



FAITH AND VAWG COALITION

# BUILDING BRIDGES CONFERENCE

*exploring the F word (Faith) and  
how we can build bridges to help  
end violence against women and  
girls.*

29th November  
10:30am -12pm





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# CONCEPT NOTE

We understand due to the abuse of faith, women can have a very difficult and complex relationship with faith, religion, and spirituality. From various voices, narratives and lived experiences of many victim-survivors we also know that faith can be a fountainhead of hope and healing. Faith can anchor and provide a guiding light and can be an inspiration to root out feelings of shame and guilt. At the Faith and VAWG Coalition, we bring together communities, faith leaders, feminist theologians, activists and organisations at the intersections of faith, race and ethnicity to end violence against women and girls. Grassroot communities and faith groups have the power and potential to make a real difference in the lives of survivors and hold perpetrators to account.

Our Building Bridges Conference endeavours to break narratives given repeatedly to us to serve patriarchy and patriarchy. Sadly, faith is weaponised and manipulated, we want faith to be used as a liberating wave in narratives and interpretations of theology. We aim to amplify the voices of women and girls by creating safe spaces and platforms where women and women led VAWG organisations especially from Black and Minoritised communities share ideas and narratives to ensure women live with dignity and reclaim their agency within religion, faith and spirituality.





In our Conference we are honoured to have some trailblazing activists as they share experiences of their activism and sheer resilience working within a diverse range of communities and continue to fight patriarchy, speak out against gender injustices, and create important spaces. The speakers with their expertise and knowledge have a good understanding of the lived experiences, cultural, and religious needs, while supporting survivors, they also detail the accounts of victim survivors as well as the issue and challenges of pernicious nature that also operates within various religious institutions.

We are sure participants will have a better insight and understanding about the importance of Building Bridges in everyday work and the positive impact this has had and continues to have. Charing the session, we have Naima from Inclusive Mosque Initiative who offer more inclusive and feminist spaces for marginalised Muslims including LGBTQ+ Muslims. We have some very powerful and interactive presentations by Jewish Women's Aid, Restored and FORWARD who will share the challenges and the ground-breaking work they have been doing at grassroots levels as they support victim survivors facing harmful practices, violence and abuse. We have Sikh Women's Aid, who will be sharing some of the findings in their recent report and impact of domestic and sexual abuse in the Sikh/Panjabi community.

The presentations will centre around marginalised interreligious narratives to deconstruct patriarchal interpretations and also construct meaningful and safe frameworks, promoting integrated approaches towards violence against women and girls and faith, black and minoritised communities for just, constructive and meaningful dialogues.

At The Faith and VAWG Coalition, we are collectivising the voices of VAWG professionals and members of Faith communities, we often reflect on these very critical and vital points and how we can move forward, enhance mechanisms, anchor each other and nurture seeds to rise and grow.

Thank you for taking the time to join us and we hope you enjoy the conference and our fantastic speakers.





# BUILDING BRIDGES CONFERENCE AGENDA

## TIME

## AGENDA

10:30 – 10:40	Welcome – chairperson, Naima, Inclusive Mosque Initiative
10:40 – 10:50	Introduction and overview of the conference – Aasifa Usmani, Programme manager – Faith & Communities Team, Standing Together
10:50 – 11:00	Sukhvinder Kaur – Sikh Women's Aid
11:00 – 11:10	Lee Wax – Jewish Women's Aid
11:10 – 11:20	Mary Otuko – FORWARD
11:20 – 11:30	Bekah Legg – Restored
11:30 – 11:55	Q&A
11:55 – 12:00	Closing Remarks



# SPEAKERS

Here is a list of all of our fantastic speakers joining us for the conference



**Aasifa Usmani** is the Programme Manager for the Faith and Communities Team at Standing Together. Her background is in Literature and Human Rights. She has worked with various professionals in key institutions and has been active in campaigning and raising awareness about Forced marriage and Domestic Abuse. She has prolific experience working as a frontline worker within feminist organisations and has actively supported victim survivors, especially women with multiple disadvantages and women with no recourse to public funds. She has worked very closely with the Police and health professionals and has delivered trainings about the public health issue of domestic abuse.



**Bekah Legg** is CEO of Restored, a Christian organisation with a mission to speak up about violence against women and equip the Church to stand against domestic abuse and with survivors. This role has enabled her to bring all her passions into one place, empowering women, leading the Church and sharing God's heart for His world.



**Lee Wax** is Training Coordinator at Jewish Women's Aid. She initially joined in 2012 to help out for a few months as Volunteers Coordinator. She took on the role of Communications & Training Manager in 2014, with her passion for doing what she calls "changing hearts and minds" in the Jewish community (and beyond) about domestic abuse. Lee's role as Training Coordinator focuses on reaching hundreds of professionals working with Jewish communities with essential training on domestic abuse in the Jewish context.



