

IRISH TRAVELLER MOVEMENT



Submission to the
Office for Social Inclusion
on the Preparation of the
National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion
(2006 – 2008)
October 2005

Introduction

Ireland has experienced many years of economic growth, being the second richest state within the European Union after Luxembourg. A number of legislative changes have been implemented, some with a positive impact on Travellers' lives, others clearly negative. An array of institutional arrangements has been put in place over the last decade, both Traveller specific and mainstream, which have the potential to significantly improve the situation of Travellers in Ireland. Yet these arrangements are too frequently marred by a lack of political will and the necessary 'teeth' to deliver the required outcomes.

Consequently the benefits to Travellers affected by poverty and social exclusion have been relatively small. In reality improvements have been slow and in some areas the situation for Travellers has actually deteriorated.

Sustaining Progress, the National Partnership Agreement 2003 - 2005 promised

" the continued targeting of resources and prioritisation of commitments at those most in need, sustaining social protection and inclusion expenditure at a level that addresses the key social deficits by continuing to protect and enhance the living standards of the disadvantaged and improving the delivery of social cohesion objectives" (3.2.2.),

To achieve this, resources must be ring fenced and directed towards Travellers and other communities suffering poverty and social exclusion. Otherwise the gap between Travellers and other marginalised communities and the rest of society will continue to widen.

The Plan needs to set ambitious targets and a clear implementation strategy to deliver the recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995 and meet the needs of all marginalised communities.

Outline of Submission

Our submission will follow the five objectives provided.

We have combined the policy sub-measures of A. Improvements to Existing Policy, B. Modifications and C. New/Additional Policies/Programmes under Actions for each objective, and summarised our Priorities up to 2008 at the end of the document.

1. Facilitating Participation in Employment

Travellers' economic activity has traditionally been primarily in the area of self-employment, involving such activities as scrap-metal recycling, horse-trading, laying tarmac, market trading, etc.. Both the Casual Trading Act, 1995 and the Control of Horses Act, 1996 had a severely negative impact on Travellers' economic activities, indicating that neither piece of legislation were adequately poverty proofed at any stage. Restrictive accommodation provision, where local authorities refuse to provide work space beside accommodation space (as is culturally appropriate) and the ongoing attacks on nomadism, along with a decreasing demand for second-hand goods such as scrap-metal, exacerbate this problem. As a result, only a minority of Travellers have remained economically active within the Traveller economy.

Within the mainstream labour market, Travellers continue to find it very difficult to access employment. Travellers are discriminated against both directly (i.e. refusal to hire or provide services) and indirectly (i.e. poor education, health and accommodation status of Travellers). Opportunities within the labour market have not replaced decreasing opportunities for self-employment within the Traveller economy, leaving many Travellers long-term unemployed and living on social welfare.

Innovative and supported strategies are required to develop Traveller access to training and labour market opportunities.

The Fas Community Employment Programme allowed for Travellers to take up 'apprentice' community work positions and other roles within their community. Further cuts to this programme will result in the reduction of numbers of Travellers coming taking up professional positions within their community.

Actions :

- Reform of the tax and benefit systems to reduce poverty traps, particular in relation to Travellers, and changes in the criteria for the medical card.
- Provision of workspace on or near Traveller accommodation
- In conjunction with Traveller organisations explore and develop innovative active labour market programmes with designated Traveller places and adequate education and training budgets
- Fas to provide flexible skills based, certified training, building on Travellers existing and traditional skills
- Develop an outreach strategy for Travellers by state training agencies like Fas, LES, etc.

- Travellers should be targeted for specific opportunities in the public sector
- Further develop competency, rather than academic qualification based recruitment strategies in relation to Travellers and other marginalised groups, including the waving of entry requirements for a variety of jobs, as well as apprenticeships
- Review of accessibility and relevance of enterprise supports for Travellers and other minority ethnic groups to be carried out and recommendations implemented
- Establish an adequate labour market data collection mechanism for Travellers, in sensitive manner and within an equality framework.
- The establishment of a Task Force Committee within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to advance the recommendation of the Task Force report, re employment and income generation.
- Any new initiatives should provide suitable choices to unemployed people, and should not force people into inappropriate and poor quality employment/training through the threat of withdrawal of benefits
- Introduce a `bridging visa` for migrant workers, who have been exploited
- Grant asylum seekers the right to work after six months, as supported by ICTU, IBEC and the INOU

2. Facilitating Access by All

2.1. Resources

While the ITM welcomes the reduction in numbers of those identified as `consistently poor`, we are concerned about the increasing gap between the poorest and the richest in society; the level of `relative poverty`, and those `at risk of poverty`.

