



The Nigerian Muslim Community in England

Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities



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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction and context

This report is one of thirteen reports on England's Muslim ethnic communities resulting from a six-month research project commissioned by the Cohesion Directorate of Communities and Local Government in order to understand the diversity of England's Muslim population and enhance its engagement and partnership with Muslim civil society. The primary goal of the research was to detail the main population and community locations, identify denominations and religious practices, and identify the strengths of links with the country of origin. An overarching objective for the project was to identify how government could best engage and work in partnership with specific communities. For many of these communities, there was little existing research specific to the community, for this reason we felt it beneficial to look at other areas such as identity, language use, socio economic situations, and intra-community and intra-generational dynamics. Since the country and migration contexts are important we have briefly detailed the relevant parts of these.

While the research and analysis was approached in a rigorous manner, the scope is broad and the population in question is sizeable. Hence, the findings from these studies sometimes offer first insights rather than firm conclusions about the respective communities. What is evident is that the diversity of these communities warrants further research and particularly a greater need for understanding of England's diverse Muslim communities at both local and central government levels. We recommend that this research is understood as a starting point rather than an end-point.

This report details the research findings for the Nigerian Muslim community. Individual reports for the other twelve communities covered by the study as well as a separate report synthesising the overall research findings are available from Communities and Local Government.

This report focuses on the Nigerian Muslim community in England and as such those interviewed and involved in focus groups were based in England. However, some of the existing research and data on the community refers to England; England and Wales; Great Britain; and the United Kingdom. Thus the report refers to whichever of these is the most relevant in the context.

1.2 Migration and England's Nigerian Muslim population

Before Nigeria's independence in 1960, many Nigerians travelled to the United Kingdom, USA, France and other countries in the West to access higher education, and most returned to Nigeria immediately after completing their studies. After the collapse of the petroleum boom in the early 1980s, Nigerians started seeking employment opportunities in other countries including the UK, and there was an increasing tendency for Nigerian migrants to settle permanently in European countries. Political instability over the years has also resulted in many seeking asylum, and asylum applications to the UK peaked in the mid 1990s during a period of repressive military dictatorship under General Sani Abacha. These now remain consistent at around 1,000 applications per year.

The Nigerian community is one of the largest and most rapidly growing African communities in the UK. Current estimates indicate that there were 146,000 Nigerian born residents in the UK in 2006, up from 87,000 in 2001. However, this does not include undocumented migrants and UK citizens of Nigerian descent. The Nigerian population as a whole is widely dispersed across London and other parts of the country. The Muslim population is a minority within the Nigerian born population, representing 9 per cent of the total Nigerian born population in the 2001 Census. A best estimate of the Nigerian Muslim population is 12-14,000 but the actual number could be far higher.

1.3 Socio economic situation

There is limited socio economic data available on the Nigerian Muslim population in England. The little data that does exist for the Nigerian community as a whole suggests that the majority are well educated and many hold professional jobs in London and the surrounding counties. However, many in the Muslim community are still reported to be suffering high levels of unemployment and discrimination, with women being thought to be particularly affected due to prejudices based on their colour, religion, dress and accent.

In addition, the common perception and promotion of stereotypes of all Nigerians as fraudsters and criminals is also thought to have a negative effect on people's employment opportunities. Anecdotal evidence from respondents suggests that there may be many thousands of undocumented Nigerian migrants working illegally in London. Also a large proportion of Nigerian Muslims, many of whom are highly qualified, are reported to find themselves either in menial jobs or unemployed.

Paradoxically, the difficulties in finding mainstream employment may be a driving factor in the development of a thriving business and commercial sector within the Nigerian community. For example, Peckham has become known within the community as 'the Yoruba heartland' in the past ten years, and many of the shops are Yoruba owned. Boroughs such as Lewisham and Southwark have a flourishing trade in 'Nollywood' films with the setting up of video film clubs off the back of a thriving Nigerian film industry. However, in part because of the small scale and highly scattered nature of these businesses, there is little data or information available on these businesses in London.

1.4 Identity, religion and language

Nigerian Muslim communities in the UK are mainly made up of Hausas from northern Nigeria and Yorubas from Southern Nigeria. The majority are Yorubas, followed by Hausa and Ibo, together with some smaller groups of Oyo, Ishan, Edo, and Efik.¹ The respondents mainly mentioned only Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani as the main ethnic groups in the UK, with one or two references to Auchi, and Nupe.

¹ Oyétiádé A., 'The Yorùbá Community in London', *African Languages and Cultures*, Vol. 6, No. 1. (1993), pp. 69-92.

The majority of the Nigerian Muslims in the UK are Sunni and generally follow the Maliki legal school, which reflects practice in Nigeria, though there are also some who follow the Shafi'i and Hanafi legal schools. There are also small numbers of Shia Muslims in the UK, along with a few followers of the Qadiriya and Tijjaniya Sufi orders. Evidence from interviews and focus groups suggests that the interplay of ethnicity, language and religion informs the congregational delineation in places of worship to some extent, though not as much as it does in some other communities.

For many Nigerian Muslims, religion is central to their interpretations and discussions about identity, and virtually all respondents made reference to their religion as key to their self image in one way or another. The self awareness about their Muslim identity has been greatly heightened within the community post 9/11. Respondents suggest that increased hostility and a perceived lack of support or welcome from wider society makes it difficult for many to feel British, and hence many retreat into what they see as a strong and positive Muslim identity.

Whilst religious identity is extremely important, identities in the community are dynamic and can change according to specific social contexts. In the wider group context where Nigerians of different religious background socially interact, religious affiliation is often diluted and becomes less important. Inter-religious marriages within Nigerian families are also common, and it was suggested by some respondents that it is commonplace for a Christian to pray at a mosque, and a Muslim at a church as both know the correct etiquette and prayers related to the two faiths.

There is a distinct generational difference about how people define their identity. Older people are generally comfortable about living in Britain, but do not feel or care about the impact on themselves of British culture and values to the same extent as young people do. For British born young people however the issue is more complex as they try to make sense of their multiple identities – British/Nigerian or Muslim/black, and the research suggests that Nigerian young people are predominantly coming to define themselves as primarily 'black-British.'

Nigerians in the UK speak a range of languages including, Yoruba, Hausa, English, Arabic, Isha, Edo, Efik, and Igbo.² Like many of the other communities in this research, there was a shared concern among first generation Nigerian Muslims about the use of English and the lack of understanding of their mother tongue by British born Nigerians. By choosing English over a Nigerian language, British born Nigerians are perceived as being in danger of losing a part of their heritage, history, culture and identity.

² Oyètàdè, 1993.

1.5 Intergenerational dynamics, young people and the role of women in the community

There are a wide range of views on the relationship between British born Nigerian Muslims and those born in Nigeria, but the majority of respondents suggested that the relationship between the generations is strong and one of mutual respect. Family is seen as vital to the Nigerian community, and there is a continued practice of deference to parents and elders, who hold the responsibility or 'guardianship' that for the young generation as a whole, not just for their own immediate or extended family.

However, problems have arisen as a result of the process of migration and the changed environment that the community finds itself in. There are concerns about the growing communication barriers between parents and children based on the different cultural backgrounds and environments that the generations have been brought up within. Many parents worry about their children growing up in a non Islamic environment and feel that negative behaviours in wider society are having a detrimental impact on young people, particularly males, as they negotiate their identities in the public domain.

For British-born Nigerian Muslims, the challenges of resolving a British identity with their Nigerian, African and Muslim identities are compounded by the additional need to navigate cultural differences, values and experiences between themselves and their parents and elders. However, unlike some other communities, there is not a perception that the second generation is becoming more concerned with religiosity.

The research indicates a high level of concern about educational under attainment and youth unemployment and the detrimental impact this is having on young people who see themselves as British, but who are becoming increasingly demoralised because they are not doing as well as their white counterparts. This coupled with a lack of knowledge about their own faith amongst many young British-Nigerian Muslims is thought to contribute to their growing feelings of alienation.

Women are traditionally seen as playing a leading role in the family, and for having the primary responsibility for the education of children. In addition to this, women are also active in community organisations and events. However, despite the prominent role that many women play, there are others that lack support and are quite isolated from the wider community. Also whilst many are actively involved in community events, there are still several barriers to women's full participation in the community. Religion plays an important role in determining the role, lifestyle, opportunities and expectations placed on women and young girls. The changing expectations and choices of Muslim women as a result of migration was an issue highlighted as being of key concern to families, particularly in the area of sexual relationships and marriage. Some respondents suggested that there is a growing religious awareness among women and that this is evident in new ways of expressing their identity and religious practice.

Despite some women achieving high levels of education and being successful at setting up and running their own businesses, many Nigerian women are said to face difficulties accessing work within the formal employment sector. The combined effects of race, gender, migration, and religion are perceived as severely restricting their employment opportunities, and those who find themselves unable to work due to such barriers have found the situation to be very demoralising, particularly as education and self-determination among women is highly regarded in the community.

1.6 Integration and cohesion

Three clear themes concerning integration and cohesion emerged amongst the respondents. Firstly, integration processes are seen as not having been very successful. Whilst generally believed to be a positive process, many fear that in the current UK climate, 'integration' means that wider society expects them to give up their religion and the important values that inform their identity, hopes and aspirations. Secondly, the perceived growth in hostility in the UK in terms of religious and racial issues is seen as having undermined the 'British identity' of Nigerians. There is considerable frustration about the way in which Muslims are portrayed, and also about the way in which 'Muslim' is used as a label to group all Muslim peoples together with little recognition of differences in culture, ethnicity and language. There is also a perception that the growing hostility from the 'host' community particularly affects the second generation. With a rise in stop and search of young Muslims, including of those who see themselves primarily as British Nigerians, young black people are perceived as being constantly harassed by the police. Thirdly, respondents felt that for integration to be successful, further efforts need to be made by the government to combat racism and the rise of perceived injustices towards Muslims.

1.7 Media and links with country of origin

Almost every respondent felt that the media portrays Muslims and Islam in a negative way, and that this is fuelling tensions and hatred towards Muslims. Media consumption within the Nigerian Muslim community is extremely varied and includes most of the mainstream UK TV and press as well as countless Nigerian internet, satellite and other broadcast media. African satellite channels in London focus on entertainment, news and sport as well as advertising various services including cultural and entertainment services to meet the needs of the African Diaspora. Most people also favour Al Jazeera, Peace TV and Islam channel for religious coverage and news about the Muslim world. Older generations are more likely to listen to the radio, whereas younger Nigerians are more likely to access information via the web.

Emotional and financial links between the community and their country of origin or heritage remain high, but for most Nigerians, the UK is now home. However, British Nigerians, particularly first generation migrants, maintain a high level of contact with their home country. Most people travel regularly to visit family, or for political or business purposes. A significant proportion of those that travel to Nigeria regularly include second and third generation British Nigerians.

Remittance by hand is a common practice amongst Nigerians and remittances are seen as a means of relieving poverty amongst relatives as well as planning for the longer term. Many Nigerians also maintain an active interest in the politics of Nigeria, and many people in the UK are affiliated to political parties back home. The rapid fall in the cost of communications has spawned significant markets within the community and there are many outlets that specialise in communication services as well as serving as niche remittance agencies. Technological developments, coupled with the increased purchasing power of diaspora populations, have also acted as catalysts for the development of audio-visual media within many African countries, especially Nigeria.

1.8 Civil Society and civic engagement

UK-based Nigerian diaspora organisations draw on a variety of constituencies, such as national or state level interest groups including business associations, associations of particular ethnic groups, and others based on gender, religion, political and cultural activities. Most, if not all, of these civil society organisations are run voluntarily or with limited funding. There are numerous Nigerian faith orientated organisations in the UK that provide a number of services for different ethno-linguistic Nigerian groups.

