# Community Organising for Inclusive Industrial Policy

## A case study of Citizens UK Birmingham and migrant micro-enterprises

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## Acknowledgements

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# Community Organising for Inclusive Industrial Policy

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# 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Aim of the research

In February 2020, we were commissioned by Nesta to address the question: what value can community organising bring to innovation policy? In this report, we explore the potential of community organising as a particular method of democratising innovation policymaking through bottom-up citizen action that both confronts and collaborates with powerholders. In particular, we look at innovation in relation to industrial policy.

Community organising is a method of public engagement used by Citizens UK (CUK), a non-partisan nationwide broad-based alliance of civil society institutions with several chapters in the UK. It is an umbrella term for a field of practice in which citizens collaboratively investigate social issues of mutual concern and take collective action to hold policymakers to account. It works with a diverse group of civic leaders from a range of different institutions, which typically include schools, universities, hospitals, faith institutions, charities and community groups.

Nesta funded Citizens UK in Birmingham (CUKB) to carry out community organising around innovation policy issues, and we were commissioned to evaluate this work. Originally, we planned to focus on the work of CUKB around the 2022 Commonwealth Games (CWG) to be held in Birmingham. However, the national lockdown imposed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic compelled us to adapt our focus. At that time, the uncertainty around whether the CWG were going forward, and the need to respond to the pandemic, affected the work of CUKB. We therefore looked more broadly at two aspects of community organising and industrial policy.

Our first concern is regarding who influences decisions about industrial policy and the involvement of citizens. The key players conventionally involved in decisions relating to the design, implementation and funding of industrial policies tend to be drawn from a narrow pool of career politicians, civil servants, scientists, and universities. However, policymakers frequently undertake some form of public engagement when developing policy, generally prior to implementation. Such public engagement often takes the form of asking the public to respond to a government consultation document or to attend public events, and although ostensibly open to anyone, in practice responses tend to be limited to a few people who are aware of the consultations and have the time and self-interest to attend events.

In this report, we explore whether community organising can bring to the table of industrial policy decision making citizens who face higher opportunity costs because their time is a scarce commodity. These include those from deprived areas, migrant businesses, working parents, wage workers, and marginalised communities who often only have token involvement or are excluded, sometimes by people who are, or claim to be, their representative.

Our second concern is that government industrial policies tend to focus on improving the competitiveness and capabilities of domestic firms, targeting 'new technology' and those oriented towards growth. This strategy generally fails to 'think small' and consequently pays far less attention to micro-businesses.

Government statistics on the size of businesses in the UK at the start of 2020 show that out of 5,980,520 million businesses there were 4,567,775 (76 per cent) without any employees and a turnover of £315,627 million. Additionally, a further 1,156,925 businesses (19 per cent) had 1-9 employees and a turnover of £615,251 million.[1]

In our study, we focus on migrant micro-enterprises in the locality that CUKB works. Migrant enterprise is a broad term used here to cover migrant-run businesses, social enterprises, community organisations and self-employment. The focus on migrant micro-businesses is core for the innovation of industrial policy given that according to the most up-to-date, authoritative research on ethnic minority small businesses in the UK, *"business owners from an ethnic minority background are more likely to be growth-focused, innovative and export-oriented than other firms."* [2] We investigated the extent to which community organising, which conventionally focuses on issues relating to employment, health, housing and crime,[a] can be innovatively used to empower migrant micro-enterprises to better engage with, influence and benefit from, industrial policies in the region. As we show later in this report, CUKB, unlike other Citizens UK chapters, has been working with migrant businesses for around four years.

## 1.2   Methodology

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the original time scale of the project changed. Accordingly, the data collection process was only able to commence in July 2020 and completed in October 2020. Our research is a snapshot in time of a longer piece of action research being undertaken by the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME), currently based at Aston University. Our research took the form of a short, sharp deep dive into the activities of CUKB. Our aim is not to provide a comprehensive account of CUKB and its activities but rather to draw attention to salient characteristics of community organising which have the potential to democratise innovation and industrial policies.

Our research activities included a retrospective element and a current component.[b]

We analysed a sample of recordings of a dozen face-to-face zoom internal meetings held by CUKB from April to July 2020, reviewed past accounts of CUKB activities, focusing on its engagement and support of migrant enterprises, and conducted a brief secondary data analysis of key publications, blogs, reports and briefs pertaining to community organising, business support and migrant entrepreneurship. In particular, this bibliographic research focused on the Business Leadership Project, which introduced CUKB to business support. This helped us gain a better grasp of the evolution of community organising vis-à-vis business support. The Project is a partnership comprising CUKB, NatWest Bank, CREME and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). It started in

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a.  Citizens UK's six national campaigns are: Better Mental Health Access; Refugee Resettlement; Housing and Homelessness; No Place for Hate Crime; A Real Living Wage; and Migrants and Inclusion. However, recently they have launched an additional campaign: Just Change, which focuses on how free school meals operate.

b.  To maintain confidentiality, all individuals and organisations are referred to by a pseudonym.

2016 and is ongoing. The purpose of this grounding of our study in previous research done by CREME permitted positioning our research on a broader agenda of action research and innovation in the West Midlands.

We collected empirical data from a cross section of people involved in Citizens UK. From July 2020, when all CUKB activities switched to online platforms, we attended eleven internal meetings. This included those of the chapter leadership group, as well as sub-groups such as the business leadership group, the youth action group and mental health group. We attended one national meeting that had representatives from all national chapters, which gave an insight into the different work being done.

We also attended six national training events, and as we were expected to be participants and not merely observers, engaged in discussions in plenary and breakout room sessions with members from a broad range of chapters. Each training session used case studies based on recent or current work. Although none of these related to work done to address diversity and inclusion in relation to migrant micro-enterprises, we gained a lot of insight into the nuances of the community organising model of public engagement. In particular, we learnt of the challenges and successes of working with power-holders to influence public policy development and implementation.

We undertook several interviews with CUKB. At one time, CUKB had two community organisers, later reduced to one, and we had ten meetings in total with both. We undertook a dozen interviews with a representative sample of CUKB members, including businesses, community organisations, faith groups and universities. We undertook three interviews with those involved in the London chapter, focussing on CUK's involvement in the 2012 Olympic Games held in London.

We were fortunate that we were able to include a current case study in our methodology. This involved the creation of the first ever consortium of migrant micro-enterprises to work on a time-bound contract procured by CUKB. This project arose in response to urgent commissioning from Birmingham City Council's Public Health department to help deal with its response to the disproportionately high morbidity and mortality rates among migrant communities, especially Black and Asian communities. The purpose of the project was to prepare videos communicating public health messages in community languages.

As a key part of community organising is speaking truth to power through its advocacy work, we undertook research with power-holders. When we developed the evaluation strategy, we knew that CUKB had planned an Assembly with the candidates of the West Midlands 2020 Mayoral Election, in front of around 1,000 ordinary citizens. Furthermore, it had planned to have meetings with different institutional stakeholders, including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the West Midlands Combined Authority (which includes Birmingham), as well as new innovation hubs/high-tech economy actors emerging in the region linked to the 2022 Commonwealth Games[c] investments. However, the pandemic delayed all such meetings, with most now scheduled for 2021.

As a fallback, we observed two CUKB delegations in meetings with public health power-holders: one with Dr. Peter, a senior management council employee, and the other with Councillor Sharon, an elected councillor who was a member of the Birmingham City Council

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c.   The 2022 Commonwealth Games will be the first time the West Midlands has played host to the event, following London 1934 and Manchester 2002.

cabinet. We followed up these meetings with separate interviews with each of these power-holders, and complemented them with three interviews with another local councillor and two executive staff working in the council.

An analysis of this data gives us an opportunity to understand the strategies community organising used to empower citizens to engage directly with power-holders. This helps us extrapolate whether community organising has the potential to empower migrant micro-enterprises to speak directly to power-holders who make decisions on industrial policies.

## 1.3   Report structure

To address the question 'what value does community organising bring to innovation policy?', which we have focused on industrial policy, the report is structured as follows. Following Section 1, Section 2 focuses on how community organising is deployed as a distinctive tool to advance the agenda of diversity and inclusion. We first provide an overview of the structure of Citizens UK and how CUKB as a chapter is unique in incorporating a University Business School into its membership. We examine three elements of the craft of community organising: organising to organise; listening; and speaking truth to power. This helps us explore how its approach to democracy in action enables community organising to intensely engage with citizens, including migrant micro-enterprises, in order to identify their needs, formulated as 'asks', and to empower them to take 'asks' to power-holders.

