



Community Cohesion and the impact on it because of racial harassment

On 16th September 2002, the BME Network organised a presentation on racial harassment. It was done by Maheeb J. Ladha, who is the Treasurer of the Network as well as the Co-ordinator of the Peterborough Partnership Against Racial Harassment (PPARH).

He outlined that there were 434 incidents in the city in the year 2001/2, up from 190 in the previous year. Projections for the current year are in the region of 400+ reported cases. Peterborough has an "Open Out" scheme, which includes a series of reporting centres across the city, whereby victims of racial harassment can report cases.

He had pinpointed every reported case on a map of the city, so that it was clear where cases occurred. As a result, there were areas of the city which caused concern, such as the city centre, where there were cases resulting from over-indulgence of alcohol on

Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. There were areas identified where white people apparently felt unsafe and others where BME communities felt the same.

Maheeb defined community cohesion broadly as issues which either bring communities together or drive them apart, and he outlined the understanding on the subject included in the Draft Guidance to local government in a joint Home Office/Local Government Association (LGA) document.

The impact of a racist murder of a white 17 year old on 21st September by a group of Asians in Peterborough had caused serious unrest in the city; its repercussions were felt for a long time.

Following the presentation, there was a long and interesting session covering young people, schools, BME and white communities leading

"parallel lives" and the concern that community cohesion debate had overshadowed and even hijacked the race equality debate and concerns.

Planned activities

The BMEN Board has agreed to support and participate in a **regional conference on racial harassment, planned for February or March 2003** in Peterborough. Further details will be available just before Christmas. The event will concentrate on case law relating to racial harassment.

Together with PPARH and PREC, the BMEN made a submission on the draft joint guidance on Community Cohesion by the Home Office and the LGA. BMEN will have a seminar on the subject later this year or early 2003.

Ila Chandavarkar appointed as BME Network co-ordinator

Ila Chandavarkar will start on the 4th November as the BME Network Co-ordinator. She introduces herself on page two of this newsletter.

**BME Network is funded
by the Home Office/
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**Deadline next issue:
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From the new co-ordinator

Hi, I'm Ila Chandavarkar. I have just joined the BMEN as the Co-ordinator and will start on Monday, the 4th of November.

I have experience in both the voluntary and private sector. I am currently on the management committees of two voluntary organisations which means that I have first hand experience of the difficulties and joys of keeping a small organisation going. For the last eight years, I have worked for Cambridge City Council supporting Council grant-aided organisations, particularly BME groups.

I feel that the BMEN can only work if our members feel it is important. This means that members know what they need the BMEN for, rather than viewing it as another "talking shop". The primary purpose of the BMEN is to advocate for the Black / Minority Ethnic sector regionally. We will not duplicate work that is currently being ably done at a local level. For example, a Chinese community group that is receiving support and advice on funding and organisational development from a local organisation like a Council for Voluntary Services or a Race Equality Council does not need the same work done by us. What we will be able to do is connect groups regionally e.g. help Chinese community groups in different parts of the region share good ideas and interests. We will, however, try to develop ways of meeting needs of member groups who feel that they cannot access help from other organisations.

Another important priority for us will be to meet as many member groups as we can in the next year. We hope that our presence will guarantee that the views of Black / Minority Ethnic groups are a core part of any government or regional consultation. We can use these consultation and partnership links to pass on news to member groups on regional and national initiatives.

This all sounds serious and well-intentioned. I hope that the BMEN will also provide good social and fun opportunities. We have a unique opportunity to show off the significant contribution of the different cultures and diversity that the various Black / Minority Ethnic communities have brought to this region. We hope to start with an informative web site and newsletters and continue to work to develop arts, sports and leisure strategies that include BME interests so that anyone in the region will know where to go for kabadi or kabuki or Carnival. I look forward to my new work, to working with the Board / staff and partners and to meeting you.



