

Maokwo, MiFriendly Cities at the Rising Global Peace Forum

## **INNOVATIONS IN PROJECT STRUCTURE:** A MULTI-PARTNER, REGIONAL **APPROACH**

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This project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Urban Innovative Action's initiative



Large scale, multi-partner projects can **deliver a range of services to a region - joined up -** , and of creating a well-rounded and joined up 'offer' for a funder, a locality, and for the individual beneficiary. However, managing such a partnership can be challenging, as organisations work differently and have different aims.

MiFriendly Cities (MiFC) adopted an ambitious structure to deliver the project from the outset, bringing together a partnership of 11 organisations including three city councils, six NGOs, a university and a commercial partner, spanning a particularly large geographical West Midlands region. Together, they delivered over 30 different activities and programmes [1]. This structure was innovative within the UK context, bringing three large city councils (each with more than 250,000 citizens) together in one joint bid, which is unusual in the UK.

The MiFriendly Cities partnership was awarded £3.7m of co-funding by the EU's Urban Innovative Actions fund (part of the European Regional Development Fund) to explore how to make Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton more 'migrant-friendly'. The project rain from March 2018 to May 2021.

A migrant-friendly city is one where the voices, skills and passion of refugees and migrants flourish, so that all branches of the community are fully invested in its future, and the social and economic fabric of the region is strengthened. This project was focused on supporting grassroots activity and on the delivery of specialist services to facilitate migrant integration - across health, citizenship, employment, and language skills, and also included the funding of 30 social enterprise and innovation projects.

This paper explores the benefits and challenges of working in a large multi-partner structure; takes a look at key recommendations that have emerged from the MiFriendly Cities project experience; and offers a detailed case study about the project.

[1] Partners included: Coventry City Council (CCC) (project lead); Birmingham City Council (BCC); City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC); Coventry University (CU); Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC); Coventry University Social Enterprise (CUSE); Refugee and Migrant Centre (Birmingham and Wolverhampton) (RMC); Migrant Voice (MV); MigrationWork CIC (MW); Central England Law Centre (CELC); and Interserve (a commercial facilities-management company and employer).



# Key benefits of a large partnership with a diverse range of organisations

- A multi-partner project with a variety of activities for migrants enables them to build relationships with a range of organisations across a region or city. This is also true, and especially important for grassroots groups.
- Participants benefit from accessing a wide range of services, and thereby being supported in a holistic way from different angles.
- This structure creates an arena in which the institutions involved in the partnership can develop their own interaction and collaborative spirit. This can lead to new ways of working.
- And to wider project reach

#### What enables effective partnership working?

The next three pages summarise key stages needed to ensure that the full benefits accrue in delivering effective large scale multi-partner projects

#### **Effective administration and governance**

A strong and formalised governance structure and processes is important to manage the complexity of partners, activities and finance. This should include regular meetings at various levels and between different thematic areas, and should also be reviewed, and adapted and changed if need be, based on conversations with the partners.

#### Fostering inter-partnership working on joint activities and events

These are some ways to make the most from a joint partnership:

- Public events (such as events showcasing project activities) help to demonstrate that the
  whole is greater than the sum of the parts. They provide opportunities for partners to
  work closely together to create content, distribute event invitations, and provide event
  support. This creates moments for sharing of new ideas, thoughts and contacts between
  a range of organisations and partners.
- Away days and team building activities bring people together, gain different
  perspectives on the project, and refocus partners on shared priorities. Large partnerships
  can mean that not everyone knows each other, and building good relationships leads to
  more effective communication and collaboration. Informal opportunities for interaction
  aid this.
- **Regular (monthly) work package calls** with a cross-partner list of attendees create high levels of collaboration and shared learning among partners.
- **Fast responses** to partnership communication in times of crisis enables the partnership to operate and respond effectively. The MiFriendly Cities project experienced this in relation to COVID-19, where effective response to requests for information were key to negotiating a project extension.

#### **Theory of Change**

Evaluation is difficult for large projects, with multiple strands of work, a range of aims and a diverse array of partners. A Theory of Change can be a useful tool for mapping the relationship between activities and outcomes, and for ordering evaluation efforts and data collection. During the MiFriendly Cities project, this was developed by Coventry University in consultation with partners, and helped foster consolidation for the project.



