



The Global Majority Fund

Evaluation of Phase I of The Global Majority Fund (TGMF)
Covid-19 response fund for communities experiencing racial inequality

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Executive summary

Purpose of the evaluation

This is the evaluation of Phase I of The Global Majority Fund (TGMF or the Fund). TGMF is a dedicated fund to support the Covid-19 response by a diverse range of small grassroots organisations that are led by or for communities experiencing racial inequality across the United Kingdom. TGMF is based on a partnership model with intermediary technical partners (ITPs), which received funding from TGMF, designed their own grant making strategies and distributed grants to smaller grassroots organisations.

The evaluation aims to understand:

- 1) the effectiveness and relevance of the funding model and process used in TGMF, including initial learnings from unsuccessful ITP applicants (Section 2).
- 2) the impact of the fund on the core stakeholder groups of ITPs (Section 3) and grassroots organisations (Section 4).
- 3) the sector gaps that need to be addressed in future emergency funding and ongoing funding for racial justice (Section 5).

This evaluation also provides recommendations (Section 6) for Comic Relief to strengthen practices in providing targeted emergency funding, and for other large institutional funders to ensure sustainable and equitable support for organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality.

Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach to collect and analyse both quantitative data and qualitative data:

- The quantitative data was the grant making data submitted by ten ITPs to Comic Relief, covering information such as the types of grassroots organisations ITPs onward granted to, the target groups of grassroots organisations, the grant amount awarded and high-level details concerning projects supported.
- The qualitative data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions, alongside online questionnaires to participants who could not join the conversations. In total, data was collected from 45 participants: ITPs (ten), grassroots organisations (28), unsuccessful ITP applicants (three) and external consultants to unsuccessful ITP applicants (four). While all ten ITPs were interviewed, evaluation participants from grassroots organisations and unsuccessful ITP applicants were lower than targeted, which is a major research limitation.

Key findings

Funding model and process

Positive attributes

- The partnership model used across TGMF was welcomed by both ITPs and grassroots organisations, enabling shared decision making and autonomy for ITPs to distribute funding to the communities in a timely manner.
- The learning space coordinated by Comic Relief to support ITPs on their grant making and management journey was received positively. It created a space where ITPs learnt from others in terms of their approaches, challenges and mistakes and enabled them to embed the learning within their organisations.
- The relational approach in TGMF translated into people-centred support, reciprocity and collaboration between the funders and ITPs. This challenged the mainstream funder and

grantee relationship which is often transactional (where partners are regarded more as service providers to deliver a certain outcome or performance).

Areas for improvement

- It was felt that the funding model was not instrumental enough in enabling sustainability. Unrestricted funding and longer-term funding are critical for organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality.
- The assessment and consultation process in TGMF could be more inclusive and transparent and involve more diverse and intersectional lived experiences.

Impact of TGMF on ITPs

Positive impact and future opportunities

- ITPs were also given an organisation development budget, which they had used it in a range of areas that they believed were critical for their strategic directions, such as to support or establish key roles within the organisations, to hire external consultants and to provide training for staff members.
- Since distributing the fund, ITPs had seen many opportunities being created, such as building their own grant making capacity, validating their grant making models, unlocking new funding, strengthening the relationships with grassroots organisations, and gaining respect in the sector.

Areas for consideration

- Each ITP received 10% of their total fund as their management costs, yet many of them felt it was not enough. There were several factors why the budget was insufficient, a key factor being the extra time spent providing capacity building support for grassroots organisations. The support spanned across the whole grant making engagement process, from the application stage to even after grant completion.

Impact of TGMF on grassroots organisations

Positive impact and future opportunities

- Of the total fund available (£3,811,750), 98% (£3,770,824) was eventually distributed to a total of 644 grantees, with the average awarded amount being £5,379.
- The largest proportion of the fund was awarded to registered charities (285 organisations received 58% of the total funding). A significant number of non-registered groups (146 organisations) received the funding, yet they only received 13% of the total fund available.
- After receiving the grants, grassroots organisations had seen new opportunities being created, including continuing the delivery of their work in the communities, raising the profile of their organisation and work among communities, building collaborations, unlocking other funding opportunities, and improving internal infrastructure.

Areas for consideration

- Barriers remained for grassroots organisations: TGMF was not able to strengthen the foundations for their sustainability and foster connections between Comic Relief and other funders.
- Analysis from grant making data revealed some trends that warrant further investigation: only 5% of the total TGMF funding went to funding organisations' core costs, and these applications came from only a handful of ITPs. There were also variations based on ethnic groups and organisations' sizes, which may indicate potential biases in the grant making processes; and data gaps in relation to intersectional issues, such as gender. These could be addressed in future evaluation as well as potential capacity building for ITPs in building more robust data infrastructure.

Sector gaps

- Organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality have faced structural barriers in accessing support and funding. The same issues were highlighted once more by all the interviewees. Barriers include the underfunding for these groups, lack of internal dedicated resources to write funding applications, lack of confidence resulting from constant rejection from funders and lack of connections with funders and challenges in staff recruitment and retention.
- Organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality were concerned about the sudden increase and interest in funding for them since the Covid-19 outbreak and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. They felt “*funders are jumping on the bandwagon*” and that the funding was still not sufficient for this sector which has been traditionally underfunded.
- To address the systemic barriers faced by organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequality, it was felt that funders should coordinate themselves in funding strategies and application processes to make grant application smoother for these groups, which are often resource-strapped, as well as to ensure a sustained focus on racial equity.
- Organisations wanted to see a genuine commitment from large institutional funders to investing in communities experiencing racial inequality. The commitment could be strengthened by the funders’ dedication to building meaningful relationships with these groups and providing longer-term, core funding.

Recommendations to Comic Relief

The TGMF model has largely been successful and has created a positive impact on ITPs and grassroots organisations. Findings from Phase I can be built on, for grant making to truly address the needs of organisations led by or for communities experiencing racial inequality, and for Comic Relief to become a regenerative and even transformational funder.

According to the model published by Justice Funders¹, philanthropy operates within the spectrum of extractive and transformational. Using this model and considering the findings from this evaluation of Phase I TGMF, we outline the recommendations below. It is worth mentioning that some recommendations might have already been considered in subsequent phases.



- **Relationship to grantees and communities:** Continue the partnership model with ITPs. The authentic partnership and relational approach should be embedded across Comic Relief more broadly and go beyond the designated fund managers for TGMF. Comic Relief should also ensure visibility to grassroots organisations. Even though Comic Relief does not directly work with grassroots organisations, it should consider ways to showcase the achievements made by grassroots organisations through TGMF and foster connections among Comic Relief, ITPs, and grassroots organisations.
- **Leadership and commitment:** Influence other major funders and the funding sector. Comic Relief should play the role in influencing other major funders and the wider sector, including (1) enabling funders’ coordination on funding needs, application and assessment process and reporting requirements; (2) advocating for a partnership model in funding (i.e., partnering with groups that have the experience, knowledge, or networks in the sector that the fund aims to see changes happen).

¹ http://justicefunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Spectrum_Final_12.6.pdf

- **Grant making strategy:** Provide funding that enables sustainability. To address structural challenges faced by communities experiencing racial inequality, Comic Relief should provide funding that can build organisations' sustainability, communicate their commitment more broadly and ringfence funding for organisational development.
- **Grant making operations:** Examine initial trends from grant making data regarding grassroots organisations in further detail and support ITPs to improve data infrastructure. Analysis of grant making data revealed some trends that warrant further investigation, such as the variations in core funding, ethnic groups, organisations' sizes, and data gaps in relation to intersectional issues. These could be addressed in future evaluations as well as potential capacity building for ITPs in building a more robust data infrastructure.
- **Grant making parameters:** Revisit the definition and percentage of management costs and embed capacity building elements in the fund. The management costs can be slightly increased to 15% of the total fund provided to the ITPs.
- **Grant making decision making:** Ensure greater participation of those with lived experience in the assessment process. This can help ensure better representation, address institutional inequality, and consider critical needs in different ethnic groups, intersectional issues, geographic differences.

There were also findings from this evaluation that would inform the directions of TGMF's Phase II evaluation, which would take place throughout 2022.

1. Introduction

“The perception of mainstream funders about BME [Black and Minority Ethnic] organisations affect the way they make decisions. That’s why The Global Majority Fund must address that perception, because it’s showing that BME organisations can manage, can deliver, and can also lead if they are given the opportunity.” (An ITP)

This is the evaluation of Phase I of The Global Majority Fund (TGMF or the fund). TGMF is a dedicated fund to support the Covid-19 response by a diverse range of small grassroots organisations that are led by or for communities experiencing racial inequality across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The purpose of this evaluation is to:

1. Understand the impact of the fund on intermediary technical partners (ITPs), grassroots organisations and unsuccessful ITP applicants, in terms of the opportunities and the challenges created resulting from distributing, applying, and receiving this funding.
2. Review the systems and processes to distribute and manage the fund in an emergency context, to understand whether these were proportionate to an emergency setting; whether the funding criteria were appropriate for this underfunded sector; whether the fund is not reaching certain communities; and whether the collective learning spaces and development support for the ITPs are useful.
3. Identify the barriers and opportunities to strengthen the practices in providing targeted emergency funding in the future.
4. Identify learnings for larger institutional funders to ensure sustainable and equitable support for organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality, which not only helps them recover from Covid-19 but allows them to thrive sustainably hereafter.

1.1 Context of The Global Majority Fund

1.1.1 TGMF as a Covid-19 response fund

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, small grassroots organisations have played a critical role in providing timely frontline support to people at a community level. Covid-19 has intensified pre-existing inequalities in underserved communities, especially those facing intersectional issues.

Acknowledging the risk faced by communities experiencing inequality, and the lack of funding to organisations led by and for these communities, Comic Relief launched The Global Majority Fund in June 2020 in partnership with the National Emergencies Trust and with financial support from Barclays. TGMF aimed to partner with organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality to distribute funding to locally rooted organisations across the UK². In Phase I of TGMF (July 2020 and September 2021), ten ITPs were selected.

1.1.2 Funding application and criteria used at Comic Relief

In the UK, Comic Relief predominantly funds registered charities with a minimum annual income of £250,000 and a maximum of £10 million. This income criterion is a must, meaning that the income of several smaller organisations cannot be combined to meet the minimum income criteria. This also applied to the ITP applicants for TGMF. Table 1 compares the similarities and differences between Comic Relief common application process and that of TGMF.

² [TGMF Phase I funding call to ITPs.](#)

Table 1 Comparing standard and TGMF application process

	Typical application	TGMF application
Application form	To apply for funding opportunity, organisations will typically submit a proposal to share their concept note. Shortlisted applicants will then be asked to provide a second proposal to further detail their plans (an example application form), covering five main sections: (1) basic details, (2) your proposal, (3) your funding request, (4) your finances/your organisation and (5) declaration and contact details.	The application form used in TGMF ³ followed these five sections, yet the questions asked under the “your proposal” section were condensed to only four key questions about the fit of the applicants and their understanding of the needs in the communities.
Assessment	Usually, after an assessment of the second proposal, organisations would be contacted to discuss their work and finish due diligence checks. Staff, independent experts, and Comic Relief trustees would then discuss the applications and make funding decisions ⁴ . Funding decisions were typically based on the considerations of six aspects: mission aligned, ready to accelerate, people centred, risk aware, learning led and storytellers ⁵ .	In the context of TGMF, after their proposals, potential partners were invited to a zoom assessment call. The funding call was led exclusively by Comic Relief staff who identified as from a community(ies) having experienced racial inequality and had an acute understanding of racial inequality across the third sector. The final investment decisions were made by Comic Relief staff members and approved by trustees who sit on the Comic Relief Social Impact Committee.

In Phase I of TGMF, 78 organisations submitted the application to be an ITP; 23 of them were invited to the assessment; and ten organisations were selected as ITPs in the end. The organisations that TGMF looked to partner met the criteria below, many of which were associated with the six general funding criteria (listed in Table 1):

- Ability to reach grassroots organisations with a good geographical spread throughout the nation
- Are committed to community-led development
- Have a participatory approach and put people with lived experience at the heart of programme design and decision-making
- Have a strong learning culture and clear monitoring and reporting processes
- Share Comic Relief’s core values in terms of inclusion and diversity
- Have robust governance systems and policies in place e.g., safeguarding and have the capacity to manage funding and make grants on our behalf
- Can support us in gathering and telling compelling and innovative stories of change

In Phase I’s recruitment (June 2020), the term “BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic)” was used when communicating the target groups TGMF wanted to reach. However, there were concerns within Comic Relief, the third sector and across wider society that this umbrella term would strip away individual identities and assume people all shared the same experiences, challenges, and barriers. After Comic Relief’s consultation with their partners, BAME was replaced by “communities experiencing racial inequality” in November 2020.

