



رێکخراوی ژنانی کوردو روژده لاتی ناوهراستی

KMEWO

Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024

SAFETY, RECOVERY & REBUILDING



KMEWO
Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO)
منظمة النساء الكرديات والشرق الاوسطيات
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WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE
KMEWO

Happy 20th Anniversary
KMEWO 2024

Happy 20th Anniversary
KMEWO 2024

Happy 20th Anniversary
KMEWO 2024

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Chair's Foreword



KMEWO thrived again for one more year providing services to Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African (KMENA) women in London, most of them survivors of Domestic Abuse and Harmful Practices. I am very proud of our dedicated staff and volunteers who support survivors with great professionalism and empathy, always seeking to ensure that no one is left behind.

Yet there is much headway to be done for women of our community both in London and worldwide, as their rights very often at risk. Refugees, asylum seekers, unemployed women of no access to public funds, brides who are literally still children are only some of the concerning examples of what KMENA women go through. Violence is present and most times they suffer in silence unable to stand up for their rights.

KMEWO stands up and will do until they are empowered enough to raise their voice and achieve a better standard of live without violence and with their rights respected. For another year I am proud of all women found the strength to seek for support and walk away from the abuse. As the chair of this organisation, I will always be by the side of those who- due to their own personal and societal reasons- are reluctant to seek for support; through campaigning for their rights we and I will try to make sure that one day they will be encouraged enough to turn the page on their lives, because all of them will be equal under the law and will have access to appropriate services within societies that promote and protect their fundamental rights.

I would like to thank KMEWO's funders, partners, stakeholders' staff and volunteers for their support and dedication to our cause. Without them we could not be able to provide all the critical support we have been providing the last 26 years.

Dr. Janan Al Jabiri

Director's Foreword



This was a transformative year for KMEWO. We saw significant growth, expanding our partnerships and increasing the number of projects aimed at providing critical specialist services to Kurdish, Middle Eastern, and North African (KMENA) women in their mother tongue.

Yet, we continue to face the harsh reality that violence against women and girls remains present leaving us questioning why, despite the available support, violence against women has not been eradicated. This year also had challenges.

The ongoing cost of living crisis has exacerbated the intersecting issues KMENA women face in the UK— language and cultural barriers, insecure immigration status, and survivors of No Recourse to Public Funds, all compounded by poverty and unemployment contributing to the reluctance of women to leave abusive relationships. Our organisation, too, has felt these challenges. The competition for funding in the women's sector has intensified, while our own costs have risen over the past two years. Additionally, the high caseloads and shortage of frontline culturally competent staff have put immense pressure on the organisation.

Recruiting specialist staff with the necessary language and cultural competence has become increasingly difficult. In response to these challenges, we have made structural changes within the organisation. In 2023, we recruited for two new critical positions: Operations Manager and Fundraising & Communications Manager. We also appointed a VAWG Services Manager, reflecting the expansion of our Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) projects.

Despite these pressures, our staff and volunteers continue to demonstrate remarkable professionalism, working under difficult circumstances while embracing every opportunity for growth and development. I am incredibly proud of their dedication. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our funders, partners, and stakeholders. Their ongoing support enable us to continue offering vital services to the women in our community who need it most. In closing, I remain fully committed to our cause and to the hope that one day, organisations like ours will no longer be needed because violence against women and girls will have been eradicated once and for all.

Sawsan Salim, Director

About KMEWO

Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women Organisation (KMEWO) is a led by and for Black and Minoritised Women's organisation in London, dedicated to improving the quality of life of Kurdish, Middle Eastern, and North African women who have experienced domestic abuse and harmful practices.

Our mission, grounded in equality and empowerment, began 25 years ago to promote their fundamental rights, and provide opportunities through specialist and holistic support, accompanying them in their journey towards safety, recovery and rebuild.

We Strive For All Women's



Aim

Our aim is to promote KMENA's women Human Rights and quality of life supporting them to recover from distress and suffering due to the dreadful experiences of domestic abuse and Harmful Practices by increasing their opportunity for better education, employment and social engagement.

Mission

To ensure KMENA Women living in the UK are supported and empowered to achieve a better standard of life, free from any violence and with legal freedoms promoted and protected.