About websites and newsletters

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Liesbeth ten Ham. I have worked at the Black and Minority Ethnic Network's office for about six months and I hope many months will follow, working together with Ila, the board and future members of staff in building the Network and making the world a better

place for everybody Well, you've got to be ambitious and I certainly believe that together we can make a difference.

My background is in marketing and my ideas for the development of the communication channels within the Network are plenty. My starting point is that by sharing knowledge, the power that comes with the knowledge multiplies. Today's technology gives plenty of opportunities to share knowledge effectively, and without huge effort.

Website: www.bme-net.co.uk

The website will list who we are and what we do, and much more.

- The News pages will contain any information, political or otherwise, that may be of interest to our members.
- The groups pages will list Black and minority ethnic voluntary groups in the region. This will include search facilities in order for members of the public, who are looking for Polish groups in Bedfordshire, for example, should be able to find them easily.
- Useful organisations and links
- Information on grants and funders including their criteria, contact details and direct links to their websites.

Newsletter

The Network will be producing a quarterly newsletter, in addition to regular e-mails to those on the e-mail mailing list.

A lot of the above words still need to be put into action, but this newsletter is proof of progress already made!

Communication is a two-way process and we need everybody's help in making this work. As a first step it is important that we have all your correct contact details. Please use the reply sheet included with this mailing. Secondly, if you have something that may be of interest to the Network or its members, please get in touch. Let's share knowledge, and multiply power!

BME Network EGM
Wednesday 30th October

Centre at St. Paul's, Cambridge 2-4pm
Contact the office for invitations & papers if you haven't received these or for extra sets.

Members' Spotlight: NACA

In May 2001 the idea for the Norfolk African Community Association (NACA) was formed. Chairman Dr. Francis Dida and one of the founders, explained that the Africans in Norfolk, who are few in numbers and large in geographical spread, had no organisation where they could share their culture and heritage. However, it was not going to be another 'talking shop'. Together with Dr. Eshetu Wondimagegne and others, Francis had the vision of a pro-active organisation, which would organise social and cultural events and also actively promote personal development, mutual support and self-reliance.

More than a year after the idea originated, NACA organised its first heritage evening with African music and exhibitions of African art, pictures and materials which was enjoyed by over forty adults and their children. Wondimagegne: "The emphasis at heritage events will be on educating the young."

In the mean time several successful skills workshops had been held, and a bumper crop of potatoes, pumpkins, beans and other vegetables had been harvested from their model allotment.

Francis explained that the skills workshops are especially to develop self-reliance for people on low income who cannot afford decorators, etc. "They are DIY workshops", summarises Wondimagegne. It may seem strange for an African organisation to organise these workshops, but both of them vividly recall how long it took them to adjust to the English way of life. For example wallpaper and carpets are not a feature of the average African house.

The 500m² organic allotment is the result of Wondimagegne's vision as well as his hard work. Wondimagegne is an agricultural scientist who, in his own words, is still learning about growing vegetables and fruit in the English climate. He manages the allotment, and the nearly hundred volunteers. "The idea is that by working on this model allotment

collectively, individuals will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for gardening and nature conservations. After some time they can take up their own allotment and grow vegetables for their own consumption." Wondimagegne adds: "The experience gained by working on the allotment can of course also lead to a job in gardening."

Records of volunteer hours and the harvest (divided among the volunteers and the pensioners across the fence who always serve cups of tea) are strong proof of the success of this NACA project, as well as the 2nd prize in the best newcomer allotment category of the 'Norwich in Bloom' competition.

In the past year NACA has grown steadily. With a core of 30 members, over 120 supporters from a wide range of backgrounds and a strong management committee of passionate enthusiasts, NACA is thriving.

Wondimagegne: "The most difficult thing has been the rejection of grant support", he says. He is very thankful to the Community Champions Fund which got them started. "The



Dr. Eshetu Wondimagegne and a volunteer on the allotment.

