



# FUNDING FAITH COMMUNITIES

## A meeting for London's funders and investors

13 October 2008 at Friends House, London

### MEETING OVERVIEW

The aim was to look at some of the complexities and controversies in funding faith communities, including the relationship between race, faith and culture, the government interfaith agenda and local faith-based action. As well as an expert panel of speakers opening the event with their knowledge and views of the key issues of importance to funders and sharing experience as funders, small group discussion provided in-depth exploration of equalities and faith, extremism, interfaith work, barriers to funding faith groups and the diversity of the faith sector.

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Sara Llewellyn, Chair of London Funders, extended a warm welcome to participants. This meeting had been prompted partly by an important discussion about equalities in London at an earlier meeting of members of London Funders that had encouraged us to delve further into the interface between race, faith and culture, which had become muddled in people's minds. Whether one has a personal faith or not, it is increasingly recognised that the motivation behind faith galvanises social action and builds links between people and across communities.

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### PLENARY SPEAKERS

#### The government agenda

David Rayner, Cohesion & Faiths Division, Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has worked for many years to deepen government's response to faith communities. They are now firmly recognised as civil society organisations of social importance and a key part of the community sector.

See David's presentation: [www.londonfunders.org.uk/MemberEventUpdates/tabid/171/Default.aspx](http://www.londonfunders.org.uk/MemberEventUpdates/tabid/171/Default.aspx)

"Face to Face and Side by Side" is the name of CLG's current framework for partnership, including policy development and practical programmes. It represents a strategic vision for dialogue plus collaborative social action. The UK has a long and deep tradition of interfaith dialogue (eg the Council of Christians and Jews, established in 1942) and there is a lot of interfaith work at local level all over the country. The

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framework aims to build on this tradition. While individual faiths are all strong on social action, there is less evidence of social action (as against dialogue) at an interfaith level, hence the new strategy which values bridging and linking work to promote cohesion, structures that will support both dialogue and action,

and opportunities for improving mutual understanding through learning about different faiths.

Faith communities themselves have pointed to obstacles to this work and especially that there is a need for work on "faith literacy" to help officials in public agencies to be better equipped to work with faiths. Regional faith forums are to receive investment to develop them as a resource for local projects and groups. (The London one is somewhat less developed as yet than others). The Community Development Foundation ([www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)) will appoint a national development manager to support the regional work.

Regional government offices are being encouraged to bring together a network of lead officials on faith to act as regional hubs and David noted that the Government Office for London has done a lot of work in this area. A toolkit is being developed for national use, jointly by GOL and Yorkshire and the Humber. There are some specific commitments by central Government in the framework, eg the Charter for Excellence in public service delivery. The Office of the Third Sector's survey of third sector organisations has a faith element. Answering a question, David noted that substantial work on the Charter has not yet begun and he offered to keep in touch with London Funders over this.

The Faiths in Action Fund now offers small grants (£4 million total), encouraging matched funding and partnership development. Round 1 is under way and a second round will be offered for 2010-11.

David also commended *Believing in Social Action*, case studies of local faith organisations and third sector infrastructure bodies working together, researched and published by Church Urban Fund and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action. [www.cuf.org.uk/Believing\\_in\\_Local\\_Action.aspx](http://www.cuf.org.uk/Believing_in_Local_Action.aspx)

## Why choose faith groups for service delivery?

Monica Needs, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, and Jim McManus, Assistant Director - Health Improvement, Barking and Dagenham Primary Care Trust  
Monica and Jim were at pains to point out that they knew they were by no means the first to develop this sort of work, but they were very happy to offer their project as a practical example of work on the ground. See their presentation at:  
[www.londonfunders.org.uk/MemberEventUpdates/tabid/171/Default.aspx](http://www.londonfunders.org.uk/MemberEventUpdates/tabid/171/Default.aspx)

Monica set the scene, reminding the audience of the challenges that faced her borough - the fastest changing borough in England, with increasing diversity and rapid population growth in all age groups. There are 200-plus faith groups and continuing growth. The faith forum had been slow to develop but key people involved were determined not only to make it work but to ensure that it was a strong and independent voice for all the faiths and for interfaith collaboration. All local authority funding includes a clause setting out the expectations of work to promote cohesion.

Jim continued, starting by describing the borough's numerous health challenges. Women have lower life expectancy in the borough than elsewhere in London (and the gap is widening), with obesity and circulatory diseases a factor. Within population groups there are severe trends, eg chronic diseases facing white women in Dagenham and high rates of infectious diseases and HIV in African-Caribbean women.

