

YEAR 1 EVALUATION

AFRIDAC COMMUNITY ADVOCACY AND MENTORING PROGRAMME



Report by:

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Civil Society Consulting CIC

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Years of systematic and institutional racism act as a catalyst for the African community in London to experience a number of health and social inequalities. These outcomes have been made worse by the pandemic and cost of living crisis which, accompanied by the lack of welfare support, resulting in London's African community reporting higher levels of mental health issues, suicide, bereavement and insecurity relating to living necessities.

As an answer to the need for more culturally appropriate interventions, the African Development and Advocacy Centre (AFRIDAC) was given funding from the Trust for London's Connected Communities to run the AFRIDAC Community Advocacy and Mentoring Programme.

The three year programme aims to:

- Enrich the lives of the African community through support and capacity building (coaching, mentoring, training and empowerment);
- Provide tailored advocacy to influence local policy and social change;
- Empower African community members are empowered to co-produce and be part of the decision making in formulating services that will affect them;
- Develop a 'community of practice' to address issues affecting the community through advocacy.

The training for Cohort 1 took place over five days and was mainly facilitated by Oladapo, the founder of AFRIDAC. Here, the first 15 individuals (Cohort 1) received thorough and holistic training that included presentations, case studies, group work, videos, guest speakers and trips. Participants will also receive 1-2-1 mentoring throughout the Programme.

The objectives of training are specifically designed to provide participants with:

- A clear understanding of what advocacy is and the role of a community advocate.
- Clarity on how to plan an effective, efficient and realistic advocacy. Greater communications skills to advocate more confidently and get their (and others) voices heard.

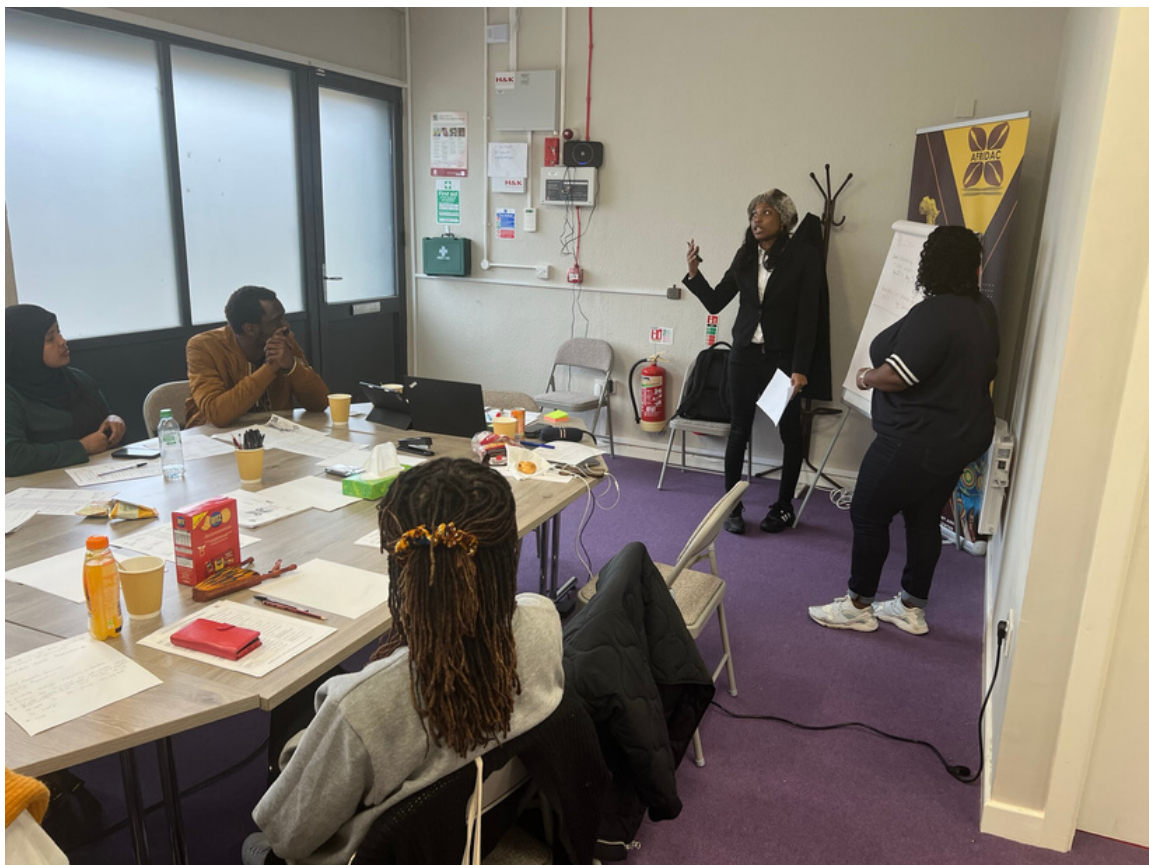
In 2022, AFRIDAC commissioned Civil Society Consulting CIC to evaluate Year 1 of the Community Advocacy and Mentoring Programme, and meet Trust for London's reporting requirements. Through this evaluation, AFRIDAC aims to not only demonstrate the impact of the Mentoring and Advocacy programme, but also to identify areas for improvement to inform programme delivery and design for the remaining delivery period.

