



Run by
Women for
Women

KMEWO

Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women Organisation

Annual Report

April 2016 - March 2017

*Violence against Women
and Girls Should Stop*



Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation

Contents

About us

About KMEWO :

- Aims
- Vision
- Mission
- Values
- Trustees , staff and volunteers

Chair's report

Director's report

Projects and services

- Domestic violence advice and support
- Samira Project
- Pathway to Recovery Project
- Thrivers' Project
- Woman Learning for Work Project
- Archway Employability Cluster
- Volunteering
- Mentoring and peer support
- Employability and carrier advice for women
- Campaign and lobbying
- Networking and partnership building
- International Women's Day Celebrations

User's stories

Achievements for Beneficiaries

Feedback from service user

Income & Expenditure

Public benefits of our work

Funders and supporters

April 2016 :
Started
Counselling
service In Arabic
and Kurdish
Languages

Nov 2016 :
Commissioned a
Strength
Review on
KMEWO

Dec 2016 :
The First
KMEWO E-news
out

May 2016 :
Success in Big
Lottery funding
"Women
Learning for
Work"

Oct 2016 :
Archway Cluster
- Mental Health
Training in
Caxton House

Jan 2017 :
Employment
support service
started

June 2016 :
FINALIST at
National Lottery -
Best Charity
Award 2016

Sept 2016 :
Success in
Islington VCS
funding for FOUR
years

Feb 2017 :
KMEWO 's
statement on
International Day
of Zero Tolerance
of FGM

July 2016 :
Recruitments at
KMEWO

Aug 2016 :
FOUR new staff
members started

March 2017 :
International
Women's Day
celebration

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 a self-help organisation to provide help and support to Kurdish, Middle Eastern and North African (KMENA) women who were fleeing civil wars, state and gender persecution, domestic violence and harmful traditional practices, in particular threats of "honour" killings. KMEWO was initially set up to call for justice in response to the poor investigation by UK authorities in the murder of a British citizen "Sobhia Nadir", who was murdered in the city of Sulaimanya in Iraqi-Kurdistan in a suspected honour' killing murder during her visit to her in October 1997. Founders of KMEWO have participated in a number of campaigns against violence against women (VAW) calling for improvement to the protection measures for UK women in general and to Kurdish and Middle Eastern women in particular. 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.

KMEWO's Aims

- To relieve the distress and suffering of KMENA 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 KMENA 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 KMENA communities resident in the UK and elsewhere by providing information and educating the general public on such matters.

KMEWO's Vision

To ensure that gender equality is achieved in all aspects of lives for KMENA women.

Our Mission

KMEWO provides 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 their full potentials, freedom and opportunities.

Our Values

- Respect for beneficiaries and staff
- Consultative and inclusive services
- Commitment to Women's Human rights
- Upholding diversity

Trustees

KMEWO is managed by a team of Nine 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. Janan Aljabiri | Chair |
| Dr. K. Rashid | Secretary |
| Tanya Ahmad | Treasurer |
| D. Jamal | Director |
| Tina Saeed | Director |
| Diba Alikhani | Director |
| Gilda Partoandaz | Director |
| Naz Jamal | Director |
| Tara Ahmed | Director |

KMEWO current staff members

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Sawsan Salim | Director |
| Gona Saed | Project Manager |
| Zekiye Kartal | Employment coordinator/Development Worker |
| Avan Dawood | VAWG/Advice Worker |
| Nawal Asous | Transitional Support Coordinator |
| Nada Bucur | Admin & IT Support Worker |
| Sazan Saleh | Development Worker |
| Leila Hashemi | Career Advice |

During the last financial year KMEWO employed 9 sessional workers:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Shahnaz Kinoo | ESOL Tutor |
| Arinola Oladejo | ICT Tutor |
| Marie Ramoutar | Childcare Tutor |
| Ozlem Ozdermir | ICT Tutor |
| Fatima Harbi | Career Advice |
| Rosemery Colen | ECG Tutor |
| Sega Habtom | Counsellor |
| Soraya Mohammadi | Counsellor |
| Monika Schwartz | Clinical Supervision |

