



A Resource Project for LGBTQ Muslim women



Annual Report

1st April 2003 – 31st March 2004

(Interim Phase)

Note: Summarised Version For Website Publication

Introduction & Aims of the Organisation

The Safra Project is a UK based resource project working on issues relating to lesbian, bisexual transgender, queer & questioning women who identify as Muslim religiously and/or culturally (Muslim LGBTQ women).

The organisation was set up in October 2001 by and for Muslim LGBTQ women and their supporters. The word Safra is related to the words for journey and discovery in many languages such as Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Hindi. This name and the compass in our logo symbolise our aim to be a resource and tool for Muslim LGBTQ women on our journeys and discoveries in life. The Safra Project is not a faith group but recognises the role of religion and culture in shaping our identities. Our ethos is one of inclusiveness and diversity and we welcome input from all who seek to combat prejudices.

The Safra Project's aims are:

1. To empower Muslim LGBTQ women to deal with the issues they face resulting from their sexual orientation and/or gender (identity) within the context of their ethnic, cultural and/or religious background.
2. To raise awareness on the needs of and issues relating to Muslim LGBTQ women in order to make service provision accessible and appropriate.
3. To eliminate (interrelated) prejudice and (multiple) discrimination experienced by Muslim LGBTQ women and to promote diversity.

In Phase One of the Safra Project (October 2001 – March 2003), we identified (some of the) key needs and issues relating to Muslim LGBTQ women in the UK, with a particular focus on access to appropriate social and legal services. The findings of the research were published in a report entitled 'Initial Findings - Identifying the difficulties experienced by Muslim LGBTQ women in accessing social and legal services'. The Safra Project also set up an online network of Muslim LGBTQ women in the form of a 'Yahoo group' and launched it's website in Phase One.

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Interim Phase / Report 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004

The Safra Project's Management Committee presents its annual report and independently examined annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2004 (Interim Phase).

The objectives of the Interim Phase and the year 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004 were:

1. To continue the Safra Project's core function of acting as a resource and information point on issues relating to Muslim LGBTQ women, including expanding the information on the website.
2. To raise awareness of the issues that Muslim LGBTQ women face based on the findings of the report 'Initial Findings – Identifying the difficulties experienced by Muslim LBT women face in accessing social and legal services'.
3. To strengthen the capacity and structure of the organisation, including the planning and fundraising for a stable basis on which the Safra Project can continue (Phase Two)
4. To expand our work supporting LGBT asylum seekers and refugees, in particular to fundraise for and execute a Country Information Research Project in order to research and provide information on the treatment of LBT women in countries with a predominantly Muslim population for the support of asylum claims.

The Activities we undertook this year to achieve these objectives are:

1. Resources and Information

The Safra Project has continued to act as an information point for all stakeholders on issues relating to Muslim LGBTQ women. We have received and replied to an average of 40 requests for information each month. These requests come from Muslim LGBTQ women and other individuals such as Muslim LGBTQ men as well as from service providers, policymakers, media, academics, activists etc. These requests included questions about where to find suitable social and legal services, information on sexuality and Islam, accessing social support groups, information on the issues that Muslim LBT women face etc.

The Safra Project website has been a key tool in raising awareness and providing information. It acts as an on-line resource for Muslim LBT women, service providers and other interested parties. We have worked on two sections in particular to expand the information and resources: the section on signposting to social and legal services in the UK and the section on Sexuality, Gender and Islam. The latter section involved research into the writings of scholars and activists on this topic. It also includes an extensive bibliography and detailed glossary of terms. The resource was launched on-line in October 2003 and was received with lots of enthusiasm.

This year we received 19,531 visits to our website which is an average of 1628 visits per month! Many national and international organisations have now included links to our website.

2. Raising Awareness

Workshops

In the Interim Phase the Safra Project raised awareness on the issues Muslim LGBTQ women face as identified in our report of Initial Findings, which included providing workshops in order to tackle (multiple) discrimination and (interrelated) prejudices. This year we provided workshops for many organisations including:

- The Refugee Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Student Action for Refugees (STAR)
- Southwark Anti-Homophobic Forum
- A focus group of policy makers and service providers, hosted by the Ministry for Health & Welfare in the Netherlands
- Mental Health Workers, hosted by the Schorer Foundation in the Netherlands

Networking, Joint Work, Information Exchange

The Safra Project has continued its work with service providers and policy makers we had been in contact with during Phase One and expanded our network in this area significantly. We continued our work with organisations such as the Metropolitan Police and Asian Women's Refuges towards making their services accessible and appropriate for Muslim LBT women. We established new links and are involved in projects with organisations such as:

- Broken Rainbow (Domestic Violence against LGBT people)
- School's Out (LGBT issues in Education)
- Equality Network
- Glasgow Women's Library
- The Refugee Women's Association
- Imaan (formerly Al-Fatiha) - a social support group for LGBT Muslims in the UK.
- Interfaith Coalition
- Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (FFLAG)

We also established contacts with organisations within Europe and Asia such as the Schorer Stichting and the Yoesuf Foundation in the Netherlands, Cogailles in Spain, Lamda in Turkey, Humjinsi and Niswaan in India and Sisters in Islam in Malaysia.

Policy work

The Safra Project took part in government consultations on proposed legislation on the following issues:

- Anti-discrimination (implementation of EU regulations outlawing discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion)
- Single Equalities Body
- Partnership rights
- Domestic Violence

Please visit ww.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk to read the responses to the first three consultations.

The Safra Project also took part in two roundtable sessions on Muslim women hosted by the Minister for Women, Patricia Hewitt MP. This resulted in the Muslim Women's Network in which the Safra Project will continue to take part.

