



**WEST LONDON
SOMALILAND COMMUNITY**

Annual Report

April 2008-March 2009

Chair's report

In its second year of existence, West London Somaliland Community has continued to develop and sustain its services for its beneficiaries. We are pleased to once again look back to a successful year and plan for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead of us in the coming years.

In the past year, West London Somaliland Community has implemented different activities and projects such as the "Easing the Parental Challenge" and the football club project. Both projects have allowed us to develop and strengthen further the organization and engage the community more. Due to these projects, we established links with the mainstream service providers with the aim of bridging the gap between them and the community and extend access in service provision to the British Somalilanders.

Furthermore, West London Somaliland Community has organized different events and meetings to address and find a remedy for the challenges that the British Somalilanders are facing, as well as making them visible and promoting the contribution of this community to this nation in the past. With the same purpose, we also took part to different meetings and conferences, including the Euro-Somalilanders conference in Sweden.

Through the projects that we undertook the past year and the meetings with the community, we came to a conclusion that the establishment of a community centre needs to be the priority for West London Somaliland Community in the coming years to be able to make a real difference and create an environment that encourages development and allows the British Somalilanders to overcome their cultural and social barriers, and address collectively their challenges. However, as like many other small organizations, we are struggling with the problem of funding. We therefore wish to appeal to everyone, especially the Somalilanders, to sponsor us so that we realize what we want to achieve.

For the financial year 2009-2010, the coordinator has succeeded to secure small grant to cover the running cost of the office where we offer information, advice & guidance services to our service users. But those small grants do not take the organization out of the financial insecurity. The good thing to note is that our Projects Coordinator is working, on a voluntary basis, to secure the organization more funding, but we also do need your support - both material and manpower.

On behalf of the trustees, I would like to thank the Coordinator and the volunteers for their tireless contributions to this the development of the organization. I would also like to thank Awards for All, The Football Foundation and every organization and individual who has contributed to the achievement of the past year for their valuable contributions.

Many thanks,

Abdullahi Ali
Chair

Coordinator's Message

Since West London Somaliland Community became operational about two years ago, it achieved a lot. In the last year, we succeeded to build on the first year achievement and sustain the vital services such as the IAG (Information Advice & Guidance) sessions and the football trainings thanks to small grants from the Awards for All and the Football Foundation.

Although we strive to empower the community in general, our focus group is the parents and young people in other words the family. With the Awards for All grant, we were able to implement the family focused project that we called "Easing the Parental Challenge", which we have designed to bridge the gap between service providers and British Somalilanders families but also to increase their confidence and raise awareness about parental challenges. This project has not only enabled us to deliver the services we planned but it has also fed us with new ideas to develop further our programme.

The Football Foundation grant has enabled us to sustain the football club activities, which has attracted the attention of the local youth. Currently more than eighty young people from a diverse background attend our football training. Due to its popularity among the local youth, the football club is now so overcrowded that we now seeking other funding cater for the growing demand. We as well as our young people find football is an enjoyable activity and an effective way of engaging the youth. Our plan is to develop the football (sports) club, in the coming years, to a club that provides not only football but also different recreational activities all year long to children and families in general with the object of improving the well-being of our community.

Regarding funding, we plan to draw a strategic plan to safeguard the financial sustainability of this community organisation. We plan to involve Somalilanders business such as Money Transfer Companies and small business to sponsor projects. However, the financial insecurity stays the biggest challenge West London Somaliland Community faces. I believe that we, as a community, can ensure the continuity of the organisation with a collective approach. I also hope we will attract the interest of funding organisations. As the coordinator, I promise to do my part and strive to sustain this unique community organisation.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the funders, **Awards for All** and **The Football Foundation**, for their valuable financial assistance but also the trustees and the community members who have contributed to the achievement of the past year. I would also like to thank **Rosedale College** for their support in providing us discount on their football pitches, which has allowed us to deliver the football project with the small grant we had.

