

# New immigrant communities and linguistic groups. Final report

## New immigrant communities report.

Delivering feedback on a five month awareness raising campaign focusing on a proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland is not without its problems.

As this particular report deals with the issue of 'new immigrant communities and linguistic minorities' both contentious issues in their own right, much more time would have been required before this report could ethically reflect the views of both these groups.

Strategic selection of organisations/groups/individuals representing the sector was used so that the report would incorporate the working groups' seven recommendations.

Focus fell on women, children and young people, older people, people with disabilities, rural and remote areas and TSN areas. All areas which the working groups felt were in the past underrepresented.

During engagement this report cross referenced with the groups so that their views could be chronicled targeting the seven different areas.

A reluctance to get involved with the Bill of Rights discussion/awareness raising sessions, was evident among some of these organisations/groups and ought not to be ignored.

Reasons for this were solely down to stretched resources and competing priorities. A lack of funding and personnel greatly hampered the groups' ability to reach out to those they wish to assist. While they are doing sterling work they would be the first to say there is much more that could be done if they had the resources.

The primary aim of this report was to reflect the views of new immigrant communities and linguistic groups as marginalised groups who in the past have not been given a voice.

Due to the tight framework it was impossible to engage with all the groups' in this sector. Initial contact was made through telephone conversations and emails and then followed up with awareness raising sessions if the group was willing to take part.

As mentioned the particular remit posed to be a controversial area and one that generated a lot of debate around culture, language and identity.

This report while illuminating the core concerns of the groups falls short because of the limited requirements of the Bill of Rights Forum and therefore does not depict all of their concerns and issues surrounding a Bill of Rights.

Overall while there was a general acceptance and support for a Bill of Rights, which would protect the rights of individuals/groups there was confusion about the legal process and whether the Bill of Rights goes far enough in protecting the victim and not the perpetrator of crime.

In any further consultation carried out this subject needs to be fully explained to allay any fears the public may harbour. Jargon free explanation of the process would also be beneficial.

During discussion and depending on the educational abilities of those engaged in the sessions for the purpose of this report there

was an unwitting acceptance that a Bill of Rights was a 'good thing.'

Others, especially those with the language abilities to express themselves clearly and local people working with ethnic/minority groups also viewed the Bill as a tool which could unite society rather than divide it into "tribal groups– i.e., nationalists, unionists, others."

There was majority support for the Bill of Rights in this initial period but caution was urged by some local groups worried about cultural identity and language rights. Consideration of these views shall be detailed in a separate linguistic minority report but it is suffice to say at this stage that some of the indigenous groups felt a need to protect their own identities.

What follows offers a snapshot of views reflected by the recorded organisations/groups. It should be reiterated that further in-depth consultation is needed within this sector to ensure a true and accurate picture emerges about their concerns regarding the proposed Bill of Rights and what they want to see included in it.

It is particularly important that continuity with the groups already engaged is supported as these groups are now alerted and informed of the Bill of Rights and will have invaluable contributions to make to any further consultation. This should not be a paper exercise but a meaningful attempt to hear the voice of our newest communities, who will shape our society in the generations to come.

As mentioned in pervious reports a large percentage of the new immigrant communities were oblivious about the campaign for a Bill of Rights and therefore had apathy towards the subject.

This is quite understandable as the vast majority of those attending awareness raising sessions were more concerned with day-to-day matters and survival in Northern Ireland.

Many of the participants were struggling with language difficulties and the move to a new country. Their perception of a Bill of Rights was that it was far removed from them on the ground.

While they appreciated the fact that the Bill of Rights Forum was engaging with them they thought their opinion would carry little weight.

It should be noted that many of the organisations sitting at the Forum, representing or involved with this sector, were found lacking in filtering the message of a Bill of Rights down to the grass root groups for whom they have responsibility. These groups in turn have not got the message across about the Bill of Rights to the ethnic/migrant communities in the wider community.

