



Journeys

10 stories celebrating 10 years

CELEBRATING **10** YEARS
1999-2009

cem*o*

Strengthening Communities
Tackling Inequalities





About CEMVO

The Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO) is a national registered charity established in 1999 and is based in three English regions (North West, South West and London), Scotland and Wales.

CEMVO supports and works with Faith, Women, Disability, Black and Minority Ethnic and Age related organisations. We are dedicated to strengthening communities and tackling inequalities. We encourage the social and economic regeneration of marginalised communities by;

- Providing a Voice to Marginalised Communities and the Third Sector by undertaking strategic work and delivering programmes that improve leadership skills and increase community involvement in the democratic process.
- Building Social Cohesion by undertaking strategic work that promotes social cohesion between, and better outcomes for, marginalised third sector organisations and the communities they represent.
- Policy and Research to affect positive social change and raise the economic status of marginalised communities by contributing to policy debates and conducting research to serve as an evidence base to inform policy development.
- Capacity Building by equipping third sector organisations representing marginalised communities with the skills to enable them to deliver services more effectively.
- Extending Opportunities through Volunteering by working with third sector organisations representing marginalised communities and individuals to help them influence and shape local service provision through volunteering.
- Developing Community Assets and supporting partnerships between local authorities and third sector organisations to enable communities to have a greater stake in community assets thereby benefiting the organisations and the communities they serve.

For more information please visit
www.CEMVO.org.uk, or email enquiries@cemvo.org.uk

*CEMVO was founded 10 years ago to advance
Black and Minority Ethnic communities
through the voluntary sector*

*In this time we have helped many individuals
and organisations to achieve recognition and
contribute to the community*

*Here are just 10 stories of people and groups
who have come to us and succeeded -
sometimes against all odds*

*We want to thank all those who have
helped us and invite them to celebrate
10 years with us*



Story 1: Usha Mohila Shomity

Discovery Home short break respite centre is well known in its community. Ask anyone who lives in the residential area just east of Brick Lane where the centre is located, and they will point you in the right direction.

Originally set up in Waltham Forest 19 years ago, the centre is celebrated for providing respite care for disabled children in the community. Clean and colourful facilities, friendly staff and expert knowledge of the needs of disabled children have helped give the centre a good name.

Easily neglected, however, are the needs of the parents who live with and care for disabled children. Mothers from East London's Bangladeshi community used to meet only fleetingly when dropping their kids at the centre; but the potential for a much greater support network was realised when Mohammed Rahman, the director of Discovery Home (aka the Qalb Centre), met CEMVO Capacity Building staff at a community fair in Tower Hamlets.

At this time, Mohammed says, the mothers were already dreaming of establishing their own community group. After successful application to the Capacity Building Programme, they received a small grant and began working with CEMVO staff in identifying areas for development and formulating a business plan. The mothers decided what they wanted to do with the support group, and CEMVO helped them organise, apply and facilitate this. Our role ranged from purchasing sewing machines and organising crafts tuition, to helping the women write application forms and formulate official

documents like health and safety plans. Most importantly, we helped Usha Mohila Shomity register with the Company House, opening up many future funding possibilities and paving the way for the group to become sustainable organisation. ***“You wouldn't get this kind of help from other organisations.”*** Mohammed says, ***“They would give you the money and say “Get on with your plan”. But CEMVO didn't do that.”***

The first and most immediate impact that this had was on the mother's daily lives. With the money available through the programme, women were able to learn and experience new things. English tuition helped the women become more independent, and trips were arranged for the women to visit places that they had never been before. This included fruit picking sessions in Orpington, picnics in Dover and visiting the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben.

With time, the mothers went on to achieve qualifications in Childcare, Food Hygiene and Customer Service to name a few. Some are selling their own crafts; others have found employment in care centres. Being able to earn a wage of their own, Mohammed says, gives them confidence, independence and the feeling that they are valued members of society. Yoga, swimming sessions and trips to the Mosque together provide them with much valued respite from the work of caring for a disabled child. ***“Do you know what Usha Mohila Shomity stands for?”*** Mohammed asks, ***“New Dawn. They feel that this is a dawn for them- they have woken up.”***





Story 2: Magdalena Read

Born in the Philippines, Magda Read first trained as a teacher, before finding employment as a journalist in the Northern region of the country. She arrived in the UK in 1997. On top of the inevitable culture shock was the realisation that career wise, despite her experience and qualifications, she was going to have to begin again from scratch.

