



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

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UK shadow report on Gypsy and Traveller women to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Introduction

The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITMB) can confirm that since CEDAW's forty-first session concluding observations to the UK, little has improved for Gypsy and Traveller women in terms of their health and education outcomes. In its 2008 concluding observations, the Committee expressed concern that Gypsy and Traveller women suffer 'multiple discrimination, particularly in access to education, employment and health care.'¹ From ITMB's experience working with these communities at the grass roots and policy level, Gypsy and Traveller women also suffer double discrimination; firstly as women and secondly as Gypsies and Travellers. In this short submission ITMB will summarize the key areas of discrimination and scrutinize the State Party's response.

Healthcare (Article 12, paragraphs 1, 2)

In its 2008 concluding observations the Committee recommended *'the State party take concrete measures to address the high maternal mortality rate in Traveller communities, including the allocation of adequate resources to increase access to affordable health services, in particular prenatal, post-natal and obstetric services, as well as other medical and emergency assistance.'*²

ITMB can confirm that Gypsy and Traveller women continue to suffer poor health outcomes and the lowest life expectancy of any group in the UK. This is evidenced by a 2012 Government report which also found that Gypsy and Traveller women continue to experience high infant mortality rates, high maternal mortality rates, low child immunisation levels, mental health issues, substance misuse issues and diabetes.³

Despite these unacceptably poor outcomes, the United Kingdom's seventh periodic report (June 2011) fails to address these issues and specifically the Committee's 2008 recommendations.⁴ ITMB welcome the Department of Health (DH) Inclusion Unit's focus on Gypsies and Travellers, however we are concerned that the DH do not include Gypsies and Travellers as one of the 16 ethnic minority categories monitored by the NHS (Gypsies and

¹ CEDAW forty-first session, 2008, Concluding Observations to the United Kingdom, paragraph 292
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws41.htm>

² Ibid, paragraph 294

³ Ministerial Working Group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, 2012, paragraph's 3.1 - 3.4

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2124046.pdf>

⁴ United Kingdom's 7th periodic report to CEDAW, June 2011, paragraph 182

http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2011/1/110610_uk_seventh_cedaw_report.pdf

Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic minority groups under UK law and were included in the 16 ethnic categories in the 2011 census).

The Government should introduce a targeted national strategy to improve the health outcomes of Gypsy and Traveller women

Education and employment (Articles 10 & 11)

Gypsy and Traveller women experience high levels of illiteracy and poor educational attainment in education settings. This is largely as a result of Gypsy and Traveller children being amongst the lowest-achieving groups at every Key Stage of education.⁵ Research by the ITMB and Children's Society has found that Gypsy and Traveller children experience high levels of racist bullying in school resulting in parents removing their children from education.⁶ This has a disproportionate affect on Gypsy and Traveller women as they are more likely than Traveller men to enter mainstream waged employment requiring formal educational qualifications.⁷

The Government should develop targeted programs to improve the education and skills of Gypsy and Traveller women both in school and in adult education

Accommodation and evictions

Gypsy and Traveller women suffer disproportionately as a result of evictions and unstable accommodation, violating their rights under Articles 12 and 10 of CEDAW. According to the Government's own figures 20 per cent of Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans are homeless, as they have no legal place to park their caravans.⁸ This makes day-to-day living for Gypsy and Traveller women raising families very hard, due to the lack of basic services such as healthcare, education, water, electricity and sanitation. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recently raised this issue with the UK in the run up to the mass eviction of Irish Travellers at Dale Farm, Essex:

*'The Committee urges the State party to halt the intended eviction, which will disproportionately affect the lives of families and particularly women and children and create hardship.'*⁹

The Government should introduce policy measures to effectively address the housing crisis facing the Gypsy and Traveller communities which disproportionately affects Gypsy and Traveller women.

⁵ Ministerial Working Group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, April 2012, paragraph 2.1

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2124046.pdf>

⁶ ITMB, January 2012 *Submission to the Children's Commissioner's school exclusion inquiry*, <http://irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ITMB-Education-Submission-January-20121.pdf>

⁷ ITMB, 2010, *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers* http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/images/roads_to_success.pdf

⁸ Ministerial Working Group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, 2012, paragraph 1.1

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2124046.pdf>

⁹ CERD, 2011, *Concluding Observations to the UK*, paragraph 28

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/CERD.C.GBR.CO.18-20.pdf>