



Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women Organization

Annual Report April 2015 - March 2016

Violence against Women and Girls Should Stop

STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

Run By Women for Women



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FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

The Organisation would like to thank the following individuals, organisations and funders for their support and assistance over the last twelve months:

Funders

- ◇ Big Lottery Reaching Community Fund
- ◇ Trust for London
- ◇ Rosa Fund
- ◇ Lloyds Bank Foundation
- ◇ Islington ACL
- ◇ Islington Council - VCS
- ◇ City Bridge Trust
- ◇ Islington –VAW&G
- ◇ Islington -CCG

Supporters - all our dedicated volunteers, Caxton House staff, Noel Hudson, David Johnson, Feride Baycan (IMECE), Jeremy Corbyn MP, Chezerina Dhaliwal / John Mors & Katrina Ffranch (Islington Council), Muslim Welfare House, Finsbury Park Mosque, Michael Pitchford , Shawnem Baram (Goyza Supplementary School), LAWA, LAWRS.

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About us:

The Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO) began as a merger of the Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation (KRWO) and the Middle Eastern Centre for Women's Rights. KRWO was established in 1999. It is a registered Charity (No. 1137055) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (No. 6978454).

KMEWO started as self-help organisation to provide help and support to Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African women who were fleeing civil wars, state and gender persecution, domestic violence and honour killings. KMEWO was initially set up in response to the killing of a British citizen Sobhia Nadir in Sulaimania (Kurdistan) 'in the name of honour' during her visit to her relatives in October 1997 and have led and/or participated in a number of campaigns against violence against women VAW to improve protection measures for women both in UK and in Middle East. Since then KMEWO has grown into a well-known organisation that is highly respected within the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Communities, the statutory and public sector organisations.

Our Aims and Objectives:

-To relieve the distress and suffering of Kurdish and Middle Eastern women and children in necessitous circumstances resident in the UK and in such parts of the world as the Trustees may from time to time determine

-To promote the human rights of Kurdish and Middle Eastern women through providing information, research and organizing conferences and seminars on human rights issues.

-To promote equality of opportunities of women particularly those within the Kurdish and Middle Eastern communities resident in the UK and elsewhere by providing information and educating the general public on such matters.

Our Mission

KMEWO will provide advice, support and training to women from Kurdistan, the Middle East and North Africa; lobbying and campaigning will continue until the women believe they are safe from violence and can enjoy the freedom and opportunities afforded to men and boys.

Our Values:

- ◇ Respect for beneficiaries and staff
- ◇ Consultative and inclusive
- ◇ Commitment to Women's human rights
- ◇ Embrace diversity



KMEWO is managed by a team of seven dedicated trustees, all of whom are resolute in their determination to help in bringing about an end to honour and domestic violence and other forms of abuse against women. They are;

Dr. J. Aljabiri	Chair
Dr. K. Rashid	Secretary
Ms T. Ahmad	Treasurer
Mr D. Jamal	Director
Ms T. Saeed	Director
Ms D. Alikhani	Director
Ms G. Partoandaz	Director
Ms N. Jamal	Director

KMEWO current staff members:

Ms Sawsan Salim	Director
Ms Gona Saed	Project Manager/Development Worker
Ms Zekiye Kartal	Development Worker
Ms Hannan Babakiri	DV Advice Worker

During the last financial year KMEWO employed 10 sessional workers:

Shahnaz Kinoo	ESOL (E1,E2,E3) & Literacy L1,L2
Diren Hamakarim	Word & Excel
Marina D'Arco	Confident building & Employability
Ozlem Ozdermir	IT, Parenting
Diane Miller	ESOL (E1, E2)
Rezan Farage	Childcare
Ameera Sulaiman	Childcare
Nasima Ali	Childcare
Asha Gaal	Childcare
Parvin Omer	Childcare

The work of the organisation is supported by a pool of volunteers to whom we are very indebted. These are:

Noel Hudson	Ghada Al-Kady
Mr X. Saya	Khalida Mosil
Sahar Nouhi	Kum Foowg Let
Siel Devos	Sussan Essah
Claudia Hernandez	Naceria Avirouche
Ezgi Akarsu	Nadaa Alssir
Safiya Cumar Muhudin	Yasmin Snouci

Chair's report

This is my third year as Chair of KMEWO and my enthusiasm and excitement with the role remain totally undiminished. The staffs have taken on more projects and are helping a greater number of Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African women to integrate within the wider community and work towards achieving their goals. I would therefore like to say a big thank you to all of them and to express my appreciation for the brilliant work they are doing. A number of women have volunteered their time in helping the Organisation to support less able service users; to them I also extend my thanks.