³ [Phase I application form.](#)

⁴ <https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/application-process>

⁵ <https://www.comicrelief.com/funding/eligibility-criteria>

1.1.3 TGMF funding model

“Trust for organisations like us needs to be maintained and that light touch [of funders’ surveillance] because we are the experts in this field, and that was recognised for the first time by The Global Majority Fund.” (An ITP)

As the fund wanted to reach communities experiencing racial inequality, the grant making approach was based on openness, trust and partnership with ITPs and it was viewed through a racial lens. The approach is summarised as follows:

- **Collaborating with ITPs** that distributed and managed funding on behalf of Comic Relief to a diverse range of locally led and focused organisations across the UK. It was believed that the ITPs had the expertise, knowledge, and networks to devise, launch and manage their own grant making programmes.
- **ITPs are led and managed by the communities they serve.** For TGMF, this meant at least 51% of the senior management team and trustees were from the community(ies) the ITPs represented and worked with. 51% was commonly used in defining organisations led and for a certain community (such as by Ubele Initiative⁶), while some UK funders have been looking at 75% since the launch of DEI Data Standard⁷. For Phase I, there was no guidance provided by Comic Relief on how organisations should calculate this figure.
- **Prioritising funding to communities experiencing racial inequality.** This meant that the ITPs were responsible for making grants to grassroots organisations focussed on addressing Covid-19 needs and priorities among communities experiencing racial inequality. The urgency to support higher risk communities was also highlighted, due to intersecting issues that intensified the effects of the pandemic.
- **Providing management costs** for the ITPs to administer the fund. The management costs accounted for 10% of the total fund provided to the ITPs before the fund was further distributed to the grassroots organisations.
- **Capacity building the ITPs** through the learning sessions hosted by Comic Relief and an investment grant for the ITPs’ own organisational development.

A total of £3.74 million was administered from July 2020 to September 2021 (Phase I of TGMF). Ten ITPs were funded and eventually provided grants to 644 grassroots organisations.

Table 2 ITPs in Phase I of TGMF

ITP	Funding	Geography	Community Focus	No. of grassroots organisations supported
African Health Policy Network ⁸	£ 440,000	UK wide	Multi community	108
Anti-Tribalism Movement	£ 440,000	UK wide	East African communities	34
Black Association of Women Step Out	£ 357,500	Wales	Multi community	47
Action for Race Equality ⁹	£ 275,000	England	Multi community	42
Greater Manchester BAME Network ¹⁰	£ 275,000	NW & NE England	Multi community	163
Imkaan	£ 440,000	UK wide	Multi community	20

⁶ [The Ubele Initiative \(2020\). Impact of Covid-19 on the BAME Community and Voluntary Sector.](#)

⁷ [DEI Data Standard.](#)

⁸ in partnership with House of Rainbow and Africa Advocacy Foundation

⁹ At the time of funding, this organisation was known by their previous name: Black Training and Enterprise Group.

¹⁰ in partnership with Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation

Migrant Centre Northern Ireland	£ 275,000	Northern Ireland	Multi community	47
Next Step Initiative	£ 357,500	Scotland	Multi community	51
Sporting Equals	£ 440,000	UK wide	Multi community	83
Voice4Change England	£ 440,000	England	Multi community	49

Strengthening the capacity of unsuccessful ITP applicants was also at the heart of TGMF. Apart from offering tailored feedback for unsuccessful applicants to better understand the strengths of their applications and areas to improve, the unsuccessful applicants were asked about their interests to receive further support from Comic Relief. eight out of 52¹¹ unsuccessful Phase I applicants and nine out of 51 unsuccessful Phase II applicants showed interest. The additional support provided included:

- **Providing capacity building workshops led by external consultants** across six areas: (1) income generation; (2) monitoring, evaluation, and learning; (3) keeping staff, children, and vulnerable adults safe; (4) grant making – key considerations when making grants to others; (5) grant management essentials; and (6) financial management.
- **Offering opportunities to have 1-on-1 sessions with the external consultants**, for the unsuccessful applicants to discuss issues specific to their own organisational development.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation took place from November 2021 to February 2022, using a mixed methods approach to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was the grant making data submitted by ten ITPs to Comic Relief, covering information such as the types of grassroots organisations ITPs onward granted to, the targeted groups of grassroots organisations, the grant amount awarded and high-level detail concerning projects supported. The data was analysed to provide a summary of the dataset.

The qualitative data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions (FGD), alongside online questionnaires to participants who could not join the conversations. Thematic analysis was conducted, based on identifying potential themes from the notes and transcripts of interviews, FGD and survey answers, and then refining them once we gained a complete overview of the data. The evidence used in this report was sometimes presented in quotes (*“in grey italic text in quotation marks”*), which were anonymised and sometimes paraphrased to protect the identity of the research participants.

The Fund Reference Group was established to provide oversight for this evaluation. The members of the group were Deryck Browne (African Health Policy Network), Indra Nauth (Action for Race Equality), Kadra Abdiniasir (#CharitySoWhite) and Poonam D’Cruze (Comic Relief). The group met with the evaluator at key points during the evaluation, including project inception, evaluation plan development, outreach to research participants, preliminary findings from data analysis and drafts of the evaluation report, to steer and ensure the direction of the evaluation meeting its purpose.

The report will refer to TGMF Phase II as there are some interlinkages where work has fallen across both phases such as support to unsuccessful ITP applicants, which was offered to Phase I and Phase II applicants as a combined intervention. Other than this, the report is focussed on the delivery of Phase I of TGMF.

¹¹ Number of unsuccessful applicants at Phase I was 68 organisations, of which 16 organisations were ineligible for funding for reasons such as being located out of the UK, were not proposing to work with communities experiencing racial inequality or the organisation structure fell outside of eligibility criteria.

1.2.1 Evaluation participants

The evaluation participants consulted through the data collection were ITPs, grassroots organisations, unsuccessful ITP applicants and external consultants to the unsuccessful ITP applicants. In total, data was collected from 45 participants: ITPs (ten), grassroots organisations (28), unsuccessful ITP applicants (three) and external consultants to unsuccessful ITP applicants (four).

Table 3 Research participants

Types of organisations	Total number of organisations	Targeted number of research participants	Actual number of research participants
ITP	10	10	10 (9 interviews and 1 written response)
Grassroots organisations ¹²	644	40 (50 organisations were approached)	28 (11 joined four FGDs; 18 filled in an online questionnaire)
Unsuccessful ITP applicants ¹³	17 (who expressed interests in further support)	8	3 (2 joined FGD; 1 via an online questionnaire)
External consultants to unsuccessful ITP applicants	4	4	4 (in a FGD)

1.2.2 Limitations

The data collection took place from late November 2021 to late January 2022. While the evaluation was able to consult all ITPs and external consultants, the participation rate from grassroots organisations was not as expected (see Table 3). This may have been due to any number of factors: the approach of the Christmas holiday period; organisations facing disruption caused by the Covid-19 Omicron variant during December 2021; consultants were engaging organisations after the funding concluded; or a general lack of capacity to participate in the evaluation. Low uptake was especially a factor with unsuccessful ITP applicants, with only two out of eight invited organisations joining the discussion.

To increase participation, organisations were invited to contribute through online questionnaires in January. This led to 18 more grassroots organisations sharing their thoughts, and one more unsuccessful ITP applicant submitting their written responses, but the participation rate was still lower than expected. This level of participation was not ideal, but nonetheless, the findings from qualitative data were both reliable and valid. The evaluation recognised that some outcomes and learning presented in this report might not be representative of the views of the majority population in the groups, which is particularly the case for findings in relation to unsuccessful applicants.

Furthermore, the power dynamics between the funder, the evaluator and grassroots organisations may have affected how honest participants were in sharing their feedback. To enable participants to be more open and honest in the interview process, feedback was anonymised. Nonetheless, participants may still be hesitant to be critical of the funder and the fund, or they may not fully trust

¹² To sample from the total 644 grassroots organisations supported, the evaluation adopted stratified sampling, i.e., sampling from a population that can be partitioned into subpopulations, as well as purposive sampling to ensure at least four organisations per ITP were consulted through the data collection. ITPs were requested to make connections to the grassroots organisations they supported.

¹³ To sample unsuccessful ITP applicants, purposive sampling was applied, considering the training attendance. Selecting from 17 organisations that originally showed interest in further training sessions, the evaluation invited two types of organisations to participate in either a focus group or a survey: (1) those who at least two sessions (this is because an organisation attended 2.8 sessions on average); and (2) those who had attended more than four sessions (this is because if excluding those who did not attend any sessions, an organisation attended 4.8 sessions on average).

the evaluator to share their honest opinions. This can be further addressed in future evaluations, by considering how the evaluator could strengthen trust with the participants.

2. Setting the scene: funding model and process

“I was very pleasantly surprised by that [the way Comic Relief worked with us], because funders usually don’t operate like that. There was recognition of equality within the relationship. If you’re going to operate a fund and you call it The Global Majority Fund, then it means that you are addressing structural inequality within funding landscapes.” (An ITP)

2.1 The partnership model enabled shared decision making

Almost all the interviewees appreciated The Global Majority Fund model’s aim to build trust and enable intermediaries led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality to be technical partners. It was felt *“a positive decision” (an ITP), “refreshing” (an ITP), and “a really good way to address the inequalities that exist within funding structures” (an ITP).*

Some ITPs (five out of ten) mentioned that their expertise and knowledge were trusted, which in return meant that funding could be distributed to the most-needed communities in time. *“I support the model that Comic Relief used, as it is very critical to ensuring that funding allocations are being made to the right organisations at the right time to meet the most pressing needs of these organisations.” (An ITP)*

The trust placed in the ITPs also enabled their autonomy to deliver the fund in the most suitable approach identified. *“Comic Relief gave us the latitude. We really had that freedom to do things our way and that, in a sense, it’s recognising the expertise that BAME organisations have got in their own communities and that is really important.” (An ITP)*

While the ITPs had the freedom to decide on their funding approaches, they also received support from Comic Relief to launch grant making in an emergency setting. An ITP recalled that the partnership had been shaped from the onset:

“The real highlight for me was at the beginning because they were trying to get money out there quickly. People didn’t quite know what was happening, when it had to be done, who was doing what. But I do feel that was approached in a real partnership kind of way.” (An ITP)

Such a trust-based partnership between ITPs and Comic Relief was critical in an emergency setting, as it allowed resources to be distributed efficiently and effectively. An ITP summarised the benefits of the partnership approach:

“The approach was based on the co-production and co-delivery approach. It empowered local intermediary partners like us, who have excellent understanding, exposure, and knowledge of our local communities. It meant that we could effectively target those resources to those communities at a very important and crucial time, for them to provide vital services to their people.” (An ITP)

Grassroots organisations generally shared the same understanding of the benefits of the partnership models. Supported by the ITPs, several grassroots organisations felt that the funders understood their areas of work and thus welcomed the partnership model in TGMF. This quote from a grassroots organisation could summarise the benefits of having ITPs as funders: *“The benefits of having an organisation that understands you as sector and what you do. They tell us how to improve.”* Another grassroots organisation praised the trust and support from ITP: *“They [intermediary technical partner] are very easy to communicate with. We can go to them as a trusted organisation, and they will point us in the right direction. They won’t question what we do but believe in us.”* One grassroots organisation appreciated the autonomy their funder offered to them: *“It’s [the grant is] flexible. It allowed us to be more creative and was not demanding for outcomes.”*

The partnership model with ITPs used in TGMF not only expedited the funding distribution to communities in need but strengthened the confidence of organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality. *“It challenges the stereotype of saying that Black and minority groups are not professional, they will not be able to be accountable. The fact that Comic Relief decided to do this, it was an enabler and boosted our confidence as a people.”* (An ITP)

2.2 Learning spaces

Throughout the partnership, Comic Relief supported ITPs with quarterly check-ins, peer learning sessions and ongoing conversations in various formats. These were positively received by ITPs. It was appreciated that Comic Relief provided ongoing support to ensure the successful delivery of the fund. *“We can discuss issues not related to process only. They [Comic Relief] often asked ‘What worked? What didn’t work? What did we learn from it?’”* (An ITP)

Several (four out of ten) ITPs highlighted the effectiveness of the learning spaces held by Comic Relief. The opportunity to share learning among peers was perceived as *“helpful”, “invaluable”* and *“absolutely brilliant”*. People learnt from others’ approaches and mistakes and could embed the learning across their own organisations:

“We can draw some great ideas from it or even see how they develop their funding application process and what would work well for ours.” (An ITP).

