



Evaluation Report on COEMO's "Celebrating Community Cohesion in West Yorkshire" Event and the Impact of the Community Cascade Project

Event Held on Thursday 27th September 2012
At the Carlisle Business Centre, Bradford



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Contents

Preface

1.1 Introduction

2. Summary of the Event

2.1 Keynote Speakers

2.1.1 The Lord Mayor, Councillor Dale Smith

2.1.2 Michelle Scott, Positive Bradford

2.1.3 Azad Ali, Engage

2.1.4 David Ward MP, Bradford East

3. Summary of the workshops

3.1 What are the challenges faced by organisations when organising a diversity event?

3.2 How can we encourage communities to participate in the political process?

3.3 How can we increase community cohesion?

4. Feedback of the Annual Event

5. Follow-up

5.1 Recommendations

6. Summary of the Community Cascade Programme 2009 - 2012

6.1 Summary of the key outcomes achieved

7. Further Details

Contact Details:

**Mushtaq Hussain, Project Manager
Consortia of Ethnic Minority Organisations
Unit 85 Carlisle Business Centre
60 Carlisle Road
Bradford West Yorkshire
BD8 8BD**

01274 488872

mushtaq@coemo.co.uk

www.coemo.co.uk

Preface

1.1 Introduction

The last few decades have seen a plethora of discussion and debate regarding the issues of integration, isolation and community cohesion. Furthermore, there have been parallel discussions regarding the link between communities and the provisions made to frontline community organisations, particularly to those who are working with and for the BME communities. Many of the discussions have amalgamated to conclude that for communities to progress further there needs to be sustainable programmes which develop, increase and maintain community cohesion so that all sections of the diverse faith and cultural communities are able to enjoy equal access to resources and services.

With the ambiguous funding climate getting worse, there has never been more of a need to fill the gap of providing adequate advice, guidance and resources to enable frontline BME community groups to gain momentum and provide much needed projects in a sustainable way. For so long the specific needs of groups from ethnic minorities have been put aside, with many infrastructure support organisations unable to satisfy the challenging demands of frontline BME organisations.

COEMO successfully secured partnership funding to deliver much needed support to all sections of the communities, particularly to community anchors and faith networks. The Community Cascade Project is a West Yorkshire-wide programme supported by the Big Lottery Fund to ensure all community anchors and faith-based networks are able to achieve their aims and objectives. The project sought to build the sustainability of these community anchors by providing a range of support (training, workshops, providing toolkits, resources and website information, one to one support and exchanges) focusing on four specific topics or “strands”:

- Community Cohesion – delivered by COEMO
- Marketing – delivered by Voluntary Action Kirklees
- Funding advice – delivered by Fit4Funding
- Environmental sustainability – delivered by BEAT.

As part of this project COEMO has been working intensively with the community anchors and networks around Community Cohesion. This area of work was very important as it ensured the issues of diversity and equality were at the forefront of each organisation’s vision and objectives. COEMO’s aims of the project were to ***Promote sharing of visions and improve positive relationships between community and network organisations by providing one to one support, workshops, an annual event and web resources on cohesion.***

For many organisations working across West Yorkshire the issues of “cohesion”, “partnership” and “integration” are still a novice concept, whilst others may have come across the terms may are still unable to grasp how to implement the issues in their daily activities.

COEMO pioneered a unique and fruitful networking opportunity, targeting diverse community anchors and faith networks who would help celebrate community cohesion and also share their perspectives on how the sector can collectively be empowered to increase cohesion, dialogue and partnership with all sections of the community.

The aim and objective of the Event was to bring together keynote speakers with grassroots organisations and showcase the work done by COEMO to help shape the future activities with a better understanding of the need of putting equality and diversity at the forefront of all activities.

Dr Mohammed Salam
Chief Executive, COEMO

2. Summary of the Event

2.1 Keynote Speakers

The event was chaired by Dr. Mohammed Salam, Chief Executive of COEMO and was attended by four keynote speakers who were invited to be part of the debate and provide inspiration to attendees of the importance of Community Cohesion as a serious aspect for communities to flourish.



