Sociology, Politics and International Studies

Productive Margins – Regulating for Engagement:
Productive Spaces of Muslim Women's Engagement

<u>TEMPLATE</u>

Interactive workshop I 'Recognizing your potential'

Welcome to the group and introduction of the facilitators

Begin with a **brief warm up** exercise (10 – 15 minutes): For instance, each participant finds a person they've not met before and interviews them about their hobbies and interests – they then tell the group what they have found out. For younger groups it can be more fun if everybody is asked to tell the group three things about themselves, of which only one is true –the group needs to guess which is true and which ones are false.

Show a brief excerpt of the **Inspiring Muslim Women** event at Bristol University (12 minutes). Start by introducing each of the speakers (use your own words, and the following information might be helpful):

BARONESS SAYEEDA WARSI is a lawyer, a politician and member of the House of Lords. She was the first Muslim woman to serve in Cabinet. She has served as Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as Minister for Faith and Communities at the Department for Communities and Local Government and as co-Chairman of the Conservative Party. She resigned from her recent post in the Foreign Office in August 2014 on the issue of the government's stance on Gaza, stating 'Long after politics has come and gone, I want to be able to live with myself.'

SUGHRA AHMED is a Cambridge academic and chaplain, she has been active in interfaith initiatives and she is currently President of the Islamic Society of Britain – the first woman to be elected as head of a national Muslim organisation. She was recently awarded the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Award for Muslim Woman of the Year at the 2014 British Muslim Awards.

FAHMA MOHAMED is a student and trustee of Integrate Bristol. She is a leading activist in the campaign against Female Genital Mutilation – securing support from the government, the UN, the Guardian and thousands of signatories to an online petition against Female Genital Mutilation.

Each of these three women has played a pioneer role in shaping public life in Britain – their full talks can be accessed on the Productive Margins Website: ttp://www.productivemargins.ac.uk/inspiring-muslim-women-3/.
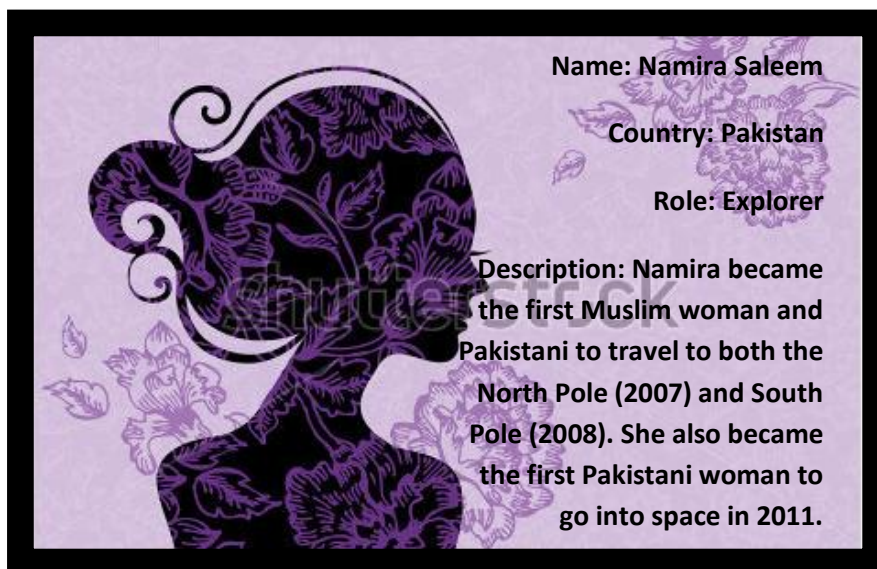
After viewing excerpts from their talks, facilitate a brief discussion (15 minutes):

- What do you think about the statements made in the film?
- What skills do you think are needed today to be perceived 'successful' in public life?
- How do we recognize what 'success' is?

Discuss examples of influential Muslim women in history and contemporary social life in the UK – 18 cards with historical, national and local Muslim 'role models' are on display on a table on one side of the room. Invite participants to take a look at all cards, then pick one card and return to their seat. Ask participants to explain

- Why they chose this particular card
- What they found interesting or even inspiring about this person
- Whether they had heard of her before.

Sample card (copyright Muslim Women's Network and University of Bristol):

> **Name: Namira Saleem**
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> **Country: Pakistan**
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> **Role: Explorer**
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> **Description: Namira became the first Muslim woman and Pakistani to travel to both the North Pole (2007) and South Pole (2008). She also became the first Pakistani woman to go into space in 2011.**

In the following discussion, make sure everybody gets an opportunity to contribute in the last two discussion sets - especially encourage those who might not have spoken much yet. Facilitate a debate on the quality of spaces that the women in the film and on the cards were engaged in:

- Were they engaged in community spaces, or civic spaces …?
- What qualities did these spaces have that allowed women to have their voice heard?
- What spaces facilitate Muslim women's engagement, and which ones create barriers?

Let the group explore what public spaces would look like if they had been designed by women in the first place:

- If you were in charge of designing city hall, or a mosque, what would it look like? What would it offer?
- What rules would you introduce there?

Conclude by summarizing the discussion – how could public spaces be made more accountable to women's needs?