“Others faced the same challenges that we did, and they came up with different solutions or different ideas. That was incredibly helpful. We didn’t have to reinvent the wheel.” (An ITP)

2.3 Funder “like a critical friend”

“The Comic Relief team is very accessible. They’ve got ongoing conversations, and they actually listen. These are ongoing informal conversations, which really helped in a way because we’ve developed our relationship. So, if you’re struggling, you’ve got a trusting relationship with the funder, you’re able to say what it is that you’re struggling with.” (An ITP)

The relationships between Comic Relief’s fund managers and ITPs were pivotal to the success of TGMF. 50% of ITPs interviewed described the relationships in positive terms. The benefits came from people-centred support, reciprocity, and collaboration, which challenged the mainstream funder and grantee relationship. *“I wouldn’t even call it funder by a relationship. It was just a collaborative relationship where we were all working together.”* (An ITP) ITPs felt the genuine motivation from Comic Relief to help them develop their organisations. *“There is a lot of added value. They keep emailing us other funding opportunities as well.”* (An ITP)

In a sector where many funders take a transactional approach (where partners are regarded more as service providers to deliver a certain outcome or performance), the relational approach at TGMF (which focused on longer term partnerships and development of the partners) was especially critical to forge the partnerships with ITPs. However, the reliance of these grant managers was not without concerns. While the relational approach at TGMF was effective, the relationships depended on the individuals and might not be transferable to the wider organisation. An ITP noted:

“As innovation [in grant making approaches] starts being lost in a funder, I hope that doesn’t happen for Comic Relief. Sometimes it’s lost because people move on. There was a bit of a change of personnel over that period. The relationships are often with that personal level rather than the organisational level.”

2.4 Areas for improvement

2.4.1 Sustainability

Regarding the improvement of the funding model and process, a majority of the evaluation participants mentioned the sustainability of TGMF. Organisations (including ITPs and grassroots organisations) were keen to build on the momentum yet were uncertain about the future opportunities from TGMF. The lack of consideration of sustainability within the fund could be due to the nature of the fund in responding to urgent Covid-19 needs. However, many (eight out of ten ITPs and 11 out of 28 grassroots organisations) expressed the need for long-term funding to develop their core mission and sustain their organisations.

The funding model, though well-praised by interviewees, was felt not instrumental enough in enabling sustainability of organisations. There were concerns that if they (including ITPs and grassroots organisations) were not able to secure extra funding before the end of TGMF they would not be able to sustain the staff recruited and trained in grant making. The result would hinder the opportunity to build momentum and demonstrate impact. It was suggested by an ITP that there should be a guarantee of future funding if the organisations aimed to develop themselves further, so that they could leverage or refine the infrastructure built. *“We need to take competition out of the structure. [Comic Relief could let us know] if we wanted to engage for the next period, and we are able to, they are going to assess if we’ve reached this capacity”.*

Beyond project-based funding, Comic Relief should recognise the importance of core funding to develop grassroots organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality. Some expectations from interviewees include unrestricted funding, longer term funding, *“a guaranteed space for further funding, up for review after a period of delivery”*, and integrating fundraising into the training or capacity building elements provided by funders. Other changes that interviewees wanted to see from major funders like Comic Relief are presented in Section 5.3.

Zooming in on recommendations

Provide funding that enables sustainability.

To address structural challenges faced by communities experiencing racial inequality, Comic Relief should provide funding that can enable organisations’ sustainability, communicate their commitment more broadly and ringfence funding for organisations’ continual development. Further funding should include core funding and ongoing, long-term funding, to support the growth of organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality.

Among funders, there may be an implicit assumption that emergency funding needs to be project-based funding. But in the emergency context where needs, circumstances fluctuate so rapidly, making it near impossible to plan, core funding is even more important. In the hope of “building back better”, organisations need breathing space to rebuild their organisations for a more resilient future, and that can be enabled by core funding and continuous capacity building.

2.4.2 Recruitment of ITPs

Four interviewees (ITPs and unsuccessful ITP applicants) emphasised the needs to improve the ITP recruitment and assessment process in aspects including clarity on the targeted groups, assessment criteria and eligibility. Similar opinions were also received after the Phase I funding, when Comic Relief gathered feedback from successful ITP applicants, unsuccessful ITP applicants and internal staff on the recruitment process. It was felt that the communication of the call for funding could be clearer, such as the eligibility criteria, grant making requirements, the changes in the total amount of

funding available and the percentage of management costs allocated. More communication channels could be leveraged, especially through umbrella organisations (such as NCVO; #CharitySoWhite) and social media (such as Facebook, LinkedIn).

2.4.3 Consultation process

An ITP highlighted the importance of consulting the corresponding Phase I partners if a potential partner in Phase II targeted the same groups, such as the same communities, related intersectional issues, or similar geographical regions. In this way, knowledge could be passed on and the duplication of work could be prevented.

2.4.4 Addressing intersectionality

Within any ethnic group there are multiple identities experiencing different levels of discrimination and disadvantages, depending on their gender, socio-economic backgrounds, and other intersectional characteristics. An unsuccessful ITP applicant emphasised that these inequalities need to be considered or even highlighted in the assessment of ITPs, in order to select the ones that will develop the communities in meaningful ways. This suggestion highlights the necessity to understand if the funded partners are addressing other kinds of inequalities, within racial inequality.

Zooming in on recommendations

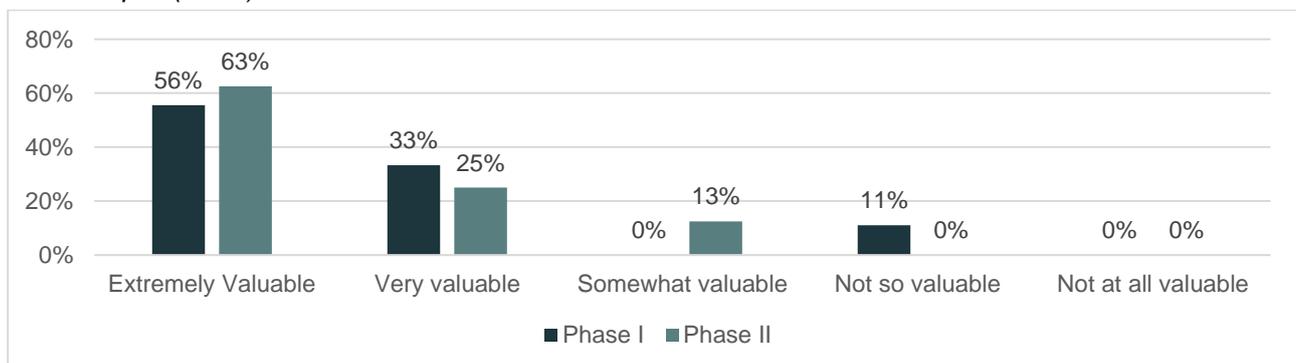
Brining in lived experience and intersectionality in the assessment.

To address potential biases during the assessment stage, one option is to consult more people with lived experience, in terms of racial inequality and its intersecting issues. Another way is to include a peer-led selection approach in the assessment process, where shortlisted applicants are engaged in the assessment process to assess their peers and their own organisations. In this way, more diverse lived experiences could be brought in, and the peers could have a stronger understanding of the expertise, knowledge, and ability to support underserved communities. A similar model is used by Village Capital in their due diligence¹⁴.

2.4.5 Feedback process

In terms of the assessment outcomes, feedback was provided to unsuccessful ITP applicants. Comic Relief conducted a survey to understand if the feedback was useful and what further support unsuccessful ITP applicants (in both Phase I and II) would need. The survey result showed that most of them felt it was valuable, and the percentage of organisations feeling its value increased slightly from Phase I to Phase II (in Figure 1).

Figure 1 Unsuccessful ITP applicants' perception on whether the feedback to their applications was useful/helpful (N=17)



¹⁴ Village Capital (2019). [Flipping the power dynamics](#).

That being said, three unsuccessful applicants consulted in this evaluation stated that the rejection feedback could be more targeted or reasonable. An unsuccessful ITP applicant commented, “We would like to get a better understanding of the key elements that would make our submission fit with the expectations of the funds or to understand what was the elements of the submission that did not meet expectations.”

Another unsuccessful ITP applicant felt their rejection reason was not valid, “We were told we did not have grant giving experience, but we see successful ones did not have either.” The rejection leads to questions about the legitimacy of the assessors: “I don’t know who is assessing.” (An unsuccessful ITP applicant); “There is potential for inequality, which presents a fear that the rejection is also a result of exclusion and bias.” (An unsuccessful ITP applicant)

A grassroots organisation had a similar observation in their experience with funders in general, “We mostly get unsuccessful, the barriers may likely be that decision makers most likely with no ill-intention, are not understanding the needs of different ethnic demographics and may not see the fund request to be worthy of funding.” Even though the outcomes could influence people’s experience of the process, the comments above show that it is crucial to revisit the assessment model, from designing the scoring criteria and communicating the criteria, to involving diverse lived experiences and providing feedback.

2.4.6 Support to unsuccessful ITP applicants

Unsuccessful ITP applicants were provided with capacity building opportunities such as training and one-on-one sessions. As the research was only able to consult three unsuccessful ITP applicants, it was not possible to provide a generalised picture of the outcomes of these sessions. Nevertheless, several areas for improvement were identified: participation rate, session scheduling and delivery method and content, which are discussed further in the Spotlight below.

Spotlight: capacity building for unsuccessful ITP applicants

Unsuccessful ITP applicants could select from a list of thematic training sessions. The training topics were developed based on the consultation with unsuccessful ITP applicants after they received application feedback from Comic Relief. Table 4 shows the result from the initial consultation on training topics and Table 4 shows the actual participation on each topic.

Table 4 % of unsuccessful ITP applicants choosing that topic (N =17)

Topics unsuccessful ITP applicants believe their organisation would benefit from	%
Bid writing	88%
MEL - Outcomes & developing tools	71%
Grant making: Foundations of making grants to others	71%
Foundations of MEL - how to evidence your work	47%
Grant management: key considerations when managing grants to others	41%
Budgeting - costing your project	29%
Keeping people safe – we have a policy, what next?	18%
Keeping people safe - where to begin if you don't have a policy	12%
Strengthening organisational financial management	12%

Table 5 Number of participating organisations in the training sessions by external consultants (by topics)

Training topics	Number of organisations
Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)	8
Safeguarding, grant making and management	7
Income generation	2
Finance	1

Note: The training sessions welcomed unsuccessful applicants of another fund at Comic Relief. This chart only shows the unsuccessful ITP applicants of TGMF. The data were shared by external consultants, who listed the organisations that had participated in their sessions.

The distribution of the actual participation (Table 5) on topics showed a similar trend as the topics unsuccessful ITP applicants believed they would benefit from in the initial survey (Table 4). Two unsuccessful ITP applicants that participated in this evaluation commented that when offered the training topics, they selected the sessions that they thought were relevant for them. Table 5 shows that two topics were likely believed to be more relevant by unsuccessful ITP applicants (thus more participating organisations): “monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)” and “safeguarding, grant making and management”. It was worth noting that finance did not seem like an area of interest for unsuccessful ITP applicants (in both Table 4 and Table 5).

Each session had participants ranging from only one person to around ten people. In total, 13 unique organisations participated in the sessions. On average, an organisation joined 2.8 sessions. Below presents the benefits and areas for improvement of the support, based on the opinions of ITP unsuccessful applicants and the external consultants that participated in this evaluation.

Benefits

An organisation felt positive about being supported further: *“We had the opportunity to cultivate an ongoing, positive relationship although we were unsuccessful with our grant application”*. Another organisation felt that the sessions helped them understand their position in the community: *“It [the training] gives us an idea of our position in our locality [...] to take up a particular role that will be more productive toward the organisations in our area”* and that they also learned from the sessions to refine their own service delivery.

On observing potential changes of the participating organisations, one consultant pointed out that an organisation was motivated to strengthen their capacity further: *“One organisation reached out to build on the training, to do something much more than they initially committed to.”*

One other organisation found all the sessions quite useful but highlighted the effectiveness of the one-on-one sessions: *“there is more space to ask questions that are quite specific to your organisation.”* External consultants highlighted the benefits of one-to-one to their participants as well, *“We can focus on their organisations. They can ask questions that drill down to their needs, rather than theory based.”*

An organisation also highlighted the benefits of having ethnic minority consultants, *“because a lot of people on the call, we’re intersectional organisations, so it was a lot easier to ask questions around the topic and diversity.”*

Areas for improvement

Session participation

It is understandable that the participation rate for some training workshops was lower as organisations could opt in to join sessions, they find most relevant, rather than the sessions being

mandatory. Noting that *“the take up wasn’t good”*, some external consultants found it a challenge to ask unsuccessful ITP applicants to join the sessions. An external consultant shared, *“I was very surprised by the level of outreach needed”*; another echoed, *“I thought it’s mandatory, but I underestimated the outreach that needs to be done. I was asking people and calling them to join.”*

Interests in the training seemed to fall when organisations secured funding from other funders. An external consultant recalled, *“Some said they won’t attend the sessions anymore as they have other funding.”* External consultants also noted that it could help to have an ongoing need assessment on unsuccessful ITP applicants *“to track how the needs change over time.”*

The discrepancy of attendance between the various sessions is also worth noting – sessions on MEL and safeguarding were much more well attended compared to finance and income generation. It may be that organisations were not interested in the latter topics, or felt they already have enough knowledge on them. But this may imply that there is a systemic challenge. Research has pointed out that organisations led by communities facing racial inequalities have lower turnover and face more financial challenges¹⁵, compared to mainstream organisations. To address these challenges, learning about finance and income generation would be crucial, so it would be important to investigate further their reasons for not wanting or not being able to attend these sessions.

