

Faith & Khidmah

Faith, Khidmah and Citizenship

Connecting Spirituality and Social Action to Build Civil Society



‘The best among you is the one who
is the most beneficial to others.’

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him)

Khidmah **خدمة**

'Khidmah' or 'service' is an Arabic word with multiple meanings including 'to give, to help, to assist someone in need, to be hospitable, to show kindness'. The concepts of 'public service for the common good' and 'social action" are also encapsulated by the idea of khidmah – and lie at the very core of Islamic practice.



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From the People For the People

The Prophet's Way of Social

He came from the people. God sent him for the Prophet's message called to God, but also for the ummah and the oppressed are all mentioned as a key part of the Prophet's mission was to work in a condition. It's time to reconnect to the "community" and the ethics of activism that guided

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Building the Backbone of Muslim Society in Britain

Muslim civil society is the backbone of Muslim communities and the glue that binds British Muslim public life together. It ranges from street level self-help groups to the delivery of services. It is as diverse as drug rehabilitation programmes and fatherhood circles, arts projects and sports clubs, community centres and mosques, 'Sunday schools' and study circles (dars). But it is an ad hoc development that has taken place in the face of racism and Islamophobia and in spite of weaknesses in strategic planning, and a serious shortage of resources. As a result, Muslim civil society is struggling and under severe strain. It is unable to consolidate itself and risks being reactionary in nature. Sadly, it is not currently in a strong position to implement and share some of the core teachings of the faith pertinent to dealing with the many social ills facing society.

The difficulties confronting Muslim civil society – and finding solutions – lie at the heart of this report. 'Faith, Khidmah and Citizenship: Connecting Spirituality and Social Action' is part of on-going work to develop relevant Islamic approaches to contemporary challenges to facilitate change. The development of these ideas has been led by the An-Nisa Society and the Radical Middle Way. These two organisations share a holistic approach towards Muslim activism and have substantial track records in social work and engagement with both public institutions and people at the grassroots.

The goal of this campaign is to help build a vibrant, resilient and relevant Muslim civil society in Britain based on the experience and expertise of the two organisations through a process of critical appreciation, consolidation and the sharing of fresh and innovative perspectives.

Our exploration of the issues formally began at a special symposium held in May 2012 entitled 'Faith & Khidmah: Connecting Spirituality, Social Action and the Big Society'. The symposium aimed to initiate a national conversation about the future of Muslim civil society, exploring ways to harness, direct and develop the incredible energy, commitment and experience that exists within Muslim communities.

The conversation is also intended to help government in the UK, as well as the statutory sector and voluntary sector organisations, to become more effective and accountable in what they offer to British citizens who are Muslim. It also aims to help

all British Muslims to be well-informed about, and involved in securing, their legitimate needs as citizens and taxpayers.

An Nisa Society, established in 1985, is a women-managed organisation working for the welfare of Muslim families. For more than 25 years the Society has led the way in promoting a British Muslim identity, developing ground breaking faith-based projects and working to create a greater understanding of the multi-ethnic Muslim community. It has expertise in Muslim issues, social policy and hands on grassroots Muslim community experience.

Radical Middle Way is interested in the generation, nurturing and application of ideas that have their roots in the Islamic tradition and which help Muslim communities and wider society to co-exist in harmony, prosperity and with justice. By encouraging and facilitating meaningful debate and dialogue, RMW encourages young Muslims, in particular, to learn and be confident about the universal values of their faith. It has expertise in handling ideas and the ability to ensure that they are widely shared and appreciated in society.

The symposium was held at the Muslim College in London, founded in 1986 by the late Dr Zaki Badawi. He was one of British Islam's first great institution builders, even coining the term 'British Islam', supporting key developments such as the Regent's Park mosque and the Council of Imams and Mosques. However, we believe that there is now an urgent need for a fresh, and different wave of institution building, focused on both harnessing the great energies of Muslim civil society and recognising its vulnerabilities and needs for support, springing as it does out of a community with limited resources, working under often difficult circumstances.

The campaign is not about re-inventing the wheel. This new wave of development needs to recognise and develop the work done by many grassroots organisations, building on strengths and taking on the challenges. To this end, we are beginning a year-long process of thinking, consultation and campaigning. We are convinced that an effective Muslim civil society will aid the development of a dynamic and empowered British Islam, which will facilitate equality, engagement, community cohesion and social inclusion and greatly contribute towards a safer, more harmonious and just society.



This report, reflecting presentations and discussion at the symposium, looks at how voluntary and social action has emerged over the last century of British Islam, shaped by migration and conversion as well as by interaction with the welfare state and evolving social policy. We will examine how the needs of Muslim communities have been met – the successes, failures and lessons to be learned.

From its very beginnings, An-Nisa Society has led on social action and working for social justice. We strive to infuse our efforts with an Islamic ethos and perspective. Our understanding is based on an extensive experience of frontline grassroots work and the delivery of groundbreaking faith-based projects, such as Islamic counseling, sexual health education from an Islamic perspective and Muslim Fatherhood. We also lead on a range of campaigning issues which include action for legislation against Islamophobia, awareness of institutional Islamophobia, and the impact on Muslim communities of the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) programme and the ‘Prevent’ agenda.

The development of a Muslim civil society is vital for the well-being of families and has been an on-going priority for the Society. To that end we have been working on conceptualising the idea of ‘spiritual capital’ from an Islamic perspective. In 2010, we took a road show around the country, in partnership with Radical Middle Way, on the themes of community development based on the Prophetic model. The Khidmah campaign is part of this work.

Our experiences and observations will, we hope, be of interest to Muslim voluntary and community organisations, to mainstream frontline service providers in the voluntary and statutory sector, to policy makers and to Government. We wish to bring them together in a policy debate, highlighting pathways by which they can engage and contribute meaningfully to the development of Muslim civil society, ensuring fair, equitable and effective service provision to all communities.

Khalida Khan

An-Nisa Society



Radical Middle Way seeks to connect legitimate, authoritative and relevant Islamic scholarship with activists, artists and grassroots civil society organisations. We aim to help them to engage with the dynamism, diversity and complexity of Muslim communities. We want to improve religious thinking and civil society, encouraging creativity and responsiveness to the challenges of modern times. We believe ordinary people have God-given agency to engage, to empower themselves, to organise and take effective action.

Our work has shown us the power of partnerships and collaboration. We learned early on that ideas are only as good as the ability of people to join hands to act on them. We have had the privilege of working with voluntary, community and charitable organisations from across Britain and around the world. We appreciate the value of robust civil society. We also know that civic action and 'khidmah' – transformative social action and service – are at the very core of Islamic belief and values.

'Faith, Khidmah and Citizenship' is our contribution to breaking down the silos in which often good and powerful work happens. We want to facilitate a culture of collaboration. The new realities of public and social policy, the immediacy of social media and the new ideas of social entrepreneurship mean that Muslim civil society must think, strategise and grow together if we are to meet the challenges facing our communities and our society.

It is critical that our communities move from a protest mindset steeped in victimhood to one of total engagement. We must take seriously our role as the 'people' of the Middle Path who have been 'enjoined to do good and forbid evil'. The process of community-building demands patience and wisdom. It cannot be done in isolation: we must learn to work with our neighbours - Muslims or otherwise. The ability to adapt, the humility to learn and the courage to share and respect are essential.

Our vision is simple: to work towards creating a society that benefits from what Islam and Muslims have to offer humanity. And it is about good counsel, harmonious coexistence, love and justice. RMW is a movement about change in the way we think, act and make Islam and Muslims relevant to the whole of humanity.

"And we have sent you only as a mercy to all peoples" [Koran 21:107]

Fuad Nahdi

Executive Director, Radical Middle Way

3 The Khidmah Campaign



The Faith in Khidmah campaign seeks to engage Muslim voluntary, community and civil society organisations, scholars and Imams, mainstream frontline service providers, the statutory sector and policy makers. We aim to place them at very heart of current policy debates, creating pathways so that they can engage and contribute meaningfully to the common good, while continuing to advocate for fair, equitable and effective service provision to all communities.

The focus is on bringing together and integrating action and work that is often restricted to different silos. We are seeking to break down the barriers between ‘faith-based’ action and statutory sector service provision – between the spiritual, cultural and secular perspectives. This is a total approach to building a better Muslim civil society.

The campaign will:

- I. Develop an applied ‘theology of social action’ – a framework that can be used by Muslim voluntary sector, civil society organisations, charities and NGOs to spur action and provide added meaning to their work**
 - Explore what the concept of ‘service’ or ‘Khidmah’ means in Islam and how it has been practically understood and implemented in the past and present.
 - Give activists and civil society organisations access to credible learning and authoritative scholarship, but also

to help connect Islamic principles to practical, real world challenges that affect ordinary people.