After receiving support from PATH Yorkshire Ltd, an organisation that helps BME individuals in furthering their career, she was chosen to participate in the second round of CEMVO's Capacity Building Programme. She was one of 15 who had the opportunity to complete an MBA at the University of East London, fully paid by CEMVO. While studying, she was chosen to undertake research for the Foreign Office; and her dissertation, which explored the difficult transition of BME Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations in to Social Enterprises, was awarded a Distinction, and was published twice.¹

After completing her MBA, Magda began her work as a Capacity Building Officer in Northern England. She provided training, advice and assistance to over 30 groups in Bradford, Huddersfield, Rotherham, Sheffield and Doncaster. These ranged from large umbrella organisations like the United Multicultural Centre and Kirlees REC; to specialist community groups like Huddersfield's Sikh Leisure Centre and Kala Sangam, a community arts group in Bradford. ***“As a CBO, I helped raise the profile of client organisations.” Magda tells us, “I increased their participation in local policy-making,***

ensuring that even the smallest and most vulnerable client groups’ voices were heard. Most importantly, I helped them gain access to funding that they would not have received otherwise.”

The programme had a real and valuable impact on both the organisations and the communities they worked with. ***“Many of these organisations have travelled a long way.”*** she tells us, ***“Three of the faith-based organisations I worked with received funding for the first time, and I was able to save at least another two from winding up. In return, this provided a lot of social, environmental and economic benefits to the communities they served.”***

The Capacity Building Programme ended in 2006 and Magda is now working with the Development Trusts Association as a Regional Development Officer. When asked about the impact of the experience on her life, she tells us, ***“Without CEMVO’s Capacity Building Programme, I doubt if I would have reached where I am today. I would probably still be in an administrative position, struggling to get a decent job in the UK because of the intense competition in this industry, particularly for someone from a BME background. CEMVO has been the key catalyst in my career development.”***

¹ Madichie, N. and Read, M. ‘An evaluation of the uneasy transition towards social enterprise UK’, International Journal of Management and Enterprise Development, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2008.

“Without CEMVO’s Capacity Building Programme, I doubt if I would have reached where I am today.”



Story 3: Groundbreaking Muslim Mental Health Programme in Wales

“Few people know that the first mosque in the UK was established in Cardiff in 1860,” says Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Director of Cardiff Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK. The mosque would have been used by sailors from Yemen and Somalia, who came to the city on work. At the time, Cardiff was the largest coal exporting city in the world. By 2001, when the last census was taken, there were 22,000 Muslims living in Wales, attending one of around 40 different Mosques across the country.

In 2006, following requests from a number of Welsh Muslims, the Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA Wales) was established. It is a social services project that provides faith-based support for families such as advice, counselling and marriage guidance. From its experience in the sector, ISSA Wales has identified a gap in mainstream mental health service provision. In particular, the value of religion and spirituality was not being recognised or catered for and little support was available for people with mental health difficulties from the local Muslim community.

In 2007, the Muslim Council of Wales contacted CEMVO. They asked us for help with addressing this problem. Working together, the ‘Minds at Ease’ initiative was developed, an operation that planned to provide Welsh Muslims with somewhere to turn to for culturally and religiously sensitive support. CEMVO

assisted ISSA Wales with an intensive process of research, project development and bid writing, and our efforts were a huge success. In April 2008 the Minds at Ease initiative was awarded £942,299 from Big Lottery Fund Mental Health Matters. Fehmida Ahmed, Project Co-ordinator, explains what this has meant: ***“One of the first things we did was set up our own office,” she tells me. “This is a big achievement for us- it really helped us develop our services. Until this point we were working on an ad hoc basis with no real base, and the staff was a team of dedicated volunteers.”***

Minds at Ease now has the resources to provide culturally sensitive services for the local the Islamic community. They run a mediation facility for resolving family and other disputes; a befriending and advocacy service for vulnerable individuals; and a chaplaincy service to meet the spiritual needs of patients within hospitals and prison inmates. The most popular and highly subscribed are the Islamic counselling service and Islamic spiritual guidance sessions. ISSA will also be running an educational campaign to raise awareness of mental health issues within the Welsh Muslim community and challenge the stigma associated with it. The achievements of ISSA are groundbreaking; as Shereen Williams, CEMVO Regional Director in Wales states: ***“This is the first faith based mental health support organisation in the country.”***

“Mind at Ease provides Welsh Muslims somewhere to turn for culturally and religiously sensitive support.”



