



MOROCCAN CHILDREN'S TRUST

Annual Report & Review

August 2013 — April 2015

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CHARITY DETAILS

Moroccan Children's Trust

Registered Company Number

6647591

Registered Charity Number

1127739

Registered and Principal Office

29, Marlborough Road, Colliers Wood, London SW19 2HF

Trustees

Nick Denison, Christopher Hands, Hali Ouedghiri, Deborah Perkin, Abdellah Soussi, Sam Taylor

Objects

- (1) To advance the education of the public in subjects relating to sustainable development and the protection, enhancement and rehabilitation of the environment and to promote study and research in such subjects provided that the useful results of such study are disseminated to the public at large. Sustainable development means "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
- (2) To act as a resource for young people up to the age of 25 living in Morocco by providing advice and assistance and organising programmes of physical, educational and other activities as a means of:
 - (a) advancing in life and helping young people by developing their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as independent, mature and responsible individuals;
 - (b) advancing education;
 - (c) relieving unemployment;
 - (d) providing recreational and leisure time activity in the interests of social welfare for people living in the area of benefit who have need by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, poverty or social and economic circumstances with a view to improving the conditions of life of such persons.

(3) To carry out any purpose for the benefit of the public in Morocco which is charitable according to the law of England and Wales, as the trustees in their discretion decide.

Financial Information

In the year 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014, the Moroccan Children's Trust received revenues of £77,792.74, and incurred expenses of £95,433.24.

The Moroccan Children's Trust has a policy on holding reserves.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Letter from the Chair – Dr Christopher Hands

UK ACTIVITIES

The MCT team in the UK has continued to play an important practical role in supporting project work carried out on the ground in Taroudannt and raising awareness about the difficulties faced by street-connected children in Morocco amongst an international audience, as well as continuing to fundraise on behalf of the projects.

Internship programme

MCT has continued its 6 month internship programme which has provided invaluable support to the organisation, specifically in the international volunteering and street child projects. We also continued to run our fundraising and marketing internship in which interns gained skills in key areas of events organising, grant-writing and marketing. All interns benefited from our tailored training sessions as well as attending external events, including a summit held by the Consortium for Street Children. All interns also carried out a two week working trip to Taroudannt where they visited the centre and received further training. In addition to getting a feel for a career in international development from multiple perspectives, in-country and in the UK, interns contributed to the development and growth of MCT through applying their own unique skills to further our work and outreach. One intern flew out to Taroudannt to shoot MCT's new organisational video, another carried out research into fostering in Morocco and a third organised an art exhibition. This year one of our interns has taken on a full-time position as an in-country project coordinator on the volunteering and street child projects. We wish all our interns good luck for the future and thank them for their contribution to our work during their placement.

Fundraising activities

Since August 2013, MCT's dedicated fundraising and marketing team - made up of staff, interns and volunteers - has held a range of highly successful events. The official events programme began with an art exhibition, 'Home Street Home', at

Brixton East Gallery. The exhibition raised awareness about MCT's work outside of our existing network through a display that included works from Moroccan artists alongside artwork from the children at Centre Amane.

In 2014 the annual gala was held on the 1st of February at the Arch Gallery in Cambridge Heath which was transformed by some enthusiastic MCT members into a sumptuous banqueting hall. The event raised an impressive £6,000. In 2015, MCT was able to stage a much larger gala event which, thanks to sponsorship from Shabir Nawab & Co., was held at The Mandarin Oriental in Knightsbridge. Entertainment included a magician and live North African music and dancing. MCT members from both Morocco and the UK were in attendance to represent the work of the charity. The event had the highest attendance to date with 172 old and new friends joining us and helping to raise over £10,000 in a live auction and raffle.

Other events have included our third and fourth November fundraising concerts at St James' Church in Paddington. At the 2014 concert, the Moroccan director of in-country partner organisation FAPE delivered a heart-warming speech about the growth of work at Centre Amane to an intimate audience of MCT supporters. The other members of the Moroccan team that joined us prepared a cake sale. Over £2,000 was raised from both concerts. MCT supporters have also arrived in force at Trafalgar Square for festive carol singing, raising a combined £332.32.



