

ROTA Consultation of London's BAME Sector: Identifying Social Policy Priorities

INTERIM REPORT

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April 2009

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Purpose of the Consultation and Report

In 2008 ROTA recruited a Policy Officer, funded for 5 years under BASIS (Big Lottery Fund) to provide generic policy support to the ROTA Head of Policy and develop specific policy research and expertise that reflected the needs of the BAME sector.

A core deliverable in the first year was to contact BAME organisations that served London's ethnic minority communities, and establish the social policy issues were most pertinent to their work and the individuals they serve. ROTA conducted email, telephone and outreach interviews over a four month period; this interim report outlines the findings of that consultation.

This interim report has two specific aims:

1. To identify a social policy priority for the sector that will be developed into a research project in 2009-2010 led by the policy officer, an intern and ROTA.
2. To identify at least five social policy areas for ROTA to focus on for the next two years; informing consultations in which ROTA will partake and policymakers who they attempt to influence.

The findings of this interim report will be explored in focus groups to be held in April/May 2009. These focus groups will ensure that ROTA focuses its attentions on specific concerns within the social policy priorities initially identified by respondents.

ROTA sees this consultation as crucial in ensuring that the work they conduct reflects the needs and concerns of the BAME sector and the communities that they serve.

Methodology

Prior to the consultation, ROTA pooled a number of databases, internet research and membership lists to create a contact list of BAME organisations. The consultation was delivered by a ROTA volunteer and an intern, and supported by the ROTA policy officer.

Initially, ROTA surveyed 90 organisations by phone, asking them for their preferred method of consultation. The majority of organisations stated that they would prefer to respond via email. As a result ROTA initially conducted the consultation in an email format.

Given the time of the year that the consultation took place and capacity issues for a number of organisations, ROTA received a limited response to the email consultation. Therefore the researchers decided to contact all organisations that had agreed to take part initially and conduct interviews over the phone or in outreach interviews. This method proved much more successful. In addition, ROTA also contacted some service delivery BAME organisations that had not been contacted previously, as the first round of contact was aimed at infrastructure organisations. The new organisations ROTA contacted were given the option of either e-mailing back the survey, carrying it out over the phone, or for a member of the ROTA staff to conduct an outreach interview.

Whilst conducting consultations over the phone, it became apparent that the quality of the questionnaire could be improved; some questions were complicated and respondents found them difficult to understand. As a result, certain questions were either adjusted or removed.

In total ROTA contacted 157 organisations for consultation, of which 34 took part. Our target of having contacted at least 20% of the London's BAME organisations on ROTA's database was achieved.

Both questionnaire samples are included as appendices to this document.

Findings: The Top Five

Having collated the information from all the consultation responses, the BAME Third sector's social policy priorities were identified as:

- 1) **Community Cohesion**
- 2) **Social Exclusion**
- 3) **Health and Social Services**
- 3) **Education**
- 5) **Poverty and Deprivation**

Community Cohesion

- Community Cohesion was ranked the highest policy concern of all the issues outlined in the survey, and was also ranked within the top five policy concerns for BAME organisations the most number of times.
- This policy priority was identified by a variety of organisations and significantly by all of the Race Equality Councils(REC) that we contacted.
- Major issues associated with Community Cohesion were:
 - Defining the term 'Community Cohesion'
 - Current barriers to Community Cohesion
- It is important to note that both were categories that we had already identified as possible answers in the questionnaire and may have been mentioned for that reason.
- Another concern raised was funding. A number of organisations identified a tension between local authorities pursuing Community Cohesion at the cost of funding small specialist groups. Organisations felt under pressure to expand their service user population to secure funding even though their initial purpose was to prioritise services for particular groups.
- As single issue groups were often underfunded, they felt that the money made available to BAME groups was getting increasingly small, especially given the increasing BAME population in some areas. They were often expected to serve an increased population with a static or reduced budget.
- RECs specifically identified a concern about expanding their services to emerging communities in London without the capacity to deliver this kind of support – especially to provide services such as translations etc. The lack of support given since the closure of the Commission for Racial Equality made this even more difficult.

