

Registration number 6082225

Faith Matters Community Interest Company
Company limited by guarantee

Abbreviated accounts

for the period ended 31 March 2008



**Faith Matters Community Interest Company
Company limited by guarantee**

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Faith Matters Community Interest Company
Company limited by guarantee

Abbreviated balance sheet
as at 31 March 2008

	Notes	31/03/08	
		£	£
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	2		443
Current assets			
Cash at bank and in hand		11,264	
		<u>11,264</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		<u>(1,542)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>9,722</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			10,165
Net assets			<u>10,165</u>
Reserves			
Profit and loss account			<u>10,165</u>

The directors' statements required by Section 249B(4) are shown on the following page which forms part of this Balance Sheet.

The notes on pages 3 to 4 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Faith Matters Community Interest Company
Company limited by guarantee

Abbreviated balance sheet (continued)

Directors' statements required by Section 249B(4)
for the period ended 31 March 2008

In approving these abbreviated accounts as directors of the company we hereby confirm:

(a) that for the period stated above the company was entitled to the exemption conferred by Section 249A(1) of the Companies Act 1985 ;

(b) that no notice has been deposited at the registered office of the company pursuant to Section 249B(2) requesting that an audit be conducted for the period ended 31 March 2008 and

(c) that we acknowledge our responsibilities for:

(1) ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with Section 221, and

(2) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial period and of its profit or loss for the period then ended in accordance with the requirements of Section 226 and which otherwise comply with the provisions of the Companies Act relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

These abbreviated accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part VII of the Companies Act 1985 relating to small companies .

The abbreviated accounts were approved by the Board on 05 - DECEMBER - 2008 .
and signed on its behalf by


.....
Fiyaz Mughal
Director

The notes on pages 3 to 4 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Faith Matters Community Interest Company
Company limited by guarantee

Notes to the abbreviated financial statements
for the period ended 31 March 2008

1. Accounting policies

1.1. Accounting convention

The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with applicable accounting standards, and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective January 2007).

1.2. Turnover

Income represents funds received within the company's ordinary activities and is broken down as follows:

Bridging Beliefs Project	£30,495
Living Islam Out Loud Project	£21,000
Sundry Donations	£3,006

It should be noted that all the funds were committed to costs, including expenses amounting to approximately £10,000 relating to the Living Islam Out Loud Project which were incurred between April 2008 and June 2008.

1.3. Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less residual value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	-	25% reducing balance
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2. Fixed assets

Cost

Additions

590

At 31 March 2008

590

Depreciation

Charge for period

147

At 31 March 2008

147

Net book value

At 31 March 2008

443

Faith Matters Community Interest Company
Company limited by guarantee

Notes to the abbreviated financial statements
for the period ended 31 March 2008

..... continued

3. Company limited by guarantee

The company is limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital.

000190/15

CIC 34

Community Interest Company Report

For official use
(Please leave blank)

Please complete in typescript, or in bold black capitals.

Company Name in full	FAITH MATTERS CIC
Company Number	6082225
Year Ending	31 ST MARCH 2008

This template illustrates what the Regulator of Community Interest Companies considers to be best practice for completing a simplified community interest company report. All such reports must be delivered in accordance with section 34 of the Companies (Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise) Act 2004 and contain the information required by Part 7 of the Community Interest Company Regulations 2005. For further guidance see chapter 8 of the Regulator's guidance notes and the alternate example provided for a more complex company with more detailed notes.

PART 1 - GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES

In the space provided below, please insert a general account of the company's activities in the financial year to which the report relates, including a fair and accurate description of how they have benefited the community, or section of the community, which the company is intended to serve.

- * FAITH MATTERS PROVIDED INTERFAITH PLATFORMS BETWEEN JEWISH, MUSLIM AND SIKH FAITH COMMUNITIES IN 2007/08 IN CITIES LIKE MANCHESTER, LEEDS, LONDON, LUTON ETC.
- * FAITH MATTERS PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ROLE MODELS FOR MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE UK. AUTHORS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORGANISATIONAL WOMEN WHO HAPPEN TO BE MUSLIM AND LEADERS IN THESE AREAS WERE TAKEN ON ROADSHOWS ACROSS THE UK.
- BOTH ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED INFORMATION FLOWS TO FAITH GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE UK AND HELPED TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY COHESION. THE PROJECTS ALSO HAD MENTORSHIP ROLES

(If applicable, please just state "A social audit report covering these points is attached".)

