Working it Out for Black & Minority Ethnic Women in Scotland

A report highlighting examples, approaches, barriers & recommendations for addressing occupational segregation and the underrepresentation of BME women in key sectors and enterprise

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Introduction

WINNET8 is a partnership of 8 member states seeking solutions to address gender inequality and promote economic growth & prosperity for all

WINNET8 was initiated and is led by Sweden and specifically the priorities are **to address the challenges of:**

- Low employment rates among women
- Segregated labour markets
- Lack of women in entrepreneurship
- Lack of women in innovation and technology

The initial work of the WINNET8 partnership is focussed on:
- Influencing and contributing to the development of policy
- Harnessing the good practice which exists across the 8 member states
- Establishing ways of consolidating good practice
- Developing Women's Resource Centre's as a method of achieving gender equality and economic growth

The good practice work will be consolidated along with research work into recommendations which will be filtered upstream to the relevant Committees and Directorates within the EU to inform the development and implementation of the Cohesion Policy, 20/20 Strategy and the Regional Operational Programmes.

One of the additional tasks of the project is to highlight thematic issues in relation to the WINNET8 objectives. To that end each of the 8 participating member states have been tasked with submitting thematic reports, studies or research summaries on specific issues.

Background

Scotland has an increasing black and minority ethnic population and strives to be an open, dynamic and multi-cultural society, which recognises the value in socio-economic terms of equality and diversity.

During the strategic planning work and the gathering of good practice, the issue of occupational segregation of Black and Minority Ethnic women and their underrepresentation in enterprise was highlighted by practitioners as a 'hidden' issue.

To that end we have undertaken a short research project with 4 initiatives who have either a primary or secondary purpose or objective around promoting BME women in the labour market or enterprise. This research aimed to identify and describe effective approaches and practices in four different agencies, highlighting barriers and identifying opportunities or recommendations for addressing segregation of BME women in the labour market and promoting their entrepreneurship.

Throughout the WINNET8 Partnership it has been evident that although Scotland has some way to go to catch up with some of our European counterparts in terms of gender equality strategy, policy and action, we have made significant progress in race equality and there is the opportunity to build on that and extend it across the EU member states.

Women make up 51% of the UK population and 47% of those active in the labour market, but are under represented in participation in enterprise and offer a wealth of untapped talent and economic opportunity. Just over a million women are self-employed, up by 17% since 2000. Despite this progress, the gap between male and female entrepreneurship in the UK remains stubbornly wide – men are still almost twice as likely to start businesses as women, and the gap is wider still for young women. If the UK matched US levels of female entrepreneurship, there would be 600,000 more businesses in the UK.

There is no breakdown in the gender split between men and women from BME communities. Ethnic minority groups overall have a self-employment rate similar (7%) to British and other white groups (8% there is however a wide variation between ethnic groups – with people from Black groups having the lowest self-employment rate at 4.5%

www.bis.gov.uk/policies/enterprise-and-business-support/entrepreneurial-culture/women-and-bame-enterprise

There is some limited information on the subject of occupational segregation of BME women. However the former Equal Opportunities Commission undertook some extensive research work in 2006 on the issue and nothing has since analysed.

Visible minority ethnic women are striving for success in their work life. Many are already highly qualified and others have increasing levels of achievement in school and beyond. However, this is not always reflected in their participation in the labour market, where many women face barriers in both entering and progressing in the

workplace; their talent is underused in Scotland. Minority ethnic women from all backgrounds are at a higher risk of unemployment than white women, even if they are well qualified (EOC, 2007c).

In Scotland, unemployment rates are 14.2% for Pakistani women, 13.6% for African women, 9% for Chinese women and 8.2% for Indian. All of these rates are substantially higher than that of white women, which is 5.2%.

In Great Britain, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women with similar characteristics and qualifications as white women are 30% more likely to be out of work (DCLG, 2007).

