

Submission to: National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
2006-2008
Submission from: Cairde, 19 Belvedere Place, Dublin 1.
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What should be in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2006-2008?

This submission to National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2006-2008 (NAPSIincl) is based on a consultation process implemented with ethnic minority community members and Cairde's experiences over the course of its activities with disadvantaged ethnic minority communities in recent years; including asylum-seekers, refugees, immigrants and others of different legal status. Cairde adopts the WHO definition of health which states that "...Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.....". This submission focuses on **four** issues which Cairde feels the NAPSIincl should include which will enable ethnic minorities to address poverty and social exclusion, which ultimately impacts on their health.

Experience indicates that there is a significant time lag between the adoption of government policy and an impact at community level. Ireland is currently experiencing significant demographic change, and is afforded a unique opportunity to develop measures responsive to the needs of minority ethnic groups prior to the emergence of intergenerational exclusion and inequality, as has been the experience elsewhere in developed countries. Adopting a trickle down effect in addressing poverty and social exclusion will not be sufficient if lessons are to be learned from other countries. It cannot be assumed that the needs of minority ethnic groups will be met in due course within existing policy and infrastructure in line with a normal pace of change. A major investment is required at this time, at this early stage of the migration experience in Ireland, in order to develop policies responsive to the diverse needs of minority ethnic communities. Minority ethnic groups must be involved centrally in this process.

1. Targeted Investment in Community Building and Building Participation

If NAPSIincl is going to address poverty and social exclusion experienced by disadvantaged minority ethnic groups, then new measures to include minority ethnic groups must be established. This must be underpinned by resources and strategies to build the capacity of ethnic minority communities to identify their own needs, make demands and engage in meaningful dialogue and decision-making processes. This involves structured funding and integrated support for ethnic minority communities to develop their own community development initiatives which will build their capacity to participate in policy making processes at local, regional and national level, and across all sectors including health.

Overall, new ethnic minority communities must be resourced to identify and articulate their needs; this includes assessing their experiences of accessing services, their experiences in using services, and changes they feel should be made to improve services. Community development projects led by ethnic minority communities need to be resourced, encouraged and supported to enable Irish policy making processes to benefit from the skills and abilities of minority ethnic communities. Early targeted investment in community building means:

- providing adequate resources at community level for minority ethnic groups to engage in community development to assess their experiences, analyse their needs and build capacity to engage with service providers and policy makers to negotiate change in service delivery and policy, and monitor the impact of change.

2. Targeted Investment In Public Services

Socially excluded communities often experience difficulty accessing information about rights and entitlements, and availability of public services. Disadvantaged groups experience poor public administration where access to services is often inconsistent across different geographical areas. This is an ongoing difficulty for disadvantaged minority ethnic communities who are not familiar with the public services system in Ireland, and who experience language and cultural barriers in accessing information and services. Specific measures to support excluded groups to access information and services need to be developed, and these measures must take the specific needs of disadvantaged minority ethnic groups into account, including measures for undocumented workers, particularly with regard to accessing health services. Targeted investment in public services means:

- Providing adequate resources to ethnic minority communities to engage with service providers;
- Providing adequate resources to service providers to explore the specific needs of minority ethnic groups and tailoring their services and policies to match those needs;
- Providing adequate resources to other services at community level which provide information and supports to tailor their information and support services to meeting the needs of minority ethnic groups.

A major investment at this time will serve to front-load the development of appropriate services with a view to savings at the latter end of the migration experience when the fruits of quality service delivery are experienced at community level.

3. Information, Data and Targets

Appropriate data and statistics to identify the needs and experiences of minority ethnic groups are neither collected nor available at local, regional or national level. Thus, evidence-based public policy development specifically targeted at the needs of ethnic minority communities cannot currently take place. The NAPSIncl should address this by developing a data collection system which monitors the ethnicity of all service users, and tracks accessibility of services and outcomes for ethnic minority communities with a view to developing targeted initiatives to

improve outcomes for all. This must be developed in partnership with ethnic minority communities to ensure appropriate and ethical use of such information.

