



ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY 2013- MARCH 2014

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AN OVERVIEW

(January 2013 – March 2014)

The Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) has continued to punch well above our weight in sharing knowledge of key issues affecting Muslim women, influencing policies by responding to government consultations and engaging at ministerial levels, and raising the profile of Muslim women's voices by regularly contributing to mainstream print and broadcast media on a range of issues including; female genital mutilation (FGM), child sexual exploitation (CSE), the veil, and role models, despite being funded solely by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) and with only one member of staff in post on a part time basis.

We are particularly proud of the following achievements:

- **Strengthening MWNUK's organisational infrastructure** - with demonstrable 'public benefits' MWNUK became a **registered charity** (1155092) in December 2013.
- **Research** – MWNUK carried out and published ground breaking research entitled: *'Unheard Voices- the Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Young Women'*.
- **Events** – MWNUK has held events on Muslim female role models, forced marriage, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.
- **Campaigning** – MWNUK ran a workshop for young activists and launched a Mosque post card campaign to end violence against women and girls.
- **Enquiries** - MWNUK have responded to over 500 enquiries requesting information about rights, support services, advice on a range of issues including forced marriage, sexual abuse, depression, violence, marriage / divorce, discrimination, immigration etc.
- **Membership** - Our membership has increased from 500 to 600 in the last 12 months. We have now also opened up our membership to men. While they will not have voting rights, their special membership is termed 'Male Women's Rights Champions.'

Thank you to all Board members, staff, volunteers and partners who have contributed to our many successes. We also particularly wish to thank the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for their continued support and funding to the Muslim Women's Network UK. Without their belief in our work, MWNUK would not have been able to achieve the work it has done over the past years.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Charity Board Members

Shaista Gohir MBE	(Chair from December 2012)
Nazmin Akthar	(Vice Chair from December 2012)
Dr Iram Sattar	(Treasurer)
Robina Iqbal	
Dr. Khursheed Wadia	
Mussurut Zia	(General Secretary from December 2012)

Executive Director

Faeza Vaid - no voting powers

National Network Coordinator

Shahin Ashraf – no voting powers (from April 2013)

*In accordance with our policies and procedures all Board and staff have up to date DBS checks (March 2014).

ABOUT MWNUK

MWNUK (www.mwnuk.co.uk) is a UK wide network of women and men, which aims to share knowledge, connect the voices, and promote the needs of diverse Muslim women. MWNUK's vision is a society where Muslim women have an effective voice and opportunity to contribute equally. MWNUK is a **registered charity** (charity number 1155092).

Values

MWNUK works within a framework of **human rights, justice** and **Islamic feminism**. We aim to be member focused, inclusive and accountable in all that we do. We are committed to **gender equality** and value **diversity**. We are independent from all established political, governmental and religious institutions. Organising as a network provides a mechanism for: sharing knowledge; raising the profile of individuals, organisations and issues; influencing policy and attitudes; and building a critical mass of voices.

- ❖ **We are member focused** - We keep our members regularly informed and value their participation. We consult and listen to our members and learn from them. We base our planning on the needs identified by members and we articulate those needs to all relevant stakeholders.
- ❖ **We value equality** - Women's equality is our central focus and we strive to make this a reality for all women.
- ❖ **We value diversity** - We recognise that Muslim women as individuals and as organisations are not a homogenous group, and value and give voice to our differences.
- ❖ **We value networking** - We believe that by building a critical mass of voices, change is possible. MWNUK needs its members and our members rely on us.
- ❖ **We value lived experiences**- We believe that women's realities are important and valid.
- ❖ **We value knowledge sharing** - We seek, collect, synthesise and disseminate information.
- ❖ **We value positive role models** - We showcase individuals and organisations who contribute to the realisation of our vision for Muslim women.
- ❖ **We value collaboration** - We are keen to connect with all individuals, organisations or stakeholders, which share our values. We welcome non-Muslims whose work focuses on these objectives as members of the network and goals and of the Board.

Membership

MWNUK has over **600 members** who are diverse in terms of ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and geographic location. MWNUK membership is also open to men. Our members include non-Muslims working with or who have an interest in issues concerning Muslim women. They are academics and students; voluntary sector and support services workers; health and legal professionals; experts in women's rights, diversity policy, disability and asylum; law enforcement officers and local government officials. Each of our members, whether individuals or organisations, are connected to other networks and audiences, thus multiplying our reach to thousands of women.

