

MEWN Cymru is an All Wales umbrella body that aims to provide a platform for the views of Ethnic Minority (EM) women in Wales. MEWN Cymru is currently present in Cardiff, Newport and North Wales. Each area has a Development Worker. MEWN Cymru developed as a group in 1994 and evolved in the depth of an era of 'double discrimination' when there was an acute need for a concerted selfless effort involving networking of women right across Wales to empower individual EM to overcome the barriers faced by them in their participation in the wider Welsh community. Many of the founder members drew their inspiration from their own aspirations and motivations towards seeking an equal status. There was also the broader need to address the issues of 'equality of opportunity' as well as gender respect and dignity. In 1998 three statutory bodies – EOC, REC and CRE, came to play a crucial role in enabling MEWN Cymru to gain a voluntary and charitable status.

Mission

To remove barriers to participation faced by EM women in Wales. Our belief is that by empowering women, challenging barriers and combating racism, MEWN Cymru is working towards change.

Objectives

- To empower visible and non-visible Minority Ethnic women and enable them to develop their own initiatives and participate fully in local and national affairs.
- To promote racial and social integration.
- To act as a voice for EM women in Wales through working closely with policy and key decision makers.
- To ensure that those implementing policies are aware of current developments, and ensuring that policies formulated in Wales are informed by the experience and knowledge of those working on the ground.
- To actively promote anti-discriminatory practices.
- To ensure that the EM women's voluntary sector maximises its potential by building and developing the capacity and professionalism through enhancing development, training and education opportunities to meet the needs of the sector.
- To raise awareness and knowledge of mainstream service providers.

Our 4 key strategic themes:

1. Information dissemination
2. Co-ordination and capacity-building
3. Partnership and pilot projects
4. Policy and representation.

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Acknowledgement

We are indebted to all the women that contributed to this study. Taking time, from your busy schedules, to share your personal and organisational experiences have made 'Voices from Within' what it has become. MEWN Cymru thanks Runa Begum for all her work on this inspiring publication.

Disclaimer

MEWN Cymru has undertaken editorial and proofreading responsibilities of this study and care has been taken to ensure that details are accurate at time of going to press. Apologies for any unintentional changes or omission. Further details can be acquired by contacting the individual organisations.

Forward

“I am very pleased to have the chance to contribute to this very important publication. Looking through its pages will provide any reader with accurate information and real insights into the work of EM women’s organisations in Wales. The message which comes through to me most strongly is of the enormous efforts which go on, throughout Wales, to use the collective strength of women in some very challenging circumstances. In some places, and in some organisations, that determination has won through some very substantial achievements – changing systems providing service sand transforming individual lives and prospects. In others, the struggle still continues to mobilise volunteers, engage local organisations and secure a sound financial basis for activity to take place. What is certain is that learning from one another remains a key asset which women contribute, both to the development of EM voices and to the wider public life of Wales. This publication helps us all to take that learning and lobbying process a big step further, and I warmly congratulate all those who have contributed to it.”

Edwina Hart AM MBE
Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Voices from Within

The EM women's voluntary sector represents women who might be facing, at the very least, two forms of prejudice, either on the basis of their race and or gender. Addressing 'multiple discrimination' with sustainable policy measures requires innovative thinking and equitable partnership working with all stakeholders. Voices from Within documents the diverse experiences of EM women's organisations in Wales. Through a range of methods, EM women's voluntary organisations have developed culturally specific and regionally appropriate services in difficult circumstances. Several EM women continue to experience isolation, exclusion, poverty and an urgent need for support in their communities.

MEWN Cymru is hopeful that through Voices from Within, several equalities agencies and other mainstream partners will raise the profile of the EM women's voluntary sector in Wales. Voices from Within gives an insight into 16 EM women's voluntary organisations. They case-studies give an insight into what the different organisations do and how they have strived to benefit EM women across Wales. The range of services provided by these groups are wide, and examples of this study include: youth work, adult education, training and employment programmes, mental health provisions, care of older people, refuges, counselling, general advice and support work, and social and cultural events. These encompass services that are centred on the needs of EM women in all aspects of their lives.

Despite the existence of EM women's organisations in Wales over the past decade, there has been little investigation into the role of EM women's organisations. Recent interests is probably a reflection of the following factors:

- Growing recognition in public policy of the importance of the voluntary and community sector in general.
- The Macpherson report on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, which placed the issues of racial discrimination and institutional racism back on the agenda.
- Lobbying by MEWN Cymru, as the EM women's umbrella body.
- Development of the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights.
- Increasing commitments to the Race Relations Amendment Act.

MEWN Cymru hopes that this document gives you an overview of the many achievements made by the EM women's voluntary sector in Wales. With your continued support the EM women's voluntary sector will gain the recognition it both needs and deserves. If we are to attain gender and race equality in the twenty-first century, the organisations which carry forward this agenda must be strengthened.

Yolanda Sokiri-Munn
Director
MEWN Cymru

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Introduction

A growing proportion of the population are of Ethnic Minority (EM) heritage. Analyses of the 2001 Census for England and Wales indicate that almost one person in ten self-identify as of EM heritage. In Wales, the highest percentages of EM groups are concentrated in the three urban conurbations of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.

Reports on the ethnic female composition of Wales based on the 2001 Census statistics; state that 1.7% of the population, i.e. 49,911 females, are reported to be from EM backgrounds. Of these the largest single group class categorise themselves within the 'White Other' group (and is made up of mainly non-visible EM women) followed by Pakistanis, Indians, Chinese, Bangladeshi, Mixed: White and Black Caribbean. Together these specific groups account for two thirds of the EM women's population. Of significant importance is the 'Mixed' group making up nearly 30% of the EM population in Wales, which is twice the average of the UK as a whole. This reflects the longstanding nature of the black population, particularly in Cardiff (ONS, 2001).

According to the Commission for Racial Equality, historically, Wales has been marked out from the rest of the UK by being a country of immigration, but the significance of this has not always been picked up by policy makers either from the point of view of the problems generated by social change or that of the successes of its immigrant society. In 2003, the Home Office reported that the total number of asylum seekers that entered Wales was 5,006 of which 309 were female-headed households. The largest groupings of asylum seekers come from Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and Algeria.

A MEWN Cymru study *Bridging the Gap (2005)* identifies the importance of distinguishing between the needs of 'well established' and 'newly settled' minorities such as migrant workers and asylum seekers for whom negotiating even the most basic welfare rights is fraught with difficulty. These groups often face particular hostilities in the community. In addition, ethnic minorities living in rural areas of Wales experience poor support networks and lack access to information and services. The Commission for Racial Equality gives an example of what race equality in Wales has to take account of with an identification that "low ethnic minority numbers outside of the southern crescent, with pockets of high levels of racism in the Valleys, means that the duty to promote good race relations takes on a special significance for relevant public bodies, though they may consider race as a low priority as 'we don't have many of *them* here"

The broad goals of the generic EM community organisations are to improve and sustain the social, economic and physical conditions of their community, to improve the lives of residents and increase self-sufficiency. However, within this broad sector, the needs of EM women are significantly different and require particular understanding and analysis. Women from EM communities are also different from those of mainstream society and comprise many different cultures each with its own distinct characteristics. All the arguments supporting community involvement generally apply to EM women and are reinforced by:

- the scale of social exclusion within EM communities
- gender discrimination
- race victimisation
- historical exclusion from decision-making processes
- services not catering to specific needs and cultural differences
- the short-term and marginal impact of development programmes

The number of EM women's groups in Wales is unknown, however indications are that there are an estimated 20, and like EM women, most are Cardiff based. Listed below are **EM women focused and led organisations** known to be in operation in 2005:

1. **All Wales Saheli Association (All Wales - Cardiff)**
2. **Ashianna (Newport)**
3. **Bangladeshi Women's Association (Cardiff)**
4. **Bangladeshi Women's Group (Cardiff)**
5. **Barkat (Newport)**
6. **BAWSO (All Wales - Cardiff, Newport, Swansea)**
7. **Cardiff Sisters in Action (Cardiff)**
8. **Central African Women's Forum (Cardiff)**
9. **East Cardiff Somali Women's Group (Cardiff)**
10. **MEWN Cymru (All Wales - Cardiff, Newport, North Wales)**
11. **MEWN Swansea (Swansea)**
12. **North Wales Chinese Women's Society (Conwy)**
13. **Sister Act (Newport)**
14. **Sisterhood Movement Club (Newport)**
15. *Sudanese Women's Rights Group (Cardiff)*
16. *Ta'Aleem Al Nyssa (Newport)*
17. *Valley's Women Ethnic Minority Support Group (Rhondda Cynon Taff)*
18. **Women in Action (Cardiff)**
19. **Women Connect First (Cardiff)**
20. **Women Stepping Out (Cardiff)**

The organisations who are indicated above in italicised font are not reflected in this publication. They were all requested and either declined to participate or did not have the necessary time or capacity to complete the paperwork and face-to-face meetings. SHEKINA is based in North Wales and is not an EM women led organisation but it does have an EM focus in its work and was recognised as such in this Case-study Report.

The most popular approach to social inclusion has been consultation but the act of consulting someone does not automatically transmit a sense of engagement – especially where there is a history of consultation that does not result in desirable change and sustainable impact.

What are the causes of social exclusion and inequality?

In practice, it is evident that inclusive policy frameworks need to be supported by complementary measures to ensure that inclusion is achieved. This means recognising the barriers to inclusion whether they are real or perceived – and these include:

- Lack of confidence amongst mainstream partners in the voluntary and community sectors' exacerbated by lack of understanding of the EM women's voluntary sector.
- Limited access to information, advice and technical assistance.
- Capacity constraints in terms of staffing and time – most EM women's organisations are small, targeting localised communities.
- Mistrust of mainstream agencies based upon a belief that services do not adequately address the needs of EM women.
- Limited power and influence to gain institutional support as partners in their bids.
- Local neighbourhood and local community activities not being considered relevant to EM women where their social networks spread across a wide geographical area.
- Language (not just the possibility of it being a foreign language for some but also issues around formality and the use of jargon).
- Bureaucracy – administrative and monitoring requirements placing a heavy burden on limited time and resources.
- Complexity of partnership arrangements.
- Unequal partners and unequal competitors.
- Little effective support or guidance from Government Offices, partly due to their lack of knowledge of the EM women's sector.

- Absence of senior level EM female champions within partnership and institutional structures.

These are complex barriers developed over years of under-investment into the EM women's voluntary and community sectors and their exclusion from decision-making processes. Removing these barriers cannot be achieved through a 'quick hit' but will need resources and mechanisms to be put into place and underwritten by a long-term commitment to race and gender equality and effective engagement. Furthermore, developing effective engagement means revising partnership culture – moving away from a view of EM communities as an issue or problem to be solved and embracing race and gender equality as fundamental to all aspects of their work.

The impact of EM voluntary organisations

There are a range of challenges that are associated with measuring the effectiveness of the work of community organisations, especially in the case of less tangible aspects such as the degree to which self-confidence and self-esteem is built. New Philanthropy Capital's report, *Local action changing lives* provides the following framework that illustrates some of the many positive benefits.

Personal Development

At a personal or individual level, the activities of EM women's organisations can have many positive effects including developing women's self-confidence, skills, abilities or knowledge and changing people's attitudes or behaviour. Projects and activities help people develop coping strategies to deal with certain difficulties, such as debt, isolation, domestic violence and unemployment. Confidence and abilities are developed through recreational activities, such as arts classes and exercise classes, through more formal training programmes, such as IT skills and language training. These organisations also enable people to put their abilities into practice through voluntary placements and employment.

Wealth Creation

This factor can be assessed at an individual, household and community level. For instance, at an individual level debt and benefit advice can help reduce financial poverty, and encourage people to participate in training or to become active volunteers, all help to improve individuals' prospects. The activities of some organisations help broker employment both inside and outside the community or direct women to mainstream agencies that can help find employment.

Developing social and community enterprises also contributes to wealth creation. The EM Voluntary sector is often perceived to focus on social returns. Social enterprises bring significant benefits to communities as they provide jobs, deliver new and improved services, and contribute to economic development.

Strengthening Social Networks

Community organisations play a key role in nurturing and rebuilding social networks and relationships, between both people and organisations. Firstly, the building in which an organisation operates and its activities provide a safe environment for local women to meet. Secondly, they pro-actively seek to build the confidence of their members in order for individuals to feel comfortable and safe outside their immediate environment. Thirdly, activities are organised outside the community in order to expand people's aspirations and experiences. Finally organisations also play a key role in supporting the development of other local or interest specific groups that improve local levels of association.

Linking the big picture with local action

Given the scope of the activities and local knowledge, the EM women's voluntary sector can influence micro and macro level change. For instance, they play a role in influencing government programmes and provide a means for ensuring the views of EM women are fed into programmes.