Having provided an overview of community organising, in Section 3 we turn our focus to migrant micro-enterprises. We begin by highlighting the characteristics of migrant micro-enterprises in Birmingham. We then explore the impact of CUKB's business support over the last few years to enable migrant micro-enterprises to become part of the innovation economy. We focus on the first-ever project to use community organising to support businesses – the Business Leadership Project that CUKB developed over four years in collaboration with its member organisation, Aston University, and specifically with CREME. This section highlights the distinctiveness of community organising as a powerful tool for circumventing the barriers faced by migrant micro-entrepreneurs from entering mainstream business support and meeting power-holders.

In Section 4, we look at CUKB's support of migrant micro-enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. First, we examine how community organising supported individual enterprises. Second, we explore how it spearheaded further innovation by facilitating the rapid development of a consortium of migrant micro-enterprises to procure and deliver a competitively tendered media project: CUKB contracted with Birmingham City Council to produce videos of COVID-19 public health messages in diverse mother tongues.

In Section 5, we explore whether community organising has the potential to promote inclusive growth as an integral part of industrial policies. There are two sides to this coin. First, we consider whether community organising can support the capacity building of consortia to put them in a better position to procure public sector contracts. Having the knowledge and skills to deliver on contracts needs to be complemented by influencing power-holders responsible for industrial policies. Hence, second, we explore whether the media project gives us some clues as to the potential of community organising to help migrant micro-enterprises to do this. In the final section of this report, we present our conclusions.

# 2

# Citizens UK Birmingham and the craft of community organising

## 2.1 Citizens UK Birmingham

Citizens UK Birmingham is one of the twelve chapters of Citizens UK. Community organising is a public engagement strategy developed in the USA and taken up by Citizens UK in 1988. Citizens UK is a broad-based organisation, with over 450 member institutions across the UK organised into local chapters that take action on a range of issues. Each chapter has a salaried lead organiser, sometimes supported by other organisers. Community organising focuses on building trust and meaningful relationships with its member institutions and citizens.

Power sits at the core of community organising, and by initial and continuous professional development, citizens including migrant micro-enterprises are trained in civic leadership skills that empower them to both confront and collaborate with power-holders. Chapters regularly come together to network, and to share their practice and lessons learnt to support each other on the local developments of national campaigns.

The current CUKB was set up just under eight years ago and comprises 26 member institutions spanning higher education institutions and schools, faith, and community organisations as well as unions.[d] Birmingham is characterised by super-diversity.[e] The population include the more established Bengali, Pakistani, Irish and White British communities living alongside newer arrivals such as Somalis and Eritreans. The highly diverse collaborators of CUKB include a cross section of citizens from diverse faiths, ethnicity, gender and age. However, while CUKB is broad-based, it does not encompass all communities, although it is trying to widen its membership.

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d. There was a predecessor chapter, but it faded away.

e. The concept of super-diversity was coined by Steven Vertovec when referring to the changing socio-demographic characteristics of Britain. Accordingly, *"Britain can now be characterized by 'super-diversity,' a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade."* (Vertovec, 2007: 1024). Currently, Birmingham covers an area of approximately 268 km2, with a population of 1.086 million. According to the 2011 UK Census, whilst 58.7 per cent were White, 26.6 per cent were Asian and 8.9 per cent were Black. Furthermore, there were 238,313 residents who were born overseas (ONS, 2011). According to the latest figures from Birmingham City Council (June 2019), there are 1,718 refugees in Birmingham.

As a member of the CUKB leadership group noted:

"It is a challenge to reach out to the long term unemployed white working-class families and gain their trust... it's hard for us to do."

In recent months, attention has focussed on recruiting young people and integrating them into CUKB. As a 23-year-old mixed heritage woman, referring to herself and another young male recruit, said:

"CUKB welcomes us and they appreciate that we have brought fresh perspectives."

The commitment to inclusivity is reflected in the current CUKB leadership team, which has both a university professor and someone who works as a cleaner participating on an equal footing. Furthermore, as the civic leadership team roles of co-chairs are subject to election every year, everyone, irrespective of age or occupational status, has an opportunity to stand for election and is encouraged to take on these roles.

While many chapters have links with local universities, three of the four universities in Birmingham are fee-paying members of CUKB.[f] Of particular relevance for exploring the potential role of community organising for democratising industrial policy is the key role played by CREME, one of the research centres at Aston University. The key characteristic of CREME is a long-standing commitment to engaged scholarship:[g] its work focuses on action research projects which are usually co-produced with migrant micro-enterprises.

Through a wide range of public engagement activities, CREME has ensured, and continues to ensure, that ordinary citizens directly benefit from the research evidence in timely and practical ways. CREME's involvement in CUKB also contributes to the large involvement of migrant micro-enterprises in CUKB, and for one of CUKB's priorities to include improving business support to them. This atypical feature enables migrant micro-enterprises to engage in community organising, gain experience in civic leadership, and obtain a seat at the table of power-holders. These factors lay the groundwork for democratising innovation and industrial policy. The importance of being part of the policy conversation to avoid being stepped over was laid bare by one of the migrant entrepreneurs who put it bluntly:

"If you are not at the table, then you are on the menu."

f.   That is University of Birmingham, Aston University and Newman University. Further, Queen's Foundation, whilst not a University, is in membership as a Higher Education College.

g.   Engaged scholarship makes research relevant to practitioners by bridging research and practice, involving intended beneficiaries at the outset of the research and implementation of evidence-based recommendations. Thus, engaged scholarship has been conceptualised as the "intentional efforts to connect knowledge generated through faculty activity directly to the public in ways that collaboratively address social issues and community needs and concerns" (Carolan and Withers, 2018 :1), wherein the generation of new knowledge through the combining of academic knowledge and community-based knowledge eliminates the hierarchy of such knowledge.

## 2.2  The craft of community organising

One of the key goals of Citizens UK is to deploy community organising to win 'asks' . Citizens UK sits power-holders with citizens to make a pledge in relation to their demands. After building trust and holding several meetings and one-to-ones, it obtains a successful commitment from policymakers around a particular topic ('win an ask'). Accordingly, asks are the end goal of the five steps of community organising. Although the steps are presented here as discrete, in practice the relationship between them is dynamic and iterative. These steps are:

I.  **Organise**: This consists of getting organised around a particular agenda and building relational power (i.e. the power of people and trust). This usually results in a range of local alliances and collaborative work around a particular campaign.

II.  **Listen**: This takes place via a series of surgeries and meetings with citizens and member institutions. The result of this is a more thorough understanding of problems affecting local citizens and cues about potential interventions.

III.  **Strategise**: This consists of setting up a plan of action. The result of this is embedding those needs in one of the campaigns of CUK and setting up a series of specific steps to respond to the issues.

IV.  **Act**: This entails bringing key concerns raised during the previous step to the attention of a range of power-holders and agitating them to address community needs. Agitation is the term used by Citizens UK's community organisers to refer to the process of raising an issue by appealing to that person's needs and interests, during their one-to-ones with stakeholders.

V.  **Negotiate**: This consists of gaining a place at the decision-making table of relevant power-holders and seeking to obtain a public commitment from them to address specific issues.

These steps are at the core of community organising and largely explain Citizens UK successes in winning asks, such as the national living wage campaign.[3] We now look more closely at three elements of community organising: organising to organise; listening; and speaking truth to power.

### Organising to organise

Organising to organise entails constant communication across staff and key members of CUKB, who meet and exchange information to assess the extent to which each one of the five key steps of community organising were taking place.

CUKB's internal meetings typically follows this structure:

a.  Rounds of introductions which relate the nugget of a story of current experience.

b.  Rounds of presenting key events and recent developments.

c.  Catch up on previous agenda items and agreements.

d.  Organising around power (i.e. key discussion of the day).

e.  Any other business.

As structured as this may seem, in reality they operate loosely as themes that evolve according to the current needs of CUKB member institutions and staff. This approach often reflects current concerns and helps to update attendees' nuanced knowledge of issues facing citizens. For those attending a meeting for the first time, many of them strangers to others, it gives an immediate opportunity to feel part of the group and to realise that their voice counts. At various times in the meeting the Chair or Lead Organiser will invite contributions, particularly from newcomers. By encouraging everyone to tell their stories, community organising deploys a powerful tool to constantly update, illuminate and humanise communal issues by drawing on personal lived experience.

