



GLOBAL MAJORITY FUND

Phase 3
2026



Delivered in partnership with the following funders:





Before reading on, we invite you
to pause in this moment.

Take a breath.



Please resist the urge to skim to
conclusions or jump ahead to the
recommendations.

Settle in comfortably, be curious and
prepare to **reimagine the possibilities**
when communities closest to injustice
are trusted with power, resources and
decision-making.



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This report is not a traditional evaluation of a funding programme. This report tells a story. It is grounded in experiences, reflections and insights from organisations working every day to support Global Majority communities and advance racial justice across the UK.

These stories capture the experiences of leaders, practitioners and community organisations leading racial justice work in an increasingly complex and hostile landscape. Together, they offer a small window into what becomes possible when communities are trusted, when lived experience is valued and when funding supports organisations, not projects.

Over the last three and a half years, the Global Majority Fund cohort have used flexible-core funding to build stronger foundations, deepen their impact, amplify community voices and shape policy decisions to create more equitable futures for their communities.

They have also operated in an environment shaped by a cost-of-living crisis, anti-migrant hostility and persistent structural racism. Each organisation has responded to racist and Islamophobic attacks, protected their communities, and diverted limited resources towards crisis response, community safety and psychosocial support. As this report highlights, the emotional, operational and financial costs of holding communities through periods of hostility and crisis remain largely absent from conventional funding models, despite this being a defining feature of racial justice work.

This evaluation provides compelling evidence that alternative approaches to philanthropy can work. Trust-based funding, shared decision-making, practitioner leadership and relational approaches to grant-making have made a difference. When organisations are supported with core-flexible, multi-year funding and meaningful support, they do far more than survive. They grow stronger. They invest in leadership, governance and systems. They create opportunities to move Global Majority communities from the margins of decision-making to the table itself, ensuring that their

"Funders need to be bolder, willing to trust & willing to take risks. If the litmus test for getting a look in for grant funding remains the ability to write a good English essay about why you need funding, then Black groups will be forever disproportionately excluded and will remain underfunded."

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voices, experiences and aspirations shape conversations, policies and practice that directly affect their lives. This ultimately brings us closer to a just world free from poverty.

If there is one lesson that runs throughout this report, it is that we can achieve far more together than any one funder, fund or organisation could achieve alone. Many of the barriers identified throughout these pages remain deeply embedded within the wider funding ecosystem: Short-term funding cycles focussing on project-based funding, eligibility requirements that fail to account for structural racism and historic underinvestment of Global Majority-led organisations, disproportionate due diligence processes and unequal access to decision-making, continue to shape who receives resources and whose expertise is valued. While the Global Majority Fund has shown what is possible, sustaining and expanding these gains will require collective effort across philanthropy.

We are deeply grateful to our co-funders: Barclays, City Bridge Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Health Foundation and National Emergencies Trust, who have travelled alongside us throughout this journey. Their trust, partnership and willingness to embrace a different approach to philanthropy, created the space for us to be ambitious, challenge convention, and reimagine what equitable funding can look like. This Fund would not have been possible without their commitment and support. We are also immensely grateful to the members of the Fund Reference Group, past and present, whose leadership, wisdom and generosity have been integral to this work. They have guided the Fund with care, conviction and an unwavering commitment to community, ensuring community

remained our North Star, shaping not only the decisions we made, but the way we chose to make them. The Fund is immeasurably stronger because of their contribution.

Most importantly, this report is a testament to the organisations, leaders and communities who have driven this work forward. Their achievements demonstrate the extraordinary value that Global Majority-led organisations bring to our society every day. They also offer a vision of what can be achieved when funding is rooted in trust, partnership and a shared commitment to justice.

As we celebrate what has been accomplished, we need to continuously build on these foundations, sustain the momentum that has been created, and ensure that organisations advancing racial justice have the resources, influence and support they need to thrive for the long term.



Executive Summary

The Global Majority Fund – Phase III was a £5.3 million pooled fund created by Comic Relief, with the support of five co-funders to invest in the long-term institutional resilience of 10 organisations led by and for Global Majority communities across the UK, known as Intermediary Technical Partners (ITPs). Designed as a structural intervention against the chronic underfunding, institutional exclusion and systemic racism in philanthropy experienced by racial justice organisations, the programme moved beyond short-term emergency relief toward sustained infrastructure and self-determination.

This report produced by the Curiosity Society as the programme’s learning partner, presents the evaluation findings through three interconnected pillars from the Fund’s jointly developed Theory of Change: strengthening internal organisational capacity (Advance), amplifying community voice and influence into decision-making (Amplify), and shifting wider funding practice (Advocate) (see Appendix 1).

Overall, the strongest evidence of progress was found under the **Advance** pillar, where the programme helped strengthen organisations’ internal capacity, resilience, and operational stability. These advancements created a stronger foundation for organisations to elevate community voice and influence decision-making (connected to the **Amplify** pillar), while also supporting ITPs to demonstrate and advocate for more equitable funding practices (**Advocate** pillar). However, the findings do not suggest a straightforward progression from one pillar to the next. Instead, progress across the three pillars was often interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Sustaining these gains in the face of wider structural barriers, including racism in philanthropy and persistent funding inequalities, remains an ongoing challenge.

|| We are no longer just asking for recognition, but shaping conversations about how funding is allocated, how services are designed, and how systemic inequalities are addressed.

Grassroots organisation



Advance



If the question is where the programme most clearly delivered, the answer is organisational capacity. Across the cohort, flexible funding provided room to act strategically against a backdrop of a wider funding system still dominated by short-term, restricted grants. The most visible changes are practical: foundational investments in core operations, systems and governance; putting fundraising on a more strategic footing; and giving leadership teams greater stability to navigate external hostility, systemic racism and chronic underfunding instead of remaining in continuous crisis mode. Taken together, the combination of flexible funding and non-monetary support points to Phase III functioning less as a conventional programme grant and more as an investment in organisational infrastructure.

Amplify



The most convincing evidence on Amplify concerns the spaces where community voice connects to a clear pathway into decision-making, from national policy contexts to regional and local systems. The strongest evidence of influence appears where organisational credibility, access to those spaces and community-grounded evidence were combined to produce a visible result, moving representation from isolated testimony to systematic, evidence-based advocacy. Beyond formal policy spaces, amplification also enabled organisations to represent themselves directly with funders and local public bodies, backed by expertise, evidence and connections deepened during the Fund. Gaining entry to these conversations is a critical step, but whether that access translates into lasting influence remains an open question.

Advocate



The programme demonstrated meaningful shifts in funding practice within the cohort itself, while evidence of change across the wider funding system remains limited. Within the fund, ITPs tested more equitable practices, from conversational applications and flexible reporting to anti-racist frameworks and higher management fees, that were more reflective of the hands-on, funder plus support provided to grantees. These findings demonstrate that alternative grant-making approaches can be successfully implemented in practice and can support more equitable, locally led change. However, they do not, in themselves, provide evidence of a broader redistribution of capital allocation authority, meaning greater control over how funding decisions are made and resources are allocated; nor do they demonstrate a wider transfer of formal decision-making power beyond the funded cohort. ITPs, together with the FRG and Comic Relief, co-created a Call to Action and used Comic Relief's convening platform to bring funders into direct dialogue. This created a space to collectively examine how grant-making frameworks could be reviewed through an anti-racist lens and to explore how funders could better support the institutional resilience of Global Majority-led organisations. While the process successfully mobilised significant sector expertise, lived experience and funder engagement, shifting broader philanthropic norms remains a long-term challenge given the persistence of deeply embedded structures, practices and power dynamics.

Six main findings

1. Flexible funding succeeded because it was integrated with peer accompaniment and dedicated organisational support, instead of being distributed as an isolated grant. While designated organisational development funding gave organisations the financial room to stabilise staffing, upgrade systems and absorb external shocks, the Fund Reference Group (FRG) provided a trusted space for strategic reflection, peer problem-solving and mutual challenge.
2. The programme enabled organisations to invest in foundational operational infrastructure, including executive leadership, core systems, strategic planning and communications. For many Intermediary Technical Partners (ITPs), flexible organisational development funding and dedicated time for reflection contributed to substantial organisational growth, stronger funding readiness and access to larger multi-year grants, reducing their dependence on short-term project funding.
3. The programme expanded internal organisational capacity and near-term stability, but long-term sustainability remains uneven across the cohort. Flexible funding and support from Comic Relief and the Fund Reference Group (FRG) helped organisations strengthen essential operational capabilities, build their confidence and improve their ability to engage with funders and other institutions. Sustaining this progress will depend both on how organisations continue to develop and on whether the funding environment provides more consistent core support.
4. The Fund Reference Group (FRG) created value through co-production, practical accompaniment and peer connection. Beyond providing technical advice and leadership support, the FRG created a rare space where ITPs actively shaped programme decisions alongside Comic Relief, enabling organisations to benefit from the Fund while directly influencing how it operated.
5. At grassroots level, onward grant-making provided essential resources to small community groups, supporting early developments such as hiring staff, registering as Community Interest Companies (CICs), formalising governance and securing follow-on funding.
6. The programme expanded community voice and enabled ITPs to put more equitable funding practices into effect. The evidence of lasting policy influence and wider changes to the funding system is less conclusive. The cohort showed that alternative approaches to grant-making can work in practice, but changing established funding practices across the wider sector will require sustained effort beyond the programme.

Over **£2.5 Million**
of grants made to grassroots community organisations

Key Recommendations

- Comic Relief should continue offering longer-term, flexible core funding, while keeping funder plus support clearly separate from funder monitoring and compliance. It should maintain direct relationships with funded ITPs alongside advisory groups, recognising that funder contact cannot replace the safe space of peer accompaniment. From year one, it should also support ITPs to plan for leadership succession, help prevent burnout among ITP leaders, particularly where responsibility is concentrated in a small number of senior people, and prepare organisations for what happens when funding ends.
- Other funders should invest in core organisational strength, remove unnecessary legitimacy thresholds and eligibility criteria that can (un)intentionally exclude organisations led by and serving Global Majority communities. Requirements such as extensive track records, ample reserves or highly formalised governance structures are often used as proxies for credibility, yet can disadvantage organisations whose expertise, trust and impact are rooted in communities and have been chronically underfunded due to racism. Funders should also use proportionate application processes, remain visible beyond reporting cycles, avoid short-lived pilots, and recognise community organisations as institutions worthy of long-term investment, not simply as vehicles for project delivery.

Whilst being supported by Comic Relief we applied and secured National Lottery three-year funding. We believe they trusted us and had confidence because a major funder was already supporting us – it gave us credibility.

ITP

- ITPs should continue to build on the progress made during the Fund: consolidating leadership succession, internal governance, and practical evidence systems, while maintaining low-barrier, proportionate support and onward funding for grassroots community groups.
- Learning partners should protect frankness, ensure teams bring relevant lived experience of racialisation or practical experience working alongside by-and-for organisations, decide early how non-written evidence will be gathered, collect a few practical baseline measures where possible, and be open about what the evidence can and cannot support.

1,600+ participants engaged
to strengthen community organising

100 Grassroots Organisations Directly Funded

Abbreviations

AHPN	African Health Policy Network
ARE	Action for Race Equality
ATM	Anti-Tribalism Movement
FRG	Fund Reference Group
GMECN	Greater Manchester Ethnic Communities Network
GMF	Global Majority Fund
ITP	Intermediary Technical Partner
MCNI	Migrant Centre Northern Ireland
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
NSI	Next Step Initiative
SE	Sporting Equals
ToC	Theory of Change
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
V4CE	Voice4Change England

Terminology

Call to Action	A collective statement co-produced by the ITPs, FRGs, and Comic Relief, calling for more equitable, anti-racist funding practice. See full Call to Action in Appendix.
Cohort	The ten Intermediary Technical Partners funded under Phase III of the Global Majority Fund. Where the report refers to “the cohort”, it means these ten organisations collectively.
Core flexible funding	CR is supportive of the transition away from an undue reliance on short term, highly restrictive project funding. Flexible, core funding is designed to support the overall good work of organisations, and not just projects. It could mean supporting an organisation’s annual budget to continue its good work, or funding to expand the work, or to add something new that amplifies the work or its results. As flexible funding, it can be allocated for expenses that are harder to fund, such as salaries of senior management or administration, or ongoing costs that are not covered by other grants..

Fund Reference Group (FRG)	An advisory and support group of individuals with lived experience and sector expertise in Global Majority-led work. The FRG was designed to bring independent perspective into programme design and delivery. In practice it combined two roles: a reference function (challenge, review and quality assurance) and a resource function (peer accompaniment, workshops, operational support, advice and connection).
Funder Plus	A term describing Comic Relief's role beyond grant-making, including convening, relationship-building, sector advocacy and the use of its institutional networks.
Intermediary Technical Partners (ITPs)	The ten Global Majority-led organisations funded through GMF Phase III, each receiving funding for their own organisational development alongside resources to make onward grants and support grassroots organisations.
Learning partner	An advisory organisation supporting a programme's learning, reflection and evaluation. For GMF Phase III, Curiosity Society was the learning partner, supporting the development of the Theory of Change, the learning approach, evidence synthesis and evaluation.
Onward grant-making	The practice by which ITPs distributed portions of their GMF funding to grassroots organisations.
Peer accompaniment	The relational support provided to ITPs by Fund Reference Group members, including mentoring, practical advice, peer challenge, solidarity and connection.
Stories of Change	A participatory reflection method used in GMF Phase III. Organisations recorded change stories at three levels (the organisation itself, the organisations it supports, and wider communities or systems) across the three programme pillars (Amplify, Advance, Advocate). See Appendix for the Stories of Change captured under the Fund
Theory of Change (ToC)	The programme's framework for understanding how change was expected to happen. The GMF Theory of Change organises intended outcomes under three pillars: Amplify (voice, representation and influence), Advance (organisational capacity and resilience) and Advocate (funding practice, sector influence and institutional change). Each is considered at the level of the ITP, the grassroots organisations it supports, and the wider system. See Appendix for the Theory of Change Phase III of the Global Majority Fund.