Membership is open to all those who support the aims of MWNUK. In addition to members we have over 350 individuals and agencies signed up to our mailing list. The majority of members have found us through our website (www.mwnuk.co.uk), but as the profile of MWNUK increases more individuals are joining through word of mouth.

MWNUK STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In February 2014 we conducted a **strategic review** about the goals we wish to achieve, and the activities we will carry out to achieve those goals.

The review and planning process involved both staff and board directors. It also took into account network member priorities and concerns gathered from the vast number of inquiries received and other interactions.

While all MWNUK activities contribute to the overall vision, we will focus more specifically on the **priority areas** listed below for the period **2014-2016**. Activities under each priority area will be reviewed annually.

- 1) Sharing understandings of gender in Islam from a human rights perspective.
- 2) Sharing knowledge of gender equality in UK family laws, marriage and divorce.
- 3) Changing attitudes to abuse against women and girls.
- 4) Changing attitudes to mental health.
- 5) Changing attitudes to women's leadership.
- 6) Supporting actions to address Islamophobia and discrimination.

OVERARCHING ACTIVITIES

A range of MWNUK's activities cut across and contribute to all our priorities

Website and Social Media

The website serves as an information hub with a variety of downloadable resources; e.g. consultation reports, factsheets, newsletters and videos produced by MWNUK. It also provides members with the platform to publicise their work and events, and to keep abreast of Network news, and global news impacting Muslim women.

Consultation Reports – The 'reports' section of the website includes governmental consultation responses submitted by MWNUK. There had been over 600 consultation report downloads by March 2014.

Online Factsheets – The 'factsheet' section of the website contains factsheets on key topics affecting Muslim women. There had been 2775 factsheet downloads by March 2014.

Newsletters – regular e-newsletters were distributed to members and supporters providing information on MWNUK activities and those of member or partner agencies. From December 2012 newsletters were sent out monthly.

Facebook and Twitter – are used as a forum for those wishing to discuss and be kept up to date using social media. We have a growing Facebook and Twitter following, with two Facebook groups: Muslim Women's Network UK Group (1101 members), MWNUK Member (498 friends) Muslim Women's Network UK Page (674 likes) ; and 985 Twitter followers as at end March 2014.

Youtube – MWNUK's new Youtube channel is 'Muslim Women's Network UK'. We are hoping to populate this channel with empowering and videos on issues affecting Muslim women and with our media contributions.

Signposting and responding to information requests – MWNUK receives requests for support and information via the website, email and telephone. This currently averages 42 per month and ranges from marriage and domestic abuse issues, through women wanting to become involved in activities in their area, agencies looking for help in their work with Muslim women to requests from media for comments and inputs.

Engaging with Media

MWNUK is regularly asked to comment and contribute to mainstream, international and niche broadcast and print media. Examples of mainstream media include; the Guardian, BBC Radio 4's 'Today Programme', Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour', the Times, the Independent, ITV, Sky News including being quoted on the front page of the Metro and Birmingham Mail. Examples of niche media include; Islam Channel, GEO News, Eastern Eye and international media such as Al Jazeera. When we launched the 'Unheard Voices report on Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Women', it was covered in more than 60 media outlets. Other issues we have commented on included, Malala Yousafzai, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation, the face veil, Lee Rigby's murder, and sexuality.

A particularly popular topic is the debate on the face veil. For example, in September 2014 a sequence of events (Birmingham college wanting a ban on the veil on campus, a Muslim woman refusing to remove it in court, and one politician stating that a national debate is needed on the veil) meant that MWNUK were inundated with media requests and responded to more than 25 requests for print, radio, TV and online - in the UK and abroad. Some of these included: Sky News, BBC Breakfast TV, BBC Sunday Morning Live, Guardian, Independent, Islam Channel BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour and numerous radio stations.

Full details of media contributions can be found on the MWNUK website.

Policy Influencing

MWNUK has been highlighting the views of Muslim women and girls. For example, we have responded to and participated in government consultations, which have included roundtable discussions and written feedback.

Roundtable Discussions:

- **Jo Swinson MP (January 2013)** - Roundtable discussion meeting with Jo Swinson MP (Minister for Women and Equalities) - to discuss a wide range of issues affecting women including: female genital mutilation, labioplasty, body image, portrayal of women in advertising, film and media, impact of pornography, attitudes of men and boys and the role education / schools can play in changing attitudes.