Engagement between the community and public authorities on the local, regional and national levels is minimal and respondents indicated that public authorities only prefer to engage with larger well known organisations. Government and associated bodies are viewed with a mixture of scepticism and sometimes fear by some in the community. The lack of understanding about the work of community organisations and lack of funding for faith organisations to undertake social action, coupled with a general lack of contact and communication between government and the community, was felt by respondents to be creating further barriers. It was suggested that this perception could be challenged if the government made more of an effort to reach out to communities and showed some sincerity of purpose in addressing community issues.

Low levels of engagement and a lack of knowledge about how to work with local authorities was felt to be due to the fact that the majority of organisations are run by volunteers. Many organisations are staffed by those who lack formal training on management and leadership or who are not able to spend the necessary time to conduct administration duties. Some do not have offices and are juggling working voluntarily with other commitments. It was suggested that the best way to address capacity building issues was for volunteers to have education and skills training, but types and level of funding currently accessed does not allow for provision of the level of support needed for volunteers. Most respondents working in community organisations felt that it is important to have paid staff in place as this would begin the process of enabling organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting relationships with authorities and communities.

Specific recommendations arising from community respondents include:

- The provision of mainstream funding for Islamic supplementary schools for the Nigerian community, as well as recognition and support for those faith organisations in the community that are proactively addressing issues the challenges facing young people in relation to educational underachievement, lack of employment opportunities, crime and alienation
- Support and funding for the establishment of youth and women's organisations, as well as for umbrella organisations that are able to develop a collective community voice for engagement with public authorities
- Capacity building for existing community organisations, including funding and training in key areas namely, business skills, management training and making funding applications
- Proactive approaches by government and local authorities to address anti-Muslim sentiment in society and the mainstream media.

Other recommendations:

- Further research into some of the less visible problems facing the community including; depression and other mental health problems, domestic violence and fostering
- Provision of clear guidance for faith based communities on government policy and funding streams related to faith based social action.

2 Introduction

Communities and Local Government recognises that there is a need to enhance its understanding and knowledge of the diverse Muslim ethnic populations in England, particularly relating to some of the specific smaller communities of African, Middle Eastern and other Asian countries of origin. As such, Communities and Local Government commissioned The Change Institute (CI) to deliver the research project 'Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities' (UMEC). The thirteen ethnic Muslim communities that the Cohesion Directorate was seeking more information about were those originating from:

- Afghanistan
- Algeria
- Bangladesh
- Egypt
- India
- Iran
- Iraq
- Morocco
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Saudi Arabia
- Somalia
- Turkey.

Reports have been provided under separate covers for each diaspora community, along with separate synthesis and technical reports.

2.1 Objectives of the research

There were four objectives for the research:

- *Mapping*: Develop population maps for each ethnic community outlining the spread of the population and identification of high density clusters
- *Identification of denominations and pathways*: Collect information on the grassroots institutions/key individuals working with ethnic communities and the breakdown of these ethnic communities by denomination/sect/clan

- *Identifying strength of links and capacity of ethnic communities:* Collect information on the strength of links between each ethnic community and country of origin (including influential institutions/individuals/media channels/religious influences). Also to collect information on the relative strengths and weaknesses of civil society infrastructure for each ethnic community, highlighting where capacities need to be developed
- *Identifying how Government can best engage with ethnic communities:* Develop recommendations on the ways in which Communities and Local Government can best engage with and understand Muslim ethnic communities in England, including recommendations on avenues of communications and delivery to these communities.

These objectives translated into six key questions that the study needed to address:

1. Where are the key ethnic groups of the Muslim population located?
2. What are the latest estimated sizes and demographic make-up of the key ethnic communities?
3. Which denominations and/or other internal groupings do these ethnic groups belong to?
4. How can Communities and Local Government best engage with them?
5. What are the strength of links between the ethnic communities and country of origin?
6. How developed is the level of social infrastructure for each group?

During the course of the desktop research and fieldwork, we obtained data on other facets of the community such as socio economic position and intra-community dynamics. In order to provide additional context to users of the report we have included this information where it was felt this would be valuable to the reader. However, it should be noted a comprehensive socio economic description or analysis of the community was outside the scope of this study. We also took the view that the migration and history of each community's country of origin was important and often offered potential explanations for the location; intra-community dynamics, including political, social and cultural characteristics; and development of the diaspora communities in the UK.

2.2 Report structure

The report is structured to address the key research questions set out previously. Sections 6 and 7 are primarily based on quantitative secondary data. Sections 8 to 12 draw primarily on the qualitative research corroborated by secondary sources where these are available. Finally, Section 13 draws together specific recommendations arising from the research.

3 Methodology

The research questions represented a broad area of inquiry and analysis. While quantitative data about the size, location and other demographic features of the priority communities was a key research need, the study primarily focused on enabling the Communities and Local Government to ‘know’ these communities in depth.

To fulfil these research requirements, the methodology developed needed to combine documentary research with processes of consultation and dialogue. Data collection consisted of two phases which were consistent across each community.

PHASE	ACTIVITY	METHOD
1	Population mapping	Review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing literature National data sources Local data sources and consultations with local authority, other public bodies and community representatives. These were conducted to cover all thirteen communities in this study.
2	Qualitative data collection	Community interviews (205 total, twelve with Nigerian community) Focus groups (30 total, two with Nigerian community).

In addition, we conducted 15 interviews with local government and voluntary services stakeholders across England to discuss their existing experiences of working in partnership with and supporting Muslim civil society organisations across all the Muslim ethnic communities that we researched.

3.1 Project phases

Phase 1: Population mapping

The first phase consisted of collecting mainly secondary quantitative data but also some primary qualitative data about locations of Muslim ethnic populations and known civil society organisations. The main method for data collection on population characteristics was through a comprehensive review of a broad range of secondary data sources, including the Census, Annual Population Survey, output of migration and population think tanks and academic research centres. This initial literature review assisted in developing a detailed picture of data currently available in the public domain, and in identifying key gaps in the existing knowledge base. It also helped in identifying key locations for each diaspora to be targeted in the community research which followed as well as identifying key stakeholders and community respondents.

Robust and up-to-date population data is difficult to obtain outside of the 2001 Census but we were able to obtain some anecdotal information from local authorities and community groups about migration since 2001. However, the 2001 Census data still informs the baseline of the population figures quoted in this study. This data has been supplemented where possible by a limited amount of additional local authority information or other sources where reliable estimates have been made.

In relation to Nigerian Muslims specifically, there is little specific research on the population in England or the UK. We are reliant on information from respondents and from a small amount of existing sources.

Phase 2: Qualitative data collection

Qualitative data collection has been undertaken primarily through 12 one-to-one interviews with key respondents ('those who might be expected to know'), and two focus groups with individuals from the Nigerian community. This phase of the research was carried out between April and July 2008.

3.1.1 In-depth interviews

The interviews assisted in developing an overview of national and local contexts: the make-up of diaspora communities, key issues concerning violent extremism including perceptions, experiences and activities, current initiatives in place to counter this and existing civil society structures and development needs. The interviews also assisted in identification of further key contacts for the one-to-one and focus group research and covered a range of topics including:

- Key data sources
- Denominations and pathways
- Key influencers and institutions
- Key issues and needs for the specific diaspora
- Links with countries of origin
- Civil society structures and capacity needs
- Current levels of contact and key barriers to engagement with public authorities
- Media consumption
- Appropriate communication channels for engagement and involvement.

The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face and some by telephone where necessary.

Respondents were chosen on the basis that they offered a range of different types of knowledge and perspectives on community issues and dynamics.

Selection of respondents involved drawing up a 'long list' of key contacts in each community in consultation with community interviewers, expert advisers and contacts made during the first phase of research. Shortlists were produced to ensure that there was adequate female and youth representation and a regional spread that reflected the distribution of the community in England. Additional names were added on the basis of subsequent recommendations made.

Interviews for the Nigerian community research were conducted by a researcher from the Nigerian community. The researcher was already familiar with many of the civil society organisations in the Nigerian community. This added legitimacy to the process of enquiry that was critical in opening up discussion and enabled us to gather rich and sometimes controversial data.

The profile of the twelve respondents was as follows:

- Five were women and seven were men
- Their occupations included four community organisation manager/coordinators, four professionals who are active on community boards and committees, one education worker, one student society leader, one journalist and one writer
- Three were in the age range 20-29 years, four in the range 30-39, four in the range 40-49 and one was over 60 years old.

A quality control process was used by CI to ensure consistency and quality across each community. This involved:

- Piloting: Each community researcher was required to carry out two/three pilot interviews in each community to refine approaches and questions where necessary. This included a detailed discussion with each researcher following the pilot interviews, with expert adviser involvement where necessary, as well as a review of the interview field notes to ensure that relevant data was being picked up by researchers
- Each community researcher was assigned to a member of the core research team who reviewed field notes on an ongoing basis, and regular internal team meetings were held to share findings and ensure consistency across the project.

3.1.2 Discussion groups

In addition to the individual interviews, we conducted two focus groups that allowed for collective insights to be generated on community needs and issues, including challenges and practical ways forward. These explored partnership issues, civil society infrastructure and capacity development needs, media and communications. While these focus groups were limited in number, they provided a rich and often diverse set of views that complemented the data gathered in the one-to-one interviews.

Focus groups were designed to include a mix of participants from different community networks and different occupational backgrounds who might be expected to hold a wide range of views. Participants were recruited by the core research team through local community organisations and CI networks.

One male and one female focus group was conducted which were attended by individuals over 35 years of age. The focus groups were conducted in London in July 2008.

		Location	Born in the UK	Born outside of the UK	Age range
Group (Female)	1	London	2	6	35+
Group (Male)	2	London	1	7	35+

Language translation was required for some members of the female focus group. Groups were facilitated by CI directors and analysts, with additional support from community researchers.

This report uses selective quotes from the interviews and focus groups to illustrate key recurring themes and issues arising during the qualitative data collection. Where necessary they have been carefully edited for ease of reading, or understanding what was meant.

3.2 Analysis of data

Data analysis involved generating understandable patterns by comparing what different respondents/focus groups said about specific themes or questions. The central question was whether the data and information and the range of views expressed led to the same conclusions. Findings were validated by triangulation of all data and information collected in both project phases so far as possible, and by critical internal reflection and review within the CI team.

The analytical process involved reviewing field notes to develop emerging themes in line with the analytical framework, which was done in collaboration with the field researchers; regular internal meetings to discuss findings from all communities; dedicated internal workshops on the communities to finalise analysis; reviews from expert advisers; feedback from 'community reviewers' and a formal peer review process.

Intercultural understanding of responses and non-responses was also essential in considerations of the data generated. A set of commonly held assumptions and understandings in any cultural group may mean that some things are simply left unsaid – because they are commonly understood in the group and do not require articulation. In addition literal translation or interpretation may simply misrepresent or miss the significance of what is being articulated. In this context in particular there will often be a distinction between what is said, and might be noted or recorded, and what is meant. In looking for meaning, silences and body language were often as important as what was said. A good example of potential misinterpretation that came up many times was body language indicating discomfort and unwillingness to pursue a particular line of enquiry.

Finally, and most importantly, we were *reflexive* in our approach, critically reflecting on the role and influence that our own research intervention may be having on key respondents and focus groups, using critical judgment and being conscious of the need to interpret with integrity in relation to what we were seeing and hearing.