Key findings:

- 89% of participants rated the training 5 / 5
- Participants were satisfied with the training in terms of their overall learning; this included a richer and rounded understanding of advocacy; 89% of respondents said they had learnt something new from the training.
- The training enabled participants to identify the root causes affecting their community, enabling them to narrow down their advocacy goal(s).
- Participants showed evidence of utilising new/ improved skills in communicating their advocacy in their community.
- The strongest outcome area for most participants was an increase in knowledge of delivering a campaign and influencing change. Feedback also showed significant and tangible results towards an increase in ability towards influencing social change.
- Participants forged connections with other advocates during the training, resulting in some collaborations. Improved networking skills were also showcased by evidence showing participants working with 'new organisations' in the community post-training. .

Recommendations for future service delivery:

- Overall, participants were satisfied with the training in terms of their overall learning; this included a richer and rounded understanding of advocacy on a deeper level.
- The focus on creating an Action Plan highlighted the Programme's emphasis on real-world change.
- Provide more networking opportunities and targeted, skills-based workshops to facilitate change and community alliances.
- Oladapo to continue acting as a facilitator of participant-led training sessions.



1. INTRODUCTION

a) About AFRIDAC

African Development and Advocacy Centre (AFRIDAC) – based in Hackney, London – is an organisation that aims to empower the African and Afro-Caribbean community in the UK to advocate on issues that disproportionately affect them.

The organisation provides a platform and voice for the African community through community collaboration, policy engagement, capacity building, information sharing and signposting across London. According to the 2021 census, over one-fifth (22%) of Hackney's population is of a Black African or Caribbean ethnic background. AFRIDAC's core aim is to strengthen the capacity of this community and create meaningful, focused and lasting socio-political change.

Advocacy

Since 2011, AFRIDAC has been advocating on issues that disproportionately affect the African and Afro-Caribbean community. The focus on advocacy evolved from the founder, Oladapo's lived experience and work in his home country Nigeria. When Oladapo migrated to the UK, he was met with a hostile environment, restricted job prospects, absence of culturally appropriate services and overall limited support (both nationally and locally) for African migrants. To influence necessary and critical social change, Oladapo looked to mobilise his own advocacy skills in the community.

A tipping point for the Black community in the UK was the Covid-19 pandemic; for instance, the Black community was disproportionately affected with high rates of infection, deaths and exposure to the virus. Further effects on the community included rising food insecurities, unemployment, restricted access to culturally competent services, homelessness, an upsurge in domestic violence cases, unsupported undocumented migrants and adverse mental health problems.

As a response to get evidence-based information, AFRIDAC commissioned research to investigate the 'Mortality rate of Covid-19 for individuals of African and Caribbean background who are key workers'. AFRIDAC also advocated for greater support for undocumented migrants and people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) during the pandemic. Consequently, 60 people were granted emergency funding of £250 by London Borough of Hackney through Family Action between July and September 2020.

Vaccine hesitancy is reported as particularly high amongst African groups. During COVID-19, AFRIDAC played a key role in encouraging vaccine uptake among the Black African community in Hackney. From April to September 2021, AFRIDAC facilitated community pop-up vaccination clinics and online Zoom conferences to discuss vaccine hesitancy within the African community. Additionally, AFRIDAC regularly collaborates with Community African Network (CAN), and Hackney Council Voluntary Service (HCVS) to advocate on behalf and support members of the Black African community in Hackney. AFRIDAC (which is a member of CAN) have been working with CAN to conduct vaccine outreach and uptake. Oladapo is a programme manager for CAN.

Over the past three years, AFRIDAC's programming has focused on promoting Black London residents as agents of change. By equipping Black London residents with the necessary tools and knowledge, they are able to self-advocate on issues affecting their own communities. Consequently, strategies and interventions that resolve present inequalities become more accessible at a community level. One successful example to highlight this is the Community Advocacy and Mentoring Programme, which encouraged attendees from London to build a network of local community advocates, identify shared challenges and mobilise the power of advocacy..

Community centre

In 2022, AFRIDAC was selected as the tenant of a Hackney Council-owned building prioritised for VCS organisations and became the first African-led organisation to occupy a council-owned building in Hackney. From here, AFRIDAC runs a Community Centre - open seven days a week.

At the Community Centre, local communities gain access to; general advice; independent advocacy; information and signposting sessions; vocational courses; drop-in sessions on benefits, housing and immigration; sexual health testing; health and wellbeing sessions; and, employment support.

Current programming includes:

- **Community Advocacy and Mentoring Programme (CAMP)**: Born out of an expressed need to increase community capacity to advocate on social change in local policies and delivery, CAMP aims to train an army of Community Advocates in the UK. CAMP helps to amplify the voice of the African and Caribbean community to influence social change, tackle poverty and inequality. The project has been supported through grants from Trust for London, The National Lottery Community Fund and Mayor of London.
- **Resilience, Energy, Aspiration, Discovery, Yearning (READY MINDS)**: This is a youth coaching and mentoring session aimed at supporting young people towards their health, wellbeing and to discover their potential as a Black individual. Between April to July 2021, the project has supported five young individuals. Feedback found that 80% reported a significant improvement in their mental health and wellbeing; 40% progressed into Higher Education and employment; and, 60% said that they wanted additional support to lead to positive outcomes. READY Minds has been funded by BTEG - Covid-19 BAME Resilience grants.
- **African Men Safe Space (AMSS)**: Through the African Men Safe Space, AFRIDAC empowers African men to access mental health and wellbeing support from clinical experts and people with lived experience, advocating for the adoption of culturally appropriate services to further increase in uptake. AMSS was created in November 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic to support African and Caribbean men. Of the 16 African men supported through this programme between November 2020 and March 2021, 80% improved their self-esteem and confidence to deal with challenging issues; over 25% returned to the workforce; and, 40% became co-facilitators of services (e.g. wellbeing coach) as a result of significant improvements in confidence and presentation. Today, there are 36 men actively participating. AMSS has been supported with grants from Local Connections Fund - The National Lottery Community Fund; MIND City, Hackney and Waltham Forest and Hackney Giving.
- **Black Women Safe Space (BWSS)**: Created in November 2022, AFRIDAC provides a safe space for Black African and Caribbean women to network, share stories and support one another. Working with a qualified coach, these women identify areas of personal development and capacity building. The group has grown to 28 members who meet regularly monthly. The BWSS was created with grants from MIND City, Hackney and Waltham Forest and Hackney Giving.
- **Afro-Carib Seniors**: Given the lack of space and very limited activities for African and Caribbean seniors to interact in Hackney, AFRIDAC is working with older African and Caribbean volunteers to create a space for the over 55s. This group meets to exercise, socialise, play games and receive health monthly.
- **Advocacy and Leadership Series (ALS)** - To celebrate our ten years as an organisation (2011 - 2021), AFRIDAC started the Advocacy and Leadership series; an annual retreat during Black history month to identify, empower and mentor the next generation of advocacy leaders within the Black community in the UK and internationally. The first event took place in Greece in October 2022 with the theme Advocacy and Appreciative Leadership. Series II with the theme 'Diaspora Leaders as an Advocate and agent of Social Change', will be held in New York, October 2023.

