



UBUNTU

BULLETIN

Black Perspectives in Community Development Training

AUTUMN 2002

MAKING CONNECTIONS

REPORT ON UBUNTU CONFERENCE, JUNE 2002

Government initiatives and policies developed since 1997 have resulted in Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities being bombarded with invitations to establish partnerships, and requests to contribute to the development of strategic objectives and action plans. Millions of pounds have been earmarked to address deprivation and disadvantage, endemic particularly in urban areas populated by diverse marginalised and excluded communities (DME).

Through conferences and community development learning events, Ubuntu aims to offer participants an opportunity to examine the impact of recent social and economic policy developments. By making the connections, Ubuntu aims to develop further a more strategic response that builds on existing community strengths and cohesion.

CURRENT INFLUENCES

Ubuntu member Dean T. Huggins opened the Making Connections conference. He set out the context and current climate influencing community development learning and training. The key points raised by Dean included:

The government approach to involving DME communities in regeneration has been to 'target', i.e. the areas where 70% of Black and minority ethnic people live. The outcome, however, has been fragmentation and disjointed policies that have led to increased demands on DME groups and organisations.

Working to improve life chances and opportunities requires community practitioners skilled in community development practice aimed at tackling discrimination and social exclusion, raising aspirations and strengthening cohesion. As practitioners it is vital that

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

UBUNTU Bulletin is a regular feature of **The Community Work Training Bulletin** but is also sent to all members of **UBUNTU**, the interest group of the **Federation of Community Work Training Groups for Black and Ethnic Minority community workers and activists**.

If you would like more information about joining **UBUNTU** please contact **Carol Jones, Development Officer Black Perspectives, at the Federation of Community Work Training Groups** on

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connections are made in order to maximise existing opportunities.

The morning continued with a series of keynote speakers. The main points from their contribution are extracted overleaf.



Local Strategic Partnerships' (LSPs) accreditation and Black and minority ethnic representation

Rupa Sarkar, LSP project officer, Urban Forum

Rupa began by highlighting the issue of under representation of Black and minority ethnic communities (BME) on LSPs. All LSPs are now accredited which means they have met the basic criteria set down by central government to receive the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. They also have a pivotal role in developing a 'joined up' response to the needs and concerns of local people, and in deciding 'where the money goes', especially funding aimed at capacity building, learning and training.

There is evidence that explains the low level of BME involvement as the result of a lack of commitment from some LSPs to support BME participation. Along with lost opportunities, the way is left clear for local authorities to influence the direction of LSPs in terms of process and decision-making. This presents an added consideration for BME communities and groups as the bureaucracy of Local Authorities often work against the interests of DME groups and communities.

Even with the accreditation of LSPs, BME community groups and organisations can raise concerns with the Government Office. However an alliance made up of BME organisations and groups would be more effective than any one individual,

group or organisations could achieve on their own.

Developing a BME infrastructure in Scotland – challenges and opportunities

Remi Ousta, Director, Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure Scotland (BEMIS)

Remi presented an overview of the development of BEMIS. The BME sector in Scotland, like those in other parts of the UK, provides a broad range of services to their communities. Making the connection in Scotland is a key objective of BEMIS. The focus is to establish a national network geared towards influencing and informing national policy development that affects the lives of BME people in Scotland. The second key objective is to further develop a strategy for training and capacity building within the BME sector.

The challenges facing BME communities in Scotland are not helped by the lack of political representation, the prevalence of institutionalised racism and most importantly the division and boundaries within and between BME communities. Addressing these issues means increasing opportunities for shared learning and training that can bring about greater cohesion and with it more effective community development.

Supporting community development and capacity building

Natasha Yusuf, Project Officer, Active Community Unit (ACU), Home Office

Natasha focused on the role of the Home Office in supporting community development. The aim of the Home Office and hence government is to 'develop social policy to build a fair, prosperous and cohesive society in which every one has a stake'. The ACU aims to support community activity by, in particular, developing the capacity and infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector.

In order to achieve this objective, the ACU has developed an action plan, which emphasises support for small community groups. The action plan includes:

- ◆ A website on funding information
- ◆ Government appointed voluntary or community organisations to act as a one-stop shop for groups applying for small government grants
- ◆ Simplified application and reporting procedures
- ◆ Support for small groups to help prepare their application.

Funding to support community development learning and capacity building is managed as an annual programme. Organisations can also apply for a time limited development grant to employ workers. Further details on funding can be found on the ACU website (see On the Web, p.19).

