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PEPA- Peer Empowerment Programme for Achievement of Migrant Women

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Introduction

Peer Empowerment Programme for Achievement of Migrant Women (PEPA) will look at the best practice guide aimed at practitioners who could engage and support migrant and ethnic minority women in peer support activities, either better or for the first time.

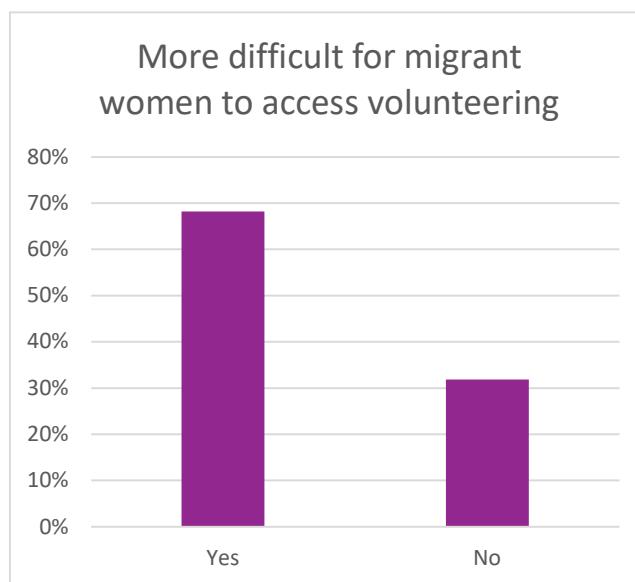
In developing the guide, structured interviews were undertaken to capture data at local level by each partner with the following two groups:

- Organisations / participants currently involved in volunteering:
- Organisations / participants wishing to engage in volunteering

Participants Analysis

Questionnaires were carried out with mixture of those migrant women that were volunteering and those that wanted to access volunteering opportunities.

They were asked number of questions to ascertain their experience to help us to shape the development of good practice guide.



Both groups overwhelmingly agreed that it was more difficult for migrant / ethnic minority women to access volunteering opportunities than the general public.

Number of reasons were cited for this. These include:

- Language problems and qualifications that are not recognised in this country. '*We may be educated but our qualifications are not recognised in this country. No job offer unless you have English and Maths'*'
- We come from different backgrounds and are not familiar with the system in this country.
- Ethnic minority women largely come to deprived areas where there are not much facilities or opportunities hence the chances of being aware or given the chance of volunteering are very limited.
- No language or literacy skills. People born and brought up in this country have this priority over us.

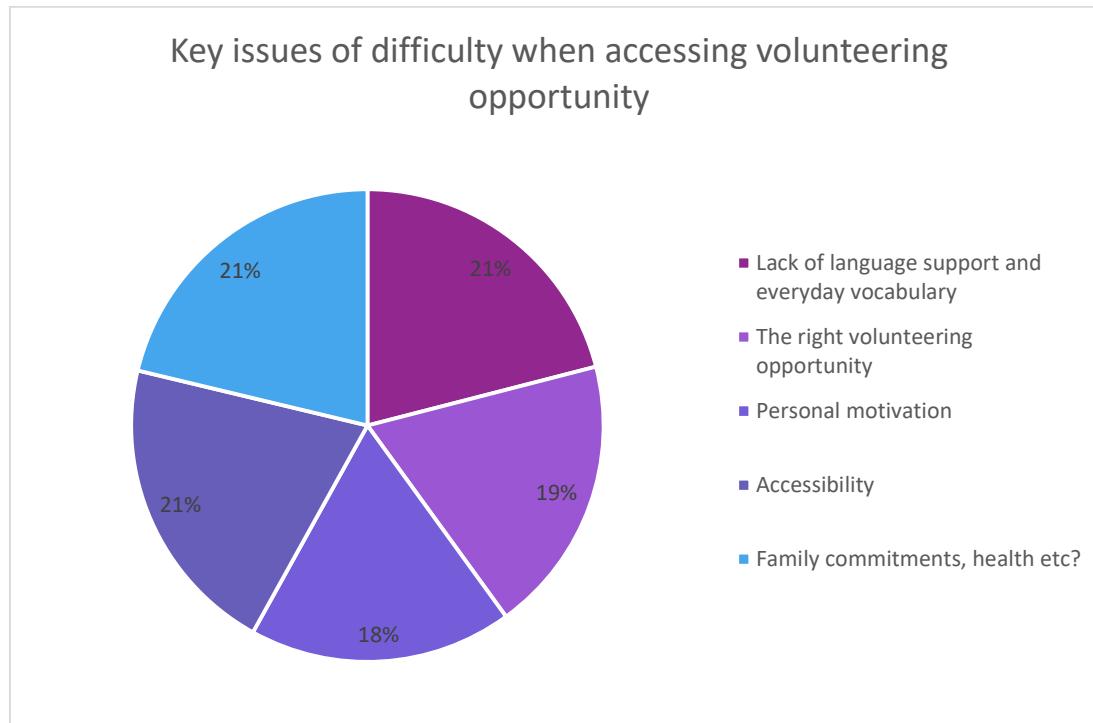
Main motivations for women wishing to access volunteering.

