

## CHAPTER 3: ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CORK

*“Being black creates a “zoo-syndrome” as people stare at you and although this is not racist, it makes you feel odd.”*

### Introduction

Ethnic Minority as used in the present context is the label of a social ethnic identity, which a group defines itself or has ascribed to. The ethnic *majority* in Ireland is predominantly, ‘white’, Catholic, and settled (as opposed to nomadic).

The numbers of non-Irish born people living in Ireland has increased gradually in the last number of years. It is important to note that ‘ethnic minority’ understood as an outsider-in phenomena is limiting and excluding as there is a large population of as it were ‘native’ ethnic minority people in Ireland- namely, the Traveller community who number approximately 26, 300.

In July 1999, anybody who had come to Ireland seeking asylum and had already been here for over a year was granted a work permit. In April 2000 the Irish Government formalised arrangements for the accommodation and welfare rights of asylum-seekers. The Government in this year undertook policies of ‘dispersal’ and of ‘direct provision’. This ‘dispersal’ was literally a ‘removal’ of asylum-seekers from temporary accommodation in Dublin to various areas around the country. Unfortunately and clearly very obviously, this resulted in asylum-seekers being taken away from the Capital and into areas where population density was less and therefore services were less.

Now, there are an estimated 1000 asylum-seekers in Cork City and County who are being housed in hostel or private rented accommodation. With this policy of ‘direct provision’ came a weekly allowance of £15.00 €19.05 per adult and £7.50 €9.52 per child. Due to the fact that we did not choose to interview asylum-seekers (which will be explained below), these facts may seem largely irrelevant. However, it is very important for a reader outside of Ireland to be aware of the current procedures and numbers of asylum-seekers in Cork (particularly in comparison with 5/6 years ago) as it contextualises and may even give an insight into some of the responses gathered in the data below.

Due to the fact that there are various research projects being undertaken with asylum-seekers in Cork City at present, we chose to locate informants who have been granted residency (be it temporary or permanent) in Ireland and the majority of whom have the right to work. However, these target group stipulations were relaxed for those asylum-seekers living outside of the city.

### The Logistics

The research was undertaken during November and December 2001 and was conducted amongst a group of 13 ethnic minority people in Cork City and County. A common, European predetermined open-ended questionnaire/semi-structures interview methodology was applied, which severely limited the researcher’s ability to probe

numerous issues that emerged during the different sessions. Of the 13 respondents, 2 are from the Travelling community, 3 are foreign students, 1 is an Irish born citizen with ethnic minority parents, 1 is an Irish born member of a religious ethnic minority and 3 are people who have Irish citizenship and have been here for over three years, 1 was someone with a temporary work permit and 2 are asylum-seekers from outside the city.

5 interviews were conducted in the informant's homes and the rest were conducted in various locations around the city, including coffee shops, pubs etc. The principle of representative gender balance could not be adhered to due to problems of access and time restraints. Those interviewed comprised of 5 women and 8 men. Three of these interviews were taped and the rest were scribed.

### **Profile of Respondents**

Listed below is a brief profile of all the respondents. All the names of the respondents have been altered. In some cases the present location and nationality of the respondent has also been altered or generalised. This has been necessary due to the relatively small numbers of particular ethnic groups in Cork in comparison to others and of course in comparison to most other European countries.

1. Anne is a Traveller woman, who is 19 and is undertaking vocational training. She is well travelled and considers herself entrenched within traveller culture.
2. Asylum-seeker who has been in Ireland for 2 months – living in Cork County.
3. James is a Protestant recently moved to Cork, but who has not revealed his true religion, letting his community think that he is a non-church going Catholic. He is not ready to “come out of the closet”.
4. Avi is an Israeli living in Ireland 5 years
5. Franz is a German living in Ireland 3 years
6. Male – early 20's - United Arab Emirates
7. Female – early/mid 20's - Malaysia
8. Male foreign student - 22
9. Male – Muslim – Refugee with the right to work- late 20's
10. Female – 29 – born in Ireland – ethnic minority parents
11. Claire– Traveller woman living on a halting site in a rural area.
12. American/Jewish Female – mid 20's – with temporary work permit
13. Nigerian male – late 20's – asylum-seeker

## **The results**

In order to facilitate an easier synthesising process for the project co-ordinators, the remainder of this document follows the interview schedule lay-out. Each question is followed by a short commentary that has been provided by the researchers and then by a series of bulleted comments in *Italics* as collected during the administration of the interviews. Where particular comments have sometimes been similar, this is noted at each relevant point. Given that the study is not reliant on statistics, respondent has given no regard to sequencing responses, but, rather, the quotes are grouped according to themes. Nevertheless, some of the yes/no responses have been grouped in tabular format to allow the co-ordinators the opportunity to glean trends.

## **Discrimination Plotting**

1	<b>In your daily life, do you feel discriminated?</b>	Yes <b>11</b>	No <b>2</b>	<i>Don't Know</i>	<i>Total Responses</i> <b>13</b>
	<b>If yes, why do you feel you are discriminated against?</b> <i>Detail principal factors for discrimination</i>				

Half of the respondents mentioned subtle, covert, beneath the surface discrimination as the form, which they have experience or noticed the most. This was also an issue in the Key witness interviews and both groups commented that this sort of discrimination was often the worst as it was not clearly visible and therefore harder to deal with. Two mentioned the deep-set Catholicism, which is evident and, which they feel may be the cause of the narrow-mindedness of some Irish people. Others referred to the discrimination they experience which they attribute to their skin-colour and obvious visual ethnic difference.

- *.Racism against travellers is endemic in Irish society and it comes from almost everybody, except other ethnic communities. It is not always overt and often found through subtle avoidance or people “speaking behind your back”. This happens because we are seen as different and we threaten the settled people’s conceptions of life because we refuse to conform. People do not like that, even if we do nothing to upset their ways. A “punk-rocker” can do whatever, but not a traveller, they are seen as different.*
- *Being black creates a “zoo-syndrome” as people stare at you and although this is not racist, it makes you feel odd. This is not necessarily discrimination, but when they watch what you try on in stores, it starts to feel like discrimination. Also, sometimes people on the estate look at you in a manner that says that you have something you should not have. This again is not really discrimination, but it does not feel good.*
- *Discrimination is endemic in Cork, mostly that of the unspoken variety but absolutely widespread. In Northern Ireland it is open and apparent, in the south it is insidious and carefully masked. At the core of discrimination is the fact that the Irish are white, conservative and Roman Catholic. Also class plays an important*

part. Discrimination manifests itself in a snide and off-hand manner, through covert actions. Any overt action is more likely to take the form of an off-hand remark based on the justification of point or a way of life. Should someone not conform, prejudice that is rooted in religious differences will very rapidly rise to the surface. People will coalesce along such lines, rarely fracturing into divergent points of view. It is either the Irish way or no way.