- **Maria Miller MP (March 2013)** - MWNUK amongst other organisations (Women's Resource Centre, Women's Aid, Imkaan, UN Women (UK), Forward, NAWO) attended a meeting with Maria Miller MP, Minister for Women & Equalities. Discussions includes the outcomes of the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) event held at the United Nations and how these could be promoted domestically and internationally. It was agreed that CSW agreements needed to be simplified and cascaded to civil society organisations, so they can start holding their governments accountable.
- **Labour Party People's Policy Forum (March 2013)** – Chair, Shaista Gohir attended the The Labour Party 'People's Policy Forum'. This forum provided an opportunity to ask some of the Shadow cabinet members questions. Shaista took Abida Sultana, a pupil from Bordesley Green Girls School with her, giving Abida the opportunity to meet both Ed Miliband MP and Yvette Cooper MP (Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Minister for Women and Equality).
- **JCHR (July 2013)** - Vice Chair Nazmin Akthar attended the Joint Committee on Human Rights' summer seminar to consider possible choices for an inquiry topic. Nazmin presented the issues concerning marriage and divorce to inform their deliberations.
- **Baroness Warsi (January 2014)** – Vice Chair Nazmin Akthar attended a roundtable discussion at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, which was hosted by Baroness Warsi on religious and civil marriages and arrangements for obtaining divorce.
- **DCMS (January 2014)** – Vice Chair Nazmin Akthar attended a roundtable discussion hosted by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport. The discussions included looking at women and socio economic growth in terms of identifying barriers to women's progression in employment across the equality strands including: race, social economic, gender, single parent, disability, child care and potential solutions.
- **Gloria De Perio (January 2014)** - MWNUK hosted a roundtable discussion with Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities Gloria De Piero MP and members. The event provided an opportunity for the voices of Muslim women to reach policy influencers directly. Topics included corruption in local politics, childcare, discrimination and much more.
- **UN Special Rapporteur Visit to UK (April 2014)** - UN Special Rapporteur Rashida Manjoo travelled across the UK during a 16-day fact-finding mission into violence against women. MWNUK Trustee, Robina Iqbal attended the event organised by Eiman in Leicester. We contributed to discussions and via a written report.

Consultation Report Submissions:

- **Legal Aid Budget (June 2013)** - MWNUK submitted report to government consultation on cuts to the £2bn Legal Aid budget. MWNUK raised concerns that the proposals are going to exclude those most at need taking legal aid away from perhaps the most vulnerable of individuals who may need it the most.
- **Prosecution Child Sexual Abuse Cases (September 2013)** - MWNUK submitted report to CPS Consultation on Prosecuting Child Sexual Abuse Cases and highlighted findings from MWNUK's Unheard Voice report and made recommendations in relation to Asian victims of sexual exploitation.
- **Media Ownership and Plurality (October 2013)** – MWNUK submitted report to Government consultation 'Media Ownership and Plurality'. MWNUK raised a range of concerns that included: the lack of balanced reporting by some media about women (especially victims of sexual abuse), women generally, ethnic minorities especially Muslim women.
- **APPG on Domestic & Sexual Violence (November 2013)** – Vice Chair Nazmin Akthar attended the All Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence Inquiry and gave evidence of recommendations obtaining better justice for women survivors of violence.
- **Child Exploitation and Trafficking (January 2014)** - MWNUK submitted a report to a cross-party Inquiry on Child Exploitation and Trafficking. We recommended that alongside any legislation measures, it is vital that resourcing and funding for culturally appropriate frameworks and training be considered a priority.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (February 2014)** - MWNUK submitted written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee Inquiry into Female Genital Mutilation. We stressed the need not only for a multi-agency approach and proper training and education but also unqualified commitment towards eradicating FGM.
- **Violence Against Women and Girls (March 2014)** - MWNUK submitted written evidence to the Joint Committee on Human Rights, chaired by Dr Hywel Francis MP, who launched an inquiry into violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Networking / Partnership Working

MWNUK are continuing to build linkages nationally with other organisations. Some have included:

- **Daughters of Eve & Stret Law (February 2013)** – MWNUK teamed up with Stret Law to produce a podcast on FGM for the International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM. Vice Chair Nazmin Akthar, discussed the issue with Nimco Ali from the organization 'Daughters of Eve'. Throughout the recording, the panel accepted live questions via Twitter.
- **US Embassy (May & December 2013)** - MWNUK hosted representatives from the US Embassy at the MWNUK offices to discuss U.S. foreign policy. Local Muslim women were invited to attend the meeting and asked questions and robustly challenged specific policy issues of concern. The issues raised by participants included the drone attacks in Pakistan, the role of US in conflicts around the world and sale of weapons to states with questionable human rights records.
- **Feminista (August 2013)** – Chair Shaista Gohir contributed towards the national annual Feminista Event, which was held in Birmingham and attended by hundreds of women across the UK. She delivered a workshop on lobbying local and national decision makers and shared experiences of MWNUK.
- **Barnardos (November 2013)** - MWNUK partnered with Barnados (in Birmingham) and Small Heath Community Forum and piloted two successful events on child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Birmingham. MWNUK plan to continue working with Barnados to develop training to tackle CSE.

