

Moroccan Children's Trust Newsletter



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Hellos and Goodbyes at the Street Child Centre

Over the past few months we've seen quite a few staff changes at our centre in Taroudannt. It is of course with regret that we say goodbye to those dedicated people who have contributed so much of their time and efforts, both physical and emotional, to ensure the development of the centre. Yet, we are also excited to welcome new members of staff who we hope, with their high energy levels and innovative ideas, will build on the work carried out by their predecessors. Firstly we must say a fond farewell to one of our three social workers, Khalid, who has been with our project from the very start. He has an enviable relationship with the children and their families. Over the course of the past year and a half he has been a figure of authority, responsibility and of friendship, and he will be sorely missed by all.



Khalid at his goodbye party

His departure has meant that Mohamed has taken on a great deal of the work that was being carried out by Khalid, so the search is on to recruit a new social worker! It will of course be difficult to find someone with a skill set to match Khalid's, so in the meantime we offer our encouragement and support to Mohamed whilst searching for the ideal candidate.

In addition, we regret to announce that Badiaa will also be leaving our project in the next months to join her husband abroad. Badiaa has also been incremental to this project, and without her we would not have reached the stage where we are now.



Badiaa with mothers from the women's project

She has successfully obtained ID papers for several children, resolved multiple health and social issues and been a figure of great respect for the children and their families, including forming a women's group.

Earlier on this year we also had to say goodbye to our homework support teacher, AbdelKarim, who was with us for the year January to December 2011. He was instrumental in establishing the classroom as a place recognised by the children as somewhere they could learn and their efforts would be supported. The post has been fulfilled by a new teacher, Soumiya, who has settled in well and built on the work started by AbdelKarim. She is currently forming good relationships with the children, and following their progress with their schoolteachers to ensure that they are realising their potential.



AbdelKarim teaching in the classroom

Two newer members of staff have also come and gone; Hicham, the sports teacher who has taken up a different job and been replaced by another Hicham and our dedicated pre-school teacher Houda who has had to leave us for health reasons and who has been replaced by Charifa.

During the transition in searching for Houda's replacement Soumiya, the pre-school assistant, has taken over the daily running of the pre-school. Her work has been invaluable in ensuring stability for the children. We hope that both Charifa and Hicham are able to continue with the hard work put in by their predecessors. It seems that in both cases they are already integrating well with the team and forming positive relationships with the children.



Hicham leading activities in the sports hall

The last person that we have had to say goodbye to is our volunteer In-Country Coordinator, Sarah, who has been an invaluable addition to the management team and a much-loved figure in Taroudannt. She gave up her time to pursue this voluntary post and made great inroads with cross-country coordination, mediation and was a friend to many of the children.



Sarah with former SCP intern Pindie

Now that we are recruiting a replacement volunteer, it becomes clear how much work Sarah did to shape this role as its first occupier and how talented she is as a negotiator, communicator and confidante.

We wish her the very best of luck with her future endeavours and look forward to welcoming a replacement this summer.

Working together to improve the lives of street girls



Living and working on the street is an ordeal for all children. However, the plight of street girls in particular is not only extremely difficult but is also often overlooked both in the eyes of the public and in many interventions targeting street children.

MCT has joined forces with other members of the Consortium for Street Children, the leading international network dedicated to realising the rights of street children, with aims to address this gap.

MCT has shared our experience of working with street girls with other organisations in the Working Group on Street Girls led by the Consortium. The Working Group is currently narrowing its thematic focus and will be aiming to develop a toolkit of tailored interventions specifically targeting girls.

Our latest fundraising efforts

Over the past few months the London team and a number of wonderful MCT supporters have been busy raising money to support the project in Taroudannt.

Our annual Gala dinner this February turned out to be a fantastic event raising around £6000 through ticket sales and an auction full of Moroccan themed goodies.

In March, the University of Leeds RAG society raised almost £2,500 with their hitchhike to Morocco. We have also recently had three marathon runners join our cause. Marcus Blacker raised over £1,000 for MCT running again in the London marathon in April.