37% of the sample (67 women) in our Scottish research with 182 minority ethnic women graduates felt that being 'black or minority ethnic' and being a 'woman' had a negative impact on gaining employment (EOC, 2007b).

Across Great Britain minority ethnic women are underrepresented at senior level. 11% of white British women are managers or senior officials, compared to 9% of Black Caribbean and Pakistani women and only 6% of Bangladeshi women (EOC, 2007c).

64% of our sample of female minority ethnic graduates (116 women) stated that sexism and racism had impacted on their career progress (EOC, 2007b).

There is a real issue about glass ceilings. And for BME women we have two glass ceilings, one is the gender one and one is the ethnicity [one]. So we have a double glazed ceiling

which is even more difficult (minority ethnic female, NHS)

http://www.vhscotland.org.uk/library/misc/BME_GFI_Scotland_final_report.pdf

3 Managers and 3 practitioners from the following agencies have contributed to this research summary:
♦ Linknet Mentoring (Chair)
♦ Edinburgh Business Development – Ethnic Enterprises (Project Manager)
♦ Women Onto Work – (Guidance and Training Staff for BME specific services)
♦ Nari Kallyan Shango NKS (Project Manager)

Their perspectives are reflected within the report and refined as conclusions and recommendations.Linknet Mentoring

The principles and approaches of mentoring underpin the work at Linknet. The approach is aspirational, goal focused and is about fostering confidence, a progressive mindset and empowerment. This ensures that beneficiaries are able to access the best possible career opportunities and to sustain them.

The project delivers intensive 1:1 mentoring support along side group events and conferences. This balance reflects the needs and barriers which clients face, that is, many require 1:1 support but are significantly isolated in their circumstances and communities; this particularly applies to BME women. They therefore benefit greatly from group events and activities where they can connect with others facing the same challenges and issues in progressing their

careers. The project is committed to inclusivity and integration and this combined approach of 1:1 mentoring and relevant thematic events meets those aspirations.

Gender balance: Generally more males using the service overall, but partnership work with relevant agencies like Shakti & Saheliya (agencies working exclusively with BME women) helps to redress the imbalance.

Barriers faced by BME women in progressing in education and careers in segregated areas/sectors

The grouping of BME is oversimplified; it is not a homogenous group and neither are women. A cursory examination of the cross-cultural diversity within the Africa Centre highlights this, added to that the religious dimensions, traditions and expectations; then added to that already complex mix, British born Africans. So the generic approach of meeting the needs of BME communities or women can often hinder progress.

Positive action on behalf of BME communities doesn't take account of the additional barriers faced by women.

The pressure from families and wider communities for women to prioritise their role as daughter, daughter-in-law, wife and mother putting any career aspirations at the bottom of her list is something which needs to be addressed. Indeed it is often the matriarchs within families who are the most conservative in terms of traditions – at the same time these women are often very strong leaders and entrepreneurs. So much untapped potential but breaking through the

communities, traditions and expectations is a challenge in itself that is before working with education, employers, segregated sectors and other business development services.

Solutions

Work with young women is key to changing culture. More activities within careers and education services to support young BME to identify their aspirations and mentoring or careers guidance support with a gendered perspective to help them realize their potential. Stereotypical expectations are generally more entrenched within BME communities and there is often significant pressure from within families for young women to pursue 'traditional' career options and in many cases an expectation that women will not work beyond marriage. Any work being done needs to take account of this. Mentoring is an option particularly where there are positive female BME role models.

To address the issues and expectations from families and the wider communities, then a wider community development approach would be necessary: Informal education around equality with a gendered perspective. If BME communities want equality, which they should have, this must be extended to the women within their communities. Equality for All and the impact of inequality should be the main thrust of the approach. Aligning the race equality issues and solutions with the gender equality issues and solutions would be a useful approach to bringing the wider communities on board.