Speaking at Events

MWNUK have spoken at a number of events in the UK throughout the year to ensure Muslim women's voices are heard. For example:

- **AGM & Networking (March 2013)** - AGM and networking event held at Houses of Parliament, Westminster, addressed by Baroness Pola Uddin, Jo Swinson MP (Minister for Women and Equalities Minister) and key grassroots activists on the theme of 'Sexual Violence of Women and Girls'.
- **Al Mahdi Institute Event on Extremism (June 2013)** – Chair Shaista Gohir, participated in a panel discussion hosted by the Al Mahdi Institute in Birmingham,

discussing what factors were contributing to extremism, the current situation and how to tackle the problem.

- **Rights of Afghan Women (September 2013)** - MWNUK was invited to share concerns about women's rights in Afghanistan at two events at a conference held at SOAS and at the University of Durham. Chair Shaista Gohir presented on how rights were being reversed and what action needed to be taken to improve rights. Representatives from the Afghan government also were present at the events, who were challenged on the rate of progress on women's rights.
- **Labour Party Conference (September 2013)** - MWNUK was invited to attend the Labour Party Conference. The importance of the role of faith groups in society was highlighted, and the importance of more women at all levels of politics.
- **International Mediation Conference (September 2013)** - Vice-Chair Nazmin Akthar attended as the UK delegate and partner representative of Mediators Beyond Borders Annual Mediation Congress. Other attendees included the UN Development Programme Turkey, International Mediation Institute and Pepperdine University School of Law, and were from across the world including Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Belgium, US, Canada and Australia.
- **Mental Health Workshop (October 2013)** – Board Director Dr. Iram Sattar, held a mental health workshop in London for the Inclusive Mosque Initiative.
- **Secondary Schools in Birmingham (December 2013)** – Chair Shaista Gohir spoke to 15 to 18 year olds at number of times at secondary schools in Birmingham on role models, forced marriage, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.
- **Deen Institute's Misogyny Conference (January 2014)** - Executive Director Faeza Vaid spoke at The Deen Institute's Misogyny Conference in London, raising questions about women's authority in Islam.
- **Promoting Muslim Female Role Models (March 2014)** - MWNUK presented our role modelling exhibitions at a number of events to celebrate International Women's Day, including to students at South City College in Birmingham, at the Salaam Festival at New Art Gallery in Walsall, and Babington College in Leicester.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING PRIORITY 1

Sharing Understandings of Gender in Islam From A Human Rights Perspective

The following activities have been carried out to support this aim:

Research

In 2012 MWNUK was invited to participate in a worldwide research being coordinated by **Musawah** as part of a **global Knowledge Building Initiative**. The project sought to discover the lived experiences of Muslim women and whether understandings of these Qur'anic concepts reflect the true justice of Islam in the way we live in the modern world.

Following training, MWNUK conducted research focusing on the Qur'anic concepts of '**Qiwamah**' and '**Wilayah**' - **Protection and Guardianship**', which underpin understandings of women's roles in Islam and of male authority, as interpreted and constructed in Muslim legal traditions, and as applied in modern laws and practices.

The research methodology included in depth case studies with individual Muslim women in UK and 3 workshops. The final report will be published in Summer 2014.

Events

April 2013 - MWNUK attended the launch of the book '**Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law**' by author **Ziba Mir Hosseini**. Also a Musawah Advocate, Ziba's book explores how male authority is sustained through law and court practice in different contexts, and the consequences for women. We live tweeted from this event on behalf of **Musawah**.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING PRIORITY 2

Sharing Knowledge of UK Family Laws, Marriage and Divorce

The following activities have been carried out to support this aim:

Resources Publications

MWNUK has continued to receive enquiries on a wide range of issues, with marriage and divorce a recurring theme. MWNUK are in the process of producing / compiling a booklet on issues relating to **Divorce** for publication in Summer 2014 and an updated edition of our **Marriage** publication in Summer 2014.