(Please continue on separate continuation sheet if necessary.)

PART 2 – CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS – Please indicate who the company's stakeholders are; how the stakeholders have been consulted and what action, if any, has the company taken in response to feedback from its consultations? If there has been no consultation, this should be made clear.

- CONSULTATION TOOK PLACE WITH FAITH LEADERS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS WHO PLAYED ACTIVE ROLES IN ADVISORY GROUPS FOR THE PROJECTS.
- THE CONSULTATIONS SHAPED THE DELIVERY OF PROJECTS WITH INPUTS FROM THESE STAKEHOLDERS.
- INDIVIDUALS ATTENDING FUNCTIONS AND PROJECT RELATED EVENTS WERE ALSO INVITED TO BE MEMBERS OF FAITH MATTERS.

(If applicable, please just state "A social audit report covering these points is attached").

PART 3 – DIRECTORS' REMUNERATION – Please insert details of any remuneration received by the Directors, even if already stated in the accounts. If no remuneration was received you must state that "no remuneration was received" below.

REMUNERATION AND OTHER BENEFITS (TO
31ST MARCH 2008): £ 15,790

PART 4 – TRANSFERS OF ASSETS OTHER THAN FOR FULL CONSIDERATION – Please insert full details of any transfers of assets other than for full consideration e.g. Donations to outside bodies. If this does not apply you must state that "no transfer of assets other than for full consideration has been made" below.

NO TRANSFER OF ASSETS OTHER THAN FOR
FULL CONSIDERATION HAS BEEN MADE

(Please continue on separate continuation sheet if necessary.)

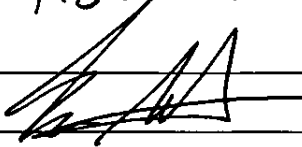
(N.B. Please enclose a cheque for £15 payable to Companies House or the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, as appropriate)

FIYAZ MUGHAL

PART 5 – SIGNATORY

The original report must be signed by a director or secretary of the company

Signed



Date

04/01/09

Office held (delete as appropriate) Director/Secretary

You do not have to give any contact information in the box opposite but if you do, it will help the Registrar of Companies to contact you if there is a query on the form. The contact information that you give will be visible to searchers of the public record.

Tel	
DX Number	DX Exchange

When you have completed and signed the form please send it to the Registrar of Companies:

Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff, CF14 3UZ
for companies registered in England and Wales

DX 33050 Cardiff

or

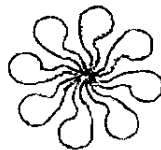
Companies House, 37 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh, EH1 2EB
for companies registered in Scotland

DX235 Edinburgh
or **LP – 4 Edinburgh 2**

or

Companies Registry, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Waterfront Plaza, 8 Laganbank Road Belfast BT1 3BS
for companies registered in Northern Ireland

000183/15



FAITH MATTERS

www.faith-matters.co.uk



A49	*AWW5M7HH* 18/02/2009 COMPANIES HOUSE	116
A61	*AN3JR6DT* 09/01/2009 COMPANIES HOUSE	63

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

Faith-Matters is a registered not-for-profit Community Interest Company,
Company Number 6082225

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Faith Matters
“Facilitating Faith Communities to Reduce Conflict”
Annual Report, January 2007 – December 2007

Faith Matters was formed in early 2006 as a vehicle to facilitate faith communities to reduce conflict within local areas. The Organisation came about partly due to ongoing issues between faith communities that were affecting community cohesion and partly due to a desire to bring faith communities together to understand commonalities, historical and religious similarities and the need to develop a bedrock of mutual support and assistance to combat xenophobia, intolerance, distrust and ignorance. Faith Matters was incorporated as a not for profit Community Interest Company in February 2007 and has subsequently undertaken a range of activities that are outlined within the Director's report which is enclosed. The Organisation has a Board of Directors which meets regularly and which provides the strategic steer and governance. Also, each project undertaken has an Advisory Committee that advises on the operational elements on the programmes and that provides other useful community links for partnerships and promotional activities for these programmes.

