



The World Federation Strategic Plan

Creating Futures Together

The strategic planning process is the first time that the World Federation has planned for its future in a systematic way. It has been a learning process for both the organisation and the individuals involved. Many new things were learnt, and many choices were made to reach the best results. No doubt you have lots of questions about how, when, who and what, and this document will try and answer as many of them as possible. The Frequently Asked Questions try to cover as many of the issues as possible that the strategic planning team came across during the planning process including questions that were sent in as queries or as feedback.



**THE
WORLD
FEDERATION**

OF KHOJA SHIA ITHNA-ASHERI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Registered Charity in UK - No, 282303

The Strategic Plan : Frequently Asked Questions

Strategic planning	2
What is a strategic plan?	2
What was the inspiration for such an exercise?	2
Why does the World Federation need a strategic planning process?	2
Why do we need a strategic plan when we did not have one in the time of Marhum Mulla Asgher?	3
The strategic planning survey	3
How did you go about finding out the needs of individual community members?	3
Is it reasonable to set a strategy for the World Federation having interviewed 500 people ?	3
If the process of surveying community members was representative of the make-up of our community, why were there not more responses from women?	3
Why didn't you wait to get more responses to the survey?	4
Why did no one phone or ask me for my input?	4
Which areas participated in the survey?	4
Why was India left out of the survey?	4
Will there be other surveys and studies conducted by the World Federation?	4
Details of the planning process	5
What has been the response to the strategic planning process?	5
How were the members of the strategic planning team chosen?	5
Who was on the strategic planning team and what were their qualifications?	5
How much did this strategic planning process cost?	6
Was it necessary to spend money producing a glossy report?	6
Issues that were not looked at in the planning process	7
Why haven't Khoja businesses been discussed in this document?	7
Why haven't you studied how the World Federation will finance itself in the future?	7
Why didn't the World Federation investigate issues like income, expenses and the standard and cost of living in each of the regions?	7
Why did the survey not address the issue of housing on a self financing basis for lower middle class?	7
Why did the plan not consider strategies for the inclusion and development of religious education in our own schools?	7
What happens next?	8
Why do some Boards and Desks have more objectives than others?	8
If this is to be long-term plan, how will the World Federation follow up this work?	8
How long will it take for the World Federation to deliver?	8
How will the strategic plan help the World Federation to recruit more volunteers?	8



Strategic Planning

What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a way for the World Federation to look forward to the future and plan effectively to achieve success. It is a process that takes input from people, within the organisation and our community, who have many good ideas and experience and then plans what activities the World Federation wants to get involved in. It also looks at factors that exist outside the organisation such as government policies and business trends which can have a direct impact on the organisation. This will help us to be more effective in finding resources such as funds, volunteers, contacts, networks, publicity and so on to respond to and meet the needs of community members. Additionally, the strategic plan helps to prioritise objectives and activities.

What was the inspiration for such an exercise?

If we look at the Quran and hadith, we find references such as:

"Allah never changes the grace He has bestowed on any people until they first change that which is in their hearts and that is because Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing" (The Glorious Quran 8:53)

"I do not fear poverty amongst my ummah more than I fear the consequences of poor planning." Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

"Plan for the hereafter as though you will die tomorrow, plan for this world as though you will live forever." Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS)

It's clear that constant planning is vital, whether as individuals, families, as a community or in the case of the World Federation, at an organisational level.

Why does the World Federation need a strategic planning process?

Every organisation needs a plan of what it wants to achieve. This helps everyone to focus on what needs to be done and to make sure that we have the right resources to do it. It also means that all parts of the organisation are working towards a common goal instead of working in different directions. Having a common plan avoids the complaints that we often face that more time is spent on administration, finding resources and duplicating other people's work, as well as discovering too late that opportunities have been missed.

Since its inception the World Federation has sought to meet the community's needs. Most of the actions carried out were done under the guidance of the community's leadership. With the ever-widening scope of services and the expectations from the World Federation, the strategic planning process enables leaders to better understand the needs and aspirations of our community by asking the grass roots themselves what they expect from the World Federation. Simply by listening, we can better plan our future actions.

Why do we need a strategic plan when we did not have one in the time of Marhum Mulla Asgher?

March 21st 2000 was a turning point in the history of the World Federation. The loss of a colossal personality left a vacuum at the World Federation. Whilst Mulla Asgher was alive, his incredible vision, profound insight and wide experience enabled the World Federation to keep abreast of the contemporary needs of the community. His sheer energy, drive and enthusiasm inspired many to develop a shared vision for our betterment. His demise left us with a tremendous gap but also with the need to continue with this shared vision.

