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FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

2004 was an exciting and challenging year for ITM. Once again the securing of funding has given a much needed boost to the organisation's funds, particularly for the new posts such as the Education worker, Community Advocacy Programme and the EU Equal Programme. These will go a long way towards allowing ITM to develop the work to which we are committed.

2004 saw the build up and preparation of the Traveller Education Strategy. 2005 will be a crucial year for the development of this Strategy and it is envisaged that the strategy will go a long way to ensure that Traveller learners will have full and equal access to mainstream education and training provision.

Travellers who are forced to live in unofficial accommodation still face the threat of eviction and uncertainty under the trespass legislation. Traveller accommodation remains one of the biggest challenges for Traveller groups at a local and national level and with the preparation of the new accommodation programmes, local groups will have a huge challenge in ensuring Traveller accommodation targets are met.

This Annual Report gives an overview of the work undertaken in 2004. It looks at the key issues and advances made in areas such as education, accommodation, and equality. It also looks at the work of the legal unit and the progress it has made throughout 2004.

ITM thanks all our members for the hard work put into ITM and its structures in 2004, and in particular to the people who have given their time in a voluntary capacity, as it is your commitment that makes ITM continue to grow from strength to strength.

Nancy Power
Chairperson, ITM Central Group.

ITM and Where We Represent Our Members.

ITM is a National representative organisation; our membership is made up of over 90 local Traveller groups and organisations in Ireland and the UK. ITM pursues the attainment of Travellers' human rights through our key policy areas and by lobbying the government to ensure that Traveller issues are on their agenda.

ITM is represented by the staff and members on a wide range of groups and committees at governmental, community and voluntary level.

At a National Level, ITM has played a role in:

- The review of the implementation of the Task Force Report on The Travelling Community 1995
- The National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- The National Traveller Health Advisory Committee
- The National Traveller Education Advisory Committee
- The National Traveller Education Strategy

In the wider community and voluntary sectors, ITM links with a wide range of groups including:

- The Equality Authority
- The Community Platform
- EAPN
- NCCRI
- The Human Rights Commission
- MABS

Funding and staff in 2004

ITM core funding comes through the National Networks Programme which is funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The Department of the Environment continues to fund the National Accommodation post, while the majority of funding for the Legal Unit comes from Atlantic Philanthropies. Finally, the funding of the Membership Development Worker came from the Joseph Rowntree Trust. ITM wishes to acknowledge the support of our funders in this report.

Catherine Joyce	Coordinator	Phil Mullen	Administrator
Anne Jennings	Administrator	Caroline Talbot	Accommodation
Thomas McCann	Equality Worker	Caroline Doyle	Membership Worker
Claire Davey	Accommodation		
David Joyce	Development worker LU		

Accommodation Work

Accommodation Working Group

The Accommodation Working Group is central to the accommodation work within the ITM. There is nationwide representation on the group and it meets every 4 to 6 weeks. As well as business meetings, usually held in Dublin, it also goes on site visits, in order to support groups within their own area. These visits comprise site visits in the morning and public meetings in the afternoon, families', elected representatives, Local Authority Officials and media are invited to these public meetings.

The main focus of the Working Group in 2004 was concentrating on the last year of the implementation of the Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes, and the beginning of the process for the new 2005 – 2008 Programmes, as well as the ongoing Review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

The Aims and objectives of the Accommodation Working Group are:

Aims

- To provide within the structures of the ITM a mechanism for ITM members to have an input into the development of Traveller Accommodation policy at a local and national level
- To act as a catalyst for change in relation to Traveller accommodation and campaign for Travellers right to culturally appropriate accommodation to be realised.

Objectives

- To provide supports for local Traveller groups on accommodation
- To develop policy in relation to Traveller accommodation issues for the ITM
- To formulate strategies on key issues
- To mobilise Traveller groups to work collectively
- To develop the work plan for the National Accommodation Officer and provide ongoing support to the worker
- To represent ITM on national committees
- To design and provide training on a number of issues
- To monitor and report on the provision of Traveller accommodation or lack of
- To monitor the level of evictions and report on these issues
- To carry out research as identified.

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) Regional Training Seminars

The ITM continued to hold a number of Seminars throughout 2004 as a way of supporting local Traveller groups and LTACC reps to participate on their LTACCs.

These Seminars were held in Dublin, Cork and Galway to try and ensure accessibility.

One round of these seminars had representation from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG), along with Local Authority Officials and elected representatives. The seminars serve as a useful link between the working of the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) and the LTACCs.