Community Champions Fund just looks for individuals and organisations who have an idea that involves the community. With a lot of other funding bodies we expected to be successful as we thought we fell into their target categories, like ethnic minorities, cultural education, conservation, long-term unemployed, refugees, etc., but that wasn't enough." NACA learned to apply separately for each of its activities, and to never give up. Wondimagegne appealed successfully against a rejection from ACORN, and did get some financial funding for their skills programme. They also received an Earthwatch Millennium Award and from the Norwich City Council.

NACA is still going through a learning process, and they are careful not to produce any branches before having roots. However, depending on support from individuals and organisations, in five years time they can see a big tree, stretching all over the Eastern Region, providing advisory services for Africans, organising skills workshops and large organic allotments, with the emphasis on crop protection and nature conservation.

European Funding

Over 500 million euros came to the UK for cultural projects in the period 1995-99 - find out what's on offer now and how you can apply.

The CULTUREURO seminars focus on opportunities for the cultural sector to access European funding, and will cover:

- brief history and background to the European Union
- implications and opportunities from the enlargement of the EU
- understanding the institutions of the EU: where does the power lie?
- lobbying your MEP and other key EU contacts
- understanding Structural Funds & their relevance to arts & culture
- the range of the trans-national funds available for the cultural sector
- the Culture 2000 programme - 2002-2004
- Case studies of successful EU funded culture projects finding partners for trans-national projects
- tips on completing EU application forms

Seminars will be run in October-November 2002. One of them will be held Monday 18th November in Northampton.

Full details of all the seminars are available from 020 77368668 or www.euclid.info (click on Seminars, Events, Conferences) The cost is £98.70, but subsidies to attend are available in some cases.

Educating young people about our world

Does your group do anything to educate teachers or school children or offer learning resources about different cultures, faiths, places or ways of life? Is this something that you would like to do? If your answer to either of these questions is 'yes', we would like to hear from you!

We are a partnership of Development Educational Resource Centres, Education Advisers and Teacher Trainers in East Anglia, who are trying to find out *who* is doing *what* to educate young people in schools about the wider world.

We are carrying out this research, with funding from the Department for International Development, to enable an exciting new initiative to promote and enable education about

the wider world in schools across this region.

If you think that you might like to get involved, or have information that that could be useful in this research, please contact us at the address below. You might like to include a short description about the group you represent, and what you do or would like to do to help pupils to learn about the world.

Please send your replies to: **Sheila Tucker Research Co-ordinator, Harambee Centre for Development and Environment Education, Emmanuel URC, Trumpington St., Cambridge CB2 1RR, tel: 01223 358116 research@harambeecentre.org.uk**

Ethnicity and health inequalities

Health inequalities work is full of assumptions and myths. If you would like to find out about

evidence-based causes of ethnic inequalities in health, please ring the Eastern Region Public Health Observatory on 01223 330353 and ask for their briefing paper on the above name subject or look at www.erpho.org.uk

Supporting young people

VYSER, the Voluntary Youth Services in Eastern Region are the current link between local/regional youth organisations Government Office, EEDA and Regional Assembly. VYSER is currently in the process of development - it has achieved some temporary funding

for two part-time development workers - one of their tasks is to look at increasing the membership of the network. It is an ideal time to get involved, as they are currently writing a development plan and look to achieve certain funding. Please get in touch for more information with Judy Hunter from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) on 020 7422 8637 or judy@ncvys.org.uk

Internet Access Awards from BT Community Connections scheme

BT Community Connections has over 1,700 internet ready computers that it's offering to community groups and voluntary organisations. A vast range of organisations may apply, including community centres, residents' associations, community regeneration projects, environmental groups, sports groups, ethnic groups, local history groups, and many more. Applicants must explain how (and how often) the computer would be used if they were successful in their application, and must demonstrate how the computer would make a positive impact on their community. The next deadline is 28th February 2003.

The BT Community Website includes terms and conditions and an online application form:

www.btcommunityconnections.com

Or write to BT Community Connections, PO Box 30775, LONDON WC1B 4QE.