Engagement with Policy makers

MWNUK has continued to participate on the Ministry of Justice Muslim Marriage Working Group to: identify the problems experienced by Muslim women (and some men) as a result of not having legally registered marriages; the reasons why many Muslims do not register marriages; consider what means are available to address the problems encountered by Muslim women; and consider merits of possible legislative reforms to address these problems.

Partnership Working

MWNUK is a member of the 'Muslim Marriage Contract Advisory Group' that meets from time to time to discuss how the Muslim marriage contract that MWNUK helped to develop and its website **muslimmarriagecontract.org** can be promoted, and to share experience of the types of enquiries received.

In September 2013, The Ministry of Justice partnered with MWNUK to hold a consultation event in Blackburn, which was hosted by the MWNUK General Secretary Mussurut Zia. The event was attended by over 40 local women, local registrars and the super intendant registrar

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING PRIORITY 3

Changing Attitudes to Abuse against Women and Girls

The following activities have been carried out to support the above aim:

Published Research

In September 2013 MWNUK launched our groundbreaking report ***'Unheard Voices: Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Young Women'*** at the House of Commons. The pilot study included 35 case studies on the hidden experiences of Asian girls and young women who were victims of sexual exploitation. The event was hosted by Shabana Mahmood MP and speakers included: Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, Sadiq Khan MP, Sue Berelowitz, Nazir Afzal, Ratna Lachman (event Chair), Shaista Gohir and Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra. The event was attended by, senior police, politicians, children's charities, local authority children's services, community groups, charitable grant making foundations, businessmen, reporters, crown prosecution service, and government officials.

The **impact** of this research to date has included:

- **Downloads** - The report has been downloaded over 2700 times from our website.
- **Media Coverage** - The report received extensive media coverage (online, print, radio and TV) in the UK and abroad – it has been covered by more than 50 media outlets (TV, radio, print and online) and continues to be covered. Some of these have included: BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour, Guardian, Times, Daily Mail, BBC Asian Network, Islam Channel, Press TV, Al Jazeera, Jang, GEO, etc. On the 20th February 2014 the report was front page news of the Birmingham Mail.
- **Presenting at Events** - MWNUK have been invited to speak at events and government meetings to raise awareness of the findings, which have included:
 - October 2013 – Government Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People Strategic Stakeholder Group (London)
 - October 2013 – Campaign to End Rape (London)
 - October 2013 - National Black Crown Prosecution Association (London)

- October 2013 – Asian Fire Service Association international conference (Manchester)
 - November 2013 – Tackling Grooming and Exploitation: Women’s Event (Birmingham)
 - December 2013 - Tackling Grooming and Exploitation: Men’s Event (Birmingham)
 - February 2014 - Link to Change’s ‘Children’s Voices’ event. (Huntingdon)
- **Policy Influencing** - The report has influenced policy and been quoted in reports and training. Some of these include:
- February 2014 - Chair Shaista Gohir gave evidence in a presentation format on child sexual exploitation of Asian girls to the Education & Vulnerable Children Committee of Birmingham City Council
 - September 2013 - MWNUK responded to the CPS consultation on Prosecuting Child Sex Abuse Cases. Our recommendations urged the inclusion of ‘threats of exposure’ to family or others when considering the case, as this was often a threat used to control victim. We were pleased to note that changes in the sentencing guidelines for sexual abuse will now include considering ‘threats of exposure’ to family or others.
 - Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE) has quoted Unheard Voices in their e learning module aimed at parents and practitioners.
 - Barnardos (Scotland) have used the report in meetings.
 - The National Working Group (whose membership includes the Department of Health, the NHS, the Royal Colleges, ACPO, Barnardos, NSPCC etc.) have quoted Unheard Voices in their report for the Health National Working Group on Child Sexual Exploitation.
 - British Association of Social Workers (BASS) have used parts of Unheard Voices in their training.
 - Report referenced in the Department of Health Working Group’s report on Child Exploitation.

Campaigns

MWNUK got involved in campaigning including supporting other organisations.

Mosque Postcard Campaign (February 2013) – MWNUK took part in the global ‘One Billion Rising’ movement to end violence against women and girls, by launching the ‘Mosque Postcard Campaign’. MWNUK sent postcards to 100 mosques across the UK and requested they pledge an action to combat violence and help us to reach out to men and boys. Several mosques including Birmingham Central Mosque and Regents Park Mosque pledged support for the campaign.

Campaigning Training for Youth Activists (May 2013) - MWNUK held a workshop aimed at young activists. Issues covered included awareness raising presentations and videos on domestic violence, sexual violence and forced marriage. The session also included advice on how to campaign and share information. The training was funded by Inspired Cashpoint.

