

# COLLECTIVE HEALING AND COLLABORATION: THE UK AFRICAN DIASPORA WITH AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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*How can the UK-based African diaspora-led voluntary and community sector work collaboratively with the voluntary and community sector in Africa and the Caribbean in healing intergenerational trauma?*

## AUTHORED BY

Aliyah Green  
Moet Semakula-Buuza



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The Jane Hatfield Award is an annual grant for young researchers to investigate issues or topics related to community, social action and/or social justice. It was launched in 2022 by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR), in partnership with The Ubelé Initiative CIC.



*"Our organisations are passionate about supporting the next generation of researchers and activists, with a focus on young researchers from Black and minoritized communities. Our aim has been to start with an award and then leave the rest - defining the research question, shaping the design and research team - up to the individuals involved. The Award is named in memory and celebration of Jane Hatfield, Trustee and then Chair of IVAR between 2006 and 2021."*

# MEET THE AUTHORS



## Aliyah Green

I am an organiser and campaigner working in racial, environmental and economic justice spaces. I support youth activism through campaign training and political education programmes focused on systemic change and leadership development. One of these programmes is called It's Just Economics, which I co-created as a member of the UK Youth Climate Coalition. It's a political education initiative introducing young people to alternative economic theories, with support to build these alternatives. I am also a member of Friends of the Earth's Environmental Justice Collective, Black Lives Matter UK and serve as a trustee at Debt Justice and The Equality Trust.

## Moet Semakula-Buuza

I am a facilitator and community organiser with experience in migration, race equity, and climate-related work. I am a member of a few groups, such as the Black Lives Matter UK South London Group, where we

are supporting community-building spaces and community-driven action. I'm also a member of Friends of the Earth's Environmental Justice Collective, supporting the Planet over Profit campaign. I volunteer with Care4Calais, providing administrative and wellbeing support to individuals navigating the UK immigration system. Additionally, I have previously researched the colonial legacy and ongoing imperialist influences shaping the criminalisation of queer refugees in Uganda and those who are Ugandan.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pan-Africanism is at the heart of our reason for writing this report. We believe the connectedness between Africans and African diaspora communities is vital to tackle systems of oppression for our collective liberation and healing. We can't tackle the global phenomenon of systemic anti-blackness, which creates and reinforces intergenerational trauma in African and African diaspora communities, without collaboration.

We sought to better understand our question by dividing it into parts, such as: how the sector was already collaborating to tackle intergenerational trauma, and what makes for effective collaboration and the barriers limiting this. In addition, we explored the insights gained through our own organising in the community and voluntary sector and how this itself can be a form of healing from intergenerational trauma. Our findings are informed by these insights, interviews with experts and a review of essays, articles, books and videos.

We identified the following barriers to effective collaboration: cultural differences, access to resources, colonial language barriers, a lack of capacity and funding for collaboration. Through our research, key characteristics needed to enable effective collaboration also emerged: a collection of individual qualities (integrity/authenticity, respect, open-mindedness/humility), agency, relationship-building, accessibility/equity, conflict resolution, capacity, different funding/resourcing and spaces for collaboration.

Three themes emerged as key areas for effective international collaboration to support the advancement of healing from intergenerational trauma. This included internal work, which speaks to the need to work on our internal conditions and develop our knowledge to make us more capable of not only our own healing but the communities around us. Secondly, decolonisation of systems, structures and relationships and the need for this to be embedded in the sector as a whole and practised on an individual and community level. Lastly, infrastructure to support collaboration, which focuses on addressing some of the barriers to collaboration and strengthening the work already happening. Our report also includes a checklist we generated for effective collaboration, based on insights gained through this research, with questions to consider to support healing intergenerational trauma.



We hope the insights gained through this research will help to build and strengthen effective collaboration between the UK-based African diaspora-led voluntary and community sector and the voluntary and community sector in Africa and the Caribbean. Increased and more effective international collaboration has the potential to accelerate the progress of dismantling global issues which cause intergenerational trauma, making the world a better place for all Africans and Afro-descendant communities.

*Aliyah and Moet*

## Terminology

**IGT** - Intergenerational trauma

**VCS** - Voluntary and community sector

**UKAD** - UK-based African diaspora

**UKAD-led VCS** - UK-based African diaspora-led voluntary and community sector

Throughout this report, we use the term 'international collaboration'. Here, we are referring to the specific collaboration between the UK-based African diaspora-led voluntary and community sector and the voluntary and community sectors in Africa and the Caribbean.

We are using the term 'African diaspora' to refer to the communities of people descended from Africa. This includes Afro-Caribbeans and other Afro-descendant communities.

# INTRODUCTION

***“I am not an African because I was born in Africa,  
but because Africa was born in me”***

***- Kwame Nkrumah***

## *Why the research?*

There are two main reasons as to why we wanted to carry out this research project. One reason is to understand why there is a gap in international collaboration between the UK-based African diaspora-led voluntary and community sector (UKAD-led VCS) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Africa and the Caribbean, and how we can close it. Another reason is wanting to understand, connect, and reconnect the fractured ties we feel from our ancestral lands and heal from intergenerational trauma (IGT) that continues to inform and influence many today.

We are activists who care about the wellbeing of our planet and the emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing of our people. We care about the relationships we have with our minds, bodies, souls, and land, as individuals and as a collective. On our journey of activism, in dismantling the oppressive and harmful structures that exacerbate IGT, we understood that a vital reason for being burnt out was due to these systems reinstilling us with trauma. This report sought to explore ways to heal from the perpetuated trauma that may trigger IGT, which Africans and Afro-descendant communities can experience due to systems of oppression. Being activists and organisers is a lifelong choice, and so is a persistent challenge. We wanted to research, and to share our journey as part of the healing process.

At the heart of our thinking, an approach is Pan-Africanism, much of which is aptly captured in the opening quote by Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah's concept of African unity, which emphasises the collective liberation of all people of African descent and the pursuit of an "African solution" to the systemic issues, resonates deeply within us. International collaboration is a key aspect of this, which is needed to make our work in tackling IGT more effective.

(Moet) A friend wrote a poem titled, Birthing Trauma – a poem about IGT. This is a snippet of the full poem included in Appendix 1:

*"Sometimes, a woman gives birth to her trauma.  
For almost a year, her womb is filled  
with all the pain that her previous life has carried."*

This poem was written for a poetry module, and once performed, it resonated strongly. It seemed to share something so profoundly unspoken, and once it had been spoken, it unlocked a voice that had been quietly pestering since.

I am not usually a huge fan of poetry, but I enjoyed my friend's. Even so, I did not expect this particular one to impact me the way it did. I was struck by it, and at the time, I thought it was because of the graphic imagery it evokes. I did not understand the deeper meaning of the poem and understood it simply as a mother in physical and emotional pain giving birth to a baby that will also feel this pain as they grow. Hearing it at 21 years old, I could not comprehend the layers of meaning behind the concept of someone Birthing Trauma. However, over the years, this poem has crept into my thoughts from time to time, with its voice nudging me. Peeling back the layers of my own experiences and those of my loved ones has been difficult to understand. I am learning more and more that even when the trauma begins as we are conceived, it evolves, grows and manifests into our illnesses, our disabilities, our insecurities, and our fears. It stays with us until we take steps towards a journey of healing.

