

Why is Hany El Banna an inspiration to Muslims?



Background knowledge for the teacher

- Dr Hany El Banna, a British Muslim from Birmingham, began the charity Islamic Relief in the 1980s.
- Islamic Relief has grown to become the biggest Western Islamic development charity, with a turnover of over £100 million a year.
- *Zakah* – charitable giving – is the third Pillar of Islam, and is based upon giving 2.5 per cent to those less fortunate; complex details apply to different kinds of wealth.
- Muslims are taught through the Qur'an and *Hadith* that they should be generous and charitable: '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, simplified).

This unit provides teachers with fresh RE that supports English and literacy across the curriculum. The activities explore biography through the example of Dr Hany El Banna. The work will enable children to work in groups and alone in speaking, listening and writing on the Islamic beliefs, meanings and values that the story opens up.

There are four pages of information and activity for pupils; the activities are of varied difficulty for 7–11s. Through increasing levels of challenge, the activities require writing for three different purposes: for information, for discussion and for persuasion. There is a class activity for pupils to produce an illustrated life story of Dr Hany.

The work in this unit could support those using the RE Today scheme of work (unit U2.6, 'What does it mean to be a Muslim?').



Assessment for 7–11s

The statements below suggest 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding' outcomes from this unit for 9-year-olds. 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 (simply) the outline of Dr Hany El Banna's life story.
- Talk thoughtfully, when prompted, about the values and beliefs that made a difference to him.

Expected

- Recognise and talk thoughtfully about the impact of Dr Hany's work.
- Connect the story of Islamic Relief to Muslim beliefs and to their own experience and lives.

Exceeding

- Give a clear account of the Islamic inspiration and impact of Islamic Relief, using the right words.
- Consider and discuss questions about the place of charity in Muslim life and in the world today.

This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 2–04b and 2–05a.



eResources

Go to www.natre.org.uk/inspiring-re/ to access the resources below.

- A link to a site to purchase Suma Din's excellent book *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.
- The Islamic Relief website.
- Dr Hany El Banna is on Facebook – select a simple clip of him talking for your children.

Members are able to download extra resources to support this unit:

- A PowerPoint presentation to support the teaching of this unit.
- The information sheets on pp. 24–27.



Essential knowledge for the pupil

Pupils will know:

- Dr Hany El Banna started the charity Islamic Relief in 1985
- last year Islamic Relief gave away over £100 million to help people in need all over the world
- Muslims practise various forms of charity, generosity and giving, including *zakah*, one of the Five Pillars of Islam
- 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
- Dr Hany El Banna is an inspiring figure to Muslim people in the UK, and his story might offer inspiration to anyone

Activity
1

Making a difference

Explain to the pupils that they are going to hear about somebody who many people consider to be inspirational.

Arrange pupils into small groups. Each group needs to have an eight-page booklet that can be made from two pieces of A4 paper. Give each group a copy of 'Writing to inform' on p. 24.

Talk through the story and the activity with the class. Set the task:

- create an information booklet about Dr Hany El Banna and his early life for children two years younger than you are

Remind each group to:

- discuss ideas as they go along
- on each page, as well as completing the task set, add writing that will tell the story to readers
- apply success criteria for successful information writing

Activity
2

Discussing the issues

Arrange pupils into groups of four. Each group is set the task of responding to four issues that the charity Islamic Relief had to solve whilst it was being set up.

Each group needs an A3 version of 'Charity in Islam – discussing the issues' on p. 25. In their groups, pupils discuss the issues one by one. Each group must work out answers to the problems for themselves, and write their answers onto their A3 copy of p. 25.

Once each group has completed the written sheet of responses, discuss each group's response and share what was actually decided by the charity using the paragraphs below.

A. Name that charity

The name 'Islamic Relief' was selected to describe where the charity came from, and what it would do.

B. Money to make a difference

Communities get more equal if everybody practises this form of 'self-taxation': rich people often stay rich, but the poorest are helped.

C. In what ways should Dr Hany's charity be Muslim?

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'.

D. How should people who work for a charity live their own lives?

The charity is owned by the poor people it serves, not those who donate. Charity workers always try to be close to those in need, listening and not just 'doing things to them'. What matters most? Islamic Relief believes it is pleasing God by serving the poor.

Discuss with the pupils:

- Is anything surprising here?
- Why do you think Islamic Relief has been very successful and grown so large?