2.1.1 The Lord Mayor, Councillor Dale Smith

The Lord Mayor kindly attended the event and formerly launched the event by providing some words of wisdom and inspiration.

Some key aspects of the Lord Mayor's speech were:

I have said for many years that certainly one of the most important issues to tackle in Bradford District is Community Cohesion, learning to live together and respect one another.

A district of contrast and challenge in which virtually every community, no matter how defined, for example by wealth, health, education, housing, location, race, creed, colour or age - whatever the parameter chosen - each displays the biggest of gaps in equality.

Bradford is the largest rural metropolitan district in the UK, one where at least 67 languages are the mother tongue, and where the population of 515,000, 27% are of south Asian origin. Yet where parts of the many district are almost of just one ethnic group.

All fascinating and vital issues that will assist COEMO continue its success as it celebrates community cohesion and brings communities together and supports hard to reach communities engage with others in the District.



2.1.2 Michelle Scott, Project Assistant at Positive Bradford

Michelle is a graduate of Peace studies at the University of Bradford. Michelle moved to Bradford 4 years ago to begin her studies. Over this period Michelle has discovered many things to love about the City of Bradford and she felt a warm welcome from many different people and communities.

During her second year of studies Michelle took up an opportunity to intern with a new initiative which aimed to celebrate all the great aspects of the city – Positive Bradford. Since then Michelle has continued to volunteer and work with Positive Bradford to organize both of the successful Positive Bradford day events and has completed her dissertation based on research in the Bradford area.



Michelle's title for her talk was "Celebrating Diversity and Uniting Communities". Michelle spoke of the inspiration and motivation behind the concept which has been an annual event to bring together diverse communities to embrace each other and show how Bradford is working extremely hard to unite communities.

The "Positive Bradford" theme has become iconic with many people around the District, and with the support of the University, local Schools and other agencies it will develop further and grow into a symbol of togetherness, diversity and the strength of community cohesion for many years to come.

2.1.3 Azad Ali, Engagement & Community Development Officer at Engage

Azad has been a community activist for over 20 years and has extensive experience of working in a central government department in various roles. He is the chair of the Muslim Safety Forum and is one of the founding trustees of the Civil Service Islamic Society and its former President. Azad is a member of Liberty and formerly a member of its National Council. He is also a member of the IPCC's Community Advisory Group and the Home Office's Trust and Confidence Community Panel.



Azad's title for his talk was "Civic Engagement through Political Participation". Azad kindly joined us from London who wanted to be part of the event and discuss the key issues which affect community cohesion from developing, particularly amongst hard to reach communities.

Azad spoke about the various obstacles faced by communities around engagement with wider issues, particularly with political activities. The key essence of Azad's speech was about promoting active citizenship through political participation and civic engagement by British Muslims in voluntary bodies and institutions. Azad addressed the issues of racism and in particular Islamophobia which are key barriers preventing communities to engage and be part of mainstream activities.

Azad's final points were to highlight the need of political awareness and focused on the implications of the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections which would shape how Policing would be carried out. The message was that if communities were to be strengthened, people had to be actively engaged in the PCC Elections. It was imperative for communities to spread the message about the new role and look at who the candidates are and what particular values they would bring to the table.

2.1.4 David Ward MP, Liberal Democrats, Bradford East

David Ward is a hard working local campaigner for the people of Bradford East. He has lived locally in Bradford with his wife Jackie for over thirty years.



A local councillor with over twenty years' experience fighting for local people, David is leading high profile campaigns to tackle fuel poverty in Bradford, make car insurance more affordable and is fighting to get the much needed regeneration work started in Bradford City Centre. He has championed education in Bradford and fought for a fairer deal for Bradford schools. In the past twelve months he has played a key role in the campaign to save the cheque from being scrapped.

Working for Bradford City Football Club and Yorkshire County Cricket Club, David has helped young people in the local community get involved in sport - and was described a couple of years ago as "the man who does the most to promote community cohesion in Bradford."