The objectives we sought to achieve through the research were:

1. To understand how organisations were already collaborating to tackle IGT and the need for collaboration.
2. To understand how to collaborate well internationally and support African diaspora-led organisations in the UK to effectively collaborate internationally.
3. To explore how organising in the VCS can be a form of healing from IGT.

Set against the above objectives, this report is structured to illustrate the characteristics of IGT, how organising in the VCS can be a form of healing from IGT, how the VCS is already collaborating internationally on this, the challenges and barriers to this collaboration, and the key characteristics needed for effective collaboration. While our research centres on the international collaboration between the UKAD-led VCS and the VCS in Africa and the Caribbean, findings may apply to different types of international collaboration.



The mission of connectedness between Africans and the African diaspora through decolonisation to challenge oppression for collective liberation is a necessary journey we are undertaking. As one of our interviewees remarked: *"There's work to be done, not just in the UK but in an international context."*

Many diasporans are born and raised in the countries of those who have colonised the land their families/ancestors are from. This serves unique challenges and specific relationships with trauma caused by colonialism. (Aliyah) Being a British born child of Jamaican parents, the concept of being 'double diasporised', as another of our interviewees reminded us, applies to British Afro-Caribbean people who have been diasporised through the extraction of Africans from their homeland on the African continent through the programme of 'enslavement' into the Caribbean and again when living outside the Caribbean in countries such as the UK, Canada and USA. These intricacies relate to a sense of identity and belonging, which create a sense of 'fragmentation' within the African diaspora, which is further compounded by additional differential migratory patterns, bringing with it challenges around expectations, understandings and notions of identity and belonging (i.e. lived experience and national identities). This speaks to the messages we were hearing through our interviews and is summed up well by another interviewee, who reminded us that,

*"Colonialism has done its best to make Caribbeans feel different to Africans and create distance and tension. But people are doing work against this."*

One of our interviewees described the collaboration we are researching as *"fragmentation working together."* This fragmentation could be a barrier to effective collaboration between the UKAD and those in Africa and the Caribbean. The importance, then, of this research is to understand how we can work together effectively to tackle the global phenomenon of systemic anti-blackness, which creates and reinforces IGT in African and African diaspora communities, not despite our fragmentation but because of it.

# METHODOLOGY

For this research, we conducted primary and secondary research to address our objectives. To support the information gathering process, we:

- Undertook desk-based research, read essays, articles, books, theories and concepts around healing and IGT.
- Watched videos, documentaries and films centring these topics, to help inform our understanding of healing and IGT.
- Conducted seven 1-1 semi-structured interviews with people based in Africa, the Caribbean and the UKAD doing work concerning healing and IGT. We also had informal conversations with relevant members in the VCS, which informed our research.
- Participated in online and in-person events for Global Majority communities (GMC), which allowed us to engage directly with GMC to better understand their experiences, while learning about ourselves and our relationship with healing and IGT.
- Facilitated sessions in the Black Lives Matter UK (BLMUK), Project Timbuktu political education programme.
- Organised the annual procession as part of the United Friends and Family Campaign (UFFC), intended to raise awareness and recognise the lives lost from police brutality in police custody.
- Enrolled in the Nia Upeoni Black Systems Change and Leadership Course for black grassroots leaders in the UK and Africa. A course aimed to empower participants with skills and frameworks to drive systemic change, enhance resilience, and address racism and white supremacy in both personal and organising spaces.

These methods of research allowed us to address our objectives in meaningful ways. We were able to connect with multiple diasporan individuals and communities experiencing, working or interested in international collaboration and/or healing IGT.

# CHARACTERISTICS, NEEDS & ORGANISING

## Emergent characteristics of intergenerational trauma and healing

From our 1-1 interviews, we were introduced to a range of characteristics describing healing and IGT. Key characteristics of IGT included: having a range of (often hard to identify) root causes, being ancestral, connected to more than just us as humans, but to the land as well and something which impacts us all.

We also found that IGT is a widespread issue and an issue pertinent in African and Afro-descendant communities. Interviewees described IGT as something real and evidenced, yet its specific origins can be hard to identify, especially when exploring IGT triggered by systems of oppression such as colonialism, slavery, white supremacy and capitalism.

Understanding IGT in the Black community means "*Looking at things from slavery and colonialism, how that means erasure of culture*", and also the continued "*stress of migration*" as one interviewee reflected, which is passed down from our ancestors. The word 'intergenerational' describes the ancestral nature of this trauma and how it is passed down from one generation to the next. Similarly to its sources, how this trauma is passed down also varies, from altered gene expression, through the womb, and learned behaviours like eating habits.

This trauma is passed down not only through ancestry but through the exploitation of the land. An interviewee made the point that "*Anything that land has been through, e.g., plantation estates, in which everything that was natural about that ecosystem has been completely uprooted.*" This land trauma could also look like deforestation and mangrove degradation, which have multiple effects, such as increasing communities' vulnerabilities to hurricanes and worsening their impacts. This indicates that the health of the land, which can be its soil, plants, and bodies of water, can also be impacted by IGT, as it is also harmed by the same oppressive systems which harmed our ancestors and are doing the same to us.



The harm caused by systems of oppression to people and the land points to the need for a healing process. This highlights that the divides made between both in white supremacist ideologies are artificial. The organising work we are doing in the UK includes consciousness raising that reconnects people to the understanding that we are part of nature, not divided from it. By organising, we are referring to grassroots organising – *“a way of working with communities to create change from the ground up. It involves building relationships with people, mobilizing resources and taking collective action to address the issues that affect them”* (Activist handbook).

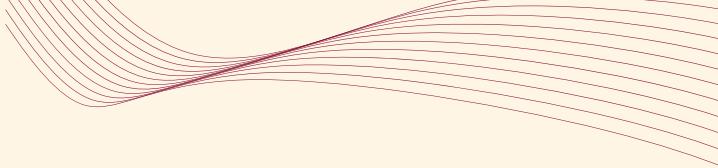
Moving on to healing from IGT, the key characteristics that appeared were the importance of IGT, the need to acknowledge IGT, the range of methods used for healing from IGT and the need to create realities which do not retraumatise people and trigger further IGT.

In order to heal, we need to acknowledge IGT and try to bring awareness to how it is manifesting in us. One of our interviewees noted that *“healing is a state of mind, not making something better, but understanding what is going on with you. To feel better and acknowledge what you are going through and what you are going to do to manage it.”* This indicates that acknowledging the need to heal and uncovering the methods to do so are part of the healing process.

A range of different healing methods were mentioned, with some methods rooted in the culture and spirituality of Afro-descendants, such as partaking in musical forms like steelpans, ancestral veneration and collective healing through dance at carnivals. Nature-centredness was a key aspect of the methods mentioned, with examples such as tending the land and herbalism. Practices such as breathwork, sharing stories and art were raised, and the potential for additional benefits when conducted in nature. Alongside forms of healing, including yoga and meditation. The experts we interviewed also conduct work ranging from youth work, teaching, capacity building, leading organisations, authoring books, reconciliation work and holistic healthcare delivery to combat IGT.

