

Moroccan Children's Trust Newsletter



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MCT launches its new Street Children Project

In October 2010, MCT and GMH launched the Street Children Project in Taroudannt. Following an initial phase of research into the needs and life stories of our beneficiaries, we developed a project that seeks to support the children and their families in a holistic way.

Our three social workers are currently offering assistance to 41 families and 91 children by facilitating their access to health and legal services, by providing emotional support and encouraging positive behaviours. The social workers are already having a significant impact on children's lives thanks to their efforts to obtain ID papers, the provision of free time activities, such as football, and the warm welcome they're extending to children who come to the Centre. Our Centre is conveniently situated in the heart of the city, near to the places where most children spend their time and also where their families live, thus allowing for regular home visits and all-important follow-ups with their families.

MCT and GMH are in the process of adding a teacher to our team, whose main task will be to provide educational assistance to children through scheduled homework support sessions, with special attention given to helping children at risk of dropping out of school and improving access to basic education.



From December, we are looking to re-launch "Full Contact" classes for all of the children involved in the project, some of whom were crowned champions in a competition of the martial art last year. The Full Contact programme, which had lost its funding, will be able to start up again thanks to the Street Children Project, with training sessions being held three times a week.

We also have plans in place to hold a comprehensive evaluation of the project in April 2011, which will measure the success of the Street Children Project and create a platform for developing further strands of the project, including a possible mentoring scheme for the children and a micro-finance initiative to promote financial stability amongst the families in the project.



Case study of a Street Child

This is Maryam's story. The case study describes her current situation and shows how the work we do could benefit Maryam and her family. It generated a lot of discussion at our Street Children Report Launch...

Maryam is 11 years old and she should be approaching the end of her primary education. In fact, she doesn't go to school and hasn't done so for several years, because of an unstable and disrupted home life. Maryam's mother and father separated three years ago and, since then, they have been in dispute over who she and her four younger siblings should live with. Unfortunately, neither parent is able to offer her the safe home environment she needs. Last year her father took all of the children away from their mother to live with him near Agadir. They stayed with him for several months, but he was eventually forced to return them to their mother's care. Maryam describes her father as "a problem". She says that he never does anything for her and her brothers and sisters and that he sometimes hits her. She wishes she had a better father who would help the children instead of obstructing them as her father does through his persistent refusal to support their application for ID papers. Without these papers neither Maryam, nor her younger brother and sisters, are able to go to school.

The family's current living conditions leave much to be desired. She lives, along with her 4 siblings, her mother and her mother's colleague, in a small apartment with only two rooms, a toilet and a kitchen. Her mother works a 12-hour day at the Hammam, but as the sole source of income she still struggles to provide a basic standard of living for her family. In their mother's absence, the four younger children (aged between 2 and 8 years) are all looked after by 11 year old Maryam. She cares for them, prepares their meals and also does the household chores. Maryam loves her mother and recognises that she works extremely hard in order to support her family. Yet, unsurprisingly, Maryam says that she doesn't want her life to be like her mother's.

In addition to an unstable home life, Maryam has other problems, which are currently being neglected. She suffers from an unidentified health problem, which causes her to experience palpitations, difficulty in breathing and dizziness after minor physical activity. So far, she has not seen a doctor and has no diagnosis for the condition. Maryam also has facial scarring from being accidentally burnt with a candle when she was two years old. Cosmetic surgery is the only way to remedy the scarring, but another consequence of not having ID papers is that Maryam is not automatically entitled to receive health-care.

When talking about her hopes for the future, Maryam says that she'd like to get married, but she doesn't want to have any children. The experience of taking care of her younger siblings mean that, at the age of 11, she has already decided that it's too much responsibility. Our social workers can help ease some of Maryam's burden and give her her childhood back. By helping to obtain ID papers for Maryam and her family we will be enabling four of the children to enrol at school. We can also help the family to find a crèche where Maryam's youngest sister could be taken care of whilst she is studying.

At school Maryam was always a good student with a passion for drawing. She enjoyed being there and would like to return as soon as possible, which she must do if she's ever to fulfil her ambition to one day become a School Principal. By offering her a place at our homework support classes, we can help her through a difficult period of readjustment, as she returns to school, and ensure that there is someone to recognise and celebrate her educational achievements with her. Our social work team can also secure Maryam a visit to a healthcare worker, who will be able to assess, and hopefully treat, her ongoing medical problems.

