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Migrant and minority community organisations:
funding, sustainability and ways forward

INTERIM REPORT

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Migrant Organisations' Development Agency (MODA)

MODA is a second-tier organisation set up in 1998 with the aim of informing, supporting and giving a voice to migrant and minority ethnic community organisations.

Targeting small organisations across London, MODA provides community development, technical capacity building support, training opportunities and different types of information services.

Website: www.moda.org.uk

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), Middlesex University

The social policy research centre (SPRC) was established in 1990. It provides a focus for research in the social sciences at Middlesex University and supports high quality research of national and international standing. Members of staff are involved in a wide range of projects funded by research councils, the EU, government departments and the major charities. The Centre supports postgraduate research students, including research funded students and a number of well-established masters programmes. The Centre runs events, including conferences, seminars and short courses. Main areas of interest include: migration, refugees and citizenship, welfare restructuring, governance and risk, urban policy, regeneration and communities, drug and alcohol policy, human security and human rights, tourism policy. Website: www.mdx.ac.uk/sprc/

Migrant and minority community organisations: funding, sustainability and ways forward

Introduction

MODA (Migrant Organisations' Development Agency) and Middlesex University have been working together on a research project about funding and resources available to migrant and minority organisations in London.

The aim of the project is to gather information about the role of minority and migrant organisations, including details about the services they provide, the community needs they address, the financial and organizational challenges they face and the creative ways they are finding to cope. The research also aimed to explore the effects of the current economic and political climate on the sector and the role played by second tier organisations and other networks.

This interim report presents some key preliminary findings as well as raising discussion points. Following an event on June 8th 2010, where the views of organisations, funders, and other stakeholders will be gathered and incorporated into the research findings, the research team will produce a final report which will be disseminated among Third Sector organisations, funding bodies, and other stakeholders.

For further information about the research project please contact:

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About the research

This research project was commissioned to explore the impact of funding strategies and policy on migrant and minority organizations based in London. MODA have worked with a large range of community groups over the past 12 years, and during this time they have witnessed significant changes in the funding available to their users. Their experience suggests that new groups have found it difficult to locate resources to start their projects, and established ones have struggled to sustain existing activities.

The research fieldwork took place between February and May 2010 and utilized a number of research methods to gather evidence, including:

- **a literature review** of both academic papers and relevant policy documents on the current economic and political climate, including issues of funding, service delivery and the equality and social cohesion agenda.
- a **survey** of community organisations. Questionnaires were sent out to a large number of organisations in the Greater London area and 26 were returned. These were supplemented by targeted telephone interviews to try and capture a good mix of groups in different geographical areas. The survey gathered information about the services provided, financial and organisational issues and the ways in which these organisations have been affected by recent changes in national and local policy and funding strategies.
- a **focus groups** with 6 representatives of selected migrant and minority community organisations. The focus group enabled a more in-depth investigation into the issues faced by organisations and helped the research team to establish some areas of best practice.
- **interviews** with 12 key informants were conducted, including funding bodies, infrastructure organisations, and second tier organisations to discuss some of the issues raised in the survey responses and during the focus group session.

Community organisations and other stakeholders that lent their support to this research or provided us with information include:

Afghan Association of Paiwand; African Future Development African Refugee Community Health and Research Organisation; African Swahili Community Project; Albert Joyle Relief Foundation; Anviet; Arachne; Barnet Refugee Service; Bengali Workers Association; Big Lottery Fund; Black Neighbourhood Renewal & Regeneration Network; Black Training & Enterprise Group; Brook Cares; Camden Chinese Community Centre; Camden Cross Roads; Centre for Armenian Information & Advice; Chinese Community Centre; Derman; Detention Advice Service; Hackney Kurdish Education Project; Haringey Chinese Community Centre; Indian Muslim Federation; Islington Refugee Forum; KANGA (Kurdish Association for Younger Generations Abroad); Latin American Disabled People's Project; Latin American Women's Rights Service; London Councils; London Development Agency; London Irish Women's Centre; LVSC (London Voluntary Service Council); MiNet; Notre Dame Refugee Centre; ROTA (Race on the Agenda); Social Enterprise Coalition; Somali Humanitarian Aid; Southwark Muslim Women's Association; South London BME Partnership; Sue Lukes (independent consultant); Voice4Change.

Data collected in the course of this research project, albeit limited, provided an interesting insight both on the issues faced by minority organisations at grassroots level and on the more general policy and funding trends.