In many cases the awareness rising session was the first contact made with these groups, especially in rural areas. This was especially so, prior to the email button campaign, which alerted groups that a crusade for a Bill of Rights with 'particular circumstance for Northern Ireland' was being championed.

It was acknowledged by all engaged in the awareness raising sessions that Northern Ireland is changing rapidly and the arrival of the new immigrant communities had caught the government out.

Participants believed that organisational support from government offices, agencies etc was weak and at its worst totally inefficient and unprepared to deal with the growing

number of ethnic/migrant communities. Many believed Direct Rule was a factor here and want to see elected government address the issue in Northern Ireland.

During discussions with ethnic/minority groups they expressed their desire to see their own culture protected and stronger rights enshrined in a Bill of Rights, which would afford them better protection in Northern Ireland.

Many new migrants and long term ethnic groups believed that their rights were not as well protected here as in the rest of Great Britain. They would like to see laws strengthened so that they deter and punish those responsible for racial discrimination. Currently it was felt that the laws are too weak and bodies such as the PSNI do not carry out stringent enough actions against perpetrators.

Participants felt that a strong Bill of Rights if implemented could uphold the right of every individual regardless of cultural background to be free from racial abuse.

Issues around the terminology used at present under the Framework Convention relating to 'national minorities' was considered problematic by those engaged. The feeling was that with vast demographic changes occurring in Northern Ireland this wording was too narrow and ought to be broadened to reflect other cultures/traditions.

Inability to access services due to language difficulties was another complicated area and confusing for almost everyone engaged in the discussion. This topic was the most central to the awareness raising sessions as the majority of the groups felt that the needs of ethnic/minority groups were not being addressed, often to their detriment. Specific areas of concern centred on health and educational services.

Some of the participants were aware of protection under Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and

felt this should be extended to speakers of non-indigenous languages in Northern Ireland.

The attitude was that governments signed up to the EU but had not thought of the consequences of new immigrant communities setting up homes and what their needs would be.

This was viewed as a failure by the government and a Bill of Rights which depicted this need and provided provision for ethnic/minority communities would be considered as a positive move.

Dispute about the costs to the local purse was highlighted during this debate. Many participants believed that a failure to adequately protect speakers of non-indigenous groups would mean the Bill of Rights was too narrow and there would be no enforcement powers to protect them. Others believed that broadening this right to protect the language rights of non-indigenous groups was a step too far and would affect the economy and the welfare of Northern Ireland. Finding a compromise was considered the best way forward for a Bill of Rights to tackle this issue.

The group also felt that by looking at social and economic issues as additional rights to those enshrined in the European Convention and the Human Rights Act extra protection would be afforded to ethnic/migrant communities living in Northern Ireland as well as the local community.

How media portrays ethnic/migrant communities also came up for discussion during awareness raising sessions. The majority of those engaged felt the media in Northern Ireland was doing them an injustice and creating unnecessary tensions.

Participants felt that a Bill of Rights should look at this and include protections for minority groups.

In conclusion, although this report is limited, all organisations/groups/individuals partaking in the awareness raising sessions were mainly supportive of a Bill of Rights. The sessions took in a cross section of the community for this exercise. Ethnic/migrant organisations/groups/individuals dealing with issues on the ground were approached from both nationalist and unionist communities and presented a united voice in support of the Bill of Rights.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, many felt that while all political parties had signed up to the concept of a Bill of Rights and were working together to achieve this they (the politicians) maybe the people who prevent it from been passed. Many observed that political parties in Northern Ireland were fixated on the nationalist/unionist debate and had little interest in other communities.

The general feeling especially among those with an understanding of Northern Ireland politics was that point scoring would come into the procedure, either stalling or derailing the process despite public support for it.

How politicians handle this process in the final days will be used as an indicator by the public on how conscientious they are about representing their constituents and being held accountable for the decisions they make.

With a rapidly changing society which has just come out of conflict participants felt there was an opportunity for a new future which should not be missed out on.