It's Our Right Project Damayanthi Muthukumaranage

# Theory of Change, developed by Coventry University

Aim	Aim   Cities in which migrants are better able to integrate, prosper and contribute	which mig	rants are	better able	e to integr	ate, pros	oer and co	ntribute
	More employers in the 3 cities adopt migrant-friendly and migrants gain more and better Jobs, careers an	we employers in the 3 cities adopt migrant-friendly policies and practic and migrants gain more and better Jobs, careers and life opportunities	25	Migrants make a greater contribution to the places in which they live, having better support and social networks, a greater sense of belonging and greater social inclusion in the 3 cities	aces in which they live, having be ing and greater social inclusion in	_	Approaches to migrant integration change for the better and the volume, quality and efficacy of migrant support increases across the 3 cities & beyond	the better and the volume, s across the 3 cities & beyond
Intermediate	Employers are more aware of migrant issues and are more prepared, confident and willing to employ migrants	Migrants have greater aspirations, more qualifications and are better prepared for employment	More security for migrants and better representation and voice for migrants in political, civil and civic life	More migrants are aware of and use support services and have better support in housing, health and other areas of need	New social networks, less prejudice and better social relations and cultural exchange between people	A greater volume of social action in the 3 cities, with migrants more involved in community development	More cities use MiFriendly lessons and techniques to inform and enhance their integration approach	The capabilities of partners are enhanced and their work becomes more collaborative and impactful over time
Outcomes	Employers have more tools, training & guidance on employing migrants and migrant employment issues	More and better support and training for migrants leading to greater self-efficacy around employment and opportunities	Migrants are better aware of and able to exercise and voices their legal rights and democratic responsibilities	More help and information for migrants in key areas and more capacity in connecting migrants with services	More connections, friendships and empathy between people and more social capital between migrants	More migrants lead social action, socially-invested businesses and form migrantled community networks	More and better data on local migrant issues and approaches and more influence on policy and the practice of other cities	All partners benefit from the experience and expertise of others and their experience working on MiFriendly Cities
	More and better working relationships between those working to support migrant integration and local employers	Local migrant support and training services gain a better understanding of migrant training needs and aspirations	More training, support and awareness raising on migrants legal rights and responsibilities in cities	Better understanding of migrant support needs and more investment in migrant support charities	More contact and dialogue between migrants and opportunities to learn languages and share cultures	More opportunities and support for migrants to lead social action and actively contribute to communities	More opportunities to develop, test and review new approaches and more capacity in evidence gathering	Local and national leaders in migrant support & engagement share more learning & expertise within 3 cities
Activities	MiFriendly Markets Informing and influencing local labour market structures	MiFriendly Aspiration Training, skills, education and enterprise	MiFriendly Voice & Citizenship Legal rights & responsibilities and democratic participation	MiFriendly Support & Access Support and empowerment for vulnerable people	MiFriendly Connections Larguage, dialogue and opportunities to connect	MiFriendly Social Action Migrant-led social enterprise and community development	MiFriendly Evidence New approaches, research and methods of influence	MiFriendly Partnership Sectors, organisations and individuals finding better ways
	Employment brokerage, business . Entrepreveus/shp training and based for colors so call innovation projects to takke . Work placement sand appropriation and employment clinic is drop in impart descrimantion and . Employment clinic is drop in exploitation in the bloom market . Social innovation projects with projects and projects and projects and social innovation projects with complex controlled barriers, and refuges to abrend universities, opportunities for change in employment support and structures. Internov support for adults . Engagement with the media. Training in social science reason implicitly and application of citizen jumport for adults.	training and support fabrication and apprenticeships as drop in sessions projects inspring d universities, maths free book clubs and or adults	Legal health checks     Social mouthin pojets on rights,     Social mouthin pojets on rights,     responsibilities it active cliteraria     driving awareness;     cliteraria para ktora ivus ilights     raning and ktora ivus ilights     multingpal literature     multingpal	whence of leadth Champions when the house heart health accuract saking and family counseling skills.  Social innovation policits on housing, househeast and those with no recourse to public funds to consume to public funds to come to public funds and support for ingrand in relative and support for ingrand in relative and case work.	- Share My Language - Share My Language - Social immoration projects cultural cerebrations clientus, a range of opportunites for disagges and finestable (e.g. Pamog Mosic, Center and Talkin old Mosic, Center and Talkin old Mosic - Exhibitions videos and social modia resends - Community upia crides - Community upia crides - Hones makones and modia labs - Hones makones and modia labs	- Creation of new social enterprises - Social enterprises and before training investment and bosiness planning investment - Support for a new network of migrart-led social invosation and community development projects - furniture factories and mobile - fabrilla in the factories and mobile - fabrilla model in the control of the control	Citizen social science research     Resident survey and andemini     analysis estation and monotoning     better survey and andemini     better survey and andemini     better survey and influence     Patry better and influence     temopration and influence     temopration survey and and control     in policy and practice of temporary     in policy and practice in inposition to internig and fleetable     processes throughout project	Letterase interal communication and patrocally bisson and patrocally bisson — Joint communication and response to energing events and paley to energing events and paley — Organisations working together to General activities. Scionaling Boards and work with European and international bodies and projects
		- A	Theory	Theory of Change fo	nge for	MiFriendly Cities		