Identifying and strengthening community assets

There is a perception that deprived communities are 'problem areas' and research within his area shows that the most socially sustainable communities are those that focus on what they have (for example, skills, physical assets, local economy) rather than that what they lack or need. Community organisations play a crucial role in identifying and mobilising assets to enhance the social and economic environment. These organisations believe that local EM women should be active in improving and taking control of their own lives.

Soad Hamdi

Women Connect First

“Community organisations tend to be over-stretched in their operations and in the delivery of their services and activities. The compilation and distribution of this document is a unique initiative which genuinely depicts the many obstacles and hurdles that are faced by women’s groups, particularly in the case of newly emerging voluntary groups. This study gives an honest insight into the morale behind our existence and the struggles faced in sustaining our services. I sincerely hope that the time invested in this key document will attract the attention of the government, potential funders, and the mainstream sector to look seriously at the positive work that is being achieved.”

MEWN Cymru working in Partnership

By enhancing and committing to partnership working we can tackle discrimination, promote racial and social justice, celebrate diversity and create thriving communities. MEWN Cymru has proactively developed partnerships, initiatives and dialogues that demonstrate our commitment to engage in meaningful exchanges with a variety of mainstream agencies, Government, EM voluntary sector, and EM women's organisations.

Partnership working is increasingly being seen as good practice and MEWN Cymru's experiences prove that;

- increased levels of recognition can be acquired of the diversity, independence and distinctive skills and experience of EM women's organisations, and the role and specific contributions made in helping Government achieve its objectives.
- better support and resources can be given to EM women's organisations to help develop the sector's capacity to be a full and equal partner with Government and the mainstream sector.
- joint working promotes effective attempts to take forward the race equality agenda.
- good consultation practices can be established with the EM women's voluntary sector in plans for policy development, implementation and evaluation
- equality of access to quality services can be promoted and that EM women are actively being involved in service planning, performance target setting and scrutiny processes.

MEWN Cymru works in partnership with many existing organisations that offer services and development programmes for women in Wales. However, MEWN Cymru faces a range of limitations in what it can achieve both locally and nationally by its reliance on short-term funding for specific pieces of work. Whilst this has allowed the organisation to pilot important initiatives, it does not provide the security, capacity and continuity necessary to fulfil a strategic role in policy and service development and in sustaining relationships. Nevertheless, MEWN Cymru has persisted and undertakes work in influencing change at a policy level through building strong partnerships and delivering a range of services far beyond its funding capacity. MEWN Cymru projects have focussed on supporting the Governments initiative to better support 'hard to reach' women across Wales and will endeavour to support EM women to be more visible, active, and consulted about the Government's role in Wales.

Some of MEWN Cymru's initiatives have included partnerships with:

- DFES to undertake research on the ICT needs of EM women in Cardiff in partnership with All Wales Saheli Association.
- Barnados Neville Street Project which has led to women engaging in their own community projects. The partnership enabled to set up a Self Help Group with a view to enhancing community life and providing information in workshops covering subjects such as Time Management, Health, Communication skills, Team Building Assertiveness and Interaction.
- Sports Council for Wales, Breast Test Wales, Cervical Screening Wales and the University of Wales College of Medicine to improve access to information and improving the health and well-being of EM women.
- National Museum and Gallery of Wales to improve access to the arts sector.
- Countryside Council for Wales, BEN, Friends of the Earth, WWF, BTCV and Riverside Community Market Association in providing educational awareness of a range of environment and sustainability issues.
- Inland Revenue making possible a 12-month secondment reflecting their commitment to Equal Opportunities and bringing diversity into the mainstream of the Inland Revenue business.
- Willows High School, Cathays High School, Cantonian High School and Fitzalan High School to undertake the Self Development Project in order to promote, provide information and develop self-confidence and a sense of identity amongst adolescent girls.
- A range of EM organisations in order to establish the BME Women's Voices – a Forum providing a means for mutual support and sharing information.

- BAWSO, Tai Hafan in researching the needs of vulnerable women in North Wales (Hidden Needs research).
- EM women's community groups to provide them with free PCs, software and insurance cover (MEWN Swansea, Shekina, Pill Millenium Centre).
- Wales Women's National Coalition to understand the EM women's positions in Public Appointments.
- Mainstream voluntary organisations in order to provide opportunities to make a commitment to establishing work practices that directly influence positive race and gender equality issues through the Can-do Challenge.
- Delivering cultural diversity training to mainstream service-providers via two of our internal projects _ EM Women's Health Awareness Project and Communities and Advice Services Project.

By delivering training, support and joint initiatives with a variety of agencies and EM women there have been opportunities for open dialogue, equitable partnerships and changes to how policies are being delivered. Mainstream agencies have increasingly become aware of the lack of culturally sensitive service provision that can prevent the needs of EM women being addressed.

Runa Begum
Development Worker
MEWN Cymru

Methodology

The main aim of this study is to identify the needs and aspirations of EM women's organisations across Wales. The study was inspired by MEWN Cymru's evolution over the past decade as an umbrella body for EM women's organisations in the voluntary sector. It was identified that much anecdotal evidence exists on the experiences of these organisations however, there were no concrete records, therefore there was a specific need for a central reference point that would not only provide a snap shot of the existence of such organisations but would also enable to challenge policy and key decision makers on inclusion and wider participation within Welsh Society.

The research was achieved initially through the mapping and outreach of the complex and multi-faceted EM women's voluntary sector undertaken through MEWN Cymru's Learn and Earn and BEST projects. The overall objectives of the mapping exercise were to ensure a more effective network, effective sign-posting and an understanding of the conditions within which the EM women's voluntary sector exists. A range of EM organisations were identified across Wales. However, the organisations to be involved in this study would specifically deal with EM women's issues. Consequently, 19 EM women's organisations (both formal and informal) were identified across Wales, all of which were invited to take part in this study.

In order to achieve the aims various research methods were employed, including a contextual review of the sector, semi-structured interviews and a telephone survey with a small number of relevant organisations active within the sector. Due to the lack of resources available to MEWN Cymru it has not been possible to conduct a complete investigation into the diverse nature and existence of the EM women's voluntary sector. Although further work will be required to gain a complete picture, this study demonstrates the position of EM women's organisations and that actions are required by a range of players in Wales.

Cardiff Central African Association Linda Biboussi

“This document will make key decision-makers aware of the reality of the existence of smaller women's groups... it acts as a wake-up call for strategic players to assist and acknowledge the efforts of community groups.”

All Wales Saheli Association

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Aims & objective:

All Wales Saheli Association seeks to develop positive futures to enrich and maximise the quality of the lives of Asian and Muslim children and families in Wales. In so doing, All Wales Saheli Association undertakes a dual synchronised brokerage role to assist mainstream service providers and clients to enhance development of knowledge to increase levels of cultural aptitude by ensuring that religious, cultural and language barriers are taken into consideration of service delivery.

The aims of the organisation are:

- To support Asian and Muslim children and families.
- To promote the understanding, knowledge and awareness of issues affecting Asian/Muslim women and families in Wales and the wider community in general (guided by cultural and religious sensitivity and application of a conducive reference point).
- To liaise with representatives of other voluntary organisations, Government Departments, Statutory Authorities and individuals.
- To mirror the best practices of Asian/Muslim voluntary organisations based outside Wales.

How your organisation began:

During the early 1980s, (within the South Wales region) fruitless attempts were made in setting up a supporting network for Asian and Muslim women and children in Wales. However due to the lack of support and understanding of the intricacies related to cultural and religious factors, and gender issues connected to community leadership the projects' disbanded.

Unsurprisingly the issues effecting Asian and Muslim women and their families escalated. The Asian and Muslim community leaders appeared to be distant to the issues effecting women and young people and the women felt that their problems were disregarded. To manage this on an ad-hoc basis a handful of women from the existing groups continued to work as individuals in a voluntary capacity.

With the encouragement of a key member from the initial 1980's Asian women's group, a successful application to BASSAC's Millennium Award scheme (England) allowed for the opportunity for training and work placements at various Asian/Muslim community projects around the country. The experience and information gained from this opportunity led to All Wales Saheli Association being named formally and constituted in August 2001.

Essentially All Wales Saheli Association was inaugurated with a vision to fundamentally shift attitudes whilst simultaneously synchronising the retaining of cultural and religious identity and managing the balance of east and west living experiences within the UK context.

Staffing & organisation:

Since the organisation's inception its operations have been based on the input and commitment of its volunteers. However, successful fundraising attempts have enabled All Wales Saheli Association to employ 1 part-time paid worker as a Project leader with additional hours worked within a voluntary capacity and 1 part-time paid Outreach worker also with reliance on additional

hours worked within voluntary capacity. All Wales Saheli Association currently has 10 Volunteers.

Who benefits from your service:

The beneficiaries of All Wales Saheli Association's services are two-pronged, firstly Asian and Muslim children and families (particularly women), and secondly Government Departments, Statutory Authorities, Voluntary organisations, and individuals.

Key partnerships:

In progress of All Wales Saheli Association's Mission Statement and objectives, All Wales Saheli Association recognises the need to work cross-culturally and apply a multi-agency integrated approach. In both formal and informal capacities All Wales Saheli Association has established numerous working alliances across the board.

Regardless of sector All Wales Saheli Association views each alliance as cross benefiting all involved. Stakeholders include Community groups, Voluntary sector, Government Departments, Statutory Authorities and other mainstream service providers.

Keeping your organisation going:

Throughout the years of operation, All Wales Saheli Association has identified that there are a range of matters that keep the organisation going. These include:

- The needs, concerns and aspirations of the client group and the willingness to engage in mainstream services.
- Regardless of gender issues and cross cultural dynamics and managing the repercussions of advocating for positive change All Wales Saheli Association board members and volunteers have given unconditional support, direction and commitment to purpose.
- Renewing and sustaining the application of engagement and the reference point applied when working with clients and service providers.
- Our funders - The Welsh Assembly Government - Children and families Unit.

Your organisations successes:

All Wales Saheli Association's success is measurable two fold; within a community context and associations with mainstream service providers.

Within a community context

A vast amount of time has been invested in developing culturally sensitive mechanisms of engagement. The following factors have been contributory to winning community trust;

- Advice and guidance from a cross sphere of professional agents outside Wales.
- Continuous consultation with communities via the community grapevine or directly.
- Observance and reflection of the community's cultural climate and activity.
- Managing patriarchal influence and the culture of gender inequality.
- Insuring that delivery falls within Asian/Muslim persuasions and sensitivities.

Associations with mainstream service providers

- CDX (previously known as SCCD) Annual Conference - Bradford. All Wales Saheli Association designed and delivered workshop: Islamophobia and Community Development
- Urban Forum – Annual Conference Blackpool
- All Wales Saheli Association has delivered workshop for 70 delegates: Islamophobia and Community
- Covered by BBC Wales and supported by WCVA, South Wales Police, CRE and the Association of Muslim Professionals, All Wales Saheli Association delivered the first Muslim Women Every Day Conference in Wales which was in total a three day event in which a total of 450 individuals attended

- Conference based on Tackling Domestic Violence within the Asian Community. In partnership with South Wales Police, Northern Circuit Domestic Violence Forum, All Wales Saheli Association benchmarked the ideology and benefits of tackling Domestic Violence from a faith perspective.
- With the unequivocal support from Ali Jan Haider (author of Child Abuse and Islam and Domestic Abuse – An Islamic Perspective), All Wales Saheli Association has been able to raise valuable discussion and awareness raising around the concerns of domestic abuse and child abuse.
- A Muslim Health Day was held in partnership between Welsh Assembly Government, British Heart Foundation, Muslim Health Network, Barefoot Health Workers Project, All Wales Saheli Association delivered a successful information day where over 100 delegates attended from health and social care practitioners and policy makers and community members.
- Honour Crimes Project in partnership with Amnesty International (Wales).

Community based partnerships

Community based partnerships are also encouraged by All Wales Saheli Association and two examples of our community based working alliances are:

- In partnership with WING (Wales Islamic Network Group), All Wales Saheli Association hosted a symposium and evening dinner event namely "Extinguishing the fire: Our war on terrorism".
- Fundays Playscheme Project has been set up through a lateral partnership with a grassroots women's group. The Fundays Playscheme has delivered numerous Playscheme events one of which being the Ramadan Club.

Current barriers & disappointments:

Negative experiences and disappointments are a reality and part of All Wales Saheli Association's learning and development, however All Wales Saheli Association acknowledges that there are benefits in learning from reciprocal engagement with all stakeholders, which is in part element of All Wales Saheli Association's reference point.

Your future:

In collaboration with the community and mainstream service providers All Wales Saheli Association endeavours to continue efforts of working towards creating trusting relations in order to establish equity through community development and assist in the delivery of culturally and faith sensitive services for all.

Sister Act

Bhunesh Persaud

"This document provides an opportunity for the voices of community groups to be heard from a grass-roots perspective... hopefully this will be a positive step forward giving a huge push for partnership working that is essential and realistic."