In that same month we also had two runners in the epic marathon through the Sahara desert poetically named Marathon des Sables or Marathon of the Sand. Matthew Bisco and Conor Fee together raised roughly £4,500.

If you would like to support the cause by joining in on physical challenges, it's not too late! You can visit Hisham Talsi's JustGiving page and support his effort to cycle from London to Rome: (<http://www.justgiving.com/cyde-hish>)

or you can visit our website and generously make a donation there: (<http://www.moroccanchildrenstrust.org/donate>)

Street Child Project Update – Visits to Taroudannt

The Street Child Project is currently going through many changes and developments, with new staff members joining us and progress being made in new strands of the project. Over the past few weeks several members of the MCT team have visited the centre, many for the first time, to support remaining staff through these transitions and to help co-ordinate the various strands of the project.



Aside from supporting the everyday running of the centre, in itself hard work, MCT members Sarah, Rosie, Andreja, Anwar, Livia, Harry and Francesca focused on specific strands of the project, including the women's project, film-making and fundraising.

SCP UK Coordinator Sarah made her second visit to the centre after a long gap, and was able to see the fruits of all the hard work she has contributed day to day in London over the past 18 months.



She was very busy meeting with staff members and administrators in Taroudannt, but she did have time to absorb let the newly expanded projects, saying, "After not having visited the centre since its first month in November 2010, I was extremely excited to finally see first-hand all of the changes and growth I had been discussing with the team."

One of my highlights was Mohamed giving me the grand tour and pointing out the changes, laughing at my exclamations over how beautiful and alive the centre is. It was also amazing to be in the centre with the windows open and hear laughter and the sounds of fun games happening in the sports hall, something we once considered a future plan."

Women's Project Coordinator Andreja and Street Child Project Officer Rosie also made their second visit to the centre and were pleased to see developments had been made, even over the few months that had passed since their first visit.

Rosie worked specifically on overseeing the filming of a documentary about the work of MCT, participated in a visit to Marrakech and in the recruitment of a new pre-school teacher.

She said of the new staff that “it was encouraging to see that each new staff member has fully integrated into the team and is enthusiastic about their work.” She also noted the development of the sports centre, the change which she described as “immense,” in terms of the equipment available and the positive atmosphere of the classes.



Andreja worked primarily on the transformation of the women’s project; planning a new stage of the project through activities to rank the daily concerns of the women, with the aim of planning a new stage of the project to help them with these worries. She also worked with volunteer Briony to plan the next few months as she will be working on the women’s project and has shown great enthusiasm and energy for this project.

There were also several new members of the MCT team who made their first visit to Taroudannt – Livia, intern for the Volunteer Project, and Anwar, Harry and Francesca who form the new fundraising team. For them, getting to know the centre, members of staff and the work first-hand were of primary importance.

Anwar and Harry worked mainly on forming partnerships with local businessmen to help raise funds more locally and hopefully eventually corporate partnerships. Harry also expressed an interest in forming an apprenticeship programme for the older children we work with who struggle with academic work, aimed at motivating them towards a more structured life and away from the appeals of the street and glue-sniffing.

There are many salesmen in the Taroudannt market who could help with such a project, so Harry and Anwar spent time talking with them to gather ideas. As a first-time visitor, Harry found the centre to be well-run with a friendly atmosphere, and said that he found the people very amicable and smiley. Anwar thought that the centre was homely and welcoming, and the children seem pleased to be there, particularly as the classrooms provide an atmosphere of focus without being stifling. He particularly liked the sports centre, as he believes it manages to channel the children’s energy into something productive. He has found that the visit helped him to become more motivated to support the centre’s work from the UK.



We are delighted that the centre has developed so well thus far, and it is such a pleasure to see how the children can benefit from the support, advice and friendship that they find from members of staff, volunteers and each other. Thank you to all our supporters who help us to maintain and develop such a wonderful place.



The Moroccan Children’s Trust is a registered UK Charity (no. 1127739) that supports the creation of sustainable social and educational development in Morocco. To learn more about us, please visit www.moroccanchildrenstrust.org.

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