Scheduling

One way to improve the participation rate was to allow more time in between sessions, as suggested by an unsuccessful ITP applicant: *“I felt there were a lot of workshops delivered in a very short space of time. I wanted to go to all but had to just select the ones I could make it.”* Echoing this, another unsuccessful ITP applicant commented on the announcement of the sessions, *“they were quite short notice as well.”*

Also due to *“zoom fatigue”*, organisations would tend to prioritise other work. The organisations expressed that better scheduling could be seen as two sessions in a month, each up to 90 minutes, with a month (or even six weeks) notice in advance.

Delivery method and content

To facilitate deeper discussion in training sessions, two unsuccessful ITP applicants noted that a group of up to 8 participants should be the maximum. They also mentioned that some sessions could be more interactive, especially for more academic topics.

There was also potential for the training to be more holistic and practical. An unsuccessful ITP applicant felt that the sessions were more like workshops rather than training. They hoped that there could be more targeted training around *“how to become a grant making organisation”* and *“how to make successful funding applications”*. Agreeing with these topics, another unsuccessful ITP applicant added the content around grant making infrastructure: *“how to set up a system in our organisation for us to be a grant giver.”* They also shared an experience with another funder, where the funder agreed to train them in grant making by letting them shadow the funder’s grant making process. *“It could be something Comic Relief provides as well, to choose two to three organisations to shadow and learn about grant making.”*

¹⁵ Voice4Change England (2015). [Bridging the gap in funding for the BAME voluntary and community sector.](#)

3. Impact of TGMF on core stakeholders: ITPs

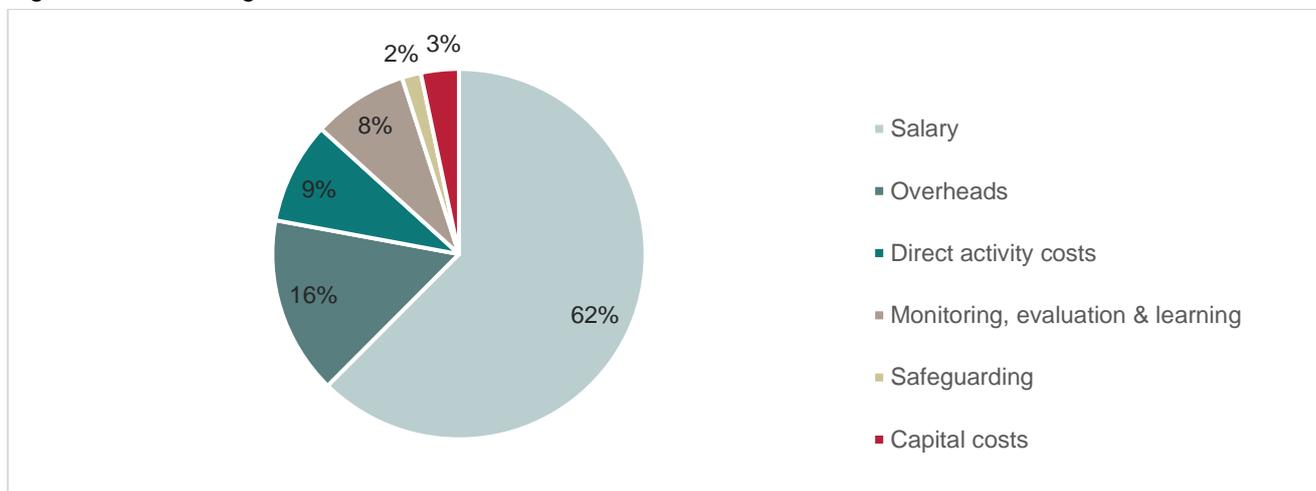
“We want to become the experts ourselves in grant making, but we don't want to just replicate the way [mainstream] grant funding operates. We want to be able to work in a much more collaborative and collective way and really remove competition from funding systems. [...] That's what we've learned very much with The Global Majority Fund about how we can do that and how we can achieve a more equal and level playing field in terms of funding.” (An ITP)

3.1 Managing the fund

3.1.1 Management costs

Each intermediary technical partner was allocated 10% of their total fund as their management costs, which was mostly (62%) used in the salary costs for project management, communications and marketing and application assessment. Apart from internal personnel costs, many brought in external independent assessors who had insights into the communities targeted.

Figure 2 How management costs were used



For organisations that had prior experience in grant making, they felt the allocation was reasonable and that they were able to leverage the infrastructure they had in place. One ITP even allocated the management costs as grants for grassroots organisations as they felt for the disproportionate impact faced by their targeted communities; they then absorbed the grant management costs internally. For those that were new to grant making, many felt they would have benefited if they had a dedicated grant making system in place to facilitate the management process. One organisation mentioned that the management costs provided by Comic Relief were much more than other funders targeting similar causes, which could better support their work in reaching historically underfunded communities.

The allocation, however, was felt to be not sufficient by more than half of the ITPs (five out of the nine organisations who answered this question) to cover the actual resources they input. For example, many (six out of ten) spent time building the capacity of grassroots organisations in the ways they could, although they might not formally consider this in their management costs. ITPs supported potential grantees with fulfilling application criteria, as they felt many grassroots organisations had the ability to deliver impeccable work in the communities but might lack the experience in writing grant applications. ITPs also advised grassroots organisations ways to showcase their work in applications, welcomed different methods (such as having an interview) and supported applicants with preparing some paperwork (such as safeguarding policies) and budgeting. A grassroots

organisation commented on the importance of the support, *“Some organisations are not as equipped. They might not have been to schools. It is important to have some to help shape the ideas and visions of the applications.”* With the additional support, four ITPs expressed that the allocation should have even been doubled. This was mainly because the fund aimed to support *“the so-called underserved communities”* and *“very, very grassroots organisations”* who needed capacity building both before and after grant making.

It could also be more time-consuming to meet compliance standards as some grassroots organisations might not have the documents and policies in place. For example, they might not have bank accounts due to their organisation types; they might not have safeguarding policies as formal policies were not in place for small organisations; or their contact information had changed since the Covid-19 outbreak. Two ITPs also received more applications than anticipated, which increased the workload significantly. For grassroots organisations that were unsuccessful in applications, ITPs tended to provide personalised feedback, signpost them to other resources or invite them to join their network for future capacity building opportunities.

Many (six out of ten) ITPs mentioned that they continued to build the capacity of the grassroots organisations after they were funded, although it might not be reflected in the original costs. The support included providing templates (such as invoices), assisting them with evaluation, and supporting their organisational needs and governance. Two ITPs struggled with their own capacity to provide a useful level of support to grassroots organisations. The lack of capacity could impact some grassroots organisations’ experience with the fund: *“To be completely honest we did not receive much support”*; *“If there is more that I can ask for, it’s capacity support on policies and process.”*

Some grassroots organisations (seven out of 28) received training to build their capacity and recommended it. *“I don’t know if we would have got this far without it. They supported my emotional wellbeing and signposted us to workshops appropriate to us. It’s very good information that I never had before.”* It was felt that more capacity building support would be valuable. A grassroots organisation who had not received capacity building support could imagine the potential benefits of it, *“I would have found that [capacity building] helpful, but a hands-off approach in that [emergency] context was good too.”*

About managing similar funds in the future, an ITP stated the necessity to forecast the additional support needed and the potentially increasing costs and workload. Two ITPs also looked to introduce a grant management system, hoping to expedite grant making and a grantee management process.

Overall, it was felt that the management cost ratio should be re-considered and increased to around 15% or even 20%, as many ITPs (six out of ten) had to input additional resources to support the grassroots organisations. Two ITPs pointed to potential issues in the term “management costs” because some inputs could not be counted under traditional management costs but were essential support needed for grassroots organisations. The additional inputs for grassroots organisations were, for example, supporting them with writing grant applications, creating policy documents and signposting to other suitable funding opportunities.

“We want to be able to be an enabler to empower [grassroots] groups. We don’t want to micromanage them, by making them feel they’re not able to do things for themselves. We’re only doing it to enable them to grow, to empower them, to engage them in such a way that they increase their capacity.” (An ITP)

Zooming in on recommendations

Reconsider the management costs and embed capacity building in the fund.

To consider management cost allocation in the future, Comic Relief should revisit the definition and percentage of management costs. Most ITPs supported grassroots organisations to build their capacity, whether that effort was budgeted or not. This has spanned across the whole grant making engagement process, from the application stage to even after grant delivery.

An ITP suggested that *“capacity building [should be] built in the model rather than expecting the grantees to organise themselves.”* An external consultant also observed the importance of embedding capacity building in the model, *“Especially when you are a small group, consultancy is expensive, choosing a consultant is hard too. Comic Relief can provide access to people they can trust.”* As capacity building has been identified as an essential element for grassroots organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality, it is recommended that Comic Relief acknowledge and integrate capacity building into the TGMF model.

3.1.2 Learning from grant making

In line with some points mentioned above, there were several success factors for ITPs in reaching the targeted communities and supporting them with delivering the projects: making efforts in capacity building, welcoming diversified application methods and leveraging ITPs' existing knowledge and networks in the targeted communities. Three ITPs highlighted the importance of having a dedicated grant manager, who *“make themselves available on a daily basis and a resource to grassroots organisations”*. Two ITPs also shared that they proactively monitored their reach of applicants, examining reasons why some communities (in terms of ethnic groups and geography) did not apply as much as others. They would make extra effort to adapt their communications to bring those communities onboard.

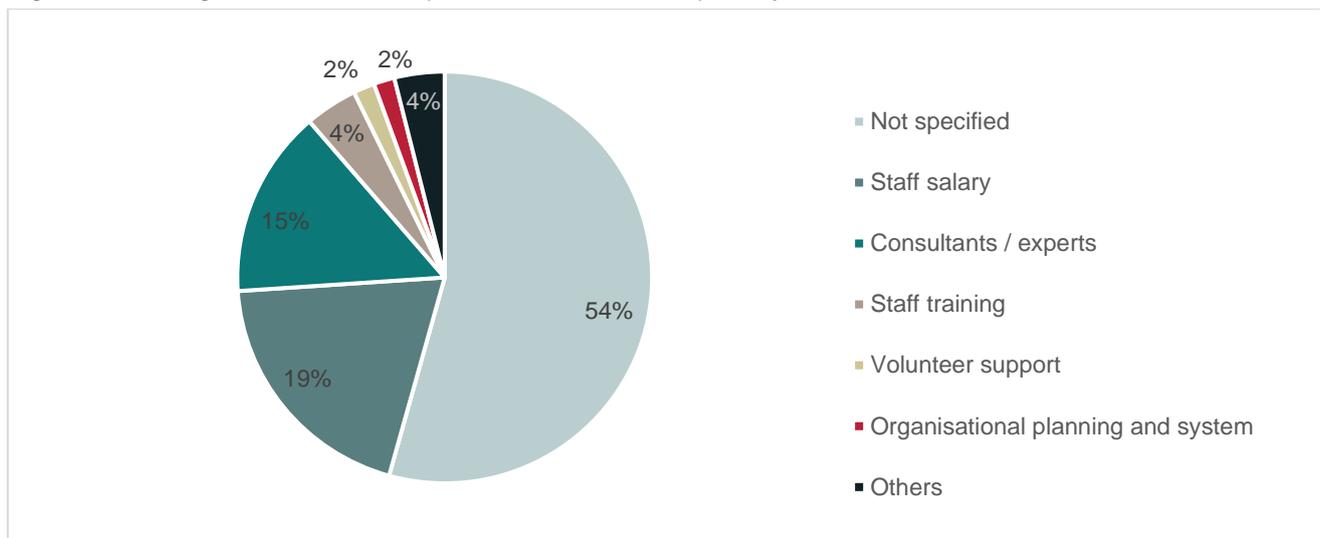
In terms of challenges, ITPs were able to overcome most of the challenges related to capacity, such as underestimated workload, time-consuming due diligence, and efforts to support grantees' delivery, through adapting and inputting some extra resources. However, these challenges did place an extra burden on the ITPs and many of them tried to absorb it internally. *“Many grantees are run by one person and to get reporting from them on time and to good standards had been challenging. We had to put in a lot of effort to support partners, and to get data on project delivery as per expected results.”* (An ITP). It might be necessary to reconsider the level of paperwork and reporting required from grassroots organisations in an emergency setting.

Carrying out robust due diligence checks at the start of the granting process by ITPs was considered essential. Within any grant fund there will always be a small percentage of attempted fraudulent applications (i.e., illegitimate organisations being created to access funding). To counter this possibility, two ITPs highlighted the importance to conduct robust due diligence even in an emergency funding setting. Comic Relief also took the opportunity to share expertise and strategies in due diligence and fraudulent application checks. Two other ITPs (although they did not experience such issues) mentioned that they were helpfully made aware of the potential threat thanks to the peer learning space. As such it could be helpful to integrate due diligence and fraudulent application related topics into the training provided by Comic Relief to ITPs so that they might gain these resilience skill sets up front.