1. Context, Methodology & Learning Role

The Global Majority Fund was established at the height of Covid-19 in May 2020, in recognition of the disproportionate impact the global pandemic had on Global Majority communities in the UK. Phase I of the Fund focussed on investing in small-medium-sized Global Majority-led organisations, known as Intermediary Technical Partners (ITPs), who went on to deliver small-scale emergency funding to Global Majority grass-roots organisations and community groups and that were delivering support in their communities. Phase II of the Fund launched in November 2020, adopting a similar model by investing in a further nine organisations, while continuing to support the ITP in Northern Ireland, to extend the reach of emergency funding to Global Majority-led community organisations.

Phase III of the fund began in January 2023, shifting the focus of the Fund from emergency response to addressing the persistent and chronic structural



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underfunding and systemic racism in philanthropy experienced by organisations led by and for Global Majority communities. Phase III was backed by a £5.3 million pooled fund from six funding partners: Comic Relief, Barclays, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, City Bridge Foundation, National Emergencies Trust and The Health Foundation. Instead of distributing resources through competitive open bidding, Phase III was designed as an invited, non-competitive programme for the ten ITPs in Phase I.

Each ITP received a grant of £460,000, which was broken down as follows:

£130,000 designated for flexible organisational development

£300,000 for onward grant making (including ITP grant making and management costs), with ITPs retaining full autonomy over how their organisational development funds were invested.

£30,000 for emergency funding delivered across two phases. In 2023, Comic Relief awarded each ITP **£15,000** to support increased cost of living costs that organisations were struggling to meet. Secondly, in August 2024 Comic Relief awarded each ITP **£15,000** to support in the aftermath of the racist and Islamophobic attacks on Global Majority communities across the UK.

Phase III began initial grant-making in May 2022, formally commencing its 3.5 year delivery in January 2023 and concluding in July 2026. Three ITPs have requested no-cost extensions and therefore some individual ITP timelines are now extending into 2027, reflecting Comic Relief's willingness to adapt grant timescales in response to need. More broadly, Phase III was explicitly redesigned around the lessons of those earlier cycles: lived-experience leadership transitioned from internal assessors into an independent, compensated Fund Reference Group (FRG); ITP selection moved from open competition to direct continuity with Phase I ITPs; core organisational development became an explicit priority; the intermediary management-cost allowance was increased from 10 to 20 per cent; and onward grants were structured to be fewer, longer, larger and more flexible.

1.1 The Evaluation Journey

This evaluation was designed to capture the structural reality of the Global Majority Fund without burdening participating organisations with extractive compliance. From inception, the process had to navigate a core tension: how to evaluate the impact of flexible, trust-based funding without reverting to rigid, traditional reporting methods.

The foundation of the work was a jointly developed Theory of Change, which established the Advance, Amplify, Advocate framework (Appendix 1). Advance focused on internal organisational capacity, resilience, and operational stability; Amplify examined community voice, representation, and pathways into decision-making; and Advocate evaluated shifts in funding

practice and wider philanthropic norms. The framework was informed by collaborative discussions on data collection, ensuring that evidence was gathered cumulatively through existing project documentation, grant monitoring, and Fund Reference Group reflections, rather than imposing burdensome primary data demands on organisations already operating at full stretch.

// We are seeing an evolution from informal, volunteer-led models to professionalised structures with governance frameworks, strategic planning, and financial controls."

ITP



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Produced by Esme Hemmings ITP Convening December 2025

The evaluation explored three working hypotheses about how the programme's pillars would operate in practice. The first was that **flexible funding paired with peer accompaniment would build lasting institutional resilience instead of temporary project activity**; the evidence shows substantial gains in capacity and near-term stability, while long-term resilience remains vulnerable to a restrictive wider funding market. The second was that **community-grounded leadership would open pathways into decision-making**; ITPs gained meaningful access to policy and funding spaces, but converting that access into lasting influence remains uneven. The third was that **demonstrating alternative grant-making models would encourage mainstream funders to adapt their practices**; while alternative approaches succeeded within the Fund, evidence of wider philanthropic change remains limited.

1.2 Deepening the Evidence: Stories of Change and Sector Engagement

Six-month learning reports and financial reconciliations provided information on programme delivery and organisational finances, but the evaluation also needed to understand changes that were less easily captured through routine reporting. These included relationships between ITPs, the practical support provided by the Fund Reference Group and the different ways organisations developed over the programme. The Stories of Change (Appendix two) were developed to explore these questions through a structured qualitative involving all ten ITPs and the Fund Reference Group. Through written submissions, accounts of specific experiences and reflective discussions, ITPs described how their organisations had changed, the practical realities of onward grant-making and

developments in voice and influence. This material provided important insight into how flexible funding and devolved decision-making worked in practice.

The findings generated by these stories were subsequently tested and refined through active engagement during annual in-person workshops. This work also included sessions with external partners at an event hosted for funders, where grantmakers and philanthropic institutions discussed the programme's emerging lessons in the wider social and political climate, providing useful sector context and challenge.

1.3 Evidence and the learning role

The evaluation addresses a central question: what changed across the cohort during Phase III, how the programme contributed to that change, and where the evidence remains less conclusive. Trust-based funding deliberately avoided heavy monitoring forms that would burden organisations already operating under pressure. Instead, the findings draw on practical changes: governance decisions, new funding relationships, expanded staff and systems, and accounts from grassroots grantees, verified against programme records and cross-checked across the cohort.

Curiosity Society's position in the work matters because the team helped shape the learning process over time. It also required care in how the evidence was

tested. Some organisations spoke more freely in smaller or learning-focused spaces than in funder-attended spaces, and the report tries to keep that difference visible. Leading racial justice work in public carries an inherent safety risk: increased visibility can expose Global Majority organisations and their leaders to greater hostility, rather than greater protection. During the reporting period, this risk was intensified by a harsher political climate, rising recorded hate crime, racism and Islamophobia, the civil unrest in summer 2024, and the far right's weaponisation of women's safety, adding a further gendered dimension to the pressures facing organisations working with Global Majority women.

For organisations in this cohort, these events had direct and exhausting operational consequences. Leaders frequently had to pause planned delivery to safeguard staff, support traumatised communities and manage crisis response. For Global Majority women leaders in particular, these pressures could be compounded by the gendered nature of the hostility they and their communities were navigating. This hidden load of racial justice work, absorbing the emotional, operational and financial shocks of an aggressive external climate, is rarely recognised or budgeted for in traditional philanthropic models, leaving organisations to navigate public visibility and personal risk largely on their own.



2 Advance

Organisational Capacity, Resilience & Institutional Strength

2.1 Organisational strengthening at ITP level

Across the cohort, the most significant achievement was the creation of time and space for organisations to build greater operational resilience and strategic stability. This investment was structured not as restrictive project funding, but as flexible organisational development funding. Of each £460,000 grant, £130,000 was designated specifically for organisational development, giving ITPs full autonomy to allocate resources toward core capabilities they identified as critical, rather than tying funds to rigid, predetermined project outputs.

ITPs directed this flexible support toward foundational needs that project-based grants routinely ignore. A primary priority was easing severe pressure on staff and stemming burnout. Organisations in this sector have historically operated on precarious funding and suppressed wages, several ITPs used their allocation for overdue salary adjustments, living-wage corrections and structured internal promotions. In one case, an

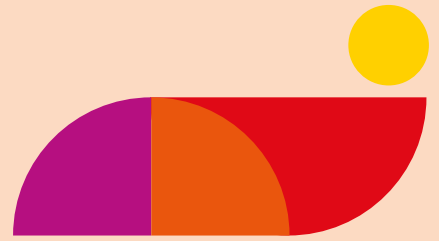
organisation implemented a 5 per cent pay uplift alongside flexible working hours; in another, £30,000 was dedicated to retention and progression.

These investments functioned as foundational organisational infrastructure rather than administrative overhead: stabilising high-turnover teams, mitigating burnout and establishing clear internal career pathways that allowed staff with lived experience to move into sustainable leadership roles.

Flexible organisational development funding enabled organisations to address needs often deferred under restricted project cycles, including executive support, financial systems, communications and strategy. Consolidating these core functions improved day-to-day operations and gave organisations a stronger platform to pursue larger grants, raise their public profile and plan beyond immediate delivery.

The cohort provides concrete examples of organisational growth. Action for Race Equality (ARE) provides a clear example of operational scaling under flexible organisational development funding. Over the course of the Fund, ARE grew from a baseline of eight staff and £600,000 turnover in Phase I to approximately 20 staff and £1.2 million core turnover (excluding onward grants). The organisation directed its flexible resources toward essential organisational infrastructure, creating key senior roles including an Executive Assistant, a Head of Public Relations (PR) and Communications, a Programme Director, and its first PR and





Communications Apprentice. Alongside refreshing its internal governance and Theory of Change, this expanded capacity enabled ARE to implement a three-year strategic plan, raise its public visibility, and meet the higher income eligibility thresholds required to compete for larger, multi-year funding awards.

For other regional and specialist ITPs, organisational development was less about growth than financial stability. Flexible support helped organisations move away from hand-to-mouth cashflow and, in some cases, build modest operating reserves for the first time. Even a small financial buffer gave them more room to plan and coordinate their work, rather than constantly responding to immediate pressures or pursuing short-term funding that did not fit their priorities simply to keep operating.

Operational capacity also expanded through modernised systems and improved income generation. The Anti-Tribalism Movement (ATM) illustrates how flexible investment in foundational infrastructure can unlock major external capital. ATM directed its organisational development allocation toward an internal monitoring and evaluation framework, upgraded governance, and independent income streams through trading subsidiaries, including Culture House and the International Somali Awards. This robust operational baseline directly enabled ATM to secure a landmark £1.4 million grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, a scale of funding previously out of reach, while providing the strategic

bandwidth to stabilise four grassroots organisations and support a community coalition in Birmingham to secure seats on municipal council working groups.

For specialist national bodies, flexible funding proved equally critical in managing organisational transitions. Sporting Equals used its organisational development allocation to navigate a significant leadership and governance change. The charity completed a comprehensive Board and Governance Review, recruited a new Chair and specialist trustees across finance and compliance, and appointed an Interim HR Director. This dedicated human resources capacity allowed the organisation to overhaul its recruitment, appraisal and remuneration frameworks, onboard five new staff members through inclusive hiring methods and stabilise its central operations to support a national network of community sports organisations.

“The support we received has acted as a catalyst for significant growth, enabling us to build new partnerships and secure additional investment to expand our community engagement work across Scotland”

Grassroots Organisations

2.2 Grassroots strengthening and the effects of onward grant-making

For many community-rooted organisations, onward grants provided a rare source of flexible funding beyond their usual funding networks. This gave grassroots groups more room to meet immediate needs, stabilise their operations and build practical connections with other organisations, without having to fit their work into narrowly defined, short-term projects.

At the grassroots level, onward funding helped small organisations formalise their operations and secure their day-to-day stability. Community groups and voluntary initiatives were able to hire staff, register as Community Interest Companies (CICs) and establish proper governance structures. In the violence against women and girls sector, for example, onward grants enabled frontline therapeutic services to register formally and expand specialist support for Global Majority communities.

The funding also helped grassroots organisations engage more strategically with wider systems. Several groups used their grants to bring in external expertise, refine their core missions and rebuild their income bases, in some cases averting imminent closure. Beyond immediate financial relief, being trusted to manage funds gave community organisations the practical confidence to operate more publicly, take up roles in voluntary-sector networks and enter partnerships that had previously been out of reach.

In Scotland, Next Step Initiative (NSI) provided an example of the value of support tailored to the needs of grassroots organisations. NSI worked with eight Global Majority-led organisations, offering one-to-one mentoring, policy reviews and governance support suited to each group's stage of development. For emerging partners such as The DataKirk, this flexible support helped the organisation formalise



// We keep asking: accountable to who? Funders, communities, or ourselves – and how do we hold all three in balance?"

ITP

accredited data and analytics training for minoritised young people. Other ITPs used the support to develop new services and establish more reliable referral routes. The approach helped smaller community groups improve their internal systems and ways of working while continuing to respond to local community needs.

2.3 Limits and Structural Barriers

While flexible funding advanced participating organisations, the programme also highlighted some of the difficulties that can come with intermediary growth and onward grant-making. Managing substantial onward grants can increase an intermediary's reported income and the funds it holds temporarily, without a corresponding increase in the resources available for its own operations. This can affect how its financial position is assessed by other funders.