A Bill of Rights was seen as a way to identify a changing society, to create legalisation which will set out to unite all communities and cultures.

Summing up, the newly emerging immigrant communities and those who represent them, see the proposed Bill of Rights as an

added protection. They also believe that it is something that could benefit society as a whole.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

More consultation is needed.

Continuity is important therefore groups already engaged in this process should be approached for future consultation events.

Forum representatives need to make a concerted effort to inform and motivate their grass roots groups to promote the Bill of Rights and encourage their members to take ownership of it.

Media campaigns need to be stepped up alerting the public to the Bill of Rights. The media campaign although late in the day and very limited was successful in attracting the public's attention. A televised advert would have had a great impact.

Politicians need to acknowledge the wide public support for a Bill of Rights. From all sections of the community and NOT make it into a political football game.

# Linguistic groups report.

## Final report

The general opinion during awareness raising sessions was that a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland could overcome the political football game language rights have become in recent years.

Many believed that rights supplementary to those in the European Convention on Human Rights, which reflect the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, could set out laws which reflect the principals of mutual respect for all communities living here.

In a changing society which now boasts several ethnic/migrant communities the issue of language rights has taken on a new dimension and many felt the age old debate between nationalists and unionists would have to change to take into consideration the language rights of other groups.

Most of the public debate so far on language issues has focused on the status of the Irish language and Ulster-Scots (which some claim is not a language but a dialect), often ignoring other languages in society.

While the argument has been that those who speak Irish, Ulster Scots and Gammon (some Travellers language) have all been able to understand English, new immigrant communities in some cases can not and therefore feel they need language rights as protection.

For the purpose of this report organisations/groups involved with or in the promotion of language in Northern Ireland were

contacted for their views on a Bill of Rights and how it could impact on them.

New immigrant communities, older established ethnic groups, people who depend on sign language to communicate also have language rights which need to be addressed. If a Bill of Rights is to get it right then it has to take into consideration these marginalised groups.

What was clear from engagement with the various groups was the belief that a Bill of Right could be in their best interests.

Users of British and Irish sign language stated their desire to be protected under the indigenous language right which would afford them extra protection. Users of minority languages felt that provision in a Bill of Rights would give them added protection and help retain their identity.

Indigenous groups agreed in principal with the Bill of Rights however some of the Ulster Scots groups still remained cautious of what many of them felt was a 'republican agenda.' The majority of the groups engaged said they were prepared to back the Bill of Rights if criteria used give positive recognition to their language.

POBAL, an umbrella group for the promotion of the Irish language throughout Northern Ireland support the campaign for a Bill of Rights. The group have actively been involved in putting together proposals for an Irish Language Act which articulates the organisations arguments for language rights and proposals for legislation protections.

During awareness raising discussions it was highlighted that many more people in marginalised groups in society use their language more so than Ulster Scots or Gammon.

Discussion centred on their rights to have their language recognised as it is more widely used. There is however an understanding that the three indigenous languages (Irish, Ulster Scots, Gammon) should be given positive recognition.

Non-indigenous groups had little interest in the debate about which language should be used as a national language in Northern Ireland. They felt that (if any) Irish, as the historical national language of Ireland should be used. Many of the non-indigenous groups had no knowledge of Ulster Scots and prior to arriving in Ireland few of them had heard of the language. European migrants were aware of a travellers' language but not knowledgeable of its composition.

The issue of the language debate in Northern Ireland has reinforced the view among non indigenous groups that politicians in the province are entrenched in traditional roles, thinking only in nationalist or unionist terms.

Reference was made to this at almost every discussion around language. Indigenous groups felt strongly about language rights and associated language with their identity, non indigenous groups saw language rights as something practical that could be extended to them to some extent, especially if a number of people regularly used the minority language (i.e. Polish).

Long term non-indigenous groups and the new migrant communities, who do not have English as their first language have often found themselves less able to access services as much of the literature is produced in English only. Discussions as to whether or not the public bodies had an obligation to speak and produce literature in the minority language was debated.