A key characteristic of community organising operations is adaptability. Community organising is a well-structured and hands-on approach to make change happen. Yet, its flexibility to adapt to the changing local dynamics as well as broader societal needs might be one of the reasons for its success. In fact, it might be argued that its 12 local chapters, whilst following the same community organising approach, also have some leeway to adapt the methodology as they see fit. In the case of CUKB, as further exemplified in the following sections, adapting community organising to the current pandemic has meant transitioning to full online delivery. Whilst this is clearly not exclusive of CUKB, it was able to do this rapidly and effectively. In particular, it has heavily relied on online platforms to hold meetings (Zoom), social media to share news and information (WhatsApp), and to win asks (Twitter). The latter has become even more important during the lockdown to agitate policymakers and practitioners and to try to position its agenda in the discussion.

Over the past few months, CUKB has focused heavily on the health and safety of staff, member institutions and local citizens. It worked on this by deploying the first three steps of community organising: organise, listen and strategise.[h] Accordingly, it was able to rapidly organised around the challenges of COVID-19 given the trust and networks already developed. This took place via online meetings and other online communications.

Trained on conducting listening campaigns, CUKB was able to listen to local communities' needs and strategise the best approach to navigate networks of power and mobilize the community by bringing different power-holders to the online meetings. Following government guidance on protection against COVID-19, and in collaboration with the local health authorities, a particularly relevant outcome of CUKB was the recording of eight videos in different mother tongue languages spoken by local citizens. These videos were released during summer 2020 and distributed across all the networks of CUK. This media project is discussed in more detail later as an example of the democratisation of innovation policy.

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h. It is likely that in the ensuing months CUK Birmingham will continue deploying all five steps of community organising around issues of Health and Safety. However, our research is coming to an end before CUK Birmingham completes all five steps of community organising.

## Listening

Active listening is a key tool in community organising, and citizens are encouraged to have one-to-one brief meetings of about half an hour, within and between chapter members, including within the organisations they represent. These relationship building exercises increase knowledge of personal and professional issues and develop insight and empathy. This helps to build strong working relationships and establish an inclusive community of citizens built on respect and trust.

A key feature of the community organising model of public engagement is its listening campaigns. For instance, in March 2019, CUKB launched an extensive listening campaign to unpack its chapter priorities in preparation for seeking pledges at regional elections in 2020. It had over 800 face-to-face conversations during seven months of events and activities. This was a labour-intensive, slow and painstaking process. As the lead organiser explained, it asks citizens in its locality to tell the community organisers:

"What matters to you – what will help you and your family."

The development of trust built by CUKB means it is more likely to get unsanitised versions of the story of ordinary citizens. This trust helps to alleviate a fear that sharing personal stories of hardship may court ridicule, as expressed by a middle-aged refugee who recently settled in Birmingham:

"They understand sometimes I feel like not sharing my story. I think people will laugh – will they say my community is primitive?"

As community organising acknowledges super-diversity, it does not put citizens into the neat categories that policymakers favour. Furthermore, a concern with intersectionality shows how aspects of a citizen's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. This approach to public engagement digs deeper and explores a diversity of views. As noted earlier, at each internal meeting everyone is updated with recent grassroots experiences.

Drawing on information from both these meetings and the intelligence gained in listening campaigns enables CUK members in public forums to voice views and concerns of citizens who are unable to attend. This is particularly important because those citizens who can attend meetings with power-holders are frequently those who are either in jobs that require them to do this as part of their professional duties or who can easily take time off work without financial penalties to attend to civic responsibilities. Citizens who are not in this position have to rely often on privileged citizens to speak for them, although CUK takes steps to mitigate this.

The public engagement strategy of community organising strengthens sensitivity to the diversity of citizens' needs, as exemplified by these stories: second generation migrant youth who have diligently followed their low income parents' advice to undertake tertiary studies who feel the only option left is to set up a business as they find it difficult to get good quality paid internships and employment commensurate with their knowledge and skills; a recent migrant in a low income job who is concerned about affordable housing; a

middle class long-term Jewish resident with daughters who is worried about the increase in hate crime, particularly misogyny; some citizens within a faith organisation who supported increasing the number of Syrian refugees taken in by Birmingham while others did not.

Cultural factors are also relevant. CUKB found that some ethnic minority communities conceptualise such issues as 'personal problems' and that they are not 'worthy' of support and therefore do not wish to 'burden' statutory services with them. CUKB found for example that hate crime and domestic violence episodes are unreported and mask the true scale of the problems. As explained by a CUKB member:

> "We explore the nuances between different communities but also look for common ground. The differences are important and should not be neglected because they reflect important needs."

Further public engagement meetings are held to arrive at a consensus, identifying and prioritising the key asks. In October 2019, CUKB brought together leaders from a variety of member institutions with CUKB supporters to vote on top civil society priorities for the 2020 regional elections for Mayor, and Police & Crime Commissioner. New priorities, each with subsections of asks, were agreed. Furthermore, in order to fully establish and institutionalise the relationship with CUKB, it was agreed to ask both the Mayor and Police & Crime Commissioner to meet with CUKB twice a year, and for both to attend a mid-term Accountability Assembly in June 2022. Unfortunately, the plans to convene a Mayoral Assembly in April 2020 to present the asks had to be postponed to 2021 due to the pandemic.

This process of intense consultation, consensus building, and citizen empowerment means that the community organising methodology results in CUKB moving at a slower pace than if the lead organiser engaged in quick and superficial consultations and was the main or sole representative at meetings with power-holders, acting as a 'community representative' and speaking on their behalf. Public engagement is therefore an ongoing feature of community organising, with intermittent bursts of more intense activity to identify evolving asks, shape priorities and make decisions by consensus, both of which inform specific action plans.

Public engagement is thus undertaken through and with citizens by citizens who are part of the local communities, rather than undertaken by someone who parachutes into the community to undertake a quick consultation by talking to 'representatives' of the communities or a small number of interested and motivated individuals. As an interviewee from a new migrant community organisation said:

> "With CUKB, we control the agenda. In other organisations, you are given the agenda and try to fit in."

## Speaking truth to power

Community organising has a neutral view of power, seeing it as neither good nor bad, and therefore its emphasis is on working with power. It treats power analysis as a constant process, and recognises that there are concentric circles of power. Some power-holders are salaried employees whilst others hold honorary positions, such as Birmingham City Councillors. Politicians are an important category of power-holders, dependent on citizens' votes, meaning citizens can influence them to develop favourable policies that take account of their needs. Community organising distinguishes between those who have official and symbolic power; those with actual and operational power; those who have a major influence on decision-making; those who actively participate in decision-making; and those who have decisive decision-making power. Relationships with power-holders are supplemented by also building generic and issue-based alliances with other stakeholders, including civil society organisations.

Community organising requires sustained and well targeted efforts, as well as constant review, reconfiguration, and recalibration to ensure engagement with a diversity of power-holders and holding them to account. It facilitates keeping constantly abreast with changes in existing power-holders and their individual agendas. It tries to identify spheres and levels of influence, the portfolios, career plans, and key issues power-holders are interested in. While at some meetings with power-holders the intention is to raise an ask, in others it is to cultivate a personal relationship with the power-holder who can draw attention to their asks in different forums or take them closer to meeting the power-holders most relevant to it. CUK also tries to build relationships with the gatekeepers to power-holders, such as advisers, executive staff, and secretaries.

One of the techniques of working with power is to consider a quid pro quo. This means that not only are asks presented to a power-holder, but attempts are also made to give them an opportunity to say how citizens can help them to fulfil their jobs. This was evident in the meeting with Dr. Peter, the Director of Public Health, who said:

> "You are trusted voices in your community, and we need to take advantage of this... we also need you to tell us where it (public health communication) is not landing well."

He asked for CUKB's support to identify 'COVID-19 champions' from each community, which he thought would be a more effective way to find them than by using random recruitment practices. CUKB agreed to explore options within their communities to support this request.

Similarly, the CUKB delegation said to Cllr Sharon, a member of the Council cabinet:

> "Give us homework, things to do on your concerns so when we meet again, we can respond."

The goal of community organising is to take citizens directly to meet power-holders. However, for practical reasons, it is the lead organiser alone who attends many meetings with power-holders, as citizens have their own enterprises to run, are engaged in low waged full-time employment, or have family commitments.