We need to develop a movement around campaigning and raising the profile of occupational segregation of BME women. BME women's support projects are often contributing to women's segregation by delivering training, education and services which are aimed at keeping women in their limited roles e.g. cooking, sewing, care, childcare etc These agencies could potentially be powerful advocates of change but they themselves need to broaden their horizons on behalf of the women they work with. Instead of delivering cooking, childcare – they could be delivering ICT, home maintenance or getting into enterprise

The Edinburgh Ethnic Enterprise Initiative (Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce)

Purpose of the Project

The Edinburgh Ethnic Enterprise Initiative is a specialist service catering for the interests of ethnic minority businesses and aims to bridge the gap between ethnic minority communities and mainstream businesses in Edinburgh & Lothian.

For over 12 years ECC has worked to address the specific issues which affect ethnic minority businesses. The Edinburgh Ethnic Enterprise Initiative and the Edinburgh Chamber Ethnic Enterprise Policy Group aim to bridge the gap to a totally inclusive business society, working alongside mainstream business support. Support is centred around advice, training, access to finance, networking and mentoring.

Beliefs and Approaches which underpin the work of Ethnic Enterprise Initiative

The project aims to break down the barriers which minority communities face and open doors to opportunity in enterprise and business in recognition of the structural nature of racial discrimination within some areas of mainstream support. The project delivers both 1:1 mentoring and a range of practical business start up events and training activities.

Gender split is 70% men and 30% female – that reflects the split across the whole spectrum on Business Gateway and enterprise support

Main Barriers which BME women face in progressing in education and careers in segregated sectors

Work focusing on exclusively promoting BME women's employment and enterprise is not recognized as being important
BME community representatives will often gravitate toward meeting the needs of their own specific minority community and is difficult to challenge impartiality in this respect
Public Sector often sees BME communities as a homogenous group and this doesn't take account of the particular issues each face – in addition to that there are different issues and barriers faced by women within their respective minority communities

What might the solutions be?

For enterprise: 1:1 specific support with appropriately matched mentors who are

empathic to the issues and challenges which a mentee faces combined with and a range of relevant events/workshops around enterprise and business development

Representative management structures within BME organizations i.e. ensuring the management or Board of Management are representative of the range of minority communities they work with.

Being inclusive to wider range of minority communities

Dedicated recruitment targeting women from BME communities for non traditional training and educational opportunities i.e. ICT as well as partnership with agencies who target BME women as their primary target group

Outreach work within communities through mosques, churches and specific minority projects we are able to support routes into Ethnic Enterprises opportunities

We need to target young people and increase work around youth enterprise for specific groups of young people and BME young women would be one of those groups who are currently underrepresented in youth enterprise

Previously BME communities and particularly women progressed along v traditional routes into retail, catering, care but with the diversification of work and increasing participation of the Polish communities there are higher levels of women progressing into less traditional areas

Women Onto Work (WOW)

Purpose of the organisation

To provide a comprehensive package of training courses combining career development, personal development with full careers guidance, inc. aftercare guidance. The courses last between 12 & 20 weeks with tailored support, guidance follow-on group & specialist support lasting for up to 18 months in total. Service are targeted at women with multiple barriers.

The courses & guidance services raise self-esteem, build confidence and support the development of core employability skills. The work supports routes out of poverty & into employment for around 110 women each year. WOW work with women aged over 21 who have been unemployed for 6 months+ & also provide a dedicated service each year for disadvantaged young women aged 16 - 19 years.

The project addresses significant inequalities and social exclusion by targeting women who are particularly excluded e.g. Black & Minority Ethnic Women, Lone parent women, women with health issues and disabilities and women caught in the poverty trap raising employability and providing routes into sustainable employment. WOW works closely with employers across Lothian region to ensure work placements and employment opportunities are secured for women

WOW has over the last few years run 2 or 3 dedicated courses for BME women in each of those years with additional specific supports e.g. ESOL and literacy support in recognition that the journey to education and employment is often distinctly different for BME women than for white Scottish women. The barriers BME women face as a result of ethnicity, language, isolation and culture require particular support to be overcome.

