

# European Youth in Action Programme

## End of Project Report- April 2011

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**Project Number: GB-12-91-2010-R4**

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**Young Girls Connect Project : January – March 2011**

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**Host organisation: African Women's Welfare Group**

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## Project summary

### Project Themes

The young girls connect project which was led by young people for young people and ran over a period of three months from 4th January to 31st March 2011 benefiting 21 young girls (aged 13-25) from disadvantaged communities. The project was funded by European Commission under its Youth in Action Programme and received €7250.00 for the three months project. The project three main themes were: promoting peer to peer education and mentoring support, inter-religious dialogue and gender equality.

The key priorities for the group was to encourage and support the active participation of young people and inclusion of young people with few opportunities, reduce child poverty and social exclusion through specific training workshops and learning, for the acquisition of skills and knowledge to improve economic viability, increase educational options, promote active participation in all aspect of UK civic society, increase confidence and self awareness and promote religious dialogue. It also focused on promoting stronger and safer communities (one of the key national and local priorities) with active citizens working together to address their common problems.

### Project aims/objectives

The main aim and objectives was to equip young girls with new skills, knowledge, confidence and greater awareness of issues facing young people, to support them to influence their peers in positive and informed ways and to increase the options available to young people from disadvantaged communities. The specific objectives were to work together to:

- identify opportunities for young African girls
- Support young girls to become active members in their local community
- develop peer - peer support group
- provide an information sharing resource centre for girls to:
  - meet and socialise, receive information, and share
  - discuss issues of mutual concerns and share experiences
- organise monthly talks and workshops to address key issues facing young people
- promote cultural understanding of the UK society and inter-religious dialogue through inter-faith visits

### Project activities/methodology and achievements

The young girls connect project works on the principle of consulting with members and getting them involved from project design, to planning and implementation including the identification and outlining of key activities. All Activities developed and delivered have been the sole idea of the members of the group. A series of activities were carried out to enable us achieve our aims and objectives:

- Monthly workshops held to explore key topics such as crime, gangs and young people
- A youth website had been developed and designed ([www.awwg.org.uk/youth](http://www.awwg.org.uk/youth))
- The group with its majority participants being Muslims, made an exciting trip to Wesley Chapel and the Museum to have a taste of Christianity and explore the UK culture, its history and people.
- The group also undertook a workshop on stop & search with members of the Metropolitan Police one of the key statutory partners of AWWG,
- The group's communication and publicity team has published its first ever newsletters.
- Also a peer-peer mentoring support group has been formed which meets every Thursday from 5-7pm
- The group also runs a weekly fitness programmes every Thursday 7-8pm
- Through its mentoring training programme, the group has raised five community champions and young leaders all of whom are serving members of Haringey Youth Council.
- The mentoring training has also created a pathway particularly for those not currently in education to gain a qualification, used the qualification to pursue further education or seek employment.

### Project Venue

The Young Girls Connect Project was delivered at Unit 2, 594 High Road, Tottenham, London N17 9TA,



## Beneficiary

A total of 21 young girls aged 13-25 years old benefited from one or more project activities. Of the 21 beneficiaries, 2 (9.5%) were aged 13-15 years old, 7 (33.3%) were aged 15-17 years old, and the majority 12 (57.1%) were aged 18-25 years old.

Majority of the beneficiaries 17 (81%) were residents of the London Borough of Haringey and 4 (19%) came from neighbouring boroughs.

## Project implementation

### Project activities

The project idea has been borne from extensive consultations with members, and the activities developed have been in response to the needs identified. Participants have been actively involved in designing and delivering the project activities.

