



NICEM

Submission to

DARD

on

Rural Development

Programme (RDP)

2007-2013

December 2007

Introduction

NICEM is an umbrella organisation representing the interests of black and minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland. Currently we have 25 affiliated black and minority ethnic groups as our full member, which represents most of the black and ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland. Our vision is of a society where differences are recognised, respected and valued, a society free from all forms of racism and discrimination, where human rights are guaranteed. NICEM works in partnership, to bring about social change, by achieving equality of outcome and full participation in society.

We welcome DARD to publish the EQIA of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 and to consult various stakeholders and equality groups. We particularly welcome the commitment of DARD developing a different approach to address inequality within the rural context and highlight those issues that have impacts on section 75 groups. The equality mainstreaming approach will assist DARD to develop the RDP 2007-2013. Within this framework we need to ensure that the issue of multiple identities will be addressed in each of the section 75 groupings. Take for an example a disabled Polish female migrant worker has more than one single identity. Therefore each of the section 75 grouping should consider the intersection of other identities when they develop their particular programme.

Over the last 3 years the demographic change in Northern Ireland has significant impacts on the rural economy. We now import more migrant workers from A8 countries to work and to live in these rural areas on top of the very small number of settled ethnic minorities who run their business and/or migrants outside EU countries who work in professional field to support local rural community. Their presence not only does it sustain our rural economy it also has a knock-on effect to sustain our local public services such as schools and hospitals.

Despite these changes one of the key barriers for minority ethnic people who are living in rural community is lack of local infrastructure for this small group of people to have their voice heard. We would like to see the RDP 2007-2013 to address this particular issues through Axis 3. NICEM is committed to assist DARD to develop local ethnic minority infrastructure as our strategic priority in order to feed into the Local Action Group (LAG) and/or as a member of the LAG if such infrastructure has developed.

Specific comments

1. Section 1: Introduction

Use of statistical analysis

We welcome DARD using different approach to engage with equality groups in order to mitigate the previous EQIA consultation on RDP. This is a forward thinking approach. We have the following issues and concerns:

- We used to ask each public authority to revisit the aim of section 75 prior to publish any document for the purpose of section 75. The overall

aim of section 75 it is not about the prevention of discrimination, as equality law already exists. It is about to promote equality of opportunity and good relations among different religious and racial groups. It puts a statutory equality duty to all public authority across their functional areas. The EQIA is an important process to ensure the measure that proposed will have equality outcome, taking into account of mitigating factor, as the ultimate goal for section 75. These measures will have positive equality on section 75 groups.

- Monitoring data for the purpose of public services is never established which would have differential impacts on all section 75 groups. Without these data we have limited information for the purpose of EQIA. We welcome DARD using qualitative approach by inviting section 75 groups addressing the equality issues in order to mitigate this problem. For NICEM it is an interim measure and for the long-term strategy we would like to ask the Department to lobby the Equality Commission and the OFMDFM setting up all equality monitoring data under section 75 by all departments and their next step agencies. We also encourage DARD to set up such monitoring data within your functional areas in order to develop a model for other departments and next step agencies. NICEM is prepared to assist DARD to set up such system within the department and DARD's next step agencies.
- Monitoring data on public services is particular important for the EQIA on AXIS 3 and 4.
- We are disappointed that Axis 4 is not subject to EQIA, which is very relevant as the LAG is the delivery body of the RDP 2007-2013. Their composition and their perception on equality issues, in particular section 75, will have knock-on effect on the implementation of the RDP.
- The EQIA does not provide comprehensive good relations assessment for both majority communities and majority and minority community in the RDP 2007-2013. It is relevant in particular under Axis 3 and 4.

2. Section 3: Background and Aim of RDP 2007-2013

We welcome the overall theme of the Rural Strategy is "diversifying the rural economy, protecting the rural environment and sustaining rural communities" and its four aims (para. 3.3, p.28). We also agreed the aim of the RDP 2007-2013, which states, "Its vision is for a programme which protects and enhances the rural environment and which contributes to the development of competitive and sustainable rural business and thriving rural communities."