Actions :

- Continue to move progressively towards the agreed NAPS target, to ensure the basic minimum payment of € 185.80 will be met by 2007.
- Ensure the target the lowest social welfare payment to be no less than 30% of the gross average industrial earnings will be met
- Remove those on the minimum wage from the tax net on a permanent basis, and index link the minimum wage rate to increases in average industrial earnings

2.2. Rights

An accessible equality infrastructure is central to the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality in Ireland.

Over the last number of years, an equality infrastructure has been put in place, which the ITM welcomes, however there have also been a number of developments undermining this infrastructure and public confidence in it.

Firstly, the removal of discrimination cases relating to the licensing trade from the authority of the Equality Tribunal. Instead of improving access to equality legislation by marginalised groups, this legislative change has achieved the opposite. As Travellers' difficulty in accessing licensed premises is well documented, it is another example of legislative change without even any pretence of equality proofing. This change has denied Travellers access to the full support of the Equality Authority in taking cases, while there is no access to legal aid either. Furthermore the option of mediation via the Equality Tribunal has also been closed off. The ITM has anecdotal evidence that instances of discrimination in licensed premises are on the increase again, following the legislative change.

Secondly, the resourcing of both the Equality Tribunal & the Equality Authority has been completely inadequate, leading to waiting times of three years or more for cases to come to a hearing and seriously undermining Travellers' confidence in the legislation

Thirdly, there is the issue of the marginal position of the equality institutions within real government policy. Their opinions are frequently dismissed, and appear to be established merely to meet EU requirements, UN commitments or agreements under the Good Friday Agreement (i.e. the Human Rights Commission).

In view of the negative impact on Travellers, a number of legislative frameworks need to be equality proofed and amended to ensure that their negative impact is removed

Actions :

- The repeal of Section 19 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act to bring Ireland into compliance with the European Union Race Directive.
- Guaranteed continued and autonomous existence of the Equality Institutions (Equality Authority, National Disability Authority, Cómhairle, NCCRI, Human Rights Commission), with valid representation of community and voluntary equality interests on each of the institutions, and adequate resourcing
- Increase the funding to the equality institutions to ensure they can effectively and adequately carry out their functions

- Expand the groups covered by equality legislation in line with the Equality Authority's recommendations to cover social class, trade union membership and ex-prisoners.
- Complete the review of the prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, including the issue of 'intent', and cover incitement to racial discrimination as recommended by CERD.
- Equality-proof the following legislation :
 - The recent amendment to the Public Order Act 1994 put through in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2001. Section 24 of this Act criminalizes trespass on public and private land and should be repealed.
 - The Casual Trading Act, 1995
 - The Control of Horses Act, 1996
 - Section 10 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992 has been amended by section 32 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 which extend the powers of local authorities to move Travellers
 - Aspects of the planning legislation, which are proven impediments to the implementation of Traveller Accommodation.
 - Section 38 of the Local Government Sanitary Services Act, 1949
 - Section 19 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act, 2003.

2.3. Goods

(See above in relation Equality Tribunal, Equality Authority and Equal Status Act.)

2.4. Services

2.4.1. Accommodation

The European Commission's Joint Report on Social Inclusion (May 2004), states that there has been "*limited progress*" in relation to the target of "*All Travellers' families identified in the local authority five-year Traveller accommodation programme process as being in need of accommodation will be appropriately accommodated by end 2004*". The ITM believes this would have been more appropriately categorised as "*insufficient progress*", as none of the local Traveller Accommodation Programmes were fully implemented by the end of 2004 (in terms of the variety of accommodation required).