- *Both have been here for some time and although in the beginning they experienced curiosity, people were very polite and on the surface accepting. The Israeli came with an Irish wife and immediately started a business, and attributes his acceptance to the fact that his in-laws are respected people in the community and that he is self-employed. The German felt the same, but also sensed that beyond the surface, lurked deep suspicion. He put it down initially to “small town mentality”, but feels that after three years this should have dissipated, but has not. Both are accepted within community happenings, but the Israeli, feels that his religion sometimes causes barriers and that the deep set Catholicism means that people don’t even enquire about it. Recent events in Israel have not helped him, and although he senses that the rural folk feel comfortable with him, when he gets into the city and engages, there is deep-set anti-Israelism. Both in terms of their work have experienced no problems at all.*
- *“Not really”. Small kids say things to you. Older people are fine. Two or three times people where I work have looked at me funny and in the shopping centre, “that’s normal though”. If you came to my country it would be the same. You get used to it.*
- *There are presumptions that if you are a Muslim then you are a terrorist. Americans automatically assume that you are from the Middle East. There is prejudice against us. I don’t blame kids in the shopping centre. They say things like “go home to your own country”.*
- *We are Travellers and settled people don’t want us.*
- *For various reasons. It depends who I am dealing with. I am a visible minority to strangers and my name causes huge problems. People discriminate against me because of my name.*
- *I look different*
- *Sometimes when people hear my accent, they realise that I am American and treat me differently. Sometimes it is good but other times they treat me as if I am stupid.*

2

**By what individuals or groups do you feel particularly discriminated against? Could you explain with examples please?**

Particular social classes and age groups are mentioned as being more discriminatory than others. In addition, prospective employers, shop staff, settled people and narrow-minded people were also mentioned as people who particularly discriminate against the respondents.

- *Prospective employers are the worst and we are often forced to use a settled persons address when making an application for a job. Poor people are also a problem, for they see us as a very real threat and form vigilante groups to chase us out.*
- *There is a small 20% minority that does the discriminating, but mainly it may be the language barrier. Also, young men don't like us talking to girls in pubs and discos.*
- *Amongst the working class it is most overt, but also firmly embedded within other strata in society. It is embedded in middle class culture. Through Roman Catholic teaching society takes it's cue. There is intolerance towards those who have sinned, like single mothers, and even the disabled are looked upon as if they have been cursed. People with disabilities are discriminated against. There are no community or retail facilities as access is rarely thought about. Disabled are the last priority on peoples' lists and the current mindset cannot be shifted.*
- *The subtle discrimination described filtered through the children and the one partner (the German is single), rather than directly, and most came from elderly people. The latter are seen as set in their ways and the interviewees don't take it too personally. However, the Israeli lived in Australia for a couple of years, and there diversity was an issue that was constantly talked about, discussed and people were keen to understand. People took the piss out of each other's cultural background and it was quite relaxed. The extreme political correctness in Ireland is probably where the problem lies.*
- *Security Guards in shops.*
- *Security Guards and Americans.*
- *The settled people don't want us here. They got "hit men" from Dublin to get us out. The council won't take our bins and won't give us a suitable house. The school won't teach our boys to read and write.*
- *Young people have spat at me. I get verbal abuse.*
- *Taxi drivers, for example, assume that you cannot speak English and have treated me as if I am stupid. I have received some racial comments from them.*

- *There is no stereotype of people who discriminate. They are generally people who are narrow-minded.*
- *By people my own age, who don't know me. By employers and by people I contact through my work.*

5	<b>Are there other people generally in society suffering from discrimination?</b>	Yes    11	No	Don't Know    2	Total Responses <b>13</b>
<b>If yes, who are they?</b>					

'Foreigners' emerged as the dominant group that the respondents felt were also discriminated against in society. Pregnant women, black people and the poor were also mentioned.

- *Black people and refugees and foreigners.*
- *Pregnant women.*
- *Yes Black people and again it is the older generation and the skin heads who are to blame. Here ideas are fixed and will be difficult to shift. The poor also discriminate against foreigners (I think they both meant refugees, although the German in his interview made specific mention of East Europeans)*
- *Not that I know of.*
- *I don't think so. Maybe Chinese girls.*
- *There is discrimination towards white English people (labelled so when they speak). I understand the political context but the discrimination is very evident. Romany Gypsies are also discriminated against.*
- *Nigerians receive a lot of verbal abuse in the streets. Also racist jokes.  
Some Kurdish people  
Travellers*
- *Refugees  
Foreigners, other than Europeans and Americans*
- *Poor people are discriminated against by the way others look down on them.  
Foreign workers in general.*

6	<b>Besides your personal case, what are the main causes for discrimination in society?</b>
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This question precipitated a brief generalised statement from respondents. No common threads were gleaned.

- *Plain racism.*
- *None.*
- *Religious difference*
- *Don't know*
- *Negative stereotypes, lack of awareness and education.*
- *Prejudice*

7	<b>Who discriminates more often or in a more serious way?</b>
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The covert nature of some discrimination in Ireland is referred to once again. Settled people, older people and retail personnel are mentioned also, once again. Discrimination by retail personnel (counter staff *and* security personnel) is a big issue among half of the respondents. From many of the experiences detailed by respondents images of 'stalking' around shopping centres by security guards to shop assistants watching over people while they are buying a bottle of shampoo are lived. Some problems with entertainment venues are mentioned also. This is a very common form of discrimination mentioned by Travellers and the service providers reiterate this. Not only the Travellers experience problems in entertainment venues. Some venues are problematic for a non-Traveller respondent also as she feels that people sometimes use alcohol as an excuse to get away with derogatory and discriminatory comments and actions. Only Traveller respondents mention issues of access.

- *The law – police and courts are the most discriminatory of all. Also the education system which decides who must fall into which stream creates both outsiders and insiders.*
- *Everybody and nobody, it is difficult to say who might be worse, but it is true to say that the ignorant are worse than those who know what is happening. There are fortunately few ignorant – the 20%.*
- *Most people in Ireland today, but having said that, there is no difference between Ireland and most of her neighbours, it's just that here it is covert.*
- *Older people, and the young skin heads in the cities, particularly against foreigners. (Here I must add, that I think in both interviews, the respondents were reflecting their own home societies – as indeed in some other questions as well)*
- *The settled people and the pubs.*

- *Pubs and restaurants are very, very racist and as a matter of course deny travellers entrance inside. Night-life for a traveller is almost non-existent unless you make the space yourself. You have to go and hire out the entire hotel or pub if you want to ensure that as a group travellers can have some fun. Otherwise you have to enter a pub in one's or two's if you want to get in and then you can create a group. Accusations of women and young girls being drunk are none sense for traveller girls do not drink before marriage.*
- *When I am out socialising and there is drink people say things more freely. (racial comments)*
- *At shops women staff are discriminatory and regularly stop you in shops to ask what we want even if we are spending good and lots of money. They instinctively think that we are going to pickpocket or steal.*
- *If you look the part, and as a white middle class male with an Irish accent, it is highly unlikely that I will be discriminated in public. It is in private that barriers are erected. They are invisible and only when you bump up against them do you know they are there. After a while you get to understand how they emerge and how to avoid them. They never however altogether leave you.*
- *Security Guards sometimes follow you.*
- *You get extra attention in shops, especially when you are wearing scarves. I think it is because refugees wear the same scarves. I went into a shop to buy shampoo and the security guard followed me and he was watching me. He stood away but he was still watching me.*
- *Pubs are the biggest problem. If Travellers come from other places and cause trouble, even if we don't know them, they give us a bad name. Even if you just want to go into a place to play darts, without having any drink, you are not allowed.*
- *The service industry in general discriminates the most.*
- *The most serious discrimination has to do with ignorance. It is a hidden discrimination.*
- *Employers and people who think they have everything and others don't because they don't try.*

8	<b>Which forms of discrimination do you perceive as the worst ones in contemporary society?</b>
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Many respondents were reluctant to say that some forms were worse than others and some were thrown by the fact that the question was asked at all. When respondents

were encouraged they came up with the answers below. Two refused to even think of one being worse than another and said that they were all bad.