Funds held for onward distribution can make an organisation appear better resourced than it is when headline income

or bank balances are used to assess its financial position. This may affect its eligibility or priority for core support, even though those funds are restricted to grassroots organisations and cannot be used to cover its own costs. The resulting increase in turnover can also make intermediaries ineligible for grassroots funding streams with strict income caps. At the same time, growth can bring greater fixed costs, including expanded teams and compliance requirements, without necessarily providing the reliable funding needed to sustain them. Organisations can therefore find themselves too large to qualify for some smaller grants, but without the financial security to maintain their expanded operations once a time-limited programme ends.

In their own onward grant-making, intermediaries sought to avoid some of the barriers they had encountered in the wider funding system. ITPs lowered turnover thresholds and simplified application criteria so that smaller and emerging grassroots groups were not excluded by conventional financial requirements.

An additional challenge was that responsibility within some ITPs remained concentrated among a small number of senior leaders. As organisations expanded and took on the additional

demands of onward grant-making, this placed considerable pressure on those individuals and created continuity risks where key responsibilities were not distributed more widely.

A further barrier lies in the wider funding environment, where racial justice is not always funded as an end in itself. As time-limited pooled funds conclude, organisations can face pressure to frame their work through adjacent statutory priorities, such as housing, health or crime prevention. This can place by-and-for groups in competition with larger, better-resourced mainstream providers, while increasing the risk that organisations adapt their core purpose to fit conventional commissioning criteria rather than the priorities of the communities they serve.

2.4 What the evidence supports

The programme advanced participating organisations, improving their systems, staffing and confidence to operate more effectively. Onward grants also provided practical support to grassroots organisations and the communities they serve. These gains are important, but they do not necessarily amount to lasting resilience. Whether organisations can sustain them will depend on future funding, leadership continuity and wider sector conditions.



3 Amplify: Voice, Representation & Influence

3.1 National and institutional voice

By-and-for organisations have deep knowledge of the communities they serve, but limited resources and access to established networks can make it difficult for that knowledge to influence policy and funding decisions. Within the Global Majority Fund, ITPs worked to strengthen their own voice and those of grassroots organisations, bringing community evidence into national policy discussions, statutory consultations and funding forums. This helped organisations gain access to institutions that had previously been difficult to reach and, in some cases, influence how policies and funding practices were shaped.

The programme amplified ITPs and grassroots voices most effectively where strong working relationships were supported by credible, community-grounded evidence. While system-level shifts in public policy remain difficult to demonstrate conclusively, organisations clearly used their increased visibility and networks to enter decision-making spaces that had previously been difficult to reach.

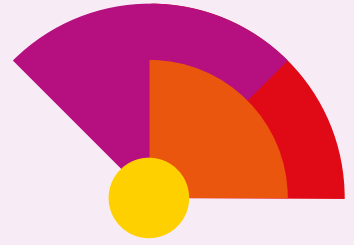
A clear example of translating community evidence into policy is Bawso, a specialist organisation supporting Black and minority ethnic survivors of domestic abuse in Wales. In its advocacy on the Migrant Victim Domestic Abuse Concession, Bawso moved beyond consultation by running structured sessions with survivors and using their testimony to show how insecure immigration status and restrictions on public funds can trap women in abusive situations. It then translated that evidence into statutory submissions that helped shape the concession's design, showing how frontline evidence can influence national policy.

3.2 Grassroots and community-facing amplification

Onward grant-making widened opportunities for smaller organisations to speak and be heard in community settings. Beyond distributing funds, it gave grassroots groups resources to become more visible locally and build a recognised public presence. Several ITPs also provided practical support through local hubs, online resources, mentoring and joint workshops, helping groups build connections, coordinate their work and speak collectively while retaining their own priorities and independence.

Amplification also took place through spaces such as sport, the arts and local health forums, not only through formal policy channels. Grassroots organisations used public events, advisory panels and leadership programmes to become more visible in





civic life. Community leaders also took on trustee and board roles in independent foundations, creating further opportunities to contribute to strategic discussions.

The Greater Manchester Ethnic Communities Network (GMECN) provides an example of this development. Previously an informal, volunteer-led collective hosted by Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO), the network became an independent Community Interest Company. GMECN then represented local by-and-for organisations directly in regional policy forums, including Combined Authority roundtables with the Metro Mayor, and undertook commissioned

Our credibility has grown because we can bring authentic voices, lived experience, and evidence of need to these conversations, ensuring that they are not abstract debates but grounded in real community aspirations and struggles.

ITP



Artwork by Woven Ink

work for statutory bodies on community cohesion during periods of local tension.

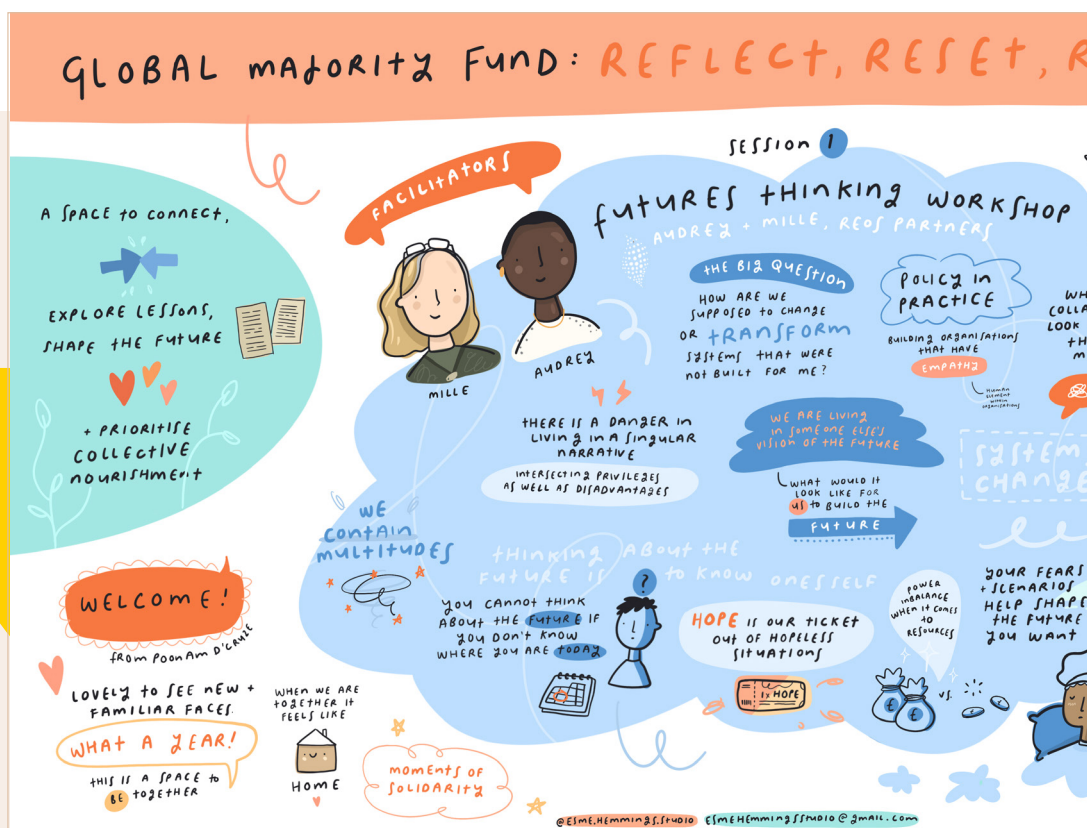
In Northern Ireland, Migrant Centre Northern Ireland (MCNI) demonstrated how ITPs can help community groups gain a greater voice in a devolved political context. MCNI supported grassroots groups to engage young people in civic leadership, bring community concerns directly to members of the Northern Ireland Assembly (MLAs), and participate in public consultations. During periods of heightened racist violence and unrest in Belfast, MCNI also brought evidence from its Hate Crime Advocacy Service into discussions with Stormont departments, using documented community testimony to raise concerns about housing inequalities and safety risks.

3.3 Digital infrastructure and narrative

Beyond presence on boards and panels, digital infrastructure became an important part of visibility and outreach. Across the ITP cohort, investment in dedicated communications roles, upgraded websites, online resources, member portals and strategic use of social media improved ITPs' ability to communicate their work directly to external audiences. While digital tools cannot generate institutional influence on their own, they gave organisations a stronger platform to maintain a consistent public presence.

3.4 Limits and Structural Barriers

First, access is a necessary step towards influence, but does not guarantee it. While ITPs and grassroots organisations gained greater presence on panels, boards and other decision-making forums,



meaningful influence depends on more than participation: it requires a clear role in decisions and a tangible effect on policy, practice or the allocation of resources.

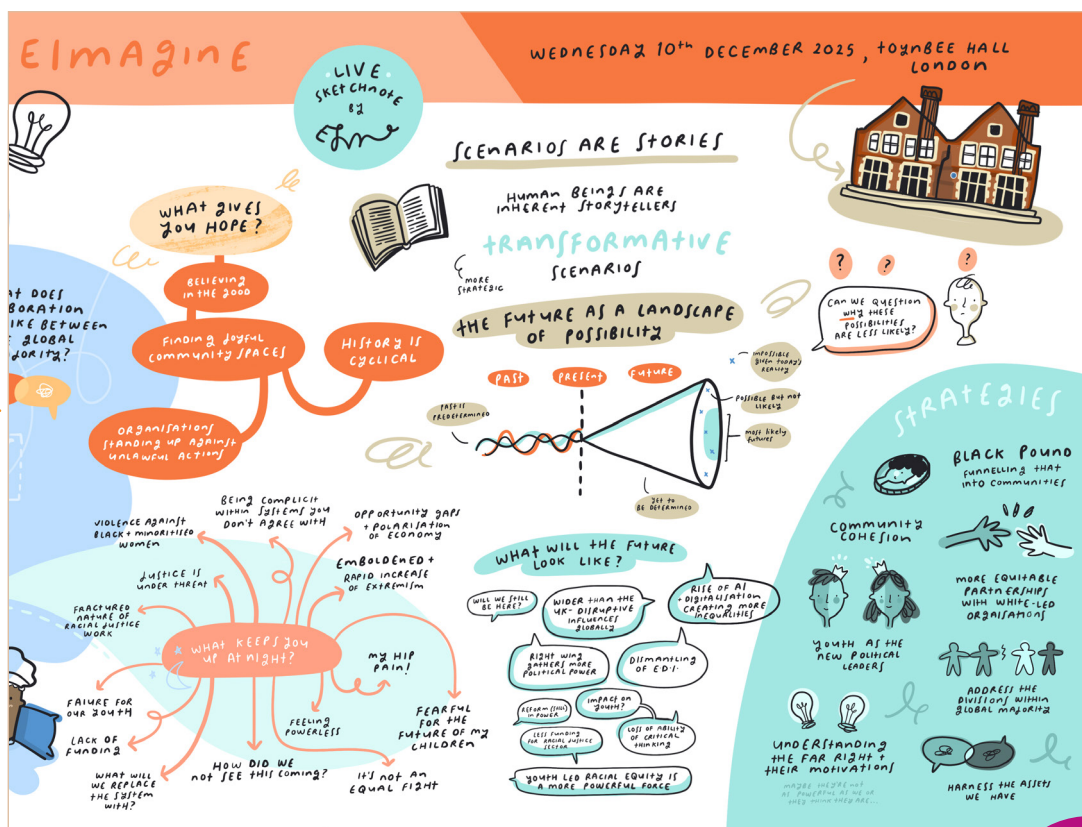
Second, evidence on grassroots amplification remains uneven. While many grassroots organisations reported greater visibility and confidence, comparable evidence is not available across all groups supported through the Fund.

Third, there are questions about whether this increased access will last. Comic Relief's backing and the pooled fund helped ITPs enter statutory bodies and major foundations that had previously been difficult to reach. Once there, ITPs built credibility through the quality of their work, the evidence they brought and the relationships they developed. The remaining question is whether those institutions will continue to involve them,

and give real weight to their contributions, once the backing and convening power of the pooled fund are no longer present.

3.5 What the evidence supports

In summary, the programme amplified voices most effectively where visibility, relational infrastructure and access were combined. The evidence also shows that regional and devolved context shaped the routes through which influence was exercised, with ITPs working through different local, regional, devolved and national institutions. ITPs and grassroots organisations gained a greater presence in policy and funder forums and were better able to bring community evidence into those spaces. These changes strengthened the conditions for influence, even where wider shifts in how power and resources are distributed remain difficult to establish.



4 Advocate:

Changes in Funding Practice, Sector Influence & Institutional Change

4.1 Inclusive practices within GMF

In many funding processes, exclusion operates through procedural norms as much as deliberate decisions: lengthy written forms, rigid due diligence thresholds that treat grassroots groups as higher risk, and a persistent reliance on established institutional relationships. These barriers fall particularly hard on organisations working on racial justice and on leaders from Global Majority backgrounds, who routinely face higher hurdles to demonstrate credibility and navigate racism within philanthropic funding systems. Within the Global Majority Fund, ITPs worked to change these mechanics, designing accessible application and assessment processes that reduced the burden on community organisations.