Ashianna & Barkat

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Aims & Objective:

- To provide information and support to women who have a significant role in caring for young children.
- To provide a forum for raising awareness of mental health issues within the multi-cultural community of Newport and provide individuals with confidence support and information to members with regard to stressful and difficult issues in their lives.
- To provide a culturally sensitive and safe environment for group discussion and peer support in a range of areas including health, education, emotional, relationships and cultural issues.
- To provide opportunities for women from the local community to develop their skills knowledge and self-confidence.
- To facilitate training and information sessions on Parenting, Nurturing skills and other childcare related issues.
- To run a varied programme of activities, events and sessions which reflect the group member's interests and needs.
- To establish clear guidelines/boundaries for the effective operation of the group.
- To build up a network of contacts within the community and local Newport service provision and agencies, and to facilitate their active involvement in the group.
- Identify gaps in mainstream service provision through networking
- To Invest in community members through training individuals to train others.

How your organisation began:

Ashianna

In 1998, the Gwent Ethnic Minority Service, Newport City Council, Age Concern and Newport Mind came together to form a partnership, through their direct work with Ethnic Minority (EM) communities to address concerns about the needs of EM communities. In order to identify the aims and objectives of the potential group, community members were invited to attend an initial meeting to bring together ideas on how to take the group forward. This idea was hugely welcomed by the community however, with time all partners withdrew from the project. In spite of this withdrawal Newport Mind identified the development potential of such a group to create an environment which would enable individuals to off-load, share skills and gather socially. Consequently, Newport Mind has managed the project ever since.

Barkat

Through Newport Mind's successes in the running of Ashianna in the Maindee area, the organisation was able to identify the need for another multicultural group in the Pillgwenly area. This was of particular interest as there were a significant number of EM women residing in the Pillgwenly area, who due to a range of reasons, were not able to access Ashianna. In the early months of 2001, a series of meetings were held between Newport Mind and Sure Start staff, to discuss the issues, importance and aims of setting up a separate women's group to reflect the diversity of Newport. As a result by mid 2001 it was decided to set up a multicultural family

support group in partnership with Sure Start to provide support and information to women from the diverse community of Newport, especially women who have significant roles in caring for young children. Responsibilities and tasks are agreed and shared among Newport Mind and Sure Start staff to provide appropriate and effective cover, assistance and support to group members depending on events and activities for the smooth running of the group.

Staffing & organisation:

Four paid members of staff are employed in total for Ashianna and Barkat. Ashianna staff are employed by Newport Mind, whilst Surestart employs Barkat staff. Volunteers provide assistance during indoor and outdoor activities, such as Bring & Buy Sale, Eid, Christmas & New Year parties.

Ashianna

One paid part-time facilitator (7hr/wk) facilitates workshops and programmes for Ashianna. The individual seeks to establish clear guidelines and boundaries for the operation of the group and where possible involve group workers in all aspects of the running of the group.

One full-time Newport Mind outreach worker whose work includes (among other Newport Mind responsibilities); running and development of both Ashianna and Barkat, support individuals with specific issues such as housing, financial, health, education matters, form filling, and to provide information as required.

Barkat

One paid part-time facilitator (7hr/wk) facilitates weekly session and is responsible for 6/8 weekly programmes for Barkat.

One full time Outreach Worker, to ensure smooth running and development of Barkat, to provide cover if and as required, networking with other agencies and individual professionals to raise awareness of Newport Mind Services particularly Barkat and Ashianna and how their contribution and input is important in making positive change in the service delivery to the diverse communities of Newport.

Who benefits from your service:

The services of both Ashianna and Barkat are available to women and families from the diverse communities of Newport. It reflects the multicultural city of Newport, enabling women from all walks of life to meet and discuss issues in confidence, share experiences through acceptance, respect and value each others' beliefs and cultures in a non-judgemental, safe and secure environment. In particular, the beneficiaries of Ashianna are mainly those that reside in Maindee, whilst the beneficiaries of Barkat are residents of Pillgwenlly.

Key partnerships:

Sure Start, Newport Local Health Board, GAVO, SEWREC, Communities First Co-ordinators, NHS Trust, Ta' Aleem Al'Nyssa, Gwent Police, BAWSO, Women's Aid, MEWN Cymru, UCWN, Communities Adults Learning, Age Concern, Somali Association, and the Gwent Alcohol Project. Many other organisations and individuals have shown great interest and find this service valuable and effective in both the Maindee and Pillgwenlly areas of Newport. Both Ashianna and Barkat are seen as a platform for sharing information and knowledge as well as providing women support and information on various health related and other matters.

Your organisation's successes:

The services have enabled to empower women from diverse communities by providing support, opportunities and environment to grow in confidence, gain and develop skills and knowledge in many different areas such as health, education parenting.

Both groups have provided a forum for women for group discussion and peer support in a safe and secure atmosphere. A place where they also feel able to share their personal experiences, relationship issues, cultures, beliefs by respecting and accepting individuals in non-judgemental way.

Recognition has been received by other organisations as well as by community members, that both Ashianna and Barkat are valuable services for the parents from diverse communities in Newport where they are able to seek support and information when required.

Group members are very positive, supportive and ambitious in taking ownership and in the development of both groups. For example by bringing new ideas for forthcoming programmes, sharing skills, volunteering in making tea & coffee as well as contributing to the smooth running of the group as required.

Current barriers & disappointments:

There is a lack of financial resources available to extend on going training initiatives that are identified by members as well for a range of other activities and events. Limited funding also affects the effectiveness of certain tasks and hampers further development of the groups this is especially in the case of limited human resources, thus 'time' does not allow for follow-ups and sustaining activities.

Larger venues are required in order to cater for the needs of women and new members. Limited crèche provisions also pose a range of barriers that deter members from participating in the activities. Undoubtedly more places are required for members to leave their young children while they relax, enjoy and gain knowledge and skills with other women.

There is a lack of understanding from mainstream service providers about EM specific issues, resulting in poor utilisation of services and limited scope for development. More importantly, support and recognition is needed from mainstream to encourage successful outcomes.

The Future:

Newport Mind feels that it is important for the services of both Ashianna and Barkat to be recognised and valued strategically. This recognition will allow for future funding, either independent of Newport Mind or through resources under Newport Mind, for the further development of the groups in order to provide for more and effective support to the larger population of Newport. The on-going success and more specifically the growth of the services will depend on acquiring a whole range of resources from staff to individual budgets for each group. Funding needs to be made more available by Local and National Government authorities for further development of both projects as it has been recognised as a valuable service for families in the Maindee and Pillgwenlly areas of Newport particularly women from South Asian backgrounds.

Both groups will continue to focus on fundraising through group events and where possible involve members in a range of activities in planning and organising in order to develop individuals' skills and self-confidence through practical means

Many of the members feel a sense of cultural and personal pride of being part of a successful group that provides essential services to marginalised communities. Newport Mind would like to build on the current successes which enable greater social development and satisfaction. Newport Mind and members of both Ashianna and Barkat look forward to running their services more than once a week to provide support and information to the wider EM communities of Newport.

Bangladeshi Women' s Association (Cardiff)

Contact details

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Aims & Objective:

- To safeguard and promote the cultural heritage and welfare of the Bangladeshi women living in Cardiff.
- To co-operate and liase with local organisations and statutory bodies for the welfare of Bangladeshi women.
- To co-operate and help the Bangladeshi Welfare Association and other ethnic organisations in all welfare activities.

How your organisation began:

Bangladeshi Women's Association has been in existence since the early 1980's with the aim to improve the social welfare of Bangladeshi women living across Cardiff, through providing social, cultural and religious celebrations. A few local women from the Bangladeshi community identified that there was a need to help improve the welfare of Bangladeshi women who in those days were extremely isolated and that there were no opportunities for the women to socialise and meet. Interest was shown from the community thus the group was established by gathering women through home visits and drawing up membership.

Staffing & organisation:

The Association is a constituted group, made up of a voluntary Executive Committee and female members above the age of 18. The Association does not receive any external funding and receives its income internally through an annual subscription of £2 by its members. The Association is overlooked by the Executive Committee member consisting of 13 voluntary members who represent a range of professional and non-professional backgrounds. The Committee meets on average every month in order to ensure the smooth running of the day-to-day management of the Association. The individual Association members are also important to the running of the activities through voluntary assistance. There are approximately 120 women on the membership database.

Who benefits from your services:

The Association targets Bangladeshi women and girls living across Cardiff. Until recently, most of its members were from well-to-do backgrounds and areas of Cardiff however, there are now approximately 100 members who reside in different areas of Cardiff and are representative of a range of professional and non-professional backgrounds. The services of Bangladeshi Women's Association enable to create opportunities for social interaction, cultural gatherings, and enables to generate discussions in improving the welfare of Bangladeshi women. These are based on the dynamic nature of the needs, its members and its management over time.

Key Partnerships:

No strategic partnerships have been formed to date but links to community members, groups and organisations working with the same target groups are continuously maintained. This is mainly due to the limited capacity and resources available to forge partnerships. The Association has experienced limited information and assistance available in developing the ability to create strategic links.

Keeping your organisation going:

Management committee and members all of whom are volunteers are crucial to the running of the Association. A newly elected management committee is developing the Associations future visions and its strategic direction, however much difficulty is being experienced due to the limited capacity and expertise of its committee members.

Members make an annual donation towards the running costs and activities of the Association which is collected during the Annual General Meeting. However, this method of income generation is not consistent or effective. The Association therefore would like to apply for external funds in order to sustain regular activities, but again the groups capacity in terms of ability and resources are limited.

Your organisation's successes:

The Association has organised a range of social and cultural events and trips that reach out to some of the most isolated women living in the most deprived areas in Cardiff. Such events provide a social network for women who rarely get the opportunity to socialise and provide encouragement among one another. Although these attempts may seem small to some, these events cannot be underestimated as socio-cultural factors can prohibit the extent to which Bangladeshi women can socialise. The Association has been in operation since the 1980s and the length of its existence is an achievement in itself. Women are still keen to participate and be involved in the group although the difficulties experienced due to its voluntary nature cannot be denied. The diversity of the membership list provides access to individual women by other voluntary and public organisations for a range of purposes for instance, the recruitment of a Bangladeshi Home Liason Officer for the Cardiff County Council was assisted by these links. The long-term benefits of this group are tenfold as it creates social and development opportunities for women with benefits then being passed down generationally, especially in the case of the social and cultural future of Bengali girls.

Some experiences & disappointments:

Currently the Association is passive and has experienced the lack of appropriate information and support mechanisms to develop a robust management committee and an active membership. Funding for activities and the running of the Association has also been an issue due to not only time owing to the voluntary nature of management but also the lack of skills in fundraising. There is also the question of duplication of efforts, among the different Bangladeshi community groups existing in Cardiff, which may be due to ineffective networking and partnership opportunities.

People with the right skills and expertise are required in order to increase the capacity of group, whilst having the support and encouragement to run the group according to its constitution. The members require training initiatives that provide expertise in managing group dynamics and evolution. The Association identifies the need to encourage the involvement of younger members in order to need balance the robustness of the group. Motivations are sometimes affected by the number and levels of external challenges that are faced by the group, along with the accompanying challenges shaped by social and cultural factors.

The Future:

A skilled and fully developed management committee is needed to improve the social welfare of Bangladeshi women, supporting women to become involved in political developments, along with other major areas of Welsh life that effect Bangladeshi women. The Association endeavours to become more proactive with mainstream developments.

BAWSO (Black Association of Women Step Out LTD) Women's Aid

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Aims & Objectives:

Established in 1995 BAWSO is an all Wales, voluntary organisation, providing specialist service to Black and Minority Ethnic women and children, made homeless through a threat of domestic violence or fleeing domestic violence in Wales. It is affiliated to Welsh Women's Aid and is accredited to the National Assembly Government as a support provider. Since opening its doors, BAWSO has supported hundreds of women and children to rebuild their lives away from fear and violence.

- To provide a place of safety and shelter for BME women and children fleeing Domestic Violence in Wales,
- To provide practical help and support,
- To create an environment where women feel empathy, can communicate and develop their self-esteem,
- To inform and educate the community on the rights and needs of women and children from BME backgrounds,
- To actively promote the right of every Black woman to freely participate in the project.
- To provide shelter in suitable locations which will be accessible to Black women seeking refuge,
- To provide advice and support for Black women in distress who come into contact with the service,
- To provide multi-lingual information regarding services delivered by the project,
- To provide advice and counselling for Black women who come into contact with the project.

How your organisation began:

There was a recognition from those working in the Domestic Violence Sector that issues that affect BME Women and children suffering domestic are complicated and have long-term effect on these women and children, therefore the best way to meet their needs is through a specialist Support provider. BAWSO was set up to meet this need. Convincing statutory and voluntary organisations of the need for a specialist refuge were a struggle in the early days. For the first 5 years, BAWSO depended on not less than 8 funding bodies to survive. We put in; time and expertise in developing a credible organisation and the National Assembly Government approved our application for core funding in our 6th year in operation. This has enabled us develop sustainable services, meeting our all-Wales brief.