3.2 Organisation development allocation

ITPs used the organisation development budget in a range of areas that they believed were critical for their strategic directions. The most common usage (19%) was to support or establish key roles within the organisations, such as recruiting and retaining talents in projects, training staff, and freeing up time for senior managers to devote to strategic activities. The focus on human resources was felt invaluable – *“It would not have been possible without the grant earmarked for organisational capacity”*. It not only increased staff’s capacity but also supported organisations’ aspirations to be *“stronger and more independent”*.

Figure 3 How organisational development allocation was spent by all ITPs



Another common usage was to collaborate with external consultants, experts, evaluators, or academic partners (15%). *“We’ve never had before to be able to pay for those services.”* The collaboration enabled ITPs to refine internal processes and practices, add value to their projects and operations, develop long-term strategy and strengthen their ability in ensuring sustainability.

To develop themselves in grant making, three ITPs mentioned that they established grant assessment panels and were able to compensate the time of experts who provided diverse views. Two ITPs also recognised the importance of enhancing their process and infrastructure to continue their grant making capacity and thus invested resources in this regard. An organisation also made recommendations to funders based on their learnings at TGMF:

“Now we always recommend that the funders pay people for their time on those panels, whereas before people used to do it voluntarily, but just in recognition of the fact that one using people’s expertise as community members, but also they’re trained people who’ve been working at a national level as well as a local level, so that has actually changed our practice as an organisation.”
(An ITP)

8% of the funding was spent on staff training. Topics covered were such as staff wellbeing, project management and fundraising and business management. 2% of the budget was used to address wider organisational needs, such as strengthening the organisations’ websites and IT infrastructures which had not been updated for years, improving the organisations’ processes and policies in aspects such as accounting and safeguarding.

A few (three out of ten) ITPs took the opportunity to understand and support communities further; for example, by conducting landscape research of the communities ITPs funded in targeted regions;

involving grassroots organisations in their membership; and communicating with new communities reached through the fund to understand inequalities they faced. Others (two out of ten) furthered the capacity building of their grantees, assisting them in project delivery and providing monthly one-on-one sessions.

3.3 Opportunities created

As a result of their partnerships with Comic Relief and their distribution of TGMF, many opportunities were created for the ITPs, which are presented below.

3.3.1 Build grant making capacity

Internally, ITPs were able to build grant making capacity in many different aspects. They learned from their project design and delivery, due diligence, assessment process and engagement with grassroots organisations. An ITP expressed that the process was instrumental to develop themselves as grant makers: *“[We] built the capacity of our staff and trustees in effective grant management, through on-going advice and training from a grants management consultant. We have been able to build a robust system for all stages of grant making and management.”* (An ITP)

Enhanced capacity also boosted the confidence among the staff team, as shared by an ITP, *“Even we as an organisation, it has helped us to understand our potential, the potential to manage funds very well, managed organisations very well. [...] It is a very strong, holistic process that has a lot of opportunities.”* An ITP also involved its members on the assessment panels, which had in return built the members’ capacity and confidence. *“Two of our members actually went on to do training around being a panel member and sitting on other funders panels.”*

3.3.2 Validate grant making models

Some (four out of ten) seized the chance to validate their grant making models. Some embedded elements that they believed were beneficial for the grassroots organisations; others aimed to influence the traditional ways of working of funders. The outcome was that ITPs refined their unique grant making models through testing and learning through TGMF.

“The Global Majority Fund, I think, was a big fund for us. And it enabled us to develop the infrastructure even more. And it enabled us to really, for the first time, use all the learning and actually deliver a collaborative framework. It was maybe the first time that we felt comfortable that the way we were managing the fund was more in the spirit of collaboration. So, I think we were very happy about what we were able to achieve with that fund.” (An ITP)

3.3.3 Unlock new funding

With the credentials of managing TGMF and the grant making models helpful for communities experiencing racial inequality, many ITPs (six out of ten) expressed they had unlocked new funding opportunities. *“It’s allowed us to test the model that has been, I would say, really successful and win bids that use that model both for not for profit, and for the for-profit sector.”* These opportunities included securing new funding during their management of TGMF; being in conversations with other funders; being approached by corporates. Two ITPs built strategic partnerships with funders, advising them on how to engage with communities experiencing racial inequality.

3.3.4 Strengthen relationships with grassroots organisations

Almost all ITPs (eight out of ten) stated that the opportunity to be funded by Comic Relief enabled them to expand their reach and strengthen the relationship with grassroots organisations and communities: *“We had grown our network”*; *“We certainly had a much greater reach to*

organisations”; *“We strengthened our relationship with BAME organisations across England”; “We were able to see the projects in real life through them, from all around the country.”*

Through working with grassroots organisations as grant makers, ITPs were grateful about their role to *“build partners’ capacity in service delivery and organisational management, leaving them more resilient and sustainable”* and to learn from grassroots organisations through *the “direct links”*. Two ITPs had consulted the grassroots organisations on thematic programmes and intersectional issues, while many (six out of ten) benefited from further understanding of community needs and inequalities. *“We learned about geographical inequalities. We learned about emerging needs during the COVID period. We learned about insecurities for women such as food, housing, and other needs that they had.”*

Two ITPs were also mindful of the change in relationships with grassroots organisations, as mentioned by an ITP, *“We were doing community development work but now also come in as a funder. [...] They [grassroots organisations] might not want to share some internal issues with us”*. Despite potential power imbalance, ITPs approached grassroots organisations in a way to truly listen to their needs and build their capacity. An ITP shared, *“One organisation said to me, ‘it’s like working with a member of your own family who has experiential insight into what we’re writing.’”* Some were mindful of their new position and strived to use it as a bridge to support the underserved communities.

“The trust has been enhanced. [...] We’ve forged a new relationship with them [the grassroots organisations]. They see us not only helping them with grants but understanding the issues they are dealing with. We often end up talking about sensitive issues, but by having those new relationships with them, we are also enabling that conversation to happen in a safe way.”
(An ITP)

3.3.5 Increased respect in the sector

With the above opportunities, many ITPs (five out of ten) felt that they had raised their profiles. *“We increased our credibility and reputation amongst wider BAME communities and organisations in the UK, strengthening our position as sector leader.”* An ITP had the opportunity to share their learnings with other decision makers in the sector, *“The funding has enabled us to begin conversations with funding bodies. We will be presenting our best practice paper and findings to various stakeholders including funding bodies and the government.”* With these new positions, many felt they gained respect in the sector as a result of managing TGMF.

“I can see just from discussions with other groups that the kudos and respect that we have amongst our communities, and amongst our partners, has been enhanced greatly by the fund from Comic Relief and the successful distribution and the work that we’ve done. So nationally, I think that we have got quite a lot of kudos and national respect.” (An ITP)

4. Impact of TGMF on core stakeholders: grassroots organisations

4.1 Grassroots organisations funded

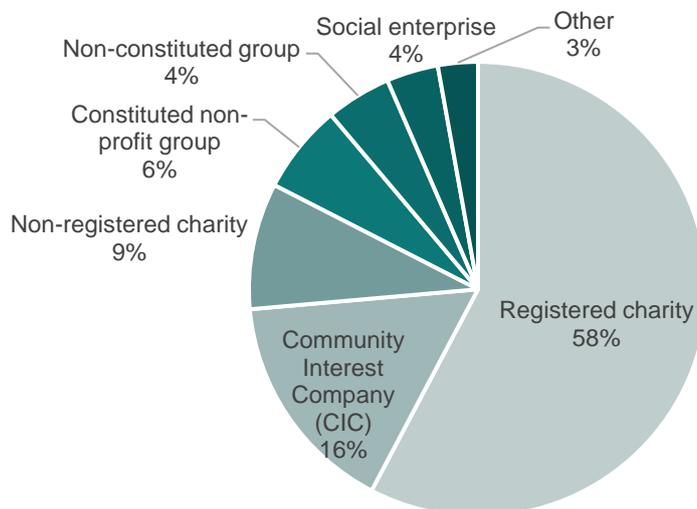
4.1.1 Types of organisations and amounts awarded

Table 6 below provides an overview of the total and average amount in GBP awarded to different types of organisations, as well as the total number of different types of awarded organisations. The total amount available for grant distribution by ITPs was £3,811,750, of which £3,770,824¹⁶ was distributed to 644 grantees, with the average awarded amount being £5,379. Registered charities were the largest recipient of grant funding (285 organisations received 58% of the total funding, see Figure 4 for more details); and received the largest average grant (£7,633). In contrast, non-registered charities received 9% of the total fund, with the average award totalling £2,879.

Table 6 Total and average amount awarded (£) to different types of organisations by TGMF

Organisation type	Number of organisations	Total amount awarded (£)	Average amount awarded (£)
Registered charity	285	2,175,370	7,633
Community Interest Company (CIC)	122	599,861	4,917
Non-registered charity	118	338,626	2,879
Constituted non-profit group	41	238,701	5,968
Non-constituted group	32	174,344	5,448
Social enterprise	28	137,695	4,918
Other	18	106,227	5,901
Total	644	3,770,824	5,379

Figure 4 % of the total amount awarded (£) to different types of organisations by TGMF



4.1.2 Types of services

Table 7 shows the distribution of TGMF funding across organisations providing different services and includes the total and average amount awarded to each service. Some of these service types may overlap with one another (e.g., wellbeing; individual confidence and wellbeing; counselling and/or therapy).

¹⁶ Two ITPs were targeted by a series of fraudulent applications. Thanks to the due diligence done by ITPs, the vast majority were caught at the application stage. Unfortunately, some grants were made to fraudulent organisations and were subsequently reported to the police.

The largest amounts were awarded to organisations providing wellbeing services (£976,378, 26% of the total TGMF funding) and education and training services (£746,675, 20% of the total TGMF funding). Meanwhile, highest average amount was awarded to organisations providing housing support (£26,520), counselling and/or therapy (£25,000), and language services (£20,000). The lowest average amount was awarded to organisations providing food, medicines, and other essentials – these organisations received £3,042 on average.

Table 7 Total and average amount awarded (£) to organisations providing different services by TGMF

Service type	Number of organisations	Total amount awarded (£)	Proportion of the total TGMF funding	Average amount awarded (£)
Wellbeing	204	976,378	26%	4,786
Education and training	125	746,675	20%	5,973
Information and advice	72	515,954	14%	7,166
Food, medicines, and other essentials	109	331,529	9%	3,042
Housing support	8	210,000	6%	26,250
VSO Operational/Core Costs	32	198,977	5%	6,218
Individual confidence and wellbeing	31	191,675	5%	6,183
General advice (including helplines)	10	159,169	4%	15,917
Multiple categories	17	77,909	2%	4,583
Befriending/Mentoring/Socialisation	7	67,906	2%	9,701
Other	9	59,953	2%	6,661
Counselling and/or therapy	2	50,000	1%	25,000
Accommodation and housing	3	45,000	1%	15,000
Organisation running costs	4	41,500	1%	10,375
Food/Food Vouchers	4	36,563	1%	9,141
Temporary emergency response coordination	4	21,645	1%	5,411
Language services	1	20,000	1%	20,000
Education support	1	10,000	<1%	10,000
Digital service delivery (excluding equipment)	1	9,992	<1%	9,992

It is worth noting that funding to grassroots organisations' core costs (i.e., VSO Operational/Core Costs) only accounts for 5% of the total TGMF funding. As many grassroots organisations demanded core, unrestricted funding to ensure their sustainable growth, the reason for the lower percentage of funding to core costs requires further investigation. One reason could be that the communications about the possibility to fund core costs were not clear enough, as it was not explicit in Phase I funding call¹⁷. In fact, only six ITPs had distributed grants that were classified as "VSO Operational/Core Costs". Among the 32 core costs grants, nearly half (15) were awarded by one ITP; two ITPs awarded seven core cost grants respectively; and three ITPs awarded only one core costs grant respectively.

4.1.3 Target groups supported

Regarding organisations targeting different ethnic groups, more than one third (34%, 213 out of 612) of grant-receiving organisations were supporting multiple ethnic groups (Table 8). These organisations also received the largest total amount from TGMF (£953,806), though the average amount awarded was slightly lower than the overall average (£4,499 vs. £5,379). The lowest total amount was awarded to organisations supporting White and Asian (£6,592) and White and Black Caribbean (£5,000) communities, however, only one organisation each received a grant.

¹⁷ <https://www.comicrelief.com/intermediary-funding-bame-led-partner-opportunity>

The average amount awarded to organisations targeting different ethnic groups varied to a considerable extent. As an example, organisations supporting people from other mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds received £10,261 on average, which is almost double the total average. In comparison, organisations supporting Jewish communities were awarded £1,944 on average; organisations supporting beneficiaries from the Caribbean, Indian, and Pakistani backgrounds received between £3,000 and £4,000. It is worth investigating the variation, as there could be several factors such as some organisations tend to apply for smaller grants or potential biases in grant making decisions.

Table 8 The total number, total and average amount (£) awarded by TGMF to organisations targeting different ethnic groups.

