

Shadow Report
Ireland's Combined Fourth and Fifth Reports under the
Convention on the Elimination of all
forms of Discrimination Against Women
(CEDAW)

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▪ Executive Summary

Introduction

Pavee Point Travellers Centre welcomes this opportunity to submit a shadow report in relation to Ireland's Combined Fourth and Fifth Reports under CEDAW.

In the time that has passed since the Irish government submitted its last report there has been some progress on Traveller women's issues and Traveller issues in general, however, we would assert that the government has 'fallen down' in many areas and failed to address Traveller issues in a comprehensive way. The main report will seek to critique the various programmes, policies and strategies that are currently in place.

Traveller Women

Intersection of Ethnicity and Gender

We note with regret that the scope of the articles of CEDAW do not allow space to address issues of racism and discrimination that may be experienced by women from minority ethnic groups. In recognising that Women's rights are Human Rights, Pavee Point would assert that Traveller women's rights are 'non divisible' so giving rights to Travellers as women and not as Travellers is not sufficient. For Traveller women their identity is intertwined with their gender and until Traveller rights are fully acknowledged and enshrined in Irish law and policies it not enough to address gender issues in an isolated manner.

Demographic overview

Traveller women belong to an Irish indigenous minority ethnic group known as Travellers. They have their own culture, history, heritage and language that according to historical material have been part of Irish society for centuries. Travellers' distinctive lifestyle and culture, which is based on a nomadic tradition, sets them apart from the settled¹ population.

While Irish Travellers are indigenous to Ireland, they have much in common with other nomadic cultures throughout Europe such as Gypsies and Roma through the constant struggle to resist policies of assimilation and have their ethnicity recognised.

According to the 2002 Census, there are approximately 12,000 Traveller women living in Ireland, constituting 50 per cent of the total Traveller population and 0.3 per cent of the total Irish population.

Traveller women are custodians of Traveller culture. However, for many Traveller women this role is burdened by human rights violations, especially in relation to accommodation where many Travellers live with no water, no electricity, inadequate service provision and the constant threat of eviction²

Key Issues Affecting Traveller Women

Overall, Traveller women's day to day lives have not changed significantly since the last time the Irish government reported to the CEDAW committee

- Traveller women face health inequalities which result in Traveller women living approximately 12 years less than other Irish women
- Educational attainment for Traveller women is significantly below that of settled women; there are only 16 Travellers currently in third level education

¹ The term 'settled' is used to describe members of the majority or general population

² A Report Based on the National Plan for Women Submission by the National Traveller Women's Forum & Pavee Point Traveller's Centre. P 8

- Access and participation in employment is still something that for the most part is outside the reach of Traveller women due to constant discrimination

In order to eliminate discrimination and to address the marginalisation experienced by Traveller women in their day to day life, effective, appropriate and meaningful programmes, policies and strategies must be set in place by the Irish government.

Underpinning the governments approach should be the recognition of Traveller ethnicity, disaggregated data collection and equality proofing and acknowledgment of Traveller women's right to representation.

Recognising Traveller Ethnicity

Currently the Irish government has stated that Travellers do not constitute a Minority Ethnic Group (this will be discussed later under Articles 1&2) under the transposed UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). This non recognition of Traveller identity has ramifications for the status of Travellers and Traveller women in Ireland across all the articles contained within CEDAW and under the following areas:

Human Rights/Equality protection

In a recent monitoring report to the Task Force on the Travelling Community, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform refers to the extension of the protections against forms of racism under CERD extended to Travellers under equality legislation, in spite of Travellers not being recognised as a minority ethnic group.

Pavee Point would see this extension of protection as falling short of acknowledging Traveller ethnicity explicitly and again conveys the contradictory manner in which Traveller identity and ethnicity is dealt with. The Irish government has implemented legislation to protect the Traveller community from discrimination but not racism, this anomaly needs to be addressed by the Irish government and has implications in terms of human rights for Traveller women.

This mindset is evident throughout Ireland's first report on CERD and a direct result is that Travellers are considered in an Appendix rather than in the main body of the Report. This lack of recognition is much deeper than a semantic issue and has significant implications for policy.

Disaggregated Data Collection and Equality Proofing

Currently in Ireland the collection of disaggregated data on minority ethnic women is not prioritised, however, in order to develop policies that have a real impact on Traveller women this information needs to be collected and collated in order to:

- Plan Traveller specific policies for Traveller women
- To equality proof mainstream policies before they are developed and;
- To be able to assess the access, participation and outcomes from all policies developed that relate to women.

Tools for Equality and Gender Proofing

Disaggregated data must include a gender perspective and the experience of Traveller women. Gender proofing needs to have Traveller proofing to encapsulate both sexism and racism and be able to assess their impact on Traveller women. As a result of developing tools for gender proofing and equality proofing in an anti racist and human rights framework, the needs of Traveller women will be addressed in a coherent and planned way.

Mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation as well as target setting need to have cross cutting elements to them. Ethnic identifier questions should be mainstreamed in all areas of service provision, to capture the needs of services users while developing cultural appropriate service delivery but also to ensure Traveller women's participation in formal employment.

Traveller Women's Right to Representation

The government's approach to eliminate discrimination and to address the marginalisation experienced by Traveller women should be underpinned by the right of Traveller women to representation.

This right to representation on governmental and administrative structures is critical in the development of policy for Traveller women. We note that the Irish government cite Traveller representation within the article on Special Measures but not specifically Traveller women and within all the other articles that we discuss in the main body of the report there are structures set up to represent the views of women but not Traveller women.

Pavee Point would see the representation of Traveller women on all structures that affect women in Ireland as being vital in resourcing, supporting and validating the voice of the Traveller woman and ensuring it is heard.

Implications for Policy Development

The Irish government has developed sectoral policies on Travellers which implicitly name Traveller identity and status, however explicitly this is not the case. This position has implications for policy development in so far as mainstream policy often does not reflect the needs of Traveller women as they are not a recognised minority ethnic group.

This in turn leads to policies that often are not reflective of Traveller women's needs and in many cases dual policy positions that conflict and are juxtaposed in their analysis of Traveller women's needs. The status of minority ethnic group would ensure that Traveller women are named and included in all government policy in a targeted way and would ensure that all policy areas in terms of social, economic, political and cultural rights are addressed in a coherent manner with the recognition of ethnicity.

Government policies need to reflect the real needs of Traveller women, while acknowledging systemic racism and discrimination as a lived reality in all aspects of their lives. Policies that don't recognise Traveller ethnicity leave Traveller women with having to make choices around gender issues over Traveller identity. Sexism and racism are an integral part of Traveller women's experience.

In order to challenge internal barriers within the community Traveller women need a range of structural measures that involve both a targeted and mainstream approach to them. These would close some of the gaps in terms of educational opportunities while creating better outcomes in the areas of health and employment.

This in turn will ensure that policies developed will be culturally appropriate; resources are allocated to where the need exists; that the data generated is both qualitative and quantitative and is used in a coherent and sensitive manner and reflect Traveller ethnicity.

