 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 Fundamental Rights Agency
- EU Economic Social Committee
- Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels
- European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
- Public Interests Law Institute in Budapest
- European Roma Rights Centre
- European Roma Information Centre
- Article 1 in Netherland (the former LBR)
- Denmark Documentation Centre on Racism
- Open Society Justice Initiative
- Minority Rights Group International
- Latvian Centre for Human Rights
- KISA – Action for Equality, Support and Anti-racism, Cyprus
- People for Change Foundation, Malta

5.4 Northern Ireland

NICEM has established a strategic partnerships with organisations across the sectors in order to promote human rights and equality in Northern Ireland, covering issues such as Section 75, the Single Equality Bill, a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, racial violence, asylum seekers and refugees, Irish Travellers and Roma, etc. These organisations include:

- All Party Assembly Group on Minority Ethnic Communities
- 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 Unions
- UNISON
- Equality Coalition
- Human Rights Consortium
- Disability Action
- Coalition on Sexual Orientation
- Helped the Aged & Age Concern
- Women's Support Network
- Women into Politics
- Save the Children
- Children's Law Centre
- Law Centre (NI)
- Childcare NI
- Youthnet
- Northern Ireland Youth Council
- Association of Independent Advice Centres
- Community Change
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
- NIACRO
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Red Cross (NI)
- St. Vincent de Paul
- Old Warren Partnership
- The Greater Village Trust

NICEM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2007-2009)

Chair: Mr. Javaid Naveed
NI Pakistani Cultural Association

Vice-chair: Ms. Maria Ellis
Women of the World

Secretary: Mr. Muhammad Al-Qarryooti
Belfast Islamic Centre

Treasurer: Mr. Tilak Raj Puri
Indian Community Centre

Other members:

Mrs. A S Khan
Al-Nisa Association

Alicja Nowakowska
Polish Association NI

Shuyb Miah
Shah Jalal Mosque Bangladeshi Community Centre

Julius Anakaa
Afro Community Support Organisation NI
(ACSONI)

Bobby Rao
Strabane Ethnic Community Organisation

Advisory members: Ms. Eddis Nicholl
Ms. Anne Brown
Dr. Joseph Mwaura
Ms. Tansy Hutchinson

STAFF LIST (Sept 2008-August 2009)

Central Administration team

Executive Director	Patrick Yu
Finance/Administration Manager	Nuala Moynagh
Reception/Administrator 08)	Sophie Romantzoff (<i>Sept 08 to Dec</i>
Reception/Administrator	Agnieszka Wlodarska (<i>from June 09</i>)

Policy Team

Deputy Director	Barry Fitzpatrick (<i>from May 09</i>)
Policy Officer	Helena Macormac (<i>Sept 09 to Dec 09</i>)
Legal Policy Officer	Helena Macormac (<i>from Jan 09</i>)
Communication Officer	Francoise Barlet (<i>from May 09</i>)
Administrator – Policy	Chris McAfee (<i>Sept 08 to Dec 08</i>)
Research Officer	Chris McAfee (<i>from Jan 09</i>)
Administration Officer	Sophie Romantzoff (<i>from Jan 09</i>)
Racial Harassment Officer	Jolena Flett (<i>Sept 08 to Dec 08</i>)
Development Officer & Advice Manager	Jolena Flett (<i>from Jan 09</i>)
Development & Advice Officer 09)	Michelle Lyons (<i>Project ended March</i>
Development & Advice Officer	Marzena Graham

Capacity Building and CONNECT-NICEM Team

Co-ordinator of Capacity Building & Executive Director of CONNECT	Gabrielle Doherty
Bookings Manager	Aruna Djalo

Finance Manager	Stewart Robinson
Development Manager	Sarah Maitland
Administrator - Bookings	Katarzyna Gelger
Administrator – Bookings	Ano Mario Vaz (<i>from July 09</i>)
Administrator – Finance	Clair Dummigan (<i>from May 09</i>)
Administrator – Out of Hours	Rumena Kostadinova-McCabe
Administrator – Out of Hours	Michaela McClelland (<i>one year sabbatical</i>)
Administrator – Out of Hours	Tanja Tierney

Internship

Hong Kong University Social Innovation and Global Citizenship internship:

Rachel Au
Cindy Lam

Queen's University of Belfast LLM Human Rights internship:

Claire Pierson
Susan Nour

NICEM MEMBER GROUPS (2008-2009)

Afro Community Support Organisation Northern Ireland
Alliance of Filipino Communities Northern Ireland
Al-Nisa Association NI
An Munia Tober
Barnardos Chinese Lay Health Project
Belfast Islamic Centre
Bulgaria Association Northern Ireland
Craigavon Traveller Support Committee
Derry Traveller Support Group
Filipino Communities in Northern Ireland
Guru Nanak Dev Ji Sikh Community Association
Indonesian Association Northern Ireland
Indian Community Centre
Mandarin Speakers Association
Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association
Northern Ireland Committee for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Northern Ireland Filipino Association
Northern Ireland Filipino Community in Action
Northern Ireland Multicultural Association
Northern Ireland Pakistani Cultural Association
Northern Ireland Sikh Association
Northern Ireland Somali Association
Polish Association Northern Ireland
Portuguese Speakers Association
Derry Traveller Support Group
Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group
Shah Jalal Mosque Bangladeshi Community Centre
Strabane Ethnic Community Association
Windsor Women's Centre Multi-cultural Group
Women of the World, Enniskillen
World Wide Women at North Down

Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
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