The reality of the general lack of provision of accommodation was also expressed by

the First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (2001), which concludes : *"one in every four Traveller families are currently living without access to water, toilets and refuse collection. The accommodation provision has not kept pace with increasing demand over the past five years and the Committee would like to emphasise in the strongest terms the importance of having local Traveller Accommodation Programmes delivered in a way that clears the backlog in Traveller accommodation."*

In contrast Sustaining Progress categorically states :*"Specific attention will be paid to ensuring greater progress in implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme. The challenges involved seem particularly appropriate to the spirit of the Social Partnership Agreement. Therefore, there will be a priority focus within this Special Initiative on identifying and addressing the barriers encountered to-date in the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme, so as to push forward implementation within the lifetime of the Agreement."* (2.3.2.)

Lack of a centrally driven approach has proven to be the central weakness in the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy. The implementation of local Traveller Accommodation Programmes is inadequate, but nothing has been put in place to ensure local authorities fulfil their obligations. This is compounded by the fact that the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 only requires the local authority to take *"reasonable steps"* to implement their programme. The duty to implement should be put in explicit terms, given that the local authority itself has drawn up the programme, and in the ordinary course of events there would appear to be no particular reason as to why it should not be in a position to implement it according to its terms.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance Second Report on Ireland noted that *'the fact that no sanctions are provided for in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, against authorities who do not take measures to provide accommodation for Travellers may weaken its effectiveness.'*

The ITM acknowledges, that the Minister for the Environment Heritage & Local Government has issued a directive to local authorities to include annual targets in

their current, second round of programmes. Whilst this is to be welcomed, it will not ensure the delivery of Traveller accommodation. In the recent Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, the ITM again called for the establishment of an independent Traveller Accommodation Agency, It was agreed by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) that in light of the non delivery of such an Agency, then the role of the NTACC would be expanded and be given additional powers to further ensure the delivery of Traveller accommodation.

As the figures below show, action needs to be taken on this issue to ensure that local Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) are seen as part of a National Traveller Accommodation Strategy. Whether a new body is established or it be done through an existing one, the delivery/or lack of delivery of Traveller accommodation needs to be monitored and necessary steps put in place to ensure adequate implementation by **all** functional authorities.

In 1999 all there was a target need by all local authorities in their TAPs to accommodate 3,785 Traveller families. At the end of 2004 only 1,371 of these had been accommodated, leaving a shortfall of 2,414 families’.

Of the 1,371 families accommodated only 69 were provided with halting site bays, whilst 226 were Group Housing Schemes - a total of 295 Traveller specific units. In 1995 the Task Force recommended 2,200 Traveller specific units be provided. A total of 420 permanent **units** of accommodation has been provided between 2000 – 2004. (All figures DOEHLG, 2005)

These figures illustrate that most of the progress has been made in relation to providing standard housing, and highlight the lack of commitment that exists to provide accommodation for Travellers that meets their needs as a nomadic ethnic group in Irish society. The overemphasis on standard housing provision is having a detrimental effect on the Traveller community. In many areas Travellers are being encouraged to accept housing by local authorities, where their first accommodation choice is a halting site.

The amendment to the Public Order Act, 1994 put through in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2001, has further undermined the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy and has led to more hardship for Traveller families living without basic services. Section 24 of this Act criminalises trespass on public and private land. Therefore, the Gardai, on foot of a complaint, can move on Travellers who are waiting for accommodation within local authority areas.

In the first year of this legislation over 100 cases were reported to the Irish Travellers Movement.

The legislation has also curtailed Travellers' right to be nomadic, as they are unable to move due to the lack of availability of legal parking places. It is in direct conflict with the provisions of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, which states that the annual patterns of movement of Travellers should be provided for.

The use of these provisions is objectionable on a number of grounds. Firstly, the provisions allow the local authority to interfere with the fundamental rights of the Travellers (including the right to a home, and to bodily integrity) without any requirement for a court order. The competing rights involved are matters which can only properly be resolved by a court. Secondly, in most circumstances the necessity for Travellers to reside in and unauthorised temporary dwelling' is a direct result of the breach by the local authority of its statutory obligations to provide accommodation. Again this should be a matter that can only be properly resolved before the courts. The local authority should not be permitted to determine given that it is not a disinterested party.