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC)

ITM along with Pavee Point and the National Traveller Women's Forum are represented on the NTACC. A lot of the work involved in the NTACC during 2004 was to do with the Review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. The ITM continued to make, in 2004, a number of submissions to this process. The key element of these submissions was the establishment of an independent Traveller Accommodation Agency. The Review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 was completed by the end of 2004, however, we are awaiting the official publication by the department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. 2005 will be a challenging year for ITM as we will have to respond to the outcomes of the Review and look at our position in regard to the NTACC.

Supports to Local Traveller Organisations

The National Accommodation Officer has continued to resource Travellers and workers in local organisations. Ongoing advice and support was provided in 2004 on a regular basis to groups and individuals dealing with emergency and crisis situations. We have also continued to engage with relevant local authority officials who have responsibility for the Traveller Accommodation Programmes. The Officer also provided cultural awareness training to LTACCs and local authority staff in 2004.

Media

The Officer has continued to respond to ongoing issues within the media and compiled a number of press releases in regard to accommodation issues. Media work continues to be a challenge, due to funding restrictions; however, the Accommodation Working Group has identified this as a priority for the next year.

Priorities for 2005

- Respond to the outcome of the Review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and continue to lobby for the establishment of an Accommodation Agency
- Continued support for members of the LTACCs
- To support members to participate in the development and implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2005 – 2008
- Address the lack of Transient provision
- Maintain and support the Accommodation Working Group
- Monitor and highlight Evictions
- Undertake Research to highlight the lack of implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2000 – 2004
- Engage strategically with the media
- Source funding for an additional Accommodation Worker.

Currently ITM has funding for one National Accommodation Officer. As accommodation is the prime issue facing Travellers and there are currently 38 new Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes, sourcing funding for a second accommodation post is a priority for 2005.

ITM LEGAL UNIT (ITMLU)

In 2004 the ITMLU pursued its objectives in accordance with the strategic plan. The work of the ITMLU is wide ranging and incorporates strategic casework and community development approaches to promoting Traveller human and legal rights as an ethnic minority within Irish society.

One of the key factors highlighted this year was that the best test cases are the ones that are supported by the local Traveller organisations. Traveller organisations involvement in case work and in the Legal Unit structures has been crucial to the development and success of the unit.

Structure of the Traveller Legal Unit

Central Group

The ITM Central group has overall responsibility for the Legal Unit and employment of staff.

The Legal Unit employs

- A Development Officer
- Equality Development Worker (part-time)
- Administrator (part-time)

A Solicitor's firm also provides a consultancy service

Legal Working Group

The legal working group contains members of the ITM, solicitors and legal professionals. This group met throughout 2004 and continued to act as an advisory group to the Legal Unit and carried out its role of supporting the staff and work of the unit.

Employment of a solicitor by a Law Centre

In 2003 the Law Society refused to allow the ITMLU to employ a practicing solicitor directly. The ITMLU worked with the other law centres to examine possible solutions for organisations like the ITM to be able to employ solicitors directly. The submission was viewed positively by the Law Society and we expect an outcome in 2005.

Securing Travellers Legal Rights

Strategic Test Cases

The Legal Unit has supported Travellers in accessing legal assistance in a number of areas over the year.

Influencing Policy Change

The development of a network of legal professionals

The purpose of this network is to ensure that legal practitioners have a familiarity with the relevant laws as they relate to Travellers. This work involves:

- The development of legal packs for legal professionals
- Informal contacts with solicitors
- Development of a panel of barristers
- Pro Bono initiative under the auspices of the Bar Council

Development of the Strategic Forum

The purpose of the Strategic Forum is to inform policy makers on issues emerging from the ongoing work of the Legal Unit and to examine changes that can be put in place to progress Traveller legal issues.

The Forum is made up of representatives from the following bodies:

The Legal Aid Board, An Garda Síochána, The Law Society, The Bar Council, Comhairle, The Human Rights Commission, The Independent Law Centres Network, The Courts Service, The Department of Justice, The Children's Rights Alliance. There were a number of key developments arising from the strategic forum. Each organisation has agreed to address issues affecting Travellers.

Human Rights Commission: The IHRC has included an objective in their business plan for 2005, to undertake joint work with ITMLU in relation to reform of the law relevant to Travellers.

An Garda Síochána: The representative of the Gardaí agreed to look at their participation in matters such as evictions, and dealing with complaints from local authorities, in light of relevant human rights considerations.

The Bar Council: A system has been established whereby a request can be made to identify a Barrister with relevant knowledge to take on cases on a pro bono basis.

Project Developments

EQUAL Legal Education for All Project (LEAP)

In September 2004 the ITMLU in partnership with Ballymun Law Centre, and Community Legal Resource (a private company dedicated to legal education in a community setting) secured funding to establish an EQUAL initiative. This project aims to provide support and training in legal education for employment opportunities in the legal profession to participants from non typical communities. The EQUAL project will span three years from January 2005.