The Advocate evidence is strongest where the programme changed these concrete funding mechanics. ITPs modelled inclusive practice by blending open calls with invited applications, seeking to widen access without pretending the sector playing field was level. They replaced

heavy documentation requirements with conversational assessments, flexible grants and simplified reporting. These processes were grounded in anti-racism, trust-based practice and an intersectional understanding of equity, recognising how race intersects with gender, migration status and socio-economic disadvantage. For specialist ITPs such as Imkaan, this meant designing grant-making that prioritised Black and minoritised women and girls facing multiple compounding barriers, treating accessibility as an essential commitment rather than an administrative afterthought.

The cohort's experience demonstrates practically what equitable funding requires: the work is deeply relational, skilled and intensive. Moving from Phase I to Phase III, the programme increased the intermediary management fee from 10 to 20 per cent, directly reflecting lessons learned about the substantial cost of community-rooted intermediation.

// This funding has been instrumental in allowing us to grow our provision and showcase sport in a way that truly reflects the needs of our community. It has helped us break down barriers and create opportunities for women and girls to participate, lead, and thrive.

ITP



Far from being an administrative surcharge, this resourcing enabled ITPs to provide the extensive developmental accompaniment, governance guidance and due diligence support that smaller grassroots groups need.

Historically, mainstream funding systems have devalued and ignored this relational labour, sidelining Global Majority organisations as a result. These insights directly informed the cohort's Call to Action, which urged the wider funding sector to recognise that building lasting community resilience requires adequately resourced, long-term operational infrastructure.

4.2 Influence on external funders and systems

Beyond changes to their own funding practices, ITPs also challenged the rules used by other funders. An example of this is Voice4Change England who used its evidence from communities they worked with to demonstrate to the Pargiter Trust how their age eligibility

criteria for minoritised health and wellbeing grants was exclusionary.

A parallel development occurred in health policy and local government practice. The African Health Policy Network (AHPN) used its role to challenge institutional barriers, co-producing the Black Community Patient Charter and establishing a trained Community Research Panel to reshape how health commissioners engage with minoritised populations. At the municipal level, AHPN translated its frontline evidence into statutory change: following representations regarding aggressive debt enforcement, the local authority formally amended its policy to end the dispatch of bailiffs against third-sector community organisations borough-wide.

Another important development was the greater involvement of ITPs in advisory and decision-shaping forums. Comic Relief's backing, together with the visibility and credibility created through the pooled fund, helped some ITPs gain access to regional foundations and statutory bodies. They were able to build on this through their track record and knowledge of the communities they serve, in some cases moving from being primarily grant applicants to advising on how funding is distributed and where structural bias affects access.

Evidence of wider influence remains limited. There are signs of change through community-led infrastructure, stronger advisory roles and greater recognition of by-and-for organisations, but the



wider policy and funding environment has changed much less. The persistence of short-lived pilot schemes and narrow funding priorities shows how external systems can continue to favour short-term responses over sustained institutional change. The evidence therefore points to growing recognition and influence, rather than a fundamental shift in how policy or funding decisions are made.

4.3 Limits and Structural Barriers

The programme modelled more inclusive practices internally, but structural barriers in the wider funding system remain. Short funding cycles, restrictive eligibility rules, burdensome written processes and unequal control over decisions continue to disadvantage Global Majority organisations.

Written applications continue to act as a significant barrier across much of the funding system, routinely excluding organisations that lack dedicated bid-writing capacity. Formal charity registration also operates as a structural hurdle, even when informal or volunteer-led groups are closest to their communities and have chosen, sometimes intentionally by design, to remain unconstituted. In addition, majority-white boards and executive leadership teams, combined

Engaging with the Fund opened unprecedented access to decision-making spaces. It enabled us to move from isolated delivery to building direct relationships with major trusts, shaping funding priorities and unlocking capital at a scale that was previously out of reach.

ITP

with mainstream due diligence norms, continue to shape who is recognised as a credible and viable funding recipient.

Short-term project funding can make it harder for organisations to plan for the longer term and invest in their own sustainability. ITPs also pointed to the problems created by short-lived initiatives. Local authority pilot projects could raise expectations within communities and depend heavily on the trust and relationships built by grassroots organisations, only to end when political priorities or annual budgets changed. Grassroots organisations were then left to manage the consequences without the resources to continue the work. Furthermore, mainstream institutions often struggle to engage with racial justice and migration as issues in their own right, frequently attempting to shoehorn racial equity into existing, narrower statutory agendas, such as youth violence reduction or generic public health targets, rather than supporting by-and-for organisations to address underlying institutional exclusion directly.

We also heard examples of local authorities commissioning specialist services for Global Majority communities through procurement processes, which can disadvantage Global Majority-led organisations. Despite their expertise, community relationships and cultural competence, these organisations are often undercut by larger mainstream providers that are better resourced to meet procurement requirements and demonstrate 'value for money'. Stakeholders reported that this can lead to contracts being awarded to organisations less equipped to deliver effective and culturally responsive services, creating a misleading picture of demand or impact. In some instances, mainstream providers subsequently subcontract delivery back to community organisations at reduced rates while retaining management fees, limiting the funding that reaches those with the deepest connections to the communities being served.

4.4 What the evidence supports

The programme developed more equitable approaches within its own funding arrangements and built the cohort's

capacity to challenge wider funding practices. By changing how resources reached grassroots groups, intermediaries showed how trust-based, anti-racist approaches can work in practice. As Awaz - the Voice of the Community, funded through Next Step Initiative, described, community groups are moving beyond seeking recognition, towards having a greater say in discussions about how resources are allocated. The programme therefore offers useful evidence for wider reform, while its direct influence remained largely within the funding relationships and practices it was able to shape.



5 The FRG Model: Role, Effectiveness & Design Lessons

Having considered outcomes across the three pillars, it is also important to look at the role of the Fund Reference Group (FRG) in supporting the programme. Established in Phase III, the FRG was an independent advisory group working across both programme design and ITP support. Its Terms of Reference set out two main roles: to act as a critical friend to Comic Relief, and to provide the ten ITPs with technical guidance, peer learning and ongoing support.

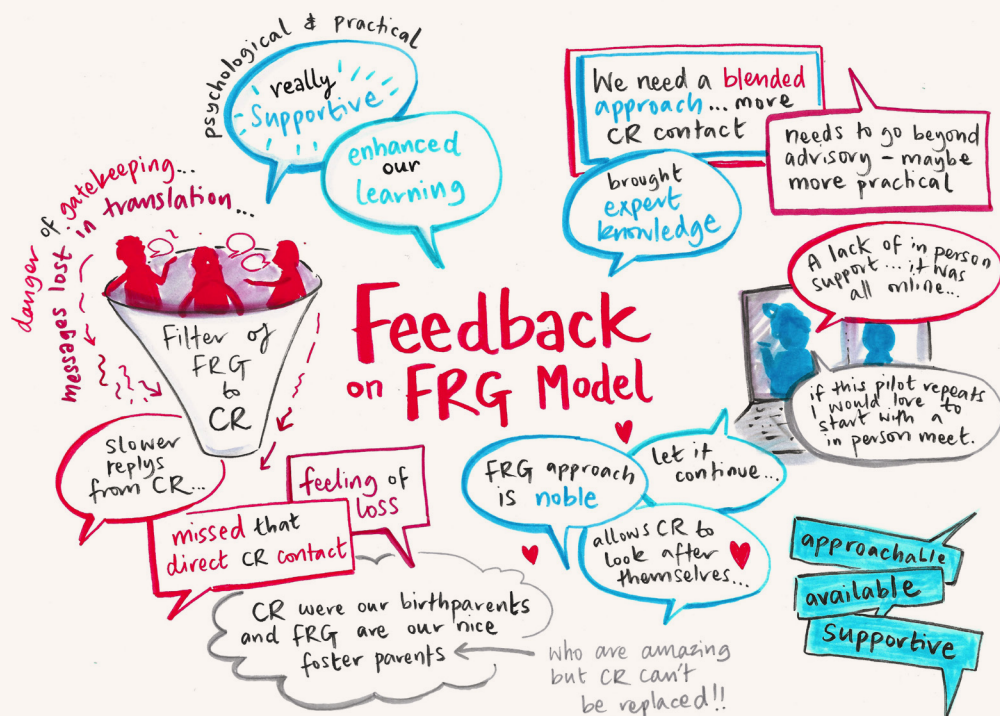
5.1 Where the FRG added value

The evidence indicates that the Fund Reference Group was a highly valued structural component of Phase III, with its contribution rooted in practitioner expertise and ongoing accompaniment.

The first value was developmental accompaniment. Rather than acting as distant assessors, FRG members provided regular, relational support: coaching

executive leaders, offering reassurance during organisational stress, creating safer spaces for open reflection and providing constructive challenge when needed. A central element of this contribution was embedding continuous reflection into the programme rhythm. This steady, trusted sounding board helped leaders navigate high-stakes operational transitions that standard grant management rarely accommodates.

The second value was structured, demand-led learning. Rather than imposing a top-down curriculum, the FRG worked with intermediaries to co-produce a workshop programme tailored directly to the priorities ITPs identified. Sessions spanned essential operational areas: governance, succession planning, due diligence in grant-making, safeguarding, storytelling, monitoring and evaluation, counter-fraud, artificial intelligence in fundraising, futures thinking and corporate partnerships.



Artwork by Moven Ink

// We are far better networked amongst our peers because of the Fund. The peer connections have been extraordinary and invaluable – creating personal and professional learning within an anti-racist environment where we don't have to explain or justify our existence.

ITP

These sessions frequently incorporated peer-led contributions, enabling intermediaries to share expertise directly across the cohort. This collaborative delivery built a practical knowledge infrastructure while sharing delivery responsibility and relieving administrative pressure on Comic Relief.

The third value was peer connection. The FRG created regular opportunities for ITPs to share experience, work through challenges together and learn from one another. It also helped maintain open communication between ITPs and Comic Relief, giving ITPs another route to bring their experience and perspectives into funder discussions.

Underpinning all three values was the specific positionality and relatability of the Fund Reference Group. Members were senior Global Majority practitioners with direct understanding of by-and-for organisations and substantial institutional experience. This combination of lived and learned expertise gave them credibility with intermediaries. Acting as both technical advisers and empathetic peers, they helped create the psychological safety needed for open and candid dialogue, in ways that traditional funder-led monitoring structures often do not.

5.2 Limits and tensions

The Fund Reference Group model was fundamental to delivery, but its evolution produced structural tensions. The group was initially conceived as a "Reference" group to provide strategic design and external challenge, but it rapidly expanded into a "Resource" group delivering intensive operational support, coaching and accompaniment. This dual role created tension: while intermediaries valued the advisory team as a trusted critical friend, several ITPs still required direct, unmediated communication with Comic Relief itself, rather than having the group inadvertently act as an intermediary buffer. Furthermore, the administrative and operational coordination required to sustain this expanded role demanded





substantially more time and capacity than originally anticipated.

While the Fund Reference Group created significant space for collaborative leadership and shared decision-making, its implementation also exposed the vulnerabilities of operating without fully defined governance and escalation pathways. Tensions inevitably emerged as the group navigated complex boundaries between advisory oversight, meeting facilitation and operational delivery across both the advisory team and funder staff. These challenges highlighted a critical design lesson: trust-based and peer-led approaches require equally robust, explicit mechanisms for navigating disagreements, clarifying roles and ensuring accountability when pressures arise.

High-stakes collaborative structures are fundamentally consolidated when governance, dispute resolution and escalation processes are co-created and agreed from the outset. In particular, this requires mechanisms to identify relational and operational strains at the earliest possible stage, allowing timely mitigating action before pressures compound. Anticipating periods of

institutional strain and embedding clear pathways to resolve them ensures that peer-led models remain resilient, equitable and protective of the people working within them.

A third tension concerned rhythm and boundaries. ITPs did not require the same level of engagement at the same moments: some were navigating complex leadership transitions and needed intensive accompaniment, while others were in steadier operational phases and required minimal input. A uniform calendar could not accommodate that variance. The value of the Fund Reference Group lay in its flexibility to respond to each organisation's specific context rather than adhering to a rigid programme timetable. However, that necessary relational proximity also underscored the need for clear boundaries, ensuring that close accompaniment does not inadvertently confuse lines of accountability between partners, advisers and the funder.

5.3 Design lessons

The design lessons follow directly from the strengths and the friction.

1. Clarify the Fund Reference Group's remit early and in shared language. If a reference body is expected to deliver technical assistance, peer solidarity and strategic funder challenge simultaneously, the boundaries between advisory counsel and operational execution must be agreed from the start, with clear senior leadership support for the model and the responsibilities it creates. Settling these roles early prevents role ambiguity and ensures that partners, advisers and the funder share a common understanding of accountability.

