

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Building Capacity in Black and Minority Ethnic Organisations

**An evaluation of The National Capacity-Building Programme  
of the Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations**

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*“The National Capacity Building Programme is an ambitious and complex piece of work in a sensitive and challenging area. It is probably the largest single investment in the Black and Minority Ethnic Sector made in the UK.”*

*Professor Gary Craig—main report*

*“The National Capacity Building Programme generated very significant impacts on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS in terms of strengthening the capacity of the capacity of hundreds of BME Voluntary and Community Organisations (BMEVCOs) to operate as accountable, sustainable and effective organisations”*

*Professor Gary Craig—main report*

*CEMVO wishes to thank its funders and stakeholders:*



*We also wish to thank the University of East London and our capacity building officers for their hard work. Finally, we would like to thank the staff and management committee members of the voluntary organisations who took part in this programme.*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1999, the Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO) established a pilot London-wide capacity-building programme. This was followed in 2003 by a national capacity building programme with the goals of:

- I. improving the capacity of the minority ethnic voluntary and community sectors to deliver services, (particularly) to BME communities
- II. enhancing the ability of the minority ethnic voluntary and community sectors (VCS) to secure sustainability and long-term funding
- III. widening participation and representation of minority ethnic stakeholders in local and regional decision-making processes.

Earlier elements of the work of CEMVO had been evaluated or monitored but this report presents the findings of the first evaluation of the national capacity building programme.

The key findings of the evaluation were that:

the national capacity-building programme generated a very significant impact on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community sectors (VCS) in terms of strengthening the capacity of hundreds of BME voluntary and community organisations (BMEVCOs) to operate as accountable, sustainable and effective organisations

as well as the direct impact on BMEVCOs, the programme has had a major impact in leveraging more than £20 million into the BMEVCS, either directly or indirectly

the pressures on CEMVO to produce quantifiable results, often as a result of the requirements of funders, produced a tendency to sacrifice longer-term goals for immediate outputs and demonstrable short-term gains

the programme has demonstrated to government and local government the need for more substantial investment in the BMEVCS and the ways in which this investment can lead to sustainable outcomes

the Diagnostic Toolkit was helpful in analysing the capacity of VCOs but tended to be used in a rather rigid way on occasions

training provided through the academic elements of the programme focussed more on the development of business skills; these could be complemented by increased input in community development skills

a number of issues have been highlighted, particularly in relation to the organisational systems within the programme, which can be further improved.

# CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

The black and minority ethnic (BME) population of the United Kingdom is now approximately 8% of the total UK population. There is a settled BME population in every local authority area in the UK with marked variations between different areas. Most minority populations are increasingly characterised by difference and diversity, particularly so since the growth of asylum-seeking refugees and, more recently, the arrival of economic migrants from East and Central Europe. Substantially more than 40% of the UK BME population was born here.

## Disadvantage and Social Exclusion

Despite this long-standing presence the history of the BME population has been one characterised by disproportionate levels of discrimination, disadvantage and social exclusion in British society today. Socio-economic data has long revealed entrenched racial, religious and cultural prejudicial attitudes pervading the nation; 70% of people from BME communities still live in the 88 most deprived local authority districts in England; residents of affluent suburbs have the highest levels of civic engagement of any population group (50%) whilst their multi-ethnic inner-city neighbours record the lowest rates of active citizenship (28%); and BME groups have higher unemployment and economic inactivity rates than the white population.

## Substantial Barriers

Official responses to the deprivation of Britain's minorities increasingly place the blame on minorities themselves rather than acknowledging the substantial barriers created by institutional racism to their social and economic progress. Such long-standing socio-economic inequalities translate into an unequal voluntary and community sector where inexperienced, under-skilled and under-resourced voluntary and community-based organisations (VCOs) compete for the allocation of scarce resources with their more experienced, well-established and well-resourced mainstream counterparts. Evidence shows that Britain's voluntary and community sectors (VCS) feature an uneven playing field: of the 153,000 general charities in the country, those with incomes of over £10Million (0.2%) have almost 40% of the sector's total income. In contrast, the BME sector has a much larger proportion of small and medium-sized VCOs. Over 60% of these have annual incomes below £10,000.

## Results of the Crosscutting Review

The Treasury's 2002 Crosscutting Review of the Voluntary Sector, acknowledged the more acute barriers faced by the BME sector and its role in delivering government targets. Research has found that BME organisations were often poorly positioned to benefit from the opportunities and challenges provided by the new (market-led) environment in an increasingly competitive market, complex tendering processes and more rigorous reporting procedures. Indeed BME organisations were most vulnerable as local councils shifted towards strategic funding and total grants reduced.

## Over-stretched and Under-resourced

National mapping of the BMEVCS pointed to the difficulties that such organisations had in sustainable development, particularly in connection with 'a lack of access to core funding activities and lack of official recognition.' Minority communities were often not aware of the work of such organisations and mainstream funders both had little strategy for supporting them or joined-up approaches to building their capacity at a local level. Respondents to studies of the BMEVCS argued they were overstretched and under-resourced and that significant additional resources were needed to build both infrastructure and capacity to respond to local issues and act strategically when necessary. More recent studies have indicated that, despite further structured interventions by government, such as the ChangeUp Process, support for BMEVCOs continues to lag far behind that given to mainstream organisations.

It was in response to these findings that CEMVO decided to develop, initially a London-based and then, a national capacity-building programme, for BMEVCOs.

# THE CEMVO NATIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME

## Introduction

In 1999, CEMVO established a pilot London-wide capacity building programme. This was the subject of some early evaluations. The pilot programme was followed in 2003 by a national capacity building programme with the goals of:

- I. improving the capacity of the minority ethnic voluntary and community sectors to deliver services, (particularly) to BME communities
- II. enhancing the ability of the minority ethnic voluntary and community sectors (VCS) to secure sustainability and long-term funding
- III. widening participation and representation of minority ethnic stakeholders in local and regional decision-making processes.

## Scope of the Programme

The national programme involved providing 26 capacity building officers (CBOs) with academic and professional training to MBA level at the University of East London. After this, aided by a bespoke, software-embedded Diagnostic Tool Kit (DTK) they worked with a range of BMEVCSOs who had signed agreements to take part. This engagement was supported by senior CEMVO staff. Engagement with this first group was for one year when the CBOs commenced work with a new group of organisations. On successful completion of the work following assessment by CEMVO Regional officers, organisations were awarded a certificate of completion.

One key role of the CBOs was to draft an Action Plan in conjunction with the organisation concerned, specifically tailored to each group. CBOs were then to work on a one-to-one basis with each group, providing them with guidance and support in implementing the recommendations and Action Plan as a whole. CBOs were to provide these organisations with free professional guidance and support, assistance with training and development, as well as with mentoring and information on relevant resources and networks and sources of funding.

CBOs typically worked with a key contact in each organisation although they would have access to all staff, management committees and other relevant local actors.

## Working with over 1,000 Organisations

CEMVO recently estimated, based on completed portfolios, contact sheets and work logs that, since 1999, when the programme was first established on a London-only basis, the capacity building programme has worked with over 1000 community based organisations and groups although this contact will have been at varying levels of intensity and for differing periods of time. These groups were supported in raising in excess of £20 million. This does not include money raised from commissioning or loan funding for example from FutureBuilders. Incorporating this additional funding, the total income levered in by the programme is probably between £20 million and £30 million.

The national capacity building programme was due to end its first three-year period in June 2006, at which point funders required that an independent evaluation should be carried out. This is the subject of the present report.

## Exceeding Targets

By June 2006, 673 organisations had participated in a diagnostic assessment, 639 had agreed a development plan, and 602 had agreed an action plan. 503 had completed this action plan to meet their organisational needs. Additionally, 78 organisations had participated in 20 workshops to develop fundraising skills, and 512 had completed a portfolio of evidence demonstrating improved expertise. These achievements were all in excess of targets set at the beginning of the programme.

# CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EVALUATION

The major findings from the evaluation were as follows:

## National Capacity Building

The national capacity building programme generated very significant impacts on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community sectors (VCS) in terms of strengthening the capacity of hundreds of BME voluntary and community organisations (BMEVCOs) to operate as accountable, sustainable and effective organisations. A small number of organisations withdrew from the programme either before formally committing themselves to it or at a later stage; in many cases this was due to the vulnerability of these organisations, many of which were small and poorly funded. The vast majority of VCOs, however, engaged effectively with the programme and were certificated at the end of it.

## £20 million Raised

As well as the direct impact on BMEVCOs, the programme has had a major impact in leveraging more than £20 million into the BMEVCS, either directly or indirectly. Many organisations became able to raise funds themselves from local or national funders, thus strengthening the role and voice of the BMEVCS at local and regional levels.

## Emphasis on Sacrifice of Longer Term Goals

The pressures on CEMVO to produce quantifiable results, often as a result of the requirements of funders, produced a tendency to sacrifice longer-term goals for immediate outputs and demonstrable short-term gains. In some cases, the programme was criticised as being too concerned with meeting targets of a 'tick-box' variety and the complexity of organisational development tended to be overridden by the need to ensure the maximum number of organisations completed the programme. The evaluation recommends that funders should be encouraged to accept a stronger emphasis on longer term outcomes: this would require CBOs to work with fewer organisations and over a longer period of time.

## More Sustained Investment Required

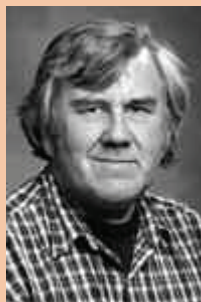
The programme has demonstrated to government, local government and other funders the need for more substantial investment in the BMEVCS and the ways in which this investment can lead to sustainable outcomes. There is no doubt that the relatively modest investment in this programme (seen in a national perspective, for example against the total income of the voluntary and community sectors of well over £25 billion) has produced some significant results in terms of the growth and increasing stability of the BME VCS. Government should be encouraged to increase this investment, ensuring a commitment to BME communities have an effective voice.

## Diagnostic Tools

The Diagnostic Toolkit was helpful in analysing the capacity of VCOs by focussing on nine separate aspects of organisational development such as financial and management systems, but tended to be used in a rather rigid way on occasions. CBOs argued that it should be seen as a basis for discussion rather than a limiting framework.

## Community Development

Training provided by the University of East London through the academic elements of the programme focussed more on the development of business skills; these could be complemented by increased input in community development skills. Working with community organisations requires a knowledge of such skills, particularly to address issues such as confusion about the nature of leadership. A number of other issues were highlighted, particularly in relation to the organisational, reporting and monitoring systems within the programme, which can be further improved.



## Professor Gary Craig

*Gary is Professor of Social Justice at the University of Hull and the Associate Director of the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation.*

*He worked in the voluntary sector and in local government, on large-scale community development projects until he re-entered academic life in the early 1990s.*

*His research interests include 'race' and ethnicity, local governance, poverty and deprivation, children and young people and the voluntary sector.*

*He is currently President of the International Association for Community Development, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and Academician of the Learned Societies in Social Science.*

*“There is no reason in principle why CEMVO should not now go to major funders, including government (which has committed itself to building the funding of the VCS) to argue the case for extensive core funding to enable the programme to continue along these lines.”*

*Professor Gary Craig—main report*

**About this report:** The study was commissioned by CEMVO in September 2006 and completed in January 2007. It included a literature review, telephone survey and postal survey of participating CVOs; interviews with CBOs and senior CEMVO staff. Copies of the summary and full report are available from CEMVO, Boardman House, 64 Broadway, Stratford, London, E15 1NG.

The full report *Building Capacity in Black and Minority Ethnic Organisations* by Gary Craig, Sue Adamson, Yasminah Beebeejaun, Bankole Cole, Abena Dadze-Arthur, Bano Murtuja and Oluwarotimi Osidipe of the Centre for Research into Social Justice, University of Hull is also available as a pdf download from [www.cemvo.org.uk](http://www.cemvo.org.uk).



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