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“It shall be given to all who attain to faith and in their Sustainer place their trust; and who shun the more heinous sins and abominations; and who, whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive; and who respond to the call of the Sustainer and are constant in prayer; whose rule is consultation among themselves; and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance; and who, whenever tyranny afflicts them, defend themselves. But remember that an attempt at requiting evil may, too, become an evil: hence, whoever pardons his foe and makes peace, his reward rests with God - for He does not love evil doers.

Quran 42:37-41.

CCMW ACTIVITIES

Three Year Strategic Plan 2003-2005.

The objectives were set and we have been working hard to achieve these.

FORUM: “Engaging Muslim women in Civic and Social Change” was held in October, 2003 in Montreal. The Forum had workshops in partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and with the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians.

The Forum’s follow up tasks have been part of the Three Year Plan, e.g. the recommendations from the Civic participation workshop with the Municipalities and the Media workshop have been part of the Regional meetings with the chapters.

CAPACITY BUILDING: Regional meetings were held in Vancouver, Toronto, Halifax, Calgary and Montreal over the period of May- July 04. In each meeting, chapters outside the specific cities participated as well.

The meetings were facilitated by board member Nuzhat Jafri and attended by other board members. The agenda included an update on the Plan; a Media orientation for the chapters; an update on the emerging issue of the proposal to use Sharia/Muslim Family law and the follow up of the Fed of Municipalities Forum workshop.

The purpose of the regional meetings was to strengthen the organization’s capacity and so chapters devised their own plans based on the Three Year Plan of the whole organization.

The board is thrilled that there is great interest in building chapters in Fredericton, Moose Jaw and the Kitchener-Waterloo and Winnipeg areas. InshaAllah, we hope these will start soon.

Regional Meetings Evaluations

At the end of each meeting participants were asked to provide feedback and the feedback was very positive with constructive suggestions for improvements.

Next Steps:

There will be quarterly follow up with the chapters on the progress of their work plans.

Regional meetings will be held next year for follow up on the Three Year Strategic plan, on going capacity

building and mobilization at the local level.

Information from the regional meetings and other CCMW activities is being shared with all of the chapters to keep up the momentum.

The national board is providing advice and guidance to women in other locations regarding the establishment of new chapters, e.g. Kitchener/Waterloo, Winnipeg, Fredericton and Moose Jaw.

Increased Use of technology: An aspect of capacity building is to increase the use of technology and we are continuing to do this. Faisal Saeed with board member Iman Zebian, ensure that the website is updated and has relevant information. We are looking into improving the website design as well. The use of the website has increased dramatically in the last year, mostly because of the issue of Sharia/Muslim Family law.

Andreea Muscurel, the assistant to the board, has initiated a list serve and many of you are already on it and have been receiving information which we hope is of interest to you. Please contact Andreea at Info@CCMW.com as we would be pleased to add you to the list.

MEDIA ORIENTATION AND REVISED HANDBOOK: The chapters had an orientation at the regional meetings and we are now proceeding to the revisions to the current handbook as some of the information requires updating as does the format.

FACT SHEETS: As part of education and advocacy, we are committed to developing three Fact Sheets on Data and Facts about Muslim Women in Canada; Political Participation of Muslim Women and Bias and Discrimination vs. Muslim Women.

The research demonstrates that there are few documented cases of discrimination and we are concerned about the lack and the silence. The research has been completed and we are currently developing documents..

POSITION PAPERS: CCMW is proud to have the support of the Institute of Islamic Studies of McGill University on this project. Professor Sajida Alvi, one of the strongest and hardworking friends of CCMW has been able to obtain the help of Professor Bilal Kuspinar and students to develop some CCMW Position Papers.

Along with many others, CCMW believes that Islam is about equality of men and women, and that we need scholarly work to demonstrate to all of us that this is a fundamental truth of Islam.

MashaAllah, papers will be on subjects such as, Violence vs. Women, Gender and Equality, Leadership and Muslim Women and Islamic Perspective on Sexuality.