- Develop solutions based on Islamic principles and ethos.

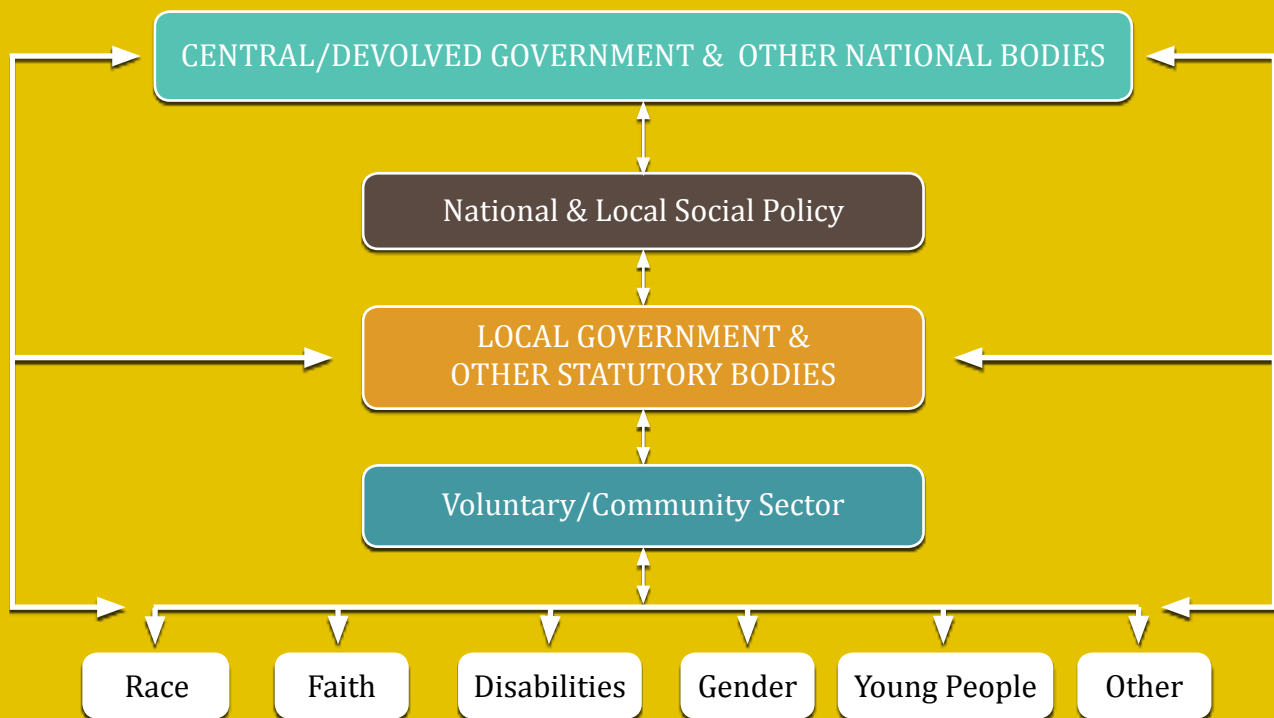
- II. Explore the opportunities and challenges facing Muslim civil society in the UK, seeking to understand it better, map its work and define its value and social capital**

- Understand what kind of community organisations and voluntary and social action have emerged over the 100 years of Islam in Britain and how this has been shaped by migration, conversion, interaction with the welfare state and established religion, and evolving social policy.
- Analyse how the needs of Muslim communities have been met – what have been the successes, what have been the failures and what lessons can we learn for the future.
- Understand how Muslim civil society engages with mainstream social policy, service providers and the broader voluntary and community sector. Where are the areas for partnership and where has there been conflict?

- III. Celebrate and share good practice**

- Facilitate innovation and encourage new ways of addressing challenges facing our communities.
- Encourage networking and joint working based on respect, openness and trust.
- Provide usable tools and good models that community-based organisations across the UK can apply in their own work.

Putting Faith Back into the Agenda



IV. Develop a comprehensive strategy for the future of Muslim civil society

- Facilitate a national network of Muslim civil society organisations and developing, for the first time, a credible evidence base of what Muslim civil society does and what kind of actual impact it has. We want to know what Muslim civil society does, where it does it, how it does it and how it gets funded.
- Present a bold strategy that will see Muslim civil society playing a dynamic role in creating better communities and neighbourhoods for all.
- Overcome barriers to growth and change by starting where the community is at.

V. Explore and identify how Muslim civil society can achieve sustainability and be better funded and supported

- Understand how best national and local government, mainstream voluntary sector support networks, grant-making trusts and foundations, and philanthropists can support Muslim civil society.
- Develop a paradigm shift in Muslim communities that results in robust Muslim charitable and philanthropic giving and investment in British-based community action and organisations leading to the emergence of Muslim-led charitable trusts, grant-making foundations and awqaf (endowments).

VI. Advocate for Muslim civil society to be recognised, supported and strengthened by national and local government and "statutory sector" organisations and service providers

- Provide input on and consistently review the impact of social policy, such as equalities legislation, on Muslim communities
- Investigate institutional Islamophobia and how to address its effects

4 The Case for Khidmah

Spirituality and social action are closely connected, explains Habib Ali al-Jifri, Director of the Tabah Foundation

In his commentary on the Quran, Imam Fakhruddin al-Razi spoke about having compassion for everything around us, for Creation. That's why the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Those who have compassion will be shown compassion by the compassionate. Blessed and exalted is he who has compassion on earth and will be shown compassion in the heavens.' In another tradition the Prophet said: 'Those who show no compassion will be shown no compassion.'

God praises those who do good acts in order to benefit their fellow creatures. He says: 'And they feed, out of the sake of God's love, the orphan and the pauper and the prisoner of war.' He tied that practice of giving food to the love of God. Its motivation was the love of God. They feed people out of his love. God protected the action from falling into the whims of the ego where the ego can actually capitalise on such a good act, a righteous act and use it for its own ends.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, sought to raise us to this work, by tying what we do to a state of being in an internalised state of solitude with the Divine presence. So, outwardly we do the work, and, inwardly, we are in a state of solitude and with the Divine presence. Anything that the human being does to serve another human being falls into that category, as long as it is done for the sake of God.

You hear stories of a young woman from France in her twenties, who left everything and went into the depths of Africa to provide medical care for people. She was there into her thirties, forties, fifties and sixties. Why did she do that? She did it because of her faith in the teachings of Jesus Christ. When you see that, you see the kind of power and energy people can get from doing something out of belief.

Doing good also harmonises the human being with his environment. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him and his family, said: 'God, his angels and the inhabitants of the earth, even the ant in the ant hill, and the fish supplicates for the



person who teaches people good.' This means that the person who sacrifices his time and his energy in teaching people goodness lives in a state of interconnection with God, his angels, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, the ant in the anthill and the fish in the ocean.

God connects what we do for people - and how we help them out - with how we are with him, with the nature of our relationship with God. Our tradition says that there are charitable acts one can do that can continue to be of benefit even after death. God made it so that to do good expiates one's bad actions. In contrast, no matter how much devotion you make, that devotion won't help you and expiate anything you do that is wrong towards another person. Whereas He has rendered it so that, if you do good for other people, you can expiate even the wrongs that are between you and God.

Our lady Aisha, in a tradition in which she narrates from our Prophet (peace be upon him), said: 'The messenger of God said to me. "O Aisha, whoever gives water, where water is to be found, it is as if he has just freed a slave. And whoever gives water out in a place where water is not to be found, it is as if he has brought a person back to life".'

And he said to her: 'If your wrongful actions and deeds are many, then, give water. Your wrongdoing will fall off you like leaves fall off a tree on a windy day.'
May God bless you and may God bless your efforts and may God give you enabling grace.

This introduction is an abridged version of the presentation given by Habib Ali al-Jifri at 'Faith and Khidmah, Connecting Spirituality, Social Action and the Big Society, the National Symposium on Muslim Civil Society', 10 May 2012.

'The person who sacrifices his time and his energy in teaching people goodness lives in a state of interconnection with God.'

5 Understanding Muslim Civil Society

The Muslim voluntary sector has strengths, springing from faith, generosity, knowledge and commitment, but is challenged by the difficult circumstances facing British Islam, explain Khalida Khan and Humera Khan, Founders and Directors, An-Nisa Society

Snapshot of British Islam

How big is British Islam?

In 2010, there were estimated to be 2,869,000 Muslims in Britain – equivalent to 4.6 per cent of the UK population – that is, more than one in six of all Muslims in Western Europe, according to the Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion & Public Life. British Muslims constitute more than 60 nationalities speaking almost 100 languages and dialects.

Where do most British Muslims live?

