



DISC Exeter working lunch

1. What are the Barriers to reaching BME groups

- Science communicators lack of understanding of wants and needs of BME Groups
 - Not knowing how to make things relevant, what are the hooks
- Lack of awareness of science happening in Developing nations
- Identifying and finding BME groups
 - Attracting a non homogenous group (particularly multi generational)
 - Marketing/Publicity – not knowing the best way to contact groups
 - not knowing the right media to contact
- more/harder work is required to reach BME groups than our traditional audiences
 - Lack of resources to make events more inclusive particularly time and money
 - Don't know how or where to start
- lack of trust – time is needed to build relationships with BME groups, and thereby provide opportunities for groups to have ownership
 - Avoiding sheep dip syndrome and mistrust (groups have had people dip in and out before and seen not outcomes from giving up their time)
 - Letting groups know 'what is in it for us'
- Finding appropriate role models and combating the stereotypical white scientists image
- Timing – knowing different cultures approach to timing (start, end, flexibility)
- Venues and knowing what groups use which venue
- Gender issues, respecting tradition
- Ensuring good levels of engagement ones groups are there – building confidence, getting over language barriers
- Dealing with differing expectations
- Lack of resources of BME groups – groups may not be there next week as their funding is scarce, lack of funding to attend
- lack of willingness of scientists – 'what is in it for me?'
- BME groups often not aware of range and diversity of whole range of science

2. Overcoming barriers

After prioritisation of the barriers listed above, eight points were chosen to be examined further. Groups were asked to consider ways in which the science communication community could work to overcome these barriers and identify areas where DISC could play a role.

a. Media

- More media training for scientists and specific training for talking to BME groups
- Produce list of BME scientists that can be given to the media to use as spokespeople. Possibly link up with the Science Media Centre
- Push young/female/BME scientists to be spokespeople in the media. This should come from high levels within organisations
- Create positive images in the media. Could link into the BBC Consultation charter review to do this

b. Image of science and scientists

- Identify role models from current science not just historical figures and include international scientists from developing countries
- List where web information and books are about BME historical figures
- Know what science is happening in developing countries and highlight the work. See sciDev.net

c. Venues

- Ask audiences where they want to meet
- Use venues that community groups already use
- Ice breakers at the start help 'thaw' venues

d. Encouraging scientists to communicate

- scientific organisations already have mission statements for communication – the communication needs to be targeted to BME groups for more points
- Encourage managers to motivate their scientists to do BME work
- Commission research to show that there are outcomes
- Give scientists reward and recognition for doing work with BME groups
- Write to 'bosses' of scientists to acknowledge that they have taken part in work with BME groups

e. Lack of understanding

- As good communicators the first thing we should do is identify how to reach out target audience. BME groups are no different.
- Need to push BME groups up the agenda – in the past they have not been a high priority
- produce guidelines on how to target and market to specific BME groups (not just event checklists, but guidelines that can be included in your current programmes)
- make links with scientists in developing countries (Birmingham LEA are doing something similar)
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f. Making it relevant

- Money is the best way to make things relevant.
- Events should highlight what science and scientists can do but should not frame everything as science
- Events should explore social history and see how science can be involved

g. Timing

- Accept cultural timings and be flexible about start and end times
- Choose easy access venues
- Have things for people to do while waiting for events to start eg food, information to read, networking
- Have a contingency plan
- Create a database of 'cultural timings' with information on religious festivals and explanations of what happens at these times (See Birmingham LEA's calendar of religious festivals)

h. Lack of BME resources

- Try to make funds available, even if it is only a token
- Make it clear that you can't solve all problems

What do you want DISC to deliver

- Create a database of funding resources and details of how to apply. Look into creating partnerships with BME groups to apply to existing funding schemes (make sure funders are realistic)

- Provide a list of publications about historical and current black scientists
- Produce a list of BME media – mediadisc has about 180 contacts for ethnic media, this could be added to make a more comprehensive list to include additional media such as pirate radio stations
- Produce guidelines of ethnic media 'news values' what makes a story, should you 'sell stories' differently etc
- Produce a guidelines for BME events that can be used by people when running events for the first time
- Lobby to push communication work particularly communication with BME's up the research assessment agenda. Provide scientists with reward and recognition for doing so
- Develop list of BME scientists that are happy to speak to the media
- Link up with BBC charter review to push positive image of BME scientists in the media