3.3 Limitations of the research

Data analysis represents both general and particular challenges in the current social and political context, as well as specific challenges in relation to some of these communities. These include:

- The sample sizes for each community were relatively small and respondents were not intended to be a representative sample of the relevant communities
- Because the interviews were not based on a random sample, the study does not claim to provide an analysis of the Nigerian population as a whole, nor was this the intention of the study. We have analysed views and comments in the context of existing data, knowledge of the current political and social context for these communities, and the comments of other respondents
- Many aspects of the topic guide were designed to identify the key needs and challenges facing the community.³ Hence the research tended to generate data on problem areas and challenges, particularly in focus group discussions when respondents felt they had limited time to ensure that their voices got heard. This may not reflect many of the positive and optimistic views of respondents. However, respondents were often aware that the discussions may come across as negative in tone, and were quick to try and balance this by highlighting perceived positive aspects of both their communities and their lives in the UK. We have endeavoured to set out the ‘best’ story (in terms of explanatory power) in the context of what is already known about why some of our respondents might express negative feelings

³ The topic guide is included in the Technical Report, available from Communities and Local Government.

- In the current context, the politicisation of the research field meant that all respondents were conscious of being part of a community under public and government scrutiny. Respondents were made aware of the purposes of the research through a 'showcard' that explained the research as well as possible uses of the research.⁴ They were informed that this research would potentially be used to inform a publication that would enter the public domain and would cover aspects such as religion, intra-community dynamics and links with country of origin. A climate of some scepticism within Muslim communities, discrimination, both real and perceived, and awareness of government interest in 'what is happening' on the ground, meant that respondents were often sceptical about the use of the information that they were providing. Many will have had agendas (for positive as well as negative reasons) when asked about issues for their communities, which may have influenced their responses (eg representing their community as having few or no problems, or conversely, as having many or major needs and/or issues with public authorities)
- This also created a number of practical difficulties in research terms, including difficulties in getting interviews with particular types of respondents, hesitancy and caution in some responses, and a closing off of some lines of questioning in relation to religion, identity and differences
- The researchers' analytical response to these difficulties was to be critically attuned to who was speaking, their location in the community, the interests that they may have, and to judge their comments in the light of this context. Researchers were aware that there are dynamic and charged debates and movement taking place within these communities on a whole range of issues ranging from religion, its expression and orientation in the context of being Muslim minorities living in a non-Muslim society, to negotiations about roles, responsibilities, duties, gender relations, and relationships with country of origin. This awareness underpinned the analysis of the data and the conclusions drawn from responses received.

For all these reasons, the research should be viewed as a 'snapshot' in time rather than reflective of the full complexity or range of issues, challenges and changes taking place in these communities (eg intergenerational relationships, gender roles, perceptions of ethnic and religious identity, changing attitudes among the young (both in liberal and more radical directions) and the levels of integration or tensions within and across communities). We are conscious of the dynamism and the rapid changes taking place in some communities, both positive and negative.

In phase one of the study an examination of literature revealed a real lack of documentation on Nigerian Muslims in the UK so it was difficult to identify obvious 'community leaders' or representatives that would be widely seen as such among Nigerians in the UK. Hence the viewpoints of the selected respondents may not necessarily be representative of other Nigerians. Additionally, only one interview was conducted with a Nigerian outside of London, so this report is predominantly about Nigerians living in London where the bulk of the Nigerian Muslim population resides.

⁴ The showcard is included in the Technical Report, available from Communities and Local Government.

4 Country History



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With 140 million people, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and one of the ten most populous countries in the world.⁵ The history of Nigeria stretches back several millennia, and whilst home to hundreds of ethnic and linguistic groups, it has been most strongly influenced by three regionally dominant ethnic groups: the Hausa in the north, the Yoruba in the west, and the Igbo in the east. The spread of Islam began in the ninth century onwards, initially in the northern regions and then to the southwestern parts. The greatest expansion of Islam in Nigeria dates from the nineteenth century after the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate between 1804-08, which brought together most of the northern region and adjacent parts of Niger and Cameroon under a single Islamic government.⁶

⁵ Nigerian National Census 2006.

⁶ Helen Chapin Metz (ed) (1992), *Nigeria: A Country Study*, Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress.

Having been a British Protectorate since 1914, modern day Nigeria gained independence in 1960 as a federation of three regions (northern, western, and eastern), with a constitution that provided for a substantial measure of self-government for the regions. However, from the outset the country was beset by regional ethnic and religious tensions, resulting in a military coup in 1966 that installed the first of a series of military governments. The Igbo attempted to secede from the federation by declaring the independent Republic of Biafra. The ensuing civil war which lasted until 1970, left over one million dead.

Since then Nigeria has experienced successive cycles of civilian rule and military coups d'états.⁷ Its most notorious military dictatorship took control of the country in 1993 under the then Defence Minister Sani Abacha. During his rule, many were arrested and sentenced to death, including the Ogoni activist Ken Saro Wiwa. Civilian rule returned finally in 1999 with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo (a former military head of state). He remained the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria until April 2007, when further elections brought the current President Alhaji Umaru Musa YarAdua to power as head of the People's Democratic Party. This was the first time that there had been a civilian-to-civilian transfer of power without subsequent military interference in the country's 47 year post independence history.

The new government faces severe challenges in rebuilding national unity and economic prosperity. Political instability and corrupt governments over the years have led to the squandering of the country's oil revenues, and left the country with a legacy of ethnic and inter-religious conflict, economic stagnation and a damaged democratic infrastructure.

Nigeria is made up of 36 states and has more than 250 different ethnic and linguistic groups, with a major divide running between the predominantly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south. The largest ethnic groups remain the Hausa-Fulani (north), Yoruba (southwest) and Ibo (southeast).⁸ The Yoruba in the south are estimated to be 50 per cent Muslim and 50 per cent Christian.⁹ The north exhibits a more fundamental form of Islam whereas in the south Muslims are seen as being more liberal in their outlook. The imposition of Islamic Shariah law in several states has embedded divisions and caused thousands of Christians to flee. Inter-faith violence is said to be rooted in poverty, unemployment and the competition for land.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hein de Has (2006), *International Migration and National Development: Viewpoints and Policy Initiatives in Countries of Origin: The Case of Nigeria*, a report prepared for Radboud University, Nijmegen and the Directorate General for International Co-operation (DGIS) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands.

⁹ Paul Lubek, Ronnie Lipschutz & Erik Weeks (2003), *The Globality of Islam; Sharia as a Nigerian Self-Determination Movement*, QEH Working Papers.

Nigeria is the world's 11th largest producer of oil with a current output of 2.2 million barrels per day, and in 2006 oil accounted for just over one fifth of GDP, 85 per cent of government revenue and over 90 per cent of export earnings. However, despite Nigeria's oil wealth, Nigeria's GDP per capita remains low and few Nigerians, including those in oil-producing areas, have benefited from the oil wealth.¹⁰ Parts of the country suffer from extreme poverty, with over 70 million people living on less than US\$1/day.¹¹ The north remains significantly poorer than the South and environmental unrest and trade in stolen oil has led to considerable violence and unrest in the oil rich regions of the Niger delta.

Despite these continuing problems, Nigeria is the predominant power in West Africa and has taken the lead in conflict resolution in several West African civil wars. It also plays a leading role on the wider African stage. For example President Obasanjo held the Chair of the African Union (AU) for 2005-06. It has a strong bilateral relationship with the UK and is the UK's second largest market in sub-Saharan Africa after South Africa. The UK is also one of the largest investors in Nigeria, with cumulative investment of several billion pounds by Shell, British Gas and Centrica in the oil and gas sector. Other large British companies active in Nigeria include Guinness, Unilever, Cadbury, British-American Tobacco, GlaxoSmithKline, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic.¹² As well as trade and investment, the UK through the Department for International Development (DfID) has substantially increased its bilateral development assistance in Nigeria, from £35million in 2003-04 to £100million in 2007-08.¹³

¹⁰ Foreign and Commonwealth Office: www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/nigeria

¹¹ CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>

¹² UK Trade and Investment: <https://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/nigeria>

¹³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office website.

5 Migration History and Trends

Before Nigeria's independence in 1960, many Nigerians travelled to the United Kingdom, USA, France and other countries in the West to access higher education. During this period there was a pattern of returning to Nigeria immediately after completing studies. A turning point in this pattern of migration and return came with the collapse of the petroleum boom in the early 1980s, the state introduction of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) and the attendant economic hardships faced by many Nigerians.¹⁴

Subsequently, Nigerians started seeking employment opportunities in other countries, and many who were not necessarily looking to study outside the country also began to leave. The severe economic difficulties, increased poverty and political instability that have plagued many African countries in the last two decades have resulted in the large-scale migration of Africans to Europe and the United States, resulting in the phenomenon of a massive 'brain drain'. The SAPs contributed to the significant illegal immigration of young Africans into Europe, particularly since 1996.¹⁵

Outside of Africa, the Nigerian diaspora is found in the United States, England, Ireland, USA, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Korea, and Brazil. However, the numbers, as a proportion of the total emigrants, is small; 2 per cent migrate to Europe, 1 per cent to the United States of America, and another one per cent to Asia.¹⁶

The population of Nigerian migrants abroad has been continuously rising¹⁷ and there is an increasing tendency for Nigerian migrants to settle permanently, despite increased restrictions and controls on immigration in Europe. Migrants are now more likely to be undocumented and their travel itineraries tend to be longer and more perilous. This has made Nigerian migrants more vulnerable to exploitation and marginalisation.¹⁸

¹⁴ Chinedum Nwajiuba, 'International migration and livelihoods in southeastern Nigerian', *Global Migration Perspectives*, No. 50, October 2005.

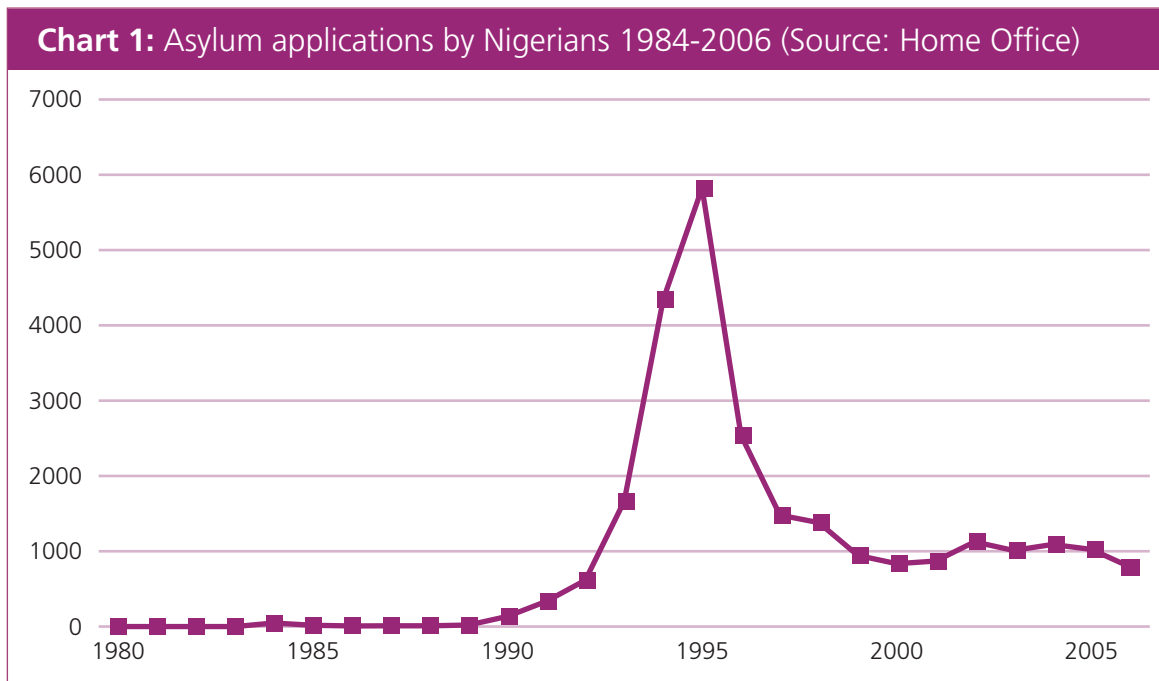
¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hein de Has, 2006.