The potential of activism, community organising and campaigning as methods of healing was mentioned. There's healing that comes from taking purposeful action to tackle systems of oppression that reinstall IGT.

We are campaigning and organising to create a world free of systems of oppression which traumatises people. In doing so, we have witnessed that healing is possible through activism. Alternatively, we are aware of how this work is capable of exacerbating IGT due to the proximity of the realisations of oppression, such as protesting against genocide and police brutality.



# How can organising in the community and voluntary sector be a form of healing from intergenerational trauma?

This section will explore the organising work we do and how this work itself can be a form of healing.

In our facilitation of BLMUK's Project Timbuktu (a political education programme to advance Black Liberation), we cultivated a space of collective care. In doing so, we built trust between members of the group and long-term relationships within our group. It was wholesome and reenergising. A key learning is that acts of care are radical acts, and this is how we can build trust and heal. Our facilitation can be considered to be part of an IGT healing process as it brought awareness to potential sources of IGT, provided a space for us to care for one another and equipped participants with the knowledge and inspiration to build a future where all Black lives are liberated.

During the programme, we held a session questioning the role of the police, where a speaker shared a tragic personal story about police brutality. The story evoked a large emotional response, and we had a grounding session afterwards as an act of care with hopes that everyone left the room feeling calmer and supported. This was our introduction to the United Families & Friends Campaign (UFFC) - a UK coalition of families affected by deaths in police, prison, mental health & immigration custody. We went on to support the organising of their annual procession, where bereaved families and others affected by deaths at the hands of UK police and other custodial services gather in solidarity and remembrance. We demanded accountability for their deaths and justice for all. Not having experienced the same tragedy, but feeling connected to the people sharing it, is a form of compassion which drives us in our organising work. The procession organising also offered a potential for healing through commemorating loss, being in community with people who have shared similar pain and channelling anger and grief into this work.

Lots of organising happens collectively, and the collectivity itself can be part of a journey to healing IGT. In *What it takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World*, Prentis Hemphill shares a story about their work as a therapist during the time of George Floyd's murder in May 2020. Where they felt their patients' needs were not being met by isolated therapy sessions and needed something collective instead. We have seen this to be true in our own organising too. Through creating a local group taking action for Black Liberation, we have experienced how being in community

with people we care about, whilst intentionally caring for the community we are supporting, can be healing. The process of building meaningful relationships and creating spaces that feel safe, restorative and joyful is healing.

Another aspect of organising with potential for healing can be seen through the art and creativity practised. Organising is already an inherently creative task, through strategising, navigating challenges, and building community to change situations and environments for the better. Additionally, activities we have led or taken part in, such as zine-making, placard-making, Sci-Fi story-writing, chant-making, and poetry-writing, have offered us spaces for creative expression. We have had informal conversations with healers, who view creative expression as central to the healing process and use creative approaches like mask-making to help people process difficult experiences.

We have utilised creative approaches in our organising, focused on imagination and visioning. Through our 1-1 interviews, we found that creating alternatives to current oppressive systems which cause and exacerbate IGT can be a form of healing. Again, we have found this to be true through different imagination and visualisation exercises we have led and taken part in. For example, we led a visioning session for a small group of young people of colour focused on migrant justice, where we collaged what a world with migrant justice would look and feel like. As well as a solarpunk visioning workshop for economic justice, where participants imagined a just economy outside of capitalism. Solarpunk is a genre of art and a movement that envisions an ecologically and socially sustainable future, prioritising community, ethical technology and post-capitalist systems and is a helpful concept we have used in organising work.

Prentis Hemphill's book, *What it takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World*, was key in one interviewee's healing journey. He explained that the book's description of a healing process through action in relation to community helped him realise that "*I could do something to be proud of myself and heal.*"

# Why are intergenerational trauma healing services needed on a local and international scale?

## Jay's Example

Jay is the Founder and CEO of Partisan, who are designing alternative help systems for Black and racialised communities. He started as a youth worker in his community and trained as a therapist to better support the Black community. However, during the training, he felt distanced from his community and frustrated for an array of reasons, including being bound by clinical ruling and pathologising methods. He felt there was "*a lot of doing to the community rather than with them.*"

He felt he needed to do something different, so Partisan was created. They do not offer therapy, but work to build alternative systems of health and support centred around Black and racialised communities. Partisan moves away from labels or diagnostic language stemming from slavery and colonialism, which were "*not made for us or designed with us at the heart of it.*" This is a clear example of why IGT healing services, which are suited to Black communities, are needed.

A way in which Partisan decolonises their work is by moving away from pathologising language (viewing someone through a medical lens, like their symptoms or diagnosis). They are instead adopting person-first language, which always puts the person first, and moving away from labels or diagnostic language to make sense of people and how they present. We found out about diagnoses stemming from slavery and colonialism, and how they are detrimental to the Black community. So, Partisan has made the effort to critique these terms, finding when they came into existence, and what purpose they served to rewrite their methods of healing.

We noted that “*people are scared for themselves and their communities*” (locally and internationally) due to politicised re-traumatisation. One of our interviewees runs emancipation circles (spaces focused on healing from the psychological trauma of white supremacy), exploring how participants express themselves in the world. This is similar to the care circles we attended online with Black Psychotherapy, which are spaces deliberately created with caring about the wellbeing of racialised identities at the core and community care sessions with LION. The focus here was not on emancipation but on acknowledging the emotions of Black and Global Majority people, reflecting on the rise of the far right in the UK and processing retraumatisation. We have found through informal conversations that there are people of colour living in fear due to fascist marches and riots in the UK, highlighting why IGT healing services are needed.

### Imani's Example

There are health disparities affecting Black communities, with IGT often manifesting in physical health conditions. Imani is the Director and Founder of KMT Rising, specialising as a holistic health practitioner. She runs a five-week online course dedicated to mindful ancient perspectives of healing, specifically for people of colour. She also works with Black women, with fibroids, cysts, complex weight and womb issues, who are overworked and overburdened. Imani understands this chronic overwork, limiting their ability to care for their bodies and meet their own needs, as a legacy of slavery. As Imani describes, “*The trauma still sits in the body of being dehumanised.*”

Inadequate education systems, locally and internationally, are shaped by colonial legacies and not rooted in African wisdom, which intensifies IGT. One interviewee shared that although education systems in the Caribbean have improved, there's still a history taught through certain colonial biases. We heard that their first actual class in Caribbean history was at the master's level, implying a lack of focus on the region's history at earlier stages of education. They elaborated that “*cultural wisdom is being lost in Africa and the Caribbean.*” This is another example of why IGT healing services are needed. The impact of inadequate education systems extends beyond gaps in historical knowledge to the erosion of cultural identity and self-worth, thereby potentially exacerbating IGT.

