



Run by women for women

ANNUAL REPORT (2011– 2012)

Kurdish & Middle Eastern Women's Organisation Limited

Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London N19 3RQ, Tel: 020 7263 1027 – 07748 851 125 - Fax: 020 7561 9594
Unit Y, 7th floor, Hannibal House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6TE, Tel: 020 7708 0057
E-mail: info@kmewo.org - Website: www.kmewo.org
Registered Charity No: 1137055 – Company No: 6978454

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Last year was indeed a very challenging time for the Voluntary sector and for the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation there was no exception. Competition for funds was very intense and as a result a number of needed projects have been placed on hold for the time being. The economic climate has however helped us to become more creative in our thinking and to use our limited resources more smartly.

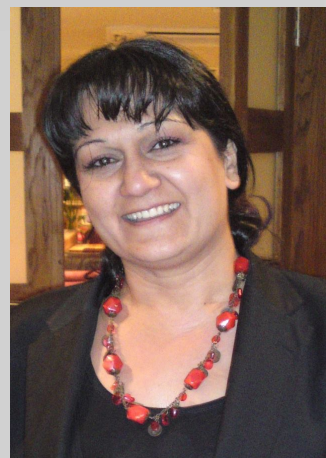
Over the last twelve months we have increased our pool of volunteers, all of whom have contributed significantly towards our goals, whilst gaining valuable employment and social skills. We have also expanded our network of supportive organisations, many of which have helped us on a pro-bono basis.

Our staffs continues to work in an exemplary manner and developing relationship with women from the Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North Africa communities in order that victims of domestic violence and other forms of human rights abuses can be identified and supported. In this respect we are particularly pleased with the relationship that has been forged with a number of Mosques, particularly those in Islington. This has enabled us to reach a large number of isolated women and help in addressing some of their needs. At the Mosques we now run ESOL classes, Up-skilling projects and health awareness seminars.

A number of schools are also working with us to address the issues of forced marriages and female genital mutilation and we expect this partnership working to continue in the future and to cover a much wider range of issues.

I have already indicated above the hard work and dedication of our staff and volunteers and I would like to formally thank them for their endeavours. Many thanks are also due to my management committee colleagues for their guidance and stewardship of the Organisation, particularly in these times of austerity. I would also like to say a special thank you to the many funders that supported us and whose generosity has helped us to provide advice and support to many victims of domestic violence.

Gona Saed - Chairperson



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The last financial year was a period of mixed apprehensions, ranging from severe anxiety to unrestrained elation. Having made a number of unsuccessful applications there were concerns about funding for the Directors salary, without which the Organisation would have had a difficult and challenging future. Fortunately, at the eleventh hour, the Henry Smith Foundation offered us a grant, which has enabled us to be more focussed and to channel our energies on achieving our aims and objectives.



Our staffs were magnanimous and with the support of our pool of volunteers, the local Mosques and some schools we were able to deliver a wide range of services to survivors of domestic violence from the Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African communities. Although support and advice continues to be the single most important issue for the users of our services, other issues have been surfacing and growing significantly. In particular the incidence of forced marriages, female genital mutilation, poor housing conditions, poverty, mental health and problem with children are all increasing and KMEWO is the first port of call for these distraught women.

Over the period of this report 330 women were given one to one advice and support, we received 1000 telephone enquiries and over 700 women attended our seminars and training events. We were particularly pleased to have three deaf women participated in our activities with the help of one of our volunteers.

In our endeavour to help our service users we put together an advice, education, training and information package, which was delivered wholly or in part by our staffs, volunteers, jointly with other organisations and freelance professionals. Including in the package are; ESOL (Entry levels 1 and 2), a volunteer's training project, an up-skilling project, women's empowerment and confidence building, mentoring and training, networking events, health awareness and keeping safe. The ESOL classes were all very successful and up to sixteen women attended each class. Equally successful is the volunteer's training project which resulted in fourteen participants securing paid employment.