- *Those against coloured folk and gypsies around the world.*
- *Racism and Sexism.*
- *Those based against a person's religion and physical appearance/capabilities*
- *Racism*
- *No form of discrimination is worse than another, they are all bad*

### **Services**

All the respondents were asked to mention some services that they had dealt with. The mentioning of public, private and voluntary sector services were encouraged if found relevant. Explanatory responses are bulleted.

11	<b>What did you expect of these services in general?</b>
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2 respondents did not expect anything from the services they had dealt with. Predominantly, respondents wanted action when communication was made with service personnel. When speaking about services in general, respondents were eager to engage in conversation about what difficulties they had experienced, what people known to them had experienced, and difficulties which members of their ethnic group experiences in general on a constant basis.

- *Equal treatment rather than being offered either nothing or trash. To be no different from the settled in Ireland.*
- *A good service. I got it every time except with the care services, which are always late with applications.*
- *No problems here.*
- *Somewhere suitable for us to live and for my boy to get a proper education.*
- *Nothing really.*
- *To react to and sort out problems*
- *I didn't see any of my problems as major ones except my difficulties in getting a job but even the small problems took so long so sort out. Everything moves really slowly.*

11	<b>What kinds of difficulties were experienced? – Link to specific service</b>
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As with the last question and the next in fact, many respondents were eager to discuss difficulties and conflicts that all or at least some members of their ethnic group experience in general. Specific incidents of difficulties they experienced themselves may have been too specific for preserving anonymity and were not often detailed. In any case, all the respondents have been affected in some way by all these difficulties.

Difficulties are also mentioned by one respondent with regard to discrimination against Irish people, particularly those who are less well off than the respondent himself. This particular respondent gave an excellent insight into, not only the problems related to discrimination of all peoples in Ireland but of Ireland's infrastructure, police force, education, media issues etc. The list is endless. This man really has the Irish worked out and is willing to remove himself from being the one who is discriminated against for a moment and voice genuine concern for members of the ethnic *majority* in Ireland whom he feels are discriminated against.

There are very few mentions of medical services in the data collected. This is surprising and if allowed larger scope and time frame, I would have pursued. Below is the only place where a respondent mentions the lack of knowledge of the medical profession as actually affecting the way people from ethnic minority backgrounds are treated. The lack of mentioning of the medical profession in this set of data is not evident in the Key witness report.

- *The police once challenged me of driving a car without insurance and they stormed into my home, put me in an arm lock, handcuffed me and marched me off. I had a charge of crashing a car put against me and was not allowed to call anybody nor was I given any information. I was not given (read) rights, forced to sign a document and was not allowed access to a solicitor. It was my first arrest (18 years old at the time) and I was scared of the male officers, there was no women officer around at all. The next day they released me without any excuse or apology and nothing further happened.*
- *The care services issue.*
- *There used to be a Mosque but the neighbours complained and it was closed down.*
- *There is a lack of space to pray.*
- *The council won't give us a house that is big enough for all of us and near the town. They want to send us out of the town. Traveller children are ignored in school.*

- *Doctors and dentists are not aware of culture-specific illnesses. Some women are not comfortable with a male doctors and this is not catered for. The medical profession generally treat you as if you are dumb. Chinese men are often stopped in their cars. There are usually Chinese symbols hanging in the car for good luck and this is how they know he is Chinese. They are singled out.*
- *I don't get called to interviews and it is very obvious to me that this has something to do with my name. I have excellent qualifications and experience. I would get a job so easily in other parts of Europe but here it is difficult. Are they scared of the good qualifications I have or what?*
- *The immigration left me waiting for too long and were not good to deal with. I have got what I have expected out of the schools and the colleges. I work in a school now.*
- *Housing is very bad here in comparison to other countries. Builders are allowed to do what they want. A deposit was put on a house and it fell through. They wouldn't give it back and I had to contact solicitors all over the place. If this happened to an Irish person who didn't have much money it would have been awful for them.*
- *Job agencies did not want to employ me because I had a temporary visa, which is silly because I applied for temping work, which is temporary anyway!*

**11 | What kinds of conflicts were experienced and how were they settled? – Link to specific service**

The above question is I think out of place as it causes a double take on the last question - being seen as repetition. Many saw 'difficulties' and 'conflicts' as being interchangeable and the definition of 'conflict' was unclear.

- *Police conflict described. At school I was forced to take my shoes off as a form of punishment and humiliation.*
- *Once in trying to access housing, I was insulted over my religion and felt that I had to take a stand. An argument ensued, but we left - Walked away – never settled, just ignored.*
- *It is difficult to find somewhere to pray. I used to pray at home when the Mosque closed but now I am a good bit away from the house during the day – I just pray in a classroom and the other students know not to disturb us.*
- *There is supposed to be a room for prayer designated if they are enough Muslims, and there are. There wasn't conflict as such but I think there should be a room.*

- *In school, they just keep the Traveller kids drawing all day. They are not even given books. Some of the teachers don't even listen to me - Not settled. There is no point sending the boy to school now because he doesn't want to go after seeing how the other boys were treated. The girl's schools is great.*
- *The police don't take racial threats seriously. My family have had death threats and the police ignored them.*
- *The police here have no jurisdiction over anything. I don't feel that I have rights as a foreign citizen. If you were to come to my country you would be treated even better than nationals. The police are not respected here. My passport was kept for three weeks and you always have to go to Dublin to get your visas sorted out. I am often stopped in my car. I have to prove to them that I own the car every time. They think I have stolen it.  
The way the Guards speak here is discrimination. They do not observe common courtesy. -  
Not settled. The police will keep stopping me because I have a foreign registered car.*
- *A landlord told me to leave the house I was in and only gave me a weekend to find somewhere else. I know I didn't sign a contract or anything but that was too short notice and there was no reason for throwing me out anyway. She just didn't want me there because I was foreign. I refused to leave because I had nowhere to go. Anytime I got someone to ring her on my behalf she hung up the phone - Somebody threatened the landlord who wanted to throw me out with legal action and she let me stay for a month.*

**12 | What obstacles are there in the fruition to these services?**

Lack of cultural awareness, education and information is mentioned as well as prejudice in general. Questioning had to be brief here in order to keep the respondents interest and concentration for the next question

- *Understanding of Travellers and seeing them as ordinary people who are no different from everybody else, except that we have some cultural trends that are mainline. Basically, people need to be made aware of what their treatment of Travellers means to the Travellers and how they hurt us.*
- *I think the system is OK, but it needs better information systems. It is the lack of ready information that makes life difficult for refugees in the very beginning. It would be good if there were an information booklet or sheet that tells us what we must do when we arrive. The reception committee has been very good and hospitable, but you feel bad always asking questions.*
- *Education for the staff in all these places.*

- *Education and understanding the needs of other cultures.*
- *Prejudice.*

14	<b>Explain your response to the improvement of services</b>
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The responses are divided. It is clear that the responses are generated depending on people's present situations and needs. Some mention general cultural awareness and learning within services as the improvement needed, while others see improvements in the service(s) as being a few practical/material things that need to be done straight away. These needs I would imagine change in the diachronic dimension.