Furthermore the ITM objects to Section 10 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992, as amended by section 32 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 which extends the powers of local authorities to force the movement of Travellers, who have nowhere else to go. There has been an increased use of section 10, meaning that Travellers are moved on without been offered alternative accommodation.

Additional concerns relate to the planning legislation, due to the fact that the housing legislation and the planning legislation are not properly integrated in that contrary provisions of the latter may frustrate the requirements of the former.

Actions :

- Establishment of a statutory Traveller Accommodation Agency to monitor the adequacy and delivery of the local Traveller accommodation programmes, with the necessary powers of implementation
- In the immediate term, increased powers to be given to the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to improve the rate of accommodation provision, as recommended by the Report by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee on the Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 (7.6.2). This to be accompanied by a system of sanctions and benefits
- Full implementation of all the recommendations of the Report of the NTACC
- Services (water, toilets, electricity and refuse collection) to be provided immediately to all Traveller families living without such services.

- Immediate repeal of Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provision) Act, 2002, which amends the Public Order Act, and criminalizes trespass on public and private land.
- A moratorium should be placed on section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 as amended by section 32 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 and other methods used for evicting Travellers, until all appropriate accommodation has been provided.
- The right to housing and good quality culturally appropriate accommodation should be recognised as a legally binding fundamental right open to all people. The establishment of such a right would ensure that government policy and resources are adequately focused on this essential requirement
- All local authorities, and the Government on a national basis, commit to specific reductions in their waiting lists by March 2005 as promised in the reviewed NAPS and to publishing the extent to which these are achieved
- An urgent review of aspects of the planning legislation, which are proven impediments to the implementation of Traveller Accommodation should be, carried out with a view to address these problems.
- Monitoring measures should be put in place to ensure that the commitment to an appropriate mix of social and affordable housing in Part V of the Planning and Development Act is reached
- Investment in Traveller tenant participation strategies for new and existing Traveller specific accommodation, including the resourcing of staff within local Traveller projects for this purpose
- Review the Caravan Loans Scheme, and consider the extension of rent allowances to include caravans
- Quality Housing Needs Assessment for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness

2.4.2. Health

Despite some advances over recent years, the overall health status of Travellers remains poor, compared to the sedentary population.

Investment in the Irish public health service is still below European standards. Future investment needs to focus on a people-centred, rights based approach, development of a universal health care system, targeting of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the elimination of health inequalities.

Actions :

- Implementation of the National Traveller Health Strategy
- Continued roll-out of Traveller Primary Health Care Programmes throughout the state in line with commitments contained in the National Action Plan Against Racism (5.6.4.)
- Progression of Traveller Primary Health Care Workers through the healthcare system, combined with further training opportunities
- Development of innovative Traveller men's health programmes
- Travellers to retain automatic access to the medical card until their health statistics come in line with the general population.
- Culturally appropriate gathering of data on the health status of Travellers, as the absence of data *"has made it impossible to determine whether the target [reducing the gap in life expectancy between the Traveller Community & the whole population by at least 10% by 2007] ... will be met"*. (Joint Report)

2.4.3. Education & Training

In 2004/2005 it is estimated that there are almost 6,000 Traveller children enrolled in primary schools, and this equates to virtually 100% enrolment. The Joint Report on Social Inclusion assesses that the target of age appropriate placement of all Travellers in primary schools has been achieved. At present, it is estimated that 85% of Traveller children transfer to post-primary school, falling well short of the target of 95% transfer rate by 2004. At the end of 2004/2005 there were about 1,850 Traveller students, out of a total of 4,000 Travellers aged between 13 and 18 inclusive (46% of all Traveller students of post-primary age) enrolled in post-primary schools, with the majority leaving post-primary by the age of 16. For the school year 2004/2005 about 260 Traveller students were in senior cycle.