4. Addressing Racism

The NAPSIncl must include anti-racism and interculturalism measures within all levels of public services, public bodies and decision-making. Components of this strategy should incorporate the following:

- training for personnel at all levels, including the health services, on race equality and interculturalism;
- assessing impact of current systems of service provision and making necessary amendments to ensure accessible culturally appropriate service provision (including interpretation, translation and mediation services);
- developing effective systems for ethnic minority community members to address racism and discrimination;
- positive action initiatives for the employment of ethnic minority community members across all sector; as well as other elements as appropriate.

Ethnic minority communities must be given resources to work in partnership with public services to develop, design and implement this overall anti-racism and intercultural strategy.

Cairde Process to Engage Minority Ethnic Groups in NAPSIncl:

Cairde acknowledges that this submission falls outside the official dates given to participate in developing the NAPSIncl. 2006-2008. However, Cairde put in place a capacity-building and consultation process with minority ethnic groups which did not allow for sufficient reflection on the NAPSIncl. prior to the dates set out by the Office for Social Inclusion.

Before setting out suggestions and recommendations for strategies to address poverty and social exclusion, ethnic minority groups must be facilitated to develop their understanding of poverty and analyse their experiences of poverty and social exclusion. This process must take place if genuine participation is to be developed, supported and promoted. Cairde secured funding from the Combat Poverty Agency, and over the period from March to December 2005 delivered six 2-day workshops to ethnic minority community groups from within the Ethnic Minority Health Forum and the New Communities Partnership. In these workshops, participants explored the following:

- What is poverty?
- How is poverty measured?
- How is poverty experienced?
- What are the root causes of poverty?
- What is anti-poverty work?
- What does anti-poverty policy mean?
- What are the values that underpin anti poverty policies?
- Understanding anti-poverty, gender and equality.
- Understanding the Equality Framework

- Understanding poverty and health, education, citizenship etc.
- Communicating your policy proposals.

Participants in these workshops were facilitated to make a submission to the Office for Social Inclusion, which was approved on 24th April 2006. Cairde has incorporated the issues emerging through this process into this submission, as well as including related issues which emerged over the course of Cairde's overall work programme.

A sample of the issues which emerged in this process include:

- Poor access to well paid and secure employment, including not having the right to work, or not having qualifications recognized in Ireland
- Language barriers to employment and accessing public services
- Poor access to information
- Financial insecurity and poverty
- Poor access to quality, affordable childcare
- Poor public administration – including inconsistent delivery of public services and poor communication strategies at community level regarding services available
- Poor access to quality and secure accommodation
- Particular difficulties experienced by undocumented workers
- Poor family supports to deal with new circumstances, such as role reversal between men and women, family separation (children in country of origin), denial of family reunification, financial obligations in country of origin, poor supports in relationship breakdown etc.
- Racism and discrimination in daily life

About Cairde...

Cáirde is a non-government organisation working to reduce health inequalities amongst ethnic minorities. Cáirde is committed to supporting the participation of communities to enhance their own health. Cáirde's aim is to tackle health inequality experienced by minority ethnic communities and individuals by working through community development to build the capacity of minority ethnic communities and individuals to realise their rights by engaging directly with and influencing the policy system.

Cáirde aims to develop an understanding at community level that health inequality is a direct consequence of wider societal inequalities.

Cairde's objectives are:

1. To build the capacity of minority ethnic community organisations to identify their own needs and develop an awareness of the policy context within which services are planned and delivered;
2. To build the capacity of minority ethnic groups to act collectively in identifying the health and wellbeing concerns of their communities and engaging with statutory service providers and planners so that genuine

processes of consultation and participation are initiated between ethnic minorities and the policy system;

3. To target at risk or disadvantaged minority ethnic groups and provide tailored supports to build their capacity i.e. women, people living with HIV, Roma etc.;
4. To advocate on behalf of individuals with statutory and other service providers;
5. To provide information and other resources to community groups and individuals and/or groups working with ethnic minorities.

In seeking to meet its aims and objectives, Cairde initiates programmes and actions which model community development approaches to tackling health inequality and which address the wider factors that influence health at the community level. These programmes include:

- Resource Centre
- One-to-One Advocacy
- Community Group Development
- Women's Group Development
- Ethnic Minority Health Forum
- New Community Partnership (NCP)
- Community Development and Primary Care
- Women As Leaders Project.
- Community Development and HIV/AIDS Project
- Policy Development

For more information please contact Patrick Connolly or Stephanie Whyte at Cairde on (01) 8552111.