#### **Communications**

Communications are a vital part of an effective project.

- Creating and implementing a coherent brand, look and feel quickly across all materials
  ensures that a credible and consistent presence is recognised by participants and other
  organisations.
- Social media channels help inform the public as well as partners and stakeholders about the project and its activities.

#### Specific communications ideas from MiFriendly Cities:

- From drip to pulse: to help focus limited resources, our project adopted a 'mini
  campaign' approach to activity, focused on key milestones or events, such as Refugee
  Week, Black History month, or the Final Event. This enabled us to create more impact
  over fewer activities and galvanise the partnership to get involved at specific times in
  the year.
- A Communications Working Group met weekly, pulling together resource from across the partnership to focus on activity and communications opportunities.
- A simple but effective 'Internal Project Update email' went out monthly to 50+ partners, sharing key governance, reporting, milestones and budget information, and providing a platform for partners to share key updates and to seek support from each other. This helped to foster joint ownership and input and ensured everyone was 'on the same page'.
- A quarterly stakeholder 'eNewsletter' benefitted from the broad contact list of diverse partners, with distribution across 1000s of potential readers and hundreds of NGOs, public sector bodies and individuals. It enabled us to share successes and publish positive stories about participants and programmes.
- The project shared positive stories about activities and participants via the MiFC website and social media channels, in particular highlighting key 'change-makers' within the project. Story-telling, especially about our participants, provided a powerful tool to engage audiences and the media, and to galvanise the partnership, as well as providing a platform for our participants to tell their story.

#### Examples from MiFriendly Cities project

Alongside the benefits to communities, we highlight the impact of the project on some people's lives:

- Victor Iringere originally a project participant, went on to become an employee of partner CRMC, running the CCC Health Champions and leading ESOL and ESP delivery and the Hope House project build. Victor has also shared his story for the project website and social media, led workshops focusing on the work of Health Champions from the project, and has featured in local and regional press coverage.
- Mary Thomas is project lead for Padendere Community Sewing Group, a sewing group
  for isolated individuals in Wolverhampton grant funded by MiFC. She also attended
  Health Champions training and took part in Media Lab training by Migrant Voice, and
  has been a leader in the establishment of the Network of Migrant Innovators of which
  she is now Director. After developing her project delivery and leadership skills through
  these various avenues, she was later commissioned along with two other social
  innovators to run a Share my Language project for the City of Wolverhampton Council.
- Loraine Masiya Mponela was a social innovator, leading a project called Right2aHome, and setting up the UK's first migrant led project housing destitute migrants. She also was part of Migrant Voice's Media Lab and Newsroom initiatives, and was featured extensively in the media throughout the duration of the project.

As the project grew, this collaboration increasingly involved project participants themselves, who led on key aspects of the project delivery and brought their knowledge, skills and experience to the fore. For example:

- Maokwo, led by social innovator Laura Nyahuye, curated and launched the online exhibition 'My City' which was launched at our final event. Laura had also previously presented at our Interim Event and also met with the Project Meeting to share her thoughts on collaboration. Through her leadership, different creative voices from across the three cities were brought together to contribute to the show.
- Social Innovator Ake Achi of 'Migrants at Work' collaborated with Central England Law Centre to deliver employment rights sessions; with CRMC and RMC to support with individual cases; and with Coventry University to develop training for employers around employing migrants.