Stop Stoning (June 2013) - MWNUK supported the 'Women Living Under Muslim Laws' (WLUML) tweet-a-thon to stop stoning. The aim of the tweet-a-thon is to raise awareness about the practice of stoning and to get people to sign the petition to the UN to ban stoning.

Race for Life (June 2013) - Vice-Chair Nazmin Akthar supported Cancer Research by participating in the Race for Life in Darlington as part of "Team MWN-UK".

Healthy Relationships (February 2014) - MWNUK joined the ‘One Billion Rising’ campaign to demand an end to violence against women and girls, by creating an awareness raising resource to make discussions on healthy relationships easier.

Sponsored Silence (March 2014) - To coincide with International Women’s Day, MWNUK launched a national ‘Sponsored Silence’ Campaign so women who are silenced can have a voice. We are often contacted by women and girls who are suffering from a range of issues including; domestic / sexual violence, sexual, discrimination, forced marriages, mental health, marriage / divorce problems. They are expected by their families and communities to suffer in silence because of dishonor, shame, and stigma. Therefore the sponsored silence raised funds for projects to allow women to ‘raise their voice’ and ask for support.

Appeal of Lenient Sentence of Paedophile Quran Teacher (March 2014) - Following the unduly lenient sentence of a Blackburn Quran teacher who sexually abused a girl, MWNUK wrote a letter to complain. We also followed this up with a second letter raising concerns about the CPS handling of the case in court. The Attorney General’s office acknowledged and considered our responses, however the case was not referred for appeal. Our concerns were referred to the CPS and we hope this will at least result in improvements in the way child abuse cases are handled in the future.

Partnership Working

- **West Midlands Police (February 2013)** - MWNUK worked in partnership with West Midlands Police and piloted an informal weekly two-hour drop-in session where women and girls could speak to a female police officer in confidence in a safe space.
- **Envision (February 2013)** - MWNUK partnered with Envision (www.envision.org.uk) to work with young MWNUK members from Bordesley Green Girls School in Birmingham, to encourage them in social action. Pupils chose domestic violence as their school campaign, and raised awareness by creating a short interactive play and quiz.
- **Equals (March 2013)** - MWNUK were formerly invited to join the coalition ‘Equals’ steering group made up of several members. The coalition has more than 30 international and national NGOs including Action Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children, Women for Women International, Women’s Aid, UK Feminista, who are striving to bring greater awareness to important issues affecting women worldwide. To mark International Women’s Day, Equals published a letter signed by high profile men and women calling to end violence against women. Signatories include Annie Lennox and Elton John.
- **Coalition of Organisations (March 2013)** - Together with a coalition of organisations, Board Director, Robina Iqbal co-signed a public letter on behalf of MWNUK about the British government's response to the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The groups applauded the government’s engagement with international human rights mechanisms. However they expressed concern at what has been revealed in the latest reporting to the United Nations Committee monitoring CEDAW. Robina continues to contribute towards CEDAW reports.
- **NSPCC** - MWNUK continued to contribute as a member of the Member of NSPCC National Advisory Group on Safeguarding and Muslim Children.
- **Barnardos** – MWNUK have delivered joint events with Barnardos in Birmingham on raising awareness of sexual exploitation and are planning future training together.

Events / Workshops

- **Forced Marriage Event (December 2013)** - MWNUK hosted Samar Minallah, an award winning documentary maker and human rights activist from Pakistan. We played her latest documentary on forced marriages, 'Poles Apart: Chains do not keep Marriages Together,' which focused on individuals who eventually managed to get out and forced marriages amongst the Diaspora communities.
- **Forced Marriage Workshop (December 2013)** - Chair Shaista Gohir delivered an awareness raising workshop on forced marriage at one secondary school in Birmingham to 16 to 18 year old girls.
- **Child Sexual Exploitation Workshop (December 2013)** - Chair Shaista Gohir delivered an awareness raising workshop on forced marriage at one secondary school in Birmingham to 16 to 18 year old girls.
- **FGM Workshop at Secondary School (March 2014)** – Chair Shaista Gohir delivered an awareness raising workshop on female genital mutilation at one secondary school in Birmingham to 15 to 16 year old girls.

Policy Influencing

As already mentioned in the '**Overarching Activities**' section, MWNUK has been working actively to find out about the experiences of Muslim women and girls through our membership, through consultations, workshops and enquiries. We have been channelling these to decision makers by attending and contributing to discussions with senior government officials and Ministers and we have also been submitting reports in response to consultations and inquiries.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING PRIORITY 4

Changing Attitudes to Mental Health

While MWNUK have not been involved in as many activities supporting this objective as we had hoped, MWNUK has planned to be more involved in this very important area of work, beginning with our AGM 2014 themed 'Muslim Women and Mental Health'.