Activity
3

30-sentence biography

Explain to the pupils that as a class they are going to create a biography for Dr Hany El Banna. Share the story of Dr Hany in more detail by reading pupils the sentences from the sheet on p. 26.

Discuss who the audience for your biography is going to be:

- younger pupils
- parents
- visitors to your local library

Discuss the form you are going to present your information in:

- a gallery
- a bound booklet
- something else?

Copy the 30 sentences onto A3 card and cut them up. Give each pupil in the class one of the 30 sentences and a sheet of A4 paper. Ask each pupil to make a picture to show what their sentence is all about. Some are harder than others, so teachers can differentiate the task.

Invite your chosen audience to come and hear the story. Three or four pupils in almost every class are great storytellers: get them to practice doing this.

You might even scan the 30 pictures into PowerPoint and do an assembly about Dr Hany.

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.

Activity 4

Writing to persuade

Arrange pupils to work in pairs. Give each pair a copy of p. 27 and read it together with the class.

Introduce the tasks (but not the answers shared below) and discuss the skills of persuasive writing, learnt in English, that will need to be applied to this task.

The questions this task addresses are as follows:

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 *zakah* to Islamic Relief?

Zakah – charitable giving – is the third Pillar of Islam, and is based upon giving 2.5 per cent to those less fortunate; complex details apply to different kinds of wealth.

C. Should Dr Hany receive an OBE?

Dr Hany El Banna received an 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. Should charities from other religions work with Islamic Relief?

Islamic Relief collaborates with other religious charities because they agree about helping the poor, even though their religious ideas are not all the same.

Ask the pupils to respond to two of the tasks described below. Either allocate these to pupils or make them available for pupils to choose from.

Persuade the United Nations that it 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.

Persuade Muslims that one of the best ways to pay their *zakah* is to give it to Islamic Relief. Create a simple poster to put in a mosque during Ramadan inviting people to give their *zakah* to the charity. Tell them how this will help others, and put the Prophet's teaching into action.

Persuade the Prime Minister. To receive the honour 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.

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.



Next steps in learning

Explore with pupils in more detail what the Qur'an teaches. For example:

'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, simplified.)

'So establish regular prayer and give regular charity; and obey the Apostle; that you may receive mercy.' (Qur'an 24.56, simplified.)

'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, simplified.)

Look at some sayings and teachings of Islam about the *Ummah* (the worldwide community of Muslims), *zakah* (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 *zakah* in some detail: £1 out of every £40 is given charitably to those less fortunate.

Write to inform

Choose key facts and express them simply in a booklet. Read the information on the left and create the page of your book as described on the right.

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.

Hany, the fourth child in his family, was 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 playing football and watching films. He liked Sherlock Holmes as well.

When Hany grew up, he got married and trained to be a doctor. He now has five children. 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 many places before settling in Birmingham. He was a brilliant 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?

He had a difficult decision: should he move to Manchester for an even better job as a doctor, or stay in Birmingham, where he 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?' He had a dream of himself walking round the Ka'bah at Makkah seven times, like a Muslim pilgrim. He noticed the building wasn't the Ka'bah, but the hospital in Birmingham. When he awoke, he was sure God had a job for him in Birmingham. Hany stayed in Birmingham.

How do you think he felt?

In 1983 there was a 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?

When he talked about the starving children he had seen, his nephew fished in his pocket and brought out 20 p 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 Qur'an 16.90 (simplified): 'God commands justice, the doing of good and generosity.'

What do you guess he did next?

Outside his mosque, and on road trips to other towns in the UK, Hany raised money to help the famine victims. He raised over £5,000 in a few months. Working with partners in Sudan, he built a chicken farm where refugees could work to grow food to eat and sell and breed cattle to help people get back on their feet, and set up a school for children who had lost their homes. Hany did not just want to give handouts, but to help people with a 'hand up'.

What do you think he meant?

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 grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains' (2.261, simplified). Hany could not imagine when he first received a donation of 20 p what would happen.

Can you guess what happened next?

Page 1

Choose the title of your booklet.

Page 2

Describe and illustrate Hany's early life.

Page 3

Becoming a doctor. Describe what Hany did with his life in his 20s.

Page 4

A dream that guided his life. Show this event on a storyboard with four or six boxes.

Page 5

Why did Hany change his life and start a charity? Use this incident to explain.

Page 6

Describe the first donation of 20 p in your own words. Why is this an important part of the story?