It is clear that levels of attainment at primary level will have huge impacts on the development of a child at post-primary and their ability to cope with a crucial transition in education, and difficulties with this transition leave children more vulnerable to early school leaving or educational under-achievement. Failing to access to the full curriculum at Primary level will also have a huge impact on educational attainment at not only primary, but will also impact on future educational achievement. Measures outlined in the Traveller Education strategy have earmarked clear policies to improve Traveller education outcomes in Primary level. This will ensure that Travellers are not withdrawn from class for supplementary teaching and that any additional supports are provided on the basis of identified educational need, not ethnic identity, and provided in an in-class setting. This will ensure access to the

full curriculum. These measures will need to be implemented to meet the expectations of Traveller parents, who are concerned by the low attainment of their children in primary school: The areas of low attainment of Traveller children in primary school are of great concern to Traveller parents: “It was found that the Traveller parents expected their children to acquire a mastery of literacy and numeracy skills in primary school. Some Traveller parents expressed their deep concerns about the low attainment of their children, particularly in relation to reading standards” Chief Inspector’s Report 2001-2005. Department of Education, 2005).

Figures provided by the CSO in 2002 indicate that almost two-thirds of Travellers left school before the then minimum statutory age of 15 years, compared with 15% for the population as a whole. Travellers who are at risk of early-school leaving should be supported to stay in mainstream education, and provided with programmes such as Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme where appropriate. Due care must be given that supports to Travellers who leave school early do not draw Travellers away from mainstream education through financial incentives or otherwise, but merely provide support for cases where children have become disenchanted with mainstream education.

Centres that provide adult and further education should ensure that trainees have clear goals in further education and that outcomes are achieved that lead to progression through education or employment opportunities. Progression routes should be mapped out for each individual trainee through specific guidance with goals and timeframes set out for trainees, that the attendance at a centre does not become the goal in itself.

In implementing change in the educational system it is of paramount importance that suitable anti-racist training is provided for all education providers. In aiming to provide an intercultural education system, compulsory anti-racism and discrimination training is vital. As pointed out by the OECD: “Teachers are the final and most important link in the delivery of education to students, they are the interface through which the objectives of the schools and the education system are mediated” (OECD, 1997, Education policy analysis, p. 18).

Actions :

- Implement fully the recommendations of the Traveller Education Strategy so that Travellers will have full equality in education in Ireland: equality of access, participation and outcome. This will impact on all facets of education: pre-school, primary, post-primary, further, adult and higher education.
- Resource Traveller organisations at the local level to employ staff to engage Travellers with the Department of Education, National Education Welfare Board and other agencies in the education sector.
- Resource Traveller organisations to monitor the implementation of the Traveller Education Strategy at a local level and to provide training for representatives of Traveller organisations to sit on national education committees such as the Advisory Committee for Traveller Education.
- Specific data on Traveller access and participation in education and analysis of outcomes in all forms of education are required in order to ensure that policies are developed in line with the experiences and needs of Travellers
- Resource Traveller organisations to continue to document and monitor Traveller experiences of the education system.

3. Preventing the Risk of Exclusion

Actions :

- Immediate repeal of Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provision) Act, 2002, which amends the Public Order Act, and a moratorium on roadside Traveller evictions using other legal instruments to prevent the forced homelessness of Traveller families
- Resourcing of Traveller and other community based projects to improve their IT capabilities and equipment
- Increased resourcing of organisations working in the area of violence against women and further development of a Traveller focus to this work
- Continued resourcing of National Drugs Strategy and further development of a Traveller focus to this work
- Increase paid maternity leave to 26 weeks, 10 days paid paternity leave and 26 weeks paid parental leave
- State Agencies need to develop Traveller appropriate outreach strategies to avoid exclusion

4. Helping the Most Vulnerable Groups

While our submission relates to Traveller issues overall, and seeks to have a direct, positive impact on the lives of all Travellers, some groups of Travellers experience particular levels of marginalisation, discrimination and prejudice.

Traveller women continue to experience extreme levels of exclusion and racism. For example, forced evictions have a particular impact on Traveller women, as they are frequently alone or with children at the time of evictions. |

The unavailability of culturally appropriate childcare remains a constant and considerable barrier to Traveller women's access to education, training and employment. Traveller women regularly cite instances of being discriminated against when trying to access crèches and other child minding facilities.

The issue of institutionalised violence against Traveller women and extremely poor treatment by the Gardaí remains to be addressed.

For Travellers with a disability, the situation has improved little in recent years. There is a clear need for the development of culturally appropriate service provision for Travellers in residential care.

