



## I. Outline Introduction

BEMIS is the national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland. BEMIS was established in 2002 to promote the interest of minority ethnic voluntary organisations, develop capacity and support inclusion and integration of ethnic minorities communities. It is a member-led and managed organisation with an elected board of directors.

The major aims and objectives of BEMIS are to represent and support the development of the ethnic minority voluntary sector across Scotland, and to support the diverse communities and individuals that this sector represents, especially those who are under-represented and disadvantaged. BEMIS aims to address inequalities by empowering communities, working towards an inclusive society by establishing structures, which recognise diversity and empowers ethnic minorities, and ensuring that they are fully recognised and supported as a valued part of the Scottish multicultural civic society.

Initial Key aims and objectives:

- To strengthen the capacity of the ethnic minorities voluntary sector.
- Raise the profile of the ethnic minorities' voluntary sector and its needs at strategic, local and national levels.
- Have a coordinating role for the voice of the ethnic minorities' voluntary sector, ensuring pertinent issues are raised with the relevant bodies.
- To take a lead on policy issues and debate which are of concern to minority ethnic communities at both local and national levels.
- Work in partnership with all stakeholders and the diverse Ethnic Minorities communities in support of equality and a multicultural Scotland.

## II. Key Strength of BEMIS as identified in the HMIE review:

- A highly committed board of directors and staff who brought with them a good range of professional skills and a clear understanding of their responsibilities; The organisation had been successful in uniting a diverse range of stakeholders; BEMIS is highly valued by stakeholders and is making a positive impact on individuals, organisations and communities;
- Strong commitment to inclusion and diversity; and
- Strong commitment to ensuring grass roots organisations have a voice rather than acting as a spokesperson for EM communities.

The above is complemented by the following notions stated by HMIE:

- A sector leading organisation/ excellent rating.
- BEMIS made a significant difference in local communities and to the organisations it supported. 93.6 % of questionnaire respondents rated the overall service provided by BEMIS as good to excellent/
- Active involvement in research work with other organisations ...'which'.. enhanced understanding and removed barriers to BME involvement in local and national democracy
- Organisational efficiency and effectiveness for stakeholder organisations had been improved
- BEMIS gives grass roots a voice rather than acting as mouthpiece for EM communities

- BEMIS had been instrumental in securing a significant increase in the EM responses to consultation processes making effective use of its network both nationally and across a diverse range of ethnic communities/
- BEMIS was making a positive contribution to policy development and had been instrumental in ensuring ...'engagement'... directly with EM organisations/
- BEMIS had a strong track record of consulting its target communities, identifying needs and responding quickly with programmes and projects.
- Their commitment to capacity building ensured that local projects were self sustaining and no longer required significant support from BEMIS staff
- The comprehensive range of accredited training opportunities offered including a BA in community regeneration and HNC working in communities ensured EM people in local communities had the skills to better engage with local structures and partnerships
- Managers and staff at BEMIS were highly motivated, energetic and committed to the purpose of their work. They worked very effectively as a team, providing high levels of mutual support.
- The very strong commitment of BEMIS to diversity and inclusion was reflected in its diverse membership. Participants in the professional development courses came from a range of ethnic backgrounds
- The organisation had made very good efforts to target specific communities with its work, and to involve them in its management
- The organisation was not fully capitalising on its excellent work. It should develop better means to communicate and celebrate its successes so as to raise its profile.
- There is a strong commitment at both board and staff level to ensure that the diverse voluntary sector and communities this sector represents are fully recognised and supported as a valued part of civic society and a multicultural Scotland.

**BEMIS, as acknowledged by diverse local, national and European stakeholders as well as HMIE, has a high proportion of fundamental Strengths that are essential for the development and delivery our strategies and objectives in support of not only the diverse EM third sector but also in advancing government policies and initiatives around equality and social justice at various dimensions.**

### III. Vision & Mission of BEMIS

**VISION FOR BEMIS** Our vision is of a Scotland that is Equal, Inclusive, and Responsive: A society where people from the diverse communities are valued, treated with dignity and respect, have equal citizenship, opportunities and quality of life, and who actively participate in civic society.