Story 4: World Record Gunge attempt fails

CEMVO's World Record Gunge event raised hundreds of pounds towards building a Children's Hospice in the Southwest. CEMVO's Volunteering Outreach Programme designed the 'gunging' to encourage members of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities to volunteer.

Another exciting event in this programme was 'Get Down and Dirty', a community painting day. This raised £1000 for Bristol Black Mental Health Project. CEMVO's Young Person's Talent Show was designed to raise the profile of the regions youth and get them interested in volunteering. Some young people that signed up with the programme were given the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time or ride in an emergency service vehicle (for pleasure) or the cockpit of an RAF plane. Many local business, charities and public sector organisations provided long term volunteering opportunities.

The programme, a three year initiative funded by the Government Office for the South West, received national recognition, with its Co-ordinator, Hazel Brittan, being nominated as an Ambassador for Volunteer Europe. She was even invited to meet the Queen. Asked about the motivation behind the project, Hazel explains: ***"There was an assumption that volunteering was something white, middle class people did. The target of the programme was to raise awareness - to make sure that people from BME***

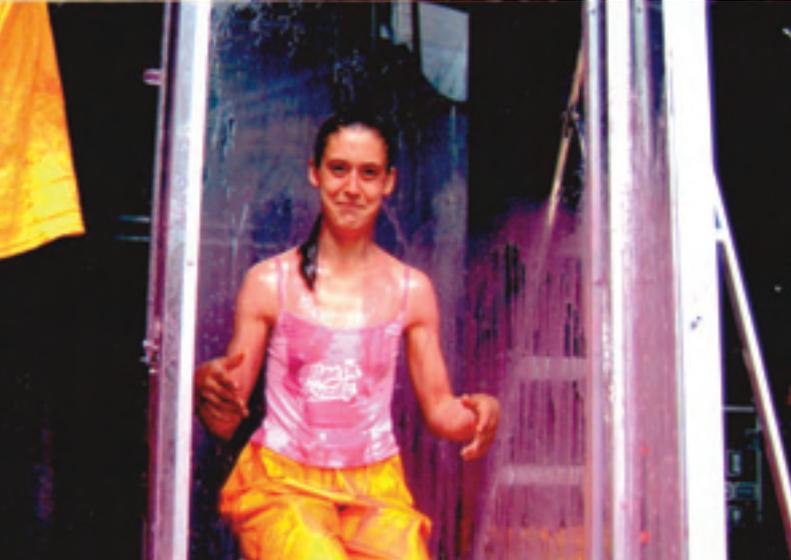
communities knew they could use their talents somewhere else."

Local businesses agreed to offer their positions for volunteers in mentoring, fundraising, administration and management. This meant volunteers gained confidence, new skills and valuable experience. In turn, the organisations were able to increase service provision thus benefiting the whole community as the capacity of their businesses, charities and service providers increased.

Hazel also wanted to use the programme as a tool for cultural education, by building bridges across Bristol's many BME communities. ***"For me, it was an awareness campaign. I wanted to have African women volunteering in Asian organisations; or Christians volunteering in Muslim organisations. Through participating in that organisation and getting real, hands on experience, you learn so much. It was a learning curve - for the volunteers and for myself."***

Five years on Hazel is still recognised in the community for the work she achieved. Reflecting on her experiences over the years, she concludes ***"CEMVO is a remarkable organisation delivering remarkable projects within our communities . . . One of the greatest things I have learned from CEMVO is that from a small acorn can grow a truly mighty tree."***

"There was an assumption that volunteering was something white, middle class people did."