#### Migrants engagement

#### This section explores how to engage migrant participants effectively in the project.

- Participants will benefit from interaction and support from each other, and this can be supported through allowing time at events for small group discussions, breaks, and group working.
- The emergence of community leaders and change-makers can be fostered through demonstrating trust in them; through fostering and encouraging peer support; and through financial investment.
- Some participants may need support from the project in removing barriers to integration, that stand in the way of their success: such as supporting them to open a bank account. This could come through advice, information, training and mentoring, or other forms of one-to-one support.
- Community leaders and 'change-makers' can support the project through social media posts, PR opportunities and coverage.
- Participants may well be the best person for new opportunities that emerge within the project – such as job opportunities or one-off tasks that need specialist engagement. For example, the MiFriendly Cities project recruited Victor Iringere, a former participant, and engaged Laura Nyahuye to deliver the exhibition.
- The Social Innovation strand of the MiFriendly Cities project invested in developing a Network of participants, called NOMI (Network of Migrant Innovators). This sustaining peer support structure was a way to ensure that participant engagement and support for one another lives on beyond the lifetime of the project.



# Challenges to effective partnership working: lessons from MiFriendly Cities project

- Reporting may need to be revised for partners who have limited resources, and opportunities for streamlining should be looked for.
- Work packages can become siloed, driven by tightly defined deliverables that define
  programme ownership, and budget and time constraints for partners. This can be an
  obstacle for cross partnership working. Identifying areas for potential cross fertilisation
  and dependencies in the bid documents could foster greater collaboration, or allocating
  specific resource for 'connecting' and joining up.
- It is important to align ideas between partners around key themes of the project. For instance, in MiFriendly Cities, partners had different ideas of what 'migrant integration' meant, and work was needed to develop a project wide 'culture', and to invest in shared understanding and common goals. This was explored through meetings and through partnership workshops in the first year of the project and at the interim away day.
- A project on the scale aiming to support many grassroots organisations with financial support should begin by identifying an organisation that can administer funding in a flexible and responsive way and release funds swiftly, as soon as applicants have satisfied funding criteria.
- Different work-place practices, communication styles and administrative processes can
  cause delays, confusion and challenges in effective delivery. Understanding each other's
  workplace contexts from the outset could help foster greater understanding. For
  example, in MiFriendly Cities, the three city councils all had different departmental
  structures which meant that processes differed. Shared understanding of these
  differences and the impact on day to day working aids the partnership to work together
  to find solutions.
- Different partners will have different resources, and some partners may struggle to
  engage and contribute to joint work as much as they would like to. Furthermore, as the
  project continues, it may be that the allocated resource for certain partners does not
  match the needs of the project or of participants. Again, conversations, openness, and
  reviewing where change is possible could support this challenge somewhat.

#### Summary

The establishment of a partnership of 11 organisations has increased the resilience of the project, enabling it to absorb unplanned changes in organisations and personnel, and adapt to the challenges of the pandemic. Multiple partners have provided more diversity of thinking and experience, making cross partner and cross project activity like events, and content for communications, richer and more varied. And these different perspectives have led to new ideas and the creation of new tools and resources.

Critically, the breadth of the project has also given opportunities for participants to benefit from multiple touchpoints and activities, broadening their own skills and increasing their confidence to become active protagonists.

But with this collaboration comes the need for greater investment in internal communications and activities to bring the partnership together, along with the need for effective consultation with partners to gain support, ideas and buy-in. Too much administrative burden can dampen passion for the project, and if there is too little, then important learning and controls can be lost. It's a fine balance.



#### 1. Governance - Delivery structure:

The bid broke down the project into 9 work packages, with a Work Package lead working across Partners to coordinate the delivery of activities. Each Work Package was required to hold a monthly meeting to manage the delivery of their activities, coordinate resources and share progress with partners, as well as report at the monthly Project Meeting.

WP1 Project preparation	WP6 Active Citizenship
WP2 Project Management	WP7 Citizen Social Scientists
WP3 Communications	WP8 Social Innovation Infrastructure
WP4 Employment	WP9 Closure and knowledge transfer
WP5 Social Enterprise and Innovation	

#### **Governance - Reporting**

Partner Performance Management 1 to 1s	Held every two months with the CCC
Milestone Review report to UIA	Compiled twice a year by the overall Project lead (CCC)
Quality Register/KPIs	Internal measurements of outputs  Monthly to overall Project lead (CCC)
Annual Progress Reviews	Annual submission by each partner and Work Package to CCC, who then complied a project APR to the UIA
WP Lead reports	Compiled monthly by WP leads and used in the monthly Project Meeting
Budget and finance management	Finances were managed via Partner 121s with CCC, and two core documents:  - a document that listed all partner and category budgets. Updated by partners in preparation for 121 meetings.  - Budget summary of receivables and distribution of budget and outstanding amounts – used internally by CCC.