David's title was "What can be done to increase Community Cohesion further?" David kindly spoke about his experiences of moving to Bradford and how things have changed since then.

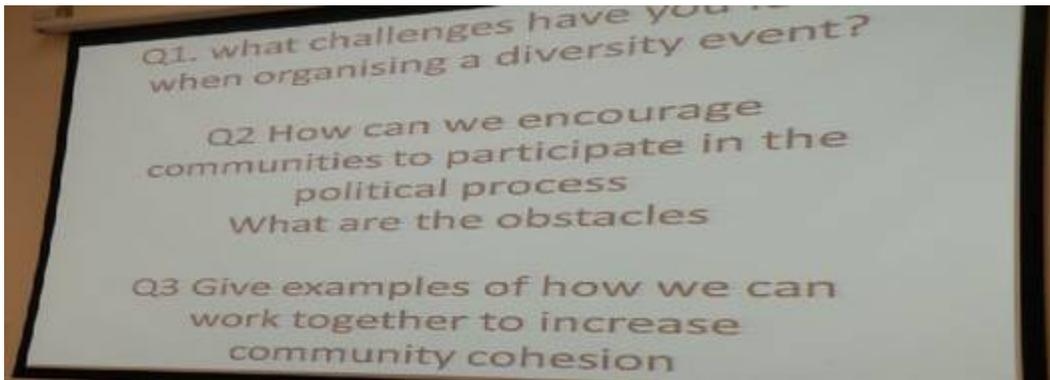
David summarised the workshops which discussed issues around social barriers, what was meant by community cohesion and the lack of engagement of certain communities.

David concluded with three key pillars which were imperative if we were to see more tolerant societies. The first pillar was Freedom; the freedom of people to be able to live their lives without being restrained by others. However it was important that should freedoms should not infringe on the freedom of others. The second pillar was Responsibility; how responsible is an individual not just to oneself, but to others equally. The final pillar discussed was about Community; if people are to get on to fulfil their own true potential this can only be done by the support of others.

David's speech can be viewed on: <http://youtu.be/mHdXYJqw4sU?hd=1>

3. Summary of the workshops

As part of the event the attendees were split into four large groups to openly discuss three key areas:



The workshops went extremely well and the notes on the discussions illustrated a plethora of key points and the different level of expectations and perspectives people had on the topics.

The discussions were very wide spread and raised some key areas for further discussion. Due to the shortage of time some areas were not explored and will need to be revisited with each organisation.

In order to encourage dialogue, discussion and debate it was left to the facilitator as to how they wished to engineer the conversations and to raise the key questions around the three areas.

The main summary of the workshops are categorised as follows:

3.1 The challenges faced by organisations when organising a diversity event

A key challenge which emerged from most of the discussions was around the use of the word 'diversity' – this was a challenge because there is no universal definition of the terms as people have no agreement in what this meant.

Other key challenges that were prominent were language barriers, catering for all communities' needs, finding common ground, finding impartial venues, not enough activities done to bring people together, and the stigma associated with 'cohesion', negativity in people wanting to attend.

The discussions raised some very key points which will be taken up by COEMO with a number of stakeholders so that future events can be planned with considerate effort.

To summarise the fundamental aspects of what was considered as challenges it could be stated that there needs to be high level of planning, with consideration of the location, the theme of the event, the range of speakers, appropriate facilities for specific needs, particularly disability considerations, interpreters and developing mutual respect so that everyone is encouraged to attend.

The majority of the participants discussed the clarity of the purpose of such events. For a diversity event to be successful it was imperative that the theme was appropriately planned with a real purpose to the event so that participants understood the aims of the event. They were very happy with COEMO's theme and how the range of speakers allowed them to think about key issues and many felt that this gave them the opportunity to understand the range of activities COEMO had been delivered over the life of the Community Cascade Programme.

3.2 How can we encourage communities to participate in the political process

Many participants felt that there was no trust, confidence or positive engagement from political figureheads which has resulted in a negative sentiment from potential voters. As a result people don't feel that they are respected as politicians exclude people from decision making and are continuously embroiled in various scandals.