However, his mandate stems from detailed and nuanced knowledge of citizens' concerns and collectively agreed asks. Not only does he have to be trusted by citizens to be an effective representative, he has to be respected by power-holders too. His integrity, credentials and credibility is paramount. A middle management employee at the council noted that the CUKB lead organiser:

"Has a fundamental relationship with many citizens and organisations and is good at getting them on side… What is important is that you have to have community intelligence not concentrated on statistics, and need stories which are open and transparent."

While at the meetings, the lead organiser often makes it a point to engage in real time consultations with absent citizens. Through the use of digital media accessed through smart technology, the lead organiser is able to very quickly text migrant micro-enterprises and individual citizens on his broadcast list and canvas their views on an issue which he can then feed into the discussions.

As the aim of community organising is to enable citizens, including those from migrant micro-enterprises, to directly speak truth to power, it focuses on the development of civic leadership. This is based on the idea that any citizen, irrespective of background, can be empowered to speak to power-holders, not only in relation to CUKB asks but also in relation to individual, community or enterprise needs. A key principle is therefore '[N]ever do for others what they can do for themselves'.

The involvement of citizens is not tokenistic. They are expected to meet power-holders on their own, participate in delegations to power-holders, play roles of speakers and chairs at accountability assemblies and other public events, and become members of advisory committees. Thus, a senior member of a well-established Christian organisation said:

"The engagement of CUKB members, not just the lead organiser, with power-holders is another example of democracy in action."

This unique methodology of community organising was attested to by a local councillor who said:

"It does not just bring strategic community leaders to the table but grassroots activists. They bring different perspectives, and this helps decision-makers to better understand the situation… and the impact of policies on different dynamics is useful."

When considering which citizens should make up a delegation, community organising methodology facilitates the possibility that each delegation comprises a mix of old and new members with varying levels of confidence and experience. Logistics can sometimes affect who is selected to be part of the delegation as some citizens work, usually recent migrants in low-paid hourly paid roles where absences result in loss of income. Migrant micro-enterprises incur opportunity costs.

Wherever possible, CUKB tries to take these factors into account when organising meetings with power-holders, although sometimes the date and location of meetings is outside its control. CUKB's delegation to Dr. Peter comprised the lead organiser, migrant micro-enterprises, faith group representatives (Christian/Jewish/Muslim), university staff and a union representative. The delegation that met the Cllr Sharon included migrant micro-enterprises and more young people.

Exemplifying its democratic ethos, each member of the delegation has a voice. The community organising approach contrasts with meetings delegations often have with power-holders where only one or two people speak, and the attendance of others is tokenistic. It offers every delegate a chance of meaningful representation and participation.

There are two main ways this is done in advance of the meeting. First, any citizen going to meet a power-holder, not just the lead organiser, is expected to 'geek up'. That is, they have to do background research on the power-holders and their interests, as well as CUKB's knowledge and perspective on the issues. As the lead organiser said about a forthcoming meeting with a prominent and powerful power-holder:

"You have to be on point when you see him… you have to keep up to date, have to cultivate awareness, got to get the pitch right because any one thing you say can mess up the next thing said."

Second, the delegation will decide collectively on the parameters of their ask and the minimum contribution of each delegate, which is usually a personal story to illuminate the ask. This does not mean that each delegate speaks for an equal amount of time, but that each one is aware in advance of what their contribution and that of others will be. While part of the meeting is choreographed, there is space for anyone to make spontaneous contributions. They have to be vigilant to ensure that the power-holder or a couple of delegates do not dominate the meeting.

The lead organiser has a particularly important role in facilitating the meeting, inviting individual members to speak at a time when the discussion comes closest to their concerns to ensure maximum impact. After the meeting, the delegation reconvenes to evaluate performance, noting lessons learnt, highlighting areas for improvement and drawing up plans for action.

While speaking truth to power is intimidating for most citizens, it is particularly challenging for new migrant communities who have different expectations and experiences of engaging with power-holders due to the range of different political systems, freedoms, rights, and approaches to democracy (where present) in their origin countries. Therefore, unlike community organisations such as the Methodist Church, citizens from organisations supporting migrant and refugee communities have to understand a completely different political system as well as learn techniques and gain confidence to engage in effective advocacy. As a result of prejudice, they may not be accorded equal recognition by power-holders, as one senior member of a majority faith group explained:

"I am a White middle class male of respectable age. Councillors listen to me… Councillors will listen not only because of who I am but because of who I represent – both the organization and Christians."

Building the capacity of everyone to participate also requires reticence on the part of more experienced members so that they consciously give others space to speak.

Recognising his privilege, the same senior person said:

"…because we have come to love and appreciate each other, I am willing to give help to newcomers. I try to be quiet and let them develop their voice… you have to stand back and enable new people to breathe, grow and speak."

However, it is not only migrants who need to be supported to develop their voice, but also non-migrant White citizens, as one noted:

"I am White British, born and brought up in this country, and am a Cambridge graduate. As a teacher, I can happily talk in front of a class or other education professional situation, but I was very nervous speaking in public for CUKB at a Council Assembly or at a public round table with the Mayor. However, through lots of opportunities to practice given by CUKB, I developed the skills and confidence and was able to engage effectively."

This was endorsed by the leader of one refugee community who said:

"…speaking truth to power was a steep learning curve but well supported by CUKB."

This empowered him to play key roles in various meetings CUKB had with power-holders. Furthermore, he was able to develop his own relationship with power-holders and invite them to attend community events. As he explained:

"We would not have had access to these power-holders if not for CUKB. It helps us to understand the political climate and how things work in this country."

The presence of power-holders at community events helps to reduce some of the fear refugees have of people in authority, to feel more confident to engage in self-advocacy, and to support the activities of their community organisation. As the website of the organisation states in encouraging citizens to attend a meeting the community had organised at its centre with a Labour candidate:

"…those of us in civil society should fulfil our duty to build the power of people and to hold the elected to account."

The development of civic leadership is also evident when citizens feel confident to respond to short notice requests from national radio and television. This is exemplified by a CUKB member from a refugee community who confidently and authoritatively spoke live to camera when there was a high-profile news item about a large number of fatalities among migrants attempting to reach the UK. The ability of a community leader to attract high profile power-holders to community events, and to speak on national media outlets, helps to raise their profile and credibility, and garners support and trust from citizens and their participation in community organising endeavours.

In the above section, we have provided a brief overview of community organising, focussing on how it facilitates the acquisition of comprehensive and up-to-date grassroots knowledge of citizens' lives, builds consensus around asks, and empowers citizens to speak directly to power-holders. These citizens include those who run migrant micro-enterprises. We now turn to look at these enterprises more closely and examine how community organising specifically empowers them.

# 3

# Migrant micro-enterprises in Birmingham and community organising

## 3.1 Migrant micro-enterprises in Birmingham

Government industrial policy has a narrow focus on measuring growth in solely economic terms,[i] which ignores the wider social benefits of micro-enterprises. However, as a government report notes:

> "Micro businesses also play an important social role, providing work for many at the 'margins' of the labour force (the unskilled, formerly unemployed, part time workers, women returnees, young and old people). In rural and deprived areas, micro businesses are among the main employers and wealth generators, and in urban areas micro-businesses are often the front-runners of urban regeneration."[4]

In the economically deprived locality of Birmingham that CUKB works in, the vast majority of micro-businesses are run by migrants from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.[j] These micro-businesses tend also to be found mainly in 'traditional' business sectors such as retail, hospitality, clothing, and services. A report published this year by the Federation of Small Businesses shows that ethnic minority businesses contribute £25 billion to the UK economy, but many are being held back by barriers which hinder their growth.[5] Policymakers are relatively deaf to the needs of those affected by these barriers as they tend to focus on more modern sectors, such as IT and digital services, as well as larger enterprises that have closer connections to the interests of power-holders. This is often at the expense of traditional economic sectors and micro-businesses.

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i.  Economic growth is conventionally defined as the increase in the market value of the goods and services produced by an economy over time. It is measured as the percentage rate of increase in the real gross domestic product (GDP). To determine economic growth, the GDP is compared to the population, also known as the per capita income.

j.  We are aware that there are issues with the term 'BAME' (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) but use it in this report for convenience to cover a broad cross-section of people who identify as Black/Asian/Ethnic Minority and who may be recent migrants (including refugees) or descendants of migrants to UK.