The benefits of working through faith communities have been numerous and sometimes unexpected. Some communities already have skill and knowledge about specific diseases or cultural norms that promote aspects of health. Diabetes has been tackled by working through mosques and tackling the issue during Ramadan (when fasting exacerbates the condition). Self efficacy as a model has roots in theology but reads across into community empowerment ("I believe I can ...., therefore I can, therefore I will ..."). Prejudices can be dispelled - the Catholic Church provides a high proportion of elder care - regardless of faith. Ideas can be disabused: single issue voluntary organisations can proselytise hard for their own ideas (often much more markedly than faith organisations) - eg promoting a particular ideology around the transmission and treatment of AIDS and HIV.

The first phase of work, *Building better health, building stronger communities*, set out a strategy for health improvement in work with the borough's faith communities. The speakers commented on the roles of the two authorities in collaborating on this work and how their roles had changed. The faith forum was started by the Borough, as also was a database of faith groups. Health trainers were been put in place with PCT funding, inspired by this earlier work by the Borough. Work on obesity and diabetes self care has been a PCT initiative but the PT and the Borough worked jointly on HIV education and the development of bereavement services.

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The impact of delivering grants through the faith forum has already been seen, with evidence of people giving up smoking, losing weight and finding jobs. There is a body of evidence from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and also from the USA - for example a reference to research published in the New England Journal of Medicine which

examined the pro-social effect of religious belief and crime reduction as a result of faith-based activity. (Links to these references are in the presentation [www.londonfunders.org.uk/MemberEventUpdates/tabid/171/Default.aspx](http://www.londonfunders.org.uk/MemberEventUpdates/tabid/171/Default.aspx)). Can we afford not to work through faith-based communities?

Jim and Monica left the audience with one concern - that increasing expectations of faith groups may be over-estimating their capacity to deliver projects and services. Capacity building and appropriate funding are both relevant.

**Can we afford not to work through faith-based communities?**

## Citizenship, identity and a sense of belonging

Professor Tariq Ramadan drew on work in various continental European contexts, especially Rotterdam, to illustrate his points. He tackled the confusion evident in the way some people link Islam, terrorism and "Britishness". This is not just the result of the reactions to 7 July 2005 but reveals a deeper lack of understanding. He believes that discourse is essential to tackle terrorism and extremism by creating understanding and social bonds.

He finds it interesting that in the UK there is a willingness to work with and across faith groups. This would not be possible in France with its secular tradition - a political philosophy which he believes operates against efficiency in tackling social issues.

But he also sees failure when he observes the obsession with integration into British culture and feels that there is little understanding of how social cohesion is genuinely built. He prefers the approach which focuses on the positive question, "What will build cohesion?", and encourages all to make a contribution to local life which will stimulate common projects and build trust - the most important factor.

In such a context, acknowledging diversity and religious and cultural difference is positive and provides a platform for equal citizenship. A common project can bring people together in trusting relationships that rise above doctrinal and other differences.

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Sara felt this was especially a fair criticism of many funders who easily adopt a "deficit" funding model - linking to problems rather than solutions. Her example of the positive side was the way women in Northern Ireland united across the sectoral divide to campaign together on nursery and childcare issues.

## PLENARY QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

All the speakers reminded us how much faith groups can achieve in community-building and direct service provision - often way beyond their apparent capacity. Discussion explored some of the complexities of relationships between local groups and government (local and national) and the paradox that money can be a barrier for some groups, not what brings them to the table.

One question, for example, sought ideas on how funders and service providers could link up to ensure a "level equalities field". David Rayner spoke for many funders in the room when he said that he was sure some groups need to be supported to work with single communities and equalities groups, if inequality was to be tackled. But he reminded the audience that it was vital to keep cohesion in mind, eg not to support a single group if their work discriminated against women. Professor Ramadan expressed this even more firmly - funders can have an impact by coming to the table with ideas and leadership as well as money, but must expect and value diversity and even divergence - and try to work with everyone. It is inevitable that there will be some level of inequality - eg from the Catholic Church in relation to women - but his advice was to avoid debating theology and concentrate on the contribution each party can make.

Jim raised the point that faith issues are not on the whole taken seriously in the equalities agenda, because we are a "religiously illiterate" society and becoming more aggressively secular.

Another question went back to the capacity of faith groups - while they seem to have limited capacity their contribution can be high. Monica thinks work is need to help groups measure and record their capacity and she accepts that local authorities have a role to play in supporting capacity-building. She provided an example from youth services: they often express concern about the nature of youth provision delivered by faith groups but rarely offer training and support to improve its quality.

