



Adam Ebrahim, CEO and Chief Investment Officer for the Oasis Group.

Oasis: pioneer of Islamic finance

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TRAILBLAZER, that is the word that aptly describes the Oasis Group.

As a financial investment company starting out in 1997, Oasis stepped in where angels fear to tread.

It entered a market where Muslims had no choice but to store and invest their hard-earned savings in institutions that were in conflict with the Shari'ah.

Later, there were other institutions Muslims could go to to invest their savings but these institutions, although Shari'ah-compliant, offered very little choice and variety.

Oasis has changed all of that. It offers investors a variety of portfolios, policies, funds and investment choices that meet individual needs and requirements.

Oasis offers investors prudent investment choices to meet their specific risk profile and has ensured that this growth is in accordance with Islamic precepts and is halaal.

In these tough and trying times, Oasis has implemented a tried and tested consistent investment philosophy based on a long-term vision and a low volatility investment strategy.

All this worked according to the Oasis plan.

Most organisations attaining such success would simply relax and call a halt right there, satisfied with the belief that nothing more needs to be done.

Not so Oasis.

Confidence in Oasis has seen some of the most influential people in the world associated with the company.

None other than the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Pakistan's former Minister of Finance, the Honourable Shauket Aziz has taken on a position on the Oasis Advisory Board.

Aziz was also global head of a division of Citibank.

With an impressive total of 40 Islamic products, Oasis has worked tirelessly to build a portfolio of products that suits every stage of the investor life cycle and almost every particular need an investor might have.

"We've been fortunate enough to have a number of firsts in the last decade or so.

"And even a global first in the case of one product," says Adam Ebrahim, CEO and Chief Investment Officer for the Oasis Group.

Looking back on its history, Ebrahim says that when he started Oasis, in June 1997, together with his brothers and Chairman Shaheeb Ebrahim, and Deputy Chairman Nazeem Ebrahim, they developed a programme to put in place a full spectrum of products for the Muslim Community.

Ebrahim says this was done because there were no alternatives for Muslims and choices regarding where Muslims invested, for example, when a Muslim belonged to a pension fund.

"When I did an analysis of a company's pension fund I noticed that between 25% and 30% of the monthly deductions from the staff salaries were going into alcoholic beverages, casinos and also other items that Muslims are not allowed to operate in and then another 30% to 40% – maybe even 50% – related to interest, banking stocks or companies like furniture companies that got most of their money out of interest rather than selling furniture," says Ebrahim.

He explains that this amounts to 70% or 80% of a pension fund being invested in haraam activities.

"So you were turning good, halaal money into non-permissible money."

Ebrahim says the first step towards attaining that solution

was the launch of the Oasis Crescent Equity Fund, in 1998.

Thereafter, they launched Global Equity and Property Funds and, in 2005, successfully listed the Oasis Crescent Property Fund on the JSE, making it the world's first listed property fund applying Islamic principles.

Recently, Oasis launched its insurance company, offering investment-linked endowment policies for longer term savings as well as an investment-linked living annuity in the form of the Oasis Crescent Pension Annuity.

He says they have put in place the building blocks to ensure that they could cover the full spectrum of products to meet Muslim needs.

"Whether it was for retirement funding needs, whether it was for savings for madrassahs, savings for your child's education, the last building block that we needed to make available to our clients, and which we launched on 1 April 2010, was the Oasis Crescent Income Fund, which provides investors with a Shari'ah-compliant income product.

"With that we completed the full product spectrum of Shari'ah-compliant products catering for every investment need of the Muslim community."

This puts Oasis in a very good position.

"It is the first time outside the Muslim world and within most Muslim countries also that there is a full spectrum for Shari'ah compliant Islamic products for the Muslim community."

Thus, after thirteen years, Oasis can offer a full spectrum of products.

"You now have the building block products, the Equity Funds in South Africa and offshore, the Property Funds in South Africa and offshore, the Income Funds in South Africa and offshore and

then you have what I'd call the Lifestyle Products."

Ebrahim describes the Lifestyle Products:

"We want to match a product to your lifestyle, your age category or your risk profile.

"What we are saying is that up to the age of 50 you are in the wealth-creating phase of your life and you also have a long-time horizon to live so you've got to take a higher risk on a high equity exposure product.

"In the retirement products we call this the 'New Moon' phase. Then, between the ages of 50 and 60 you get to the age where you have to be more conservative but you still have a long-time horizon and you're still working so you go into a moderate equity exposure. We call this the 'Half Moon' phase.

"Then, once you reach the age of 60, you no longer accumulate. You are actually living off your savings.

"You have passed your wealth creating side and you are at your harvesting side; you have got to live off your savings.

"So you've got a very different risk profile, so that would be the 'Full Moon' phase."

Oasis strives to make things really simple so that people can understand and take ownership and control of their financial assets.

The Income Fund is one of the first income funds in the world that gives investors a daily price. "If you had to go to an Islamic Bank and if you wanted a reasonable rate of return you'd have to put money away for a year or two years, sometimes even three years.

"We are giving the same rate of return as if you've invested for a longer duration, however we offer daily liquidity.

"You don't have to wait a year before you can get your money.

"If you redeem today you

should get your cash within 48 to 72 hours."

He says you will only get income for the period that you have invested but it is daily and that is a first in the world.

The Oasis Crescent Income Fund is well suited to madrassahs and masjid that want to reduce the risk of losing any money, and that require a periodic income.

Muslim investors in conventional banking products currently do not take the interest, only taking the capital; as a result, inflation will make you poorer.

With this product you grow your assets in an Islamic manner and you have more money for an improved lifestyle.

Oasis also offers retail retirement funds which fund compulsory savings towards retirement from your pre-tax money.

So, basically, you get a tax reduction for saving for retirement.

A second product relates to a general endowment policy.

The endowment policy is more contractual than a unit trust.

An endowment is more structured and it's a good savings policy, say for hajj or as a dowry.

With a thirteen year history in fund management, Oasis is well positioned, having made significant investments in its infrastructure, its brand, its products and its people to position itself as a leading global investment manager.

Its successful track record saw the Oasis Crescent Fund range of products passing its impressive twelfth anniversary on August 1, 2010.

Oasis, with their broad product offering, has become a strong and established brand within our community with a complete and comprehensive range of Islamic alternatives to conventional offerings, satisfying the lifestyle and risk profile needs of all.