

The Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities

2011 MANIFESTO

“An ethnic minority baby born today is sadly still more likely to go on to receive poor quality education, be paid less, live in sub-standard housing, be in poor health and be discriminated against in other ways than his or her white contemporaries. This persistent, longstanding inequality is quite simply unfair and unacceptable.”¹

INTRODUCTION

Election time is around the corner and it is more than ever essential to protect the most vulnerable members of our society from becoming the first victims of electoral promises resting on the Westminster budget cuts and the protection of one's own perceived electorate.

Ethnic minorities² will have more impact than ever before in this election and their influence will keep gaining strength. The impact of the 'swing vote' from ethnic minorities will prove crucial as a benchmark for future elections.³

Some progress has been made in the past few years to address equality and diversity issues, but there is still a long way to go to achieve the eradication of poverty and ironclad legislation dealing with racism. Specific policies have to be either continued or put in place to ensure all communities, local, settled and new, are treated fairly and equally.

¹ Commission for Racial Equality, "A lot done, a lot to do", London, Sept. 2007.

² In this document the terms "ethnic minorities", "black and minority ethnic communities" (BME) or "minority ethnic people" or "minority ethnic communities" or "minority ethnic group" mean 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.

³ NICEM estimates that there are currently over 30,000 Polish people and another 10,000 people from the rest of A8 and A2 in Northern Ireland. There is also a substantial number of Filipinos (4,000-6,000) and Indians (1,500-2,000) who have registered under the work permit legislation over the last 8 years.

Northern Ireland is slowly accepting the vital need for migrant workers to boost its economy. Diversity and equality have become one of the core concerns of the Stormont government since racism and hate crime have increased manifold following the arrival of Filipino nurses, then the Eastern European migrants, and now nurses and ICT engineers from India. Northern Ireland is now boasting a rich diverse culture, on a par with the main cities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, as the 2011 census will demonstrate.

In times of economic downturn, minority ethnic communities are the first victims of the 'scapegoat syndrome', where local individuals and political parties throw on their shoulders the weight of their mistakenly perceived responsibility for the economic demise of the nation. The current economic crisis presents a significant challenge for the government to keep pushing for racial equality whilst preparing a workable budget and satisfying the indigenous population.

Let us not forget: Eastern European migrants have taken low paid jobs that local people shied away from as it appeared they would be better off staying on benefits. These low paid jobs are the cornerstone of the local and regional economy and are essential to the growth of the meat processing industry in particular. The largest supplier of chicken and meat-related products in Europe, which is based in Northern Ireland, heavily relies on 12-hour shifts of manual labour.

Moreover, China and India are the second and third largest investors in the UK. India is now the second largest investor in Northern Ireland and China is following suit, slowly expanding in Northern Ireland.

Minority ethnic individuals and organisations are a vital part of society: they participate fully in an agenda of integration and peace. Northern Ireland society cannot afford to ignore their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Northern Ireland, and its government should fight scaremongers who demonise them all the way.⁴

To address effectively the increasing numbers of minority ethnic people, NICEM and its members, who focus on the promotion of diversity and the fight against racism, have had to step up to the forefront of the

⁴ The net impact of post-2004 migrant workers is 40,000 jobs and £1.2 bn GVA (gross value added, a common measure of the value of economic output, which is primarily made up of wages and profits). For details, see Oxford Economics, "Economic, Labour Market and Skill Impacts of Migrant Workers in NI", Department of Employment and Learning, September 2009, p. 80.

political and social discourse to protect ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland. This has involved imaginative ways of creating projects and diversity events to empower, protect and defend ethnic minorities made even more vulnerable by the difficult economic conditions. In turn, resources have become scarce in the voluntary and community sector and competition for funding will squeeze out ethnic minority organisations as a result of the lack of local infrastructure. We need to redress the unmet social needs of ethnic minority communities, particularly in the context of the regressive budget cuts which will hit the most vulnerable groups in our society.