Our Holistic Services

Taking Women to
a Journey Towards

Safety
Recovery
Rebuild

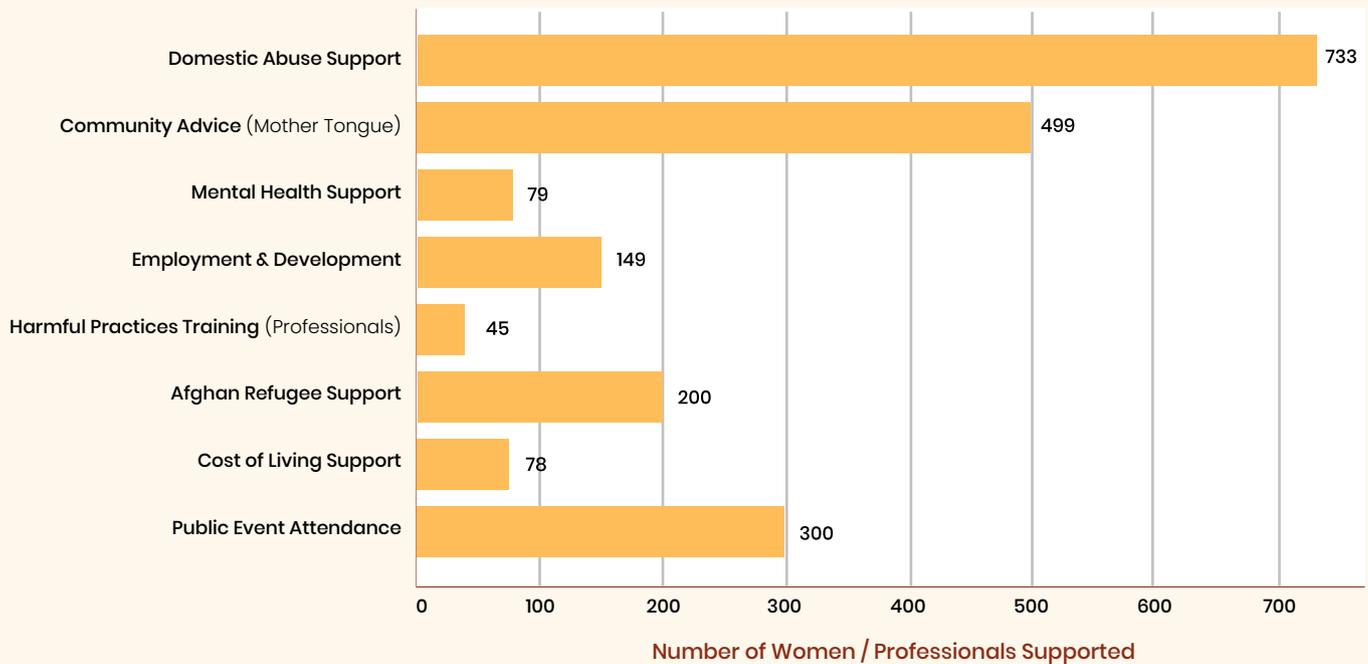


Our holistic services are free and provided at a safe and confidential space in mother tongue and in English

Impact at a Glance

In 2023–2024 we supported **2073 service users** both directly and indirectly with KMEWO’s holistic and specialist services. The majority of our service users are survivors of Domestic Abuse and Harmful Practices with complex and intersected needs, all of them coming from Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African communities.