Perceiving the need to carry out an exercise in which the voices of individual community members are heard and to enable the WF to continue into the future with its vision, The President initiated this project and requested the Vice President to put together a suitable team.



The Strategic Planning Survey

How did you go about finding out the needs of individual community members?

Simply stated, we asked them. The strategic planning team coordinated a worldwide telephone survey in which community members all over the world were telephoned and asked to answer some questions. Additionally, surveys were sent to community leaders to complete and other surveys were available on the internet. We benchmarked ourselves against industry best practice in conducting such research to produce statistically valid information. Over 500 questionnaires were completed and analysed. If you would like more detail on how the survey and research was designed and carried out, please refer to the strategic plan document.

Is it reasonable to set a strategy of an organisation like the World Federation having interviewed 500 people ?

In order to be 95% confident about our responses we only needed 383 completed phone surveys. This is an industry accepted standard. Therefore, the survey responses are statistically representative of the worldwide Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri community.

If the process of surveying community members was representative of the make-up of our community, why were there not more responses from women?

The initial goal of the project was to have 50% of responses from women. However, given the cultural norms of our community it was very difficult to telephone women in comparison to men. Inshallah in future exercises of this nature, more women will be respondents.

However, in the survey questions, respondents were asked specific questions regarding women and even with answers to these questions alone, and with the fact that it was difficult in polling our community's women, there is no doubt that more needs to be done to advance the place of our community's women.

The Strategic Plan : Frequently Asked Questions

Why didn't you wait to get more responses to the survey?

Time is always a scarce resource, but each of the regions had approximately 2 months to obtain survey responses. It is unlikely that given more time, more responses would have been received. The strategic planning team made extraordinary efforts to encourage individual regions to collect the surveys to the extent that additional efforts were not yielding any tangible results.

Why did no one phone or ask me for my input?

The strategic planning team made extraordinary efforts to reach out to as many community members as possible. Many marketing efforts were undertaken including:

- all Jamaats to make announcements about the strategic plan to their community members.
- World Federation circulars, such as Insight, contained information on how to participate in the process.
- Emails were sent to all those who have registered their email contact details with the World Federation.
- Emails were sent to all those who have registered their email contact with NASIMCO and Africa Federation.
- The World Federation website contained surveys for community members to fill out as well as instructions on how to get involved in the process.
- Community members were randomly selected and called to gather their input and answer survey questions. By using statistical analysis, the strategic planning team was able to extrapolate trends in our community by calling only a portion of our world-wide community. Since it was necessary to only call a representative portion of the community, it is possible that you did not receive a phone call.

Which areas participated in the survey?

We surveyed the grassroots in Pakistan, North America, Europe and Africa.

Why was India left out of the survey?

The strategic planning team made significant efforts to contact individual Indian Jamaats to include them in this effort. Leaders of the individual Indian Jamaats were approached and encouraged to participate. However, they have not participated. We look forward to their participation in the future.

Will there be other surveys and studies conducted by the World Federation?

This is just the first stage of the strategic planning process. Inshallah, subject to the direction at the next Conference, the World Federation will continue to scientifically poll community members to answer specific questions that will help it conduct its activities more effectively.



Details of the Planning Process

What has been the response to the strategic planning process?

The response to this project has been overwhelmingly positive, both from community members and the leadership. The feedback received was that this is a much needed and long awaited project. There were many concerns, fears and aspirations raised from all parts of our international community. The strategic planning team was amazed and honoured at how community members opened their hearts regarding their own feelings and issues and the compassion and caring for the community as a whole that was exhibited in responses. The team received much wise advice in the form of constructive feedback.

How were the members of the strategic planning team chosen?

At the beginning of the year, the World Federation sent an announcement from the Secretariat introducing the strategic planning project and inviting community members to join the effort. The team members were selected based on their professional experiences, skills and competences, and their participation in community activities.

Throughout the project, notices were sent to the community to keep them up to date on progress and to invite them to participate. All of these postings are still available on the World Federation website. Alhamdulillah, through this effort, we had participation in the process from all over the world..

Who was on the strategic planning team and what were their qualifications?

The strategic planning team was made up of professional and highly talented men and women from all over the world. The group included accountants, actuaries, MBA professionals, muballighs (students of Islamic studies), religious scholars, veteran community workers, marketing experts, doctors, economists and statisticians. Additionally, the strategic planning team sought the advice of professional services firms including polling and marketing specialists. Each person brought unique talents to the team.