According to the 2001 Census, more than a third (38%) of Muslims live in London with key concentrations in the West Midlands (14%), the North West (13%) plus Yorkshire and Humber (12%). London is the most ethnically diverse Muslim community.

Key features of British Islam

- It's the second largest faith community in Britain
- It's the largest (52%) of the non-Christian populations, according to the 2001 Census
- It is not composed of one single ethnic group and includes people from all ethnic backgrounds and national origins who speak a multitude of languages
- It suffers from social exclusion (multiple deprivations) – making it possibly the most disadvantaged community in the UK
- With all its diversity, numerous surveys have shown that most British Muslims say that their faith is the most defining factor of their identity and needs, regardless of background and origin. Research suggests that, religion can be an important form of social capital that supports participation and integration.

British Islam is diverse

Among British Muslims can be found settled communities, young Muslims who are 3rd or 4th generation Britons, migrants, new cross-cultural communities, converts, refugees. Some 70 per cent of world refugees are Muslim, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009 Annual Report. Muslims span many divides – rural/urban, working

class/middle class, originate from mono-cultural/cosmopolitan cultures, high and low economic status, skilled/unskilled, Muslim by birth/converts and Sunni/Shia/ and different schools of thought.

Migration to Britain has had many causes

Some Islamic migration to Britain has been voluntary, reflecting historical colonial relationships, marriage and people seeking work opportunities. However, much migration has also been forced, resulting from wars, ethnic cleansing and political insecurity.

Muslims have been caught up in world events

British Muslims have been affected by a host of major world events including conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo, Kashmir, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. As a result, many Muslims are refugees or have sought asylum, have experience of serious trauma often resulting in mental ill-health, disrupted or broken families or are suffering disabilities as a result of being caught up in conflicts. Many still have families in their countries of origin, or in places where they have been dislocated, that they support.

British Muslims also feel empathy with the plight of Muslims in the rest of the world as fellow Muslims and because many still have family ties there.

Challenges facing British Muslims

Some of the issues facing Muslim communities are not dissimilar to other migrant communities. British Islam has faced challenges of fractured communities, high levels of socio-economic deprivation, weak social infrastructure, an inadequate voluntary sector, ill-equipped religious institutions (mosques), institutional discrimination, lack of appropriate representation of needs and issues. However, British Islam has had additional factors to contend with that have contributed to its social exclusion and difficulties and barriers in improving its condition.



The social context has been complex

Muslims have experienced changing social patterns, socio-economic problems, and cultural conflict as well as racism and Islamophobia. Institutional Islamophobia plays a big role but is little understood.

There is very little data available on Europe's Muslim and minority populations. What does exist is usually extrapolated from ethnic and country-of-origin data, which provides a limited picture of the lives, experiences and needs of Muslims in Europe. In the UK after decades of invisibility in official statistics, the 2001 Census lifted the veil on Muslim socio-economic disadvantage. It revealed that Muslims had the highest figures for virtually everything from high unemployment, poor housing, and overcrowded conditions, to the worst health amongst others. For example:

- The Muslim population is the youngest in Britain – 34% are under 16
- Muslims report worst health – Muslim women have worst health
- Muslims have the highest rates of disability (24% women and 21% men)
- Muslim households experience most overcrowding (32%); most likely to lack central heating (12%); 1% lack access to a bathroom
- 1 in 3 Muslims have no qualifications (31%)
- Muslim unemployment rate highest (14% men 15% women)

The stresses have led to increasing family breakdown and dysfunction – with increases in the divorce rate, the number of single parents (mainly led by mothers), households headed by a woman. There are also rising physical and mental health problems, increased domestic violence, issues of forced marriages and disproportionate number of children in care. Alienation of young Muslim men has also increased with an over-representation in the criminal justice system. A Ministry of Justice report published in January 2012 found that a third of youngsters in Feltham Young Offenders' Institution were Muslim.

Islamophobia has had considerable impact

Muslims experience and fear racist and Islamophobic attacks on the streets and the threat of a rapidly increasing far-right extremism which specifically targets Muslims. Islamophobia is also experienced both institutionally and through the narratives and imagery of the media. The consequences can be profound both for individuals and the Muslim community.

Research by the Open Society Institute (OSI) 'suggests that religious discrimination against Muslims remains a critical barrier to full and equal participation in society'. The findings of the OSI survey, consistent with other research, suggest that religious discrimination directed towards Muslims is widespread and has dramatically increased in the past five years. Muslims can experience discrimination in many different locations including in a doctor's surgery, in a hospital, in school, by landlords, the local council, on public transport, with the police, the courts and from members of the public.

The results can be low self-esteem, depression and stress, anger, frustration and powerlessness. If unchallenged, it can lead to communities internalising the experience, becoming what they are projected to be and growing vulnerable to radicalised ideas.

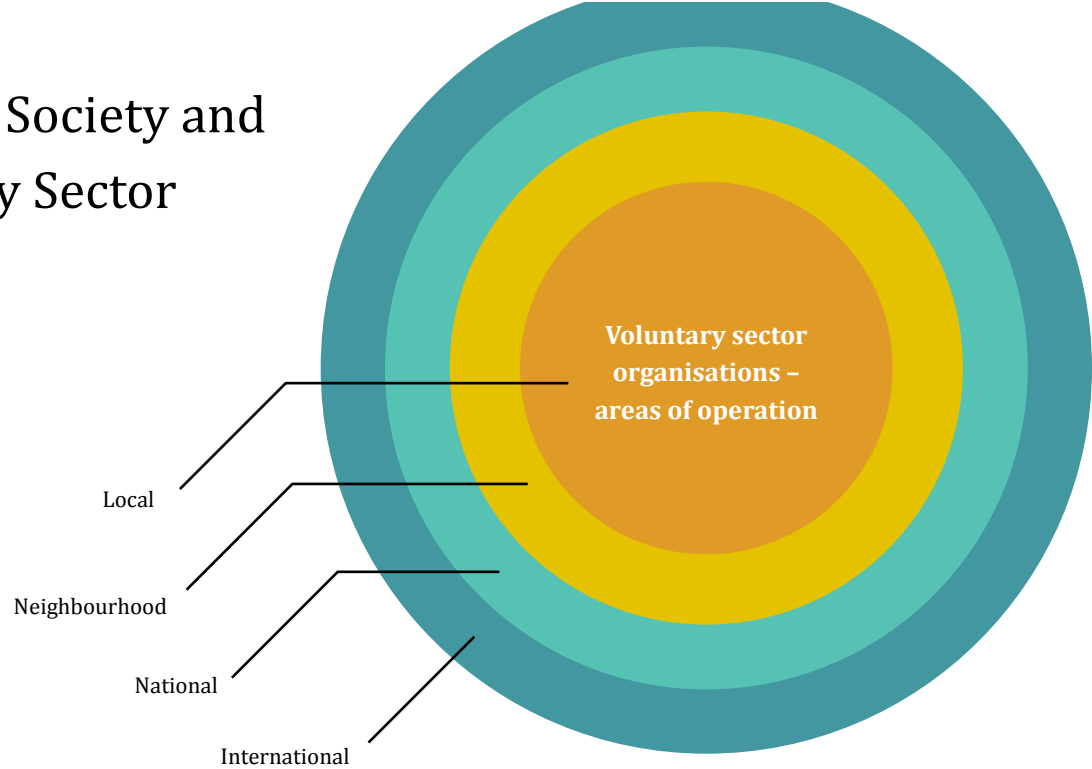
Social Exclusion

The net result is Muslim social exclusion. This is the outcome of multiple deprivations that prevent individuals or groups from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live. (See Glossary in Appendices)

Modernity and Relevance

Last but not least, there is the challenge of change and modernity. British Muslims, many of whom are migrants from rural areas, have to cope with living in a secular society that is diverse, in social flux, based on notions of citizenship not familiar to their experiences. For most, the situation is made even more complex and confusing by a lack of understanding of how to get on as a minority. There is a real need to shift the mind-set from one of protest to engagement and, ultimately, to action through a journey of rediscovering, reclaiming and activating Islamic understanding.

Muslim Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector



The Role of Voluntary Sector Organisations

A hallmark of strong civil society is that it has a wide range of groups, societies and organisations. At the core are voluntary sector, non-governmental and not for profit organisations. These can provide different and specialised services, cost-effectively, offering flexibility and innovation, advocacy and citizen participation.

The voluntary sector is often able to deliver services more efficiently to certain groups as it can operate in settings, which the government and the statutory sector have found difficult or impossible to understand and access.

It can also act as a conduit between the government and its agents and the community. It can provide two-way communication and interaction on needs, issues, policy and so on. It can make the government and statutory sector accountable. Therefore, the absence or weakness of this conduit can have serious consequences.