Our plan for the coming year is to place greater emphasis on helping the women to escape from the relative poverty which is a notable feature of the Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African communities. Their circumstances are likely to become even more desperate as a result of the recent changes to the welfare system, which will undoubtedly impact on people whose first language is not English and who lacks relevant employable skills. We would like to run a series of poverty related workshops to will help the women gain employment and thus become productive members of the community.

We continue to enjoy welcome and generous support from a number of funders, whose names are listed later in this report. However I would like to mention here Lloyds TSB and the Henry Smith Charity, both of which have agreed to fund a volunteers project that will enable us to provide training in Administration, Awareness, Advocacy and Events Planning for at least sixty volunteers (over three years) to help then gain relevant skills and gain paid employment in the future.

Sawsan Salim – Director

HISTORY OF KMEWO:

The Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation, replaces the Kurdish Refugee Women's Organisation, which was established in 1999. Its primary goal was to champion the cause of women from Kurdistan and the Middle East - mostly victims of domestic violence, honour killing, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and other forms of human rights abuses. However, on arrival in the UK, their problems were soon compounded by their inability to speak the English language; not being able to find paid employment; lack of accommodation and problems relating to their immigration status.

It was in response to these problems that a few dedicated and visionary women, with determination and drive, formed the Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation. Initially they started giving advice and counselling, two days per week, from a small office in Archway. However as news of our services spread within the community, demand grows and soon we were working five days per week. The opening of the Peckham office follows swiftly thereafter. In 2009 the Organisation was merged with the Middle Centre for Women's Rights and after a name change it was registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee. In 2010 the new Company was formally granted charitable status by the Charity Commission, whereupon the original charity number was removed from the register.

MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANISATION:

A board of nine trustees, seven women and one man, from within the Kurdish and Middle Eastern community, manages the Organisation. The board meets every two months to monitor performance, determine policy issues, and to decide on long-term strategy. In between meetings the Chair meets with the Director to discuss and deal with operational matters.

OUR AIMS:

- 1- 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.
- 2- To promote the human rights of Kurdish and Middle Eastern women through providing information, research and organising conferences and seminars on human rights issues.
- 3- 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.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS

Advice and outreach support:

We continue to provide advice and support to victims of domestic violence and over the last twelve months 330 clients visited our offices in Archway and Southwark for advice – some of these clients visited us several times over the period. We also received more than 1000 telephone calls. Although domestic violence remains the predominant issue for our users a range of other issues are increasingly competing for our time and resources. Specifically these are forced marriages, female genital mutilation and issues relating to housing, welfare benefit, immigration, forced marriages, No Recourse to Public Funds, etc.

The solution to many of the issues is believed to lie within an integration of the Kurdish and Middle Eastern women and the mainstream communities, and towards this end we are working with the local authorities and other organisations to identify and eradicate the barriers to assimilation. For example we are participating in the activities of the Forum for Equalities and Human Rights in Southwark (FEHRS) whose vision is to champion a fair and equal society in Southwark by promoting diversity, tolerance and understanding with the aim of working towards the elimination of discrimination.

In Islington we have been funded by the Council to deliver a part of their Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme. This is essentially a collaborative initiative, the aim of which is to make the borough a fairer place and to help the poorest and most vulnerable residents.



Volunteer's Recruitment & Development Project:

With financial support from Henry Smith and Lloyds TSB we started a volunteer's recruitment and development project. Over a three year period the aim to recruit and train sixty women volunteers in Advocacy, Administration, Awareness, Events Planning and Befriending. The training programme for each candidate is planned to last between 3 and 6 months after which each of them should be ready to seek paid employment. So far sixty women have joined the programme and their feedback is extremely positive. The following are some of the activities undertaken by the volunteers along with some of the feedback received.