- Monthly workshops were held to explore key topics such as crime, gangs and young people; drugs and its impact on society, how to become actively involved in all aspects of your local community, young people, law & order and the criminal justice system and workshops on personal and career developments.
- The members of the group working together with a web developer, came up with the design and layout of the current youth website ([www.awwg.org.uk/youth](http://www.awwg.org.uk/youth))
- With majority of its members being Muslims, the group made an exciting trip to Wesley Chapel and the Museum. This visit presented members the opportunity to have a taster of Christianity and its doctrines. For some it was their very first time to visit a church. The impact of this is the promotion of co-existence and tolerance among religious groups. Since the chapel is also attached to a museum, members had the opportunity to explore the UK culture, its history and people.
- The group also undertook a one day workshop on stop & search with members of the Metropolitan Police one of the key statutory partners of AWWG, This activity enabled participants to understand the legislations underpinning stop and search
- The group's communication and publicity team has worked tirelessly to publish the first ever newsletters which will henceforth be published quarterly.
- Also a peer-peer mentoring support group has been formed which offers advice and support to members across different disciplines. Members also use the forum to explore topical issues. The forum is held weekly on Thursdays from 5-7pm
- The group went ice skating and through its fitness programmes it is promoting social skills and healthy lifestyles
- A mentoring training was run weekly on Saturdays from 11am – 4pm leading to level 2 award in progression
- Through the mentoring training programme, the group has raised a number of champions and young leaders who speak out on behalf of the rest of young people within the community. Five young people from the group are serving members of Haringey Youth Council, and one of them is a representative in the youth cabinet. This is a key achievement in seeing young people from marginalised backgrounds getting involved in the political life of their community.
- The mentoring training has also equipped members with relevant skills needed to help influence and educate their peers. The outcome of which has been the peer-peer support group
- The mentoring training has also created a pathway particularly for those not currently in education not only to gain a qualification but to have the options to pursue further education or seek employment thus improving their life chances and options available to them.



## Protection and safety issues

No safety issues were encountered or recorded

## Preparation and background

### Background of the group – ‘Young Girls Connect’

The group was originally set up in 2004 by a group of five young girls to empower young African women and girls through learning and skills acquisition to increase their confidence and awareness of issues facing young people, support them to influence their peers in positive and informed ways and to increase the options available to young people particularly from disadvantaged communities.

Based on this concept, and with the help of the host organisation (African Women’s Welfare Group), a series of consultations with other young girls, community leaders and other stakeholders from the local community were undertaken. The group finally stamped their name within the community in 2009 when they embarked on an 6months journey to expose the inhumane practices of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and its impact on young girls. Working with FORWARD UK, between 2009-2010 a series of short films were made and the video is currently being used for educational and awareness raising purposes. The film “**The Making of Think Again**” is also posted on youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL04lpinhhg>. Hard copies are also available upon request.

The group continues to consult with other young girls disadvantaged communities to identify their needs at any one time and works hard on seeking funding to put together programmes and activities to increase the life chances and options available to them as well as to also highlight emerging issues facing them.

More Recent consultations and discussions with target group highlighted areas for interventions:

- lack of opportunities for young African girls to contribute to the UK civil society
- lack of peer-peer support group within the community
- lack of adequate career development support particularly for young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds

The Youth in Action funding has thus enabled the group to address some of these key priority areas and make achievements (outlined in Part 1 above) which would have otherwise not be made without funding.

### Project Preparation

Once funding was secured and participants recruited, another consultation was carried out to outline project activities, decide on topics of interest to run workshops on, mapped out skills for volunteering opportunities. and distribute task according to skills and interest.



## **European dimension**

By attending the series of workshops, participants were made aware of the importance of observing the rule of law. The workshop on young people, law and order was complemented with a video on the impact of crime on young people, their families and friends, their communities and society at large. It also highlighted some key reasons why young people get involved in crime and ultimately the criminal justice system.

Through the participation in the workshop on active citizenship in the local community, they were able to share ideas, knowledge and experiences which promoted relationships and understanding of their roles as citizens of Europe and the world at large. Also through the peer mentoring support forum, young people are able to address their own priorities and take steps to make a positive difference to their communities.