These fell into 3 main categories

- Gain experience and build confidence
- Gain work experience and get paid employment
- Help people in need and gain, particularly if they have been in similar situation

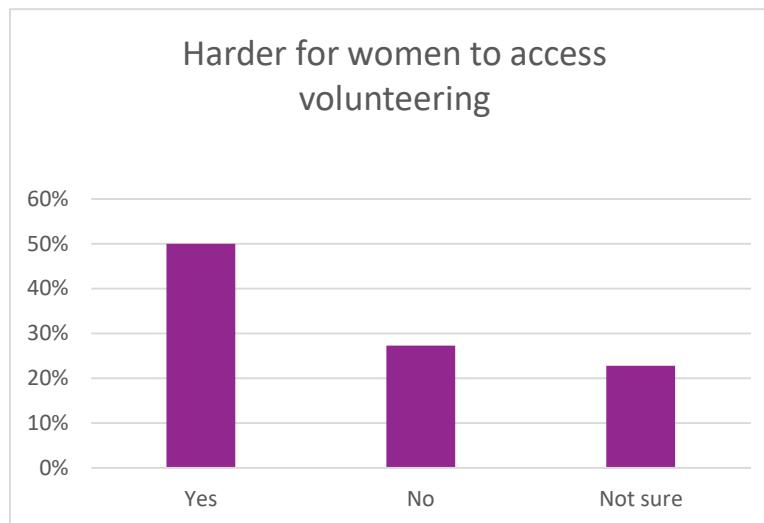
Key issues most difficult when accessing volunteering opportunity?

Participants were asked to select between 5 choices.



Family commitment and health, lack of language support and accessibility were cited by migrant women as the main issues for stopping them from accessing volunteering opportunities, closely followed by the right opportunity.

Is it harder for women to access volunteering than men?



50% of participants agreed that it was harder for women than men to access volunteering opportunities.

Exploring this further, main reasons highlighted were family commitment that took priority for women and that men had more access to

information through their social circles than women.

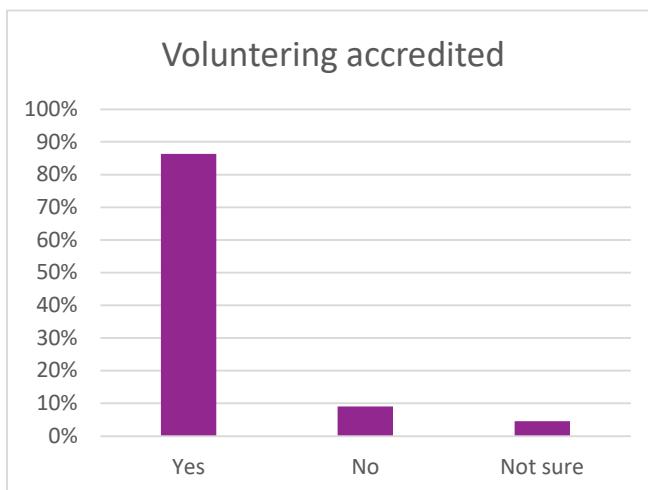
Most important aspect of volunteering for women

Women sought volunteering opportunities for number of reasons. These included:

- Education
 - o This is more important because if you don't have the capability to gain knowledge, you will not understand the job role.
- Experience
 - o Ability to put theory into practice. I can understand the nuance of the work environment.
 - o Many people have been offered jobs because they have experience but no qualifications.
 - o Builds confidence and improves language skills.
 - o Gain the experience because I can always study at any time and get my qualifications.