Target group supported	Number of organisations	Total amount awarded (£)	Average amount awarded (£)
Multiple groups	213	953,806	4,499
African	127	754,605	5,942
Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background	67	687,539	10,262
African and Caribbean	67	357,771	5,340
Black British	37	153,955	4,161
Other White background	23	114,447	4,976
White and Black African	13	66,296	5,100
Caribbean	10	31,400	3,140
British Asian	10	147,170	14,717
Indian	9	33,606	3,734
Jewish	9	17,500	1,944
Any other Asian background	7	32,426	4,632
Bangladeshi	4	32,290	8,073
Other ethnic group	4	31,492	7,873
Arab	3	18,287	6,096
Pakistani	3	9,399	3,133
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller	2	13,998	6,999
Latin American	2	20,990	10,495
White and Asian	1	6,592	6,592
White and Black Caribbean	1	5,000	5,000
Total	612	3,770,824.09	5,379.21

Table 9 Disaggregation of seven most supported target groups by types of organisations, including the total number and the percentage. The table excludes the rest of the target groups due to low numbers.

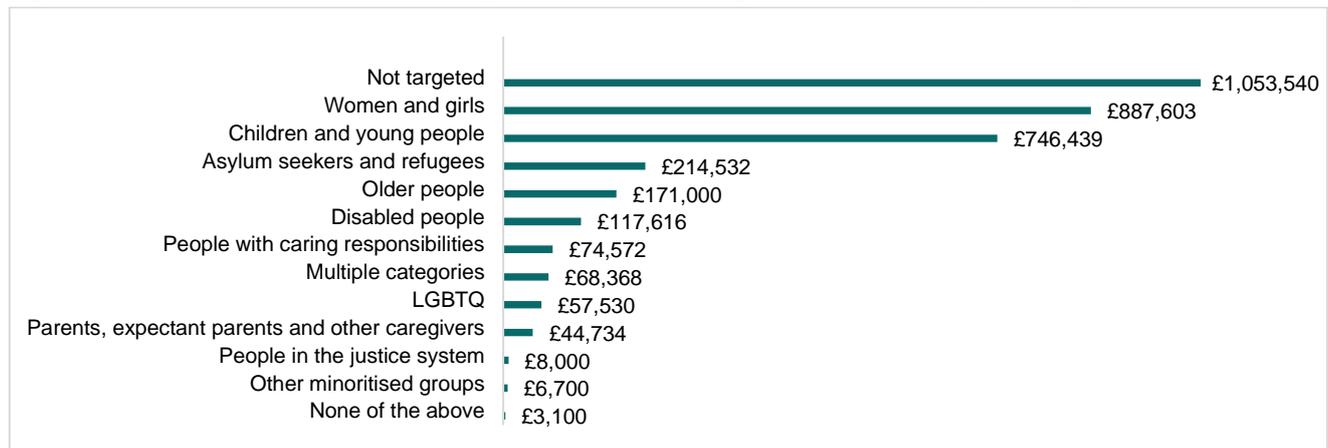
	Registered charity (N = 263)	Community Interest Company (N = 118)	Non-registered charity (N = 117)	Constituted non-profit group (N = 40)	Non-constituted group (N = 32)	Social enterprise (N = 26)	Other (N = 16)
Multiple groups	72 (27%)	40 (34%)	39 (33%)	21 (53%)	22 (69%)	13 (50%)	6 (38%)
African	57 (22%)	20 (17%)	31 (26%)	9 (23%)	3 (9%)	5 (19%)	2 (13%)
Other mixed or multiple ethnic	44 (17%)	14 (12%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	1 (4%)	4 (25%)
African and Caribbean	32 (12%)	10 (8%)	16 (14%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	4 (15%)	2 (13%)
Other White background	13 (5%)	1 (1%)	8 (7%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Black British	10 (4%)	23 (19%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Most types of organisations supported a similar pattern of ethnic groups as the overall total (see Table 9). 27% of registered charities supported beneficiaries from multiple groups and 22% of them supported people from African background. More than a third (34%) of Community Interest Companies supported multiple groups, but 19% of them supported Black British beneficiaries (in other words, 62% of all organisations supporting Black British communities were CIC). Multiple groups made up half or more of all beneficiaries for constituted and non-constituted non-profit groups and social enterprises.

4.1.4 Intersectional issues

With any ethnic groups, different identities could influence people’s experience of inequality; thus, it is important to review racial inequality through an intersectional lens. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of the overall awards by different intersectional issues of racial inequality. The largest proportion of the fund was received by organisations not targeting any specific beneficiary focus groups (£1,053,540), followed by organisations supporting women and girls (£887,603) and organisations supporting children and young people (£746,439).

Figure 5 Total amount awarded (£) to organisations supporting different beneficiary focus groups by TGMF.



The total number of beneficiaries at the end of the funding was 97,133 (Table 10), however, 49 organisations did not report on the numbers of beneficiaries so the actual number might be higher. Even fewer organisations reported on the gender of the participants (191 organisations reported this data six months into the funding and 437 organisations reported the data at the end of the funding).

Table 10 Total and average numbers of female and male beneficiaries 6 months into the funding and at the end of the funding

	Total number of beneficiaries	Total number and % of female beneficiaries	Total number and % of male beneficiaries
At six months	31,506 <i>Data available for 228 organisations</i>	12,698 (48%) <i>Data available for 191 organisations</i>	13,577 (52%) <i>Data available for 191 organisations</i>
At the end of the funding	97,133 <i>Data available for 595 organisations</i>	37,915 (59%) <i>Data available for 437 organisations</i>	25,708 (40%) <i>Data available for 437 organisations</i>

Based on the data we have from six months into the funding, the total female and male beneficiary numbers were almost equal (48% female vs. 52% male); in comparison, the data collected at the end of the funding shows that 59% of the beneficiaries were female in comparison to 40% male. It is worth noting that the latter data is more accurate as it had the data from a bigger number of

organisations that received grants (in comparison to the data provided six months into the funding), however, the data on gender is still missing for almost a third of all grantees. Additionally, we should keep in mind that almost a third of the total funding was awarded to organisations specifically supporting women and girls (Figure 5 above), therefore it is possible that women and girls were underrepresented across other categories; however, complete data on beneficiaries by gender would be required to make any conclusions.

4.1.5 Geographical locations

Among the regions of the UK, the largest proportion of grantees were in Northwest England (32%), followed by the Greater London area (23%) (See Figure 6). The only other region in England that had more than 5% of the grantees was West Midlands, and a further 10% of grantees came from the rest of England. 9% of grantees were in Scotland, 8% of grantees in Northern Ireland, and 7% of grantees in Wales. After London, Manchester was the city with the most grantees (93 out of 643 grantees came from Manchester, or 14% of all grantees).

Figure 6 Percentage of grantees located across different regions of the UK

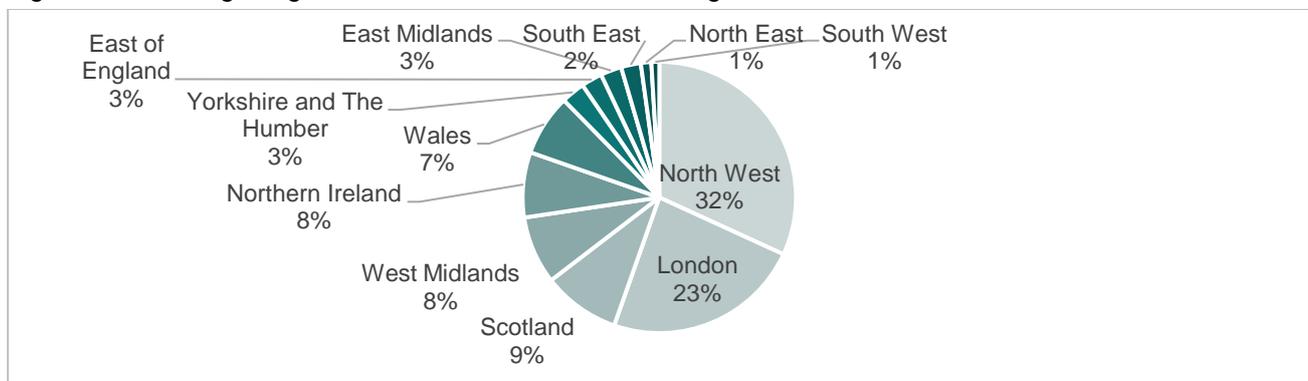
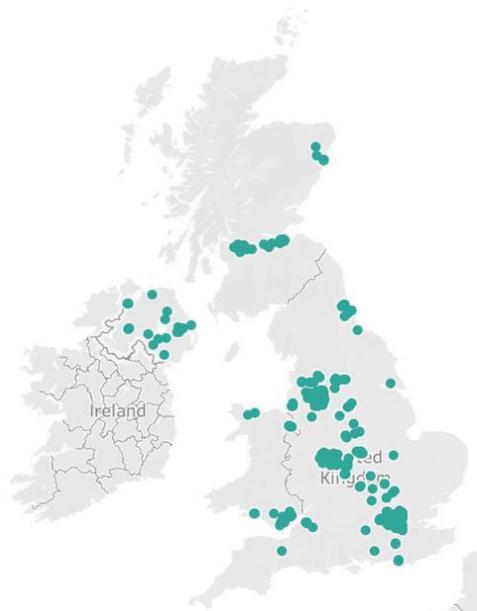


Figure 7 Locations of grantees across the UK



These proportions are slightly different from the distribution of the target groups (i.e., communities experiencing racial inequality) across the UK, which might be explained by the locations of the ITPs. For example, 25% of the awarded grassroots organisations were awarded through an ITP in Manchester, which would explain why Northwest England organisations received the largest proportion of all grants, even though only 10% of the region's population could be considered as

target groups for TGMF. However, it is worth noting that these numbers represent the number of grantee organisations, rather than the amount awarded. The full geographical distribution of grantee locations can be observed in Figure 7.

Table 11 demonstrates the total number of grants and the total awarded amount across different countries. 62% of all TGMF grants were awarded across England, followed by 11% in Scotland, 9% in Wales, and 9% in Northern Ireland. Further 9% took place nationally, across the UK. One grant awarded took place in Ireland.

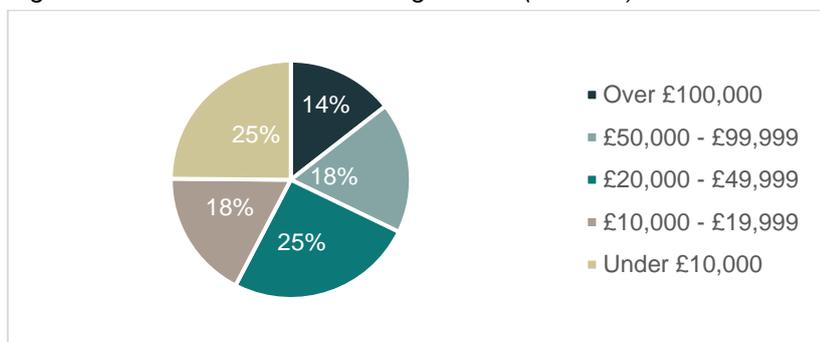
Table 11 Number of grants and total amount awarded (£) by different countries (N = 539)

Country	Number of grants	Amount awarded (£)
England	335	2,190,452
UK	49	451,284
Scotland	58	443,514
Wales	47	384,883
Northern Ireland	50	298,547

4.1.6 Organisational sizes

Analysis of the grantees' annual incomes (see Figure 8) showed that 43% of all grantees had an annual income of less than £20,000 a year and a further 43% earned between £20,000 and £50,000 annually. It is estimated that 65% of charities led by communities experiencing racial inequality had a turnover of less than £10,000¹⁸, and they are often unable to access institutional funding – which TGMF has been able to address. Only 14% of grantees had a turnover of £100,000 a year. While the average grantee annual income was £54,279, median grantee income was almost half as much as that at £26,143.