The Strategic Plan : Frequently Asked Questions

How much did this strategic planning process cost?

Strategic planning is conducted by many organisations both small and large, profit and not for profit. Most of these organisations employ strategy consultants to do the kind of work that the World Federation's strategic planning team has done. In fact, there are professional strategy consultants on the World Federation team.

When a professional strategy consultant was asked how much a project such as the one conducted by the World Federation would cost, the answer was between £50,000 - £125,000. This large range is dependent on the prestige of the consulting firm chosen for the work, the number of interviews conducted, and the rigour of the analysis.

Alhamdulillah, since our team was made up of volunteer professionals, costs to the World Federation were minimum and only included items such as printing, shipping, meeting supplies, other transportation and logistics costs, and miscellaneous items which so far have reached approximately £3000 and may cost £6000 in total. If we are to quantify the number of hours input by the strategic planning team, the cost would be at least £50,000. Alhamdulillah, they have dedicated their time in the way of Allah.

Was it necessary to spend money producing a glossy report?

The report is going to be used to raise awareness of the World Federation both nationally and internationally as part of its long term vision of building networks in partnership with others so as to do Allah's work (SWT) better. The document will also be used for PR and fundraising purposes.

There is always that question that could these monies be spent elsewhere. The strategic planning team debated over this issue considerably and decided that as it was an unique opportunity to give the five year objectives of the organisation to the widest community possible, we needed to ensure this document reflected the visionary and professional ethos. We also wanted to raise awareness of the content in a way that informed all our members worldwide as to what were the objectives of the WF over the next 5 years.

Issues that were not looked at in the planning process

Why haven't Khoja businesses been discussed in this document?

The aim of the organisation is three fold:

1. Promotion of the shia ithna asheri faith
2. Relief of poverty in the community
3. Education of community members

To go beyond this at this initial stage, was felt to be going beyond the aims of the organisation. Additionally, supporting of businesses is not allowed under charity law.

Why haven't you studied how the World Federation will finance itself in the future?

The strategic planning process was designed to identify the needs of the community and match them with the long term objectives of the Boards and Desks. Finance is the means to meeting these objectives and not an end in itself. Identifying the sources of funding will be part of the ongoing work of the organisation.

Why didn't the World Federation investigate issues like income, expenses and the standard and cost of living in each of the regions?

This is a very interesting questions and need addressing. The strategic planning team did not address these questions at this point in time as we needed to see how the first planning cycle was going to be delivered. This idea is worthy of consideration in the longer term and has been noted as part of future phases of work.

Why did the survey not address the issue of housing on a self financing basis for lower middle class?

This question is important but the strategic planning team considered that at present point in time, this was beyond the scope of the project.

Why did the plan not consider strategies for the inclusion and development of religious education in our own schools, creation of Islamic ethos and environment at our own schools and centres and the promotion of advanced studies in Islamic education at recognised educational institutes (not hawza)?

These are extremely important issues that in itself require a detailed evaluation and could not be considered as part of this process. Please refer to the Board objectives in the strategic plan document for more details as these cover many similar areas and will look at exploring these issues over the next five years.



What happens next?

The strategic plan lays out the organisation's objectives for the next five years, but why do some Boards and Desks have more objectives than others?

The objectives have been designed by the Boards and Desks themselves based on the results of the survey. The Boards/Desks have taken into account the present infrastructure that's in place and have then identified these objectives.

If this is to be long-term plan, how will the World Federation follow up this work?

It is absolutely right that the hard work starts now that we have a plan! Implementing the plan will take time and resource, both financial and human. Now that we have a plan, the various sections will work to implement the annual targets that will support their five year objectives. Additionally, this exercise is a process, not a one time event. The strategic plan is a living document, which will change and be updated as necessary.

Now that you've asked the community what it needs, how long will it take for the World Federation to deliver?

Currently, the strategic plan has a five year time horizon. The strategic planning team has worked hard with the individual Boards and Desks of the World Federation to identify objectives based on the answers to the surveys. These objectives are to be met within five years. However, each five year objective contains annual milestones that the Boards will be working to meet.

How will the strategic plan help the World Federation to recruit more volunteers?

The implementation of the strategic plan makes it easier for the World Federation to recruit volunteers. For example, by having explicit goals set out with annual measurable targets, a Board of the World Federation can more effectively target the right volunteers to help them. Additionally, the strategic plan encourages the creation of 'job descriptions' so that volunteers know exactly what they should do and what is expected of them. This clarity also makes it easier for volunteers to join the World Federation.