# SPEAKERS



**Mary Otuko** is the UK Programmes Manager at FORWARD leading in the planning and delivery of multiple projects under our Communities and Youth & Schools Programmes. She is part of FORWARD's Senior Management Team directly managing staff as well as our work relationship with partner organisations, other service agencies and FGM affected communities nationally. Mary has an MSc in Population and Development from London School of Economics and sits on the Board of Trustees for a new charity called TEST (Tanzania Education and Skills Trust) which is setting up a school and working with street children in Kigoma, North-West Tanzania. Mary is also a Committee member and Projects Lead for the Lango Association UK (LAUK), a community organisation set up by UK Diaspora Ugandans from Northern Uganda.



**Naima Khan** is the Director of Inclusive Mosque Initiative (IMI). IMI is an intersectional feminist mosque dedicated to creating inclusive, safer places for marginalised Muslims and their families. Naima has worked in the arts sector, the philanthropy sector and the domestic violence sector. She is a regular contributor to radio shows on topics including feminism, religion and the arts.



**Sukhvinder Kaur** is the Director/Trustee of Sikh Women's Aid. She is passionate about raising awareness of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse within the Sikh and wider BAME community. She has seen a sharp rise in faith based sexual abuse in places of worship & faith settings and has worked tirelessly to shine a spotlight on this issue. Sukhi is also a founding member of a Sikh/Muslim interfaith group "Same Difference" that is looking to tackle contentious issues between the two groups including misleading narratives about Sikh women and girls being disproportionately targeted by Muslim grooming gangs. The group has gone from strength to strength and hosts monthly gatherings to discuss community cohesion and all matters that can bring these two groups together. Sukhvinder also takes a keen interest in politics and has stood as a local councillor candidate in the Birmingham Elections in 2019.







# UPDATES FROM THE FAITH AND VAWG COALITION

In case you've missed it - here is a rundown of our most recent work and updates about the Coalition.

We are now a full team of three comprising of the Faith and Communities Programme Manager, Programme Officer and Membership Coordinator

We have a spanking new website ([www.faithandvawg.org](http://www.faithandvawg.org)) If you haven't already check it out!

We've released a policy briefing on raising the legal age of marriage in the UK. That can also be found [here](#) on our website

We were part of joint [policy briefing](#) with others from the VAWG sector on the Online Safety Bill.



We provided the Law commission consultation paper in collaboration with EVAW coalition (End Violence Against Women)

We have worked with campaigners on influencing and representing the voices of survivors from Faith, Black and Minoritised backgrounds on the new Domestic Abuse Act. In this we have also produced guidance on Spiritual Abuse for the Home Office



# GET INVOLVED

Write a reflection or something you learnt or took away with you from the conference. Take a screenshot and share it on your socials tagging us @FaithandVAWG on all platforms! Use the hashtags #FaithOnFifth and #BuildingBridges

**#Building Bridges**  
**#FaithOnFifth**



# Our Members

Natalie Collins

Black Churches  
Domestic Abuse  
Forum

Sarah K Hyde

Restored

Nikki Dhillon Keane

Welsh Women's  
Aid

Back in Control  
Consultancy

FORWARD

Huda Jawad



Faith and  
VAWG Coalition

Standing  
Together Against  
Domestic Abuse

Muslim Women's  
Network

Latin American  
Women's Rights  
Service

Muslim Youth  
Helpline

Juno Women's  
Aid

Jewish Women's  
Aid

Marwa Belghazi

# YOUR FEEDBACK

Please scan the QR code below or [use this link](#) to give your feedback on our Building Bridges Conference. Your feedback is important to us and we want to hear your thoughts so we can make our future events even better!

Estimated Time to complete: **3 Minutes**



Just scan this code with your mobile's camera and it will direct you to the survey.



# THANK YOU

We would just like to say a massive thank you to everyone involved in making this happen. The support we have received has been extraordinary and so thank you once again.

If you would like to contact the team please email us at: [hello@faithandvaw.org](mailto:hello@faithandvaw.org) and one of the team will be in touch with you soon.

To keep updated with our work and what we are doing follow us @FaithandVawg on all platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) or visit our website: [www.faithandvawg.org](http://www.faithandvawg.org) (while you're there, you might as well join our mailing list too ;)

In Solidarity,

The Faith and VAWG Team



# A GIFT FROM US TO YOU

As a thank you to each and everyone of you, we wanted to gift you with a **free** tote bag with the slogan "Sisters Support Sisters". We appreciate the time and effort you're taking to be a part of our conference. There is limited stock and will be allocated on a first come first serve basis. Scan the code below and send a direct message with your name address and quote 'Building Bridges'. \*Limit 1 per attendee. Alternatively, email those details to [hello@faithandVAWG.org](mailto:hello@faithandVAWG.org)