Figure 8 Annual income of TGMF grantees (N = 356)

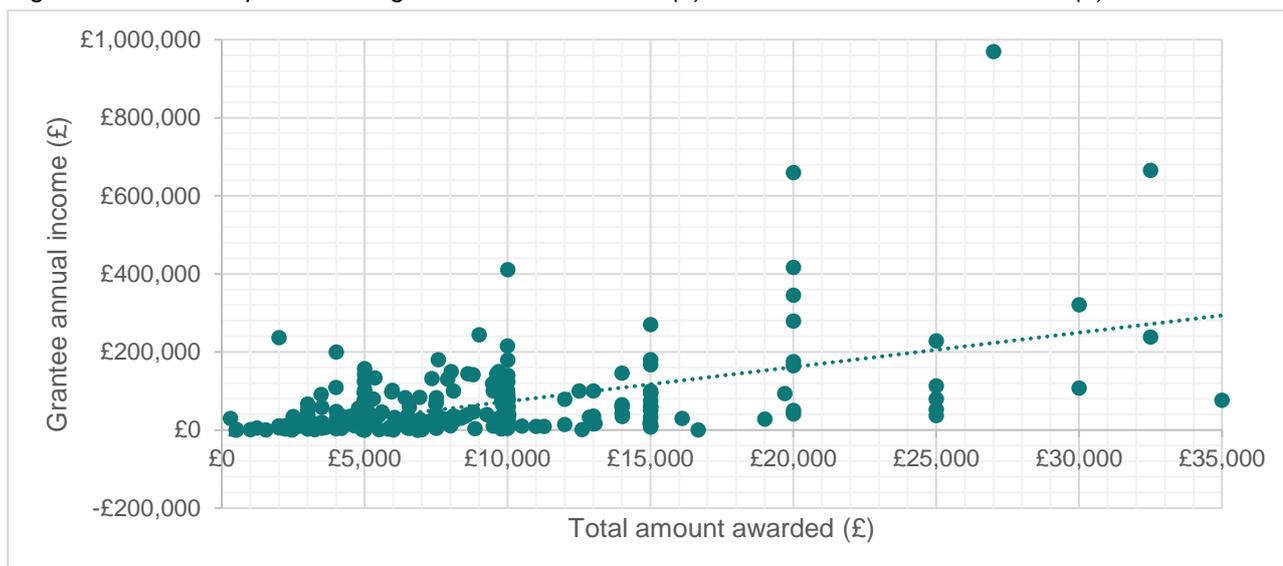


Moreover, grantees that had a higher annual income were significantly more likely to be awarded a larger grant (see Figure 9), which was confirmed by a statistical test ($r = 0.53$, $p = 0.00$). Several factors could contribute to this pattern, which is worth examining further. For example, if this is because smaller organisations tend to apply for smaller grants; if the risk appetite of the funder affects the amount of funding awarded to smaller organisations.

In terms of different organisation types (Table 12), registered charities earned the highest average annual income (£81,354), while non-constituted groups reported the lowest annual incomes (£7,608). All other types of organisations' average annual incomes ranged between £14,954 and £43,573.

¹⁸ Charity So White. [Open Letter: Relief Packages for The Charitable Sector](#).

Figure 9 Relationships between grantee annual income (£) and the total amount awarded (£)



Note: one outlier, a grantee with an annual income of £1,613,466 (and a £30,000 grant), was excluded from this analysis.

Table 12 Average grantee annual income across different types of organisations funded by TGMF

Organisation type	Average grantee annual income (£)
Registered charity	81,354
Other	43,573
Community Interest Company (CIC)	30,718
Social enterprise	24,986
Non-registered charity	21,060
Constituted non-profit group	14,954
Non-constituted group	7,608

Table 13 Average grantee annual income disaggregated by different ethnic groups supported

Ethnic group supported	Average grantee annual income (£)	Number of organisations
Latin American	659,953	2
British Asian	201,471	10
Gypsy	93,500	2
Other, Mixed or Multiple ethnic background	74,154	67
Multiple groups	53,671	213
Other ethnic group	48,833	4
Arab	48,122	3
African	42,777	127
African and Caribbean	42,048	67
Black British	30,382	37
Any other Asian background	30,195	7
Caribbean	27,587	10
Bangladeshi	23,877	4
Other White background	21,442	23
White and Black African	21,325	13
Pakistani	7,471	3
White and Asian	6,548	1
Indian	2,747	9
White and Black Caribbean	2,700	1

Regarding grassroots organisations' annual income and the ethnic groups they supported, we can see in Table 13 there is a clear outlier in the sample, specifically for the Latin American communities. This is because out of two organisations that support Latin American communities only one provided their income data, which is £659,953. The next group of organisations with the highest average annual incomes support British Asian communities, which is because four out of ten such organisations funded by TGMF earn more than £200,000 annually. Lowest average annual income (< £3,000 yearly) was reported by grantees supporting Indian and White and Black Caribbean communities. However, there may be some overlaps in these categories (e.g., British Asian may include Indian; Mixed may include White and Black Caribbean). Nonetheless, this may provide a picture to understand whether organisations led by some ethnic groups have received systematically less funding than others. It is worth considering providing additional support to these ethnic groups, in terms of needs assessment, funding amount and funding applications.

Zooming in on recommendations

Examine initial trends from grant making data regarding grassroots organisations in further detail in future evaluations

Analysis from grant making data revealed some trends that warrant further investigation: only 5% of the total TGMF funding went to funding organisations' core costs, and these applications came from only a handful of ITPs. There were also variations based on ethnic groups and organisations' sizes, which may indicate potential biases in the grant making processes. There were also data gaps in relation to intersectional issues, such as gender. It could be difficult to unpack these variations and draw statistically significant conclusions as each grouping may be too small. These might be addressed in future evaluation as well as potential capacity building for ITPs in building more robust data infrastructure.

4.2 Opportunities created

4.2.1 *Continual delivery of work*

With the funding, many grassroots organisations (12 out of 28 consulted in this evaluation) expressed that they were able to continue their work in the communities, even though there was an increased level of support needed in the communities and internal uncertainty brought by Covid-19 (such as staff sick leave and care leave). These service provisions include delivering frontline services, extending the hours for helplines, building safe community spaces, and developing preventive work. Organisations were striking a balance between frontline and back-office work, supporting internal staff in terms of upskilling, mental health, and remote working. A few (four out of 28) were able to reach more people and establish better relationships with communities. *"We established a stronger confidence in our service users in feeling comfortable in asking for help from our and other organisations, especially with food security and coping in winter, as culturally it is usually an uncomfortable thing for them to do."* (a grassroots organisation)

Due to the emergency nature of the funding, a few (four out of 12 who mentioned the benefits of being able to continue delivery) felt it was too early to identify any longer-term outcomes, while other organisations had seen opportunities created, as discussed below.

4.2.2 *Gain awareness and build collaborations*

As a result of the fund, many grassroots organisations (13 out of 28) mentioned that they had gained more awareness and even established longer term collaboration or partnerships with organisations they met or collaborated with. The collaboration came from being more visible as they delivered work in the communities, as described by a grassroots organisation, *"As we were able to deliver more*

activities in the community, we gained more awareness, connected and met more people, both actual service users and partners.” The collaboration also sprouted from the networking in the communities, as described by another grassroots organisation, *“We had chances to network and then partnered with other organisations. It gave us confidence.”* The benefits of collaborations could potentially contribute to long-term positive outcomes for grassroots organisations, as summarised by a grassroots organisation, *“The funds have enabled us not only to help improve the living conditions of the community we serve but also it has enabled us to create partnerships and connections to other organisations and sources of funds. This has made our operations more efficient and timely specifically due to the communication network we keep with other organisations.”*

4.2.3 Unlock other funding opportunities

Grassroots organisations’ continued work in the communities, increased visibility and new collaborations contributed to them unlocking new funding opportunities. *“The funds facilitated new collaborations with other grassroots organisations as well as opening doors to receiving funding from other organisations.”* (a grassroots organisation) Since receiving grants from ITPs at TGMF, some grassroots organisations (six out of 28) received new funding and two others were applying for funding with the examples of TGMF. Two others felt that their relationship with funders had improved.

“We created about 10 volunteers who supported vaccine centres plus we now run a community fridge run by volunteers. We also received private donations of money from another charity when they saw our good work.” (a grassroots organisation)

4.2.4 Improved internal infrastructure

With the experience accumulated through the fund, a few grassroots organisations (three out of 28) were able to refine their service delivery model or develop new services, which had the potential to bring in more opportunities. *“We have developed what we do. There is potential for us to use the same model in other boroughs.”* (a grassroots organisation) *“It enabled us to present our programme to some corporates, as they know it’s more established now. We received good feedback and buy-in.”* (a grassroots organisation) Through the capacity building support by ITPs, a grassroots organisation shared that they also developed their infrastructure, making them more established. *“It helps to shape the structure of our organisation to be more sustainable.”*

4.3 Barriers remained

The partnership model used in TGMF seemed effective in addressing some barriers faced by organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality (the barriers were discussed across the report and specifically in Section 5). Grassroots organisations were supported in their funding applications and organisational development during the grant period. However, other broader issues, such as their sustainability (discussed in Section 2.4.1) and their connections with funders, remained unaddressed.

Thinking about the partnership model, a grassroots organisation questioned the existence of the *“middlemen”* between funders and grassroots organisations. It was felt by that grassroots organisation that the partnership should be built between funders and grassroots-led organisations, *“if more time, energy, resources were put into the grassroots and not on the middlemen, then you’ll have a much more flourishing sector”*.

Some grassroots organisations felt that the grant was *“not cost effective in terms of the amount of the work you put in the context”* and some had to reduce their overheads to deliver projects. The unforeseen challenges caused by the uncertainty of Covid-19 influenced how projects could or should be delivered in communities. For example, some in-person community projects needed to be

delivered online; some grassroots organisations who had only few personnel needed to rethink their project delivery when core staff should be on leave (due to sickness or caring responsibilities); some grassroots organisations tried to embed mental health support in their service (such as helpline) and upskill staff in a short period (such as how to deal with bereavement). Grassroots organisations shared such challenges with ITPs. Two grassroots organisations appreciated that ITPs understood their challenges and allowed them to postpone their projects. But given the parameters of the grants, not all challenges could be addressed fully and have caused frustration among grassroots organisations:

“These grants are not sufficient to meet the enormous needs of BAME communities in light of COVID-19. [...] These grants [allocated to grassroots organisations] cannot cover the increased costs (e.g., digitalisation, upskilling of staff) to deliver services amidst COVID-19 restrictions.”
(a grassroots organisation)

“The challenge we faced was addressing the increased demand for services from vulnerable communities in need of unparalleled levels of support using the pot of fund we received, we had to prioritise and safeguard our beneficiaries facing the most challenging times.”
(a grassroots organisation)

In addition, grassroots organisations tended to lack connections with or visibility to funders, which put them in a disadvantaged position when competing with other more established groups. Many interviewees (both grassroots organisations and ITPs) emphasised the importance of bridging the connections between funders and grassroots organisations. This could be done through a range of methods, such as providing recognition (through badges, certificates, bulletins, ceremonies), organising networking events, involving grassroots in some of the Comic Relief activities and visiting some grassroots organisations funded by Comic Relief.

“Is there any opportunity to stay involved? I hope there was a bulletin to show what we do, or an interactive event to celebrate what we have done. We’d like to have a working relationship with the funder, they can involve us to organise such events.” (A grassroots organisation)

“If Comic Relief has a certificate or badge that could have gone to say, guys you’ve done fantastic, and here’s a Comic Relief badge. I would have loved that the people are walking around because they’re proud that they got funded through that, and they did something in the emergency. You might want to have some awards ceremony for people for what happened in these two years.” (An ITP)

“There is no link between Comic Relief and us. It’d be great to have the first level funder to see and hear organisations on the ground, to understand the nature of the work we do. So, when they design the new fund, they can provide better support.” (a grassroots organisation)

Zooming in on recommendations

Bring visibility to the grassroots organisations.

Even though Comic Relief does not directly work with grassroots organisations, it should consider ways to showcase the achievements made by grassroots organisations through TGMF and foster connections between them. Not only can this recognise the importance of work delivered by grassroots organisations and raise their profile, but it can also help Comic Relief connect with organisations on the frontline and inform decision making in future funding design. There could be a range of methods, such as providing recognition (through badges, certificates, bulletins,

ceremonies), organising networking events, involving grassroots organisations in some of the Comic Relief activities and visiting some grassroots organisations funded by Comic Relief.

5. Taking a step back: sector gaps

During the data collection, all participants (ITPs, grassroots organisations, unsuccessful ITP applicants and external consultants) were asked about their perceptions of the barriers faced by communities experiencing racial inequality and the changes that should happen in the funding sector. These perceptions are discussed below.

5.1 Underfunded sector

In the funding sector, the barriers and inequalities faced by communities experiencing racial inequality have been well discussed in the literature. Organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality have traditionally faced significant barriers in accessing support and funding. The same issues were highlighted once more by all the interviewees.