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

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Noel Hudson | Khadra Ali |
| Leila Hashemi | Sheverlin P McIndoe |
| Suzan Nazaniny | Claudia Hernandez |
| Khalida Mosil | Yasmin Snouci |
| Isic Kahveci | Sara Alhassany |
| Jawan Faris | Suha Sabah |
| Sheveline P.Meindoe | Zahra Habri |

Chair's report



It has been, once again, another extraordinary year for all of us at KMEWO: staff, volunteers and the management committee members. Here, I would like to share some of the year's highlights.

Firstly; I am delighted to announce that we have supported women and families through a wide range of services that were provided in a safe, friendly environment, confidential, nonjudgemental and free of charge. Our support covers general advice and information on issues related to housing, welfare benefits, language support, Counselling and Therapy, and advice and advocacy support on DA, HBV and HTP.

Secondly: we were very proud that KMEWO did reach the finals in the National Lottery Awards for the title of Best Voluntary/Charity Project Category this year. The Awards are an annual search to find the UK's favourite Lottery-funded projects, aim to celebrate and recognize the difference that those projects have made to people, places and communities all across the UK. Thanks for all those who voted for us to reach the finals.

Thirdly; despite the fact that KMEWO have been heavily engaged in responding to our Middle Eastern women's needs here in the UK, we have not forgotten the struggle of the Middle Eastern women back home; we raised awareness about the suffering of Yazidis women in our press releases asking that the perpetrators of the extreme violence women and girls should be brought to justice by an international investigative commission to set a precedent going forward. Our organisation urged the UK government to oppose the lack of response from the United Nations, and from Iraqi and Kurdish governments, and called for the immediate release of all Yazidis in captivity.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a Big Thank you to our funders who entrusted us to support, empower and serve the Middle Eastern women community needs. I hope we have used their financial support effectively, and I can say easily that you have a part of their lives too.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to all our volunteers who tirelessly supported Middle Eastern women by supporting our organisation. They shared their time and talents, and have greatly contributed in making our work a success. Many thanks.

Last but not least, I would like to express my condolences to our Director, Sawsan Salim. Despite the loss of her parents in a year; she ensured that the KMEWO activities go like clockwork. Many thank Sawsan, and we are all, in KMEWO, very sorry for your loss.

More details about KMEWO's work will be shared in this annual report. I hope you will read it with pleasure and interest, and I would be grateful to receive any comments or suggestions to improve our performance in the future.

Dr. Janan Aljabiri

Director's Report:

Once again I am very pleased to report a very successful year for the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation. Building on the successes of the last few years we are now catering for a larger number of women, which has resulted in a 20% increase in our staffing level. There are a few specific opportunities that underpin our successes which are worth noting;

Continuation funding from the Big Lottery Fund - following on from the successful completion of the Women Learning for Living project, we were fortunate in securing additional funding, also from Big Lottery, to deliver a follow-up project (Women learning for Work). Unlike the earlier project, which focuses mainly on basic knowledge and confidence building this latter project is intended to create a pathway into work and covers, amongst other things, vocational childcare and teaching assistant training.



DWP partnership project - in partnership with the North London DWP we set up an employability project for long-term unemployed people within the Archway area of Islington. After a slow start I am pleased to say that we are now proceeding to plan

MOPAC (Pathway to Recovery project, has received continuation funding for a further three years and is proceeding as planned. This project covers one to one support, confidence building and counselling delivered in seven separate language's in partnership with IMECE and LAWR'S.

Thrivers project – this project is funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation and seeks to help women who have been suffering from domestic violence and have now reached the stage where they have decided to make the transition from daily abuse to peace and tranquility.

It is undoubtedly the case that without the advice, partnership working, guidance and positive encouragement of many people the achievements of the Organisation would not have been possible. They include the grant Officers whose guidance have guide us through the many funding applications; members of BMEAR with whom we network and through which we were able to share best practice and obtain informed comments on our projects; IMECE, LAWA and LAWR'S, our partners in the delivery of the SAMIRA project and PRP, the Muslim Welfare House and Finsbury park mosques for allowing us to use their building to deliver some of the subjects.