In this 'Catch 22' context, NICEM's manifesto is making strong recommendations to the government.

In particular, we are asking for the impetus towards adequate action to address prejudice, racial discrimination, racist hate crime and promote diversity to remain strong even in difficult times.

The government needs to promote the rights of ethnic minorities in recognition of the essential part they play as part of the social, cultural and economic fabric of Northern Ireland.

NICEM's place in Northern Ireland's society

Our vision is of 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. 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.

On behalf of its **29 affiliated Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups** as full members, who represent settled ethnic minority and religious minority communities, Irish Travellers, migrants from the EU and non-EU migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, NICEM:

- promotes **good race relations** and endeavours to achieve the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of racial equality;
- identifies and **responds to the needs** of black and minority ethnic communities;
- defends and **promotes the rights** of black and minority ethnic communities;
- **represents** and promotes the black and minority ethnic sector

- provides **support and leadership** to black and minority ethnic communities;
- raises **public awareness** and **understanding** of racism, particularly institutional racism; and
- provides **training** for potential leaders from within black and minority ethnic communities.

We reinforce our objectives and actions by contracting over 300 registered freelance interpreters through NICEM's accredited training programmes. They provide more than 80 national languages and/or dialects to the most vulnerable groups in our society whose mother tongue is not English, in the criminal justice system, as well as in other public services. CONNECT-NICEM, the community enterprise of NICEM, is the largest job creator within the voluntary and community sector.

The voluntary and community sector is a vital cog in the machinery of peaceful resolution and positive change in Northern Ireland. Without it there are no good relations, no cohesion, no sharing, no integration, no sustainable peace.

In times of positive demographic changes, black and minority ethnic voluntary organisations have more than ever an essential role to play to ensure that policies evolve to reflect these changes and do not grind to a halt.

Manifesto objectives

- To ensure that human rights and equality are mainstreamed into government policies and practice;
- To ensure that minority ethnic communities are an essential element of all parties' electoral agendas;
- To ensure that the government effectively sets up and implements policies fighting social exclusion and economic disadvantage in minority ethnic communities, as well as the local community at large;
- To ensure that the government promotes public participation via capacity building in minority ethnic communities;
- To reduce the gaps in poverty levels and in access to public services; and
- To eradicate prejudice, racial and religious discrimination and racist hate crime, moving towards human rights protection and equality for all.

We call on all parties to include resolutions on the following concerns in their election pledges:

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| Action 1 | Rewrite a new version of the Racial Equality Strategy based on the current six aims; |
| Action 2 | Develop regional services to support victims of racial hate crime; |
| Action 3 | Improve legal protection in accessing public services; |
| Action 4 | Set up an independent complaint system on bullying in school; |
| Action 5 | Address the needs of ethnic minority students with no GCSE qualifications; |
| Action 6 | Implement safeguards to protect migrant workers from exploitation; |
| Action 7 | Address disadvantages when new migrants complain or are disciplined at work; |
| Action 8 | Enact the Agency Workers Regulations and bring them into force immediately; |
| Action 9 | Support the creation of a “Social Protection” fund to help those facing destitution or who are destitute through no fault of their own; |
| Action 10 | Address inequality issues on ethnic minority health; |
| Action 11 | Introduce the proposed change to the review of the current Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 in the new Assembly; and |
| Action 12 | Create and implement a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. |

Ethnic minorities are now an integral, vital part of Northern Ireland’s social, political and economic fabric. They are here to stay and need protecting from racism, poverty and dire education and health inequalities.

NICEM calls on all political parties to pledge to work towards a better society where equality of chances is the core principle of all legislative actions. Supporting NICEM’s recommended actions will be the defining step towards a peaceful, prosperous shared future in Northern Ireland.

DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL POLICY AREAS

RACIAL EQUALITY STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

2005-2010

ACTION: Based on the 6 robust aims of the current strategy, rewrite a new version of the Racial Equality Strategy that reflects the current political, social and economic context and challenges to deliver the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) objectives on tackling racism.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>The Assembly voted unanimously to support the Racial Equality Strategy and a strong Action Plan to deliver the 6 aims from all departments and their next step agencies.</p> <p>The demand from all ethnic minority groups, the All Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities and NICEM for a new Racial Equality Strategy based on the current 6 aims.</p> <p>The Racial Equality Strategy has been frozen since the Assembly voted down the “Shared Future” document in May 2007. Since then, no Action Plan has been prepared, with the exception of DEL which has implemented their Action Plan regardless.</p>	<p>NI Assembly, Minutes of Proceedings, Tuesday 3 July 2007 (No.17/07), Hansard http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2007/070703.htm</p> <p>Oxford Economics, “Economic, Labour Market and Skill Impacts of Migrant Workers in NI”, DEL, Sept. 2009</p> <p>Robbie McVeigh and Chris McAfee, 'Za Chlebem: The impact of the Economic Downturn on the Polish Community in Northern Ireland', NICEM, Oct. 2009 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)</p> <p>Institute for Conflict Research, “A Report on the Experiences of Migrant Workers in NI”, DEL, Dec. 2009</p> <p>“Health of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in NI”, a NICEM scoping paper, Jan. 2010</p> <p>Para. 1.10-1.11 of the Programme on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration consultation document (p.4-5)</p>

<p>The context of the 2005-2010 Strategy is outdated in view of the dramatic changes in the demographic composition in Northern Ireland, as well as the new political, social and economic climate.</p>	<p>NICEM submission to OFMDFM on “The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration”, NICEM, Oct. 2010 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)</p> <p>Submission from the All Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities on “The Programme for CSI”, Oct. 2010</p> <p>NISRA, “Migration Statistics for NI (2009)”, Nov. 2010</p> <p>Department of Employment and Learning, “Attitudes to migrant workers: results from the NI Omnibus Survey”, November 2010 (annual survey since 2006)</p> <p>“Hate Incidents & Crimes”, PSNI Annual Statistical Report, 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010</p> <p>“Good Relations Indicators-2010 update”, OFMDFM, Jan. 2011</p> <p>OFMDFM’s response to PQ AQW 4289/11 by Dawn Purvis MLA on 18 February 2011</p>
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RACIAL INCIDENTS, HATE CRIMES AND DISCRIMINATION

- ACTION**
1. Improve and increase the confidence of ethnic minority people when reporting hate crime;
 2. Develop regional services to support victims of racial hate crime to mirror the existing domestic violence support services;
 3. Set up a funding scheme for voluntary and community sector organisations to support victims of Hate Crime,

mirroring the current scheme for victims of domestic violence;
and

4. Improve legal protection in accessing public services for black and minority ethnic people, particularly in the context of criminal justice.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>Racial incidents and racial hate crime have increased in average by 10-15% over the last 10 years.</p> <p>Half of the victims of racial hate crime have no confidence to report the crime to the police. They view the police as not being on the victim's side. It is a mixed experience.</p> <p>The current number of reported racial incidents and hate crimes are only the tip of iceberg.</p>	<p>See recommendations of the NIO funded external evaluation report: "Evaluation of NICEM's Racial harassment and advocacy Project", MMMA Consultancy, Mar. 2006</p> <p>Robbie McVeigh, "The Next Stephen Lawrence: Racist Violence and Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland", NICEM, Nov. 2006 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)</p> <p>Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland, "Hate Crime in Northern Ireland: A thematic inspection of the management of hate crime by the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland", Jan. 2007</p> <p>PSNI Annual Statistical Report "Hate Incidents & Crimes", 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010 OFMDFM, "Good Relations Indicators-2010 update", Jan. 2011</p>