# How organisations are collaborating internationally to tackle intergenerational trauma

Most of our interviewees have collaborated internationally, and those who have not expressed desire and motivation to collaborate. A UK-based interviewee has worked with people who have worked and trained in Africa and the Caribbean and is planning to attend the International Conference of Community Psychology in Lagos, Nigeria, but has not engaged in explicit international collaboration. They are hoping to gain funding to be able to do this work.

Another UK-based interviewee has worked in Africa and the Caribbean and knows other members of the UK-based African diaspora, who have moved to Africa or the Caribbean permanently and continued their work there. This raises an important question: how can we build on these individual efforts to create long-term, sector-wide collaboration between UKAD-led VCS and the VCS in Africa and the Caribbean?

We found examples of VCS members in Africa and the Caribbean collaborating with the VCS in the UK, but had not yet collaborated with African-diaspora led organisations. This raises another question: could we learn from how these collaborations are functioning, and how these collaborations are initiated? The following case studies examine different types of international collaboration currently happening:

## Nyala's Example

Nyala works at [The Repair Campaign](#), an organisation seeking reparatory justice for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states affected by the ongoing legacy of slavery and colonialism. They lead a [global petition](#) calling on the UK and other European governments, institutions and individuals who perpetrated and benefited from chattel slavery and its legacy, to apologise for these atrocities and commit to repair.

Her work focuses on amplifying grassroots movements and bridging the gap between policy needs and achieving reparations. Attaining reparations is a key aspect of tackling the IGT caused by colonialism and slavery. Her role also includes translating historical research for wider audiences to combat misinformation. She believes that historical education is a key way to raise awareness about sources of IGT.

Nia Upeoni (meaning intention beyond the horizon in Kiswahili) is an initiative of The Ubele Initiative and collaborators, and is an academy dedicated to cultivating leadership among Black grassroots leaders across Africa and the UK. It aims to build long-term power by developing Black leaders, with Pan-Africanism embedded in the design of the course. Nia Upeoni is an example of collaboration between the UKAD-led VCS and the VCS in Africa, specifically in Kenya, which supports Black leaders to do their work, often tackling oppressive systems which cause IGT.

### Nia Upeoni Course

We undertook a Nia Upeoni twelve-week course, guided by leaders including Michael Hamilton and Apollo Murigi. This course was designed specifically for Black grassroots leaders and community activists. Participants from the UK and Kenya worked together to learn about practical frameworks and tools to address systemic challenges affecting Black communities in both the UK and Kenya, such as the Three Horizons framework and Ubuntu principles. We had regional-specific discussions, including topics such as the Gen Z Uprising in Kenya and the history of Black activism in the UK.

The course was funded, so participants did not have to pay to participate, which serves as a good example of funding used to facilitate international collaboration. We found this experience valuable and an example from which others can learn when undertaking international collaboration.

### Yansie's Example

Yansie is an author, mental health professional, and trainer. Her work includes collaborating internationally among Black and Global Majority communities in Africa, America, Europe, the UK and mostly in the Caribbean around designing, implementing and evaluating mental health strategies. A particular example of this is in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, where she co-created a health response and trained medical and police officers in this. She also did similar work in Uganda. To share the knowledge and resources gathered from this, she held a long workshop specifically for the UK Black diaspora, which included many doctors and practitioners.

# BARRIERS AND WHAT IS NEEDED

We are advocates of international solidarity, as there is real importance in it. We also see the significance of taking this a step further in exploring the necessity of international collaboration to actually forge connections with the people who want and need support. We hope this becomes a bridge that shatters the Global North and South divide, cultivating long-term relationships rooted in trust and care needed to tackle oppressive systems that harm all of us. Through constructive collaboration, effective community-building and solution-based work can be achieved.

We are a part of the Environmental Justice Collective programme run by Friends of the Earth to empower youth in their environmental activism. We joined the Planet over Profit (PoP) campaign, which aims to hold UK companies legally accountable for the environmental and social damage caused by their supply chains, many being in the Global South. The campaign advocates for a new UK law that would ensure companies prevent harm to forests, wildlife, and communities, going beyond current regulations. Essentially, it's about ensuring that companies prioritise the planet and people over profit. We created zines as a means of being in solidarity internationally. One centres the PoP campaign and collective liberation, another reimagines a future where people and the planet are cared for, and the other informs about the #STOPEACOP campaign. They feel like a great starting point to achieve systemic change, and collaborating on an international scale could be the step for this to be done.

We are considering how to apply the learnings from this experience to answer how the UKAD-led VCS can work collaboratively with the VCS in Africa and the Caribbean in healing IGT.

# BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

1

Cultural differences

4

Lack of capacity

5

Funding for collaboration

3

Colonial language barriers

2

Access to resources - technological, financial and other

# What is needed for effective collaboration

There are various barriers in place, preventing collaboration between the UK, Africa and the Caribbean VCS.

## Cultural differences

One of the Nia Upeoni course leaders described the challenges they faced. One of them was an internal challenge where they recognised cultural differences between the Kenyan and British participants. Kenyan participants attended each session, as well as all arriving an hour ahead with their notebooks and pens ready and eager for the in-person sessions. Whereas the UK participants did not attend all the in-person sessions, and did not all arrive on time due to various reasons. It can be inferred that the Kenyans' attitude in this sense was more appreciated, as a lot of hard work had gone into the creation and development of the in-person sessions.

Understanding the cultural differences can be challenging, but it offers growth. On the other hand, it may have seemed that Kenyan participants were less engaged when online compared to in-person sessions. As some were using their phones outside in a public space, driving or with their cameras off, and they were not using the chat function, which could be for various reasons. In the UK, it is common and maybe even an expectation to be sitting at a desk with the camera on and using the chat function when on an online call. Understandably, there are cultural differences and understanding how to navigate this to support all participants is important.

Another interviewee also highlighted the difficulties of aligning different activist praxes. Common activist methodologies and ideologies can vary across regions and cultures. If groups have very different theories of change and ways of working, this can be a barrier to collaboration. Additionally, levels of decolonialism embedded within group ideologies can be a barrier if they differ. This can be a challenge, as it impacts groups' beliefs, such as their views on how funding can be sourced, project goals, and power dynamics, all of which need to be aligned to enable the most effective collaboration.

## Access to resources - technological, financial and other

Another challenge expressed during the Nia Upeoni course was the access to technology and WiFi for Kenyan participants, so to resolve this, data was bought so that they would be willing and able to do the course. Even still, UK voices were more prominent during sessions, and their camera quality was clearer. One interviewee explained that behind-the-scenes discussions were had to balance participation more equally in sessions and ways in which to resolve the technical challenges faced. Although they recognise that the adjustments made were of "*the lowest hanging fruit*", and that more needs to be done.

Another interviewee expressed difficulties in accessing knowledge, such as historical records and archives that are gatekept by British institutions. Not having access to the knowledge you need to conduct international work can pose a barrier to international collaboration.