The changing scenario: policy and funding

The last few years have seen radical changes for migrant and minority groups in terms of their ability to access funding to sustain their organisational activities. The economic downturn in Britain has had a significant impact on Third Sector minority organisations, however, changes in policy and government funding strategies have also contributed to the hardship that many organisations now face. The section which follows is a brief summary of some of the key issues around policy changes and funding that have emerged from our research.

The policy discourse: cohesion vs equality?

- The government approach to **Community Cohesion** develops "in response to disturbances in three northern towns in 2001", with a focus on crime and associated with race and faith issues[1]. Following the London bombings in 2005, the government sets up a Commission on Integration and Cohesion to look at local and practical ways to build cohesion.
- June 2007 – The Commission on Integration and Cohesion publishes **'Our Shared Future'**. The document suggests that: "funding to community groups should be rebalanced towards those that promote integration and cohesion […] 'Single Group Funding' should be the exception rather than the rule for both Government and external funders"[2].
- February-May 2008 – Communities and Local Government (CLG) replies to 'Our Shared Future' with a consultation on its **'Cohesion Guidance for Funders'**. Many respondents suggest the guide promotes cohesion at the expense of equality, misrepresenting single groups and reinforcing negative stereotypes[3]. In particular there is criticism over the notion that funders should not fund a single group project if it "builds resentment on others". The focus on mainstreaming services is seen as compromising minority organisations' role and identity[4].
- October 2009 – The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) publishes a **'Cohesion and Equality Guidance for Funders'**. The document argues that "local authorities are implementing the drive to promote community cohesion and integration in breach of their positive legal obligations concerning equality and diversity". In many cases local authorities have decided to withdraw funding from organisations delivering services to particular groups. The EHRC recommends to "not automatically equate single-issue groups as being divisive" and argues that "ultimately, what matters is that funding goes to the organisation best placed to deliver the services that are required".
- March 2010 – CLG publishes a **'Cohesion Delivery Framework'**, which aims to show how "cohesion fits with equality". The document states that "Race equality, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism are different, important and, if done effectively, will support one another". However it also suggests that "the relationship between diversity and cohesion is complicated". In relation to funding, it recommends to avoid "funding of organisations, activities or facilities for one group only or which are seen in this way, eg they are given an 'ethnic' name"[5].
- April 2010 – The new **Equality Act** is approved and receives Royal Assent. The Act simplifies 116 pieces of equality legislation into a single document and extends protection against discrimination to a wider range of groups. However some Third Sector organisations

[1] CLG (2010) Cohesion Delivery Framework 2010, page 7
[2] Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007), 'Our Shared Future', Annex D. Single group funding is defined as that "awarded on the basis of particular identity, such as ethnic, religious or cultural".
[3] DCLG (2008) Cohesion Guidance for Funders Consultation. Summary of responses.
[4] Voice4Change (2008), Cohesion Guidance for Funders: A question of Single Group Funding.
[5] CLG (2010), Cohesion Delivery Framework 2010, page 20

working with specific groups are concerned it might be difficult to demonstrate their entitlement to be exempt from the new anti-discrimination law. For example, according to the Charity Commission "charities that provided access to sport for particular nationalities or worked with specific age groups, such as older people, could find meeting the requirements in the act challenging"[6]. After the publication of the EHRC's guidance on compliance with the act, expected in June 2010, the Charity Commission will publish additional guidance for charitable organisations.

Funding, commissioning and the impact of the recession

- In September 2002 the Treasury publishes a Cross Cutting Review into the role of the voluntary and community sector in public service delivery. The recommendations include the creation of a "Futurebuilders Fund" (2003) to provide loan financing to Third Sector organisations in England to help them bid for, win and deliver public service contracts. This marks a more general national and local trend towards **commissioning**, with a parallel reduction of 'traditional' funding schemes for Third Sector organisations.

- In 2009 the UK officially enters **recession** for the first time since 1991. The economic crisis leads to an unprecedented rise in unemployment throughout the country. Its indirect effects include increased levels of mental health issues, stress and family tensions[7]. The impact among migrant and ethnic groups is particularly severe[8].

- This scenario places **increased demands** on voluntary sector organisations, particularly those helping with financial issues, unemployment, welfare and housing. In its 'The Big Squeeze' report, LVSC shows that voluntary organisations in London have been "very resilient" with 93% reporting to have taken action in order to continue to provide services to meet the needs of the Londoners they serve. To do so, voluntary organisations are increasingly relying on part-time staff and volunteers to deliver services[9].