3. Section 4: Equality Strategies and Government Priority Areas

We welcome DARD put equality in the delivery of the RDP. It is an important step towards a right direction to address existing inequality through the EQIA equality outcome. We also welcome DARD to address other key government strategies by using equality mainstreaming approach. Within this framework we need to ensure that the issue of multiple identities will be addressed in each of the section

75 groupings. Take for an example a disabled Polish female migrant worker has more than one single identity. Therefore each of the section 75 grouping should consider the intersection of other identities when they develop their particular programme or programmes.

4. Section 5: Equality Evidence from Pre-Consultation

We reinforce our comments in the last section regarding multiple identities. It is important the equality evidence should address this issue more thoroughly. Some of the issues identify in each group should also consider whether the other section 75 groups have the same issue and problem, for example under women-ethnic minority also has problem on childcare provision.

We also have the concerns that Irish Travellers who have half of the population reside in rural area was not involved in the Pre-Consultation process. Irish Travellers, in the past, provided their skills and cheap labour for the rural economy prior to 60s. The urbanisation process and the introduction of plastic forced the Irish Travellers, who once provided key supply chains in the rural economy, such as blacksmith and seasonal workers, into poverty. Their nomadic way of life also is affected as the local authorities did not provide sufficient permanent and transit site and most of these sites are sub-standards which affect their health, education, playing, living, etc. We would like to urge DARD to have a separate meeting with the key traveller groups outside Belfast to get more information about their equality issues.

5. Section 7: Assessment of Axis 3

We reinforce our comments in paragraph 3 regarding multiple identities. Some of the issues identify in each section 75 group should also consider whether the other section 75 groups have the same issue and problem.

Regarding the ethnicity issues we agreed with DARD that “there is much work to be done and then later by the delivery agents to ensure that ethnic minority groups and communities feel included and can be encouraged to put forward projects for funding.” NICEM is committed to assist DARD developing the areas of work need to be done for the future.

One of the key barriers for minority ethnic people who are living in rural community is lack of local infrastructure for this small group of people to have their voice heard. We would like to see the RDP 2007-2013 to address this particular issues through Axis 3. NICEM is committed to assist DARD to develop local ethnic minority infrastructure as our strategic priority in order to feed into the Local Action Group (LAG) and/or as a member of the LAG if such infrastructure has developed.

We also suggest DARD to do more local research studies on ethnic minorities in order improve equality information. NICEM has both expertise and capacity to develop the research studies and is willing to work in partnership with DARD to move the way forward.

6. Section 8: Mitigating Measures

We welcome DARD has strong commitment on equality mainstreaming in ensuring all operations carried out under the RDP 2007-2013 will comply with section 75 requirement. We have concerns on the development of the LAG, which is crucial for the success of the delivery of the RDP 2007-2013.

We support the views of the Rural Community Network how to strengthening the equality and good governance elements of the LAG (see Section 4 “Mainstreaming Equality” – Local Action Groups, Rural Community Network submission on the RDP 2007-2013).

NICEM welcome DARD to have training plan for members of the new LAGs and training on equality issues will be a key part of this plan (para. 8.5, p.121). Training is an important process to ensure individual member of LAG to conform and perform the requirement under the RDP 2007-2013, in particular section 75 requirement.

We also suggest DARD to put section 75 requirements into all tender document and form part of the contract to deliver the RDP 2007-2013 (contract compliance). This will put equality into heart and mind of the LAG.

We agreed DARD’s analysis on the mitigation measures under ethnicity. NICEM reiterate the partnership approach to address the challenge in delivering RDP 2007-2013. We are committed to assist both the training and effective delivery under Axis 3. We are willing to work with the LAG to develop such programme and strategies to address the needs of minority ethnic people living in the local rural area, in particular develop local infrastructure for minority ethnic people.

For further questions and assistance of this submission, please contact Mr. Patrick Yu of NICEM for details. Our contact is as follows:

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