¹⁷ Nwajiuba, 2005.

¹⁸ Hein de Has, 2006.

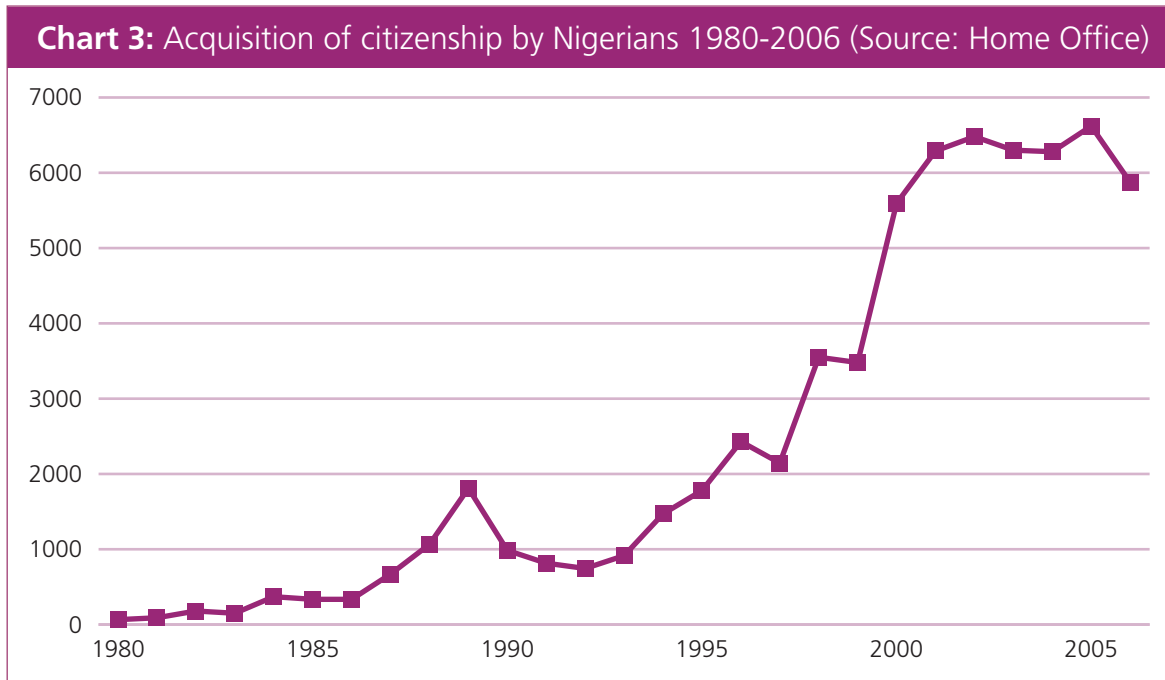
Chart 1 illustrates the trend of asylum applications by Nigerians to the UK, which peaked in 1995, coinciding with the peak period of repression under the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha. Since 1999, when democracy was restored, it has remained consistent around 1,000 per year.



Grants of settlement show a steady increase, with peaks in 1999 and in 2003, coinciding with the two election victories of Obasanjo (see Chart 2). However, it is not clear whether there is any direct correlation between these factors.



Citizenship acquisition among the Nigerian born population has also dramatically increased, from an average of 667 per year between 1980-1995 to just over 5,000 per year since 1996 (see Chart 3).



6 Community Demography and Key Locations

2001 Census: Nigerian Muslims by Country of Birth in England: 7,484

The Nigerian community is one of the largest and most rapidly growing African communities in the UK. According to Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, there were 146,000 Nigerian born residents in the UK in 2006, up from 87,000 in 2001. However, this figure does not include undocumented migrants and UK citizens of Nigerian descent.¹⁹ The Nigerian Muslim population is a minority within the Nigerian born population in the UK, representing nine per cent of the total Nigerian born population in the 2001 Census.

Approximately half of the respondents were unwilling to estimate the figures of Nigerian Muslims living in the country, stating that there was no possible way of giving a correct figure for various reasons, including the fact that many Nigerians are undocumented. Of those that did attempt an estimate, most cited 10,000 as the lowest figure, with higher end estimates ranging between 50,000-70,000.

A small amount of additional data about recent Nigerian migration was available from a number of local authority sources. According to a 2007 report on New Communities in Greenwich,²⁰ the Nigerian community in the Borough is estimated to number between 10-12,000 (4-5 per cent of the Borough's total population), and is the largest community after White British. The report shows a 70 per cent increase between 2003 and 2006 of Nigerian pupils in Greenwich schools, the largest for any group in the borough.²¹ The largest communities live in the north and north east of the Borough, particularly Thamesmead, Abbey Wood, Glyndon and Woolwich. According to the report, 84 per cent of Greenwich residents born in Nigeria are Christian, which suggests that up to 16 per cent are Muslim. If these statistics are correct then Greenwich has some 800 – 1,000 Nigerian Muslims, making it the second largest number in a local authority area when compared to 2001 Census data.

¹⁹ International Migration and National Development: Viewpoints and Policy Initiatives in Countries of Origin. The Case of Nigeria, Hein de Has, 2006

²⁰ Social Inclusion and Justice Division Greenwich Council (2007), *New Communities in Greenwich*, Greenwich Council.

²¹ Ibid.

As Table 1 shows, the majority of the 7,484 Nigerian Muslims recorded in the Census are concentrated in London, with very small numbers distributed across other parts of the country.

Table 1: Number and percentage of Nigerian born Muslims in each government office region (Source: Census 2001, commissioned table C0644)

GO Region	Nigerian-born Muslims	% of total Nigerian-born Muslim population in England	% of Nigerian population that is Muslim	Nigeria born Muslims as % of total Muslim population
London	6,268	84%	9%	1.0%
South East	311	4%	7%	0.3%
North West	232	3%	8%	0.1%
East of England	195	3%	6%	0.2%
West Midlands	135	2%	8%	0.1%
Yorkshire and the Humber	105	1%	7%	0.1%
East Midlands	103	1%	7%	0.2%
South West	90	1%	6%	0.4%
North East	45	1%	8%	0.4%
Total	7,484	100%	9%	0.5%

Figure 1: Distribution of Nigerian born Muslim population in London (Source: Census 2001)



Twenty four of the 25 local authorities with the largest Nigerian Muslim populations are in London and collectively represent 81.2 per cent of the total Nigerian Muslim population in England. According to 2001 census data, the highest concentrations are in Southwark, followed by Hackney, Lambeth, and Newham.²² Information from respondents for this study suggests that due to cheaper house prices some Nigerian Muslims have also moved further out to Stratford, Leyton and Rainham, although there is no official data available to corroborate this view.

Table 2 lists the ten local authorities in England, all of them in London, with the largest Nigerian Muslim populations and sets out the proportion of the overall Nigerian born population in each local authority that are Muslim. As the table shows, there is little variation across local authorities in the percentage of the Nigerian born population that is Muslim. The only exception among ten boroughs with the largest number of Nigerian born Muslims is Westminster (19.6 per cent Muslim). This aligns with comments by respondents who noted that the Nigerian population is relatively un-segregated by faith.

Table 2: Local authorities in England with largest Nigerian born Muslim population (Source: Census 2001, commissioned table C0644)

Local Authority	Nigerian-born Muslim population	Nigerian-born population	% of Nigerians who are Muslim	Nigeria born Muslims as % of total Muslim population
Southwark	1,280	10,673	12%	7.6%
Hackney	683	6,633	10%	2.4%
Lambeth	665	6,121	11%	4.6%
Newham	393	5,423	7%	0.7%
Lewisham	373	5,297	7%	3.2%
Greenwich	317	3,918	8%	3.4%
Brent	306	3,070	10%	0.9%
Westminster	254	1,299	19%	1.2%
Barnet	223	2,753	8%	1.2%
Islington	167	1,779	9%	1.2%

²² 2001 Census.

7 Socio economic situation

There is limited socio economic data available on the Nigerian Muslim population in England. IPPR's *Beyond Black and White* provides data from the LFS of new and established Nigerian born migrants.²³ According to this report, 61 per cent of Nigerian-born migrants who arrived in the UK prior to 1990 are employed and 10 per cent are unemployed. For settled migrants who arrived after 1990 the figures are 73 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. 15 per cent of new Nigerian migrants are in full-time education compared to the 5 per cent national average and 37 per cent are educated to degree level or equivalent level. For those Nigerians who arrived prior to 1990, 51 per cent are educated to degree level or equivalent level. While these figures are for the entire Nigerian born population they are commensurate with the responses, though anecdotal, from interviewees and focus group participants who noted that most Nigerian Muslims are well educated and many hold professional jobs in London and the surrounding counties.

High levels of unemployment amongst British-born Nigerians and new migrants were a particular cause for concern for male focus group participants and interviewees. Many expressed a concern about discrimination in the labour market, which they suggested may be driving some Nigerians to work illegally. Anecdotal evidence from respondents suggests that there may be many thousands of Nigerian migrants working illegally in London. Recent changes to the UK's immigration policies, such as the 1999 *Immigration and Asylum Act* and the 2002 *Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act*, have been identified as contributing to an increase in the number of undocumented Nigerians working in London.²⁴ Examples were given of qualified but undocumented Nigerian people in the country working illegally for as little as two pounds an hour, while many qualified Nigerians with legal status were also having difficulty finding employment because of what many felt were racial and religious factors.

Respondents cited many examples of negative perceptions about Nigerians which they feel affect their employment prospects. These include negative perceptions of the Nigerian accent and the stereotypical image of Nigerians as 'fraudsters'. Many respondents felt very uncomfortable about the perceived media focus on trafficking, crime and document forgery, which they feel obscures the fact that the vast majority of Nigerian migrants are not criminals. Beyond this specific stereotype faced by Nigerians, others point out that racism in general, and Islamophobia in particular also lead to high levels of discrimination in employment. The following words of one male focus group respondent capture the widespread frustration of many in the community about the barriers they face in accessing employment:

*For Nigerians in London there is not a glass ceiling as we are not even able to get our foot into the door. We are discriminated against for the colour of our skin, our accents, our religion and our perceived status as fraudsters. Even the educated amongst us are doing menial jobs.*²⁵

²³ Sarah Kyambi (2005), *Beyond Black and White*, IPPR. Percentage refers to working age population.

²⁴ Hein de Has, 2006.

²⁵ Focus group participant, male.