The organisation has a number of work strands and objectives that are listed below. Faith Matters therefore works to provide:

- **Social programmes based on the themes of interfaith, conflict resolution, the protection of human rights and preventing violent extremism. Within these themes, we will work with any faith community though Faith Matters has built up a specialism in working with Jewish and Muslim faith groups. We also work within areas of geopolitical significance like the Middle East and we are currently working to set up programmes within Israel and the West Bank of Palestine.**
- **Platforms where historical similarities are used as the glue to try to get faith communities to try to understand each others perspectives. The common theme here has been ‘Looking Back to Look Forward.’**
- **A bridge between secular and faith communities.**
- **Advice, support and consultancy to statutory, private and community / voluntary groups, in relation to faith groups. The advice and consultancy also relates to work around preventing violent extremism.**
- **Faith Matters uses innovation and Information Technology techniques within the heart of the social programmes that we initiate and implement and we work with project partners with the same vision.**

Director's Report – Fiyaz Mughal

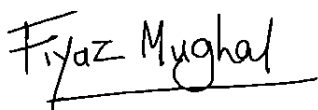
The period of January 2007 – December 2007 saw a number of activities undertaken by Faith Matters with respect to four major programmes. (Each programme received the benefit of advice and information from a network of experts that Faith Matters works with and who provided useful and working links into communities). The four major programmes involved the following:

- The Bridging Beliefs Forums that were undertaken in 5 cities across the UK, namely London, Leicester, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Over 400 people attended these forums in total and attendees came primarily from Muslim and Jewish communities, though there were those that attended from other faith groups and those with a historical and non-faith based interest in the subject of genocide and minority communities in Europe. The project also spawned off other Jewish and Muslim bridge building and conflict resolution programmes and these are currently running in Birmingham and Manchester and Faith Matters has been asked to attend student union meetings in other cities on the back of this project. The project was conducted in partnership with the Three Faiths Forum, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Sufi Muslim Council.
- Faith Matters started the co-ordination work on a project entitled 'Living Islam Out Loud.' The project looks at the experiences of American Muslim women and tries to develop links with Muslim women within the US and those within the UK. Living Islam Out Loud will be taking 4 prominent American Muslim women (authors, poets and community leaders) throughout the UK on a series of lectures, talks and symposia in April 2008. This project therefore will be the start of an ongoing partnership programme that will provide opportunities for Muslim women in the US and the UK to link up and exchange thoughts, experiences, cultural exchanges and discussions, as well as information around community based projects.
- We successfully put together a project called Cohesive Communities targeted at Sikh and Muslim communities and the aim of the project is to facilitate a platform through which much needed discussion and dialogue can take place between key British Muslim and Sikh community and organisational leaders, students, religious leaders and up and coming politicians. Furthermore, the project will fly members from various vocational sectors and from Sikh and Muslim groups to the conflict resolution centre in Corymeela, through which dialogue and discussions can take place between these leading members. There will be five key areas from which participants will be picked and these include **London (Southall, Slough and Hillingdon), Derby, Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton.** Faith Matters has

spent a considerable amount of research time and effort in 2007 putting together this groundbreaking project in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government.

- Faith Matters also worked during 2007/2008 in an advisory capacity on two micro-finance development projects being started within the West Bank of Palestine (Future Visions) and within Jerusalem (Jerusalem Interest Free Fund). The Future Visions programme was targeted at providing micro-finance loans to women entrepreneurs who had no access to mainstream loans within the West Bank and who had no credit histories, have never worked before etc. The Jerusalem Interest Free Fund provides micro-finance loans to financially deprived communities in Jerusalem and these include Arab East Jerusalemites and the Orthodox Jewish community. Both programmes are based on the premise of interest free loans. Faith Matters will continue in the advisory role that it has during 2008.
- Faith Matters worked with the Three Faiths Forum in helping to put together elements of the Undergraduate ParliamEntors Programme (UP). In particular, the Parliamentary links that Faith Matters has built up assisted in the setting up stage of the project. The UP programme invites politicians to act as mentors for London based university students studying in the political field. Mentors meet at least once a month with a trio of Muslim, Christian and Jewish students who will be working on a project together.

Developmental opportunities have significantly increased from January 2007 – December 2007 and next year will see Faith Matters build further on new programmes that will reach out to Hindu and other faith communities. There are further opportunities within the Middle East context of Israel and Palestine and Faith Matters is well placed to undertake work within those countries and in partnership with faith communities within the UK. We will also be looking to place innovative Information Technology at the heart of the delivery of our programmes and the dissemination of findings and outcomes from them. Roll on 2008!