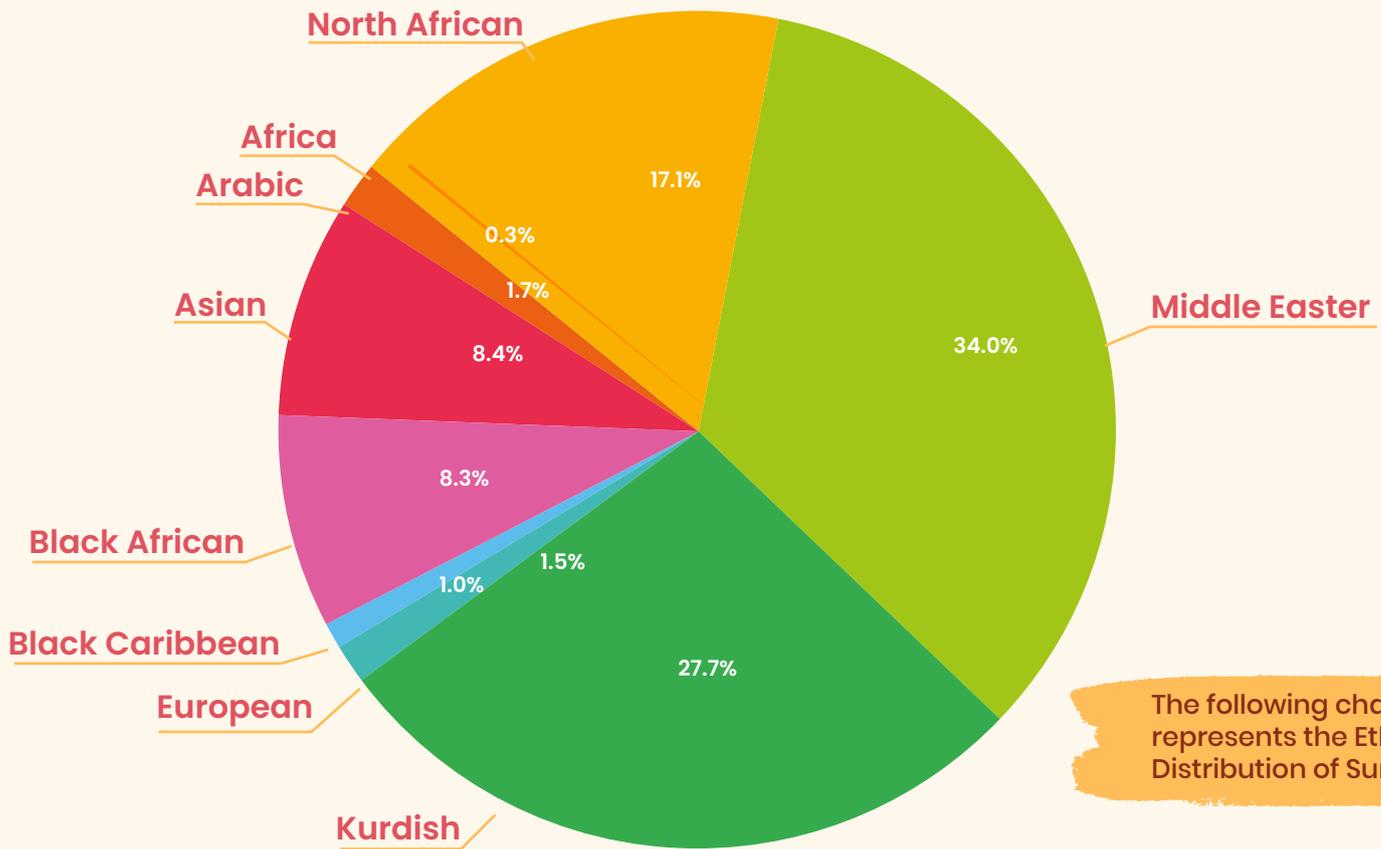
Support Provided to Women (2023 – 2024)



Intersectional Violence Against Women and Girls Advice and Support

We provide essential intersectional VAWG advocacy and support to survivors of Domestic Abuse and Harmful Practices including Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (GM) and the So- Called Honour Based Abuse.

With the strategic priority that 'No one is left behind' we create women's only safe spaces to offer intersectional advocacy by culturally competent frontline professionals in mother tongue (Kurdish Sorani, Arabic, Farsi) and in English. We conduct safe life risk assessments, crisis intervention and we draw safety plans supporting survivors to access and navigate the criminal justice system. We also make referrals to immigration and family law routes. Emotional and peer support as well as community advice (housing, welfare benefits, debt management and more) are available to survivors approaching KMEWO.



The following chart represents the Ethnicity Distribution of Survivors

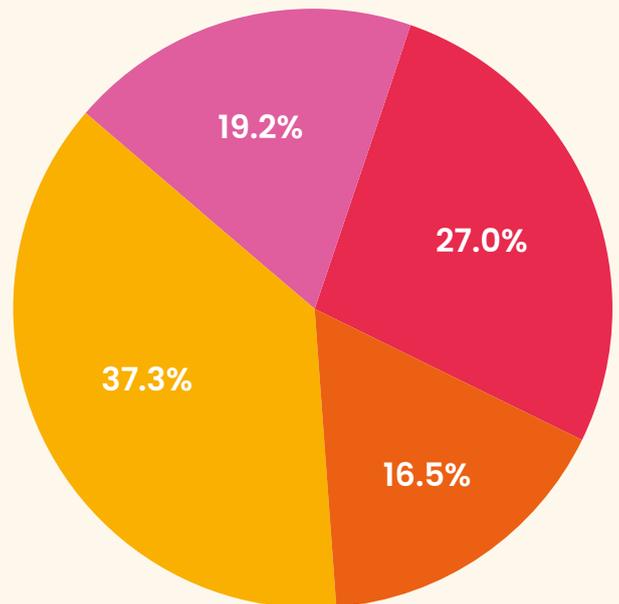
KMENA WOMEN'S NEEDS IN THE UK

KMENA women in the UK present multiple and complex and intersected needs. Indicatively, in 2023-2024 we supported 733 survivors of Domestic Abuse with the following needs:

Needs	Number
Did not speak English	583
No Recourse to Public Funds	258
Mothers of Children Under 18	422
Presented Housing Issues	300

Distribution of Support Needs Among Domestic Abuse Survivors

- Did not speak English
- Presented Housing Issues
- Mothers of Children Under 18
- No Recourse to Public Funds



Safety

Samira Project

Partnered with **IMECE Women's Centre and Latin America Women's Aid (LAWA)**, we support Black and Minoritised women with a focus on Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African (KMENA) women in Islington who are survivors of domestic abuse and harmful practices. Our culturally sensitive services vary between VAWG advocacy and support (crisis intervention, support with the criminal justice system and welfare benefits needs). In **2023-24**, we supported **123 women** in their mother tongue.

Prevention and Action Through Community Engagement and Training (P&ACT)

A London- wide partnership of 12 'led by and for' Black and Minoritised women's organisations, led by Asian Women's Resource Centre, providing VAWG advocacy and support, counselling, therapeutic groups, and community engagement. In **2023-24** we supported **77 women** with one-to-one support in their mother tongue.

ASCENT Safe Accommodation Floating Support Services led by Refuge

The ASCENT Pan-London Floating Support Service is run by 11 'led by and for' organisations providing specialist domestic abuse support, trauma- informed counselling, wrap-around support for those in safe accommodation, across London. In **2023-2024** we supported **38 women** living in safe accommodation.

ASCENT Safe Accommodation Floating Support Services for NRPF women led by Asian Women's Resource Centre (AWRC)

An ASCENT pan-London Partnership providing one to one domestic abuse and harmful practices advocacy and support in mother tongue ensuring women's access to safe accommodation, supporting them with Migrant Victim Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC), support with cost of living and welfare benefits advice. In 2023-24 we supported **34 survivors**.

London Community Fund- Home Office

We provide one to one Domestic Abuse advocacy and support in mother tongue, women's only therapeutic group sessions and Harmful Practices training to frontline professionals in the statutory and voluntary sectors to raise awareness on the complex nature of harmful practices when intersected with domestic abuse. This year we supported **30 women**.

Survivors 2 Theivers II

KMEWO and Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation partnered to provide holistic support to Black and Minoritised residents of Haringey, Hackney, Westminster and Barnet. During this time **20 women** received culturally competent VAWG Advocacy and Support in mother tongue (Kurdish Sorani, Arabic, Farsi) and in English.



I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your generous support and assistance during a challenging period of my life. Your help was a turning point for me, as your care and compassion made me feel that I am not alone facing these difficulties.



Recovery

Counselling

We provide up to 20 sessions per survivor of culturally competent counselling in Arabic, Farsi, Amharic, Tigrinya and English. The sessions are individually tailored and are offered by BACP registered therapists in a safe and confidential space to survivors who have experienced VAWG, harmful practices, loss and trauma. In 2023-24 we supported **55 women**. In 2023, counselling became a self standing project (Mind the Gap) at KMEWO funded by Islington Giving and Cripplegate Foundation.

MOPAC

islington
giving

*Cripplegate
Foundation*

Women's Only Therapeutic Groups

Our therapeutic groups create safe spaces for women to come together, share and learn from their peers. They are provided by psychologists or in partnership with other organisations offering sessions about mindfulness, stress management, relaxation techniques, financial stress better sleep and more. In 2023-2024 two courses of 8-10 sessions each provided to **24 KMENA** women in London.


Home Office

The London
Community
Foundation
MOPAC

islington
giving

*Cripplegate
Foundation*



Rebuilding

Our rebuilding services create safe spaces for women to access employment and development services, learn and meet breaking the cycle of isolation. We offer:

Women's Only English Classes:

Our ESOL classes create safe spaces for women to come together, tackle isolation and language barriers. In 2023-24, **63 women** participated in ESOL classes provided face to face in different community hubs and online.