Yours sincerely,

Id Hassan Muse,
Coordinator

Introduction

Being part of the British Empire, Somaliland has an old historical link with the UK with migration of Somalilanders into Great Britain dating back to the early nineteenth century, which makes this community one of the oldest minority groups in the UK. The first migrant group from Somaliland came in Britain early nineteenth century and were mainly men who worked as crewmembers on ships. They settled in the docks' towns such as Cardiff, Liverpool, Bristol and East London. As the only Somali group in the UK, in the past Somalilanders used to have strong sense of community, which allowed them to respond collectively to their challenges. However, the situation has changed with the arrival of many people from the Somalis inhabited regions and countries in the Horn of Africa, and Somalis came from all the corners of East Africa.

We recognise that Somalis have countless organisations across the main UK cities, however they are often said to be invisible and unrepresented group. The reality is that there is no Somali community. Somalis are a diverse group (see Ioan Lewis' book titled "Understanding Somalia and Somaliland", and our leaflet called "About the British Somalilanders") who came from different regions and countries of East Africa. We believe that Somalilanders are nationally, culturally and historically different to other Somali groups. Our community organisation tries to cater for the specific needs of the British Somaliland community while building a sense of belongingness to this society among them.

With West London Somaliland Community we aim to be a real community organisation that not only provide service but also build a sense of community among the Somalilanders and create an environment that encourages participation and development. As a single nationality organisation, we want to be closer to the Somaliland community to build the trust so we are able to build a sense of a community, which in its turn will allow us to deal with the sensitive issues and remove the cultural and social barriers.

The establishment of West London Somaliland Community is also an opportunity for Somalis in general to address their diversity openly and start to build understanding and respect for it, which we think is conducive in understanding and valuing the British diversity as well as integrating meaningfully to this society. We aim to encourage a culture of tolerance among the Somalis in general, which will allow them to respect their differences and in general the human nature diversity so to make possible to create a situation where communalities can be build on. The culture of tolerance will also facilitate to work together and address collectively, as part of the British society, the common challenges.

In the two years West London Somaliland Community was operating, it undertook important steps to lay down a strong foundation for a community owned organisation.

In this report, we are presenting the past year achievement as well as our future plans.

West London Somaliland Community Vision

Our vision is to make West London Somaliland Community a successful organisation, which effectively addresses key issues concerning Somaliland community including education, family matters, sports and youth activities, and meaningful integration in the mainstream society. We are committed to seeing our community to be successful citizens in this country.

Mission

Our mission is to empower Somalilanders in West London to enable them to participate meaningfully in the society as confident citizens, knowing their rights and responsibilities. We also strive to promote community cohesion.

Aims

- To facilitate and help integration of West London Somalilanders into the wider society and promote community cohesion by opening our service to the wider community and by reviving the historical link between Somaliland and the UK.
- To raise awareness about the parental responsibilities and to enable Somalilanders to face the challenges of parenting of the 21st century.
- To prevent the Somalilanders youth involvement in crimes, and to relieve those who are in condition of need, hardship and distress.
- To advance education of the public on all aspects of the Somaliland history and culture.

Objectives

- ✓ To provide IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) sessions in meeting the day-to-day needs of the British Somalilanders parents and the community in general.
- ✓ To set up parents' committee to create an environment where parents can share experience, express their concerns openly and raise awareness about the parental challenges in the community
- ✓ To run football and folks dance teams to build a sense of belongingness among our youngsters, keep them off street and offer them an alternative way of socialising, and hence preventing them from involving into gangs.
- ✓ To organise conferences about the issues that matter to the community and the society at large.

- ✓ To offer supplementary classes to the children that need extra help to increase their achievement.
- ✓ To produce newsletter to inform and increase the awareness in the community about the challenges and the opportunities available for them.
- ✓ To organise social and cultural events to reduce isolation and promote community cohesion.