Actions :

- Gender impact statements in relation to equality, anti-racist and other policies of relevance to Traveller women are required at local, national and international level in order to ensure that efforts to address racism take account of the particular reality of Traveller women's lives.
- Specific data on Traveller women's access to health, education and other services are required in order to ensure that policies are developed in line with the experiences and needs of Traveller women
- An Garda Síochána should develop and adopt, in association with Traveller women's groups, a code of practice in relation to their contact and dealings with Traveller women
- Availability of culturally appropriate childcare needs to be put in place
- Rights based legislation, as committed in the 1996 *Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities*, to be enacted

5. Mobilising All Relevant Bodies in Fighting Poverty & Social Exclusion

It is vital that the new NAPS is going to fully meet the commitment contained in the original NAPS, (Building an Inclusive Society, 2002), which states that “*Citizenship rights encompass not only the core civil and political rights and obligations but also social, economic and cultural rights and obligations that underpin equality of opportunity and policies on access to education, employment, health, housing and social services*” continuing to state “*In the context of this Strategy there is a commitment to: a move towards a more **formal expression of entitlements** across the range of public services*” (25., our highlights).

5.1. Recognition of the Independent Community Sector Voice

Virtually all recent government policies recognise the need to cross-reference one policy with another one. For example this NAPS needs to take account of commitments in social partnership agreements (Sustaining Progress), other government policies (e.g. NPAR) and white papers. The role of NGOs, especially community organisations representing some of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups (such as the ITM) is - in most instances - recognised and affirmed.

This happened most extensively and coherently in the White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the state and the Community & Voluntary Sector, (September 2000), which commits government departments to “*an enabling approach*” and the adoption of “*community development principles of participation and inclusion*” in relation to the Community & Voluntary Sector (3.33.). It also explicitly states that “*The Government values the existence of a lively and involved Community & Voluntary Sector independent and sufficiently wide ranging to represent the many diverse elements of society*” going on to state that “*the sector has a specific role in ensuring that the experiences and interests of marginalised communities are articulated and are heard when decisions that effect them are being made.*” (3.13.). Government policy in the document explicitly commits itself to a set of joint principles, including the “*mutual right to constructively critique each other` actions and policies*”, to “*respect the autonomy and diversity of the Community & Voluntary Sector*”, and “*the right of the Sector to organise and represent itself*” (3.63.).

Unfortunately however, the experience of the Sector (in particular anti-poverty groups representing the most marginalised, including the ITM) is, that there has been a

considerable clawback on these commitments since. Examples for this are : the termination of funding to the Citizen Traveller Campaign and the Community Workers' Co-Operative, the establishment of High Level Steering Groups at national and local level to the exclusion of Traveller organisations, and the unilateral exclusion of the Community Platform and its member organisations from important institutions, following the decision not to sign up to Sustaining Progress.

At a local level, there is the imposition of giving local authorities the power to endorse (or not) the workplans of locally based Community Development Projects (including Traveller CDPs) via their City/County Development Board. While the review of local and community development structures set out to avoid duplication and improve co-ordination, it has clearly achieved the opposite, creating additional layers of meetings and signing-off, increased workloads and aggravation for local projects, and seriously interferes with the independence of local Traveller projects in real terms. Any changes to the structures of existing CDPs should only be considered with the explicit consent of the project involved (e.g. mergers).

Actions :

- Discontinue the policy of endorsement of workplans of CDPs. At the very minimum, exempt Traveller CDPs from this process, as there is a clear conflict of interest for local authorities, often in conflictual relationships with Traveller organisations over the issue of Traveller accommodation, given the power to endorse their workplans
- The Plan needs to make a strong commitment to involving the representatives of anti-poverty and equality constituencies in partnership and dialogue, without making this conditional on supporting a particular policy programme. The Community Platform should have the right of representation on all relevant structures dealing with anti-poverty work of a cross-cutting nature
- Meet the commitments made under the White Paper 'Supporting Voluntary Activity' in particular the allocation of the ring fenced training and capacity building funds for anti-poverty groups
- Re-instate funding to the Community Workers' Co-Op under the National Anti-Poverty Networks Programme
- Replace the Citizen Traveller Campaign with a new campaign aimed at improving the relationship between Travellers and the settled population in the context of promoting Travellers' human rights. Any new project to build on existing initiatives of good practice, work from a community development ethos, acknowledge the vast disparity in the power relationship between Travellers and the settled community, and develop a framework addressing

this power imbalance

- Disband the High Level Steering Group and their counterparts at local level, which have deliberately excluded Traveller organisations, as they are in direct conflict to the stated priority of the National Action Plan Against Racism which states : *“The priority will be to enhance the participation of cultural and ethnic minorities in consultative and decision making processes ...”* (9.3.)
- Previous commitments from the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness; to *“a new Electoral Participation Initiative including a voter education programme...to focus particularly on communities experiencing disadvantage and on young people.”* to be met