Consequences of the lack of an effective Muslim voluntary and community sector

Over the past 60 years, as significant numbers of Muslims have come to Britain, Muslims, in the main, developed organisations and services that met their immediate needs and gave priority to setting up mosques, da'wah (evangelical) organisations, halal meat shops, burial facilities, institutions such as supplementary and full time schools for teaching Islam to children and young people.

According to the Charities Commission, almost half of all registered Muslim charities are mosques. This may be an underestimate since some mosques may not be registered. We estimate that about three quarters of British Islam's

institutional capacity is comprised of mosques. However, mosques in Britain do not generally provide for the wide spectrum of needs such as health and social welfare. Although there are some notable exceptions, mosques were, by and large, not set up to provide pastoral care. Many, however, are now beginning to explore this possibility.

There has been limited development of health and social welfare. Services such as advocacy organisations, provision of mental health therapies and facilities, housing projects, day centres and care for the elderly and disabled, Muslim women's refuges as well as youth centres and support for the arts have tended to be poorly developed.

The emergence of Muslim voluntary sector organisations addressing health and social welfare has been a very new development. Following 9/11 and particularly 7/7, many Muslims felt distressed by what had happened and wanted to do something positive. They began to feel a stronger sense of a British Muslim identity and began to seek to uplift and serve not only the Muslim community but also to engage with other faiths and communities and take part in wider public life.

Muslims started to mobilise around engagement and social issues, not as ethnic or racial groups but as Muslims. The initial Muslim response to these events was national politically-based activity, largely spearheaded by male-led organisations. Then, health and social welfare projects, inspired by Islamic perspectives, began to emerge, typically initiated by women. Many are not registered as charities. They usually lack paid staff and premises and are often under-resourced. They tend to encounter difficulties in engaging with service providers and policymakers, in understanding the wider implications of changing social policy. So they may be unable to make the public

sector and government sufficiently accountable, despite their growing experience and knowledge on the ground.

Apart from a handful of funded organisations, they are likely to be small projects, often operating from people's homes. The lack of locally-based premises is critical. Having appropriate and accessible premises provides space for services and activities to be delivered more professionally. It gives users - the local community - a sense of ease, familiarity and ownership.

Mosques would struggle to provide for the breadth of services required at a local level. Even if some mosques do begin to extend some social welfare services, which is desirable, all of Muslim civil society does not have to be based in mosques. Most simply do not have the capacity - space-wise many cannot accommodate women - and also there is a need for diversity and choice. Having premises facilitates the ability to access grant funding and contracts for services. Capital funding for buildings and premises is hard to access.

There are many excellent and exciting initiatives emerging. However, much of it is working in isolation, lacks co-ordination, is fractured and lacks capacity and sustainability. Projects often start off very promisingly but may fail due to lack of funding. There is no common vision or agenda as to what constitutes Islamic models of social action or a cohesive vision and agenda. This poses problems both within the community and with those in the mainstream wishing to engage with it.

Over the last decade or so, there has been a growing acceptance of faith as an indicator of identity and need in the government and statutory sector, which if properly tapped and informed, will be conducive to the development of the Muslim voluntary sector.

The growth of a new generation of social activists, who are a source of dynamism, creativity and potential, is also very encouraging. This new generation, which is not bound by past history, and whose members are rooted in this country and confident of their identity as British Muslims, is keen to take the community forward but it needs vision, capacity, support and resources.

A picture of Muslim charities in England and Wales

It is difficult to estimate the number of Muslim voluntary sector organisations as records are still not widely kept on the basis of faith. We believe that many small organisations may not even be registered with the Charity Commission. This highlights the need to analyse and scope the Muslim voluntary sector.

According to research conducted by the Charity Commission in 2007, there are 1,373 registered Muslim charities with a combined income of £218.5m. This figure does not include direct charity giving, sent to families or communities in people's countries of origin.

The research found that almost half of the Muslim charities have an income of less than £10,000 a year. Only 2 per cent have an income exceeding £1m. The largest, by far, is Islamic Relief.

Income band of Muslim charities

From accounts submitted to the Commission, the most recent figures show that, in 2010, Islamic Relief's income was over £82 million; Muslim Aid's over £25m, Muslim Hands' over £11m and Islamic Help's just over £3m, which, together, account for more than half the income of all the registered Muslim charities.

It is useful to make some comparisons with the Jewish community, a similar faith-based community. The 2007 figures show that the Jewish community, which is much smaller in size (266,740) than the Muslim community (now almost 3m), has almost double the number of registered charities (2,351), with an income of £708m.

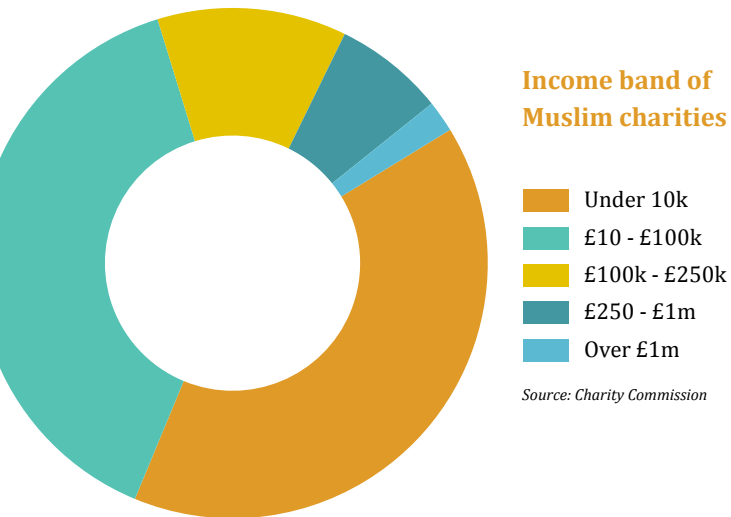
If we look at the Jewish community, their charities are investing a significant proportion of their income into welfare work in the UK. For example, Jewish Care, the largest Jewish charity with an annual income of over £62 million, invests mainly in residential care homes, day centres, independent living, sheltered housing and services for people with mental health issues such as dementia in the UK.

In contrast, charity collected in this country by Muslims is not, in the main, being spent on the welfare of Muslims in this country, despite their dire need. This is ironic, given that the Muslim community is considered to be Britain's most socio-economically disadvantaged community. It also gives more in charity per head than people of any other faith, according to the 2005 Citizenship Survey, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Most Muslim charitable funds raised in Britain is spent abroad - apart from that spent on mosque building. For example, in 2010, nearly all of the £82m that Islamic Relief raised was spent abroad on relief and emergency work. Its website lists a number of countries where it operates. The UK is not on that list. (<http://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/WhereWeAre.aspx>) This represents a major achievement and statement of support for Muslim peoples in other countries. However, we must ask how we can achieve similar income flows towards charitable work among Muslims in this country as well.

Funding from government and statutory sources to the Muslim voluntary sector, to meet Muslim needs, is difficult to ascertain, as records have not been kept systematically on faith, until very recently. However, anecdotally and from our experience over almost three decades, we believe that this has been limited. Funding given on the basis of ethnicity or racial categorisation has often bypassed Muslim groups.

It is only through recent counter-terrorism strategies, especially the 'Prevent' programme, that faith groups have been specifically targeted for short-term funding. Consequently, some Muslim organisations did get funding but most of this was geared towards countering extremism and was not designed for the meeting of the holistic needs of the community. Prevent funding was seen to be designed for the surveillance of Muslims – many of the projects were met with suspicion and, in any case, lacked sustainability.



If Muslim charities were to invest even half of their annual income in the UK every year, it would make a huge difference to British Islam, enabling it to develop its own vision for a better future for British Islam and set its own agenda and identification of its own need. This is not to say that the government should not also invest in and fund Muslim needs. As taxpayers and citizens we have a right to expect specific strategies and resources to address our legitimate needs.

We believe that we need to use the Jewish model to resource and provide services - that is a mixed funding model to access both government funding where appropriate and community funding where appropriate.

Why have Muslim voluntary sector organisations not developed more fully?

A host of factors explain this poor development. Internally, within the Muslim community, there has been a lack of strategic investment in community development. New Muslim migrant communities tend to be a focus on 'returning home' rather than making Britain a permanent home. People have also been focussed on financially supporting families in their country of origin. Poverty has been important as well as the sheer diversity of the Muslim population amid different waves of migration. External factors are also vital to developing our understanding. Society has tended to see communities on racial rather than religious lines. As a result, public sector delivery has been race-based, with a suspicion of religion among service providers, funders and commissioners.