These are to be available by the end of 2004.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: CCMW prides itself that our work is grounded on what Muslim women need. For a number of reasons, we think that research is required, across the country, to clearly identify what is happening in the lives of Muslim women and what are the emerging needs and how best these can be met. The identification of the needs will help not only CCMW but other organizations as well.

This will be initiated once we have the Fact Sheets data and the results from the regional meetings so that we can base the research questions on this information.

COLLABORATION/ADVOCACY: These have continued and increased because of the emerging issue of the proposal to use Sharia/Muslim Family law in Ontario.

We collaborated with the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) and the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada {NOIVMWC} to complete research on the Ontario Arbitration Act, and on examples on the use, or lack of, in Europe.

We have had an enormous outpouring of support from individuals and groups and have them on our list serve so that we can keep all informed.

We have been collaborating with groups such as the Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, and Razia Jaffer represented CCMW at their conference in Calgary over the weekend of October 7/04.

The media interest has been significant and CCMW's visibility has increased a great deal. We are now called upon for many items which affect Muslims and not only women.

We have had very positive feedback from the media about our prompt responses and the calibre of our information.

We have met with the Afghan Women's organization and with the Federation of Muslim Women and we hope that we can work together for our common objectives.

OTHER PROJECTS: CCMW had been approached by the U.S based organization, KARAMAH, about a joint project to educate non Muslims about Islam. Sadly, the project did not obtain funding but we hope to collaborate with Karamah on other initiatives.

Professor John Graham of the University of Calgary has submitted a proposal for a project "Muslim Women:

Understanding Exclusion, Promoting Inclusion” and has asked CCMW to participate in this. We are so pleased and hope the funding will be approved.

Professor Bruce Mabley of Laval University, has a project on developing tools to assist teachers when dealing with Muslim students. He is to work closely with the Montreal chapters on this project.

United Nations Canada has asked CCMW to be part of their advisory committee for their project “Integrating and Belonging.” This project is to promote youth and communities to ensure strong participation of youth in community matters.

SHARIA/MUSLIM FAMILY LAW UPDATE: Marion Boyd, the provincially appointed reviewer is to release her recommendations to the Provincial government and to the public within the next month. CCMW, along with other groups met with Marion Boyd and did written submission. We are anxious to learn what she will recommend.

As you are aware, in December 2003. we were contacted by the media as some Muslims in Toronto, proposed the use of Sharia/Muslim family law in Ontario, rather than using the laws of Ontario.

This is possible because of the provincial Arbitration Act, amended in 1991, by the NDP government. The primary focus of the Act is for commercial, rental and labour issues, but there is a clause which allows for its use in family matters, even though there is a specific law, the Family Law Act which has a preamble stating principles about the family.

CCMW has been very active in this issue. We have written a position paper, after consulting with a number of scholars. We have advocated and with the media attention we received a flood of letters and emails. We had asked all Canadians to write to the Premier and this resulted in the Premier appointing Marion Boyd to review the Arbitration Act and its affect on “vulnerable” women and families.

Research

CCMW in partnership with NAWL, NOIVMWC and CCMW, initiated research on the Arbitration Act. The research was done by Natasha Bakht, under the supervision of NAWL and it demonstrates that the Arbitration Act is inappropriate for family matters because of the lack of safeguards and the possibility of harm to women. The whole

procedure of using the Act is considered private and so has no court oversight and is not guided by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The proponents have tried to reassure people that the laws of the land will supersede the arbitration process, the agreement and the arbitral award, but that is not the reality. There is a lot more about how alternative dispute resolution can be useful, but the fears of the privatization of family law remain.

The other research on Europe and Sharia, done by Pascale Fournier, is completed and is on our website. Both the papers have been presented to Ms Boyd, the provincially appointed reviewer of the Arbitration Act.

We are pleased that the paper on the Arbitration Act, by Natasha Bakht, has been published in the new journal, Muslim World and Human Rights.

We will be summarizing the research papers and distributing it widely in other languages soon, in the meantime please visit our website for the Arbitration Act research report.