The groups believe a Bill of Rights which included language rights would have a duty to recognise this argument to some extent. Non indigenous groups felt that while the three traditional languages should receive positive recognition this should not mean one law for indigenous groups and another for non indigenous groups.

Problems associated with any extension of language rights to non indigenous groups living in Northern Ireland centred on the extent to which public bodies would have to facilitate another language and how far should they go.

The costs involved in this and the drain on the public purse were issues which proved to be contentious in debate. It should be noted that this argument was also used regarding the use of the Irish language and the cost of producing literature etc in Irish.

Expenditure was a major factor in discussions around language. However, despite this the presumption was that language rights form part of the 'equality agenda' and therefore to ensure equality everyone should have language rights or acknowledgment of their mother tongue.

All the groups engaged felt a need to protect their language and distinctive identity. At the heart of the debate was a desire by both indigenous and non indigenous groups not to lose their cultural identity and traditions.

If a Bill of Rights can work around this and formulate a legalisation which ensures government and public bodies treat all communities on the basis of equality and afford equality of opportunity in both public and private sectors it may well receive the backing of all groups in Northern Ireland. However it was noted that this solution may not be easy to arrive at, as the debate about language rights is not without controversy.

Organisations/Groups/Individuals contacted in relation to a proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. (Attach to final report)

Outreach worker – Mary Lafferty.

The engagement process took place from December 2007 until March 2008.

As per remit and for the purpose of this report several groups closely associated with newly emerging communities and linguistic groups were contacted. Other groups working within the sector, but in a broader sense, were also contacted and their contribution is valuable as it depicts a bigger picture of the issues facing this community.

Please note the Key Issues highlighted here are only a few of the comments received from the various groups.

Newly Emerging Communities Organisations' Groups/Individuals contacted:

Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group, Omagh  
NICEM, Belfast

Hungarian – Irish United Network, Londonderry

Strabane Ethnic Community Association, Strabane

Strabane Grammar School Youth Club, Strabane

Women into Politics, Cookstown

Omagh Women's Area Network, Omagh

STEP, Dungannon

Community Foundation Northern Ireland, Belfast

Anna Lo, Belfast

Woman of the World, Fermanagh

Windsor Women's Centre, Belfast

Living Room Youth Project, Omagh

Sai Pak Chinese Community, Londonderry

Chinese Community Association, Belfast  
Indian Community Centre, Belfast  
Disability Action, Belfast  
North West Disability Action Zone, Londonderry  
AfroCaribbean Association, Londonderry  
SEEDS, Londonderry  
Social Development Department, Londonderry  
Interpreting Service Northern Ireland, Belfast  
Rural Community Network, Omagh  
North West Social Development Agency, Londonderry  
Filipino Community, Omagh  
Indian Community, Omagh  
Polish Network, Omagh  
Contact-A-Family, Lisburn  
St Vincent de Paul, Armagh

#### Linguistic Groups

Bready Ulster – Scots Association  
Pobal  
Royal Institute for the Deaf  
Culturlann McAdams O Fiaich  
Drumquin Ulster Scots Youth  
Bushmills Ulster Scots Association  
Ulster Scots Heritage Centre  
Derry Travellers Group

Synopsis of organisations/groups role, key issues raised and contact details for the purpose of forthcoming consultation event.

Organisation: Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group:  
Contact: Mary Lafferty, Training and Support Officer  
Telephone:028 8224 9750

The group currently works with approximately 40 different nationalities in a rural setting. The group also network

extensively with similar organisations promoting the welfare of ethnic minority/migrant communities.

With a varied programme of activities and a busy office environment dealing with day-to-day problems encountered by migrant workers, the group is proactive in the promotion of human rights.