In order for things to change participants felt more needed to be done directly to ensure people understood the importance of voting and the political process. It was argued by many that politicians needed to show a "human side and be accessible". Many suggested more educational activities to encourage younger people to take voting seriously, and wanted politicians to develop relationships of trust and accountability.

From the workshops a key message for the "political figure-heads" to note is that people want an honest and open debate around issues that really matter and look at the global perspective which influence on local agendas.

One of the key obstacles identified was the lack of interest/apathy because they have seen too many broken promises, leaving young people in particular disillusioned. For things to improve politicians need to work with grassroots organisations, community and faith leaders, invest in social media and work with schools and faith institutions to bridge the gap and increase confidence and empowerment.

3.3 How can we increase community cohesion

One of the key aims of Celebrating Community Cohesion was to look at what has worked and continuously identify new ways of increasing community cohesion. This key question wanted participants to engage in discussion about the things that were highlighted by the speakers and examine whether more can be done to increase community cohesion.

From the discussions it was apparent that there could never be 'too much of cohesion work' and that there were endless opportunities to bring communities together.

A number of issues were raised regarding the need for cohesion work and majority felt that it was essential that work was done at grassroots level to bring common ground and work together to share resources.

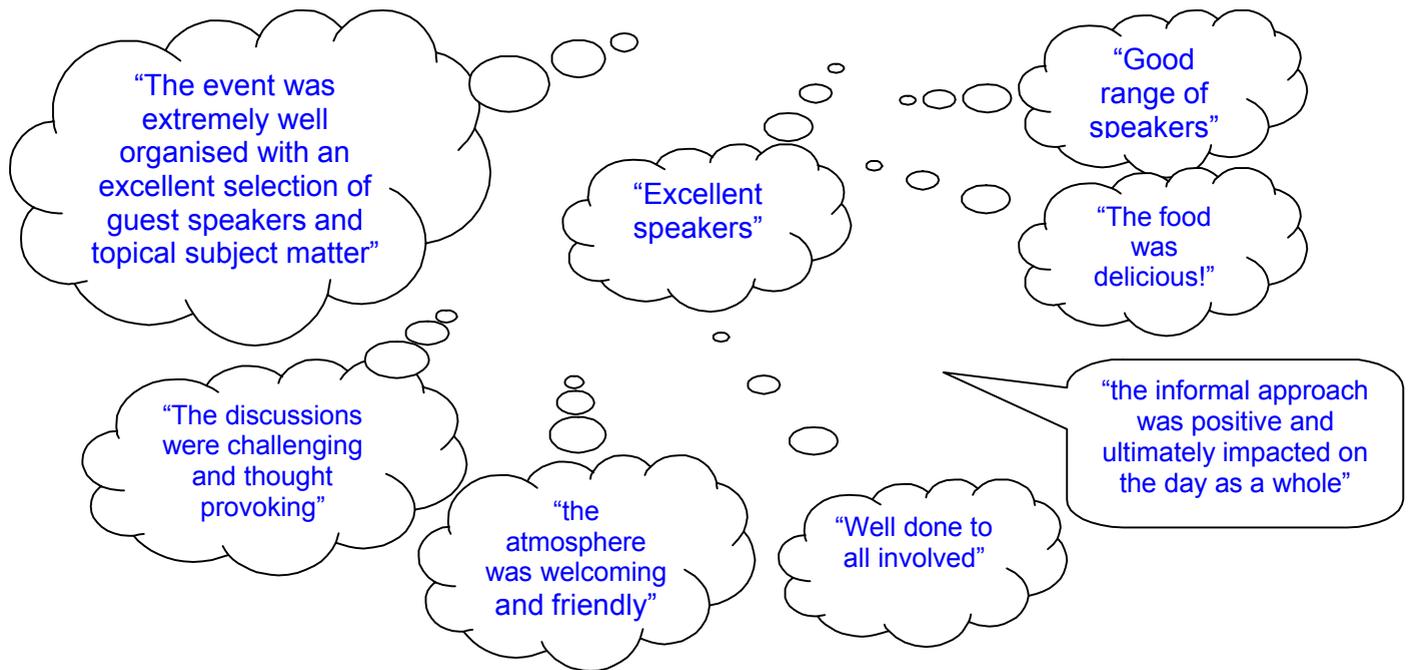
One key method of increasing community cohesion was to create opportunities for dialogue by using various arenas such as schools, community centres, faith buildings and so on where communities could be welcomed and supported to learn from each other. It was also discussed by a number of groups that more exchange visits were required to bring diverse communities from different locations together, with a focus on schools and young people.