- ⇒ An initial period of induction about the Organisation, our areas of work, the role and importance of volunteering and the need for sensitivity when dealing with clients. They were also inducted into risk assessment, told about how to identify signs of domestic violence, child abuse, drugs and alcoholism.
- ⇒ Organise Sunnyside Garden project – this involve developing the idea, make contact with our clients to establish the degree of interest, identify and book the venue, organise the various activities each day, etc.
- ⇒ Organise visit to the Houses of Parliament – make arrangement for the visit with the Secretary of our local MP (Jeremy Corbyn), select the group for the visit, agree a meeting point for the women and make sure that the protocol of the House of Commons is observed.
- ⇒ Make the necessary arrangements for a visit to KMEWO by a delegation of women from Toutes Les Horizons in France. There were 7 women in the group and they were interested finding out about our Organisation and to explore possibility of future joint working. In addition to helping with the arrangements for the visits one of the volunteer assisted with translation.
- ⇒ Organise a confidence building trip for a group of our clients to Epping Forest, where they meet members of other organisations and encouraged to make new friends.
- ⇒ Organise two self-defence classes at Muslim welfare House.
- ⇒ Assist with the running of a six-month ESOL classes at IMECE Office for Turkish speaking group.
- ⇒ Organise Six month ESOL classes at Muslim Welfare House.
- ⇒ Career Orienteer Programme – this was a twelve week's programme, designed to rebuild the confidence of the participants and was delivered in partnership with Octopus Community Network.

As a result of being involved in the various activities listed above the volunteers have gained and developed a range of skills, including the following;

Communication – all the volunteers are now more confident in communicating with others both in person and over the telephone. This has helped them to improve their confidence and has enabled some of them to progress on the further education, employment and volunteering with other organisations.

Team building and networking – they have learnt how to work together and support each other and not to be negative towards other people.

Organising an event – they have learnt how to plan and organise simple events, to set outcomes and milestones and to monitor their progress.



The following are samples of the comments received from the volunteers

Nadia - 'I am helping out at the ESOL classes with Souad and people from my community. This has been an amazing experience and I have thoroughly enjoyed putting my newly learnt skills into practice as well as getting to know the individuals in the classroom and helping them. They remind me of myself 20 years ago when I came here and wanted to learn English but didn't have the opportunity to take part in a class like this and my only teacher was Eastenders and the BBC news!'

Showbo - Last Thursday I attended a course (simply positive), which is held for a group of women to build confidence and self-esteem, also encouraging these vulnerable women to find a right path and approach things without fear. I actually was there to learn some facilitation skills and get experience from the course, but I found some of the aspects were good for me as well. I was impressed by the facilitator how she could involve and engage the women to talk and express their feeling without hesitation or fear of being judged by her. She has made the course interesting and safe place to be, as the women were asking her if she could extend the course longer. I learnt from the facilitator how to use one's skills and put them into practice, over all was a good experience for me for a start and would like to attend other sessions'.

Zekiye- I have been a volunteer since October 2011 for Kurdish Middle East Women Organisation (KMEWO). I help out with internet research, writing articles and outreach/ family support work. THE KMEWO does great support and advice for very vulnerable women. Beyond this essential work they offer women like me, i.e. loan parent with two young children, a great opportunity to gather working experience and contribute my diverse background with it. Antonia works as Volunteer Coordinator which does all the development events. As well as lending me support to all training courses, she has always shown belief and emphasis for my contributions. With her wide working experience, knowledge and patience she has helped me always to combine volunteer work with job search, together with my childcare responsibilities. This I fully appreciate and see as one of her great skills. With her great respect for the volunteers and warm welcoming, Sawsan interacts and treats me as an equal and includes me in consultations concerning Kurdish matters. With the amount of trust I am given, I have been asked to write articles about Honour based Violence, which have subsequently been published. With huge effort and professional advice they are motivating me for my job search - and with that comes confidence. Of course I will be still available for KMEWO volunteering once I am back to employment because I deeply believe in their need for assistance. There is a great need for this work to continue and to maintain the service which is already on offer.