Most of these micro-businesses are run by so called 'necessity entrepreneurs'[k] who are principally concerned with generating enough income to support their families than with following traditional models of business growth. Most, if not all, of these businesses are also community focused, not only in terms of the goods and services they provide and their clientele, but also in terms of simultaneously meeting the information and psycho social needs of their communities. Two examples from our research illustrate this: the first, the owner of a popular local gym, emphasises the ties between the gym and local parents and children:

"There have been cases of bullying in the local schools and we have many latchkey children where both parents are at work. Our gym is used as a safe haven where the children can come directly after school, and we coach them about how to deal with the issues. The parents are relieved that their children have a safe place to go to until they can return home."

The second case, a local shopkeeper, emphasised the importance of the social nature of owner-customer relations in his shop, as well as the role it plays in keeping community members informed about relevant local developments and opportunities:

"People come here because they are lonely and want to have a chat with someone. They may only buy one small thing, but they enjoy the company. We befriend them and they talk about their problems. Sometimes we tell them about local services and about jobs or accommodation that may be available."

For such enterprises, corporate social responsibility is an integral part of their business model. Indeed, while corporate social responsibility typically develops as a supplementary element of a profit-making enterprise, for these migrant micro-businesses being embedded within a community and having a social role is fundamental to their operation.

Therefore, a holistic approach to growth is needed that sees their contribution to society not just in narrow economic terms but in a way that also acknowledges their contribution to the social fabric of society. As such, rather than describing their social activities as 'corporate' social responsibility, the phrase 'communal' social responsibility better emphasises their socially embedded and community focused nature. Having briefly highlighted some key aspects of micro migrant businesses in Birmingham, we now turn to look at the involvement of CIKB in them.

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k. Necessity entrepreneurs refers to entrepreneurs who start their businesses when they could not find another means of earning a living to support self and family.

## 3.2  Development of the Business Leadership Project

CUKB pioneered the deploying of community organising to support a new target group for CUK: business owners. After the 2015 Citizens UK General Assembly, Birmingham's lead organiser met with the director of CREME. That conversation created the foundations of a pioneering project of business support. CREME, then based at the University of Birmingham, harnessed its membership of CUKB to collaborate and learn the craft of community organising.

This began with three listening campaigns with migrant micro-enterprises in two of the most economically deprived areas of Birmingham: Lozells and Small Heath. At the time, a key aim was to bring the plight of marginalised inner-city enterprise owners to the attention of the city's business support providers. The three listening campaigns served to unveil some of the key challenges that local enterprises faced, such as the lack of access to affordable rental space and a lack of contact with key stakeholders. This was the first time that CREME and CUKB brought together local entrepreneurs with mainstream providers such as Greater Birmingham Local Enterprise Partnership and NatWest bank.

This pioneering effort built up momentum and resulted in the setting up of a one-year pilot project funded by the Growth Hub. The Growth Hub describes itself as:

> "...the home for advice, guidance and funding for businesses and entrepreneurs across the Greater Birmingham area. We offer impartial, no-cost advice from our expert business advisers online and in person, working with many specialist partner organisations in public and private sectors. Our aim is simply to make businesses we work with as successful as they can be."

During the piloting stage, and via a series of one-to-ones and bespoke workshops, a civic, private and public sector partnership was formed by CUKB, CREME, Natwest Bank and the Growth Hub. This reached out to over a hundred migrant micro-enterprises in three areas which make up the core of the CUKB locality: Lozells, Spark Hill and Small Heath. None of these enterprises had received mainstream business support in the past. The success of this pilot work resulted in the setting up of the Business Leadership Project through additional funding for three years.

Community organising proved key to engaging a large number of enterprises across Birmingham, building trust and supporting their integration into the mainstream business support ecosystem by including them in the Growth Hub's enterprise database. Over this four-year period (2016-2019), the partnership of CUKB, CREME, NatWest Bank and the Growth Hub, reached out to over 219 migrant micro-enterprises across Birmingham, 95 per cent of which had no previous experience of mainstream business support. This capacity building also safeguarded over 200 jobs.

This project is now an integral part of Aston University's Business School and it will continue over the next three years to provide bespoke business support via a Business Accelerator expert who has already supported hundreds of micro-enterprises across Birmingham.

## 4

# Migrant micro-enterprises in Birmingham and community organising: During the COVID19 pandemic

## 4.1 Support for individual migrant micro-enterprises

During our study we observed that CUKB has been continuing to provide support to enterprises via community organising, despite the challenges of the current pandemic. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, CUKB's use of the adaptability of community organising allowed it to rapidly respond to the specific demands of engaged enterprise owners and leaders. This took place via three channels: online surgeries, e-meetings, and the sharing of information via digital mediums such as WhatsApp and email.

The granular understanding of these enterprises' needs, as a result of the close interaction with them, allowed CUKB to provide bespoke advice that mainstream business support might have easily missed. For instance, for one business focused on caring for the elderly, the advice was to set up a helpline with funding from the National Lottery to allow the local citizens to call with specific queries about its services, and to gain support from the migrant community in Birmingham.

Another example was the case of a business focused on education. CUKB advised it to apply to become a member of the Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health and Inequalities Review board. Furthermore, it advised it to set up Saturday school classes, with a focus on the Black community in Birmingham, to support children falling behind educationally due to COVID-19. This would in turn allow it to gain government funding for each family, thus enabling them to afford to send children and youth to attend these classes. This provided much needed reassurance to parents who value education as a step to inter generational social mobility and more secure and better incomes than their own.

As a result of community organising, this bespoke culturally appropriate support, unlike mainstream business support, was grounded in the trust built in the community due to constant interactions. This trust that sits at the heart of community organising is a distinctive feature that differentiates community organising from any other form of mainstream business support and positions it as an innovative tool vis-à-vis industrial policy. The implementation of the support in both cases was mediated by the tensions brought by COVID-19. It is likely that CUKB will continue supporting these migrant micro-enterprises in the advancement of their economic targets and growth potential in ways in which the current model of mainstream business support will be unable to achieve.

Sisters Care, one of the businesses first supported by CUKB during the Business Leadership Project mentioned earlier, featured on national TV channel Sky News in April 2020, as well as in the highly respected daily national newspaper *The Guardian* in August 2020. This media attention raised the national and local profile of Sisters Care and brought public recognition to its tireless work. It had received constant support and surgeries by CUKB, which enabled it to make better use of media attention to further its agenda and support the communities it serves.

In the case of a Sky News report on the impact of the pandemic on the elderly, the feature focused on social care workers supporting long-term illness for the elderly who require home based support. The challenge faced by Sisters Care was the desperately short supply of PPE equipment to support patients referred to them by the NHS. However, despite having an NHS contract, Sisters Care was considered an independent provider. As such it struggled to get hold of PPE equipment, with suppliers stating they *"don't supply kits to agencies."* [6] The media exposure enabled Sisters Care to obtain much needed PPE.

*The Guardian* featured the story of the CEO of Sisters Care,[7] who directly attributed her ability to poignantly and successfully convey a powerful account of her work caring for the elderly to training from CUKB. When talking about the impact of community organising training, she said:

> " ...it has given me a communication tool which has helped me each and every day."

Reaching power via the media allowed Sisters Care to voice its specific concerns, drawing attention to the elderly in ethnic minority communities who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. By referring to CUKB's work on high profile public platforms, it drew attention to the value of deploying community organising as an innovative form of business support, as well as empowering citizens to make their voices heard.

CUKB was able to bring migrant micro-enterprises to the table of power-holders. Just a couple of months after the COVID-19 national lockdown, CUKB trained business leaders in a one hour Zoom session on the mindset and skills required when meeting power-holders. This was followed by a one-hour meeting with Councillor Rafiq. During a very difficult time for businesses due to the general uncertainty and the growing economic pressure of lockdown, CUKB was able to bring a dozen migrant micro-businesses that were well connected in their localities to directly present their case to him. For these micro-businesses, this was an opportunity to air their concerns about the negative impact of COVID-19 on their business. In particular, they were able to articulate their stories and request his support. In turn, Cllr Rafiq was, for the first time, exposed to the personal experiences of migrant micro-enterprises.

The result of this event was that Cllr Rafiq provided reassurance, explaining what the local government was doing to protect their safety and survival. Moreover, he promised to have an open line to all of them, as well as to all of the other micro-businesses that were referred to him by them. He directed them to useful online resources and, more importantly, provided them with his phone number as well as his email. This bespoke support by Cllr Rafiq was a direct result of CUKB deploying community organising to provide certainties for these micro-businesses, and allowed them to get hold of valuable information on government funding, grants and other financial support.

