# UCL Migration Research Unit

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# UCL Migration Research Unit
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# Spiritual remittances from Muslim communities in London: Religiosity across borders

The role of religion in remittance sending for the purpose of funding faith-based buildings through an empirical study of Muslims in London, predominantly of a Bangladeshi background, who send money 'back home' for mosque construction or related projects.
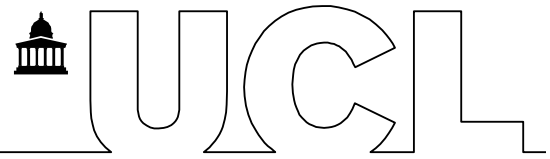
**Rahima Begum**

# Spiritual remittances from Muslim communities in London: Religiosity across borders

**Rahima Begum**

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**Supervisor: Dr Claire Dwyer**

**This research dissertation is submitted for the MSc in Global Migration at University College London**

**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY**

# M.Sc. in Global Migration

I, Rahima Begum.......................................................................................................................

hereby declare :

(a)     that this M.Sc. Project is my own original work and that all source material used is acknowledged therein;

(b)     that it has been prepared specially for the MSc in Global Migration of University College London;

(c)     that it does not contain any material previously submitted to the Examiners of this or any other University, or any material previously submitted for any other examination.

Signed : R.Begum....................................................................................

Date :   12/09/2011.................................................................

# Abstract

This paper seeks to understand the role of religion in remittance sending for the purpose of funding faith-based buildings through an empirical study of Muslims in London, predominantly of a Bangladeshi background, who send money 'back home' for mosque construction or related projects. Research in transnational studies and migration scholarship examines the relationship between a migrant's home country and their host country at varying and diverse levels. Additionally, studies on remittances are quite elaborate and in the field of transnationalism current work on transnational practices such as the pattern of sending remittances exist, however there is a lack of research exploring the trends and patterns I discuss and I begin to theorise. The key studies closest to my research are that by the likes of Peggy Levitt who has explored different kinds of migrant transnational practices, religious transnationalism and social remittances to name but a few. However, there are still many shortcomings in this particular scholarship, as the concept of transnationalism is contemporary in its use in mainstream social science and yet has scope to be explored more. This thesis explores the transnational practice of remittance sending and argues that there is another category of remittance, spiritual remittance which should be included in the broader rubric of the remittance typology.

A qualitative approach is undertaken, using interviews as the primary tool for data collection. The majority of the interviews were conducted with Bangladeshi Muslims, via East London Mosque and LMC, Muslim Aid, charity events, personal contacts and an online survey as the main source of interviewee recruitment. All the interviews are recorded, transcribed and coded.

The themes explore the motivations behind sending spiritual remittances for mosque projects abroad, the processes involved and the outcomes. This includes a discussion of the transnational ties after the completion of the projects, the design of the mosques and what the whole experience means to the interview participants and what they think it means to various stakeholders involved in the projects. The findings reveal some similarities and differences in relation to parallel literature. The conclusion demonstrates the significance spiritual remittances have been in people's lives, the impacts they have had and how I have made a contribution to academic literature. Finally, it concludes with future research recommendations as it argues that this is an exciting and necessary area that needs theoretical debate and more in-depth empirical studies.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by thanking my dissertation supervisor, Dr Clair Dwyer for her invaluable guidance and support. Her knowledge, time and advice have incalculably aided me to organise my ideas and develop them so that they can become a reality.

I am also very grateful to all the respondents who gave up their time to take part in the interviews, consequently helping with the progression of this study. Muslim Aid and East London Mosque & London Muslim Centre (LMC) were particularly helpful in allowing me permission to recruit interview participants, so I would also like to express my gratitude towards them.

Last but not least I would like to express my appreciation towards my family and friends who provided invaluable networks that led to many interviewees that I was able to recruit. I am also thankful for their continuous support and encouragement, particularly when I was faced with challenges in the field.

# Contents

# Chapter 1: Introduction

*'Modern social science…asserted that religion would fade, then disappear, with the triumph of science and rationalism. But religion has expanded explosively, stimulated as much by secular global processes- migration, multinational capital, the media revolution- as by proselytizing activity. Contrary to expectations, its expansion has been an answer to and driven by modernity'* (Rudolph, 1997: 1).

In this contemporary era it was predicted that religion would become less significant in important phenomenon such as modern-day migration as the quote above suggests. However, this assumption is proven too narrow as it neglects the role of religion in the 21st century, which has experienced a range of religiously motivated processes, activities and consumption (Rudolph, 1997). Some of these include so-called religiously inspired security threats, whilst others include the opening of new religious buildings in the developed world such as mega churches and mosques in the US and the UK, popular amongst diaspora populations. In this transnational age migrants are also contributing to their country of origin at different levels, including the religious domain, for example through channels of economic and social remittances where new religious practices and materials are remitted back to their homeland. I believe it is crucial that other spheres of the transnational religious life are empirically studied, hence, in the following study I further look into the role of remittances. My thesis argues that there is another category of remittance, spiritual remittance which I begin to define in the context of this study. I begin to theorise the definition in the forthcoming chapters and I call for spiritual remittance to be included in the broader rubric of the remittance typology and to be included in the analytical scholarship of transnational studies, religion and migration.

Spiritual remittance is a working concept I theorise and in this empirical study I focus on the Muslim community in London, predominantly from a Bangladeshi background and I explore why, what and how they send spiritual remittances for mosque projects in Bangladesh or elsewhere abroad. In this instance, I include mosque construction, expansion and renovations, funding religious services (for example, Quran classes), Islamic schools and Islamicly orientated orphanages; all of which fall under the umbrella of the term 'mosque' in this study. This study discusses what the motivations are behind these remittances, the routes they are sent through, the dynamism of the process, the outcomes of such practices and actions, and

the experiences for remitters. These are the key dimensions of spiritual remittances, however the empirical chapters demonstrate that the differences and diversity within the Muslim community may change and do change, and further complicate the constructed concept of spiritual remittance.

I set out a typology of remittances and distinguish the new phenomenon of spiritual remittances (as a different kind of remittance, but with possible similarities with other remittances as well). Furthermore, it is not new in that spiritual remittances have never been sent before, but new in its theorisation and heightened visibility in an empirical study. This project asks whether spiritual remittances are different from other kinds of remittances. The chapters have been organised as follows, after introducing my thesis and research background, I state my aims. The next chapter provides a literature review identifying the gaps in the literature which has led me to explore this research project. After the literature review, I reiterate the aims and then present the key research questions. The third chapter details the methodology, the theoretical concepts and the outcome in practice, and I also outline the strengths and weaknesses of the methods overall. The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters are primarily empirical, which present the findings and provide critical discussion to the findings where my hypothesis further develops. These three chapters analyse the motivations, practices, the transnational processes, and the impact in terms of transnational continuity and material impact. The final chapter concludes with a summary of what the findings indicate and what has been learnt about spiritual remittance. It draws upon the parallels of what is already known amount remittance as well as stating the differences, and illustrating the diversity amongst respondents. Finally, it concludes with future research recommendations as it argues that this is an exciting and necessary area that needs theoretical debate and more in-depth empirical studies.

**1.1 Aims**

The aims of this research is to provide a detailed empirical study of the broader nature of people's religion influencing their choices in sending remittances to their origin or home country for both spiritual and faith-based reasons. Also, to explore the dynamics of the processes and whether maintaining connections transnationally through a material form is a motivator for pursuing these activities. Investigating what this means in terms of their reasoning or belief systems and their financial position is also important here because it highlights the link between often two different things. Essentially this thesis aims to work through a remittance typology and attempt to theorise spiritual remittance. The rationale for this study is significant because it attempts to address the role of religion in remittance choices for the purpose of constructing faith based buildings through different means, which is a major shortcoming in the field of religious transnationalism and migration. This project will specifically focus on the Muslim communities in London of primarily a Bangladeshi background, and the mosques or faith based buildings built in Bangladesh or elsewhere abroad by these communities.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature available on transnationalism, remittance and transnational religion. It will argue that there are major shortcomings in existing studies of religion, migrant transnational ties and remittances. This chapter is organised in the following order, it begins by identifying what has been researched in the ethos of migrant transnationalism. It then discusses the literature on remittances, where I construct a remittance typology in order to theorise what is already known about remittance. The next section overviews the literature on religion more explicitly in the lives of migrant communities. I then comment on the generational significance of migrants engaging the transnational practices. The final section makes some concluding comments, which then lead to the aims and the research questions of this study. Throughout the chapter I argue that there are a number of discrepancies on research that explores transnational religious remittances, more specifically spiritual remittances. The typology of remittances is quite wide ranging, however, there is no obvious term that considers the religious, faith and spiritual dimensions. Hence, I call for spiritual remittances to be included in this broad typology of remittances and therefore spiritual remittance will be my working concept in the forthcoming chapters.

## 2.2 Transnationalism

The world is more connected than ever before transcending borders and boundaries of nation-sates in multi-level realms to create in some ways a global community. These realms include the social, the economic, the geographical, the cultural, the political and the religious. At first glance it may appear that these processes are the result of heightened and accelerated globalisation, however, globalisation is often abstractly conceptualised and it does not consider the transcending expression of different phenomena across the cultural and territorial boundaries of the nation-state (Kearney, 1995 cited in Gregory et al, 2009). Over the past two decades emerging social and economic phenomenon are observed which has led to a relatively new term emerging known as 'transnationalism' (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). The notion of transnationalism 'describes a movement or set of linkages that occur across national borders…its growing popularity indicates the heightened interconnectivity of people

and things that now flow across borders and boundaries in greater volume and with greater speed than ever before' (Gregory et al, 2009: 772). Glick Schiller et al (1992) first conceptualised the term transnationalism to bring a global perspective that would help reshape concepts such as society, since contemporary migrants were increasingly engaging in activities spanning multiple borders, from a range of socio-economic, religious and racial backgrounds.

Over time, the concept of transnationalism has developed from its original use, including both migrants and non-migrants, both sending and receiving countries and further complexities. What makes this term contemporary is that it does not follow older migration theories of linear one way permanent or temporary international migration but rather 'describes a migration pattern of simultaneous connection to two or more nations' (Basch et al, 1995 cited in Gregory et al, 2009: 772). Furthermore, it is modern advancement of revolutionary communication and computing technologies that have facilitated such a transnational age, enabling migrants to construct and maintain continuous social, cultural, political and economic multi-webbed networks between their host and origin country (Gregory et al, 2009). Therefore, I use this exciting and contemporary concept in my study in the hopes of adding a fresh take in transnational studies.

Transnational studies is an incredibly significant yet fragmented scholarship in the social sciences, and this issue should not be left unaddressed because of the large scope it has in bringing an analytical perspective from all the different fields of transnationalism together (Khagram and Levitt, 2008). Walton-Roberts (2004) suggests that the discipline of geography, some sub-discipline more than others, engaged with transnational migration theory late due to a fragmentation of the overall discipline, thus dividing useful intellectual dialogue. Khagram and Levitt (2008) suggest five key intellectual foundations in transnational studies, which are as follows: empirical, methodological, theoretical, philosophical and public transnationalism (see figure 1). They shed new light on the range of fields concerning the social sciences, including remittances sent by migrants to their home country and the role of religion. My research falls under both the empirical and theoretical foundations of transnational studies as latter chapters will demonstrate. This is because my research questions encompass describing, explaining and somewhat classifying an important transnational phenomena and the dynamism of the processes involved through a practical study. They also lead to a new

theorisation which adds to current theorisations of remittances, as well as mending the fragmentation between transnationalism, remittances and spirituality and religion to some degree.

Figure 1: Five Intellectual Foundations in Transnational Studies

1) 'Empirical Transnationalism focuses on describing, mapping, classifying, and quantifying novel and/or potentially important transnational phenomena and dynamics.
2) Methodological Transnationalism involves, at a minimum, reclassifying existing data, evidence, and historical and ethnographic accounts that are based on bounded or bordered units so that transnational forms and processes are revealed.
3) Theoretical Transnationalism formulates explanations and crafts interpretations that either parallel, complement, supplement, or are integrated into existing theoretical frameworks and accounts.
4) Philosophical Transnationalism starts from the metaphysical assumption that social worlds and lives are inherently transnational.
5) Public Transnationalism creates space to imagine and legitimate options for social change and transformation that are normally obscured, by purposefully abandoning the expectation that most social processes are bounded and bordered.'

(Source: Khagram and Levitt, 2008: 2)

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) compellingly highlight that a transnational lens clarifies the understanding of social processes and institutions in juxtaposition to traditional migration scholarship. Assimilation theory assumed that migrants would eventually lose their ties with their ancestral homelands, but this has not always been the case, instead many migrants continue their social network across borders (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Hence, scholars such as Basch et al (1994) argue that a transnational perspective should be assessed empirically in terms of the variability, influence, strength and the impact of transnationalism. This is the discussion my research partakes in, to some extent as my data and analysis explores some of the differences amongst different generations of migrants in participating in the transnational activity of remittance sending. There has been research on a variety of dimensions of transnationalism, including identities, politics, socio-economics, culture, religion and various types of transnational practices and the scope (see for example, Ballard, 2000; Duany, 2000; Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2003; Goldring, 2002; Itzigsohn, 2000; Vertovec, 2003; Charsely, 2005; Gardner and Grillo, 2002). My study however, combines both religion and economic dimensions of transnationalism. It focuses on the relationship

between migrants sending remittances to their origin country, a way in which they maintain a transnational link, which is influenced by their spirituality. Now I turn to review the literature on remittances.