A race-based view of society and suspicion of faith

The Race Relations Act 1976 was also constructed around an understanding of society based on race and its needs. Important as racism is, this understanding narrows the multidimensional needs of diverse communities, which can be drawn and shaped by their faiths, cultures, languages and class. For most Muslims, their faith is the overarching marker of identity and need. As this was poorly understood and recognised, Muslims became invisible generally in society and in service delivery. They were either not accessing mainstream services or the services were inadequate and sometimes even damaging, for example in the areas of mental health and fostering and adoption.

This approach has also not been able to fully identify and tackle exclusions, such as institutional Islamophobia, which are peculiar to Muslim communities. Institutional Islamophobia is endemic in the private and public sectors. (See Glossary in Appendix) It is only by monitoring on the basis of religion as well as race and ethnicity that we can get a true picture of Muslim invisibility and social exclusion.

Public policy and the Muslim voluntary sector

There should have been a greater articulation of Muslim voices from the grassroots to national policy makers and government. In fact, the reverse has taken place – top-down government approaches have typically been presented with little meaningful engagement with Muslims. As a result, they have often resulted in policy that is inadequate to meet the needs of diverse communities.

The Prevent strategy, for example, with all its flaws and limitations, initially went largely unchallenged by Muslim organisations. It could be imposed on the Muslim community because the Muslim voluntary sector is ill-equipped to understand the ramifications and could not challenge the Government because it did not have the awareness, experience, skills, capacity and resources to do so.

This void has led to widespread discontent and social exclusion. The problem persists. For example, when the Equality Bill 2009/10 went for consultation, there were very few contributions from a Muslim community, which is greatly affected by this legislation. For decades, Muslims had been campaigning for legislation against religious discrimination but when the religion and belief duty was under threat, while it was going through the House of Lords, there was little outcry from the Muslim community.

There are countless pieces of legislation and public policies that affect Muslims, yet the community is unable to influence and shape them. For example, in 2012, it was announced in the Queen's Speech that there will be a Children and Families Bill going through Parliament in 2013. This will undoubtedly affect Muslim families. But it is doubtful if the Muslim voluntary sector will be able to make a meaningful contribution to this important Bill.

Faith brings strength to the voluntary sector

Because faith sits at the heart of many people's lives, it can be inspiring and lead to permanent change – in practice often leading to the job being done more effectively. For example, the Indian Government wanted to develop a tree-planting programme to prevent soil erosion and improve the environment. The programme had little success until a Hindu priest told people about the religious virtues of the programme. It became a huge success.

Likewise, An-Nisa Society found that some models of mental health therapies are less useful, and even damaging, to Muslims and their families. So, in the early 1990's, we looked into Islamic models, which lead to much better outcomes and healing. After a considerable amount of lobbying and much resistance from some sectors, we managed to access public funding for the first time in the UK for a faith-based project. We established Islamic Counselling as a viable form of mental health therapy and created the UK's first accredited Islamic counselling course and an Institute of Islamic Counselling and Psychotherapy. However, rollout has so far been stalled because of lack of funds – the perennial problem for many wonderful projects and ideas. There are many issues related to health and social care policy, which would work more effectively with Muslims if Islamic perspectives were more strategically incorporated. Social care practice might also be enhanced – not just for Muslims but for everyone. For example, we have very clear principles in relation to care for the elderly that need to inform policies concerning them.

The Muslim community needs support to develop its faith-based approaches for the meeting of needs, which the mainstream or other voluntary sector organisations may be unable to provide. For example, Islamic counselling, sexual health education or the development of housing, taking on board Islamic concepts of environmentally friendly building and private family space, all need to be developed. We have already seen how well other faiths excel in this field and have been able to improve the practice of mainstream institutions as well as delivering some services themselves.

Meeting the needs of Muslim communities

Government policy has tended to be suspicious of faith, regarding it as vehicle for proselytising. There is a flawed assumption that Christians, Muslims and other faiths all operate in the same way and that faith issues are just about religion and inter-faith activity rather than a part of people's lives that may be even more integral than ethnicity.

Thinking about faith therefore tends to be seen as only important in terms of ensuring that people have rights to worship and to stick to their rules of practice. As a result, attention has been limited, for example, to the availability of halal meals. This is short-sighted. Public sector services may have been originally devised for a Christian population, but

that population has changed. In fact, many of Britain's minority communities are strongly faith-based.

Communities cannot mend themselves – time to support Muslim communities

Responsibility for tackling poverty and inequality cannot be left solely to those who are disadvantaged and disempowered. Furthermore, if change is created at a local level only, it will not survive in a system where inequality is endemic. Communities will not be mended unless we build a broader economy.

The Big Society is strong on empowerment but is weaker on equality issues. By equality, we mean everyone having an equal chance in life so that, regardless of background or circumstance, they can contribute to society, fulfil their potential and live a satisfying life. Muslims suffer greater inequality than other communities in the UK – this has to be addressed. Unless the Government specifically targets Muslims, we will be left even more behind.



Government engagement with British Islam

Muslims did not figure much historically in government approaches. However, over the past decade or so there has been some movement. Yet policy makers have sometimes taken a narrow approach to Islam and its role in civil society.

The Labour Government of 1997-2010 developed new approaches to the Muslim community in Britain. Initially, it acknowledged the existence of faith communities, providing small pockets of funding and seeing engagement with them (largely through inter-faith activities) as part of a broader policy of maintaining community cohesion. It oversaw greater but limited involvement of Muslims in the political system, with more Muslim MPs elected and the appointment of Muslims peers to the House of Lords. The models used to engage Muslim communities emerged from the way in which Church-State relations were historically addressed and were arguably inadequate to deal with the diversity and complexity of British Islam.

However, social policy engagement with British Islam remained narrowed often to agenda that impacted on mainstream liberal priorities such as honour killings, forced marriages and domestic violence. This is not to say that Muslims themselves were not concerned about these issues. But the Government tended to neglect the wider and holistic needs of the community. Following 9/11 and 7/7, policy considerations were largely driven by security and foreign policy considerations; after 9/11, aimed at preventing terrorism and, after 7/7, violent extremism. The needs of Muslim as citizens became lost, as a result, in an overwhelming narrative about the need to manage internal security within Britain, with a raft of anti-terror legislation.

Labour did create a vehicle that could potentially have forged a more strategic vision to realise Muslim aspiration – the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Its stated goals are the achievement of individual potential, not limited by prejudice or discrimination, respect and protection for human rights, equal opportunities as well as mutual respect between communities, valuing diversity. However, the Government failed to develop a strategic policy to tackle Islamophobia and institutional Islamophobia – in contrast to its focussed efforts to challenge institutional racism. (See Glossary in Appendix)

Following the riots in 2001 in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham and events of 9/11 and 7/7, community cohesion became an important government priority. It was largely seen as the need for Muslim communities to ‘fit in’ as they were not ‘cohesing’ with wider British society. Muslims tend to be seen as ‘the problem’. In recent years, community cohesion has been widened to include the need for all communities to come together. (See Glossary in Appendix)

Reflecting its considerations of preventing violent extremism, Labour invested in mosque management, female empowerment, youth empowerment and activities, academic symposia and interfaith work with a goal of maintaining domestic security. This was done largely through its counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent. The strategy also aimed to mainstream Prevent through service delivery in the statutory sector. This was seen as surveillance of the community in every area of their lives.

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government that came into power in May 2010 carried out a review of Prevent. Despite widespread calls, particularly from the Muslim community, for the Prevent programme to be dismantled, the Coalition government decided to keep the strategy and refocus it, saying it intended to make a clearer distinction between counter-terrorism and its integration strategy and include all forms of extremism.

It is unclear how the Prevent strategy is presently being carried forward but a negative legacy remains. It is also unclear how much the new policy is focusing on far-right extremism, which is a serious threat to the safety and security of Muslims. Clearly, there is a lot of potential scope for the Muslim voluntary sector to monitor what is happening, but this monitoring role is currently underdeveloped.

Labour's Equality Act 2010 is crucial because it extended the public equality duty to religion and belief and made it a 'protected characteristic' on a par with nine other categories, which include race, sex and disability. This inclusion in the Act creates a statutory duty for public bodies to proactively address issues around religion and belief. The Equality Act 2010 gives us the tools to work to address discrimination and achieve equality. However, the opportunity may be lost without an empowered Muslim voluntary sector to ensure that it is used effectively.

A central plank of the Conservative-Liberal Coalition Government has been the Big Society. Its focus has been on localism and devolution, giving communities more power and transferring power from central to local government. Increasing the openness and transparency of government by, for example, more easily available government data, is intended to support this process. The Government has supported greater provision of services via charities and social enterprises, with people encouraged to take a more active role in their communities via, for example, volunteering. But as has been outlined in this report, the Muslim voluntary sector cannot engage or compete on an equal basis as it is already so far behind.