Conferences

The Safra Project participated in a number of conferences, seminars and events raising awareness on issues relating to Muslim LBT women. These include:

1. At the Warning Signs of Fundamentalism Conference, the asylum co-ordinator presented a paper on attacks on LGBT people as warning signs of fundamentalism (the paper presented by is available on www.safraproject.org).
2. At the Birmingham City Council Conference on LGBT issues in Education Settings, the Project Co-ordinator facilitated a workshop on faith and diversity issues.
3. At the Student Action for Refugees Conference, the Safra Project Chair and Treasurer facilitated a workshop on LGBT refugee youth.
4. At the National Union of Students Lesbian & Bisexual Conference, the Safra Project Chair spoke about incorporating faith and diversity issues.
5. The Safra Project Chair participated on the 2nd International Muslim leaders' consultation on HIV & AIDS in Malaysia highlighting issues of sexual and gender diversity.
6. The project co-ordinators attended and spoke about the Safra Project's work and need for capacity building at the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Conference pre-seminar on capacity building of Muslim LGBT groups and at the main Conference about our work in relation to LGBT refugees.
7. A Safra Project volunteer facilitated a workshop on Muslim women and sexuality at the World Social Forum Conference in India.

Publications

- Suhraiya & Anisa (Safra Project), Sexuality, Gender & Islam (Website resource)
Link: www.safraproject.org/sgi-intro.htm
- Anisa de Jong (Safra Project), 'Identifying Warning Signs of Fundamentalism(s). Attacks on the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People', in: Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms (November 2002)
Link: <http://www.whrnet.org/fundamentalisms/docs/doc-wsfmeeting-2002.html>
- Anisa de Jong (Safra Project), 'Navigation Guide: lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) asylum seekers and refugees', Information Centre on Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) (September 2003) Link: <http://www.icar.org.uk/content/res/nav/keyiss.html>
- The Safra Project also replied to several media enquiries and as such featured and provided input in other publications on issues relevant to Muslim LBT women.

3. Organisational Developments & Capacity Building

At the AGM on 6 May 2003 a Constitution and Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy were approved consolidating the basis of the organisation.

The Interim Phase was run by the Safra Project volunteers until July 2003. Successful applications were made to Global Fund for Women and Awards for All to fund a consultant that could develop the organisation further and plan and fundraise for Safra Project - Phase Two. This consultant was employed for six months from August 2003.

The consultant project co-ordinator put together a three year project plan for Safra Project - Phase Two, based on the needs identified in the Report of Initial Findings and on further consultation with the Management Committee and other stakeholders. Funding applications were submitted to Comic Relief, Trust for London and Community Fund. The applications to Comic Relief and Trust for London have been granted and the application to Community Fund has been denied. The project plan for Phase Two has been adjusted accordingly, concentrating on our core aims and commenced on 1 March 2004.

The Safra Project's online network (Yahoo Group) has grown from 17 to 41 members during this year (welcome to the 24 new members), and has seen an increase in exchanges of information and online socialising & mutual support.

4. Country Information Research Project and Refugee issues

In the Interim Phase the asylum co-ordinator developed a Country Information Research Project (CIRP) for which funding applications were submitted to the Allen Lane Foundation (granted) and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (denied). The project was adjusted in accordance with the funding received. In the course of this project the following activities have been undertaken:

1. Workshops as the Refugee Council & Student Action for Refugees (see above)
2. Writing letters of support for refugee members of the Safra Project
3. Researching and compiling country information reports (to be published on the website shortly)
4. Expansion of information on services and links relevant to LGBT asylum seekers and refugees and their caseworkers on the Safra Project website
5. Publication of a 'Navigation Guide' on LGBT Refugees for the Information Centre on Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) (<http://www.icar.org.uk/content/res/nav/keyiss.html>)
6. Maintaining & expanding contacts, exchanging information, publications (see above) and responding to (case-specific) enquiries with relevant organisations including:
 - UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group (formerly Stonewall Immigration Group)
 - Refugee Women's Legal Group
 - Refugee Women's Resource Centre
 - Refugee Women's Association
 - Immigration Advisory Service
 - Refugee Legal Centre
 - Several Immigration and Asylum Solicitors

Legal and Administrative Details

The Safra Project is governed by a Constitution adopted at the AGM of 6th May 2003. Subject to all constitutional qualifications, full membership of the organisation is open to Muslim LBTQ women and other women who can identify with the issues the organisation addresses, associate membership is open to any other person or organisation supporting the aims of the Safra Project.

The Safra Project is administered and managed by the Management Committee (MC) in accordance with the Constitution and the Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy. The MC consists of not less than 3 members and not more than 5 members, elected at the AGM or appointed by the MC with a restriction of not more than 1 co-opted member. Members of the MC shall be women, the majority of the MC shall be Muslim (religiously and/or culturally) and the majority of the MC shall identify as LBTQ.

(Note: for privacy and security reasons the names of the Management Committee have been removed from the web-published annual report. Please contact the Safra Project info@safraproject.org if you require this information)

The MC is required to comply with their obligations under any statutory Act with regard to:

1. the keeping of accounting records
2. the preparation of annual statements of accounts
3. the auditing or independent examination of the statements of account

During this financial year the Safra Project has been advised on financial management matters by Stuart Bailey (Accountant) who also acted as the Independent Examiner of the annual accounts.

Anisa de Jong and Suhraiya have been employed as consultants to the Safra Project during the Interim Phase and have been appointed as jobsharers in the post of Project Co-ordinator from 1 March 2004 marking the start of Phase Two.

The Safra Project's MC declares that this Annual Report and Annual Accounts give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the organisation.

Signed on behalf of the Management Committee

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Name & Position:

Date: