



# UBUNTU

## BULLETIN

Black Perspectives in Community Development Learning and Training

SUMMER 2004

### Advance Notice

# UBUNTU CONFERENCE

Thursday 23rd-Friday 24th September 2004

Burleigh Court, International Conference Centre, Loughborough University

In 2003 the Ubuntu steering group decided that if Ubuntu is to respond more effectively to the growing demand for practitioners who are skilled and able to work constructively with and within Black and other diverse marginalised and excluded communities, the network would need to expand its activities. To meet this objective, an application was submitted to the Community Fund to help fund a dedicated team of Ubuntu workers. Whether or not the bid is successful, (we'll be hearing by the end of July) Ubuntu needs to agree a strategic plan that will guide future development and use of its limited resources to help meet the learning and training needs of BME practitioners and activists who have a community development approach to their work.

This event is the first step towards creating a framework that will guide the future scope

and direction of Ubuntu as a national network open to all BME practitioners and activists working with and within diverse marginalised and excluded communities.

### CONFERENCE AIMS

- To widen opportunities for Ubuntu members to become actively involved in taking forward the development of regional, sub-regional and national networks.
- To encourage members to participate in developing the existing Ubuntu steering group.
- Broaden participation from across the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the overall activities of Ubuntu.
- To develop a better understanding of Black perspectives of community development work.

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

Attendance at this residential conference will be free and open to practitioners that have participated in at least one Ubuntu event in the past two years.

If you would like further information about this event or to register a place, please contact Carol Jones at the Federation, 0114 273 9391, or email carol@fcdl.org.uk.



# BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY IN EUROPE THROUGH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The event was attended by 130 delegates from across Europe, and organised jointly by the Combined European Bureau for Social Development ([www.cebsd.org](http://www.cebsd.org)), the International Association for Community Development ([www.iacdglobal.org](http://www.iacdglobal.org)) and their member, the Hungarian Association for Community Development ([www.kka.hu](http://www.kka.hu) - <http://www.kka.hu> host organisation), and the Community Development Journal.

The Conference aimed to:

- Strengthen the basis for practice exchange and networking across Europe.
- Identify and agree issues to take forward in the European context
- Produce a Europe-wide manifesto for community development

Ubuntu members, Hayat Hewitt and Gurcharn Kaur attended the conference. This article gives a brief summary of their contribution to creating a European community development framework that acknowledges Black and other diverse perspectives.

## THE CHALLENGE OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Hugh Frazer, from the European Commission, delivered the keynote speech, which focussed on the challenge facing the European community to develop strategies that address the needs of those experiencing poverty and social exclusion: 55 million or 15% of the EU population were living at risk of poverty. Factors include long-term unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, living in areas of multiple disadvantage and racism:

*'In some [European countries] the social situation of*

## International Conference

Budapest, 25-28th March 2004.

*ethnic minorities, of children, of people who are mentally ill, of people leaving institutions raises particularly serious concerns'*

Hugh Frazer, European Commission

At the level of the European commission policies developed to address the poverty and social exclusion include:

- ✓ Increasing the access of the most vulnerable and those most at risk of social exclusion to decent housing, quality health and lifelong learning opportunities.
- ✓ Making a drive to reduce poverty and social exclusion of immigrant and ethnic minorities.

The commission also recognised that community development can help to deliver 'integrated and co-ordinated' policies at the local level, with communities facing multiple disadvantage'. Organisations working with and within such communities also have a key role to play in the delivery and monitoring of EU policies and programmes at a local level.

## CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

The workshop attended by Hayat looked at the theme of migration and Europe. Participants considered a number of approaches aimed at community cohesion that included assimilation and multiculturalism. In both cases the overall effect was (as in the case of UK) less than successful. As one participant put it, 'they [assimilation and multiculturalism] are nothing more than putting groups together for the convenience of the state'. One recommendation from the workshop was the need to identify

alternatives, which is where, potentially; Black perspectives could offer a solution.

Gurcharn attended a workshop on Local Economic Development and the Social Economy, which focussed on the development of small locally based enterprises. In one example from Spain, community based research methods revealed a high number of people over 65 and young single women with children. This led to setting up a local social care project. The young women proved care for the older adults, and were paid a wage. Evaluation of the programme revealed that the project helped to connect disparate communities as well as provide a much needed service.

Learning for BME practitioners:

- The importance of research in evidencing community needs.
- A clear value base that includes support, training and development for everyone who is part of the process must underpin services developed from within communities. If the value base is not shared and agreed projects can run the risk of becoming another exploiter of local people.

## IMPLICATIONS, ARISING FROM THE CONFERENCE, FOR BME PRACTITIONERS IN THE UK

One thing was clear from the speakers and workshops on day one, whilst diverse perspectives were acknowledged; the notion of Black perspectives was missing. This however was addressed by the organisation of an impromptu workshop by Hayat Hewitt, which did not go unchallenged. The 'status' (sic) of the workshop was questioned, as was the use of the term 'Black'. Some



delegates saw this as stigmatising and causing particular groups to feel isolated. This perspective, which is supported by the advocates of diversity, suggests an urgent need to consider notions of political solidarity as suggested by 'Black perspectives' and the consequence of this debate for diverse marginalised and excluded communities.

Workshops on day two were tasked with producing three statements that would form part of a community development manifesto. The purpose was to produce a declaration document that set out key recommendations that aim to enshrine community development into the social and economic policies of EU members.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, MINORITIES, MIGRATION, RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

The following is an excerpt from the declaration.

The EU should ensure free movement of all EU citizens accompanied by social protection, promote cohesion and solidarity for host communities, migrants and communities of origin, and combat racism and discrimination in all its forms.