Social Exclusion

- Social Exclusion was ranked second as a social policy priority.
- It was also the policy area that was referenced most throughout the consultation process.
- Respondents that ranked Social Exclusion in their top five, most frequently mentioned sub-concerns were **Exclusion from Politics**, and **Exclusion from the Labour force** respectively.
- A recurring concern was the link between Social Exclusion and access to services. Of organisations that ranked Social Exclusion in their top five, 20% highlighted generic concerns with limited access to engage in social life due to issues such as poverty. Others referenced specific areas of access such as health services, housing and education – citing Social Exclusion as a root cause of this reduced access. Alongside this were issues around interpretation, difficulty in accessing appropriate systems and procedures, and signposting to services, which all reduced the possibility of access.
- Some organisations noted a ‘hostility’ and ‘tension’ between communities due to conflicts between differing ethnic groups.

Health and Social Services

- Health was ranked in joint third place as a social policy priority for the BAME Third sector and was also referenced under other social policy priority areas, such as Social Exclusion, Community Cohesion and poverty.
- Specific issues that were referenced with access to health services were interpretation and a lack of provision for culturally sensitive services.
- Mental Health appears to be a major concern within this policy issue, as it is noted as a specific issue by 60% of the organisations who placed this category in their top five ranked policy concerns.
- Other health concerns highlighted by some organisations were sexual health issues and drug addictions, with particular reference to the support offered by small organisations to local communities who may not seek treatment through mainstream generic services.

Education

- Along with Health, Education was ranked joint third as a policy priority for the BAME Third sector.
- A key area of concern regarding Education was access to the education system – specifically regarding schools or appealing against an exclusion decision.
- Other references made to access were raised by Refugee and Asylum organisations, which repeatedly spoke about school exclusions, initial access to schools and unaccompanied minors arriving in the UK.
- Other organisations commented on levels of attainment for some BAME groups.
- There were concerns regarding the provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages teaching.
- It was also stated that education was a concern given the impact that it had on the ability to seek employment. Refugee and Asylum seeker organisations also referenced difficulties in applying for employment with qualifications gained abroad, which were non-transferable.

Poverty and Deprivation

- Poverty and Deprivation was identified as the fifth most frequently mentioned social policy priority identified by the sector.
- However, there was limited consensus on specific reasons for why this issue was important. Of those who stated Poverty and deprivation as a top five concern, 56% did not comment on any specific issue. For many it was an overarching factor that impacted widely on other social issues highlighted in the questionnaire.
- The organisations that did mention specific aspects, consequences or causes of poverty, remarked on its impact on the education/health of communities and individuals. It often compounded any discrimination that communities experienced and added a multiple discriminatory element to the reduced access that they faced.
- Youth crime and violence was also linked as both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Organisations that made reference to this link argued that young people caught up in violence and other forms of crime were often from poorer communities and this was not always considered when making criminal justice responses to address the issues.

Further Findings

While the following issues were not identified as top priorities in the consultation results, they add to the evidence above and invariably feed into the five areas chosen. In some cases issues were repeatedly referenced even though they were not identified as a social policy area on the initial survey. It is for this reason that we highlight key points made regarding other social policy concerns below:

Immigration

- Immigration was raised repeatedly during the consultation process as an area of concern, even though it did not feature on the original list of social policy priorities.
- While this could be attributed to our contact with Refugee and Asylum seeker organisations, it is also important to note that other organisations, such as RECs, referenced immigration as an area of work that they were being expected to cover – especially given the creation of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in place of the CRE.
- Immigration was also referenced in regards to access to services, such as health, education, employment, and housing.
- Criminal Justice responses also included immigration in reference to hate crimes, and ‘hostility’ and ‘tension’ were referred to in the context of Social Exclusion.

Gender and Age

- Organisations that provided specialist services or infrastructure support for BAME elders, BAME young people or BAME women identified specific equalities in the areas of age and gender respectively as policy priorities.
- While these specific areas were infrequently mentioned, broader considerations by the respondents around cross-equalities and multiple discrimination supported the need to think about social issues such as health, education, criminal justice and housing across different equalities strands. Along with the creation of the EHRC and the impact that this had on the sector, it was recognised as crucial that the cross-equalities work be used to understand and tackle multiple forms of discrimination rather than ignore or seek to rank single group issues.

Criminal Justice

- While Criminal Justice was not identified as a top five priority, there were common concerns among respondents that identified it.
- Overrepresentation of the BAME community in Stop and Search procedures was identified, as well as disproportionality at other stages of the Criminal Justice system.
- BAME communities that experienced hate crime and issues of youth crime and violence were also referenced specifically under the Criminal Justice heading, and under other categories generally.
- BAME Women's organisations also cited specific types of crimes that affected their service users such as increased risks to female migrants, forced marriage, domestic violence and the availability of interpreters to enable them to seek support if they experience any of these.