Of course none of the work undertaken by the Organisation would have been possible had it not been for the generosity and goodwill of our funders. They include; the Big Lottery Fund, Islington Council, City Bridge Trust, Trust for London and Lloyds Bank Foundation. We are greatly indebted to them all and hope that they will continue to support us in our work to help disadvantaged Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African women achieve their potential.

Through our networking relationship with peer organisations in Islington, KMEWO have developed and perfected the skills that underlie our successes. By sharing our experiences and knowledge we have create a knowledge pool of know-how that helps to inform what we do and how we do it.

I am looking forward to my coming year as Chair of the Organisation and to further champion the interest of Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African women and girls to which we are totally committed. Once again, many thanks to all who supported us in the past year!

Janan Aljabiri



Director's Report

The last year was a very successful one for KMEWO. We supported an increasing number of abused and disadvantaged women over the period of this report with life changing outcomes. We have successfully broadened our range of activities to help women rebuild their lives, broaden their horizons, regain their independence and live free from abuse. Our current list of projects and cultural activities include the following;



- ⇒ Domestic Violence advice and support – a one to one service for disadvantaged women with various personal issues, including housing, welfare benefits, domestic violence and employment.
- ⇒ Campaigning & Lobbying – one of KMEWO's core activities is campaigning against domestic violence, female genital mutilation and other forms of abuse against women. We write letters to MPs, publish articles on our website and in our Newsletter, participate in demonstrations, give press and radio and TV interviews.
- ⇒ Learning for Living project – a three year project, funded by Big Lottery Fund, that trains and educates Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African women to help them become more employable, independent, and to become active members of the community
- ⇒ Thrivers Project – funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation. The Project supports women who are victims of Domestic Violence in the transition from leaving an abusive relationship until they are safe. Services include providing advocacy and advice in the lead up to leaving an abusive situation, helping women to draw up and implement safety plans, and assistance find safe and secure accommodation, financial management and how to deal with daily household problems.
- ⇒ Archway Employability Cluster – in 2015 we were invited by Islington Council to lead on this project in the Islington area of the borough. The Archway Employability Cluster is a forum of local organisations working together collectively to help local unemployed residents into work. Current membership of the forum is 22, and includes; Islington Council, Islington Job Centre, Peabody Trust and Hillrise Community Centre, Caxton House community center, to name a few. KMEWO facilitates the forum for a year from 20th January 2016 and will run until the beginning 2017.
- ⇒ International Women's Day celebrations organised on 4th and 5th March, which were attended by more than 200 women and families. These events provided an excellent opportunity for socialization and having enjoyable time.

Financially, 2015/2016 was a good year for KMEWO – we received funding from Big Lottery, Trust for London, City Bridge Trust, Islington Council and Lloyds Bank Foundation, Rosa Fund, and Islington ACL. This will secure our position until 2018, at least. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their kindness and generosity in helping to transforming the lives of hundreds of women.

Our achievements are due, in no small part, to the hard work and dedication of our staff, sessional tutors and volunteers. They all work tirelessly to help the women to learn, develop and to achieve their goals. The support and guidance has enabled women to find employment, to go on to further education and to rebuild their lives away from violence or abuse.

KMEWO has received a great deal of support from many peer organisations to whom we owe our thanks and appreciation. At our regular networking meetings we share information about our respective projects, share best practices and decide on collective campaign actions on behalf of our female beneficiaries.

I am looking forward to another equally productive year with KMEWO in exploring new opportunities and dealing with the many challenges which, undoubtedly, await us. With the continued support of our funders, staff, sessional tutors and volunteers, I am confident of a positive future.

Sawsan Salim

Projects and Achievements

KMEWO support 2000 women and family every year.