▪ Key Recommendations

Articles 1 & 2

Discrimination

- Pavee Point would recommend that the Irish government should immediately recognise Travellers as a minority ethnic group
- That the protections afforded under CERD for other groups should extend to Travellers. This would ensure that government policies, anti racism initiatives and the protection of rights for Travellers would be enshrined and therefore would meet the needs of Travellers, including Traveller women in a valid and meaningful way
- The government should monitor and publish the impact of the changes to the Equal Status Act introduced by the Intoxicating Liquor Act, 2003 on an annual basis
- The intoxicating Liquor Act, 2003 should be amended and the Equality Tribunal should revert to hearing all cases in relation to the Equal Status Act. The new role of the District Court in regard to cases involving licensed premises covered by the Equal Status Act, should cease

Article 3

Special Measures

Task Force and Monitoring Committee

- The establishment of a statutory Traveller Agency to monitor, coordinate and where appropriate, *enforce* the recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community. The Traveller Agency would be allocated sufficient resources and powers to achieve its goals
- The publication of an update on the implementation of the Task Force Report every two years, to be presented for debate and approval at the Irish Parliament (Oireachtas)
- Traveller women are a separate section in the Monitoring Committee's work. We would assert that all the special measures identified within the Task Force Report have a gender perspective and all reports assess the impact of sectoral strategies on Traveller women and not just the Traveller Community in general

Traveller Accommodation

- Improving the rate of accommodation provision within the context of new local authority accommodation plans to cover 2005-8
- The establishment of a statutory Traveller Agency with powers to approve and enforce local authority 5 year Traveller accommodation plans
- The complete overhaul (rather than 'review') of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998
- The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 should be scrapped with immediate effect

Traveller Health

- It is inefficient and inaccurate for Government and Traveller groups alike to assess the health needs of Travellers on the basis of 1987 figures therefore the All Ireland Traveller Health Needs Assessment Study (AITHS) needs to be resourced and completed
- Following the AITHS, a new health strategy should be written to continue to plan for future needs in Traveller Health
- The Community Health Worker role should be strengthened through the establishment of a well funded and resourced national accredited training and employment programme
- To implement outstanding recommendations stated in the Health Strategy relating to Traveller women

Article 10

Education

- A root and branch review takes place that examines the outcomes from investment in education for Travellers and Traveller women
- It is imperative that Traveller women be given roles as advocates for their community as Community Education Workers

Article 11

Employment

- The low level of educational attainment amongst Traveller women is a huge barrier when accessing employment, particularly low levels of literacy. All pre training in active labour market training needs to ensure programmes address this issue
- Social welfare requirements need to be addressed in line with the EU social protection rights, i.e. that all welfare supplements are poverty proofed

General Recommendation

Violence Against Women

- Equality should be named as a key working principle of the National Steering Committee (NSC) strategic plan for 2005-8
- Development of an equality proofing framework to support the mainstreaming of equality within the VAW sector should be given priority within the work-plan of the NSC over the coming years
- Organisations with targeted initiatives to address existing inequalities experienced by Traveller women in relation to violence should continue to be resourced

- **Introduction**

Pavee Point is a voluntary non-governmental organisation which is committed to the attainment of human rights for Irish Travellers. The group is a partnership of Travellers and the majority population working together to address the racism and exclusion Travellers experience in society. It has been involved in direct work with Travellers since 1985.

The key values which underpin Pavee Point's work include: human rights, equality, social solidarity, cultural diversity, community development, partnership and a recognition that issues facing Travellers are multi-dimensional and so require holistic responses to address them.

For the past 20 years Pavee Point have been working towards addressing inequalities facing the Traveller community from community development and anti-racist models of work.

- **Structure of Report**

The racial discrimination experienced by Travellers in Irish society is increasingly well documented at both national and international level. However, documentation of the position of Traveller women is limited. This shadow report is written primarily for the purposes of informing the members of the CEDAW Committee about the concerns of Pavee Point in relation to Traveller women in Ireland. The report aims to aid the Committee in getting a more complete picture of the racial discrimination experienced by Traveller women in Ireland as measured against the articles under CEDAW and with close reference to Ireland's Combined Fourth and Fifth CEDAW Reports.

While there is a significant amount of useful information in Ireland's CEDAW Report relating to the current position of women in general, we note with regret that the scope of the articles of CEDAW do not allow space to address issues of racism and discrimination that may be experienced by women from minority ethnic groups such as Travellers.

The focus of this Shadow Report relates to Article 3, Special Measures. Within this article Travellers and Traveller women are explicitly named within Ireland's CEDAW Report, providing scope to highlight gaps and omissions relating to the Irish governments' responses to eliminating discrimination for Traveller women. A number of other articles relevant to Traveller women's issues are also commented on.

To help the CEDAW Committee in the task of reaching conclusions and tracking comments, this Shadow Report is structured along similar lines to Ireland's CEDAW Report, with some additional information by way of introduction, executive summary and key recommendations.

National Overview

Government Policy

Government policy relating to Travellers over the past 30 years has been primarily one of rehabilitation, settlement and assimilation, encompassing a charity model of work that primarily addressed individual Travellers issues.

This approach viewed Travellers as the problem, failed to recognise Traveller ethnicity and ignored structural barriers of discrimination and racism and was rolled out 'for' rather than 'with' Travellers.

Through the continued lobbying and work of Traveller organisations and in particular, Traveller women, some progress has been made towards shifting government policy to one of inclusion that is inclusive of Travellers distinct needs and recognises the impact of both individual and institutional racism.

Demographic overview

Travellers are an indigenous minority ethnic group living in Ireland with their own culture, history, heritage and language. Travellers' distinctive lifestyle and culture, which is based on a nomadic tradition, sets them apart from the majority or settled population.

Ireland's 2002 Census recorded the following statistics in relation to Travellers and Traveller women;

- The total population of Travellers living in Ireland is 23,681³
- Travellers make up 0.6 per cent of the total population
- There is a total of 11,973 Traveller women living in Ireland
- There are 4,913 Traveller girls between the age of 0 – 14years
- 422 Traveller women living in Ireland 65 years or older

Although Travellers comprise only a small percentage of the total Irish population, as a group they are widely recognised as one of the most marginalised or disadvantaged in Irish society.

The disadvantage and marginalisation faced by Travellers is reflected in statistics relating to Traveller health, employment, education and accommodation and shows that everyday life for Traveller women has not changed much;

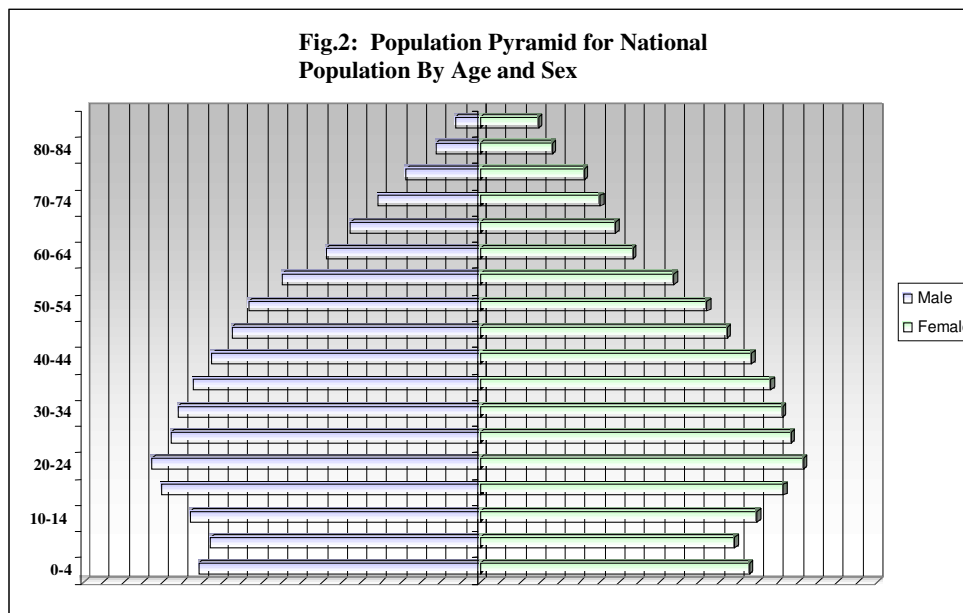
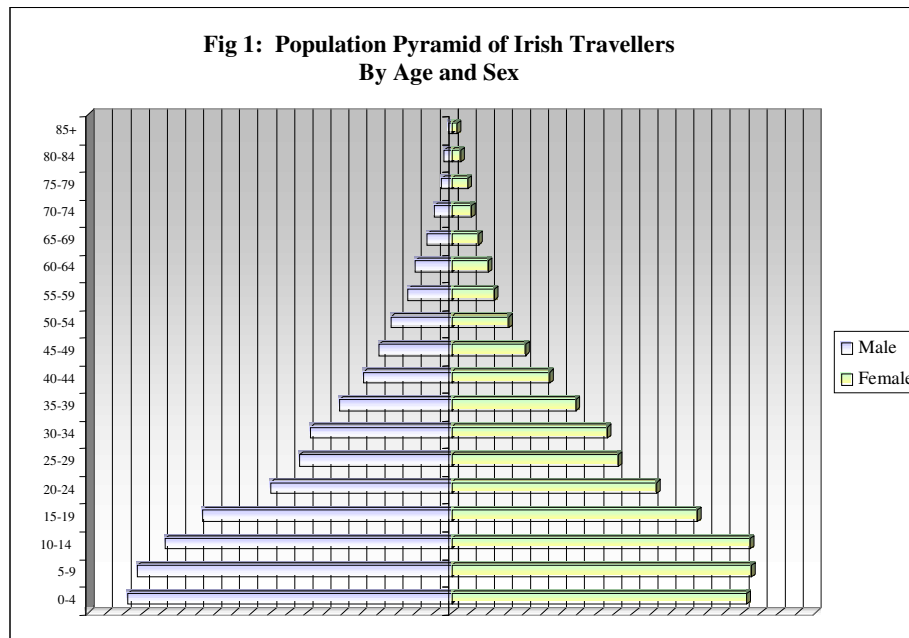
- At birth Traveller women can expect to live approximately 12 years less than settled women
- Traveller women's life expectancy is now that of the general population of the 1940's
- Infant mortality rate for Travellers is 18.1 per 1000 lives births (national figure is 7.4)
- Figures from ISIDA⁴ for 2002 show sudden infant death syndrome to be 3.7 times higher than the general population
- There are high levels of illiteracy among several generations of Traveller families