- At the same time, **cuts in welfare provision and available funding** as a result of the recession are impacting on the Third Sector as a whole and on migrant and minority groups in particular. This, together with the trend to commissioning ever larger contracts is making it difficult for minority organisations to diversify their income streams.

- In May 2010 the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat **Coalition Government** announces it will support "the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises, and enable these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services." The coalition plans include the introduction of a national citizen service and setting up a Big Society Bank, "which will provide new finance for neighbourhood groups, charities, social enterprises and other non-governmental bodies"[10]. In March 2010 Tory leader David Cameron also announced his government would have shut down the Futurebuilders programme and use income from its loan book to fund 'community organisers' and give grants to neighbourhood groups. Nonetheless, some organisations feel Conservatives would favour generic service delivery over culturally focused ones, and fear that the government help will not reach those catering for the most marginalised minority communities[11]. BME infrastructure organisations are also seen as at risk[12].

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[6] 'Charity Commission to issue guidance on the Equality Act' Third Sector Online, 21 May 2010
[7] LVSC – London Voluntary Sector Council (2010), 'The Big Squeeze 2010'
[8] ROTA (2009), The economic downturn and the BAME third sector
[9] LVSC (2010), ibid.
[10] Cabinet Office (2010), 'The Coalition, Our Programme for Government',
http://programmeforgovernment.hmg.gov.uk/
[11] ROTA (2009), ibid.

Survey results: migrant and minority organisations in London

Our sample included 26 migrant and minority organisations in London. Although not aiming at being representative, it covered a wide range of groups in terms of activities, organisational structures and user categories.

As shown on figure 1, almost all organisations provide some kind of advice service, ranging from legal and welfare advice to housing and health. Most also provide training opportunities and more than a half provide language support, including English classes, translation and interpreting services. Some of these organisations, including the smaller ones, often represent a unique opportunity for cultural and social interaction for some of the most marginalised minority groups. The sample is also varied in terms of users - including 3 women's groups, 2 faith groups, 4 refugee organisations and 1 disabled people's group – and location, with 13 different boroughs represented: Croydon, Hammersmith and Fulham, Newham, Lambeth, Islington, Hackney, Barnet, Ealing, Westminster, Redbridge, Enfield, Merton and Southwark.

1 - Services Offered
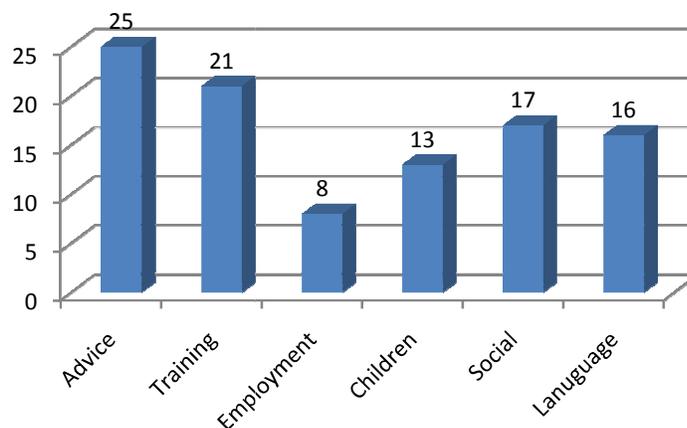
Funding sources

Third Sector organisations get their income from a wide range of funding sources. Although 2 of the organisations we surveyed are funded almost entirely by Local Authorities, all the others showed a much more complex funding base (see table 2).
Most organisations (21) receive some funding from Local Authorities and Charitable Trusts, however, only 6 reported to receive any money from the Lottery and 9 from the Government or the Home Office. For more than half of them, membership fees, donations or other fundraising activities represent just a small proportion of their income, which confirms how reliant they are on external support to be able to deliver their services.