## Colonial language barriers

A Kenyan facilitator on the Nia Upeoni course, expressed a barrier to international collaboration as the UK's problematisation of how the British language is designed. This can be in terms of its complexity and the regional differences between Kenyan and British English. His understanding of how "*language is best used when it's simple and understood*" relates to the importance of information and resources being easily accessible for all on a global scale. He conveyed that in the near future, the course leaders should explore redesigning the course with education around a language both understood in the UK and Africa. It should include a level of literacy and manner that does not offend people based on their cultural values. Realistically, this may sound impossible and unachievable, but through many mediums we learn, such as through art, symbols, gifs, colours, dance, movement, music, braille, sign language, etc. So, through being educated around this accessible language and adopting it in the redesign of the course, they can move away from colonial-designed language. This is a means of systemic change as both the African diaspora and VCS workers in the UK, Africa and the Caribbean can adopt this or something similar. Additionally, they can also share their information and resources widely, and possibly contribute to the growth and development of these communities, as there is easier access.

## Lack of capacity

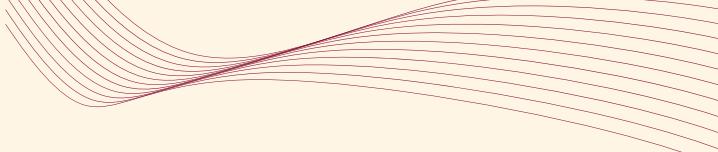
Across multiple interviews, a lack of capacity was mentioned as a barrier to international collaboration. One interviewee mentioned capacity and time being a challenging factor for international collaboration, stating they have not been able to try to collaborate internationally due to this barrier. The risks of burnout for individual activists and coordinators who are already stretched thin were also highlighted. Taking on another responsibility as a liaison point for collaboration requires extra capacity, which many do not have.

## Funding for collaboration

One interviewee facilitates emancipation circles intended to hold space for people of African origin, exploring how they express themselves in the world. These spaces are a way of community-building and are very much needed in grounding ourselves in a tumultuous system that continues to retraumatise and divide us. However, they stressed that there is no funding for these types of spaces. There are countless barriers in gaining funding, including having to *"jump hurdles to justify what we do and why we're doing it more than white groups who are not asked the same questions"* and in the same capacity. She shared her vision of setting up a healing centre with providing massages, chi gong and mindfulness courses to transform negative habits in Dominica. Without funding, these visions remain shelved, and opportunities for international collaboration and to heal and grow from IGT are hindered.

Another interviewee had a similar sentiment around funding, in the way that buzzwords are given attention to meet funders' or people with resources' criteria. The power dynamic creates inauthenticity as those on the "receiving end" tweak their proposals to meet the power holders' requirements instead of their actual needs. Many do not see their vision of collaboration, healing, and systems change programmes come to life because of these restrictions.

Additionally, we found that issues and contradictions arise from balancing a need to rely on colonial funding systems while trying to do healing work on IGT caused by colonial harm. This describes how funding structures rooted in colonial logics will often impose restrictions, short-term timelines, and their own defined measures of success on grantees, which can undermine and impede the approaches required for healing work on IGT caused by systems of oppression. VCS organisations trying to operate outside of harmful systems and doing work to address and repair harms produced by colonialism may face difficult ethical questions when navigating working with funders with colonial ways of working, rather than reparative ones.



Furthermore, even when funding is acquired to support international collaboration, questions arise concerning how it will be sustained if funding comes to an end. For example, the funding that allowed for the Nia Upeoni course allowed us to experience first-hand international collaboration between the UKAD and Kenyans. As there was funding to initiate the pilot that we were a part of, we were able to build connections, grow as a group and develop our skills for international collaboration. How many other groups are not able to do this because they don't have funding? How many groups have to curtail the vision for their work when under funding restrictions?

# NEEDS FOR EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION



# What is needed for effective collaboration

In answer to our research question, different themes emerged regarding what is needed for effective international collaboration tackling IGT. We found a collection of values, in opposition to a colonial mindset and extractive practices, needed at an interpersonal level to facilitate this kind of collaboration, including:

## Integrity/Authenticity

Not compromising on principles was highlighted as being important in aiding collaboration. This is true even when it may lead to conflict, something we will consider further on in this section. Balancing authenticity/integrity with the needs of compromise during collaboration may be difficult, but it has been shown to create the most effective collaborations built on genuine relationships and aligned goals.

We were made aware of the importance of aligning fundamental principles, which is only possible when people show up authentically and can share what these principles are.

## Respect

Respect is pivotal for healthy, trusting relationships, so it has unsurprisingly shown up as a key value needed for collaboration. When it comes to international collaboration, how do we show respect when people have different cultural expressions for this? Considering this question is key to developing collaboration where participants feel respected. One suggestion is for all participants to answer this question together in the early stages of collaboration, with an invitation to share answers to this question throughout the collaborative process, which may be prompted unexpectedly. Additionally, boundaries set throughout the collaboration need to be respected and addressed if not.

## Open-Mindedness/Humility

As international collaboration is a coming together of two or more perspectives, opinions and biases, it's vital to bring awareness to these in the early stages of collaboration and before, if possible. This value of open-mindedness is coupled with humility to have your perspective changed by new information. For UK participants, we heard that sometimes "*they are coming from a good place, but it is worded incorrectly, or they have learnt wrong information, coming from misleading sources.*" For African-diaspora communities born and raised in the UK, this can be especially true due to our education systems and absorption of white supremacist ideologies.

## Agency

Alongside the interpersonal values listed, other key qualities for international collaboration were expressed, including agency. In this context, it describes the ability for all members of the collaboration to make decisions. We found that participants must feel empowered to meaningfully impact the collaboration. How do we foster an environment where all participants feel empowered to make choices and take action? This is a question we have come across a lot in our organising work, which is heavily reliant on community power. Here, one-to-one check-ins, collective decision-making and building a safe space where people are not punished for mistakes are important.

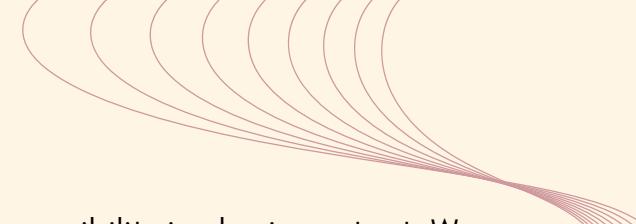
## Relationship Building

Although our research is exploring sector-to-sector collaborations, we found that what is fundamental to collaboration is the individual relationships built through authenticity, respect and open-mindedness. Collaboration often depends on individual relationships rather than organisational ones. The importance of sustained relationships and maintenance of connections was highlighted. Again, this links to what we have learnt through our community organising journey so far – the importance of relationship building. In our community organising, the relationships may be with community members, other organisers and specific power holders.

A specific example of an effective collaborative way of building relationships is through Ubuntu, a philosophy centring community, interconnectedness and relationality, an idea rooted in South African wisdom. It provides a helpful collection of principles to support us in working in a way which prioritises relationship building.