An interesting suggestion by some participants was the collective voice diverse communities have with key cross-cutting themes, such as high unemployment rates; therefore they should come together and collectively campaign.

It was concluded that although a lot of community cohesion themed events are held in many locations they fail to market them properly and are unable to attract the right audiences. It was discussed that those planning cohesion related events should spend more time in planning and marketing the events to ensure that there is good coverage, the right audience and suitable speakers to help bring people together who would otherwise not be engaged.



4. Feedback of the Annual Event



Some learning points for COEMO to consider for future events:

- The workshop group I was in was far too large for positive discussion
- It would be useful to have a delegate list
- There was no outline/schedule for the day available
- Workshops leaders needed more preparation

5 Follow-up

5.1 Recommendations

Coemo is committed in providing a platform for frontline BME organisations and hard to reach communities to be able to access resources to improve the lives of their communities. It is evident from the event that more Cohesion-themed activities should be delivered to ensure that all sections of the community are able to enjoy equal and shared lifestyles.

Following is a summarised list of actions that COEMO will now aim to deliver upon:

- Continue to provide support for diverse communities to come together and bridge differences
- Work in partnership with other organisations to champion issues of cohesion and integration
- Engage with local authorities and stakeholders to ensure energy is invested to strengthen communities

6. Summary of the Community Cascade Programme 2009 - 2012

Back in 2009 COEMO, alongside a number of partners including Fit4Funding, Voluntary Action Leeds, Bradford CVS, Voluntary Action Kirklees, Voluntary Action Calderdale, Voluntary Action Wakefield, and Bradford Environment Action Trust embarked on a West Yorkshire-wide partnership programme which would help support and develop the voluntary and community sector in a unique collaborative way. The project was funded by the Big Lottery Fund through the BASIS 2 Programme.

The aim of the project was to Cascade information and support that would go further in sustaining the beneficiaries. As a result the project was named the “Community Cascade Project”.

The initiative targeted “community anchors” (namely community buildings, faith centres and community networks) and front line organisations linked to those anchors, across all five West Yorkshire districts. The project sought to build the sustainability of these community anchors by providing a range of support (training, workshops, providing toolkits, resources and website information, one to one support and exchanges) focusing on four specific topics or “strands”:

- Marketing – delivered by Voluntary Action Kirklees
- Community Cohesion – to be delivered both by COEMO and Active Faith Communities, but when Active Faith Communities lost its funding, COEMO stepped forward to deliver all the proposed outputs for this strand
- Funding advice – delivered by Fit4Funding
- Environmental sustainability – delivered by BEAT.

The project was to be coordinated by Fit4Funding, whilst the Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs) in each of the five districts as part of the team, provided local knowledge, promoted and marketed the offer and monitored and reported at district level.

COEMO’s Community Cohesion

The aim was to promote sharing of visions and improve positive relationships between community and network organisations by providing one to one support, workshops, an annual event and web resources on cohesion.

“..supporting community centres to stay sustainable, save money where they can, bring in money if they can and get their centres used by as many people as they can!”

6.1 Summary of the key outcomes achieved

6.1.1 Direct Support

Over the life of the project we have successfully provided direct one-to-one support to 72 community anchors, organisations and faith-based networks

The one to one support has varied from provided generic support around cohesion issues, inclusiveness and support around developing strategies to work with the wider diverse communities to more in depth support around developing action plans, setting-up open days and working with the management committee members and staff to look at new and innovative methods of engaging with the wider and socially excluded communities, including new arrivals, those with language/cultural issues, and those with issues around disability or any other issue.