DEVELOPING THE THEMES

In the afternoon, a series of workshops developed the themes explored in the



keynote speeches. They covered the following topics:

1. Visual literacy: tools for participation and decision-making
2. Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Community Development Learning
3. Local Strategic Partnerships

and Community Development Learning

4. Community engagement without exploitation
5. Empowering BME management committees.

Action points arising out of the workshops and plenary discussions are detailed in the

conference report, and formed part of the agenda at the Ubuntu event on the 14th October in Birmingham.

- ◆ *A full conference report is available from the Federation Office, tel: 0114 273 9391.*

UBUNTU STRATEGIC PLAN

With the plethora of government initiatives aimed at increased community involvement from Black, minority ethnic, refugee (BMER) and diverse, marginalised and excluded (DME) communities, there has been a growing demand for training, learning and capacity building to facilitate active participation. Recent policy developments have opened up access to quality community development training and learning opportunities that underpin capacity building. However, much of this work is fragmented and unknown to the wider Black and minority ethnic communities across the UK.

In order to support the dissemination of good practice and information, Ubuntu has produced a comprehensive strategic plan that seeks to help develop and promote examples of good practice in community development learning and training. It also aims to establish fora where BMER/DME practitioners and activists can contribute to

wider policy debates from Black perspectives.

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

The process of developing the Plan took into account changes in the field of training, learning and capacity building. Race relations and race equality policies and legislation have also influenced these changes. In addition, Ubuntu has taken on board the implications of a number of enquiries and reports such as the Macpherson report, the Runnymede Trust report on The Future for Multi-ethnic Britain and the Herman Ousely report on Bradford. At a European level, the provisions of Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty have also been taken on board. More recently and perhaps significantly these papers have been joined by the Cattle report on the disturbances in Bradford and Oldham.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To identify the training and learning needs of Black and

minority ethnic activists and practitioners around community development.

- ◆ To support networking and skills sharing between Black and minority ethnic practitioners and activists.
- ◆ To strengthen links with relevant Black and minority ethnic infrastructure organisations and networks.
- ◆ To address the tensions and conflicts within and between BMER and DME communities and groups.
- ◆ To research and collate existing information and materials relating to community based learning courses and programmes that reflect Black perspectives.
- ◆ To ensure Ubuntu is represented on relevant decision making fora.
- ◆ To provide opportunities for sustaining and developing the work of local BMER and DME community groups.
- ◆ To strengthen the management and decision making structures of Ubuntu.
- ◆ To identify funding for a dedicated Ubuntu worker.
- ◆ To move from the margins to the centre by developing political awareness and influence.



SPREADING THE WORD

The strategic plan was launched at Federation and Ubuntu events held in June this year. Members added their support to the document and identified the priorities for the coming year. The paper has been made available through a recent Standing Conference for Community Development event and the Black and minority ethnic voluntary sector network in Glasgow. It also formed part of the Ubuntu practice sharing event on the 14th October in Birmingham and will be part of a joint event with the Community Development Foundation and others in December, again in Birmingham (details from the Federation office).

SKILLS SHARING

Work has started on a project plan that takes forward priority objectives drawn from those

above. Ubuntu and the Federation have already begun to take this process forward. Examples of good practice from Black perspectives developed by members will be included as part of a new sharing practice publication available in the New Year. Three community development skills sharing events are planned to take place in November in Scotland with BME and white practitioners, who will share their experience of working with BME living in rural isolation (see BEMIS article p.8).

Ubuntu is also involved in the delivery of a skills sharing event with members in Oxford who have developed a programme that examines, including the practical dimension, the theme 'working across communities'. Ubuntu is continually seeking opportunities to promote the Black experience of community development and learning or capacity building. If you are

planning any training or learning opportunities, practical help is available. Federation members can also access the Training and Development Funds to help meet the cost of events, including their write up.

To sum up, the strategic plan aims to build on the range of expertise at field and policy level amongst BMER/DME practitioners and activists. The plan also aims to help develop tools for good practice, and shape and influence current social policy agenda by shifting Black perspectives from the margins to the centre.

◆ *If you would like a copy of the strategic plan, or to discuss any aspect of the work of Ubuntu or the Federation of Community Work Training Groups, please contact Carol Jones, Development Officer, telephone 0114 273 9391. Or you can email: carol@fcwtg.demon.co.uk.*

BLACK PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – A DEFINITION

What, then, are the lessons that we can learn from that history? Firstly, we learn that a Black perspective is a holistic perspective which takes in the whole of society. Secondly, that a Black perspective is an anti-racist perspective and not a cultural or ethnic perspective. A Black perspective challenges a racist system, a cultural perspective finds accommodation within it. Finally, a Black perspective is a community perspective and not an individualistic one. Black unites, ethnicity divides.

A. Sivanandan