



Case Studies on Faith-Based Social Enterprises

An Oxford University Innovation Partnership Study Visit Programme

**A report by
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Best wishes

Charles Oham



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1 Executive Summary

This social enterprise study forms a part of the Oxford University Innovation Partnership Study Visit Programme. It outlines an exploratory inquiry conducted on Faith-Based Social Enterprises (FBSEs). The project, a pilot, focused on social entrepreneurship activity operated by five religious organisations based in London and Oxford.

The findings from the study reveal that the FBSEs were actively engaging in a range of social enterprise initiatives in their local communities (Cafes, Social Housing, Community Hall Hire and Farming). From the discussion with respondents and the results; funding, skills and awareness of opportunities (research and capacity building), and managing the venture are critical inputs required by FBSEs, it followed that some FBSEs in this study were unaware that they were involved in social entrepreneurship. As a result of this, there was a lack of awareness of the concept of social entrepreneurship by the FBSEs in this cohort. Diagnosing the needs and building the capacity of this group of social enterprises will strengthen the social enterprise collective, and the social economy, thereby, increasing social impact.

2 Background

Faith and entrepreneurship research has been an area of interest for over one hundred years as a result of the agency of faith on entrepreneurs (Brammer et al. 2007; Carswell and Rolland, 2007; Cavanagh, 1999; Davidsun and Wiklund, 1996; Gotsis and Kortezi 2008; Gibbs and Ilkan, 2008; Ibrahim and Angelidis, 2005; Kauanui et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2003; Morrison, 2000; Malloch, 2005; Millman et al, 1999; Moris and Schindehutte, 2005; Neal et al., 1999; King-Kauanui et al., 2008; Pearce et al., 2010; Chapel, 1993;). A critical phase was attained with Max Weber's seminal work on the "Protestant Work Ethic" in 1905. Furthermore, a nascent area of inquiry known as "Spiritual Capital" is an emerging field of study that considers the advantages of faith on entrepreneurial efficacy (Malloch, 2005 & 2008; Oham, 2013). Social enterprises are a part of the entrepreneurial spectrum and have been under intense focus over the last 20 years (Nicholls, 2006). Moreover, within the social enterprise subgroup exist social enterprises engaged in trading activity as a result of faith and a broader view on capitalist economic thought. They are referred to as Faith-Based Social Enterprises (Dinham, 2007; Oham, 2013; Yunnus, 2006). Furthermore, many social entrepreneurs have stated that their faith and the support from Faith-based groups such as churches and mosques were invaluable in seeing them through in starting their social enterprise initiatives (British Council,

2015). Therefore, a link between faith and social entrepreneurship exist and there is the potential to build capacity and stimulate partnerships that will invariably increase social impact in society. The role of faith in others spheres of society has received critical attention by policy makers in the UK and the USA (Dinham, 2007). The interest in faith and entrepreneurship is set to grow much more given these facts.

3 Aims & Objectives

This study sought to explore “How building the capacity of FBSEs could strengthen social enterprise support programmes for the wider social enterprise community”. This is because different motivations for entrepreneurship exist leading to a spectrum of social entrepreneurs possessing unique but viable homogenous group profiles. An understudied social entrepreneurial group that contributes significantly to society are FBSEs. The case study identified and engaged with Faith based social Entrepreneurs/Enterprises to ascertain how best to support them in building their capacity.

Therefore, the aim of this report is to disseminate relevant findings on FBSEs studied, and to discuss the potential impact an engagement with FBSEs could have on social enterprise development and social impact.

4 Methodology

The report builds on the review of literature of previous studies on FBSEs using secondary research and other qualitative approaches such as the analysis of religious documents and organisational literature which included; church reports, organisational websites, annual accounts and brochures. This was combined with case studies involving an average of two hour discussions and observations with key leaders in five FBSEs engaged in a range of trading activities (hall hire, community centres, cafés and farming). The approach was adopted in order to engage with FBSEs unaware of research activity and capacity building support. FBSEs' that participated in this study were:

- A Christian social enterprise founded by a vicar based in London
- A church-led social enterprise café in East London
- An evangelical church community project in Oxford
- A church-run community hall in North London, and;



- An Islamic agricultural project based in Kenya with headquarters in London.

These samples were chosen based on their faith based approach coupled with a more formalised trading objective. They fulfilled the definitional objectives of social entrepreneurship.

