

Why is Hany El Banna an inspiration to Muslims? Resource sheet

Anti-racist religious education

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Why is Hany El Banna an inspiration to Muslims? How has his work for equality changed the world?



Background knowledge for the teacher

This unit enables pupils to explore the inspirational life of Dr Hany El Banna, a Birmingham British Muslim, who began the charity Islamic Relief in the 1980s. He has seen it grow to be the biggest Western Islamic Development charity, with a turnover of over £100 million a year. The charity helps those in need – not just Muslims, pursuing justice and equity for all, regardless of race.

The unit provides teachers with fresh literacy activities that explore biography through the example of Dr Hany El Banna. The work will enable learners to work in groups and alone, in speaking, listening and writing, on the Islamic beliefs, meanings and values which the story opens up. There are four pages of information and activity for pupils, differentiated for pupils aged 11+. Through increasing levels of challenge, the activities require writing for four different purposes: for information, for discussion, for entertainment and for persuasion.

There is a focus on the ways the charity works for equality, and for humans in need no matter what their race or ethnicity. There is a focus on the ways in which Hany El Banna is a role model within British Islam, and presents a challenge to the casual media stereotypes of Islam too often seen.

Essential Knowledge for the pupil

Pupils will know:

- The story of how Dr Hany El Banna started the charity Islamic Relief in 1985, and how it grew so that it gave away £100 000 000 to help people in need all over the world last year.
- What Muslims believe about charity, generosity and giving and how these beliefs lead to charitable action in a world where many suffer from poverty, poor education and healthcare and emergency disasters
- That Muslims try to follow the teaching of both the Qur'an (scripture) and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), and this leads them to think about how they use their money, time and gifts.
- That Dr Hany El Banna is an inspiring figure to Muslim people in the UK, and that his story might offer inspiration to anyone.

Resources

- This clip shows Prince Charles speaking about Dr Hany El Banna's work at an award ceremony. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYWUHBWxkw>
- Suma Din's excellent book about Dr Hany El Banna's life story is called 'Dr Hany El Banna: A Servant to the World's Poorest People' Kube Publishing, 2011, Series: Muslims in the Modern World. Thanks to Suma Din for her help in preparing these ideas.
- Islamic Relief has a fine website, including some resources that can be very useful in schools. www.islamic-relief.org
- Dr Hany El Banna is on facebook, and children may like to see him talking. <https://www.facebook.com/drhanyelbanna> There are lots of clips to choose from, so select a simple example for your children.

Assessment for 11YOs

The statements below suggest 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding' outcomes from this unit. Adapt them for the age of pupils you are teaching. If necessary adapt the 'e' words to the assessment language of your school.

Emerging

- Retell the outline of Dr Hany El Banna's life story
- Talk thoughtfully about the values and beliefs which made a difference to him.

Expected

- Recognise and talk thoughtfully about the impact of Dr Hany's work on issues of equality.
- Connect the story of Islamic Relief to Muslim beliefs and to their own experience and lives.
- Consider what might make Hany El Banna a good Islamic role model.

Exceeding

- Give a clear account of the Islamic inspiration and equalising impacts of Islamic Relief, using the right words
- Consider and discuss questions about the importance of charity, equality and justice in Muslim life and in the world today.

RME outcomes for pupils in Scotland:

- Through exploring the lives and teachings of significant figures from world religions, I am increasing my knowledge and understanding of their key beliefs. RME 2-04b
- Through investigating and reflecting upon the lives and teachings of significant figures from world religions, and drawing upon moral values as expressed in religious scriptures and other stories, I am beginning to understand how these have influenced the morality of world religions. RME 2-05a



Activity 1: Making a difference.

Make an 8 page booklet in a group of four telling the first part of Dr Hany's story. Give groups of pupils a copy of the '30 Sentences' page below to begin with. Talk through the story and the activity with them, and give each group an 8 page booklet. They can work on the different parts of the booklet using the information on the page. Encourage pupils to discuss their ideas as they go, and focus on quality informative writing. Link to work pupils do in the English curriculum.