³ The Department of Environment and Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees count of Travellers estimates the total population of Travellers at 30,000

⁴ Figures sourced from the Irish Sudden Infant Death Association

Figure 1 and figure 2 provide comparisons between the age profile of Travellers and the general population in Ireland. They vividly illustrate the impact of very high infant mortality rates, the young age profile of Travellers and the much lower life expectancy rates.

Fig 1 and 2: Population Pyramid of Irish Travellers compared with the National Population by Age and Sex. Data from Central Statistics Office: Census 2002.



Traveller women

Traveller women experience both sexism and racism through; being a woman, being a Traveller and being a Traveller woman. In many cases the need to address racism is prioritised over addressing sexism, although gender inequality affects the ability of a Traveller woman to live her life free from violence and support and provide for herself and her family.

The levels of disadvantage between settled women and Traveller women must be considered, and this means a multi dimensional response in terms of resourcing, targeted approaches and policy development.

Traveller women are custodians of Traveller culture. They are the caregivers with the main responsibilities of childcare and negotiate between schools, doctors and other services for the family.

However, for many Traveller women this role is burdened by human rights violations in relation to accommodation, i.e. with no water, no electricity, inadequate service provision and the constant threat of eviction⁵

The Irish governments' responses to the elimination of discrimination against women lack recognition of the specific position of Traveller women. The Irish government needs to recognise the discrimination experienced by Traveller women fails at the intersection of ethnicity and gender and the negative outcomes of the two, racism and sexism.

Traveller women have been to the fore in the Traveller Movement in Ireland. The role of Traveller women in representing their issues and broadening the vision of the equality agenda in general is important. Traveller women's experiences need to be central to policy developments to address racism and sexism within both the Traveller community and civil society.

⁵ A Report Based on the National Plan for Women. Submission by the National Traveller Women's Forum & Pavee Point Traveller's Centre. P 8.

▪ Articles 1 & 2 **Definition and Policies against Discrimination**

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term ‘discrimination against women’ shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

State Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

Introduction

The introduction of the equality legislation Equal Status Act (2000) and The Employment Equality Act (1998) and the establishment of the Equality Authority and the Equality Tribunal to monitor and enforce the equality legislation was a welcome recognition by Irish society that discrimination and inequality were issues to be addressed. However, discrimination continues to be a significant issue for Travellers and Traveller women.

Barriers

Equality Legislation

There is a concern by Traveller organisations and Traveller women that the legislative progress made to date by the Irish government and the corresponding institutions implemented to affect change are under threat. This is clearly visible in the change of jurisdiction for discrimination relating to licensed premises from the Equality Tribunal to the District Court, achieved through the introduction of the Intoxicating Liquor Act, 2003⁶.

The Irish government agreed the change of jurisdiction as a result of a sustained public relations campaign characterised by invective and unfair comment by the Licensed Vintners Federation.

This change discriminates against Travellers and others in terms of costs, representation issues and procedural issues. It is also perceived as a backward step in terms of the loss of mediation, which was a much used and non-confrontational option for Travellers.

The equality legislation, in particular the employment side, is stronger on the gender issue than it is on other issues. The rewards and sanctions are stronger on the employment issue than they are on the provision of goods and services. This is due in part because employment and gender issues are two of the biggest equality issues at EU level.

The reality for most Traveller women is that cases taken will be based on their ethnic identity and not on their gender and with regard to the provision of goods and services rather than employment i.e. where the sanctions are weakest.

Travellers as a Minority Ethnic Group

One of the dilemmas facing Traveller women is that the State will acknowledge their culture and recognise Travellers as a social grouping but is reluctant to acknowledge their ethnic status. Ireland’s

⁶ Following the introduction of the Equal Status Act in 2002, there were many cases taken by Travellers against licensed premises which were perceived to be discriminating against Travellers.

equality legislation provides for the inclusion of Travellers, not on the grounds of race but on membership of the Traveller community.

This position taken by the government strikes Pavee Point as contradictory as the definition of Travellers within the equality legislation is taken from the Northern Ireland Race Relations Order. This in turn is based on the definition of ethnic group which has grown out of British case law which found Travellers represent an ethnic group.

This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that though the State says it will acknowledge Travellers' culture invariably State policy is underpinned by an implied assimilationist approach. For example, in the 1995 Task Force report on Travellers a recommendation was made to build 3,100 units of accommodation by 2000. The bulk of this accommodation was to be Traveller specific accommodation e.g. halting sites. By 2000 over 60% of the target of accommodation units in the form of houses was met, while less than 10% of the Traveller specific accommodation had been built.

Although the inclusion of the Traveller ground within equality legislation goes some way towards acknowledging Traveller culture and addressing the discrimination experienced, it falls short of addressing the fundamental causes and effects of the overall discrimination experienced by Travellers in Ireland.

As with many communities, Traveller women are the ones in the community who liaise with statutory agencies and service providers. At times they have felt, that their issues of exclusion are blamed on their Traveller identity and the implicit proposition is put to them that if they ceased to be Travellers their problems as women would also cease. Traveller ethnicity is not chosen, it is innate and the non recognition of it has an impact in terms of internalised oppression and a lack of cultural pride.

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Government Response

The first national report by Ireland to the CERD committee, July 2003, (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform) states in plain terms *"In regard to the scope of the report it should be noted that Irish Travellers do not constitute a distinct group from the population as a whole in terms of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin."*

The government report to the CERD committee included Travellers in the appendix to the CERD report and describes Travellers in a way that any ethnic group could be defined: *"Irish Travellers (population 24,000) are an indigenous Irish Community with a shared history of a nomadic way of life and cultural identity."*

This stated position is not in line with legal and academic opinion in recent years. It is inconsistent with the government's policies and action in recent years, policies have been developed and the language used to describe Travellers has been similar to that of a minority ethnic group. This duplicity leads to ad hoc policy development and legislation that only partially protects Travellers under its statutes.

The recent Council of Europe's (COE) resolution⁷ on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities which states "...racism in Ireland has become an issue of increasing concern touching not only the Traveller community but also new immigrant communities" reflects that at a European level Traveller ethnicity is recognised and Travellers experience of racism and discrimination is named. The COE acknowledges the racism that Travellers experience as a result of their culture and

⁷ Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Resolution Res CMN (2004) 6 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5th May 2004 at the 883rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies

identity. Travellers are currently named as a social grouping under the Equal Status Act, however in order to ensure the full protection of human rights Travellers should have the extended rights as enshrined under the UN convention CERD. This would be in line with the Council of Europe's recognition of Traveller identity.