b) About Civil Society Consulting CIC

Civil Society Consulting CIC (CSC) is a consultancy for the social sector, based in Hackney, London.

CSC believes civil society organisations, particularly those led by the communities they seek to serve, are key to healthier, more equal and more inclusive communities.

CSC works via three strands:

- Delivering a low-cost consultancy service for civil society organisations;
- Providing free support to organisations 'led by and for' marginalised communities through our national capacity-building programme Steps to Sustainability funded by Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities and The National Lottery Community Fund;
- Conducting community research and evaluations for funders, housing associations and think tanks. Recent clients include the Campaign to End Loneliness, Comic Relief, LGBT+ Consortium, Mind, New Philanthropy Capital and NHS England.

c) Evaluation context

In 2021, AFRIDAC received £69,608 from Trust for London's Connected Communities – Strengthening Voice funding stream to run the AFRIDAC Community Advocacy and Mentoring Programme for three years. In January 2023, AFRIDAC received £142,040 from The National Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund as supplementary funding for three years.

In 2022, AFRIDAC commissioned CSC to evaluate Year 1 of the AFRIDAC Community Advocacy and Mentoring Programme, and meet Trust for London's reporting requirements.

Through this evaluation, AFRIDAC aims to not only demonstrate the impact of the Mentoring and Advocacy programme, but identify areas for improvement to inform programme delivery and design for the remaining delivery period. AFRIDAC also hopes to gain further evidence and deepen its understanding of how increased advocacy skills can amplify the voice of the African community to influence social change, tackle poverty and inequality in London.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

a) About the programme

- The Programme is a three-year project providing training and mentoring to support 30 individuals from African and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds to become community advocates.
- The training and mentoring support is being delivered by AFRIDAC's founder Oladapo and guest speakers via two cohorts of 15 over a three year period (March 2022 - Feb 2025).
- The Programme, through engaging members of London's African and Afro-Caribbean communities, aims to increase the confidence and skills needed to advocate effectively on community issues, leading to the amplification of voices on issues they care about.
- Improved advocacy skills leads to a greater chance of social change – changes in mindset at community- level and within institutions results in policy change and reform – which will have positive knock-on effects on inequalities that disproportionately affect London's African and Afro-Caribbean communities.

The Programme aims to:

1. Enrich the lives of the African community through support and capacity building (coaching, mentoring, training and empowerment);
2. Tailored advocacy to influence local policy and social change;
3. African community members are empowered to co-produce and be part of the decision making in formulating services that will affect them;
4. Develop a 'community of practice' in addressing issues around poverty and inequality through advocacy.



PROJECT FUNDED BY TRUST FOR LONDON AND FACILITATED BY AFRIDAC.

AFRIDAC.ORG @afridac1

AFRIDAC ADVOCACY AND MENTORING PROGRAMME

REGISTER NOW AT
afridacadvmentprogg.eventbrite.co.uk
Email: info@afridac.org
or call 02036338125

- Are you African or Caribbean and interested in community advocacy?
- Join the 5 days advocacy training and mentoring programme to become a Community Advocate.
- As a Community Advocate you will have the skill to share your story and give voice to your community.
- Do you live in London?

Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

BOOK A PLACE ON THE
ADVOCACY COURSE TO BECOME
A COMMUNITY ADVOCATE.

Guest speakers include:

- Drew Sinclair to explore the use of creative writing, film, animation, graphic design and art as an advocacy tool and;
- Ken Hinds to speak about his over 30 years of campaigning in London challenging the Police on Stop and Search.
- The training for the next cohort in August will be co-facilitated by a filmmaker.

The process

Applications are selected by the AFRIDAC team via a short application form and a 2 minute video by applicants designed to determine potential participants' suitability, motivation(s) and goal(s). This initial informal screening ensures that AFRIDAC selects individuals who will be able to get the most out of the Programme. The selected applicants are a combination of people new to advocacy and those with an existing track record of working in communities and have a motivation to build advocacy skills, so that they are able to develop an Action Plan to tackle pressing issues in their chosen community.

The first 15 individuals (Cohort 1) were on board at the end of 2022, and received five days of intensive blended training in the form of presentations, case studies, group work, videos, guest speakers and trips. The participants also received three months of 1-2-1 mentoring to support them in implementing their Action Plan. The next cohort are currently being onboarded, with the next training taking place over three days in August 2023.

In Year 3, AFRIDAC will facilitate group sessions in a three-day retreat for both cohorts of community advocates, giving them a space to reflect on the Programme, share updates on their progress and provide peer support. These sessions will 'double up' as an opportunity for AFRIDAC and the independent evaluators to collect evaluation data, particularly on impact and change brought about after programme completion. Evaluation data will be targeted in Year 3 to build a robust 'network' of community advocates.

b) Programme content

The training for Cohort 1 took place over five days and was predominantly facilitated by Oladapo, the founder of AFRIDAC, with support from his team of interns.

The Programme aims to specifically provide participants with:

- A clear understanding of what advocacy is and the role of a community advocate;
- A deeper understanding of how change happens;
- How to plan advocacy more effectively, efficiently and realistically;
- The tools and techniques available to make change happen;
- Greater communications skills to advocate better and get voices heard;
- Their own advocacy kit to advocate with confidence.

Participants are provided a **workbook** to write down their thoughts and ideas over the five days, which they can continuously refer back to and reflect on.

The workbook guides participants through a collaborative, interactive and reflective step-by-step process to create an actionable advocacy Action Plan; the realisation of this is the final goal of the training.

To give an idea of the training content, please see the **workbook contents** below:

1. An Outline of Initial Expectations and Advocacy Plan
2. Identifying whether your Advocacy plan is 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound)
3. Identify the core Problem, Solution, and Opportunities: The Problem Tree
4. Outcome, Aims & Objectives of your Advocacy Project
5. Plotting a Change Diagram
6. Strategies and how to achieve change
7. Identifying Targets and Stakeholders (i.e. Decision maker(s), Influencers and Alliances)
8. What are the current strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of your Project
9. Communication:
 - a. Framing your narrative and three key messages you wish to convey.
 - b. What communication channels will you use, who is/are your spokespeople and what communication materials will you produce.
10. Timetable: Phase 1, 2 and 3
11. Detailed Action Plan
 - a. Goals
 - b. What to do
 - c. Timeframes
 - d. Resources required
12. Monitoring and Evaluation

c) Evidence of Need

Racial inequity in London and the London Borough of Hackney

The African community in London have experienced years of systemic and institutional racism, marginalisation, inequalities at different levels, including health, housing, and education, and endemic poverty.

The community is disproportionately experiencing increasing food poverty, limited access to statutory provision, high employment rates, homelessness, increasing cases of domestic violence, digital poverty, no recourse to public funds and no welfare support for undocumented migrants and refugees.

This has only been exacerbated by the pandemic and rising cost of living. As a result, the African community is experiencing increasing cases of mental health issues, depression, suicide and bereavement.

What is community advocacy?

Citizen engagement platform Granicus describes 'Community advocacy' as a strategic approach to influencing outcomes and driving change on behalf of a community.' It involves representing the community's rights and needs to the level of government best able to respond.

Community advocacy enables people to become active citizens and self-advocate in regards to decisions affecting their life, as well as advocate for others who have less ability to do so (Advocacy Focus).

In general, advocacy strategies and campaigns aim to influence:

- Funding and resources
- Infrastructure priorities
- Policy change
- Process change



Why is community advocacy particularly important for the African community?

The voices of the African community, in particular, are often not heard. This is due to:

- **Limited knowledge of advocacy within the community.** Oladapo AFRIDAC Founder and Executive Director, commented:

‘A lot of the time people don’t understand what advocacy is: it’s a whole practice, not just noise making. It’s not about picketing alone, a lot of advocacy is engaging policy making: not only finding the issue but enable individuals to come up with a solution - and these solutions are usually holistic.’

- **Structural inequalities that disproportionately affect the African community**, meaning their voices are not heard/ prioritised:
 - Due to, and as a result of, these inequalities, decision and policy making remains with the privileged few. This is demonstrated by the lack of diversity in local and national government and public sector bodies, which means minorities’ experiences and views are seldom represented. This is also the reason minorities are adversely affected by policy changes; for example, lockdown rules meant that ethnic minorities, who were more likely to work in ‘exposed’ occupations (ie. where you cannot work from home) were more likely to contract the virus.

Why Afridac?

AFRIDAC has a number of differentiating factors in comparison to other community advocacy organisations, such as POhWER, The Advocacy People and Voice Ability. As Oladapo explains, AFRIDAC’s advocacy offering is not about helping people submit complaints but to build on existing enthusiasm, capacity and skills; to enable individuals to become community advocates themselves; and, amplify a movement that is people-led and embodies a common voice to make change happen.

Crucially, AFRIDAC is black-led and can provide community advocacy to the African community that is relevant and led by lived experience (AFRIDAC’s board of trustees, staff and volunteers have lived experience of systematic racism, poverty and inequality). This is in contrast to more generic community advocacy trainers, such as the Sheila McKechnie Foundation (SMK)

EVALUATION AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

a) Research framework

CSC uses ‘a framework for evaluating public engagement’ from Research for All’s ‘A common standard for the evaluation of public engagement with research’ (2018) as a framework to structure our evaluation of AFRIDAC’s Community Advocacy and Mentoring Programme (see diagram right).



We will use data derived via the collection tools to:

1. Evaluate the design and delivery (quality of the programme)
2. How the participants’ progress against the outcome areas. See table below. Note: these outcome areas were designed by AFRIDAC and NCVO, with input from CSC

| Activities | Outcomes | Outcomes indicators |
|--|---|---|
| <p>5 days blended advocacy training</p> | <p>Participants will have increased knowledge in how to identify core issues that affect their community</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether participants can highlight their community’s most pressing issues (pre- and post-training videos made by participants). • Improved ability to use techniques (e.g., theory of change) to find the root cause by funnelling issues. • Improved ability to work through scenarios and identify root causes. • Whether participants know how to ask open questions to find out more information. |

| Activities | Outcomes | Outcomes indicators |
|--|--|---|
| <p>5 days blended advocacy training</p> | <p>Participants will have increased skill in communicating key messages to diverse audiences</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved ability to create a petition • Ability to write a letter to MP/local councillors/decision makers. • Improved ability to explain issues convincingly. • Improved presentation skills. • Increased awareness of the need for tailored messages and use of different media for varying audiences. |
| <p>5 days blended advocacy training</p> | <p>Participants will have increased knowledge of delivering a campaign and influencing change (action plan)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved ability to get buy-in of the local community. • Whether can co-produce messages • How they feel about leading community meetings. • Whether they can identify the stakeholders. |
| <p>5 days blended advocacy training</p> | <p>Participants will have improved networking skills</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of new connections since starting the training, and potential synergies/ collaborations emanating from this. • Improved confidence in making new connections. |
| <p>5 days blended advocacy training</p> | <p>Participants will have improved skills in using filming and social media for advocacy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of social media posts. • Number of short films produced. • Improved use of images and language. |

| Activities | Outcomes | Outcomes indicators |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| 3 month one to one mentoring | Participants will be supported to implement the action plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant part of the action plan is completed by the end of Year 3. • Participants feel confident to continue delivering on their action plan and sustain their role as a community advocate. |
| 3 month one to one mentoring | Participants will have support to monitor and evaluate a campaign. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved ability/confidence to design and deliver a monitoring and evaluation framework. • Evidence of using this learning to improve practices and processes. |

b) Data collection tools and methods

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation by facilitators |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant workshop |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance register |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-training questionnaire |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-training questionnaire |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan template |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview script and video |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor and mentee feedback form |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant short videos at start and end of advocacy training |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews and focus groups conducted by evaluators |

c) Short term vs long term impacts

The aim of this evaluation is to demonstrate the immediate impact of the Programme on the community advocate themselves (which the above outlines), but also to demonstrate its longer-term and broader effects for London's African and Afro-Caribbean community; for example:

- whether participants having increased self-confidence to advocate about community issues
- whether community advocates 'in training' have empowered others in the community start on their own advocacy journeys;
- if subsequent advocacy has brought about policy shifts (within local authorities for example).

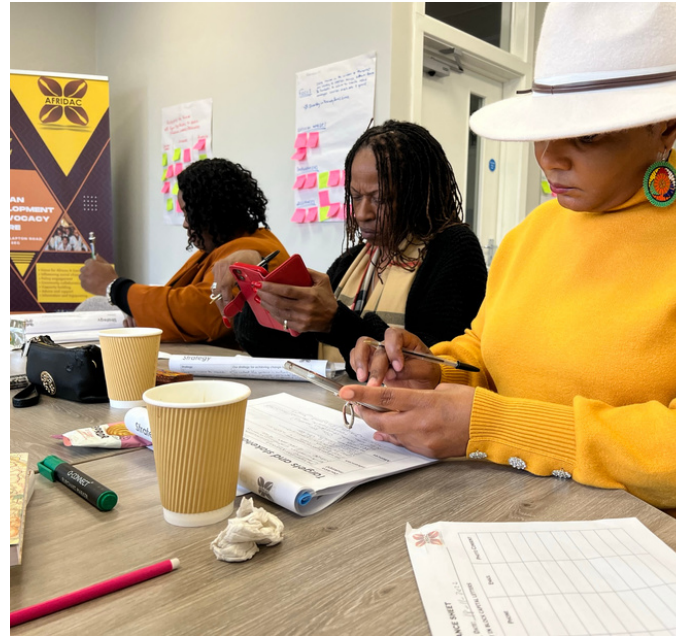
We anticipate the majority of this longitudinal data will be collected by evaluators during group reflection and feedback sessions in Year 3 once participants have had time and space to reflect on their learning and make a start on implementing their action plans.



IMPACT ASSESSMENT

YEAR 1

The following section of the report assesses AFRIDAC's success in relation to the evaluation framework set out above.



Training

The following section details the impact of the training element of the Programme:

a) Training design and delivery

The vast majority of participants in the first training cohort expressed satisfaction with the training as a whole.

Strengths of the training in general were:

- The in-built flexibility within the training's design and structure meant it was useful for participants with diverse advocacy goals;
- The participant-led nature of the training enhanced the confidence-building element of the training;
- All participants came out with positive outcomes and learning; some participants were clear on what issues affected their community at the outset of the training whilst others were less clear. However, by the end of the training, all participants came out with progressive and positive outcomes regardless of what advocacy level they were at.
- Oladapo (AFRIDAC founder) who was the main facilitator of the training was particularly praised. His facilitation style was noted as a highlight and key strength. As one participant commented:
 - "Our 'perfect' teacher Oladapo: has helped us to narrow our plan down to the specifics and be clear on what exactly to do."

Survey results showcase high level of satisfaction from participants:

89%

Participants rated the training 5/5

78%

Participants rated the quality of the training 5/5

67%

Participants said that they were 100% satisfied with the training

67%

Respondents said that their initial expectations were 100% met from the training, others agreed that their expectations were somewhat or highly met

100%

Participants said that they would be interested in attending another training by AFRIDAC in the future

Feedback on the structure, relevance and of the training and activities was also incredibly positive:

- All participants either 'agreed' or strongly agreed that they found the training relevant to their needs and expectations;
- All of the participants said that they either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the training allotted sufficient time for each activity;
- 100% of respondents said that the focus areas throughout the training and workshops were practical/ or easy to reply to.

In regards to broad learning outcomes, 89% of respondents said they had learnt something new from the training. Below are some selected comments from participants highlighting the overwhelmingly positive and appreciative responses from participants:

“I just really enjoyed being on the course. I learned a lot”

“My expectations have been met ten-fold”

“I have been pleasantly surprised, motivated and encouraged to begin a process of advocacy”

“Just that I really enjoyed being on the course. I learned a lot”

“Course has really benefited me. I have a very busy schedule as a mum and [if it wasn’t as good as it was] I would not have come back for all five days. I had so many barriers to even get to the course but I made sure I came even if only for a few hours”

“The scope for development and joint community work with a company like Afridac is huge”

“The training is so perfect”

“Outstanding delivery”

“I realised that the key to community advocacy is patience, tolerance, resilience, and good organisational skills. Helping people is very rewarding beyond any financial gains.”

b) Impacts of the training

In this section, we will assess the training's achievement in the following outcome areas, based on participants' progress and feedback on each area.

OUTCOME AREA 1

- Participants will have increased knowledge in how to identify core issues that affect their community.**

One of the first stages of the training guided participants to narrow down the problem they wished to address. This was achieved by getting participants to detail and evidence why the issue affecting their community was timely and that they were the right person to advocate on it.

Prior to the training, participants had an awareness of an issue or multiple issues that they were interested in addressing. It was, however, clear that most participants lacked specification and clarity towards the root issue they wished to address; for example, some participants expressed uncertainty about what they really should and could focus on and how to narrow it down.

As one respondent commented:

“I want to reach more people (in current work doing)... but I am not sure how this will look”.

Others lacked direction and the ability to narrow down the core problems as “There are so many issues” affecting the community they wish to advocate for.

However, in the post-training interviews, all participants expressed with confidence and enthusiasm they were able to identify the root issues and what they wanted to advocate on.

This was particularly felt for those participants who initially lacked clarity on what the most urgent issues affecting their community were:

“AFRIDAC has been really helpful in helping me narrow down certain things that may have been bothering me or troubling me”

Even participants who were more experienced in supporting communities and were looking to expand or improve the work they were already delivering, said that the training enabled them to realise the skills, expertise and connections they already had and how to utilise them more effectively:

‘I didn’t quite understand what it was I was doing to ‘help people.’

Participants who were confident in the community they wanted to advocate for pre-training still expressed how the training enabled them to realise the root causes affecting their community. As one participant commented:

“Initially enrolled on the course because I wanted to help and motivate young people in the borough with mental health. I came to realise that a lot of young people post-covid have been really affected by mental health”



OUTCOME AREA 2

- **Participants will have increased skill in communicating key messages to diverse audiences.**

The training encouraged participants to clarify their aims, outcomes and objectives of their advocacy work to help narrow down what they wanted to do. One particular section of the training is dedicated to supporting participants to:

- Communicate how they will frame their advocacy;
- Define what their narrative is;
- Detail three key messages that they wish to express.

In the pre-training videos, participants were able to enthusiastically communicate a broad idea of what they wanted to achieve. However, most participants lacked confidence and ability to express what they wanted to do convincingly and in a structured manner. In the post-training videos, a significant improvement was clear in the participants' ability to explain what the goal and aims of their advocacy is in one punchy sentence.

Post-training, participants experienced an increase in communication skills and confidence in communicating their advocacy. Participants commented:

“I feel a bit more confident now the way I deliver my presentation and engage with people.”

“I have been able to help people in the community in identifying areas of need. The training has helped my presentation and communicating skills. I can talk confidently to people now. I am able to connect with people from different boroughs and diverse people.”

During the training, participants were also guided to think and describe what communication channels they intended to use, including who their spokesperson would be. From observations of participant workbooks, the evaluators are able to identify channels that would be most effective for their advocacy (e.g. social media, TikTok, online/offline flyers) but the majority decided a combination of communication channels were the best. Participants were also able to outline what outputs they intend to produce from each channel.

Improvements in ability to communicate key messages was noted by one participant who recalled using their “advocacy skills to intervene’ in a situation where a child with a disability was being treated poorly by an individual in public. The participant then went on to “direct the family to further information and support” to help future situations, which the ‘mother of the child was very grateful’ for.

OUTCOME AREA 3

- **Participants will have increased knowledge of delivering a campaign and influencing change**

The strongest outcome area for most participants, in terms of learning and change, was an increase in knowledge of delivering a campaign and influencing change.

Prior to the training, many participants highlighted that creating a feasible action plan with “realist, achievable and time-bound goals” and a clear “structure” was a top priority. The majority of participants had met this outcome by the end of training. This is made evident by the feedback, where all participants expressed an increase in knowledge of how to create an action plan that aims to make their advocacy projects a reality.

During the five-day training, a strength-based approach was used to develop a complete action plan. Here, participants were guided to think not only of the potential weaknesses in their projects, but differentiate between strengths and opportunities. From workbook observation, all participants showed evidence of a clear and detailed outline of an Action Plan e.g., goals, methods to success, clear timeframes, the resources they required and feasible targets.