While the managerialism and concern with measurement that tends to characterise government can seem extreme, David hoped that local faith groups, especially, would be constantly encouraged to value monitoring and measurement and the building of an evidence base to demonstrate their impact. Tariq agreed: many religious communities are active and efficient and under-estimate what they achieve. Learning to measure their capacity and effectiveness could help them. David quoted an economic assessment of faith groups by the North West Development Agency which found they contributed over £90 million a year to the local economy.

One borough representative asked for advice: not all of their faith communities would join the faith forum. Tariq Ramadan agreed it was possible that some groups felt they would lose credibility if they got involved with government. Also, some groups will not want to work with non Muslims. His advice was to start with those groups that are ready but encourage them not only to work together but to consider how they communicate their activity - literally the language they choose to use might help others to come on board. Monica reinforced these points: not just the importance of avoiding jargon but deliberately using words like "fair", "accessible", "together", in her experience, appealed to all groups.

A point was raised about funders' possible lack of comfort about commissioning social outcomes from faith groups. Jim thought this might reflect unease about religion in general, transferred to funding questions. David suggested that funders should be pragmatic. Public money should not be used to propagate religion, nor specifically to maintain buildings for their religious purposes - any more than it should be used to support political parties. Funders knew when other sorts of groups crossed a line of acceptable activity, and should apply the same critical skills to faith groups.

## KNOWLEDGE CAFE

Five tables each took a different discussion topic and each group was asked to feed back its key points. Participants enjoyed the small groups sessions (the knowledge café) since these allowed in-depth discussion and a chance to deepen links with other funders. It is hard to do the discussions justice in short reports but it is encouraging that several of the participants have told us that they will do something different as a result of the meeting - eg reviewing how faith policy affects the number and quality of applications they receive; and checking whether unintentionally some of their resources are not reaching people on faith grounds; and engaging with faith forums to ensure they have the widest possible range of links to other groups.

### Equalities and faith

- How can faith-based organisations deliver public services without acting against their conscience? Through inclusive solutions like the Catholic charity that coordinates holistic services for homeless people but engages other non-Catholic organisations to provide some parts of the services, such as delivering advice on sexual health. (Some organisations would still view this as acting against conscience and would not engage in such inclusive practice.) Another example was a shared community space from which specialist services were delivered to a range of communities, including a number of specific faith groups, ensuring the distinct needs of specific communities were met, but also strengthening social cohesion by providing scope for interaction between groups. In this example, two women's groups serving different faiths started to collaborate, enabling women from different communities to develop relationships and benefit from each others' projects.
- People in specific equalities groups can be dissatisfied with public services or find them inaccessible. Faith groups supporting minority communities can be well placed to meet distinct needs of which mainstream services may be unaware and there is good reason why funders should support such groups.

Facilitator: Barbara Nea, HEAR

**Faith groups supporting minority communities can be well placed to meet distinct needs of which mainstream services may be unaware**

- In maintaining their own mission and values, some faith-based organisations may not be compliant with equality, human rights and anti-discrimination legislation. Participants in this discussion agreed that if these groups want to accept public money to provide services, they must be compliant and soon it will be illegal not to be. If organisations disengage from public service delivery it could be a loss to their service users: some funders may still want to fund them but we will have to wait and see if they simply try to get around the law, or respond more positively. (And the group noted it is not only faith-based groups than can be discriminatory.)
- Funders do need to appreciate the diversity of the faith sector. Some faith-based organisations discriminate but many provide services that are open to all.
- Some people from equality groups, eg LGBT people, because of negative previous experiences or perceptions, would avoid receiving services from any type of faith-based organisation even in the knowledge that discrimination against services users was outlawed. How can this be counteracted so they can feel comfortable about using services?
- If there is a 'genuine occupational requirement', under Employment Equality Regulations 2003, faith-based organisations will still be able to recruit restrictively. In the light of recent equalities legislation, there is a need for clarity about what constitutes a 'genuine occupational requirement' in the delivery of public services.

### What role can funders and the VCS play in reducing religious extremism?

Facilitator: Fred Grindrod, Barrow Cadbury Trust

- The government's funding stream "Preventing Violent Extremism" shows the importance of language, focusing as it does on exclusion rather than engagement. The group shared examples of projects refusing to request support from this fund. LB Hounslow has renamed it "building stronger and more united communities" in order to convey the positive outcomes they seek.

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- We need early intervention in this area, tackling precursors such as poverty and exclusion.
- Having a dedicated cohesion officer works well

for some of the local government funders.

