



# UBUNTU

## BULLETIN

Black Perspectives in Community Development Training

WINTER 2003

### BRINGING IT TOGETHER: LEARNING AND TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY REGENERATION REPORT ON UBUNTU CONFERENCE: OCTOBER 2002

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**This was the third event since April 2002 organised by Ubuntu. It had as its focus skills training, opportunities for networking and application of good practice from Black perspectives. Further, the event aimed to contribute to government led initiatives by exploring policy developments in the context of social inclusion, capacity building and developing the Black and minority ethnic (BME) response.**

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**N**ew Labour through numerous policies and community-based initiatives has sought to engage with and encourage communities stunted by economic and political marginalisation, physical decline and lack of investment to participate and 'get involved' in the regeneration of neighbourhoods and regions. Government success is heavily dependent on meeting these objectives through programmes aimed at capacity building and social cohesion.

Black and minority ethnic communities have been identified as primary beneficiaries of such programmes. The aim is to ensure communities are equipped for their role and to broaden and strengthen neighbourhood renewal skills amongst professionals and community development practitioners alike.

Participants at the Ubuntu event raised many issues that have yet to be addressed as part of the regeneration

**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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agenda. The shared perception is that economic regeneration (a primary objective) has yet to produce any tangible results. Rather, the proliferation of government agencies has served to limit the ability of BME communities to deal with conflict and to raise aspirations.



## UBUNTU ACHIEVEMENTS

There were two keynote speeches. The first was by Ubuntu member, Dean T. Huggins who gave an overview of the recent work of Ubuntu. Achievements include:

- Drawing up a business plan to support future funding applications.
- Agreed content and format of an Ubuntu web page as part of the Federation's web site, which is due to go online spring 2003.
- Organised three events in 2002.
- Delivered workshops at Federation events.
- Strengthened representation on the Federation management committee.
- Developed partnerships with national organisations and regional networks.
- Disseminated Ubuntu strategic objectives through Ubuntu/Federation members and contacts.
- Further developed the Ubuntu strategic plan based on members' comments and recommendations.

Copies of the strategic plan are available from the Federation office.

## REGENERATION AND BME COMMUNITIES

The second speaker, Mukami McCrum, Director of Race Equality Council Central

Scotland, shared her perspective of regeneration and BME communities in Scotland. cursory examination of devolution and regionalisation suggests increased opportunities and choice for BME communities to engage with and influence policy that directly affects their lives.

The situation in Scotland reflects the experience of BME communities elsewhere. Change brought about by community development learning does not happen in a vacuum; other issues also impact on the agenda.

The opportunities offered, for example, by Social Inclusion Partnerships and Local Strategic Partnerships present BME communities, activists and practitioners with new challenges. Key amongst these is thinking beyond the geographical distances that separate communities. As a minority there are undeniable risks linked to the regionalisation and regeneration agenda. Some BME communities can become further isolated and marginalised as the 'numbers game' takes on another dimension.

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***...For BME communities the outcome is frustration as limited resources, time, and energy are diverted to dealing with policies based on 'knowledgeable ignorance'.***

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## DRIVING THE AGENDA

Mukami explained that Ubuntu is the only BME community development learning network

that seeks to drive the agenda that shapes community development and community development learning. This can only be achieved if, and only if, BME practitioners and activists develop and share tools that strengthens community cohesion and development, and challenge perceptions of white expertise as the truth and the *only* truth.

This approach has the potential to offer real solutions to the problem of conflict and fragmentation within and across BME communities - a consequence of internalised racism. Why else does the perception of BME communities 'accepting' the given status continue to persist?

## RECOGNISING OUR SKILLS

Racism is now official and continues to place barriers in the way of community cohesion. Existing and developing decision-making structures do not recognise the wealth of skills and knowledge within communities. Mukami argued that for BME communities the outcome is frustration as limited resources, time, and energy is diverted to dealing with policies based on 'knowledgeable ignorance' rather than invested in developing a community infrastructure that supports economic and social regeneration. The solution? Resources that enable the BME sector to 'monitor the people who monitor us'.

Mukami concluded by stressing the importance of



communities responding to the 'leaching' of resources by becoming better informed, and by sharing and disseminating the skills and knowledge necessary for community development. This approach can help develop Black perspectives of discrimination and how it impacts on the lives of communities, and offer possible ways forward that promote sustainable regeneration.

## SHARING LESSONS AND ASKING QUESTIONS

A series of workshops was held on a range of topics. We highlight three workshops here to illustrate the issues and ideas shared on the day.

### UBUNTU STRATEGIC PLAN

Participants divided into groups to discuss Ubuntu's strategic plan. These workshops formed part of Ubuntu's consultation with BME practitioners on the development of a realistic and sustainable work plan.