Staffing & organisation:

The strategic management and overall responsibility of the organisation lies with the Board of Directors, which consists of 11 women from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds, from Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. The membership of the committee reflects the nature of the communities that we serve, and members have various relevant skills and experiences. One third of the Board are ex-service users.

On the operational level, the delivery of the services is the responsibility of 44 paid staff and 102 volunteers, who includes mentors and interpreters. The day-to-day management of the organisation is the responsibility of the Director.

Who benefits from your service:

BAWSO works specifically with BME women and children. We provide a specialist service that is designed to meet the needs of the women and children accessing our services. In 2004, BAWSO's largest client groups have been from an African origin (39%), followed by Asian (37%), Afro-Caribbean (12%), White (9%) and Arabic (3%).

Referrals come from many agencies i.e., Social Services, Homelessness Department, Women's Aid Organisations, The Police, hospitals, GPs, Schools, Colleges, neighbours, voluntary organisations, advice centre, etc.

Key Partnerships:

BAWSO would not have developed any Projects without the support of The National Assembly Government, Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords, and Welsh Women's Aid, WCVA, BME Voluntary Sector and other voluntary organisations.

However, the Refuge Provision works in partnership the Cardiff County Council & Wales + West, Newport County Council & Charter Housing Association, City and County of Swansea and Swansea Housing Association, Comic Relief, Gwent Police, 'Barbados' Marlborough Road Project, Scarman Trust, MEWN Cymru, Tai Hafan, TEC, WEA (Workers Educational Association), Cardiff Women's Workshop, Learn Direct, Careers Wales, Women Connect First, The Parade, Big Lottery Fund, VCS (Voluntary Community Services), CSV (Community Service Volunteers), VAC (Voluntary Action Cardiff), WCVA (Welsh Council for Voluntary Action), VCVS (Vale Council for Voluntary Services), Barbados Neville Street Project, NRPSI LTD (National Register Public Service Interpreters), Language line, High Wycombe County Council, Cardiff University-Cardiff Centre for Lifelong Learning, BBC Children in Need, Reading is Fundamental Ltd, NHS Riverside-Social Services, St Johns Ambulance, Four winds (mental health), Severn road school, Child psychotherapist trust, Lloyds TSB Foundation, and MENFA.

Keeping your organisation going:

It is not an easy task but BAWSO has had incremental growth due to commitments to ensuring Sustainability. Our "glass is always half full!" and this underpinned by:

- Effective & efficiently use of resources
- Innovation/responsiveness
- Networking & partnership
- Holistic approach/specialist
- Collective/individual ownership
- Professionalism
- Engagement/not disengagement
- Service User centred
- Managing diversity (equality & equity)
- Sound governance structure
- Sound financial base

Your organisations successes:

Over the past nine years BAWSO has experienced a range of successes, among which the organisation is proud of the following achievements:

- Supporting more than 200 BME Women and children at any one time,
- Developing the first BME Women Refuges in South, South West and South East Wales,
- National Assembly Government Accredited support provider,
- Developing and sustaining one of the largest Floating Support Project in Women's Aid,
- Developing and sustaining Partnership across Public, Voluntary and Private Sectors,
- Being identified as a model of Good Practice on National and International levels,
- Quality Mark by the Legal Services Commission.

Current barriers & disappointments:

Despite the successes of growth, BAWSO continues to face an array of multi-faceted challenges which impede on the potential development of the organisation and the benefits that can be filtered at a community level.

- Financial Constraints,
- Community Pressure,
- Raised Expectations,
- Multi-Roles,
- Developing Equal Partnerships,
- Black Women-hidden victims,
- Confidentiality of services,
- Safety of the support worker,
- Safety of the women and children.

Your Future:

BAWSO has worked very hard and has been successful in developing 12 projects. We hope through the support of our key partners that we continue to provide these services to BME Women and children suffering domestic violence in Wales.

**Alison Ghrairi
Cardiff Sisters in Action**

"I believe that this booklet is an excellent way of providing valued information about different organisations who aim to provide appropriate services that all women can benefit from."

**Shekina
Julie Sellars**

"Shekina believes that this document will prove valuable to those minority ethnic organisations that are isolated from the South of Wales. It will be an important factor in bringing the attention of key decision-makers to the work that we do in North Wales and to highlight the help that we need."

Cardiff Sisters In Action (CSIA)

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Aims & objectives:

CSIA uniquely address the difficulties EM women face in accessing health and fitness facilities by ensuring that public leisure facilities provide services/classes that can be accessed by all EM women, particular women of a Muslim background and other women who are often excluded from participating in health and well-being activities.

The aims of the organisation are:

- To benefit EM women and young girls by creating opportunities through physical training and education.
- To provide women only environments which provide a sense of safety and security.
- To improve overall health and well-being.
- To provide opportunities for uniting and socialising.

How your organisation began:

CSIA are a newly formed organisation that was set up in 2003. Its founding members felt that there was a need and high demand for a group that would be able to focus on the barriers that prevent many EM women and girls from accessing existing public services. The group was created with a view to striving to work in partnership with a range of Bodies to raise awareness of the existence of cultural barriers and to remedy access issues.

Staffing & organisation:

Within the first year of operation, CSIA have recruited over 100 members and many are now voluntary assistants. The management committee consists of 5 women, some of whom are full time non-paid staff and others are part time non-paid staff. The management committee informally meet once a week on an ad-hoc basis with intentions to address any problems that may arise in the operations of CSIA. Further to this, the group meets monthly on a formal basis to discuss events, correspondence, finance, classes (both current and future), forthcoming meetings and other general issues. CSIA ensure consistent communication with group members during regular classes and activities that are coordinated, fundraisers and fun days.

Who Benefits from your services:

Although the main target group are Muslim women, the services and efforts of CSIA are open to all EM women and girls residing in Cardiff. Women and girls from African, Asian, Somali, Chinese, Arabic and Malaysian origins currently access the services and take part in the numerous activities, whilst the unique services are of particular benefit to non-visible EM women such as, British and European women who have become marginalised through choosing to practice Islam.

The benefits experienced by members are immense. For instance, the Women only Circuit Training Class has more participants than some public classes open to all. Members have commented on how “brilliant an opportunity” it is to workout in surroundings that they are comfortable with and which meet their needs and wishes. Many members have serious health and fitness issues and until now many of these women have had no real opportunity to address their health problems and improve the quality of their lives. CSIA have thus been able to provide this invaluable and unique service in Cardiff.

Key Partnerships

CSIA are currently working in partnership with Channel View Centre, Eastern Leisure Centre, Maindy and Splott swimming pool and Star Leisure Centre, all of who are eager to extend this partnership further in the forth-coming year. These partnerships have been formed with a view to educating and improving mainstream knowledge on the changes that are needed in public services to ensure that the needs of wider members of society are being met through appropriate approaches and behaviours. These partnerships are invaluable as it brings about more awareness of the levels of sensitivity and understanding that is needed to improve services in order to attract more users and for the overall benefits for society.

Keeping your organisation going:

A dedicated committee has enabled CSIA to establish the group and keep it operating successfully. The significance of the voluntary input of members is enormous to the successful operation of the group. Most pleasing is that many more EM women are now able to use public leisure facilities in order to improve the health and quality of life.

Your organisations successes:

Using Channel View Leisure Centre as an example shows how the input of CSIA has provided guidelines on acceptable behaviour and conduct when dealing with a particular section of society that has specific cultural and religious needs and barriers. For instance providing advice on creating greater understanding about the importance of complete privacy during training and exercise in order to facilitate classes for EM women who would otherwise been excluded. This had enabled the installation of a pin code entry system for women only sessions. Such simple steps are inherent to EM women but were not so obvious or understood for mainstream service providers.

CSIA recognised themselves as a specific user group of public services and regular consultations and meetings took place with the management of a range of leisure facilities. The successes of the partnerships came about by close working and raising awareness, hence the creation of a range of successful sessions and activities that are held by a range of leisure facilities around Cardiff. CSIA has contributed towards the provision of Aerobic classes, Karate classes and more recently the introduction of Circuit sessions which are proving to be very popular. An Activity Hour has also been established which is aimed at teenage girls and young women, providing opportunities to enjoy various activities including wall climbing and trampolining, this has further enabled to introduce new activities to the lives of marginalised women and girls.

A huge amount of interest has been shown by other Leisure and Community Centres who would like to work in partnership with CSIA. This is undoubtedly a positive move towards change and CSIA are optimistic that further encouraging results can be achieved.

Current barriers & disappointments:

There is still an enormous amount of hard work ahead and the lack of understanding towards CSIA has been the main obstacle, which will certainly continue to be a struggle for the group. The limited understanding and support towards the structuring and establishment of the group was most frustrating and on many occasions the very people that should have been encouraging seemed to discouraged the development of CSIA. CSIA has had to work very hard in repeatedly explaining the extreme importance of privacy, numerous repetitive problems have been faced, such as windows not being concealed during women-only gym sessions, and male members of staff leisurely walking into women-only sessions despite the large signs prohibiting them to do so and further to the fact that they have been made aware of the guidelines. It is vital that once rules have been set they are enforced by management and staff at all times, or else most EM women will once again become reluctant to use the centres because of lack of trust in safe guarding their privacy

The Future:

CSIA is pleased with its achievements so far. Through the support of members, CSIA recognises that it's services and efforts are filling a very important gap for EM women and the group anticipates its development to go from strength to strength. Through the acquisition of financial

assistance CSIA will achieve many of its ambitions and will continue to provide a much-needed service throughout the community.

Future aims will be to continue to secure the organisation financially, persist with efforts to unite women and girls from all communities and provide more activities, both social and educational, which will encourage EM women of all ages to adopt a healthier attitude towards exercise and diet. However our main goal is to ensure that community services are accessible to all women, as all women have a right to these services and if bringing about change is necessary then this is something that people need to be made aware of.

Jasmin Chawdhury

Bangladeshi Women's Association

“This document will help to raise awareness of the importance of the existence and development of a group such as this in order to enhance the social capital of Bangladeshi women in Cardiff. Thus assisting in the progression and integration of isolated communities into mainstream society.”

Central African Women's Forum (CAWF)

Contact details

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Aims & Objectives:

- Work for the benefit of Central African Women in the UK by providing advice, information, counselling, translation, and interpreting services and assistance in matters such as health, accommodation, welfare rights, training, employment, education.
- Help asylum seeking and refugee women and children to integrate into Welsh society.
- Assist with interpretation.
- Accompany women to hospitals/doctors/solicitors/schools.
- Provide support and counselling in native languages to women who have been raped during the war.
- Provide advice on housing issues such as maintenance, problems with settling into an unfamiliar neighbourhood etc.

How your organisation began:

The Forum was established in September 2003, by a female volunteer who was assisting the work of the Central African Association (CAA). The volunteer, now Chairperson of the Forum, found that an increased number of women were accessing the services of CAA because of a female presence. Consequently, it was recognised that these women had particular socio-cultural needs and linguistic problems, which were likely to be discussed more openly in a women-only environment. As a result the Chair of CAA encouraged the formation of the Central African Women's Forum.

Staffing & organisation:

The Forum is a constituted group, with 5 Committee Members, who are all either refugees or asylum seekers. There are no paid staff members and those involved in the running of the Forum commit themselves voluntarily. There are 20 female members who are part of the Forum all of whom are again either refugees or asylum seekers.

Meetings are held every 2 months in order to gain updates on activities, updates on individuals' circumstances, address problems and issues faced by individuals and by the Forum, delegate assistance required by individual members, and to identify areas of support.

Who Benefits from your services:

The members of the group are made up of women from the countries of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, Central African Republic, Angola, Chad, Guinea, Gabon and Cameroon. These women mostly reside in Cardiff, mainly in the areas of Adamsdown, Canton, Cathays and Splott. All of who are either refugees or asylum seekers and are mostly single mothers. The Forum therefore seeks to benefit such women and their children by assisting them to integrate into the day-to-day life in Wales.

Key Partnerships:

The CAA is key to the establishment and development of the Forum due to staffing and the level of experience one individual can commit to the running of the Forum. The Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) is also an important partner through its referral of individuals who fit into the

category for assistance. Also the WRC are providing contributions in kind to the printing of the Forum's first leaflet which will enable to reach out to more individuals and promote the service.

Keeping your organisation going:

Volunteers are an essential part of the daily running of the organisation as there are no paid staff. One member, who is also the chairperson, is a full-time volunteer and is available during core office hours. Also the Forum is dependent on assistance from the CAA, which provides office space, transport when required, and an array of advice, which are all crucial to not only the running of the Forum but also to the value of the service provided to its members. As long as there is a gap in the assistance and services provided by mainstream organisations the existence of the Forum will be sustained, particularly as the CAWF is the only group that provides linguistic & cultural support for women with the identified needs.