## Accessibility/Equity

An equitable approach is necessary to collaboration, and by this, we mean intentionally adjusting support, resources, or processes so everyone can partake in collaboration. This approach acknowledges that everyone has different circumstances and will need different adjustments. From our interviewees, we found examples of this, such as: participants being given money to buy resources when financial barriers are present, funding to buy data when internet connection is a barrier and receiving mentoring to access unfamiliar platforms when digital literacy is a barrier.



Considering how to utilise online spaces well to aid accessibility is also important. We heard from one interviewee that they made sure all resources used were available online to account for collaborators who were not able to access them physically.

There are specific nuances to consider concerning accessibility for international collaboration, such as the speed and complexity of language used, where the participants may not be confident or fluent in the language. Utilising translators where needed to aid understanding may be beneficial, as well as using culturally familiar platforms and communication channels.

## **Conflict Resolution**

We found that conflict is not inherently negative for a collaboration and, in fact, conflict can be a sign that collaborators are showing up authentically, with one interviewee sharing that through the conflict, their collaborative work became stronger. With that being the case, being able to work through conflict, to resolve it, is a key skill needed in order to support collaboration built on genuine relationships. To put participants in the best place for collaboration to work, conflict resolution skills are beneficial.

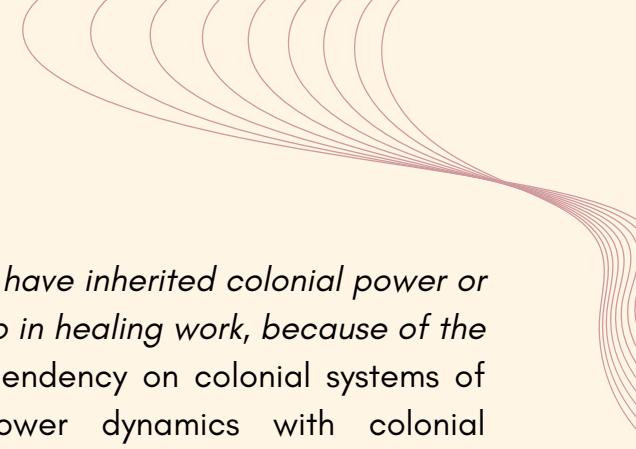
## **Capacity**

Capacity is needed to give collaboration the space it needs to flourish. Capacity is also needed to turn one-off collaborative events into long-term collaboration. It also increases the likelihood of sustained collaboration due to a reduced risk of burnout. Furthermore, having the necessary capacity allows collaborators to implement action around the different themes mentioned here.

A key challenge we found interviewees had with collaboration was a lack of capacity. From our experience, this seems to be a sector-wide concern for the UKAD-led VCS, which prompted us to ask if there are infrastructure organisations which can provide the capacity needed to support the sector to undertake international collaboration. An infrastructure organisation builds capacity and offers support, which allows other movements, projects, or organisations to function effectively. We've explored what this could look like in our context in the conclusion.

## **Different Funding/Resourcing**

We found about the need to be well-resourced to undertake collaborative work, with concerns shared about the problematic history and nature of many funding streams



One interviewee expanded, saying, *“Institutions that have inherited colonial power or perpetuated harm face limits on how far they can go in healing work, because of the restrictions that funding puts on your work.”* If dependency on colonial systems of funding (funding structures, practices, and power dynamics with colonial characteristics) creates contradictions and restrictions on work centred on IGT healing, how do we navigate this issue?

Multiple interviews mention the need for good funding practice (long-term, multi-year, unrestricted funding) and also the need for Black-led funding streams that will not directly or indirectly impose restrictions on intergenerational healing work for the Black community. One interviewee shared how they fund their work, relying instead on community members stepping up when needed for various projects, which removes the restrictions imposed by colonial systems of funding. They described how projects they have worked on have operated without formal funding, relying instead on community members stepping up when needed for various projects, such as education services for African and Caribbean children and supporting the elderly. They described this way of working using Ubuntu principles, where the organisation functions using interconnection and relationships, with funding relying on people's generosity and agency.

Reparative funding models that align with IGT healing practices and support long-term, collaborative approaches are required.

## **Space for Collaboration (Digital/ In-person)**

What spaces are available for collaboration? For international collaboration, utilising digital spaces is necessary for collaborators in different regions. When considering digital spaces that aid effective collaboration, it's important to consider which platforms are preferable based on cultural familiarity, price, and ease of use.

Additionally, we found that the benefits of in-person spaces and their ability to support relationship-building and connection are essential to collaboration. This also offers the potential for people to build direct relationships, which avoids the challenges which come from trying to make a cold introduction. When considering in-person spaces for collaboration, key factors need to be considered, a top one of which is affordability. For organisations with limited funding, this is a common concern and is hard to navigate without a funding increase.

# Checklist: Questions to consider for effective international collaboration focused on healing IGT

We have pulled together a checklist with questions for UK-based organisers to consider when partaking in international collaboration, which aims to prompt reflection and challenge assumptions to support effective collaboration. We encourage using and sharing this checklist as UK-based organisers, and hope organisers from elsewhere will take inspiration from this to make their own.

This is not a one-size-fits-all list, but a collection of questions that have been raised throughout our research. Feel free to take what makes sense for you and leave what doesn't. Some of the questions may feel more relevant to early stages of collaboration, before collaboration has started, mid-points or at the end. Although later questions are specifically focused on IGT healing, earlier questions apply to international collaboration more generally. Use this checklist as it makes sense for your specific context. Find the full checklist template [here to work on online](#) (via Canva), [here to print](#), and all questions are listed plainly in Appendix 2. A sample of the checklist questions is below:

- What are my assumptions about international collaboration work? Why do I want to undertake this piece of work?
- Am I open to learning?
- Am I open to understanding new perspectives and receiving new information?
- What are my assumptions about relationship building? Am I prioritising relationship building currently?
- What are the perceived barriers to participation?
- Have boundaries been set?
- What's the decision-making process? How is power shared?

# CURRENT CONTEXT

## Reflection on the state of play today

This section aims to explore the current context we are working in and how it has influenced and informed this research, along with personal insights underscoring why we explored this topic now. We will also look at emerging re-traumatisation that is politicised and the opportunities for the VCS to build long-term international collaboration. The events described here are current as of December 2025.

Currently, the far right is re-instilling trauma every day. In the UK, racist and xenophobic individuals, communities, corporations and political parties are spreading misinformation about migrants. As well as financing and lobbying for hostile environment policies and assaulting migrants and racialised people perceived as migrants.

An organised march planned by the UK Independence Party (UKIP) was moved by the Metropolitan Police from Whitechapel and the wider Tower Hamlets borough (home to many Muslims, South Asian migrants and diasporans) to Knightsbridge to avoid violent encounters. This Islamophobic and racist action was successfully interrupted because of community organising, where many communities and groups were organising an anti-fascist counter march. This amplifies the power that organised diaspora communities can have to resist movements which intensify IGT. Organising is currently being used against us by malintentioned actors, which is more reason for the VCS to take action, using international collaboration to build solidarity and strengthen this.