For ways to help children like Maryam, take a look at our website:

<http://www.moroccanchildrenstrust.org/>

MCT Street Children Report Launch

The Street Children Report launch took place on October 27th in Room 3 at the House of Lords, kindly provided by esteemed friend of the charity Lord Ahmed. The event was very well attended with members of other NGOs, including fellow members of the Consortium for Street Children, former volunteers, representatives of other NGOs active in Morocco and donors all present.

The evening kicked off with an introduction by Lord Ahmed, after which MCT Director Chris Hands gave a presentation on the findings contained in the report. His presentation also included a first-hand account of why he was inspired to set up the Street Children Project.

Guests were then invited to read a case study of one of the children involved in the project (see page 2 for further details), while members of the MCT team acted as facilitators, responding to the audience's questions and comments on a one-on-one basis. The event was rounded up with a general question and answer session covering a range of issues related to the report, including enquiries about the breadth of the project, ways to collaborate with other NGOs and how the project might seek the support of the Moroccan Government.

The launch proved to be entertaining as well as informative and a number of guests joined the MCT team at a Westminster pub for complementary drinks and further discussion about some of the issues raised during the report launch.

Events like our report launch present a wonderful opportunity for meeting representatives of other NGOs working in similar situations all across the world and members of the Moroccan community in London. On the back of the launch we have been able to hold a number of useful meetings, which will ultimately bring greater benefits to the children we work with in Tarouannt.

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Many thanks must go to Nicola Hands, MCT Management Committee, whose hard work on the report ensured its successful reception.



MCT launches its Street Children Report in style

MCT Staff

Project Development Officers:

Sarah Sibley, Mihaela Grindeanu

Volunteer Project Officer: Jenny Love

Management committee: Nicola Hands,
Monica Mukerjee, Laila Sumpton

Board of Trustees:

Chris Hands, Sam Taylor, Nick Denison,
Alexandra Apostolou, Fouad Birouk,
Mohamed Nejmeddine, Hicham Ouslimane



Current Interns Mihaela, Sarah and Jenny in and around Taroudannt

New Interns visit Morocco

With the Street Children Project in its first month, MCT's three interns headed to Taroudannt for the first two weeks of November. Mihaela Grindeanu and Sarah Sibley (Street Children Project Development) and Jenny Love (Volunteer Program) spent their time fitting as much as possible into their first visit to Taroudannt.

The interns were graciously hosted by the family of Groupe Maroc Horizons member, Rachid Birouk, while other members of the organisation helped to welcome them—the first evening in Taroudannt was celebrated with a traditional Moroccan meal with the entire GMH committee—and to coordinate their meetings.

In the first week of the visit, GMH members introduced the interns to Taroudannt, helping them to familiarise themselves with the town- its layout, public places, souks, and people. The interns were able to spend hours at the mainstream Al-Wifaq school and the Lalla Amina orphanage, two of the projects which welcome MCT volunteers. They also went to the nearby village of Tioute, where they visited a women's Argan oil Cooperative.

Most importantly, however, long days spent at the new Street Children Project Centre helped the interns understand the context in which the Street Children Project runs and allowed them to see how it was being implemented on the ground. The new centre's three social workers - Badiia, Mohamed, and Khalid - took the interns with them on night visits in the street, daytime family visits, and to see sports activities, like football matches, organised for the older boys in the project. By participating in this kind of practical work Mihaela, Sarah, and Jenny were also better able to understand ways in which the newborn project could develop in the future.

Along with strengthening relationships in Taroudannt, the interns also aimed to build new partnerships to support the SCP's future. A visit to al-Karam in Marrakesh brought a valuable lesson from an established street children charity. The interns then continued north to Rabat for three days of meetings with the UK Embassy, the British Council, "the Agence de Developpement Social", the "Comité de Soutien à la Scolarisation des Filles Rurales", and Mrs Naciri of the association "Formation et Recherche en Developpement."

The trio traveled back to Taroudannt to share what they'd learnt and to continue with more project work. And they were lucky enough to share Eid al-Adha with their Moroccan hosts before departing for London!



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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