The Scope of Strategic Development of
Ethnic Environmental Participation in North Wales
Black Environment Network

Executive summary

A. The context

i. There is at present no initiative in North Wales focused solely on promoting and enabling ethnic environmental participation.

ii. There is now a legal requirement to promote racial equality that applies to all statutory and statutory funded organisations.

iii. Although the Legal Duty to Promote Race Equality only applies to statutory and statutory funded organisations, social inclusion and social cohesion are high on the political agenda. There is therefore, within the voluntary sector, a positive climate for action for involving ethnic communities.

iv. Increasing awareness of their social responsibility , alongside the recognition of the social benefits of engaging with ethnic communities has brought forward organisations and community groups new to this field.

v. Recognising that action for ethnic environmental participation is inextricably linked to social inclusion and a range of outcomes which are environmental, social, cultural, and economic, a range of partners can be involved to work with a common interest.

vi. In areas of ethnic concentration, there is adequate representation of discreet ethnic groups in the form of constituted ethnic community groups, giving a public face to ethnic presence. However in areas of sparse ethnic presence, there are not enough numbers of ethnic persons to enable the forming of such representative groups. This means that, except for a few community groups representing ethnic groups with sufficient numbers, many families and individuals are spread across a large geographical area and are not active members of any constituted groups. This creates logistical problems for direct outreach and information sharing.

B. The engagement of organisations with ethnic environmental participation

i. Organisations included in the research
A range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations were included:
- Because of their social inclusion, or environmental remit
- Because they recognise that environmental participation has significant social, cultural and economic outcomes and have expressed their interest in the potential of ethnic environmental participation in relation to their work

ii. Degree of involvement
Of the 19 organisations:
- 58% had a Race Equality Scheme
- 53% had an outreach programme
- 37% had experience of work with people from BME backgrounds, but 60% of these organisations were under 1 year old and only 20% had one which was over 2 years old

iii. Information and skills
The areas where these organisations which have begun work with ethnic communities felt the need for information, knowledge, experience, skills and support overlapped with the organisations who hadn't established any such work. The sharing of information such as the mapping of BME groups throughout North Wales was seen as useful and labour saving across all of the organisations, but it is the aspects which enable practice which are seen as vital if ethnic inclusion is to be functional.

iv. Training and developmental services
Overall, the organisations commented that they were aware of social inclusion issues relating to their agendas but they felt that they clearly lacked adequate knowledge, experience and practical skills to design and fully implement effective practical action. They felt that the desire for action is being hampered by the lack of knowledge, skills and development support. In comparison to their urban counterparts in the urban inner cities, organisations situated in largely white areas with a sparse ethnic presence do not have the basic understanding and awareness of the needs and

circumstances of ethnic communities. This is primarily because mixing with different cultures is simply less frequent when it is not a feature of everyone's daily life. They were in agreement that training and developmental support would be key in enabling ethnic environmental participation. The following training and services were identified:

a.Training and services related to internal systems/policy:

Awareness raising   76%
Knowledge to develop activities that are socially and culturally relevant.

Understanding needs and skills   92%
Facilitation of contact with ethnic groups, skills that enable staff to work relevantly and effectively with ethnic groups.

Developmental support   88%
Advice to fine tune/plan programmes of work to include ethnic groups.

b.Training and services relating to external systems/front-line staff working in or with communities:

Assessing activities for relevance	68%
Assessing educational/promotional programmes for suitability	80%
Advice on consulting and involving BME communities	92%
Advice on planning cultural events	80%

v. A network or forum
The idea of setting up a network, forum or co-ordinated joint support group to address the issue of ethnic inclusion was agreed to be 'significant' by 99% of the individuals and organisations interviewed. It was felt that additionally the processes addressed will be generic to social inclusion and therefore support the general effort towards social inclusion.

vi. Partnership with BEN
All the organisations interviewed felt BEN is the key organisations relating to ethnic environmental participation and that partnership with BEN would be beneficial at all levels of the work relating to ethnic environmental participation.

C. The views of ethnic community representatives

Ethnic community groups are formed only when there are sufficient numbers of discreet ethnic groups. The sparse ethnic presence in North Wales is not conducive to this. Because of the lack of constituted ethnic community organisations representing the range of ethnic groups in North Wales, the research also drew on the views of key individuals respected by ethnic groups for their views on ethnic issues.

- Other than knowing about the work of BEN across the UK and having environmental knowledge relating to their own interests, none of the participants knew of any specific environmental projects involving BME groups.
- They asserted that environmental issues affect everyone and that there are environmental areas of concern to which the life concerns of people from BME communities are connected. There are opportunities for involving them in becoming interested in learning more about the environment and to find out about the ways in which they play their part in active citizenship.
- BME groups and individuals want to get involved but simply do not have the time or do not know how to go about it.
- The interviewees were not new to the concept of BEN as a catalyst for environmental participation and felt that BEN can play a key role. They felt BEN needed to:
    - Highlight itself in North Wales
    - Communicate the environment as a whole in a way that is relevant to BME communities
    - Create and facilitate opportunities for environmental contact and participation

D. Recommendations

i. A network or forum

A network or forum focused on ethnic environmental participation should be set up to support organisations wishing to involve ethnic communities in environmental participation. It should aim to :

- enable organisations to :
  - share information
  - share good practice
  - pool resources as appropriate
  - provide mutual support
- co-ordinate work, consultations and research on common themes
- act as an overall link to ethnic community representatives
- provide a focus for policy and working practice development
- act as a stimulus to partnership working and joint initiatives or projects

ii. A BEN developmental project for North Wales

BEN should set up a developmental project in North Wales to support the development of ethnic environmental participation. It should aim to:

- provide training and developmental support to organisations wishing to involve ethnic communities in environmental participation
- facilitate contact and support the development of working relationship between ethnic communities and environmental / other relevant organisations
- support ethnic communities undertaking environmental projects and / or working in partnership with environmental organisations
- track developments and to represent the needs, concerns and wishes of ethnic communities in relation to environmental participation
- spearhead the development of methodology for working effectively to enable ethnic environmental participation in an area of sparse ethnic presence

The methodology developed by BEN to engage ethnic groups in the built and natural environment related to the urban scenario, which most of the ethnic population are concentrated. This research was done by Black Environment Network to scope the strategic development of ethnic environmental participation in an area of sparse ethnic presence. The full report, completed in March '04 can be downloaded free from the Resources section of the BEN website

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