



Improving Reach 2008-11


Monitoring Report

IRP/M/01

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Part one

Programme	Improving Reach
Organisation name	Croydon BME Forum
Project name (if applicable)	South London BME Partnership Development Project
URN	07775
Contact name	Nero Ughwujabo
Position	Chief Executive
Date completed	22 April 2010
Project year (1/2/3)	Two (2)
This report covers period	01/11/2009 to 31/03/2010 (This report covers 5 months instead of 6. The previous report covered 7 months to facilitate the reporting on the launching of the project last October.)

Programme Outcome 1	Smaller organisations have more skills and resources to provide support services to third-sector frontline organisations, which work with excluded communities. These smaller organisations are able to continue their work after our funding has run out
Project Outcome 1a	To increase the capacity of South London BME Partnership to coordinate and develop the BME voluntary and community sector infrastructure in 6 South London Boroughs
Indicator(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance and leadership will have received training in leadership and management skills.
	Greater sharing of information, resources and expertise within the BME network and community.
	<p>Established communication network through the setting up of website, database, intranet and publicity materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed terms of reference and/or development plans for LIO in each of the 6 boroughs.
Please summarise your progress against this outcome in one of the following three classifications:	
Very good progress: no remedial action is required	<p>Evidence:</p> <p>In the last 5 months (Nov 09 – March 10), the project has made good progress. This period can be described as one of steady progress and consolidation. During this phase, the following milestones were achieved:</p>

Project Office

- Project work plan reviewed and updated and was presented to the Project Board in Dec 09.
- Comprehensive borough profile of BME community in Croydon was researched and compiled. This profile was developed to provide an understanding of the nature, composition, locations, issues, activities and involvement of BME populations in their communities. Similar profiles are being developed for the other 5 boroughs. These BME profiles are meant to be part of the project legacy of mapping the growth of these populations in the 6 boroughs.
- Successfully co-hosted a Jobs+ event in Croydon in collaboration with London & Quadrant Housing Group and Amicus Horizon. **(Please see details under Croydon BME Forum sub-head)**
- Supported a number of key regional and national discussions around developing, supporting and strengthening BME infrastructure. Meeting hosts included: London Funders, BTEG, Voice4change, MiNet and NAVCA.
- Supported the strengthening of the Minority Ethnic Network's (MiNet) activities through service to its Advisory Board.
- Developed a listing of BME directories in the 6 SL boroughs.
- Serviced two Project Board meetings on 16th Dec 2009 and 10th Feb 2010.

Local Project Partners

Development of the Partnership work in the 6 boroughs has made good progress in the period under review. Below is a summary of the status in each borough and a sampling of some the outputs over this period:

Bromley

- The Bromley BME Forum Steering Group continued to meet systematically in this period as it consolidated its formation plans. It held 5 meetings times since Nov 09 (Nov. 4 & 30th, Jan 18th, Feb 11th & Mar 2nd).
- A Terms of Reference, membership application form and publicity leaflet describing the purpose of the forum, have been developed, approved and placed in circulation. Work

around branding for the forum is currently being undertaken on behalf of the forum. Once this work is completed, the New Forum would have its logo, letter head and banner.

- Forum members attended 5 partnership related meetings in the borough between Jan-Mar 10, at least 2 of which were LSP public meetings and a Health, Housing and Social Care Committee meeting. By attending these meetings, the new Forum has already begun to engage with the statutory and VCS in Bromley around issues critical to the BME communities.
- Bromley BME Forum members participated in a capacity building workshop on 27th Jan 2010 at the Anerley Business Centre. Sponsored by BNRRN *Working Together – Enabling BME Participation Project*, the workshop focused on building the capacity of BME frontline organisations to understand how the local council functions and how to effectively engage these entities around policy. Forum members also attended 3 BNRRN Steering Group meetings under its *Working Together Project* in Bromley.
- Bromley attended its first two Project Board meetings in Dec 09 and Feb 10 and by doing so have taken their place within the management structure of the South London BME Partnership.
- On 27th April 2010, Forum members will gather to elect the members of its first executive committee. A venue has already been booked and some 40 BME organisations in the borough have been invited.
- Received a sum of £783 from the South London Consortium Staying Connected as part of the Partnership to bring together BME frontline groups around issues of concern to them.