Founder and Director of Faith Matters

Bridging Beliefs Forums

"Looking Back to Look Forward" – Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester, Leeds and London

Faith Matters was supported and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government to hold 5 forums nationally and the first forum was held in July 2007.

The Bridging Beliefs Forums were a unique series of talks that took place in the cities outlined above. In a unique demonstration of togetherness, survivors of the Holocaust and the genocide of Bosnian Muslims came together to share the stage and their experiences to groups around the UK. This was a novel project that helped to break down barriers and generated materials that can support Holocaust and genocide education in the UK and beyond.

By having the survivors of both the Holocaust and the Bosnian Detention Camps sharing their personal stories, it forced listeners to put faces and names to the horrific stories they only heard about at a distance. By having survivors of both genocides on stage together we helped to keep the lessons that need to be learned from these horrendous historical events, fresh in people's minds. These forums also gave the audiences the opportunity to take part in a discussion, the results of which were fed into government decision making processes and also into educational institutions.

Bridging Beliefs Forums - Aims and Objectives

- To promote a sense of shared historical, religious and cultural experiences for Muslim and Jewish communities and the impact of the Holocaust and Bosnia on these minority faith groups in Europe.
- To raise awareness of examples of genocide and to keep genocide education on the public agenda.
- To provide a platform for discussion on these issues where both Muslim and Jewish communities work together.
- To raise awareness for the genocide inflicted upon Bosnian Muslims and to bring these tragic circumstances into the public arena.
- To engage with groups and individuals that might not otherwise take part in interfaith initiatives.
- To provide an opportunity for members of each faith community to reach out to each other within their local areas and through local interfaith groups.
- To raise awareness of the media of the strong resolve within Jewish and Muslim communities to work together.

The majority of forums were completed in November 2007 and there was therefore intensive activity between July and November 2007. The two speakers at the events were Kemal Pervanic (a Muslim survivor of the Bosnian killing

camps, namely Omarska and Manjaca) and he was incarcerated from mid 1992 to the end of 1992 in these death camps. Having suffered extreme food and sleep deprivation as well as psychological traumas, he has had to come to terms with the fact that he survived and many of his colleagues and friends died simply because they were Muslims and seen as 'the other.'

The second speaker was Ruth Barnett, a Kinder-transport survivor, who arrived in the UK aged 4 and who then returned to Germany in 1949. She returned back to the UK within a year and the Holocaust and Jewish persecution has left a deep imprint on her. Ruth lost many family members in the Holocaust and they were killed simply because they were Jewish. Ruth has been working as an educator around genocide for the last 25 years and has coined the term 'genocide footprints' around the mark that we as humans leave when we turn against each other for reasons that may include religious intolerance, xenophobia or the struggle for natural resources.

Both speakers therefore talked about the need to understand the narratives of both communities within Europe and with a view to '*looking to the past to move forward together.*'

Both Kemal and Ruth raised elements that had strong resonances in both situations. Whilst we have not attempted to directly compare the Holocaust to Bosnia, there are nonetheless similarities in the run up to genocide and we also agree with Ruth's analogy that there are genocide footprints and elements that lead to the actual event itself. Kemal and Ruth raised some of these elements that included:

- *The purging of Jewish and Muslim professionals from their positions of power in Germany (and other countries invaded by the Germans) and Bosnia.*
- *A loss of nationality and identity.* The creeping expanse of Aryanization and classification on the grounds of faith alone.
- *A rise in nationalism* and the link between nationalism and the need to purge away minority communities.
- *Using folklore to enhance nationalism.* The Nazis used Viking based folklore that started to become intertwined with Christianity. In Bosnia, folklore around the battle of Battle of Kosovo in 1389 on St Vitus' Day and the subsequent demise of Prince Lazar, the leader of the Serb army in the battle, led to the development of folklore around him. It also led to the development of a sense of national unity and identity for the diaspora of fiefdoms led by him. Allied to this, Serbian texts around the event play up the link between God and the Serbs and they cast the Ottomans very negatively as 'heathens and devils.' In many ways, these texts already had built the basis for a nationalist leader to manipulate them and along came Slobodan Milosevic. The scene had

been set centuries ago for a 'purge' of Bosnian Muslims within Bosnia Hertzegovina.