Recommended measures

- Pavee Point would recommend that the Irish government should immediately recognise Travellers as a minority ethnic group
- That the protections afforded under CERD for other groups should extend to Travellers. This would ensure that government policies, anti racism initiatives, positive action measures and the protection of rights for Travellers would be enshrined and therefore would meet the needs of Travellers, including Traveller women in a valid and meaningful way
- The government should monitor and publish the impact of the changes to the Equal Status Act introduced by the Intoxicating Liquor Act, 2003 on an annual basis.
- The intoxicating Liquor Act, 2003 should be amended and the Equality Tribunal should revert to hearing all cases in relation to the Equal Status Act. The new role of the District Court in regard to cases involving licensed premises covered by the Equal Status Act, should cease
- In cases where discrimination by a licensed premises is alleged, the mediation service previously offered by the Equality Tribunal should continue to be made available as an alternative to taking cases to the District Court

Final conclusions

A lack of true recognition of Traveller identity and its basis results in a situation whereby Traveller women's human rights cannot be realised and validates an assimilationist approach. Recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group will not be a panacea for movement on Traveller policy, but it could contribute to some more fresh and imaginative policy response than most recently observed.

▪ Article 3

Special Measures

State parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social and economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Introduction

Article 3 documents the various special measures undertaken by the Irish government in addressing discrimination and inequality for Travellers.

Measures documented in the Irish government's CEDAW report relate directly to recommendations from the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995 and as identified by the Monitoring Committee as priorities to progress.

Task Force on Travellers and the Monitoring Committee (see appendix one)

Current situation

In the Irish government's report on CEDAW it highlights the existence of a structure known as the Monitoring Committee of the Task Force on Travellers. This structure was put in place to implement the 300 recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995.

Membership of the Monitoring Committee consists of representatives from both Traveller organisations and the State.

Ireland has adapted sectoral policies in relation to Travellers and these policies have come under the auspices of the Monitoring Committee.

Barriers

The fundamental problem of the structure to implement the 300 recommendations of the Task Force Report is the emphasis on 'monitoring' rather than implementation and the lack of resources and statutory powers. Therefore there is a need to properly address the institutional barriers and the lack of political will that exists around moving forward on policies relating to Travellers.

There has been increasing recognition in recent years that many of the key recommendations arising out of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995, have either not been delivered or have been delivered in a piecemeal or inadequate form.

Many of the key recommendations of the Task Force that were eventually implemented were only done so after months and years of further lobbying by organisational working with Travellers e.g. the National Strategy on Traveller Health 2002-05.

Even more disappointing was the government's response to the problem of lack of implementation of recommendations identified in the Task Force Report and the First Monitoring Report on the Task Force. Instead of establishing a statutory Traveller Agency 'with teeth' with a significant budget and statutory powers the Irish government, in 2003, set up a High Level Officials Working group.

Traveller organisations see this as providing additional institutional blocks to progression of Traveller issues particularly in light of the fact that Traveller groups are not represented on this structure and without clear terms of reference.

There are no reports on the proceedings and deliberations of the group particularly in light of the fact that this group was set up to remove some of the barriers to implementing policies relating to Travellers. Similar structures are now being replicated at local authority level as some local authorities have viewed it as a green light for the further exclusion and marginalisation of Travellers and Traveller women.

Recommended measures

- The establishment of a statutory Traveller Agency to monitor, coordinate and where appropriate, *enforce* the recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community. The Traveller Agency would be allocated sufficient resources and powers to achieve its goals
- The publication of an update on the implementation of the Task Force Report every two years, to be presented for debate and approval at the Irish Parliament (Oireachtas)
- Traveller women should be represented on the high level officials group
- Mapping exercise recommended by the Monitoring Committee to be completed
- Traveller women are a separate section in the Monitoring committee's work. We would assert that all the special measures identified within the Task Force Report have a gender perspective and all reports assess the impact of sectoral strategies on Traveller women and not just the Traveller Community in general

Traveller accommodation

Current situation

Provision of Traveller specific accommodation

Although a number of initiatives have been undertaken in the area of Traveller accommodation since 1995 the issue of Traveller accommodation remains contentious;

- There are a total of 1,463⁸ Traveller families (22% of Traveller families) still living without permanent quality accommodation in 2004. 788 of these families are living on the side of the road with no hot water, electricity and sanitation, there are an additional 323 families sharing basic facilities with other family members, with a further 352 families in emergency and temporary facilities⁹
- Government policy in 1995 was to provide 2,200 bays on halting sites and 900 houses by the end of 2000. As stated earlier, 60% of the target of accommodation units in the form of houses was met, while less than 10% of the Traveller specific accommodation had been built
- The government also introduced criminalisation of trespass, by provision of s.24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002. Traveller organisations view this Act as a form of State violence as it criminalises nomadism, which forms part of Traveller culture

⁸ Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government figures 2003

⁹ Letter to An Taoiseach, (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern TD by Traveller Organisations, November 2004

Policy developments

The Monitoring Committee to date has progressed the following initiatives in relation to Traveller accommodation;

- The establishment of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees, the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the Traveller Accommodation Unit in the Department of the Environment
- The enactment of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, and legislation to give effect to the government Traveller accommodation strategy through amendment of the Housing, Planning and Management Acts.

Progress to date

In 2003, a review of the operation of the Traveller Accommodation Act has been undertaken and the report is currently with the Minister for Housing and Urban Development and Renewal, of the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. This review is welcomed by Traveller organisations as the provision of good quality Traveller accommodation continues to be a challenge. In general Traveller accommodation is of poor standards or culturally inappropriate.

However, Pavee Point believes that a complete overhaul of the Traveller Accommodation Act, 1998, is required.

Barriers

- There is a lack of political will at both local authority level and at a national level to implement the Traveller accommodation programme as set out in the Housing Act 1998
- The government's current programme of accommodation is assimilationist in its current application in so far as the progression of standard housing has developed at a much faster rate than that of Traveller specific accommodation¹⁰, this needs to be addressed immediately
- The introduction of a draconian amendment to the Accommodation act in 2002 which effectively makes Nomadism illegal and penalises Traveller families for the non implementation of government policy on accommodation so those on the roadside can be removed by the police and their caravan impounded and a fine issued. This has huge negative consequences for Traveller women and their families and the removal of Traveller families is an example of State violence

Recommended measures

- Improving the rate of accommodation provision within the context of new local authority accommodation plans to cover 2005-8
- The establishment of a statutory Traveller Agency with powers to approve and enforce local authority 5 year Traveller accommodation plans
- The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 should be scrapped with immediate effect
- The complete overhaul (rather than 'review') of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998
- Transient halting sites: Nomadism should be recognised as a valid way of life and be resourced and supported by the state and the requirements of all remaining families on the roadside with no amenities needs to be a priority for 2005

¹⁰ Traveller Specific Accommodation: provision of Traveller halting sites with caravan bays, group housing and transient sites for Nomadic Travellers

Traveller Health

Micheal Martin, TD., Minister for Health and Children stated in 2002:

‘The available data on the health status of the Irish Traveller community shows that they experience a level of health which falls short of that enjoyed by the general population’¹¹

Current situation

A number of key recommendations from the 1995 Task Force Report related to Traveller Health. One key recommendation was for the development of a strategy on Traveller health.

After 7 years a National Strategy for Traveller Health covering the period 2002-5, was drawn up and approved by the government along with a number of new structures to progress recommendations named within the strategy, namely, the Traveller Health Advisory Committee and a Traveller Health Unit in each Health Board.

Although the strategy was a great achievement in terms of the development of concrete actions to address health inequalities for Travellers and Traveller women, it was unfortunate that the process in getting to the final document took so long.

The government has also named Travellers within other policy to address disadvantage, namely the National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS). Although Traveller inclusion in mainstream policy is a positive step, there is a need to ensure meaningful consultation is held with Travellers and Traveller women in the development of specific strategies and targets. For example targets set out within NAPS relating to Travellers were not agreed measures with Travellers and Traveller representatives.