On Friday 2nd May 2014, seven volunteer trekkers set out to trek through the Atlas Mountains and climb Mount Toubkal, the highest peak in North Africa. Each trekker aimed to raise £1,000 for MCT on top of their fees for the trip. With several

exceeding their fundraising targets, the total raised came to nearly £8000. Here's what one of our trekkers had to say:

"To raise money for such a worthy cause was wonderful. To do it in a beautiful country, where I met so many lovely people and experienced truly amazing things was life-changing."

Thanks to the support of a generous donor who has taken on the title of Middle East and North Africa MCT Ambassador, we began work on the design of our new website earlier this year, to be launched later in 2015. We have continued to reach out to our supporters through various channels, including social media, which was also used to launch our volunteer alumni network earlier this year.

As well as these fundraising activities, our work has also been supported by a number of grant-making organisations and major donations:

- In October 2013, we received generous renewed grant funding from the British Foreign Schools Society of £10,370 per annum over two years. This has been used to fund the educational programmes at Centre Amane.
- In 2014, the Shashoua Foundation provided us with funding to renovate our sports centre which enabled us to implement a regular recreational programme, as well as run occasional large group activities for children and their families at Centre Amane. Futures for Kids Foundation then matched that donation in September 2014 to support the completion of the hall renovation and improvement works in health and hygiene.
- Shabir Nawab and Co provided full funding for the MCT Gala and other charitable donations towards running costs throughout the year.
- From October 2014 to April 2015, Philip Murphy and his film production company based in Ireland initiated their own fundraiser for MCT and the wider community in which we work. The group transformed a Jeep into an ambulance, filled it with donations of clothes and medical supplies for Centre Amane and drove it from Ireland to Taroudannt to donate it to a local commune. Additionally, the group raised over £4,000 to go directly to funding the children's activities at Centre Amane.

We would also like to thank all those individuals who have carried out sponsored activities and those who have made generous one-off and regular donations to MCT over the last two years.

CENTRE AMANE

Social work, education support & pre-school, recreational activities, women's project

Since August 2013, our work at Centre Amane has continued to expand and develop to meet the needs of the children and families who attend. Over 40 families benefit from the various services provided which include educational support, a pre-school, recreational activities, and a women's group. Underpinning all these services continues to be the street and home outreach work done by our local team of social workers.

In April 2014 we bid farewell to social worker Iqbal who had worked tirelessly with the centre since 2011, particularly supporting families to obtain identity papers for their children and coordinating the weekly women's group. We also said goodbye to activities coordinator Hicham who left to focus on his work with another local charity, founded to get young people involved in volunteering in Taroudannt and communities in need in the surrounding area.

Yet, endings pave the way for new beginnings and over the past two years we have welcomed a number of new team members. In September 2014, Zohair took on the activities coordination role and has since given it a fresh look, implementing the weekend programme and introducing more creative activities. Other new team members in supporting roles at Centre Amane are Asmaa and Zahira. After a 1-month internship, Asmaa started in August 2014 as our first accountant and in-country fundraiser. Zahira, our officer working on complex birth registration cases, took on administrative duties at Centre Amane to support our general work, such as

applying for the centre to gain state certification as a social centre. Our local salaried team now supporting the Street Children Project across all fronts is up to 12, from the original 3 that started in October 2010.

Social Work

A number of new children and families have begun working with the team at the centre, benefiting from the holistic support that we offer. Some of the families who have been with the centre since its inception in October 2010 have begun to play a greater role in its running, referring and welcoming new members as well as volunteering during activities and at community gatherings.

Recognising the benefit of a safe space to talk and share new experiences, the team developed two new weekly groups in November 2013 for the young people aged 13+ years, one for boys and one for girls. The sessions have included workshops on rights, goal-setting and healthy relationships as well as group activities such as crafts and sports. These sessions have benefitted from our collaboration with the Consortium for Street Children on developing a manual for working with girls groups. In autumn 2014, the group participants attended a session on volunteering – what is it and how to do it. Currently, several of the young people are volunteering at Centre Amane to run recreational activities for the younger children and help organise larger group activities both inside and outside of the centre.