Your organisations successes:

Within a year of its inception the Forum has helped overcome the feeling of isolation among groups of women who, due to their circumstances, suffer from discrimination, hostility, language barriers, anxiety and helplessness to name but a few. The Forum has made it possible to support and assist such women with problems they face in daily life. This would have been unachievable without its members' commitment through compassion and empathy and making available resources, as little or as big, which can be shared among the group.

Current barriers & disappointments:

Funding limits the effective running of the Forum. Currently the Forum has no funds, and as the Forum exists within the overall work of the CAA, the CAA endeavours to make fundraising applications in order to develop and, more importantly, sustain what has already been established. As a small organisation the CAA feels that it has to try harder, compared to its counterparts, to receive small amounts of funding. Demand for the Forum is high, however there is a lack of manpower to support the running of the Forum as there is only one voluntary member of staff, who is not only committed to the CAWF but also to the work of the CAA. In addition to this, the same volunteer is the only person within the Forum who speaks English, whilst the rest of the members speak French. The degree of recognition of the CAWF's contribution to society is a disappointment, primarily because organisations are willing to refer individuals to them but are not willing to support the cause through funding or the deserved level of acknowledgment.

The Future:

The CAWF aspires to acquire office premises and gain funding to effectively achieve its objectives. The Forum aims to become a one-stop contact point (for female refugees and asylum seekers) for information, guidance & support on resettlement issues including education, employment, health, housing, immigration, self-reliance, training and capacity building. It would like to gain recognition on merit of the services it provides to the Welsh society and in the near future would like to reach out to a range of women from areas other than Central Africa and in so doing CAWF will amend the name of the group as appropriate.

East Cardiff Somali Women's Group (ECSWG)

Contact details

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Aims & objectives:

The main focus of ECSW is to deliver activities in education and training for Somali women and children in the East Cardiff area, whilst also creating an environment for social and psychological support for its members.

- Educational opportunities for children
- Educational opportunities for women
- Community events
- Employment opportunities
- Building Bridges
- Development of the group

How your organisation began:

The ECSWG was established in 2002 and is now a constituted community group. The group began from parental concerns of low academic performance among Somali youngsters, it was identified that a homework club and the provision of a social environment was needed in order to give young Somali people the opportunity to take part in social activities in order to keep them out of trouble. Women from within the community realised that there was a lack of social and psychological support among each other and the creation of a group would provide the ideal opportunity to establish a climate for individuals to strengthen community links.

Staffing & organisation:

The management committee is made up of seven volunteers of different ages, who possess a range of experiences. Many of the women have experience of raising a family and some have had employment experiences in areas such as nursing, teaching and administration. Further to this there are seven other stand-in Committee members.

There are no paid staff and the group operates entirely with the assistance of volunteers. Volunteers take turns to run the office, attend meetings and develop projects on the ground, on a shift work basis.

Who Benefits from your services:

The group targets Somali women and their children, particularly those residing in Splott, Adamsdown, Tremorfa and Roath (East Cardiff). Members consist of approximately 40 women and 100 children. Many of the members are asylum seekers and of refugee status, with the majority of the women being single mothers and are not in paid employment.

Key Partnerships:

Key partnerships are with Voluntary Action Cardiff who have provided support in areas such as funding, training, business plan, the constitution, and so on. Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales through the Communities First Support Network (CFSN) has assisted in acquiring office premises and other general issues. Whilst a consultation event was held with the ECSWG members in order to identify issues and concerns of the community in the local area, feeding into the Communities First initiative through closely working with MEWN Cymru.

Keeping your organisation going:

Each Committee Member donates £5 and individual members pay £2 monthly. This money goes towards arranging community social evenings every 2 months to sustain community cohesion. Volunteer input is also crucial to the running of the group.

Your organisations successes:

A launch event took place in 2003, and over a period of 2 years of establishment, the group has introduced sewing classes, courses, and homework clubs that seek to benefit the welfare of the Somali community. The creation of a social climate cannot be underestimated and the ECSWG have provided an opportunity for the local community to gather and give each other support. An office base was acquired in May 2004 giving the group a base and exposure. Seven computers were donated by Computers in the Community, with a view to starting computer courses for the members.

Current barriers & disappointments:

The lack of education and English skills of the members of the group are proving to be a barrier for participation. Another enormous barrier is getting women out of their homes in order to participate. The feeling of comfort within their own environment hinders the success of participation, not only in mainstream activities but also activities within the group. With this as a constraint in engaging people, it is difficult for a few members of the community to battle for the benefit of the whole community through the group. In addition, such problems deter the desire to attend meetings and seminars that would be beneficial to the cause, as committed individuals have come to find themselves overly-stretched. There is a lack of engagement with other community groups, which is crucial to the development of ECSWG in order to learn from a range of experiences and to receive support and advice.

The Future:

The Group endeavours to become a registered charity and to ensure sustainability of its activities in order to improve the welfare of the Somali community. The Group would like to introduce religion classes for children in order to promote the positive teachings of the Quran. At present this service is only available for them in Butetown which creates difficulties of access for local children. The successes of the Group will seek to ensure that the existence of the Somali population within Cardiff gain recognition and dignity as active members of society, which positively support the mainstream and its activities.

Minority Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN) Swansea

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What are your organisations aims and objectives

MEWN Swansea aims to provide support for EM women and to develop an agenda of action to counter the barriers to form full participation in the Welsh work force and the community.

Our objectives include:

- To set up a multicultural women's centre.
- To empower women from EM communities and enable them to develop their own initiatives and participate fully in mainstream services.
- To provide a regular drop in service for EM women.
- To establish a training unit for EM women which offers courses that will help them enter back into the work force.

How your organisation began:

In 1992 a conference initiated by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Wales Women Euro-Network (WWEN) and the Council for Racial Equality (CRE), was held in Cardiff for EM women from all over Wales, involving representatives from local groups. MEWN Swansea was established in 1993 as a direct result of the recommendations contained in the Cardiff Conference report. In 1996, MEWN Swansea secured enough funding to acquire a base in the Swansea Council for Voluntary Services.

Staffing & organisation:

MEWN Swansea is a registered charity limited by guarantee. The management committee is made up of 12 volunteers from a range of professional (i.e. social services, education, self-employed) and non-professional backgrounds.

The organisation employs 8 paid staff, 5 of which are full time and 3 part-time workers. The organisation also has the input of 5 female volunteers.

Who Benefits from your services:

MEWN Swansea is a forum for EM women living in and around the Swansea Bay area. Women from all EM backgrounds are the main beneficiaries of MEWN Swansea services. The organisation provides an environment for mutual support among EM women and enables them to share both expertise and experiences. However, as MEWN Swansea is the only organisation that supports this group of beneficiaries in outside of the South Wales area, we have had request for assistance from individuals and organisation from outside the remit area.

Key Partnerships:

MEWN Swansea works in close partnership with Swansea Council for Voluntary Services, South Wales Police, Neath-Port Talbot Council, Black Environment Network and Swansea NHS.

Keeping your organisation going:

Although funding is a crucial element of the survival of the organisation, equally of importance are the board members, the volunteers, and women from EM communities, all of which make up the fundamental ingredients in keep the organisation in operation.

Your organisations successes:

MEWN Swansea has undertaken a range of research projects and focus group workshops which inform the provision and creation of the services it provides. In effect, English classes, I.T classes, Childcare, Access to Nursing and Basic Skills, are examples of some of the MEWN Swansea's services. As many of MEWN Swansea's members are mothers, crèche facilities are an important aspect of service provision, which allows women to attend and benefit from the range of activities provided.

As a result of a variety of research projects, MEWN Swansea have worked with a number of public service providers in order to raise awareness of the barriers faced by EM women in effectively making use of their service entitlements. Examples of this include the 'Making Voices Heard' research, which highlighted that there was a lack of real knowledge amongst the EM women about the range of services available and the level of cultural and social insensitivities that were inherent in such services. In 1998, another important study followed 'Who Will Look After the Children?' This research highlighted the childcare issues that EM women face. Consequently MEWN Swansea identified a range of partnerships. In working closely with the Swansea Police Authority, policing services have become more effective in understanding issues that face EM women in relation to the services provided. For instance, there is greater awareness and positive change in the ways in which the Police understand EM people as being the same as their white counterparts when they approach emergency services and that they are also victims of crime, but there is a further realisation that cultural sensitivity is imperative when dealing with EM women. Cultural issues and community expectations around domestic violence are also dealt with more sensitively through better diversity training of police staff. In working on the Swansea Housing Option initiative run by Swansea City and County Council, MEWN Swansea has been able to positively change attitudes in the housing sector. Housing policies are now conscious about the needs of EM women and the importance of allocating residency to EM women in appropriate areas. In the past this was a huge area of concern but in recent times there have been many positive changes.

Furthermore, in working closely on the Safer Swansea initiative run by the Swansea City and County Council, MEWN Swansea was awarded for constructively working with public service providers to raise awareness of the barriers to participation faced by EM women living in the Swansea area. Issues that we directly influenced included securing homes, car safety, keeping children off the streets, providing a homework club.

MEWN Swansea, in partnership with Engender (a Scottish women's organisation) and Oxfam, ran training session under the heading 'Engendering Change'. Its overall aim was to build capacity and give EM women from the voluntary sector the skills, information, and knowledge to influence decision-makers. The project involved training in political and practical skills such as public speaking, provision of information, and understanding of the structures within local and national government.

Current barriers & disappointments:

The problems experienced of funding have been a big disappointment. Despite MEWN Swansea being the only organisation of its kind outside of Cardiff all the way up to North Wales (and is being used by organisations and individual outside of Swansea) it is extremely difficult to acquire funding. Much time is spent on funding and the lack of successful outcomes are not necessarily due to the quality of the completed applications forms. More surprisingly, it seems to be easier to acquire large amounts of money to fund posts, however it has proved difficult to acquire smaller funds that would pay for rent and running costs, which tend to be crucial to the operations of an organisation.

MEWN Swansea is also very much disheartened by the frustrations and the level of difficulties experienced in working towards positive change. Although some positive work has been

achieved (as mentioned above), the change is extremely slow. The organisation is invited to numerous consultations and events run by mainstream organisations on identifying ways to effectively work with EM communities, on the whole these have been of little practical benefit. For instance, basic information that had been produced a decade ago is still being reiterated in current consultation work, without any evidence of change. However, there is appreciation of the difficulties in improving social inclusion, but the question to be asked is “how slow and how much time is it going to take?” Much valuable work has been undertaken and funds are readily available for research however, there are on-going duplications in research and productiveness is limited unless the results are applied and used. Limited understanding and contradictions exist in some public service provisions. For instance, women only swimming sessions are held in public swimming pools however, the lifeguards provided are mostly male. Furthermore, the canteen area where people sit and relax (open to men, women and children) overlooks the pool. This provision was introduced following the ‘Making Voices Heard’ research, exemplifying the limited use of the valuable information acquired through research and consultation.

The Future:

MEWN Swansea would like to pursue with the on-going successes of the efforts of the organisation and endeavour to purchase a building that can be shared with other women-only groups in the Swansea area.

North Wales Chinese Women's Society

Contact details

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Aims & objectives:

- To promote the Chinese Culture
- To benefit Chinese women in North Wales
- To help Chinese women to adapt into the local community

How your organisation began:

In the year 2000, the Chinese had organised an event to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Some of the Chinese women gathered together to make some traditional Chinese food. It was here that some of the women suggested to group together in order to form a group that would work towards benefiting isolated EM women in North Wales.

Staffing & organisation:

The operation of the group is based on the voluntary input of only a few Chinese women.

Who Benefits from your services:

All Chinese women and their families living in North Wales, also friends of the members who are interested in Chinese culture are also welcome to participate.

Key Partnerships & the purposes of these partnerships:

The North Wales Chinese Women's Society is not currently involved in any partnerships.

Keeping your organisation going:

The managing members keep in contact with all other members more or less every month and share information and notices of events and activities by letter. Annual subscription fees are used to fund the activities and refreshments that are arranged by the group.

Your organisations successes:

The group has established a dance team and a choir group that performs at local events. Both groups have been invited to perform at local events organised by other minority groups. This has allowed for positive cultural exchanges among some of the other local communities in North Wales.

The group is particularly proud that regular visits have been set up for its members to visit the elderly and women that are sick.

Current barriers & disappointments:

Not enough volunteer workers and most of them complain about this and that. Also many Chinese women do not speak English, approximately 4-5 women in the group are able to communicate in English. Due to language difficulties and the lack of interpretation services many women resort to travelling to Manchester, especially in the case of visiting a doctor, as it is the nearest location of accessing Chinese speaking services. Mental health services are also an issue as there is no mental health support available due to language difficulties. This has proved to be a very challenging area as one individual returned to China due to the lack of services and another family resorted to a 24-hour supervision. Furthermore, the group has no office space thus meetings are held in a local restaurant.

