

GREEN MOSQUES PROJECT, LSx

About the project

Green Mosques is an innovative project designed and implemented by the London Sustainability Exchange (LSx). LSx is a not for profit organisation which aims to accelerate the transition to a sustainable London by connecting and motivating people. In March 2014 LSx started the Green Mosque Project in six London boroughs; Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, Enfield, Southwark and Greenwich.

In recent years, more households than ever are having to 'choose between heating and eating'. Tower Hamlets is home to 40% of the poorest communities in the UK making fuel poverty a common problem. Tower Hamlets also has one of the highest Muslim populations in the UK (35%). Commonly, the Muslim population (among other minority groups) has missed out on the environmental message. Green Mosques was created in recognition of these factors. The year long project aimed to tackle fuel poverty by using Islamic values to engage the community, and working with their powerful social network to create a new social norm.

To ensure the success of Green Mosques, LSx worked alongside partners including; The Muslim Agency for Development and Education (MADE) in Europe and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences. As well as utilising the energy and finance expertise of PureLeapFrog, IncomeMAX and iChoosr.

The project used the "[four E's](#)" engagement mechanism to create a social norm of using less energy to cook, clean and heat homes:

- **Engage** through the established social networks from 6 Mosques
- People were **enabled** by volunteers and champions who gave advice and assistance in their homes
- They were **encouraged** through the use of Shari'ah values and the development of community energy
- At least three Mosques are now developing their **exemplar** status and developing energy generating projects, with 16 others interested

This social action community energy project, worked through natural social gravity to build up its members and develop new avenues for community energy. Social networks and friendship groups made social action fun and easier for people to engage. Social action creates a

powerful introduction and a buzz around community energy.

Successes

The project was successful at achieving its outcomes and overall objectives of tackling energy efficiency and fuel poverty encouraging volunteer-led social action through Islamic values and powerful personal friendship groups. This success was illustrated by the number of people that the project reached and the practical benefits it resulted in for the community. 532 volunteers engaged in social action, 1,193 attended community events reaching a further 18,038 people, 28 professional volunteers gave time to the project supporting legal and financial support. It was projected that the home-improvement measures implemented saved CO₂e 17 tonnes and most importantly 57 homes with 141 people were lifted out of fuel poverty saving at least £42 in each home.

Measuring the success of the project was important to reassure both LSx and the funders that the project was reaching its goals. Feedback was gathered from the participants at the events and training sessions that LSx organised. Feedback took the form of: Baseline surveys (stalls, talks and events in Mosques); exit surveys from

training; follow-up surveys; focus groups and phone interviews (indirect beneficiaries).

Challenges

An important challenge that was addressed early in the project was engaging Mosques at the appropriate hierarchical level and acquiring buy-in and support from Elders, Trustees and Imams. This problem was overcome with persistence; face-to-face meetings from trusted organisations such as MADE; utilising a personal contact and clear explanations.

Once people understood what we were trying to achieve they were hugely supportive.

As with any engagement project some households who had booked in for retrofits were cancelled and rearranged a number of times. This issue was overcome by friendly persistence and the tireless dedication of 'Volunteer Champions', who were trusted by the households.

Involvement

In the first month of the project, volunteers and Champions were recruited via introductory events at mosques. As the year progressed the Champions recruited attended training events organised by LSx. In

June and July of 2014 Champions were encouraged to use their training to provide household energy measures and encourage behavioural change.

In addition, referrals to IncomeMAX were identified through surveys in or outside Mosques' regular prayers or events. Information, tips, advice and energy-saving devices were given away at events or on stalls in/outside the Mosques and a number of celebration events took place for Champions, participants and volunteers. PureLeapFrog also had 6 meetings with Islamic (community) volunteers and banking specialists, including Linklaters, Norton Rose Fulbright and Foot Antsey and over 50 hours of voluntary support / pro-bono advice was given to the project exploring Shari'ah compliant funding mechanisms for community energy projects.

As previously described all events and training sessions included feedback surveys so that the views and experiences of those attending could be taken in-to account when planning subsequent activities.

Learnings

This project harnessed the enthusiasm; good will and drive from a community that is inspired to environmental change through social action and spiritual belief. Linking Islam and the environment worked well for creating an

understanding of climate change and related issues (energy efficiency, fuel poverty) and solutions. This was particularly prevalent at an intergenerational level, i.e. younger people were equipped the practical skills and an awareness of the issue (climate change, energy, fuel poverty) and older people had a greater depth of knowledge about Islam.

Building relationships with and gaining the trust of the communities involved was a crucial part of the project. Without the strong relationships that LSx has formed with the host mosques many of the projects achievements would have been impossible.

Funding

The project was funded by The Social Investment Business Limited (TSIB) which manages the Centre for Social Action's Community Energy Peer Mentoring on behalf of the Cabinet Office. The emphasis for this funding was



volunteering and peer mentoring. The project ran for a total of 13 months and incurred a total cost of £49,064. Lsx worked alongside project partners Muslim Agency for Development and Education (MADE) in Europe and Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) as well as utilising the energy and finance expertise of PureLeapFrog, IncomeMAX and iChoosr for this project.

Legacy

Though the Green Mosques project has come to an end, its legacy can be seen in the continued action it has inspired, examples of which are described below:

Explore Energy Generation for Mosques

Together with project partners MADE and IFEES along with 10:10, LSx are applying to Urban Community Energy Fund (UCEF) to run consultations for up to 20 Mosques interested in energy generation, particularly Solar PV. From our initial desktop research we anticipate expected overall capacity to be 210kW or more. So far 16 Mosques have expressed an interest in exploring community energy.

Shari'ah Compliant Funding Mechanisms Report

PureLeapFrog worked with Islamic volunteers and finance specialists to produce a report that outlines Shari'ah compliant funding mechanisms which will be used as part of the consultation process if we are successful with UCEF funding and disseminated to Mosques.

Eco-Audits

Five Mosques (Harrow, MANUK (Old Kent Road), Majid E Umer (Waltam Forest), MCEC, Enfield, Norbury Muslim Centre (Croydon)) have applied for Eco-Audits from LSx through City Bridge Trust as a consequence of this project. LSx anticipate a further five applications from the Mosques we have worked with through this project and, together with MADE in Europe seek to improve the environmental performance of the Mosques.

Green-Up Toolkit

MADE in Europe produced the second edition of their Green Up Toolkit – a guide and award scheme for Mosques and Islamic Groups that features information about Islam and the Environment, key issues, such as fuel

poverty and tips and advice for Mosques. 500 copies of the toolkit will be sent to 20 Mosques and an electronic version made available on MADE's website.

Fuel Poverty Toolkit

MADE and LSx designed a Fuel Poverty toolkit for project champions that contains more specific information about fuel poverty and actions individuals can take in their homes. We would like to publish this and make copies available to Mosques and our community groups.

Eco Fair

MADE in Europe established the first Islamic Eco-Fair in the UK as part of their outreach for this project. The Eco Fair will run annually in different London Mosques each year reaching potentially thousands.

Documentary

MADE in Europe produced a mini-documentary on their work about climate change and fuel poverty.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKEgRn44KoM&list=UUcKGN9ET_mN9t0mgoNQWbfbw.

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