One to one support in mother tongue and in English providing advice on education, volunteering and employment. In 2023-24, **78 women** received 127 sessions of education and employment support.

Online coaching supports women with confidence building, job searching techniques, volunteering and CV writing. In 2023-24, **8 attended** coaching.



Community Advice and Support

IBAA PARTNERSHIP

Islington BAMER Advice Alliance is a partnership consisting of seven organisations in Islington providing one to one community advice and support in mother tongue, community engagement activities, advice on housing and homelessness as well as welfare benefits. Our aim is that marginalised communities in Islington will break the cycle of exclusion and will be enabled to equally access general information and services being aware of their legal rights. In 2023-24 we supported **499 women** directly and indirectly.

AFGHAN REFUGEES RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

In Partnership with Islington Council and the No Recourse to Public Funds Team, KMEWO leads the Afghan Refugees Resettlement project. We provide tailored made advice and advocacy to Afghan refugee women and families', emotional support and integrative activities. Since 2022 we have been running activities for Afghan women and through the STARS group. During the reporting period we have supported **45 Afghan refugee** women, **50 Afghan families** summing up 200 people in total.

Support with the Cost of Living

The rise of cost of living has a detrimental effect on survivors of domestic abuse making them often reluctant to leave the abusive relationship as otherwise they can't make ends meet. 48 women received immediate responses to Cost-of-Living Crisis through emergency fund, food vouchers, clothing, and donations.



Harmful Practices Training for Professionals

KMEWO traditionally provides Harmful Practices Training for professionals in the statutory and voluntary sectors to raise awareness on the complex nature of harmful practices when intersected with VAWG. In 2023-24, **45 professionals** attended 2 sessions of harmful practices training for professionals.

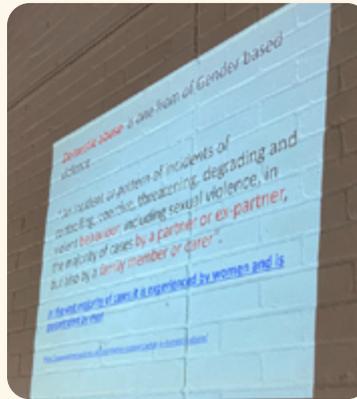


Absolutely, I feel like this has built on existing knowledge and I can be confident when implementing into my work.

Building Social Support Networks for Women

We tackle exclusion and isolation by creating safe spaces for women to meet, learn and socialise. Last year we hosted two public events on the occasions of 16 Days of Activism and International Women's Day.

We also participated in Nowruz Celebrations held by the NRPF Team of Islington Council. In summer of 2023 we organised a picnic for women and children in Islington and London-wide. More than 300 women attended our events and activities during the reporting period. We also raise awareness on Domestic Abuse and Harmful Practices.



Campaigning and Networking

Holocaust Memorial Day in Islington

On the 26 of January 2024, KMEWO's director, Sawsan Salim, delivered a speech regarding the Halabja Massacre on the occasion of Holocaust Memorial Day at Islington Assembly Hall sharing her personal experience.



Mayor's Civic Awards

In March 2023, KMEWO's director, Sawsan Salim, received the Mayor's Civic Award for her 25-year dedication to supporting Black and Minoritised Women, survivors of Domestic Abuse and Harmful Practices in Islington. Sawsan was one of 8 residents in Islington to receive the Mayor's Civic Award.

KMEWO in the UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls Meetings in London

In February 2024 KMEWO along with sister organisations attended two meetings with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls in London. We also submitted written evidence on the So-Called Honour Based Abuse providing insights for the UN's upcoming report.



Organisational Development

In House Training on Leadership and Management

Funded by Rosa Fund for Women, in 2023 we had a great opportunity to deliver a 12-series Strategic Leadership and Management in-house training for staff and volunteers at KMEWO. The first six sessions of the training were provided by an external consultant while the rest was peer learning from among KMEWO's staff. The feedback received was positive and the training encouraged a volunteer and three members of staff to apply and be successfully recruited to senior positions within the organisation.



Although I am already working in the sector, the training session was quite helpful. I hope it was helpful to those who are new to the Domestic Violence field.