Length of volunteering opportunity.

There were range of answers including 2 to 3 months, all the way to 12 months. Some also commented on the fact that the opportunities should be flexible based on individuals' circumstances as some people were able to commit to more time than others.



Overwhelmingly 89% agreed that volunteering opportunity should be accredited.

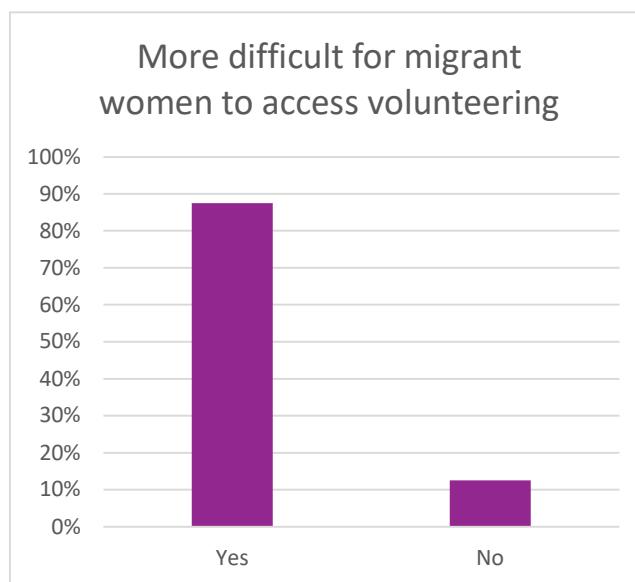
Women felt accreditation would help them to seek employment in the future and therefore it was important to have something that would mark their volunteering.

Participants were asked to share tips on good practices. These include:

- Constant support from the organisation.
- Encouragement to gain qualifications whilst volunteering.
- An opportunity to observe sessions to get a better understanding.
- Training, integration with other work colleagues and support from peers.
- A welcoming atmosphere and support from managers and colleagues.
- An opportunity to meet different people to improve my communication skills.
- Ability to use own initiative, it allows someone like me to gain confidence.
- Support from management, offered English classes, job opportunities and clear instructions given to do my job.
- Good induction.

Organisational Analysis

Questionnaires were also undertaken with organisations, those that are running volunteering programmes and those looking to run a volunteering programme.

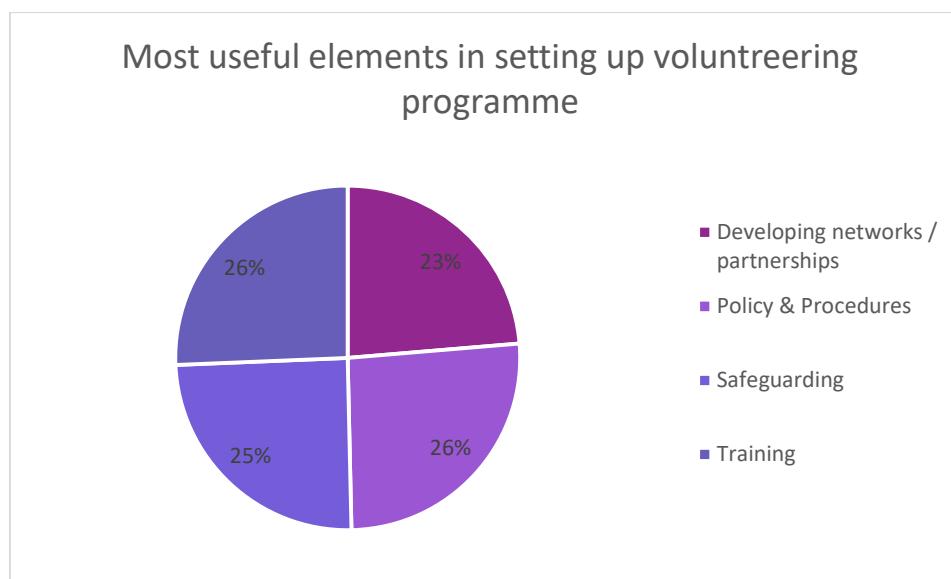


90% of participants agreed that it was much harder for migrant women to access training opportunity than general public.