I could not finish without special mention of our Project Manager Gona Saed, Development Worker Zekiye Kartal, other members of staff and our many volunteers who work whose support was unflinching. During the year I suffer bereavement, personal and family illness, which resulted in my absence from work for several weeks. However, under the leadership of the Project Manager the team work enthusiastically to keep the “ship” afloat and not disappoint our service users.

To everyone who helped us in any way I would like to express my thanks and appreciation.

Sawsan Salim
Director

Services:

In this reporting period KMEWO supported around 2000 women and families through a range of, already established as well as new, services. All services are provided free, confidential and non-judgemental in a women only, safe and friendly environment. Services and activities included:

- General Advice and information – Housing and Welfare benefits
- Outreach and Language support
- Specialist Advice and Advocacy support on DA, HBV and HTP
- Counselling and Therapy in Kurdish, Arabic , Tigrinya, Farsi and English languages
- Bi-weekly Therapeutic Support groups
- Educational outings – visits to Libraries, Local museums and farms
- Confidence building workshops
- Awareness raising seminars and celebrations
- Mentoring training for volunteers
- ESOL and IT courses
- Employability skills courses and support for women
- Child Care and Teaching Assistance tester courses
- Skills building training for women
- Networking and partnership building
- Lobbying and campaigning
- Volunteering opportunities

Projects

1. ADVICE, ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT PROJECTS

565 women received One to One advice, advocacy and/or counselling support services, some on multiple occasions. A range of issues were dealt with, including but not limited to; housing, welfare benefits, domestic violence, honour based violence, divorce, FGM, NRPF, debt, education, and immigration. The services provided through either or a combination of:

- Face to face by appointments or Drop ins from KMEWO offices in Caxton house
- Telephone via KMEWO's main office advice line and two emergency mobile numbers.
- Outreach surgeries from community centres, GPs, solicitors' offices and Primary schools.
- Home visits (or other places chosen by users – for example Café shops).

Services are funded by different Trusts or Local authority through a number of projects:

Samira Project

A specialist Domestic Violence support service for BME women in Islington with high or medium risk of DA. The Project is a partnership initiative between IMECE, LAWA and KMEWO and funded by Islington Community safety Department.

Outputs for this project from April 2016 to March 2017:

- 367 One to One intervention sessions to 60 women.
- 11 women were referred to MARAC.

Feedback from each session indicates the satisfaction of the women about the quality of the service they received, improved self-esteem and confidence session after session and increased hope and positivity of women in regard to their future.

An important part of this project is the capacity building of smaller BME women organisations in Islington in order to maximise access to women from all BME backgrounds that might be at risk of Domestic Abuse. To achieve this all three partners have actively formed the BAMER women's network that meets quarterly and held one conference every year to share information, knowledge and expertise amongst all DV service providers in Islington.

Pathway to Recovery Project:

This is a partnership project started April 2016 and funded by the Mayor of London's MOPAC fund. The project delivers specialist support services to BAMER women across London who are fleeing domestic and/or sexual violence and harmful practices such as: forced marriage, honour based violence and FGM and etc. It provides crisis intervention addressing the immediate safety and recovery needs of BAMER women and their children's taking a specialist and multi-agency approach. Services offered as part of this project are: advice and information sessions, up to 10 counselling sessions in either Arabic, Kurdish or English languages, confidence building and therapeutic group activities, referrals and signposting to specialist agencies, and outreach surgeries for easier access in English, Kurdish, Arabic, Persian and Tigrinya support services.

Outputs for PRP project since April 2016:

- 1640 One to One advice and support interventions to 309 women.
- 46 women needed help with housing
- 297 with welfare benefits
- 8 with NRPF issues.
- 45 women received 236 counselling sessions.
- 77 women attended 20 confidence building and therapeutic group sessions.