Activity 2: Discussion to learn – four issues

In groups of 4, pupils discuss four issues which the charity Islamic Relief faced. They work out answers to the problems for themselves, writing answers onto a A3 copy of page 24. When they have completed the written sheet of responses, then the teacher shares what actually happened, as follows:

1. The name 'Islamic Relief' was selected to describe where the charity came from, and what it would do.
2. Communities get more equal if everybody practices this form of 'self-taxation'. Rich people often stay rich, but the poorest are helped.
3. Islamic Relief accepts donations from anyone, but most people who give are Muslims. They help anyone in need (not just Muslims). They don't proselytise – explain that this word means trying to convert people.
4. The charity is owned by the poor people they serve, not those who donate. Charity workers always try to be close to those in need, listening, not just 'doing things to them'. What matters most? Pleasing God by serving the poor.

Did the children find anything surprising here?

Can they say why they think Islamic Relief has been very successful and grown so large?

Activity 3: 30 Sentence Biography to turn into a class book or gallery

Copy the 30 sentences onto A3 card and cut them up. Each pupil in the whole class will take one of the 30 sentences and a sheet of A4 paper. They each make a picture to show what their sentence is all about. Some are harder than others, so teachers can differentiate the task. When there is a full set, these thirty pages could either be bound together into a class book, or displayed on the wall. If you make a gallery, invite younger pupils to come and hear the story. Three or four pupils in almost every class are great storytellers: get them to practice to do this. You might even scan the 30 pictures into a PowerPoint and do an assembly about Dr Hany El Banna.

Note that some of the sayings of the Prophet and quotes from the Qur'an are included to make links to the whole of Islamic understanding, as well as in relation to prejudice reduction.

Activity 4: Writing to Persuade

Copy the page below for pairs of pupils, and read it together with the class. Connect the tasks to the skills of persuasive writing in the English curriculum.

The questions this task addresses are:

- A. Should the United Nations support a charity based on one religion? (The UN began its support for Islamic Relief in 1993)
- B. Should British Muslim people give their Zakat to Islamic Relief? (Zakat is the third pillar of Islam, charitable giving, based upon giving 2 ½ % to those less fortunate – complex details apply to different kinds of wealth)
- C. Dr Hany El Banna received the OBE from the Queen in 2004 for services to humanitarian causes. (He has also received many other national and international awards for his work)
- D. Islamic Relief collaborates with Christian and other religious charities because they agree about helping the poor, even though their religious ideas are not all the same.

Next steps in learning

Explore with pupils in more detail what the Qur'an teaches e.g.

'And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity. And whatever good you send out before you, you shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees all that you do.' (Qur'an 2:110)

'So establish regular prayer and give regular charity; and obey the Apostle; that you may receive mercy.' (Qur'an 24:56)

'For those who give in charity, men and women, and loan to Allah a beautiful loan, it shall be increased manifold (to their credit) and they shall have (besides) a liberal reward.' (Qur'an 57:18)

In his final sermon at the end of his life the Prophet Muhammad referred to the story of Adam and Eve and said: "There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a non-Arab over an Arab, and no superiority of a white person over a black person or of a black person over a white person, except on the basis of personal piety and righteousness."

Look at some sayings and teachings of Islam about the Ummah (the worldwide community of Muslims), Zakat (the pillar of charitable giving) and wealth and poverty, and consider what difference they would make to life today if everyone followed them. This will include the practices of Zakat in some detail: £1 out of every £40 is given charitably to those less fortunate. **Is the work of Islamic Relief likely to make the world a fairer place for all races? How and why?**



Part One: Write to Inform.