Achievement and performance

In the period that this report covers, West London Somaliland Community continued to develop and succeeded to sustain the activities that have been implemented in the first year as well as starting new activities. We have further paid a great attention to build the organisation and continued to lay down a strong foundation for West London Somaliland Community. With the great effort and commitment of the coordinator, the trustees and other volunteers, in this year the following has been achieved:

- Thanks to grant received from Awards for All, West London Somaliland Community has started to deliver in April 2008 a family focused project called “Easing the Parental Challenge”. This project consisted of an Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions on the families day to day needs, a conference to raise awareness in the community about the parental challenge and bridge the gap between service providers and the families, a recreational trip to the sea side to reduce isolation, and a parents group to raise awareness about the parental challenge, increase the confidence of parents and organise parenting skills training.

This grant has enabled us to address the parental challenge and put the first step of a long journey to alleviate the immense pressure on the British Somalilanders families. We have delivered IAG sessions four days a week to families on the issues surrounding them such as children and parents’ education, recreational and parenting activities and on their other day-to-day needs. Through this information and advice sessions, we provided support to twenty-five families on a variety of issues including school bullying, difficult behaviour, children achievement and well-being.

As part of this project, West London Somaliland Community has organised, on 11th August 2008, a trip to the seaside for sixteen families (sixty eight people) and had to disappoint many others, as places were limited. It was an unforgettable day for many of the children and parents who had the chance to partake in this as they expressed in the feedback forms.

On 1st December 2008, West London Somaliland Community has organised a conference to bring parents and service providers together in order to bridge the gap and extend access in service provision. It was a well-attended conference where more than fifty people mainly from schools and family support services from different organisations, attended. Different issues are been addressed and discussed during the plenary and workshops sessions, and it was an eye opener for many participants.

Further through this project, in collaboration with the Hillingdon Family Support Services (HFSS), West London Somaliland Community has mobilised the community for a dad seminar that HFSS has organised on 7th February 2008, and we were satisfied that seven fathers attended the seminar among many others fathers and grandfathers. It was a very successful seminar that had had an immense impact on the participants due to the discussed issues and the diversity among the dads.

- On 4th April 2008 West London Somaliland Community has hosted at Willesden Green Library the launching of Dr Jama Musse Jama's book written in Somali and titled "Gobanimo Bilaash Maaha" which means "Freedom is not free". Dr Jama emphasized in his book the rights and duties of the citizen in a democratic society and he published in that book the whole constitution of the "Republic of Somaliland" to encourage and facilitate for the Somalilanders to read and understand their constitution. The aim of the book, explained Dr Jama, is to educate Somalilanders about democracy and the rule of law. Dr Jama Musse Jama is a former research fellow and lecturer at the University of Pisa (Italy), and has mathematics educational background. Now he is an IT Senior Analyst at "Value Team" which is one of the major players of European IT companies. He is the author of, among the others, "My teachers' group: news report of an injustice", "Layli Gobalay" and "Shax".
- During the month of May 2008, West London Somaliland Community took part in the festivity of the celebration of the 17th anniversary of the revival of the "Republic of Somaliland" on 18th May 1991, and co-organised two celebration events in Bethnal Green and in Wembley with the "Friends of Burao University" and the "British Somalilanders United Group". Both celebration events were very successful and enjoyable. The Mayor of Brent who we invited to share the celebration with us opened the Wembley event. As part of our community cohesion strategy, others civil servant and communities were invited at those events
- On 7th June 2008, West London Somaliland Community has organised its first AGM, which took place at Windmill Park Community Centre and where guest speakers were invited. Michelle Samuel who is extended schools partnership coordinator presented the core objectives of extended schools and how schools implement or should implement those objectives. Eid Ali Ahmed, deputy director of Welsh Refugee Council, has done a presentation on building an effective

community organisation. After the presentations, the coordinator has presented the annual report and accounts to the members and invited them to ask any questions on these documents. Further, an election forms were distributed to the members to elect their new trustees or re-appoint the sitting members. As there were no other candidates, three members (Chair, Secretary and one member) were re-appointed and a new treasurer as well, as the treasurer has requested to be replaced due to her busy work schedule.