An important service that is started with this project is the Bi-lingual Counselling service that was set up in June 2016. Starting this service was a great achievement for KMEWO users, as it had filled a gap in the need existed for several years. Women were continually reporting back on lack of appropriate counselling service in their own languages.

All 309 women felt more empowered, confident and stronger after our interactions.

Thrivers Project

This project provides a long-term holistic support service for women who are at the point of transition from violent and abusive environments towards independence. The main purpose is to provide the necessary assistance and support for survivors who have decided to escape from abusive/exploitative relationships, and to rebuild their lives in a safe and secure environment. KMENA women are supported through one to one sessions, the opportunity to attend six months' support group, access to confidence building and motivational workshops and to participate in a mentoring/mentee programme.

Outputs for this project from April 2016 to March 2017, this project:

- 68 women engaged with the project
- 482 individual face to face and/or telephone advice and support sessions.
- 43 women were supported to deal with the short and long term on impact of domestic violence, depression, anxiety, and isolation.
- 35 women were given advice on housing and benefits entitlement.
- 27 women have participated in nine Bi-weekly support group sessions.
- 7 women recruited and attended four days mentoring training to become mentors and peer supporters.

The support group sessions offered participants a safe space to discuss and share experiences, to build self-confidence, explore and promote their emotional wellbeing, reduce the sense of isolation and enhance integration in the wider society. Topics included: Parenting skills, and the challenges of cultural issues, overcoming feelings of loss and grief, Self-care and relaxation, personal development and setting goals for the future and discussion on hope, money management, healthy eating. Inspirational KMENA women, who made it to success in their personal and professional lives and were willing to tell their stories, were invited to inspire women in the support groups.

All 65 women felt an increase in their self-confidence and inner strength due to our support. Sixteen women attended further education.

2. EDUCATION, VOLUNTEERING AND EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS

Woman Learning for Work WLW project

Funded by the Big Lottery reaching communities fund for 2016-2019, this project was built on the successes and the lessons learned from the previous "Women Learning for Living" project in 2012 – 2015 , also funded by the Big lottery Reaching Communities Fund . The aim of WLW project is to build KMENA women's confidence, empower and enable them to meet their potential and overcome barriers to their advancements.

Women have access to a programme of learning ranging from ESOL at Entry levels 1, 2 & 3, basic IT and Internet skills to higher levels vocational courses such as employability skills, Word and Excel for work, Child Care, Teaching assistance and other work based skills courses. Women also access a range of educational outings such as visits to libraries and museums, training workshops in a range of subjects such as Domestic violence, Money managements, Health and safety, Safeguarding and first aid.

The project started in August 2016, and in its six months progress report in February 2017 reported:

- 162 women in eleven courses (ESOL, IT and child care and Teaching assistant) and two Library visits.
- The courses were delivered from 6 community venues including two mosques, one local library, two community centres and one primary school.
- Each course delivered over a period of ten to thirteen-weeks, varying between 15 and 33 Guided learning hours.
- All 162 women have received one to one progressions support sessions to discuss personal development plans and complete Individual Learning Plans.

As a result majority of women have latter joined Islington, Haringey and Hackney colleges or local ACL accredited courses. Most importantly 162 women have progressed significantly due to the support provided and through socializing and meeting other women. This helped them feel part of a group and less isolated which in turn increased their self-confidence and empowered them.

The project captures the most isolated and vulnerable women through the one to one support sessions and offers a range of other KMEWO services such the DV advice and information, Bi-lingual counselling and women's and support groups.





KMEWO have reached the finals in the National Lottery Awards 2016 for the title of Best Voluntary/Charity Project Category.

We are very thankful to all our supporters, especially the leader of the Labour party Jeremy Corbyn, Islington Council, Mayor Kat Fletcher and the leader of the Council, Cllr Richard Watts and John Muir from VCS.