Finally, the participation of some of the members in Haringey Youth Council will facilitate their participation and contribution in policy dialogue and debates on policies and practices concerning young people within the community, borough wide and even nationally

## **Evaluation**

Regularly weekly discussions and 3 focus groups sessions were carried out with an average of 9 participants at each sessions during project delivery to evaluate progress/impact and identify any gaps in delivery.

At the end of the project, 14 feedback forms were collected which provided information on project impact, achievements and learning points.

### **Key learning Points:**

- Young girls from African community need a lot of motivation to be engaged
- The involvement of parents particularly mothers in youth project and keeping them informed of all activities is key to getting the young people more engaged
- The design of activities particularly working with certain groups must take cognisance of cultural specific issues (Ramadan in Augt/Sept)
- Provision of community-based education may be an added value particularly for young people not in education
- Involving young people from concept design to project implementation encourages their full participation
- Supporting young people to get involve in civil society may be the way forward to creating future leaders
- All project activities to be conducted during weekdays in the evening from 5pm
- If Saturdays, activities should start from 2pm and not earlier- young people struggle to wake up early on Saturdays



## **Achievements**

In line with the youth in action priorities and the objectives we set out in our project plan, 21 young girls have been empowered to become more confident and well equipped to influence their peers in positive and informed ways

Through the projects, participants have gained key competencies which will increase their options for further education, to seek further training or to seek employment. The key competencies gained through workshops and learning included: communication in mother tongue, learning to learn, social and civic skills and other specific skills such as working with others, problem solving, improving own learning and performance, preparation for work, analytical skills and decision making skills.

Other key achievements of the project included:

- Five youths have joined Haringey Youth Council and are serving members with voting rights
- One young person is a member of the Haringey Youth Cabinet
- The participation of the five young people in the Haringey youth Council will bring an added value to policy dialogue and stimulate debates on active citizenship, policy and practice of concerns to young people at both national, local and community levels.
- A weekly peer to peer support group has been formed benefiting an average of 10 participants each week
- Our first ever newsletter called ACHIEVE NEWS has been published
- 15 young persons have successfully completed Level 2 mentoring training
- Finally through the peer-peer mentoring support group, members have the opportunity to come together and meet in a friendly and safe environment to share ideas, concerns, experiences and hopes while establishing mutual trust and social resilience.

## **Impact, multiplying effect and follow-up**

A total of 16 additional young persons benefited from the project directly. All 21 participants took part in the peer mentoring programme of which 15 successfully completed all aspects of the training programme. This mentoring training has set a progression pathway particularly for those young persons who are not in education. Through the mentoring they will be having a qualification which they could use to further their education or seek employment. For those in education this qualification will provide them with added value to their education and career prospects

Of the 21, 5 were school drop out and with the mentoring training they will become skillful and in gaining the level 2 qualification, they will improve their life options, more likely to achieve higher, and earn more which will invariably create wealth and reduce child poverty

In addition to the mentoring training, participants also benefited from the peer-peer support group formed. The support group has now become one of the key weekly activities of the youth group and will continue into the foreseeable future. This support group provides an opportunity for young people to come together to share ideas, discuss issues affecting them directly and to receive support from other members of the group. In some occasions, participants struggling with college work have had the benefits of being supported by their peers

The participation of five members of the group in Haringey Youth Council has a positive impact on rest of the members of the group and their local community as their concerns and input on local issues will be directly feedback to the youth council. The participation of the young people in the youth council will also enhance their personal development and increase options available to them.

By attending the workshops, participants have been empowered to impact not only their own lives but to also have positive influence on their peers thus reducing crime, drug and gang culture, enhancing stronger, positive and safer communities

Through volunteering on the project, 6 young people would have gained transferable skills for personal development and career prospects



Finally, this project frame work has been adapted as the template upon which all future youth work will be carried out.