The case study framework and the Theory of Change logic have been applied to analyse the data.

5 Parameters of the Research

The project sought to explore “how building the capacity of FBSEs could strengthen social enterprise support programmes for the social enterprise community.” Therefore, it is pertinent that the study identified and engaged with FBSEs to ascertain how best to offer support in building their capacity. Organisations selected for this study had a history of formalised trading operations that meets the broader definitions of social entrepreneurship (trading for a social purpose and ploughing back the profits that purpose). Faith based organisations not involved in social entrepreneurship (coordinated trading activity) were excluded from this study. This approach gave the study the required focus.



6 What are Faith-Based Social Enterprises?

There is no clearly defined consensus on what a FBSE is, in fact, there is no solely agreed definition on the term social enterprise too (Peattie and Morley, 2009). However, the term “Faith-based”, connotes that a social enterprise is being run by a religious group or a person of a particular faith persuasion. On a broader level, a social enterprise is any business primarily set up for a social purpose whose profits are ploughed back to further the organisations objectives (Burns, 2011).

FBSEs are social businesses that trade for social purposes. However, the term social purpose is loosely used to include trading for a somewhat spiritual purpose too (Oham, 2013). For example, a church initiative to create and run a community centre from its building in order to generate income to cover its overheads and to engage with its community can be classified as a FBSE. In this case the income generated is being ploughed back to fulfil its spiritual and social objectives. Within the Church of England, one push factor for social entrepreneurship was to sustain its spiritual work in the midst of a dwindling resource base that resulted from poor investment decisions and significant losses by the Church Commissioners (Foster, 2006). This push factor is not confined to a particular church denomination or faith but many faiths. Therefore, the model of faith-based social entrepreneurship is more nuanced than it seems since the social objective of assisting people by disrupting social disequilibrium is also a spiritual objective. It is important that stakeholders understand this unique group of entrepreneurs (clergy, parishioners and volunteers) as they are a part and parcel of the social enterprise family. An understanding of FBSEs’ will add value to the social enterprise sector and society at large by increasing social impact.

Just like other social enterprises, FBSEs face generic challenges such as financial constraints and a lack of management and enterprise skills due to the fact that they are set up and driven by passion and social need (Peattie and Morley, 2009). However, there are also unique challenges that these organisations face, they include, bias, stereotyping and a lack of specialist training and development inputs (Dinham, 2007; Oham; 2013). On the other hand, these challenges present opportunities for the design of effective training and capacity building programmes for FBSEs, which can lead to an increase in social impact for the entire social enterprise community.



6.1 Originality and Value:

The study on FBSEs is a fairly nascent line of inquiry that holds great potential in terms of the extensive and untapped resources (assets and human resources) that could be put to good use in tackling the complex social challenges around the world. Furthermore, segmenting and engaging with FBSEs as a homogenous group that can be supported with relevant interventions will build critical mass for the social enterprise community. Thus, the study adds value as we attempt to understand FBSEs in order to promote diversity with the range of support offered by social enterprise business development organisations.



7 Case studies:

7.1 FBSE1: Community centre project:

FBSE1 is a new building project that will house a church, a community centre and a hub for social enterprises in a suburb of Oxford. The key strands of this project will be to improve maternal health in the community, run community development projects, improve educational objectives and support refugees in a deprived area of Oxford.

The church with a long history of community development is currently based in a building it acquired circa 1805. Decades ago the church ran a café within the building; this links its history with its present intentions demonstrating a revival of its entrepreneurial orientation. The community church has outgrown its current property and plans to acquire an unused building in the area. The proposed centre will address the critical needs of a highly deprived area in Oxford affected by high levels of unemployment and poverty. Plans are in place to add a range of community projects such as childcare provision, a café and an employment training service. The project will be run as a social enterprise; this should sustain the activities for the benefit of the whole community.

