



Community cohesion depends on trust. The challenge for us all is to bridge the gap between our ideals and practice.

There is recognition that within the communities in our towns and cities there is a lack of trust between people. People are living parallel lives. Young people are rarely consulted on issues facing them. Often they are living with a sense of hopelessness, especially prevalent in areas of deprivation. Government policies are having an increasing impact on local communities, sometimes positive, sometimes negative. There are attempts at consultation, but at times in local communities they appear to be last minute window dressing after the decisions are already made. Inadequate or superficial, they are adding to a sense of exclusion and disaffection. This breeds mistrust. In local situations one constantly hears, 'They don't listen'.

These perceptions underline the importance of HIC 'honest conversation' dialogues. The focus of the HiC dialogue and training in 2003 has been to help communities to deal with some of these underlying issues and bridge the divides within communities and between those in authority and those at the grassroots. They have taken place in Huddersfield, Nottingham and Liverpool. They are providing an opportunity to identify good practice and share examples of genuine engagement and integration, developing grass-roots initiative and leadership. Moving beyond blame to responsibility.

Newsletter May 2004

National Hope in the Cities Consultation, Liverpool, 7-8 February 2004

It was a weekend of hope as community leaders from around the United Kingdom got together to discuss the problems and the initiatives undertaken to bring opportunities to deprived areas of their communities.



Photo by Jim Sharp

Professor Gerald Pillay (right) talking with Taher Ali Qassim, Chair of the Liverpool Yemeni Arabic Club, and his daughter, a student in Cardiff

This year the Hope in the Cities National Consultation took place in Liverpool in partnership with Liverpool Hope University College. These consultations have been taking place since the 1980's and they "strive to promote social inclusion through community cohesion, emphasising the importance of moral values and empowering communities." Some of the communities represented during this weekend included: London,

Newcastle, Huddersfield, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham, Cardiff and Bristol.

Professor Gerald Pillay, Rector of Liverpool Hope University College, gave the keynote welcome address. In his address Professor Pillay, a South African who lived through the apartheid era before teaching in New Zealand and recently coming to Liverpool, talked about how the Anglican and Catholic churches in Liverpool made an ecumenical commitment through Hope University to regenerate deprived areas in the city. "Our job is to create hope where there is hopeless," he said.

One of Liverpool Hope University College activities in the community is called Network of Hope. One of the Networks of Hope activities' is taking place in Blackburn where courses are provided to Muslim woman who otherwise would not be able to attend the University. "By giving the communities a second chance, we give dignity and empower victims, everyone can benefit from it" Professor Pillay said.

Throughout the weekend the community leaders had the opportunity to highlight some of the projects that their individual communities were involved in and participated in three workshops:

1) Asylum Seekers: Integration, Training and Jobs

It was agreed that the agenda on asylum seekers should move forward and for that to happen it was important to share the information on different stories, experiences and projects. Positive publicity in local papers was suggested as one way to bring a broader understanding of the background of asylum seekers and the benefits for the communities in embracing them.

2) Police, Youth and the Community

This workshop emphasised the importance of dialogue in a community and how it can be used to break down barriers such as fear and the lack of trust among its members. Too often there are situations where the police are seen as the enemy and drug dealers are filling the gap between the youth and society due to the lack of positive alternatives and government support. It is important to get back to the basics, promote integration by putting yourself into other people's shoes and through the creation of support groups. Most importantly, by giving young people power on the decision-making process.

3) The Trust Factor in Building Community

This workshop emphasised the personal commitment that each one should have in building creative relationships without a hidden agenda, while having the courage to trust and be trusted. In addition, it talked about the need to develop a group of people committed to change, starting with them. This change could include getting people together and exploring the risks and opportunities of developing trust. As consequence, such action enhances trust in the community and opens up a forum for exchange of ideas.

This is indeed, a community of hope. Despite possible challenges the community leaders left Liverpool looking forward to implementing some of the ideas presented.

Ana Periera

NOTTINGHAM

Among other highlights of the conference was a contribution from Nottingham. Glen Williams, a detective and Vice-President for the Black Police Officers Association, spoke along side a black community youth worker. They had been divided. They told about a visit, as part of a Nottingham delegation, to an HIC consultation in Caux, Switzerland. There they had taken part in the HIC honest conversation dialogues, had broken down barriers of mistrust between them. "It was a life changing experience," said Glen Williams.

It had also resulted in a commitment on their part and others in the community who had become part of their team. This had led to a dialogue in the St. Ann's area, which has been a centre for the drug culture – an initiative that is ongoing. Their enthusiasm and conviction was infectious.

Nitin Shukla, Gateshead Council Diversity Officer and Councillor David Down came down from Newcastle upon Tyne. Nitin, Shabibi Shah, a refugee living in London, and others working with Asylum-Seeker Support Groups, highlighted the positive contribution that asylum seekers and refugees can make to enrich our society.

