

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

**Submission to the  
Children and Young People  
Unit on Consultation on  
a Draft Strategy  
for Children and Young Person  
In Northern Ireland**

**28 February 2005**

## **Background**

‘A Draft Strategy<sup>1</sup> for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland’ - aiming to place the emphasis on children and young people’s rights entitled **‘Making it r wrld 2’** was launched in November 2004 by the government. The decisions that the government reach on these issues will affect how it will work for all children and young people in Northern Ireland for the next ten years.

Whilst welcoming this draft strategy as the first step of the commitment of the government, NICEM believes that the culture of human rights, equality and justice are essential to build a peaceful and prosperous future for all children and young people in Northern Ireland. NICEM believes in the **implementation** of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** to protect all children and young people’s rights. All children and young people in Northern Ireland should equally enjoy the Convention, which the UK ratified in 1991. Concerning **the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action** adopted at **the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance**, it is therefore essential that the measurements and programmes on the Convention be adhered to.

## **NICEM’s Response and Recommendations**

NICEM’s response<sup>2</sup> to the draft strategy has incorporated the comments and views of 23 young people of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds (see appendix - **A Report of a Consultation Workshop of Young People of Black and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds on 8 February 2005 at Lagan College**).

1. The consultation on ‘A Draft Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland’ has not been consistently put in place to support the idea of a **‘consultation’** and the inclusion of **‘all children and young people’**. Young participants of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, in the consultation workshop confirmed that they did not benefit from the ‘young person’s version’ and ‘the translated version’ and found the information difficult to understand. Young participants also stated that they wanted to be consulted and involved directly, **‘I am very happy about talking, it helps in each thing’, ‘We could share our point of views on these topics!’, ‘It was a great experience and we hope to have a few more meetings in future.’** They want to have a say in the matters that affect them.

**Recommendation:** The strategy should use a range of communications for a targeted **meaningful consultation**<sup>3</sup> with all children and young people in

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<sup>1</sup> The draft strategy includes: a vision statement, a set of values, a rights-based whole child perspective, operational principles, strategic objectives and strategic outcomes of 5 suggested areas of actions (Rights and Equality, Participation, Protection, Provision and Poverty) and some additional draft actions relating to cross-cutting themes. A set of strategic indicators for monitoring and evaluation such as assessments in relation to equality and good relations, new Targeting Social Needs (TSN), Human Rights and rural proofing.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning this submission, NICEM would like to express our gratitude to the information provided by Elaine McElduff at the CiNI.

<sup>3</sup> See NICEM’s paper on a meaningful consultation with BME communities, [www.consultationni.gov.uk](http://www.consultationni.gov.uk), [www.GENERATE.qld.gov.au](http://www.GENERATE.qld.gov.au), Davie, R. et al (1996). The Voice of the

terms of policy formulation and service delivery. This may include a series of promotion such as television advertisements, workshops, road shows or training trainers to reach them. A user-friendly glossary to define terms that are used in the Strategy is needed. Young participants of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds participated and contributed to the draft strategy with a diversity of experiences and cultures, therefore, all children and young people means children and young people of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and other 'invisible' groups in particular children and young people with disabilities, children and young people from poor families, children and young Irish Travellers, children and young asylum-seekers and refugees, children and young people in care, detained children and young people aged between 16 and 18 years old all should also be explicitly included in the full strategy - plan of action. They are all equal partners in the shaping of services and in developing policies.

2. The Convention has not been used as a framework in the draft strategy, although it was suggested that there was a rights-based whole child approach. NICEM's concern is on the effects of oppression, discrimination and inequality on children and young people at individual, group and institutional levels, therefore, taking the strategy forward needs the entire framework of the Convention. With reference to **the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action** adopted at **the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance**, it is therefore crucial that the measurements and programmes on the Convention are adhered to. It is because the Convention is much broader than those contained in the rights of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to meet the needs of all children and young people in Northern Ireland.

**Recommendation:** The strategy should be aimed specifically at ensuring full implementation of the Convention on the basis that it is a rights-based whole child approach. Comprehensive strategies/action plans must include the mainstreaming of the fight against racism in policies, the need of enhancing social inclusion and combating disadvantages in all forms including multiple discriminations. Therefore, the issues of multiple identities and multiple discriminations in the discussions of specific actions to deal with oppression with particular reference to the intersection of disability, social and economic circumstance, gender, race and sexual orientation is much needed.

3. Although at present the government does not intend to withdraw its wide-ranging reservations on immigration and citizenship, which is against the object and purpose of the Convention, this view is also reflected in the draft strategy. However, immigration and integration issues (law, policy and practice) both have a real impact on the lives of young asylum seekers, young refugees, young people of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and their families in Northern Ireland in particular the issues of access to and quality of service provisions. Children and young people matter. Due to the fact that

racism is a violation of human rights, the main points raised by young participants in the workshop indicated that the everyday discrimination faced by them, such as experiencing continued hostility because of their migrants origin or asylum-seekers or refugees status, encountering a rise in religious intolerance due to different faith – all this because of their belonging to minority groups.

**Recommendation:** The government should withdraw its wide-ranging reservations on immigration and citizenship, which is against the object and purpose of the Convention, for the meantime, before its withdrawal, the integration of young asylum seekers; young refugees should not be subordinated to other policies and service provisions and this should be clearly stated in the strategy. Integration is not just in the school but also outside of school and post school into the community. Its outcome is to enhance life opportunities for all children and young people.

4. The draft strategy indicates the lack of a strategic co-ordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention and co-ordinated protection of children and young people's rights across the government and departments' operation.

**Recommendation:** A Cabinet-level Minister for children and young people or a cabinet children and young people's committee in Northern Ireland should be established to ensure the commitment of the government and departments' operation to implement the Convention in the strategy. Whilst, the strategy review panel will have a clear role and purpose to assess and review the progress, the independent monitoring role and responsibilities should be given to the voluntary and community sectors.

5. Young participants retold their experiences of living in adverse conditions on the fringes of poverty and social exclusion. Without an adequate understanding of the institutionalised nature of racism and discrimination and the way it is embedded in their lives, by simply positing racisms, xenophobia, racial and cultural intolerance as verbal or physical violence or 'visible' discrimination, is not an effective way to deal with the complex and diverse ways that the varying forms of racism actually operate, and are perpetuated. The draft strategy provides only one-off or separate research - this will not capture all the issues for a better understanding and effective actions.

**Recommendation:** NICEM proposed a new longitudinal study of children and young people of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, children and young Irish Travellers, children and young asylum-seekers and refugees should be included in the strategy to provide adequate information for early intervention, prevention and developmental work.

6. The extent of work suggested will be dependent on adequate resources, funding and staffing as a range of activities are needed to implement at the delivery level. The draft strategy provides insufficient information on the way the priority status will be negotiated.

**Recommendation:** The strategy should demonstrate how the priority status is negotiated along with the resources, funding and staffing to implement the strategic plan in each department.

**For further assistance of this submission, please contact:**

**Mr. Patrick Yu**  
**Executive Director of NICEM**  
**Ascot House, 3/F**  
**24-31 Shaftesbury Square**  
**Belfast BT2 7DB**  
**UK**  
**Tel: 028 9023 8645**  
**Fax: 028 9031 9485**  
**Email: [patrickyu@nicem.org.uk](mailto:patrickyu@nicem.org.uk)**