Choose key facts + express them simply in a booklet

<p>Here is all the information you need about Dr Hany El Banna's early life so that you can write an information booklet about him for children 2 years younger than yourselves. Make an 8 page booklet using this information.</p>	<p>Page 1 Choose the title of your booklet</p>
<p>Dr Hany El Banna was the fourth child in his family, born in Cairo, Egypt in 1950. His mum and dad were Muslim people, leaders in their local community, and his dad was a professor of Islamic thought. People called their home 'the house of the nation' because it was always full of other people. Hany's mum was especially careful to look after anyone who others left out. When he had time off from school, Hany liked football and films. He liked Sherlock Holmes as well: reading those stories made London seem an attractive city.</p>	<p>Page 2 Describe and illustrate Hany's early life.</p>
<p>When Hany grew up, he trained to be a doctor. He wanted to help others. In his early 20s, there was a conflict in Egypt. He joined a First Aid group to help those who were hurt. When he qualified to be a doctor, he came to London to work in an NHS hospital. He cried on the plane, because he missed his family so much. He worked in hospitals in Reading, Aberystwyth and Glasgow, before settling in Birmingham. He was a brilliant young doctor, winning a prize for his work to help cancer patients. But one weekend, when he should have been preparing for his exams, he spent the weekend fundraising for refugees in Lebanon. Hany failed the exam. How do you think he felt?</p>	<p>Page 3 Becoming a doctor. Describe what Hany did with his life in his 20s.</p>
<p>He had a difficult decision: should he move to Manchester for an even better job as a doctor, or stay in Birmingham where had friends and was working for charity as well as being a doctor? At the mosque, he prayed a personal prayer: 'Allah, what do you want for my life?' Then he had a dream of himself walking round the Kaaba at Makkah 7 times, like a Muslim pilgrim. But then he noticed the building wasn't the Kaaba, but the hospital in Birmingham. When he woke up, he was sure God had a job for him in Birmingham. Hany stayed in Birmingham. How do you think he felt?</p>	<p>Page 4 A dream that guided his life. Can you show this event on a storyboard with 4 or 6 boxes?</p>
<p>In 1983 there was a terrible famine in Ethiopia and Sudan. Hany flew to East Africa, wanting to help. He met with other doctors there in a five star hotel, but then he went to meet the people whose lives were threatened by the famine. One old man said to Hany 'For Allah's sake, do something for us.' As he flew home, that was the message he could not forget. Hany was determined to do something. What do you think he did?</p>	<p>Page 5 Why did Hany change his life and start a charity? Use this incident to explain.</p>
<p>When he told people of the starving children he had seen, his little nephew fished in his pocket, and brought out 20p he had been saving for chocolate. 'Use this to help these poor people' he told his uncle. 'I don't need the chocolate.' Hany returned to Birmingham thinking about chapter 16 verse 90 of the Qur'an: "God commands justice, the doing of good and generosity." What do you guess he did next?</p>	<p>Page 6 Describe the first donation of 20p in your own words. Why is this an important part of the story?</p>
<p>Outside his mosque, and on road trips to other towns in the UK, Hany raised money to help the famine victims of Sudan. He raised over £5000 in a few months. Working with partners in Sudan, he built a chicken farm where refugees could work to grow food to eat and to sell, bred cattle to help people get back on their feet and set up a school for children who had lost their homes. Dr Hany did not just want to give handouts, but to help people with a 'hand up'. What do you think he meant?</p>	<p>Page 7 Can you create a graphic that shows money coming in from collections and then being spent to help people? Add good labels and captions.</p>
<p>The Qur'an teaches that people who give money to God's cause will see it grow like a stalk of grain from one ear: 'out of a grain grow seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains.' Hany could not imagine when he first received a donation of 20p what would happen. Can you guess what happened next in his story?</p>	<p>Page 8 Use the quote from the Qur'an to finish your book, and add some guesses about what happens next.</p>

Part Two: Write to Discuss: Here are four situations from the story of Dr Hany El Banna to discuss in small groups. When you have decided what answer you want to give, write it down in 2-3 sentences.

<p>Discussion point 1. Name that charity In 1985, Hany and other Muslims from Birmingham set up a new charity so that their fundraising and work to help people in need could grow. The Qur'an says 'Whoever saves a life of one human being it is as though they have saved the life of humanity' (5:32). What would be a good name for their charity? Can you design a logo? Discuss all your ideas and write your name in the box. Draw your designs for a logo.</p>	<p>We think Dr Hany could call his charity:</p> <p>Because:</p> <p>Our idea for a logo is:</p>
<p>Discussion point 2. Money to make a difference One of the 5 Pillars of Islam is called Zakat. It is to do with giving generously from your wealth to help the poor. Every Muslim is asked to give £1 away for every £40 they keep. So if you have £1000 you give away £25. If you have £40 000, you give away £1000. What difference would it make if everybody did this in your town? What could be done with the money which people gave? Make a list of 5 ideas, the best idea at the top.</p>	<p>If everyone gave £1 for every £40 they had to help the poor, then here are 5 things that could change about our town.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
<p>Discussion point 3. In what ways should Dr Hany's charity be Muslim? As Dr Hany's charity grew larger, he needed to think about who they should help, and what they should offer. Should the charity welcome donations not just from Muslims, but other people too? Should they help Muslims, or should they help everyone, whatever their beliefs, if they were in need? And should they spread the Muslim message as they gave out food or medical supplies, or just give the aid? What are your answers to these three questions? Write them carefully into the box.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What donations should be welcomed? 2. Who should be helped? 3. Should the charity spread the Muslim message?
<p>Discussion point 4. How should people who work for a charity live their own lives? Hany knew that as the charity grew, many people would come to work with him and he wanted them to live the life of a charity worker in the best way possible. He wrote a booklet for all his staff and volunteers called 'Grassroots'. He dealt with questions like: Who owns the charity? How should charity workers treat people in need? What matters most in getting the work of the charity done? What do you think he might have said about these questions? Discuss your answers and write them down clearly.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Who owns the charity? B. How should charity workers treat people in need? C. What matters most in getting the work of the charity done?