TRANSDPOSE - Community Advocacy

The Legal Unit obtained funding to develop its Community Advocacy project that will focus specifically on combating discrimination. This programme involves training and supporting Travellers and member organisations to access their legal rights. The TRANSDPOSE project is in partnership with the European Roma Rights Centre and the Italia Helsinki Committee. The project will commence implementation in 2005, and run until the end of 2006.

The development of a Community Advocacy programme will build on the work that was already completed by ITM in partnership with the Equality Authority.

Information Provision

Legal Packs

The emphasis in the legal packs is on practical accessible information, so that legal professionals, presented with an issue of relevance to Travellers, could quickly find if there was case law, legislation or other information in the area. The Legal Packs were launched and distributed at the legal seminar held in 2004.

Information sessions

The Legal Unit, in partnership with Ballymun Law Centre, undertook a series of training sessions in relation to legal awareness with Travellers living in the Ballymun area. The training consisted of six hour-long sessions designed to develop an awareness of the law and its relevance to the Traveller Community.

Legal Packs for Local groups

A funding proposal was submitted to Comhairle during 2004 to assist in the cost of developing legal packs for local groups based on the needs of those groups, and the themes that emerged from the queries being submitted from local groups to ITMLU. Drafting the content of the packs commenced in 2004, and the packs will be completed and distributed in 2005.

Networking

Independent Law Centres Network

The Legal Unit is a member of the Independent Law Centres Network (ILCN) which continued to meet throughout 2004.

The Law Centres liaised with Law Centres Northern Ireland to look at developing joint initiatives on an all-Ireland basis. Links were also created with the Law Centres Federation in the UK. In October 2004, all the members of the ILCN contributed to a booklet on the European Convention on Human Rights. The booklet was presented at a lunch time session in Wynns Hotel and was well received. It is intended by ILCN that this event will take place annually.

Media

2004 saw an increase in the awareness of the Legal Unit by the national broadcast and print media. Media inputs ranged across a diverse collection of topics involving Traveller issues with participation by the policy officer in national radio and television programmes. There has also been coverage of the Legal Unit in the broadsheet newspapers all of which has enabled the unit to raise its profile amongst those in the legal profession who may be interested in taking cases on behalf of Travellers.

Submissions

The ITMLU made the following submissions:

Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation Act) 1998

The Legal Unit contributed to submissions by the national Accommodation Officer in relation to the reform of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, and in relation to the operation of other legislation impacting on the provision of Traveller Accommodation.

Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

The ITMLU produced a shadow report and commentary on the Irish National Report to CERD. This shadow report focused on the issue of Traveller ethnicity and the Irish Government refusal to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority within the State's report.

The ITMLU submitted its shadow report to the CERD secretariat in December 2004.

Human Rights Commission

The Legal Unit submitted a request in 2004 to the Human Rights Commission to carry out an audit of legislation relevant to Travellers' Human Rights. It is expected that this work will highlight the impact of negative legislation on the Traveller Community.

Equality Issues

The Equality worker maintains a position that straddles both the ITM and the Legal Unit. The Equality worker has a broad remit within the organisation that includes both particular representative activities and ongoing development work.

Equality Working Group

Key people were identified from local organisations and asked to participate in the EWG in addition individuals from outside of the ITM membership, e.g. the ICCL were invited to participate. The EWG has identified a number of key concerns and issues with regard to equality that need to be addressed both at national and local level.

Actions taken:

- Training needs assessment questionnaire sent to all local groups in order to establish what type of training local groups require.
- Log has been sent to all local groups to record incidents of discrimination.
- A request has been sent to all local groups to identify a key person who would act as a contact person for all equality issues thus assisting liaison with the local groups.

A training session was provided with the Southern Network of the ITM, about 60 people attended. It is envisaged that this training will provide the basis of an equality training pack for groups to use at local level.

The issues addressed by the training included

- The Equal Status Act,
- The impact of the recent changes to the legislation.
- Taking cases under the Equality Legislation; and the Equality Tribunal, how it works and the process of taking a case.

Human Rights Day

The EWG developed a strategy to celebrate International Human Rights Day. The ITM organised a national event and local groups were provided with a suggested advertisement to raise awareness about Traveller issues but also about the connection between human rights at home and abroad.

A number of meetings with the Equality Authority on equality proofing took place, emphasising the need to address the Traveller dimension vis-à-vis equality proofing and the possibility of training in this area for EWG. Meetings also took place with the board

of the Equality Authority, as well as attendance at a seminar of the committee on the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities.

Networking and Representation

The Equality Development Worker and members of the EWG have a representative role on the following groups:

- Exchange house - Traveller Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).
- Board of the Equality Authority
- Implementation and Advisory group on the community and voluntary sector
- CV12 - Community sector advisory group on the white paper on the Community and Voluntary sector
- The Community Platform
- The Monitoring Committee on the Task Force Report

Membership Development

Following on from special resolutions at last years AGM a significant amount of work has been undertaken in developing a new database of ITM members.