UPSKILLING WOMEN'S PROJECT

We received a two year grant from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation to deliver this project, the purpose of which is to provide basic literacy, numeracy classes, guidance and support to women seeking to return to education and employment. The following activities were undertaken as part of the project

ESOL Classes - we have been running ESOL classes at the Muslim Welfare House and Finsbury Park Mosques for Arab speaking women on Monday's Tuesday's and Thursday's each week. The classes are delivered at; Entry levels, Entry level 1 and Entry level 2. Attendance varies between 12 and 16 per class and over the period of the report a total of 326 women attended the various classes.

IT training – over a period of eight weeks we ran a weekly “Introduction to Computing classes”, which was attended by seventeen women. The classes were held at the Octopus Community Centre and cover the following topics; using the Start Button to find Programs; Navigate the Keyboard; Save a file, Print a document and using the internet. Some of these women continue to receive basic training in our Office on a one to one basis occasionally.



Confidence building – another part of the upskilling project involves building the confidence of the women. Many of the women from the Kurdish, Middle East and North Africa are originally from rural areas and are therefore quite unfamiliar to the complexities of a modern metropolitan city. Consequently they are unable to navigate the systems, which mean that they are not able to contribute to the community or achieve their personal goals. With the support of Octopus Community Network we organised a range of activities to help the women regain their confidence and self-assuredness. These include travelling on the buses and trains, visit to cultural places, coach them to speak in public and encourage them to take part in community activities. A total of 36 women participated in the programme.



CV training – In November last year we ran a CV training course, which was attended by 10 women. A trainer from SCCD delivered the course on a pro-bono basis. Each participant was asked to complete a CV by herself over the following six weeks that was passed on to the trainer for comment and improvement as necessary. They were all subsequently awarded certificates for attending the course and for successfully completing their CV assignment. The training has helped at least 4 of the women to secure paid employment. Two others have run in April 2012.



Mentoring & Training Events - during the year we ran a mentoring and training session which was attended by 10 women. The session was facilitated by a consultant from Laamiga and covers the building of self-confidence, developing a business idea and starting a new business. Some of the women came with a number of business ideas, which revolves around their existing skills and knowledge. These include cake making, sewing and dress making, cooking and childcare. Different business options were discussed, along with the possible risks and opportunities, including the setting up of a social enterprise. It was agreed that the women would consider what had been discussed and that further meetings could be arranged if they wished to take the matter further.

Health Awareness Seminars - with grants from Awards for All and London Catalyst we have been running a series of Health Awareness Seminars for girls and women from the Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African communities. So far we have delivered six seminars and we plan to deliver a further fourteen between now and December 2012. The subjects covered so far are; Smoking & Shisha, Puberty, Breast Cancer, Welfare Cuts and Mental Health, and Dance Therapy. An average thirty three women and girls attended each seminar – (an overall total of 199) and their feedback was extremely positive, especially those relating to breast cancer and puberty



Forums and networking meetings - over the last year we have participated in a number of events, including the following;

Keeping women safe in Islington – on 24 February 2012 we took part in a forum meeting, which was organised by the London Borough of Islington, where the focus was on Keeping Women Safe in Islington. Seven other women's groups were in attendance and we took along thirteen of our service users.

Networking event – On 8 March we attended a Women’s Legal & Policy Network event in Southwark, which was organised by Rights of Women. The main agenda item was the implementation of Section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act in London. We also attended an international women’s day event in Islington, which was organised by the London Borough of Islington. The theme of this event was employment for women and there were representatives from local employers, the police and various community organisations.



Conference and celebrations – on 10 March, in partnership with the International Federation of Iraqi Refugees we organised a conference and celebration for families from Kurdistan, the Middle East and North Africa. Over one hundred people attended this event which provides an opportunity for networking, making new friends and the sharing of experiences

For Honour and Love (DVD and Training Manuals) - in our previous report we mentioned that in partnership with Eighteen & Under from Scotland and Leeway Women’s Aid in Norwich we produced a DVD and training manuals, entitled Honour and Love. Essentially these were about FGM, Forced Marriages and Honour Based Violence. Subsequent to a successful launch at the Amnesty International Centre in March 2010 further launches were carried out in other Cities, i.e. Manchester, Wolverhampton and Luton. It was also used in a training we did in Norway. The launch Luton was particularly successful and resulted in the Council deciding that “every Early Years setting in Luton will now hold their own copy which we are advising that they share with all their staff to raise awareness of the issues covered”.



