

Focus Group: Ethnic Minority Groups & Green Spaces

Date: Friday 27th June 2003

Name of Group: Bangladeshi Women's Garden group – "Concrete To Coriander"
(9 in group)

Mrs S. Akhtar
Mrs S. Chowdhury
Mrs T. Khassum
Mrs M. Rhanom
Mrs L. Saleha Chowdhury
S.K. Choudhury
A. Chowdhury
Irena Iwegbu – CSV Environment

N.B. The group had varying levels of English language skills (oral and written) and did not feel comfortable with the prescribed Focus Group protocol. Therefore it was decided by the group that it would be easier for them to answer the questions while it was scribed onto flipcharts while ensuring that everyone had adequate opportunity to take part.

1. How many of you were interested in green spaces before we asked you to be involved today?

7

2. What is a green space? Name some different kinds

The group saw green space as including formal and no formal spaces including farmland.

"any area containing grass, trees or flowers including farmland, gardens parks and woods"

A number of types of green space were identified. These were:

Parks, gardens, fields, woods/forests, islands/roadside verges
Allotments, front gardens, hedges and botanical gardens.

3. How have you used green spaces?

There was a general feeling from all the group that having access to green space was very important for them and their families, particularly children.

"it's nice to be able to take the children out and see the flowers and the trees"

Green Spaces were used by the group for;

- getting fresh air
- taking their children out to play
- planting flowers and vegetables
- playing sport and games
- picnics
- enjoying the beauty of the space
- seeing plants and flowers from all over the world

4. What would you like to see or do in green spaces?

The group saw parks important, but they needed to be safe and clean so that they could use them more for activities without worrying.

The groups said they would like:

- more flowers
- designated picnic and sports areas
- cleaner and tidier parks – less rubbish, better looked after
- good facilities – toilets, telephones, benches
- opportunity to do activities
 - cycling
 - walking
 - outdoor sports

5. How have you been involved in the care, creation or improvement of green space?

The group have all been very active in improving the green space within the local area both in their own homes and within the community. They have worked on allotments in the local park and in other locations across the area (Small Heath Park, Bordesley Green allotments)

Gardening competition – both in their homes and as part of a group

Developed a community garden

Healthy walks programme linking local green space

6. What deters you from getting involved in caring, creating or improving green space?

The need to build relationships with other organisations in order to share knowledge and skills was seen as important. Transport was a particular problem if a car was available it was usually in use and there is a lack of confidence in using public transport for long distances (More a safety issue than a reliability issue)

Issues arose such as;

- safety
- lack of information about what there is to do and how they can get involved
- access to transport – don't like using transport on their own
- fear/lack of confidence
- isolation – need to build relationships with organisations working green spaces

7. Are there any cultural barriers?

This response was illuminating, as this group have been active for 2-3 years. It was felt that the younger generation particularly the women have more opportunities to be active and get involved.

Issues arose such as;

- expectations of women within community
- seen as something that is not part of the routine
- suspicion – easier for the younger generation
- information – language occasionally an issue

8. Would information in community languages be useful in making access easier?

Although the group had a range of abilities in English it was felt that plain English was generally sufficient with community languages for information such as welcome signs and contact details. A visual interpretation also helps – and is universal.

Plain straightforward English is often sufficient as someone can usually translate
Key messages in community languages – bulletpoints would improve access
Information in places the community uses – libraries, community centres, sent to community organisations

Telephone nos, dates & addresses in English

Use of pictures/images rather than words

9. What more needs to be done?

Organisations need to work with communities to ensure they are culturally aware and sensitive – quality of experience

There needs to be resources identified to support activities

Need to be partnership between organisations and communities from which both can learn