### **Project Future and sustainability**

The project is continuing with the peer support group meeting weekly, nonetheless fundings are being sought to enable us continue with further training, launch our peer education programme borough wide and run a mentor-mentee programme

### **Visibility**

Publicity of the project was done through different media. Flyers were designed and distributed by the young people on the street, to their networks of friends.

Flyers were also distributed through African Women's Welfare Group (AWWG) networks and partners, through the website. Flyers were also taken to the Mosques and through Haringey Children and Young People's Services.

The project activities were also publicised by word of mouth through AWWG's clients base

All promotion materials and publication carried either the youth in action logo or the logo for the European Commission

### **Dissemination and exploitation of results**

An end of project conference was organised and presentations given on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2011 at African Women's Welfare Group premises. Invitations were sent out to partners, youth groups, statutory and voluntary organisations.

The young people gave a presentation on the youth project for the year: activities carried, achievements, lessons learnt, and sources of funding for the project from June 2010 to March 2011. Different members of the project also commented on the project highlights for them.

Also the entire project work for the year was captured in the first ever Young Girls Connect Newsletter- ACHIEVE and this has also been disseminated widely to partners and both statutory and voluntary groups. Project results have also been uploaded unto British Council Youthspace [www.youthspace.org.uk](http://www.youthspace.org.uk)

### **Coaching**

The group had two persons from the host organisation with responsibility for coaching, mentoring, supervising , providing guidance and supporting with resource management. The legal representative of the host organisation together with the project manager provided us with unlimited support before and during project delivery. They supported us in the planning, design and in facilitating consultations and focus groups discussions of the project.

They also supported us with resource management and project conference preparation. Throughout the project, both the legal representative and the project manager acted as our coaches and supervised the group and all its weekly activities. The success and achievements of the group have resulted from the support and guidance received from the coaches

### **Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities**

A total of 21 young people benefited from the project all of whom were either from refugee and migrant background or ethnic minority background. This group is known to have fewer options and this is consistent with reports from the Local Authority Haringey Council child poverty strategy 2008-2011.

Haringey is one of the most deprived boroughs in the country with many families experiencing significant levels of poverty and with 75% of its young people coming from ethnic minority backgrounds; Haringey has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest proportion of children living in poverty in the UK and is the 7<sup>th</sup> highest in London. 56.9% of children from the most deprived ward live in poverty, majority of whom are from migrant households.

Out of the 21 participants, 17 are residents of Haringey who are dependent on the social welfare system, 5 are currently not in education or are unemployed and one of the participants is registered disabled. All participants come from ethnic minority backgrounds.



## Difficulty/Recommendation

We experienced particular constraints in implementing the project within a very short time. Receiving notification in November for project starting in December leaves very little room for preparation particularly so within the festive season.

It might be worth considering to give at least an additional month or two for projects to start after the grant has been awarded.

Supporting young people particularly from disadvantaged communities may be the way forward in building resilience communities

## Conclusion

The project was successfully delivered and within budgets. The feedback received and the learning points noted will be useful to inform future project planning. The project reached out to many more young people than expected and the overall impact to participants are captured in these comments from beneficiaries:

*"The mentoring training has given me a new focus, and I look forward to using this qualification to further my education"*

*"Thanks to AWWG for supporting and coaching me to stand for Haringey Youth Council election. The experience was very enlightening and has been a journey of self-discovery it has made me a better person. I can now with confidence represent the views of young girls in my community and support them as well"*

*"I love the fact that I can come to AWWG to learn and still see my friends"*

*"Mentoring helped me to be able to have patience and to have the proper communication skills to deal with future mentees".*

*"The activities provided by young girls connect has improved me and helped me to re-focus".*

*"The visit to Wesley Chapel was great, I understand the origin of the Methodist Church now and the work of John Wesley, brilliant"*

*"The peer support group has been great, it has helped me not only with personal issues but also supported me with course. Thanks girls"*

*"The skills gained during mentoring is helping me now in school and I use it to provide support to my school mates"*