Membership now comprises of distinct categories:

1. Full Member ¹

Criteria – Must be a Local Traveller Organisation/ Traveller Group

The Rights Afforded to Full Members are:

- Receive all information from the ITM
- Can be involved in Working Groups and Regional Networks
- Invited to AGM
- Full voting rights at AGM
- Can be member of the Central Group

¹ They are:

- Non-governmental and independent of the statutory sector although many of their activities are funded by the state
- They are organised with a membership of Travellers and settled people seeking to work together as equal partners and can be organised with a membership made up solely of Travellers. The effective participation of Travellers is a key feature of these organisations.
- They have taken up a clear and proactive position in relation to Traveller issues and rights, and to the improvement of the living circumstances and general welfare of Travellers
- They work from the understanding that Travellers are an ethnic minority with a distinct culture which should be taken into account of in the provision of services
- They are committed to the principles of community development, for example, the development of strong Traveller participation (developed further with the Western network of the ITM)

1. a National/ International Full Member

Criteria – National and International Irish Traveller Organisations

The Rights Afforded to National and International Full Members are:

- Invited to AGM
- Full voting rights at AGM
- Receive all ITM information
- Can be on National Working Groups
- Can be on Regional Networks

2. Associate Member

Criteria - Organisations and Individuals who support the aims and objectives of ITM e.g. Equality Authority, Statutory Bodies, Preschools, Training Centres

The Rights Afforded to Associate Members are:

- Can receive ITM newsletter and general information
- Invited to the AGM
- Can be involved in National Working Groups

3. Individual Traveller Member

Criteria – Individual Travellers who are not linked into local groups and who support the aims and objectives of ITM.

The Rights Afforded to Individual Traveller Members are:

- Can receive ITM newsletter and general information
- Can be Involved in National Working Groups
- Can be involved in Regional Networks
- Invited to the AGM

N.B.

The Central Group of the ITM reserves the right to co-opt individuals onto the central group who they believe would be an asset to the Central Group.

Regional Networks have the right to nominate from the regions for co-options to the Central Group

Supporting New Traveller Groups

Considerable work has been ongoing throughout the country in making links with new groups and members and also in supporting existing groups.

Last year focused on three main areas:

- Louth and Cavan: ongoing developments in relation to developing work and supporting Travellers locally are taking place.
- Laois: Laois Travellers Action group published a community profile and have secured funding for work and are now quite active in the region.

All of the above work is taking place in partnership with the local Traveller communities, local community and voluntary groups and the National Traveller Women's Forum.

Regional Networks

The following networks have been active and met regularly during 2004. These include:

- Southern Network (Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare)
- South-eastern Network (Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford, Waterford, Wicklow, Tipperary)
- Eastern Network (Dublin, Kildare, Louth, Meath)
- Midlands Network (Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Tipperary)

Work needs to take place in the West and network events planned in the North Eastern areas.

To date regional networks have held at least two events in the year. Some of the events have focused on:

- Education- feedback on the Traveller Education Strategy
- Inputs and training from the ITM Legal Unit
- Equality training delivered by the ITM Equality Officer
- Inputs from Pavee Point Primary Health Care team
- Inputs from Pavee Point mediation team and the National Traveller Women's Forum
- Planning and developing the regional networks for the future

Education Work

The ITM education report “Travellers in Education: Strategies for Equality” was published last year. This report looks at the existing education policies and the role of Traveller organisations in education provision and support. The ITM video “Moving On: Travellers and Third Level Education” was launched in conjunction with University College Cork in 2004. The video promotes the possibility and options for access to third level education for Travellers. Both have received positive feedback from our members.

As part of the development of the Traveller Education Strategy, The ITM, in conjunction with the National Traveller Women’s Forum and Pavee Point, organised 5 regional seminars and one national workshop on Traveller Education. The report on the Consultations with Traveller Parents and Learners will inform the position of ITM at the Joint Working Group which is in the process of developing the Traveller Education Strategy.

The ITM education-working group has spent considerable time and energy, re-establishing its membership and developing a work programme for the group, which will include informing our members on the developments of the Traveller Education Strategy.

Education Priorities for 2005

- The main priority for 2005 is the continuing development and monitoring of the implementation of the Traveller Education Strategy.
- The creation and filling of the post of Education Worker in ITM
- Continuing to support the representatives on the Traveller Education Strategy Joint Working Group
- Using the ITM Education Working Group to disseminate information
- Using the ITM Education Working Group to promote and disseminate the “Moving On” video
- Continued consultation and information dissemination to members