



UBUNTU

BULLETIN

Black Perspectives in Community Development Learning and Training

AUTUMN 2004

UBUNTU: MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

In September 30 members of Ubuntu got together at a residential conference, held in Loughborough, to review the work of Ubuntu and to plan for the future. By agreeing to take part in the event, participants were committing themselves to developing a strategic plan in which to develop Ubuntu as a strong and vibrant national network.

A participatory approach was used to ensure all participants were able to participate in the design of a strategic framework and action plan. Using a participatory approach can help strengthen ownership of and commitment to the network. It also makes things happen in ways that reflect the diverse perspectives of all BME practitioners and activists working with and within diverse marginalised and excluded communities.

Participants were also able to:

- Identify opportunities to strengthen, and respond to the challenges facing Ubuntu

as a national community development learning network.

- Further, develop their own capacity as reflective practitioners.
- Develop a better understanding of Black Perspectives and how this links to wider policy agendas, including the international dimension.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BLACK PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK?

Black perspectives of community development describe ways of working that places emphasis on process and content, and recognises the interdependent nature of Black and minority ethnic communities. This is informed by shared histories and experiences of working towards equality, fighting oppression and challenging oppressive practice, attitudes and beliefs within diverse marginalised and excluded communities. It also

Welcome to the UBUNTU Bulletin, a newsletter on Black perspectives in community development learning and training.

UBUNTU Bulletin is a regular feature of Federation News but is also sent to all members of UBUNTU, the interest group of the Federation for Community Development Learning, for Black and Minority Ethnic community workers and activists.

If you would like more information about joining UBUNTU please contact Carol Jones, Development Officer Black Perspectives, at the Federation for Community Development Learning on

0114 273 9391
carol@fcdl.org.uk
www.fcdl.org.uk

describes a way of viewing the world that recognises and validates the contribution Black and minority ethnic people make to society as a whole.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS

The review began by reflecting on Ubuntu's achievements to date. Since 2002 key



achievements have included:

2002

- Co-organised a conference 'Bridges or barricades? Community development in a multi-ethnic Society', in partnership with The Community Development Foundation.
- Organised a BME community workers and activists training day, with Ubuntu members in Newcastle.
- Hosted a conference, 'Making the Connections: putting Black and minority ethnic perspectives of community development learning and capacity building on the agenda'.
- Organised 'Bringing it together: Learning and training for community regeneration' conference.

2003

- Organised 'Black perspectives of Community Development and Social Justice' conference.
- Organised a conference in partnership with Community Development Exchange (CDX) and the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS). 'Connecting Black and minority ethnic people in rural areas – are we doing enough?'

2004

- Co-organised in partnership with CDX and FCDL a conference, 'Working with Allies: Celebrating success, learning from mistakes and building the future'.
- Submitted application for infrastructure funding to Community Fund.
- Organised Ubuntu 'review' residential.



- Contributed to the development of a learning and qualifications framework for community development work.

KEY PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

- Support the development of Ubuntu as a national network.
- To increase involvement of Black and minority ethnic community development practitioners and those with a community development brief.
- Develop and disseminate models of community development learning that reflect Black perspectives.
- To increase the provision of learning, training opportunities for BME practitioners and activists, who have a community development approach to their work.

The continued development of this strategic framework and the subsequent action plan will require ongoing support and commitment from all members of Ubuntu. This will help to help strengthen and establish an Ubuntu infrastructure that can better represent, reflect and respond to the needs and aspirations of its members.

DEVELOPING AN UBUNTU INFRASTRUCTURE

Within the Federation Ubuntu has the status of a semi-

autonomous network. What this means is that although the group enjoys significant levels of autonomy over decision making and use of resources, it is not a legally constituted independent body. There is however, a great deal of potential to influence the scope and direction of

community development training and practice in the UK.

Participants stressed the need for a network that supports the continual development of its members, hosts subsidised events and offers training and learning opportunities linked to recognised progression routes leading to formal qualifications. Members also wanted to participate in a forum that helps them to reflect on their practice and have access to support mechanisms dedicated to gathering and recording examples of diverse perspectives of community development work.

In the medium term, Ubuntu should also strengthen links with other BME national networks and organisations, and support the development of regional Ubuntu networks. This programme would also offer Ubuntu members the opportunity to get involved. For example, in planning and delivery of local training events, seminars and conferences, with (and for) local workers, both paid and unpaid. These partnerships would also contribute to building trust and cohesion within and between communities.

Ubuntu members also have a key role to play in responding to and influencing policies that seek to encourage and support community engagement through learning and capacity building



programmes and initiatives. Members are also well placed to ensure the effective representation of diverse community development perspectives in current and emerging policy debates. This also includes developing frameworks that help meet the needs of and engage more effectively with diverse marginalised and excluded communities.

