

**'A SHARED FUTURE' CONSULTATION REPORT**  
**Bangladeshi Welfare Association, Newtownards**  
**27 May 2003**

Most of the participants have not read the consultation document beforehand. The facilitator spent some time explaining the context and purpose of the consultation. Participants decided to respond using the three questions:

- 1 What is your vision?
- 2 What do we need to do to get to that vision?
- 3 Who should deliver it?

Some of the participants could speak English but others could not. One of the participants acted as interpreter.

**Q1. What is your vision?**

Participants began by making it clear that "too often (in Northern Ireland), it is all about Protestant and Catholics and it is as if we don't exist".

After giving an airing to their strong feelings about being excluded, the participants then went on to discuss their vision for Northern Ireland in 25 years time. They would like to see the following:

- A diverse community with many more people who can claim to be a member of one or more minority ethnic group;
- A society where the diversity of different cultures are a part of life and accepted as such;
- A Northern Ireland where Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and people of different faiths are acknowledged;
- No more division in terms of Protestants and Catholics;
- Where people better understand the roots of racism and are, therefore, less likely to be racist;
- Capacity building programmes within minority ethnic communities showing positive results;
- More minority ethnic people being involved in politics – participants' current experience is of politicians coming to them to try to get their votes but who do not really care;
- Minority ethnic politicians that people from the minority ethnic communities can trust. These politicians can become the voice for minority ethnic people living in NI, they will be more neutral and can truly represent the people from minority ethnic communities;

- A minority ethnic Minister – perhaps, even a Bangladeshi First Minister in the more long term future;
- Better facilities (including community centres) for the Bangladeshi community and for minority ethnic communities in general;
- More job opportunities for black and minority ethnic people;
- More minority ethnic people employed in the public sector as a result of affirmative action being taken by the public sector to attract more minority ethnic people to work for them;
- A greater number of integrated schools;
- The teaching of mother tongues in schools, starting from primary school level;
- RE taught in schools to include teaching on all religions – this to become a part of the curriculum so that it will be compulsory for all schools to do this including Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Imams to be involved in schools as other Christian pastors/priests are;
- Race equality to be mainstreamed into all subjects, eg, history;
- A more transparent system of housing allocation by the NIHE so that perceptions of discrimination and prejudice are eliminated.

### **Q2. What do we need to do to get to that vision?**

- Through capacity building to enable black and minority ethnic people to realise their potential and acquire new skills, knowledge and competencies;
- Black and minority ethnic role models being used to stimulate and support development in the community;
- The provision of adequate funding for black and minority ethnic community groups;
- Intercultural and racism awareness education being made a compulsory element of school teaching;
- The continued development of the role of the Inter-Faith Forum.

### **Q3. Who should deliver the vision?**

- The organisation needs to be independent of Government but to be funded by Government;
- The organisation must work to a structure that is representative or involving of all groups – with minority ethnic people on the Board, in committees/sub-committees and as members of staff.

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