



MCWG
Dar Al Arqam

ANNUAL REPORT
APRIL 2000 MARCH 2001

MOROCCAN COMMUNITY WELFARE GROUP
REGISTERED CHARITY No. 1045064

**“The Moroccan Community
Welfare Group creates loads of
opportunities and a better
community for me & my friends”**

Jouad Touzni, 16

I am honoured once again to have been involved with the Moroccan Community Welfare Group Dar Al Arqam for another year, and proud to contribute to the 2000-2001 Annual Report; a year which has again been full of achievements and successes at different levels.

The organisation has continued to expand its services, and relationships with other groups to now work with many more users and partners than ever before. I personally see this as a significant factor, since MCWG Dar Al Arqam has always believed in being at the heart of the community, feeling their problems, and becoming part of their challenges to succeed.

I cannot ignore the fact that the community has grown considerably over the years from first generation migrants to third generation young Britons. Along with this growth has been an increase in the social and economic problems they face, and in turn increasing challenges for our organisation.

MCWG Dar Al Arqam over the last year has consciously adopted a stronger emphasis on social welfare provision. We have embarked on a project that provides advice and consultation with community members, including translating and typing of letters. We have also formed links with organisations such as Gifts in Kind UK, and the Notting Hill Housing Trust who provide items such as wheel chairs, clothes, books in Braille, and furniture to be distributed by us to needy people within the community.

Effective planning has become the essence to our work over the last year. A significant development has been the creation of the Moroccan Forum, which has brought together many local community groups to share ideas, cooperate, and plan together for supporting the community. We have set agendas to tackle issues of education, crime, the youth, and cultural identity.

The opening of the new Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre at the heart of the community has also produced a positive outlook and provided a common ground to work together. We have been working closely with the Centre to allow community members to access their various education courses and services, and to plan future activities.

MCWG Dar Al Arqam's success in the past year has been due to the enormous ambition of staff and volunteers to achieve high standards. The achievements over the last year have stemmed from sustained hard work.

During 2000-2001, the organisation continued to deliver a high standard of existing activities, developed new programmes, and concentrated on highlighting the needs and problems of the Moroccan and ethnic community through various consultation studies, campaigns, and reports.

This has resulted in the design of projects that take findings into consideration, and therefore meet our users' needs.

Furthermore, MCWG Dar Al Arqam has in the last year continued to lead a campaign to bring halal food to the menu of schools in Kensington and Chelsea, where Muslim children make up 70% of pupils.

In addition, MCWG has developed a long term Youth Project Development Plan, which will prove immensely useful in improving our youth services. The plan gives the project a special momentum that will carry through the new thinking behind the Organisation. Lastly, I would like to thank on behalf of MCWG Dar Al-Arqam, everyone who has assisted our work directly, and indirectly. Their help has contributed to our success, and without which it would not have been possible.

COMMUNITY LEARNING

The Moroccan Community Welfare Group has actively attempted to increase activities for women and other excluded groups in the community.

Following last year's pilot ESOL & Computing course in conjunction with Kensington and Chelsea College and the Nottingdale Technology Centre, MCWG has joined efforts with the National Distance Learning College. Work is underway to create a unique project providing culturally appropriate and accessible courses for disadvantaged people in the community.

MCWG is also in the process of becoming an approved Oxford, Cambridge, and RAS centre, and will be able to run accredited CLAIT computing courses at our Skills Development Centre later in 2001.

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECT

In 2000 MCWG Dar Al Arqam extended its social welfare provisions from providing activities that indirectly tackled social problems, to providing direct support through advocacy, provision of information, and referrals. Our office was made available 3 evenings a week for public users to drop in, and get letters translated and typed. We have also formed links with organisations such as Gifts in Kind UK, and the Notting Hill Housing Trust who provide items such as wheel chairs, clothes, books in Braille, and furniture to be distributed by us to needy people within the community.

During the month of Ramadan the Organisation again provided food and drink to needy refugee groups who could not fully practice and celebrate this important month. We worked with the Tenants Management Organisation, who provided an excellent venue at the Kensal Resource Centre. The Ramadan Project was used by over 100 beneficiaries, and resulted in a process of bonding and happiness amongst the community. Many people who had no social or family ties became acquainted with new faces and the MCWG, and are now using our services and activities.

Over the last year MCWG Dar Al Arqam has forged important ties with key agencies in West London.

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA AND WESTMINSTER HEALTH AUTHORITY

Probably the most significant has been that with the Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority. We have worked closely with the Authority's Community Development team to bring health initiatives to the community.