- *I just want to have choices in life, I want to be able to have an option and I want to be treated equally.*
- *Just make information better available, then people will know their rights and expectations.*
- *A Mosque should be built.*
- *Books should be given to Traveller children and they shouldn't be left in a corner just drawing all day.  
A house two miles outside the town is too far for the children. The council needs to take this into account. We need a place with five bedrooms to fit us all. I have nine children.  
The council should collect our bins. We can't be expected to go all the way to Moylare (pseudonym) to get rid of our rubbish. We need hot water.*
- *It would be possible to improve all the services. There needs to be intercultural learning so people know how to speak to you.  
Needs to be an understanding of different cultures and gender specificity.  
Services have to challenge themselves and accept that Ireland is not a mono-cultural society.*
- *There should be education for all staff on multi-cultural issues. Integration and awareness needs to be promoted.*
- *The police have debilitated thinking. Many are "old blood" and didn't even know where my country was on one occasion when I was stopped.  
We have no representation in the Student Union and I have never seen the Student Union president at any one of our functions. If something is organised by the International Students Office, there is alcohol there and basically a big "piss up". Why not pray?*
- *There should be clear rules about renting and working in Ireland. Foreigners should be made aware of them when they get here. It is very hard to get*

information from anybody only your friends and the people you meet. Receiving professional information is time-consuming, sometimes expensive because you have to travel and it is generally a very frustrating process.

**DICSRIMINATION ACTIONS**

15	Do you feel protected against discrimination?	Yes 1	No 12	Don't Know	Total Responses 13
	If not, why?				

It was documented that in theory the laws, the police force and the Equality Authority were there to protect. However, this was not the case in practice due to a lack of access to resources, legal representations and general information alongside the failure of the police force to act on complaints. Most knew they were there but had no confidence in using them or in their ability to succeed.

- *Proviso – the law protects us, but to access the law we need money and not all Travellers can afford to pay these monies to access the law.*
  - *In Ireland, the concept of “fair play” was seen as being unique and one in which people abided to, so regardless who you are, if you pay your dues, then you are in, even if not fully in, but in nevertheless (You work that one out)*
  - *No. There are some laws but nobody has told us about them. Anyway, we can't pay for the solicitor. The Guards are supposed to protect you from this but one night a window got broken in one of the pubs and they came knocking here for my husband and he was in bed asleep. What does that tell you?*
  - *If someone wants to do something to me, I don't think that there could be anything that would protect me from that person.*
  - *I am vulnerable because I am small and a woman but I can defend myself physically. There is a law but it isn't put into practice. If you expose yourself, you, or your group could be targeted. There is nothing there to encourage you to do that.  
Men use a crowded place and alcohol as an excuse to touch you and give you verbal abuse. I feel more vulnerable when out socialising in certain places than I would on my own walking home. There is no protection in these places.*
  - *The Equality Authority is theoretically fine but not on a practical level.*
  - *The Guards do not take our complaints seriously. If I have taken the courtesy to call the Guards to report something they should take it on. I would not make complaints to the Guards that is why I don't feel protected.*
- T *The University is more worried about the American students.*

- *My friends would stand up for me and their parents would do what they could if I*

16	<b>Do you think you can do something to fight discrimination against you?</b>	Yes	8	No	4	Don't Know	1	Total Responses	13
	<b>Explain your response?</b>								

A willingness to get involved with various groups who do anti-discrimination work and a willingness to individually be more conscious of discrimination issues was evident from the responses. The need for support however in doing this was sometimes evident.

- *By beating the system and trying to better understand the settled people and by standing up for my rights. Also by learning what battles need to be fought and what must be ignored and walked away from.*
- *I am new here and don't want to be getting involved in something that may cause problems to my application.*
- *Advocacy and the creation of awareness about discrimination issues.*
- *If you are willing to get involved, then you earn respect and people will talk to you. The Israeli started a crafts fair and the German relates his own experiences in East Germany and how these should never be repeated again*
- *I don't think so.*
- *I am involved in the Muslim society and that is exposing our culture.*
- *We don't know anybody else here. (Traveller response in relation to her own geographical area)*
- *By working with voluntary groups who do anti-discrimination work.*
- *I can only be myself and treat everybody fairly which I hope I do and hope they do to me.*

17	<b>Are you presently doing something to fight discrimination?</b>	Yes	2	No	11	Don't Know		Total Responses	13
	<b>If not, why?</b>								

One is educating her self and another is involved in educating in schools. Another has basically given up hope.

- *I am educating myself as best that I can so that I can be better prepared to deal with the challenges of the future.*
- *Explained already.*
- *Craft fair and engaging as many people as possible and discussing diversity.*
- *Same as the last answer.*
- *What can we do? We have been to visit the counsellors and everything. We write letters.*
- *I visit schools. I tell my story and talk about racism*

18	<b>Are there other people, groups, institutions (etc) that can do something to fight discrimination?</b>	Yes	8	No	1	Don't Know	4	Total Responses	13
	<b>If yes, what?</b>								

Universities and the Government are criticised for having the potential to do something but of not doing it. Organisations and institutions could do more through education. NASC and Amnesty International are mentioned as Non-Governmental organisations that can actively fight against discrimination.

- *Teachers would be the best start for all children pass through their hands and they could all learn what discrimination means and what can be done to fight it in a positive manner. The police could do with sensitivity training and an understanding that all people in Ireland are equal and that some are not more or less equal than others.*
- *The Irish are very good at this. They are much better than most African countries.*
- *Individuals yes, but not organisations. The German also felt that the Irish government had set-up some 'consumer' agencies to deal with discrimination.*
- *There are banners in clinics against war and racism put up by political organisations, there should be more so as to educate.*
- *The Muslim society in college exposes our culture and our religion with exhibitions.*
- *Immigrant support groups like NASC are doing things. Amnesty International run good anti-racism campaigns.*  
*It must be said that different groups have different needs. Organisations need to get in touch with people who do not want to come into these organisations. One should ask the questions; why aren't people using this particular service? Why isn't it working? If these questions are asked they can do a more effective job in*

*fighting discrimination. Members of minority groups should be employed in all these organisations.*

- *Amnesty International, NASC, NGO'S and individuals are doing things to fight discrimination. Guards, political organisations, trade unions, health boards and religious orders could do more.*
- *Every single year we hear about European campaigns against racism, every single year. Nothing is done. Nobody bothers to take on what we say. There is a huge billboard about racism in Europe. I don't want to know about Europe, I want to know about here. The University should have books about all countries in the library and they don't. They should do what the American universities do.*
- *The universities could do a lot if they wanted to.*
- *People should be informed of the issues involved in poverty etc. People do not know how to react to the unknown. The Government should be providing information for Irish people and those Irish people and others who are discriminated against.*

19	Do you think that being different from others automatically means being discriminated?	Yes 8	No 1	Depend s 2	Don't Know 2	Total Responses 13
	If yes, why?					