UKAD grassroots groups are organising in solidarity with international groups against similar issues of racism and xenophobia embedded in international systems. There is an increase in UKAD communities wanting to connect with their ancestral lands, support with systemic issues communities are facing there, and decolonise their way of thinking. These activities are intertwined by the rejection of UK-led imperialism, its beliefs and Pan-African principles. The checklist in Appendix 2 is relevant to support UK-based diaspora communities on their respective journeys of international collaboration, by posing questions which aim to prompt reflection and challenge assumptions to support effective collaboration.

Hurricane Melissa (a catastrophic hurricane that occurred in late October 2025, hitting Haiti, Cuba and Jamaica as a category 5 hurricane) has shown the need and possibility for collaboration between the UK and Jamaica for immediate relief work and also long-term support for Jamaicans. The mobilisation in the UK, predominantly by UK-based Jamaican diasporans, was immense, including blogs, fundraisers and redistribution of resources. This has shown the ability of the UKAD-led VCS to work internationally, but has also highlighted what is missing to support effective collaboration. A key gap is a lack of infrastructure to support the type of direct sector-to-sector collaboration needed, avoiding third parties with misaligned interests, which can reduce the effectiveness of work or divert it off course altogether. In a world with worsening, corporate-driven climate crises, the frequency of these disasters is likely to increase. These crises compound the injustices and traumas that communities already face.

How do we build mechanisms for effective collaboration, which not only will be utilised in crisis moments but also enable long-term strategic collaboration? We are considering this question and what the necessary infrastructure to support this collaboration will look like. As a British-Jamaican, I (one of the authors) am particularly interested in how to support collaboration between UK-based Jamaican diasporans and Jamaican-based organisers to tackle UK-led imperialism and its impacts. As residents of a country within the imperial core<sup>1</sup>, reflecting on how to use this position to actively challenge imperial power is important.

Through the organising we are involved in, a pivotal realisation in understanding international collaboration as diasporans for us has been asking ourselves why we want to reconnect with our ancestral homes. Our Pan-Africanist view of unity amongst Black people can be achieved by bridging the gap between Africans and the diaspora. One way to do so is by redefining Western terms, such as 'migrant,' and engaging with the history and journey of migration to humanise people who migrate and diasporans. We can learn how generations of diasporan journeys have impacted the lives we live today, which can aid in our healing work. As we learn of our families and communities' history of cultural healing practises, their relationship to their land, and how they dealt with conflict on a domestic and wider scale, we can better understand the intergenerational layers of trauma we may carry.

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<sup>1</sup>a term which refers to imperialist countries which have historically benefited from unequal exchange with periphery countries. (ProleWiki)

# CONCLUSION

We set out to understand how the UKAD-led VCS can work collaboratively with the VCS in Africa and the Caribbean in healing IGT.

Where can this trauma go? We have chosen to use this trauma to drive us to take action in nourishing ourselves and our communities. Through organising, mutual aid, compassion and utilising this in the VCS. Through the activism of dismantling systems that cause harm and community-led healing practices, there is potential to really tackle the root causes of IGT and the systems which intensify it.

While we live in a world which is continually retraumatising African and African diaspora communities, the goal of healing IGT cannot be postponed until we have dismantled the systems which have triggered and exacerbated this trauma. The insights from this research show that dismantling systems of oppression and healing IGT are intertwined activities, each having the potential to support the other. Also, the desire to do this work collaboratively between the UKAD-led VCS and the VCS in Africa and the Caribbean was exemplified in this research. There are three themes we would like to leave you with that emerged throughout our research: internal work, decolonisation and infrastructure to support collaboration, which offer pathways to support the advancement of international collaboration between African and UKAD communities within the VCS.

## Internal work

*"Everyone needs to love the Africa in them to get to the place of healing we need to get to." - Ian*

The first is internal work. Working on our internal conditions and developing our knowledge are key actions needed to support this work by making us more capable of not only our own healing but the communities around us. What we create externally is shaped by our internal conditions. If we embody the qualities of the world we want to live in, we increase the likelihood of that becoming real.

Courses centring liberation, empowerment and growth through decolonial practices play an important role in supporting people with this internal work. UKAD-led organisations are leading this work and are best placed to do so.



We can see with examples like Nia Upeoni (a Black-led systems change course) and Project Timbuktu (a systems change political education programme), that this work is underway. These examples provide spaces for participants to practice and understand how to create solidarity systems like mutual aid as they centre community building. Long-term resourcing is required to enable these initiatives to thrive and reach their relevant audiences.

Organising courses such as Friends of the Earth's Environmental Justice Collective leadership programme focus on developing knowledge of organising concepts and practical organising skills. These courses cover topics mentioned above that are needed for effective international collaboration, like conflict resolution, relationship-building through 1-1's and creating equitable spaces. Again, these courses need long-term resourcing to expand to match the scale of demand.

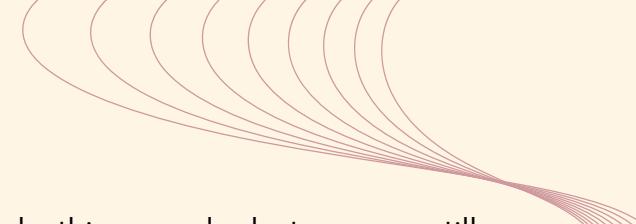
An important part of this internal work is practising using our imagination muscle, which we are often socialised not to use, so that our capacity for imagination does not become a limiting factor in our work. Reimagining a world with deep collaboration between African and African-diaspora communities, unconstrained by today's reality, is an important step in achieving it. Imagination allows us to take part in prefigurative politics<sup>2</sup>, a helpful strategy to create change.

*"Imagination helps us envision outside of the confines of the oppressive systems we live under at the moment"* - Aliyah, [The Future We Dream of zine](#)

Lastly, learning from African wisdom and practising principles like Ubuntu supports the development of internal qualities and skills needed for effective international collaboration, e.g relationship-building. For the UKAD, this also offers a way to reconnect with ancestral knowledge.

## Decolonisation

The second theme is decolonisation. Historically, decolonisation described the process which former colonies went through to free themselves and become independent of the colonising country. Today, we understand the term to mean working to challenge systems, structures and relationships which remain embedded with colonial logic.



Decolonisation asks us to question how and why we do things and what we are still doing because of colonial ideology. It's a process to undo the ways colonial logic is embedded in our communities and us, shaping us culturally, psychologically, economically and spiritually.

Many of the experts we spoke to are already practising decoloniality in their organisations and their work. A range of different healing methods were mentioned throughout this research, with some methods rooted specifically in the culture and spirituality of Afro-descendant communities. We also engaged with organisations that work against colonial practices in the mental health space, such as not using harmful pathologising language.

When exploring IGT triggered by systems of oppression (such as colonialism, slavery, white supremacy and capitalism) and the work of the VCS in tackling this, we believe more prominence should be given to the decoloniality needed for the sector as a whole, including training, awareness raising and space to practice decoloniality. We found that differing levels of decoloniality embedded within organisations' ideologies can be a barrier if they differ. Training, awareness raising and space to practice decoloniality could support more effective collaboration by supporting collaborators to align here.