Progress to date

Since the launch of the National Strategy on Traveller Health, mixed progress has been made. A number of initiatives have been undertaken in relation to Traveller women’s health. However, a number of key initiatives remain stagnated, such as work on the All Ireland National Traveller Health Study (AITHS) which is an initiative undertaken by The Department of Health and Children and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland. This study will inform actions required in relation to Traveller health. Currently policy is development from a study undertaken in 1987.

- The role of Traveller women as Community Health Workers has been a significant objective of the National Strategy on Traveller Health. Primary Health Care (PHC) projects have been recognised as positive programmes in improving the healthcare of Travellers. Also more than 30 PHC programmes have been set up around the country since the health strategy was completed. Most areas with a significant Traveller population have had PHC programs established as recommended in the health strategy.
- Ethical guidelines for research into Traveller Health are currently being developed by the Traveller Ethics, Research and Information Working Group. This group also examines research proposals for ethical approval.
- A Community Genetics Approach to Health and Consanguineous Marriage in the Irish Traveller Community’ position paper was produced by The Traveller Consanguinity Working Group. This paper is currently being adapted in the Department of Health and Children

¹¹ Minister M. Martin in preface of Traveller Health: A National Strategy. Department of Health and Children, 2002

Barriers

- There has been poor progress in carrying out the AITHS, which would be used as a baseline to assess Traveller health. The study was due to commence in 2004. The proposed start date is now early 2005. The previous health survey relating to Traveller health was collated in 1987 and without involvement from Traveller organisations in the collection of its information. Without up to date information or statistics on Traveller health, it is impossible to compare the progress of health programs and interventions and furthermore it is difficult to plan what targets need to be set, what interventions are needed in the future, what areas of health, and where best money needs to be spent
- Cuts in funding and the current government's health reform policies could undermine implementation of recommendations in the Traveller health strategy

Recommended measures

- The provision for representation of Traveller health issues should be made within the new Health Executive as planned in the current government health reform policy
- It is inefficient and inaccurate for Government and Traveller groups alike to assess the health needs of Travellers on the basis of 1987 figures therefore the AITHS needs to be resourced and completed
- Following the AITHS, a new health strategy should be written to continue to plan for future needs in Traveller Health
- To implement outstanding recommendations stated in the Health Strategy relating to Traveller women
- The Community Health Worker role should be strengthened through the establishment of a well funded and resourced national accredited training and employment programme
- Mid- term review of the implementation of the health strategy needs to be completed; this review should contain a gender dimension

Final conclusions

Since the publication of the Task Force on the Travelling Community 1995 and the establishment of the Monitoring Committee to implement Task Force recommendations, outcomes for Traveller women have varied.

Whilst Ireland's adaptation of sectoral policies in relation to Travellers is welcomed, we note with regret that the Irish government's report has not included comments or in some cases very little on Traveller women in the articles on health, employment and access to credit.

Traveller women's issues should not only be addressed through Traveller specific special measures, but should be progressed through all mainstream policies that affect women.

▪ **Article 10**

Education

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure on a basis of equality of men and women

“Why I didn’t learn to read and write at school because the teachers put all the Traveller children into what they called a special class. There were children between the ages of six years old and fourteen, I don’t know why they done that. We’re put in one big room and told to play a board game or draw a picture. I feel very resentful and angry about how we were treated in school. We went to school for years and we left not being able to read and write”

Voice of a Traveller from Drogheda, Co. Louth

Introduction

The 2002 Census highlighted the low level of educational attainment for the Traveller community in terms of access, participation and outcomes. Outcomes for Travellers are much lower than that of the settled community with many Travellers’ fulltime education ceasing at age thirteen or fourteen. Travellers leave school earlier than settled early school leavers.

For many Traveller children the day to day reality is that their identity is a trigger for discrimination within the educational environment. Because of their identity Traveller children in school can experience incidents of racist bullying and discrimination by Teachers and settled peers from the school yard to the classroom. The experience of School can be extremely stressful and traumatic for the Traveller child when experiencing this racist bullying.

“I was often called names by other children, like a knacker¹². You could get them in their good moods that they’d want to play with you, when their other friends would be gone off playing with somebody else, they’d want to play with you. But then like I’d ignore them, I’d say I’m not playing with you, cos you called me names”

Voice of a Traveller woman age 19

Critique of the Irish Government Report to CEDAW: Overall observations

- The disparity of education amongst Traveller girls and women is not acknowledged in the government’s report
- Traveller girls are not named as a specific target group for specific initiatives addressing educational disadvantage
- The government only mentions Traveller women in relation to the FAS programme and does not mention specific targets in relation to adult or third level provision
- Gender proofing and equality proofing are mentioned however, there is no discussion of the intersection of ethnicity with these tools to measure outcomes despite the fact that Traveller girls and women have low levels of achievement from formal and informal education provision
- Interculturalism is not mentioned at all in terms of the development and delivery of education provision, yet the evidence suggests that Traveller girls experience discrimination and racism from settled children, teachers and tutors
- The Education system does not recognise and support Traveller girls and women in accessing education

¹² Derogatory term used to describe Travellers

We welcome:

- The Education Equality Initiative and its focus on Travellers
- The Equality for Women Measure which is supporting Traveller women representing their community on local and regional governmental structures
- The development of the Traveller Education Strategy, which we hope will be an ambitious strategy focusing on the Traveller learner and addressing the current inequalities in education provision

It is important that these initiatives are built on, well funded and form part of an overall approach to addressing educational disadvantage, not isolated once off actions.

The Traveller Girl Child, Cultural Rights and Interculturalism

“Children of minority communities and indigenous people have the right to enjoy their own culture, to practice their own religion and to use their own language”¹³

The rights of children including Travellers to an education that accommodates and respects their culture and is free from discrimination are enshrined in various international instruments. Article 4 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination of Education 1960 obliges governments to develop and apply policy in such a way as to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in the matter of education’.

Barriers

When the young Traveller girl attends school, unfamiliar values, systems and an environment that does not reflect her culture or experiences confront her. Young Traveller women and girls need to be supported to develop themselves personally within safe environments where they can absorb and articulate their own culture and cultural needs.¹⁴ Within that curriculum there is little or no recognition or validation of Traveller culture. Ongoing discriminatory practices and low expectations of Travellers by staff at all levels and classmates who knowingly and unknowingly carry through such bias, is the reality for most Travellers.

Recommended measures

- Interculturalism as a priority must be an integrated part of the education system from early years up to adult education and life long learning initiatives, including Teacher Training. The Department of Education should have a dedicated intercultural section which would have responsibility for supporting this development. Traveller women’s representation on this structure is essential.
- Support for the validation of the Traveller girl child is vital in supporting identity, this means that the social, economic and cultural rights for Traveller women are recognised
- An anti-bias approach must be adopted within the Education system. Anti-bias is described as “An active/activist approach challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias and ‘isms’.It actively intervenes, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviours that perpetuate oppression”.¹⁵ This approach has been developed through the work of the EIST project in Ireland and we would recommend that all early years providers be trained in this approach

¹³ Article 30 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

¹⁴ A Report Based on the National Plan for Women. Submission by the National Traveller Women’s Forum & Pavee Point Traveller’s Centre. p.15

¹⁵ Eist- respecting diversity in early childhood care, education and training, Pavee Point p.39

Access, Participation and Outcomes to Educational Structures for Traveller Women

Primary and post primary school

"If we value all our citizens equally, and recognise their fundamental rights to equal participation and access to social goods, we must ensure that we all have equal access to education"¹⁶

It is only in recent times that Travellers have begun to gain access to second level education structures. It is Traveller mothers who have to deal with the consequences of inadequacies and poor practice in relation to their children's education. One clear and regularly occurring example is the practice of withdrawing Traveller children from class for remedial education, not based on educational need, but based solely on their identity; that they are Travellers.

Barriers

Schools and the Equal Status Act

Traveller parents still experience barriers in enrolling their children in schools.

The Equality Authority has received complaints recently in relation to pupils being directly discriminated against when they were refused admission to a school because they were Travellers.¹⁷ The Equal status Act 2000 promotes equality of opportunity and prohibits discrimination on nine specific grounds, one of these being membership of the Traveller Community.