The big question is: can this new policy and political environment tackle the challenges facing the Muslim community? As one of the poorest and least powerful groups in the UK, Muslims are at risk of being systematically excluded from any benefits that may arise, in spite of the Prime Minister's declared intention that no-one should be 'left behind.' Unless the Government specifically targets Muslims, as a socially excluded group, that is precisely what is likely to happen.

This section has been adapted from original research and strategic analysis presented by Khalida Khan and Humera Khan of An-Nisa Society at 'Faith and Khidmah, Connecting Spirituality, Social Action and the Big Society, the National Symposium on Muslim Civil Society', 10 May 2012.

'Enfranchising the disenfranchised to participate and engage requires public policies to address fundamental inequalities and address discrimination.'

Open Society Institute

6 Muslim Civil Society Speaks

There were many fascinating comments and insights made on building a Muslim Civil Society during the Faith and Khidmah Symposium in May 2012. We have collected them under various themes.

Participants at the 'Faith and Khidmah' symposium joined two working groups to debate the perspectives presented by the keynote speakers. They sought to make their discussion practical and forward looking, drawing on the diverse experiences in the room.

The first working group explored the 'Theology of Social Action' and considered the following questions:

- Does Islam help or hinder voluntary and community action?
- Is faith a barrier to working with others?
- How can transformative religious action exist within a secular public square?
- What are critical issues in the community that require scholarly guidance and input? How do we deal with differences of opinion?
- Is the 'shariah' relevant to the work of Muslim civil society and social action?

The second working group was titled 'From the Frontlines of British Islam – The Challenges of Service Delivery and Meeting Community Needs' and were guided by the following questions:

- Is there even a need for 'Muslim' or faith-based approach? How does race/ethnicity differ qualitatively from faith when considering voluntary sector action?
- What are the key challenges for the Muslim Voluntary and Community sector?
- What is the relationship between the various Muslim V&CS orgs? Is there a shared vision/agenda?
- Do Muslim communities see government as a partner or a hindrance?

Participants shared strong analysis and indicated a number of areas that needed urgent attention. These ideas for the way forward are as follows.

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Faith & Khidmah:

Connecting Spirituality, Social Action and the Big Society

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 Habib Ali al-Jifri, Director of the Tabah Foundation, on the Theology of Social Action.	 Secretary of State for Communities Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP on Faith and the Future of Big Society (Invited).
 Humera Khan, Founder of the An Nisa Society on the Unique Challenges Facing Muslim Civil Society Today.	 Elizabeth Hunter, Director of Theos Think Tank, on Has the Coalition Changed the Way We "Do God"?
 Khalida Khan, Director and Founder of the An Nisa Society gives a View from the Frontlines.	 With Special Guest Shaykha Halima Krausen, Lecturer in Islamic Theology, Initiative for Islamic Studies, Hamburg.

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Four things you'll gain from this pioneering event...

1. An enhanced understanding of the Islamic approach to social action delivered by one of the world's most influential Muslim religious leaders;
2. Unique insight on the Muslim civil society - its outreach, scope and impact;
3. Greater awareness into the real challenges facing grassroots voluntary and community sector organisations and how they are faring; and
4. An opportunity to network with key figures in the field and share practical approaches and tools for successful community action and advocacy.

Understanding the Theology Behind Muslim Civil Society

Thoughts for UK government

Delegates argued that the needs of Muslim people in the UK have been poorly served to date by state services because of the way those services have been informed, structured and delivered. These needs, it was said, are also not being met within the community because Muslim civil society is poorly developed, leading to suffering, alienation and social exclusion. With Muslims, a faith-based approach can work effectively via a well-informed and structured state sector involving the Muslim voluntary sector. A faith-based approach is more likely to be transformative, holistic and cost-effective, leading to permanent change.

However, some delegates commented that the Muslim community currently lacks the educational strengths, income, family circumstances, environment, knowledge, confidence and a sense of self-efficacy, available time and energy and access to decision-makers to drive forward policies and service delivery that meets their aspirations.

The Muslim voluntary sector could, if supported properly, enable/ deliver cost-effective services to Muslim people and to non-Muslims in the UK. However, the Muslim voluntary sector is poorly developed for a number of reasons, first because Muslim community is disadvantaged and relatively poor economically. Secondly, the Muslim voluntary sector is new, mainly since 7/7 and inexperienced. Racism and Islamophobia also marginalises the Muslim voluntary sector.

Other speakers remarked that the state has traditionally been suspicious of faith. It has been reluctant, until recently, to engage with faith-based institutions – and tended to engage with national leaderships which lack grassroots connections. It has tended to focus on narrow practice-based needs of Muslims – eg halal meals – rather than broader issues related to faith. It has also tended to over-focus on security issues related to Muslim communities rather than on delivering to their needs as citizens.

So, said some speakers, for the Big Society to work well, there needs to be investment in - and harnessing of - the social capital available with the Muslims community and through the Muslim voluntary sector. Responsibility for tackling poverty and inequality endemic in the Muslim community cannot be left solely to that community.

A number of delegates suggested ways forward for the Government. They felt it was important for the state to engage with Muslims as citizens, not just through lens of security and counter-terrorism. It was also important for the government to understand how government policies have led to Muslim social exclusion and to tackle its root causes. It should understand the Muslim community and how it is organised and make Muslim needs 'explicit' until they become 'implicit.' That is, just as government and statutory sector automatically look at the impacts on race, gender, refugees and so on it should include Muslims as well.

It was commented that the state should consider changing the model of engagement from one led by the Church of England and rooted in the notion of religion. In short, the Government should really back the precepts of the Big Society by giving the Muslim community more power, encourage Islamic engagement, support Muslim charities and social enterprises and publish government data on the Muslim community so its needs are transparent.

Speakers warned that there was is in danger in that the Muslim community is facing cuts in the already meagre resources coming from the state sector and in support of the Muslim voluntary sector. The Government should adapt its financial priorities to recognise high levels of Muslim socio-economic disadvantage and act quickly to make sure that Muslim people are part of the general policy of social action.

Thoughts for the Muslim and non-Muslim voluntary sector



The drive in the Muslim community for undertaking simple acts of good action in modern Britain is a well-kept secret. Thousands of Muslims support people in their families, neighbourhood and communities, often at great personal sacrifice.

This support varies from running spiritual spaces, madrassas, to helping the elderly and offering informal counselling. Over the years, despite their underclass status and the fractured nature of the community, British Muslims have been able to create a patchy and limited informal infrastructure.

However, speakers highlighted that Muslim charities are small in number and size as well as being poorly funded, compared with those available to comparable communities. They provide a narrow band of services, typically not including health and social welfare. There have been serious challenges, rooted in limited resources within the embryonic community itself combined with a lack of sensitive service delivery by mainstream providers. There has been a lack of strategic planning, of knowledge and evidence and issues for a Muslim community that has had strong commitments to financially support relatives abroad, while being poorly networked within Britain itself.

Nevertheless, Muslims are generous, relative to their income and other communities. Some speakers said an issue might be that the sector is particularly focussed on providing financial support to overseas countries of family origin. It was pointed out that 'Khidmah' or service lies at the heart of Islamic social

action. So the Islamic imperative already exists but has to be better understood and applied.

Delegates felt that there was a need to carefully map the needs of the Muslim communities, and also map what Muslim voluntary organisations exist and what they are already doing. Suggestions at the Symposium included proposals that there should be more investment in premises where diverse services can be provided. Also, that there is a need to develop more wide-ranging services for Muslims, beyond mosques, including counselling services, housing, therapies etc. In particular, it was noted that 'personalisation' of welfare services demanded that Muslim identity be properly recognised.

Delegates said that it was important to develop a proper dialogue and debate among diverse Muslim communities about their ambitions for social policy so that the Muslim voluntary sector can be a proper channel for community consultation by government and other state agencies. The Muslim voluntary sector also needed to develop mixed funding – Government and private – to share experience and good practice within the Muslim voluntary sector and to develop and support specialist organisations.

They said that Muslims need to learn from best practice of other faith communities, such as the Jewish community, to look at their models of social services programmes and see how it can inform ours. They said there was a need for networking and creating links.

Thoughts for Muslim individuals and organisations

The need is great so we have to move on from minor, peripheral issues.

Delegates commented that the theology must be right – it was vital to make it relevant to the challenges facing Muslims today. Islamic theology should underpin our attitudes and work. There was a need to examine issues around charitable giving.

Many felt that there needed to be some rethinking about sending so much charity abroad. Certainly, they said, there was a need to invest in local communities. Muslims need to look into ways of maximising charitable giving. We need to bring in a radical mind-set shift for donors and trustees of charities – awareness of recognising the needs of Muslims closer to home. We need to revive traditional values of charity in terms of giving firstly to family, then neighbours, then community etc. We can no longer sustain the mind-set that all we need to do is just give, and not question how what we give is spent. This whole issues needs to be looked at through the prism of Fiqh/ Islamic Jurisprudence.