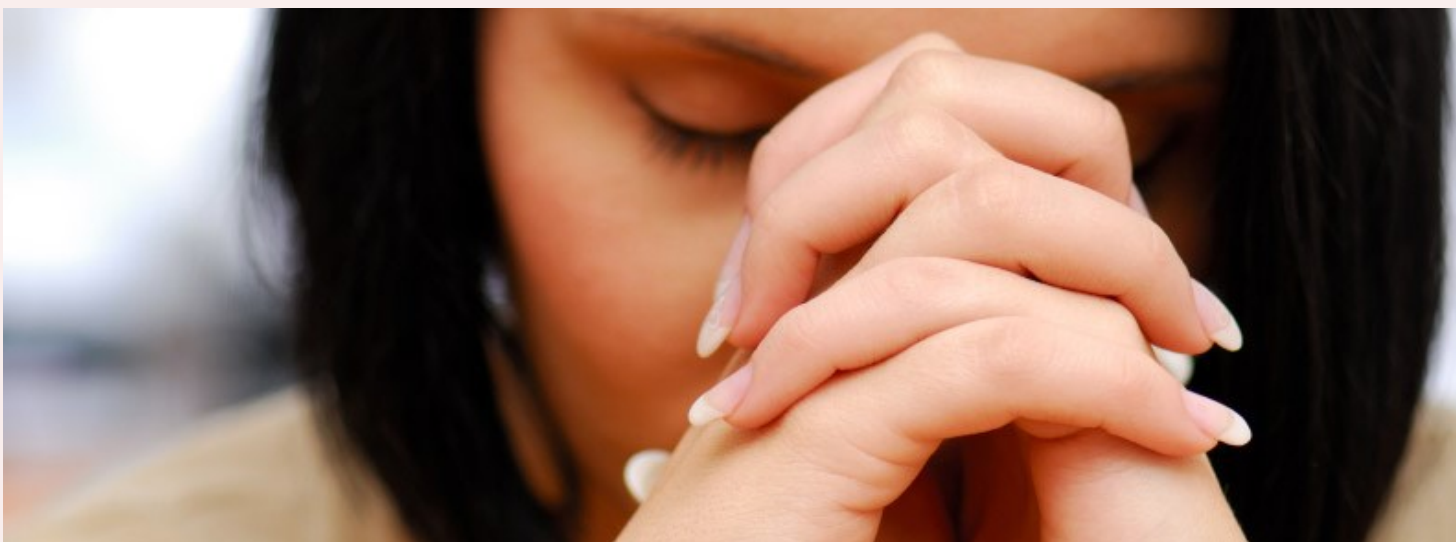
The following are the projects undertaken by KMEWO over the period of this report:

Advice and Support – A total of 558 women were given advice from our Archway and Southwark Offices, some on multiple occasions. A range of issues were dealt with, including; Housing, Welfare Benefits, DV, HBV, divorce, FGM, NRPF, debt, education, and immigration.

The Samira Project – We provided 200 intervention sessions on a one to one basis to 50 women, **with** 15 cases referred to MARAC. The Samira Project is a partnership initiative between IMECE, LAWA and KMEWO which is progressing very well and on target to meet its milestones. Under this project we established the BMEAR network which brings together members of minority groups to discuss different issues, related to refugee women in Islington.

Thrivers Project – Since October 2015, 228 confidential individual advice and support sessions were provided by the Transitional Support Worker to 68 women in a safe, female only environment. The purpose of this project is to help victims of domestic

and honor based violence, FM and FGM who have decided to escape from abusive/exploitative relationships, rebuild their lives in a safe and secure environment. Female service users are of Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African origin. Sessions included immediate and long term risk assessments of the women and their children, referrals to safety planning, emotional support and counseling, referrals to IDVA, legal and immigration specialists. These women received 3-8 sessions of advice and support, and 6 months' support group attendance.



a short film (Lost in Translation). Following this was the launch of the report by Michilline Safe Ngongo, the Islington Hillrise Ward local councillor. KMEWO's Director Sawsan Salim then welcomed guests, and was joined by Project Manager Gona Saed to deliver a presentation about the project's achievements, key findings, lessons learned and users' profiles.

Feedback from participants:

"It is so good and comforting to see an organisation that is helping and supporting these women. Thank you for doing this inspirational work. My only suggestion is to keep going and please continue your fantastic support "

"I really hope you succeed in getting continuation of funding for this work, well done to KMEWO team "

From the feedback we had: %100 of attendance through that "one of the best useful part of the event was the film that acted as an eye opener for many "

"Very enjoyable event "

"The most useful part of the event was showing and explaining steps of women learning for living project, shows how it was successful and how it is needed in our community in the UK"

"Congratulations on a fantastic achievement. I hope we will have the opportunity to do more work in partnership in the future"



Archway Employability Cluster

— After the success of our Big Lottery project ‘Learning for Living’ in 2015, KMEWO was approached by Islington Council to coordinate an Employment Cluster in the Archway area. The Employment Cluster is a forum made up of community organisations and services operating in N19/Archway, with its aim being to develop better services for jobseekers in North Islington. This Cluster is focused on helping those in receipt of job seekers allowance (JSA) in Archway and surrounding areas (N19) to secure employment. The Cluster started on 20th January 2016 and will run until the beginning 2017.