Story 5: The London Muslim Centre

Built in 2004, the London Muslim Centre is a spacious and open building. On first impressions, it may seem a quiet and sombre building, but a number of lively and cheerful patrons help make this religious building come alive with meaningful work.

Shaynul Khan, Assistant Executive Director of the London Muslim Centre (LMC), is infectious and upbeat and enthusiastic about the Centre. He explains that the building was purposefully designed with a lot of windows and open space- to 'dispel myths' and misconceptions about what goes on inside Mosques. The ethos of the LMC is rooted in education- of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It holds open days and exhibitions, tours of the neighbouring East London Mosque and discusses freely some of the most contentious issues that seem to surround Islam in the West- the Veil; Extremism and Islamophobia to name a few.

While the neighbouring Mosque was established 100 years ago next autumn, the LMC was, until a few years ago, little more than a dream of its present self. Shaynul first met the organisation as a CEMVO Capacity Building Officer in 2002, when there were less than 10 employees and an annual turnover of around £200,000. Using the knowledge he gained from his training as a CBO, he helped the Centre secure over £2.4 million in funding- fuelling a massive explosion of growth and service provision. There now are nearly 100 employees and over 30 different projects

serving the local community. As Shaynul puts it, ***"it's no longer on the local map; it's on the world map."***

The Centre is located in Tower Hamlets, home to the country's largest Muslim population. It attracts up to 25,000 visitors a week, and is the only place in the UK that is allowed to publicly sound the Muazzin's call to prayer (azan). But this is also one of the most economically deprived regions in the UK, and the LMC tackles many of the diverse issues created by this fact with an array of innovative and award-winning projects. 'Way To Work', a free service and winner of Third Sector Awards 2008, focuses on skills, training and employment; while Women's Link provides counselling and support to sufferers of domestic violence. The centre also has its own gym, library, crèche, and radio station.

In 2008, alongside the Mosque, the LMC won both Community of the Year Award and Super Model Mosque UK. Looking back at the Centre's development, Shaynul concludes ***"There's a great deal of value that we need to attribute to the capacity building programme. As an organisation that was on the verge of exploding in terms of growth, it didn't have a strategic plan or a clear vision - those were the things that we actually put into place. The London Muslim Centre has benefited a great deal from the CEMVO's Capacity Building Programme and still applies the knowledge gained through the process today."***



Story 6: Equalities National Council

Julie-Jaye Charles is a warm and charismatic character who is well respected by those around her. And there is good reason for this: as a Black Disabled woman she has used her experiences of discrimination and physical impairment to develop a truly inspiring organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals in the UK.

It all began in 1996, when Julie became ill and was admitted to hospital. Instead of receiving the support and respect that all patients deserve, Julie realised she was receiving sub-standard treatment as a result of racial discrimination. But rather than allowing herself to be weakened, Julie transformed the adversity she faced into strength and determination. With a small team of supporters, she set up Equalities (now Equalities National Council), a group dedicated to developing sustainable support mechanisms for Disabled people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in Britain.

Equalities was first established East London's Waltham Forest, in the humble setting of Julies front room. After enrolling on CEMVO's Capacity Building Programme, the organisation was able to develop and grow, strengthening its internal structures and programmes, and establishing partnerships and a Business Plan. Reflecting on the experience, Julie explains, ***"Because of the way CEMVO supported us, we were able to really benefit from the***

partnership. It was not a suffocating model; more of an arms length model. They said, 'you need to do a lot of the work yourself but we will be in the background if you need any support', which did us a lot of good."

Equalities has become a successful organisation working on a national level with groups who often face multiple discrimination because of their race, disability or social status. It runs a National Ambassador programme, providing skill development for entrepreneurs from the BME community, and an Advocacy and Mentoring programme, which supports BME service users and in turn gives them the opportunity to train as Advocates or Mentors too. ENC also provides support to ex-offenders, disabled people and carers, spanning a range of service streams including health, social care, housing, employment, further education, and well being. Disabled people receiving support from ENC are able to feel secure that they have the support to gain fair and equal services.

ENC is now at the stage of mainstreaming its services so that people across the country will be able to ask for the support of an Advocate or Mentor, as they would a social worker or psychiatrist. And Julie-Jaye has become a beacon in her own right, frequently using her skills and knowledge pool to advise Government Ministers.

