



# **BRIDGE THE GAP**

**WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE BME THIRD SECTOR IN ENGLAND**

***Voice4Change England***

**A NATIONAL VOICE FOR THE BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC THIRD SECTOR**

## INTRODUCTION

Voice4Change England is a national policy body dedicated to strengthening the BME Third Sector as a positive force for change. It is a new initiative which seeks to provide a co-ordinated and influential voice for the Black Minority Ethnic Third Sector. Voice4Change England is a partnership of 18 organisations, networks and initiatives working at national and regional levels.

We aim to become a co-ordinated national voice for the BME Third Sector to support them in their work and form a dialogue with Government. We want to create a thriving BME Third Sector which will help to reduce inequality, and lead to greater participation, cohesion and integration through, for example, the delivery of public services.

We are raising awareness of BME Third Sector issues to regional and national policy-makers. The BME Third Sector is a valuable part of society but is currently under-resourced. Our networks give us access to 5,700 BME Third Sector groups and organisations.

Voice4Change England set out to examine what data and evidence there is available on BME groups working within the Third Sector. The research was undertaken by b:RAP, a human rights organisation with a strong reputation for innovative equalities research. This is a summary of the research key findings and recommendations.

## WHY IS MAPPING RESEARCH NEEDED?

There are acknowledged gaps in the existing information about the BME Third Sector which prevent a comprehensive national picture being drawn. This in turn diminishes the voice of the sector and the role it can play in building a cohesive civil society in the future.

Surprisingly, Voice4Change England is the first to recognise that there is no single source of intelligence for the BME Third Sector. This means there is no industry standard to work to. The BME Third Sector, is however, larger than expected.

Voice4Change England uses a broad definition of BME for its work. We include all those other than 'White British'. We realise this is a broader definition than some of our partners. In reality no single BME Third Sector term is easily identifiable. The term is used for convenience rather than consistency.

## WHAT DID WE NEED TO FIND OUT?

- 1 The number of BME Third Sector organisations?
- 2 Their characteristics such as annual income and who they employed?
- 3 The services BME Third Sector organisations are delivering?
- 4 What type of organisation they are?
- 5 Who they represent?
- 6 How much funding they are getting and where from?
- 7 The number of contracts they are getting to deliver public services and their value?
- 8 The issues they consider relevant to support and development?
- 9 The role of the BME Third Sector in shaping policy?
- 10 How best to manage, store and retrieve such information once it is collected?

The BME Third Sector cannot enhance its role in public policy formulation until it can evidence what work is going on where, nationally and regionally.

## HOW WAS THE RESEARCH DONE?

The researchers accessed existing national and regional information sources for us from Government and Third Sector sources.

Policy makers increasingly place much significance on high quality intelligence about the sector that can inform practitioners, public sector purchasers and a wide array of public policy-makers. This can help strengthen relationships with the sector.

To date, there have only been a handful of national-level BME Third Sector mapping studies. Voice4Change England is aware that this means that the BME Third Sector is not operating on an equal footing with the rest of the Third Sector.

## WHEN WAS THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

The data was collected during March to September 2007. It was carried out in three phases. Existing information was collected and collated. Gaps in the information were then identified. The information was analysed and written in report form.

## THE PARTNERSHIP

The Voice4Change England Partnership is made up of the following 18 organisations, initiatives and networks.

- BECON (North East BME Network)
- Black Development Agency
- Black South West Network
- Black Training and Enterprise Group
- Confederation of Indian Organisations
- Community Development Exchange
- Connections for Development
- Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations
- Ethnic Business Development Corporation
- FATIMA Women's Network
- MENTER (East of England BME Network)
- MiNET (London BME Network)
- One North West (North West BME Network)
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
- The Pillar Consortium
- The Social Business Company
- Voice East Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humber BME Regional Panel

# WHAT ANSWERS DID WE DISCOVER TO OUR QUESTIONS?

## 1 The number of BME Third Sector organisations?

National estimates of the size of the BME Third Sector vary considerably. There are somewhere between 5,000 and 11,000 such organisations. Out-of-date information is a key issue.

Regionally, the figure is somewhere between 15,300 to 17,460. However regional data is very inconsistent and is likely to under-estimate the number of such groups. A reliable, like-for-like comparative picture of the BME Third Sector across the English regions is not currently possible.

Nationally, and regionally, BME social enterprises need to be recorded. Such data is not kept.

## 2 Their characteristics such as annual income and who they employed?

There is not enough national or regional data to draw up a comparison of the *income* of BME Third Sector and other charitable groups. There is national data on the *number of staff* employed but this is out of date while regionally such data is patchy and inconsistent. Again, information on the *number of volunteers* is dated and tends to focus on the ethnicity of volunteers rather than the number. *Salary levels* nationally and regionally are not recorded.

## 3 The services BME Third Sector organisations are delivering?

National data is drawn from two studies and is now dated. Regional data is available in six out of nine regions and most do not describe which types of activities are undertaken mainly by BME Third Sector organisations. Comparisons are virtually impossible.

## 4 What type of organisation they are?

There is national information that comes from McLeod et al's 'Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations: their role and future development in England and Wales' but it is dated. Substantive regional information is only available in two regions.