- *Dehumanization and the creation of the 'other'* who warranted harsh and extreme treatment.
- *Post the genocide:* denial of the Holocaust and those deniers of the Bosnian genocide.

Futher Developments from the Forums

Attendees of the Forums stipulated that they were looking to work together with members of other faith communities – particularly the two (Muslims and Jews) through:

- Interfaith and conflict resolution work,
- Through bringing together women's groups and working towards getting local programmes on inter-religious themes set up,
- Looking at past historical elements and building bridges so that current geo-political elements in the Middle East can be discussed once mutual trust has been built up,
- Joint student and youth groups.

Faith Matters will be monitoring these developments within the five cities of Manchester, Leeds, Leicester, Birmingham and London, though resource shortages mean that full monitoring and progression tracking cannot take place.

Evaluation Feedback Comments on the Bridging Beliefs Forums

"Stimulating and thought provoking speakers. Excellent and much needed."

"Although I was not sure what I was looking to achieve from attending the forum, it was a privilege to hear two very human, human beings expand on the after effects of genocide as well as its causes. The Forums are capable of opening paths to understanding and so to tolerance."

"Very moving and emotional. Wonderful and inspiring speakers. Well organised and meaningful. By attending the forums I got to understand and examine the similarities between the Bosnian Muslim and Jewish experiences within Europe."

"It was fascinating to hear the accounts of the speakers, but I sense that the problems faced (in terms of genocide repeating itself), are still present."

"The Forums represent a platform on which 2 faith communities can start to build empathy and mutual understanding of one another and their historical narratives through what are cataclysmic events. They can also help to inform the wider population of what took place and how it affects these groups today."

"A practical project to help build bridges and promote tolerance. Much needed today when geopolitics clouds basic discussions between some faith communities."

The Future

The vision is to repeat the forums across the country from 2008/2009 to **15** cities, however, the focus will mainly be on smaller towns in the UK and within cities towards the Midlands and the north of England. Allied to this is a fundraising drive to raise the necessary finance to ensure that we can visit and host the talks at three times the level that Faith Matters had done so in 2007/2008.

Event Pictures



Audience listening to Kemal and Ruth – Bridging Beliefs Forum (London)



Panel discussion and Q and A's



Panel members (from left to right), Ruth Barnett, Fiyaz Mughal, Jonathan Freedland, Kemal Pervanic and Haras Rafiq



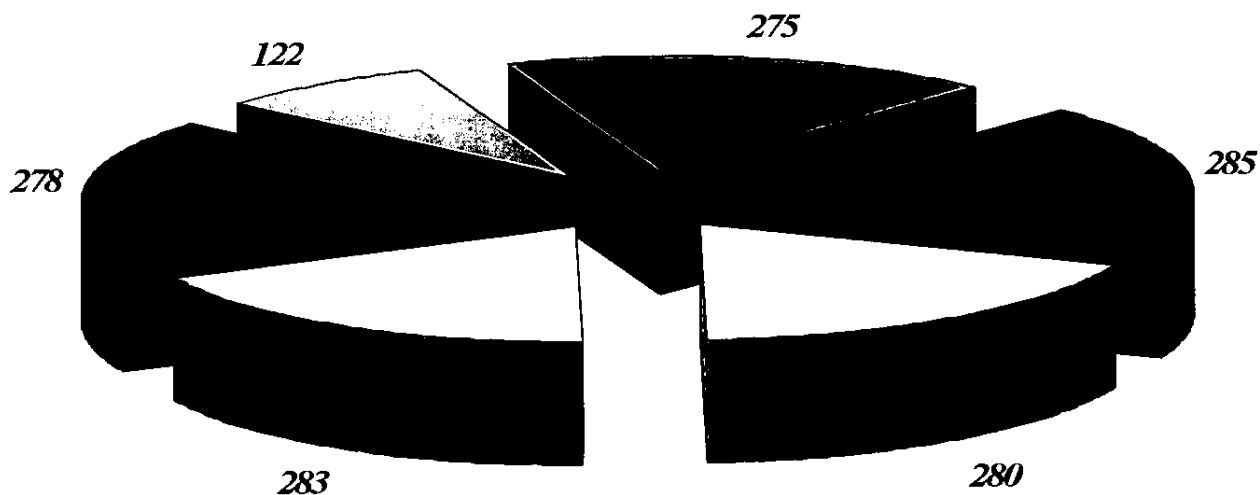
Muslim attendee to the Bridging Beliefs Forum