The DVD and Manuals are now being used in training delivered by us as part of Safer Islington Partnership programme, which we deliver throughout the year to social workers, refugee workers, teachers, student s, advisors, and community safety professionals, other voluntary sector workers, health professionals and police officers. So far we have trained 351 professionals and sold 210 copies of the DVD and 630 Manuals.

Campaigning and Lobby - Our campaigning and lobbying work continues a pace and last year the main focus was on forced marriages and female genital mutilation. Notwithstanding the fact that both these activities are not permitted within the UK parents are taking their daughters abroad, often on a range of pretexts, to have them married or to be circumcised. We worked in three ways to stop these illegal and inhuman rights violations. One – we try and educate the parents that what they are doing is both wrong and illegal. Two – we try to alert the schools on possible signs of such activities are possibly being considered, so that actions can be taken and three – we are lobbying the Government for them to work towards the abolition of these acts worldwide.

INTERPRETING & TRANSLATION – We continue to provide interpreting and translation support to Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North Africa women at interviews with various organisations, e.g. the police, solicitors, colleges, Housing department, Refugee, Job Centre plus etc. to carry out interpreting and translation on their behalf. This is still very much an important and ever increasing part of our workload and over the last twelve months we accompanied over 90 women to various interviews where the need for our service was essential. A few volunteers have assisted in this and their support is greatly appreciated.

NETWORKING & PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

KRWO continues to work with a number of other organisations, in order to share good practice, inform and be informed about each others work, support and participate in the work and activities of each other, etc. Amongst these are; Safer Islington Partnership, Islington Faith Forum, Arab Advice Bureau, Iranian community Center, Red Cross, MARAC, MPS HBV working group, CPS, Amnesty International, Southall Black Sisters, Peckham Community Council meeting, IMECE, IMKAAN, Newham Asian Women Project, the Metropolitan Police, Women Asylum Aid, Women Resource Centre, Refugee Council, Latin American Women Aid, Islington & Hackney Domestic Forum, International Federation for Iraqi Refugees, Coalition against Deportation to Iraq, Forward, Manor Garden Center, Iranian and Kurdish Women Rights Project, Peckham Voluntary Sector Forum, Roj Women, Islington Voluntary Action, Evelyn Oldfield and Nafsiyat.

We would particularly like to highlight our special relationship with the Muslim Welfare House Mosques, Finsbury Park Mosques, Somalia Mosque, Canonbury, Pakeman and Highbury Quadrant Primary schools, all of which provided us with valuable support in the delivery of our ESOL classes and Health Awareness Seminars.

MAAZINES AND WEBSITE =

Our Magazines are published and distributed quarterly (500 copies each) and visitors to the website range from 2000 to 4000 per month. Over the last twelve months we covered issues such as Violence against



Women; Honour Related Violence in Sweden; Ending the Culture of FGM; Forced Marriage and the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act; No Recourse to Public Fund; Women in Pursuit of Equality and Women's Rights towards an Alternative Perspective – Challenging Religious Patriarchies. A number of distinguished women, including, Lynne Featherstone MP (Minister for Equalities); Dr. Aisha Gill, Maria Hagberg, Bint al-Sultan, Sohaila Sharifi and Dr. Amina Alrasheed were amongst the contributors.

PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY:

Much of our promotion and publicity is done through the distribution of leaflets and by outreach work. There are three Mosques in Islington and they are attended by hundreds of women each week and with the support of the Directors our leaflets do reach a large number of them. Within the Mosques and the community our outreach worker helps to raise our profile by speaking to individuals about services and encouraged them to become volunteers. Information about our work is also published in our newsletters, magazine and are posted on our website.