There are organisational forms within the VCS that remain embedded in colonial logic, such as harmful hierarchies and structures in which power is concentrated at the top. It would be beneficial for UKAD-led VCS groups to examine their structures, consider if they are following colonial ways of organising, and whether their group structure can serve the people and mission of the group. NGOisation (the process where grassroots movements and community groups turn into formal non-governmental organisations) often dilutes groups' ability to meet their aims by becoming overburdened with bureaucratic practices and prioritising success measurements by funders they are reliant on. We spoke to experts working in the reparations movement, prompting reflection on how the UKAD-led VCS can protect movements like this from being diluted and retain organisational structures which best serve the movement. Mutual aid groups, solidarity networks, and grassroots collectives are examples of structural forms we believe can be decolonial and have the potential to support the aims of work tackling IGT.

Decolonial funding is needed. A key finding of this research for effective collaboration includes having a well-resourced sector, especially with Black-led funding streams that do not impose restrictions on intergenerational healing work for the Black community.



The funding landscape and those who make funding decisions must recognise the need for their funding to be decolonial, undertaking their own decolonial journeys, whilst also supporting their grantees in their decolonial work.

International collaboration between the African and Caribbean VCS and the UKAD-led VCS is inherently decolonial work, repairing and reconnecting the relationships between Afro-descendant communities, a key Pan-Africanism principle. However, this collaboration must intentionally take a decolonial approach, ensuring that the way the work is done does not reproduce colonial dynamics.

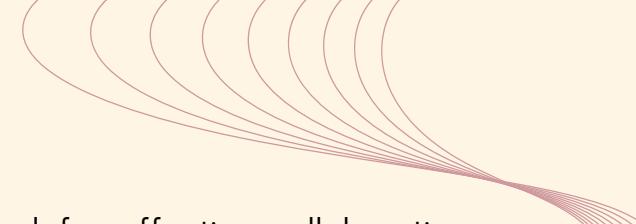
## **Infrastructure to support collaboration**

The last theme which emerged surrounds the infrastructure needed to support long-term international collaboration. How and what could this look like?

Lack of capacity was found to be a barrier to effective collaboration. Developing infrastructure could address this by creating more spaces for collaboration and providing coordination and support to build capacity. This could look like an infrastructure organisation facilitating remote convenings between UK-based and international groups, organising in-person convenings utilising technology to include those who can't join physically, supporting other relationship building between groups and developing digital infrastructure to aid this. Infrastructure which provides administrative, policy and reporting support could also help to reduce the burden on groups undertaking international collaboration.

Funding was identified as another barrier to international collaboration. Individuals and organisations who want to undertake international collaboration are often constrained by a lack of aligned funding or a lack of funding altogether. An infrastructure organisation could support this by compiling a list of applicable funders or by securing funding to directly resource groups' collaborative work. Another barrier found was access to resources, which could be addressed by having more infrastructure which raises funds to buy the resources collaborators need.

Infrastructure to provide guidance and share knowledge around international collaboration would be beneficial. This could look like checklists, templates or peer learning groups. We aim for our checklist in Appendix 2, developed through our research, to add to this type of infrastructure. It's intended to support best practice and offer guidance for international collaboration using reflective questioning.



We found that conflict resolution skills were needed for effective collaboration. Infrastructure could be developed to support this by providing conflict resolution training to groups to help collaborators navigate disagreement and conflict when it arises.

The need for infrastructure is not just to support the collaboration between UK-based groups and those in Africa and the Caribbean, but also to support collaboration and foster connection between the UK-based African-diaspora led groups themselves, who are aligned in their goals for international collaboration. When these UK organisations build relationships and work collectively rather than in silos, this can strengthen and enable more effective international collaboration to occur.

Overall, we need infrastructure to support long-term, sector-to-sector collaboration between the UKAD-led VCS and the VCS in Africa and the Caribbean.

## **Hopes for the Future**

Parts of our journey of organising, tackling IGT, and supporting international collaboration are interwoven in this report and are ongoing. We're committed to and advocate for more international collaboration within the UKAD-led VCS.

We aim to support the people who contributed to this research and others in the sector to come together and explore how they can participate in international collaboration more effectively. We hope to make the time and space needed for this work, and support with the infrastructure needed to sustain it. We advocate for the development of new forms of infrastructure needed to support international collaboration, potentially starting with specific themes and regions, to narrow the scope and make these collaborative efforts more manageable. We hope the UKAD-led VCS can make more informed decisions and are better equipped when it comes to undertaking effective international collaboration.

Finally, for the UKAD-led VCS and the VCS in Africa and the Caribbean, we hope increased and more effective international collaboration will accelerate the progress of dismantling global issues which cause IGT, heightening the impact of the work they are already doing and making the world better for all Africans and Afro-descendant communities.

# APPENDIX 1

## Birthing Trauma - a poem about intergenerational trauma

Sometimes, a woman gives birth to her trauma.  
For almost a year, her womb is filled  
with all the pain that her previous life has carried.  
The blood that has fallen from her face, her arms,  
from between her legs  
now gushes back into her organs,  
so she can feed this new trauma  
that is growing inside her.  
Her limbs swell and swell with the grief,  
like her arthritic joints, until  
it is ready to be exhaled through childbirth.  
But this trauma never just disappears.  
After she has expelled the being from her womb,  
when her knees quiver and her breath slows down,  
the grief finds a new home in a new body.  
But still she does not succeed in entirely passing on her grief.  
It fights to claw onto her:  
around her hips, her breasts, her stomach  
in the form of stretch marks and tiny baby hands  
grabbing for some absent affection.  
So, it is no surprise when she mothers this trauma,  
That new trauma is born.

- Halima Begum

# APPENDIX 2

## Checklist: Questions to consider for effective international collaboration focused on healing IGT

Find the full checklist template [here to work on online](#) (via Canva), [here to print](#), and all questions listed plainly below:

- What are my assumptions about international collaboration work? Why do I want to undertake this piece of work?
- Am I open to learning?
- Am I open to understanding new perspectives and receiving new information?
- What are my assumptions about relationship building? Am I prioritising relationship building currently?
- Do I have conflict resolution skills?
- Do any collaborators have conflict resolution skills?
- Do I understand how my collaborators show and perceive expressions of respect?
- Have boundaries been set?
- What's the decision-making process? How is power shared?
- What are the perceived barriers to participation?
- What actions will we need to consider to reduce potential barriers to participation?
- Have we considered the physical spaces required for potential in-person sessions?
- What are the preferred digital communication channels/platforms for online sessions and work?
- Have we secured funding for this collaborative work?
- What funding and resources are available for this collaboration?
- Am I able to speak about IGT in terms my collaborators are familiar with?
- Am I open to different perspectives and understanding of IGT?
- How does my perspective on IGT shape the collaboration?
- What collective care practices do I use in my usual context? How can they be adapted for this international collaboration?
- Are my methodologies for IGT healing sensitive to the cultural and historical contexts of my collaborators?
- How can I adapt my healing methodologies for an online context?
- How do we ensure we are not collaborating in a way the retraumatises participants?

# CONTACT US



Aliyah Green

&



Moet Semakula-Buuza