## 2.3 Remittances

There is a significant body of literature on remittances, especially as a result of scholars and policy maker's interests in the role of remittances as key sources of foreign direct investment (FDI) and how it can be perceived as a panacea for development finance in the developing world, but at the same time have negative effects (Datta et al, 2007). According to Willis (2008: 213) 'remittances are money and goods sent 'home' by migrants…[they have a transnational nature] both virtual and real'. Sending remittances has been made easy through banking systems and money transfer services; however, it is difficult to estimate informal and illegal remittance transfer. Remittances are sent by a diverse set of individuals and groups such as exploited low-paid migrants in London (Datta et al, 2007), hometown associations members (Mercer et al, 2008) and transnational entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Global remittance is far greater than bilateral aid from some of the world's richest countries and for countries such as the Philippines, Morocco and Mexico remittances are the largest source of foreign capital (Willis, 2008). Some countries heavily rely on remittances to sustain their economies; hence they encourage emigration and stay connected to the diaspora through programmes. However, this has negative consequences as well, such as the inequalities created within towns and villages, between families that receive remittances and those that don't, and can cause families to have heavy reliance on remittances, having stressful effects of the migrant remitter.

Nevertheless, there are positive impacts as well. The implications of remittances can be perceived at both the micro and macro level, for instance, it can improve one's credit rating (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Remittances can also be ideas sent 'home', which Levitt refers to as social remittances; these 'are the ideas, practices, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending-country communities' (Levitt, 1998: 76). Scholars have researched the very nature of remittance sending, and the beneficial and detrimental consequences for migrants and non-migrants (Datta et al, 2007). It is clear that the body of work on remittances is vast and this can perhaps be further distinguished by outlining a remittance typology:

1. The first and most obvious type of remittance is the 'economically non-productive' remittance, which is money and resources sent 'home' to family members or friends for their 'private' or personal consumption (Willis, 2008).

2. A second type of remittance is the 'local-level economic development' remittance, which is remittance sent for investment on local facilities and amenities, such as shops and small businesses (Willis, 2008).

3. A third type of remittance is that of home or hometown associations (HTAs), which is when migrants from the same village, town or region are able to maintain material ties with their 'home' collectively, usually working on projects of a certain locality. However, the transformative possibilities of the relationship between the capital, social and political of HTAs are not understood very well yet (Mercer et al, 2008).

4. A fourth type of remittance is social remittance, which Levitt (1998) developed as intangible norms, practices, identities and social capital deployed individually or collectively, and a more than one way process. She suggests that there are at least 'three types of social remittances- normative structures, systems of practice, and social capital' (Levitt, 2001: 59).

These types of remittances outlined are not fixed groupings and they do not imply that they are separate from one another. Moreover, remittances can be sent individually and collectively, they can be distinguished and converge into the private and public spheres of their use; it is too simplistic to say they are distinct from each other (Mercer et al, 2008). Nonetheless, this is a useful typology to use in order to help understand that the focus of remittances has been on the economic and less so on the social. Therefore, it indicates that there are other spheres that can be considered here, such as the spiritual and can be theorised, which is not considered at all and gives way to opening up what can be considered as a remittance. Spiritual remittance is the physical money (or the metaphysical prayers) that migrants remit to their home country (or to a country that they have a connection to), for personal religious and spiritual reasons towards establishing something material that has a spiritual meaning attached to it. It is also the involvement that goes behind gathering the spiritual funds for remitting, so for example networking with people to raise and collect funds. This is my early theorisation of spiritual remittance.

It has been argued that there is too much emphasis on the economic developmental roles of remittances, as the panacea of development (Orozco, 2003). Then social remittance started to get more attention as it became recognised for its significant value (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011). However, the spiritual value for sending remittances for the sake of religion and faith has virtually not been considered as an important factor in this process. Henceforth, this is what I intend to do, contribute and fill the gap in the literature, by identifying the spiritual, religious and faith based motivations behind these actions in the Muslim community in London. Just as once the social and cultural value of remittances was undervalued; the spiritual value of remittances is practically unrecognised. Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011) argue that by bringing the social and culture to the table of migration and development debates, it can tremendously help policy makers understand migrants and their contributions in sending and receiving countries. Consequently, understanding the spiritual and religious reasoning behind remittance sending can also shed new and interesting light to these debates. Now I turn to look at the literature on religion, specifically in relation to transnationalism.

## 2.4 Religion

As discussed, the practice of sending remittances is studied numerously in literature on transnationalism. However, the religious dimension to this practice has been largely overlooked. In the discipline of geography, Park (2004) points out the importance of developing current research on religious sacred spaces because geography is about the study of space and place. There is a range of studies that explore this in various disciplines (see for example, Eade, 2011, Eade, 2010; Garbin, 2009; Naylor and Ryan, 2002; Watson, 2005). My study however is interested in exploring the processes of sending money on spiritual grounds. Holloway (2011) suggests that geography can work with the discourse of theology which has a long tradition of engaging with religion, and that researchers need to come at an indirect angle when asking questions about religion. At some level my research question on motivations may have connections to the theological underpinning of religion, faith and spirituality so I take this into account.

Furthermore, there is somewhat a large body of literature on religious institutions that investigates the macro-level linkages between global religious institutions and their religious

diaspora, such as in the case of the Catholic Church (Levitt, 2003; Levitt, 1998). Religious institutions can be sites of transnational belonging and these institutions engage to keep their ties with migrants (Levitt, 2001; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004).).  My study however, reveals that when religion is spoken about, it is done more in relation to spiritualty; therefore religion is referred to in a personal sense rather than a structural and organisation understanding of religion. Rudolph's (1997) work is some of the earliest on transnational religion, which looks at how religion can construct a transnational civil society, challenging the secular state as religious communities participate in shaping world politics. Beyer (2008) a key protagonist on the literature on religion in the processes of globalisation suggests that religion is taking over globalisation and modernity, providing the function that is required and needed. For example, globalisation has enabled it's visibility in material forms, as indicated by the opening of numerous and new Pentecostal mega churches. Although there is some parallel work on remittances and religious buildings constructed by migrants, there is little or no literature that examines spiritual remittance.

Increasingly, social scientists are realising that religion can be utilised in civic engagement as the humanitarian function is understood better (Levitt, 2008). Nonetheless, migrant transnational religious identities and practices have largely been overlooked by migration scholars and others (Levitt, 2003). Technological revolution has enabled the intensification of religiosity and transnational religious solidarity (Rudolph, 1997); different generations of migrants have practised, lost or transformed religiosity (Vertovec, 2009); hence there is enormous scope to do further and new research. Therefore my research investigates an aspect of how transnational religious life is enacted by certain migrants through spiritual remittances. I know comment on the generational issues involved in transnational practices.

**2.5 Generational Significance**

According to Levitt and Waters (2002) there is a significant debate around the connection migrants and their children maintain with their homeland. They investigate how transnational the second generation migrants really are and the types of activities they are involved in using empirical case studies. It is acknowledged that this is happening but knowing how widespread it is, is unclear and remains open for further discussion. The intensity, frequency, type, style and reasoning behind transnational practices for second generation migrants are still a very

under-investigated area. A study by Rumbaut (2002) indicates that transnational activism is much lower amongst second generation immigrants who are not bilingual compared to their bilingual counterparts, because of the difficulty in communicating to the highest of abilities in order to have strong transnational ties. Having institutional and multigenerational networks, life-course effects, class and racial characters were the main factors that influenced transnational participation among the second generation, indicated by Levitt's (2002) longitudinal study. My research will consider some of the generational differences and draw some concludes as to whether the practice of spiritual remittances will continue with future migrant generations.

**2.6 Concluding Comments**

In summary, after exploring the existing literature it is clear that there is little to no useful literature that combines the dimensions of religion, spirituality, remittance and transnatioanlity, hence I believe my research will be of value in this discourse. Levitt has explored quite a few different transnational practices, however these are not in the same manner that I have chosen to look at. I explore how transnational religious life is enacted by majority Bangladeshi migrants and their children in London through spiritual remittances. The Muslim Bangladeshi group is an over studied group, however, learning about their spiritual transnational practices is virtually unknown. This is different to other arenas of transnational life and other types of remittances due to it being an unexplored area of research, but it does have some connections with other forms of remittances, such as economic and social remittances. Religion, spirituality and faith are dynamic and difficult to fix within borders and boundaries, and it is not always easy to express, but it links migrants and non-migrants and this can even be contested. Thus, I explore these issues in depth in order to add to the intellectual debates in the discourse and learn something that could be of use in the future. In turn, I call for spiritual remittance to be included in the broader rubric of remittance and a part of transnationalism, although not all may agree with my intellectual agenda I believe it should be explored as a possibility. Now I present my aims and research questions.

**Aims and Research Questions**

The aims of this project is to investigate and provide an empirical study of people's religion influencing their choices in sending money to their origin or home country for both spiritual and faith-based reasons and to work though spiritual remittance as a new theorisation in the typology of remittance. This is to address significant shortcomings in existing literature and to contribute to intellectual debates around remittances and whether the meaning of this term can be opened up for further discussion in multiple disciplines in the social sciences. This project focuses on the Muslim communities in London, mainly from a Bangladeshi background and the mosques or faith based buildings built in Bangladesh or elsewhere abroad by these communities.

In the duration of my study I aim to discuss potential answers to the following research questions:

1. *What are the underlying causes and motivations of sending remittances to build mosques for settled Muslim migrant communities in London to their 'origin' country?*

2. *How and through which channels is this done?*

3. *What are the dynamics and politics of the process?*

4. *In what ways does their transnational material culture and identity influence the architectural styles of the mosques built in their 'origin' country?*

5. *Are connections maintained once the mosques are built?*

I constructed these questions because I believe it pulls out the different dimensions of spiritual remittances, which distinguish it from other types of remittances, but I also want to see whether there are any similarities.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

I conducted the primary research over two months during June and July 2011. This chapter outlines and explains my choice of methodology. It begins by addressing the significance of using a qualitative approach to this study and demonstrating why it is the most appropriate approach to use, due to the multifaceted and subjective inquiry of the research aims. It then explains the reasons why semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as the primary methodological tool, as a way of enabling a comprehensive insight into study. Following is a discussion of the pilot study, sample size, location and the ways in which participants were recruited as well as the use of visual materials. The strengths and quality of the methodology as well as the weaknesses and problems encountered follow. There is also a section detailing the way data analysis was achieved, highlighting the use of transcription and coding. The final section explores the ethical issues and the issue of positionality involved in the research, followed with few concluding comments.

## 3.2 Qualitative Approach

This thesis explores the role of religion and spirituality in remittance choices Muslims make in London for, primarily, mosque construction abroad. Researching such a significant personal matter requires a qualitative method that would enable subjective and in-depth questions to be asked. The requirement of the research questions in essence concerns personal motivations and decisions, generational identity, politics and family ties, stories and experiences. These subjective and complex dimensions to the research questions require a qualitative epistemological grounding. According to Johnston et al (2000: 660) 'qualitative methods are concerned with how the world is viewed, experienced and constructed by social actors. They provide access to motives, aspirations and power relationships that account for how places, people and events are made and represented.' Hence, I chose to use a qualitative approach, which is the most appropriate approach because of the intensive and complex nature of my research inquiry. It allows me to understand and interpret people's experiences, realities, and their shared meanings in an in-depth nature (Dwyer and Limb, 2001; Clifford and valentine, 2003).

Qualitative research gained its credibility in the social sciences after the 'cultural turn' as a humanistic angle emerged from multi-disciplines, which the dominant quantitative methods could not fulfil (Dwyer and Limb, 2001; Johnston et al, 2000). Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods 'regard the social world not as something pre-existing and awaiting discovery, but as something dynamic and changeable, always in the process of becoming- of being constructed through a web of cultural, political and economic relationships' (Johnston et al, 2000: 660). Feminist theory has been particularly significant in influencing qualitative methodological tools such as interviews, in that it shed light on issues of power relations, reflexivity and inter-subjectivity (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). These are an important factors in my research because I want respondents to voice their views openly without influencing them, in turn allowing new themes to emerge which I may not have considered previously. In turn, all these qualities are deductive to achieving my research aims.

## 3.3 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

The most appropriate method to elicit qualitative information for my research was by semi-structured interviews. The general aim of an interview is to have a 'conversation with a purpose' (Eyles, 1988 cited in Flowerdew and Martin, 1997: 110). Hence, I chose a semi-structured style interview because I wanted interviewees to feel in control and express their views elaborately and freely, but at the same time to keep a direction and focus by using an interview schedule (see appendix 1). The semi-structure of the interviews had a flow and order but remained flexible and conversational in order to cover new or different relevant themes that emerged or to skip questions that did not apply (Longhurst, 2003). The interviews facilitated the gathering of rich and detailed material. They also revealed that interview data does not imply 'generalised meanings which inevitably mask the complexity and fragmentation which exists within overarching structures' and groups (Duncan and Duncan, 2001: 399). This means that there are huge variations within my target group and the results do not represent all Muslim communities in London, but instead provides insight into this group.

### *Pilot Study*

I conducted a small pilot study with Muslim students from UCL involved in charity work, to identify possible weaknesses and inconsistencies with the interview schedule, so I could make amendments to improve the schedule. The changes to the questions were small, but significant. For example, the pilot was particularly useful in highlighting how a fluid organised structure could be created in the schedule, and where context specific adjustments should be made according the interviewee profile.

### *Sample Size, Recruitment and location*

As the research questions highlight, I needed to recruit and interview Muslim people in London. Specific criteria had to be met; most importantly the interviewees had to be sending remittances abroad to finance the construction or renovation of a mosque or a building associated with a mosque. This includes remittances sent in the past, in the present or the intention to remit in the future. Furthermore, it also involved Muslims that knew other Muslims who were doing this or donating money themselves towards a mosque project abroad. The aim was to conduct thirty interviews but I was able to conduct thirty-one interviews in total (see appendix 2). This is a reasonable sample size considering the time constraints of conducting the fieldwork in two months. Most of the interviews lasted forty-five minutes. According to Longhurst (2003) the research sample size is not about being representative but is one way of understanding people's experiences and realities through in-depth interviews.