Housing and Regeneration

- There were four main areas of concern within the housing and regeneration category.
- Some groups were concerned with the safety and quality of housing, social housing in particular. This was mentioned in reference to Criminal Justice and Community Cohesion as well as under the 'Housing' heading.
- The impact of the Olympics on housing for BAME communities, especially in East London was highlighted.
- Concerns regarding overcrowding for some BAME groups and the assumption that it was the fault of the communities and not something that needed to be accounted for in service provision was referenced.
- Some organisations also highlighted the importance of housing for travellers, given the limited availability of traveller sites and the negative stereotypes associated with their provision.

Employment

- Two main themes were identified with reference to Employment.
- For BAME women's groups, concerns were raised regarding discrimination in the workplace and working environments, accessing employment opportunities and barriers to progression.
- In regards to migrant workers, organisations highlighted confusion about who was able to work, and a need for clarity from policy makers about the Home Office's stance on the issue. Difficulty in accessing employment as well as the negative stereotypes associated with immigrant workers was also highlighted.
- Given the above identification of Education as a social policy priority it should be noted that many identified it as being a link to future employment and the impact that discrimination in the former had on the experiences and access to the latter.

Next Steps

This interim report launches Year 2 of the BASIS project. ROTA will be developing the findings of this interim report in focus groups being held during April and May 2009. The focus groups will consider the five social policy priorities that have been identified and clarify what aspects of them are most important.

ROTA will use the focus group findings, the initial collated data and the interim report to:

- Devise a one year research project on Community Cohesion (with the specific concern identified in the focus groups)
- Focus future consultation responses, policy briefings and engagement with policy makers on the five policy priorities identified.
- Continue to engage the BAME Third sector and those involved in the consultation over the next year and monitor their satisfaction with the engagement.

Information on focus groups will be sent to organisations who took part in the initial consultation. Those unable to attend focus groups are invited to provide a written response and email it to carlene@rota.org.uk by May 15th, 2009.

Appendix

Identifying what is important to the BME Third Sector

ROTA is currently setting its policy and research priorities for the next three years. We want these to be a reflection of the priorities for the BME Sector serving London. This brief questionnaire begins our consultation. We want to hear what social issues are most important to your organisations and the community/ies it serves.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire below. If you would rather be contacted by phone or in person to take part please email carlene@rota.org.uk and I will contact you directly.

Questionnaire – PART 1

Objective

By the end of 2010 20% of London's BAME infrastructure organisations, report that they have clearly identified their top three policy concerns.

Your Organisation

Name:

Address:

Borough based:

Borough/Region served:

Contact Name:

Contact Number:

Contact Email:

Please briefly describe the main aim/s of your organisation:

Question 1:

Which of the following generic social policy areas are of the greatest concern to you and the community/ies that you serve?

(Please place a number by your answers with 1 being of greatest importance and 10 being the least)

Age
Community Cohesion
Criminal Justice
Education
Employment
Gender
Health and Social Services
Housing and Regeneration
Poverty and Deprivation
Social Exclusion

Question 2a:

Within your top three social policy concerns which of the following specific issues are of the greatest concern to you and the community/ies that you serve?

(Please place a number by your answers with 1 being of greatest importance and 11 being the least)

Age

- Care for the Elderly
- Youth Discrimination

Community Cohesion

- Barriers to community cohesion
- Defining community cohesion

Criminal Justice

- Victims of Crime
- Serious Youth Violence
- 'Institutional Racism'
- Women in Prison

Education

- Educational Attainment
- School Exclusions
- National Curriculum
- 'Institutional Racism'

Employment

- Managerial positions
- Political Representation
- Labour Market
- Local Economy

Gender

- Labour Markets
- Educational Attainment
- Criminal Justice
- Relationships and Sexual Health

Health and Social Services

- Mental Health
- Addiction
- Obesity
- Pregnancy and Sexual Health

Housing and Regeneration

- Local Housing Estates
- Community Safety
- The Olympics
- Homelessness

Poverty and Deprivation

- **Child Poverty**
- **Poverty and Crime**
- **Poverty and Education**
- **Poverty and Health**

Social Exclusion

- **Exclusion from politics**
- **Exclusion from education**
- **Exclusion from the labour force**

Question 2b:

If your social policy priorities were not represented in 2a please state them below and explain under which heading from Question 1 they would best fit:

Question 3:

