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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'Voices for Change': Integration reality examined in NICEM report¹

A report into the **experiences of community members from black and ethnic minority backgrounds living in Northern Ireland** has been released by the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities as part of a major European project examining the integration reality of life here.

NICEM Executive Director, Patrick Yu, stated that

"It is the first report of this kind and includes detailed regional focus across Northern Ireland with the participation of 650 respondents on five key integration indicators including employment."

Mr Uwem Otong from Nigeria, spoke at the launch to draw attention to employment barriers to the integration process:

"Third Country National migrant workers continue to come to the UK under the pretence of 'training opportunities' promoted by overseas employers - they leave their countries in trust and then realise there was never any job to go to. These are local and national issues that must take the European and international context into account. If no positive action is taken by government towards integration realities then young people will live and grow in anger."

¹ Research Report "Voices for Change: Mapping the views of black and minority ethnic people on integration and their sense of belonging in Northern Ireland", NICEM 2014.

This report was commissioned as a response to **the lack of existing community-led action research and the recent consultation on a revised Racial Equality Strategy** in the wake of the mass demonstration 'March Against Racism' in Summer 2014 that attracted almost 8,000 supporters.

Geraldine Scullion, a co-author of the report, stresses the **need for action from government departments** to be proactive in supporting integration:

"Members of NI's BME community and migrant workers make an enormous contribution to the economy and society in NI which is not recognised or celebrated; the barriers which hinder their full integration - under-utilisation of their qualifications, skills and experience, the perpetuation of erroneous myths and stereotypes, racial bullying of children in schools, or the fear of racist attacks – must be addressed by the authorities in order for their potential to be fully realised."

END

Notes to Editors:

1. The report will be launched at NICEM Annual General Meeting on Friday, 28 November 2014 at Crescent Arts Centre, 4 University Road, Belfast at 2:15 for 2:45pm. A special guest will respond to the Report at the Annual General Meeting.
2. The Chair of the All Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities, Anna Lo, MLA, will also speak at the launch of the Report.
3. The Mapping Report is one of the tasks in Northern Ireland implementing a EU Transnational Project "Integration on the Ground" (INTEGRO) which was funded by the European Union Integration Fund.
4. For the arrangement of interview for the authors and the community please contact mark@nicem.org.uk or patrick@nicem.org.uk phone **07710 767235**
5. For all press enquiries, please contact Patrick Yu.



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