The Future:

The group would like to apply for funding to introduce new activities that can benefit its members. Interpretation services are crucial to the group members and the local Chinese community and the group requires a permanent place to meet. Health and exercise classes have also been identified as a need.

Sister Act

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Aims & objectives:

The group acts as an umbrella organisation for all EM groups which specifically work with women's issues in the surrounding areas of Newport, in order to provide empowerment to women in order to take forward and deliver an increasingly enhanced agenda for EM women in Newport.

- To improve the quality of life for EM communities in Newport.
- To liaise with EM community groups to create a support network for women and to cater for specifically identified needs
- To empower women in the local community by providing opportunities for skills development, training, and in involving marginalised women in Newport in decision-making processes.
- To work closely with voluntary and statutory organisations to give advice & support to its members.

How your organisation began:

Women in Newport attended a training day arranged by the Communities First Co-ordinator for Pillgwenlly and the Communities First Support Co-ordinator of the EM communities of interest. The training day was attended by women from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, including Arab, Bangladeshi, Indian, Somali, Afro-Caribbean, and Pakistani women, among others. This provided an opportunity for communication in order to express needs and aspirations of local women. This inspired four women, who represented a cross-section of some of the communities in Newport, who were able to identify themselves as key community activists and recognised the need for the development of such a group.

Thus the foundations of the group were laid with a key intention that rather than allowing the agenda for EM women to be led by funders, agencies, or well meaning organisations it would be the women on the ground that would take a lead in the group's evolution and the running of its activities.

Staffing & organisation:

Sister Act is in its infancy stage, is yet to elect a management committee and does not employ any staff, neither paid nor unpaid. Although, the inception of the group was guided by four women from the locality, in effect it operates through the commitment of two of these individual women, due to challenges of family and personal commitments. Sister Act endeavour to recruit a development worker however, this is dependent on the formal establishment of the group through a constitution, which is currently in progress. At present the group is assisted by 30 volunteers on an ad-hoc basis, however the consistency of this responsibility is unbalanced again due to family and cultural restrictions.

Who Benefits from your services:

Sister Act focuses on all EM women residing in Newport, particularly those that are socio-culturally isolated from participating in mainstream services, thus preventing the potential development opportunities for women. Sister Act believe that in focussing on the empowerment of EM women, benefit will not only be gained by individual women, but the development potential of families and communities will be increased. With the positive returns of development efforts, the experiences of progress can be enhanced between generations of marginalised communities.

Key Partnerships & the purposes of these partnerships:

Key partnerships have been formed with Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales (BVSNW) and Newport City Council through their assistance in the setting up of Sister Act. BVSNW currently provide capacity building support in the development of the group. However, beyond this, Sister Act has had many negative experiences of partnership working. For instance partnership has become rhetoric for the Welsh Assembly Government, key funders, and other key organisations, in order to justify control and the distribution of limited funding. It seems to also be fashionable to talk about partnership work however, effective partnerships are not evidenced resulting in disillusion and apathy of smaller community groups. Key policy and decision-makers must realise the reality of community work through effectively listening to those from a grassroots level and ensure effective evaluation of all partnership work.

Keeping your organisation going:

The support and advice provided by BVSNW and an independent community development practitioner has been key to the operations of Sister Act. Whilst the strength and commitment of the founder members and the practical input and support of the volunteer are invaluable to the operation of the group.

Funding is inevitably a fundamental element in the running of the group, however as funding is not currently available, the group requires advice on the most appropriate funding streams available.

Your organisations successes:

Although in its infancy stage, to date Sister Act has organised a 'communication exchange day' to identify the gaps in service provision and a day trip to Margam Park.

More importantly, Sister Act has stirred the views of a few locally established organisations and has angered some people with views that "we don't want them to do what we ought to be doing". Sister Act has objective opinions to feel that many established organisations are content with the level of their activities however, through the existence of Sister Act, many community organisations are waking up to the reality that much more needs to be done in order to ensure the empowerment of marginalised communities. As more community groups emerge it provides older organisations with the inspiration to further commit to their work. The nature of community work is so that a range of personalities and agendas are brought together. However, it is the acceptance of these challenges and the identification of workable solutions that has allowed Sister Act to attain the confidence and cooperation of a range of people, which has consequently aided the development of healthier lines of communication. The issue of trust will be an on-going issue as Sister Act aims to sustain and build on the relationships already forged and will endeavour to work towards greater understanding.

Current barriers & disappointments:

As well as external challenges Sister Act has experienced a range of internal challenges posed by group managing dynamics. For instance, members have experienced a misinterpretation of ideas, battle of strong wills, roles fought over, therefore a third party has stepped in to mediate problems. People have certain habits and the lack of understanding can be damaging to the progress and development of the group. Sister Act would suggest that larger voluntary organisations and mainstream bodies provide training, guidance and support in capacity building through management skills.

Human resources are a contentious issue for community groups due to the level of funding available for the operation of initiatives and the group. Many organisations operate without any formal funding and the fear for Sister Act is the efforts placed on funding will only allow to recruit one development worker who will be responsible for the running of the whole group. However, this is not feasible for the effective running of any programme as there are needs for core activities, for example, administration, finance etc. Furthermore community workers are hugely underpaid and under-resourced to provide effective services and support "its almost like they [funders] want blood," as a result people begin to resent funding providers. Racial discrimination

is also exists among many mainstream providers. All these issues call for direct involvement with EM groups in order to appreciate and respect the efforts and the level of work achieved.

Groups such as Sister Act rely on the invaluable input of volunteers however there is a huge need to present such individuals with the respect they are due along with incentives to keep up with their on-going efforts as they can provide as much support as paid individuals.

Sister Act question as to why it required a person come from Cardiff to identify needs and help create a group in Newport? Although there is appreciation of the support provided, there should such services and support available locally.

Small organisations experience limited support and are not professional in understanding the multi-dimensional issues that affect the operations of a voluntary group or the many barriers that exist in setting one up.

The group is and has been experiencing a range of obstacles, with many that have been overcome and many which are yet to be resolved. For instance, there are a range of trust and openness issues that needed to be dealt with on a community and organisational level and this will be an on-going challenge in the operation of the organisation. Furthermore new EM groups are in fear of 'stepping on toes' whilst established groups are afraid of competition. However, this on the other hand be seen as a positive aspect as it can be interpreted as a battle which everyone is going through. The importance thing here is to pool money and resources together in order to deliver effective outcomes.

However, although this is being tried in places such as Cardiff, smaller groups do not have the monetary or time capacity to travel outside of their region.

Although Sister Act have gained much support from the community, voluntary sector and the mainstream, there the group feels apprehension about the different interests that exist from groups and organisations that have more prominence. Sister Act, as an emerging group are experiencing vulnerability from hidden agendas held by larger groups.

A huge amount of resources are spent on consultations/seminars with lunch and refreshments provided, but the question is to what extent are the results used in an effective manner? Here, issues need to be analysed without rhetoric.

The Future:

The operation of Sister Act is currently based on volunteer input therefore the group needs support in general advice, funding and training. Sister Act would like to develop into a formal organisation, with a constitution, Management committee and paid workers. Sister Act aims to become a unified voice for EM women and EM women's groups in Newport.

Sisterhood Movement Club (SMC)

Contact details

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Aims and Objectives:

- To act as a link and network for women in Newport and other neighbouring areas through social events and gatherings.
- To provide support to women through a signposting service.
- To provide a safe environment for women.
- Encourage, empower and motivate women to engage in social activities available to boost self-confidence, self-esteem, identity and value in life.
- Facilitate social, leisure and educational activities and gatherings that will enable women to have their say within the community.

How the organisation began:

The Club started with a group of friends meeting over coffee. Consequently social gatherings and parties began to be arranged among these individuals. This brought about the realisation that individuals within the group were gaining a great deal of satisfaction and benefits through support and encouragement during times of joy and difficulties. As a stronger EM group of people within society, individuals became conscious about other EM women who may have lost their confidence through the array of difficulties experienced in life in being not only a minority but also marginalised due to social and cultural factors. It was also identified that not only was it that vulnerable EM women required support but women that seemed to be much stronger in nature also lacked the encouragement to develop their full potential. SMC was thus formed and was launched in September 2004.

Who benefits from your services:

Women from all walks of life are welcome to make use of the services provided by the SMC.

Staffing and organisation:

Since SMC has only recently been established, the group relies on non-paid voluntary staff.

Key partnerships:

Voluntary, community, public and statutory bodies are all key to SMC as they are all significant links to reach wider women within the community, without one another any organisation will find it difficult to operate successfully

Keep your organisation going:

The SMC operates through the commitment of friends who are willing to spend their personal time in order to develop the group. Furthermore, the Newport Filipino Bureau has also provided enormous levels of support to the development of the group. Membership fees of £3 per month go towards supporting the Clubs activities and its sisters.

Your organisations successes:

So far, due to the infancy of the group, SMC are very proud that the official launch of the group was possible after only two months of considering the establishment of it. Much positive feedback has been received from other voluntary organisations on the diversity of the group.

Current barriers & disappointments:

Work commitments hinder the smooth running of the group. Family commitments are also an obstacle to SMC's operations as some individuals lack support although they are committed to the intentions of SMC. SMC has also received negative feedback, such as "it wouldn't work or last," however these are the issues that SMC takes on board as a challenge due to the dedication and belief for the cause. SMC is also experiencing negative experiences through the lack of funding available.

The Future:

SMC aspires to become an entry point for networking with members of a range of communities and to become in the future a strong link to EM women. The intention is to work in with a range of organisations and link in with those that have similar objectives and purposes. The group endeavours to undertake a range of projects/events that would benefit and encourage more women to participate.

'Shekina' Multicultural Women's group

Contact details

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Aims & objectives:

Shekina's brief is to provide women from all nationalities who are visiting North Wales, particularly through study, with an environment to create friendship and understanding at all levels. The emphasis is on friendship and the centre is very informal and user friendly.

How your organisation began:

The group was founded by a student from Nigeria, Stella Adigun, in 1999. She realised that the wives and families of many EM students were feeling isolated and somewhat excluded in their new environment. Better communication and ways of adapting to the Welsh community were needed. Mrs Adigun organised a committee and the plans were made. Initially language classes and various social events were organised. Later with the help of Coleg Harlech Workers Education Association (CHWEA) more classes were introduced and more local women were recruited to join the classes which eventually numbered about 18 and varied in subjects from several languages and IT to Art and Yoga, etc. Through this 'Shekina' endeavoured to promote a better understanding among women of different cultures in Bangor.

Staffing & organisation:

Shekina itself has no paid staff. However, its tutors are paid directly by the CHWEA and the voluntary Co-ordinator receives 10 hrs pay per week for Development work also funded by CHWEA. Over the years a great many volunteers (which can fluctuate between 5 and 10 in any one year), especially the Co-ordinator and others involved with administration and finance have attended regularly and consistently over the years, Committee members too have become involved with various projects, social events and cultural visits all on a voluntary basis.

Who Benefits from your services:

Our primary target group remains to be EM women accompanying their husbands who study at Bangor University or Gwynedd Hospital. There are a few EM women living in the Bangor area and Shekina has made every effort to reach out to them. Recently a Chinese woman working in Caernarfon who busy with studies at the Menai Coleg joined the organisation as a volunteer. Since then Shekina has had much more contact with the Chinese community in the area and the volunteer has encouraged several women to join Shekina's classes and attend various social events. Local non-ethnic women continue to attend our classes and events too.

The classes benefit the women in several ways including; getting them out of the house and into a friendly environment, teaching them new skills and encouraging them to find work should they want to, break down racial barriers, and helping women to come together in friendship and understanding. Over the years several women have gone onto higher education and become mature students studying for PhDs and teaching certificates.

Key Partnerships:

We have support from and partnerships with a number of groups: CHWEA, WCVA Social Risk Fund, Gwynedd Council, NAICE, Principality Building Society and MEWN Cymru. These partnerships enable us to network and support other organisations to access funding and to spread the word regarding the work we do. We are a point of contact for the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Social Services, and Local Authorities regarding issues relating to EM communities.

Keeping your organisation going:

It has not always been easy to keep going. Funds, memberships and volunteers fluctuate. This means that considerable responsibility tends to be carried by just a few stalwarts. As it falls upon the Volunteer Co-ordinator to access funds in addition to the running of projects, networking, and attending meetings, the burden at times becomes so great that enthusiasm runs low. Fortunately Shekina has strong and willing volunteers who lighten this burden, however it is still difficult to access funds. Also in being the only organisation in North Wales which caters for women who are not permanent residents in the UK, but nevertheless are temporary residents for 3 years, Shekina feels that funding should be easier to obtain. Sustainability seems to be the crunch of the problem as with most voluntary groups.