"Because of the way CEMVO supported us, we were able to really benefit from the partnership."

Story 7: Jeanice Lee: Capacity Building Scotland

Originally from Hong Kong, Jeanice Lee has been living and working in Scotland for nearly 17 years. After working as a professional interpreter and translator, she joined CEMVO in 2003 as one of the original 28 Capacity Building Officers (CBOs). Like the others, she spent 9 months studying her MBA at the University of East London before returning to Scotland to begin working with a range of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary organisations and community groups. While CEMVO Scotland was based in Glasgow, the Capacity Building Programme was national in its reach and to date, she has worked in almost every region in the country.

During nearly 5 years of being a CBO, Jeanice worked hands on with multiple groups that ranged from well-established organisations to very small and unstructured community groups that were just starting out. Each group had different needs and aspirations, so the role had to be flexible. The capacity building work included areas such as governance issues, business planning, fundraising, effective communication and much more. Talking about the key to achieving success as a CBO, Jeanice commented, ***“It is about building a relationship and trust with an organisation, and making sure they understand why changes are being recommended. It’s not just the know-how that’s important, it’s the know-why.”***

The Capacity Building Programme was so successful in Scotland that the Scottish

Government continued to fund this work after the initial programme finished. Now in its 6th year, the Scottish Capacity Building Programme has evolved, taking into account lessons learned and adapting to the needs of BME organisations. New strands have been introduced to allow the delivery of more individually tailored support. The “Pre-Capacity Building” strand helps new and emergent groups set up essential structures; while the “Post-Capacity Building” strand reflects the reality that for some groups, one year’s contact is simply not enough.

Some groups that Jeanice worked with in the early stages of the programme such as Ethnic Enable (Glasgow) and Edinburgh Inter Faith Association (Edinburgh) have firmly established their presence in the BME sector as well as the mainstream. She has seen others on the programme develop into sustainable social enterprises. And Jeanice has experienced her own success. On top of receiving a distinction for her CEMVO sponsored MBA, she has progressed in her own career. She is now the Head of Business Development for CEMVO Scotland, managing the Capacity Building Programme for the whole country. Looking back on the experience, Jeanice reflects, ***“I have learned a lot over the past 6 years and worked with many wonderful organisations and people. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to study the MBA. I feel that I’ve grown and progressed with CEMVO . . . without this opportunity I wouldn’t be where I am today.”***



CITY OF LONDON



Story 8: Comedy Clubbing

As a unique economic and cultural hub, London harbours a thriving and diverse comedy scene that is unrivalled the world over. But in spite of producing many stars and successes as well as rare and interesting takes on contemporary culture, the contribution made to British comedy by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) performers still struggles to achieve mainstream recognition. In 2009, CEMVO delivered its own comedy project specifically designed to raise the profile of BME comedy in the capital.

As part of the project, we hosted our own Comedy Showcase, celebrating the best of London's BME comedy. We also produced our own DVD 'Comedy Clubbing', a documentary which explores how comics use their local environment and cultural backgrounds to provoke thought and laughter while addressing some interesting stereotypes. ***"Comedy provides another perspective on race relations in this country."*** Andi Osho, actress-comedian-writer extraordinaire who worked with CEMVO on the project explains, ***"It shows that a discourse on the matter doesn't have to be a maudlin affair. You can discuss race issues and have a laugh too!"***

Alongside Andi, CEMVO worked with established talents like Felix Dexter and Shazia Mirza; as well as rising stars such as Humili-Asian comedy club founder Hyde Panaser. But the project was also strongly volunteer-centred. Under the professional guidance, our volunteers researched, interviewed and filmed the documentary themselves. For many of them, it was the first time they had got involved in this sort of thing, and the benefits were manifold, Josh Strauss explains ***"Volunteering with the comedy project was a lot of fun, and it has really raised my prospects. I got an internship with a professional broadcasting company straight afterwards and I've even been employed for the first time in the sector. Now I'm saving up to buy my own video camera."***

Looking at the importance of project like these, Andi concludes, ***"It's heartening to have a project that is not only championing culturally diverse comedy but celebrating it too. There are many excellent comics in the UK from a wide variety of cultures and it's important to provide them with a platform and way to bring their brand of comedy even more into the mainstream."***





Story 9: From the Margins to the Mainstream

Tower Hamlets Town Hall is a large, modern building situated in the Docklands area of East London. Outside, fish swim in small canals that line the streets. Inside, balconies lined with ivy and light overlook a spacious reception area. This is where Mohammed Abdul-Jolil, ex CEMVO Capacity Building Officer, now works.