Volunteering

— A total of 15 volunteers were recruited by KMEWO during the year 2015/16, of which 6 were recruited from our courses. The volunteers were all very enthused and motivated and willingly took on the various tasks they were assigned, e.g. assisting teachers in IT classes, helping peer participants who might have lower level of English or IT, participating in KMEWO's events such as promotional information stalls, consultation with local authorities, assisting other women to access KMEWO's advice and support services.

Campaign and lobbying

— Our campaign and lobbying activities remain a key and vital part of our work:

1. KMEWOs' Director Sawsan Salim actively participates in VAW&G commissioning consultations to put forward the views of BAMER women's organisations specialism on future commissioning. Consultations over the year were organised by Lloyds Bank Foundation, Islington

council, Southwark council, Equalities and Human rights, and Rosa Fund.

2. KMEWO has highlighted the lack of focus on FGM within Kurdish and Middle Eastern Communities and has called for a change in the World Map of FGM and National Data collection categorisations to include data and monitoring information on all Middle Eastern communities and region in regard to the high prevalence of FGM. The issue was highlighted in both MOJATU Conference on FGM in Nottingham (Oct. 2015) and The Open Space Event organised by ROSA Fund (Nov. 2015).

3. KMEWO, in partnership with specialist women's organisations IMECE and LAWA, has established the Islington BAMER Women's Network. The network consists of local BAMER women's organisations, statutory service providers, local policy makers and Commissioners. It held its first conference on 16th October 2015 called: "Challenging inequalities, Bridging Gaps", which sought to lobby Islington MPs and local Councillors to ensure fairness for BAMER organisations in their funding allocation and the recognition of the need for specialist service for BAMER women.

Feedback from the conference:

***"I am humbled when women's services work on a shoe – string budget to deliver vital services and change policy.... I am in favour of ringfenced budget for specialist DV services. I am open to taking the agenda forward"* - Jeremy Corbyn MP**

***"Service provision is crucial, but this is not all. It's about resistance & building a movement"* Marai Larasi – Director, Imkaan**

4. KMEWO's active participation in a parliamentary meeting organised by Seema Malhotra MP (former Shadow Minister for Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls to explore the role for schools, faith groups and community organisations in preventing VAWG.

5. KMEWO issued a press release supporting #ICchange, urging the UK Government to take action and ratify the Istanbul Convention on combating VAW&G.

6. Two issues of AWEZA newspaper in Kurdish language came out and were distributed widely to the community; the focus was on FGM and women's rights in Iraq's constitution.

7. KMEWO issued a media statement calling the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq to guarantee that full equality and women's rights in Iraqi Kurdistan Constitution is upheld, with a call for International support.

8. Recently KMEWO started compiling case studies of users affected by UK dual marriage system (Civil marriage and Sharia marriages), which is allowed in the UK, and resulting inequality and discrimination in cases such as divorce and inheritance.

9. KMEWO issued a statement on the Prime Minister's comments that "Muslim women need to learn English! In Its statement, KMEWO insisted that 'women from many different BME and migrant communities have ESOL needs, and that these should be met by adequate government funding for ESOL and IT skills courses. This should be part of a national programme to tackle illiteracy and improve access to wider society and integration – free for all those who need it regardless of their ethnicity or religion. KMEWO demanded that more opportunities for ESOL and broader education will contribute in increasing knowledge, tolerance, understanding and celebration of our society's diversity. Singling out a group will further marginalise them and divide our society.

Interpretation & Translation – Over the last twelve months we supported 102 women in interpretation and translation at interviews with the police, solicitors, colleges, housing departments, refuges, job centers, etc. KMEWO taking an active role in this provision following the changes to the welfare benefit systems, along with a surge of refugees and asylum seekers, has meant that the demand for these services continues unabated.

International Women's Day Celebrations –

KMEWO organised two events this year; on 4th and 5th March 16. In our BAMER Women's Network we celebrated International Women's Day on 4th March 2016, in Caxton House in Islington. The celebration was organized with our sister organisations IMECE, and LAWA, and Cllr Asima Shaikh, addressed the audience as a key note speaker. The event attended by more than 100 women and started at 11.00.