We have also translated into Arabic new and innovative publications called Fag News and Booz News, which aim to deter young people from smoking and drinking alcohol. The partnership with KCW Health authority is a promising relationship which will continue to bring health benefits to communities that have been difficult to reach in the past.

HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL INCLUSION PROJECT

The MCWG Dar Al-arqam has been involved in the new Holland Park School Inclusion Project. The scheme involves working closely with excluded pupils by providing alternative educational activities on school site. MCWG Dar Al Arqam is setting up a mentoring scheme with Holland Park School. We have also liaise with parents, since many of the pupils referred to the Inclusion Project are young people that we work with.

YOUTH ACTIVITY CENTRE

The Youth Activity Centre has seen another busy year, when we have worked with over 100 young people who are underachieving at school, and are at risk of offending. The building has been completely renovated, and now includes a computer suite with 15 computer terminals, a kitchen area, and TV lounge. We have continued working with the Notting Hill Police and the Kensington and Chelsea Youth Offending Team, who fully support our work by providing advice and drop-in sessions.

We are also now affiliated to the London Federation of Clubs for Young People, who have provided courses to improve our staff's youth work skills, as well as activities and ideas that have been incorporated at our centre. We have successfully continued to educate and motivate disadvantaged youths in west London, by giving them the opportunity to run their own projects and air their views. In particular our service-users have learnt new skills such as computing, film editing, first-aid, health awareness, and positive role-play.

There are noticeable signs that our users have been given a sense of motivation and confidence, and are now more willing to participate in society at all levels. They are also clearly being deterred from anti-social behaviour and taking more responsibility over their lives.

COMPUTING & CV CREATION

Computers at the Centre have been available for CV creation and computer workshops. The aim of the workshops is to provide young adults with computing skills that would improve their job skills. CV creation sessions will also be run to compliment this aim. The programme is very much steered by the users themselves, who have identified their specific computing needs, and will continue to be involved in the planning and delivery of the project. We have worked with over 50 young people at the Computer Centre during the first year.

HOMEWORK SUPPORT

The centre is now also available for homework support workshops. The computing and homework projects are aimed at 14-21 year olds. Users can bring the school assignments to be typed or created on computers.

Experienced staff are available on Fridays and Saturdays to provide direct assistance and advice with homework.

ARABIC & CULTURAL STUDIES

The Arabic and Cultural Studies course run last year for adults was introduced for 14-21 year olds during 2000. The project has been created alongside the Migrants and Refugee Communities forum, and aims to provide local people with information and skills that instil a sense of identity, and an appreciation of their diverse cultural background. The existing Community Library has continued to expand during the past 12 months. It now contains a vast amount of unique cultural literature in both, Arabic, and English, and includes books, magazines, newspapers, directories, videotapes, and audiotapes. The magazines and journals section has particularly been improved with more titles.

MCWG has continued to run a swimming club at Kensington Sports Centre on Sundays for children and adults. We also run football sessions every Thursday at Westway Sports Centre for 11-18 year olds. These activities have continued to be extremely popular. Rock Climbing and Canoeing have continued to be held at Canalside House. Youth Club members are alternately taken to Rock Climbing during the winter months, and change to Canoeing during the summer.

In March 2001 a large group of young people were taken to Euro Disney, Paris. Participants were taken on a tour of the city, before indulging in the fantasy theme park. The trip succeeded in teaching participants essential life skills, teamwork, cooperation, and responsibility. It also went along way to giving them a sense of confidence, identity and belonging to socially excluded people.

Again this year, 2 Eid celebrations were held for men, women, and children to highlight the two important cultural events; Eid Ul Fitr, and Eid Ul Adha. The events were held in December 2000 and March 2001 respectively.

This year over 500 people participated in games, competitions, prizes, and a song and play performance by local youths. We have found that the culture conflict experienced by youths born into a British society from Ethnic backgrounds is softened by such events. The festivals worked to unite the local community and bridge the gap between the older and younger generation by sharing identities and ideas.

SPECIAL THANKS

Finally, the Moroccan Community Welfare Group is extremely grateful to all the various trusts and organisations that have supported us during the past 12 months. We would like to take this opportunity to specifically thank the following organisations:

Campden Charities, RBKC Community Education, NKAT, Golborne United SRB, Charles Hayward Trust, London Youth, KCW Health Authority, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Baring Foundation, Percy Bilton Trust, Westminster Amalgamated Charity, Yapp Charitable, Trust, A&E Education Trust, Football Trust, Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, Al Rahma Foundation, maktoum Foundation, Muslim Aid, SRIH Association.