Number of Attendees at Forums

The 5 combined forums had a total of **407** people attend. Attendees were roughly of the ratio of 60:40 from Muslim and Jewish communities respectively. The number of attendees for each forum are shown below:

London: 93
Manchester: 78
Birmingham: 83
Leicester: 67
Leeds: 86

Evaluation of Forums

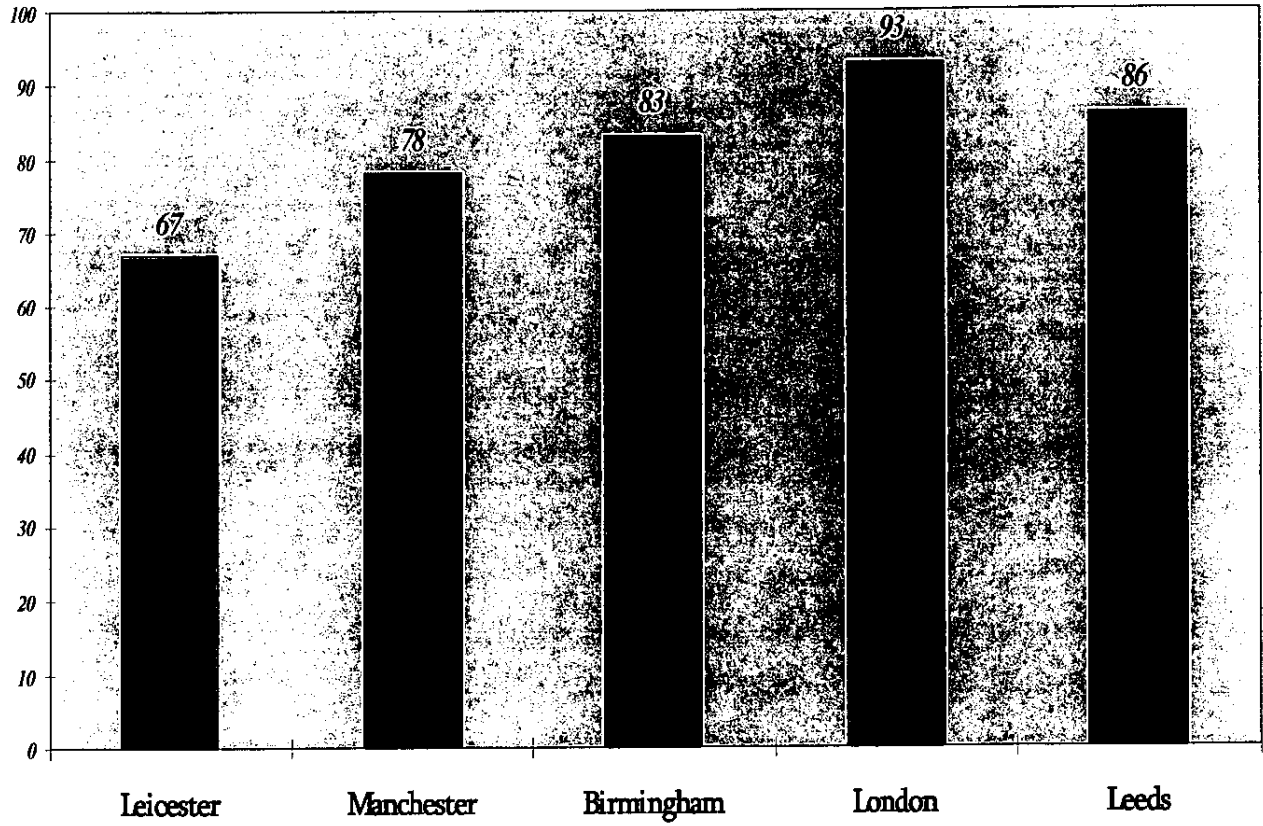


- Met the aims**
- Recommend to a friend**
- Help in reducing stereotypes against faith communities (Muslim & Jewish)**
- Build cohesion & a sense of mutual understanding between faith communities**
- Enhance the learning about the history of migrant communities in Europe**
- Did not fill in the form**

Note:

(The above figures show the number of respondents who believed that the forums (1) met the aims of what they were looking for, (2) Would be recommended to a friend, (3) Would help in reducing stereotypes against faith communities, (4) Would help to build cohesion and develop a sense of mutual understanding between faith communities, (5) Would enhance learning about the history of migrant communities in Europe and (6) were the numbers of people who did not complete the evaluation forms.)