Most respondents commented on discrimination specifically on the grounds of their faith, ranging from a lack of facilities for prayer whilst at work, to employers commenting in interviews upon women's clothing and head covering, often claiming that this would impede their work if they were to be employed. Another female respondent described personal difficulties in the labour market:

It is difficult to get work here. I have a PhD from an English University and I taught at a university in Nigeria, but still I cannot find work here. The one interview I did have, the person who interviewed me commented on my dress.²⁶

Paradoxically, the difficulties in finding mainstream employment may be a driving factor in the development of a thriving business and commercial sector within the Nigerian community. However, in part because of the small scale and highly scattered nature of these businesses, there is little data or information available on these businesses in London. One report suggests that over 3,000 businesses in London are owned by black Africans and are concentrated in the capital's poorest boroughs, but it is difficult to delineate business ownership by nationality from the report.²⁷

For example, Peckham has become known within the community as 'the Yoruba heartland' in the past ten years, and many of the shops are Yoruba owned. Some respondents thought that the majority of these businesses are Muslim owned. However, it is difficult to identify for certain whether a particular faith community dominates the business sector, as Yorubas include both Muslim and Christian members within wider families and groups. Boroughs such as Lewisham and Southwark have a flourishing trade in 'Nollywood' films with the setting up of video film clubs off the back of a thriving Nigerian film industry. More recent migration has seen Nigerians settling in Dagenham, which is reflected in the number of Nigerian shops on the Heathway.²⁸ There are also a growing number of African enterprises across the Borough of Islington, many of which are thought to be established and owned by Nigerian women.

²⁶ Nigerian community respondent: Female, London, 30s.

²⁷ David Styan, 'The Security of Africans Beyond Borders: Migration, Remittances and London's Transnational Entrepreneurs', *International Affairs*, Volume 83, Issue 6, pages 1171-1191.

²⁸ Huq Rupa, 'Sound of the Suburbs', *The Guardian*, April 2008.

8 Key characteristics

8.1 Identity

For most of the respondents, religion was central to their interpretations and discussions about identity, and virtually all respondents made reference to their religion as key to their self image in one way or another. Their views suggest that there are two principles themes around which community debates concerning religion and identity coalesce.

The first is that self awareness about Muslim identity has been greatly heightened within the community post 9/11. This has impacted on people in one of two ways. The increased hostility and negative representations of Muslims following the event has led some to *recoil into the shell of Muslim identity* as one person put it, or it has led others to more positively identify themselves as part of a global *ummah*. Respondents suggest that this hostility and perceived lack of support or welcome from wider society makes it difficult for them to feel British, and hence many retreat into what they see as a strong and positive Muslim identity. Secondly, there is a great deal of discussion within the community about what it means to be Muslim and to comply with Islamic values in the midst of a non-Muslim culture and society.

Whilst religious identity is extremely important, identities in the community are dynamic and can change according to specific social contexts. In the wider group context where Nigerians of different religious background interact, religious affiliation is often diluted and becomes less important. Moreover, inter-religious and inter-ethnic marriages are common, and many Nigerian households are composed of individuals with distinct religious-ethnic affiliations. As such, a characteristic of the community highlighted by a small number of respondents is the relative flexibility that the younger generation has in choosing which religion to follow. However, this view was not widely expressed, and nor does it accord with the more common assertion of the strength of Muslim identity stressed by the majority of the respondents.

There is a distinct generational difference about how people define their identity. Older people are generally comfortable about living in Britain, but do not feel or care about the impact on themselves of British culture and values to the same extent as young people do. As one older respondent explained: *The main issue is that we consider ourselves as Muslims of Nigerian origin first and then as British Muslims.*²⁹

²⁹ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

For British born young people however the issue is more complex as they try to negotiate their multiple identities – British/Nigerian or Muslim/black. Whilst there is undoubtedly a greater focus on faith across all generations within the community, unlike in other Muslim communities included in this study, there was no suggestion from respondents that younger people are becoming more concerned with religiosity. On the contrary, respondents overwhelmingly suggested that Nigerian young people are predominantly coming to define themselves as primarily ‘black-British.’

For British-born Nigerian Muslims, the challenges of resolving a British identity with their Nigerian, African and Muslim identities are compounded by the additional need to navigate cultural differences, values and experiences between themselves and their parents and elders. For some, the tensions lie in the perception amongst older people that the changing identity of the young is closely related to adopting what they see as the negative traits of the surrounding society.

8.2 Ethnicity

In Nigeria there are up to three hundred ethnicities formed by common cultural values and shared languages. Attempts at ethnic labelling are not easy, confused as they are by intermarriage and intermingling.³⁰ However, there is a general consensus that within the hundreds of ethnicities in Nigeria, there are three primary ones; the Hausa-Fulani who are concentrated in the north, the Ibo in the southeast, and the Yoruba in the southwest. These dominant groups make up just over half the population of Nigeria.³¹ The majority of Nigerians in the UK are Yorubas, followed by Hausa and Ibo, together with some smaller groups of Oyo, Ishan, Edo, and Efik.³² The majority of respondents mentioned only Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani as the main ethnic groups in the UK, with one or two references to Auchi, and Nupe.

The majority of respondents were of the view that ethnicity does not play a significant role in Muslim community interactions, and that a shared sense of being Muslims tends to ensure that the different groups freely socialise and intermingle on non-ethnic lines. They also suggest that there is considerable social mixing with non-Nigerian Muslims as well as Nigerian Christians. However, there were one or two respondents who did not agree with this view. They suggested that there are distinct social and cultural differences between the Yorubas and Hausas, which causes an element of inter-ethnic rivalry and plays a role in organisations and their formation.

³⁰ Ugbana Okpu (1977), *Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigerian Politics: 1960-1965*. Stockholm: LiberTryck AB.

³¹ Thomas Hodgkin (1960), *Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthology*. London: University Press.

³² Oyètádé A., ‘The Yorùbá Community in London’, *African Languages and Cultures*, Vol. 6, No. 1. (1993), pp. 69-92.

8.3 Religion

According to the 2001 Census, Christians are the dominant Nigerian faith community in England, with only 9 per cent of the Nigerian community identifying itself as Muslim. Nigerian Muslims and Christians co-habit in the same areas in the UK with little segregation along religious lines, and as a consequence, the groups are sometimes not easily distinguishable outside of external symbols of religious practice. Nigerian communities are also unique in maintaining successful inter-religious relationships. For the Archbishop of Canterbury's Listening Initiative in Christian-Muslim Relations, Nigeria was identified as a potential case for the study of and development of Christian-Muslim inter-faith dialogue.³³ Inter-religious marriages within Nigerian families are common, and it was suggested by some respondents that it is commonplace for a Christian to pray at a mosque, and a Muslim at a church as both know the correct etiquette and prayers related to the two faiths.

About half of the respondents stated that the majority of Nigerian Muslims in the UK are Sunni following the Maliki School of Islamic jurisprudence,³⁴ and that there is a small minority of Shi'a Muslims. The rest were either unsure of what the main Muslim denominations in the community are, or were of the view that there are no denominations in Islam. Most of these latter were also of the view that it is predominantly educated and young people that are not concerned with different denominations by way of emphasising its unifying and non-divisive nature. Some respondents did refer to a few smaller Muslim religious groups that are represented in the UK. The most often mentioned were the Sufi orders of Tijaniyah³⁵ and Qadiriyah³⁶ and a couple of respondents also mentioned that there is small Ahmadiya community in the UK.³⁷

Evidence from interviews and focus groups suggests that the interplay of ethnicity, language and religion informs the congregational delineation in places of worship to some extent, though not as much as it does in some other communities. Some mosques such as the Old Kent Road Mosque in south London have a predominantly Yoruba presence, but are also attended by Hausa and other Nigerians. Hausa do not

³³ Archbishop of Canterbury's Listening Initiative in Christian-Muslim Relations 2001-2004. Report available at: www.tinyurl.com/58spmr

³⁴ School of law attributed to Malik ibn Anas al-Asbahi in the eighth century in the Arabian Peninsula. Predominant in North Africa, with significant presence in Upper Egypt, Sudan, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. Originally referred to as the 'School of Hejaz' or the 'School of Medina', it is characterised by strong emphasis on hadith; many doctrines are attributed to early Muslims such as the Prophet Muhammad, wives, relatives, and Companions. A distinguishing feature of the Maliki school is its reliance on the practice of the Companions in Medina as a source of law. Additionally, Malik was known to have used 'ray' (personal opinion) and 'qiyas' (analogy). Source: The Oxford Dictionary of Islam.

³⁵ The Tijani Order was founded by Shaykh Abbas Ahmad ibn at-Tijani, an Algerian Berber (d. 1815). It has spread from Algeria to the south of the Sahara and into western and central Sudan, Egypt, Senegal, West Africa and northern Nigeria, as well as being represented in Europe and North America.

³⁶ The Qadiri Order was founded by Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani (d. 1166) from Gilan in Persia, who eventually settled in Baghdad in Iraq. After his death, his Sufi Order was propagated by his sons. The Qadiri Order has spread to many places, including Syria, Turkey, some parts of Africa such as Cameroun, the Congo, Mauritania and Tanzania, and in the Caucasus, Chechen and Ferghana in the [former] Soviet Union.

³⁷ Ahmadiyyas are not considered as Muslims by some, primarily because of their belief that the Prophet Mohammad is not the last prophet.

have a separate mosque and are more inclined than the Yoruba to pray in whichever mosque is close to them regardless of ethnic make-up, the main consideration being whether it is Sunni or Shia. The other well-known Nigerian mosque is at Kennington Road, but many mosques are informal set-ups where people club together to rent a house and set up a mosque. Nigerians also worship at the Muslim Welfare House, North London, and other mosques that are not traditionally 'Nigerian', but which are convenient due to their location.

Where ethnicity does play a role in mosque attendance is a result of language use and community interests, rather than intra-community tensions or conflicts. On occasion the service can focus on regional concerns of interest to the majority Yoruba, and Hausas can also be alienated by the language used to conduct the 'khutbha' (sermon). As one respondent explained: *Ethnicity can play a role where people share the same language, or come from the same area and form the majority in the mosque or organisation.*³⁸

The Old Kent Road Mosque does attempt to address the language issue, and often prayers are conducted in English or partly in Arabic to ensure comprehension by all those attending. However, it was reported that some Nigerian Hausas are organising to create places of worship in privately rented spaces where Hausa children can be taught by teachers who speak Hausa. Some respondents hoped that through this the Hausa culture and language will be passed on to young people growing up in London.

There have been ongoing debates in Nigeria about restoring Shariah law, which have been of interest to the community in the UK. In April 2001, the Nigeria Muslim Forum (UK) sponsored an international conference in London entitled "The Restoration of Shariah in Nigeria - The Benefits and Challenges". Intellectuals amongst the Nigerian Muslim diaspora have not publicly opposed the idea of restoring Shariah law, but have expressed some criticisms. These focus on the interpretation of Shariah, the ignorance of judges and 'vigilante' police (*hizbah*), the gender bias in its enforcement, the interests of the poor, the lack of preparation, the absence of codified law and the levels of corruption in Nigeria.³⁹ However, many of those attending the Conference wanted Shariah implemented in Nigeria as they believed that it would help counteract growing levels of poverty, hunger, corruption and human rights abuses.

³⁸ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 30s.

³⁹ Lubek, Lipschutz & Weeks, 2003. *The Globality of Islam; Sharia as a Nigerian Self-Determination Movement.*

8.4 Language

There are about 500 languages spoken in Nigeria today. The official languages of Nigeria are Edo, Efik, Adamawa Fulfulde, Hausa, Idoma, Igbo, Central Kanuri, Yoruba, and English, along with many other minority languages. In London, Nigerians speak a range of languages including, Yoruba, Hausa, English, Arabic, Ishan, Edo, Efik, and Igbo.⁴⁰ As already noted, language interplays with ethnicity and religion in the attendance and constituency of mosques. However, focus group participants felt that the community understands language challenges, and that the chosen language for debate or discussion can change dependent on the group in question. For example one respondent noted that in mosque services:

*Usually the khutba (sermon) is in Arabic, but depending on the audience the Imam may use English or Yoruba to conduct the khutbha.*⁴¹

Like many of the other communities in this research, there was a shared concern among first generation Nigerian Muslims about the use of English and the lack of understanding of their mother tongue by British born Nigerians. By choosing English over a Nigerian language, British born Nigerians are perceived as being in danger of losing a part of their heritage, history, culture and identity. In the words of one male respondent:

*I try to speak in Hausa to my children but they prefer English. They try to speak with us in Hausa but amongst themselves they speak English and all other types of English slang. When a people lose their language they lose so much of their history, their identity, and their culture.*⁴²

⁴⁰ Oyètádé, 1993.