#### 2. Governance - Meetings and forums:

# Progress reporting and ad hoc issues UIA meetings

UIA meetings were held on an ad hoc basis between CCC and the UIA.

## Oversight, strategy and impact The Steering Group

Meeting every 6 months, attended by senior Partners, typically Directors of organisations and senior council officials. Originally this group was formed to provide senior strategic oversight for the project and to look at ways to influence policy. It was decided midproject that the steering forum become a series of three engagement events aimed at bringing partners, participants, stakeholders and policy makers together to discuss key themes.

## **Project decision making Project Committee**

Meeting quarterly and Chaired by Coventry City Council, this was attended by senior Project leaders and Directors of organisations. The committee reviewed project performance KPIs, finance and budgets, reporting and structural issues impacting delivery, and took decisions on budget reallocations and changes to the application document.

## **Project Delivery**Project Meeting

Meeting monthly, Chaired by Coventry City Council and attended by project delivery and Work Package leads. This meeting reviewed KPIs, shared issues and challenges, and discussed delivery performance, project challenges and successes.

## Project management CCC internal project meeting

Internally, CCC used a project update document that covered all project outputs, deliverables and finance details. They met twice a month to discuss the project and plan for governance forums and meetings.

#### Informal working groups

These were organised by Work Package leads and partners. For example, the Communications Working Group met weekly to progress Work Package 3, and included representatives from the 3 city councils, Migrant Voice, and CRMC's Legacy Officer for the project.

#### **Team Away Days**

An initial away day was held at the start of the project, led by MigrationWork CIC. The Partnership held an interim away day in September 2019, which proved to be a useful intervention in the project – bringing together 30 people face to face in Coventry. The project is also planning two Evaluation half day away days towards the end of the project.

#### West Midlands:

- 2.8m people
- 1000's of migrants and refugees in the region
- 3 city councils
- One combined authority (WMCA)

#### We've delivered...

6,000+ health messages

253 legal rights checks, advice and signposting

4 Know your rights guides in 9 Community languages

394 Share my Language community activities

106+ home makeovers

12+ repair cafes

1,000+ of up-cycled furniture items

114 apprenticeships and job opportunities

639 English language classes

Citizenship rights presentations to 500+ schools

3 Stakeholder forums with 100s of attendees

Briefing papers shared across Europe

1,000s of tweets and posts

A new online art exhibition

#### We've built...

A new shared community space Relationships between 11 Partner organisations

Greater understanding of migrant issues

A 'Network' of social innovation projects and leaders

Resilience and support structures

Connections between cities

A Chapel of Many 'chair sculpture'

New furniture from old

A reputation - finalist in the Innovation in

Politics Awards 2020

#### **Project Team:**

- 3 city councils (BCC, CCC, CWC)
- 6 NGOs
- One academic institution Coventry Uni
- One corporate partner

#### We've reached...

500+ participants

10,000+ people

1,000s of migrants

100s of community service providers

Councils and authorities across UK and

Europe

Regional funders

50 regional and national journalists

100s of NGOs and charities

1.000s of local residents

250+ employers

#### We've supported...

32 social projects with seed funding and advice

36+ language inspired workshops

The RISING Global Peace Forum

Coventry Welcomes City Festival

The fight against Covid 19 with PPE, child-care support and community activities

#### We've trained....

61 Health Champions

80 Citizen Social Scientists

162 Citizen journalists

78 with DIY skills and qualifications

131 with digital qualifications

40+ social entrepreneurs

100+ maker and 3D modelling skills

This paper was written by <u>MigrationWork CIC</u>, one of eleven project partners involved in the MiFriendly Cities project. MigrationWork lead on the project communications; authored two series' of briefing papers about innovative approaches; ran three international Sounding Board discussions; delivered the Social Innovation programme, training and supporting 16 migrant-led social innovation projects in the region; and developed the <u>Network of Migrant Innovators</u>.

To find out more about MiFriendly Cities, see our resources and social media