Recommended measures

- Enrolment barriers for Traveller children must be removed immediately and schools be transparent in their policies
- Mandatory anti racism and equality proofing training should be available to all Boards of Management and Principals of all schools
- Strengthening of the Equality Authority's role in addressing discrimination issues in relation to schools

Traveller Education Strategy

The Department of Education and Science is currently developing a Traveller Education Strategy through the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education and Educational Disadvantage Committee. The strategy will be a five year plan including an evaluation of existing initiatives in the area. One of the challenges for a Traveller Education Strategy is to ensure equality outcomes for Travellers. In 2003 €41.6 million was spent on Traveller education. Pavee Point has, for many years, called for a root and branch review of resources that are spent on Traveller education.

Recommended measures

- A root and branch review should take place which examines the outcomes from investment in education for Travellers and Traveller women
- Traveller women's experience of education is acknowledged and supports and resources targeted towards areas of the greatest need for Traveller women

¹⁶ Lena Saleh (1995) contribution made at the conference l'education specialisee en Europe, held at Centre National d'Etudes et de Formation pour l'Enfance Inadaptee, Suresnes, France

¹⁷ Eilis Barry BL, Legal Advisor, Equality Authority 'The Legislative Framework for an inclusive School' Conference on the Inclusive School', Proceedings of the Joint Conference of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Equality Authority March 2004

- Tools to measure access, participation and outcomes for Traveller women in the system be introduced using a code of ethics to ensure these tools are used in an appropriate manner
- It is imperative that Traveller women be given roles as advocates for their community as Community Education Workers

Adult and Third Level Education

Many Traveller women are poorly educated, with low literacy levels. The number of Travellers in third level institutions is extremely low.

The Green Paper on Adult Education “Adult Education in an era of Lifelong learning’ shows an estimated 50% of literacy students and 80% of community education participants are women. Thus, women are taking action to redress their educational disadvantage but primarily in the sectors that are under resourced, in terms of infrastructural investment, in terms of income to participants to cover participant costs and in terms of recognition of achievements and progression.¹⁸ Despite the barriers and against the odds Traveller women are gaining access to Adult Education Access programmes in some of the National Universities and through Primary Health Care projects and Community Education schemes.

Recommended measures

- Childcare needs to be available to Traveller women returning to adult education as this is a real barrier to access. This childcare should be affordable, equitable and accessible for Traveller children. This will mean the widening of childcare programmes such as Early Start nationwide as many Traveller women could not afford private childcare
- The ring fencing of adult education places in the provision of community education initiatives that target the most marginalised for Traveller women with this being provided in a non linear fashion for Traveller women who may have health or family responsibilities
- Many third level institutions have access programmes; however the access programme is small and limited to a number of universities. This programme should be expanded to all third level institutes and places ring fenced for Traveller women
- Retention of social welfare benefits, secondary benefits and the medical card for a period of time

Accommodation

Barriers

Accommodation plays a key role in a Traveller’s experience of education. There have been cases of Traveller Families who were moved without notice under Section 10 of the Housing Act at a time where their children were in the middle of state exams. This disruption as well as impacting on a child’s academic performance has also a huge effect on the child both psychologically and emotionally.

Recommended measures

- Families with young children must be accommodated and impact assessments and the assessment of accommodation need takes into account Traveller children’s access, participation and outcomes from education as a result of non provision of accommodation
- Traveller women who may be alone in raising families must be supported. In this case sanctions be placed on local authorities who may be acting in contravention of the rights of the child where accommodation is not provided

¹⁸ WEI Women’s Education Initiative Report 2000 p12

Gender Proofing, Ethnicity and Equality Proofing

Gender proofing is an important tool for developing ways of integrating gender equality into educational policy. However it should be noted that there has been very little research into Traveller women's and the Traveller girl child's experience of the Education system. The Women's Education Initiative recognises the need for provision of ongoing research and consultation in order to identify the particular needs of groups of women e.g. Traveller women.¹⁹ Statutory Agencies or Government departments do not prioritise gender equality when developing policies regarding Travellers. It is important to stress that Travellers are not a homogenous group. And furthermore Traveller women and girls, like all women are not a homogenous group. Expectations, ambitions and desires change from generation to generation.

Recommended measures

- Gender proofing alone without the intersection of ethnicity will not reflect the experience of Traveller women who may appear 'invisible' in the collection of data on gender. The government should acknowledge Travellers as a minority ethnic group
- The Gender Equality Unit within the Department of Education and Science are currently piloting an ethnic identifier, the learning from this pilot should be used to inform national policy on ethnicity, gender and educational outcomes at all levels of the system

Final Conclusions

As has been observed recently in a consultation process carried out with four hundred and fifty Traveller learners; Education should be about Liberation, if this is to be so, the role of Traveller women in their community is vital, and this role should be resourced, supported and celebrated.

There are many challenges for Irish society at national, regional and local levels to ensure that Traveller women have equality of access, participation and outcomes in order that they have opportunities to achieve their full potential. Recognition of their ethnicity and distinct culture, as well as their diversity within their culture, such as their gender is a prerequisite to Travellers being fully respected and included in the wider society. In order to combat the exclusion of Traveller women in education clear strategies and affirmative action is required at all levels.

¹⁹ WEI Women's Education Initiative Report 2000 p.12

▪ **Article 11**

Employment

1. **State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:**
2. **In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, State Parties shall take appropriate measures:**
3. **Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.**

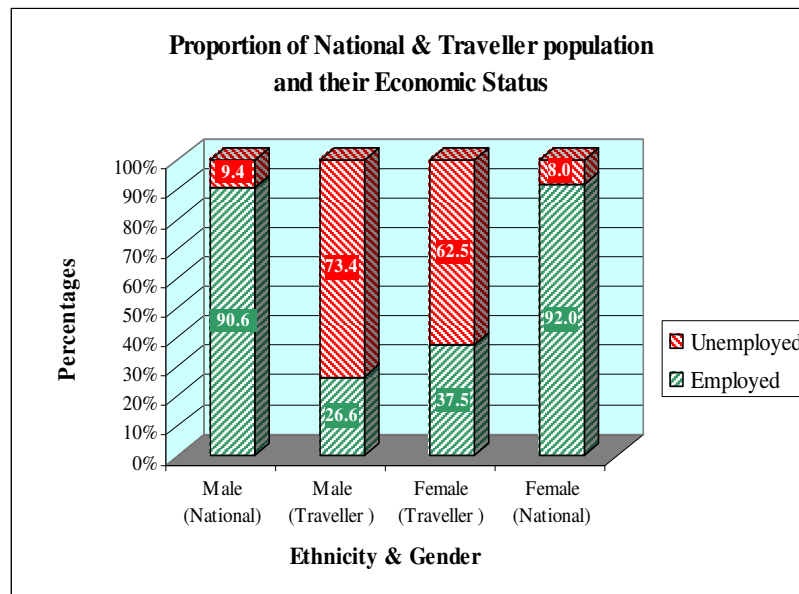
Introduction

Discrimination in the labour market is a huge issue for Travellers. This has a knock-on impact on Travellers engagement in the formal education system as many parents query the value of second level education when there are so few jobs at the end of it for Travellers. This scenario persists even though employment in Ireland has grown significantly over the past decade.

Level of Unemployment

The 2002 census highlighted that 73% of Traveller men are unemployed in comparison to a national male figure of 9%; while 62% of Traveller women are unemployed in comparison to a national figure of 8% (see Fig. 7). The range of employment that Travellers are engaged in fits into the ‘first in, first out’ category so that even for Travellers who have secured employment very few are in sustainable /career building type jobs.

Fig 3: The Economic Status of Travellers compared with the National Population



Data for the Central Statistics Office: Census, 2002

Current situation

One of the difficulties in making the issue of discrimination visible has been the lack of data the system collects itself. In the 2002 Census a question was asked about Traveller identity²⁰ and the employment statistics highlight the extent of Travellers exclusion from the labour market: unemployment for Traveller women is 62% in comparison with a national figure of 8%.