I chose this particular target group because of my existing networks and resources, coming from a Muslim background myself. This said, my positionality did not hinder my critical researcher position at any stage of the research process. Originally I set out to focus only on Bangladeshi-Muslims but this changed in the research process and I interviewed eight non-Bangladeshi Muslims of which, two were Somali, two Indians, one Pakistani, one Indonesian, one Ethiopian and one Omani (see appendix 2). This is because they fit with all the other criteria I was looking for and I think it added an interesting comparative element. Also, the travel and financial constraints led me to recruit and interview participants living in London. I believe if I was able to travel to Bangladesh with some of the participants to see some of the processes and meaning involved in constructing a mosque, and interview the benefactors it

would have added greatly to the research. However, this would be unrealistic because of the time and financial constraints, but this is something that could be considered in future research. Considering all the constraints, I believe that the sample size and variety is very strong and have gained very rich data.

I recruited respondents mainly from my informal networks, from community summer events and from formal organisations associated with Muslims, including the East London Mosque & LMC, and the charities Muslim Aid, Small Change and Ummah Welfare Trust, all from which I used a snowballing technique. I also used the social networking site, Facebook to recruit some participants by creating a short on-line questionnaire using Survey Monkey, which then led to two interviews (see appendix 3). Although I was able to conduct more interviews than I originally set out to do, it was quite challenging to persuade people to take part in an interview because remitting money for religious reasons are usually for personal reasons and being modest is a big factor behind it, so talking about it can be unusual. But also, many people felt uncomfortable with the idea of an interview on such topic, so it took a lot of convincing and assurance of anonymity to recruit interviewees. The locations of the interviews were in the charity headquarters, family events in Camden and Acton, UCL and some were telephone interviews. All interviews were recorded (with permission) and transcribed. Having some sort of affiliation with some of the respondents did not alter the outcome in a biased manner, rather it aided in building good rapport with the respondents and thus successful interviews. A critical perspective was always maintained in the research.

### *Visual Materials*

Some of the respondents were also able to provide photographs of the mosque projects they were involved in. This has been particularly useful in exploring the research question on architecture and has added to the quality of the discussion. The photos are used in the thesis once permission was granted by the owners.

### 3.4 Limitations

One of the weaknesses with qualitative methods is the issue of knowledge and bias factors in interpretation, affecting subjectivity and positioning as the researcher becomes immersed into the research process (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). However, this is a factor that I overcame by

acknowledging the weaknesses and by being self-reflexive. In the interviews for example, when asking more challenging and sensitive questions I tried to keep neutral and let the interviewee take their own direction in the way the question was approached. Every time I reflected and improved the way I asked questions for the next interview. Furthermore, the data collected through a qualitative lens is not a representation of my target group. It may perhaps be seen as a weakness compared to quantitative methods which allow extensive data collection and is more representational, however quantitative methods cannot produce rich and in-depth data the way qualitative methods can, which is what my research aims require.

It was difficult to recruit interviewees because of the personal and sensitive nature of my research, but also because participants were busy, particularly because of the preparation taking place for the month of Ramadan. Consequently, I offered participants telephone interviews instead of face-to-face interviews in effort to convince them to take part. Although this was not the ideal situation because of the difficulty in creating a trustful rapport and being unable to read body language, I was able to conduct six in-depth telephone interviews, out of a total of thirty-one.

## 3.5 Data Analysis Approach

It is argued that using software for analysis of qualitative data can cause de-contextualization and objectification (Johnston et al, 2000). Hence, I made the decision not to use any specialist coding software for coding, but also because the interviews are very free flowing and organic and I did not want to disrupt that with software.

All thirty-one interviews were recorded, labelled in order of date conducted and then transferred onto a password accessible computer. They were transcribed using Dragon NaturallySpeaking 11.0 and then the transcripts were coded according to different themes using different colours, and numbers because of the overlapping themes on Microsoft Word. These transcripts were then printed out so the hard copies could be further analysed (see appendix 4).

One of the interviews with a first generation Bangladeshi Muslim was conducted in Bengali (Sylheti) as the interviewee was unable to speak English fluently. I conducted the interview in Bengali with my mother who knew the interviewee, so good rapport was already in place. My

mother was also able to assist with translating and transcribing the interview into English. All other interviews were conducted in English.

## 3.6 Ethics and Positionality

Inevitably, ethical issues are always raised when research is conducted. All the interview data collected were stored in a password accessible computer and all hard copies of the data, such as the transcripts, were stored in a place where only I could access. This was to keep personal information safe and to maintain high ethical standards. It is also important to recognise that the research process may affect the lives of the research subjects but 'negotiating expectations' is a way of resolving this issue (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). Many of the respondents were surprised by some of the questions because they involved themes that they had never talked about in such depth to another individual, such as talking about their own spirituality. However, generally it seemed that they were satisfied with talking about their spirituality as they felt like it was their chance to reflect on this aspect of their lives.

Furthermore, as part of the ethical conduct, every participant was kept anonymous and given a pseudonym in the analysis. The questions asked were considerate and unambiguous. The environment in which the interviews took place was during day time where all stakeholders felt safe and comfortable. The procedure of the interviews was explained to the participants, making sure they gave formal signed consent and given an information sheet with my contact details (see appendix 5), so that they could reach me if they had any enquiries later. They were also asked for consent to record the interviews with a Dictaphone. They were all told clearly what the research is about and given the right to terminate, withdraw information given and withdraw from the project without giving a reason.

The politics of the researcher's positionality and reflexivity played an essential role in the interviews (Valentine, 2005). My socio-cultural positioning allowed me to relate with British (Bangladeshi) Muslim interviewees because I shared similar identities based on religion, and in many cases ethnicities and/or gender, which had advantages as they were able to open up, not having to explain specific terminologies. Valentine (2005) explains sharing those similar identities to participants can achieve a 'rapport' effect endeavouring elaborate conversations, empowering the interviewee. For example, many interviewees used the term 'back home' representing their origin country and felt comfortable expressing their multiple homes and

identities. 'Ethnic matching', according to Grewal and Ritchie (2006) influences the quality of research because it impacts the preparation and execution of the study, as well as the interpretation and the relationship between the researcher and subjects, thus influencing the credibility.

Although not to a great extent, it was more challenging to recruit male interviewees because of the cultural sensitivity of a female interviewer interviewing a male. Whilst speaking to potential young male participants, they expressed that they would not feel very comfortable to be interviewed by me, but also because of the sensitive nature of the research themes. In turn, I took this into account and offered the option of telephone interviewing, which was quite a successful move to make. Furthermore, my mother agreed to help interview a Bengali speaking respondent and with the translating and transcribing, only when the respondent gave consent. Ethical conduct was maintained during this process. All the data and confidential details of participants will be destroyed after the end of the research project.

### 3.7 Concluding Comments

This chapter has explained why a qualitative approach was used and which tools were used to collect data. It discussed the pilot study, the sample size, the recruitment and the locations used to conduct the research. The strengths and weaknesses were expressed and how the strengths overweighed the weaknesses overall. Ethical considerations were also discussed and how I analysed the data. Overall, the methods used in the research were appropriate, successful and sufficient. The next chapter is the empirical chapter, where I present and critically analyse the findings.

# Chapter 4: Being a Good Muslim and the Hereafter

This chapter presents and critically discusses the primary findings of the study. It focuses on the numerous and interconnected motivations behind spiritual remittances, exploring religious reasons, family, the homeland and generational issues as well as the impacts of general belief.

## 4.1 Motivations behind sending spiritual remittances

The underlying causes, the reasons and motivations for sending remittances to build or renovate mosques predominately in Bangladesh are vast and diverse. Although the chosen group of this study is specific and relatively small, the respondents of this study expressed a variety of reasons for sending spiritual remittances, which all had a multi-faceted nature. The motivations spanned from wanting to help disadvantaged people for humanitarian reasons, to being inspired by their Islamic belief, to being connected to the family and homeland, to giving others a communal mosque space to benefit from. All these motivations are interconnected and the respondents articulated this strongly. Some were involved in home associations, whilst others were involved in small personal family based projects or simply donated towards charities that were involved in mosque construction projects. These were reasons in itself as being part of a home association gave a sense of belonging and collective solidarity to the members and working with family members strengthened the transnational family bonds, similar to parallel literature. The rest of the section examines the motivations in detail.

## 4.2 For the sake of God

The biggest motivations were around inspirations coming from religion. Some respondents felt like they had a moral obligation and duty towards donating money for mosque projects abroad in a faith context. The principles and teachings of Islam seemed to be the key factors in all the interviews. Hadee, for example, eloquently stated that he felt it was his "social responsibility" to help disadvantaged people in any possible way and he takes his inspiration from the example of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (*saw*), seeing him as a role model. Inspirations have also come from the Holy Scriptures, and respondents try and ground their decisions and actions by using the *Quran* and *Hadith* as guidelines. Ultimately they felt they were receiving *sawaab* and saw the mosque as part of doing charity and feeding the poor, which was an investment for them in the hereafter. It was also important to some

respondents that a mosque was built in areas where none existed because a mosque is a way of preserving the practice of faith. Box 1 demonstrates this:

Box 1: Ghazi

> *"Well, it's part of our faith to build institutions that's going to preserve our faith and improve the practice of the Muslim community. So Muslims are encouraged to build mosques wherever they are and also to build Islamic schools. Also, it is a part of our faith to help our relatives, those who are in need, so it is basically out of faith that we would do these things."*

Respondents explained that by building a mosque, it would let the practice of faith be established and perform its multi-functional purpose (box 2 illustrates how respondents expressed this). They found this to be a significant reason for sending remittances as they wanted other Muslims to be able to have a place of worship, but also a place that fulfils other roles in social, political and spiritual spheres, acting as the "Parliament for the Muslim society" as one respondent stated. In essence, to meet the needs of the society it was established for and this is a Prophetic tradition that is followed to date. According to Parvez (2000: 241) a mosque should be re-vitalised as it plays 'a key role in reviving people, nurturing active citizens, and assisting the spiritual, moral and social development of Muslim communities.' Many of the respondents believed ideas like this were imperative because they felt that their home country needed this, particularly because economic and social inequalities was large and they see a mosque as a mutual place that can demystify differences and cause dialogue for change, even in a non-faith context. They also see it as a place of education, a place to demystify the difference and misunderstandings between culture and Islam, which can be referred to as *bi'dah* and this is a key factor for building a mosque, where ideas and knowledge can be disseminated (Parvez, 2000). Hence, these spiritual remittances are potentially entwined with traditional forms of remittances because it supports the development of community, in turn raising the literacy and employment rate in the area.

*"My understanding of the role of the mosque is that it should be a place of learning; it's like a hub for the Muslim community, so whoever is in that local area should be able to come to the mosque to basically learn everything that they need to learn about Islam. It should be a community centre, you know when people have problems they should be able to go to the mosque and get help and get solutions to their problems...a place where people are engaged in other activities..."*

*"The mosque is a place of worship, it's a place of peace, it's a place of education, it's a place of gaining knowledge and it's a very important building. It's very important that it's the central focus to the whole community and you know they know this is a place that they could go to any time. The mosque isn't a private institution, its doors are open to everyone. It is a community centre, it's your Islamic version of the community centre that was established 1400 years ago."*

## 4.3 Sadqa-e-Jaria and hadiths

Furthermore, Ubaid suggested that people think more about where their money goes when working on charitable and religious projects, and how such projects are conducted once a person's level of spirituality increases. Moreover, Nusrat believes that having a sense of spiritualty is vital living in the developed world because of the precedence materialism can often take. The belief in the spiritual is clearly an essential factor that motivates respondents and the belief of gaining endless spiritual reward, which is captured in the Arabic notion of Sadqa-e-Jaria (see box 3 for Arissa's understanding).

Box 3: Arissa

*"...the jist of it [Sadqa-e-Jaria] is basically using your wealth towards something that will outlive you and something that will carry on going so, I think there were three things that the Prophet (saw) said that are Sadqa-e-Jaria. So one of them is contributing towards building a mosque I think or building a well or something that's on-going or a school, I think the other one is having a child that prays for you when you pass away or does something for you..."*

The motivation that a mosque would forever benefit the people praying in it and the benefactors that provided the finance is a substantial reason. This spiritual dimension to motivations is significantly expressed by all the respondents and most of them paraphrased different *hadiths* as their inspiration for sending these remittances, particularly the hadith that a person will get a house in paradise if they build a mosque in this world, as suggested by a respondent in box 4:

> *"…when we collect the money we keep telling them the hadith that whoever builds a mosque for the sake of Allah, Allah will build a house for him in the Jannah and that's enough hadith for them."*

These examples, demonstrate that there is some theological underpinning to people's motivations of sending spiritual remittances, as they feel that by working on religious projects they are being good Muslims that will ultimately have an impact on them in the hereafter. Additionally, the hadiths and teachings of Islam also state that there are certain categories of people that one should help before others, and the first groupings are family, orphans and widows as Nusrat notes. Therefore, she felt that her parent's donations were directed towards their Bangladeshi village because of the strong attachment they had to it and the Islamic principles. These types of projects also brought family and friends closer together transnationally as the motivations came from a common cause. This is exemplified by respondents who were members of a home association, such as Ghazi who was partly motivated by his philanthropic vision of helping communities in need and feeling responsible for his relatives back home. His motivations were also encouraged by the fact that he was in a home association. The sense of collective solidarity and unity of people from the same village was an inspiration for him. These themes crop up in existing literature on remittances, as Mercer et al (2008) explore.

## 4.4 Family, the homeland and generational factors

More than a half of the respondents expressed strong sentiments towards their home country or their parent's origin country as a reason for their remittances. They empathised with the poor and disadvantaged people in their homeland because they felt like they had some sort of connection to them and a moral obligation coming from their faith. Particularly amongst the first generation, they felt that they were making an emotional investment in their homeland. Waheed explains that in his home village, the villagers wanted a mosque but they couldn't afford to build one, so his family intervened. For Waheed his upbringing and background to give stemmed from his work in the charity sector and the 'normalised' support he and his family would provide to his relatives back home whether they want to do this or not (see box 5).

