



**NICEM**

**2015 MANIFESTO**

**March 2015**

**“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.”<sup>1</sup>**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Elections are fast approaching and it is increasingly essential to ensure that vulnerable members of our society are protected from the worst effects of austerity measures and economic uncertainty in Northern Ireland.

BME citizens<sup>2</sup> have expressed a greater willingness to vote in local elections than the general population<sup>3</sup> and the upcoming Assembly election will likely see the impact of the ‘swing vote’ from ethnic minorities.<sup>4</sup>

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 offset the impact of austerity and to achieve ironclad legislation dealing with racism. Additionally, a robust and effective Racial Equality Strategy, which finished consultation in 2014, must be implemented to ensure all communities, local, settled and new, are treated fairly and equally.

Despite the vital role of migrant workers in boosting Northern Ireland’s economy<sup>5</sup>, BME workers today face the fallout from media and political

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<sup>1</sup> Commission for Racial Equality, “A lot done, a lot to do”, London, Sept. 2007

<sup>2</sup> In this document “Black and Minority Ethnic Communities” or “Minority Ethnic Groups” or “Ethnic Minority” has an inclusive meaning to unite all minority communities together against racism. It is a political term that refers to settled ethnic minorities (including Travellers, Roma and Gypsy), settled religious minorities, migrants (EU and non-EU), asylum seekers and refugees and people of other immigration status.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, S. and Scullion, G., 'Voices for Change: Mapping the Views of Black and Minority Ethnic People on Integration and their Sense of Belonging in Northern Ireland' (2014) Available at: <<http://nicem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/VOICES-FOR-CHANGE-NICEM-2014.pdf>> [Accessed 03/03/15]

<sup>4</sup> The 2011 Census identified 1.8% (32,400) of Northern Ireland population were ethnic minority (non-White group. There was also 11% of population born outside Northern Ireland, including former A8 & A2 country which accounted for 2% (35,700). The prevalent main language other than English was Polish (17,700), Lithuanian (6,300), Portuguese (2,300), Slovak (2,300), Chinese (2,200), Tagalog/Filipino (1,900), Latvian (1,300), Russian (1,200), Malaysian (1,200) and Hungarian (1,000).

<sup>5</sup> Migrant workers fill key skill gaps in Northern Ireland and compensate for the loss of emigrating skilled worker. Additionally, 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

representatives who seek to blame migration for current economic difficulties. The absence of adequate legislative protection and cohesive anti-discrimination policy has – in the context of austerity cuts targeting the vulnerable and increasingly restrictive immigration control – seen soaring rates of hate crime, discrimination and exclusion.

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. Therefore, these factors will damage Northern Ireland's economic interests in two ways, through the deterrence of both vital migrant workers and significant foreign investment.

Northern Ireland society cannot afford to ignore BME communities' contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Northern Ireland, and its Government should fight prejudicial images and attitudes.

To effectively protect the increasing numbers of minority ethnic people, NICEM and its members have had to step up to the forefront of the political and social discourse 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. However, 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 BME communities, particularly in the context of potential budget cuts, which will hit the most vulnerable groups in our society.

In this 'Catch 22' context of increasing need and decreasing resources, NICEM's manifesto is making strong recommendations to the Government.

In particular, we are asking for adequate action to address gaps in legislation and policy, tackle inequalities arising from austerity cuts and alleviate conditions resulting from increasingly restrictive immigration control.

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and profits). See Lynn, S., 'Mapping the Deployment of Migrant Labour in Northern Ireland' (2013) Available at: <[http://www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new\\_6420381\\_mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf](http://www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new_6420381_mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf)> [Accessed 18/02/15] pp.41-43 and Oxford Economics, "Economic, Labour Market and Skill Impacts of Migrant Workers in NI", Department of Employment and Learning, September 2009, p. 80

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 mission is to work to bring about social change through partnership and alliance building, and to achieve equality of outcome and full participation in society. Our vision is of a society in which equality and diversity are respected, valued and embraced, that is free from all forms of racism, sectarianism, discrimination and social exclusion, and where human rights are guaranteed.

On behalf of its **28 affiliated Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups** as full members, who represent settled ethnic minority and religious minority communities, Irish Travellers, Gypsy and Roma, 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 BME communities;
- defends and **promotes the rights** of BME communities;
- **represents** and promotes the interests of the BME communities;
- provides **support and leadership** to BME communities;
- raises **public awareness** and **understanding** of racism, particularly institutional racism; and
- provides **training** for potential leaders from within BME communities.

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

In times of positive demographic changes, BME voluntary organisations have an essential role, now more than ever, to play in ensuring 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 the BME 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 BME communities;
- To reduce the gaps in poverty levels and in access to public services; and
- To eradicate prejudice, racial and religious discrimination and racist and religious hate crime and hate speech, 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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| <b>Action 1</b> | Reforming the Race Relations Order 1997 to ensure equal protections are afforded in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom |
| <b>Action 2</b> | Rectifying the shortcomings in the draft Racial Equality Strategy and ensuring its expeditious implementation;                            |
| <b>Action 3</b> | Offset the impact on vulnerable groups of budget cuts arising from the Stormont House Agreement;  |

**Action 4**            Combating increasingly restrictive immigration provisions, particularly those arising from the Immigration Act 2014.