EDUCATION

ACTION **1.** Set up an independent complaint system on racial and religious bullying in school; and

2. Address the needs of those ethnic minority students who left school with no GCSE qualifications, and the subsequent gaps.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>Education is the only means to have social mobility in our society, in particular for ethnic minority children.</p> <p>Children and young people of ethnic and religious minority backgrounds routinely experience racial and religious bullying in our school system. School authorities take no action or deny any racial or religious element when they receive a complaint. Many of them are being victimised as a result of their complaint.</p> <p>School bullying has severe negative impacts on psychological, social and school performance of ethnic minority children and young people.</p> <p>Ethnic minority students are 3 times more likely than the local average to end up with no GCSE qualifications, whereas the gap in the top slice between ethnic minority groups and the local average is narrowing (1% in GCSE and 6% in A level)</p>	<p>“Working Together: A Race Equality Youth Summit”, NICEM & Runnymede Trust, 5 May 2006</p> <p>“The Nature and Extent of Bullying in Schools in the North of Ireland”, Life Long Learning Research Centre, University of Ulster, Department of Education, 2007</p> <p>“Attitudes to Difference: Young people’s attitudes to and experiences of contact with people from different minority ethnic and migrant communities in Northern Ireland”, NCB NI and ARK YLT, March 2010</p> <p>“Good Relations Indicators-2010 update”, OFMDFM, Jan. 2011</p>

EMPLOYMENT

- ACTION:**
1. Implement safeguards to protect minority ethnic individuals from economic exploitation through legislative protection, particularly regarding the lack of legal enforcement through inspections on agency workers;
 2. Address the disadvantages of new migrants either when they make a complaint against their employer and/or colleague (s) or when they are subject to disciplinary procedures under the internal disciplinary process of the current employment law;
 3. The Agency Workers Regulations should be enacted and enforced immediately; and
 4. Non-EU seafarers who work in the fishing industry should be regulated under Work Permit rules whether they are working inside or outside the 12-mile zone.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
Members of the Polish community are 3 times more likely than the Northern Ireland average to be unemployed (2009 research figures). These figures can also apply to the rest of the A8 and A2 migrants.	<p>"Submission to the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Committee on the UK's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights", NICEM, April 2009 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)</p> <p>Robbie McVeigh and Chris McAfee, 'Za Chlebem: The impact of the Economic Downturn on the Polish Community in Northern Ireland', NICEM, Oct. 2009 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)</p>
Workplace prejudice and discrimination are common experiences of migrant workers in Northern Ireland, whether they are from A8, A2 and non-EU countries. The economic downturn makes their job even more insecure, particularly for those working in low paid jobs, social care and nursing	<p>"Annual Report 2009-2010", Office of the Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal (http://www.employmenttribunalsni.co.uk/annual_report_2009-2010.pdf)</p> <p>"A report on the experiences of migrant workers in NI", Institute for Conflict Research, Dec. 2009</p> <p>"The Agency Workers Directive – A</p>

homes, or as agency workers.	Public Consultation 2010”, Department of Employment and Learning, Dec. 2010
Most migrant workers are not protected under the existing employment law, particularly agency workers or people working for employers who will not renew their work permit despite good performance.	“Good Relations Indicators-2010 update”, OFMDFM, Jan. 2011

POVERTY

ACTION **Support the creation of a “Social Protection” fund** under OFMDFM to help those facing destitution or who are destitute through no fault of their own.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
Lack of a safety net for those migrants who are not eligible under the benefit system despite their contribution to PAYE and National Insurance.	Eastern Europe migrants are 3 times more likely to be unemployed compared with the local average but only 5% are eligible to claim benefits. (Robbie McVeigh and Chris McAfee, 'Za Chlebem: The impact of the Economic Downturn on the Polish Community in Northern Ireland', NICEM, Oct. 2009 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)
A Work Permit Holder pays around £700 to renew their work permit on an annual basis as revenue for the “Migration Impact Fund”.	
Public sector cuts will hit the vulnerable element of our society, and typically ethnic minorities who experience various barriers in trying to access to public services.	‘Racism and racial inequalities: the scale of the challenge’, Chapter 2, Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2010, p.13-18
	Para. 1.14 of Good Relations and the Racial Equality Strategy, “The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration”, consultation

	<p>document, August 2010, p. 5</p> <p>“Proposal on plugging gaps in welfare support for migrant workers for Racial Equality Forum”, Law Centre, November 2010</p> <p>“Good Relations Indicators-2010 update”, OFMDFM, January 2011</p>
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HEALTH

- ACTION:**
1. The Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety should carry out a comprehensive health needs assessment of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland without further delay;
 2. We urge DHSSPS and their next step agencies to address inequality issues on ethnic minority health urgently, including issues affecting Irish Travellers, Roma and Gypsy communities;
 3. We urge DHSSPS and their next step agencies to address the unmet social needs of ethnic and religious minorities, particularly mental health needs.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>Health inequalities are widespread among different ethnic minority communities due to difficulties in accessing health and social care services.</p> <p>Although some improvements have been made through provision of interpreters and involving the community through partnership programmes and support, the current economic climate will result in severe cuts in public services. We foresee that the</p>	<p>“Improving government service delivery to minority ethnic groups: NI, Republic of Ireland and Scotland”, NCCRI, Sep. 2006</p> <p>“Audit of Health Inequalities: Review of Research”, DHSSPS Equality Steering Group, Nov. 2010</p> <p>“NI Health & Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System: Sub-regional Inequalities” – HSC Trusts 2010, DHSS & PS, 2010</p>

gap in health inequality will dramatically increase.	“Good Relations Indicators-2010 update”, OFMDFM, January 2011
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REVIEW OF THE RACE RELATIONS (NI) ORDER 1997

ACTION: The Executive should introduce the proposed change to the new Assembly as soon as possible in order to breach the current gap.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
The current law has not been updated despite the fact that GB amended the same law in 2000, as now in the new Single Equality Act 2010.	The Assembly voted unanimously in support of the review of the current Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 and 2003 Regulations. (See Hansard http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2008/090526.pdf)
Ethnic minorities have less legal protection compared to the rest of the United Kingdom.	The formal Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, NICEM, March 2009. (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)
We cannot afford to wait for another 10 years as we have already been waiting for this change through the Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland, which is currently frozen.	“Good Relations Indicators-2010 update”, OFMDFM, January 2011

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ACTION: NICEM supports a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. As a committed member of the Human Rights Consortium, we support the campaign for the delivery of one of the last unfulfilled elements of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland would provide us with a framework of basic rights that each person in Northern Ireland is entitled to. This mechanism would enable us to hold our politicians to account and ensure that

policy decisions and legislation are made with the aim of progressively improving the lives of the people here, with particular protection of the most vulnerable.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>The UN Committee calls for the enactment of the Bill of Rights for NI, including economic, social and cultural rights.</p> <p>Ethnic minorities are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our society and special attention is needed in relation to the protection, prevention and promotion of international human rights standards, in particular in relation to expulsions, deportations and extraditions. These rights are not considered in the draft Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. NICEM strongly urge the Human Rights Commission to adopt a more inclusive approach to allow equal protection, prevention and promotion of international human rights standards to this group of people in our society.</p>	<p>NICEM submission to UN Economic, Social and Cultural Committee on the UK's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, April 2009 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)</p> <p>"Conclusion Observation of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the UK's 4th and 5th periodic reports", E/C.12/GBR/CO/5 22 May 2009</p> <p>"Submission to the NIO consultation on 'A Bill of Rights for NI: next steps' ", NICEM, March 2010 (downloadable from www.nicem.org.uk)</p> <p>"Good Relations Indicators-2010 update", OFMDFM, January 2011</p>

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