

EMPOWER

Building Communities Together



Maslaha's Book of Travels event, Dec 2015

Message from the chair

We've had an enlightening, inspiring and exciting first six months at the Aziz Foundation. With the beginning of a new chapter in the Aziz family philanthropic journey, we are seeking to bring together a pool of wisdom, resources and expertise that can make a real difference in building self-help capacity in the most disadvantaged communities in Britain. At the core of this journey is a Board of Trustees, consisting of family members and friends deeply committed to the Foundation's objectives. We are humbled that the Board has been joined by the Right Honourable Baroness Butler-Sloss GBE as the founding patron of the Foundation.

The financial climate for voluntary sector organisations is currently very difficult. Government funding has shrunk dramatically in recent years and the competition for other sources of funding is very fierce. In this context, there is significant opportunity for corporations, trusts and foundations to play their part. The Aziz Foundation takes its potential contribution very seriously, and seeks to apply an entrepreneurial spirit to help

the most marginalised and disadvantaged communities in Britain, in a sustainable manner, as an integral part of the Aziz family business ethos. The Foundation will support projects, strengthen organisations and help incubate innovative ideas that will ultimately improve the conditions of the most disaffected communities in our society. We hope this will in turn help and support members of these communities to integrate into mainstream society, and thereby, help to create a more cohesive Britain.

We have set out to add value to the charitable sector by empowering those who empower others and catalysing change. This is key to our vision of service and social justice. The question of how to do this in the most effective way, to get the maximum in social impact for every pound that we invest, is the challenge facing us all in the sector. As Aristotle said: *'Anyone can give away money or spend it; but to do all this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, for the right reason, and in the right way, is not something easy that anyone can do. It is for this reason that good conduct in such matters is rare, praiseworthy and noble.'*

In this first issue of our newsletter, we hope to introduce our work to you, and also to thank you for supporting or partaking in getting the Foundation's work off the ground. We continue to look forward to your support and collaboration with us in the great work we hope to do. I want also to take this

opportunity to wish the Foundation's (relatively) new operational team every success. I am confident that they will take the Foundation from strength to strength on its new journey.

Finally, we would welcome any ideas and suggestions you may have, so please do contact us!

Asif Aziz
Chair of Trustees



MUJU's Creative Link event, Feb 2015

"Our vision is a fair and thriving society, where individuals and communities can flourish."

Our patron, advisors & staff



We are pleased to announce that the Right Honourable **Baroness Butler-Sloss** of Marsh Green GBE has joined us as our founding patron at the Foundation. Baroness

Butler-Sloss was the first female Lord Justice of Appeal, and until 2005, as President of the Family Division of the High Court, the highest-ranking female judge in the UK. She has chaired many notable inquests and inquiries, such as the Cleveland Inquiry. She recently chaired the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life.



We are also pleased to be joined by two advisors. **Shami Chakrabarti** CBE worked as a Home Office lawyer, and was until recently the Director of Liberty, the foremost

civil rights organisation in the UK. She has been described by The Times newspaper as 'the most effective public affairs lobbyist of the past 20 years'. Shami served on the Leveson Inquiry and regularly contributes on TV/radio and to the broadsheet media. She has served as a Governor of the LSE and the British Film Institute, and is currently the Chancellor of the University of Exeter.



Michael Wakelin worked at the BBC for 23 years, ending up as Head of Religion and Ethics from 2006-2009. He is Executive Producer for Pause for Thought

and produced Travellers Tales for Premier Radio. He is currently also an Executive Associate in Public Education at the University of Cambridge, Director of Programmes for Coexist House and Project Manager for the Religion Media Centre.

We have appointed a small staff team.

Mohammed Aziz is the Director. He has extensive experience in both local and central government work, as well as policy and project delivery work.

Nazmul Toropdar is the Foundation's Head of Operations & Organisational Development. He has led the CSR agenda for a blue chip company and has significant commercial and marketing experience in both corporate and third sector organisations.

Tufyal Choudhury is an academic at the Durham University. He has led research and public policy projects at the Open Society for over a decade. Tufyal is our lead for research and public policy work.

About our work

The Aziz Foundation has developed three major work streams, each responding to a strategic aim of the Foundation, which are as follows:

- To identify issues and needs, raise awareness of them, and strengthen capacity for self-help in disadvantaged communities.
- To develop new leadership in disadvantaged communities that is credible in both those communities and wider society.
- To support disadvantaged communities to engage in wider society to address their own needs and to contribute to the common good.

The Foundation's work streams are represented in the diagram and described below.