Key points:

- The historical legacy of the church culture in terms of social entrepreneurship is manifesting in the present. It also reflects the unchanging social challenges that are entrenched in the area requiring long-term social innovation strategies to alleviate poverty and inequalities in the community.
- The leadership team are ambitious with their fundraising strategy to start the social enterprise that will fulfil their spiritual and social objectives.
- Volunteers are deploying their professional skills and social capital to resource the project

7.2 FBSE 2: Church led social enterprise cafe:

FBSE2 is a community café initiated and run by a group of churches in a major new housing development in East London. The property developers and the local authority as part of their social clause (section 106) set up a community development trust bequeathed with an endowment fund. The Trust activities will be funded by the interest generated from the

endowment and rents from two shop units, and a community hall. The vicar of the parish and the estate chaplain sit on the Trust's board, they recognised the need to build community cohesion in an estate of varied socioeconomic classifications. They proposed using one of the Trust's shop units as a cafe. The vicar and the estate chaplain were able to convince the board to give the Church of England parish one of the units to run as a café on behalf of the community and local group of churches. The idea was for the churches to demonstrate their commitment to the community by social action. The board agreed to this idea and allowed usage of the shop unit for a café on a rent-free basis.

With no grants and funding for start-up of the café, donations, resources and volunteers were solicited from a federation of local churches in the area. A total of about four thousand pounds was raised for start-up. Currently, they are breaking even with a monthly income of three thousand two hundred pounds (£3200.00). The café is heavily reliant on volunteers and a few flexible staff that they pay a fair wage of £10.00 per hour. However, they encourage members of partnering churches to volunteer, if they can afford to do so. The café was closed during the month of August 2015 to review the business model and consider whether it wants to continue in its existing form or incorporate other operational models. A lack of volunteers and footfall by customers are the critical challenges it faces.

Key points:

- To date, the cafe has not received any grants or loans but is resourced by the local churches. The management team of the café have also used their social capital (trust, networks and relationships to get many concessions from stakeholders.
- FBSE2 has not been able to compete with the major chains in the area, however, they have understood their strengths and their unique selling proposition which is being a child friendly community café. For example, a play area for parents and toddlers has been created. Also, on busy days, parents have space to put their buggies to one side of the café which is uncommon with other cafés.
- Social capital has been used to resource this café demonstrating how social enterprise initiatives can be started by partnerships and collaborations.
- Capacity building is a critical resource need for FBSE2; they have not exploited other avenues of sustaining the social enterprise that has attracted so much goodwill from stakeholders.



7.3 FBSE 3: Church community centre

FBSE3, is a community centre run by the local church for the community. The church had a declining and elderly congregation coupled with high overheads required to maintain an old building. As a result of this situation, the board sold some part of their land and the church hall and reinvested the funds in modernising the church building. It included replacing the pews and movable chairs, thereby, turning the church into a multipurpose hall for the community. The hall is hired out for a number of community activities each week except on Sundays when it is used for worship. Weekly activities include a dance class that trains over fifty students a week; several scout groups (Cubs, Beavers, Brownies and Guides), Yoga and exercise classes, several lunch clubs, and a parents and toddlers club. FBSE3 has also professionalised their hiring system by securing adequate insurance, and developing a robust hire, and health and safety policy that customers must agree to before use of the hall is granted. This trading activity using existing resources has led to an increase in income and the sustainability of the churches primary objective (being a worship centre). From the information provided in Table 1, the column designated lettings generated the highest proportion of income; this is actually the social enterprise function of hiring out the church facility for a range of activities. The key contact in the organisation did not think they were engaged in social entrepreneurship possibly as a result of a lack of understanding about this business model. However, the contact was keenly interested in the outcome of the study and ways in which they could access business development support.

Key points:

- Committed work ethic of the volunteers most of whom have retired
- Highly effective and efficient in managing their assets and resources
- Engaging with wider sections of the community
- A need for capacity building to consolidate on their social enterprise activity e.g. developing a marketing strategy.



Table 1: A quarterly comparison of income generation activity for FBSE3 - January- March 2014-15

	2015	2014
FWO	£4,512.45	£4,469.90
Plate	£540.77	£449.28
Donations and fundraising	£319.95	£375.00
Friday coffee	£221.00	£300.00
Lettings	£6,715.75	£7897.50
New Year Party	£437	
Total Income	£12,746.93	£13,491.68