Having identified what you consider to be the most important social policy priority for you or the communities you serve please provide a brief explanation about why you consider this a priority:

Questionnaire – PART 2

Question 1:

Do you, or have you, received copies of ROTA’s following publications:

Agenda	YES	NO
Supplement	YES	NO
E-Newsletter	YES	NO
Policy Briefing	YES	NO
Research Report	YES	NO

(If Yes please specify which ones):

Question 2:

How useful have you found these publications (with 5 being very useful, 3 satisfactory and 1 not useful):

Agenda	1	2	3	4	5
Supplement	1	2	3	4	5
E-Newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
Policy Briefings	1	2	3	4	5
Research Report	1	2	3	4	5

Question 3:

Which social policy issues are of interest to you and the communities you serve?

Community Cohesion	YES	NO
Criminal Justice	YES	NO
Education	YES	NO
Employment	YES	NO
Health and Social Services	YES	NO
Housing and Regeneration	YES	NO
Mental Health	YES	NO

If there is another social policy issue that is of concern please state it here:

Question 4:

Do you feel that ROTA’s publications provide you with information on the social policy issues that are of interest to your organisation and the communities that you serve?

YES (which ones)

NO (which ones)

Question 5:

If you answered no to question 4 how can ROTA make improvements to its publications to ensure you receive useful information on social policy?

Question 6:

Have you ever visited ROTA's website www.rota.org.uk ?

YES NO

Question 7:

If you answered Yes to the above how useful did you find it?

1 2 3 4 5

Question 8:

Do you feel that ROTA's website provides you with information on the social policy issues that are of interest to your organisation and the communities that you serve?

YES NO

Question 9:

If you answered no to question 8 how can ROTA make improvements to its website to ensure you receive useful information on social policy?

Question 10:

Are you currently a member of ROTA?

YES NO

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We will be taking all of your comments on board and aim to make and monitor improvements to our service.

If you do wish to be provided with updates to ROTA's services please tick here

Identifying what is important to the BAME Third Sector

ROTA is currently setting its policy and research priorities for the next three years. We want these to be a reflection of the priorities for the BAME Sector serving London. This brief questionnaire begins our consultation. We want to hear what social issues are most important to your organisation and the community/ies it serves.

The five issues that you identify as being of greatest importance will become ROTA's five policy priorities for the next three years.

The issue that you identify as being of greatest importance will be developed into a two year research project by ROTA.

WE WANT OUR WORK TO MEET YOUR NEEDS. Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire below. If you would rather be contacted by phone or in person to take part please email carlene@rota.org.uk and I will contact you directly.

Questionnaire – PART 1

About You:

Organisation Name:

Address:

Borough you are based in:

Borough/Region/area you serve:

Contact Name:

Contact Number:

Contact Email:

Please briefly describe the main aim/s of your organisation:

What matters to you?

Please highlight in bold which of the following social issues are of most importance to your organisation and/or the community/ies it serves and explain why:

Age

Community Cohesion

Criminal Justice

Education

Employment

Gender

Health and Social Services

Housing and Regeneration

Poverty and Deprivation

Social Exclusion

If an issue you have is not represented by any of the headings above please add it below:

Of all of the issues you have raised which do you consider to be the MOST important?

At ROTA we also want to know if you are receiving the services that we offer you, and if you find them useful – please let us know by completing the survey below. Our membership is free and open to all, and once you are a member you will receive all of our publications.

Questionnaire – PART 2

Is your organisation currently a member of ROTA?

YES NO NOT SURE

Do you currently receive any of the following publications?

Agenda	YES	NO
Supplement	YES	NO
E-Newsletter	YES	NO
Policy Briefing	YES	NO
Research Report	YES	NO

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest) how useful have you found these publications?

Agenda	1	2	3	4	5
Supplement	1	2	3	4	5
E-Newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
Policy Briefings	1	2	3	4	5
Research Report	1	2	3	4	5

Do you feel that ROTA's publications provide you with information of interest to your organisation and the communities that you serve?

YES (which ones)

NO (which ones)

Are there any particular issues that you would like ROTA to produce a publication on?

Have you ever visited ROTA's website www.rota.org.uk ?

YES **NO**

How useful did you find it?

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Do you have any other comments about the services that ROTA currently offers?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We will be holding focus groups in March to discuss our findings. Would you be interested in attending a focus group?

YES **NO**

We will send you a copy of the consultation report as soon as it is completed.

For questions please contact Carlene Firmin on carlene@rota.org.uk