The micro-businesses who met Cllr Rafiq used their networks to cascade all the information they gained to other enterprises, while CUKB collated all the information from Cllr Rafiq together with other resources and disseminated them through its own distribution lists via email and WhatsApp. The combined use of individual and institutional networks ensured that migrant micro-enterprises received relevant and reliable information in a timely way which helped with safeguarding the livelihoods of impoverished citizens.

## 4.2  Support for consortia of migrant micro-enterprises

The provision by CUKB of business support to individual enterprises was complemented this year by another innovation: the formation of a consortium of enterprises and provision of business support to ensure contract compliance. We shall examine how a response by CUKB to an urgent COVID-19 public policy procurement request led to the production of eight videos in several mother tongue languages by a newly constituted consortium of migrant micro-enterprises. This innovation could be spearheaded by CUKB as community organising has the potential to adapt and build on previous successes.

Particularly relevant to this public health media project was that CUKB had previously been a partner in a pioneering project which ran from January to May 2020 identifying eye health care needs and the co-creation of solutions. The optometry project brought together CUKB, Aston University (including CREME) and Aston Villa Foundation, to work with some of the most deprived wards of Birmingham which are located in CUKB's locality. CUKB mobilised migrant enterprises along with other organisations to work with partners to co-create the design, approach and implementation of the listening events held with local citizens to formulate 'asks' to healthcare providers.[l]

For the public health media project, however, CUKB took a further innovative step, and with its support enabled migrant enterprises to play a central role. In April 2020, the Public Health department of Birmingham City Council put out an urgent call for tenders to prepare materials to communicate COVID-19 public health messages to diverse communities.[m] We examine how the project, which ran from May to October 2020, was designed and developed, how the consortium worked together, and the outputs and outcomes. The consortium worked on health policy, and we explore the potential of lessons learnt from this project to enable community organising to support migrant micro-enterprises to influence industrial policies.

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l.  Involving citizens in Aston's research January to May 2020.

m. The project is entitled 'Wellbeing of Black & Minority Ethnic (BAME), Disabled and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) Communities – Covid-19 Campaign' and was delivered between June 2020 to October 2020.

The public health media project highlighted three key features of migrant micro-enterprises in the CUKB locality. First, such enterprises had minimal or no experience of working on their own, or as part of a consortium, on contracts awarded by public sector bodies like the local council, which required producing official outputs for government purposes. Second, they had little or no experience of working with professionals with specialist communications and digital expertise. Third, their commitment to communal social responsibility was the key driver for participation in the project. They were highly motivated to undertake the project as they could see how in the country, in their locality, and specifically in Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, there was a high rate of morbidity and mortality caused by COVID-19. As one project team member commented:

"We did not do it for the money but because we knew it was very important for our communities to understand the public health messages as so many people were getting ill and dying. As members of CUKB we feel it is our responsibility to help our communities in whatever ways we can."

As turnaround times were very quick, CUKB decided to put in a bid rather than suggest separate applications be made by individual migrant enterprises. However, it was not only a question of time constraints, but also because most, if not all, of these migrant micro-enterprises lacked the expertise to write successful bids. There was no time to train them, so a modus operandi emerged which drew on the networks developed through community organising to mobilise people, knowledge, and expertise. The lead organiser immediately put out a call to migrant enterprises in its network to ascertain interest. Referring to the lead organiser, one interviewee who has extensive experience of working on diversity, inclusion and social cohesion projects commented:

"He has instant connectivity with micro-businesses and community organisations, and he has credibility and trust. This has not happened overnight. So, he got a quick response."

He collaborated with a bid writer and interested enterprises to complete the application form, detailing how the enterprises' embeddedness within the communities and localities, and native speaker fluency in non-English community languages, added value to the project. He emphasised that this grassroots engagement would help ensure the authenticity of the communication content and strategy, as well as provide a credible conduit to their respective communities.

As the community organising methodology of public engagement pays special attention to granular understanding of citizens and communities, the consortium felt that the differences between communities needed to be respected for accurate portrayal of specific communities and to get community buy in. This resulted in the production of eight videos although the contract was to make four videos. The mother tongue languages covered by the videos were Urdu, Mirpuri, Shona, Nbele, Tigrinya, Somali, and Gujarati.[8]

Community organising methodology played a key role in the way in which the consortium worked. A core group of nine individuals met weekly for an hour but also communicated as necessary between meetings through WhatsApp. The lead organiser attended the weekly meetings, but as community organising emphasises citizen empowerment, he took a back seat in discussions, although he liaised with the commissioner and ensured contract compliance. He provided support to the consortium outside the meetings by having one-to-one conversations with them. Other members of the Business Leadership Group of CUKB, who were not directly involved in the project, intermittently provided socially distanced coaching and mentoring.

The consortium used a form of diffused leadership. Those who had more experience of community organising and superior civic leadership skills facilitated the empowerment of each person. They knew how to give everyone a space for their voice to be heard, how to explore differences and uncover nuances, and how to arrive at consensus. As one core member commented:

"We did not have one leader. All of us took turns to chair a meeting. We agreed actions for the week, and everyone acted responsibly. They got the views of members of their own community and then reported back."

Community organising facilitates problem solving. There were diverse views about the content of the videos and project members collectively engaged in problem solving. A key issue was whether the videos made for a specific community should reflect the specific concerns of that community. Community organising had instilled the value of constantly listening to the voices of their constituency members, so the migrant enterprises brought to meetings up to date community grassroots experiences of the pandemic. Hence, the process of producing the videos was iterative. The consortium looked for commonalities as well as differences in experience and considered how these could be reflected in the videos so there was resonance with each individual community.

However, the consortium was aware that government messages were constantly changing and, therefore, there was the risk of the videos circulating for a while with public health messages which were no longer current. Consequently, the consortium agreed the enduring, generic messages of government should form the content of the videos. This would ensure sustainability, and the content could be repackaged for promotion on multiple media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Community organising encourages continuous collaborative learning, and two media experts from ethnic minority backgrounds who were involved in the project ran workshops on how to formulate powerful and complementary verbal and non-verbal messages. One of them noted:

"Current public health videos are generally very patronising, have no creativity and ingenuity, and do not include the voices of people they want to affect… I felt the videos could make a huge difference without being partisan."

He drafted a script, sought feedback from the consortium, and incorporated their comments to prepare a final storyline suitable for multimedia messaging. The consortium understood that the non-verbal content of the videos was also very important to ensure buy in from intended beneficiaries. The filmmaker worked closely with each migrant enterprise to ensure appropriate scenes were shot to create bespoke videos. As he lived in the locality, he had grassroots experience and knowledge of how citizens and communities of diverse backgrounds approached media exposure. He told them:

"Remember this is a public video; if you don't want something to be shown tell me, if you don't want someone to be in the picture don't bring them into the shot."

The videos comprised generic and tailored elements. The tailored components paid attention to nuanced verbal and non-verbal communication which bears testimony to the value of detailed public engagement undertaken through community organising. Three examples are provided to illustrate this.

First, the choice of narrators. Each bespoke video featured local members who could speak the mother tongue. Diversity criteria such as age and gender were taken into account so that voices were heard of men and women, particularly as mothers, and of old and young people. Second, each video for a specific community had shots of a community organisation's offices. As one interviewee put it:

"We removed some photos of politicians back home that were hanging on the walls of the office, because we were concerned that they may offend some parts of the community who did not support the politicians."

Third, each bespoke video had footage of the area in which the target community was prevalent. Care was taken to ensure that there were, for instance, no shots which included the front and signage of businesses run by members of the target community. For instance, a screenshot that depicts a café owned by one community but does not have a shot by one owned by another community in the same area would raise questions about privileging one over the other. While this would not be noticed by the mainstream population, the consortium drew on their experience of community organising so that they were especially mindful of intra-cultural sensitivities and risks of undermining widespread buy in.

Not only was attention paid to the granularity of inter-community and intra-community differences but also to ensuring that the individual communities, and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities more generally, were accurately and realistically portrayed to help counter:

"…the negative stereotypes evident in mainstream media…and people from the right-wing accusing Muslims, for instance, of not adhering to the rules. So, we incorporated shots of people following the rule like wearing masks all the time."

The consortium welcomed ownership of the videos. Despite the time constraints and other pandemic related challenges, they felt that:

"We told our story ourselves – we did not have someone speaking for us."