Some participants' advocacy proposals changed as a result of narrowing down core issues in the community and the feasibility of their plan, which encouraged participants to deepen their critical thinking skills. For example, pre-training, one participant intended to “start an organisation back home in the Congo and find investors who will help me to bring this project about.” However, this participant lacked detail on how this would be done practically. By the end of the training, they still wanted to pursue this goal, however, possessed an increased awareness and knowledge on who to contact and “the specifics... on exactly what to do and how to act on it.”

For other participants, a commonly shared goal was to learn how to embed advocacy into their current community work. This expectation was clearly met: “Since attending the training, I have a much better understanding of how to embed it (their advocacy) into my daily work.”

Post-training, participants commented that they not only learnt new knowledge but that the training enabled them to realise, and thereby, and utilise the advocacy skills they already possessed. As one participant stated: “Coming here, I believed I was literally a beginner but Ola (Oladapo) has helped us assess ourselves and be aware of our own advocacy skills. I realised the skills I already have.”

Another successful key outcome was identifying and engaging potential stakeholders. During the training, participants demonstrated their ability to identify and delineate who their targets, influencers, and alliances were. This included a range of different stakeholders: “I’m coming out with even more clarity in terms of who I need to contact ... and make my thoughts and ideas become a reality.” One participant also commented on how narrowing down and identifying who to work with “left them with confidence to know what I will do next.”

Feedback also showed significant and tangible results towards influencing social change due to their new knowledge and skills; for example, one participant noted that they have “been supporting an 80 year old lady who is having issues with housing due to abuse.” Another participant feedback that they were able to use their new advocacy knowledge to “highlight the challenges faced by people in the community”, which resulted in the Council providing a grant of £10,000 towards their organisation.

OUTCOME AREA 4

- Participants will have improved networking skills.

One key focus of the training was to encourage new connections between participants, with the expectation that these new synergies/ potential collaborations may result in improved self-confidence among participants.

In the pre-training interviews, participants expressed a desire to connect, work and learn from other passionate advocates. Some participants saw this as a top priority: “it would be good to be around other people doing similar work... and build connections with them”

In the post-training interviews, several participants praised the connections they were able to make with other participants during the training:

- *“I have met great minds”*
- *“[It was]Nice to meet new people and mix with people that I wouldn’t normally do on a day-to-day basis.”*

One participant even noted how they have continued to ‘work closely’ with another participant post-training. *“I have been working closely with Kim (a participant in the advocacy course) and different organisations in Waltham Forest Council.”*

Prior to the training, participants also highlighted their desire to identify *“different influencers we can connect with to bring our project to life. Who to work with, and how to work with a team.”* This expectation was met by participants who commented on their greater understanding of who they *“need to contact.”*

Creating new synergies within the community and working with ‘new organisations’ has already been met by some participants: *“I started to work closely with Newham and Hackney Councils doing community outreach activities and helping to start Food Hubs, train volunteers and apply for funding.”*

Other participants have also been successful in creating change through networking with individuals in the community through their advocacy:

- *“An elderly man who owns a bus and restaurant has volunteered the free use of the vehicle and space for community use.”*
- *“A Black reverend lady walking past our Winter Warmer space insisted we work with her church members to support them in a similar version. She has agreed to allow the use of her church for free.”*

OUTCOME AREA 5

- **Participants will have improved skills in using filming and social media for advocacy**

Whilst Cohort 1 did not receive any formal training in film and social media advocacy during the training, some evidence was found to showcase improved skills using social media for advocacy.

The workbooks showcased evidence that participants were encouraged to utilise media (e.g., physical/ digital posters, social media, newsletters, QR codes).

Post-training, two participants feedback that they have been using social media to further their campaign:

- ***“To raise awareness on mental health during mental health month.”***
- ***“On social media I have been sharing information and especially when I engage with parents.”***

The evaluators expect to see greater evidence for this outcome during the Cohort 2 training period, where a filmmaking workshop will take place. Cohort 1 will also be invited to participate, in which new data can be collected and analysed.

Mentoring

We will be evaluating the impact of the 1-2-1 mentoring aspect of the Programme – predominantly through mentor/mentee feedback forms – in our Year 3 report. This is because both cohorts receive mentoring through the entire programme period.

a) Case studies

i. Adreena

Adreena lives in North-East London. She is a self-employed speaker, author, poet and writing workshop facilitator. Adreena describes how, as a black lesbian woman, she has experienced multiple forms of misogyny, homophobia and racism as a result of her intersecting identities. Adreena was looking to gain formal training on how to advocate ‘better’ and reach more people through the work she is already delivering. She runs a popular monthly Open Mic Night, where the LGBT+ community can come together to express their experiences and thoughts.

Adreena believed she was doing some type of advocacy work, but was unsure because she lacked formal training. She hoped to gain a clear idea and plan on how to practically support more people who have experienced abuse

By the end of the training, Adreena expressed that she had gained the knowledge and skills to better embed her advocacy in the work she delivers. She left the training with a clear Action Plan: “to have a 100% increase in the number of therapists who identify as LGBTQ+ in London boroughs with the aim of reducing suicide rates of LGBTQ+ people over 2 years.

ii. Gertrude

Gertrude works as a community outreach officer at a church. Across her work, Gertrude works with children aged 13-18. In her pre-training video, Gertrude expressed a desire to create a project centred on supporting young people from minority backgrounds with their mental health. Gertrude was eager to gain the knowledge and skills to create a support group.