On the key points of sustainability and credibility, participants felt there should be a more robust approach to promoting the work of Ubuntu at a regional level. There were suggestions for guidelines and briefing papers on:

- How do you work with trainers and consultants?
- A list of trainers referred by Ubuntu contacts, and who are also Federation Associates.

- Capacity building from Black perspectives.

- Addressing the damaging effects of internalised oppression.

Participants also wanted Ubuntu to:

- Become a representative voice within the community based learning and training field.
- Contribute to the strengthening of the BME sector generally.
- Engage in strategic information gathering and dissemination.
- Develop training courses in personal and professional development for BME practitioners, including managers.
- Engage in strategic networking; organising events in local communities.

**Recommendations** arising from the Strategic plan workshops:

- Reduce the strategic plan from the current ten points thereby making the plan more focussed and robust.
- Tap into existing, and where necessary help to establish new, local networks through which the strategic plan can be implemented.
- Participants cautioned against securing funding for funding sake.

### MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

This workshop identified existing and desirable indicators in mainstreaming equal opportunities. The whole debate

surrounding mainstreaming EO has come about through the efforts of BME sector over a number of years. Recognition of the need for mainstreaming has been enshrined in race equality legislation, the Human Rights Act and is supported by governments at an international level.

Mainstreaming has been defined as 'the systematic integration of an equality perspective into the everyday work of government'. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to create a more equitable society.

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***A key objective of mainstreaming is 'to increase problem-solving capacity and to enhance sound evidence-based policy-making...before decisions are made and not after.'***

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Workshop participants were concerned that this was the first time they had heard of the mainstreaming policy, although it has formed a part of government policy since 2000. This is of particular concern when one considers a key objective of mainstreaming is 'to increase problem-solving capacity and to enhance sound evidence-based policy-making...before decisions are made and not after'.

It is clear that more needs to be done to ensure grass roots organisations and communities are aware of mainstreaming. Participants agreed to go back to their areas and find out what's



happening and make the information accessible to those working at a grass roots level

## FUNDRAISING: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN

In this workshop, participants were taken through the basic steps of developing a funding strategy.

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***Remember! You are selling your idea to someone who has the means to make it happen! This requires research and preparation.***

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Recent research carried out by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) revealed that both the number and success of funding applications made by BME groups was well below that of white-led voluntary and community organisations. BME organisations can be forgiven for being doubtful about the chances of securing funding, as there is a lot of anecdotal evidence to support this view. The reality however is more complex. Not all BME groups experience the struggle for funding in the same way.

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***Prove it! Funders want to know that there is real need and that their money will make a difference.***

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## SOURCES OF FUNDING

ACU website [www.volcomgrants.gov.uk](http://www.volcomgrants.gov.uk) has sources of funding. This site has extensive

information on sources of funding available from central government. The Community Learning Chest for example is a good source of funding for community groups who want to deliver their own community development learning programmes. The grant, which is between £50 and £5000, is available to individuals and community groups who want to develop the skills they need to play an active role in local regeneration.

Finally, the Federation manages a small development fund that members can access to support the design, delivery and recording of community development learning and training programmes. Please contact the Federation for more details.

## INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING FOR REAL

Planning for Real was first used in 1977, and is a complete process of community involvement and development. The model has been used in various situations from looking at the usage of a small piece of land through to strategic planning. It also helps local people sort out what needs to be done to improve their neighbourhood by bringing together different types of expert knowledge, including the community.

If you would like further information about Planning for Real or help to deliver a workshop, please contact Carol at the Federation office.

## WHAT NEXT?

This event was oversubscribed, however on the day just over half those who registered actually attended. Should Ubuntu charge a registration fee for future events? Even though BME practitioners repeatedly argue that conference and training fees make it difficult for them to access the opportunities such events offer. How can Ubuntu best support BME practitioners and activists, and ensure added value in the use of scarce resources? If you have any helpful suggestions, it would be good to hear from you.

Another issue that arose because of this event was of requests from white practitioners to participate. As a result, Ubuntu in partnership with the Federation is planning to host a mixed event 'Identifying and working with allies' (working title) in Spring 2003.

## SEEKING PARTNERS

Ubuntu is currently seeking partners to co-organise a series of regional events that offer BME communities and practitioners (and their allies?) the opportunity to share and promote examples of community development learning, and with it, capacity building.

**If you would like to discuss the work of Ubuntu or the Federation, please contact Carol at the Federation office, tel: 0114 273 9391 or email: [carol@fcwtg.co.uk](mailto:carol@fcwtg.co.uk)**