Overall, participants agreed that establishing Ubuntu as an independent network should be a long-term aim. However, this could also have implications for the network in terms of perceived loss of voice and influence within the Federation.

DEVELOPING A FORWARD STRATEGY FOR UBUNTU

Three key themes were identified to take forward the strategic aims of Ubuntu. They are:

- Promotion
- Events
- Research

A work programme is currently being drawn up that outlines a series of activities that will meet the support needs of existing members, broaden the appeal of Ubuntu and enhance its ability to exert influence within key fora at all levels.

In order to move the programme forward, Ubuntu needs members who are interested in co-organising an event in their area that focuses on community development learning from Black perspectives. Ubuntu will also be proactively seeking opportunities for collaborative work with other national and regional infrastructure Black and minority ethnic organisations



building sustainable communities.

TURNING THE STRATEGY INTO ACTION

The main resource available to Ubuntu is its members. The strategy cannot be developed and implemented without their active input.

This is however a two way process. Ubuntu members also need support if they are to help bring about the changes that benefit diverse marginalised and excluded communities. To this end Ubuntu is committed to making available resources to help facilitate the participation of all BME practitioners to play an active part in broadening access to quality community based adult learning.

NEXT STEPS?

A strategic plan and proposed action plan is in the process of being drawn up. If you would like a copy of the document or would like to discuss opportunities available to bring community development learning and training to your area, please contact Carol Jones at the Federation office:
 Carol@fcdl.org.uk.
 0114 273 9391.

and networks. The purpose is to further develop the key themes and to broaden the scope and range of Ubuntu's work.

The strategy will take forward and build on achievements thus far by contributing to the further development of community development learning from Black perspectives with and within communities and groups at a local and regional level.

CHALLENGES

Despite the active commitment from a number of Ubuntu members (there are currently 270 names on the Ubuntu contact list), and ongoing support from the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL), there are formidable barriers in the way of Ubuntu achieving the aims described above.

A key stumbling block is the lack of support from employers of Black and minority ethnic practitioners, who wish to enhance their community development skills and practice through participation in the work of Ubuntu.

This points to a need for research to determine and evidence the level of learning and training needs amongst Black and minority ethnic practitioners working with diverse marginalised and excluded groups and the added value skilled and well trained workers contribute towards





NEWS IN BRIEF

UBUNTU NORTH-WEST ENGLAND NETWORK

The network was formed in 2003 following an Ubuntu event held in Manchester. It aims to bring together Black and minority ethnic practitioners with an interest in community development learning and practice, from Black perspectives, to share ideas, information and develop learning and training opportunities in the North West region.

Meeting dates for 2005:

- 13 January 2005
- 10 March 2005
- 12 May 2005

All meetings take place from 10–1pm at GMCVO, The St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ.
Tel: 0161 277 1000.
Fax: 0161 273 8296.
Email: gmcvo@gmcvo.org.uk.

If you would like further information about the network, please contact Aba Graham on (0161) 474 2175 or you can email her at Aba.graham@stockport.gov.uk.

You can also contact Carol at the Federation office.



FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LEARNING AND TRAINING FROM BLACK PERSPECTIVES

The Federation has secured limited funds from the Learning and Skills Council to help build capacity in the voluntary sector for BME professionals in England.

The funds will be used to deliver training and community development courses for BME practitioners working at all levels who have community development as part of their brief.

For further information, contact Carol at the Federation office on carol@fcdl.org.uk or telephone 0114 273 9391.

UPDATE OF THE 'BEING WHITE' VIDEO

Some of you may be familiar with the video that was produced by the Federation in the 1980s.

The video examines white identity and the implications for challenging racism in British society.

Twenty years on the issues raised are still prevalent today.

The Federation, in partnership with the Community Development Foundation, intends to produce an updated version of the video, and has organised a meeting for Monday 29 November, 3pm at the Federation office in Sheffield.

If you would like to be involved in the project, please contact Carol at the Federation office on carol@fcdl.org.uk or telephone 0114 273 9391.

NOT JUST BLACK AND WHITE: NACVS DIVERSITY CONFERENCE 2004

Date: 1 December 2004

Venue: Charles Wilson Building, Leicester University

Key Speaker: Keith Vaz MP Leicester East

Workshops will be both policy and practical and cover ALL the diversity areas.

To download a copy of the conference booking form, go to: <http://www.nacvs.org.uk/nacvs/events/diversityconference/> Or you can call NACVS on 0114 278 6636.