(June 2016)

| Activity | Venue | Learning hours | Start Date | End Date | Number attended |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|----------|-----------------|
| ESOL E1 | MWH | 33 hrs | 3/10/16 | 19/12/16 | 14 |
| ESOL E 3 | FPM | 33 hrs | 5/10/16 | 21/12/16 | 14 |
| IT Intermediate | Elizabeth House | 30 hrs | 8/11/16 | 28/2/17 | 9 |
| IT for Work/ACL | Caxton House | 15 hrs | 15/11/16 | 13/12/16 | 9 |
| ESOL Conversation | Caxton House | 24 hrs | 3/11/16 | 2/2/17 | 19 |
| Library Visit | N4 Library | 3 hrs | 17/10/16 | 17/10/16 | 11 |
| Library Visit | N4 Library | 3 hrs | 19/10/16 | 19/10/16 | 10 |
| ESOL E2 | MWH | 33 hrs | 9/1/17 | 27/3/17 | 19 |
| ESOL Conversation | MWH | 24 hrs | 20/2/17 | 25/5/17 | 15 |
| Child Care & Teaching Assistant 1 | Caxton House | 30 hrs | 10/3/17 | 19/5/17 | 9 |
| Child Care & Teaching Assistant 2 | Caxton House | 30 hrs | 8/3/17 | 17/5/17 | 13 |
| ESOL Entry 1/2 | Newington Green PS | 33 hrs | 1/3/17 | 24/5/17 | 15 |
| IT for Employment | Elizabeth House | 30 hrs | 7/3/17 | 28/3/17 | 5 |

Archway Employability Cluster

Funded by Islington Council – Department of Skills and Employability, KMEWO set up and coordinated The Archway Employment Cluster during January 2016 – January 2017. The Employment Cluster is a network of local community organisations and Employment services operating in N19/Archway, with its aim being to develop better services for jobseekers in North Islington. The cluster brought together local employment service providers that allowed for sharing information and resources.

Outputs during this reporting period:

- 7 network meetings were held, in which each attended by 10 - 20 local partners and representative of Islington Council.
- 100 individuals and services are reached by the project to share information.
- 35 individuals attended 2 workshops organized by KMEWO; one on Mental Health awareness for professionals and the other with Changes to welfare benefits and supporting people back to work.
- One IT for ESOL learner's course provided to 9 women.
- 18 women referred for Employment coaching to Islington iWork.

One of the significant outcomes of this project was the partnership working initiated as a result of the network, for example, KMEWO, Caxton House, Islington ACL, Peabody Trust and other partners worked together to provide ESOL and IT for work courses and Job screening days for local job seekers.

This initiative provided new opportunities for KMEWO users to be engaged in employability activities. It also raised KMEWO's profile to obtain funding to further support women in their employability needs.

Volunteering

In this reporting period, a total of 18 volunteers were recruited by KMEWO. The volunteers are engaged in a variety of roles, including 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.

Mentoring and peer support

As part of Thrivers Project, in this reporting period 7 women engaged in four days of mentoring training; through the support groups and individual mentor-mentee relationships, women are engaged in providing peer support to each other, reducing isolation and widening their social and support network. All seven mentors are provided with professional support and supervision.

Employability and carrier advice for women

In January 2017, KMEWO started providing carrier advice and employability support to women, the service includes skills assessment, identify the needs for skills building training, identify suitable job opportunities, enhance CVs, and help with job applications and to prepare women for job interviews. The services are delivered by one on one sessions and group trainings. By end of March 2017, 8 women are engaged in the programme.



3. AWARENESS RAISING, CAMPAIGNING AND LOBBYING

FGM and DV workshops Three FGM and five DV/ HBV training workshops were delivered and between April 2016 and March 2017. The workshops took place in a primary school, at Caxton House, and Ashley Road Children centre . These were targeted at women from Kurdistan, the Middle East and North Africa. A total of 85 women attended the series of eight workshops.