Box 5: Waheed

> *"I think it's the upbringing and the background that I've come from that's probably why. Some people need to listen to a story and stuff to donate, but I think it's just been quite natural for me because of my background. I mean I'm working for a charity and also coming from a background where we have to support family back home quite often, so it's on the back of your mind anyway whether you want to do it or not, you know you're going to support it, at the same time you know there is reward for it…when you're constantly giving it becomes more of a ritual actually and you forget the cause of why you're giving it. I can say somewhat spirituality is there but it's not something there. Some people are really emotional and spiritual, I'm not that type of person but I guess it exists in every human."*

The notion of giving has been instilled in Waheed that it's become a routine, so in his case perhaps he has lost sight of thinking spiritually, but his actions are inherently to some extent spiritual because of the values attached to donating towards a mosque construction. This sentiment towards giving in various ways is a paramount motivation, which has been passed down generations as several respondents articulated. Usman's comments portrayed this when his elders taught his mother and then his mother taught him to always give *Sadaqa*. He states that his mother, a first generation Pakistani, has always been directly involved in charity projects such as mosque construction in poor villages by communicating and liaising with different stakeholders, whereas he, as a second generation is more indirectly involved in terms of helping to fundraise. This is articulated by the majority of the Bangladeshi respondents as well.

Safron's father, a first generation Bangladeshi is involved in many on-going development projects in Bangladesh, making investments in building houses, opening shops and recently building a mosque. As he is a first generation Bangladeshi he is much more connected to Bangladesh than Safron, and building a mosque is an extension of that emotional investment. Therefore, the homeland is crucial motivator for the first generation migrants and giving towards the homeland and generally "giving" is passed down to the future generations. Similarly, Zeena's father, a first generation Bangladeshi was involved in several businesses in his Bangladeshi village. He was very religious minded and drew his inspiration from *Salah*, the *Quran*, engagement in the affairs of the community in both the UK and in Bangladesh. His multiple motivations lead him to donate some of his land to build a community mosque in his village and then contribute a large sum of the money to build the mosque. He also converted

one of his shops into a mosque to make it easier for the bazaar workers to pray. These two examples illustrate that the first generation Bangladeshi Muslims are very transnationally tied to their homeland and the UK. Having a religious upbringing has encouraged in some ways transnational civic engagement because the projects may have religious and spiritual grounds, but they are also intended to benefit the community more generally. This connects to some of the arguments Rudolph (1997) makes about religion having a transnational nature in engaging societies civically.

It also appears that the people living in Bangladesh have an expectation that Bangladeshis in the UK should do send money to their village because they are perceived as wealthy 'foreigners' (*bedeshi*). They believe their 'foreign' relatives have disposable income so it should not be a problem, but off course this is not always the reality. Moreover, relatives living in Bangladesh may have an expectation that their British counterparts will build a house for them or financially provide for them, but this idea does not sit very well particularly with the second generation as they would rather build a mosque which would benefit the whole community and their relatives, which some respondents inconspicuously articulated.

## 4.5 Changes in Status and Belief

Mosque projects carried out by the fathers of second generation Bangladeshi respondents, particularly if they were involved in other community development projects, had an impact on their status. Respondents such as Saba, Safron and Wafiza noted that their fathers became well known in their villages and gained some form of prestige. However, they also stressed that the 'limelight' was not sought after and this was not the motivation for working on such as spiritual project, rather the increase in social status was the consequence of their work. There is some connection to parallel literature on the beneficial impacts that sending economic and social remittances has on the migrants who engage in such practices, such as the African studies Mercer et al (2008) investigated. However, the migrant respondents in this study are sending spiritual remittances; hence their mosque projects are personal and meaningful to them, so gaining higher social status is not a motivator for why they send money for mosque construction.

The respondents that had family members, who were very involved in the mosque projects, also expressed that this had affected their belief systems in some ways. For example, Wafiza felt that her religious values and the importance of family became stronger (see box 6).

Box 6: Wafiza

> "I think it's strengthened the belief as well as family ties, and I credit that to my parents who have modelled that fact that we need to do something about it [issues in Bangladesh]. So we as siblings, even the family charity we're setting up now is my father who is more or less housebound now, but he wants us to do something that he can leave behind that we work on together. So he has instilled that value hopefully for a couple of more generations where we will value the importance of contributing in not just money but time and energy to support local communities as well as those communities who are far away from us."

Wafiza's father has become elderly and it seems that he wants the next generation of young people to share some of the values that he has, because time is changing and the first generation experience is very different to the second. He wants all his children to be unified by working on a project that is based on shared values, in this case religious values, so that they can gain personal growth, have a positive impact on each other and live up to the values embedded in their Islamic faith. In turn, it appears that he wants to encourage future generations to work with families and communities, by instilling his knowledge and values to his adult children who can then pass this on to their children, and so on.

## 4.6 Concluding comments

Overall there are multiple reasons why the respondents send remittances for mosque projects. A huge factor was based on their Islamic values and understanding, and their spiritual growth. Another vital factor was helping family and relatives in their home country, and this is connected to the religious reasons as well. Families 'back home' also expected to receive remittances, which had become a norm. Respondents emphasised with helping the disadvantaged, helping *ethim* children, and strived to gain inner happiness and peace. And some empathised with the struggle of not having a place of worship and support, like a mosque which gives users equal opportunities, especially to the poor, so these were important factors too. There were generational influences as well; first and second generation migrants had similar and different understandings towards giving money to build mosques abroad and expressed this act of spirituality diversely. The first generation especially had an

emotional connection to their homeland and the obligation of feeding the poor, hence they felt it was an essential reason for them.

One respondent tried to explain why her father was involved in building a mosque in his Bangladeshi village and she somewhat thought that the motivations might be conflicting. Box 7 portrays what the respondent stated:

Box 7: Safron

*"I think most villages they do have one [mosque], I think it's more like, because we live here and we have wealth in a way I think it's something to show off wealth, which is sad and is exactly the opposite of what it should be. Because it's like in your bari [house/village] you should have a mosque [which people expect]. I think because people they live in the West and so they have the wealth in order to build a mosque so they build a mosque… obviously I think they do have a lot of reasons but I think it's because they can, because they've got that wealth. I don't think it's necessarily needed because I think they have that access to a mosque but it's more about having that ease of having it in your backyard basically, having people coming to you rather than you going to them. I mean it does serve lots of purposes… even our parents when they talk about 'back home' they've seen the poor, they do think about them, think about their lives. They constantly got contact now, you now with technological advancement they're always on the phone talking to them and they know what people have problems. So they still have that strong link with them back home so they're aware of their problems. You know because they used to live there it is personal to them, like they were then their shoes once and now they're here, they want to give back isn't it. So they do want to build a mosque to fulfil their conscious, you know feeding the poor and getting reward for it…"*

Safron's comment summarises some of the issues in trying to work through explaining why money is sent to build a mosque. She seems unsure in the beginning but eventually realises that her father did this project for both spiritual, development and family reasons, but also perhaps because his family in Bangladesh wanted the mosque in close proximity to their house. This was a marker of her father's success, although this was not the motivation for doing it as stated earlier in the chapter. Clearly, all reasons discussed throughout the chapter are diverse, interconnected and sometimes conflicting, but they all have a spiritual dimension running through, even though sometimes the remitters may forget that. Now I turn to examine how these respondents go about giving their spiritual remittances.

# Chapter 5: Processes of Spiritual Remittance

This chapter discusses the ways in which respondents collect or raise remittances, the channels in which they are sent and the people who receive them. It looks at the processes of spiritual remittances involved in both home associations and individual donations, analysing the similarities that may exist with the processes involved in other forms of remittances, but also identifying different and new ways of thinking about how remittances are collected and sent. The final section of the chapter analyses the dynamics and politics involved in the processes at multiple levels

## 5.1 Channels of sending

The channels respondents described to send their spiritual remittances were as follows: collecting a large sum of money and taking the funds to Bangladesh in person or through a relative, to avoid tax implications but also to get a better exchange rate as one respondent suggested, using internet banking or money transfer services because of their speed, safety and ease, and sending donations through trusted charities. Most mosque projects in Bangladesh and elsewhere would consist of remittances from a mixture of different channels. In Adil's case he had a lack of trust with the builders so he tried to oversee as much as possible, and he perceived his brother not as competent because he was too trusting and didn't manage the project properly which the builders took advantage of. Thus, he was moving back and forth between two countries with the remittances and managing the project. Many respondents said that they would in the ideal situation like to take the remittances themselves and oversee the whole project, but it would be too expensive and money transfer is the easiest and fastest route. Also, money transfer is higher amongst African projects because services like the Western Union have a lower fee rate, for example to Ethiopia as Lana talks about or Sheel money transfer has special offers for Somali remitters as Fadila noted.

Spiritual remittances are sent through very similar channels to other forms of remittances as investigated in existing literature (see Willis, 2008; Datta et al, 2007). This includes the money transfer services, banking and informal routes via visiting in person as mentioned by the respondents, thus there is nothing new to the way spiritual remittances are sent compared to what is known about the channels in existing literature. However, except I argue that the

interconnection between charity and remittances when people donate spiritual remittances presents a new way of sending remittances. I bring this argument to the table because diaspora channels in the UK offer opportunities for migrants to get involved and donate money to charity appeals in their home country, which they are spiritually, emotionally and religiously invested in. This is a route that some respondents have been involved in.

## 5.2 Home Associations

Some of the respondents or their parents, all of whom are first generation migrants, have an informal or formal membership to a home association. Ghazi for example, works in a senior position at the East London Mosque and he is also a member of a home association, Zogornathpor Islamic society, which is a UK registered charity. He is working on an on-going project to establish an Islamic complex, which includes a community mosque. He talks about the association having a large number of members, how he regularly donates and the arrangements of how the association is organised (see box 8).

Box 8: Ghazi

> *"It's based on my affordability. So at the moment I give about £10 a month so there's about 50 of us who do that, £10 a month so that's £500 a month. So that pays for the salaries of the teachers [of the madrasha] and other on-going costs…We have a management committee in Bangladesh. From here we have the chairman, the secretary of the project; they make regular visits every year and see how the progress is and take the report from them and then they come back and report to us."*

The association clearly has structure and the large number of members adds up to a big total in order to expand the complex, which is comprised of a mosque and education facilities. He explains that different methods are used to raise the funds, such as fundraising using his personal networks and snowballing, especially during the month of Ramadan when people are particularly generous. The association has also had fundraising appeals on Bengali television channels such as NTV, which Ghazi believes is an effective tactic to use because viewers get excited and feel encouraged to call in and donate. As Ghazi and other members of the association are well networked it isn't difficult to set up the appeals on television and using leaflet and website media generally. They have used television on several occasions and find it quite effective because they can 'reach thousands of people', unlike lengthy door-to-door labour intensive methods. Viewers who are from the region the appeal is for are particularly eager because they feel that the funds will benefit people they know in their village. However,

Ghazi notes that a lot of preparation is required to achieve maximum success, such as contacting people beforehand to let them know about the programme, mainly from their supporter base. He believes that television appeals are now a saturated market because there are so many different charities and organisations, so in this current climate the supporters from the particular locality should be encouraged to achieve success. Once the finance is collected, it is remitted through a money transfer service to the home association charity in Bangladesh.

From another home association point of view, Arissa, a Somali respondent explains that her mother and other members have fundraising dinners to raise money for their mosque project in Somalia (see box 9).

Box 9: Arissa

> *"They just have dinners in their houses and sometimes on Eid they do have a special Eid gathering where more people come, but it's usually once a fortnight they meet up and then they have like a review of what's happening. They all know so they do bring money and they do get new people who come as well... Say if someone tells their friends about it and they want to contribute because people usually do, then they bring them along to the dinner and then they contribute there and then but there is a set amount that each of the main members pay towards."*

These dinners demonstrate the dynamics of the association and how members can be in a social setting and gather a large sum of spiritual remittances at the same time. In turn, the process in this case becomes an enjoyable one. These are some of the complex and intricate processes involved in spiritual remittances and the work of formal home associations on Islamic buildings, which requires the investment of time and effort. The fact that Ghazi is a regular donor and gets really involved in the appeals shows how passionate he is about the project, and the sentimental regularity Arissa's mother's work, adds a different dimension to what a remittance is.

## 5.3 Gathering funds

Mosque projects of smaller informal home associations, family projects, and those that give personal donations to an organisation or someone they trust are involved in collecting or giving their spiritual remittances slightly differently compared to large formal home association. All respondents generally donated a portion of their income or savings as

remittances; however, Safron and Zeena's dads for example also used some of the profit from their businesses in Bangladesh on their personal small scale projects. It could be argued that this is not a remittance because the money is coming from the same country. But at the same time I suggest that the profit belongs to Bangladeshi migrants that do not live in Bangladesh so the money have a transnational nature here, and they use other traditional methods of remittances. Respondents involved in smaller scale personal projects, contacted their family, relatives, neighbours and friends to collect a large sum of money to then be remitted.

On the other hand, mosque projects by charities would usually raise funds through the internet, television appeals, phone in methods and sometimes door-to-door collections. Respondents like Lana teach Arabic to raise funds for their charity mosque projects as well as circulating emails and text messages about the causes and requesting donations. Ehan briefly mentions that his small charity fund raises in community events and bazaars around London, collects donations from their website, London *masjids*, and through family and friends. However, he says that because his charity is small and there are many other established charities it's difficult to compete. It is obvious that there are multiple methods used to raise and remit spiritually embedded funds back to the homeland and there are clear similarities with how other forms of remittances are sent. However, migrant diasporas, such as the Bangladesh community in the UK have set up Bengali channels, which charities use as a tool for fundraising appeals, especially during the timing around the month of Ramadan where people are more willing to give. This entwining of charity and remittances is a new way of thinking about remittances and how they are sent. Therefore, I argue that respondents that donate via charity to their homeland are sending remittance (and not just charity) because it is personal and it is their home country and they often feel they have the obligation to help people in their homeland.

### 5.4 Generational differences

Although many respondents were quite trusting in giving out their donations towards mosque construction projects, it was still important to them where their money was going. Hence, particularly the second generation respondents opted for sending their remittances through well-known Islamic charities. The majority of the respondents that discussed family or small scale mosque projects said that the mosque committee in Bangladesh would receive the money. More specifically, the person in charge of the finance or sometimes their relative

would receive it first and then they would pass that money to the Imam of the mosque or the head of the mosque committee. The second generation respondents were happy to help their parents in these types of arrangements of mosque projects, but they preferred the charity route or having a direct involvement if they had the time and resources.