- When dealing with faith groups people need an understanding of the barriers affecting that group.
- When dealing with inter-faith work focus, should be on communication and education about different faiths, rather than debating beliefs and practices.
- Myth-busting is needed about each other's beliefs and practices. This includes engaging local and national media in the work, as part of the myth-busting and educational exercise.
- There is often a danger of simply pushing all integration/cohesion work on to one particular recognised community group, which prevents other groups with different experiences and viewpoints from gaining traction with their work.

### Inter-faith work

Facilitator: Lisa Greensill, Government Office for London

- Cultural history as well as individual faith plays a part - eg Somalis from different tribes may share a faith but it takes more than that to help them work together. Funders can play a part in facilitating umbrella groups or networks to emphasise similarities and play down past differences.
- A funder helping people from different faiths come together from the bottom up is more likely to achieve results than one particular faith instigating inter-faith work. Funders can identify activities or multiple agency approaches that get best value for money.
- Organisations like local authorities can play honest broker. Community development approaches are often successful through getting out into communities and talking to people; addressing immediate conflicts and issues; and working with a number of community leaders to build trust.
- It takes time to build trust and effective relationships.
- There is a lack of knowledge of other faiths and people can be so afraid of upsetting each other they stay in their 'silos'.
- Some faith organisations will never get involved: they view their way as the only 'right' way.

**Organisations like local authorities can play honest broker**

## 'Dogmatic, inflexible and stereotypical' - are these views truer for faith organisations seeking funding or funders themselves?

Facilitator: Billy Dann, Church Urban Fund

- We hear more about differences and problems between funders and faith organisations than about common ground and solutions, yet there are far more examples of the latter.
- There needs to be communication with faith groups beyond just funding. Funders need to be realistic about what can be achieved by any project or organisation.
- Not providing funding for a certain project or organisation does not mean that the work of that group is not respected. Conversely, it is possible to fund services in an organisation without buying into everything that organisation believes in or stands for. Questions to ask would be whether individuals in need would be hurt if certain organisations were not funded or whether those individuals were being 'punished' for the views of the organisation.
- Clear moral codes underlie some faith projects, but their services can be freely available, eg the Salvation Army does not discriminate in delivering its homelessness services.
- Organisations can change: the faith origins of many organisations are now much less prominent though a strong value base will still operate, eg in Barnardo's and the Children's Society.
- Consideration has to be given to subtleties when funding something, eg are particular groups excluded from using a religious building?
- With the shift from grantmaking to commissioning, faith groups may have less choice about imposing their own views - willingness to accept money through commissioning will mean faith groups having to take on board funders' requirements or risk being in conflict with the funder.
- The big issue that makes people uneasy is the position of some faith groups around sexuality and sexual orientation. Sometimes people on both sides feel uncomfortable discussing this.
- There may be a difference between independent and statutory funders, with the former more selective about what they fund while the latter have obligations to promote community cohesion and to listen to the views of all groups. Public sector funders particularly now have to deal with issues around 'cohesion' and 'inclusion' which can sometimes be in conflict with one another.
- Some projects do seek to specifically assist people of faith who are in need, eg funding Christians with HIV/AIDS but this is not promoting faith.
- Some funders may have deep concerns about potential negative publicity around projects they fund or do not fund linked to issues of faith.
- Differences are real - between funders and faith groups and in the relationship between funders and faith organisations. We really are sometimes looking at a clash of ideologies. Discussions need to be out in the open. As such, understanding and respect are needed on all sides (and perhaps also an awareness of rights though this could be seen as a separate issue).

Clear moral codes underlie some faith projects, but their services can be freely available

Funding partnership work between faith groups can be an effective way of working through barriers and overcoming differences

## Appreciating as funders the diversity of the faith sector

Facilitator: Dominic Fox, Stone Ashdown Trust

- Application processes can present barriers that may prevent or discourage some faith groups from applying to them. These include: language barriers; lack of experience in producing written applications and evaluation reports; preconceptions, if funders' boards are predominantly white, Christian and middle class; and some funders being risk averse. Such barriers can be overcome by staff with specific knowledge of different community and faith issues.
- There are examples of social lenders and investors thinking differently about the support they provide for faith groups, such as Charity Bank developing a programme of sharia loans (interest free, accessible investment compliant with Islamic teaching).
- Funders need to negotiate the hurdle of suspicion surrounding single faith groups since the events of July 2007 in London - this is often, unfairly, exacerbated by the media
- We should look to Northern Ireland to gain knowledge about how best to resolve conflict between faith groups in times of unrest.
- Funding partnership work between faith groups can be an effective way of working through barriers and overcoming differences. Differences need to be acknowledged and respected.