N.B.: Lettings is the social enterprise function of running the community centre

7.4 FBSE4: A Christian social enterprise:

FBSE4 is a social enterprise that provides a range of services in the local community, the services includes housing, clothes recycling, charity shops and cafes. All the profits generated by the social enterprise chains are ploughed back to fulfil the objectives of the social enterprise (please see Table, 4) which is “for the advancement of the Christian faith through teaching and releasing people’s skills for work , and the advancement of education, and the relief of poverty in needy circumstances”. The social enterprise was founded in 1997 by Mr A (anonymised) after leaving his vocation as a priest. He started an independent social enterprise with a Christian ethos. Although, not directly attached to any church, it has a team of practising Christians and ministers of religion that are on the board or work for the social enterprise in some capacity. The organisation actively works with local churches in the area. It was as a result of its engagement with the local churches that its social housing arm was initiated. The social housing arm now forms a large part of its offering in the organisation (see Figure 1). FBSE4 has grown over the years and at one time employed up to a 100 people in operations spanning from furniture warehousing, plastic recycling, dress-making facility, chain of cafés to social housing (see Table 2-4 and Figure 1). Having downsized by laying off staff and some unsustainable arms of its business due to the last recession, FBSE4 exist as a smaller version of itself generating a turnover of about half a million pounds compared to three million pounds in the past.

Table 2: FBSE4, Sources of Income in 2014 (FBSE4, Annual Accounts, 2014)

FBSE4 Income Sources	Income (£)
Café	30,933
Shop	3,803
Housing	266,187
Clothes Recycling	7,639
Donations	75,657
Investments	65
Other	1,848
Total income	403,285
Reserves	142,434

Table 3: Showing Percentage of Income Breakdown in 2014 (FBSE4, Annual Accounts, 2014)

FBSE4, Social Enterprises/ Income Sources	Percentage %
Café	7.6
Shop	0.94
Housing	66
Clothes Recycling	1.8
Donations	18.7
Investments	0.016
Other	0.4