The Training Officer in this organisation is involved with the Bill of Rights Forum and has worked on a human rights project funded by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- More funding needed to encourage social integration of migrants living in rural areas.
- Lack of transport isolating migrant woman and children.
- Educational needs of children from other cultures not been addressed in a structured manner by educational boards.
- Lack of funds available for English classes which would benefit migrant workers.
- Health services not accessible to migrant workers due to language barriers.

NICEM: Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities:  
Contact: Patrick YU, Executive Director  
Telephone: 028 90 283 645

By far the largest organisation dealing with ethnic minority/migrant issues across Northern Ireland. NICEM works for social change in relation to race relations and in particular for the elimination of racial discrimination.

NICEM is a voluntary sector umbrella group for many of the other provincial ethnic support groups across the province, but it should be noted not all.

This organisation is also proactive in its work with Asylum Seekers and the Director Mr Yu is to the forefront in the campaign for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- The need for fully inclusive schools where tolerance of other cultures/faiths are encouraged.
- The Department of Education need to go beyond the four main Churches when carrying out consultation about religious instruction for the syllabus.
- A more proactive approach should be taken by the government to ensure ethnic/migrant communities needs are being met.

Hungarian – Irish United Network (Hiun)

Contact Krisztina Pinter

Telephone: 028 71 313 789

Mobile: 07731584724

The organisation is relatively new and although located in Londonderry it covers a large geographical area taking in Strabane, Castlederg and Omagh.

HIUN works to assist Hungarian citizens and their families settle in Northern Ireland. HIUN provides advice and information on all aspects of living in NI and seeks to raise awareness of the Hungarian culture and traditions among the local community.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Discriminatory treatment of Hungarian workers by local employers.

- A lack of cultural awareness about Hungary within the education system.
- Number of Hungarians arriving in NI not knowing there is support networks available for their benefit.

Contact – a – Family, Lisburn

Contact: Fidelma McCoy

Telephone: 028 92627552

Contact – a – Family is a service open to parents and carers of children aged from 0 -19 with disabilities and long term illnesses. A Family worker will assist with issues that arise in caring for a disabled child. This might include offering to negotiate with other agencies, give information on different services, emotional support etc.

The organisation is proactively seeking to promote their services to the newly emerging communities and settled ethnic groups within NI. In March 08 they held a conference around this issue and have published many of their flyers in different languages to encourage people to come forward.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Inability to gain the trust of newly emerging communities.
- Need of interpreter to communicate with different nationalities.

African and Caribbean Association of Foyle:

Contact: Elly Omondi Odhiambo

Telephone: 07922317860

The organisation covers the Derry City Council area. It is estimated that there is just fewer than 80 people of

AfroCaribbean background in the locality. The organisation also caters for other members who are not from Africa and Caribbean. The group meets once a month.

The aim of the organisation is to retain their culture and traditions and promote these to the local community.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Need for more funding to promote organisation and reach out to AfroCaribbean community.
- Policy makers need to be more aware of AfroCaribbean problems and issues.

Indian Community Centre, Belfast

Contact: Twastree Banerjee

Telephone: 028 90278922

The organisation is a voluntary organisation which was established in 1981 in the Carlisle Methodist Church Hall. The centre works towards the promotion and understanding of Indian culture and traditions in NI.

The organisation offers a range of activities including social events for senior citizens, health seminars, women's activities, information and advice, training and advocacy work.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Need for more social integration.
- Lack of resources prohibiting more training seminars.

The Chinese Welfare Association, Belfast

Contact: Sophia ??

Telephone: 028 90288277

The organisation was set up in 1986, by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. It is a support organisation for Chinese people living across NI.

The aim of the organisation is to ensure that the Chinese community have the opportunity to participate in society on the basis of equality.

It also seeks to identify the needs of the community, to promote diversity, equality and mutual understanding between the communities.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Lack of understanding in the Chinese Community about funding.
- Lack of funds prohibiting extra English classes for those new arrivals who do not speak the language.

#### Sai Pak Chinese Community Project

Contact: Karen Scrivens

Telephone: 028 71288858

The Sai Pak Chinese Community Project is linked to the Chinese Welfare Association in Belfast.