They felt empowered that the:

"Voice of the voiceless was being heard, not that of some self-imposed community leader."

The success of the videos and the resulting uptick in community adherence to public health messages was attributed to having real people from the community in the individual videos. Essentially, the videos' success can be attributed to the fact that people are more likely to follow messaging from someone who is in some way 'like them'. As one respondent explained:

"If someone that looks like me is wearing a mask then I am more likely to follow him than if it is a message by some posh white person."

To ensure citizen take-up, a comprehensive dissemination strategy was developed. All the videos are accessible as an archive and shared across Citizens UK's YouTube channel, website and various social media platforms of the migrant enterprises. The videos have reached an audience of more than 20,000 people, and this number is expected to rise as enterprises and individuals upload their videos onto their own websites and social media platforms. This has resulted not only in local and national exposure, but also international recognition among diaspora communities worldwide and citizens in the countries of origin of migrants. As the videos contain universal standard public health messages, have been produced in mother tongues, and can be viewed on ubiquitous mobile phones, they can be easily accessed irrespective of level of literacy and geographical location.

This international reach has demonstrated the value of community organising not only to empower migrant enterprises and their communities in Birmingham, but it also has the cascading effect of inspiring migrants living in other countries. As one consortium member said:

"People from our community living in other countries have seen the video and we get many enquiries. They appreciate our raised profile in Birmingham. They cannot believe that as refugees who came to the UK recently that we can get the government to give us money to make the videos. They feel empowered and are wondering whether they can do the same in countries where they are living, like the Netherlands, Italy, etc."

**5**

# The potential of migrant micro-enterprises to reach power-holders

## 5.1 Capacity building of consortia of migrant micro-enterprises

As shown earlier, community organising has been used to provide business support to individual migrant enterprises, but can it also build capacity for consortia of enterprises to procure public sector contracts? In the public health media project, the lead organiser of CUKB played a critical facilitative role, which raises the issue of whether community organising can empower migrant enterprises themselves to become autonomous, develop their own consortia, bid for contracts and ensure compliance. To answer this question, we examine six factors which point to the potential of community organising to develop and run culturally appropriate business support training for migrant micro-enterprises to work as consortia.

First, the Business Leadership Group was set up earlier this year through community organising, comprising migrant enterprises and representatives from CREME. Hence, CUKB has within its infrastructure a mechanism for overseeing consortia capacity building and providing peer support, mentoring and coaching.

Second, community organising has produced networks that can be mobilised to recruit and retain participants in a training programme. Third, community organising has produced case studies, such as the public health media project, which participants will find easy to relate to as they are drawn from grassroots community experience. This contrasts positively to a lot of case studies used in business training which draws on case studies focussing on White, male, opportunity entrepreneurs.

Fourth, community organising has already empowered citizens, including those in the public health media project, who are confident in using their voice and civic leadership skills to work with professional trainers to help co-produce and co-deliver training. They serve as powerful role models to other citizens. Fifth, the media project has indicated an outline curriculum content. These include identifying procurement opportunities; writing bids; project management; networking; working in teams; and digital skills.

Finally, bespoke training can take account of cultural factors, such as the ethos of corporate social responsibility which permeates migrant enterprises. It can, for instance, show enterprises how to draw on cultural traditions of family and community microfinance models, and harness these to that offered by the western financial system. Although all citizens need English language literacy skills to facilitate socio-economic integration, the programme could offer bilingual support to make capacity building more accessible.

The biggest challenge that community organising faces in implementing a consortia business training programme is obtaining sufficient financial resources for a well-planned, professionally delivered and evaluated project. As it has already established links with power-holders, decision-makers and policymakers in Birmingham, it may be able to build on their support as it did for training individual migrant enterprises as previously detailed. Substantial training bursaries are required to adequately offset the opportunities costs of training, which has a higher impact on necessity entrepreneurs which make up migrant micro-enterprises, and potential entrepreneurs employed as wage labour.

Opportunity costs are particularly burdensome as the pandemic has placed increased pressure on what were already tight profit margins and precarious livelihoods. The heightened awareness of systemic racism, prompted by the Black Lives Matter protests, may strengthen CUKB asks to give more financial support to those who need it, which is proportional to their own circumstances. This will ensure that migrant micro-enterprises and low-earning-potential entrepreneurs have the same opportunities to develop knowledge and skills, which enable them to compete equally for suitable procurement opportunities.

The CWG will provide procurement opportunities not only in the lead up to the Games, but during the Games itself, as well as through legacy work. CUKB is planning to ask power-holders for an inclusive procurement policy for the CWG and Birmingham/West Midlands Combined Authority: specifically, it wants to leverage the CWG to catalyse increased footfall in its locality. If successful, it is likely that many procurement opportunities for individual enterprises and consortia may arise in the locality for small infra-structure projects, facelifts of shops, cafés and restaurants, environment upgrades, as well as cultural projects[9] which would be suitable for migrant micro-enterprises.

The CWG also will provide opportunities for international trade. For the Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002, for instance, trade initiatives were put in place to ensure appropriate links and alliances were formed between regional businesses and other Commonwealth companies to enhance trade links. A Commonwealth Games Business Club was set up to maximise business opportunities alongside hosting the Games. Reports on the Games do not refer to migrant micro-enterprises featuring in these initiatives. This is not surprising, as industrial policies predominantly or exclusively focus on growth and high-tech businesses.

However, is there a possibility that community organising could facilitate inclusive growth by promoting international trade by migrant micro-enterprises? Migrant communities in Birmingham, as elsewhere in the UK, have extensive worldwide diaspora connections. They have links with their countries of origin where the livelihoods of family members are often reliant on or supplemented by the remittance economy. These economic links have been complemented by the transfer of new artifacts like the products of the public health media project not only back home but also to diaspora communities worldwide.

The business support given to migrant micro-enterprises could also develop the potential for international entrepreneurship. Government research has shown that second generation migrants with university education have mobilised disciplinary knowledge, entrepreneurial heritage, family finance and social capital to develop international knowledge-based businesses.[10] The pattern of intergenerational transition from necessity to opportunity entrepreneurship[11] is also a pathway for the children of migrant micro-entrepreneurs in Birmingham. There may also be opportunities for current migrant necessity enterprises as consortia to be given support to develop international businesses. The CWG could be a vehicle for this if, through community organising, this ask could be put to power-holders – which we turn to in the next section.

## 5.2  Potential of consortia of enterprises to reach power

In this section, we address the issue of whether community organising can help consortia and individual migrant micro-enterprises to influence power-holders who are responsible for industrial policy, specifically in relation to the CWG. An innovative approach of CUKB is to use the CWG as a catalyst to generate a sustainable place-based legacy in its economically deprived locality, including increasing the footfall for migrant micro-enterprises. However, areas of deprivation are less likely to be attractive to international and national visitors. To make the locality attractive requires dealing effectively with multiple factors such as giving a facelift and improving the infrastructure of migrant micro-enterprises; remedying environmental degradation and lack of cleanliness; making the area safe by reducing petty and violent crime; strengthening transport links; and effective marketing of the area to visitors.

To be able to capitalise on potential individual and consortia procurement opportunities in the locality, and the region more generally, requires migrant micro-enterprises to positively influence a wide cross-section of power-holders involved with the Commonwealth Games, Birmingham City Council (BCC) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Apart from the Games, there are emerging procurement opportunities for consortia of micro-businesses resulting from new industrial policies to deal with the negative impact of the pandemic.[n] During our brief research, there were unfortunately no opportunities to examine direct citizen engagement with industrial policy power-holders, but we were able to see the potential for this through the role of community organising in relation to the public health media project.

Community organising enabled delegations of citizens, including migrant micro-enterprises, to capitalise on the success of the public health media project to have meetings with two power-holders in Birmingham City Council (BCC): one with Dr Peter, Director of Public Health at BCC, and another with Cllr Sharon, who is the BCC Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care. Although their portfolios focussed on health, because both occupy powerful positions in different parts of the organisational framework of the council, they have access to a wide range of power-holders in different sectors. They could therefore be a conduit for migrant micro-enterprises to those directly responsible for industrial policies. As part of the senior management team at BCC, Dr Peter participates in sector-specific, as well as cross-sector, meetings at local, regional, and central government levels. His vertical connection to other power-holders complements the multilateral connections that Cllr Sharon has via the Council Cabinet.