Some respondents related back to their own situations which was not good as it reinforced the idea that they are different and peripheral in Irish society whether they want to be or not. Most took on the hypothetical nature of the question and gave their reasons for saying yes.

- *Being different makes you more popular and people like to be popular. Being different in terms of being a Traveller or a black, does not make you popular.*
- *Both felt that being different was a good thing and it is the only way that society can experience change for the better. Without the input of those who are not mainstream, communities stagnate and die.*
- *If a Traveller is barred from a pub, all Travellers are barred. If someone from the settled community are barred, they don't bar all of them!*
- *This is particularly true in Western society, which is still quite homogeneous.*

- *Discrimination if you are different happens easily, even if you are Irish. If there were no asylum-seekers or Travellers there would still be someone to point the finger at. This is human behaviour and attitude.*
- *Discrimination comes with the dealings you have with people.*
- *If you are anyway different some people are going to pick up on that no matter what.*

19	<b>Do you think that differences among people are positive, negative or it varies depending on the kind of difference?</b>	Positive 6	Negative 2	Depends 2	Don't Know 3	Total Responses 13
	<b>Why?</b>					

Six respondents thought difference was positive and an asset to Irish society. Two documented that it was positive if . . . . .

It was clear by some respondent's reaction to the question that they were very reluctant to even mention any negative aspects there might be to difference as this might reflect their own 'difference' (if it is seen as such by them) in society. The question was unfair as it had an underlying negative tone.

- *Everybody is entitled to do what they wish – that is what freedom is.*
- *Differences bring cultural diversity to society and that is good. It is important that society is made up of different people and that they blend in and identify with the same society. It is wrong when people who are different don't adopt the local way of doing things.*
- *Positive if differences can be harnessed to develop society better. Positive because through differences society strengthens and because it becomes more diverse and then less intolerant.*
- *It depends. It is good for the Irish to be exposed to difference. They don't travel much. If they did, they would know how to deal with it. Children hang around in groups near where I live. It shows a real difference in social class, which is not good.*
- *Back home there are a lot of races. We are taught to respect each other and people's ways of life. Ireland is a fairly homogenous society. Some people cannot afford to go abroad. In the hospitals there are doctors from different countries. It is good to introduce something new.*
- *Don't know.*

- *Differences lend more diverse experiences into society. This makes society more interesting and positive.  
Irish citizens shouldn't have to explain; "I'm Irish but. . . . ."*
- *Difference is positive. I love difference. We should accept our differences as a good thing.*
- *Difference is positive if people are inquisitive to find out.*
- *It is definitely positive. The world would be a very boring place if there wasn't difference but people have to be informed about these differences and learn to accept them.*

19	<b>Are there differences that are acceptable and differences that aren't?</b>	Acceptable 2	Unacceptable 4	Depends 4	Don't Know 3	Total Responses 13
	<b>If yes, which ones are acceptable and which ones are unacceptable?</b>					

This question, like the last, had a negative under-tone (that was present no matter what way it was asked by the researcher) and was not liked by some of the respondents while others used it to identify groups who they think are discriminatory themselves.

- *Lots is acceptable and to be encouraged, but racism should be unacceptable.*
- *Yes, if the lead to a diverse and culturally mixed society.*
- *These days everything is very open and people get by, it is difficult to say what is acceptable or not. Ten years ago things were different but today people accept change.*
- *Yes, differences that are positive are acceptable, but those that are negative like nazism and communism are not, for they exist only to make the lives of others miserable.*

19	<b>How should society deal with differences?</b>
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Education and attitude changes were the dominant themes but the responses to this question generally need no commentary.

- *Education, awareness and fair play.*
- *Learn from each other.*
- *By catering for these differences and actively supporting them.*

- *By being more accepting and by educating themselves, those who are progressive should educate those who are conservative and it should not be left to the state and the foreigners to do the educating.*
- *There needs to be an exchange of ideas. The University, for example, has an International dinner and fashion shows.*
- *Education. Children need to be taught from the beginning that there is not just one entity in the country. If you are a minority group, you get negative vibes from the way people look at you. Campaigns cannot reach out to everyone. In medical situations, some people cannot speak English. There is a big communication barrier. Translators should be available. Some patients are neglected for a while because they cannot speak English.*
- *Society has to expect that no society is stagnant and not to see different cultures as a threat or an invasion. There hasn't been an invasion since the Vikings! (9<sup>th</sup>*
- *There has to be a change of attitude within people. There also has to be a change from within politics, institutions and families. This does not come automatically. We have to open up the issue into debate. We have to allow people to integrate. The President of Ireland visited my county and she was treated brilliantly and there was huge coverage in the newspapers but there wasn't in Ireland. I wouldn't say that there is "a hatred", but an ignorance. It is a fear of the unknown. Irish society is not co-ordinated. People are not willing to try different food. They don't want change. There has to be education, especially because Irish people do not travel as much as others. If they do they go a place where there are Irish people. In my 7 years here I have never seen anything about my country. If there was I think it would fail, as there would be no acceptance for it. Racism here is well hidden and well ingrained.*
- *Society should deal with difference in an opportunistic way. It needs to be helped along.*

### FOCUS GROUP CORK TRAVELLER WOMEN'S NETWORK

The group of women convened for this focus group belong to an organised grouping which they themselves set-up to deal with daily problems that that as Traveller women they face. As such, it has to be noted that they have previously articulated many of the issues raised and were able to easily engage with the researchers. Such a situation may not necessarily have emerged should this focus group have been conducted amongst a disparate group of Traveller women.

The focus group included seven respondents, was closed and the conducted on October 10<sup>th</sup> 2001. The responses are noted as recorded both by tape and two separate sets of scribed notes. Quotations from conversations conducted prior and post the focus group with the various participants, if relevant have been incorporated as part of the text.

### RESPONDENT PROFILE

#	Name Given	Age	Gender	How would you describe your ethnicity?
1	Heather	30	Female	Traveller
2	Ingrid	19		
3	Theresa	18		
4	Holly	37		
5	Esther	23		
6	Ruanne	30		
7	Ena	38		

**Q In your daily life, do you as Travellers feel discriminated against?**

Yes, people are not allowed into bars.  
Everyone's money is the same.

**Q How do they know that you are Travellers?**

Because you are in a crowd and all from Cork. Some Travellers wear big earrings and jewellery and loads of rings on their fingers.  
All Travellers aren't the same.

**Q What about the men?**

Men also in a crowd and look different. A crowd of Travellers automatically means trouble to people. When there is trouble, *all* Travellers are stopped. Yes sometimes in the past there have been fights and problems, but it can't be said that it is the same for all the travellers. A pub on the Commons Road won't serve Travellers at all and have said it publicly on the radio.