Main Barriers for BME women in progressing in education and careers in segregated sectors:

BME women's engagement in education is often motivated by marriage and status and not always for career aspirations and development. The pressure to secure a good marriage and the belief that women must have a level of intellect to appropriately support their husband's career often lies behind the support which they get from their families to engage in undergraduate and post graduate learning. Ironically those barriers seem to be more prevalent in the UK for women of Asian origin. Countries like India and Sri Lanka are undergoing some transformation around the role of women in civic and economic participation with explicit legislative and culture change around gender equality. This is largely amongst the middle classes and those who have access and opportunity to secondary and higher education, but it is positive change nonetheless. However migrants and second/third generation Asian British are more entrenched in old cultural values and traditions around women's role and less progressive in terms of gender equality.

Some BME communities (including Indian, Arab and African) will to some extent make decisions on behalf of women and often don't allow them to make education and career development decisions for themselves. It is, for some communities too big a step outside culture and norms to encourage women into male dominated sectors and areas of work. They are often reluctant to allow women to make relationships with people outside their own culture. This compounds the external barriers and challenges from business and employers. There is a swelling tide of change and the old way of the male role exclusively being the role of provider or main provider is gradually changing and we should use every opportunity to address these stereotypes or 'traditions' which undermine women's potential.

Having worked across a range of initiatives designed to promote BME women in business, employment and education and as an ethnic minority women myself, I believe the most significant barrier is employers. Whether rightly or wrongly, employers, especially smaller employers will often be afraid of employing BME women. This is particularly the case with SMEs. I imagine that women generally experience disadvantage in gaining employment or achieving their career potential with SMEs. Add ethnicity to the mix and you often will have an insurmountable barrier. Small business people will be more inclined to choose candidates who share the same culture and values believing they will make easier and safer members of staff to manage

From witnessing the participation of BME women at WOW events which address gender stereotyping and raise awareness of women's potential in 'non-traditional' roles and employment, it is clear that many BME women are carrying the misperception of what 'non-traditional' employment is; they imagine it to be construction, engineering and science. They do not perceive technology, innovation or enterprise as non-traditional. At the same time however, they are generally more reluctant to consider their options in these areas. Gender stereotyping appears to be more entrenched within BME communities overall and work on demystifying options in these sectors would need to be more intense and directed. Paradoxically, many BME women are highly qualified in areas like maths, science and technology.

There is a general malaise and acceptance that there is a clash between the values systems of many ethnic minority communities and this generally appears to continue unchallenged – again this hinders progress

<u>What do you think the main solutions might be for BME women to progress in segregated areas of education and employment?</u>

A more rounded approach to working with BME women is required if they are to progress in employment and particularly segregated opportunities including enterprise. Using a community development approach with wider BME communities alongside initiatives which explicitly address BME women's under representation in employment. If you want to work with BME women to address inequality then you often have to take on the whole family and community, approaching the work in a culturally and empathically sensitive way which supports women to be open about their career aspirations.

We can use the case for equality more widely and for the benefit of women. We can ensure that all equalities work undertaken on behalf of BME communities has a more gendered perspective. Harnessing the opportunity to support all dimensions of equality at one time. Women's inequality is not recognised in the same way as minority groups' inequality, but we could be making the most of this potential by ensuring all equalities work which has a primary focus on race also includes gender within that.

Highlight examples of success from SMEs where BME women have made a significant contribution to productivity, growth and success within relevant publications and support programmes for business

The local and central government and the EU need to look at the equalities issue wisely and ensure that any policy, strategy or resources being directed into race equality includes a gendered perspective, but equally that any gender equality policy and strategy doesn't assume that women are a homogenous group and takes account of the additional barriers and discrimination that BME women face in their education and career development.