Restructuring

In 2023 KMEWO underwent organisational changes with an Operations Manager, Fundraising and Communications Manager and a VAWG services manager in place. As we are expanding with more partnerships and projects our strategic priority is to focus on fundraising and business planning, up to date policies and efficient VAWG services, competent to meet the high demand and the complex needs of our survivors.

Case Study From Desperation to Safety- The Journey of M.S

Background

M.S, a woman from Kurdistan, sought support from the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO) in July 2023, reporting a distressing incident of violence and abduction. Her husband forcibly relocated her and their daughter to Kurdistan. After confiscating their passports, he left them without legal documents and financial support. They were together at his house in Kurdistan, however, after an argument, the perpetrator sent both M.S and her daughter to her family's house without financial support, making them even more vulnerable. Regrettably this was not the first incident of abuse. M.S has been systematically experiencing domestic violence from 2021 when she arrived at the UK, including physical abuse during pregnancy, controlling behaviour, and financial exploitation. Consequently, M.S suffered severe physical and emotional trauma, raising concerns for her and her son's safety and well-being.

KMEWO Accompanied M.S in her Journey to Safety

M.S found herself alone and abandoned in her family's house. Her husband had taken drastic measures, contacted solicitors and left her in a vulnerable position. It was at this critical moment that she reached out to the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation for assistance.

Recognising the urgency of the situation, we took immediate action. We reached out to Rights of Women, seeking advice and guidance on how to best support M.S. This marked the beginning of an intensive collaboration aimed at securing M.S's safety and the well-being of her daughter.

KMEWO's Senior VAWG Advisor contacted the British Consulate in Erbil, advising M.S to do the same. This collaborative effort between KMEWO and the Rights of Women was essential to address the complex legal faced by M.S. KMEWO initiated communication with the Consulate Case Manager for the Middle East, who sought to confirm the British citizenship of M.S's son through medical records. Meanwhile, the survivor was advised to apply for a new Iraqi passport, a process that took several weeks to complete. Before turning to KMEWO, M.S had contacted the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) department in Kurdistan, but due to pressure from her husband, she had withdrawn the case. KMEWO provided the necessary support to encourage her to reopen the case and obtain a reference number.

Once M.S secured her new passport, we guided her through the process of applying for a replacement Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). With the BRP in hand, KMEWO advised M.S to contact the Embassy for her son's Emergency Travel Document (ETD).

Throughout this challenging journey, KMEWO maintained constant contact with M.S, providing emotional and practical support. Simultaneously, Rights of Women assisted M.S in obtaining a Subject Access Request from the Home Office. This proved crucial in preventing her husband from cancelling her spousal visa, as the Home Office was already informed of the case through Rights of Women. KMEWO offered M.S a support letter to present to UK Border officials upon her arrival in the country. On the 3rd of October 2023, she and her son safely returned to the UK! +

Soon after their return, KMEWO assisted M.S in finding emergency safe accommodation and applying for the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC), which was granted on the 17th of October. M.S was then advised to apply for Universal Credit to help with her immediate financial needs. Working together with the Local Council we secured accommodation for M.S in her sister's city, ensuring that she would be close to her family, according to her wish.

Being aware of the challenges she faced and would face, we also offered M.S the opportunity for counselling to help her cope with the trauma. As she does not speak English, we advised her to consider attending online English Language (ESOL) classes to help her rebuild her life and regain her independence.

M.S's journey from desperation and isolation to safety, support, and hope was a milestone to the dedication and collaborative efforts of KMEWO, Rights of Women, Home Office and other Local authorities. Together, they helped M.S and her son escape a dangerous and harming situation, demonstrating the power of advocacy, compassion and commitment to those in need.

Conclusion

M.S's case illustrates the tragic impact of domestic abuse. Her courage and the dedicated support from KMEWO and Rights of Women, ensured her safety and protected her rights.

“ He locked me in, I kicked the front door very hard and he was obliged to unlock it as he was scared of neighbours to call the police. ”

The Survivor in her own words.