## 5.5 Dynamic processes

This section ponders over the dynamism and the politics involved in the process and engages in critical discussion. Respondents described various difficulties at different stages of the mosque building process. Most believed that finding someone to oversee the whole project was a challenge because no one could really afford to take time out of their day job and described logistical issues, such as slow communication. Thus, some respondents suggested that they would prefer to have no or very little direct involvement, so their main involvement would be providing financial assistance. Some suggested that trying to negotiate decision-making ideas and thoughts amongst the villagers and committee members was a little difficult. Respondent's part of small charities or a home association believed that competition with other projects were becoming an increasing challenge, because people viewed 'pure humanitarian' projects as more imperative. The process of gaining spiritual remittances for a mosque building project respondents say does come with challenges and here I have identified four broad interlinked dynamic processes they experienced, which stood out the most. These are family politics, village politics, macro-level politics and the dynamics of transnational decision-making.

### 5.6 Family and village politics

The majority of the respondents believed that they had a good relationship with the community in Bangladesh, so the communication was successful, although sometimes slow. These communities often recognised the benefactors and usually held them in quite high esteem, especially if they were from an older generation and contributed to the community in other ways. However, several respondents noted that their families in Bangladesh had become heavily reliant upon their remittances (see box 10), including their spiritual remittances.

> *"I think there's always a bit of difficulty because in the Bengali community particularly there is there huge reliance on family and relatives to support one another, so a lot of like my parents did come to the country in the hopes that they'll improve their own economic situation. But they have always tried to help improve the economic situation of their own family back home, so there is always that sort of value attached to you know money that it should be used for the purposes of bettering themselves and their communities."*

It appears that the norm would always be to give money to own family members in need in the home country first because of the cultural and religious principles associated with giving. As mentioned earlier, Islamic teaching which Nusrat pointed, out says that there are certain categories of people that one should help first, and this is family. Spiritual remittances come secondary to other kinds of remittances, such as economic ones given to family members in need. Additionally, relatives in Bangladesh have an expectation that the eldest living abroad should contribute the most, while the receivers of the funds are also usually the elder members of the household.

During Adil's mosque construction in his village, he experienced some village politics. Few people in his village appeared jealous or upset because he was spending money toward building a mosque rather than on them, because they felt that they needed the financial help. However, the purpose of a mosque as discussed in the previous chapter is to provide the local community with a mutual multi-functional space, so Adil saw his vision as a project to help the whole community, and not just to benefit one person or one family. Family tension was also stirred up after an unfortunate incident of theft by the builders. Adil had sent his money to his younger brother in Bangladesh to conduct the mosque construction, but his brother over-trusted the builders on 'good faith' who left the job half done and fled with the rest of the money. This sowed uncertainty in Adil's mind about whether his younger brother is competent enough, which lead Adil to assign the task and funds to his older brother. Not only did the sibling dynamics change between Adil and his younger brother, but also with the two brothers in Bangladesh themselves.

These tensions are evident in other remittance literature as well (Mercer et al, 2008; Conway and Cohen, 1998). This is an issue remitters often face when they have many family members back home, trying to decide who to put in charge of management and finance. For Adil he

experienced two upsetting dilemmas, the tension amongst brothers and the faith and trust put into builders working on a religious project betraying him and his brothers. Most likely, if Adil was involved in a non-religious development project then he and his sibling may have taken much more precautions with the builders, but because they were working on a religious building perhaps they expected more reciprocity of trust with all the stakeholders. Therefore, the features and dimensions around spiritual remittance is different than other types, because of the grounding themes of religion and faith changing people's usual way of conduct to some degree. What makes spiritual remittance different is that remitters like Adil and his brothers become really invested in religious projects, and therefore become quite trustful and lose sight of how they would usually work on a project in a non-faith/spiritual context.

Furthermore, Atiya talks about the dynamic process that was experienced in her father's mosque renovation project in Bangladesh. It began when her father went to Bangladesh to his village and saw the poor state of the small original mosque. He wanted to do something about it and the local people suggested this too, that he would give money to renovate it. He was an *Imam* so as a religious leader and being financially able he felt that it was his responsibility as Islamic teachings would encourage this, however the project took almost five years to complete with a lot of tension and village politics in the process. His plan was to refurbish the mosque, extend it and renovate the surrounding area such as the roads and pavements because it had become dilapidated. Instead, he was informed by his brother in Bangladesh left in charge that builders were delaying the work and other problems were arising. Mosque committee members were having arguments with each other and had disagreements and different visions to Atiya's dad, hence Atiya's dad felt he had to go to Bangladesh to sort the problem out (see box 11).

Box 11: Atiya

> *"My dad was kind of thinking that it's because everyone's got their own agendas. It was just kind of local politics, it was nothing to do with religion or anything like that, it was just local politics. People just wanted to see like they had a bit of control of the thing, they could say yeah I was part of it and yeah I did this, and yeah I did that. I think they lost sight of the fact that this was the mosque that they wanted to do build…"*

The idea that a Bangladeshi who has in some ways become a foreigner to the village people in Bangladesh and doing what he wants in their village does not sit very well with some committee members. Atiya believed that the main reason why there was conflict and perhaps

some hostility by certain members towards her father was because they wanted to have power and control over the project, and felt that the person who is supplying the money is taking control, hence they delayed the progress of the project. This was the opposite of what the project was about in essence, and certain members forgot why this project was initiated. The relationship Atiya's father he had with the management and the locals became very dynamic and conflicting.

The role of individuals such as community leaders can be important in shaping where and how the money is sent and spent, sometimes having disproportionate influence, is investigated in literature on African HTAs for example. These parallel studies consider controversies and dynamic rapport between the leaders, benefactors and beneficiaries, and tension in village politics, which could result in members of the diaspora having to travel back to resolve issues around projects (Mercer et al, 2008). My study investigates on the other hand further into the specific dynamics when concerning spiritual remittances.

## 5.7 Gender dimensions

Family dynamism was obvious too because Atiya's father had to leave for a month when the problems arose in Bangladesh, which perhaps led to some strain on the family as the lost the breadwinner for a month. That being said, she said that family roles changed for this period and "everyone stepped up". In some ways this empowered the women of the household as Atiya's mother become the head of the household. Atiya also stated that both her parents would discuss and consult each other on the project and in decision-making on questions of how much money to remit, what the project should entail and who can be trusted to take the responsibility on the ground. In fact she sates that are mother is more conscious of the village politics and indirectly implies that her mother is making the key decisions as illustrated by the quote in box 12.

Box 12: Atiya

> *"She's actually visited it a lot more than he has recently so she is more aware of what's going on, who's in charge of the area, who's in charge of the politics, whose creating all the drama back home so he goes to her. If someone goes to him 'you should do this' then he comes and says what do think and she's says this person was like this back home and this person is doing this and that stuff like that."*

Atiya's mother has more connections because she regularly goes Bangladesh, therefore her input is greater than some of the other mothers of second generation respondents. Her father is the representative or the face of the project, whereas her mother is working behind the scene dealing with problems, perhaps due to the gender norms in the Bangladeshi culture. This sheds light on the gender roles between the couple in their mosque project, because it demonstrates that they are both very involved but have differing roles. The gender dimension stood out in that many Bangladeshi respondents stated that the women would usually work behind the scenes, except in a few cases. This was particularly in contrast with a Somali respondent. These themes around gender link to the literature on the how women's roles change once they become the head of the household or lead community projects.

Arissa's mother's HTA is very dynamic and inspiring for her. It consists of 12 Somali women in London from the same town in Somalia getting together once a fortnight for dinner in each other's houses and raising money and discussing the progress of various projects in their town in Somalia (see box 13).

Box 13: Arissa

> *"Out of my mum's little group, one of them goes away every year or two and she checks on the projects and what they're doing and stuff. And they actually built a school for women to empower women and I think part of it is sort of like, well it's not a mosque but women do pray there during Ramadan because the mosque gets full up. And they also have Quran classes, they have sewing classes, the have Arabic English classes so there's a lot of things going on there for women. And, I would love to be more involved in the future InshaAllah and actually be part of the organisation or maybe even when my mum gets older, take her place or whatever. But what they've done is massive even though there's only a few of them."*

Usually one of the women would travel to Somalia and back to get an update of the progress during their fortnightly dinners. This example is quite unique in that it is fully led by a small group of Somali women making all the decisions and working on quite prestigious and empowering projects. This association has female representatives in their Somali town taking care of the day-to-day running of the project when the women in London cannot be there. However, Arissa emphasised that her mother and the other members maintain regular communication to make sure that achieving their goals stayed on track. There projects not only involve send spiritual remittances, but they also send what may be called 'economically non- productive' and 'productive' remittances to provide support for widowers or

unemployed family members for example. There is a link between the different uses of a single transaction of remittance because the remittance sent to build a mosque encompasses different functions and meanings.

## 5.8 Macro-politics

Ghazi and members of his home association experienced some village resistance with the complex project which was more widely connected to macro-politics, described in box 14.

Box 14: Ghazi

> *"Initially there was some resistance locally from some people not to have it. This kind of local politics. There are some people who are against sort of Islamic institutions in Bangladesh because they think that they may lose their authority and their power in the area. These are secular groups. The current Prime Minister is Sheikh Hasina and her secular government. The previous government was pro-Islamic, this one isn't."*

The process of setting up the complex faced this turbulent difficulty as a result of quite strong political allegiances in Ghazi's village. He suggests that previous government allowed Islamic initiatives to be set up, but the current government is very secular and to some extent not making this easy. This political tension has seeped down to village level micro-politics. This is an interesting dimension in terms of the real politics involved because the project is based on spiritual donations from the community that come from the locality who want to build a mosque and other things for the poor and the locals. The complex is not just a religious space, but a communal space that has multi-purposes. However, Ghazi's comments bring out what he sees as barriers in Bangladesh and what he wants to do for his village and region.

Another respondent, Riyad stated that he would rather not do any projects in Bangladesh, even to build a mosque because he felt like there was too much corruption there and therefore a legal system out of his control, as distinguished in box 15.

Box 15: Riyad

> *"You can address any problems here [the UK] quite well, there are systems here, there are laws, there is accountability, there are infrastructures available for you to sort out problems. But in Bangladesh the infrastructure there is so corrupt it's not even worth trying. I think most politicians Bangladesh are only interested in their own personal gain. They are not interested in anything else."*

Riyad is a second generation Bangladeshi, and he interestingly compares the legal framework of Bangladesh and the UK, stating that in the UK context there is legal protection when working on projects, whereas in Bangladesh he feels he wouldn't get this. Ghazi on the other hand is a first generation who is involved in a Bangladeshi project and faces barriers, but as a first generation he knows and understands how the politics and the legal system works in Bangladesh, whereas Riyad, a second generation Bangladeshi is likely to have less knowledge and understanding about how Bangladesh works. The second generation have grown up in the UK context so their understanding of politics and legality is based more upon the UK context, at the same time they are most likely not as embedded in how systems work in Bangladesh as their parent's generation. Hence, Riyad may feel that his attention in the UK is time and energy spent better.

## 5.9 Transnational choices

When presented with the choice, Saba believes her mother would rather send her money to Bangladesh for mosque construction because she grew up there, whereas Saba would prefer to donate in the UK because she grew up in the UK and has a greater sense of attachment. However, she and her mother are also strongly willing to help financially whenever just causes or opportunities are presented to them and what they believe is the most important to them at the time. Other respondents made similar comments, so people do think about transnational politics at some level, trying to make a decision on where their time, effort and resources should go. On the one hand there are people in the UK that are living in poor conditions and face all kinds of issues, but on the other, there are people in Bangladesh who are living in basic poverty and require dire help. So particularly migrant donors are faced with this dilemma, as they try a weigh up reasons where they should give their charity. This comes back to why spiritual remittance is different because other types of remittance can be more straightforward, so for example, sending economic remittance to family because of obligation. Whereas spiritual remittances is more complex because people look to their faith, which encourages people to help the needy, but then the question is which needy should be helped, the ones in the UK or the ones in Bangladesh?

**5.10 Concluding comments**

Sending spiritual remittances for mosque projects in Bangladesh or elsewhere abroad is sent via the usual routes that other types of remittances, but television appeals is a route that has not been explored literature and many respondent opt for this route. The process is a very dynamic one whether it is done on a small scale minimal involvement level or a large scale involvement level as it can affects people's belief systems to some degree. The themes of family, generation differences and faith-based charity giving come across very strongly. The dynamic processes particularly tell complex and political narratives, at family, village, macro and transnational levels, usually interwoven narratives.

Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on whether donors giving charity can be theorised as remittance. A group of young people especially in this study expressed that they had no committed loyalty to giving to one particular country. For example, Waheed, Maaz and Aalam work in the charity sector, they know where there money goes when they donate, how it is used and are motivated by their faith, so they do not feel like they have to only donate to their parents country, but rather wherever they feel the most benefit will be experienced. This begs the question whether donating money to charity for mosque projects is a spiritual remittance, and hence I feel it is a contribution I am making in the debates round faith, remittance and politics in the community

# Chapter 6: Transnational Outcome

This chapter analyses the ways in which respondent's cultures and identity influences the designs of the mosques they construct. The final section discusses the continuities, future projects and experiences.

## 6.1 The aesthetics

Particularly on the personal mosque project endeavours by first generation Bangladeshi Muslims, there appears to be a common favour towards Islamic tiles of the *Kaaba* and/ or *Madina* in Saudi Arabia as the centre piece décor.  As figure 2 and 3 illustrates, two different mosques built by two different Bangladeshi respondents, using similar imaged tiles as a focal point around the *mihrab*. The first respondent, Adil, ordered his tiles from China (see figure 2) and he got the engineer to design the mosque in a regional style. Adil expressed a sense of proudness of what was accomplished, especially because he got the tiles ordered from another country. This exemplifies that Adil not only has a transnational connection between the UK and Bangladesh, but he also has some active connection to China. Although China plays a small role here, it was quite significant for Adil as he emphasised that a foreign element was added to the tiles origin. Technological advancement has made it easy to do business and therefore to have a multi-webbed transnational tie to three counties in this case. Overall, the funders of the mosque projects have some involvement in choosing the tiles or the paint colour and so forth if they have physical involvement in running the project, but they tailor the mosque according to the locality. It was also quite common to build the mosque on inherited land. Adil did this, built a small contemporary Bangladeshi mosque on inherited family land, with an ablution washing facility outside the mosque (see figure 3 and 4).