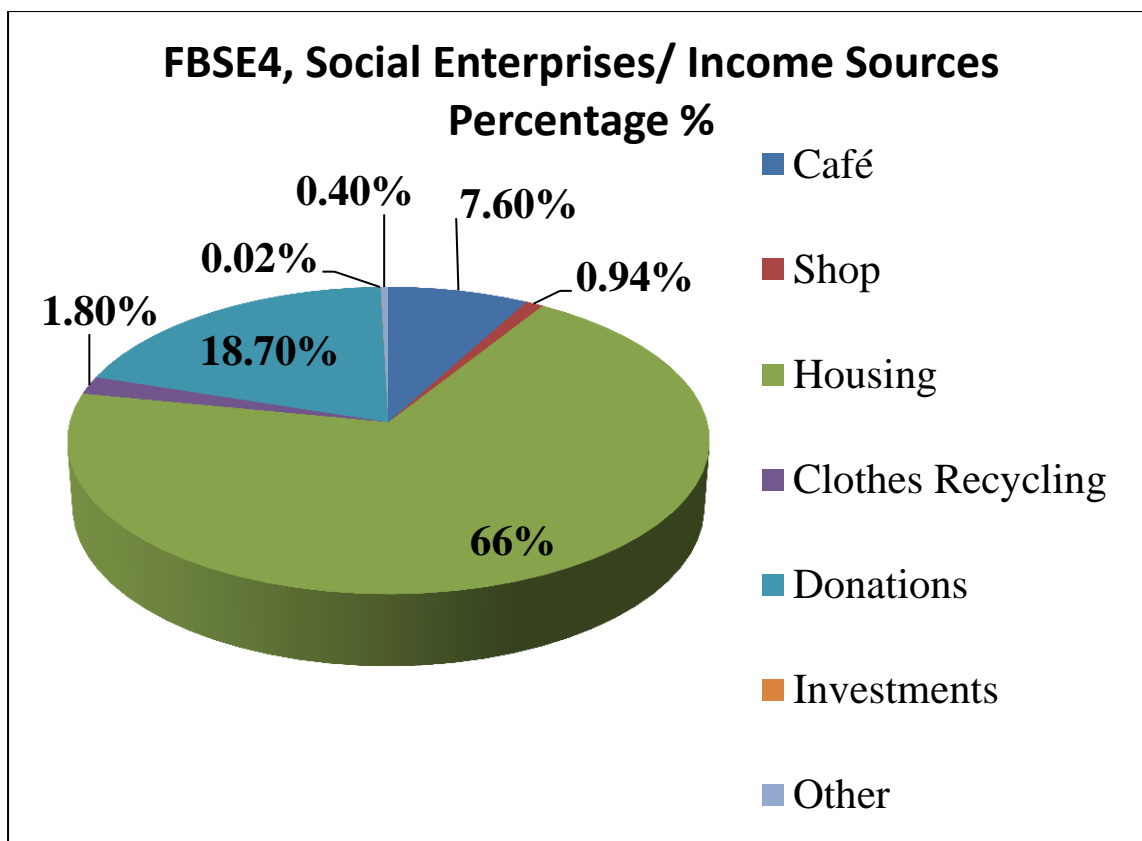


Figure 1: Pie Chart Showing Percentage of Income Breakdown in 2014 (FBSE4, Annual Accounts, 2014)

Table 4: Social Impact: Outputs of FBSE4 in 2014 (FBSE 4, Annual Report 2014)

	Women	Children	Men	Total
Support Group Vulnerable Women(No recourse to public funds)	14	15	2	31
Volunteering				9
Work Placements	31	8(secondary)		31
Employment Support				15
Housing and Benefits Support	14	15	30	37
Specialist Training				6
Mental Health Volunteers				3
Asylum Seekers				2
Total interventions				134

Key points:

- The organisation is being run professionally by a group of people that consider themselves first as Christian social entrepreneurs engaging in the market place.
- They are highly efficient and risk averse in their investment decisions.
- The social enterprise can be identified as a FBSE based on its stated objects in its governing documents, the values in the organisation and the profession of faith by staff.
- They possess the potential for knowledge management and transfer to FBSEs' intending to start social enterprises based on their 18 year experience and track record of success.

7.5 FBSE 5: Islamic Agriculture Project

FBSE5 is an Islamic Agricultural project run in Garissa County, Kenya by a London based international development FBSE. They approach conservation agricultural farming through Muslim perspectives. They train beneficiaries in the use of natural farming methods that promote environmental sustainability. Women participation is promoted throughout the agricultural sector they operate in. The organisation is led by Mrs B (anonymised) the CEO, she is a female social entrepreneur actively involved in improving the lives of disadvantaged people around the world through Islamic models of support and care. FBSE5 faith-based approach incorporates thought leadership (experts and key influencers) and religious values to care for people and the planet.

The farm produce had been sold in the local market; however, sales of the produce is to be taken over by a leading supermarket. The whole approach is that profits generated from sales of the produce are ploughed back to fulfil its community objectives. The pilot project in Garissa, achieved a 49% per head increase yield, 44% of the beneficiaries supported on the project are orphans while 71% are women. 100% of the beneficiaries (men and women) reported project satisfaction. FBSE5 is currently seeking funds to scale up the agricultural project as they have been offered 10,000 hectares of land for farming by the Government of Garissa, County, Kenya.

Mrs B stated that, “What has been the trigger for me has been my faith that pushes me in everything I do but also a strong drive that was as a result of the gaps in attainment, opportunity and education for ethnic minority people, so a sense of justice and equality also drove me”.

Other projects include developing an Islamic charity model called Aqwaf where money is given to pay for various social objectives that assist the underprivileged in society. Aqwaf projects could be used to fund a community development project like a well to benefit people in a community. Aqwaf is an endowment vehicle and once initiated, the surpluses are ploughed back into the local community. Mrs B was not sure whether she was a social entrepreneur and needed clarity on what being a “social entrepreneur” is.

The organisation also works with similar or other faith groups to actualise mutual objectives. Such projects, when initiated, are sensitive to the peculiarities of different religions. One example is, not having classes on Fridays whenever a Mosque is being used for training. They also take into account equalities and religious values of their stakeholders when they run projects.

Key points

- FBSE5 is an innovative organisation and demonstrates that faith can introduce new ways and methods of doing things
- They are sensitive to the needs and values of their stakeholders
- Social entrepreneurship is being practised as a solution in tackling the needs of their beneficiaries, however, management are uncertain whether this project, the organisation or its staff were engaged in social entrepreneurship.
- The organisation has a global vision operating in three countries, and on three continents using some aspects of social entrepreneurship as a business model

8 Findings

8.1 What can we learn from these FBSE's?

The following points below highlight in a nutshell the findings of this study.