Insecurity of Employment

Traveller women access employment in two key areas: the 'first in, first out' services sector; and Traveller organisations who are often relying on training and / or employment schemes to provide these opportunities. What progression had taken place from training and education opportunities has been to one or other of these options.

Social Welfare and Secondary Benefits

The gendered nature of the social welfare system has a big impact on Traveller women's progression from training to employment. In particular, concerns about losing the medical card act as an impediment. Traveller organisations have lobbied for the retention of the medical card²¹ for Travellers when they enter employment for at least five years – arguing that such an arrangement should be reviewed after five years to ascertain whether Travellers health status has improved vis-à-vis the general population.

Childcare and its impact on access to Training and Employment

Childcare is also an issue for Traveller women. Traditionally Traveller women would prefer that their children are minded by relatives in or near to their own home. Some training courses have supported such an arrangement. However, other issues have arisen, for example other family members provide the childcare when they should be themselves in education. Provision of childcare services has improved but the costs can be prohibitive. Similarly the issue of discrimination arises here with Traveller parents concerned that their children may not be accepted or well treated.

The equality legislation is discussed with regard to Articles 1 and 2. The Employment Equality Act (1998) has not been used by Travellers to the same extent as the Equal Status Act (2000) even though discrimination in the labour market is very evident. The key reason for this is that access to the labour market is relatively new and many Travellers fear cutting off what little access there is by challenging discrimination.

Recommended measures

- The low level of educational attainment amongst Traveller women is a huge barrier when accessing employment, particularly low levels of literacy. All pre training in active labour market training needs to ensure programmes address this issue
- Social welfare requirements need to be addressed in line with the European Union social protection rights, i.e. that all welfare supplements are poverty proofed
- The medical card should not be a barrier to Traveller women's access and participation within the labour market
- Child care and training are inextricably linked and must be resourced, in particular for those accessing Community Employment (CE) and Jobs Initiative (JI) programmes.
- The need for ring fencing of places on CE and JI for Traveller women as a positive action

²⁰ Pavee Point had lobbied for this question to be part of a broader ethnic question but the State argued that there had been insufficient time to pilot such a question. As an ethnic question has been piloted recently it is to be hoped that such a question will be contained in the next census.

²¹ The medical card provides access to those on low incomes to general practitioner and medical assistance

measure, the roles Traveller women play in Traveller organisations is supported by such initiatives

- While the Traveller economy has been supported and inclusive of Traveller women in the past, regressive government legislation such as the Markets Acts have reduced the role of Traveller women in this income generating activity
- Pro-active work is required to create improved progression routes and in particular to the sustainable end of the labour market. Such a development presents challenges to the demand side of the labour market (the employers) and to Travellers themselves as it demands an increasing level of ambition and its expression. This is not easy for women from any minority ethnic group when they have seen so little positive development for their community within a society that has changed dramatically and become so wealthy

Final conclusions

It is vital that the government when addressing inequalities between men and women take cognisance of Traveller women's needs in terms of employment. Traveller women should be targeted through all active labour market measures that are aimed at women and should be represented on the various structures to tackle gender inequality in the field of employment.

▪ **Article 13**

Family benefits and bank loans

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) The right to family benefits;**
- (b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;**
- (c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.**

Introduction

Travellers face particular issues in relation to access to personal bank accounts. At present access to personal bank accounts is extremely difficult because of the manner in which financial institutions are interpreting money laundering laws.

Barriers

Anyone applying to a bank, for example, must produce photo ID (usually a passport or a driving licence) and a bill with their address on it, for example electricity or gas. This is very problematic for Traveller women – even though an increasing number of women are driving there are still a lot of Traveller women who do not have either a passport or a driving licence.

Even more problematic is the household bill - on official Traveller halting sites most services are provided through a meter system whereby the user buys a card and so does not have a bill per se.

This has impacted on Traveller women's ability to access training courses as most funders prefer the training allowance to be paid directly into a bank account. Traveller organisations have managed after much wrangling to sort some arrangement out but invariably when the person leaves the course their account is closed and they are not necessarily informed of this development.

Recommended measures

- The application of the equality legislation to this area of service provision and an exploration of how best to match the demands of this legislation with those of the money laundering laws. One simple measure would be to insist the financial institutions use the full list in the latter legislation and so there would be a greater chance of Travellers and others potentially being able to produce it. The Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority are working on an information leaflet in this area which will be useful to raise people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities

Final conclusions

Access to credit and financial services are a basic day to day requirement for Traveller women in the running of households, supporting of families and access to payment from training and educational opportunities. The systems that currently exist must be made more transparent and accessible for Traveller women, this is a basic citizen's right.

▪ General recommendation

Violence Against Women

Introduction

Traveller Analysis

Traveller women's experiences of gender based violence and access to support, needs to be understood within the wider context of the Traveller community. That is, as a minority ethnic group in Ireland who experience widespread discrimination and racism.

Traveller women, whilst experiencing racism as a member of the Traveller community, as women also experience sexism. Traveller women therefore experience a particular form of oppression as a result of the fusion of racism and sexism.

This specific form of oppression, also experienced by women from other minority ethnic groups, shapes and influences Traveller women's experiences of gender based violence.

Racism and sexism become powerful determinants of Traveller women's status in Irish society²²; strongly influencing both State and non-governmental organisations (NGO) responses and Traveller women's resistance to violence's perpetrated against them.

Traveller women experiencing violence can therefore experience high levels of racism and discrimination throughout the help seeking process. This has led to many difficulties for Traveller women who experience violence in approaching service providers, both non-governmental and statutory for support.

As well as experiencing the intersection of racism and sexism, Traveller women are also faced with dealing with the experiences of violence from three levels; the family, wider community and the State.

It is imperative that these specific forms of violence are recognised and strategised around to ensure any prevention, support, awareness and policy work carried out in partnership with the Traveller community, by the Irish State and NGO's is culturally appropriate, inclusive and anti-racist.

Underpinning the eradication of violence against Traveller women is the right of Traveller women to represent their issues. The right to representation is therefore critical in the development of VAW policy for Traveller women to live a life free of violence.

Equality Proofing, Monitoring and Evaluation

State and NGO responses to equality

Organisations that include equality as a key working principle are thus ensuring a more fairer and equitable distribution of resources and provision of service, as well as the participation and representation of diverse and excluded voices in areas of decision making and employment.

Within the Violence Against Women (VAW) sector, integration of equality as a key working principle and thus the mainstreaming of equality is limited. There is also no equality framework in place specific to the needs of the sector to provide direction on the issue.

²² Fay, R. (1999). *Pavee Beoirs Breaking the Silence: Racism and Violence Against Women*. In (Women's Subgroup Community Workers' Co-Op, Eds.) *Violence Against Women – An Issue for Community Work* (pp25 – 29). Galway: Community Workers' Co-operative.

In the absence of any sort of framework supporting the mainstreaming of equality Traveller women, intentionally or unintentionally, continue to experience racism and discrimination when seeking support.

Principles of equality must underpin the work of the sector and be reflected in any actions undertaken to eradicate VAW. The NSC²³ on VAW needs to take a lead role in the mainstreaming of equality within the VAW sector.

A commitment at this level will ensure a cohesive and consistent approach to addressing inequalities at the levels of service provision and policy development.

Recommended measures

- Equality should be named as a key working principle of the NSC strategic plan for 2005-8
- Development of an equality proofing framework to support the mainstreaming of equality within the VAW sector should be given priority within the work-plan of the NSC over the coming years
- Organisations with targeted initiatives to address existing inequalities experienced by Traveller women in relation to violence should continue to be resourced

An Garda Síochána & Irish Criminal Justice System responses

There is a dearth of data research on the experiences of Travellers, or other minority ethnic groups, within the broad Criminal Justice System in Ireland. This is a result of existing data collection methods by the Garda Síochána and other organisations with criminal prosecution functions not generating, collating and presenting data with an ethnic dimension to it.

None the less, anecdotal, individual experience and limited research, as well as our experience of working on issues of exclusion for Travellers highlights a high level of mistrust of both the legal system and the Gardai, inconsistent responses and racism. Gardai work in relation to VAW, especially in relation to ethnic groups needs to be monitored to ensure equality of outcomes and for the continued improvement of services.