In her post-training video, Gertrude highlighted the training’s strength in supporting her to realise the skills and networks she already had. She also gained the ‘knowledge’ needed to put her project into action.

iii. Kim

Kim has been mentoring and coaching for 32 years, supporting victims of abuse and domestic/sexual violence and other ‘trauma’ related issues. Kim set up her own business during the pandemic after observing inadequate counselling and support services for those with deteriorating mental health. More specifically, Kim saw a mismatch between service users of colour who were being routinely paired with couches/counsellors who did not have similar lived experiences.

Prior to the training, Kim was passionate about uniting black-owned businesses and organisations, so that they can collaborate, share resources and create synergies between one another as a response to inequitable funding practices in the sector.

Post-training, Kim’s project proposal remained the same, but commented on how she had gained greater clarity on the resources needed to make her project a reality.

iv. Leticia

Leticia is passionate about providing individuals with the basic right to essentials, including clean water and energy. Before the training, Leticia was looking to create an organisation in her hometown (in Central Africa) that could provide 'water for all' but did not know where to start or how this could be done in practice.

In her post-training video, Leticia expressed how the training helped her realise that her 'goals were not refined enough.' The training enabled Leticia to narrow her project down to have clear goals and benchmarks, including what resources she needed and who to collaborate with.

v. Melisa

Melisa is neurodiverse parent and Director of a non-profit aimed at eradicating digital and educational poverty. Melisa was looking for training to enhance her advocacy skills to greater empower other neurodiverse families. Melisa's passion for advocacy is rooted in her lived experiences of the challenges involved in neurodiverse parenting, including the value she places on her supportive networks. She wanted other families to benefit from the networks she had.

Since attending the course, Melisa has a greater understanding of how she is currently 'helping people.' She left the training with a clear set of goals and a developed advocacy plan: "to support parents in the community to access resources and to improve their knowledge to support their children better."

6. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the survey findings, workbooks and video testimonials from Cohort 1, the evaluators have developed a series of learnings and recommendations for AFRIDAC to improve the training.



LEARNING 1: CONDENSED TRAINING DAYS

- The length of the training - spanning five consecutive days - was asking too much commitment from some participants (i.e. parents/ employed). We found evidence that not all participants attended the full five days and skipped elements of the training. One participant feedback that the training would have been better if “everyone stayed for all the days’.

Recommendation:

- AFRIDAC has already incorporated this feedback and the next training cohort will be three days long. This will leave participants with more flexibility and room to dedicate time to the mid-week training sessions.

LEARNING 2: THE TRAINING HAD GREATER IMPROVEMENTS FOR ‘BEGINNERS’

Participants came into the training with different levels of knowledge on advocacy. This was most beneficial for those participants new to advocacy, as more experienced participants lent their expertise. However, the mix in experience levels resulted in less learning opportunities for participants with more advanced advocacy knowledge. For example, one participant with a deeper knowledge of advocacy mentioned that they were unsure if they learnt anything new during the training.

Recommendation:

- Whilst this was feedback from only one out of the nine participants, we would recommend AFRIDAC providing a one-to-one follow-up session for more experienced participants so that they can receive individualised support pitched at a more advanced level.



LEARNING 3: LACK OF NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES WITH FUNDERS AND STATUTORY SERVICES

From our observations, whilst participants were satisfied with the networking connections they made with Cohort peers, as well as speakers on the programme, we were unable to find evidence of networking opportunities with funders, statutory services and local organisations, which is critical to the success of an advocacy campaign.

Recommendation:

- Host a networking event (online or in-person) with local community organisations, local statutory services and Hackney VCS. This will provide an appropriate platform for the cohort to form, collaborate, learn and share ideas with new connections within the borough and beyond.

LEARNING 4: WEAKER OUTCOME AREAS 2 AND 4

As evaluators, we found it difficult to find extensive evidence showcasing improved networking skills and communicating messages.

Recommendation:

- The training would benefit from more networking opportunities; as well as targeted, skills-based workshops including petition-writing, writing to MPs, and how to tailor messaging to different audiences

LEARNING 5: RISK IN HAVING ONE MAIN FACILITATOR

The evaluators observed a potential risk in having only one main facilitator as participants must be able to build a personal connection/ relationship with that one facilitator.

Recommendation:

- If capacity allows, AFRIDAC could have a supporting facilitator throughout the training. This individual may not need to dedicate themselves to the whole training but it will place less pressure on participants if they're not naturally connecting with the main facilitator. AFRIDAC has taken this on board as the August cohort will have a filmmaker co-facilitating the session with Oladapo.

CONCLUSION

Our evaluation shows Cohort 1 left training equipped with a deep understanding of advocacy on both a theoretical and real-world basis. The emphasis on applying theoretical learning to make tangible outcomes is demonstrated by all participants leaving with a clear Action Plan. This included a detailed set of goals, timeframes, potential collaborations and required resources.

The main factors contributing to the positive experiences reported by participants were Oladapo's facilitation techniques and expertise, plus the flexibility of the training. For example, having participants lead facilitated significant and meaningful capacity building.

In terms of future recommendations, participants expressed a desire to have more networking opportunities and targeted, skills-based workshops to facilitate change and community alliances.

Given strong foundations and minor areas for improvement, we anticipate the next cohort to have an even more enriching learning experience and that more outcomes are met.

At this stage of the Programme, the evaluators were able to assess strong short-term outcomes from the training. The long-term and deep-seated impact - for example how communities have embedded advocacy principles in their day-to-day work will be captured in Year 3 of the evaluation period when both cohorts attend a retreat, which the evaluators will attend to conduct focus groups.

The evaluators will deliver a second and final report at the end of Year 3, which will also incorporate assessment of the 1-2-1 mentoring aspect of the Programme.

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