2. Budget realistically for relational accompaniment. The time required to deliver intensive one-to-one coaching, strategic advice and in-person convenings frequently outpaced initial estimates. Future models should properly cost both the time commitment of senior advisers and the full logistical costs of bringing cohorts together, while building in a responsive contingency allocation to support ITPs facing urgent, unanticipated operational pressures.
3. Maintain direct, unmediated relationships alongside peer accompaniment. While the Fund Reference Group served as an invaluable bridge, intermediaries emphasised the necessity of having direct, accessible communication lines with Comic Relief. Funder-adviser structures should multiply points of connection rather than inadvertently creating a single intermediary filter. To sustain this, the funder must ensure adequate and continuous internal staffing capacity to maintain active, ongoing relationships with ITPs in parallel with the advisory group.
4. Agree ways of working, dispute resolution and escalation protocols early. Relational, trust-based programmes must anticipate periods of institutional and operational strain. Establishing clear, co-designed pathways for early mediation, escalation and accountability ensures that the model can constructively navigate pressure without placing undue burden on individuals or eroding trust across the partnership.
5. Protect the practical peer-learning space. Beyond structured outputs, the informal intelligence-sharing, mutual problem-solving and cross-cohort solidarity facilitated by the group proved to be one of the model's most distinctive and valuable contributions. Future designs should intentionally protect unhurried space for peer exchange that is free from monitoring or reporting demands.
6. Maintain an adaptive, demand-led rhythm. Rather than following a rigid corporate time-table, the learning and accompaniment offer succeeded because topics were prioritised directly by the intermediaries themselves, with attendance kept optional and delivery spaced out to accommodate operational workloads. Support demands inevitably fluctuate with delivery cycles and external community crises, requiring a flexible schedule that ITPs can absorb without adding to existing administrative burdens.



Artwork by Woven Ink

6 What Worked, Main Challenges and Lessons Learned

6.1 What worked

Trust-based flexible organisational development funding. The funding succeeded because it was premised on the principle that Global Majority-led organisations know their own needs best. The £130,000 flexible organisational development allocation within each grant gave ITPs the autonomy to invest in their own operational priorities rather than being constrained to rigid project delivery, giving them the stability to address deferred infrastructure and plan strategically.

Co-production and lived experience. Embedding lived and learned practitioner experience across both the FRG and ITP cohort fostered shared responsibility, peer solidarity and collaborative leadership, creating spaces where ITPs could actively shape the programme alongside Comic Relief.

The intermediary model is an accessible bridge. The model succeeded where ITPs used their community proximity to lower barriers, simplify compliance and channel resources to hyper-local, unconstituted and emergent groups that mainstream funding routinely overlooks.

Practitioner accompaniment. The Fund Reference Group provided constructive challenge, technical coaching and a trusted sounding board, helping leadership teams navigate operational pressures and feel less isolated.

Treating operational health as a core mission. The programme worked where it recognised that fair pay, reliable systems and staff wellbeing are not administrative distractions, but essential preconditions for building resilient community institutions.

Investing in relationships. Comic Relief had invested in relationships across the

// During the post-2020 period, everybody was throwing money at us, but it was all crisis response. What the GMF provided was the stability to step back, hire a dedicated bid writer, and build the internal capacity to secure our own future.

ITP

cohort since Phase I and deliberately resourced them further in Phase III through travel, facilitation and dedicated time together. This helped deepen trust, reduce some of the competitive dynamics between funded organisations and create opportunities for practical collaboration.

6.2 Main challenges

The challenges encountered across Phase III offer equally important structural lessons:

Leadership dependency. In the ITPs where leadership responsibility remained concentrated, organisational growth made leadership succession planning more urgent. This highlighted the need to strengthen delegation and board oversight from the outset, rather than waiting until a leadership transition is imminent.

The operational cost of onward grant-making. For several ITPs, making funding accessible to smaller grassroots organisations involved substantial work

beyond distributing grants, including due diligence, monitoring and reporting, and in some cases intensive one-to-one support on governance, safeguarding and organisational sustainability.

The grassroots evidence remains uneven.

Qualitative evidence points to positive outcomes for the people and communities reached by funded organisations, but documentation and monitoring data vary across the programme. Some forms of meaningful change also take longer to emerge than could be observed within the funding and evaluation period. This reflects an ongoing tension between keeping reporting requirements proportionate for smaller frontline organisations and gathering enough consistent information to understand outcomes across the programme.

The limits of three-year funding for long-term sustainability. Expecting a 3.5-year programme to achieve permanent financial sustainability in an exclusionary funding environment is unrealistic. Phase III successfully built organisational strength and near-term stability, but securing durable institutional resilience remains an

ongoing challenge that requires sustained multi-year support from the wider sector.

Systemic inertia in the wider funding environment.

Beyond the immediate programme, mainstream funding and statutory systems frequently offer consultation, visibility or short-term pilots without meaningfully redistributing power, shifting due-diligence norms or committing long-term resources.

Evaluation candour in funder-led contexts.

When evaluative conversations take place within an active funding relationship, ITPs naturally manage risk to protect future support. Creating conditions for complete candour requires independent reflective spaces uncoupled from grant decisions.

Protecting relational and collective assets.

Cross-cohort trust, peer solidarity, the collective voice articulated in the Call to Action and direct funder access are among the programme's most valuable outcomes. These relationships and connections can be difficult to sustain once the programme ends. Funders should consider how they can support them to continue beyond the grant period.



An ITP participating in a Futures Thinking workshop delivered by REOS Partners

6.3 Lessons learned

1. Multi-year core funding is essential, but funder advocacy is required to build true resilience. Flexible funding provides vital operational stability, but lasting resilience requires income diversification. By-and-for organisations cannot achieve this on their own: Comic Relief and co-funders must use their institutional standing to advocate across the philanthropic sector, encouraging other donors to commit to multi-year flexible funding so organisations can build sustainable income bases
2. The ITP model can widen access, but their processes need to work for grassroots groups. Working through ITPs helps Comic Relief reach smaller grassroots organisations, reduces the administrative burden on them and makes funding more accessible for smaller groups. However, grassroots groups still face barriers if intermediaries rely on complex processes, demanding compliance requirements or eligibility criteria that favour organisations with formal structures and established track records. Effective ITPs do more than administer funding: they help groups navigate requirements, adapt processes where needed, and draw on trusted relationships with the communities they serve.
3. In pooled funds, proportionate reporting requires active funder stewarding. If a programme aims to capture nuanced grassroots change without imposing heavy paperwork on small organisations, reporting expectations must be designed for proportionality. In a pooled fund supported by six co-funders, this requires Comic Relief to actively steward co-donors: securing explicit agreement among all funding organisations to honour shared, streamlined reporting principles. Without this collective discipline, competing donor compliance requirements inevitably filter downstream, burdening intermediaries and grassroots groups; the responsibility for reconciling those requirements must remain with the funders rather than being passed down the funding chain.

how do we become
independent
and survive with
resilience?



Artwork by Woven Ink

7 What Should Be Done Differently: Recommendations

Before turning to specific recommendations, it is necessary to situate them within an increasingly hostile political and operating climate. While a small number of independent foundations have maintained their focus on racial justice, the broader social environment has deteriorated. Frontline Global Majority organisations are actively navigating rising racial tensions, anti-migrant hostility and targeted hate crimes. For staff and leadership teams, this has meant absorbing intense personal risk, community trauma and physical security concerns simply to keep doors open and protect the people they serve.

At the same time, the voluntary sector is enduring severe statutory funding cuts alongside widespread donor retreat. Many mainstream funders that made public commitments to racial justice in 2020 have quietly deprioritised by-and-for resourcing. This pullback has hit organisations doing intersectional, feminist and specialist work hardest: groups supporting racialised women, migrant survivors of violence and minoritised young people are operating on the frontline of multiple compounding crises with fewer resources. As Phase III concludes, the hard-won institutional progress organisations have fought to build remains acutely vulnerable. The recommendations below set out what Comic Relief, other funders, ITPs and evaluators must do differently to protect, resource and sustain this key infrastructure.

7.1 For Comic Relief

1. Continue flexible, multi-year funding

Flexible organisational development funding was the most effective element of Phase III, giving ITPs both the stability to invest in their organisations and the

autonomy to decide which priorities needed attention. Future programmes should retain both elements: a clear allocation for organisational development and substantial flexibility over how ITPs use it, rather than prescribing activities or outputs in advance.

2. Keep independent support clearly separate from grant monitoring and compliance

The support available through the Fund Reference Group gave ITPs space for advice, mentoring, reflection and constructive challenge outside the formal funder relationship. Future programmes should preserve this distinction, so that ITPs can access trusted support while Comic Relief maintains clear, proportionate routes for monitoring, compliance and accountability.

3. Maintain direct, unmediated relationships with partners alongside advisory groups

Intermediary Technical Partners valued the Fund Reference Group as a peer sounding board, but consistently stressed that an advisory body must never replace direct, unmediated communication with Comic Relief itself. Funder-adviser models should multiply connections rather than creating an unintended intermediary buffer. Comic Relief should ensure it retains sufficient internal staff capacity to maintain active, direct relationships with funded ITPs throughout the life of the programme.



4. Plan early for ITP leadership transitions, staff wellbeing and what comes after the grant

Frontline by-and-for organisations often rely heavily on a small number of leaders, with significant pressure placed on those individuals. Comic Relief should provide dedicated support from year one for staff wellbeing, leadership transitions and planning beyond the grant period. This should recognise the racialised and gendered pressures many leaders face, while avoiding placing the burden of responding to structural underfunding on individuals or organisations themselves.

5. Protect Comic Relief staff wellbeing and capacity to sustain relational funding

Relational, trust-based funding requires significant staff time, judgement, engagement and emotional labour within the funder as well as among funded organisations. Comic Relief should therefore allocate enough resources, ensure sufficient continuity of staffing and appropriate support for staff managing complex relationships with ITPs.

7.2 For other funders

The recommendations for the wider funding community build directly on the cohort's co-produced Call to Action, which urged philanthropic foundations and statutory donors to fundamentally rethink how they resource racial justice:

1. **Prioritise long-term, multi-year core funding for organisations led by and for Global Majority communities.** Funders must move away from short-term project grants that starve organisations of basic operating costs. Sustainable community resilience requires multi-year investments in the institutions themselves: funding governance, fair staff remuneration, digital tools, and leadership development rather than frontline activities alone.
2. **Fund organisations as whole institutions, not merely as frontline delivery vehicles.** Supporting organisations led by and for Global Majority communities means resourcing the full cost of institutional health. This includes providing the core capital needed to upgrade back-office systems, recruit dedicated operational

**DRIVING CHANGE
FROM THE TOP!**

Challenging racism and
discrimination throughout
organisations

we're not
there yet...



SO MANY DOORS
ARE SLAMMED IN
OUR FACES...

Artwork by Moven Ink

staff, support staff wellbeing in high-trauma environments, and build reserve buffers against external shocks.

3. **Broaden eligibility beyond charity registration to recognise diverse legal structures.** Funders should stop treating registered charity status as the sole measure of institutional legitimacy. Many grassroots groups operating closest to communities are constituted as Community Interest Companies (CICs), unincorporated associations, or community cooperatives. Grant criteria should be widened to resource differently constituted groups through proportionate due diligence and trusted intermediary partnerships.
4. **Replace burdensome written processes with proportionate routes and build reflective teams.** Traditional written application and monitoring systems continue to function as structural barriers that favour well-resourced mainstream organisations. Funders should adopt proportionate assessment routes, such as short expressions of interest followed by conversational assessments and video submissions. Funding bodies should build grant-making teams and trustee boards that include people with relevant lived experience of racialisation and/or practical experience in or alongside by-and-for organisations, in roles with formal influence over decisions.
5. **Avoid launching short-lived pilots that raise expectations and then withdraw.** Short-term local authority

and foundation pilots often extract the relational capital and community trust of frontline groups, only to terminate when municipal priorities or annual budgets shift. Funders must commit to sustained partnerships rather than treating racial justice and community support as temporary trial projects that leave organisations to handle the community fallout.

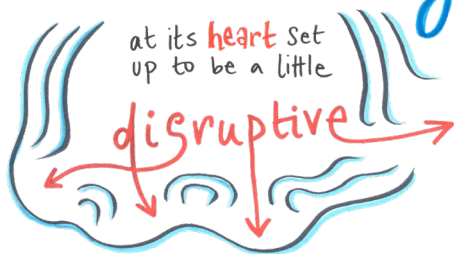
6. **Provide useful feedback and remain engaged outside reporting cycles.** Open, trust-based funding requires continuous dialogue. Funders should provide transparent, constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants and maintain active, supportive contact with grantees year-round, rather than only engaging when formal reports or renewals are due.

7.3 For ITPs

1. **Plan for leadership succession before exhaustion or departure occurs.** Intermediaries must actively address leadership concentration. Rather than waiting until senior leaders face acute burnout or planned departures, organisations should use periods of stability to establish distributed leadership, delegate key operational functions, and agree board-level succession pathways.
2. **Actively use organisational development funding to diversify income.** Flexible organisational development support provides an extremely relevant operational

|| My recommendation to anyone doing what we have done is don't rush to grow; take time and plan. A formal legal structure brings more costs and administrative demands, so it is vital to build governance and capacity first.

Global Majority Fund community



Artwork by Woven Ink

breathing space, but it must be deployed strategically to build long-term resilience. Intermediaries should draw on their expanded capacity, operational systems and evidence bases to cultivate multiple independent funding streams – spanning diverse trusts, statutory contracts and earned revenue – reducing vulnerability when time-limited pooled funds conclude.

3. Treat governance and operational systems as strategic infrastructure, not overhead. ITPs should continue investing in robust digital tools, human resources, and board recruitment. Strong operational infrastructure protects organisations during external political volatility and enables them to manage larger tranches of capital safely.

4. Design evidence and monitoring for your own learning. Evidence systems should serve the organisation's own strategic decisions and community accountability first. Tracking a small set of consistent, meaningful measures over time, such as community reach, staffing stability, and policy influence, is far more useful for organisational learning than complex reports that exhaust staff and communities.