There were number of reasons cited in their opinion. These included:

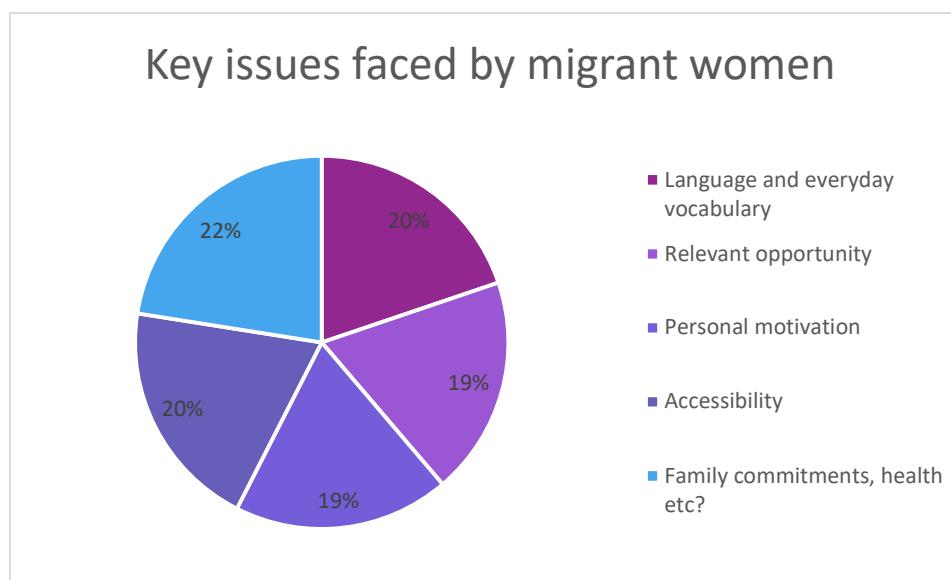
- It is becoming harder to implement volunteering programmes due to policy and procedures which is putting organisations off from offering the opportunities hence reducing number of opportunities available.
- Language is a big issue. It is difficult as training is always provided in English.
- Fitting volunteering opportunity around their family support. This means they are limited in terms of number of hours they can commit to.
- If they don't have 'Right to Work' then they are unable to volunteer, so much harder for them to access these opportunities
- Women are very passive. They don't understand the concept of FREE.

Most helpful elements in setting up a volunteering programme for migrant / ethnic minority women?



There was an equal spread across all four options with development of policy and procedures and training being the most important.

Key issues migrant / ethnic minority women face when accessing volunteering opportunity?