One FGM workshop for professionals was conducted on 26th April 2016 in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid. Many in attendance were visually distraught and expressed their abhorrence with the continuation of the practice. KMEWO aims to change attitudes towards FGM and to break this cycle. KMEWO will continue to work with Mosques, Kurdish supplementary schools, primary schools and professionals from health and education sectors to raise awareness through education, networking with other women organizations and recognize the crucial role of men in this battle. Simultaneously teachers and authorities get trained in detecting and identifying girls who are vulnerable to FGM abuse.

The RMT Trade Union offered its support to KMEWO in the campaign against honour based violence and other forms of abuses against women from Kurdistan. Although based in the UK, KMEWO has for many years been an active participant in the campaign for women's equality in Iraqi Kurdistan. KMEWO has Lobbied Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Kurdistan Parliament and the Kurdistan President to uphold to their responsibilities in combating violence against women and girls. KMEWO has demanded that the KRG to make positive changes in legislation, polices and the allocating of reasonable budgets to support and protect women survivors of violence. The letter on which the support is partly based can be found on our website. (April 2016)

A Vigil for Ezidi Women and Girls KMEWO organized a vigil on the two-year anniversary of the brutal attack of the Yazidi people in Sinjar Province in the Northern region of Iraq to call for the immediate release of the thousands of Yazidi women and girls who are still sold and captured as sex slaves. We called on our sister organisations, peers and supporters and especially the Kurdish and Middle Eastern communities in London to join us in solidarity with Yazidi women. (August 2016).





Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation rise with Nadia Murad* and Billion Women Rise on 3rd August 2016

STOP YAZIDI GENOCIDE

This August 3rd marks the two-year anniversary of the brutal attack on the Yazidi people in Sinjar Province in the Northern region of Iraq, two years since IS (Daesh) stormed towns, villages, and historic homelands of the ethno-religious group, killing over 5,000 men and elders, enslaving over 7,000 women and children and displacing over 400,000 more.

Join us to stand with Yazidi Women, Nadia Murad, Yazda and Billion Women Rise to call for the immediate release of the thousands of Yazidi women and girls who are still sold and captured as sex slaves.


KMEWO is Organising a Vigil
WEDNESDAY
3RD AUGUST 2016 6PM
TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON WC2N 5DN

We call on our sister organisations, peers and supporters and especially the Kurdish and Middle Eastern communities in London to join us in solidarity with Yazidi Women.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
 use the hashtag:
#stopyazidigenocide
 Tweet us **@kmeowo**

*<http://www.nadia-murad.com/>
www.kmeowo.com

For more information about KMEWO's vigil, please contact us on 020 7263 1027, 07894252708 or 07748851125




KMEWO's statement on FGM On the International Day of Zero Tolerance against the practice of Female Genital Mutilation, KMEWO published a statement to raise awareness of the procedure and to campaign for it to be outlawed globally. We believe that in order to tackle this form of child abuse, we must continue to focus on community work, and aim to change attitudes towards FGM and break this cycle. KMEWO will continue to work with Mosques, Kurdish supplementary schools, primary schools and professionals from health and education sectors to raise awareness through education, networking with other women organizations and recognize the crucial role of men in this battle. (February 2017)

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, FGM 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, Newton Green Primary School, all of which provided us with valuable support in the delivery of our ESOL classes and FGM awareness seminars.

Islington BAMER Women's Network was initiated by Samira Partnership (partnership of IMECE Women's Centre, Latin American Women's Aid and Kurdish Middle Eastern Women's Organisation) and consists of women, community, public and statutory sector representatives who came together to create and enhance a stronger voice of women from black, minority ethnic and refugee communities with an aim of securing and maintaining specialist services which address specific needs and experiences faced by these women.

Islington BME Advice Alliance The Islington BAMER Advice Alliance (IBAA) is a partnership among 5 community based Advice specialist organisations (IMECE Women's Centre, Islington Bangladesh Association, Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation, Eritrean Community in the UK, and Islington Somali Community) and a lead by a local based BAMER specialist 2nd tier organisation (Evelyn Old Field Unit). The alliance was set up to voice the needs of BAMER communities in need of specialist advice services in the borough.