5.2 Maintaining and Enhancing Anti-Poverty Budgets

The European Commission’s Joint Report on Social Inclusion (May 2004), stated in relation to the newly established Office of Social Inclusion *“one would have to question if the resources allocated to this office are sufficient for the ambitious work programme outlined.”* We believe that this observation is also applicable to the wider anti-poverty community sector, and local and national Traveller organisations in particular.

The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995 recognises the important role that Travellers and Traveller organisations play, and reinforces the need for Traveller involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies that effect Travellers. This also has resource implications.

Actions :

- Resource Traveller organisations at the local level to employ staff to engage Travellers with the Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes, as well as the health and education strategies
- Increase the number of Traveller CDPs nationwide in line with the NPAR commitment *“... to provide funding and support for a number of new projects [within the Community Development Support Programme] focussing on supporting people from cultural and ethnic minorities to articulate their needs ...”* (9.5.1.)
- Resource newly emerging Traveller groups in areas without Traveller organisations. Resource the ITM to support this development, and networking among local groups
- Recognise that CE schemes provide key services and support necessary infrastructure the anti-poverty community sector. Progression of participants should not negatively impact on this important service

- Maintain and expand resourcing of Traveller organisations through the Community Development Programme, the Local Development Programme and the National Anti Poverty Networks Programme.
- A national funding scheme for the Community Advocacy Programme should be introduced. This would provide resources to the groups covered under the Equal Status Legislation to promote equality and the use of legislation in their sector.
- Resource the work of the ITM-Legal Unit, in its advocacy and community development work with Traveller organisations on engagement with the law
- Continued and enhanced role for the Combat Poverty Agency, especially re linking anti-poverty action to policy making processes and supporting community development approaches to addressing poverty in policy areas
- *See point 2.2. in relation to resourcing the Equality Institutions, including the NCCRI*

5.3 Proofing

The concept of poverty proofing is the cornerstone of the NAPS, although the practical impact on key policy instruments like the budget, the National Development Plan etc. has been minimal.

- Further implement the NESC recommendations to enhance measures to make poverty-proofing work in practice, and ensure it covers all areas of government policy, including the budget, the national Development Plan and tax incentives schemes
- *Proofing of legislation listed under 2.2.*

5.4 Traveller Ethnicity

Most recent government documents put a heavy emphasis on “*evidence based policy making*” (e.g. NAPS/incl 2003-2005, 3.1.3.). In stark contrast to this, the government has recently begun to deny that Travellers form a distinct ethnic group within Irish society, flying in the face of most serious anthropological research and evidence. The UK courts have considered this issue in detail and found Irish Travellers to be a distinct ethnic group. The Irish Human Rights Commission has also considered this issue. The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in its most recent regular report (March 2005) concluded, that “*the Committee expresses concern at the state party`s position with regard to the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group.*”

This is not merely a theoretical consideration, but has potentially serious implications for the delivery of services, programmes and policies to Travellers (e.g. NPAR, etc), as well as interfering with Travellers right to self-determination.

Actions :

- Return of government policy to the recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within Irish society, and meet its international obligations under CERD

6. Priorities until 2008

- Establishment of an effective mechanism to deliver the broad spectrum of Traveller accommodation urgently required. This mechanism needs to system of sanctions and benefits and a strong input from Travellers and their organisations
- Speedy Implementation of Traveller Health & Education Strategies
- Recognition and resourcing of autonomous Traveller and other community development organisations to advocate on behalf of the most marginalised
- Wide-ranging legislation to establish social, economic and cultural rights and formal expressions of entitlements for marginalised communities