Figure 2: Mihrab of Madina Masjid in Sylhet        Figure 3: Tiles with the image of Kaaba, in Sylhet
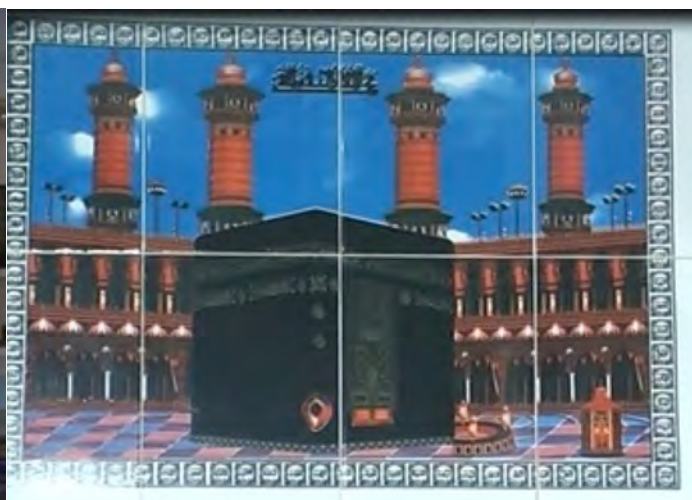


(Source: Adil, respondent)             (Source: Safron, respondent)

Figure 4: Madina Masjid in Sylhet, Bangladesh



(Source: Adil, respondent)

Figure 5: Ablution washing area next to Madina Masjid in Sylhet



(Source: Adil, respondent)

Some of the interviewees stated that the style of the mosque in their projects were an amalgamation of ideas. For example, Lana and Ehan browsed the web or travelled, taking inspiration from different architectural traditions and combining it with the local architectural traditions. Wafiza talked about how a 'fusion' style was chosen in terms of the aesthetics encompassing a Bangladeshi and Arab Islamic design as well as adopting a British or Western way of teaching in a madrasha. It seems visually that the architecture was not influenced by migrant western identity, but practical elements and social remittances were taken on board, such as systems of running Islamic schools. Only one respondent felt that the mosque her father was working on was influenced by their British and Bangladeshi identities, but this was not argued very strongly (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Construction of a Mosque in Sylhet, Bangladesh



(Source: Safron, respondent)

The majority of the respondents believed that the design and architecture of the mosques were traditional according to the standard local and regional traditions. Traditional in the sense that it conformed to the standard designs in the country and incorporated some Islamic traditions, which Waheed articulates (see box 16).

Box 16: Waheed

> *"It's a very standard design for a Bangladeshi mosque. I mean it's got is curves like a traditional mosque to show a bit of Islamic symbolism, although it doesn't mean anything religiously but it does symbolise it. I think it's white with bright blue stripes across it. It's very traditional Bangladeshi mosque in the village so you can't expect anything more."*

This view was also apparent with the Somali respondents but it appeared that there was a stronger Arabic influence than a Somali. Similar with the case of the Omani respondent. Therefore, I believe that the closer a Muslim majority country is geographically to the Middle East, the stronger the Arabic influence is on the mosques. Many respondents were taking part or knew someone taking part in a home association type of mosque building project, like Ghazi who is involved in an official one (see box 17).

Box 17: Ghazi

*"There is a committee in Bangladesh, they do all the work. Once they have done it they seek our approval and they apply for funding. They come up with the project and they apply for funding from our charity here and we give them just like any other funder does. It's a very typical Bangladeshi architecture. Very simple, basic architecture. We were more concerned about the facilities rather than the aesthetic of the building because we don't have the luxury of spending. It's more about the function."*

Here Ghazi emphasises the importance of functionality within the local context, rather than the architecture because of the funding available. Nusrat similarly makes a comment about the precedence of functionality in box 18. Perhaps, also a lot of the times in the case of Bangladesh remitters gather the minimum that is needed because there are people surviving in the country on the bare minimum, so it may be seen as offensive to them if remitters spend lavishly on a building.

Box 18: Nusrat

*"…we have to understand that the area wasn't exactly you know sort of really wealthy so looking into designing a mosque that had lots of ornaments, and special design and architecture wasn't the focus, rather it was just making sure that there was an existence of a mosque that could be used for a variety of purposes."*

The majority of the respondents were not physically involved in the mosque construction phase. They were either part of a home association and providing funding or generally donating towards such projects. Hence, the designing was mainly left to the local community the mosque was being built in, with committee members or community leaders making the key decisions about the logistics and the design. HTA members may approve the final plans but the running and the designing was left to the local architect and committee members in the community. There is also a significant emphasis on the simplicity factor, where funders provide what is needed rather than extravagant unnecessary things, both because of the lack of funds and resource available to create something lavish, and because many people feel that

simplicity is embedded into the Islamic teaching in terms of providing a place of worship and resources people need, and thus not to indulge. This again points out that spiritual remittance is different to other forms, because this view would normally not be considered if remittance was funding a mansion house for example.

Respondents also made it clear that 'no strings were attached or tied' to funding or donating towards mosque construction or renovation in terms of enforcing their plans of how the aesthetics should look. Ehan explains in box 18.

Box 18: Ehan

> *"Our intention isn't to try and say this is English or British and here you go. It's designed around the people and what their needs are. There have been some influences like building shops and the thinking behind that is that by having shops you can generate the running of that masjid, and these are sort of things which are Islamic principles if you go back in history. When masjids are built, they are built with businesses around so they can sustain themselves which something we've lost over the years, but that something that we've looked into for this particular masjid."*

What connects all the projects are the Islamic symbolism, principles and values behind them. For example, the users of the mosque should have some input in the projects whether through providing ideas or manual labour in the construction phase. But also if there is enough funding, a minaret is desired first so that the *adhan* can called out, second would be the dome to enhance the acoustics whilst praying. These are desirable Islamic building characteristic traditions but are not necessary features. The function of having the space to facilitate congregational prayer is the most important necessity for the Muslim communities. As Waheed puts it in box 19.

Box 19: Waheed

> *"The thing is villagers in Bangladesh they are not really bothered about the design. They're just happy that they've got something and they don't have to travel and stuff like that. Kids can come without having to go on boats, worry about it getting dark and drowning."*

The emphasis was put on the multi-purpose and functional use of the mosque, usually built with the purpose of facilitating Islamic classes for the community and eventually with a madrasha incorporated into it or built next to it. Building a mosque that suits the climate of Bangladesh and having *wadu* facilities was important (see figure 5 for example). These aspects were far significant than the aesthetics, as the aesthetics were secondary to the main purpose

and function of the mosque. Some of the respondents that donated were not interested in where their money went as long as it went towards what they saw as much-needed mosque projects; sometimes they would see the progress on television if a charity was responsible for the project. Overall, small scale personal projects like Adils involves more input in the aesthetics because it's on his family land compared to larger more communal projects where the job is left more the committee.

## 6.2 Transnational continuity

The final section of the chapter discusses the narratives respondents gave about the future of their mosque construction projects, if they could stay in contact and if so the ways in which they would do this. It also looks the future projects respondents discuss that are inspired by religion, faith and spirituality, and then consider what the whole process and spiritual remittances means to them.

## 6.3 Linkages with material outcome

The main types of contact respondents kept or hope to keep after the end of their projects broadly fit into the model of contact through familial networks or through formal/informal networks such as a mosque committee in Bangladesh. Respondents either keep communication with their Bangladeshi relatives as they normally would do, would ask for an update or their relatives would let them know if there were and problems or if they needed more financial assistance with the mosque. The other form of communication was when mosque committee members would appeal for further donations from their relatives living in the developed world, including the UK, America, Australia and Germany. This illustrates that the connections in this study are transnational. Home association members receive newsletters and emails concerning the up keep of the mosques for the village committee, but they also try to take regular visits to make sure that the community is happy with the mosque. These effects of the aftermath of project completion is similar to parallel literature, as the empirical work of Mercer et al (2008) sheds light on.

Conversely, complexities are added to these spiritual remittances, when respondents like Lana expresses that they see their mosque as a long-term project (indicated in box 20).

<div style="text-align: center;">Box 20: Lana</div>

> *"We have a long-term project, we want to build you know like a place they can raise funds for themselves, like a shop or something. So we give capital and they run the shop and profit can go to the masjid so they don't depend on us all the time. Eventually that's what we want to achieve. I would say that is the end project, once it runs and then the shop gets bigger and bigger so they don't need us anymore. This gives jobs to the local people and…you know you have to change the mentality of dependency…"*

Lana project is grounded on faith and she wants the mosque to bring about renewal in the village, so people can support themselves and not rely on anyone else. The aim is to build a mosque that is self-sufficient, which fits around the Islamic principles. Other respondents felt after finishing the project they didn't expect to have any links or responsibility to it, because the project was more about helping the community and gaining spiritual reward. Comparing this point to other kinds of projects using economic remittances, this study indicates something different. Usually remitters would have some form of link to their projects after completion either through family or villagers because of the connection to the homeland and perhaps seeing it as a material or social investment (Mercer et al, 2008), however, some respondents didn't really care to keep a contact, just as long as the money was used properly and communities were benefiting. I attribute this to the spiritual and religious dimensions of silently giving, as respondent strongly believed in the spiritual benefits. Numerous respondents used Arabic words such as inshaAllah or mashaAllah, connecting their action back to faith and having 'God consciousness'.

**6.4 Future projects**

Future involvement respondents considered were as follows, donating after *Jummah* prayers in their local mosque box collections, donating to Islamic charity appeal on television especially during the month of Ramadan, contributing whenever an opportunity that had spiritual gain presented itself, giving if family or friends asked, and helping with mosque building projects in war-torn countries. The last example was particularly popular with the younger respondents because they were more involved in global issues and world politics compared to their parents, and they felt that these countries need their help more than Bangladesh. Essentially, thinking about giving in terms of the global community, the *ummah*.

A few respondents suggested that they wouldn't want to do any religious projects in Bangladesh again or at least in their home village because of unpleasant village politics. Atiya's quote in box 21 demonstrates this

Box 21: Atiya

*"In terms of how long it took and everything else about the politics of it, what he [her father] had to do to get something done you know that was off putting, so it kind of resulted in my dad investing not as much money. Or give money to something that's not related to him locally if you see what I mean, like somewhere further away, like a madrasha or something like that. He thought he won't get involved locally because the people feel like they know you and try and get involved and everything and it gets a bit crazy."*

The stress of having to please different members of the village that Atiya's father knew changed his view on where to give his money and opting for easier projects that requires less time and input in the future. Nonetheless, when the tension arose whilst conducting the project, Atiya's father and other stakeholders reminded each other why they are renovating the mosque in the first place, bringing their glue back to spirituality and faith, so perhaps that is what kept the project going in this extremely difficult scenario. They all remembered that they were working together for a good cause, but perhaps if they were working on a house construction project for example, and extreme tension arose then the project would be more likely to disintegrate as stakeholders would have that shared religious motivation keeping them together. Therefore, this study reiterates the difference that spiritual remittance has compared to other types.

**6.5 Concluding comments**

In summary, the beneficiaries have a large say in planning and designing mosque that are for them, however the experiences and relationship with family and villagers in Bangladesh can be a bit off putting for some benefactors. Though overall, respondents found their projects very self-satisfying and were happy with the outcome. It was especially the religious and spiritual factors that they found satisfying, as the quotes in box 22 exhibit.

<div align="center">Box 22: Ghazi and Wafiza</div>

> *"It give you a sense of spiritual satisfaction that you're doing something for your extended family members or the people, your country of origin and the poor community and we have a responsibility towards them. Just fulfilling our part of the responsibility towards our family members and fellow people of Bangladesh."*
>
> *"I think because it's grounded in faith it keeps us focused between living life here and preparing for the hereafter. Sometimes it gives us a focus of what we're trying to achieve and to leave something behind that worthwhile."*

The general outcome of giving spiritual remittances meant success at multi-webbed levels, including spiritual gain and growth, community development, strengthening family and homeland relationship, and educating a society.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

In conclusion, what I have discussed in this thesis is why people give money, time and energy to build mosques in their origin country and I described this using the concept spiritual remittance. There are different ways in which we might think about them as being spiritual. For example, spirituality means different things to different people, but religion was a clear thread that connected the understandings of spirituality of all the respondents in the study. The emphasis was the strong emotional and metaphysical link with God and expressing this through ones actions and good deeds towards humanity, regardless of whether they were small or big. One respondent noted that this is often an abandoned or forgotten aspect of religion or faith. I believe this is understandable because expressing and talking about spirituality and religion can be difficult, and theorising it in a non-theological context as my literature review briefly mentions. Another theme that emerged was the importance of 'giving' being seen as a spiritual act, as a result of believing in the afterlife. According to Parvez (2000: 91) 'Islam advocates balance and integration between the spiritual and material, individualism and collectivism, and between rights, duties and responsibilities.' This balance between the spiritual and material can apply to spiritual remittance. Henceforth, I broadly define spiritual remittance as the sending of money (and prayers) across geographical boundaries for religiously motivated reasons.

Themes such as tension between people from the diaspora and the people left behind receiving the remittances emerged, similar to studies by scholars such as Mercer et al (2008). The example of one respondent's father taking control of the project experienced village politics, even though he may have thought that people would be grateful for his contribution, but then some people weren't, so there is this contradiction. On the one hand, the village people may also see him as an outsider from London taking control and find this frustrating, but still be grateful for what he is giving. On the other hand, there is this kind of double standards because he has 'made it' in the West and they expect him to give money as his duty towards the community, so there is this hierarchy of expectations and pressures. However, this is why in some ways spiritual remittance can be seen as a positive form of remittance because it can almost take a person outside the family obligations and other demanding

obligations. Even when tensions arise the spiritual motivation takes precedent and people feel obliged to work together.

