



**Maryam Al Zadjali and Nada Al Jamali**, chairperson and board member of Dar Al Atta'a, talk about their insights and experiences shaped by years of active charity work

# Living Charity

Dar Al Atta'a has today consolidated its presence as an active and sincere charity house, providing aid and relief to the needy, and staying truly discerning about whom they serve

**D**ar Al Atta'a, or the 'House of Giving', needs no introduction. One of Muscat's leading charity and voluntary organisations, founded in 2002, it has done pioneering work in providing food supplies, free housing, cyclone relief work, educational assistance and training, and aid in many other forms to the less privileged and affected in Oman.

For our People & Causes special, we spoke to Maryam Al Zadjali, one of the founders and chairpersons of Dar Al Atta'a, and Nada Al Jamali, board member, on what it means to be the moving force behind a dynamic charity body, and their plans for the rest of 2011. The passion for their calling is obvious as these two ladies explain the day-to-day-workings and the defining moments of active charity work.

"Our major project last year was the



construction of 13 houses, fulfilling out goals in time for the 40th National Day. This was our contribution to the country for this landmark anniversary," says Nada. Another National Day achievement was 40 scholarships for students for higher education at local colleges.


Taking the educational initiative one step higher, 27 girls from villages like Qantab and Quriyat were given free training in the Montessori system of teaching. The Phet cyclone last year was a crucial point for Dar Al Atta'a, as was Gonu, in 2007, when the organisation did groundbreaking work in bringing food, water and other essentials to affected people, in and outside Muscat. These incidents saw their capabilities being consolidated and taken to the next level with active volunteer work and relief activities.

For 2011, they're kicking off in a big way with the upcoming gala fundraiser dinner on March 2, in collaboration with the Omani Society for Fine Arts (OSFA), to be held at Grand Hyatt Muscat. Ministers, business people, artists and other well known members of society will participate at this

event, with artworks being auctioned off to raise money to train underprivileged women or give scholarships. The same event last year had raised over RO 200,000 which went into the houses.

Day-to-day functioning at Dar Al Atta's MQ office mainly sees people walking in, giving in their applications for assistance, after which Dar Al Atta'a sends a team to assess if the applicant is deserving. Over the years, Maryam, Nada and the six other women behind Dar Al Atta'a have seen their own insights and experiences change. "In the beginning, we were emotional, when an applicant walked in and started crying

about their situation, we would believe everyone. Now, we can actually gauge which is a genuine case," say Maryam and Nada. Then there have been cases that they couldn't even believe in the beginning. Like the family in Qurum which lived in a small house without a single bathroom or toilet facility.

"Charity in its wider definition encompasses a number of things – it may be just lend a listening ear to some, and for others, guidance on what to do, and then actual material aid. Whatever it is, we go home with a deep sense of satisfaction, about having given something back to society," says Maryam. 



The Phet cyclone in June last year was a crucial point, when Dar Al Atta'a did groundbreaking work in delivering food, water and essentials to affected people

## On Giving

- The 2nd annual fundraiser gala dinner on March 2.
- Dar Al Atta'a survives on funding from individuals, banks or corporations, which have to be solicited. A programme for corporate memberships is being put into place.
- Ramadan is a very active time, when they are open for 24 hours and rations are distributed. Last year, more than 3700 families were served.
- Regular monthly rations for around 90 families are also given - the running costs are high and companies that can sponsor the food items are welcome.
- Contact Dar Al Atta'a on 24692996