**MISSION STATEMENT FOR BEMIS** As a strategic national infrastructure organisation, BEMIS aims to empower the diverse Ethnic and Cultural Minority Third Sector and the DIVERSE communities that this sector represents. We are committed to promoting inclusion, democratic active citizenship, recognition of diversity, human rights education, and wider representation, as well as effecting a proactive role in maintaining and enhancing pathways to influence government policy at local, Scottish, UK and EU levels.

BEMIS, within the perspective of our vision, ***adopts, deploys and utilizes the following core principles*** in our strategy and operational planning, development and delivery: BEMIS...

*Recognizes and respect the diversity of diversity in all it does.*

*Seeks to foster a sense of community within, and solidarity between, minority groups.*

*Ensures that its policies and actions are clear, coherent, and consistent, and apply equally to all.*

*Embraces all without either homogenizing difference or entrenching ethnic division.*

*Does not favor any group over any other, or entrench any racist doctrine or ethnic hierarchy.*

*Avoids any policy or action which gives offence to any stake-holders.*

*Is open to the fluidity of individuals' self-description and to the fluidity of ethnic and other related classifications.*

*Does not seek or purport to speak on behalf of minority communities either individually or collectively, but assist them to speak for themselves.*

*Utilises consultative and inclusive approaches to facilitate effective community engagement to inform and influence local and national policies.*

*Ensures that its Board and staff is reflective of the diverse communities in Scotland.*

### IV. Strategic Aims and Objectives

All of BEMIS strategic, planning and operational contexts are based on a partnership approach to ***all equality strands*** promoting interaction and cooperation at all levels.

**The following role and remit constitute a reflection of our vision, strategic and operational principles:**

BEMIS has **three overarching** strategic aims.

### **1. To empower and build the capacity of minority formal and informal community organisations:**

BEMIS is proactive in initiating focused capacity building programs and structures that meet the need of the sector, and the impact has been acknowledged at various levels especially within the framework of empowering these organisations and the cascading strategy deployed within these programs and initiatives. However, we acknowledge that the need for capacity building among the ethnic minority voluntary sector and communities is not only about providing training and bridging the skill gaps, but also about enabling and involving these communities in the wider decision making processes on a local and national level. Through sharing information, promoting good practice, networking effectively with the wider voluntary sector and other agencies, the ethnic minority voluntary sector will be able to develop its own capacity building initiatives as well as better support the communities these organization/agencies represent. In addition, capacity building for the ethnic minority voluntary sector should be transferred to involve the communities themselves and this is one of the priorities BEMIS has been promoting and supporting. BEMIS will continue to work in partnership with educational bodies, learning organizations, funders and other stakeholders, as well as the ethnic minorities voluntary sector especially grassroots groups /organizations, to identify and facilitate capacity building training and development programs across Scotland.

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**Providing direct support for the development of EM groups and organisations.**

**Engaging EM community organisations and communities in policy making processes; influencing government policy and ensuring their active and equal participation in civic life.**

**Empowering their capacity to function effectively and to achieve their individual organisational mission.**

**Empowering local grassroots community groups and promote their local involvement and representation with local public bodies and other stakeholders while ensuring their voice is reflected and recorded in national development and policy and decision making processes.**

**Continuing direct support and empowerment of EM communities in rural areas.**

**Investing in promoting and up-skilling of volunteers and workers in EM organisations.**

**Lead on consultation and research work ensuring direct input from grass root EM Communities into wider initiative and developments.**

**Address at local and national levels pertinent issues in support of the diverse EM voluntary sector and its development.**

**Advocating for minority (ethnic and faith) communities and community organisations ensuring recognition of diversity, recognition of discrimination and proactively working to open doors and change traditional thinking and operations by stakeholders.**

**Mobilising communities to support diversity and equality.**

### **2. To be a key player and proactive stakeholder in leading on lobbying and influencing policy development at all levels in relation to Ethnic Minorities and the Race Equality agenda in Scotland (strategic partnership role to the Government):**

BEMIS has been over the last years proactive in promoting and empowering a political voice for the diverse EM voluntary sector through working directly with them and in partnership with the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, funding bodies, wider voluntary sector and any other partners. However, due to various factors such approach remained restricted within a responsive rather than a proactive framework approach. Following on the HMIE report and further feedback with the Scottish government, it is acknowledged that BEMIS has a strong impact of the Scottish voluntary sector scene and this has to be utilised in ensuring government objectives and efforts are supported more effectively and efficiently within a strategic partnership role with the Scottish government.