Number of Attendees per Venue
(Total 407 attendees)



Cohesive Communities – Working Towards Bridging Divides Between Sikh and Muslim Communities

Confronting Regional Barriers and Divisions Between Sikh and Muslim
Communities Through Conflict Resolution Programmes at Corymeela

Introduction

The Cohesive Communities programme is primarily targeted towards Sikh and Muslim communities within the UK and will target a variety of groups such as students, religious and organisational leaders and individuals involved in the political life of this country.

Cohesive Communities will involve taking groups of 20 members of each faith community from each of the vocational groups outlined to Corymeela in Northern Ireland and which has been involved in conflict resolution over the last 40 years. Corymeela staff have helped to create spaces where people of diverse backgrounds can come and meet each other and where there is an atmosphere of trust and acceptance and where differences can be acknowledged, explored and accepted. It is a site to develop community cohesion through conflict resolution.

Corymeela has made a sustainable difference to community relations and reconciliation work over the last 40 years and many of the people involved in reconciliation at Corymeela are now active throughout Northern Ireland.

Background to Cohesive Communities

This project has come about due to previous and continuing tensions between members of the Muslim and Sikh communities. These tensions include:

- Breakdowns in community relations in areas like Derby between Sikh and Muslim communities,
- Sikh community members feeling vulnerable to attack because they 'look Muslim.'
- Continued tensions between the two communities and especially between young people,
- Issues around the 'Bezhti' play and the impact that this had on community and race relations,
- Attacks on Sikhs by people thought to be Muslims,
- Lack of employment and progression opportunities for members of both communities.
- Stories of alleged forced conversions.

Further information that has led to this project includes the fact that there have been serious incidences of youth violence between Sikh and Muslim communities starting in 1996 within the Slough area of London.

In Derby 2001, tensions between Sikhs and Muslims worsened following September 11, as rumours spread that Al-Muhajiroun members were active in the area distributing anti-Sikh leaflets. A hoax letter, which had been circulating on the internet for some years and aimed at fomenting Sikh-Muslim conflict, inflamed the Sikh community when it was allegedly distributed in Normanton Road, the heart of Derby's Asian community. There was talk of a boycott of Muslim shops and angry meetings were held at the Gurdwara. With many Sikhs having already moved out of the Normanton area to Derby's suburbs, those who remained felt vulnerable and outnumbered.

These are therefore some examples of underlying tensions between both communities and this project aims to tackle some of these by bringing groups of Muslims and Sikhs together within a comfortable and neutral environment which has decades of experience of working through community tensions and problems. It is also interesting to note that the tensions become more acute on national days like the Independence days of Pakistan and India and on the anniversary of the invasion of the Golden Temple in Amritsar in the early 1980's.

Aim of Cohesive Communities

The aim of the project is to facilitate a platform through which much needed discussion and dialogue can take place between key British Muslim and Sikh community and organisational leaders, students, religious leaders and up and coming politicians.

Objectives

- To provide a platform in Corymeela through which dialogue and discussions can take place between key members of the Sikh and Muslim communities in the UK. There will be five key areas from which participants will be picked and these include **London (Southall, Slough and Hillingdon), Derby, Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton.**
- To engage with students, organisational heads, community and religious leaders and up and coming politicians from both communities. The primary focus of the programme will be to engage with as many Muslim and Sikh youth and student groups as possible.
- To develop a work programme that enhances continued contact with both communities and which lays down the basis for a strategy to counter-act those that prey on divisions and on fomenting extremism within both communities. The strategy will also have a key section that includes youth and student groups and work that may be conducted on university campuses.
- To help to break down stereotypes and barriers that have built up over time between British Muslim and Sikh communities.

- To work towards the production of a tool kit that can be used to provide frameworks to reducing tensions between both communities. This will include sections on combating myths, national and local contacts etc
- To produce a web-site that specifically facilitates contact with members from both communities.
- To utilise other good practice being conducted between groups and to introduce that within the project.
- To create community cohesion champions between Muslim and Sikh communities throughout the UK.