FUTURE PLANS

The following two projects were included in our last report as priorities for the future. However due to a lack of funds we were unable to deliver them but we have decided to keep them alive, whilst we continue to search for funds.

Family Support & Teenage Conflict - one of the features of today's society is the apparent tensions that exist within the family. Gone are the days when the main influence in a young person's life was the parents and the extended family. Young people are instead looking outside of the family for information, guidance, knowledge and inspiration and tend to regard the family as of only limited importance. It is more so the case with Kurdish and Middle Eastern families, where the parents can scarcely speak the language, with little or no knowledge of western traditions and culture.

However the biological bond that binds them together seems to be unbreakable and this is both a source of love and a recipe for conflict. It is a widely held belief that the ideal situation for society is a strong family unit, a view with which we fully concur. One of our priority projects for the future is to support the family and to try and address the conflict that exists within the family.

Mental health project - one of the unpleasant effects of domestic violence is the psychological impact it has on the victims and their children. Over 70% of the women we have seen, as clients, speak about not being able to sleep at night and how they are always feeling depressed and are lacking in self-confidence. Most of them also spoke about their children having nightmares and a range of behavioural problems. This project will help to address these issues, ensuring that the victims of domestic violence and their children are provided with appropriate advice, support and counseling.

PUBLIC BENEFIT OF OUR WORK;

- ⇒ Our work does meet all the requirements of the Public Benefit test;
Our benefits are clear – we provide advice and advocacy on domestic violence, honour based violence, forced marriage, health, education, housing, etc. to vulnerable and disadvantaged women
- ⇒ The benefits are related to our aims – all the benefits that we provide are consistent with our aims and objectives.
- ⇒ Benefits must be balanced against detriment or harm – none of our activities are considered to be harmful to others or to the environment
- ⇒ The beneficiaries must be appropriate to the aims – all our benefits are appropriate to our aims and are directed towards a significant number of women in the community.
- ⇒ Where benefit is to a section of the public, the opportunity to benefit must not be unreasonably restricted: - our services are available, nationwide, and are provided completely free of charge.

Management, staff and volunteers of Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation Limited

Management Committee

Ms. Gona Saed	Ms. Srur Omar
Ms. Janan Al- Jabiri	Ms. Sara Farji
Ms. Tanya Ahmad	Ms. Diba Al Khani
Ms. Tara Abdullah	Mr. Ibrahim Kerim
Ms. Fatima zamani	

Staff

Ms Sawsan Salim	Ms Antonia Rosati
Ms Hannan Babakiri	Ms Soad Halawa

Volunteers

Fatima Zamane	Andjelka Savovic
Kamila Omar	Rezan faraj
Halima Nur	Faiza Hussein
Hodan Sharif	Nadia Haltalli
Hayat Habri	Basima Shahine
Naima Halil	Ali Salih
Zakiye Kortal	Farhad Saed
Olena Vereshchak	Noel Hudson

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Supporters

All our dedicated volunteers, Caxton House- all staff, Noel Hudson , Maria Gonzalez & Louisa Hernandez (Voluntary Action Islington), Tony Nickson (Evelyn Old Field), Feride Baycan (IMECE), Jeremy Corbyn MP, Rosalind Miller (Islington Faith forum) , Chezerina Dhaliwal/Anne Clark/Katie Furness (Islington Council), Dashty Jamal- Iraqi Federation, Red Cross, Muslim Welfare House, London North Mosque, Luton Women's Aid and Octopus Community Centre.

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London Catalyst	

Thanks to:



Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London N19 3RQ, Tel: 020 7263 1027 - 07748851125 - Fax: 020 7561 9594
 Unit Y, 7th floor, Hannibal House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6TE, Tel: 0207 708 0057
 E-mail: info@kmewo.org
 Website: www.kmewo.org
 Registered Charity No: 11137055
 Company No: 6978454

**Community
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