BME communities are 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 opportunity is the core principle of all legislative actions. Supporting NICEM's recommended actions will be the defining step towards a peaceful and prosperous "shared society" in Northern Ireland.**

## DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL POLICY AREAS

### 1. REVIEW OF THE RACE RELATIONS (NI) ORDER 1997

**ACTION:** The Race Relations Order 1997 should be reformed to ensure equal protections are afforded in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>The current law offers disparate protection to individuals discriminated against on the basis of colour and nationality, and those discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity or national origins.</p> <p>Race Relations legislation still fails to protect some categories of worker, such as seafarers employed abroad.</p> <p>Ethnic minorities have less legal protection compared to the rest of the United Kingdom, as the Race Relation Amendment Act 2000 as well as afforded by the Equality Act 2010.</p>	<p>The Assembly voted unanimously in support of the review of the current Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 and 2003 Regulations. (See 26 May 2009 Hansard)</p> <p>The formal Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, NICEM, March 2009. (downloadable from <a href="http://nicem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2-NICEM_RRO_Review_Paper_final.pdf">http://nicem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2-NICEM_RRO_Review_Paper_final.pdf</a>)</p> <p>“Good Relations Indicators - 2012 update”, OFMDFM, January 2013 (downloadable from OFMDFM website and looking for Equality Research, then Equality Publications)</p>

## 2. A Sense of Belonging: Delivering Social Change through the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 - 2024

**ACTION:** Ensure that the draft Racial Equality Strategy is adapted to address shortcomings highlighted in the consultation process.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>The current draft of a Racial Equality Strategy lacks strong accountability and oversight mechanisms, such as Departmental Racial Equality Champions.</p>	<p>Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 'A Sense of Belonging: Delivering Social Change through a Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2024' (2014) Available at: &lt;<a href="http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/racial-equality-strategy-2014-2024-consultation.pdf">http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/racial-equality-strategy-2014-2024-consultation.pdf</a>&gt; [Accessed 18/02/15]</p>
<p>Robust implementation mechanisms, including thematic and Departmental Action Plans and Racial Equality Champions, must be provided for. The previous Strategy was poorly implemented, making this issue particularly important.</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Assembly Motion Debate, 'Racial Equality Strategy', 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007. See: <a href="http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2007/070703.htm">http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2007/070703.htm</a></p> <p>Irwin, J., McAreavey, R and Murphy, N., 'The Economic and Social Mobility of Ethnic Minority Communities in Northern Ireland' (2014) Available at: &lt;<a href="http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/ethnic-minorities-northern-ireland-full.pdf">http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/ethnic-minorities-northern-ireland-full.pdf</a>&gt; [Accessed 18/02/15] p.3</p>
<p>The Strategy must also make concrete provision for 'ethnic monitoring', beyond data already collected, so that data gaps on BME participation may be filled.</p>	



### 3. AUSTERITY, BUDGET CUTS AND THE STORMONT HOUSE AGREEMENT

**ACTION**    Offset the impact of proposed budget cuts and welfare reform on vulnerable groups in Northern Ireland.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>Lower wages, job insecurity and underemployment are common amongst BME communities in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Wallace, A., McAreavey, R. and Atkin, K., 'Poverty and Ethnicity in Northern Ireland: An Evidence Review' (2013) Available at: &lt;<a href="http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-northern-ireland-full.pdf">http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-northern-ireland-full.pdf</a>&gt; [Accessed: 20/02/15] p.29</p>
<p>BME individuals have been disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn, with BME unemployment being higher than average in North West council areas.</p>	<p>McAfee, C., 'The Impact of the Economic Downturn on the Black and Minority Ethnic People in the North West of Northern Ireland' (2014) (downloadable from <a href="http://www.nicem.org.uk">www.nicem.org.uk</a>)</p>
<p>The Stormont House Agreement has committed to significant public sector restructuring that will likely exacerbate these disparities further.</p>	<p>Rogers, S. and Scullion, G., 'Voices for Change: Mapping the Views of Black and Minority Ethnic People on Integration and their Sense of Belonging in Northern Ireland' (2014) Available at: &lt;<a href="http://nicem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/VOICES-FOR-CHANGE-NICEM-2014.pdf">http://nicem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/VOICES-FOR-CHANGE-NICEM-2014.pdf</a>&gt; [Accessed 03/03/15]</p>
<p>The Government must take steps to ensure that sufficient resources are available to tackle racial inequalities and that cuts do not</p>	<p>Stormont House Agreement 2015, p.1</p>

disparately impact BME communities.	
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#### 4. IMMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS AND THE IMMIGRATION ACT 2014

**ACTION** Combat increasingly restrictive immigration provisions, particularly those arising from the Immigration Act 2014.

REASON	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p>Migration is extremely important to the Northern Irish economy, with migrant labour forming the backbone of the Agri-food industry - which constitutes 20% of our private sector – and of our healthcare sector.</p> <p>Therefore, it is concerning that the Immigration Act 2014 seeks to place immigration enforcement duties on landlords and banks, which will impede migrants seeking housing and bank accounts. By making the United Kingdom a cold house for migrants, the economy of Northern Ireland is placed at significant risk.</p>	<p>Lynn, S., 'Mapping the Deployment of Migrant Labour in Northern Ireland' (2013) Available at: &lt;<a href="http://www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new_6420381__mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf">http://www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new_6420381__mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf</a>&gt; [Accessed 20/02/15] pp.3, 13 and 52</p> <p>Immigration Act 2014, Sections 22(1) and 40(1)</p> <p>Race Equality Foundation and Movement Against Xenophobia, 'Access to Services: the Immigration Act 2014 and Key Equality Impacts' (2014) Available at: &lt;<a href="http://www.noxenophobia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Equality-impacts-IA-Sep2014.pdf">http://www.noxenophobia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Equality-impacts-IA-Sep2014.pdf</a>&gt; [Accessed 02/03/15]</p>

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