5. Keep onward grant-making accessible and avoid replicating mainstream barriers. As ITPs distributing funds to smaller groups, they must actively guard against reproducing the exclusionary processes of mainstream philanthropy. This can be a challenge when also maintaining regulatory compliance. Where this is possible, examples include keeping funding accessible requires simplifying applications, accepting conversational or video submissions, offering flexible core grants, and supporting unconstituted groups, ensure that resources reach those working closest to community needs.

7.4 For learning partners and evaluators

1. Ensure the evaluation team brings relevant lived experience and practical credibility into sensitive interactions.

For racial justice programmes, this means ensuring that the team includes people with relevant lived experience of racialisation and/or practical experience in or alongside by-and-for organisations. This matters particularly in designing questions, holding sensitive conversations and interpreting what participants share, where an understanding of racial dynamics, community contexts and the practical realities facing organisations can affect what is heard, what is missed and how evidence is understood.

2. Create confidential spaces for honest reflection, separate from funder-attended spaces where necessary. ITPs may be less able to speak candidly about operational difficulties, relationships with the funder or aspects of the programme that have not worked when funders are present. Learning partners and evaluators should therefore decide early when confidential spaces are needed, build them in at appropriate points throughout the programme rather than relying only on end-stage feedback, and

be clear about how sensitive findings will be anonymised and shared.

3. **Decide from the outset how voice notes and video will be recorded and analysed, if those formats are to be accepted.** If audio, video or conversational updates are used to reduce reporting burdens, learning partners and evaluators need a clear and consistent way to capture the material, identify the main themes, and use it alongside written evidence.
4. **Collect, where possible, a small number of simple before-and-after figures.** Staffing levels, grants won, numbers of groups reached, governance changes, workshop participation and new funding secured are all more useful when anchored to a baseline. These measures need not be sophisticated, but they can provide useful context for qualitative accounts of organisational and programme-level change.

5. **Be explicit about what the evidence can and cannot support.** Learning partners and evaluators should distinguish between findings that are well evidenced, changes that are plausible but not yet firmly established, and areas where the available evidence is too limited to draw a conclusion. Gaps, contradictory evidence and important questions that remain unanswered should be reported rather than resolved through stronger wording than the evidence allows.



Appendix 1

The Global Majority Fund exist to unlock the power of organisations led by and for the Global Majority to achieve lasting, systemic change	Our vision is A fairer, just space where racial justice movements thrive, built on sustainability, inclusivity, trust, and collaboration	Mission Our work focuses on Amplifying the voices of Global Majority communities, Advancing the capacity of organisations led by and for the Global Majority, and Advocating for inclusive funding practices
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We will know the GMF is successful when

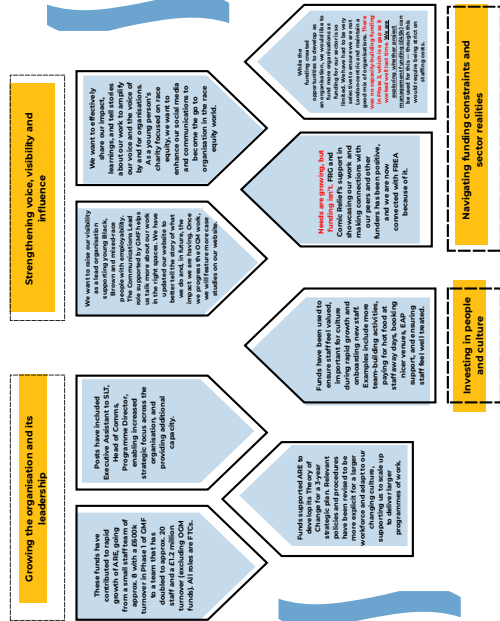
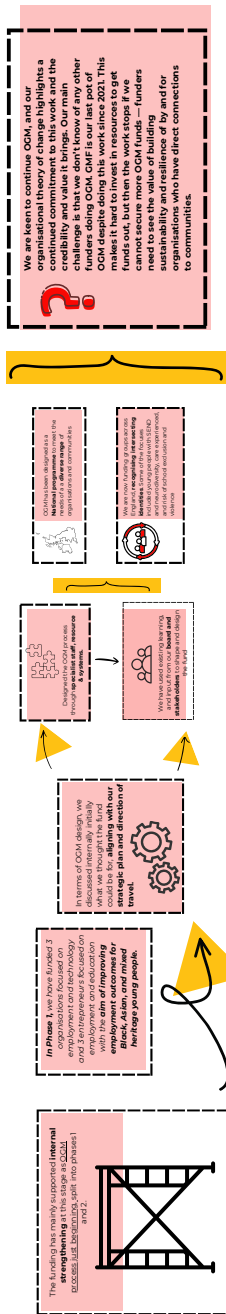
Advance the capacity of organisations led by and for the Global Majority Global Majority organisations and Intermediary Technical Partners are well-resourced to connect and deeply support their communities and thrive, not merely survive. These organisations demonstrate a significant increase in capacity and organisational stability. They strengthen their networks, foster meaningful collaborations, and have the capacity to engage funders directly, driving long-term movement sustainability.	Amplify the voices of Global Majority communities Grassroots organisations led by and serving Global Majority communities significantly influence policy decisions and resource allocation. Community perspectives are actively sought after and can actively shape and lead decision-making processes across sectors.	Advocate for inclusive funding practices Funders acknowledge and address the institutional racism in funding systems, transforming their practices to actively support Global Majority-led organisations. The funding sector becomes more responsive and attentive to the needs of Global Majority communities, ensuring resources are distributed equitably and organisations can sustainably operate and innovate. Inclusive practices become the norm, with funders recognising effort alongside outcomes and addressing systemic barriers.
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To achieve these goals, the Global Majority Fund will commit to

- 1.1.** Organising activities and events to broadcast community voices and narratives.
 - 1.2.** Sharing case studies, success stories, and unexpected outcomes to showcase the impact of Global Majority Organisations.
 - 1.3.** Convening dialogues and public forums with community leaders, funders, and policymakers to elevate lived experiences and insights into decision-making spaces.
-
- 2.1.** Disbursing onward grants to support organisations led by and for the Global Majority.
 - 2.2.** Delivering Capacity Development Training Programmes.
 - 2.3.** Facilitating networking activities among grantees.
 - 2.4.** Providing access to networks, partners, and funders to expand growth and sustainability.
 - 2.5.** Engaging communities in co-design activities to improve the relevance and impact of initiatives.
 - 2.6.** Establishing transparent criteria and inclusive application processes for grant selection and awarding.
 - 2.7.** Supporting collaborative proposal development for larger funding opportunities.
 - 2.8.** Mapping and sharing opportunities and resources among Global Majority organisations, ITPs, and funders.
 - 2.9.** Cultivating and nurturing internal relationships among GMF members to strengthen partnerships and mutual support.
-
- 3.1.** Promoting inclusive funding practices and models.
 - 3.2.** Facilitating collaboration among funders to align reporting, funding models, and timelines, reducing barriers for Global Majority organisations.
 - 3.3.** Offering training and support to promote cultural competencies among Funders.
 - 3.4.** Collaborating with funders and partners to influence funding sector standards and advocate for systemic change.

ARE Action for Race Equality

Action for Race Equality (ARE) is a national charity based in London championing fairness, challenging race discrimination and pioneering solutions to empower Black, Asian and mixed-heritage people through education, employment and enterprise. Founded in 1991 (originally as the Black Training and Enterprise Group) and relaunched under its current name, ARE works with government, business, public services and Black-led organisations to influence systemic change. With a growing team and strategic partnerships, it supports community voice, organisational capacity and policy reform to close racial inequalities and maximise the contribution of all communities.



Stories of Change



ANTI-TRIBALISM MOVEMENT

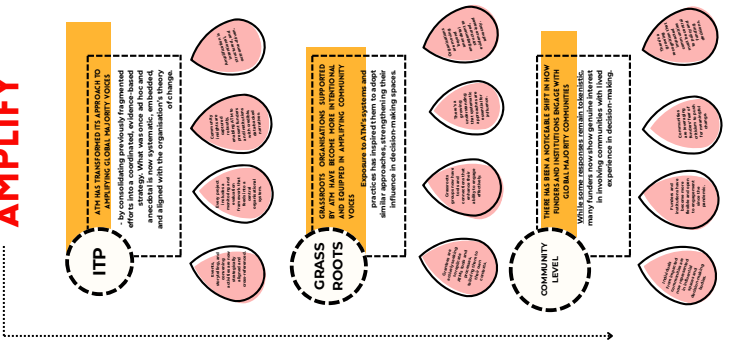


The Anti-Tribalism Movement (ATM) is a London-based charity founded in 2010 to challenge discrimination and build fairer, more inclusive communities. Originally established to support Somali communities, ATM has grown into a national organisation working across diverse diaspora groups in the UK. ATM's strategy focuses on developing leadership, fostering tolerance, and advancing social justice. ATM's current 3-year strategy takes a long-term vision and commits ATM to not just tackling the symptoms of inequality but addressing the root causes to create systemic change.

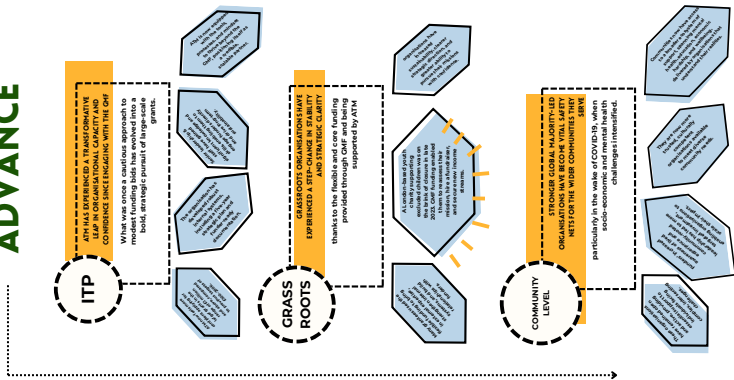
Working in partnership with service users, community organisations, public institutions, policymakers, and donors, ATM is one of the leading conveners, connectors, and catalysts for positive change within the UK's Black and diaspora communities. By building collaborative infrastructures, ATM tackles the root causes of entrenched inequalities rather than addressing symptoms in isolation. This solidarity-based approach ensures our impact is broader, deeper, and longer lasting."



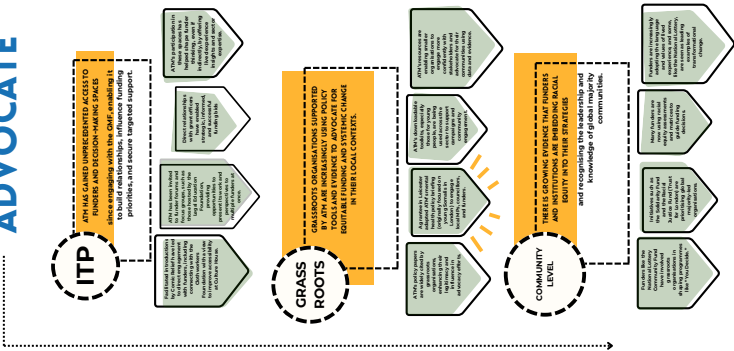
AMPLIFY



ADVANCE



ADVOCATE



BAWSO

BAWSO was founded in 1995 by a small group of Black and minoritised women in Cardiff who recognised that mainstream services weren't meeting the needs of their communities. Since then, it has grown into an all-Wales organisation, running specialist refuges, safe houses, community outreach and a 24-hour helpline. BAWSO supports people from Black, minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence, human trafficking, forced marriage, honour-based violence and exploitation.

In providing specialist, culturally sensitive support for those who often face multiple barriers in accessing help, BAWSO advocates for change so that Black and minoritised survivors are not overlooked. Alongside its charitable work, BAWSO also delivers commissioned services through contracts with local authorities and the Welsh Government.

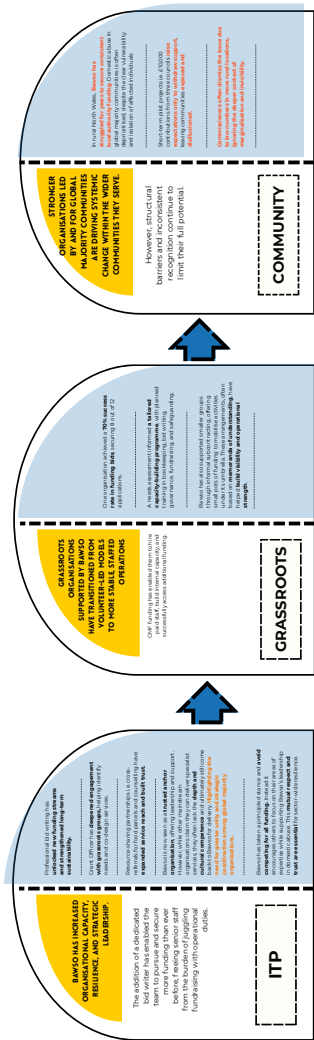
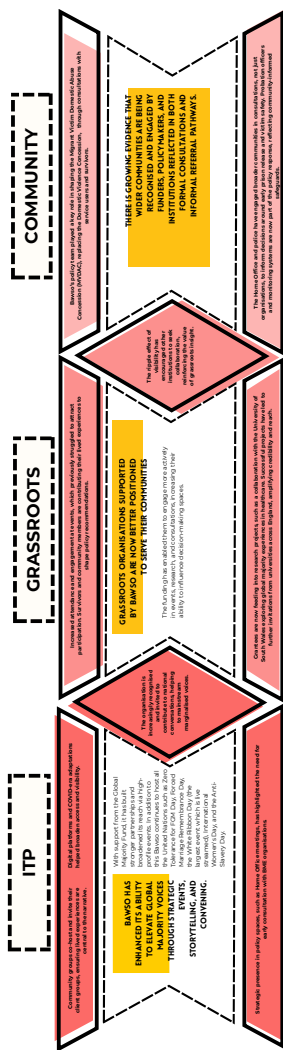
A key characteristic of the VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) sector is that it is collaborative, without a culture of organisations competing for the same pots of funding.