In support of these goals, the EU and member states should create and support structures and agencies, which pursue the aims of racial equality and cross-cultural understanding and

awareness. The EU and member states should at the same time emphasise the positive aspects of a wider and more diverse Europe.

The EU and member states should acknowledge, through policy and funding development, that community development has a critical role to play in engaging people in increasingly diverse communities through inclusive methods. This may be done by building bridges between majority and minority communities, including in situations of conflict.

The EU, national governments, donors and community development organisations and agencies need to work collaboratively to promote cross-border and national co-operation in relation to the position of minorities and the particular challenges they face within specific local contexts.

**The full text of the declaration is available from [www.fcdl.org.uk](http://www.fcdl.org.uk), or you can contact Carol Jones for a paper copy.**

# INSPIRE: A COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME WITH A DIFFERENCE

**A**fter almost 3 years in development the Inspire Community Leadership Programme, conceived and developed on behalf of the African Caribbean Trust and the Pakistani Community Alliance, has almost completed its pilot phase. Twenty participants were recruited, 10 from the African-Caribbean and 10 from the Pakistani community. The programme aims, amongst other things, 'to enable better communication within and between communities'. And, as a result of the programme, participants have begun to recognise the number of shared concerns and issues faced by both communities. This prompted one participant to comment:

*'I'm baffled as to why Black and Asian communities aren't coming together as ONE voice to*

*provide services for our communities collectively seeing as we both suffer from similar setbacks and issues'.*

The course programme was structured to cover a number of themes that include: history of the voluntary sector and the BME contribution, equal opportunities, regeneration/ community cohesion and community development work perspectives.

The programme underwent an interim evaluation in February, which highlighted a number of learning and action points, one of which was the need for participants to be given time to reflect on their learning and to think about how they might use this in their work with

communities: something we all need to think about?

Whilst the course wasn't originally conceived solely with a community development focus, it does reflect much of the values and principles of community development work and contributes towards developing a good model of training and community based learning that has, at its core, Black perspectives of working with and between communities. As the Inspire curriculum document states the course was devised as 'an investment towards a more productive and sustainable future for the African Caribbean and Pakistani communities of Huddersfield'. The pilot was funded 100% through SRB5 (Huddersfield Pride).

**If you would like more information about Inspire, please contact Louise Muhammad, 01484 540225 or email, [louise.muhammad@btinternet.com](mailto:louise.muhammad@btinternet.com)**



# REFLECT ACTION WALES: ONE YEAR ON

**F**ollowing a successful Reflection Action (RA) Training event held in Cardiff (see Ubuntu Bulletin, summer 2003) a network of BME practitioners interested in developing their practice using RA have been meeting to share their experiences and further develop their skills in community development.

RA is a participatory model that fuses the theory of Paulo Freire and the practice of Participatory Appraisal (PA). Facilitators use tools such as time lines and matrices that enable participants to follow a community development process, which includes analysing their situation, deciding what changes to make, taking action and learning from the results.

Recently, the group met to reflect on and analyse how RA has influenced and complimented their work with communities and groups. Over the past year, a common theme arising out of their shared experience was an individual and collective sense of empowerment and confidence gained from having been part of the process. This was especially the case for practitioners who were new to working with communities, and as one practitioner put it:

'Because I feel empowered, I can empower someone else, [and] you must try, if it doesn't work try another way'.

## RA TOOLS AS REFERENCE POINTS FOR SELF-REFLECTION

Many practitioners commented on feeling more able to 'share of themselves' with other members of the group and those they were working with. For example some members felt more able to

challenge negative attitudes amongst the BME communities they worked with, and that the RA group played a key role in enabling them to do this, by offering support and practical ideas. One participant described this as 'de-programming of self', which helped to move past difference and to recognise the value and strengths of others.

## CASE STUDIES

Members of the RA Network share their experiences of using RA with communities and groups.

### HEALTH DAY FOR WOMEN

Rahana Miah, of the Bangladeshi Women's Group, facilitated the process, the aim of the day being to give local women an opportunity to identify and prioritise their health needs. Participants first identified the issues and needs. These were recorded, using a mixture of words and symbols, and prioritised, with a matrix then being used to create a visual representation. Discussion then centred on why some issues were considered more important than others, and how this decision might influence strategic planning and policy development around women's health locally. One outcome was that participants recognised the important role they have in improving the health of their communities.

### ANANDO DHARA – BANGLADESHI YOUNG PEOPLES GROUP

The group had been going for 8 years, in which time there had been little development. Sayad Uddin, Black and Ethnic minority Support Team (BEST) (and coincidentally a founding member

of the group), working with Maria Constanza Mesa, Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales (BVSNW), introduced RA to the group who then began to use the tools to identify and priorities individual and collective needs, leading to action for change. The group began by looking at their individual perspectives of the group. This led members to think about ways in which they might need to change as individuals in order to bring about the changes they wanted for the group. Part of the action plan included opening up the group to young women. They decided 'to begin with what they had' and made contact with relatives and friends. The group recognised this was only the beginning, and for the group to grow and have credibility both within and without the community, it will be necessary for other young Asian people to become involved.

## CHALLENGES OF RA

A key question occupying many in the Cardiff group is how, as RA suggests, to stand to one side and 'let' the groups they work with reach their own levels of analysis and understanding of their needs and the best way to meet them. This is particularly difficult when many workers have set priorities or 'targets' that are not necessarily shared by the community group. Addressing this potential conflict of interest is something the group hopes to explore in more detail using RA.

**If you would like further information about the Welsh experience of RA, please contact Maria Constanza Mesa at BVSNW, 02920 45068, email [m.mesa@bvsnw.org](mailto:m.mesa@bvsnw.org)**