The social work team's holistic support continues to include health advocacy in addition to family visits and direct contact at Centre Amane. First aid care is provided

directly at the centre, but external advocacy and accompaniment to medical consultations is also provided. The team monitors individual's empowerment and confidence to access local services; in spring 2015 the team signed a partnership agreement with the regional branch of the Ministry of Health to work together to find solutions for some of the disadvantaged families with whom we work in the local community.

Education support & Pre-school

Our daily non-formal educational sessions continue to provide both academic and social support to children and young people aged 6 to 20 years. Over the past two years we have been able to strengthen our links with local schools to ensure that our teachers are aware of the identified academic and behavioural needs of each child and can tailor support to meet these. We have also used these links to run training sessions in schools, allowing us to share good safeguarding practice and raise awareness of issues the children face in their daily lives.

The pre-school class offers places to 15 students who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend a private pre-school. At the start of the 2014-15 school year, 8 new children enrolled in our full-day service run by a full-time and a part-time teacher. Due to the centre's inclusion in the local community, the pre-school class is able to continue offering integration activities with local private pre-schools and experience new places outside of the classroom.

Recreational activities

Recreational activities remain an important service, ensuring the children and young people have opportunities to relax and enjoy time away from their daily stresses; share experiences with friends; try new activities; and develop skills of teamwork and discipline. In our own sports hall, we run a daily programme of games and sports. Additionally, over the past two years there have been a number of trips to provide new experiences, including visits to the beach, the mountains and local gardens.



In spring 2015, the activity coordinator began implementing a schedule of weekend activities to provide an alternative for the children and young people during their free time. Saturday mornings with the younger children and evenings with the older children are now spent doing group activities in the sports hall. Sunday mornings are reserved for planned visits or collaborative activities with other local charities and centres. These experiences outside of the centre help the children and young people to learn more about their own community and get involved in a safe way. They can also help to reduce prejudices in the wider community.



Women's Project

The Women's Project has continued to grow in strength since August 2013 in its work to engage mothers connected to Centre Amane. The project aims to empower

women to make positive changes for themselves, their families and their community. More specifically, the project focuses on:

1. Improving women's self-esteem
2. Supporting women to improve their economic situation
3. Improving the relationship between mothers and children, including promoting positive parenting practices and improving mental and physical health of women and children.

The women's group meets one afternoon a week at Centre Amane - always a vibrant and bustling occasion. The women take an active role in organising the sessions which usually include an activity chosen by the women, discussion, afternoon snack and plenty of mint tea.

During the past 12 months, the group has adopted a more participatory approach. In November 2014 the first Women's Group Committee was elected, consisting of 4 representatives from the Women's Project. This committee was set up to give women more control in making decisions about the project. They meet monthly and are supported by the Women's Project facilitator to plan and deliver sessions. This includes networking outside of the group to find speakers to facilitate sessions on topics the women have expressed an interest in. Members of this first committee stated that being part of the committee gave them "*a chance to take some responsibility*" and "*a sense of value*".

A period of participatory research was carried out with the women's group from December 2013 to February 2014. The Women's Project facilitator, supported by a volunteer, carried out interviews with 17 women to gather information on their family situation, their access to services and support networks. This information was then shared back to the women's group for discussion and reflection.

The Women's Project has succeeded in creating a support network for mothers as well as building a sense of community at Centre Amane.

SECURING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Alongside our direct work with disadvantaged children and their families, MCT is striving to improve conditions for children in the wider community and across Morocco. This work is being undertaken through our birth registration project and through our efforts in the arena of child protection.

Child protection

Our work at Centre Amane continues to draw upon international expertise in social work, paediatrics, safeguarding and children's rights to provide a model of best practice. In recent months, we have been working with volunteer and former social worker and counsellor, Lynnette Swanson, to review our practice and provide training and professional development opportunities to members of our team. We are also in the process of compiling a hands-on social work guide, based on our team's practical experiences of delivering relational social work in Taroudannt, which we aim to use as a tool for sharing our practice with other organisations active in Morocco.

In the past few years, the issue of child protection has become increasingly prominent in Moroccan national discourse and we have also been working hard to capitalise on this as a springboard for more systemic change. In particular, we have been building relationships with local actors – including the heads of the local courts and of the social welfare body – and presenting them with our own plan for an effective, sustainable and replicable child protection system for Taroudannt and its surrounds. Since the election of Abdellah Soussi, MCT board member and director of our partner organisation FAPE, to the regional advisory committee on Child Protection we have become a recognised voice of experience in this area and Abdellah has since been invited to several UNICEF-run conferences at the national level.