Cllr Asima Shaikh confirmed, once again, the Islington Council commitment to support women organisations struggle to eradicate gender based violence through their support to BAMER.

This followed by short welcome speeches by the organisations' Directors, Feride Kumbasar, Sawsan Salim and Yenny. The Directors addressed the participants in English, Turkish, Spanish, Kurdish and Arabic by the of KMEWO, IMECE and LAWA

Sawsan Salim, the Director of KMEWO emphasised the importance of the International Women Day, to show solidarity and sisterhood. She highlighted the suffrage of Yazidi women who have been tortured, raped, and massacred in Mt Sinjar, Iraq by ISIS, as well as those who faced the same fate in Syria. Feride and Yenny highlighted the importance of tackling the inequality and to show solidarity.

The speeches were followed by wide range of activities, videos,



discussions, interactive workshops, Zumba and food and drinks was served. The event ended at 3 pm.

The second event was organized by KMEWO in partnership with the Federation of Iraqi Refugees on 5th March in St Patrick Parish Hall, and it was directed mainly to the Kurdish speaking community.

KMEW's Director, Sawsan Salim, congratulated the women and explained the importance of this day. She stressed that despite women struggle for equality and despite their equal status by law with men; women still suffer from less wage than men, subjected do domestic violence and male dominance. She called all women to stand up for their rights, use the available services and make their voice heard by their local and wider society.

Networking & Partnership Building –

KMEWO continues to work with other organisations, in order to share good practice, inform and be informed about each other's work, support and participate in the work and activities of each other, etc. Amongst these are; Safer Islington Partnership, IMECE Women's Centre, LAWR, Imkaan, MARAC sub group, LAWR'S, Islington and Southwark VAW&G , Right of Women, Women Resource Centre, International Federation for Iraqi Refugees, Female genital mutilation forum, Islington Voluntary Action , Evelyn Oldfield Centre, and Islington Refugee Forum. KMEWO's Director and Project Manager regularly attend and speak at various meetings about the activities of KMEWO, helping to raise our profile significantly.

We would particularly like to highlight our special relationship with the Muslim Welfare House Mosque, Finsbury Park Mosque, IMECE , Kurdish Advice Centre (Komkar), Jannaty Women's Group, Newton Green Primary School, Copenhagen Primary School, Zakrose, Azadi, Goyza Kurdish supplementary school all of which provided us with valuable support in the delivery of our ESOL classes and FGM awareness seminars.



CASE STUDIES

Case study 1:

Suha was born in ME. When she was growing up her family exposed her to all sorts of abuse and neglect. She was cut when she was 5 years old, because FGM was and still is very common where she used to live. She was never sent to school like her older brothers. She was taught from an early age that her duties were to shop, cook, clean and wash for all the family to prepare her for her marriage life.

When Suha was 15, she was forced to marry a 50 year old disabled man in exchange for money to settle some of her family's debts. She then came to UK on a spousal visa to live with her now ex-husband in London and experienced sexual, emotional, physical and financial abuse from him. She managed to flee and contacted KMEWO. KMEWO's interventions included Risk assessment, safety planning, finding a refuge, and emotional and practical support. She was also referred to a solicitor to apply for residency in UK.

Suha has now moved into her own flat. She is still involved with KMEWO through doing ESOL and IT courses. She continues to be offered emotional and practical support to help her rebuild her life in her new community. In July 2016 she was referred to counselling in her own language.

"she feels more confident to go out on her own and is very grateful to be able to speak out about her repressed and painful life experiences in a safe environment".

Case study 2:

Khadija is in her mid-forty old, born to a large family in North Africa with eight sisters. She had worked as a housekeeper in Saudi Arabia for 1 year; after her return to her country. A rich woman (originally from the Gulf but lived in the UK) from a well-connected family in her own country asked Khadija if she would take a job to look after her baby daughter. Khadija needed that job to support her family and accepted the job, and came over to UK after obtaining a one year visa. The agreement was to work as a babysitter for one year and then goes back to North Africa. Upon her arrival Khadija's passport was taken by her employer; she was treated very badly, (like a slave) using her own words. She was mistreated and abused in several ways: emotionally, physically and financially. She didn't get paid for her work and in addition her family was threatened back home, because of that she didn't dare to complain to anyone.

After 4 years of being trapped and abused she managed to escape and went to a police station but with no documents or passport. Police investigation led to the employer's arrest and Khadija was recognised as a victim of human trafficking.