The following activities have also been carried out to support the above aim:

- **Article in Pulse Magazine (February 2013)** - Board Director, Dr. Iram Sattar, who is also a GP, contributed towards an article in the Pulse magazine. Three GPs, including Iram were asked to write an opinion piece about how they would respond to a young Pakistani female attending surgery who had been treated with violence from a male family member for having a relationship with someone of a different faith.
- **Mental Health Workshop (October 2013)** – Board Director Dr. Iram Sattar, held a mental health workshop in London for the Inclusive Mosque Initiative. The event was a success and feedback included gaining knowledge about the different types of mental health issues, the symptoms, stigma, treatment, and how to seek help. The session also touched upon 'jinn' possession.
- **Mental Health First Aid (February 2014)** – As part of ongoing training MWNUK Board and Staff participated in a workshop on the basics of Mental Health First Aid. This was particularly useful because MWNUK are receiving an increasing number of calls from women who are suffering from mental health related problems.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING PRIORITY 5

Changing Attitudes to Women's Leadership

Muslim women across UK, including many of MWNUK members make an impact in a wide range of work. It is important that their contributions are recognised.

The following activities have been carried out to support the above aim:

- **Role Model Exhibitions** - Our Muslim Women Role Model and Big Sister exhibitions have been borrowed by partner organisations throughout the year. They can be previewed on our website: www.mwnuk.co.uk (resources section). We also produced a short video highlighting British Muslim female role models, which may be viewed on our Youtube channel.
- **Featuring Members in Newsletters** - MWNUK newsletters each feature a member and their initiatives. For example, in February 2014 MWNUK Member Shazia Saleem was featured as an inspiring entrepreneur from Luton who has recently launched the UK's first ever halal 'British-favourities' ready-meals business called 'I eat Foods'. Her range is now being stocked at Sainsburys. You can read more about Shazia's journey at www.ieatfoods.com.
- **Capacity Building of Youth Activists (May 2013)** - Partnering with vInspired Cashpoint MWNUK held a campaigning workshop aimed at young activists. The workshop included awareness raising presentations and videos on domestic violence, sexual violence and forced marriage. And also how to effectively campaign and share information.
- **Anthology Project** - In memory of the late Cassandra Balchin (former Chair of MWNUK), MWNUK have created a collection of short stories due for publication in 2014. The aim was to provide a voice to Muslim women and the wider community in a creative way, assist in tackling the very real and pertinent issues that affects us all, and provide a platform to recognise the talent of those within Muslim and/or BME communities and give individuals an opportunity to harness their skills and take them further.

Poetry Event - In June 2013 MWNUK hosted "Hear I Am ~ An Evening of Poetic Narratives" in London. The night consisted of a range of performances from both established and new spoken-word artists and poets

- **Brightest 100 British Bangladeshi's** – Vice Chair Nazmin Akthar attended an awards ceremony in the House of Commons to recognise the Brightest 100 British Bangladeshi's in the UK. Rushnara Ali MP hosted the event and we are pleased that Nazmin was included in this top 100 list and was asked to speak on the importance of participation and engagement and the need for role models to aid progression and empowerment.
- **Network Member Capacity Building** - MWNUK continue to support and capacity build individuals and organisations. For example, MWNUK are currently supporting the development of Nottingham Muslim Women's Network.

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING PRIORITY 6

Supporting Actions to Eliminating Islamophobia & Discrimination

MWNUK have always supported actions to eliminate **Islamophobia** and **Discrimination**, for example, we created a **factsheet** on this topic. This had been downloaded 644 times by end of March 2014. We have also created **positive role model resources** to counter the negative stereotyping of Muslim women including posters, booklets, exhibitions and video.

However, following our Strategic Planning Meeting in February 2014, we felt it was important that this category of work was defined independently as a priority. Over the past year, especially following the Woolwich Attack in May 2013, we received a number of complaints from Muslim women about hostility, harassment and discrimination – including indirect discrimination in the workplace.

