

Across the Nations Annual Report

22/23

ACROSS

The Nations



Our mission

We believe in a world that welcomes and values minoritised communities.

Our vision

Across The Nations is a charity that partners with local organisations to develop innovative and sustainable programmes promoting the well-being of marginalised communities.

Our key principles

The ethos of the charity and the activities it invests in are underpinned by the following key principles:

- Filling the gap of the marginalised; to be led by the needs of the marginalised and invisible in society.
- Forming and collaborating with local and international partnerships.
- Understanding local culture to find sustainable solutions that are understood by the local culture.
- Building new leadership to enable new leaders to build capacity at local level.
- Investing at the point of need to ensure funding goes directly to those at their point of need.

Our history

Established in 1998, Across the Nations (AtN) was initially set up to provide a response to the marginalised special needs community in Morocco. The charity partnered with others to support the foundation of a special school which was established at this time and continues to the present day.

In 2017, as a response to the needs of people displaced by events in the Middle East, a partnership was established with STEP Iraq which was

already working with marginalised and displaced people in a refugee camp in Rabat.

Working in partnership with STEP, AtN began an Art Therapy Project and an Adventure Therapy Climbing Project aimed at supporting the mental health and well-being of displaced and traumatised young people. In addition, a Livelihood project was started to develop IT skills for those within the refugee camp.

In 2020, HEM, which began independently in 2014 with a small group of healthcare professionals supporting local clinicians in Burkina Faso and Jordan, affiliated itself with AtN to give it a structure to grow within. This affiliation has developed alongside the other strands of the charity and is now an important and integral part of the work of AtN.

HEM connects Health, Education and Mentoring expertise and experience with local and national practitioners and service providers working to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

The charity continues to actively seek ways to support marginalised and displaced people at a local level and in partnership with others, wherever they are in most need across the world.

Our partners

STEP UK

Established in the Kurdish region of Northern Iraq in 2001 when Saddam Hussein was still in power, STEP is a niche child protection agency which primarily supports vulnerable children, refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, and local Kurds; including kids working on the streets. It is also working with the local government to pioneer a regional foster care system which is slowly being rolled out across Kurdistan.

For more information see: <http://www.step-uk.com/uk/>

MRDS (Millenium Relief & Development Services)

MRDS partners with AtN to fund all of the food, water and transportation for the climbing trips.

ABOUT US

Board of Trustees

The Across the Nations board of trustees is responsible for governing the charity to ensure compliance with the charities aims and the law, manage the effective use of resources, set strategy and ensure the work is effective.

In line with good practice, the board keeps under regular review its own performance, roles and responsibilities and sets boundaries between its governance role and the charity's day-to-day operations. The AtN board of trustees includes a wide range of ages, relevant skills, and experience. TMcE was welcomed to the Board in 2022 and provided with documentation on the role. She brings a wide range of skills in strategic planning, experience of funders and administration and personal qualities of compassion and empathy relevant to the charities aims.

Trustees meet at least four times a year and often monthly to maintain an oversight of all aspects of the delivery and finances of the charity.

Name	Position
Tim Morris	Chairperson
Tracey Ripley – McElvogue	Trustee
Conor Mason	Trustee/Finance
Heather Mason	Trustee
Alan Peek	Trustee
Anne Davey	Trustee/Secretary

Volunteers/field workers

Matthew Low	Volunteer field worker/ climbing project/HEM
Gail Low	Volunteer field worker/art therapy/HEM
Bryony Wilson	Volunteer field worker/Leader of the HEM team

The volunteer field workers lead and develop the day to work of the charity at the point of need. They develop collaborative relationships and partnerships, lead training and engage in the practical tasks relevant to their various areas of expertise.

Annual update on the activities of the charity

The following section summarises the key activities and development of the charity that have been taken place within the reporting period.

The activities fall under several areas, including the Çîyako Project/adventure therapy, art therapy and health, mentoring and education through HEM.

Çîyako Project/Adventure therapy

Due to personal reasons Matt Low had to relocate back to the UK during the period of this report. The adventure therapy has been able to continue with the support and partnership of STEP. Matthew will continue to lead this team virtually from the United Kingdom and also make regular trips to Kurdistan.

The two local apprentices, Noor and Jwan will continue to carry out initial training for the children to climb in Kurdistan. Matt will continue to build on this during his visits back. Eighty children were taken out to the rock face in July following preliminary training and safety work done in the camp.

In August 2022 Matt focused on necessary administration to set up a management and recording system and English lessons.

Matt was also contacted in 2022 by the International Mountain Federation to develop a qualification for leaders.

Following his trip in early 2023 Matt was able to provide a positive update on the ongoing work in the camp in Kurdistan. Nathan Low accompanied him and made a film of the refugee camp and the work of Noor, camping and climbing. During this trip Matt scoped out another potential site for rock climbing having lost another location.

It is encouraging to note the requests from an ex-Iranian camp for stateless women to be involved in the adventure climbing. The apprentice Noor is going to go and help train them.

The next trip to Iraq by Matt will be in June 2023. He will be starting a peer review on Adventure therapy in Iraq to document the work being done and provide evidence of the impact it is having in the lives of those who participate.

Useful discussions are taking place with the University of Wales concerning a proposal for a PhD focused on the benefits of Adventure Therapy in Kurdistan. Matt has also written and submitted a short piece about the adventure therapy work to a professional mountaineer magazine.

We continue to network with relevant people and bodies to access funding for the future of this project.

We are always mindful of the political climate in Kurdistan and the challenges people face in their day-to-day life and the challenging context in which AtN functions in Kurdistan.

Hem Health

Bryony Wilson continues to head up the work of HEM health, an integral part of the work of AtN. She undertook a successful trip in October 2022 to Kurdistan when she was able to meet with a range of former and new contacts to continue to build good working relationships. Much networking with relevant professionals has continued throughout this period linked to the suicide prevention work, patient centred care and trafficking. She has also continued to meet with the patient-centred care group online.

Deborah McMillan from this group, contacted a University of Ulster staff member who has written textbook on person centred care and explored ways to partner with them. This included a discussion on any expectation of financial contribution or voluntary help to factor in moving forward.

The suicide prevention work continued with good connections being made. The mental health work is Kurdish led with ongoing retrospective work being carried out to provide the first quantitative data since the war. There are plans to set up a group amongst Kurds and minority middle eastern groups.

She currently works on HEM Health initiatives on a self- funded basis for one day a week.

Art Therapy

Finances

Funds remain small based on regular giving with several small donations made to AtN and HEM health during the year.

Final papers to be completed and submitted are still pending before donations can be given through the Charities Aid Foundation. (CAF)

Fundraising

Work has been done to ensure that any fundraising campaign is accessible and manageable including clear branding.

Social media is now being used to post information about the work of AtN on Facebook. This has enabled sharing with a much wider audience.

Future fundraising possibilities are being explored including an AtN presence at a climbing festival, further fund raising applications in Iraq and USA.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & THANK YOU

The Trustees are very grateful to the following donors who have provided funds for the charity during this reporting period. The annual report summarises some of the significant impact you are making in the lives of many people because of your generous giving.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE FOLLOWING DONORS

MRDS (*Millenium Relief & Development Services*): for the generous funding that provides all of the food, water and transportation for the climbing trips.

Individual donors: for the donations given on a regular monthly basis.

The Board would like to acknowledge the work and thank all the members of the Board, staff volunteers and associates in all that has been achieved in this reporting period.

Giving a voice to the marginalised

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Number NI028174