

**All Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities**

**Date:** Tuesday 18 November, 3.30pm

**Venue:** Room 21, Parliament Buildings, Stormont

**In attendance:**

***Political Representatives***

Anna Lo (Chair - Alliance), Bronwyn McGahan (Sinn Féin), Noelle Robinson (Cllr, Green Party)

***BME Sector Representatives***

Patrick Yu (NICEM),  
Kristyene Boreland (World Wide Women @ North Down)  
Justin Kouame (NICRAS)  
Eddis Nicholl (NICRAS & NICEM)  
Paul McGlinchey (NICEM)  
Luke Kelly (NICEM)  
Frances Wong (Oi Yin Women's Group)  
Claire Choulavong (BME Women Network)  
Dr. A. Abdelrahman (SCANI)  
Raing McCullagh (Indonesian Association of Northern Ireland/IANI)

***Speakers***

Paddy Sloan (BBC Children in Need)  
Claire Choulavong (BME Women Network)

**Apologies:**

***Political Representatives***

Danny Kinahan MLA (UUP)  
David McIlvine MLA (DUP)

***BME Sector Representatives***

Joseph Ricketts (Afro-Caribbean Support Organisation NI), Phoebe Wong (Oi Yin Women's Group), James Holmlund (Baha'i Council for NI)  
Maria Lourenco (World Wide Women @ North Down) Mark Caffrey (NICEM)

**1. Approval of Minutes of last meeting** - Minutes approved - Bronwyn McGahan (BM) temporarily chairs

**2. Matters arising from the last meeting**

**(i) AQW 35167/11-15 from Minister of Environment**

Anna Lo (AL) arrives and assumes chair

AL: Answer received to question sent to Environment Minister on whether he plans to survey the composition of the new Councils in relation to BME councillors. Minister's reply stated that his officials would approach the ECNI and NILGA in relation to this issue.

Patrick Yu (PY) notes need to monitor the demographic composition of the new super-councils

Bronwyn McGahan (BM) provides notice that Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) were advertising for independent members and encourages BME sector representatives to apply.

AL requests that APG issue email to encourage BME applicants **ACTION POINT**

### **(ii) APG proposed motion debate on Racial Equality Strategy**

AL notes the lack of response from DUP despite 4 requests for confirmation – discussion with Pam Cameron (DUP) who issued request to policy contact.

BM: need to target DUP members of OFMDFM Committee such as Jimmy Spratt (DUP)

PY: Have received message back from David McIlvine who is unavailable due to work commitments in Brussels.

It was agreed that the Chair's office and the Secretariat will follow-up the issue with DUP.

### **(iii) AQW to the First and deputy First Minister on "Vote! You are at Home" campaign**

AL: Need to proceed with this matter quite carefully. Sent to support staff to improve the tone and omit individuals' names

## **4. Presentation from the BBC Children in Need Funding Programme**

### **Ms. Paddy Sloan (PS) Chief Executive, BBC Children in Needs**

- PS: Successful appeal yet again. £32.5 million raised thus far. Hopefully another £50m will be raised this year.
- AL: positive experience of starting up mother and toddler group at the CWA with BBC Children in Need funding
- Sense of scale. 2013/14 – £49.7 million, £3.5m goes to NI - more than required by Barnett Formula, approximately 7% of budget.
- Funding goes for 3 years or more. Portfolio bigger than annual spend - 234 projects (£7.4m)