In terms of the capacity of grassroots organisations, the barriers include the lack of dedicated resources to write funding applications, lack of confidence resulting from constant rejection from funders and lack of connections with funders and challenges in staffing. Driven by passion, many would choose to devote their limited resources to the communities. *“We have to choose between supporting vulnerable people or writing application forms.”*

The barriers perceived by grassroots organisations could be the result of the decisions made by funders. Funding tends to be short-term and project-based, making applicants compromise on their longer-term mission:

“We tend to do more work than we are paid for because they are project based. A lot of funders don't seem to want to fund core costs, even for staff. It takes passion for what you do and a strong determination to continue working as a small charity in the midst of very big organisations.” (a grassroots organisation)

Short-term funding, in return, caused insecurity in grassroots organisations: *“We have found donors are willing to donate to our project as a one off but we are seeking stability.” (a grassroots organisation)*. To sustain their projects, grassroots organisations were constantly looking for funding: *“We struggle with persistency and haven't overcome it yet. We always need to look for a larger grant so that we can be more sustainable.” (a grassroots organisation)*

The insecurity had been mounting since the sudden influx of emergency funding. There was a risk for smaller organisations, which suddenly received a large amount of funding, but not being able to sustain fundraising efforts after the pandemic when the emergency funding decreased. The risk could be summarised by the observation of an ITP:

“The bits that I see that concern me are some very, very small groups that have been receiving funding from multiple funders, emergency funding. Some groups are struggling to manage that huge upscaling of what they do, with all these multiple streams. There's a level of panic starting to creep in, amongst organisations whose funding is now drying up a little bit, but COVID isn't over. The expectations of the community are much higher.” (An ITP)

Structural racism and inequality have been present within the funding sector. While the partnership model of TGMF was welcomed, when talking about the potential for other funders to partner with organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality, interviewees often

mentioned words such as “*courage*”, “*brave*” and “*a leap of faith*”. Two grassroots organisations expressed frustration that their success rate would be higher if they partnered with white-led organisations. While they, as organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequality, received less share of funding in the partnership, they often did most of the work. It was felt important for the funders to recognise the pivotal role of these grassroots organisations in serving communities experiencing racial inequalities and the fact that they might not have the same track records and opportunities as their white counterparts. It was also felt important for the funders to revisit their funding models, including the application process, evaluation requirements and fund design.

“We are competing with [white-led] organisations that have been in this field and have tremendous advantages. Because, you know, they’re much more embedded in the funding charitable sector than we are. So, we’re always starting off at a disadvantage and I think that’s something funders need to factor in when they’re thinking about funding the sustainability of grassroots organisations.” (a grassroots organisation)

“They’re run by passion and volunteering. And they’ll continue to do that whether they have the money or not. They don’t want to be big either. The genuine ones who do that work are not aspiring to be big bureaucracies and organisations. I think funders need to recognise that.” (An ITP)

5.2 Perceptions of the emergency funding

5.2.1 “Funders are jumping on the bandwagon”

With the racial inequalities brought to light by Covid-19 and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, more funding has been devoted to supporting the long-underserved sector of communities experiencing racial inequality. However, many worried about this phenomenon and were sceptical of funders and their intentions. “*Many funders don’t fully know what is happening on the ground. It could be trendy, so they fund it.*”, expressed a grassroots organisation. Some also argued that the dominance of project-based funding posed a threat to the sustainability of grassroots organisations in the field, as many of them had never been supported to develop their infrastructure. This can be summarised by a grassroots organisation that highlighted the issue of structural challenges within the funding sector, “*We don’t have the structure to raise funds but it’s an expectation of us. It has a knock-on effect on us. Now funders are jumping on the bandwagon, so organisations can raise some funds. But there needs to be a shift for us to also obtain the core finance.*”

5.2.2 “It’s not an influx of funding”

In the research, interviewees were asked about their thoughts on the funder perception that there has been a sudden influx of funding, which aims to support organisations’ Covid-19 recovery. Some interviewees welcomed the influx of funding, but some thought the increase in funding should not be called an ‘influx’. This is because the sector still faces extreme funding pressures: “*The sector always operated with extreme underfunding. If there is enough influx, we will have more development in the sector*”, commented an ITP.

“Comic Relief needs to invest more than what they did now, because it’s like, they’ve got a loaf of bread, they’re cutting it and the crumbs are what they give to you. It feels like that we’re still on the margins. I would want Comic Relief to talk to other funders as well, to use this model to increase our capacity, to start with developing Black and Minority Groups.” (An ITP)

There is always much more demand than supply, especially in a historically underfunded sector. The fact that some ITPs received far more applications than expected and could only fund a small portion of them further evidenced the imbalance of supply and demand of funding in the sector to

communities experiencing racial inequality. Acknowledging the situation, a grassroots organisation further emphasised the importance of examining the origin of funding to see whether it came from exploitative sources, *“It’s a small pot of funding and at some point, the money will run out, but we need to ethically look at where the money has come out.”*

5.2.3 “Funders should coordinate themselves”

To address the systemic barriers faced by organisations led by communities experiencing racial inequality, effective funders’ coordination would be important, as TGMF is only one out of many funds. Funders’ coordination will make the grant making process easier and smoother for these groups, which are often resource-strapped, as well as to ensure a sustained focus on racial equity. One key area mentioned requiring funders’ coordination was the application and reporting standards. *“[Funders need to] think about what else other funders are doing at the exact moment for that exact client group.”* This could include providing standard forms or a standard set of questions and guidance in ways to fulfil the requirements if they are targeting similar causes and similar groups. Such coordination was felt particularly crucial considering the emergency context, so that organisations could focus their efforts on delivery and addressing communities’ needs.

Another area that needed coordination was for the funder to take a “landscape” approach, mapping what was out there, who they were funding and if further funding could add value or hinder growth. An ITP mentioned, *“It’s difficult to get funders to talk to each other, but they should join up.”* This was perceived by others as essential, as it could avoid duplication of efforts and distribute money in a better way.

Zooming in on recommendations

Influence other major funders and the funding sector

With the success of the TGMF model, several organisations expressed hope for other funders to recognise and adopt this partnership and trust-based model. Comic Relief should play the role in influencing other major funders and the wider sector, including (1) enabling funders’ coordination on funding needs, application and assessment process and reporting requirements; (2) advocating for a funding partnership model through approaches such as publicising this report, facilitating a funder roundtable event, and holding a learning event that involves funders, intermediaries, and grassroots organisations.

5.3 Changes that people want to see from large institutional funders

“At the very last meeting that we had with Comic Relief, the fact that they were saying they’re looking at doing more of this funding was so heartening, because we are not seeing many funders doing that. We are actually seeing funders stepping back from funding race equality and moving away to either business as usual or colour-blind approach.” (An ITP)

5.3.1 “Take a leap of faith in us”

The funding model used by TGMF has instilled certain confidence in communities that have historically experienced underinvestment and denial from funding. Many ITPs hoped other funders could trust the organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality. *“The fact that the Comic Relief has had the courage to actually give their own responsibility to BAME groups to do on their behalf is excellent, because most funders are very protective.” (An ITP)*

Acknowledging the courage funders needed to take, an ITP stressed the importance to break the cycle of mistrust: *“it's harder for Black organisations to gain major funds, so it's harder to build up the track record. So it's harder for major donors to have trust in Black organisations. Now that cycle must be broken. And so, it's almost a leap of faith to enable us to break that cycle.”*

5.3.2 “A genuine commitment to investing in BAME communities”

Almost all participants (ITPs, grassroots organisations, unsuccessful applicants, external consultants) in the research raised serious concerns about the sustainability of the funding towards communities experiencing racial inequality. It was perceived that many funders were *“one-off, gone after money was spent, as though that particular issue has gone away”* and that funders *“were afraid of being political”*. These attitudes could impact the trust between funders and communities, especially with a sector that has been underfunded and denied by funders. Even if the initial funding is in a shorter-term or in an emergency context, it is important for funders to revisit their model and action next steps. Funders should engage with communities genuinely, not only spending time to learn and unlearn from their approaches but also committing longer-term or multi-phase funding.

5.3.3 Building meaningful relationships with communities experiencing racial inequality

To further their commitment, it is also critical for funders to connect with communities and undergo relevant training, such as diversity, equity and inclusion, power dynamics in funding and participatory grant making. Acknowledging this, an external consultant argued:

“I think there is distrust from funders – they don't understand the communities, they don't have connections with these grassroots organisations. There is a lack of understanding of what's needed. Funders should have DEI training, shaking the organisations from the top.”

5.3.4 Funding emerging and long-term needs

Although the funding could support organisations to deliver important work in the communities, some grassroots organisations believed that the short-term period is *“rush”, “unrealistic”,* and *“diluting what we do just to get little amount of money”*. Others wished there could be core-funding or unrestricted funding for them to further their mission and develop their sustainability.

“Without the core, we can't sustain and it's always running from project to project. Our community is at a disadvantage so the funding process should be different. People know we will be there even we run of money, so we are surviving but it's not right.” (a grassroots organisation)

In addition to the urgency of meeting communities' core needs (such as food banks), there were also concerns about the lack of funding for emerging needs. An ITP pointed out the need to continue funding emerging issues: *“The emergency funding came out, but what we didn't see and had asked for was a second round. Emerging issues funding didn't materialise. There are emerging issues that were different from the points when funding was available.”*

To identify emerging needs, engagement with communities would be critical. A few emerging needs mentioned by interviewees were mental health, support for key workers who need to have longer shifts and support for children and young people whose parents passed away.

“We are happy that there was some funding provided due to COVID but that is a firefighter's approach. What we are looking for is something that is a long time because of future effects. The sudden inflows were provided to meet the immediate needs. We're not looking at what we've made immediate but future long-term needs.” (An ITP)

6. Recommendations to Comic Relief

To build on the success of TGMF funding model and learn from the barriers, we suggest a just transition journey for TGMF. Based on the model published by Justice Funders¹⁹, philanthropy operates within the spectrum of extractive and transformational:



We recommend Comic Relief implement the actions outlined below to be a regenerative and even transformational funder. The recommendations are based on the findings from this evaluation of Phase I TGMF, while some might have already been considered in subsequent phases.

	Regenerative philanthropy (based on the Justice Funders model)	Recommendations to Comic Relief (considering the evaluation findings)
Relationship to grantees and communities	Authentic partnership where grantees retain the right to design the solutions for their lives rather than have approaches imposed on them.	<p>Continue the partnership model with ITPs. The authentic partnership and relational approach should transfer to Comic Relief more broadly, beyond the designated funding managers for TGMF.</p> <p>Ensure visibility to the grassroots organisations. Comic Relief should consider ways to showcase the achievements made by grassroots organisations through TGMF and foster connections between them.</p>
Leadership	Leadership views its role as one that helps to facilitate the effective stewardship of all philanthropic resources into community control.	<p>Influence other major funders and the funding sector. Comic Relief should play the role in influencing other major funders and the wider sector, including (1) enabling funders' coordination on funding needs, application and assessment process and reporting requirements; (2) advocating for a funding partnership model with organisations led by and for communities experiencing racial inequality.</p>
Grant making operations	Operational processes are primarily oriented around how to best support grantees and communities in achieving their vision of social change.	<p>Examine initial trends from grant making data regarding grassroots organisations in further detail and support ITPs to improve data infrastructure. Analysis of grant making data revealed some trends that warrant further investigation, such as the variations in core funding, ethnic groups, organisations' sizes, and data gaps in relation to intersectional issues. These could be addressed in future evaluations as well as potential capacity building for ITPs in building a more robust data infrastructure.</p>

¹⁹ http://justicefunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Spectrum_Final_12.6.pdf

Grant making strategy	Grant making strategies are developed by movement leaders who are accountable to an organised base (i.e., residents and community members).	Provide funding that enables sustainability. To address structural inequality faced by communities experiencing racial inequality, Comic Relief should provide funding that can enable organisations' sustainability, communicate their commitment more broadly and ringfence funding for organisations' continual development. The grant making strategy, building on the partnership model in TGMF, could be further co-designed with ITPs and grassroots organisations. Further funding should include core funding and ongoing, long-term funding.
Grant making parameter	Grant making parameter is determined by movement leaders who are accountable to an organised base.	Reconsider the management costs and embed capacity building elements in the fund. With the partnership model with ITP, Comic Relief should revisit the definition and percentage of management costs. Consider including the costs to ITPs of providing capacity building support.
Grant making decision	Decision-making power about grants has been transferred completely to movement leaders/organisations who are accountable to an organised base.	Bring in more diverse and intersectional lived experience in the assessment. To address potential biases during the assessment stage, Comic Relief should consider consulting more people with lived experience (in terms of racial inequality and its intersecting issues) or including a peer-led selection approach in the assessment process.

In conclusion, with the success of the TGMF model, several organisations expressed a hope for other funders to recognise and adopt this partnership and trust-based model. Many also believe Comic Relief played a key role in influencing other major funders and the wider sector.

“The fact that Comic Relief came up with the idea of working with BAME intermediaries in order to reach other BAME groups, I think it’s a domino effect. I wish that other funders would also do the same. It would create opportunities in their portfolios and would really be helpful in having resources invested in the communities.” (An ITP)

Specific to funding in the emergency context, the approach adopted by TGMF to work in partnership with ITPs has enabled funding to be distributed quickly, equitably and to the communities most affected by the pandemic. It has also enabled Comic Relief to fund organisations they have not been able to fund in the past. This distributed, ‘hub-and-spoke’ model of funding in the emergency context, contrasts with more centralised models adopted by other funders, most of whom have ended supporting existing grantees rather than reaching new organisations.

Furthermore, there were learnings from this evaluation that would be implemented in future evaluations of TGMF, both in terms of gaps of this evaluation that would be addressed, as well as initial trends identified that would be investigated further. Phase II evaluation would be taking place throughout the course of 2022.

Finally, the fact that TGMF can be implemented is also thanks to the institutional changes of Comic Relief, which has committed to shifting the power. These lessons can be shared by Comic Relief with other funders, to inspire them to go on a similar journey towards equitable grant making.