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2017:

IWD with BAMER women Network

KMEWO celebrated IWD with partners at BAMER network at the Sobell Leisure Centre in Islington. The celebrations started with refreshments and were followed by 18 short welcome speeches in English, Turkish, Spanish Kurdish and Arabic by the directors of IMECE, LAWA and KMEWO.

KMEWO's director, Sawsan Salim, congratulated the women and explained the importance of this day and stressed how all women should unite against male dominance and violence and keep fighting for equality and freedom. She also mentioned the women and children suffering in Syria and Iraq and expressed solidarity with these women. The speeches were followed by a Zumba activity that got most of the women on their feet jumping and dancing. Councillor Kaya Schwartz and (VAWG) Strategy and Commissioning Manager Manju Luhman joined the celebration.

Million Women Rise March

Making a voice for Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women, KMEWO participated in International Women's day Million Women march on Saturday 11th March in Central London, to protest male violence against women in all its forms and demand its end.

A combined AGM and IWD with KMENA community

On Sunday 12th, KMEWO's held its combined AGM and IWD celebrations, most of the trustees were present. The meeting started with a run through last year's achievements as well as an update of all the projects accomplished by KMEWO. The AGM process started at 6.30 and 9 people were elected, one of them being a new addition to the management committee.

The IWD celebrations started. Sawsan Salim, KMEWO's director thanks every one for their continue support to KMEWO and spoke about the importance of ending violence against women and girls amongst KMENA communities.



KMEWO's holistic approach to providing services to KMENA women



User's story 1

My name is Valentina, I am married with young children and was a qualified professional in my country. I did not work in England and was very isolated, my only contact being my husband and children. My husband was very controlling and abused me financially and emotionally.

One day, he beat me and I called the police, they came and took him away. After extreme pressure from my extended family, I agreed to drop the case and my husband was released. However, he was angry with me for reporting him to the police and couldn't forgive me. Although we are living in the same house, we didn't talk to each other resulting in a very tense situation. The situation worsened and he would constantly ignore me and make me feel like I was worthless.

I am an ambitious person, I was always told that I am a highly intelligent woman and want to pursue a degree that would allow me to work in my chosen profession in London. My husband is a successful businessman and earns a fortune; however he refuses to support me financially and pay for my tuition fees. I approached the job centre and other organisations looking for help with these fees but they all told me that I wasn't eligible for financial aid because my husband earns a good salary. I felt helpless, powerless and trapped.

I was referred to Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO) by the police for additional support from women who spoke my own language. I sought advice and help regarding any study or work opportunities as I knew that was the only way to eventually escape my husband's control and become independent.

The steps KMEWO took to help me:

- A support worker was allocated to my case
- A risk assessment was conducted and a safety plan was discussed and agreed upon
- I was referred to a family solicitor to seek legal advice in case I wanted to divorce my husband
- I went with a support worker to the Housing Benefits to discuss my housing issues as our current tenancy agreement was in my husband's name.
- A referral was made for counselling in my native language and I started the sessions shortly afterwards.

Realising my potential and skills, KMEWO helped me to find a volunteering opportunity and to applied for a DBS check for me and offered me a volunteer position doing translation work from English into Arabic. Later I became an active member of a support group in the community and went on to complete KMEWO childcare course successfully. I also took an IT course and a mentoring course and I now use this new skill to mentor vulnerable clients.

KMEWO's courses empowered me and helped me gain confidence and self-esteem as well as escape my isolation and loneliness. I made friends with other women that I met in the support groups and courses. I now feel ready to make a positive change in my life.

Feeling stronger, I was able to challenge my husband's controlling and abusive behaviour which eventually led to him divorcing me. I confided in his family and told them of the financial and emotional abuse I had endured at his hands all these years. My husband recently asked for forgiveness and asked if I would him back. However, feeling strong, independent and in control I am now thinking carefully about it and want to set conditions to be agreed upon in writing if I were to accept.