We have also begun to move forwards our plans to develop a fostering programme: a vital element of any future child protection system. Although it will still be some time before our plans come to fruition, we have made significant progress in the past 18 months in two key areas:

- planning a piece of consultative research with children to further understand their ideas and expectations about families and fostering. This research will be carried out in summer 2015 in partnership with Masters (Family Law) and doctorate candidates at the University of Agadir and with the participation of

other local NGOs including Anir, SOS Village, Ahli, Raafa and other child protection centres.

- developing plans and securing some start-up funds for a transitional care centre which will provide interim care for children during family reintegration or whilst they are prepared for placement with a long-term foster family

In the coming year, we will further strengthen our position as a local authority in the field of child protection and will continue to move forwards with finalising our plans for a fostering programme, including the envisioned transitional care centre, influenced by the findings of our research work and ongoing consultations with local actors.

Birth registration

The social workers at Centre Amane identified lack of birth registration and identity papers amongst the families with whom they work as a consistent barrier in assisting them to access health and education services. As a result, in October 2013 we launched the pilot year of our identity papers project. This began at the grassroots level in three key methods. Firstly, we continued to provide legal and administrative support through renting an office space and employing a dedicated caseworker to assist in the most difficult cases, working especially with single mothers to overcome barriers to register their children. Secondly, we ran awareness-raising events on the importance of birth registration within the local community, in Taroudannt city and the province. In January 2014, the project expanded to include a third strand of a mobile registration service and training sessions for provincial representatives of the six key sectors involved in the registration process – civil registration, authorities, tribunal, education, health, and NGOs.

The project quickly expanded and we began to simultaneously carry out research at a provincial level as well. We combined this with our regular monitoring and evaluation of casework to identify specific problems in both the procedure and national legislation that create obstacles to register children in certain socio-economic situations. Upon completion of the pilot year, we evaluated the work of the previous year and compiled and put forth a comprehensive list of recommendations across the six major sectors. On 20 December 2014, one and a half years of work on children's right to birth registration came together at an international conference hosted by MCT and FAPE in Taroudannt, funded by the French institute and French embassy.

We are now in the process of publishing a guide to birth registration which will be distributed amongst concerned parties and other organisation to allow a collaborative approach on this very important issue across Morocco. This laid the foundations for our advocacy project which will attempt to drive policy change on a national level and envisions more and more families overcoming barriers to registering their children, enabling them to secure better futures for themselves.

Participatory research

Between April and June 2014, a group of 14 'hard to engage' street-connected children took part in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, led by international volunteer Connie Wu. The study aimed to find out more about these children's life experiences and how they envision their futures so that MCT can better meet their needs. This was one of the first times a PAR approach, which places children on an equal footing to adult researchers and identifies them as capable and active individuals who are experts on their own lives, had been employed with street-connected children in Morocco. Three main activities, chosen collectively by the children participating and the team of adult researchers, were undertaken: Photovoice, thematic drawings and mental maps of their hometown, Taroudannt.

Facilitated discussions about the photographs, drawings and maps the children produced encouraged a joint exploration of their experiences and their visions for the future and allowed the research team to draw out some key themes. The research also provided an opportunity to think about each child's needs individually and to find out what changes they would like to bring about in their own lives, such as being more religious, going to school, studying harder or behaving better in class and being in good health. To conclude the research, an event was held to which the children could invite whoever they wanted and share with them what they had produced. A poster summarising the research was accepted by the Consortium for Street Children's annual research conference in London, where it was presented in November 2014.

VOLUNTEER PROJECT

In the past 18 months we have continued to build on the changes to the programme that were initiated in autumn 2012 when we began renting our own 'volunteer house' in Taroudannt, greatly expanding the potential scope of the project. Since then, we have renovated several more rooms within the property, meaning that we are now able to host 8 volunteers at any one time. An in-country volunteer co-ordinator we recruited in January 2013 and remained in post until May 2014, furthering the growth of the project and supporting the volunteers who stayed in the house during this time. In April 2014 we recruited a replacement to her role from the London team.