## PLENARY SPEAKER BIOS

**Sara Llewellyn** is the Chair of London Funders and Deputy Chief Grants Officer of The City Bridge Trust. She has worked for the Trust since 1995. Prior to that she was the Director of a homelessness charity for five years, and in the domestic violence movement before that. Sara is a member of the London Regional Consortium for ChangeUp, a member of Charity Bank's Credit Committee and was on the Investment Committee of Futurebuilders England (2005 - 2008). She was a previous Vice Chair of the Community Fund in London (1998-2003) and Chair of Awards for All (1999-2003). She is Treasurer of a childcare social enterprise in Lewisham, a Director of the European Reminiscence Network and one of the initiators of 'Unboxed', developing approaches to human rights and leadership work with young people.

**Jim McManus** is Assistant Director of Health Improvement for Barking and Dagenham Primary Care Trust and will shortly take up appointment as Joint Director of Public Health for Birmingham City Council and the three Birmingham PCTs. In his current role, he is responsible for voluntary sector and faith communities funding, and adult public health and emergency planning. He is a theologian by training. He is an adviser to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. He worked in the voluntary sector for seven years and has been working with faith communities most of his life. He is the author of recent Department of Communities and Local Government guidance on faith communities and emergency planning, and faith communities and pandemic flu.

**Monica Needs** has worked for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for five years as Community Development Officer. During this time she has worked closely with the local faith forum and also works as part of a team on the Council's corporate grants programme. Previously Monica worked for Epping Forest District Council and a faith based organisation.

**Professor Tariq Ramadan** has contributed substantially through his writings and lectures to the debate of Muslims in the West and Islamic revival in the Muslim world. He is active both at the academic and grassroots levels lecturing extensively throughout the world on social justice and dialogue between civilizations. Tariq holds a PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Geneva. He is the Professor of Islamic Studies (Faculty of Theology at Oxford), a Visiting Professor (holding the chair in *Identity and Citizenship*) at Erasmus University (Netherlands), Senior Research Fellow St Antony's College (Oxford), Doshisha University (Kyoto, Japan) and at the Lokahi Foundation (London).

**David Rayner** was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1978 and worked in parishes in Manchester, Cambridge, Peckham and Smethwick, where he was active in housing and community development and built cross-sector partnerships. In 1999 he began a secondment to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) as secretary to the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC) and subsequently became a permanent staff member, first in the Urban Policy Unit, then the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit as head of the community participation team, which included responsibility for the voluntary and community sector (VCS), faith communities and ICRC. Since May 2007 he has been in the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) in the Cohesion & Faiths Division with a national role on faith community engagement. David's main role for the coming year will be to support delivery of the regional strand of the inter faith framework, *Face to Face and Side by Side*.

## OUR THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING

- The meeting's planning group: Billy Dann, Church Urban Fund; Lisa Greensill, Government Office for London; Mubin Haq, City Parochial Foundation; and Sara Llewellyn, The City Bridge Trust for their help and input in organising this meeting.
- Our "knowledge café" facilitators, for preparation and support - Billy Dann, Dominic Fox, Lisa Greensill, Fred Grindrod and Barbara Nea - who all brought a depth of experience that assisted good discussion.
- Friends' House for efficient and hospitable arrangements.
- CCLA Investment Management for support towards the costs of the meeting and London Development Agency (LDA) for its support of London Funders' work. The LDA works to improve the quality of life for all Londoners and drive sustainable growth.

## PARTICIPANTS BY ORGANISATION

(attendees in bold type = speakers)

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
<b>Prof Tariq</b>	<b>Ramadan</b>	
Rebecca	King	Antigone
<b>Jim</b>	<b>McManus</b>	Barking and Dagenham Primary Care Trust
Fred	Grindrod	Barrow Cadbury Trust
Craig	Tomlinson	BBC Children in Need
Russell	Darboon	Big Lottery Fund
Cat	Dix	Capital Community Foundation
Jaishree	Mistry	Charity Bank
Daniel	Chapman	Church Urban Fund
Billy	Dann	Church Urban Fund
Sara	Llewellyn	City Bridge Trust, The
<b>David</b>	<b>Rayner</b>	Department for Communities and Local Government
Sarah	Mawle	Football Foundation
Lisa	Greensill	Government Office for London
Barbara	Nea	HEAR
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Inga	Spencer	London Borough of Hillingdon
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Alison	Licorish	London Borough of Lewisham
Abdul	Sayed	London Borough of Lewisham
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Amy	Willshire	London Borough of Waltham Forest
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Kalpana	Kapoor	London Probation
John	Anderson	London Youth
Paul	Gibson	Mazars
Nick	Holmes	Mazars
Rita	Fentener	Red Ochre
Barnaby	Hopson	Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
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