Mosques and schools should be encouraged to develop their pastoral activities but other routes should also be encouraged to support Muslim need and realisation. There is a need to create opportunities for people to serve and volunteer. As Habib Ali said, doing this 'harmonises one with the environment'. One suggestion was to work with students at universities on volunteering projects, pilots for new initiatives etc.

There are also Muslim professionals who are in a position to contribute – they should be volunteering their professional skills for the greater good of the community (not just Muslims). Grand theories need people and manpower to help them come to fruition.

Delegates questioned what we are leaving for the next generation. We need to bring in professionalism and expertise to strengthen institutions and pass on viable places of public service.

Delegates asked how can we develop the mind-sets of young Muslims for them to understand what social problems exist within the communities, so that they recommend responses. The response is stronger and effective when it comes from within. How do we empower young people to advocate on systematic change on the way we serve and give charity? Delegates said it was important that Muslims train in pastoral/ social welfare professions. They should engage with mainstream service providers with an informed perspective on Muslim social exclusion and pastoral needs and support the transition from vulnerable to whole self and citizen. The good news there is tremendous capacity in the Muslim community to make a change for the better. We just need to harness it.

Thoughts on mosques

Mosques are an 'untapped resource' with great potential, particularly as they have a 'ready audience' to engage with. There is a role for the mosque, but it is not the case that all civic service activities need to happen in/from the mosque. But there is no reason why services such as therapy and counselling should also not be offered by mosques.

Accountability is a big issue in the mosque system with regard to funds raised, committees and methods for decision making. Mosques are meant to be places of 'spiritual transformation' but sometimes they are not as successful as they might be. As one delegate stated: 'A religious institution which does not provide its number one purpose [spiritual transformation] needs to reassess itself.'



Glossary of Terms

Civil Society/Voluntary Sector/Third Sector

'Civil society can be defined as the totality of voluntary civic and social organisations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society.' Faith & Voluntary Action, NCVO, 2007. Civil society organisations are also called the Third Sector, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and voluntary sector. These terms are often used interchangeably, as they are in this document.

Community cohesion

Community cohesion is defined as: 'working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and the wider community.' 'Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion,' Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007

Islamophobia

Hostility, fear and hatred of Islam, Muslims and Islamic culture, and active discrimination towards this group as individuals or collectively. Where used in this report, 'Islamophobia' is defined as discrimination against Muslims. Discrimination means any distinction, exclusion, restriction of preference based on membership of the Muslim community which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social or cultural or any other field of public life. (Adapted from the UN's definition of racism)

Institutional Islamophobia

Institutional Islamophobia is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their religion. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and anti-Muslim stereotyping which disadvantage Muslim people. (Adapted from the 'Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report'.)

Khidmah

Khidmah' or 'service' is an Arabic word with multiple meanings including 'to give, to help, to assist someone in need, to be hospitable, to show kindness'. The concepts of 'public service for the common good' and 'social action' are also encapsulated by the idea of khidmah – and lie at the very core of Islamic practice.

Race

The term 'race' is used in the context of discrimination on the grounds of race, which occurs where people face discrimination because of their presumed membership of groups identified by physical features such as skin colour, hair or physical appearance. References to race in this report should not be taken to suggest that there are distinct human races.

Racism

Where used in this report, 'racism' is defined as 'racial discrimination,' which, according to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 'shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction of preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social or cultural or any other field of public life'.

Social exclusion

Social Exclusion is the outcome of multiple deprivations that prevent individuals or groups from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live. It describes a situation where certain groups within a society are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against. Exclusion can be official or unofficial and can take place in a number of arenas, from the legal, health and education systems to the household and community. Processes of exclusion can be highly visible and deliberate, but they can also be hidden and unintentional.

Social inclusion

Social inclusion is the provision and promotion of equal rights and access in the field of education, employment and decision-making. Overcoming discrimination is implicit throughout policies and practices to realise inclusion. Social inclusion is

defined as positive action taken to ensure the provision and promotion of equal rights in socio-economic spheres and greater participation in decision-making.

Waqf

A 'waqf' is an endowment or donation typically denoting a building, a plot of land or money for Muslim religious or charitable purposes. The donated assets are held by a charitable trust.

The basis for the institution of waqf comes from a single statement of the Prophet Muhammad, although it is supported and encouraged through the holistic approach of Islam's model for human behaviour.

'When a person dies, all his good deeds cease to exist except for three: an ongoing act of charity, beneficial knowledge and a righteous child who prays for him.' (Hashim, 2007:63)

In one hadith, Umar acquired some property and, after advice from the Prophet, gave it away as alms that the land itself was not to be sold, inherited or donated. He gave it away as alms for the poor, the relatives, the slaves, the djihād, the travellers and the guests. 'And it will not be held against him who administers it if he consumes some of it(s yield) in an appropriate manner or feeds a friend who does not enrich himself by means of it.'

Zakat

The Qur'an speaks about zakat in more than 30 different verses. 'Zakat' is a way to redistribute the wealth, thus increasing the role of charity in the economy with a particular interest in the poor and the dispossessed. However, zakat is considered more than charity - one must give zakat for the sake of one's own salvation. The giving of the zakat is a means of purifying one's wealth and is a sincere expression of gratefulness. It is a detachment of string inner ties from one's material wealth that promotes an inner purification. It contributes to the elimination of poverty and need in society.

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'Charity is only for the poor and needy and for those who work with it and for the reconciliation of hearts and for (the liberation of) slaves and for those in debt and in God's path and for the traveller. An obligation from God, and God is knowing, wise.' (Qur'an 9:60)



The Historic Role of Faith in Serving Britain's Social Needs

It is not long since faith communities were the cornerstone of social support in Britain, says Elizabeth Hunter, Director of Theos



Healthcare and education in this country for most of history were provided by religious orders, churches and faith-based charities. The apex came under Queen Victoria. During this period, civil society was extraordinarily dense, with the different Christian denominations dominating 'welfare provision'.

Each had its own special interests and, between them, they ran literally thousands of charity schools, ragged schools, Sunday schools, mothers' meetings, soup kitchens, maternity charities, crèches, blanket clubs, coal clubs, clothing clubs, boot clubs, provident clubs, goose clubs, slate clubs, medical clubs, lending libraries, holiday funds, penny banks, saving banks, visiting societies, temperance societies and pension societies. By one estimate, evangelicals ran about three in four voluntary societies in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The welfare state - as it developed in the 20th century - was not, as it is simplistically described, a shift from religious to secular provision. The context was very different. The nation was still seen as fundamentally Christian, so it was not a case of Christians stopping providing welfare, but providing it in a different way. For Anglican Bishop JWC Ward, the welfare state was 'an expression at the national level of the humanitarian work on the Church'. However, by the 1960s the discourse had moved on. Secularising forces had obscured the Christian origins of the welfare state, and indeed charity was sneered at by some, seen as patronising and amateurish compared to the smoothly running, standardised machine of the state meeting needs across the nation. Some have seen the welfare state as actually replacing religion, a utopian vision in which faith was to be invested in order to build a new Jerusalem.

I have no right to comment on Muslim social action. I would, however, humbly like to offer a few thoughts about what I have learned from the Christian world. Any faith-based social action needs to be carefully thought through from the outset. You need to ground your activity in your theology, know your values, know your mission. If you start from there - and plant your feet - you should be able to engage with the State in a way that allows you to fulfil your aims. If you don't, if you're not clear on your vision and purpose, on the 'God' part of doing good, you get assimilated, bound up in someone else's agenda.

The history of faith-based social action engaging with the State is littered with examples of groups who lost their distinctiveness and ended up being co-opted by forces bigger than themselves. This is seen most clearly in conflicts over statutory requirements. In order to work with the State, voluntary groups have to do it 'their way', toeing the line on equality and other legislation. The voluntary organisations we've spoken to, as part of various research projects, complain of the inflexibility of state systems and the impossibility of navigating them. Meanwhile, most faith groups just want government to help them to help people, but it's not as simple as that.

Governments come and go, and so do big theories, funding models and buzz words. What people of faith do best is service, despite them all. They should be flexible enough to adapt to changing contexts, but not so flexible that they lose their moorings.

Elizabeth Hunter is the Director of Theos.