⁴¹ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

⁴² Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

9 Intra and Inter Community Dynamics

9.1 Intergenerational issues

There are a wide range of views on the relationship between British born Nigerian Muslims and those born in Nigeria, but the majority of respondents felt that the relationship between the generations is strong and one of mutual respect. Within the community there are regular social, cultural and religious events held throughout the year, both locally and nationally. These events are seen as being spaces where people of all generations participate and interact. Family is seen as vital to the Nigerian community, and there is a continued practice of deference to parents and elders. A number of respondents referred to the responsibility or 'guardianship' that elders have for the young generation as a whole, not just for their own immediate or extended family.

However, most respondents also highlighted problems that have arisen as a result of the process of migration and the changed environment that the community finds itself in. There are concerns about the growing communication barriers between parents and children, which are not based necessarily on the lack of a shared language, but on the different cultural backgrounds and environments that the generations have been brought up within. Parents born and brought up in Nigeria find it difficult to inculcate the values and ethics of their native heritage to young people, who are growing up in a completely different society to the one in which they did. These cultural differences between parents and children can give rise to many problems and negative impacts, as expressed by this female focus group participant: *There is a big communication gap. The youth don't understand their parent's background, and therefore, don't listen to them.*⁴³

Many parents worry about their children growing up in a non Islamic environment and feel that negative behaviours in wider society are having a detrimental impact on young people, particularly males, as they negotiate their identities in the public domain. The focus groups highlighted a common perception that Nigerian youth in the UK, are less disciplined in comparison to young people back home, but many parents feel that they cannot discipline them in traditional ways because of the risk of interference from welfare officers. At the same time they expressed frustration that government approaches have not worked, and that this is evidenced by the growing levels of knife and gun crime amongst youth.

Cultural differences can also have a significant impact on the issue of life choices that young people make. Marriage is one area where there can be serious conflicts if parents have a preference for their children to marry someone from their own religion, country and home town. Most children growing up here believe that they should be allowed to choose to marry anyone they like. One respondent (an Imam) suggested that parents find it more tolerable for boys to marry outside than girls.

⁴³ Focus group participant, male.

The change in environment between Nigeria and Britain has also had a significant impact on community lifestyles and family structures. Whereas in Nigeria the whole extended family and community had a contribution to make towards children's upbringing, in the UK parents are largely left to raise children on their own without the wider support and community influence. Additionally, there are pressures that many face in accommodating the need to work with spending enough time with their children. For many parents, the most negative aspect of this is the impact this has on their ability to play a more proactive role in their children's education. They feel that this not only affects children's levels of achievement in mainstream secular schools, but also leave them vulnerable to negative influences from western culture and their peers from other backgrounds.

9.2 Young people

Apart from concerns about inter-generational tensions, most respondents expressed concerns about educational attainment and youth unemployment and the detrimental impact this is having on young people who see themselves as British, but who are becoming increasingly demoralised because they are not doing as well as their white counterparts. A large part of the community is also concentrated in some of the most deprived areas of London. Without the opportunities for work and progress, respondents felt that young people are opting out and wasting their time just hanging around with friends. This in turn has led to fears of rising levels of crime and young boys getting involved in petty crime, graffiti, and stealing.

There have been various community led responses to these challenges. A number of mosques have established youth forums/clubs and there are also many secular supplementary schools and youth clubs in existence. These organisations provide a range of religious, sporting, educational and social activities, and though established by adults, many are led by young people themselves. Male focus group participants indicated that as a result of such interventions, the rate of crime has gone down and that there are fewer problems amongst the young men. In the words of one such respondent:

Several years ago when there was a lack of Islamic centres there was a higher amount of juvenile delinquency. With a growing number of Islamic centres the number of juvenile delinquents has gone down. There are fewer young people on the streets.⁴⁴

The lack of knowledge about their own faith amongst many young British-Nigerian Muslims is thought to contribute to their growing feelings of alienation, and most respondents felt it was important for young people to have access to Islamic teaching, not as an add-on but as a central part of their lives. Some of those who raised this issue felt that there should be access to public funds for Islamic schools.

⁴⁴ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

Another fear strongly expressed by respondents in focus groups with regards to young people relate to the welfare of children arising out of the lack of appropriate fostering arrangements. Respondents suggested that many Nigerian children of Muslim heritage are being placed with non-Muslim foster parents, and that as a consequence, the Nigerian Muslim culture, disciplines and practices that might be helpful for them are being undermined. It is important to stress that this is only a perception that has been picked up during the study, and that it requires more detailed research in order to determine the scale and nature of the problem highlighted.

9.3 Women

Women are traditionally seen as playing a leading role in the family, and for having the primary responsibility for the education of children. In addition to this, women are also very active in community organisations and events. One female respondent explained the multiple roles that women play as follows:

Women are highly respected in the community and take very active roles, particularly during social and educational events. Their main issues are education, employment and the upbringing of the young. Apart from being active in Muslim organisations they also form their own women-only organisations where they share experiences and support each other. They also patronise other conventional/public social provisions for dealing with children and young people's behavioral issues.⁴⁵

Other respondents however suggested that despite the prominent role that many women play, there are others that lack support and are quite isolated from the wider community. This lack of support, external friendship networks or access to counselling services can lead to high levels of depression for many. Additionally, whilst many events for children are organised and managed by women, there are still several barriers to women's full participation in the community.

Religion plays an important role in determining the role, lifestyle, opportunities and expectations placed on women and young girls. Respondents noted that the majority of women are expected to pray at home rather than at the mosque, and where women do worship at a mosque, they are more likely to be Yoruba than Hausa women. Some respondents suggested that there is a growing religious awareness among women and that this is evident in new ways of expressing their identity and religious practice. Outward expressions of religiosity are said to have become more prominent, especially amongst Hausa women in the UK. One of the manifestations of this has been an increase in the wearing the 'Hijab' and traditional headdress in public, as well as a move towards reading of the Quran by themselves. One Hausa respondent explained:

They are trying to educate themselves, usually through religious education. Not many know about the religion. They don't know how to read the Quran or how to perform their prayers. They don't know Arabic and they don't know the hadith so they are teaching themselves.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Nigerian community respondent: Female, London, 30s.

⁴⁶ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

The changing expectations and choices of Muslim women as a result of migration was an issue highlighted by some respondents as being of key concern to families, particularly in the area of sexual relationships and marriage. The emerging patterns among young people are seen as reflecting western cultural mores, which are making parents urge marriage at a relatively young age for girls out of the fear about young girls having boyfriends before marriage:

Parents are fearful for the safety of their daughters. Chastity is very important to Nigerian parents, and girls seem to fall under the pressures of their peers...but this isn't something that only Nigerian Muslim parents worry about, this is something all parents worry about.⁴⁷

Despite some women achieving high levels of education and being successful at setting up and running their own businesses, many Nigerian women are said to face difficulties accessing work within the formal employment sector. The combined effects of race, gender, migration, and religion are perceived as severely restricting their employment opportunities, and those who find themselves unable to work due to such barriers have found the situation to be very demoralising, particularly as education and self-determination among women is highly regarded in the community. Many women shared the view expressed by this respondent:

In interviews women have been discriminated against for covering the head. Muslim women have said that future employees made comments on their dress, suggesting that it would impede their work. Such interviews have not been successful.⁴⁸

9.4 Cohesion and integration

Three clear themes concerning integration and cohesion emerged amongst the respondents. Firstly, integration processes were seen as not having been very successful. Secondly, the perceived growth in hostility in the UK in terms of religious and racial issues is seen as having undermined the 'British identity' of Nigerians. Thirdly, respondents felt that for integration to be successful, further efforts need to be made by the government to combat racism and the rise of perceived injustices towards Muslims.

Most respondents were of the view that the second generation of British Nigerians is integrated to a high degree, but that integration can only go so far when the wider society (including government), police actions and the media are perceived to be continuing to demonise and marginalise Muslims and black communities. Some also expressed confusion about what integration means. Whilst generally believed to be a positive process, they feared that in the current UK climate, 'integration' means that wider society expects them to give up their religion and the important values that inform their identity, hopes and aspirations.

⁴⁷ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

⁴⁸ Focus group participant, female.

In the light of the socio-political context in the UK post-9/11, there was frustration among respondents about the way in which Muslims are portrayed, and also about the way in which 'Muslim' is used as a label to group all Muslim peoples together with little recognition of differences in culture, ethnicity and language. One male focus group respondent noted:

One of the main challenges is that we see 'society' as being hostile to us as Muslims. Especially since 9/11 and 7/7, people are unfriendly to our community and don't take time to understand how we are feeling. We are reduced to being 'Muslims' in a stereotypical way and associated with terrorism. Prior to the attacks we had not been seen like this, we were Africans or Nigerians. It makes us all feel uncomfortable.⁴⁹

There is also a perception that the growing hostility from the 'host' community particularly affects the second generation. With a rise in stop and search of young Muslims, including of those who see themselves primarily as British Nigerians, young black people are perceived as being constantly harassed by the police. This is also said to be increasing the level of fear young people in the community have about expressing their identity in public. One community worker expressed this as follows:

People are becoming fearful of what would happen to them if they stick their neck out and embrace their culture. It was difficult to get young people to speak to you (about the research). They didn't want the government to know what their views are because they are afraid that anything they say or think will be manipulated against them. They fear being imprisoned because they are Muslim and because they are black.⁵⁰

Some respondents suggested that in response to these issues, many people find solace and comfort in their shared Muslim identity. The male focus group participants in particular expressed strong passions in relation to Islam, and identified religion as a factor that allows the community to stay together rather than fragment in the face of all the difficulties it faces. Most cultural practices within the community are informed by religion and vice versa, resulting in the two being seen interchangeably:

There is an unwritten rule in the Nigerian community and Nigerian Muslim community. We are proud of our culture. It is a rallying point and we seek to preserve our cultural future.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Focus group participant, male.

⁵⁰ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London.

⁵¹ Focus group participant, male.

10 Media

10.1 Perceptions of the media in the UK

Almost every respondent felt that the media portrayed Muslims and Islam in a negative way. Only one out of the twelve respondents felt that the media reports news involving Muslims fairly. Most felt that the media gives a negative image of Islam and Muslims, fuelling tensions and hatred towards Muslims. One respondent captured the general sentiments when he stated:

The UK media is biased they are just pro-government, pro-foreign policy. They tend to jump to conclusions when it comes to issues concerning Muslims. For example if a Muslim is involved they will not want to know the whole facts. If a Muslim is caught doing something like the Muslims in Forest Gate,⁵² normally the media would investigate, but when it comes to Muslims they will take whatever the police say and work with it. They are eager to use the word Islamic with every suspect who is a Muslim whilst they don't do the same with people of other faiths.⁵³

10.2 Media consumption

Media consumption within the Nigerian Muslim community is extremely varied and includes most of the mainstream UK TV and press as well as countless internet, satellite and other broadcast media.