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[12] BNRRN - Black Neighbourhood Renewal and Regeneration Network, Policy Briefing, February 2010

2 - Sources of Funding

% of income:	None	1-25%	25- 50%	50-75%	75-100%	Total
Local Authority	3	13	4	2	2	21
Government & Home Office	14	7	1	1	0	9
Charitable Trusts	4	11	6	3	0	20
Lottery	16	2	2	3	0	6
Membership fees	9	12	1	2	0	15
Fundraising events/Donations	6	12	1	2	0	15
Other	0	6	3	0	0	8

In the year 2008-2009 more than half of the groups generated income over £ 50,000; about a fifth between £ 10,000 and £ 50,000 and the remaining fifth less than £ 10,000 (see figure 3). This distribution of organisations in terms of 'income categories' has remained practically the same for the period between 2005 and 2010. However, a significant number of organisations reported being affected by a reduction in grants available, whilst some have experienced funding cuts from Local Authorities and statutory bodies. Four organisations in particular reported a significant decline in funding over the last five years. Although the general picture suggests that most organisations are managing to overcome the challenges represented by reduced funding opportunities and what is perceived by many as an adverse policy environment, many described their condition as a "struggle for survival" which leaves little room for development and long term planning and, in particular, does not allow to meet growing needs among users.

3 - Amount of income £ generated in 2008-2009

Legend: 0-10,000 (5); 10,000-50,000 (6); 50,000-100,000+ (15)
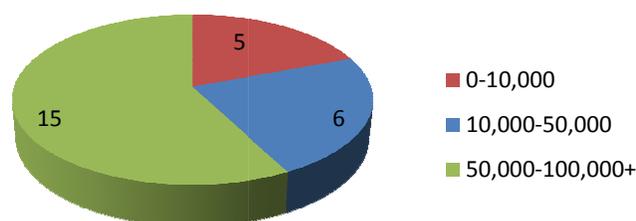
Funding issues

For more than half of the respondents, **accessing information** about funding is seen as relatively easy (see figure 4). The main sources of funding information include local Councils for Voluntary Services, Local Authorities capacity teams and, above all, second-tier and umbrella groups, including e.g. Advice UK, Alliance for Advice, BraVA, LASA, MODA, Refugee Council, Women's Resource Centre. Many benefit from the mailing lists, newsletters and other information services they produce.

However, being aware of funding opportunities does not necessarily mean that organisations can secure funding easily. In fact, most of our respondents said that a large proportion of the existing funding sources are not suitable for or open to them.

4 Accessing Information about funding
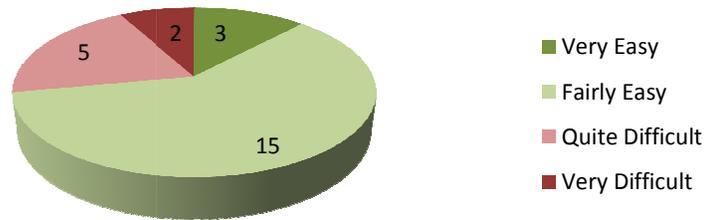
Many organisations complained about the **complexity of funding applications** (see figure 5), which often involve lengthy processes. Funders are seen as constantly introducing new forms, guidelines and procedures, making it difficult for small charities to keep up. Moreover, some officers within ethnic organisations may have language issues when dealing with the bureaucratic jargon. Some groups reported not to have understood why their application was rejected, often feeling there was "no good reason" or, frustratingly, were told their applications were feasible and potentially fundable, but were ultimately rejected because of a lack of available funds. This confirms the findings of a recent ROTA research report, where about two thirds of London BME Third Sector organisations "stated that they were spending a disproportionate amount of their time trying to fundraise in order to try and minimise the effect of the recession whilst simultaneously trying to meet the needs of their service users"[13].

For those who manage to secure funding, the **administrative process** involved is also problematic, with the need to keep track of accounts, liaise with funders, manage employees, etc. As one respondent pointed out "sometimes groups are set up to help people, but running projects requires a lot of other types of skills that don't necessarily involve helping on the frontline". Attracting volunteers for this kind of administrative activities can be difficult, so this represents an extra cost for organisations. The requirements to access funding are particularly problematic for newly established groups, who are often unable to show a track record of activities or financial records, and end up losing out on funding despite the fact that they might be delivering an important frontline service.