1. Community Empowerment

Disadvantaged communities face many problems. Often these are specific to these communities and there are many initiatives to address them. This work stream will work with disadvantaged communities, particularly African-Caribbean, Gypsy-Traveller, Muslim and White working class communities, to:

- Identify the most pressing issues and needs facing them, and raise awareness around them.
- Support key local and national initiatives that seek to build capacity to address these issues and needs – either directly through development work or indirectly through arts, culture and sports.
- Develop best practice and efficiency in these communities in addressing their own needs and contributing to the common good.

2. Leadership Development

Disadvantaged communities often suffer from poor leadership - critically, from a lack of leaders conversant with and able to bridge between both disadvantaged communities and wider society. The leadership development work stream will support the development of leadership in disadvantaged communities that is appropriate to their needs, through:

- Identifying gaps in the capacity of the current leadership.
- Supporting the development of initiatives that can fill these gaps in future leadership.
- Identifying potential future leaders and supporting them in equipping themselves for that role.

3. Public Engagement

Disadvantaged communities often lack representation and a voice in mainstream society. This work stream will assist in strengthening that representation and voice in wider society, to enable them to play an active role in public life, to address their own needs and to contribute to the common good, by:

- Producing their own research and narratives about their communities.
- Learning about public life, engaging in politics and speaking to power.
- Influencing public policy to achieve group justice.
- Speaking to the nation to correct misinformation, stereotypes and prejudice.
- Challenging disadvantage and discrimination through strategic litigation.



“Our mission is to support disadvantaged people and communities, so that all people are able to fulfil their potential and are valued.”

Our journey so far

Over the last six months we have sought to establish the Foundation as a best practice grant-making body. We have made significant progress towards establishing our corporate identity, strategy and work programme – but we are also aware that we are at the beginning of a journey of learning. Here is a glimpse of what we have done so far:

We have undertaken significant **consultation** with key stakeholders. We have held over 100 face-to-face meetings with other grant making organisations, relevant experts and professionals, and grass-roots organisations on how the Aziz Foundation should be set up and what should be its priorities. Based on this, we have agreed that in the long term we should focus on a number of disadvantaged communities – including Black, Gypsy/ Traveller, Muslim and White working class communities. In the short term, however, the Foundation will focus mainly on Muslim communities, with the intention of then taking the learning to other disadvantaged communities.



New Horizons' British Islam's conference, Mar 2016.

We are guided by the values of empowering the individual, promoting justice for all and serving the common good.

We have made significant investment in developing our own **organisational infrastructure**. In addition to forming a Board of Trustees and applying for charitable status, we have also appointed a patron, two advisors and set up steering groups for our streams of work. We have appointed a talented staff team with extensive experience in academia and the public, private and voluntary sectors - all with invaluable experience in community activism and community organising. This will enable us to bridge our vision at the board level with the needs and dynamics on the ground. We have also made significant progress in developing internal policies and processes.

We have developed an impressive **network of key contacts** and potential collaborators and partners – including other funders, delivery partners and grantees. This will enable us to work with others as agenda and change setters, but also to be directly involved in projects of particular interest to us and to fund work on the ground making the most difference.

We have developed three **streams of work** – as described on the opposite page. Under each work stream we intend to develop whole programmes and suites of projects. We have made significant progress in the first stream of work on community empowerment. As part of this work stream we have developed two significant projects. Under the Beehive Project, we have launched a call and received proposals to part-fund important **youth, community and education** work, as well as **arts, culture and sports** work in the community. Under the Beacons Project, we will work with four community centres in London to develop them into best practice or beacon community centres based on a set of criteria. We have also initiated work in the other two streams – and discuss below how we intend to take them forward.

The road ahead

As we move forward, we hope to widen our network of partners, professionals and grantees. In the next few months, we hope to finalise our work on corporate identity, strategy and work programme. This will result in a new website, a communications strategy and publicity material. We want to ensure that we are reaching out to as many promising applicants as possible who share our aspirations and want to make a real difference in the communities that we are targeting.

Further to our recent call for project proposals under our community empowerment work stream, we will now be working with over a dozen projects to make them operational. We are now also working on launching the next two phases of our Beehive Project – organisational development funding and



Mosaic's Primary School project, 2015/16

Our principle of operation is to focus on strategic interventions - wherever possible, we will work in partnership and add value.

residencies for incubating innovative social action and public engagement ideas. Through this we hope to strengthen organisations we are currently funding or working with, and others as well, and also to provide space and resources for bright ideas that might not otherwise take off.

On the leadership development front, we are currently working with three teaching institutions to develop a comprehensive Muslim leadership development programme. We expect this programme to help produce leaders who are grounded in both the Islamic and social sciences, and who are fully conversant with both Muslim communities as well as wider society. The programme will focus on capacity building in existing Muslim institutions to enable this and on identifying, mentoring and providing scholarships to bright young Muslims to access various career paths.