Your organisations successes:

Shekina was fortunate to receive a generous grant from WCVA Social Risk Fund and this has enabled to continue and offer more assistance to members and volunteers. For the first time this grant has enabled to provide courses with volunteer tutors, courses which otherwise would not have been funded. Examples of such courses include English as a second language, Computers for beginners, Conversational Spanish and Creative writing. In 2003 Shekina won the Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales' Diversity Award.

Many members continue to introduce new families and are appreciative of Shekina's efforts. Many have to return to their home countries, most of which keep in touch via e-mail, which is very encouraging. Several have become volunteers, gone onto higher education or returned home with a positive image of both North Wales and its people. Some have decided to come to Bangor because of Shekina's reputation and activities they provide for isolated women.

Current barriers & disappointments:

Shekina's experiences have been very positive on the whole. The organisation enjoys meeting with and learning from those women who come from other countries. It has not always been easy to recruit volunteers from among them, and this is perhaps the biggest disappointment to date and needs attention. New members tend to lack confidence especially if their use of English is not fluent, whilst family commitments often keep them from becoming involved. However some women have come forward as volunteers, which have proved very helpful indeed. One lady from Mexico even stepped in to teach Spanish. The advantages of the project mean that women come together to share their experiences and expertise in a friendly and non-threatening environment. Shekina feels this is a core necessity of our success. We have had women from Nepal who have taught other women knitting skills, women from Japan who have given lessons in Origami, there have also been tea parties and theatre visits.

The Future:

Shekina continues to apply for more funding and hope to extend services further, for instance Shekina endeavours to introduce mother and baby groups, healthy eating seminars, driving tuition, drop in sessions for legal matters, among a range of others however, funding for these are yet to be sought. When CHWEA found that they could no longer pay for nursery fees for the EM women attending language classes, the Social Risk Fund stepped in and funded a grant to pay volunteers tutor expenses in order for women to continue to take advantage of Shekina's services. If our new applications are accepted then the organisation can undoubtedly do much more. Shekina continues to be positive and hopes that in the future to form new partnerships with the North Wales Race Equality Network, MEWN Cymru, and some of the other voluntary organisations setting up in the area. Women's groups in the North of Wales need to work together in order to find common interests and partnerships (leading to future funding bids).

Women in Action (WiA)

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Aims & objectives:

Women in Action aims to support women from socially excluded backgrounds to take part in health and well-being activities. The objects for which WIA is established are to reach out to and draw in otherwise excluded members of Ethnic Minority communities through health and well-being activities.

- To promote and to foster the spirit of group building by building a supportive group which makes it a pleasure to gain both the health benefits of taking part in culturally appropriate physical activity, and the social benefits of group membership.
- To share and exchange information and experience about other health related activities.
- To explore other opportunities that may be of interest to group members.
- To support and encourage identified progress routes into training, education and employment.

How the organisation began:

Under the Sustainable Action Health Research Programme (funded by the Welsh Assembly Government) undertaken by Barefoot Health Workers project (Cardiff Local Health Board) and the Triangle Project in Riverside (University of Wales), research highlighted that there was a need for accessible health and well-being activities for women from the many culturally diverse communities of Cardiff. In particular, women-only swimming was identified as a priority. Both research projects funded the initial pilot scheme, for 16 weeks between September 2001 and March 2002 however, further funding was required for the continuation of the success of the swimming provisions. However, in order to apply for a continuation of funding the group required a constitution and the name Women in Action (WiA) was chosen and a committee was formed.

Staffing & organisation:

At present the Barefoot Health Workers Project and the Triangle Project both oversee and support the activities and development of Women in Action. However, WiA is a constituted group that has a management committee consisting of 13 female volunteers from diverse ethnic backgrounds and a range of professional and non-professional experiences.

Who Benefits from your services:

So far 150 Women from various EM communities living in some of the most deprived areas in Cardiff have taken part in and benefited from a range of activities. The benefits of our activities are tenfold and cannot be underestimated. The possibilities of access to activities provide women with not only improved physical health, such as arthritis and weight problems, but have also enabled the building of social capital among the women. The exchange of social support has helped marginalised women with improved mental well-being and assisted them with dealing with stress. The social environment provided through this ability to network enables the women to identify and encourage each other about potential opportunities that exist within society. It has created possibilities to build self-esteem and confidence, which have also led to various progression routes for employment.

In addition to this due to the group's facilitation by the Local Health Board access to information on health initiatives are easily accessible and distributed.

Key Partnerships:

The Barefoot Health Workers project (Cardiff Local Health Board) and the Triangle Project in Riverside (University of Wales) are supporting partners and have enabled the creation of WiA.

The Local Authority's Leisure and Lifelong Learning department has been a key partner to WiA. Initially they supported the creation of the constitution and assisted in accessing funds. This alliance has been further reinforced by the partnership work through the Women-Only Development Project, i.e. training EM women as lifeguards. This project is now supported by the Sports Council for Wales, Maindy pool, Eastern Leisure Centre and Splott Swimming Pool.

A 1-year Aerobics initiative was undertaken in partnership with Butetown and Grangetown Healthy Living Programme.

Throughout the development of WiA, the group looks to increase its number of partnerships in order to create greater impact and benefit to the lives of the women it serves.

Keeping your organisation going:

The support and dedication of volunteers and members is crucial in creating a friendly and safe environment for women from diverse and multi-ethnic background. A small number of volunteers keep the organisation in operation, therefore trust and good relations are important. Interesting and practical activities also keep members motivated, whilst the social environment brings people together and is very important.

Moreover, the support and advice from Barefoot Health Workers Project and Triangle project in Riverside is paramount to the operations and development of the group.

Your organisations successes:

WiA have been successful in reaching out to and drawing in women who are otherwise very isolated and have difficulties in accessing facilities and activities to improve their health and lifestyle. The success story of the women-only swimming classes is only a fraction of what has been achieved. As the demand for these provisions grow, the supply of female lifeguards are limited, making it difficult to cover these sessions. As a result members of WiA, Cardiff County Council and the management of Splott and Maindy pool discussed the possibility of training WiA members as lifeguards. This initiative, known as Women only Development Project will not only address the issue of shortages in female lifeguards but also create diverse employment opportunities for EM women to be trained as lifeguards and swimming instructors.

WiA's first newsletter was launched in an event held on 12 October In addition to the newsletter being a helpful resource it was compiled directly from the input of WiA members. This enabled the members to gain an understanding of the processes involved in its production, whilst gaining basic level training in design, layout and media packages.

The event was held in celebration of WiA's efforts and achievements and helped to raise the profile of the group. The event was successful in informing a range of organisations of the groups' current activities, its future aspiration and the challenges it faces. Much positive feedback was received. Trevor Gough, Head of Services and Leisure of Cardiff County Council, has requested the distribution of the WiA newsletter to councillors and Council departments in order to inform mainstream society of the positive outcomes achieved by the group. The BBC have also shown interest in WiA and have approached the group with request to place its newsletter on the BBC website for coverage. This has provided great encouragement and motivation for the groups' ongoing efforts.

WiA organised a weekend trip to The National Trust Stackpole Centre in Pembrokeshire. Thirty members took part and the trip was a new experience for almost all the group members. It provided an opportunity for the women to experience not only a weekend away but also to

experience the diversity of the Welsh landscape. A range of team building activities took place in order to improve a sense of well-being.

There are numerous individual success stories of WiA's members gaining employment in both the mainstream and in the creation of small-scale enterprises.

Current barriers & disappointments:

The support and advice from Barefoot Health Workers Project and Triangle project in Riverside has sustained the project so far. However, the involvement of these two projects is due to end and there is a degree of uncertainty in relation to support. Consequently, the group endeavours to look into training initiatives that are available in order to not only sustain the group but also develop it. The idea is to gain funding for a paid co-ordinator and to further build the capacity of the group in areas of funding. Furthermore, the withdrawal of the two projects calls for commitment from individual group members to take over the co-ordination, continuation and development of WiA. However, there is a lack of support in funding advice, capacity building and management. This is of concern to the group due to the lack of resources and management expertise currently available.

Experiences of mainstream services have also been disappointing, as there is a lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity in relation to the needs of EM women. Equality and diversity training should be made mandatory and not considered an add-on in order to eliminate the ignorance that currently exists.

The Future:

To continue with the development of the group, introduce new opportunities and other health related activities for the women by obtaining long term funding. The group also anticipates reaching out to non-visible women that reside in Cardiff and increase its membership.

Rahila Hamid

Ashianna

“Indeed from women’s point of view there is a great demand for our service to develop and offer support and information more than once a week. At present Newport Mind being a charity organisation with limited resources has no specific fund for Ashianna which continues to provide an effective service. Help and assistance is required from decision makers in terms of funding as there is an apparent need with the demand growing day by day.”

Women Connect First Ltd (WCF)

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Aims and objectives:

Women Connect First (WCF) organisation provides all the women from EM communities specifically those who are disadvantaged and marginalized, including Asylum Seekers and Refugees, access to a wide range of Educational training, Advice & Counselling, Career guidance, Employment and Personal support.

From March 2001 to September 2003 WCF's main activities had included basic skills training, advice & counselling, and volunteering. This was a partnership project created between Women's Workshop and BAWSO Women's Aid. Recently WCF secured new funding from the Home Office until March 2006 for a partnership programme with the Cardiff County Council (CCC).

In order to bridge the gap between CCC & EM Communities, WCF in partnership with the CCC, provide training courses & job shadowing, and focus groups/seminars for EM Women delivered at CCC to give an insight into how the local authority works. This enables EM women to access CCC employment and services.

Aims & Objectives:

- Empower EM Women especially those that are disadvantaged and marginalised.
- Promote racial equality, social inclusion, community cohesion, equal opportunities and social justice.
- Offer EM women the opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge through specifically tailored free training and education, which will lead to further training/education or employment
- Raise the awareness of mainstream organisations and members of the Welsh society of EM specific cultures, beliefs and needs.
- Training is complemented by the advice/counselling, mediation, career guidance and support services, which is also available to any women from the EM communities wishing to tap into this provision.
- Volunteering Service.

How your organisation began:

WCF was established in March 2001 to empower EM women in South Wales and enable them to take an active role in the Welsh economy. The organisation was prompted by the Stephen Lawrence case and was set up through the Home Office's Race Equality Unit and the Connecting Community Scheme. It was initiated through its two mother organisations; BAWSO and The Women's Workshop.

Staffing & organisation:

WCF has 7 paid staff, 2 of which are full-time and 5 of which are part-time paid workers.

Volunteers: Since March 2001 up to July 2004: 60 volunteers registered with WCF, 20 of which secured employment subsequent to their volunteering experiences.

Directors Board: WCF has a voluntary Directors Board of 8 members who are professionals working in the statutory or voluntary sector.

Who benefits from your services:

WCF aims to target women from EM communities in Wales, who are marginalised and who have difficulty accessing mainstream education, training, employment opportunities, advice and support. This includes EM women returnees who aim to return to training and employment, EM women who suffered or fleeing from domestic violence or forced marriage, asylum seekers and refugees, and women who have mental, emotional or any other difficulties.

The primary objective of WCF is to outreach women from EM communities who are experiencing poverty and social exclusion and enable them to access a cost-free service and empower them by providing the opportunities to gain new skills, move into employment and play a positive role in the Welsh economy.

Key Partnerships:

WCF's main partnership is with Cardiff County Council. However, links are made with other organisations in Cardiff such as; AWEMA, Cardiff University – Centre for Life long learning: Widening Participation Department, BAWSO Women's Aid, Cardiff ITEC, SOVA, Women's Workshop, BVSNW, MEWN Cymru, VAC (Voluntary Action in Cardiff), Race Equality First, Barnado's, Asylum Seekers Unit at CCC and many other organisations which provide similar services. These partnerships mainly involve client referrals, sign-posting, networking and sharing expertise/experience, human and material resources. The most recent partnership which is in its developing phase is a joint application to EQUAL European Funding together with AWEMA (as the Lead Organisation) and some other partner organisations from EM voluntary organisations in Wales.

Keeping your organisation going:

Fundamental to the operation of WCF is the commitment of all staff, volunteers and Board of Directors who believe in the good cause and feel sense of ownership through their dedication and hard work. WCF continuously gear and adapt services to meet the needs of the grass roots level of EM Women and their families living in South Wales, whilst commit to good networking and maintaining professional good practice standards of work and service. It is also important for WCF to be able to deal with organisations and individuals at all levels statutory/voluntary/service users.

Also essential to the existence of WCF is the ability to provide volunteering services for EM women to enable them to gain work experience and improve their skills to successfully realise their full potential and secure employment. Providing interpreting services to ensure the excellent services for new arrivals and women, who do not have good command of English language. WCF has a willingness to work in partnership. Crucial to the successes of WCF services is the provision of childcare support and travel expenses.