- Over the past few years, started investing in extracting information and learning from projects in order to find out why disadvantages exist
- Domestic violence and abuse a big issue, with over half a million spent addressing this issue with regards to children in NI. This includes funding for child refuges in NI, for which there is no statutory provision
- Funding for BME groups tends to fall under the general remit of funding given to 'marginalised groups' – although BME groups also receive indirect funding through individual projects, such as those addressing domestic violence et cetera. 10% of funding (8% of projects) addresses BME issues, in line with that provided in the UK.
- Many BME groups are not well represented by current projects – there is only a single Traveller project, little work addressing Refugee/Asylum seekers' needs and no projects on trafficked children or unaccompanied minors.
- Gaps in particular geographies – notably in the North West (Antrim, Down, Fermanagh)
- For migrant children, mental health issues can be prevalent, due to the stresses of integration and isolation, difficulty communicating etc. Mental health is a big issue for children generally, especially for adolescents
- It is vital for groups to demonstrate that there is a disadvantage flowing from their minority status and that they have targets to address this disadvantage in order to obtain funding.
- Considering the range of support available from the SEELB/SHSCT/CRC/PHA/NIHE/Youth Justice Agency/Sport NI/, this is a relatively small fund and a big consideration is how to maximise its impact It is hoped that lasting changes will be made through improving life skills, community engagement, peer relationships and self-esteem.

### **Question and Answer session:**

Justin Kouame (JK): Would Children in Need funding provide for childcare so that individuals could participate in groups and events?

PS: Does not normally cover childcare, other than to make high quality childcare available to those children who would not normally be able to benefit from it

AL: Visited the Salvation Army Youth Project recently, which had a majority of children from a BME background – had recruited many of its children from schools in South Belfast. Would Children in Need fund projects like this?

PS: Yes, so long as the service was good quality and there is a demonstrable disadvantage suffered by the children as a consequence of their minority status

AL: Parents who were waiting for their children at the project found they would like to spend the interim doing something productive, like learning English – could that be funded?

PS: Unlikely, as the fund does not cover individuals aged 18 or over

PS: Is the Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF) still running?

PY: Yes, but the impact of budget cuts on this fund is yet to become clear, although it seems likely that grants will be reduced

AL: MEDF funding will likely only be committed to until 2015/16

PS: Our funding is relatively easy to obtain, with small grants from £3,000 5 times a year and larger grants running for around 3 years. Capital will be funded up to £20,000 if the rest is secure. There is also an emergency essentials programme, which allows small amounts of around £200/£300 for urgent needs, such as beds, ovens et cetera.

Paul McGlinchey (PM): Issue over lack of funding allocated for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and related BME-specific issues such as FGM. Are there lessons to learn from projects elsewhere in the UK?

PS: Projects addressing these issues are more common in our UK portfolio, as stronger networks exist in Great Britain to tackle these issues - lack of network in the identification of victims in NI produces challenged. Would encourage applicants to address these issues.

BM: Have engaged with disadvantaged children in Dungannon, are you aware of the Buddy Bear Trust? This receives little Government funding and plays an important role in combating the disadvantages suffered by children living in isolated rural areas.

PS: We are dependent on local networks to identify appropriate projects for us in rural areas.

PY: The only BME group active in Fermanagh at the moment is Women of the World, which has been impacted by the loss of its chairperson. Although, it is important to note that just addressing groups based on locality may not work best in the BME context – many such groups are nationality based, rather than regionally based, which is why so many are based in Belfast.

AL: Would you attend BME festivals/events and establish a stall as a way of raising awareness of the fund?

PS: We don't tend to take this approach, as very often the groups that we do encounter through such activities do not fall within the remit of the fund

PY: We can provide communities with the basic information and contact details regarding the fund, as supplied on your leaflet

AL: We will raise awareness of the fund **ACTION POINT**

Kristyene Boreland (KB): We will share the fund's information on Facebook

BM: What has been a good practice model within the Southern Trust?

PS: We funded STEP and LORAG, which have been good at engaging young people, including BME children. Innovation and user involvement are things we're particularly happy to see in potential projects, as are attempts to cover geographical gaps

AL: Would you accept applications from schools?