Living Islam Out Loud: Perspectives from American and British Muslim Women

'Continents Divided, Muslim Women United'

Introduction

Faith Matters started the co-ordination work for this project in October 2007 and the project will take four prominent US based Muslim authors and poets on a tour from London through the UK in order to engage with British Muslim women's groups. The lectures, symposia, informal group meetings and book readings will no doubt also focus on the role of Muslim women in the US and the changing social patterns taking place. Indeed, US civic and social regeneration in communities is being influenced more and more by US Muslim communities and particularly by Muslim women. This is also the case within the UK.

The four American Muslim women will discuss Islam, women and the changing dynamics that are taking place within Muslim women's groups in the US. Discussions will also include elements that will touch upon issues of identity, citizenship and belonging. More than ever, these elements are being aired and discussed by the wider public though sometimes through xenophobic discourses and these talks will help to provide platforms through which these issues can also be discussed in a more constructive and realistic manner.

The talks will involve taking selected readings and for the speakers to provide their thoughts and personal experiences to the audience. This will also help to encourage new potential links between US and UK based Muslim women so that constructive dialogue can take place at numerous levels. Some of this dialogue will include *faith based elements, gender and social issues, civic participation, integration, citizenship and migration elements.*

Key Objectives of the Living Islam Out Loud Programme

These include:

- Looking at the role of Muslim women within the changing and shifting social environment of the US and Europe,
- Developing links and work plans post the trip to link women's groups in both countries into an informational network,
- Promoting a positive role model for dynamic and pro-active Muslim women,
- Enhancing the role of participation through involvement at a civic or municipal level,
- Looking at areas such as citizenship, integration and developing messages that enhance community cohesion between other faith communities and Muslim groups and the wider community in general.

- Looking at the possibility of future exchanges and visits to the US by British Muslim women.

Historically, Muslims have been in Europe for over a millennia. The role of Muslims in Spain, Portugal and Eastern European states is well documented and the influence of Islam within the UK also has a long history going as far back to the 9th Century AD (3rd century AH- After Hijra). Little is know about this influence though archaeological digs have verified Islamic trade and cultural influences in Britain as far back as 1,100 years ago. Recently there have been migrations from Maghrebi countries like Algeria, Libya, Egypt and Morocco and there are also large and well absorbed communities from the Lebanon and Palestine in the UK. Recent migrations from Turkish speaking communities like the Kurdish and Turkish communities, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, have meant that there are vibrant Muslim communities that are culturally different. By far, the vast majority of the migration has been by the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities from the sub-continent.

Recent terrorist events over the past seven years in the United States, Spain and England have also created an unparalleled awareness of the presence of Muslims. Islam and Muslims are mainstream and European and US based societies are acknowledging ignorance about Islam and Muslims and the challenges and benefits Muslim populations pose. Those challenges are also relevant for Muslim communities some of which include external and internal ones on the horizon.

External challenges include those members who seek to paint Muslims as 'the other' or the fifth column within countries. Such a xenophobic view does not create and enhance community cohesion in the UK or the US and this project can help to counter that through the press work that will be undertaken. Internal challenges include the tiny minority of extremists who claim to be Muslims and who play on the concerns of the communities within Europe and the US and who need to be ousted and challenged for the destructive, exclusionary and xenophobic stance that they take. In all fairness, not only do they do the greatest injustice to fellow citizens through violent actions that are undertaken, they also do the greatest disservice to the Muslim community that they purport to be from.

This project can act as a bulwark against those voices who abuse Islam and who manipulate it to enhance their voices of exclusionism and ghettoisation. It can therefore be one of the many drivers of positive change that are needed to push back those who are instinctively anti-Muslim by virtue of racism and xenophobia

and those extremists who come from the same basis of hate and exclusionism. The project also builds upon the Islamic tenets of respecting and promoting diversity as a natural element of development for communities.

It is a fact that Muslim communities are in flux and in a period of global transformation. This transformation within the Islamic world is being led largely by Muslims in Europe and the US and this is accelerated because of certain academic freedoms along with freedom of speech and freedom to worship. These civil liberties are largely unknown in Muslim-majority countries and which are acting against the peaceful educational line which Islam takes. As a result, Muslim women are finding and reclaiming a strong voice and space within Muslim communities.

There are many misconceptions about Islam and Muslims and various interpretations of the role of Muslim women in sacred Islamic texts and in contemporary society give rise to the biggest misconceptions of all—that Muslim women are oppressed and relegated by scripture to an inferior status. This project will provide empowered images of Muslim women.

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