1. FBSEs such as churches are practising social entrepreneurship as a means of raising income to sustain their spiritual objectives which at the same time delivers on their social objectives, this creates synergies and a “win win” situation for stakeholders.
2. FBSEs are converting their assets and resources for social enterprise activity, although some do not know that they are engaging in social entrepreneurship by doing this.
3. FBSEs require significant levels of developmental and capacity building support to formalise their social enterprise activities, and to sustain their objectives. Support needs include entrepreneurial leadership, business planning, financial planning, human resources and social impact measurement training. However, some of the FBSEs’ in the study were managing well and could act as a bench mark or provide a mentoring role for FBSEs.
4. FBSEs were heavily involved in a diverse range of community initiatives, from cafes to hall hire services, and employment interventions etc.
5. Social entrepreneurship is a push and a pull factor for FBSEs that provides a range of benefits to the communities they serve.
6. The FBSEs engaged with other denominations or religions to build critical mass, fulfil objectives and leverage social impact. Within the Christian faith all denominations (orthodox, evangelical and charismatic) were involved in social enterprise activity.
7. Relevant data exist through institutions like the Charity Commission and Company House to conduct an intensive study to identify and map FBSEs. One of the respondents informed the researcher that their annual accounts and reports are in the public domain through the charity commission website. Such data once mined could provide a huge wealth of information on FBSEs and the social enterprise activities that they are involved in. For example, income generation activities can be broken down into earned income/donations, and spiritual/social activities which will be indispensable in identifying and supporting FBSEs.
8. The FBSEs were unaware of research in social entrepreneurship and the necessity to actively engage with researchers and business development organisations.
9. There were mixed feelings in terms of the FBSEs that felt that they were sustainable and those that thought that they were not.
10. Running a social enterprise fulfils two objectives for faith groups, firstly, to engage with their host communities and legitimise their role and relevance in a highly secular society. And secondly, to generate earned income to sustain their objectives.

The findings above point out that FBSEs studied were resilient, entrepreneurial, and innovative, and have in some cases a significant asset base that they could utilise to further their social objectives (Dinham, 2007).

9 Evaluation using the theory of change

What FBSEs in this study set out to accomplish is two-pronged, to sustain their spiritual objectives, and to fulfil their social responsibility to the community. FBSEs, therefore, demonstrate their relevance to their host communities as they address market, societal or governmental failures in their communities, and at the same time sustain their spiritual objectives through social entrepreneurship. Please see Appendix 1 for an application of the theory of change to the study findings.

Outputs of this project:

Following on from this study are plans to:

1. To develop a guide for faith based groups that would like to explore the possibility of setting up a social enterprise or to consolidate on existing social enterprise activity. The guide will function as a basic learning resource and signposting tool for faith-based social entrepreneurs currently under resourced.
2. To disseminate the findings of this study through publications, seminars, workshops and events. Thereby creating awareness and building critical mass for supporting all forms of social enterprise activity.
3. Explore the possibility of conducting further research into FBSEs. As this study cannot be generalised due to the nature of the research.

10 Conclusion

This study has shed some light into the operations and dynamic nature of five FBSEs based in London and Oxford. These FBSEs play an important role in their communities, and on a broader strategic level, opportunities exist to build capacity through strengthening and encouraging partnerships, and leveraging resources of all classifications of social enterprises for the good of all.



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Applying the theory of change to Faith-Based Social Enterprises in the Study

Social Enterprise Activity	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Medium-Term Outcomes	Long-term outcomes
FBSE1: Community centre	Community services	Community cohesion events	Volunteering and Friendships Job creation Improved social capital	Community hub & suitable church facility
FBSE2: Community cafe	Community café and local meeting point	Volunteering opportunities Facilities for parents	Improved community cohesion amongst residents	Improved community cohesion and development Increased relevance of the churches in the community
FBSE3: Community centre	Community hub for sports and wellbeing	Use of community space	Improved community engagement	Sustainability of the church's social action activities Increased stakeholder engagement
FBSE4: Christian social enterprise	Refuge for mothers affected domestic violence	Safety of women and their children affected by domestic violence	Emotional wellbeing of mother and child	Suitable housing and support for vulnerable people Increased demonstration of Christian love in action
FBSE5: Islamic agriculture	Increased acreage of cultivation Job creation	Employment and training in farming skills	Improved yield by 49%	Food security and employment for people Increased use of Islamic leadership principles



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