Community organising uses strategic ways to capitalise on any meetings citizens have with power-holders as stepping stones to other power-holders, as some examples illustrate. At the meeting with Cllr Sharon, the delegation mentioned they would like to meet the council's new Chief Executive Officer, and she offered to facilitate this. At this latter meeting, the delegation which comprised the CUKB lead organiser and citizens including

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n.  The government announced in October 2020 the Kickstart programme which provides government funding to businesses with 30 employees to offer placements to 16-24 year olds. Micro-businesses can set up a consortium to bring the numbers up to 30 employees and apply for funding. See: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-kickstart-scheme-grant-29-or-less-job-placements

migrant micro-enterprises, spoke about the role of the CWG in catalysing regeneration of the locality, and inter alia made him aware of the issues facing migrant micro-enterprises. Similarly, while the delegation to Cllr Sharon was broadly focused on her health and social care portfolio, it provided an opportunity to mention CUKB's innovative work with migrant micro-enterprises. The delegation told her:

> "We have developed a project on business leadership which goes beyond capacity building and includes unpacking public sector commissioning and contracting."

She said she was familiar with the problems facing migrant micro-enterprises such as the lack of appropriate business support, and the difficulties of accessing procurement opportunities. She had gained this knowledge in multiple ways: as a long-term resident of Birmingham; as an elected local politician; and from family members who owned businesses. By reinforcing her awareness, migrant micro-enterprises have increased the possibilities of her raising their concerns at opportune moments in meetings with colleagues, and at the cabinet meeting.

Community organising also facilitates bringing power-holders to citizens. Migrant micro-enterprises, like all citizens in deprived areas, want power-holders to see the reality of their lives so as to gain a deeper understanding of their needs. A powerful way to do this is to arrange for power-holders to undertake neighbourhood walks. When the delegation met Dr Peter, it was evident he had an appetite for this. He requested that separate visits to diverse communities be arranged so that he could address their specific Covid-19 concerns. As he told us in a subsequent interview:

> "I want to see people and be seen by them."

He was interested in visiting the locality and talking to citizens because:

> "They are not necessarily constrained by professional etiquette so tell you how it is… [representatives can give] a filtered view of the world…rather than the nuances and diversity of opinions present in any community."

He emphasised that in meetings with senior management at national level these visits allow him to demonstrate *"authentic leadership"*, as he is able to draw on experiential knowledge to *"talk about actual life"* and to *"substantiate arguments with live examples."*

Citizens, including migrant micro-enterprises, can make his visits worthwhile and encourage him to disseminate his good practice to colleagues, thus potentially increasing the number and scope of neighbourhood walks. His commendation would greatly facilitate CUKB's plans to arrange a series of neighbourhood walks for power-holders, including members of the organising committee of the CWG, who like Dr Peter, have only recently come to reside in Birmingham. For migrant micro-enterprises, neighbourhood walks are an important way to introduce the relevant power-holders to local enterprises, including those that may have direct relevance to the CWG.

For instance, citizens could see the potential during the CWG for international and British athletes to visit the locality and give motivational talks at gyms and community centres. The owner of a small, independent gym which acts as a community hub where people of all generations meet to use the facilities said:

"We know the Games athletes will not come to our gym to train because we do not have the facilities they need. But if we could be given some funding to host events where they could come and give inspirational talks covering their life story, the value of exercise etc. this would have a lasting impact. I think lots of people would attend and some who are not yet members of our gym might join, which would help us to grow.

We have a lot of medical problems in our community such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems, and people will be inspired to take more exercise and reduce their risk of serious illness. This type of prevention means an economic saving for the NHS and less sickness and deaths in our community."

The above examples show how community organising can provide the vehicle to use citizen engagement with power-holders in one sector to lead to power-holders in another sector. This strongly suggests that community organising methodology can deploy various strategies effectively to take migrant micro-enterprises on the road to engage directly and indirectly with power-holders involved in industrial policy.

# 6

# Conclusion

In this concluding section, we return to the question of 'what value can community organising bring to innovation policy?' In our study, we looked at innovation as applied to industrial policy and focussed on migrant micro-enterprises. Community organising conventionally does not focus on industrial policy, so we evaluate whether it can do so. In the introduction we stated that we were looking at two aspects: first, who influences decisions about industrial policy; and second, the potential for industrial policies to be inclusive of micro-enterprises.

Micro-enterprises in principle can take advantage of business support that is available in Birmingham, but in practice there are several limitations as previously mentioned. First, while there is some face-to-face business support in Birmingham, a great deal is provided online. There are a plethora of government and other websites which provide extensive business support information. However, they are all in English, and therefore not directly accessible to those who have inadequate English language skills or lack a good level of digital skills.

Second, transferability of mainstream business support is often growth-oriented, which can render it inconsequential to a large number of migrant micro-enterprises. Third, the heavy bias of mainstream business support towards certain sectors such as IT and finance cause serious disadvantage to other industries such as retail and the health and social care, where there are many migrant micro-enterprises. Finally, such support fails to take account of the business model of many migrant micro-enterprises, which highly values corporate social responsibility targeted at local communities.

On the other hand, as we have shown in this report, community organising can be an effective alternative to compensate for the limitations of mainstream business support vis-à-vis migrant micro-enterprises (and potentially enterprises owned by people with disabilities, retirees, and other minority groups). Its potential and effectiveness relies on its capacity to build trust with citizens of diverse backgrounds and strong relations with a wide variety of power-holders and stakeholders.

Business support offered through community organising has the following characteristics: it is timely, bespoke, culturally appropriate, delivered face-to-face and digitally, is classroom-based with follow up coaching and mentoring, and can take account of the central role migrant micro-enterprises play in their communities. We have also shown how community organising can provide business support which aids the development both of individual enterprises and consortia of enterprises. These capacity building activities can prepare migrant micro-enterprises so that they can operate on a level playing field with other businesses, and participate in competitive tendering for contracts offered by the public sector.

Furthermore, as they are embedded in diaspora communities, migrant micro-enterprises can play an important role in stimulating international trade with a wide range of countries of origin and elsewhere, which is particularly important post-Brexit. All these factors will allow the enterprises to grow and make an even greater contribution to the economy as well as to social cohesion.

However, capacity building in and of itself is insufficient if migrant micro-enterprises are not recognised by power-holders as being able to contribute effectively to the development and implementation of industrial policies. This requires direct advocacy from migrant micro-enterprises themselves. We have shown in this report that as community organising has a specific focus on the development of civic leadership skills, it can enhance the confidence and capacity of migrant micro-enterprises to directly engage with power-holders.

The development of cognitive and psychosocial skills occurs through initial intensive training, but are constantly refined and sustained through continuous professional development, coupled with multiple opportunities to practise the skills in CUK meetings and as members of delegations to meet power-holders. We provided examples in this report of citizen empowerment and of migrant micro-enterprises talking to power-holders. These provide strong indicators that community organising continuously can support migrant micro-enterprises to influence industrial policy by undertaking listening campaigns, formulating their asks and presenting them directly to power-holders involved in innovation and industrial policies.

However, there are two challenges to community organising: first, appropriate infrastructure and second, time. Many CUK chapters have the support, but not necessarily the membership, of universities, which is particularly useful for drawing on their research to provide an evidence base for their asks. However, advocacy in the industrial policy sector, as we have shown, is only facilitated if community organising embeds the universities, and in particular the business schools, in their infrastructure. This would foster greater empathy with the needs of migrant micro-enterprises and the provision of appropriate support for individual enterprises and consortia. To do this requires a commitment to co-production, so that universities and migrant micro-enterprises can work in collaboration in the development, delivery and evaluation of business support. In this report, we have shown how CUKB is an exemplar of this innovation in the infra-structure of CUK.

Second, the old adage 'time is money' has direct application to citizens living in deprived areas. Attendance at training and other events, and preparation for and participation in meetings with power-holders, requires a lot of time. But time is a scarce commodity for people living in poverty. A wage earner cannot take time off work without a loss of income. A shopkeeper or café owner operating as a sole trader has to close the premises, which results in a loss of trade. A self-employed taxi driver has to stop work. Citizens living on the breadline do not have the luxury of time and hence cannot take up all the opportunities for civic engagement with power-holders that community organising provides them.

If the government is committed to democracy in action, then some level of financial compensation is necessary and equitable to give all citizens equal opportunities to participate in democratic processes. Community organising can go a long way in promoting inclusive innovation and industrial policies, but financial support from government is necessary so that citizens on low incomes do not suffer financial penalties and can have equal opportunity to speak truth to power.

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