Symposium Programme and Presenters

Faith & Khidmah: Connecting Spirituality, Social Action and Big Society

National Symposium on Muslim Civil Society, 09.30 – 17.00, Thursday 10 May 2012

The Muslim College, 20-22 Creffield Road, Ealing, London W5 3RP

TIME	SESSION/TOPIC	SPEAKER(S)	NOTES
10.15	Welcome & Overview	Abdul-Rehman Malik, Chair	
10.20	Introduction to “Faith and Khidmah”	Fuad Nahdi, Executive Director, Radical Middle Way	
10.30	Keynote I: “Khidmah – An Islamic Approach to Social Action”	Habib Ali al Jifri Director General, Tabah Foundation, UAE	A seminal talk, outlining an Islamic theology of social action and social transformation.
11.15	Keynote II: “What Makes Muslim Civil Society ‘Muslim’: How Faith Shapes What We Do and What that Actually Means?”	Humera Khan, Founder and Board Member, An Nisa Society Khalida Khan, Founder and Director, An Nisa Society	
12.00	Discussion on Keynote I & II		
12.30	Lunch & Networking & Prayers		
13.15	Keynote III: “Doing God for the Common Good: Faith and the Future of Big Society”	Matthew West, Section Head, Big Society and Community Rights Division, Department for Communities and Local Government	How are faith communities faring with the Big Society? What are the successes? What are the challenges? What comes next? How is Big Society being operationalised and what the impact of the policy has been for civil society in general and faith-based organisations in particular?
13.35	Keynote IV: “Has the Coalition and ‘Big Society’ fundamentally changed the way public policy deals with faith?”	Elizabeth Hunter, Director, Theos – Faith & Public Policy Think Tank	
14:00	Discussion on Keynote III & IV		
14:25	WORKING GROUP I: Theology of Social Action – Responding to Keynote I	Chair: TBA Rapporteur: Usman Nawaz Special guest: Shaykha Halima Krausen	
	WORKING GROUP II: From the Frontlines of British Islam – The Challenges of Service Delivery and Meeting Community Needs – Responding to Keynote II	Chair: Humera Khan Rapporteur: Rizwan Rahman	
	WORKING GROUP III: The Challenges of a Shifting Policy Environment – Responding to Keynote III and Keynote IV	Chair: Dr Fauzia Ahmed Rapporteur: Saba Elgazelle	Discussion Questions: 1. What does Big Society actually mean for Muslims and people of faith? Impact and Implications? 2. Are our communities equipped to take on the challenges of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship, the cornerstones of Big Society thinking? 3. Where is their convergence with Big Society and Muslim Civil Society, and where are their challenges? What aspects work for us?
16:25	Reflections	Shaykha Halima Krausen, Lecturer in Islamic Theology, Initiative for Islamic Studies, Hamburg	
16:40	Concluding Remarks & Next Steps	Khalida Khan & Fuad Nahdi	What’s the agenda and how do we move it forward?

Presenters



Habib Ali Zain al-Abideen al-Jifri is of the most charismatic and imaginative scholar of our times. His engagement with communities and policy makers has taken him across the Arabic-speaking Muslim world as well as to the UK, Canada, United States, France, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore and beyond. He is ranked #42 on the Muslim 500, a widely respected ranking of the 500 most influential Muslims in the world as compiled by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre in Amman.

Habib Ali al-Jifri is founder of the privately-funded philanthropic organization Tabah Foundation for Islamic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi, a young non-profit institution that aspires to become a formidable source of reputable work in Islamic research and thought. He is a member of the board of the influential Dar al Mustafa seminary in Yemen, member of the Royal Aal al Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan, and, since its founding in 2005, a key advisor and patron to the Radical Middle Way.

Habib Ali al-Jifri is part of the Ba Alawi spiritual tradition that has been based in Yemen for approximately 800 years and traces its spiritual lineage directly back to the Prophet Muhammad. He is a key signatory and proponent of the Muslim-Christian "A Common Word" initiative and leading campaigner for cross-cultural and inter-faith dialogue. More recently he has been at the forefront of promoting the rights of religious minorities in the Muslim World, particularly working to improve Muslim-Coptic relations and participating in a forthcoming peace mission to Nigeria. Habib Ali is the author of a number of books including Jesus – Son of Mary, a biography of Jesus as understood in Islamic tradition.

<http://www.alhabibali.com/In/en>

<http://www.tabahfoundation.org/en/>



Humera Khan is a founding member of the An-Nisa Society, an organisation working for the welfare of Muslim families. She has been an activist and educator for over 25 years, working in race and gender equality, the voluntary sector and social services.

Humera has written a series of books on Islam and sexual health, Muslim fatherhood and recently completed a 12 month project working with Muslim boys and young men entitled 'British Muslim or Wot'.

Other work includes involvement in various interfaith activities, co-facilitates a Jewish-Muslim dialogue group and was the Family specialist member for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Christian Muslim Forum (2006-10).

Over the last 25 years, as a freelance consultant Humera has written numerous articles for various publications including Q-News, Guardian and the Independent. She has also had various media and public appearances speaking on a wide range of issues from multiculturalism, Islamophobia and racism to social issues such as sexual abuse, generation conflicts, domestic violence and gender.

Khalida Khan is an activist and writer on Muslim issues with a background in local government, race relations and community development. For the nearly 30 years she has played a leading role in highlighting the need for legislation against religious discrimination and in developing Muslim sensitive services and policies. Her publication, 'PVE and Prevent: A Muslim Response' (February 2009) has influenced the discourse on the government's Preventing Violent Extremism policies. She is a co-founder and Director of An-Nisa Society and has been a trustee of the Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR) and a commissioner of the British Muslims & Islamophobia Commission (BMICOM). She was a co-founder of the pioneering magazine Muslimwise and a frequent writer for Q-News. She now presents regularly on issues of faith, service provision and the Muslim voluntary and community sector.

<http://www.an-nisa.org/>



Matthew West is a section head in the Big Society and Community Rights Division at DCLG. He has been responsible for cross-cutting strategic issues and programme management since January 2011. Previously, Matthew worked in the Government's Race Equality division, leading on the Government's 2010 Statement on Race Equality and the Tackling Race Inequalities Fund.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/big society/>



Elizabeth Hunter is the Director of Theos. Before joining Theos in August 2011, Elizabeth had worked for the BBC in both television and radio, and also for the Church and Media Network. She has an MA in Theology from King's College London.

<http://theosthinktank.co.uk/>



Fuad Nahdi journalist, commentator and campaigner. He is currently the Executive Director of the Radical Middle Way, a major UK-based initiative he founded in the aftermath of the 7 July 2005 terrorist attacks in London to tackle the ideology and theology behind violent extremism and encourage civic engagement and social action.

In 1992, Fuad founded and became editor and publisher of Q-News - The Muslim Magazine (1992 - 2007), the first independent, Muslim current affairs magazine in the UK. Q-News was bold, argumentative and proudly British. Fuad served as a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Listening Initiative on Christian Muslim Relations (2001 - 2004) which led to the creation of the Christian Muslim Forum of which Fuad was a founding member.



In 2009, 2010 and 2011, Fuad was named one of the world's 500 most influential Muslims in a widely acclaimed survey by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre in Jordan. He was awarded the Three Faiths Interfaith Gold Medallion (2012), he is founding vice-Chairman of the Archbishop of Canterbury's initiative Christian-Muslim Forum and Advocate of the Mitzvah Day International project.

<http://www.radicalmiddleway.co.uk>

References & Further Reading

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Participating organisations and affiliations of participants

The 'Faith in Khidmah' symposium brought together a number of civil society organisations, charities, people engaged in frontline service delivery and government including:

The Muslim College
The Pears Foundation
Islamic Society of Britain
Catholic Bishop's Conference
Imperial College Islamic Society
Rumi's Cave/Ulfa Aid
Wandsworth Youth Offending Team
Department for Communities and Local Government
Milton Keynes Arts Heritage and Culture
The City Circle
GymNation - Friendship Cafe - St James City Farm, Gloucester
Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, Bristol University
Islam-UK Centre, Cardiff University
Christian Muslim Forum
Supplementary Muslim School, Wembley
Muslim Youth Work Foundation
The Welcome Project
Jubilant Stories
Ruskin College

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the presenters at the 'Faith & Khidmah: Connecting Spirituality, Social Action and the Big Society' symposium in May 2012, notably Habib Ali Zain al-Abidin al-Jifri, Elizabeth Hunter, Matthew West, Shaykha Halima Krausen, Dr Fauzia Ahmed, Humera Khan, Khalida Khan and Fuad Nahdi. Thanks also to the symposium chair, Abdul-Rehman Malik, to our rapporteurs, Saba Elgazelle, Rizwan Rahman and Usman Nawaz, and to the many Muslims and non-Muslim organisations whose views and insights are contained in this report. Our appreciation to the staff at the Muslim College, London, for their assistance especially Latifa Hariri, Mamadou Bocum and Shahwiqar Shahin. Finally, thanks to staff and volunteers at An Nisa Society and Radical Middle Way for their enduring commitment and hard work in developing this project and to Jack O'Sullivan for writing this report.



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