With a growing Chinese population in the north-west of the Province the organisation has increased its numbers significantly over the past few years.

The centre hosts many social events and training opportunities for the Chinese community. Sai Pak is also an active networking group promoting integration.

This group have worked on a Bill of Rights for NI with Derry City Council and have helped with a submission sent forward to the Bill of Rights Forum.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Lack of resources to offer more services.
- Not enough information being shared among the ethnic groups in NI.

Disability Action, Belfast  
Contact: Patricia Bray  
Telephone: 028 7 1360811

Disability Action works to ensure that people with disabilities attain their full rights as citizens.

While the group currently have no framework for working with ethnic minorities there is discussion taking place about the possibilities of producing literature in different languages making services more accessible to ethnic/migrant communities.

While the head office was aware of the Bill of Rights campaign they acknowledged that this information had not filtered down the organisation to the rural offices.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Lack of resources to encourage outreach work on issues, which affects people in rural communities. Need more personnel needed to work on ground.
- Aware of work around Bill of Rights but admits this has not reached grassroots groups due to lack of personnel and time factors.
- Not enough work carried out on or information available for minority groups.

Strabane Ethnic Community Association, Strabane  
Contact: Bobby Rao

Telephone: 028 71886419

The group is relatively new in business for two years. It has to date 159 members from different nationalities.

At present the group is establishing itself through social events and the delivery of health educational seminars.

**KEY ISSUES:**

- Lack of funding is the main issue for the group.
- A need for another employee so that Development Worker can visit/contact groups living in remote rural areas and encourage them to participate.
- Transport infrastructure makes it difficult for those in rural areas to access service available or attends functions.

Women of the World, Fermanagh

Contact: Maria Ellis

Telephone:028 66347833

Wow was established in 1992 and represents woman from around the world in Fermanagh promoting understanding of cultural diversity to the wider society.

**KEY ISSUES:**

- There needs to be more done to eradicate racism and sectarianism in NI.
- Minority ethnic people need to be considered as an integral part of Northern Ireland society.
- The term 'minority ethnic' should no longer be used to label people and a people's ethnicity.

Omagh Women's Area Network (OWAN), Omagh

Contact: Bridget McAleer  
Telephone: 028 82240990

OWAN is an umbrella organisation providing support, information and guidance for new and existing women's groups in the rural and urban areas of Omagh District Council area.

The Centre offers a range of educational and training courses for women from all denominations and cultures.

**KEY ISSUES:**

- Lack of resources which results in a lack of much needed services.
- Not enough recognition for the work of rural groups.

Women into Politics, Cookstown

Contact: Bebhinn McKinley  
Telephone: 028 90243 363

Women into Politics are a cross community organisation, encouraging the principals of democracy, feminism and community development. It promotes the advancement of women within society.

The organisation works in partnership with grassroots organisations to raise awareness of the community relations and strategies to build peace and reconciliation.

**KEY ISSUES:**

- A lack of funds available to reach out into the communities and offer training.
- Not enough women represented at decision making level across government and public bodies.

Anna Lo, Alliance MLA

Contact: PA Sandra, Stormont

Telephone:028 90521 560

Ms Lo was contacted as she is to the forefront in ethnic issues and had worked tirelessly to establish the Chinese Welfare Association.

**KEY ISSUES:**

- Disappointed in the way politicians still refer to “two communities” in NI and see ethnic/migrant communities as an attachment rather than part of society.
- Barriers at the moment as not all ethnic/migrant have English. This needs to be overcome so these communities can avail of services like the rest of the society.
- Concern around faith issues in the educational system.

Filipino Community, Omagh

Contact: Linda Montejo

Telephone:028 82244 149

The Filipino group is a voluntary group and operates under the umbrella of Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group. At present the group has approximately around 150 members and meets once a month for social and fundraising events. The group are aware of the Bill of Rights debate and have contributed to a project run by the Community Foundation for NI.