About 25% of the interviewees were first generation migrants and 75% were second generation, which means something in relation to the question posed by Levitt (2001). Although in a different context, Levitt asked the question whether religious transnational practices would be salient amongst second generation migrants and my finding reveals that it does. However, the practices are salient in a different way, as the second generation transform the way they perform transnational practices and transform to some extent what it means to them. To call spiritual remittance a religious practice may be premature, but this is something I want to contribute to debates, because by finding revealed interesting similarities and differences amongst the two generations. In both generations, religion was imperative, not declining in importance for the younger generation as some may suggest. Overall, there was a lot of diversity; in particular generational differences were nuanced.

I have identified this new form of remittance that is different but also has connections with other forms of remittance, so it is sometime similar to economic and social remittances because there is clearly a strong sense of family or some people are organised with HTAs, so there are lots of connections. Yet there is this other unexplored dimension of religion and faith. Particularly with the second generation migrants, some suggest that they do not want to donate to Bangladesh because they are unfamiliar or worried about the politics there. Nonetheless, they still feel it's important to donate to Bangladesh because of their faith. They also donate through charities to build religious buildings, sometimes through television appeals for their origin country. I argue that respondents that donate via charity to their homeland are sending remittance because it is personal and it is their home country and they often feel they have the obligation to help people in Bangladesh. This sheds light on whether this can be considered as a remittance, but also what happens when migrants donate money to a different country that is not their homeland, under spiritual motivations? Can charity be a remittance? Does remittance have to go to your family members or local community? I have pulled out these arguments which can be thought about. I begin to theorise spiritual remittance and this is my contribution; in future research I can tease out whether this is the right word to use or not and these themes need to be researched more.

# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| *Adhan:* | The call to the five daily prayers. |
| *Alhamdulillah:* | An Arabic phrase meaning "Praise to God" or "All praise is due to Allah". |
| *Allah:* | Allah is the Arabic word for God. |
| *Du'a:* | The act of supplication. |
| *Bedeshi:* | Foreigner. |
| *Bid'ah:* | A newly invented matter introduced into the religion of Islam, having no root or basis in it. Although the act may seem to resemble the way of Islam, in reality it opposes the guidelines of Islam. |
| *Ethim:* | Orphan. |
| *Hadith:* | A narrative. It refers to the sayings, deeds, and approvals of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). |
| *Imam:* | A leader, whether in prayer or of a nation or a leader in knowledge and understanding. Often the leader of a mosque and a teacher, and more often, the one who the community turns to if they have a question regarding Islam. |
| *Iman:* | Trust, acceptance, affirmation, faith, belief. |
| *Insha'Allah:* | Arabic term used to indicate hope for an aforementioned event to occur in the future. The phrase translates into English as "Good willing or "If it is God's will". |
| *Jummah:* | A congregational prayer that Muslims hold every Friday, just after noon in lieu of dhuhr. |
| *Kaaba:* | A square stone building in Al-masjid-al-Haram (the great mosque at Makkah) towards which all Muslims face in prayer. |
| *Masha'Allah:* | An Arabic phrase that expresses appreciation, joy, praise or thankfulness for an event or person that was just mentioned. Towards this, it is used as an expression of respect, while at the same time serving as a reminder that all accomplishments are so achieved by the will of God. The literal English translation is "whatever God wills". |
| *Masjid:* | A Mosque. A place of prostration, but refers to the place where the congregational prayer is held. Also, a centre for community life. |
| *Mecca:* | Holy city in Saudi Arabia, where the Kaaba is situated. |
| *Mihrab:* | A semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the qibla; that is, the direction of the Ka'bah in Mecca and hence the direction that Muslims should face when praying. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Muslim:* | A person who follows the Islamic religion. In Arabic it is the term for "one who submits to God". |
| *Qiblah:* | The direction towards which all Muslims face in prayers and that direction is towards the Kab'ah in Makkah (Saudia Arabia). |
| *Quran:* | The final compilation of the verbal revelations given to the Prophet Muhammad (saw). This is the Muslims source and holy scripture. |
| *Sadaqa:* | Anything given in charity. |
| *Sadqa-E-Jaria:* | On-going charity. An example is a person who digs (or causes to be dug) a well from which people can draw water, free, with the intention of doing it for the sake of Allah. This is an act of charity which continues over time, and as long as people benefit from the well, the donor, dead or alive, will continue to receive credit for having done it. |
| *Salah:* | Prayer. One of the five Pillars of Islam. |
| *Salallahu'Alaihiwassalam (saw):* | It means, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, which is a phrase (often abbreviated to "saw") that practising Muslims often say after saying (or hearing) the name of the Prophet Muhammad. |
| *Sawaab:* | Reward. |
| *Subhanalla-wa-ta'ala (SWT):* | An Islamic Arabic phrase that can be translated in English as "glorified and exalted be He" or "may He be glorified and exalted". |
| *Sunna:* | The established way of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). |
| *Ummah:* | Nation, community. "The Ummah" is the worldwide Muslim Community. Also referred to as a single nation of Muslims and non-Muslims by the Prophet Muhammad (saw). |
| *Wadu:* | Performing ablution. The purification by washing specific limbs in a specific way and number of times. |
| *Wadu khana:* | A special designed lavatory where ablution can be performed. |
| *Zakah:* | The religious obligation to pay 2.5% of one's savings to charity every year. One of the five Pillars of Islam. |

(Source: Parvez, 2000)

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### Dissertation Proposal: MSc Global Migration

**Spiritual remittances from Bangladeshi Muslim communities in London: Religiosity across borders**

*Introduction*

This study proposes to explore and analyse the theme of remittances, focussing on settled migrants, of first and second generation in London sending money and other resources back to their 'home' or 'origin' country for religious purposes. This will involve exploring remittances sent to build mosques for various reasons such as spirituality, local necessity in the home country and perhaps to enhance ones status by demonstrating ones economic abilities through the built environment. There is a lack of research on the role of sending remittances for religious purposes in the geographical, migration and transnational academic fields. This project aims to research this shortcoming in the field of transnationalism in relation to religiosity of migrant communities across borders, not in the settled 'host' country, but the effects in the origin country. The rationale for this research project is significant because it attempts to address issues of the role of religion and spirituality in remittance choices for the purpose of faith based buildings through various channels. This is a relatively new area of research, especially in transnational studies where religion and spiritual remittances is often largely neglected.

*Aims*

The aims are to provide a detailed empirical study of the broader nature of people's religion influencing their choices in sending money to their home country for spiritual and faith-based reasons and identifying whether wanting to maintain connections transnationally through a material form is a part of the reason. Investigating what this means in terms of their belief systems and their financial position is also an aim in this study. This study will focus on the Muslim Bangladeshi Communities in London and the mosques built in Bangladesh by these communities.

*Research questions*

> What are the underlying causes and motivations of sending remittances for settled Bangladeshi Muslim migrant communities in London to their 'origin' country for the purposes of building mosques?
> How and through which channel is this done?
> What are the dynamics and politics of the process from start to finish and are the connections maintained once the mosques are built?
> How does their transnational material culture and identity influence the architectural styles of the mosques built in their 'origin' country?

*Background: Literature Review*

It is recognised in migration scholarship that many contemporary migrants maintain their connections to their home country from their host country in social, political, cultural, economic and increasingly spiritual and religious ways (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). However, scholars long overlooked the importance of religion and spirituality in social and economic life until recently. For example, studies that have explored religious institutional connections produced by transnational migration (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2002; Levitt, 2004). Nevertheless, the transnational practice of sending remittances is under-investigated in the spiritual and religious sense; hence there is great scope to do research in this

field. The literature that exists on remittances largely focuses on development for individual or grouped causes (Datta, 2009). There is a large body of literature on organised diasporas such as hometown associations (HTAs) where members send remittances to a place in which they share an interest in a hometown or village or region or nation. However remittances sent by HTAs are mainly sent for the purpose of health, education, public services, community infrastructure services and other local needs (Orozco, 2003). Therefore, I propose to fill the gap in the literature by developing a new way of understanding remittances through a spiritual lens and connecting this to the literature on transnationalism.

## *Methods*

Interviews will be used as the primary tool for data collection, as the research questions encompass a qualitative inquiry. The interviews will be semi-structured, which will enable the gathering of rich and in-depth data material as the conversational and relaxed style of extracting information can allow the interviewee and interviewer to establish good rapport, enabling the interviewer to be reflexive and organised as well as flexible. This technique or method is chosen because speaking to people in an effective manner is an extremely useful way of gather insightful information, which a quantitative method may not be able to provide. This will involve the interviewer being a good listener, so that emotions of empathy and reciprocity make the interviewee feel comfortable and trustful, thus resulting in good interviews.

A schedule will be used outlining key themes and questions to be asked in the interview. According to Longhurst (2005) a good interview schedule consists of a starting point of broad and comfortable questions that then moves onto more difficult and perhaps sensitive ones. Pilots will be conducted to achieve a good and effective schedule. The interviewees will be recruited through a snowball effect and through Islamic organisations, such as charities and mosques in London. I propose to conduct 25 to 30 interviews because I feel this will be a sufficient amount to gather rich data in the time given to complete the study. All the interviews will be recorded, transcribed and then analysed. I will also use photographic material of mosques built with remittances if interviewees are able and willing to provide this.

For the analysis I will use the software Dragon NaturallySpeaking to transcribe all the interviews and then code the transcripts using a numeric and colouring system, either using the software Audio NoteTaker or Atlas Ti.

## *Ethics*

First and foremost, all the research data collected will be stored in a password accessible computer and for hard copy research, in a locked cabinet, to ensure confidentiality, thus maintaining high ethical standards. All the participants in this research project will be kept anonymous to ensure ethical conduct and they will also be asked for permission to record the interview. To ensure safety, the interviewer and the interviewee will meet during daytime and in a neutral place that all parties agree with and feel safe in. Positionality will also be considered.

To maintain high ethical standards, the interview questions will be considerate, fair and unambiguous. Before the interviews, permission from the participants will be asked, ensuring that all participants get a formal information hand-out explaining the research project (with my contact details on it), so that they have a clear understanding of what will be required from them, how their information will be

used and how they can contact me if they want. All participants will be asked for formal consent and will have to sign declaration forms stating that they understand and agree to take part in the project. This said all participants will have the right to terminate an interview if they wish and withdraw any information they give and withdraw taking part in the project. At the end of the research project, all the personal and identifiable data collected will be destroyed ensuring good ethical practice.

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    *Development Opportunities?* Inter-American Dialogue, Report commissioned by the *U.S. Agency for International Development*.

| Research timetable | 2010 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tasks** | March | April | May | June | July | August | September |
| **Literature review**<br>A summary of what is already known about my area of inquiry from academic literature and other authoritative established sources. Focusing on key protagonists' involved, key arguments, trends and the identification of gaps in my area of inquiry. | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | |
| ***Fabricating and preparing research resources***<br>This stage will include the assembling of in-depth interview and schedules. | | | ■ | ■ | | | |
| ***The collection of data and the preparation of data for analysis***<br><br>Data collection is the primary fieldwork from the research carried out and then processed by transcribing. | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| ***The Analysis of data***<br>Through the qualitative materials collected and prepared (transcripts), also including participant observation. | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| ***Composing final write up***<br><br>The dissemination of the final research project, presenting the findings. | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ |

Preferred supervisor: Dr Claire Dwyer

## Auto-Critique

The target group I wanted to study in my original proposal was the Bangladeshi Muslim involved in sending spiritual remittances and whilst majority of them were, some of the respondents were from a non-Bangladeshi background. This was because the snowballing technique had led me to some really interesting respondents that participated in the practice of spiritual remittance and I felt I could not leave them out. For example, Arissa was a particularly significant respondent because she gave a gender perspective that didn't come out very much in the Bangladeshi interviews, and although I only touched upon the theme of gender in the analysis, I felt this was an interesting comparison between a Somali and Bangladeshi case. Hence, I believe this theme is useful to consider in future research.

Furthermore, I strongly believe that this study would have benefited from a longer research period because I felt that spiritual remittances would have been explored more as new themes such as macro-politics emerged later on in the data collection stage. The time limitation did not allow me to engage in deeper discussion, which I felt was needed because of the new concept of spiritual remittance I constructed required greater theorisation and as in these few months I was able to gather a vast amount of rich qualitative data. But again, because the limited time period and limits on the numbers of words that can be written for this thesis, I was not able to fully engage with this new concept and have greater dialogue around current and emerging debates on remittances, charity; religion, faith and spirituality.

Additionally, I feel that this study is much more expansive than what has been presented in the thesis because my study only focussed on the migrant remitters of spiritual remittances, and not the receivers. It would have been of great benefit to this research if both ends of the narrative were obtained, however this would be impossible to do with the time limit and therefore I think that future research is required to explore the themes in greater depth and from both narratives. New questions concerning what a remittance is emerged, such as giving charity and who should be the beneficiaries of the remittance to be classified as receiving remittance. These are also questions that can be considered in the future.

**Interview Schedule**

Tell me a little bit about yourself: (Name, age, generation, ethnic background, occupation or organisation affiliated with).

*Motivations*

Can you tell me a bit about the mosque project you are/were involved in abroad.

What made you decide that you would send money abroad to build a mosque?

What inspired you to do this? (Islam, family, moral obligations, etc)

What is you understanding of Islam in relation to giving money to build mosques? (could this be a motivation)

Can you tell me what spirituality or being spiritual means to you? Do you consider yourself to be spiritual? In what ways? Do you think this aspect (of your belief system) influences your remittance choice? Can you tell me more about this?

Where would you want to send your remittances if you were involved in a mosque project? Why?

*Involvement and logistics*

How involved have you been throughout the project?

Are there any other people involved in the project? If so, who?

Were any of your family members been involved at any stage? Who? What role have they had?

How involved have others (stakeholders) been in the project?