Plans are already underway to be more involved in this very important area of work. For example in March 2013, Executive Director Faeza Vaid attended the **Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS) Reference Group** meeting held in Birmingham, and presented discrimination issues affecting Muslim women. One of the issues raised was that not many people know where to go for advice, or of the EASS helpline (0808 800 0082). MWNUK have already started working with EASS to develop a factsheet on this issue in multiple languages.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

MWNUK believes that it is important to share knowledge, experience, best practice and opinions with Muslim women from different contexts. MWNUK has therefore been involved in a number of international initiatives and any travel expenses have been covered by the host organisation.

Musawah

MWNUK has been involved with '**Musawah**' (www.musawah.org), the **global movement** for equality and justice in the Muslim family, since its inception. It also calls for: non-discrimination, justice and dignity as the basis of all human relations; full and equal citizenship for every individual; and marriage and family relations based on principles of equality and justice, with men and women sharing equal rights and responsibilities.

Initially our former Chair, Cassandra Balchin, was a founder member of Musawah. Faeza Vaid has been an active part on Musawah's 'Young Women's Caucus'. And in February 2013, Shaista Gohir was asked to join the 15 member International Advisory Group for Musawah. In April 2013, Shaista joined other activists from Middle East, Africa, and Asia at the Musawah Planning Meeting in Cairo. The planning session included moving the secretariat office from Kuala Lumpur to Cairo, fund raising, communications and building and disseminating knowledge.

United Nations Video Conference

MWNUK Vice Chair, Nazmin Akthar, was invited by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation to participate in a video conference with schools across the globe as part of International Women's Day on 7 March 2013. She spoke to students from schools in Palestine, Jordan, and UAE. The focus of the discussions were on rights of women; topics ranged from the rights of women in Islam and patriarchal misinterpretations, female genital mutilation and violence against women generally, legal pluralism, banning of the hijab as well as the importance of education in promoting rights and combating violence against women.

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Board Director Robina Iqbal is involved with the **UK CEDAW Working Group**, facilitated by the Women's Resource Centre and continues to encourage that Muslim women's voices are included on the Shadow CEDAW report. This report shows where the UK Government needs to improve law, policies and practice to ensure women can fully enjoy their human rights. The Women's Resource Centre sent this shadow report to the UN CEDAW Committee outlining where the UK is not meeting the standards and international obligations required. The Shadow Report also made reference to work carried out by MWNUK. The UK examination by the UN CEDAW Committee took place in July 2013.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

In December, women representing a diverse range of women's groups met in London to discuss the **58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women** that was to take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 10 to 21 March 2014. MWNUK Board member, Robina Iqbal attended the meeting on our behalf. Themes discussed included access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment. Robina will be representing MWNUK at CSW meetings organised by the government or National Alliance of Women's Organisations. We currently do not have the resources to attend UN meetings.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND ACCOUNTS

The overall budget from **April 2012 to March 2013** was **£36 031**. We operated on a similar budget in 2013-2014. In both years **Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust** was the main funder. In the last 12 months, we have seen a rise in the number of private donations.

The majority of expenditure has been on core costs. A summary of accounts is provided on the next page for financial year 2012 to 2013 only and a full set of accounts is available upon request. Financial report for 2013-2014 is yet to be prepared and will be presented at the next Annual General Meeting.

The accountants are:

RUS Chartered Accountants (Registered Auditors and Tax Advisors)
1190A-1192 Stratford Road
Hall Green
Birmingham
B28 8AB

Detailed trading income and expenditure account for year ended 31 March 2013

	2013		2012	
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources				
Grants receivable		35,988		35,195
Banking Interest Receivable		18		20
Other income		25		-
Total income		36,031		35,215
Expenditure				
Costs of running Community Interest activities:				
Grants – Staff - Wages & Salaries	20,533		21,747	
Grants – Staff - Employer’s NIC	1,626		1,812	
Grants – Establishment – Rent & Services	3,000		3,250	
Grants – Establishment – Insurance	295		294	
Grants – Bank Charges	-		8	
Grants – Printing, Postage & Stationery	882		584	
Grants – Professional – Accountancy Fees	1,060		1,633	
Grants – Professional – Auditor Remuneration	-		1,200	
Grants – Professional – Legal Fees	109		51	
Grants – Resource Production (Exhibition, Booklets)	-		1,650	
Grants – Office Expenses – Telephone	283		269	
Grants – Research Costs	1,879		-	
Grants – Website & Upgrades	381		95	
Grants – Depreciation of Computer	74		110	
Grants – Travelling & Accommodation	2,467		2,776	
Grants – Subsistence	72		172	
		32,661		34,451
Total Costs of running Community Interest Activities		32,661		34,451
Governance costs				
Taxation		4		4
Total governance costs		4		4
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year		3,366		760