## 5 Who they represent?

Nationally this information is captured in one major study but not in other national data fields. A comprehensive region-by-region comparative analysis is currently impossible although some information does exist.

## 6 How much funding they are getting and where from?

Existing information is dated and does not generally draw out BME Third Sector funding or give any information for ethnic groups served. This is true at national, regional and local levels.

Data was identified for six out of nine regions about the proportion of Local Authority grants made to BME Third Sector organisations but it varies in how it is recorded and published making comparison very difficult. Regional administrative bodies do not have data available.

## 7 The number of contracts they are getting to deliver public services and their value?

Third Sector contracting as a national policy agenda is in its infancy. For a national picture of contracts awarded to be built up, data would need to be fed up through public sector purchasers. Surprisingly, no standard definition of public services exist. There was no national data of contracts awarded to the Third Sector collated and therefore none specific to BME Third Sector organisations. No detailed regional data could be identified.

## 8 The issues they consider relevant to support and development?

This area of information has been well researched. The research has focused on national surveys of the BME Third Sector and in these the issues raised recurrently include funding; BME sector influence; the emergence of a single equalities agenda and the potential for a dilution of 'race' equality; lack of infrastructure support, and a general lack of progress on issues of 'race' equality. Similar concerns were echoed at the regional level along with other key issues.

## 9 The role of the BME Third Sector in shaping policy?

There is a vast amount of diverse and uncoordinated information but the information is primarily qualitative and there is little quantitative data on the degree to which BME Third Sector organisations are engaged in public policy development. There is currently no means of assessing progress against measurable indicators.

Regional information is much the same. The research identified gaps in quantitative information in seven out of the nine regions. It is difficult to compare with and between regions. There is an absence of readily accessible information about the development of BME engagement mechanisms in each region.

## 10 How best to manage, store and retrieve such information once it is collected?

A database that could evidence answers to these questions would enhance the BME Third Sectors case for more capacity building work. It would also help to inform public policy. At the moment the BME Third Sector is not being given the credit for the work it is doing. It needs to become more significant in the future and it can achieve that by having purpose based systems to capture and manage information.

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# WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS?



## 1 **The number of BME Third Sector organisations?**

The best source of national information is the GuideStar data used by NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) in its Almanac. However it only relates to general charities and leaves out other organisations such as social enterprises therefore giving a partial picture.

A new definition of BME Third Sector is needed and new forms of capturing such information by working with others should be found. A case study approach could be developed too. Data on the BME social enterprise sector needs to be recorded.

## 2 **Their characteristics such as annual income and who they employed?**

New research needs to be originated or partnerships developed within the sector to investigate how existing survey methods can be modified to provide greater BME sector intelligence.

## 3 **The services BME Third Sector organisations are delivering?**

More consistent and standardised service definitions are needed to enable comparisons between regions and between BME and non-BME sectors. Case studies could also be identified as qualitative information.

## 4 **What type of organisation they are?**

GuideStar could be used to collect information relating to charities. Regulatory bodies such as Charity Commission, Companies House and CIC Regulator, could also be approached.

## 5 **Who they represent?**

Additional primary research is needed to establish a common way of classifying organisations and their beneficiaries. There is potential for Voice4Change England to develop and publish guidance on research methodologies in this area.

A case study approach could be devised to explore whether there is evidence of the added value of single-identity forms of provision.

## 6 **How much funding they are getting and where from?**

This is an important area for more research in the future. However it needs collaboration, partnership working and additional resources to achieve this. Voice4Change England could act as an influencer and lobby for these changes.

## 7 **The number of contracts they are getting to deliver public services and the value of those contracts?**

It would require a major programme of research to find this information out. Voice4Change England could therefore look at alternatives such as working with the Office of the Third Sector to collect some information and/or target higher spending local authorities too.

## 8 **The issues they consider relevant to support and development?**

Voice4Change England can work to develop this area of policy more consistently by working with partners at regional and sub-regional level to develop capacity in the areas of funding, influence, race equality and infrastructure support. It can influence the Home Office 'State of the Sector survey', investigate the potential for other voluntary sector structures and see how the views of the BME sector can be dealt with in a more strategic way.

## 9 **The role of the BME Third Sector in shaping policy?**

The Home Office 'State of the Sector survey' could be used to gather intelligence on the sector's role in influencing policy but significant work would have to be done to ensure that Government interventions are based on accurate data and evidence of need. A case study approach could also be adopted.

## 10 **How best to manage, store and retrieve such information once it is collected?**

The ability to generate a fresh, consistent and comparable BME Third Sector intelligence is a priority for Voice4Change England. There would be immediate benefits for establishing a common data set.

## **Moving Forward**

Voice4Change England members sign up to an information sharing system and update it on a regular basis. Voice4Change England encourages a more systematic and co-ordinated utilisation of other existing surveys and data collection initiatives. There is also potential for Voice4Change England to develop new areas of investigation such as good performance management.

Voice4Change England wants to develop alliances to take the recommendations forward. To discuss the research further, come and talk to us.

## **Contact us:**

To find out more about Voice4Change England or to become a Voice4Change England member or supporter, please contact 020 7843 6130.

Email: [info@voice4change-england.co.uk](mailto:info@voice4change-england.co.uk)  
[www.voice4change-england.co.uk](http://www.voice4change-england.co.uk)

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