

Equality Research Branch,
Equality and Social Need Division

Room A 5.02, Castle Buildings

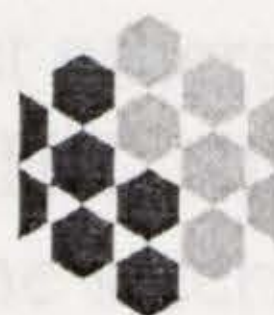
Stormont

BELFAST

BT4 3SR

Tel: 02890-523284, Fax: 02890-528273

stephen.donnelly@ofmdfmni.gov.uk



Office of the

**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**

www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

FROM: Stephen Donnelly (Dr)
Equality Research Branch

cc: see below

DATE: 25 May, 2004

John Spellar (B&L)

Issue:	Publication of Migrant Workers Report by the Institute for Conflict Research
Timing:	Routine – publication not due until 17 June.
Presentational	The publication may receive media attention given the
Issues:	prominence of the immigration issue.
Recommendation:	That Minister notes the publication of the report on 17 June.

Background

In early 2003, The Institute for Conflict Research submitted a research proposal to OFMDFM. The main aim was to develop an information source which would be a compilation of existing limited knowledge of migrant workers in terms of their number, location, type of employment, form of recruitment and experience of living in Northern Ireland.

The project involved a review of government statistical data, a survey of 176 migrant workers and interviews with a range of service provider organisations and employers. It was carried out between April and December 2003. Copies of the draft report have been widely circulated to policy and NISRA colleagues in Departments and the PSNI. All departments have had an opportunity to comment on the report in draft stage and subsequently the authors have responded to suggested amendments.

An advisory group comprising amongst others, the Citizens Advice Bureau, ICTU, Belfast Law Centre, NIHE, NICEM, the Equality Commission and OFMDFM acted as the steering group for the research.

The research examined the following areas:

- Demography
- Employment
- Harassment
- Housing and public services
- Information and support

Key Findings

The report provides a baseline of current information on issues affecting migrant workers and concludes:

There is a lack of integrated, cross-departmental data on migrants.

Departments are developing strategies to deal with the problems faced by migrant workers.

Migrant workers need better information on their rights and responsibilities.

The report reviews the many different types or 'status' of migrant workers and the government sources of information available. Categories of migrant worker include, amongst others, nationals of the European Economic Area, Non-EEA people requiring work permits, and 'permit free' categories such as citizens of British Overseas Territories.

The report reviews all of the different sources of information available from the Census, the labour force survey, the census of employment, DEL statistics on work permits and many other sources.

The 2001 Census indicates that there are 26,659 people in Northern Ireland who were born outside the UK and Republic of Ireland. In terms of the largest groups, just over 10,000 are from Africa/Asia, about 7,000 from Western Europe and 6,000 from North America. Obviously, these are not all migrant workers as, for example, the figures include children. The Labour Force Survey estimates that there are about 9,000 non-UK

and RoI nationals actually working in Northern Ireland. The report was unable to accurately quantify the number of 'undocumented workers' but quotes a 'guestimate' figure of 2,000 people.

The Census also indicates that there are just over 14,000 people born outside the UK and Republic of Ireland currently working in Northern Ireland. This figure is considered in the ICR report to be the upper limit for migrant workers. This figure includes all categories of migrant worker.

Migrants work in a wide range of occupations but are concentrated in health care, hotels and restaurants, the wholesale and retail trade, food processing and manufacturing. The research documents some of the poor pay and living conditions faced by migrant workers, particularly those employed through recruitment agencies. DEL is currently engaged in the development of new legislation to establish minimum standards for employment agencies working in Northern Ireland. This will form part of a consultation process later this year.

Recommendations

The report's main recommendations are that information sources on migrant workers should be improved and various suggestions are put forward. Work permit holders should be given better information on the conditions of the work permit, benefit eligibility and sources of advice for specific problems, in particular, their employment rights.

Employers should take care when choosing a recruitment agency as some agencies charge 'extortionate' fees. The report documents examples of the practice of making deductions from wages for accommodation and other 'services' from the workers' hourly rate. This practice is highlighted as grossly unfair since working longer hours increases the amount paid for such 'services'.

The report suggests that the Equality Commission and the Race Equality Forum are well placed to develop a coordinated strategy to respond to all of the above issues.

Summary

The report highlights the diversity among people described as 'migrant workers' and the range of regulations that migrant workers of different status must adhere to. It reviews all the relevant statistics available and discusses their strengths and weaknesses. Action is being taken to improve the statistics and the report notes that in key areas such as employment, housing and policing, Departments are in the process of developing strategies to deal with the issues faced by migrant workers. The report represents a useful overview to our current state of quantitative and qualitative knowledge in this area and will help inform the development of the Race Equality Strategy and the information needs of the Race Forum.

A copy of the report is attached (Annex A).

Stephen Donnelly (Dr)