BBC Hausa plays a central role in informing the Hausa and wider African communities about what is happening in the north of Nigeria, as well as in other African regions. BBC Hausa broadcasts current affairs programmes, news on polls from around the world particularly West Africa, and where 'stringers' (freelance journalists) are available, provides news from Ghana, Cameroon, China and the USA. Initially student run, it is now an established part of Hausa culture, though the morning news was cited as being listened to primarily by politicians and civil servants. It was suggested by respondents that almost every Hausa in Britain listens to the service. With the advent of FM it has been able to partner with FM stations across Africa, and many African based radio stations record the programmes for transmission at a later date. According to one respondent:

From the age of nine I was listening to BBC Hausa. BBC Hausa broadcast in Hausa is the bible for Hausa people and many believe the content to be truthful. The majority of people in Nigeria do not have the funds to buy a newspaper and so many prefer to listen to the radio. Often a Hausa person is seen carrying a radio on his shoulder listening to BBC Hausa.⁵⁴

⁵² The consultee is referring to the incident in June 2006 when Mohammad Abdulkahar and Abul Koyair were arrested in Forest Gate and alleged to be making home-made chemical weapons. Mr Abdulkahar was shot during the raid and a significant investigation was undertaken by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). The final report called for the Metropolitan police to apologise to the two families involved but stopped short of calling for prosecutions. Now often referred to as 'the Forest Gate incident', it is one of the most significant events with respect to the relationship between authorities and Muslim communities since the London Underground bombings in July 2007.

⁵³ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 20s.

⁵⁴ Nigerian community respondent: Female, London, 30s.

N Power radio is a live internet radio transmission from London. It is cited as being one of the premier Nigerian radio stations in the UK. The channel provides news, education, music and topical discussions. OGBC2 FM Radio transmits music, news and drama online. This popular online radio channel is primarily aimed at Yorubas.

Older generations are more likely to listen to the radio, whereas younger Nigerians are more likely to access information via the web. Print media includes *The Trumpet Newspaper* and over 20 magazines. Most of the major Nigerian newspapers can be accessed online.

According to one research study on the Nigerian diaspora, there is an increasing engagement with the political system via the Internet, particularly newsgroups and websites, and using the Internet as a mediating space.⁵⁵

Websites popular for many Nigerians include:

- www.nigeriaworld.com: a popular site for news on culture and politics
- www.nigeriavillagesquare.com: A mixture of current affairs, culture and music. The site has a contemporary western feel which is attracting many men and women from the younger generation.

Other sites mentioned were:

- www.amanaonline.com
- www.arewa-online.com
- www.elendureports.com
- www.gamji.com
- www.nigeriamasterweb.com
- www.nigerianews.com
- www.saharareports.com.

Youtube is reported to have created a huge following amongst the younger Nigerian audience as they upload and create their own news.

African satellite channels in London focus on entertainment, news and sport as well as advertising various services including cultural and entertainment services to meet the needs of the African Diaspora. BEN TV, Passion TV, AIT Moviestar, NTA, OBE and African International TV were cited as media outlets consumed by the vast majority of Nigerians. BEN TV, seen as a broad 'infotainment channel', is one of the largest providers of entertainment to black and ethnic minority audiences across the UK. Its appeal reaches across audiences, ranging from the younger generation through to more mature viewing audiences. Most people also favour Al Jazeera, Peace TV and Islam channel for religious coverage and news about the Muslim world.

⁵⁵ Gabriel Abiodun Adeniyi, G. A. (2007), 'Nigerian diaspora and the virtual construction of identity', Text of paper prepared for the Institute of Communications Studies (ICS) post-graduate conference holding 18.05.2007. Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds.

11 Links with country of origin

Respondents generally felt that for many Nigerians, the UK is now home. Even older Nigerians see the UK as their 'second' if not first home. Male focus group members spoke about how their feelings and relationship towards Nigeria and the UK have changed:

I remember when people first arrived they thought they were going to be going back so they went down to Tottenham Court Road and bought Multi-region TVs and DVDs – now people have stopped doing that (laughs). They had always thought they would return but now this becomes unlikely as their kids are born here.⁵⁶

11.1 Travel

British Nigerians, particularly first generation migrants, maintain a high level of contact with their home country. The proliferation of mobile telephones, call cards, telephone booths and the internet has helped to maintain and enhance links with their country of origin or heritage.

Many go back to visit family occasionally, whilst others regard a visit to Nigeria as an annual obligation. Others also visit for political or business purposes or to establish homes over a period of time. Popular times for travel to Nigeria include public holidays such as Christmas and the Islamic celebrations of *Id al Fitr* and *Id al Kabir*, *Mouloud* - birth of the Prophet Mohammed and National or Independence Day.

A significant proportion of those that travel to Nigeria regularly include second and third generation British Nigerians. For many it can be a soul searching experience, an exploration of heritage and roots that contributes to the ongoing process of identity redefinition. Recently however, travel to and from Nigeria has received significant coverage in the media as a result of travel policy changes and a number of controversial deportation cases that resulted in a collective response from the Nigerian community. In 2005 Britain imposed a ban on entry visas for young Nigerians aged between 18-30 who intended to visit the UK for the first time, citing a heavy workload and a large incidence of absconders. However, in 2006 UK visa restrictions on young Nigerians were lifted.⁵⁷ Such restrictions have left some Nigerians suspicious of the immigration system and others have been directly affected by it.

⁵⁶ Focus group participant, male.

⁵⁷ 'UK visa restriction on young Nigerians to be lifted', Work Permit.com, www.workpermit.com/

Another issue picked up by respondents related to the recent forced removal of a Nigerian passenger on board a BA flight to Nigeria on 27 March 2008. More than 1,000 Nigerians have backed a call to boycott British Airways unless it apologises to 136 passengers who were ordered off a flight to Lagos after they complained about the forced deportation of a man on board.⁵⁸ The incident created outrage among expatriate Nigerians in the UK, who called on the Nigerian government to intervene. This led to the British High Commissioner to Nigeria being summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be warned that Nigeria expects its citizens to be treated with dignity.⁵⁹

11.2 Remittances

Remittance by hand is a common practice amongst Nigerians. It enables money to be handed over directly and avoids a proportion being lost to a money transfer organisation. Money may be invested in homes or businesses in order to secure a potential livelihood and living spaces for Nigerians if they decide to live 'back home' in Nigeria. Respondents saw remittances as relieving poverty amongst relatives as well as planning for the longer term and maintaining their roots in both social and material terms.

The frequency of remittance varies, with some remitting money to their families every few months (11.3 per cent), yearly (31.0 per cent), and every two-three years (50.7 per cent).⁶⁰ Many Nigerians in Nigeria perceive a difference in the living standards of emigrants who have higher standards of living and economic mobility, which fuels a desire to migrate to the UK. Relatives in Europe and United States may provide the means to meet over 50 per cent of family needs in Nigeria.⁶¹

11.3 Political links

One of the key issues of concern for respondents was a general feeling of distrust amongst Nigerian migrants towards the Nigerian state, which makes it difficult for the Nigerian government to reach out to diaspora groups overseas. This is seen as the result of years of repression and neglect and is visible in the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO) initiative, which lacks a firm connection with the very active development of associations of Nigerians abroad.⁶² Despite this, most respondents suggested that Nigerians maintain an active interest in the politics of Nigeria, and that many people in the UK are affiliated to political parties back home.

⁵⁸ 'Nigerians call for boycott of BA after deportation', *The Independent*, 21 April 2008.

⁵⁹ 'A world of casual racism' exposed at BA', *The Independent*, 26 April 2008.

⁶⁰ Hein de Has, 2006.

⁶¹ Nwajiuba, 2005.

⁶² Established in 2000, Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO) in the Americas is a non-profit organisation with a main office in Washington, D.C. It aims to provide a platform for Nigerian Professionals in the diaspora to instill ethical consciousness and civic responsibility that will enhance the socio economic advancement of Nigerians and humanity in general.
www.nidoamericas.org.

The UK government, through various agencies, also appears to be making efforts at engaging Nigerian Muslim leaders as illustrated by the recent visits of the All Party Parliamentary Group to Nigeria to meet with Islamic groups and organisations, as well as the reciprocal visit of Sultan Abubakar Sa'ad and Shaikh Qaribullah Nasiru Kabara to the UK.

11.4 Business and commerce

Examples of the range of trade include specialised goods such as foodstuffs, to a myriad of travel and forwarding services. The rapid fall in the cost of communications, including internet, pre-paid phonocard and mobile phone services, has spawned significant markets within the community and there are many outlets that specialise in communication services as well as serving as niche remittance agencies. Technological developments, coupled with the increased purchasing power of diaspora populations, have also acted as catalysts for the development of audio-visual media within many African countries, especially Nigeria. London is reputed to be the largest external market for Nigeria's booming DVD-based *Nollywood* film industry.⁶³

⁶³ Styan, 2007.

12 Civil Society

12.1 Brief overview

A study by Van Hear et al highlighted the diversity of Nigerians living in the UK and their organisations.⁶⁴ It also showed that UK-based Nigerian diaspora organisations draw on a variety of constituencies, such as national or state level interest groups including business associations, associations of particular ethnic groups, and others based on gender, religion, political and cultural activities. Van Hear et al also reported that, beyond such particular interest groups, Nigerians (and Ghanaians) in the UK figure prominently in pan-African diaspora development organisations.⁶⁵

12.2 Types of organisations and services

As the population of Nigerians in the UK has increased so has the number of community based organisations. Most, if not all, of these organisations are run voluntarily or with limited funding. The types of organisations found include: religious, political, educational youth and women’s development organisations. Many organisations were set up to offer support services to newcomers such as helping them to find accommodation, informing them where other people from different backgrounds are in London, and also where they can meet people at gatherings and during celebrations such as Eid. Other organisations focus on educational or charitable activities such as organising lectures and discussions, or providing channels for sending back charitable funds to Nigeria raised by the community in the UK.

The organisations also provide a number of other services such as legal, contribution to finances, matchmaking and marriage counselling. While a number of Muslim specific organisations were identified, many were open to all Nigerians and reported reaching out to different parts of the community.

There are numerous Nigerian faith orientated organisations in the UK that provide a number of services for different ethno-linguistic Nigerian groups. A good example is that of the Nigerian Muslim Forum (NMF) that has available on its website free downloadable PDF versions of the Holy Quran in both Hausa and Yoruba. It also provides a section of the Quran in Fulfulde, another language spoken by many Nigerian Muslims. It also has a list of a number of notable Nigerian *Shuyukh* (religious scholars) to which UK Nigerians can refer to for theological and practical advice on day to day issues. Furthermore, the forum runs a number of programmes that cater for the Nigerian Muslim community such as: promoting the educational growth of Nigerian Muslims, arranging reception programmes for new students, involvement in *dawa* (proselytising) activities in Nigeria, and the collection and distribution of *Zakatul-Fitr* (obligatory alms-giving during the Holy month of Ramadan) in Nigeria.

⁶⁴ Nicholas Van Hear, Frank Pieke and Steven Vertovec (2004), *The contribution of UK-based diasporas to development and poverty reduction. A report by the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford for DfID.*

⁶⁵ Hein de Has, 2006.

12.3 Key organisations

A number of organisations important to the Nigerian Muslim community were mentioned by respondents:

Central Association of Nigerians in the UK (CANUK): the Central Association of Nigerians in the United Kingdom (CANUK) is an umbrella body of all Nigerian Associations in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. It currently represents about 45 different associations and 18 other affiliate/associate members with a membership of 28,000.

Muslim Association of Nigeria (MAN): the Association was established to aid Muslims of Nigerian origin resident in the UK. It was also set up to advance the Islamic faith and work to alleviate poverty and distress.

Remember Saro-Wiwa: Remember Saro-Wiwa is a coalition of UK-based organisations and individuals encompassing the arts and literature, human rights and environmental and development issues. It is a pan-African and British organisation that draws together a wide body of people that includes an active membership of young Nigerians from the UK.