- As part of our commitment to build a fit for purpose community organisation, the coordinator and the new treasurer have taken part in a one day training titled “Understanding Financial System” and organised on 16th July 2008 by TIDE, which is a training provider. With the same purpose, the trustees received on 23rd August 2008, one day training on roles and responsibilities of trustees, from the basis project of the refugee council.
- On 11th October 2008, we re-started the football training sessions as we secured a two years grant from the Football Foundation towards pitch hiring and coaching, referee and coaching course for our volunteers (three persons to each course). The West London Somaliland Community Football Club is one of the successful projects run by the organisation and where currently more than eighty pupils are registered with the number increasing every week. To be able to sustain this project and cater the maximum number of our pupils, we have implemented a £1 fee payment every Saturday but still allow those children who don’t pay to take part of the football sessions. We plan to increase the fee in the next season to £1.50 and be strict on its payment to be able to develop and sustain this worthwhile project. Also those pupils who don’t come regularly will be removed from the members list to cater only the committed players. We also plan to apply for other funding to increase the training hours so we can cater all the registered pupils as we anticipate that at least one hundred thirty children will be registered with the club at the end of July 2009. All this information will be sent to the parents before the end of this season (2008-2009).
- West London Somaliland Community succeeded to be registered as a charity and it’s been entered in the UK Central Register of Charities on 27th February 2009.

Follow-up and future plans

In its second year of operations, West London Somaliland Community succeeded to implement or make happened the most of its plan for that particular year except the expansion of the community organisation into the London Borough of Brent. We acknowledge that expansion will not do good for our community organisation in its early stage and that it will face difficulties in terms of management and sustainability. However, the expansion plan is not out off table and we will consider again soon as the opportunity arises.

In its third and following years, West London Somaliland Community will build on the achievements of the past two years to implement its entire development programme and achieve its end goal, which is a community movement towards development.

The experience that we have gained from the projects that we have so far delivered has demonstrated to us the need for a Community Centre to make a real difference and create an environment that encourages change. This Community Centre will make possible that the most of the organisation' activities take place under one roof. In our plan, the community centre will be a place that accommodates for a youth centre, a coffee bar for young and old, workshop sessions, community meetings and the day-to-day service delivery of the community organisation. This centre will not only enable the Somaliland community to face their challenges collectively and make them visible and represented but at the same time it will link them to the wider British society and promote community cohesion. For that reason, we will strive in the next year and beyond to make this possible and open a unique community centre for the British Somalilanders.

Further, we are committed to sustain the IAG sessions at the community organisation office and the successful Football Club. Soon as the first year of the Football Foundation grant end, we will start talks, as agreed prior the release of the current small grant, with the Football Foundation to discuss the possibilities for further funding from them and the development of the West London Somaliland Community' Football Club. We believe that this project will even contribute to the realisation of the community centre as we aim to develop the Football Club to a wider youth project with a social outcome and which use sports and recreational activities as medium to stimulate their talents and aspirations.

Conclusion

In the last two years, West London Somaliland Community has booked remarkable achievements with a small budget and other challenges. We are optimistic and committed to push this organisation towards the top and putting in place a fit for purpose community owned organisation. The community engagement and involvement in the running of the organisation is what keep going and motivate us. We will double our efforts in combating the bad image that community organisations have within the Somali communities and we will keep the course of making West London Somaliland Community an accountable, respected and representative community organisation. We will launch in this year AGM the parents' committee, which we think that they will play a major role in bringing the community more closer to their organisation and express openly their pressing needs.

Again, funding remains a major challenge for the sustainability of West London Somaliland Community. We believe we can only deal with this challenge if we work together in securing durable funding sources for our organisation. We are therefore encouraging community members to contribute towards our project activities.