**KEY ISSUES:**

- Employers discriminating against ethnic/migrant workers, who believe they have no rights.

- Government needs to address visa problems faced by non European workers.

Windsor Women's Centre, Belfast

Contact: Satya Roberts

Telephone: 028 90235451

Windsor women's centre operates under the umbrella of Women's support Network (WSN). It is a development organisation whose members represent a wide and diverse range of issues.

Windsor Women's group offer crèche facilities and training for ethnic/migrant woman living in the area. Their aim is to provide services to women and their families as well as provide a focal point for local women to campaign and lobby to improve their lives and circumstances.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Funding issues are to the forefront of issues facing the centre.
- Encouraging woman to take part in training, especially if they do not speak English.
- Encouraging woman from ethnic/migrant backgrounds to reach their full potential.
- It should be recognised that in many cases women's rights are linked to men's often to the detriment of the female.

Omagh Forum for Rural Association.

Contact: Mary T Conwell

Telephone: 028 82251559

The organisation acts as a rural voice and support for rural community groups as well as encouraging community development in rural areas.

Formed in 1989 the Forum is a network organisation owned by local communities providing practical support and guidance to local community groups, responding to issues of concern, and representing and acting upon the views of the community.

Current membership stands at 59 groups.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Rural transport inefficient causing isolation for rural dwellers, particular problems for new communities as they often can not communicate with locals.
- More housing needed in rural areas – influx of migrant workers moving to rural areas so extra accommodation is needed for them and local community. Planning restrictions need to be revised.

STEP, Dungannon

Contact: Tracey O Kane

Telephone: 028 877 29002

The South Tyrone Empowerment Programme is a community development and training organisation.

It offers services region-wide and beyond ranging from advice, training and translation services. STEP offers a quality Interpreting and Translation service and had over 250 interpreters with specialist knowledge in Education, Housing, Health, Immigration, Police, Legal Matters, Social Security etc. It also offers translation in over 30 languages, all translators are fully qualified.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Rural issues of ethnic/migrant communities overlooked by governing bodies and agencies.

- Lack of coordination from Departments (ie Education, Health) resulting in a failure to handle the needs of new communities.

Living Room Youth Project, Omagh  
Contact: Charlene Blakely  
Telephone: 028 82248 181

This is a community based project looking at the issues of youth within the Omagh District Council area. At present the project has over 100 individuals attending the project. The group is a supporter of a Bill of Rights for Children and Young people and have made their comments to the Forum. This group offer personal development classes, training and community integration programmes.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Not enough focus on youth issues in general.
- Little activities available to encourage ethnic/migrant youths to integrate into local society.
- Very limited efforts made to tackle isolation felt by youths from different nationalities.

Northwest Social Enterprise, Londonderry  
Contact: Paul McNaught  
Telephone: 028 7129 9094

The NWDA aim to increase the formation, growth and survival rate of social enterprises, improve research, information and communication within the sector. IN 2006 action Plans were devised to help develop a long-term strategic vision for social enterprises in the northwest in order to maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits for the region.

In March 2007 it set up the Ethnic Minority Business Forum North West recognising and rewarding the high contribution that BME individuals and businesses make to the regional economy.

KEY ISSUES:

- More government support/funding needed to assist voluntary/charity groups.
- More BME individuals should be encouraged to take up training places.

Interpreting Services for Northern Ireland

Contact: Clare Hamilton

Telephone: Trust HQ 028 90960000

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provide interpreting services to the growing ethnic/migrant communities needing health care within NI. The moral and ethical reason for providing interpreters for people whose first language is not English include, equal access to information, user satisfaction, improved use of resources, legal obligations of Trust.

KEY ISSUES:

- Ensuring that all medical practitioners/advisers are aware of legal obligation and need for interpreters.
- More interpreters needed to match demand.
- Extra employees needed to train interpreters.