The femme de ménage, originally recruited to the programme to provide home-cooked meals, keep the apartment clean and make volunteers feel at home, has been a key member of the team over the past three years. Originally recruited from Centre Amane's women's project she has been invaluable in helping volunteers experience authentic Moroccan living and feel 'at home'.

"The support from the in-country team is invaluable I always felt that if I had any issues there was always someone to turn to"

The UK team spent much of 2013-2015 actively recruiting volunteers to the programme and were rewarded by an influx of volunteers to the house.

Between September 2013 and August 2014 we welcomed six volunteers to Taroudannt. The first was a long term volunteer who spent six months working on the women's project. A graduate of the UK internship programme she was an excellent recruit to the team and had a highly successful placement.

In May 2014 we welcomed a second research volunteer to the programme, following the success of a placement completed by a research student in May 2013. A student at Edinburgh University, her placement focused on a piece of qualitative research carried out in partnership with the social work team. Her placement produced a high quality piece of research which has been used by the team on the ground, as well as being a helpful addition to her studies.

As in previous years the summer months proved a popular time to volunteer and between May-August 2014 we welcomed a further four volunteers to the house for short term placements of two to three months. The team managed this well by planning specific tasks for each of the volunteers to complete, including teaching languages, running sports activities and supporting the women's project.

All volunteers were partnered with a local volunteer who acted as their buddy. This has continued to be one of the most successful aspects of the volunteer programme, with buddies and volunteers both reporting positively on the impact of the relationship and the cultural exchange it promotes.

"My buddy was really gave me an insight into Moroccan culture. He showed me the best places to visit in Taroudannt. We became great friends and I learnt a great deal from him. It's been one of the best parts of my placement"

Whilst the summer months are always very busy, it is usually more difficult to recruit volunteers during university term time. In response to this the team looked for alternative opportunities for volunteer recruitment and began the long process of applying for status as a European Voluntary Service (EVS) accredited organisation. As part of the application the team had to further develop the structure of the programme and worked hard to produce role descriptions for different volunteer positions, timetables and schedules for volunteer placements and more stringent pre- and post- departure briefings. Although the EVS application is still ongoing, we have already put into place the project developments described, leading to a much more structured programme.

Over the past year we have also seen the development of our national volunteer scheme. The team has an accord with Al Akhawayn University, through which we are able to publicise opportunities for Moroccan students to come and volunteer for a month during their studies. In December 2014 we welcomed the first students from Al Akhawayn and hope to welcome many more in the coming months and years.

In January 2015 the team at Centre Amane was joined by a highly skilled volunteer to work over a 6-month period on the development of our fostering project. A retired UK social worker, she has brought a high level of expertise to her role and the team in Morocco have greatly benefited from her knowledge and experience not only of fostering, but also of counselling and social work. She has recently decided to extend her placement until winter 2015.

From May to September 2015 we plan to welcome another three volunteers to the team for short term placements of two to three months. Working across the a variety of roles, including supporting Women's Project development and helping to lead summer activities at the Centre, they will play a valuable and important part in the projects over the coming months.

FUTURE PLANS

Moroccan Children's Trust has big plans that will not only impact on the lives of the children we work with directly, at Centre Amane, but will help to make important differences to the lives of children throughout Morocco.

We have recently signed a partnership agreement with the University of Agadir, which will allow us to carry out a range of research projects, allowing us to continue maintaining a strong and up-to-date evidence-basis for the work we undertake as well as helping to bring the experiences and views of marginalised communities to the fore.

Elsewhere, our engagement with Al Akhawayn University has led us to welcome our first national volunteers this year and we hope to expand our national volunteering scheme, building on the success of these initial volunteer placements.

We will continue to support Souad, our young parliamentarian, to research and develop a plan for free, neighbourhood-serving pre-schools and help her to advocate for this inspirational and important project through the Children's Parliament and through our own networks.

We will continue to move forwards our plans for creating a holistic and replicable child protection system in the Taroudannt region, including launching a fostering programme for children who cannot safely stay with their birth families. Our fostering programme, featuring a transitional care centre that will be the first of its kind in southern Morocco, will be built on best practice from the international arena and will be influenced by the views of children living in difficult circumstances in the region.