Traveller women's experiences of the legal system remain largely unknown. To date much of the focus has been in relation to Traveller women's experiences of An Garda Síochána's responses.

Recommended measures

- Traveller women should be named as a target group for recruitment as Gardai
- Crime recording system PULSE should be developed to include an ethnic identifier
- Anti-racism and diversity training should be promoted and provided by specialised groups to Gardai and members of the Judiciary
- Any future research on the Irish civil and criminal legal system in relation to VAW should include the experiences of Traveller women and children

Anti - racism

Support Services

“The underlying approach to refuge work is based on an understanding that any women suffering violence has the right to enter a refuge and be treated as a person with dignity, her rights respected and her stated needs met”²⁴.

²³ In response to a recommendation contained in the Report of the Task Force on Violence Against Women, April 1997, the NSC on VAW was established by the Government in December 1997.

For many Traveller women the experience of accessing and using refuge services has been negative. Traveller women, either intentionally or unintentionally have experienced discriminatory and racist practices through the limiting of the number of Traveller women allowed in a refuge at any one time, age limits on boys allowed in refuges, and a lack of understanding by workers of Traveller culture and the position of Travellers within Irish society.

Support services therefore need to be resourced by the Irish government in order to implement the following recommendations. Work on the mainstreaming of equality within the VAW sector, as mentioned above, will also support the following recommendations.

Recommended measures

- All support services should implement anti-racist codes of practice and integrate anti-racism training into the overall training for all workers and members of management boards
- Organisational policies and practices should be Traveller proofed to ensure that responses do not intentionally or unintentionally have a negative impact on Traveller women and children
- Ensure support services reflect cultural diversity by ensuring services are culturally appropriate
- Implement an ethnic identifier question for all women accessing services to assist with monitoring and evaluation of equality of access and outcomes for Traveller women

Reflecting diversity

Representation

Although there are a small number of organisations working to support marginalised women on the issues of VAW, more often than not mainstream discourse on VAW fails to contextualise the specific issues faced by marginalised women experiencing violence. That is, migrant women's experiences of racism and violence are read as being the same as for Traveller women resulting in a homogenised analysis of issues and responses.

Traveller women have an important role to play in representing Traveller women's issues in relation to VAW and broadening the vision of the equality agenda in general. Traveller women's experiences need to be central to developments made to address VAW and sexism within both the Traveller and wider settled communities.

Traveller representation at Regional and National committees on VAW is vital in highlighting the disparity between Traveller women and settled women within the area of access to supports.

Since the establishment of the NSC on VAW, limited work has been carried out to be more inclusive of marginalised groups in relation to representation roles, other than Pavee Point Travellers Centre²⁵.

²⁴ Ireland's Combined Fourth and Fifth Reports under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, p.120.

²⁵ Pavee Point has a specific programme addressing VAW which works to develop a Traveller analysis of VAW, inform the development of culturally appropriate responses for Traveller women and influence government policy.

Recommended measures

- Traveller women's representation on both the National Steering Committee and Regional Planning Committee's on VAW should continue to be resourced and strengthened
- Members of VAW committees should undergo anti-racism and diversity training
- A diversity audit and evaluation of VAW committees should be undertaken to ensure appropriate representation is reflected within its membership
- National and Regional committees on VAW, terms of reference should accommodate a process for developing strategies for the naming of specific Traveller concerns within mainstream government policy relating to VAW

VAW as an issue of Gender: Awareness raising and Education

The government CEDAW report refers to awareness raising and education work as being responsible for generating a wider public debate on the issue of VAW and in providing information to victims of violence²⁶.

However, it is also important that awareness campaigns reflect the specific realities of women in Ireland, such as those faced by Traveller women. To date, awareness campaigns in relation to the eradication of violence against women have had a broad and generic focus.

Recommended measures

- Targeted awareness raising initiatives which reflect the diverse population of Ireland should be resourced
- Guidelines relating to the development of culturally appropriate education and awareness materials should also be developed
- Any targeted awareness raising initiatives relating to minority ethnic groups should include consultation with Traveller organisations and Traveller women

Final Conclusions

Traveller women and Traveller groups continue to address the issues of VAW in relation to the Traveller community. However, there are major gaps in the resourcing available for Traveller groups in addressing this area and tentative discussions and responses do not always make for good practice.

It is essential that Traveller women continue to be resourced to maintain current levels of work, develop new initiatives and obtain the required expertise, nationally and internationally to support best practice.

Service providers, both statutory and NGO, also require resources and support to ensure responses to violence against Traveller are culturally appropriate and anti-racist.

²⁶ Ireland's combined Fourth and Fifth Reports under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, p122.

Appendix One:

The Task Force on the Travelling Community (1993 – 1995)

The Task Force on the Travelling Community was established in June 1993 by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform and was comprised of 17 members and chaired by Liz McManus TD and subsequently by Senator Mary Kelly. Its terms of reference included ‘to advise and report on the needs of travellers (sic) and on Government policy in relation to Travellers’ and to make recommendations and draw up a strategy for consideration by Ministers.

Table one outlines the bodies represented on the Task Force.

Table One: Nominating Bodies for the Task Force on the Travelling Community

Nominating Bodies for the Task Force on the Travelling Community
Pavee Point (a national Traveller NGO, formally the DTDEG)
Conference of Religious in Ireland (association of people from roman Catholic religious orders)
National Federation of the Travelling People (now disbanded)
Minister for Equality and Law Reform (now merged with the Department of Justice)
Irish Traveller Movement (a national Traveller NGO)
National Association of Traveller Training Centres
South Dublin City Council (local authority)
Department of Education (now Education and Science)
Department of Environment (now Environment and Local Authority)
Department of Health (now Health and Children)
Department of Social Welfare (now Social and Family Affairs)
Fine Gael (political party)
Progressive Democrats (political party)
Fianna Fail (political party)
Democratic Left (political party)
Labour Party (political party)

Government publications published an interim report in 1994 and the final report of the Task Force in 1995, after which the Task Force was disbanded. A Committee to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the Task Force on the Travelling Community was established in an ‘Aide Memoire’ to Government in March 1998.

Committee to Monitor and Coordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community

Soon after the publication of the Report, an interdepartmental working group was set up to consider the implementation of the Report, and the Government decided in principle to accept the main thrust of the Report.

A Committee to Monitor and Coordinate the Implementation of the Report was established in 1998, which is chaired by a representative from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and includes representatives from the main Government Departments, the three main Traveller Organisations (Pavee Point, the Irish Traveller Movement and The National Traveller Women’s Forum), the social partners and Ministerial appointments.

The Government Departments included on the Monitoring Committee and their main role is as follows:

- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (coordination. Including the Task Force Report and the Monitoring Committee)
- The Department of Environment and Local Government
- Department of Finance (government finance)
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (employment related issues)
- Department of Education and Science (education)
- Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
- Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (community development)
- Department of Social Affairs (income support)
- Department of Health and Children (health and children)

The Monitoring Committee subsequently published its first report on December 5th 2000. Its second report was due to be published by July 2003 but has not been published by time of going to print.

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC)

The NTACC is a body established by statute in 1999, with an independent Chairperson and three dedicated officials. The committee also has three sub-committees and its agenda has focussed on all aspects of accommodation, from provision to site management. The NTACC superseded a consultative group established following the recommendations in the Task Force Report.

Traveller Accommodation Unit

The Unit was established in 1996 by the Department of Environment and Local Government to oversee the implementation of the National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation and the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998. The main elements of this Act are as follows:

- Local Authorities are required, in consultation with Travellers and Traveller Representatives, to prepare and adopt by a date specified by the Minister, 5 year programmes to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas
- Allows for public input to the preparation and amendment of such programmes
- Obliges Local Authorities to take the appropriate steps to secure implementation of programmes
- Requires Local Authorities to include objectives concerning Traveller accommodation needs in their county/city development plans
- Provides improved powers to Local Authorities to remove temporary dwellings where serviced accommodation is available within one mile