Northwest Disability Zone

Contact: Patricia Bray

Telephone: 028 71360811

Disability Action works to ensure that people with disabilities attain their full rights as citizens.

While the group currently have no framework for working with ethnic minorities there is discussion taking place about the possibilities of producing literature in different languages making services more accessible to ethnic/migrant communities.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Failure to provide ethnic/migrant communities with information enabling them to access services.
- Government funding needs to come to organisation to help ethnic/migrant communities.
- Local people using sign language can not access services easily and there is no provision at all for different nationalities who do not speak English.

#### Seeds

This organisation is part of the Foyle Multi-cultural Forum. The Forum provides the opportunity for groups to come together and discuss relevant issues affecting the local ethnic minority community. It aims to act as a support mechanism for groups in their growth and in developing their ability to offer services. The group meets on a monthly basis.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Lack of funds causing concern for many groups.
- Organisations/groups working within the sector should have a coordinated approach towards helping ethnic/migrant communities.

Bready – Ulster Scots

Contact: James Kee

Telephone: 028 71841636

Bready Ulster Scots and District Development Association were formed in 2001 to provide a structure for the Ulster Scots revival and to provide cohesion for other groups with an interest in the Ulster Scots heritage. This group have submitted a paper to the Bill of Rights Forum.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Identity and Community rights are not properly protected.
- Rights of victims' is never given the recognition it deserves.
- Terminology regarding 'majority' and 'minority' communities is problematic.
- Ulster Scots as an identity needs to be recognised as a right.

Ulster Scots Language Society  
Contact: Michael Montgomery  
Telephone: 028 90436 716

The Ulster Scots Language Society was formed in 1992 to promote and establish Ulster Scots as a language. The organisation encourages an interest in writing, education and literature relating to the history of Ulster Scots.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- The group expressed major concerns about the Human Rights Commission having a negative attitude towards Ulster-Scots and would not be happy for them to be monitoring body for BOR.
- There is no Ulster Scots representative on NIHRC
- If the BOR in NI is aligned with a proposed BOR in ROI there is a possibility that a relationship could develop that may negatively influence the monitoring of the NI BOR, which could pose potential threats to our culture and traditions.

Pobal

Contact: Nick Saddler

Telephone: 028 90437072

Pobal promotes social inclusion and reconciliation through integrated social and economic development within communities. Pobal is a not-for-profit company with charity status that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- A Bill of Rights would be welcome as it could provide extra legal protection for the Irish Language.
- The general public have indicated that a Bill of Rights 'particular to NI' would be supported. This support should be registered by politicians and acted upon.

Strabane Grammar

Contact: Ruth Hopkins

Telephone: 028 71382319

Strabane Grammar School work in close partnership with Strabane Ethnic Communities Support Group. The schools association with the Ethnic Support Group began two years ago when they examined the growing problem of racism in NI.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- Not enough information regarding issues of Human Rights etc being delivered through the curriculum.
- No suitable meeting place which would encourage young people from all nationalities/cultures to attend.

Royal National Institute for Deaf (RNID), Belfast

Contact: Brian Symington

Telephone: 028 90239619

RNID is an umbrella organisation which deals with deaf people, hard of hearing, Deaf-blind and people with Tinnitus. The organisation offers information and communication services, including Sign Language Interpreters, Training of Interpreter's, lip speakers etc.

**KEY ISSUES:**

- Problems with the time span of Bill of Rights programme - felt it was too rushed.
- Other groups in society need to respect the rights of the Deaf community and not exclude them either directly or indirectly.
- Sign language should be recognised/taught in schools as it is an indigenous language.

## Recommendations

The language needs of the ethnic/migrant communities need to be taken into account when formulating a Bill of Rights.

Clarification on language rights is needed and further consultation on this issue is recommended.

Literature about the Bill of Rights should be produced in other languages for the benefit of ethnic/migrant communities.

Users of sign language should be consulted in a meaningful way to ensure their needs will be met in a Bill of Rights.