Before coming to KMEWO, I was helpless and suffering in silence. The counselling I received at KMEWO helped me to resolve my internal emotional conflicts and difficulties. KMEWO helped me with my emotional issues via therapy, group support, meeting peers and making friends and with my legal issues by giving me the chance to speak with a solicitor. KMEWO also helped me progress with my quest for education by offering me free courses and training. Finally, KMEWO increased my confidence by providing me with skills which has provided me with volunteer and a mentoring opportunities.

User story 2

“I got married in back home 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 six 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 behaviour, because I came on spousal visa and have no recourse to public funds. Unfortunately, his behaviour 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 for beneficiaries

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

- 734 women have directly benefited from access to a range of support services interventions.
- In which, 479 Women were supported by the Samira, Pathway to Recovery and Thrivers Projects, each receiving a combination of advice, advocacy, counselling and other interventions by KMEWO as described earlier.
- 162 participated in education and training supported by the Woman Learning for Work Project
- 85 women attended 8 FGM/DV awareness training gaining access to available support for survivors
- 18 volunteers were recruited to support our work
- 7 women recruited and trained as mentors
- 27 women supported for employment
- 77 women benefitted from confident building's workshops and support groups
- 150 Women were supported to attend appointments with other agencies such as services to police, housing, health assessment and solicitors' appointments

80% women are now living in a safer environment away from the threat of domestic abuse and other forms of VAW&G

Majority of our users are women with children in which most positive outcomes directly impacting on their children's wellbeing.

Service Users Feedback

Feedback from Support group (Reehan)

"I feel better. I try to be more optimistic, I am strong, I do everything"

"I am strong and overcome difficulties. I feel I am with my family sharing ideas and having a good time. I feel free and welcomed to talk."

"The pain is there but I have ambition to overcome it."

"I would like to be strong but I live in fear"

"This support group has impact on me and I feel part of the group and I get the emotional support I really need."

"I have met new friends and have developed skills in relationships."

"I am able to express myself and meet other women in the group .Many thanks for Nawal and Sawsan."

"I have got all help I need from all staff."

"This support group touch my heart and make me happy to meet new friends."

"I feel not lonely and not alone."

"I have a good time. Today we talk about healthy relationships and this was very good."

"Very good service. I feel that I make you tired from my demand. You have provided me with so many services. First of all the human relationships that makes all the difference. They listen, understand our problems. I come without appointment and they help even they do not have time or very busy with other things. Second, they very determent seriously in helping."

"I am very happy. I feel confident, I have developed my skills and I became a volunteer with Nawal. I am also a Mentor now. I have met new people and feel more confident in myself. I have got out of social isolation. I believe that I have something to offer to others."

Income & Expenditure

Over the financial year April 2016 to March 2017 the Organisation received income of £231,102 and incurred costs of £145,538. (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, honour 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 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 | Islington Council - VCS |
| Trust for London | City Bridge Trust |
| Rosa Fund | Islington -VAW&G |
| Lloyds Bank Foundation | Islington -CCG |
| Islington ACL | MOPAC Fund |
| FSGF | Peabody |

Supporters - all our dedicated volunteers, Caxton House staff, Noel Hudson, David Johnson, IMECE Women's Centre, Jeremy Corbyn MP, John Mors & Katrina Ffranch (Islington Council), Muslim Welfare House, Finsbury Park Mosque, Michael Pitchford, LAWA, LAWRS, Newton green primary school, Cllr Kaya Comer Schwarz, Cllr Michelline Safi Ngongo, Councillor Una O'Halloran, Imkaan, WRC, Enrique Saenz (AdviceUK), Monika Schwartz and TimeBank.

Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation

Caxton House Community Centre
129 St. John's Way London N19 3RQ
T: 020 7263 1027 / M: 077 4885 1125

M: 074 1236 4046 (*Education*)
M: 075 5723 6874 (*VAW&G*)
E: info@kmewo.com

 **KMEWO**  **@kmewo**
www.kmewo.com
Charity No:1137055 Company No:6978454

MOPAC | MAYOR OF LONDON
OFFICE FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION
England & Wales 