A major area of focus for us over the next few months, however, will be in our public engagement work stream. We are looking at part-funding and commissioning a number of research projects, particularly projects exploring Muslim social attitudes and public attitudes towards Islam and Muslims, as well as projects addressing policy areas of particular interest to British Muslims. We are also interested in creating an environment and funding initiatives that help develop young Muslim public intellectuals. To this end, we are developing strategic partnerships with the Muslim Institute and New Horizons in British Islam, as described on the next page.

Presently, we are also considering funding a commission on religious education, a forum on counter-terrorism and a religion and media centre, as well as projects in a number of race, equality and human rights organisations.

Success stories

Our first scholar



The Foundation is proud to have offered its first scholarship. The scholarship has been awarded to Arwa Ibrahim for an MPhil in Political Sociology at the University

of Cambridge. As an undergraduate, Arwa studied International Relations and Journalism and then went on to do a Masters in Middle Eastern Studies. Arwa worked as a journalist for the American McClatchy Newspapers and at the London-based Middle East Eye. Her research focus is urban inequalities, collective resistance and the social dynamics of urban regeneration in London, Istanbul and Cairo.

Our first grantees

The Foundation has made its first grants to the following:



Founded by Prince Charles, Mosaic aims to raise aspirations of young people from deprived communities to realise their talents and potential. The Aziz Foundation is supporting Mosaic's 'Futures Primary School Mentoring Project' which seeks to equip young girls with the skills to connect education to work at an early age through female mentors from professional backgrounds acting as role models.



MYH is an award winning free and confidential helpline service, open 7 days a week. It has helped just under 50,000 young Muslims since its launch in 2001. MYH provides a safe space in which young Muslims can find the help they need from professionals for their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Young Muslims contact MYH on a daily basis about all kinds of issues including questions on faith and identity, feelings of isolation and lack of belonging, physical/sexual abuse, self-harm and suicidal feelings, and mental health. The Foundation provides a patrons grant to MYH.



Red Rag Productions is an independent film production company dedicated to making documentaries and films on a range of controversial and contemporary issues, in particular those affecting minorities in European societies. The grant is supporting the production of a documentary featuring the lives of four hijabi Muslim women in four European cities and the tensions they face in "asserting their Muslim identities."

maslaha

Maslaha creates new ways of tackling long-standing issues affecting Muslim communities in the fields of education, criminal justice, health and gender. The Foundation supported Maslaha's Evliya Celebi's 'Book of Travels Project', an alternative account of Muslim identity using Ottoman shadow puppetry as a medium for exploring 'radicalism' in the modern world. The support resulted in working with students at Frederick Bremmer School (in Walthamstow), followed by a student-led exhibition at the Rich Mix.



The MUJU Crew provides platforms for Muslim-Jewish creative collaboration. The Foundation has part-funded MUJU's 3-day Creative Link project for Muslim and Jewish Year 9 girls. Engaging with storytelling, theatre and visual arts, the girls worked together to explore and share concepts of faith, identity and resilience, courage and social action. Their creative journey culminated in a shared performance.



The Foundation is part-funding the Muslim Institute's quarterly journal, Critical Muslim. The journal seeks to provide a platform (particularly for young intellectuals) to rethink Islam for contemporary times to discover anew what it means to be Muslim in the twenty-first century. The overall concern is not just to inform and educate, but also to promote openness, pluralism, tolerance and rational thought. Through this journal we hope to develop a group of young writers who can routinely contribute to various public discourses.



The Foundation part-funded New Horizons' annual British Islam Conference: A Marketplace of Ideas. The weekend conference aims to encourage the development of British Muslim thought, identity and culture and provides a space for development of networks and partnerships.



The Foundation has part-funded a research project led by Coventry University that will document how the new statutory duty, introduced in 2015 and requiring schools and further education colleges to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism", is being implemented in schools and FECs and its implications for relationships between teachers, students, parents and the wider communities.



The Foundation has part-funded Sadaqa Day 2016, a day of Muslim-led social action aimed at Muslim families, institutions, youth groups and community groups. It was open to all and one of its main objectives was to bring people together from different backgrounds who have not worked together or met each other before.



The Foundation will fund a pilot study on how survey and polling data can be collected and used in order to challenge and question assumptions about what Muslim citizens actually want and where their attitudes are on a range of socially debated issues. The project will be led jointly by British Future and New Horizons.

For a full list of charities we are supporting, please visit the Aziz Foundation website.

Watch this space

As we continue to develop our work streams, we will continue to support and award funds to more individuals and organisations. Please keep an eye on the Foundation's website for all the forthcoming calls for proposals.

www.azizfoundation.org.uk