**Q Are there other places?**

Not in restaurants or hairdressers. People stop travellers in shops. The security guards follow groups of young people as well. I have seen them following groups. In England it

is not so bad and when you go away and then return you see it much more. Confrontation with security and management is commonplace. When shopping the Traveller women don't look any different to anybody else. Security guards are not employed just to follow travellers, but travellers get followed much for often.

Traveller kids used to get segregated at schools. They had special classes separate from everybody else and they were also not allowed to mix with the other kids in the yard during breaks. Also, Traveller children were mixed across different age categories and thus never really got the same level of education as the rest. Sometimes, when there were not enough travellers for a special class, the children were made to sit in one corner at the back of the room.

Me and my two sisters were put into mixed groups. We ended up always sitting at the back of the room.

**Q What about the children in school now?**

One teacher told me that she couldn't teach my daughter. No reason was given apart from the fact that she was a Traveller. She then took her child to another school and the child is now in sixth grade. Largely however, although the law has changed and children can go to school unimpeded now, it is felt that the same effort is not put into teaching as that put to the settler children. The traveller kids go to school and do nothing. They come out of school illiterate. I have two sons, the 19 year old can't read and write.

Sorry for going back to school but their uniforms used to be taken off them and they used to be washed and deloused. Some Travellers though were guilty of reinforcing this position, for they would send their kids to school to get uniforms and a good cleaning. There is a special Community health nurse, Community Welfare Officer and Priest for Travellers. If the Traveller men knew that women were getting paid, they would let the women out.

As parents, they would sometimes get some of us that had completed a few years of education to teach our kids, so that the teachers would have more time for other activities. It was never put like that, rather that we were getting involved in our children's education, but the same principals did not apply to the other parents. My two sons are 17 and 19 years old, and they went to school for some years, but as we speak today neither can read nor write. The mother has to read and write for them. This means that vocational studies are limited, and although there are adult literacy courses it is impossible to persuade Traveller men to attend. As women we try hard, but whatever we do we just can't get them in. One of the women's husbands went through to secondary (prep) school, and cannot read or write. He was simply left in class and passed through at the end of each year, but no attempt was made to teach him so that he could learn anything.

**Q Have you ever been discriminated against in a hospital or Registry office?**

My brother died a couple of months ago and there were a lot of people in the hospital. When a Traveller dies there are a lot of people around. The hospital said that only two

of the family could be in the room. This breaks with our tradition and this is a tradition we have had for thousands of years, and the hospital was completely inflexible to our plight. A couple of years ago, in maternity wards at hospitals Travellers had to be in a separate room. That has changed now.

I was married seven years ago and I wanted to get married to my boyfriend in Ballyphehane. The local priest refused to marry us and said that we had to be married by the Traveller priest. We really did not want to do that, for at the time we were in Ballyphehane and wanted to get married locally by the local priest. It took a lot of persuasion and after a while he relented and married us. But, he got had the final say for on my marriage licence it says "A.N. Other, unemployed Traveller". I objected to that, but they would not and still will not change the marriage licence. To me this is an insult. We sent a letter to the Government and we haven't got a response yet. They say that any changes have to come from the original priest, and he has moved on, so I am stuck with that.

The question that begs asking, is that if I were Chinese or Black, would they have put unemployed Chinese person or unemployed Black person? In England Travellers are treated as badly. For the future I just want my kids known as "children", not as Traveller children. We are extremely proud of being Travellers and will not change that, but we don't want our children to go through what we did – they should just be children – no more or no less.

**Q What about the church?**

Sometimes it discriminates. There is a special priest for Travellers. "He's lovely though".

**Q Are there other groups in society that are discriminated against?**

Refugees are discriminated against and here sadly not only by the settlers, but also by Travellers themselves. This is a sad state of affairs, but Travellers are Irish and have been here for hundreds of years – all the time, and got nothing from the government. Yet the refugees come to Ireland and get houses and the Government give them this and the Government give them that.

Refugees are seen in the streets beginning and although some are removed the guard act differently towards them as opposed to the way they act with travellers. When Travellers are caught begging, they are taken to court, the Refugees are not. It must be added that not all Travellers feel like that, especially amongst women, for the refugees also have problems and their life is not an easy one. It's just that that they (the Government) didn't sort out their old problems before creating another one. We must note that there are no fights between Travellers and refugees, just that we don't mix. But then we don't mix much with some Irish people as well.

**Q What about getting a job?**

One of the young Traveller women got a job in a restaurant, but was immediately warned by her placement officer not say anything and to be very careful about what she said about herself. When I was employed I did not tell them my background and they didn't know I was a Traveller. Five weeks later I told one of the girls the area I was from.

I did not tell her that I was a Traveller, just where I was from, but this was a known Traveller area. The boss was odd with me the next day. They can't fire you because you are a Traveller, but their attitude changes and it is then impossible to work properly. My life was made difficult after that. I eventually just left and went back to my Placement Officer to look for something else.

**Q Where would you tell someone that you were a Traveller?**

I would never openly tell anyone I'm a Traveller. It is none of their business. We're Travellers and we're proud of it. I have a 9 year old in school and she hides from being a Traveller. She is ashamed to tell her friends that she is traveller and would run a mile if anybody found out. But my 6 year old tells everyone that she is a Traveller. One day a black girl called Amanda a 'knacker' The next day her sister wanted to know who had called her a knacker and she said to the girl: "Yeah, I'm a knacker, what about it". Kids in England say they are Travellers all the time. My 5 year old says "I'm a Traveller" and she doesn't know what it means.

The problem is that society is taking culture away from Travellers. Travellers are being pushed into situations that in they end they will either not tolerate it or others won't be tolerant anymore. One of the big give ways is our accent. If someone asks me about my accent I say that I'm from Meath. It is the Government and society just pushing and pushing and eventually Travellers won't be Travellers anymore.

**Q Is there interaction between Travellers and Gypsies and Romanies?**

There is also of interaction with Gypsies in England, but in Ireland there is a clear distinction between Travellers and Gypsies. In Ireland the Travellers are not Gypsies. Feel much more settled. Travellers have started to settle more and more, whilst gypsies continue to roam with no fixed abode. You could never say that Travellers are Gypsies. None of the women had ever spoken to any of the Romanies in Cork, but some of the husband has dealings with them. They trade in cars. Travellers have greater links with the Chinese and Blacks than with Romanies.

**Q Imagine a temperature chart, with settled people at one end and 'Gypsies at the other end. Where would you be?**

None of them - in the middle. Settled people are called 'buffers'. A buffer is someone you clean the floor with. No, some of the ladies here are married to settled peopled and the relationship between settlers and Travellers is an extremely good one. It is only those in authority that cause the problems. With settlers we have great relations with some. By and large, we would be nearer the settled.

**Q Do you feel protected against discrimination by law?**

No laws. There are no laws to protect the Travellers. There are supposed to be laws, but nobody takes any notice of them. Anyway, even if they did notice them, they would always find their way round them. We have forms and we are supposed to use them in pubs etc. but it never works. There is an Anti-Discrimination Law and there are forms, some of the lads have used them. There are specially trained solicitors who the government and they are supplied for free. If you win the case in court you can get and you get £5000 and if you loose it does not cost you money. Travellers don't abuse this

because it is important to have this protection. Anyway, some Travellers are illiterate and don't even understand the system.