PS: We do not fund schools, or work conducted during school hours

PY notes the particular difficulties faced in establishing projects to address the disadvantages experienced by Roma communities, as these communities are quite mobile and community members sometimes lack residential status and entitlements

## **5. Presentation from the new BME Women Network**

**Ms. Claire Choulavong**

**Development Worker, BME Women Network**

- Aim of the network is to promote racial and gender equality for all BME women in Northern Ireland
- Network is a BME-led women's network
- Will develop a NI-wide BME women's network to establish community based awareness raising initiatives and information points
- Network will work to empower women and create a sense of ownership
- Will provide a safe place for victims of crime to share their experiences and will deliver training and organise leadership initiatives in order to enable marginalised BME women to participate in the NI political process and civil society
- The Network will achieve these aims by:
  - Developing the capacity of BME women (through the fostering of sustainable, community-based leadership and the delivery of education and training)
  - Promoting participation in public and political life
  - Identifying needs within the community
  - Organising meetings/programmes/activities/events

- What the Network has achieved so far – meetings with existing member groups and individuals, running mothers and toddlers groups, use of social media and a fortnightly newsletter to reach women.
- Upcoming event with presentations by Dr Fiona Bloomer (Social Policy Lecturer at UUU) on the criminal law on abortion and Dr Susann Hushke (Research Fellow at QUB) on her research on the criminalisation of paying for sex
- Network will be using this event to prepare a response to the DoJ Consultation on the Criminalisation of Abortion
- Belfast Film Festival events – working with BFF to screen 3 documentaries about combating violence against women
- Reclaim the Night March – annual march against sexual and gender-based violence
- Training courses – OCR accredited English language courses, Equality & Diversity training and registered, accredited child minding courses
- Regional networks will be developed through NICEM's regional offices in Derry and Lurgan

PY provides more detail on the context of the Network, with it arising from work of CEDAW intervention conducted by NICEM staff members in 2011. The CEDAW process had been working with over 150 women engaging in training, seminars, discussions and other events between 2012-2013. Since the launch of CEDAW's most recent Concluding Observations at Stormont's Long Gallery, follow-up meetings with around 20+ women over the last 12 months were conducted to agree on the establishment of a new BME women-led network bringing all BME women together to tackle gender and racial inequality in NI. The Network is independent from NICEM, as they have their own Steering Group. NICEM is currently managing the BMEWN's funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust that allows a part-time Women's Development Worker to develop the Network, as well as to empower BME women in NI.

AL points out that many BME women's groups already exist and queries whether they risked being subsumed by the Network.

PY: A lot of these groups have governance issues, the BMEWN can act as an umbrella group to help build the capacity of current groups. Also, most of the extant BME Women's organisations do not focus on policy matters. Therefore, the new Network is complimentary to existing women's groups.

BM queries whether gaps had been identified in the provisions made by existing women's groups. JK states that many groups, such as refugee and asylum seeking women, are not adequately provided for. EN notes the success of the Network in drawing in large numbers of people at its roundtable events.

AL: Developing the ability of groups to perform policy work is good, although it is also important to focus on training and capacity building amongst grass-roots groups.

PY: Capacity-building and empowerment is the main purpose of the Network. Many regions lack a local women's group, which will be remedied by the Network's regional work.

KB notes the changes in demography of women in NI and the timeliness of discussing this issue in the context of the consultation on a Racial Equality Strategy. Stated that it would be interesting to see Paddy work with the BMEWN to scope the experiences of BME children in NI.

AL raises the issue of isolation amongst women who migrate here and their vulnerability to domestic violence. Stated that communication would be made with Justice Minister to see if funding could be secured to advance research in this area

#### **ACTION POINT**

(AL leaves)

### **6. AOB**

PY: Notice of NICEM's AGM on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November. Noted the progress of the EU INTEGRO research - received more responses than expected from the Traveller community and this will be the basis for a separate report. A pilot project will focus on employment, employability and qualifications.

JK: Notice of events being run by NICRAS - 7<sup>th</sup> December Love Music, Hate Racism 12<sup>th</sup> December 5pm Crescent Arts Centre – seminar Sexual violence and the plight of Congolese women

### **7. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at 3.30pm (Room 29)