Page 7

Create a graphic that shows money coming in from collections and then being spent to help people. Add good labels and captions.

Page 8

Use the quote from the Qur'an to finish your book, and add some guesses about what happens next.

Charity in Islam – discussing the issues

Here are four situations from the story of Dr Hany El Banna. When you have decided what answer your group wants to give, write the answer in two or three clear sentences in the right-hand column.

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, simplified).

- 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.

We think Dr Hany could call his charity:

Because:

Our idea for a logo is:

2. Money to make a difference

One of the Five Pillars of Islam is called *zakah*. 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 £1,000 you give away £25. If you have £40,000, you give away £1,000.

- What difference would it make if everybody did this where you live?
- What could be done with the money that people gave?
- Make a list of five ideas, with the best idea at the top.

If everyone gave £1 for every £40 they had to help the poor, here are five things that could change about where we live:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3. In what ways should Dr Hany's charity be Muslim?

As 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?
- 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.

1. What donations should be welcomed?

2. Who should be helped?

3. Should the charity spread the Muslim message?

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. 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.

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?

30 sentences telling the life story of Dr Hany El Banna, 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.	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.	5. Aged 33, Hany visited Sudan for a conference. He was shocked to see victims of famine himself.	6. Hany started collecting money outside mosques in Birmingham to help famine victims.
7. One night, Hany had a dream about the Ka'bah at Makkah. He believed God was guiding his life.	8. An old man in the famine in Sudan said to Hany, 'For Allah's sake, do something to help us.'	9. Hany told people about the Sudan famine. His nephew gave him 20 p. It was the first donation.
10. The Muslim Qur'an says, 'God commands justice, the doing of good, generosity' (16.90, simplified).	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 £5,000 for food aid.
13. Islamic Relief was set up by Hany in 1984. It has grown. Today it spends £100 million per year.	14. Muslims give £1 out of every £40 to help the less fortunate. It's called <i>zakah</i> , the third Pillar of Islam.	15. Hany wanted the charity to help anyone in need, not just Muslims.
16. The Qur'an says that saving the life of one needy person is like saving the whole world.	17. Hany says, 'I don't own Islamic Relief. It belongs to all the poor people who need it.'	18. 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 27,000 orphaned children.
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 Hany visited 40 American cities in 20 days to raise funds for Islamic Relief.
25. Hany is famous for not being proud or thinking anyone is too unimportant to talk to.	26. In 2004, the Queen gave Hany the honour called the OBE to recognise all he had achieved.	27. In 2008 Hany retired from Islamic Relief, but he still leads the Humanitarian Forum.
28. Hany wrote: 'Let the volcano bring ashes. We will bring the fire of unity.'	29. 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 Hany's inspiring life.

Writing to persuade

The challenge: choose and tackle two of the tasks given by your teachers to write persuasively. Use the ten information points about Dr Hany El Banna's life and the work of the charity he started, Islamic Relief.



As Hany's charity work increased, it was able to help people in many different nations where there had been war. Since the 1980s Islamic Relief has 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?

The Prophet Muhammad also said, 'A kind word or even a smile is a form of charity.' Whenever Hany visits a place where people are suffering, 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 has said, 'Hold their hands. Feel their suffering. They are your brothers and sisters.'

(Based on Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Book 27, Hadith 62)

Islamic Relief took its inspiration from the Muslim scriptures, the Qur'an and from sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. 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.

(Based on Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 2, Hadith 6)

In 1999, Islamic Relief began to work with Christian agencies like CAFOD and Christian Aid. 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.

Another *Hadith* says, 'The Holy Prophet said: Allah has no mercy for him who has no mercy for his fellows.' To Hany, this means that everyone in need should be treated with mercy. That is why Islamic Relief has cared for orphans in particular. In 2010, the charity arranged sponsorship for 27,000 orphans in more than 20 different countries.

(Based on Sahih Muslim, Book 43, Hadith 88)

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.' 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.

(Based on Abu Dawud, Book 1, Hadith 272)

Zakah is the third Pillar of Islam. Most Muslims choose to give £1 to help the poor for every £40 they have. Many Muslims give their *zakah* 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 during Ramadan is the highest of the year.

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 each year to serve the poorest people on Earth.

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!

(Based on Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 1, Hadith 134)

Hany is not overwhelmed by the suffering seen in the world. He once wrote, '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.'