(If applicable) Did your (father) being away affect you or any other members of the family in any way?

(If applicable) Tell me a bit about your role as a leader in the community. Does this allow you to shape projects? Do people come to you for help/direction when they have ideas about projects?

*Routes for remittances and politics*

Did you raise any money in London or elsewhere to contribute towards the mosque construction? (E.g. charity appeals, local community, relatives, etc). If so, tell me more about it.

Did you have to go through a certain procedure to make the mosque plans a reality? Tell me more about this (Political dimensions?)

Through what channels did you send money abroad? (E.g. money transfer services, yourself, through relatives, etc).

What was the most effective way of sending the money? And completing the mosque?

*Design and architecture*

Can you tell me about how you chose the design of the mosque?

Do you feel that different parts of your identity influenced the mosque design? How?

Do you feel that living in another country, experiencing different architectural designs and norms influenced the mosque design? How?

### Reflection and future

What aspects of the process has everyone been happy with? (i.e. mosque style/planning, contributions to the mosque, the amount of money remitted, etc).

Have there been any difficulties? Can you tell me more about this (i.e. mosque style/planning, contributions to the mosque, the amount of money remitted, village/ family politics, etc).

How involved are you with the completed mosque/how involved will you be once the mosque is completed? Can you tell be a little more about why this is?

Are there any other projects you have been involved in following the mosque construction, or will be after the mosque is complete? (E.g. Islamic school or another mosque, etc).

What does this whole experience mean to you? (Has it affected your belief systems and social standing- do people recognise you for what you have done? How?)

## Appendix 2

Interviews dates and interviewee profile:

| Date of Interview | Name (Pseudonym) | Male or Female | Generation | Ethnic Background |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 08/06/2011 | Adil | Male | First generation | Bangladeshi |
| 12/06/2011 | Lulu | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 12/06/2011 | Fadila | Female | Second generation | Somali |
| 12/06/2011 | Usman | Male | Second generation | Pakistani |
| 12/06/2011 | Safron | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 14/06/2011 | Waheed | Male | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 14/06/2011 | Arissa | Female | Second generation | Somali |
| 14/06/2011 | Ayana | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 14/06/2011 | Zeena | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 16/06/2011 | Taybah | Female | First generation | Bangladeshi |
| 21/06/2011 | Ula | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 22/06/2011 | Ghazi | Male | First generation | Bangladeshi |
| 22/06/2011 | Wafiza | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 22/06/2011 | Hadee | Male | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 23/06/2011 | Kanzah | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 26/06/2011 | Lana | Female | First generation | Indonesian |
| 26/06/2011 | Ehan | Male | First generation | Ethiopian |
| 28/06/2011 | Nusrat | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 29/06/2011 | Omera | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 29/06/2011 | Firoz | Male | First generation | Bangladeshi |
| 29/06/2011 | Parveen | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 29/06/2011 | Qismah | Female | Second generation | Arab- Omani |
| 30/06/2011 | Saba | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 30/06/2011 | Aroosa | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |

| 01/07/2011 | Cantara | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 04/07/2011 | Ubaid | Male | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 08/07/2011 | Aalam | Male | First generation | Indian |
| 10/07/2011 | Riyad | Male | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 11/07/2011 | Maaz | Male | Second generation | Indian |
| 31/07/2011 | Atiya | Female | Second generation | Bangladeshi |
| 31/07/2011 | Mahdi | Male | First generation | Bangladeshi |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Building a mosque abroad and remittances**



My name is Rahima Begum and I am a Masters student at UCL. I am currently researching the reasons why Muslims in the UK are sending money abroad or to their home country to build mosques. I want to find out what inspires and motivates you or others to do this, how this is done and what happens after the mosque is completed.

This survey will only take a few minutes to complete and I would like to further interview anyone who has in any way contributed to a mosque project abroad. Please note that the information provided will remain anonymous.

**1. Do you know people who contribute to mosque projects abroad?**

◉ Yes

○ No

If yes, who? | family- father, uncles |

**2. Do you yourself send money abroad for mosque projects?**

◉ Yes

○ No

**3. If yes, how do you (or the person you know) send the money?**

☐ In person

☑ Through family networks

☐ Through official organisations

☐ Other (please specify)

| |

**4. Are you actively involved in any mosque projects abroad?**

○ Yes

◉ No

If yes, how? | |
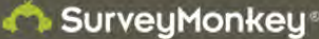
**5. What motivated you (or the person you know) to send money abroad to build a mosque?**

| |

**6. If you would like to be interviewed please state your name and contact number below (which will remain anonymous) or inbox Rahima Begum.**



Thank you for your time.

Done

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**Transcript 18 (Female Bangladeshi) Nusrat**

■ **1)** **Motivations, inspirations and causes. Defining spirituality and part of motivation.**

■ **2)** **How money is collect and the channels it is remitted through (and contextualising).**

■ **3)** **Dynamics and political dimensions to the process, challenges/ difficulties.**

■ **4)** **Continuity of maintaining links, future projects.**

■ **5)** **Architectural design.**

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

**2)** Nusrat: I've just finished my final year as a politics and Eastern European studies student, I am from ethnically from Bangladesh so I have been born and brought up in London. I am really passionate about going into international development umm particularly because I think there are a lot of poverty related issues in the world. In terms of my background within the Muslim community I've had the opportunity to work with various Muslim organisations. In particular I've done a lot of charity work to help raise funds for not just mosques but other organisations and institutions such as schools in the developing world.

What generation Bangladeshi do you consider yourself?

**2)** Nusrat: I'd say third because I've been bought up here. (My parents migrated here, so I would be second-generation).

Can you tell me anything about any mosque projects you might have been involved in?

**1)2)** Nusrat: In my family there is a great sentiment towards giving and being very charitable for organisations which we regard as having a lasting benefit, so in terms of mosques but also building schools. Um for religious education, for the purposes of teaching Islamic studies. My family we do send money back home, we've done it in the past. I also know different charities, we do support like Islamic relief or Muslim Aid or Ummah Welfare Trust. The funds that we first sort of use to support those schools or those mosques with have been purely because we've been driven by sort of the goal that we will be rewarded for it because as Muslims that's what we believe.

What project were your parents involved in?

**2)1)** Nusrat: I believe my parents were involved to help rebuild a mosque. It was in Bangladesh. It's in the village. Yeah there is an existing mosque but because it's quite a deprived area they always try to support work in whatever way they can financially with the project, and I think in terms of the actual building it that was the reason why as well. They helped with the renovations. I think that especially in the village because it's a very communal area, it's sort of facilities like the mosque are not just used for prayer purposes but for education purposes as well. I'd say this was done perhaps a couple of years ago now.

Did you have any involvement with it yourself knew?

**2)3)** Nusrat: Yeah well because I always discussed with my parents any projects they support back home, they'd ask me if I could offer any financial assistance, so I do remember that you know my mum said they really want this to be built and it will have a lot of benefit for the community because the community is quite poor. I'd say it was probably about £20 (I gave) so it wasn't as much as perhaps I'd liked to offer but I think just because of our means…

Who else was involved in the project?

**1)2)3)** Nusrat: I'd say that because we have a lot of support here in the UK in terms of the Muslim community, if I was to go into Jummah Friday prayer sermon and after it I announced that we

are looking to help a village to build a mosque, you know the concept behind building a mosque is that if somebody helps to build it a mosque in this life then in the next life they'll be rewarded with a house in the hereafter. So I think that's a strong motivator, so I could have at the time done something like that and got the local community involved more but it was primarily through friends and family donations. It was through our own personal family and friends networks. I'd say it's something smaller than some of the other projects which perhaps I've worked with on a sort of a larger scale. For example Ummah Welfare Trust, like I have volunteered at an event of theirs where they did raise money for a mosque to be built in the developing world, so this one was very much more directly done through the family.

What were your main inspirations for this?

**1)** Nusrat: I think that any act of giving for my family or those that I know in the Muslim community is generally this ethos that as Muslims and just generally as human beings we are responsible and have a moral duty towards others, so this is why my parents and myself are really keen to support projects like that. And knowing that you're investing, it's not just that you're investing in a building but you're investing in a building which will serve the purpose of actually providing education for children and religious guidance for those children is really important. I think personally my motivation has always been sort of faith-based. I see this as something that I will continue to take benefit for myself after I had left this world so one of the key things that are mentioned amongst the continuing charity will be added to your reward in the hereafter is this notion of on-going charity. So giving something like that to establish an institution or for example a school that will be used for the next 10, 20, 50 years is a powerful motivator in our giving.

What does spirituality mean to you?

**1)** Nusrat: I think the word spirituality in a non-faith context can mean many things, but I think spirituality for myself as a Muslim and in Islam means to develop a relationship with the divine creator. So I would say that this spirituality is your ability to work towards doing what you're creator once, but more than that I suppose spirituality is a way of thinking and it's following actions and the guidance sat down in Islam particularly through the Quran and the teachings and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). So I'd say spirituality is this sort of heightened sense of awareness about your creator and yourself and the purpose of life.

Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

**1)** Nusrat: I'd definitely say that I am somebody who wants to, I am religiously spiritual in that I do my up most I guess to remain active in the Muslim community because I believe that there is a divine creator and any good deeds I am able to do, those good deeds will be rewarded for me in their hereafter.

Do you think this spiritual aspect of religion has influenced your decision in helping with mosque projects?

**1)** Nusrat: Yeah I definitely say it's influenced it. I think if I was, I don't really want to use the word non-spiritual but if I was somebody who didn't have values attached or any sort of spiritual motivation to actually give, we could all be pretty selfish basically. We could all say why should I take on that responsibility and give up my money or I spend that money on something for myself, but I think that spiritual motivation is something that is necessary for ourselves living in the developed world because we tend to fail to appreciate what we have. So I definitely say that you know spirituality plays a huge role in all the actions that I do.

Why did you and your family decide to do this project in Bangladesh?

**1)** Nusrat: I think that again I suppose coming back to the sort of the teachings of giving in Islam, the teachings are that you should, there are certain category of people we should be helping. And the first of them is our relatives and they fall into that category alongside orphans and widows. And I guess sort of my family and their relationship in the local community back home meant that they have a strong attachment. They want to see the people that are living in that village be empowered and have some sort of achievement because they aren't financially in a stable

state. So I think that's definitely one of the reasons why it was Bangladesh, we would never just say solely be to our home country or where my parents were born because we have given to plenty of other charities and plenty of other projects and support in any part of the world that needed it.

Would you say partly because your relatives are there?

**1)** Nusrat: Yeah because almost like because there's an obligation to help those who are closer to home first and you know just knowing the needs of that community. And also knowing that the beneficiaries will be perhaps people who are our own family and friends.

How involved have you and members of your family been?

**3)** Nusrat: I'd say that you usually like we're only involved at the fundraising stage. And that's just purely because we haven't been in a position to do anything more than that because of their geographical distance. I would say that possibly we've been able to help out financially but we haven't been involved in seeing the development of it, seeing how it has impacted and how it can be improved. The fundraising has been mainly family income plus extended relatives, asking extended relatives to contribute.

How do you send the money?

**2)** Nusrat: Because my family are… I do have a lot of my family members who come and go from Bangladesh so there are two options usually, my dad with either transfer it via money transfer scheme or they would give it to one of my family members who is actually travelling to Bangladesh. So like I said at the time it was probably given to someone who was travelling back home at the time.

That person who travelled at the time, did they see the whole process of the project?

**3)** Nusrat: I think because they, I think it was my uncle, they only went for a short amount of time so, they didn't actually get to see the actual development of and establishment of the mosque. From what I know it is completed. I think my family members have used it and I think they've had the opportunity to use it as well and it's in the community.

What was the most effective way to send the money?

**2)** Nusrat: I think it is effective to send it with somebody from the immediate sort of family, or someone who is familiar with the locality because then they have a sense of responsibility about making sure that money reaches the hands of the people that it was intended for. But also I think being able to see that work and the fruits of your work is a strong motivator for being able to continue supporting projects like this.

How well did the whole process run?

**3)** Nusrat: I think because we have are very close links and ties with the people in the community there, um the communication process about how things are going was quite open and fluid.

Can you tell me about the chosen design and architecture of the mosque?

**5)** Nusrat: Um I believe that it was probably the local spiritual leaders there, so perhaps the Imams of the mosque. I'd say some of the more senior members of the community. It was already owned by the people there so it would have been their decision. I don't think there's a huge, we have to understand that the area wasn't exactly you know sort of really wealthy so it looking into designing a mosque that had lots of ornaments, and special design and architecture wasn't the focus, rather it was just making sure that there was an existence of a mosque that could be used for a variety of purposes.

Was there any British influence in it? **5)**

**Interview consent form**

**Spiritual Remittances from Muslim Communities in London**

*Please retain the information sheet that explains this research project and provides contact details should you require additional information in the future.*

This form is to document my consent to involvement in this research.

Also, I would like to confirm that the information I provide will be treated as strictly confidential. This means I will not be named in any research publications arising from the research and my data will be stored securely.

I _____ (name)
agree that this research project has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read the notes written here and I understand what the study involves.

Signed:

Date:

I _____ (researcher name)
confirm that I have explained the nature and demands of the research to the participant.

Signed:

Date:

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**UCL**

**Information sheet**

**Spiritual Remittances from Muslim Communities in London**

There is a lack of research on the role of sending remittances to build religious buildings in Migration and Transnational Studies.

This study intends to investigate the theme of remittances sent by settled migrant communities in London to their 'origin' country or abroad generally for religious motivations. This research hopes to gain insight into the broader nature of people's religion influencing their choices in sending money abroad for both spiritual and faith-based reasons and for maintaining connections transnationally through a material form. Furthermore, to understand what this means in terms of their belief systems and their social and financial status.

The research data will be used in a Global Migration Masters dissertation, which is a required element of the Master's degree programme.

For further information, please contact Miss Rahima Begum (rahima.begum.10@ucl.ac.uk or 07783745525).

If you are willing to take part in this research, please complete the consent form and return it to the researcher. Please note that you are able to withdraw from the research at any time even if you have signed the consent form.