Khadija was referred to KMEWO by her GP for further support; after needs assessments KMEWO provided counselling sessions and support group. She was also supported to attend meeting with a family solicitor to get advice on her safety.

Khadija says:

"People at KMEWO understand my culture and customs and the danger that I am facing".

"In KMEWO, they are engaging me with a support group where I am meeting many women with a similar situation as mine which encourages me to make friends and stop being so isolated. I also attend ESOL classes with these women which makes me feel much safe and close to them."

"Counselling helped me a lot especially when I can speak in my language to someone who understands my culture and supports me. I feel that KMEWO empowered me."



Case Study 3:

"I got married in Africa and joined my husband in the UK shortly after. Since I have arrived in the UK my husband started to become very abusive towards me. He confiscated my passport. He started to verbally insult me. He slapped, kicked, punched and pushed me against the wall and to the floor and called me names. He shouted, screamed and swore at me. He criticised anything I do even the food that I cooked every single day. He went out to work and locked the door after him in an attempt to isolate me. He never shared any decisions with me including the family benefits and finances. When I became pregnant he immediately sent me back home to have the baby there. Then, he brought us back to the UK 6 months after I had the baby. However, he carried on with his abuse. He threatened that if I took any actions against him he would have custody of our child and would send me back home alone and would abandon me there.

I have, for the most part, put up with his abusive behavior, because I came on spousal visa and have no recourse to public funds. Unfortunately, his behavior got worse when he found out that I was pregnant with our second child. He demanded that I have an abortion or travel back home to give birth on my own there. He threatened to forcefully remove me if I don't travel back voluntarily. He said he does not want this baby to be born in this country and therefore.

After he physically assaulted me one morning I contacted the police and disclosed what had happened I was told not to go back to the perpetrator. The police referred me to Samira Project. The support worker created an individual safety and support action plan for me, in which we discussed what options I have, what I want to do and how I need to move on with my life. The support worker placed me and my child in a refuge with funding from social services. I was referred to an immigration solicitor who applied for a DDV concession for me. I was provided with advice around my safety options and I was referred to a family law solicitor who applied for injunctions to keep us safe and to protect my child from abduction by his father. They also wrote a support letter for my infinite leave to remain application as a victim of domestic abuse. They assisted me with my homeless/housing application and to move to a self-contained accommodation".

ACHIEVEMENTS

The following are some of the outcomes we have achieved from our various activities;

- 558 women were given advice and support
- 50 women were supported by the Samira Project
- 68 women were supported by the Thrivers Project
- 74 women attended four FGM awareness training gaining access to available support for survivors
- 102 received interpreting and translation support
- 80% women are now living in a safer environment away from the threat of domestic abuse and other forms of VAW&G
- 49 women benefitted from outreach services to police, housing and /or solicitors appointments
- 130 women attended educational courses including ESOL,IT, and literacy
- 15 volunteers were recruited to support our work



SERVICE USERS FEEDBACK

- ⇒ “Emotional support helped me a lot especially when I can speak in my language to someone who understands my culture and supports me. I feel that KMEWO empowered me.”
- ⇒ “When I came to your organisation, I was shouldered with problems, sadness, and confusion, now I feel I could leave your organisation, feeling lighter”.
- ⇒ “Without your support, I do not what could have happened to me. Your support made feel safe and secured”.
- ⇒ “I sought help from different agencies but no one had helped me from the danger that awaited for me but you... thank you”.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE

Over the financial year April 2015 to March 2016 the Organisation received income of £134,922 and incurred costs of £120,215.

(A detailed audited Account for the period is available)

PUBLIC BENEFIT OF OUR WORK

Our work meets all the requirements of the Public Benefit test;

- ⇒ We provide advice and advocacy on domestic violence, honor based violence, forced marriage, health, education, housing, etc. to vulnerable and disadvantaged women
- ⇒ All the benefits that we provide are consistent with our aims and objectives.
- ⇒ None of our activities are considered to be harmful to others or to the environment
- ⇒ All our benefits are appropriate to our aims and are directed towards a significant number of women in the community.
- ⇒ Our services are available, nationwide, and are provided completely free of charge.

Funders

- ◇ Big Lottery Reaching Community Fund
- ◇ Trust for London
- ◇ Rosa Fund
- ◇ Lloyds Bank Foundation
- ◇ Islington ACL
- ◇ Islington Council - VCS
- ◇ City Bridge Trust
- ◇ Islington –VAW&G
- ◇ Islington -CCG



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Run By Women for Women

Annual Report

April 2015- March 2016



Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women Organization