Part 3: Create a class book, or a gallery of works of art and text, to show the biography of Dr Hany

Thirty Sentences telling the life story of Dr Hany El Banna, A Muslim who changed the world, the founder of Islamic Relief		
1. Over 65 years ago, a little baby boy was born in Cairo, in Egypt. His parents called him Hany.	2. When he was a boy, Hany liked to watch films and play football. He was always a caring person.	3. Hany decided he wanted to become a doctor. He wanted to do a job that helped other people.
4. When Hany grew up he became a doctor at a hospital in Birmingham. He was brilliant at this!	5. Aged 33, Hany visited Sudan for a conference. He was shocked to see victims of famine himself.	6. An old man in the famine in Sudan said to Hany 'For God's sake do something! Help us.' He remembered.
7. Hany told people about the Sudan famine. His nephew gave him 20p. It was the first donation.	8. Dr Hany started collecting money to help famine victims outside mosques in Birmingham.	9. One night, Hany had a dream about the Kaaba at Makkah. He believed God was guiding his life.
10. The Muslim Qur'an says 'God commands justice, the doing of good, generosity.' (Surah 16:90)	11. Hany stood outside the mosque in Birmingham with a collection bucket to help famine victims	12. After a few months Hany and his friends had collected more than £5000 for food aid.
13. Islamic Relief was set up by Hany in 1985. It has grown. Today it spends £100million per year.	14. Muslims give to help the less fortunate, £1 out of £40. It's called Zakat, the 3 rd Pillar of Islam.	15. Dr Hany wanted the charity to help anyone in need, not just Muslims. He wanted fairness for all!
16. The Qur'an says that saving the life of one needy person is like saving the whole world.	17. Dr Hany says 'I don't own Islamic Relief. It belongs to all the poor people who need it.'	18. Dr Hany says 'it is important to hold hands with the people we serve, not just to send money.'
19. Islamic Relief's work in over 20 different countries is supported by the United Nations.	20. Islamic Relief gives food, healthcare, education – and love – to people who need it most.	21. In a year, Islamic Relief supports more than 27000 orphaned children. It's for all, not just for Muslims.
22. No one is a true believer until you love for your brothers and sisters what you love for yourself.	23. Islamic Relief works with partners from other religions in harmony to help the poor.	24. In 1993 Dr Hany visited 40 American cities in 20 days to raise funds for Islamic Relief.
25. Dr Hany is famous for not being proud or thinking anyone is too unimportant to talk to.	26. In 2004, the Queen gave Dr Hany the medal called the OBE to praise all he had achieved.	27. In 2008 Dr Hany retired from Islamic Relief, but he still leads the Humanitarian Forum.
28. Dr Hany wrote: 'Let the volcano bring ashes. We will bring the fire of unity.'	29. Dr Hany wrote: 'Let the sky be shadowed with dark clouds. We will bring the light of partnership.'	30. Here are comments from our class about what we learned from Dr Hany's inspiring life.