A variety of people, who contributed, included a Brazilian journalist on a degree course at Liverpool University, a night-club doorman from Manchester, who is doing imaginative work to engage some of the most disadvantaged young people and giving them a vision for what they can do and be, and the Chair of the Liverpool Yemeni Arab Club. The doorman quoted "True poverty is not someone without a penny, but someone without a dream". John Sephula, community worker from Leeds, posed the question, "Where does regeneration not effect the heart of communities? We put money into lovely buildings, but the key is the human factor." He is working to empower disadvantaged young people. Students from Sheffield working there with a project, 'Learn to Lead' told of their programme that is not only developing leadership skills, but encouraging a spirit of service to the



Photo by Jim Sharp

Glen Williams addresses the conference

community beyond self-advancement. Further Dialogues have taken place at the Chase Neighbourhood Centre where the focus has moved to more effective involvement of young people. Also, meetings of mothers in the area who are concerned at the future of family life and more particularly, their sons.

One single parent community worker has experienced a heightened involvement of young people in a youth and community centre. She had the inspired idea of the theme/catch phrase "Holding Hands in St Ann's". Following further discussions this has been expanded to "Holding Hands around St Ann's". It is planned to have a walk through the multi-faceted history of the area, which experienced race riots in the past. This is all being planned for the 17 July. The inspiration for the walk has been drawn from the Richmond USA "Unity Walk" which in 1993, recognised unacknowledged events in the 370 year history of black-white relations. Designs are in preparation for banners, t-shirts, and literature to promote this action. Other Dialogue outcomes will be the establishment of links between St Ann's and the First Nation people in Canada. Also with St Ann's in Jamaica where people are involved in the Walker's Wood social and economic developments.

London

What's happening in London? In connecting theory with practice and personal transformation for changes in our communities, HiC London Group are engaging with people that want to make a difference in their community.

With the Governments fresh challenges and thinking in the search for communities to have a sense of value, common morals, life opportunities, where strong positive relationships are seen as key factors. The notion of common morals principles and values are achievable when local people are being engaged said a policy maker at a recent HiC London Group Meeting.

There is a need to break down the myth and mistrust between communities. There is a need to find our identity, if we have a British Identity, what is it? These are some of the reasoning behind the Community Cohesion for London we were told.

On liaising recently, with one of our community groups in East London it was confirmed that there are war-like conflicts affecting our communities as a result of historic wounds not being healed. This has also caused much unrest and mistrust amongst the diverse groups and in particular issues within 'intra' and 'inter' races. For example, there has been conflict within the hierarchical caste system in the Bangladeshi community; Mosques that are in conflict with each other and operate territorially; and there are tribal conflicts within the Somali community. Not to mention the mistrust between the Police in this community where 87% are Muslims and where recent reports has show the area as having 'Benign Neglect'.

This community like 8 others London Boroughs are being funded to address issues such as: crime and community safety, developing young people, integrating new groups (Refugees and Asylum Seekers), engaging with disaffected White Youths, and unemployment amongst diverse community groups. Yet this money in itself is the cause of some of the mistrust.

Another major issues also facing London is the high prevalence of mental health problems within excluded groups as reported by Mental Health Social Exclusion Unit. Dianne King has written a most interesting article on the associated problems. Copies of her article can be obtained from her directly on Evian904@aol.com.

International News

Caux 2004 HiC Pre- Conference Training Workshop

This summer Hope in the Cities will be taking responsibility in two important programmes at the Initiatives of Change International Conference Centre in Caux, Switzerland. (www.caux.ch). One is a Conference entitled 'Human Security through Good Governance'. This Conference organised by Agenda

for Reconciliation will be from 4–10 August. The conference will explore some of the root causes of insecurity and personal and communal violence and uncover some of the tools for responsible decision making and change.

Hope in the Cities will have three workshops as an integral part of the conference, which will bring together those in authorities with community activists and ordinary citizens.

The three workshops will be:

a) Asylum-Seekers and Refugees – a welcome asset?

This workshop will stand the asylum issue on its head, exploring the possibility that asylum seekers and refugees, rather than being a burden, may be part of the answer for the ageing, labour-poor societies of the West. It will explore the role of integration, training and jobs as a means to release the potential of new arrivals, and examine initiatives to open the hearts and minds of host communities.

b) Youth, police and the wider community

The aim is to gather an international group, which will consult about how to break down the barriers and misconceptions, which separate young people, operational police and the wider community. Thus creating understanding and effectiveness. Also how to put into practice lessons learnt from honest dialogue for the benefit of all.

c) 'Honest conversation' dialogues: a pathway for building trust – moving from crisis towards cure.

Prior to the 'Human Security' Conference at Caux, HIC will run a 3 day intensive training programme, on **"Leaderships Skills for Community Builders"** (limited to 50 people)

Beginning 9.30 am on 2 August and ending 12 noon on 4 August

For more information on the Training Programme – www.hopeinthecities.org or email: contact@hopeinthecities.org

HIC Calender 2004

April – May 2-4 August	HIC Facilitation Training in Derby 'Leadership Skill for Community Builders' Caux Switzerland
4- 10 August	'Human Security through Good Governance' Caux Switzerland

HIC is a programme of Initiatives of Change, which is an international network of people of diverse faiths and backgrounds, working for reconciliation and justice, beginning with change in their own lives

Contact: Hope in the Cities UK,
24 Greencoat Place,
London SW1P 1RD
Tel: 020 7798 6000
Email: lawrence.fearon@uk.iofc.org or
Direct Tel: 020 7798 6013