In recent years, BAWSO's annual turnover was around £4.48 million, with approximately 110 staff.

BAWSO has adapted to major changes in how services are commissioned and funded. As local authorities increasingly favour a single lead provider for refuge and support services, BAWSO's partnerships with a mainstream Women's Aid organisation have been challenged. BAWSO has seen many practices that undermined trust and morale. When the partnership collapsed, BAWSO used the experience to strengthen its independence and rethink its role.

It has since diversified its funding to reduce reliance on partners who overlook the needs of Black and minoritised communities, positioning itself as a national BME-led organisation with the capacity to lead as well as support. During the COVID-19 pandemic and in the wake of George Floyd's death, BAWSO secured new funding that allowed it to purchase additional refuge beds, support and digital equipment. That moment built visibility and trust, sparking greater collaboration across the sector as grassroots groups began co-hosting events like Windrush Day and Black History Month.

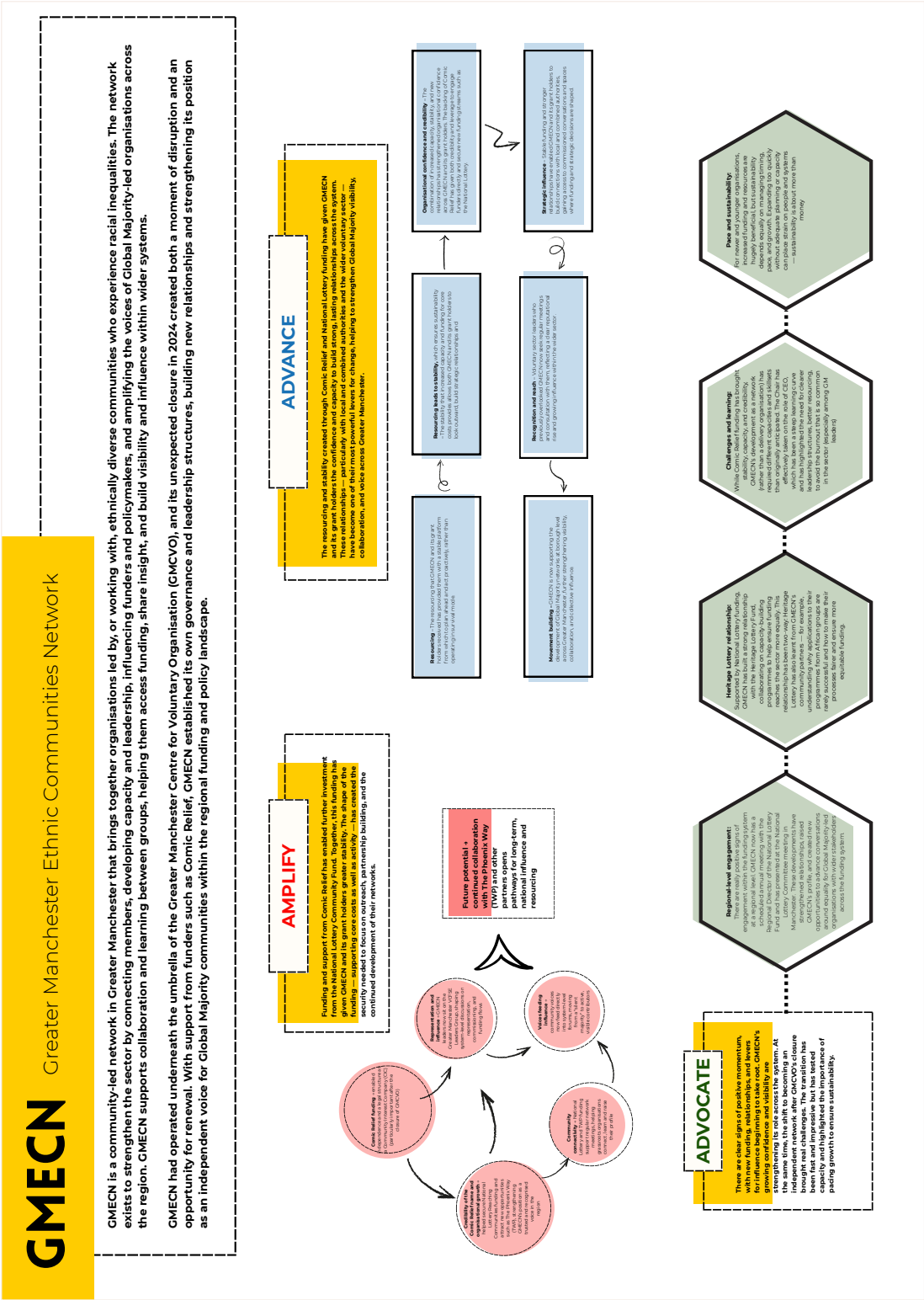
Although that initial wave of funding has waned, BAWSO continues to push for long-term structural change—ensuring that global majority-led organisations are not only included, but resourced and empowered to lead.



AMPLIFY

ADVOCATE

ADVANCE



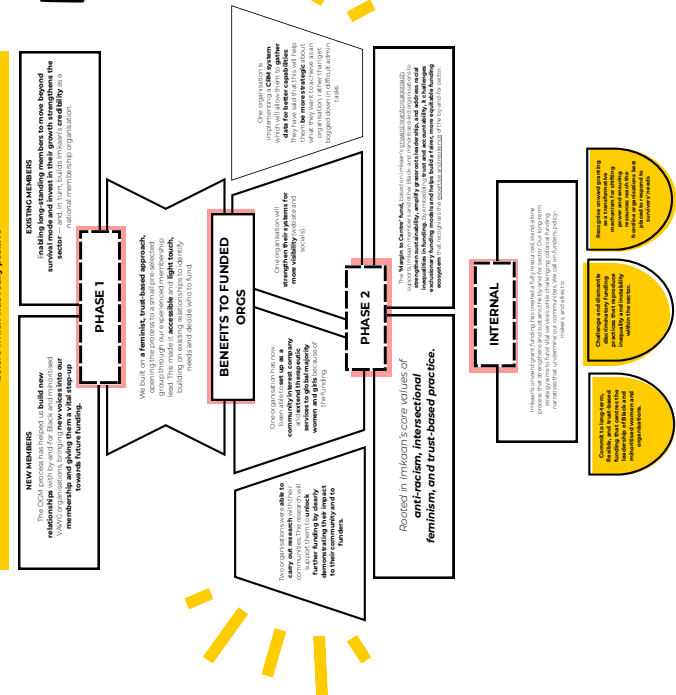
imkaan

Imkaan was founded in 2004 as a UK-based Black feminist organisation dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls from Black and minoritised communities. Its work is rooted in anti-racism, intersectional feminism, and social justice, positioning itself as a national umbrella body for specialist “by-and-for” services led by and for Black and minoritised women and girls.

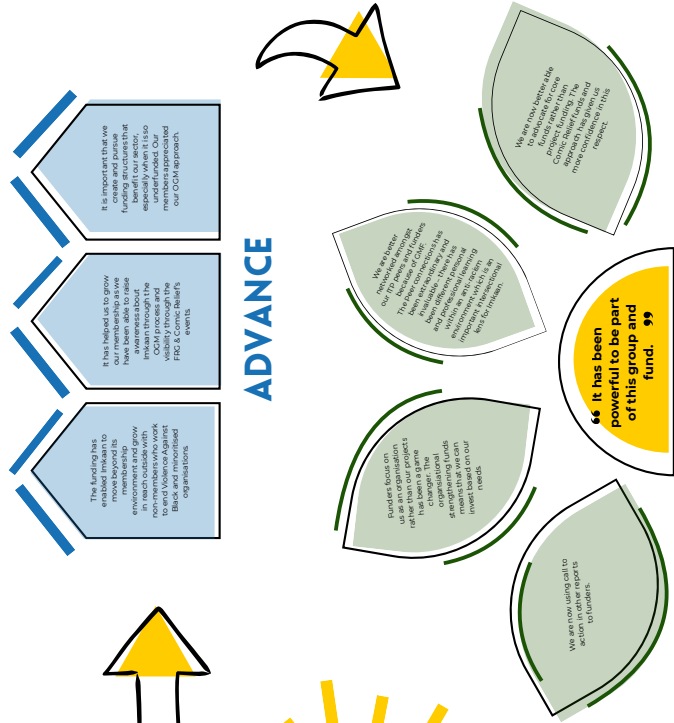
Today, Imkaan supports a network of member and associate organisations across the UK, offering strategic advocacy, capacity-building, training, research, and re-granting to strengthen the by-and-for VAWG (violence against women and girls) sector. By embedding trust-based, anti-racist approaches and rethinking conventional funding models, Imkaan seeks not only to respond to violence but also to challenge the systemic inequalities that limit access to funding, services, and power.

AMPLIFY

“ We were conscious not to be extractive. The organisations and members we funded told us that they had never experienced such a participatory and collaborative funding process before which was really positive ”



ADVANCE



ADVOCATE

“It has been powerful to be part of this group and fund.”

We are now better able to advocate for core project funding than Comic Relief funds. The approach has given us more confidence in this respect.

funders focus on us as an organisation rather than our projects has been a game changer. The organisational strengthening funds means that we can invest based on our needs.

now using call to
in other reports

We are better networked among our ITP peers and firms because of CME. The Peer connections have been extraordinary and invaluable – there has been different personal and professional learning within an anti-learn environment which is important when...

Appendix 2

MCNI Migrant Centre NI

Migrant Centre NI was established in 2010, originally as the Belfast Migrant Centre, and later renamed to reflect its work across Northern Ireland. Its core purpose is to protect the rights of migrant workers, tackle racism, remove barriers in areas like employment and housing, and raise awareness of migrants' rights. The organisation is based in Northern Ireland with offices in Belfast, Lurgan and Derry-Londonderry, providing advice and advocacy on welfare benefits, EU Settlement Scheme applications, workplace rights and support for victims of hate crime.

Migrant Centre NI operates as a relatively small charity, with around nine staff members and an annual income of under half a million.

AMPLIFY

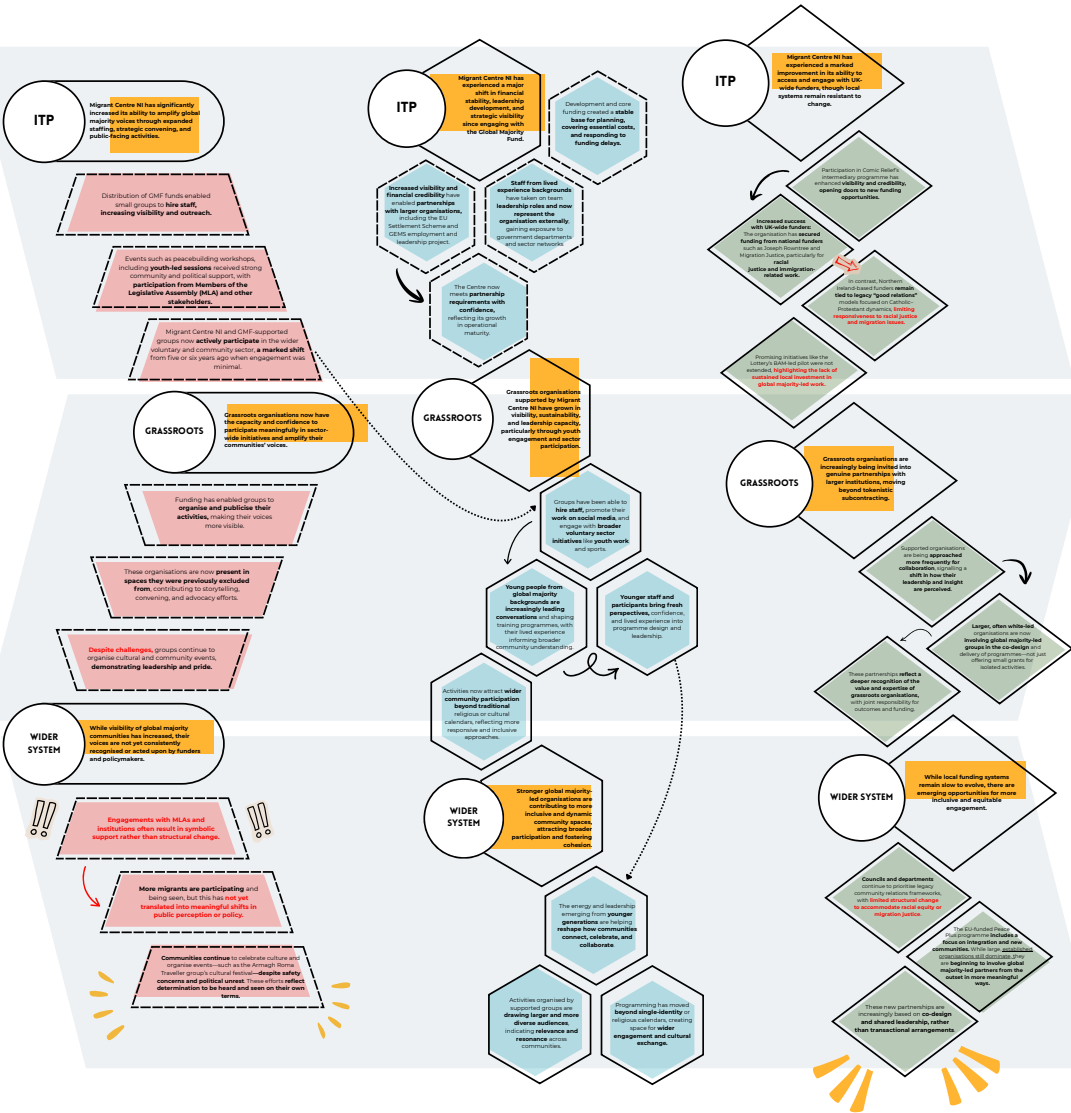
GMF funding enabled MCNI and grassroots partners to grow their staffing and outreach, increasing migrant visibility, confidence and participation in community and public spaces.