This is a role that has to be enhanced and structured strategically with the government. However, this will have to be deployed effectively to ensure that mutual interests of both the government and the diverse EM voluntary sector and communities are paired within a national unified aim that engulfs the Government's five strategic objectives. Such role will be developed within the following outline (not conclusive):

#### **• Setting up a structured and focused consultative framework in support of the government and stakeholders at several levels:**

*Varied consultation mechanisms based on context and content:*

- sustain a supporting consultative framework for the government.**
- report and advise the government on pertinent issues in relation to EM voluntary sector and communities.**



• **Ensure contribution and feedback from diverse communities in response to government initiatives and legislations.**

• **To develop our strategic partnership role with the Scottish**

*Government in support of their objectives and undertaking of the equality and civic agenda in a multicultural Scotland:*

• **act as a fully supporting partner with various departments (Responsive and Pro-active).**

• **act as a catalyst for promoting the interests of EM with the government as well as ensuring government objectives are filtered and supported among EM and the wider sector (actively & proactively).**

• **Ensure EM communities and organisations have a voice assisting their engagement and empowerment to influence the government**

*policy agenda at local, national and international levels.*

• **Work closely with the government at various levels and ensure the impact of policies, legislations and initiatives in relation to equality, social justice, and community cohesion, are equally adhered to and deployed.**

• **Be pro active in building bridges between the government and stakeholders and the EM voluntary sector and communities.**

• **To provide a pathway to influence mainstream (government) policy:**

*work on supporting the Scottish government and key stakeholders, in the development of their policies and initiatives on equality, diversity and community.*

**3.To help develop, promote & progress inclusive society and democratic active citizenship for all in a multicultural Scotland at Scottish, UK and European levels. In addition, be pro-active in supporting and promoting Democracy & Human Rights Education in Scotland ensuring inclusive active citizenship roles for the diverse Ethnic Minority communities:**

Recent developments in Scotland, in relation to equality and priorities have set up new operational frameworks for all equality groups including BEMIS. And as an umbrella organisation, the responsibilities and role of BEMIS in this context becomes vital in its endeavour to meet these challenges.

The role that BEMIS has played over the last few years as an intermediary umbrella organisation has successfully enabled various ethnic minorities groups/communities to have a voice and secure capacity building and access to engagement with various initiatives. This has also informed to the understanding of key stakeholders and decision/policy makers and, as such, impacted positively on development in Scotland. However, the need for a more focused inter-agency work places BEMIS in a unique role where we can effect a very positive

impact in promoting equality and diversity in Scotland while ensuring a voice in the European setting where good practice and developments in Scotland can be promoted, shared and enhanced. To ensure our contribution to multicultural Scotland and interaction with European development, BEMIS will operate within the following framework:

• **Address and lobby issues of concern for the EM community and voluntary sector with concerned stakeholders at Scottish, UK and European levels.**

• **Raise awareness of the Scottish EM voluntary sector regarding developments in UK and Europe in relation to equality and human rights/ Ensure filtering of relevant information to Scottish EM groups**

• **Promote and effect influential human rights interest among the diverse EM voluntary sector.**

• **Work with and engage the EMVS in initiatives and policies ensuring their voice at a UK level and consequently European level.**

• **Empower local EM groups to have the confidence and opportunities to develop partnerships within UK and European contexts.**

• **Continue to represent Scotland at UK and European forums in support of the equality agenda in Scotland.**

**BEMIS**

Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and Cultural Minority Communities

**BEMIS**

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