<u>Opportunities</u>

Another impact which is cascading down to women's opportunity and participation in education and career development is the changes in legislation here in the UK which protect women from forced marriages and allow them to divorce from partners and access free choice. BME groups and communities are increasingly coming out in support of women's rights. Women overall are less likely to have to hide their aspirations

Nari Kallyan Shangho (NKS)

Purpose of the organisation
Nari Kallyan Shangho (NKS) is a health and welfare project for South Asian women and children living in Edinburgh. It provides a common platform for South Asian women to act together to improve the quality of their lives. NKS is involved in developing and delivering a range of activities which include:

- Advocacy, outreach and group work
- Health education and promotion
- One to one advice across including housing, benefits, immigration, and racism
- Organising courses and training which support women to progress in their lives and careers
- Building confidence, developing skills and linking women into wider opportunities in employment, enterprise and wider civic participation
- Arranging open days and seminars to address issues relevant to South Asian women and children
- Promoting multicultural childcare services by way of the NKS Childcare Facility

- Networking and linking voluntary and statutory agencies to promote inclusion and integration

Beliefs which underpin the work of NKS
The project aims to empower women to take control of their lives and ensure they access the best possible opportunities in their communities, education, the economy and wider society. NKS promote equality and democracy and create opportunities for South Asian women's voice's to be heard at all levels.

Barriers faced by BME women in progressin in education and careers in segregated areas/sectors

Resources were dedicated to supporting women into childcare through the childcare partnership. NKS worked in partnership to deliver formal training and qualifications for women to get into childcare. These resources have since been cut thus limiting women's opportunities for employment. Public sector are keen to promote BME women into 'traditional' opportunities and have not committed to promoting women in segregated sectors.

Many of the women NKS work with have no basic skills or qualifications. Immigrant women who have qualifications find that they are not recognized here in the UK. This means that their options are limited and if they can find work it is generally below their skill and qualification level with limited or no career development potential.

BME communities and particularly women within those communities are especially

isolated whether through language or ethnicity, mainstream services, employers and business development doesn't take account of those issues and indeed when it comes to employers there is still scope for significant scope for addressing prejudice and uninformed judgments about BME communities and women in particular.

Lack of appropriate careers guidance support for BME young people. There is a standing joke within the communities that young BME people in school are automatically guided towards business studies and related subjects. This is not to suggest that there is significant institutional racism within the education system, but that there are pre-conceived expectations of what BME young people's capabilities and aspirations are. Equality and diversity strategies and policies are well intentioned and support tolerance and respect but the application in practice sometimes gets lost.

Some families within the community are reluctant to let their daughters move from home when the time comes for university education. With sons there is rarely an issue. Again this restricts the options young BME women have to follow an educational and career path of their choice. There is little that can be done to address the culture within families, however agencies working with communities could be addressing this in their generic support services. I'm not sure how much they do.

Language is always a barrier particularly for immigrant BME women. Standard employability and enterprise support doesn't take account of this.

What do you think the main solutions might be for BME women to progress in segregated areas of education and employment?

In any work that is done with BME women either training or careers support aimed at tackling occupational segregation or promoting entrepreneurship the global market perspective should be promoted. We want to broaden horizons across cultures and this should also be extended to teaching and careers guidance with young people.

We need training and guidance for those who are influencing the lives and career development of young BME people. The need to ensure they have a race and gendered perspective on their approach to supporting learning and career development. There are a lot of 'tokenistic' gestures which young people including young women feel patronized by.

Providing literacy and ESOL support to ensure BME people (woman in this case) can make the most of career development opportunities is imperative if we are to redress their underrepresentation in sectors and enterprise.

In summary we need to focus on young women for direct education, focus on older women and wider BME communities using community development opportunities to change and influence families. Within the education system, we need to ensure that professionals who are supporting educational and career development. Both of my sons were directed towards business studies and in fact have progressed into law and medicine!