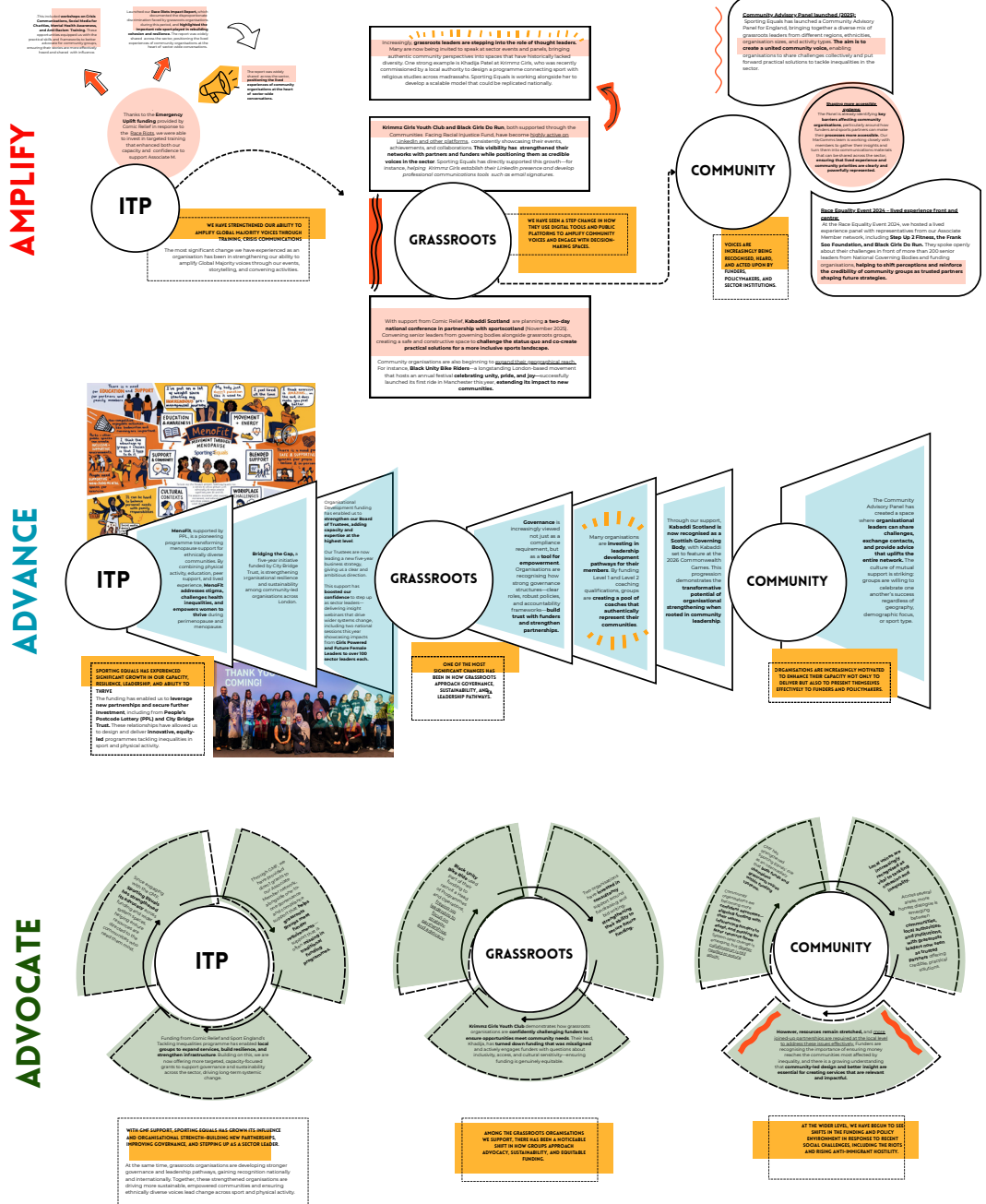
ADVANCE

Funding has supported the development of stronger organisations — helping MCNI and local groups improve governance, access new resources, and empower younger leaders to take on more influence.

ADVOCATE

Support from GMF strengthened MCNI's ability to gather evidence and work with others to challenge discrimination, promote migrant rights, and engage decision-makers on systemic issues.





VOICE 4 CHANGE

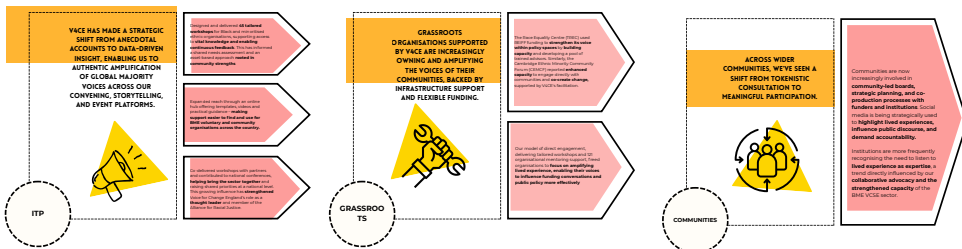
Voice4Change England is a national membership organisation advocating for Black and Minoritised Ethnic voluntary and community organisations (BME VCSEs) across England. It was incorporated in 2010 and is based in London. With a staff team of around 12 and an annual charitable expenditure of approximately £696,000, it works to amplify the voices of BME-led organisations through policy influence, capacity-building workshops, mentoring, research and accessible resource hubs.

SUMMARY: MOVING FROM ANECDOTE TO ACTION

Across all three levels, V4CE, the organisations we support, and the wider communities we serve, the most transformative shift has been our ability to collect, interpret, and act on concrete data about systemic barriers. This shift, grounded in trust and collaborative leadership, has elevated our capacity to amplify marginalised voices, advance organisational strength, and advocate for systemic equity. Our collective journey continues, but the foundations for enduring, anti-racist, community-led systems change are now shaping into a collective solidarity race equity movement.

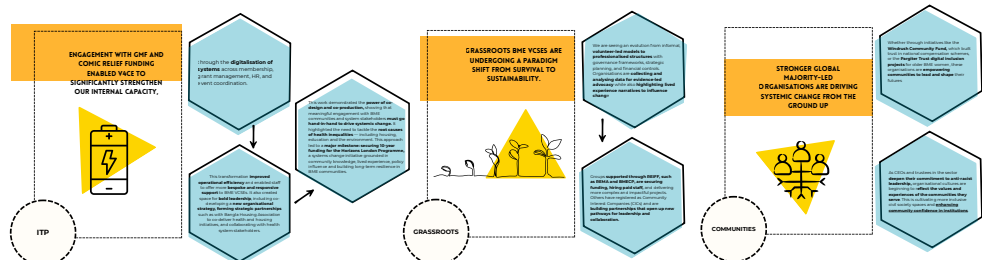
AMPLIFY

"THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN HOW VOICES OF GLOBAL MAJORITY COMMUNITIES ARE HEARD AND ACTED UPON"



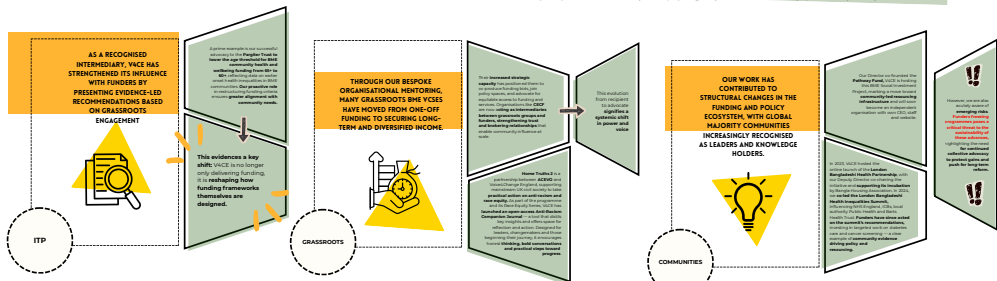
ADVANCE

"THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN CAPACITY, RESILIENCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH"



ADVOCATE

"THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN HOW EQUITABLE FUNDING AND SYSTEMIC INCLUSION ARE BEING ADVANCED"



Global Majority Fund: Call to Action

PRIORITISE

Prioritise funding organisations and programmes designed and led by Global Majority communities.

COMMIT

Commit to bigger and longer-term funding for Global Majority-led organisations – funding organisations, not solely projects.

GRANT

Grant unrestricted or flexible-core funding to Global Majority-led organisations to allocate resources where they are needed most.



This report forms part of the Global Majority Fund's learning partnership with Curiosity Society. Curiosity Society supported the participatory co-design and development of the Fund's Theory of Change, and led the Phase III evaluation in collaboration with Comic Relief, the Fund Reference Group and the Intermediary Technical Partners.

Curiosity Society team: Michel Alimasi, Senior Consultant and Project Lead; Andy Schofield, Director; Anna Crooks, Consultant, later Senior Consultant.

CURIOS/TY
SOC/ETY

Reflect, Reset, Reimagine: a Global Majority Fund poem

Salma the Poet
@salmathepoet

Over 48 hours, there will be convening
Reflecting, resetting and reimagining

A time for future shaping and lessons
For collective nourishment and connections

To discuss the fund's work together
And how to improve and do better

A moment to recalibrate
But also to celebrate

All the work that's been done to progress racial justice
Despite all the challenges you've been faced with

There was Covid-19 and its new ways of working
The rise of the far right which has been truly terrifying

The Global Majority Fund is as important now as it was then
This fund truly breaks down barriers

From Comic Relief training their assessors in unconscious bias
Reminding them that a perfect English essay is not the aim

To trusting partners to support their communities in the best way
While always being just a Zoom call away

Working closely with many donors through various phases
To help ensure the fund's success
And each community's needs can be met

Intermediary Technical Partners recognise colonial structures

A lack of registration doesn't mean low capability
Rather the importance of flexibility in an emergency

An opportunity for led by, and for, global majority entities
To have a more level playing field
To apply for funding without having to explain why
they exist and why their services are important

An opportunity to truly shift the conversation

Each partner working with communities
facing racial injustice and inequity

From Imkaan and its work addressing
violence against girls and women

To Voice4Change England progressing policy
and programme development

Anti-Tribalism Movement and its dedication
to tackling discrimination

African Health Policy Network supporting health conditions
from HIV and cancer to diabetes and others

BAWSO providing a lifeline to victims and
survivors of abuse and violence

Migrant Centre North Ireland supporting new and settled migrants

Action for Race Equality empowering young people
through employment and education opportunities

Greater Manchester Ethnic Community Network
supporting led by and for ethnic communities

And last but by no means least, Sporting Equals
improving participation in physical activities

And while this might be these partners' day to day

Covid-19 had other ideas in mind

And they worked with the Global Majority Fund to pivot and
to ensure they could meet the needs of their beneficiaries

Phase One alone supported over 110,000
people and almost 650 organisations

And while these are impressive statistics

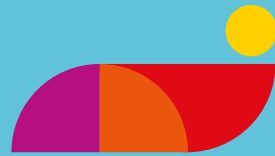
Only you will truly know the impact and the part you played in it

And the life lines you've provided to the global
majority in your communities

Together with Poonam, Sam and Charlene
Nadeem, Chupa and Shameem

You've made the absolute dream team

I hope to provide you with a little entertainment so
you can down tools and enjoy your evening



The background is a solid light blue. Scattered across it are several abstract geometric shapes. These include semi-circles and quarter-circles in vibrant red, orange, and purple. Small yellow circles are also present, some appearing to be part of the larger shapes and others floating independently. The shapes are distributed across the upper and middle portions of the page, with some larger shapes partially cut off by the right edge.

GLOBAL MAJORITY Phase 3 2026 FUND