**Q Would you see the situation with you late brother in hospital as discrimination or just part of your life?**

Part of my life.

**Q What would force you to take up the Anti-Discrimination Stance?**

I have a daughter in third year and she's in a bakery two days a week. "I wanted her to leave school for the money". There is an organisation there to help Traveller kids to go to secondary school. But this organisation is only giving it to one Traveller boy in the whole of Cork. There are 20 odd Traveller kids going to secondary school in the whole of Cork. And Cork is big in terms of Travellers. In my extended family, there are 104 cousins and 20 odd aunts and uncles, all living in the same area.

**Q Do they have the potential to go to school? How many say 12-18 year olds are going to school?**

About 10-15 could go to secondary school and about only 5 go to school. Discrimination has a lot to do with this, primarily because they have not had a good primary education. There are about 50-60 who could go to primary school. The overwhelming majority go to school. This is the first generation where change is taking place. It's a bit better and a lot of the boys have moved into business. Mainly horse dealing and scrap trading. Some also get married very young.

**Q Are you actively doing something to fight discrimination?**

We have A to do that. Traveller training centres are very good. They are creating awareness. Young girls from the settled community are now wearing the long earrings. I saw a girl in the shopping centre and I said to my daughter that she was a Traveller. She said she wasn't. She had about six chains around her neck. By talking and sharing our culture, we are giving something to the settled children as well as taking from them.

**Q Who outside your own community is doing something to fight discrimination?**

Some settled people are doing something. The SVP (St. Vincent de Paul) give childcare to the women here. They are big into education that is a big change from a couple of years ago when they would have gone about handing out IEP10 docketts to Travellers. Those times are gone and there are now changes. They give us the room here. I left Blackpool Training Centre and went to Sunbeam. My placement officer was Spanish and had had problems getting a job in Ireland. She was very nice and kept asking us if we were okay. At first it was hard to interact with the settled people, now its fine.

**Q If I mention some people could you tell me if you consider then as positive, negative or neutral.**

Service	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Doctors	✓	✓	
Government		✓	
Teachers		✓	✓
Politicians		✓	✓
Police			✓

Counsellor Flannery said that Traveller men were like ‘pedigree dogs sunning themselves under trees’. He said that ‘all Travellers should be tagged like cattle so that every time they left a town you would know where they were’. This happened a couple of years ago. We must laugh at that.

**Q Is there discrimination within the Traveller community?**

Traveller women can’t have male friends. Men discriminate against women. Can’t talk to a strange man in a public place. Cannot take up an offer of a lift. Traveller men don’t like their women to have independence. After marriage they try to control their women. If a woman speaks to strange man, then she is called dirty or a ‘slapper’.

When you are a Traveller women and have a child people say to you “when are you going to stop working”. When she is married it is like that. It is changing though and today you would notice it at the colleges, where you will find many Traveller women. More women are coming out now. It took many of us years to come out and do it. The new problem now is with refugees, for they starting where we were many years ago. You have to feel sorry for them. Most feed the men first. I know this woman who heats the milk for the corn flakes in the morning, “all she has to do now is to spoon-feed him”. Traveller men are waited on my their mothers.

**Q Is there anything else you would like to share with us?**

We need to mix with settled people, our culture is going anyway. I was 16years old when I got married. It was grand in that day but its different now. There is a 16-year-old girl that has to go to England to get married. Trailers are gone.

**FOCUS GROUP OF ASYLUM SEEKERS IN A MODEL VILLAGE COUNTY CORK**

Given the precarious nature of this group of respondent’s existence in Ireland, namely asylum seekers hoping to be granted a right to live, it proved extremely difficult to get them to critically assess the situation in Ireland. Nevertheless, there was a degree of openness and some issue were explored, but an overall assessment of must be that this was not a successful focus group. Having said that, it should also be remembered, that all the respondents in this group originate from countries that have recently and indeed, currently experience immense turmoil, and the sort of discrimination that cannot be imagined by people in Ireland. Therefore, trying to reconcile opinions on discrimination in Cork, given the setting from which the respondent’ have just come from may verge slightly on the ludicrous and unreal. The author has during the past decade worked in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has first hand witness to ethnic cleansing and killings on the grounds of simply doing something different. Comparing this to racial attitudes in their host society, no matter how abhorrent they may me, is very difficult.

The focus group was conducted in a small town outside Cork and was open, which meant that asylum seekers other than those recorded entered and left the group at will, sometimes contributing and on other occasions simply listening. We do not believe this had an adverse attitude, with the exception of the tail end of the focus group, when some gender issues may have been further explored, should women have been part of the group. Their omission was not deliberate, for the group did constitute themselves and the researchers did not feel that they had a right to impose upon the nature of the constitution of the group. An attempt to convene a group of female asylum seekers proved fruitless.

The group comprised of six West and Central African asylum seekers and was conducted on October 10<sup>th</sup> 2001.

**RESPONDENT PROFILE**

#	Name Given	Age	Gender	Place of Origin	How would you describe your ethnicity?
1	Christophe	35	M	Congo	African
2	Francois	29	M		
3	Humphrey	42	M	Nigeria	
4	Jacob	38	M		
5	Kabelo	26	M	Congo	
6	William	40	M	Nigeria	

**1. Do you feel because you are firstly foreigners and secondly black that you are discriminated in your daily life?**

Generally we are not. The little we can see is that we the people we have met here in Model Village are co-operating. There has been no hostility towards us. Actually Within the short-term that we have been here the people have been very accommodation

indeed. There is one thing however, but we cannot really see it as discriminating, but many people are surprised to see a black person and to see the same person regularly, and they sometimes stare. This is more so amongst the elderly and the young, but that cannot be said to be discrimination. Like, people like, wanting to talk to you and I find it OK. I am a human being like you and if we can treat each other like human beings then we shall be OK. Language is sometimes a problem and the understanding between people. We all speak English here but the Irish speak it different to the African man, and for some of us English is a second or third or fourth language. Some of us like coming from Francophone Africa and we speak French and we have many local languages, so the tongues sound different. The people are friendly like.

**2. Do you ever feel discriminated when in shops or such places?**

Sometimes though when we go into shops people look scared and they don't know how we are going to act. You can see it in half their minds and maybe they think that we will steal and act that way, but nobody has ever had any problems. But we must remember that a stranger will always be a stranger until he stops being a stranger. We can say that a country cannot always be 100% good. There will be some bad things as well. In our countries there is a lot of discrimination, so here it is not too bad. Especially now things are OK. The Irish people are OK, they are fine.

**3. Are you being polite with me or telling the truth, remember I too am a foreigner and I too come from Africa?**

Look, there are some problems, but we think that it is a language barrier. Some of us cannot speak good English and this sometimes causes small problems because people cannot understand each other. This causes some of us black people to be cheated because we cannot fully blend in. We then meet with each other and discuss issues to try and help each other out and to try and understand what was said by different people that we come across and to sort out misunderstandings. It is better that way that we deal with things between ourselves, for we are the strangers. But the Irish people are OK.