Out involvement with the anchors/networks has helped them be more inclusive, innovative and encouraged partnership working. Furthermore, they are now considering the needs of the marginal groups of their communities and continuing to look at ways of improving their services to them.

A great number of networks required support around examining what works for particular community groups, such as ethnic minorities, new arrivals and those from particular faith groups.

6.1.2 Exchange Visits

As part of the programme we helped bridge the gap between different faith and community groups across different areas of Bradford. We successfully held 27 exchange visits between diverse faith and ethnic communities with over 100 people attending from over 20 organisations.

This part of the project was very well received by those who took part in the programme as it allowed them to visit different places of worship and diverse community buildings. This encouraged dialogue, discussion and initiated better understanding of what communities held as their values and lifestyle.



These images show the exchange visits between Baidon Methodist Church and Hanfia Masjid in Bradford. This was an excellent initiative which took two different communities to a different location and helped them engage with each other.



6.1.3 Workshops

One key element of the Cohesion strand of the project was to ensure all Districts had sufficient knowledge on imperative issues, such as understanding implications of the Equality Act, examining new ways of engaging with communities, working through needs of communities, looking at new ways of attracting users, amongst a host of other key areas.

COEMO delivered an average of ten workshops per year across West Yorkshire.

6.1.4 Annual Cohesion Event

COEMO's aim was to ensure that all sections of the community across West Yorkshire were able to enjoy in benefiting from the support. In addition to this, COEMO held an annual celebratory event each year to ensure that diverse faith and community organisations were able to come together to share their skills and engage working together. .

The Annual Events attracted a huge audience and were attended by a range of speakers.

Year 1 Annual Event

This was held in October 2009, which officially commenced the programme.

The event helped celebrate community cohesion and brought together diverse faith and community groups to share information, best practice and build community relations.

The event was attended by 141 people from 75 community anchors, organisations, and networks from across West Yorkshire.

Year 2 Annual Event

Held in September 2011, the event was attended by 63 people, with participation from over 52 organisations.

Year 3 Annual Event

As reported above, was held in September 2012 and attended by 61 people from 51 organisations discussing cohesion as a celebratory topic.

7. Further Details

A Full Evaluation of the Community Cascade Programme is available. Please contact us for further details.

COEMO is continuously looking at delivering innovative programmes. If you are interested in benefiting from the support and resources available, or wish to deliver a programme in partnership we look forward to hearing from you.

A free online toolkit on community cohesion is available online- see http://coemo.co.uk/res/doc/REVISED_TOOLKIT_COMMUNITY_COHESION_JUNE_2012.pdf

We have also made this available for you to download on your Iphone, allowing you to keep the toolkit with you wherever you go. Simply scan the Code to open on your mobile! You can get your free scanner on "AppStore" by searching for a "Qrc Scanner".



You can download this report through <http://www.coemo.co.uk/publications/>

Community Cascade Details:

Community Cascade is a BIG Lottery BASIS 2 project which provides support to community anchors in West Yorkshire. These include community buildings, faith centres and community networks. There is a training programme and support packages which focus on environmental sustainability, funding, community cohesion and marketing. For further details on the Community Cascade Programme please visit the dedicated website which lists forthcoming events and allows you to access the support.

<http://www.fit4funding.org.uk/community-cascade/introduction/>



Left to right: David Ward, MP, Mushtaq Hussain, Project Manager, COEMO, and Dr. Mohammed Salam, Chief Executive, COEMO



“Celebrating Community Cohesion”



For further information & support please contact:
Mushtaq Hussain
Project Manager

CONSORTIA OF ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS
Carlisle Business Centre, 60 Carlisle Road
Bradford BD8 8BD
Tel: (01274) 488872
E-mail: mushtaq@coemo.co.uk
Website: www.coemo.co.uk

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