Media

The media from all over the world has paid attention to the issue and CCMW has had almost 100 interviews and articles. The latest has been the Readers’ Digest and Chatelaine magazine of October 2004.

Conference: The Making of the Islamic Diaspora, May 7/04.

An international conference held by York University under the leadership of Professor Haideh Moghissi of the Diaspora, Islam and Gender Project..

Alia Hogben of CCMW was one of the speakers on the subject of the proposal to implement Sharia/Muslim Family law in Canada.

NAWL Consultation, spring 2004.

Alia also spoke to about 30 women from across Canada on the same issue and an article was written for the journal Jurisfemme.

Workshops on Sharia/Muslim Family law :

The Ottawa chapter organized an educational forum at the University of Ottawa on June 12/04. The participants, men and women, wanted to learn about the Arbitration Act and the impact of using it with Muslim family law in Ontario. Another was organized by Sadia Gassem in Waterloo for about 70 service providers. Board members and the Executive Director have been speaking at these sessions.

So many groups have supported us and we are grateful for the thought and the work they did on behalf of Muslim women. For example, LEAF, the University Women’s Club and the National Council of Women of Canada submitted proposals to Ms Boyd and wrote to the Ontario Premier. NCWC not only made

presentations but ensured that information was circulated to all the members.

Symposium: CCMW is planning a symposium for March 2005, on the intersectionality of secularism, the role of religion in the state, the limits of multiculturalism and the balancing of rights such as religious freedom and equality for women. This will be a groundbreaking opportunity for all of us, even beyond Canada. We will collaborate with Rights and Democracy and NAWL as well as the University of Toronto.

The intent is to have a wide ranging discussion by experts and activists which will lead to policy papers of interest to all liberal democracies.

Funders: We are grateful of the funding provided to CCMW for all this work by the Status of Women and the Dep't of Canadian Heritage, Multiculturalism Program.

OF INTEREST

Arab Regional Conference 10 Years after Beijing, Beirut, July 2004.

Board member Najet Hassan was in Beirut and attended a session at this conference which reviewed and set goals for the future of Arab women.

Book: Nowhere to Turn? Voices of Frontline Workers, 2004.

The book is produced by the Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa.

An excellent resource book both for women and for professionals.

Please contact CCSD phone 613 236 8977 or email council@ccsd.ca

Book: New Horizons Human Rights Education for Families, 2004.

Another excellent book which can be used for groups. An initiative of the Indo-Canadian Women's Association and the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

Edmonton chapter member, Professor Zohra Husaini was part of the group who developed this book.

Book: Family Law Guidebook for Recent Immigrants, 2003.

Another publication by the same association. It is full of good information.

Please contact them at

335 Tower II, Milbourne Market Mall, Edmonton, Alberta T6K 3L6.

Book: Woman, Power and Politics, 2003.

To assist women to understand that without involvement in the political processes, women will not have power to change their lives. It is worthwhile for individuals and groups to use this resource book.

A project of the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care.

Briarpatch Magazine, March 2004.

This magazine contained articles by a young Muslim woman about her hijab, and another on Naushaba Habib, the president of the Regina chapter.

Naushaba writes about her experiences as a new Canadian immigrant. MashaAllah, she is very active in the community and last year was in the media as she explained to all Canadians what Ramadan and fasting means to Muslims.

The Regional chapter under Naushaba has established a scholarship to encourage them to attend university.

Lecture Series: Progressive Muslims & the Future of Islam in Canada, March 14/04.

This was organized by the Snowstar Institute of Religion and the CCMW Toronto chapter. Our friend Raheel

Raza is one of the leaders of the Snowstar Institute.

The founding of a new organization: Progressive Muslims.

A couple of years ago, some Muslims started a website called Muslimswakeup and it has been so successful that they have initiated a new organization.

There is a crying need for alternative voices and perspectives on Islam and Muslims and we hope that this group will be a beacon of hope.

New Translation of the Quran.

Egyptian Islamic scholar of the University of London, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, has completed a new translation using modern English for easier access.

Consultation on the Dep't of Justice's Anti-Terrorism Act.

CCMW has been invited to the consultation on this Act for November 04.

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