<p>Part 4: Write to Persuade: Use these ten information points about the growth of Islamic Relief, led by Dr Hany El Banna. Here is a challenge: can you choose and tackle two of these tasks to write persuasively? Use the information about Dr Hany el Banna's life and the work of the charity he started, Islamic Relief.</p>	<p>Persuasive writing activities: work with a partner and choose two.</p>
<p>As Dr Hany's charity work increased, they were able to help people in many different nations where there had been war. Since the 1980s Islamic Relief provided care, food, health supplies and education in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Chechnya, Indonesia, Palestine, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen (to name but a few). Can you find these countries on a map?</p>	<p>1. Persuade the United Nations that they should support Islamic Relief. Write a short letter explaining that the charity doesn't want to convert people to Islam, but just to help those most in need.</p>
<p>Islamic Relief took its inspiration from the Muslim scriptures, the Qur'an and from sayings of the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]. These sayings, called 'hadith' included this one: "The Holy Prophet said: No one is a true believer until he desires for his brother or sister that which he desires for himself." So Islamic Relief always aims to provide basic human needs for all people, whether they are Muslim or not.</p>	<p>2. Persuade Muslims that one of the best ways to pay their Zakat is to give it to Islamic Relief. Create a simple poster to put in a mosque during Ramadan inviting people to give their Zakat to the charity. Tell them how this will help others, and put the Prophet's teaching into action.</p>
<p>In another Hadith: "The Holy Prophet said: Allah has no mercy for him who has no mercy for his fellows." To Dr Hany, this means that everyone in need should be treated with mercy. Fairness comes first. No prejudice allowed. That is why Islamic Relief has especially cared for orphans. In 2010, the charity arranged sponsorship for 27 000 orphans in over 20 different countries.</p>	<p>3. Persuade the Prime Minister. To receive the medal called the 'Order of the British Empire', a person's supporters must write letters to the Prime Minister, who will read all the letters and maybe recommend that the Queen gives the award. Write a letter saying why Dr Hany deserves this award.</p>
<p>Zakat is the Third Pillar of Islam. Good Muslims choose to give £1 for every £40 they have to help the poor. Many Muslims give their Zakat to Islamic Relief. A special gift, about £7 for each person who has enough food, is given during Ramadan. This money is called Fitrana, and it means that Islamic Relief's income in Ramadan is the highest of the year.</p>	<p>4. Persuade a Christian development charity that working with Islamic Relief is a good idea. Write a note to say why it might be good for Christians and Muslims to work together to help the poorest people on earth.</p>
<p>The Prophet Muhammad also said 'Every act of goodness is charity.' So Islamic Relief benefits from the kindness of millions who give money, but also from thousands who volunteer. You don't have to be rich to give your time!</p>	
<p>The Prophet Muhammad also said "A kind word or even a smile is a form of charity." Whenever Dr Hany visits a place where people are suffering, then he doesn't just meet the bigwigs and the powerful people. Instead he sits with the refugees or the orphans and holds hand with them. He says 'hold their hands. Feel their suffering. They are your brothers and sisters.'</p>	
<p>In 1999, Islamic Relief began to work with Christian agencies like CAFOD and Christian aid. Dr Hany was sure that they could help each other, and that each partner could work from their own religion, but in harmony with another faith. Islamic Relief helped CAFOD to work in Afghanistan, where its contacts were good. And CAFOD helped Islamic Relief to work in Honduras, where most people are Catholic.</p>	
<p>Islam links the human search for God to the service of the poor. One Hadith says: "The Holy Prophet said: Look for me among the weak ones." Dr Hany feels closest to God not when he goes to a palace or a parliament, but when he is with orphaned children or refugees who have fled from their homes because of war or violence.</p>	
<p>Dr Hany says to his volunteers: "When you see an orphan, that child is related to you. Forget race, religion, skin colour. They need you to help them." It is this determination to help wherever need is greatest that has seen Islamic Relief grow over the last 40 years to a charity that spends over £100 million to serve the poorest people on earth each year.</p>	
<p>Dr Hany is not overwhelmed by the suffering seen in the world. He once wrote <i>'Let the volcano bring ashes. We will bring the fire of unity. Let the sky be shadowed with dark clouds. We will bring the light of partnership.'</i></p>	



"LIVE FOR A DREAM TO BECOME A SERVANT FOR HUMANITY."

DR. HANY EL-BANNA



"We have a duty to give charity to our neighbours, to our local Muslim community as well as the Muslim community abroad. By giving to ISB, we can fulfil two thirds of that responsibility!"

The ISB is very important; 20 years ago it started to work on developing British Muslim communities.

This work is really important. Please support it. Charity Begins at Home!"

Dr Hany El Banna OBE

ISB Ramadan Campaign