Croydon BME Forum

- The new ICT suite was placed into full usage in January 2010. It has been used at least 4 days each week since that period. Its main customers have been BME organisations and businesses who are providing training for unemployed persons seeking additional skills and opportunities to return to work. Approximately 250 persons, mostly young people, have trained in ICT, CV writing, interview preparation and business management using the facility between Jan - Mar 2010. The ICT suite has begun to return sustainable financial benefits to the organisation.
- Croydon BME Forum in partnership with London & Quadrant

Housing Group and Amicus Horizon held a Jobs networking and information event under the theme: **Jobs+: Raising aspirations and creating opportunities in Croydon**. This event which was held on 18th February 2010 at Fairfield Halls; brought together some 250 BME tenants who are in long-term unemployment, to focus on employment and training opportunities in Croydon. The event was comprised of presentations, discussions, workshops around employment and training and an employers' exhibition fair. Some 25 employers from Croydon participated in the exhibition. Participants were largely women and young people who are unemployed. Project staff supported the planning and management of what was regarded as a very successful event.

- Supported recruitment process for Community Development Workers x2 and an Office Manager/ PA.
- Capacity Building training held for staff members in development worker roles.
- Croydon BME Forums annual ICT support membership package was renewed with Superhighways to help support their infrastructure development.
- Received a sum of £783 from the South London Consortium Staying Connected as part of the Partnership to bring together BME frontline groups around issues of concern to them.

Kingston

- Kingston Race Equality Council (KREC) was formally accepted into the South London BME Partnership by its Board at its December meeting. With the admittance of KREC and Bromley BME Forum into the Partnership, SLBP has achieved a milestone of developing partner representation in all 6 boroughs.
- KREC attended its first two Project Board meetings in Dec 09 and Feb 10 and by doing so have taken its place within the management structure of the South London BME Partnership.
- Two meeting were held with KREC to discuss and plan the next steps of engagement with the both the BME communities as well as the statutory agencies in the borough.
- KREC's Director met with Equalities and Diversity Management team of the Kingston Council in March to discuss the organisation's new role as the facilitator of the BME Forum in Kingston. Among the issues discussed were: KREC's facilitation role under this new arrangement, transition

of forum activities, new modalities of how KREC, Kingston Council and SLBP could effectively engage around the Kingston Forum and about the availability of support for KREC in this role. KREC is due to hold its first big meeting with BME organisations on May 4th 2010.

- An annual ICT support membership package was opened with Superhighways for KREC to help support their infrastructure development.
- Received a sum of £783 from the South London Consortium Staying Connected as part of the Partnership to bring together BME frontline groups around issues of concern to them.

Merton Unity Network

- Supported Merton BME Forum Strategic Planning Seminar “No Change No Gain” on Feb. 26th 2010. This event was held to help revise the Forum’s strategic plan which is in its final year. Staff team also provided workshop facilitation support to the event.
- Two development meetings were held with MUN’s team to look at mapping out their plans for the upcoming year and to see what support the organisation will need over this period.
- MUN’s annual ICT support membership package was renewed with Superhighways to help support their infrastructure development.
- Design ideas for MUN’s newsletter were developed and submitted by staff
- MUN Marketing strategy which was designed and redeveloped by project team has since been approved by its committee and is being prepared for printing.
- Received a sum of £783 from the South London Consortium Staying Connected as part of the Partnership to bring together BME frontline groups around issues of concern to them.

Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Group

- EMAG’s annual ICT support membership package was renewed with Superhighways to help support their infrastructure development.
- Received a sum of £783 from the South London Consortium Staying Connected as part of the Partnership to bring together BME frontline groups around issues of concern to them.

Sutton Race Equality Council

- Provided continued active support of reporting meetings between SREC and Sutton Council to negotiate the release of the Strategic Partnership Programme funding for the period Oct 09 – Mar 2010. The groups met in Dec 09 and Jan 10 to facilitate key feedback on SREC's progress. To date Sutton's Council has provided both qualitative and quantitative satisfaction on the partner's progress. Funding against the 6 months Plan (Oct 09 – Mar 10) have been released. At the end of April, SREC expects that the Council will announce its full confidence in SREC's ability to deliver as a Strategic Partner.
- Supported the recruitment and appointment of the interim Coordinator and provided ongoing programmatic and other strategic support to the position.
- Supported SREC's reporting requirements to the Council under the 6 months revised action plan.
- Supported the set up of a new and independent website for SREC at: <http://www.suttonrec.org.uk/> . The work was done by Superhighways with funding from the Sutton Active Citizenship Project - collaboration between Sutton CVS, Sutton Volunteer Centre, SREC and Sutton Council. Staff members have also been trained in its upkeep and maintenance.
- Supported funding applications by providing information and guidance.
- SREC's annual ICT support membership package was renewed with Superhighways to help support their infrastructure development.
- Received a sum of £783 from the South London Consortium Staying Connected as part of the Partnership to bring together BME frontline groups around issues of concern to them.
- Supported SRECs work towards the review and implementation of a standard of quality using PQASSO.
- Supported the creating a new database – a core tool that allows efficient knowledge management and reporting on stakeholder engagement. This work was also done by Superhighways.

Risk

In your Work-plan (IRP/M/01), you identified key risks. Are there any new risks to you achieving this outcome? The following is still the major additional risk identifiable.

- Reluctance by LIO/ potential BME umbrella group to organise themselves into larger voice/ second tier organisation and to partner with SLBMEP. The relatively short lifespan of the project engenders this reluctance. Some are fearful that should they undertake the additional responsibility of hosting a BME Forum, they might find themselves struggling financially at the expiration of the project especially given the current economic climate.

Risk mitigation approaches:

- Continue to dialogue with potential partners around the importance of organising around a larger voice and representation grouping.
- Provide strong support for their development of strategic / business plans of 2-3 years duration
- Provide training, strategic and technical support for medium to long-term funding applications for their development plans and activities.
- Encourage the development of partnerships around funding applications, infrastructure development and representation and voice activities.

Learning

This report represents a year and a half into the project life-cycle and we have learnt some very useful lessons during this period:-

- The introduction of commissioning and a reduction of grants across the local authority spectrum have created an urgent and greater need for partnership applications and infrastructure support for BME organisations. A feature during this period has been the growing number of BME organisations (infrastructure or otherwise) that have either lost funding or have had unsuccessful bids.
- BME frontline organisations seem to continue to struggle for resources and to have their issues heard in those boroughs where there is not at least one strong BME infrastructure/members organisation speaking and advocating specifically on their behalf. Without that voice and representation, these BME Communities remain under-resourced with limited access to mainstream community services.
- Infrastructure organisations are at varying levels of development /capacities and need to be engaged based on their respective developmental levels and capacities.
- The level of diversity among BME organisations in various boroughs impact directly upon how the project will eventually unfold in a particular area.

- BME organisations are in desperate need of training and capacity building, therefore all similar projects must have a training/capacity building component as part of their deliverables.
- Projects of this nature need to ensure that they select staff with the right kind of development skills and experience to engage community groups and organisations. The right skills set could substantially stimulate and increase the level of partner engagement in the project.

Is there any other information you wish to tell us about your progress?

Comparatively, progress under this reporting period has been slower than in the earlier periods and this has been so for two main reasons: First, the impact of the recession on a few of our partner organisations and secondly, a reduction in the number of events within the project as the team focused its energy on strengthening the strategic and organisational processes within some partner organisations. In the first instance, funding cuts by local councils and some regional funders and the role out of commissioning systems across the boroughs have forced some of our partners to drastically revise their operational scope as they struggle to find resources for the new fiscal year 2010-2011. Secondly, much of the project team's attention was focused on Kingston and Bromley where new forums are being developed and on Sutton where critical support was necessary to maintain the viability of that partner organisation. We are pleased to report that Sutton Race Equality Council is now in a much better place and the Council is pleased with its progress.

Notwithstanding this, the progress during this period was good. Two new organisations from Bromley and Kingston joined the Partnership in December and in the process increased its working presence to all 6 of the selected boroughs in South London. Bromley BME Forum and Kingston Race and Equalities Council were formally accepted by the Partnership Board at its December meeting. The Board was quite pleased with this development as it now feels that it has a framework for building a successful sub-regional BME infrastructure network across South London.

The highlights of this period were:

1. The entry of KREC and Bromley BME Forum into the Partnership
2. The successful co-hosting of the Jobs+ event in Croydon
3. The successful launch and usage of Croydon BME Forum ICT suite

The key projected activities over the next 6 months would revolve around the following:

- Revision of business plans for at least three of our partners.
- A mini conference to bring together partners and key individuals within the 6 boroughs to focus on the future of the Partnership including; direction, funding, core-funding for partners from local councils and local partnerships around community cohesion work among other issues.
- Development and consolidation of infrastructure organisations in Bromley and Kingston through which the local BME Voice and activities could evolve and be supported.

- Capacity building training for trustees and staff of partner organisations
- Compilation of comprehensive borough profiles of BME organisations in 3 boroughs

We are very pleased with the progress to date and as the project enters its final year under this funding the Board has already begun to focus on funding support for the development and consolidation of this exciting Partnership work across South London. In some quarters, is it already being described as a credible leading model of infrastructure partnership within the Third Sector.