A Big Thanks to Our Funders



Our Team

Trustees

Dr. Janan Aljabiri	Chair
Tanya Ahmad	Treasurer
Dr. K Rahsid	Member
Tina Saeed	Member
Gilda Partoandaz	Member
Naz Jamal	Member
Tara Ahmed	Member
Suham Karim	Member

Sessional Staff

BACP Accredited Counsellors:

Sega Habtom	Counsellor
Fariba Shahbakhti	Counsellor
Monika Schwartz	Clinical Supervision
Sharifa Joya	Afghan Resettlement Support Worker

Tutors:

Shahnaz Kinoo	ESOL Classes
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Volunteers

Somayeh Rahimi	Volunteer ESOL Tutor
Farzana Adell	Volunteer ESOL Tutor
Dr. Fatima Ally	Volunteer SOL Tutor
Dunya Al- Azawi	Volunteer Support Worker

Staff Members

Sawsan Salim	Director
Gona Saed	Deputy Director
Sazan Salih	Operations and VAWG Services Manager
Anastasia Papapetrou	Fundraising and Communications Manager
Avan Dawood	VAWG Services Manager
Lanya Abdulrahman	VAWG Advisor and Caseworker
Parastoo Nakshbandi	VAWG Advisor and Caseworker
Jwan Faris	Community Advice Worker
Anthea Ranjit	Digital Community Coordinator
Gul Ghutai	Afghan Resettlement Support Coordinator
Chiman Swan	Employment Support Worker

Annual Accounts

KURDISH AND MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN'S ORGANISATION LIMITED				
DETAILED INCOME				
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024				
	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024	2023
INCOMING RESOURCES	Fund	Fund	Total	Total
Grant, Donations and Legacies	£	£	£	£
Henry Smith Charity	0	78,000	78,000	53,850
Islington Council / VCS	0	20,000	20,000	20,000
GLA - Refuge	0	41,740	41,740	43,040
GLA - AWRC	0	45,094	45,094	40,321
Islington Samira Project -IMECE	0	21,901	21,901	21,935
London Council/ AWR Centre	0	0	0	27,232
Islington Afghan Refugees support	0	60,000	60,000	75,000
Islington IBAA- Advice	0	15,292	15,292	14,792
CCG Healthwach Project	450	0	450	11,004
Cripplegate Foundations	11,000	25,500	36,500	11,000
Cripplegate - IBAA	0	0	0	303
Rosa Fund	0	0	0	24,387
London Council/WGN	0	0	0	1,650
Lloyds Bank Foundation	25,500	0	25,500	27,250
MOPAC- PACT/ AWRC	0	39,935	39,935	19,968
Smallwood Trust	0	19,946	19,946	0
Grass root -Partnership-MOPAC	0	0	0	59,096
Tech Lending Hub Fund	0	12,763	12,763	29,780
The Carrying Family	0	0	0	9,990
Church Trust	0	3,425	3,425	1,600
LCF/Big lottery	0	66,274	66,274	9,000
Treebeard Trust	25,000	0	25,000	25,000
LCF/ Home Office	0	22,640	22,640	10,000
The Blue Thread	0	11,000	11,000	0
Women's Aid Foundation	0	5,000	5,000	16,558
Others	0	0	0	100
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	61,950	488,510	550,460	552,855
KURDISH AND MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN'S ORGANISATION LIMITED				
DETAILED EXPENDITURE				
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024				
	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024	2023
Outgoing Resources	Fund	Fund	Total	Total
Charitable Expenditure	Fund	Fund	Total	Total

Salaries	-	210,273	210,273	199,268
Taxes and NI	-	58,060	58,060	1,229
Partnership- Grassroot	-	14,367	14,367	25,681
Rent/Rates	6,000	16,840	22,840	15,850
Counselling	-	29,131	29,131	23,885
Office Need/Cleaning	-	308	308	507
Volunteer Expenses	-	1,286	1,286	2,906
Travel	-	1,116	1,116	903
Refreshment	-	7,513	7,513	6,494
Telephone	-	783	783	1,634
Legal & Professional fees	-	6,562	6,562	590
Publicity/Advertising	-	773	773	790
Stationery/office supplies	-	5,677	5,677	5,254
IT Support	-	8,035	8,035	4,560
Membership Fees	-	490	490	504
Equipment	-	3,083	3,083	-
Capacity Building- QM/ Events	-	350	350	718
Repairs & Maintenance	-	3,100	3,100	8,574
Evaluation/ Survey	-	-	-	225
Vouchers	-	1,630	1,630	1,509
Accountancy Fee	1,500	-	1,500	1,000
Staff Training	-	7,432	7,432	
Payroll Services	1,000	-	1,000	1,015
Insurance	-	1,536	1,536	-
Subscriptions	-	-	-	208
Sundry Expenses	-	-	-	-
Total Resources Expended	8,500	378,343	386,843	363,303



Kurdish And Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO)

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Company No: 6978454



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