



Report of Activities

October 2001 – 31st March 2003

The Safra Project was founded in October 2001 with the following aims:

- 1) To research and provide information on the experiences and needs of Muslim LBT women in order to increase access to appropriate social and legal services.
- 2) To research and provide information on sexuality, gender and Islam, with a focus on perspectives that challenge gender-bias and homophobia or transphobia.
- 3) To research and provide information on the treatment of LBT women in countries with a predominantly Muslim population, in particular for the support of asylum claims.

Phase one of the Safra Project ran from October 2001 until 31st March 2003. In this phase we concentrated on our first and second aims.

The Safra Project:

- Organised a Focus Meeting for service providers
- Organised a conference for Muslim LBT women
- Researched and published a *Report of Initial Findings*
- Launched a website.

The ***Report of Initial Findings*** was launched on January 30th 2003 at the Greater London Authority. Our key note speaker was Barbara Roche MP, Minister for Social Exclusion, Equalities and Women. We also received a message of support from the Mayors Senior Policy Advisor for Equalities Lee Jasper.

The aims of this report are:

- 1) To identify and raise awareness of the issues Muslim LBT women face resulting from their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the context of their ethnic, cultural and/or religious background.
- 2) To identify some of the difficulties Muslim LBT women experience in accessing appropriate social and legal services.

3) To highlight needs and make recommendations to service providers to ensure more accessible and appropriate social and legal services and recommendations for further research and work that needs to be done.

The website was also launched on January 30th 2003. It acts as an on-line resource for Muslim LBT women, service providers and other interested parties. The website currently includes:

- information on the Safra Project and a downloadable version of the report of initial findings
- sign-posting to social and legal services in the UK
- initial information on sexuality, gender and Islam
- A bibliography and links to other sources of information on gender, sexuality and Islam

WEBSITE

We are currently expanding the information on the website and hope to carry on doing so once we have received further funding.

As a resource project our on-going work has included:

- Providing information to the public via email, telephone and post
- running an online forum for Muslim LBT women,
- writing articles on the Report of Initial Findings, the work of the Safra Project and publicising the conference for Muslim LBT women (2 in Diva Magazine, ILGA Newsletter, Women's National Council Newsletter, Observer, Asian Leader, Women's Asylum News)
- We also did four local and regional as well as language specific radio interviews to publicise the conference for Muslim LBT women (BBC World, BBC Asian Network, BBC Birmingham, BBC Leicester Urdu programme)
- input on consultations on forthcoming equalities legislation
- Attending and speaking at conferences, seminars and events on issues relating to Muslim LBT women covered in the *Report of Initial Findings*. (ILGA Europe conference, Capital Woman, UNISON seminars, Student Action for Refugees Conference, NUS lesbian & bisexual Conference)
- Work with and provide training to organisations on making their service more inclusive of Muslim LBT women

Future Activities of the Safra Project

We are currently awaiting funding to:

1. employ a 6 months project worker who will
 - draw up a work plan and fund raise for an office and staff in order to carry out the long-term work plans of the Safra Project.

This work plan could include:

- continuing current information provision and improving the service through the development of fact sheets and other materials
 - continuing to develop the website as an information resource
 - promoting the *Report of Initial Findings* amongst service providers in the UK and
 - work with service providers and policy makers to implement it's recommendations
 - Improve networks and build links with international organisations working on issues of common interest
 - conduct further research in the areas of:
 - mental health
 - domestic violence and safety
 - discrimination in employment
 - human rights and legal situation in asylum seekers country of origin.
 - Gender, sexuality & Islam
2. In relation to the third aim of the Safra Project we are awaiting funding to set up a Country Information Research Project (CIRP) which will compile 10 country and human rights reports in relation to LGBT refugees from predominantly Muslim countries.