5 Difficulties with funding – Completing Application Forms

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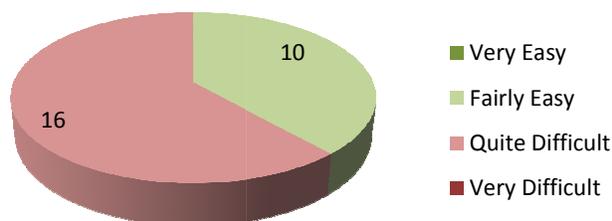
[13] ROTA, 2009, The Economic Downturn and the Black, Asian and minority ethnic third sector, page 24

Another issue reported very often is that most Local Authorities have significantly reduced if not cut altogether **grassroots funding**[14]. More generally, organisations complained about lack of "pots of money" accessible to small local groups. One exception often mentioned by respondents is the Awards for All grants scheme run by the Big Lottery Fund[15]. One organisation we interviewed managed to access the 'Hardship Fund', which required proving that the specific community served had been hard hit by the recession disproportionately, with an increased demand for the services the organisation provides. Organisations aware of this scheme found it to be extremely difficult to access as the requirements for meeting the funding criteria are quite stringent.

Most of the time groups seem to suffer from what they perceive as a top-down approach, where policy makers impose **constantly changing priorities** to those working front line. Some groups find they are chasing up funding around the new "hot topic", having to constantly reinvent themselves. This also means other pressing issues may be ignored or "put to the backburner". Many small organisations end up changing their original aims and objectives to meet funding requirements.

The emphasis on **commissioning** is also seen as a major problem. Bids and contracts are very demanding and full of bureaucratic procedures, even more than traditional funding streams, ruling out small and minority organisations almost "by definition". Smaller groups do not have the time and resources to attend appropriate training; those who participated in commissioning events often found them confusing and overwhelming.

The option of moving towards working as **Social Enterprises** – advocated by policy makers as a way forward for the Third Sector - attracted mixed feelings. Some groups took part in dedicated training enthusiastically and highlighted how becoming a Social Enterprise would allow them to do things they could not do as a charitable organisation and open new income streams. Others argued that Social Enterprises are not necessarily the best model to sustain their activities. As with the commissioning model, this was sometimes seen as a way to fundamentally change the nature and spirit of Third Sector organisations. Some groups just admitted to not knowing very much about Social Enterprises, although many were aware that this type of working was being advocated by government and stakeholders.

Staffing and volunteering challenges

Some organisations complained about the significant reduction of **'core' funding** and long-term funding, some stating this is now virtually non-existent. This poses serious issues around sustainability and makes it extremely difficult to recruit and maintain members of staff for administrative and managerial roles in particular. A lack of staff for some means trying to gain more volunteers. In many cases even the organisations' coordinators and directors work on a voluntary basis.

Training, CRB checks and updating the regulations relating to staff are all time consuming and expensive. The need to constantly be up to date with new regulations relating to staff such as

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[14] Generally speaking, grassroots funding refers to grants for small and local community groups, with a relatively small income and largely relying on volunteers.
[15] Awards for All funds small, local community-based projects in the UK with grants between £300 and £10,000 to fund a specific project or activity. Organisations can receive up to a maximum of £10,000 in any two year period. Several of our respondents referred to the Awards for All application process as relatively straightforward and quick.

health and safety ends up being very costly. Absenteeism and a lack of staff in general are also problems that were highlighted in the research findings. However, many organisations are able to go to UNISON for help with staffing issues, and many try to provide more training to enhance the skills of their workforce.

6 Staffing and Volunteering Challenges
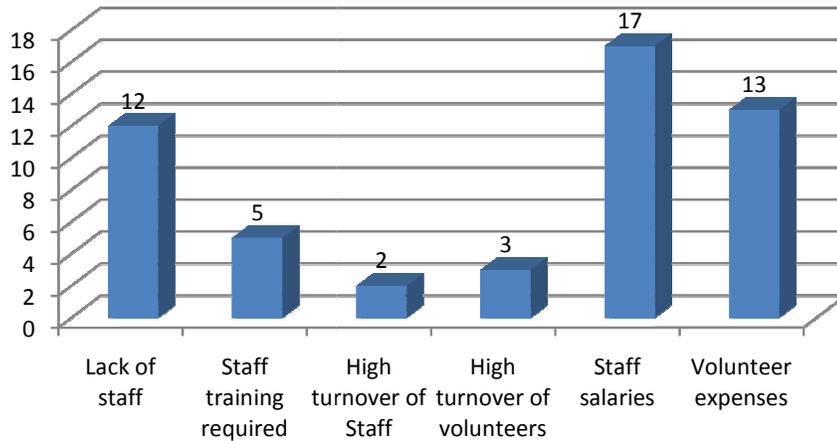
Second tier organisations

Many organisations are using second tier and infrastructure groups as a means of support (see figure 7). However, it is revealing to see that almost one third reported not to use them at all - and may not even be aware of the services they offer.

7 - Support from second tier organisations
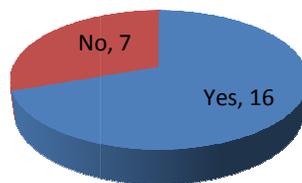
We asked respondents what type of support they would like from second tier organisations and the responses included:
- fundraising (especially help with completing application forms);
- involvement with forming partnerships and campaigning;
- up-to-date information and training (including on HR and legal and policy issues);
- marketing and business planning;
- volunteer recruitment;
- capacity building and outreach support.

Many groups suggested that making time to access these services is a problem. As funds for groups decrease, and the money they have for supporting core services dwindles, they are left in a situation where they are unable to send staff on training or develop business plans. Some groups suggested they do not even have time to read the emails or newsletters they receive.

The role of networking and collaboration

The vast majority of organisations identified **networking** with other groups as a key strategy to overcome the challenges they face. According to some funders, small organisations are very good at front line activities but not necessarily so good at sharing information and working in collaboration. On the other hand some organisations have found success by entering a consortium bid. However, some ethnic specific organisations felt that funders and policy makers are often too simplistic about how groups may come together. It is often assumed that same ethnic groups can easily collaborate, but this is not the reality. There are significant differences within the same 'communities', specialist areas of work and divisions that often reflect conflicts between different ethnic, political, and religious groups.

Often partnerships are characterised by a very unequal balance. Sometimes smaller groups can feel that larger organisations are trying to take them over and their voice isn't heard in the partnership. Overall for very small groups it is difficult to be involved because collaborating on projects/funding can be very time consuming.

Many ethnic-specific organisations are concerned that the emphasis on commissioning and partnerships will mean competition between ethnic groups and that they will loose out if their specific community is not seen as a priority.

Mainstreaming and the role of small groups

Some groups felt that minority organisations have been used as scapegoats in periods of crisis – from 9/11, to London bombings, to the recession: "the easy targets are the 'others', like migrants and refugees". In particular, with the surge in unemployment migrants and refugees were often cited as the 'problem' with an increase in racism, hate crime and even unlawful cases of job discrimination, as reported by some infrastructure organisations.

In recent changes to funding priorities, Local Authorities have often decided – more or less openly – to penalise refugee and BME organisations; a policy which is seen by some as "racist". For those working with asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and "those with shaky legal status", getting funding can be more difficult.

Many felt that although the CLG guidance was withdrawn and despite the EHRC guidance (see page 7) the focus on social cohesion has become part of the discourse and most national or local policy makers are in fact against the idea of funding 'single-issue' groups, preferring instead 'mainstream' service delivery.

Some organisations have been suggested by Local Authorities to "go mainstream", serving all communities. Although there are some success stories, infrastructure organisations pointed out that "in some areas the mainstreaming of services is never going to be possible" – e.g. women's centres or in all those cases where it is important to have a specific cultural understanding. Some organisations cannot 'branch out' because as a result specific communities, hidden and

marginalised, would lose out as a result. Some group specific organisations are the only places "they feel they can access".

There are areas where small, group-specific organisations are fundamental, such as advocacy on health issues, on housing, unemployment, involving families in the education of their children (supplementary schools), or even in resolving controversies at community level.

As a second-tier organisation pointed out, grassroots organisations "provide much more value than the money is put into them – there is so much volunteer work involved and you have a guarantee to reach out to certain groups of people".

Engaging with policy

Most small organisations feel that changes in funding and policy have been made without their voice being heard. Although several consultation exercises have been put in place, they are often perceived as bureaucratic and time-consuming. Some organisations took part in consultation events hosted by funders, but often felt that they created "a competitive environment, pitching organisations against each other". Nonetheless some groups suggested that "making yourself known" and building a strong relationship with funders can be an opportunity which can raise your profile.

Some respondents have noted that consultation events often have a low presence of BME groups. This is due to a number of barriers, including language and jargon, intimidating environment, cost of attending and recruiting interpreters.

Many groups lack a full understanding of local and national policies. According to infrastructure organisations, many grassroots groups still do not see the point in being involved in these processes and, as a consequence, lose out. For example several organisations are not aware of the so called 'Compact' the agreement between government and the voluntary sector in England[16]. Work needs to be done to ensure that BME groups and funders are engaging with one another, and groups need to understand the processes by which government bodies make funding decisions. This is an area where second tier groups can play a role in facilitating communication.

Identifying needs and providing evidence

Some organisations feel that funding bodies and Local Authorities have a top-down approach in establishing priorities, often ignoring those grassroots organisations who have a close knowledge of local and community issues, can "talk to people" and therefore are in a better position to identify emerging local needs. In particular organisations feel preventative work is often ignored – which is what grassroots organisations are good at. "Funders often act when it's too late", said one respondent.

Organisations often referred to the difficulties in providing evidence of the needs of the groups they serve and in proving their ability and expertise in addressing them. Collecting case studies and carrying out **research** are seen as key strategies to make a case to funders and empower small groups to collectively raise awareness on certain issues.

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[16] When published in December 2009, the so called 'Refreshed Compact' attracted criticism for not recognised the specific issues faced by BME organisations and not including a BME Code anymore.

However, this is particularly difficult for small organisations working with minority groups which are not "recognised" by official statistics and classifications, such as the standard ethnic categories (e.g. Latin Americans, Turkish or Kurds) and even more so for specific groups within a community (e.g. women's groups, older people's services, etc.). Consequently some organisations who could afford it decided to fund their own research projects, some working successfully with professional research centres or universities. This proved an effective way to raise their profile among local stakeholders, although it can also be a labour and time intensive activity.

Some groups felt that policy makers' emphasis on targets and statistics to measure the achievements of Third Sector organisations is not appropriate, diverting efforts "towards number crunching instead of delivering the service". Since smaller organisations "cannot play this game of targets and statistics", larger ones become increasingly visible, dominating the scene and influencing policy. Moreover, the fact organisations are asked to monitor their users, sometimes collecting personal information, "is not helping the trust of users towards organisations".

Key preliminary findings

Although based on limited fieldwork, this exploratory research highlighted several key issues which would be worth exploring with further research:

- With the impact of recession, the implementation of the social cohesion agenda and the shift towards commissioning, several migrant and minority organisations have experienced increasing difficulties in accessing funding and resources and consequently in providing support to their communities.

- Most small organisations feel changes in funding and policy have been made without their voice being heard. Although consultation exercises have been put in place, they are often perceived has bureaucratic and time-consuming. More generally, there appears to be a lack of trust towards funders and policy makers, as well as towards some of the larger Third Sector organisations.

- Many groups lack a full understanding of local and national policies. According to infrastructure organisations, many grassroots groups still do not see the point in being involved in these processes and, as a consequence, lose out.

- Funders as well as policy makers often focus on 'innovation' and 'changes'. For many organisations this means constantly re-inventing themselves and a struggle to carry out with long term services. This is particularly frustrating for organisations which have been providing quality services for a long period of time.

- The social cohesion agenda has pushed some minority organisations into the mainstream, with mixed results. Whilst some have successfully managed to open up to a wider range of users, others feel they have lost their identity without even securing a more solid funding base.

- Networking and partnership work are seen as key strategies to overcome some of the challenges faced by the sector, however many groups do not have enough time and resources to get involved and are worried about being taken over by larger organisations.

- Likewise, engaging with commissioning and considering the social enterprise route attract mixed feelings, both seen as top-down agendas that would favour larger, mainstream organisations against local, ethnic-specific ones.

- For some organisations, particularly group-specific ones, providing evidence on the needs they want to address and on their ability to deliver services is increasingly challenging. Carrying out research projects can be a successful way forward, but also resources and time consuming.

- Community groups feel constantly monitored and assessed in terms of efficiency, with an increasing numbers of targets to meet. However, many argue the Third Sector should not be 'measured' like the business or public sector, its strength lying in its values and its impact on social and cultural capital.

Discussion Points

- What is the role of small, group-specific organisations within society and the Third Sector in particular? How can these organisations make a case for themselves?

- How can grassroots organisations get involved in influencing policy decisions and funding strategies?

- How can community organisations positively engage with the commissioning and social cohesion agenda?

- What role should infrastructure organisations play in sustaining small groups? What examples of best practice can be identified?

- Are partnerships a feasible way for all organisations trying to access funding and resources? What factors determine a successful partnership?

- What is the role of research in providing evidence about community needs? How can research and academic institutions positively engage with the Third Sector?

- What policy changes are ahead and how can minority organisations get prepared?