Your organisations successes:

WCF started as a partnership project and provided excellent service to grass roots level EM women, and successfully developed into independent voluntary organisation, registered as a company with its own Board of Directors. Although WCF feel that this is an achievement in itself, the following are further successes the organisation, its staff, volunteers and members are proud of.

- Succeeding in achieving very high standards of service, through which WCF came on top of 75 projects funded by The Home Office, Connecting Communities scheme during the first round of funding between March 2001 to March 2003.
- Establishment of a successful volunteering service, which was an unexpected positive outcome.
- Building of an excellent professional image of WCF in a short period of three years, which permitted to establish a formal partnership with CCC to enable the council to outreach to EM communities.
- Success in securing a second round of funding from Home Office until March 2006.
- Encouragement of other organisations such as Cardiff University and Cardiff ITEC to run ESOL classes and basic skills training in partnership with WCF.

Current barriers & disappointments:

WCF feel that the voluntary sector is very vulnerable as it has to maintain its own sustainability, which puts all staff under tremendous pressure to fundraise, secure funding with the strain of uncertainty of the inability to sustain future long-term plans.

There are further conflicts and splits between different EM groups and communities, which slows down progress and negatively influences funders' decision-making processes. This is also affected by the lack of coordination and the limited existence of partnership mechanisms resulting in wasting resources and not being able to serve the communities as effectively as required. Competition rather than partnership exists between the many different EM organisations. Moreover, Institutional racism/discrimination still applies and places extra burden on staff working with and for EM women.

Role models, mentors and well-trained EM staff are needed to encourage and motivate staff members and women at a grass-roots level of the successes and achievements of EM women. Conversely, EM women who wish to play an active economic role in Welsh society face a number of social and cultural barriers, this further causes staff to face obstacles in effectively working with individuals.

On a more practical scale, there is a desperate need for EM nurseries/crèche facilities and EM childcare staff as many women are restricted from taking up services due to maternal duties.

The Future:

WCF is hoping and working towards securing core funding, whilst working towards expanding its services on a South Wales and further on an all-Wales basis. WCF would like to develop a research programme to study further into the issues that have been identified, raised and tackled during the past three years of the operation of WCF. The organisation would also like to provide a more comprehensive service by reaching out to clients' extended families, husbands and children. On a larger scale WCF aspires to develop national and international programmes aiming at empowering EM women and improving their quality of life, whilst assisting them to fully integrate into British society and internationally realise their full potential.

Shahara Haque

Women in Action

“This document will raise the profile of the group and of its achievements to date despite the many challenges faced. Currently there is a lack of awareness and engagement of small community groups, this document will therefore be crucial in exemplify the successes and existence of initiatives, consequently promoting effective engagement processes not only among community groups but also within the mainstream.” .

Conclusion & Recommendations

The section is based on the ideas and suggestions derived from the research as well as MEWN Cymru's experiences gained throughout the years in working with a range of EM women and EM women's organisations. The recommendations have been highlighted in boxes for each section.

The individual organisations that have participated in this study are of different sizes and serve similar but most definitely different purposes. In view of the many obstacles that these organisations and their members face, they often achieve a great deal with very few resources. On the one hand, the EM women's voluntary sector plays a role in maintaining community (social, religious and cultural) identity, in promoting community welfare, and in sustaining community as 'community'. On the other hand, the sector performs an advocacy function – challenging the wider society to recognise the needs and rights of EM women.

Sustainability and capacity building

EM women's organisations in Wales are generally small with limited capacity and funding, with their sustainability continually under threat. However, they still play a crucial role in society within Wales. A decade on from the creation of MEWN Cymru, when only four EM women's groups existed, we can now see the extent of the growth of the sector. The time and effort devoted to the struggle of surviving is astonishing.

It can be seen that there is a general consensus that a more effective network is needed to put a greater emphasis on EM women in particular. However, due to a number of internal and external challenges faced by these groups, community empowerment and integration initiatives in Wales appear to have further increased the already widened gap between one of the most disadvantaged sections of the community, i.e. EM women's groups, and the mainstream community sector. Many groups are unable to access relevant information about local initiatives or simply lack the capacity to be more involved. In effect, this means that they have had little say in the decisions that affect them and their communities on a day-to-day basis.

- Recognise the importance of core funding to sustaining organisations;
- Encourage organisations to build up a capital asset base and to develop income-generating activities, combined with the necessary training;
- Provide capacity-building support related to the services that the organisations provide, support in management; in their ability to develop and respond to the changing external environment; and to participate meaningfully in partnerships.

The long-term sustainability of EM women's organisations will depend on the extent to which resources are made directly available to them, so that they can continue to provide services to the immediate community.

Policy and practice

Many EM women's organisations provide services and advocacy across a range of policy areas providing a good foundation for developing joined-up approaches however, the potential of this needs to be recognised and clearly defined. This will not only enable effective policies and strategies that are more inclusive but also allow such community groups to approach issues and their target groups more holistically.

- Recognise the potential of EM women's organisations in influencing micro and macro level change through government and mainstream programmes, this provides a means for ensuring the views of EM women are fed into programmes.

Targeting communities and understanding differences

Any support policy of EM women's organisations needs to recognise that local circumstances differ and these differences are usually reflected in the structure of the local sector. Consultation arrangements and support to organisations directly delivering services are most effective when they are based on an understanding of local situations.

- Improve responsiveness to local differences by employing EM women.
- Treat each group individually and understand social differences.
- Understand linguistic, cultural, racial, ethnic and religious differences between and within communities.
- Promote diversity through media.
- Commit to equalities and consultation training for staff to improve their ability to understand and work with diversity.

Staffing

The EM women's sector experiences high levels of recruitment and retention problems. Numerically the number and diversity of the EM women's organisations may indicate a healthy and growing EM women's sector, however the relatively small number of organisations that employ paid staff is not reflective of the growth that has been observed within this sector. Despite strenuous efforts in recruiting staff, retaining an adequate supply of experienced and trained full-time and part-time workers, staffing difficulties are exacerbated by funding insecurities, and increasing community pressures and demands. Furthermore, management tends to be either or both inexperienced and unsupported. Organisations without paid staff can also become difficult to make contact with and it may be perceived that a number of these groups are 'dormant' and non-operational.

This gives a very stark and worrying picture of the actual physical capacity of the EM women's sector. The extent to which a sector of this size can have significant impact is obviously hindered by such limited resources. This finding is ironic when compared to the relatively exponential growth of the sector in Wales

- Invest in improving work conditions, staff participation and training opportunities in order to help attract and keep a high quality workforce.

Funding

These are often supported by national grants programmes and by specific short-term initiatives. However, these organisations often have

Most of EM women's organisations are adjusting to a changing climate, the needs of EM women are changing, new organisations are appearing and existing organisations are increasing their activity. Nevertheless the experiences of vulnerability are ever increasing through concerns of funding cuts with real difficulties encountered in accessing mainstream funds once short-term funding runs out. However, it is important to emphasise that although national grants programmes and specific short-term initiatives support some organisations, many organisations do not receive any form of funding.

The low levels of funding received by these organisations indicate a need for strategies, policies and practices to reflect the pivotal positioning of EM women's organisations within the Welsh society. Mainstream agencies have to find ways of helping innovative projects which are already succeeding in meeting priority needs in order to graduate into more long term, mainstream funding and support. This includes policies to nurture these projects, such as providing shared premises, mentoring support from more established organisations, help in making contacts and championing the initiatives in partnership forums.

- Provide unrestricted funding/funding for overhead costs.
- Provide long-term support.
- Support initiatives to strengthen organisational capabilities.
- Support efforts to increase financial sustainability/security.
- Provide start-up capital for new or innovative initiatives.
- Support initiatives that influence policy.
- Support 'less popular' causes.
- Support initiatives that tackle the **root causes** of inequality and social exclusion.
- Fund initiatives that facilitate the exchange of experiences and lessons learned.

Partnerships

Government initiatives are increasingly recommending the prioritisation of areas of significant EM populations. In particular, an effective partnership with government is an essential part of ensuring that the EM women's sector is able to develop its full potential as an important contributor to society and a strategic agent of those it seeks to represent. EM women's organisations also feel that they do not have an equal relationship with mainstream agencies and are therefore frequently excluded from strategic or policy discussions. Increasing alliances and partnerships need to be established between generic EM organisations, EM women's organisations and non-EM bodies. Additionally, true partnership working will permit to overcome concerns that mainstream undertakings are simply rhetorical, making way for the sustainability of relationships.

- Create partnerships under the commitment of the Race Relations Amendment Act
- Cement an honest and open relationship

Monitoring

It is important to monitor the extent to which EM women's organisations are significantly involved in partnerships, whether in decision-making or service-delivery capacity. Currently, there are no mechanisms in place by which such monitoring could be carried out. Evaluation is also crucial in order to assess the success of initiatives and the effectiveness of partnerships. Monitoring and evaluation may not always be perfect or easy to do but qualitative as well as quantitative measures are important. Methods such as case studies, snapshots and subjective views can be used in combination with quantitative approaches in order to build a case to show progress being made towards identified goals.

- Qualitative indicators need to be established in order to monitor achievement of aims and outputs
- Build in formative and summative evaluation processes for workshops and events in order to learn build on learning acquired from previous work.
- Seek short, medium and long-term indicators of success.

Data Collection

In producing this document there have been limited or no statistical information relating to EM women and the number of women who have accessed and are continually benefiting from the EM women's voluntary sector and the services provided in Wales. It is therefore argued that greater efforts must be made by the Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities and other statistical bodies to provide information by ethnicity, gender and faith.

- Ethnic group should be recorded using a consistent classification.
- In surveys sample sizes need to be sufficient to support analysis by gender and at least the larger ethnic groups and faiths.
- Published analysis from all sources should include cross-tabulations by ethnicity, gender and faith, so that the results for women and men in each ethnic group can be analysed.
- Equal opportunities and ethnic monitoring need to be promoted across the board.

Future Developments

The intention is to influence statutory, voluntary and other mainstream providers in Wales to ensure that provisions and policies are inclusive in Wales. The Commission for Racial Equality, in its 2004 – 2006 Agenda Document, commits to “bringing together all who are working in the race equality field either at the level of organisations... or those working within organisations on race equality practice” through networking sessions. Therefore this evidence-based resource can be used to understand the current state of the EM women’s voluntary sector in order to work towards effective and positive change.

The study exemplifies the increasing demands on EM women’s organisations to represent the society in strategic developments. However, in order to do this practical assistance must be provided to ensure organisational development of the EM women’s voluntary sector. This will enable more efficient access to EM women and more efficient learning of EM women’s barriers to participation and cultural needs.

A national mapping exercise is needed to establish the nature and extent of the EM women’s voluntary sector organisations. This should include gathering information on key features and examples of effective capacity-building and good practice, as demonstrated by these organisations in their work with both providing services and the influences they have in development.

The establishment of a national Forum is imperative in order for organisations to provide practical support to one another, create a stronger voice and to influence key decisions that have an impact on the lives of EM women.

Consultations should seek the views of EM women’s organisations by engaging with them on their own ‘territory’ and by employing consultants to gather the views of both organisations and individual women from the communities. Practical support should be provided to enable smaller organisations to participate.

Final Comments

This study and the feedback received from the participating organisations confirm that we need to know much more about the different women’s groups that operate at the community level. Although they are a growing part of the voluntary sector, we know little about their successes and struggles or the changing environment in which they work. Evidently, small organisations, collectively, do not receive a proportional share of the resources available within the voluntary sector. In order to nurture these invaluable community groups, we must know about their role, their successes, their vulnerabilities, their struggles, and their needs. This document can be seen as a beginning, but reviews of this kind should be a regular process, in order to gain an assessment of where progress has been made and to keep momentum for change and action rolling.

Good Practice ideas:

We set out here a list of action points that should help you develop a strategy to engage with EM women:

- Do you know about the local EM women's voluntary sector – structure, services, who is involved, where they are already engaged?
- Has there been active promotional work (e.g. leafleting, outreach, working through voluntary, community and faith organisations) to raise awareness of your (and other) services?
- Are EM women targeted for engagement in planning projects and services?
- Do you have an accurate baseline of EM women in your area?
- Do you have a shared vision of EM women's engagement and a strategy for achieving it?
- Is key information e.g. project development and appraisal procedures produced in accessible formats?
- Have you set aside resources for capacity building, support to develop projects and pilot testing?
- Are groups encouraged to work together?
- Do you have a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework for EM women's engagement and impact?
- Do you have a workforce and management structure that reflects the local EM women's population?
- Are EM communities 'ghettoised' on particular themes?
- Do your staff have a clear picture of the local EM communities and the differing women's needs and circumstances?
- Do your staff know about the MEWN Cymru Can Do Challenge (linking mainstream voluntary organisations with ethnic minority women's organisations across Wales)
- Access www.mewn-cymru.org.uk for additional resources and ideas.

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