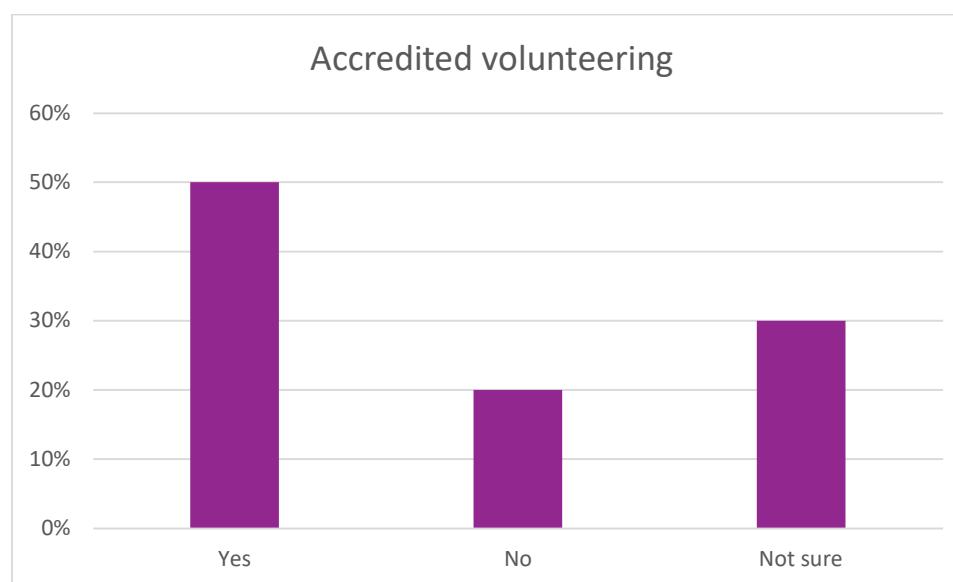


What aspect of volunteering were most important to migrant volunteers.

- Ability to network and make contacts as they are new to the country.
- Skills development / knowledge to get employment at the end.
- Structure - what is required from the individuals.
- Guidance - what they need to do, so they don't have to work out what is needed.
- Gaining experience and exposure. Stepping stone for future opportunities. Learning about procedures and the learning environment.
- Opportunity to learn / networks / meet new people.
- Social aspect and building networks; the rest will become easier.
- Many people are lonely so want some social interaction. Want to learn a new skill.
- Need someone to guide them. Role models

Organisations new and existing also commented on the length of the volunteering opportunity.

- This depends on the opportunity itself. For young people in schools two weeks but longer for community initiatives.
- At least 2 hours a week.
- Minimum of 3 months especially if you invest in training.
- For mutual benefit at least 6 months.
- Depends on the person. It has to be a person-centred.
- Depends on individuals personal circumstances. Those that have time want longer others shorter for studies.



50% of organisations agreed that the volunteering opportunity should be accredited.



What in their opinion was a good practice?

- Programmes:
 - o Sport Birmingham volunteer 360 package. It's all round, allowing for vetting before they start so the right fit can be found before they start.
 - o Polish group - families don't speak little English. Runs stay & play group with polish language support.
 - o Allotment project. Theresa volunteer co-ordinator for Hodge Hill – been doing for 3 years. Constantly recruiting and is able to recruit as is trusted in the community and is so successful
- Informed and willing to take part. Those that are seen as 'I had to do it' are not productive.
- Ascertains end goals to manage expectations.
- Any programme that has good atmosphere and welcoming. If this is possible then it doesn't matter what the opportunity is.
- Environment to be encouraging so they help to shape the service. Making sure that you provide adequate supervision
- Clear about expectations on both sides.
- Asking volunteer for their feedback to help to continuously improve the programme – this can be empowering

Which specific skills and competences should PEPA develop practitioners to increase the levels of migrant / ethnic minority women.

- Guide on setting up good practices.
- Reporting structures.
- Safeguarding policy is water tight.
- Make sure marketing is part of developing the programme.
- Clarity of expectations – behaviour and work ethics.
- Code of conduct.
- Recruitment process.
- Incentives such as expenses.
- Making volunteers part of your organisations so they are staff same as your staff.
- Focus approach on the ethnicity they are accessing. Tailor for the community they are accessing.

- Clear communication with the citizens.
- Free tools to manage the volunteers.

What has been the greatest challenge in setting up a volunteering programme?

- DBS / official checks make it harder (financially) for organisations.
- Retention rate – getting people through the door and keeping them.
- Attracting the right people that have interest in what they are doing.
- Time management to support volunteers. It is important to have capacity to support these volunteers especially when your programme grows.
- Capacity to support volunteers and keeping up communication.
- Making sure that we had procedures. Recruitment, are they the right fit for us. How do you let them go if they are not the right fit. What rewards if expenses not possible.
- Motivating volunteers – how do they take initiatives. This could be due to language barrier, lack of experience.
- Making women understand the expectations and reality of volunteering.
- Understanding of 'volunteering'.
- Keep it going - to keep them engaged, keeping volunteers challenged.
- Need dedicated volunteers or a paid person so the person has capacity to develop the programme and volunteers.



Conclusion

Peer Empow