Mohammed began his work as a CBO back in 2004, focusing his energies on groups within the borough of Tower Hamlets, one of the most diverse and economically underprivileged boroughs in the Capital. At this time, there was a real need for the kind of continued support that the Capacity Building Programme Offered. Mohammed explains that many groups he worked with didn't even have the most basic systems in place. **“One organisation employed staff but none of them had contracts,”** he explains, **“They were paid by cheque at the end of the week and if there was money in the account you got paid, if you didn't- hope for the best.”**

Through a systematic provision of support, advice and training, Mohammed was able to provide groups with the tools they needed to move up in the world. **“The skills that the**

CBO's brought in were unique,” he explains. **“All of us had completed a business MBA tailored to address the needs of small community groups, and many, like myself, also had considerable experience working in the community. But the most important factor was the longevity of the support we were able to provide. Rather than staying for 2 weeks and then leaving, we worked with groups for months. We didn't stop until they were stable, confident and had a clear plan in place for achieving their aims and objectives”**

In the years following CEMVO's Capacity Building Programme, many of the groups have really come on leaps and bounds - some increasing their annual turnover by tenfold or more. In a strange twist of fate, Mohammed is actually meeting some of them again now - in his new position at Tower Hamlets Council. **“I am still working in the borough, this time as a strategic manager for the local council, and some of the organisations that I capacity built are now applying for and winning local authority contracts. It's a completed cycle - they have moved from the margins to the mainstream. It's amazing to have seen them grow.”**



Story 10: Wales supporting Ethnic Youth

Asim Hafeez was Director of CEMVO Wales in 2005. In his time in the role he oversaw CEMVO's successful expansion into a new, larger base, from which the Capacity Building Programme was able to benefit over 35 different voluntary and community based organisations across Wales.

Swansea's Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) was one of the groups who enrolled onto the Capacity Building Programme at this time. The organisation was established to provide targeted and culturally aware mentoring, information and support to young men in Wales' BME communities covering a range of areas including employment, education, health, counselling, citizenship and community safety.

After enrolling on CEMVO's Capacity Building Programme the group has enjoyed a large expansion of service provision and a wide ranging recognition of the importance of their work, as Asim explains; ***"They have been viewed nationwide as the exemplar BME Youth project."*** They won ITV People's Millions Award in 2007 and the Lord Mayors Community Regeneration Award in 2009.

The group is beneficiary led, meaning that the management committee is always made up of at least 51% young BME males (under 25). There is a strong emphasis on learning and activity sessions, ranging from mountaineering trips, football training, first aid workshops, employment and education workshops and museum visits- all provided free of charge.

Young people who attended EYST also had the opportunity to produce 2 anti racism short films which was funded by the Police. It's now used in local schools and has received fantastic feedback.

EYST provide drop in sessions in school lunch breaks as well as having after school clubs where young people can relax and have fun as well as receive one to one support with homework and other education needs they might have. ***"It's a very good project and CEMVO was there supporting it throughout."*** Asim concludes. Following their success they have recently opened a new Urban Youth Centre in Swansea, which provides after school support for the young men. A young women's project which would mirror EYST's current work with young men is in the pipelines.

After his stint as Regional Director in CEMVO Wales, Asim went back to Welsh Assembly Government to head up Community Cohesion and became Wales' first PREVENT Co-ordinator. He then joined the Home Office as Community Advisor and recently appointed as new Head of Intervention. His experience at CEMVO, he says, helped him progress in his career. ***"Working as a Director in Wales really built up my skillset and gave me an appreciation of how dedicated and hard working members of the voluntary sector often are. My experience was all round a very positive one and I wish CEMVO every success for the future."***

"Viewed nationwide as the exemplar BME Youth project."



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