**4. Do you perhaps have friends and relatives in other countries in Europe and do you know about their lives with regards to discrimination?**

Yes two of us have, in France and England. In France there are no problems with language for French is the same wherever you go and the French people understand us better because they have a history with black people. In England it is also the same, people understand us, but in both countries there are more problems than we have here in Ireland. The problems in England are with other people and in France with the government.

**5. How many of you have children here at school and what are the interactions between them and others and also between yourselves and others concerned to your children's education?**

Some of us have children at schools and the schools and the teachers are very good and their friends are very good. We have good relationships and our children play and learn like children anywhere. There are no problems at all and we are very happy with things as they are. Even at schools the children learn the language very quickly and they become part of the school.

**6. How would you describe your relationship with various government agencies?**

Generally there are no problems and although we cannot say that this is a problem, there are delays experienced with child benefit payments. There have been long delays and we do not know the reason is. Maybe it is because we are asylum seekers, but it best not to think like that and think that maybe it is just a delay. Except that we do not see delays in other things from the government, this is the only one. But it is important for we need this to be waiting for children's money for roughly three months now is very long and we should not have to wait for so long. But in my heart I know that it will be OK and I am managing to look after my children. About six weeks ago I went back and asked what was happening and they said it is OK. I have been calling through the phone since then, but nobody wants to respond to me.

**7. Has anybody ever had to access medical help at all?**

We all have a medical card and there is no problem and also no problems with doctors. Some of us waited a long time, but no problems. All of us had to have check-ups when we came and everything is fine.

**8. With which of these services (Healthcare services, Care services, Registry services, Housing, School, Vocational, training, Work, Culture and leisure, Worship-religion) do you deal with / people you represent deal with?**

We have had no problem with any of these except that we cannot work. If I could work, I would do so with my hands for I am a carpenter by trade. If I could work, I would do so with technical things, for that is what I did before I came here. I would be a businessman, but want to study a little more so that I can understand the system better. I have done business administration before and want to carry one. I would like to learn to be a truck driver. I want to be a decorator.

**9. What about women and work, I see one of the ladies just return from what looks like work?**

No she was just shopping, they too are not allowed to work. My wife can do something, but it is different for women. It is important that one person in the family works and earn money to live and one person to help with the house. I have no problem letting my wife work.

**10. Do you think that these services are accessible to you / the people you represent?**

Seemingly they are, with only child benefits being a problem.

**12. Do you think it would be possible to improve these services?**

They are very good already and we are very happy.

**13. Could you talk to me about housing?**

No problems here at all now. We all have got accommodation. Looking for the house was a problem though. We were new when we came and they just gave us a piece of

paper and told to call and look for the house. This was very difficult, for you come to a new country and you don't know what to do. One of us spent most of his allowance on phone calls. We had to ask a lot of questions to lots of people. Some of us that were lucky and were helped by Irish people who made it easy for us to find a house. There is an instance here in Model Village of a pregnant woman who is single and she cannot find a house whatever she does. That is discrimination, for the moment they hear her voice, which is like a foreigner, they say that the accommodation is not available, but the next day you still see it in the newspapers, sometimes even the next week it is in the newspapers.

This is not discrimination because we are black, but maybe because we are foreigners, because some of our friends from Eastern Europe have had the same problems as well. We have to depend on others if we want something to happen quickly. But for Black single parents it is a kind of problem. Landlords don't want women and children, for without husband's there us a problem for there is no man to do anything around the house. For a landlord is easier to rent the house to a family for the house will then be fixed if there is a problem. The problem is, that how, there are women with kids, in one case a woman with four kids is living in a single room, and this is not healthy.

**14. In this new society, who are the people that are the most helpful and who are not?**

The government agencies and the volunteers, but generally most the Irish people are very friendly.

**15. Who else do you think is also discrimination against in our society?**

Only those who cannot speak English properly or those whose English cannot be understood. There is no discrimination against Blacks and against asylum seekers and foreigners.

**16. Is there discrimination in Nigeria?**

Oh yes, plenty! If you are from the north or the south in the south or the north, then you are badly discriminated against, just like that. Also when we see whites in Nigeria, because of there colour, some black men will help them out, but there are some black men that will try and cheat them, because they think that will have money. Some blacks feel that whites are superior, but they have not feed themselves yet. In Ireland maybe 20% of the people discriminate, in Nigeria it will be 50% or even 60%. There are no tribal differences here. Here that this does not happen.

**18. Who are these 20% that discriminate in Ireland?**

Nobody really, but maybe sometimes landlords with single parents (women).

**19. Do you think that perhaps there is discrimination against people other than yourselves in Ireland? (Probe for religious or class)**

No, this looks like a good society and all the people are God fearing and act Christian. There are some poor people, but these are very few and most have a place to go to. There is not the same kind of discrimination like back in Africa.

- 20. For the very last time, I am going to ask you whether you have been in any circumstances that made you feel different in an inferior way? That is since you came to Ireland?**

No, only when people don't understand what we say and we cannot understand what they say, but you learn to listen and soon that is not a problem. No we are treated very well here.

- 21. Does anybody feel that there is discrimination amongst and between various groups of asylum seekers – and here I am also referring to our friends from Eastern Europe as well?**

No, we are all one here and are all friendly.

- 22. Do any of you feel that because they are white refugees, they may get more privileges than you from a white Irish society?**

No, there is no evidence of this, and anyway, we speak English better than they do and we don't get more than them. It is fair to say that the Irish people do not discriminate against asylum seekers.

- 23. Which forms of discrimination do you perceive as the worst ones in our society?**

Racism and religious discrimination are the worst. Many people die of religious fighting in Africa.

- 24. Let us assume that you had a problem regarding discrimination, maybe that single parent woman, is there any place you can go to?**

NASC, where you come from and also the welcoming committee here in Model Village. These people have been very helpful and they would be able to solve the problem.

- 25. How come that lady has not sought help yet?**

Maybe there is another problem that we do not know about.

- 26. Does anybody here have any problems with living in Ireland?**

Yes, we just want to work, If you can say that in your study it would be good and it would help us if we could do something. There is a saying about idle hands that get up to no good. It happens in other places amongst our people. Here the village is small, but in Dublin it happens amongst asylum seekers. But if they were allowed to work it would be different because we can all work. We came here so we can have normal lives and that means we must work. Even if we could work for some hours a week, maybe helping people it would be good.

- 27. Do you feel emasculated being unable to work, in other words does it make you feel that your manhood has been taken away?**

No, we are still men, but it feels bad sometimes to just be sitting and waiting. Some of us have been here for more than a year and we are waiting. It would be much better for everybody if we could work and do something with our lives. We want to start building

our lives and to just sit here waiting. I don't mind doing anything for I need to keep my body strong. They are trying, but we need to try more.

**28. Could you tell me why you chose to come to Ireland?**

It is a God fearing country and it is religious and the people are good, this is a place where you can make a good future for you family and good for the children. It is not like where we come from. Why did you come to Ireland?