The Nigerian Youth League: The Nigerian Youth League is currently established in London with its satellite office in Abuja Nigeria. Membership is from different youth organisations, and young people who come from differing social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Their aim is to work with others to create harmony in Nigeria.

Xⁿ Foundation: The Xⁿ Foundation was founded in May 2006. Its mission is to enable the development of the disabled, and create a platform so that young Nigerians can reach their full potential. Its projects include education, health, rehabilitation, the arts and a programme on awareness and intervention for the disabled.

AREWA Association: is a non-religious association that aims to bring people of northern Nigeria together in order to promote unity. It also collects things like hospital equipment to send to places where it is needed in northern Nigeria.

The Nigerian Muslim Forum (NMF): The Nigerian Muslim Forum offers Islamic activities. It organises study circles for male and female members of the community and holds national events three times a year. In terms of services, the Forum offers advice and guidance to new students and visitors to the UK, and provides support for those in need in Nigeria.

Council of Nigerian Muslim Organisations (CNMO): An umbrella organisation of Nigerian Muslim Organisations in the UK.

Other organisations mentioned by various respondents include:

- Foundation for Good Governance in Nigeria (FGGN), an international organisation of Nigerian professionals which is based in the UK
- NASFAT. A religious organisation based in Nigeria, but has an international membership
- Islamic Awareness Forum in London which is co-hosting the Inaugural Nigerian Muslim Conference with the Nigerian Muslim forum in December 2008
- Al-Huda Islamic Academy based in Leicester.

12.4 Key influencers

While many other ethnic communities listed organisations as influential, Nigerian Muslim respondents were more likely to name specific individuals in the community with high standing. Often these individuals were linked with or ran Nigerian Muslim organisations. Other key influencers also included individuals who had political significance in Nigeria, journalists and individuals working in the media, academics and religious scholars.

12.5 Civic engagement and relationships with local authorities

All 12 respondents reported that engagement with public authorities on the local, regional and national levels is minimal and that public authorities only prefer to engage with larger well known organisations. These views are summed up by this respondent from a Nigerian Muslim organisation:

I do not think our organisation has any direct contact with public authorities, either locally or nationally. There might be indirect contact through individual members, especially those that have influence in the community. The assumption that the main Muslim organisations like the Muslim Council of Britain and the British Muslim Forum represent Muslim communities is a problem because smaller organisations like ours do not get any attention.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

An issue raised by several respondents was how government and associated bodies are viewed with a mixture of scepticism and sometimes fear by some in the community. Two respondents spoke about visits from the Metropolitan police and the Fire Services, though one of them suggested that visits from any public authority are usually viewed with scepticism. Some respondents felt this perception could be challenged if the government made more of an effort to reach out to communities and showed some sincerity of purpose in addressing community issues. In the words of one respondent:

The ball is in the court of the authorities. They can indicate that they want to meet the community. They can also make reconciliatory noises, friendly noises about the Muslim community and indicate that they are ready to listen to what the community has to say. To allay fears and try to be seen as more just, let the law take its course with Muslims.⁶⁷

A lack of understanding about the work of community organisations and how to engage with them, coupled with the general lack of contact and communication between government and the community, was felt by respondents to be creating further barriers. Another issue raised by a community worker who works for a number of organisations concerns government policy of not funding religious organisations. In the absence of a strong civil society structure, many religious organisations in the community provide a range of social welfare services with a positive impact, but are hindered in accessing public fund because they are perceived by authorities as purely religious establishments.

It was important for the majority of respondents that a genuine dialogue is set up which provides a space for the community to express its opinions, concerns, and religious values. In addition to the use of media outlets such as Islam channel, English newspapers, special programming and positive images of Nigerians as ways of engaging the community, respondents also mentioned the importance of partnerships between public authorities, organisations and religious leaders as a way to engage with Nigerian communities. Ten of the twelve respondents suggested that the best way to implement dialogue and partnership working would be through umbrella and other key community organisations.

⁶⁷ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

12.6 Community issues and capacity building needs

Low levels of engagement and a lack of knowledge about how to work with local authorities was felt to be due to the fact that the majority of organisations are run by volunteers. Many organisations are staffed by those who lack formal training on management and leadership or who are not able to spend the necessary time to conduct administration duties. Some do not have offices and are juggling working voluntarily with other commitments. One respondent explained the dilemma facing most organisations:

Our organisation doesn't have an office to operate from. Whoever works there does so voluntarily with no pay. We have no access to the government so we are not recognised as representing anything. The lack of an office, people working as volunteers, and the lack of funding means that the organisation is far less effective. If you are able to sort out the financial aspects of an organisation you are able to do a lot of things, such as training and education.⁶⁸

It was felt by respondents that the best way to address capacity building issues was for volunteers to have education and skills training, however currently the types and level of funding accessed cannot give the level of support needed to volunteers. One respondent suggested that staff need technical and professional support and continued backing from government and other umbrella NGOs. Most respondents working in community organisations felt that it is important to have paid staff in place as this would begin the process of enabling organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting relationships with authorities and communities.

⁶⁸ Nigerian community respondent: Male, London, 40s.

13 Conclusions

Figures for the Nigerian population overall vary considerably depending upon the sources consulted. In addition to the documented sources, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are large numbers of undocumented Nigerian migrants in the UK. What can be said for certain is that the population is widely dispersed across London and other parts of the country, and that it is the largest growing African group in the UK. Nine per cent of Nigerian born migrants are Muslim according to the 2001 Census. A modest estimate of the current Nigerian Muslim population in the UK is in the region of 12-14,000.⁶⁹

Religious identity is extremely important to Nigerian Muslims and this cuts across ethnic and linguistic differences, with Nigerians of most backgrounds sharing places of worship within the community, as well as a high level of attendance at mosques set up by other older established Muslim communities. There are also good relationships between Nigerian Muslims and Christians and it is common to find the two communities living peacefully in the UK and inter-mixing as well as inter-marrying. However, the Muslim minority is considered to be less active than its Christian counterparts in both commerce and civil society organisations.

A younger generation of Nigerians, Muslim and non-Muslim alike are beginning to develop a distinctly British identity, but like other new communities are also beginning to suffer the effects of educational underachievement, high unemployment, exposure to drugs and criminality and a more general alienation from mainstream society. To date this has not been seen to lead young people towards greater religiosity or religious extremism.

Whilst many are successful in education and employment, overall the community suffers high levels of unemployment and discrimination. A large proportion of Nigerian Muslims, many of whom are highly qualified find themselves either in menial jobs, unemployed or working illegally. The primary reasons for this are thought to be racism and religious prejudice.

Many women are highly qualified and successful in education and employment, but there is still a high level of marginalisation both within the community and in wider society. Although the community is served by a strong civil society infrastructure, and many women play an active role in community events, most of the existing organisations are not able to adequately support the needs of women. There is no neutral space where Nigerian women who are facing a number of challenges that range from violence, raising children alone, unemployment and depression can meet or seek advice and support.

⁶⁹ This figure is estimated using Labour Force Survey data and the Census average of ethnicity. Since this is based on country of birth data and because of potential illegal immigration, this is likely to be a low estimate.

Travel and other links with Nigeria are strong and a main focus of interest for many Nigerians remains the political climate in their country of origin. Within the UK however, political engagement is minimal and dependent upon the levels of outreach and engagement different local authorities practice with regard to ethnic minority communities in their areas. Relationships with the government and other authorities are problematic due to a general scepticism and fear of governments stimulated by the UK government's role in the war in Iraq, foreign policy decisions and perceived negative actions towards Muslim communities in the UK by the police and other agencies.

The majority of civil society organisations in the community receive no public funding and rely on volunteers and voluntary contributions for their survival. In addition, Nigerian Muslim organisations feel over-shadowed by larger organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain which most respondents do not see as not representative of Muslim Nigerians.

13.1 Recommendations

This research has provided many insights into the Nigerian Muslim community in England, particularly the vast majority who live in London. Many areas were highlighted as community concerns but require further enquiry to draw firm conclusions. This is the first report of its kind on the Nigerian Muslim community in England and, along with many of the other reports in this study, should be seen as a starting point in the process of understanding England's diverse Muslim and ethnic minority communities in greater detail rather than the final word.

The UMEC Summary report provides detailed recommendations for engagement with and development of Muslim civil society organisations. The following specific recommendations for public authorities are in relation to responding to the Nigerian Muslim community.

Specific recommendations arising from community respondents include:

- The provision of mainstream funding for Islamic supplementary schools for the Nigerian community, as well as recognition and support for those faith organisations in the community that are proactively addressing issues the challenges facing young people in relation to educational underachievement, lack of employment opportunities, crime and alienation
- Support and funding for the establishment of youth and women's organisations, as well as for umbrella organisations that are able to develop a collective community voice for engagement with public authorities
- Capacity building for existing community organisations, including funding and training in key areas namely, business skills, management training and making funding applications
- Proactive approaches by government and local authorities to address anti-Muslim sentiment in society and the mainstream media.

Other recommendations:

- Further research into some of the less visible problems facing the community including; depression and other mental health problems, domestic violence and fostering
- Provision of clear guidance for faith based communities on government policy and funding streams related to faith based social action.

14 Glossary

Dawa: Proselytising.

GDP: Gross domestic product.

Hadith: Reports of the Prophet Muhammad's deeds and sayings, an authoritative source of guidance for Muslims.

Khutbha: Sermon.

Maliki School: School of law attributed to Malik ibn Anas al-Asbahi in the eighth century in the Arabian Peninsula. Predominant in North Africa, with significant presence in Upper Egypt, Sudan, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait.

Qadiriyyah: Sufi order founded by Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani (d. 1166) from Gilan in Persia, who eventually settled in Baghdad in Iraq. The Qadiri Order has spread to many places, including Syria, Turkey, some parts of Africa such as Cameroun, the Congo, Mauritania and Tanzania, and in the Caucasus, Chechen and Ferghana in the [former] Soviet Union. See also Sufi.

SAP: Structural adjustment programmes.

Shariah: 'Shariah' literally means the path that leads to the well of water. It is the path to Islam – including Islamic theology ethics, law and spirituality. It is often considered to be God's will for humanity, especially as presented in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, providing the basis for Islamic law as defined by Muslim scholars over the centuries.

Shi'a: Muslims who believe that succession to the political and religious leadership of the Muslim community should be hereditary through Muhammad's daughter Fātimah and her husband, Muhammad's cousin Ali. Although Shi'as do not believe that these successors (imams) are prophets, they do believe that they are divinely inspired and infallible. Approximately 15 per cent of all Muslims are Shi'as.

Sufi/Sufism: Spiritual aspect of Islam. Sufi has a range of meanings deriving from different aspects of the word's etymology but generally refers to those who are interested in inner knowledge and practice towards spiritual awakening and enlightenment. There are a number of Sufi orders or 'paths' (*tariqas*), including the *Tijaniyah* and *Qadiriyyah*, many which developed between the 9th and 12th centuries.

Sunni: Muslims who emphasise the importance of the actions and customs of Muhammad and the first generations of Muslims, viewing as legitimate the establishment of the caliphate, in contrast to Shi'i beliefs. About 85 percent of all Muslims are Sunnis.

Tijaniyah: Sufi order founded by Shaykh Abbas Ahmad ibn at-Tijani, an Algerian Berber (d. 1815). See also Sufi.

Ummah: Community of (Muslim) believers.

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This report presents a picture of the Nigerian Muslim community in England. It is one of a series of thirteen reports on different Muslim communities in England.

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