



AFGHAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT SERVICES

**AFGHAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT SERVICES**
ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021

FROM ISOLATION TO FULL PARTICIPATION

PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

What a challenging year it has been.

By early 2020, the world was struck by a global pandemic that has impacted every aspect of our lives, including how AWO delivers its services.

We started the new fiscal year by modifying our service delivery models. As a result of the guidelines released by government and public health officials, and the declaration of the state of emergency by the Province of Ontario, we had to deliver all of our in-person services remotely. This was challenging for newcomers since in-person services are very important for them. They missed having one-on-one interactions with us. Lack of experience in virtual settings and lack of access to devices were other challenges that our clients faced.

Moreover, the unemployment rate increased among AWO's client base. Most newcomers, women, and youth employed in restaurants, retail, and manufacturing industries, lost their jobs.

Although the COVID pandemic brought many challenges, AWO was able to successfully navigate the unprecedented conditions and respond with understanding and flexibility.

To help our clients better understand COVID and the effectiveness and safety of vaccines, we invited doctors and nurses who were able to provide information on COVID and vaccinations in the native languages of our clients. In partnership with the City of Toronto and service providers, AWO vaccination ambassadors provided a vaccine clinic and assisted hundreds of community members in receiving their vaccines.

The pandemic also presented unique social and mental health challenges that led to the isolation of the youth, single parents, and seniors in the community. The AWO, with support from donors, delivered food and other essential items to single mothers and seniors who have been unable to leave their homes.

In addition to the challenges faced by our clients, our staff also had to struggle to learn new skills and learn to provide virtual services. Although initially the number of clients that our staff previously serviced in-person was reduced due to the shift to virtual services, the demand for services picked up by the end of the year and the AWO exceeded its targets.

AWO was able to serve **16,301 clients**. The difficult circumstances of 2020-2021 demonstrated the AWO's resilience to rise to a challenge, particularly its commitment to provide seamless services that help to support and integrate refugees and newcomers.

Through all the challenges, the strength of AWO's staff, Board members and volunteers has been a constant. For that, we thank them all. We also thank our valued, funders, partners and community connections for their support and collaboration during this year and throughout the uncertainty of the pandemic and for their steadfast commitment to our mission and vision.

Our hope is that we will continue to have support from our staff, Board members, volunteers, community partners and funders to ensure that the needs of these and other refugees are met and that they are able to integrate successfully into Canadian society.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Asma Faizi (President)

Beheshta Jaghori (Vice President)

Huria Jalalzai (Treasurer)

Mina Sabbor (Secretary)

Sheba Shernaz

Hakeema Mashal Sidiqi

Sumaya Karimi

Nasimeh Bayat

Kobra Rasul

Abeda Baluch

Parween Pazhwak

ABOUT AWO

Founded in 1990, AWO provides settlement and integration services to newly arrived refugee and immigrant communities all over the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Peel Region. Most of our clients are women and their families, many of whom have escaped war and persecution and who experience multiple socioeconomic, race and gender-based barriers. Annually, we provide upwards of 90,000 direct services through our trauma-informed, client focused programs, which go beyond settlement needs and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) to providing mental health and wellness supports and encouraging active participation and connection with broader communities.

Our unique contribution is the provision of gender sensitive, culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services that help foster safety and a sense belonging for refugees and immigrants during a crucial time in their settlement journey. We serve all newcomers, with 90% of our clients coming from the following regional backgrounds: Afghans, South Asians, Central Asians, and from North African and the Middle East (mainly Iranians, Somalis, Syrians, Iraqis, Kurdish, Assyrians and Palestinians).

OUR VISION

Refugees and immigrants, especially those who have experienced wars and persecution and those who are marginalized, leading self-sufficient and dignified lives in a socially inclusive society.

OUR MISSION

AWO works with refugees and immigrants, particularly those who have experienced wars and persecution and those who are most marginalized, with a special focus on women and their families. Our mission is to improve their quality of life, to promote their social and economic inclusion, and empower them to become contributing members of society and live in dignity.

OUR VALUES

Gender equality; access and equity; dignity and respect; social inclusion; and economic empowerment

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Promote greater social and economic inclusion of women, youth and seniors; empower marginalized and isolated women and their families; enhance mental health services; strengthen partnerships and collaborations; and enhance organizational capacity and sustainability



Isolation, illness, income loss, and insecurity. Refugee and newcomer communities especially those who were newly arrived, on their own, elderly, or at risk of domestic violence experienced heightened stress during the pandemic. It took all our staff and volunteer efforts in conjunction with the timely, essential resources from funders to meet the needs of our communities.

We could not have served as many community members without the generous support of community-based funders such as, United Way of Greater Toronto, Canadian Women's Foundation, New Horizons for Seniors, Second Harvest, and the Peel Community Grant. These funders helped us reach and serve the most vulnerable populations, including seniors and women who have experienced domestic violence, and increased our ability to protect our staff and clients with proper PPE.

WELLNESS LINE PEER-LED PROGRAMMING

Our Wellness Line programming was critical to enabling AWO to reach women who are experiencing or are survivors of domestic violence and to isolated seniors. Funding from the Canadian Women's Foundation gave much needed support to isolated newcomer women. The Wellness Line provided an outlet for those in distress to receive friendly, calming reassurance from trained peer leaders, and connections to available support and resources that can help ensure that the situation does not reach crisis level. The focus of the project was on racialized newcomer and immigrant women/girls and their families from Afghanistan, Iran, Arabic-speaking countries, and South Asia. The target population included newcomers and immigrants who could not communicate fluently in either of the official languages, were living on their own or in crowded intergenerational homes, had been harder hit by the pandemic due to their pre-existing poverty, and/or had weaker support networks.

PANDEMIC *EMERGENCY SERVICES*

The Wellness Line tried to provide newcomer and immigrant communities with a low barrier environment. Peer leaders spoke 7 different minority languages including Farsi, Dari, Pashtu, Urdu, and Arabic. The diverse linguistic ability increased the AWO's capacity to connect directly with newcomers and immigrants with English lower than LINC Level 2. One-on-one connections were carried out over the phone and anyone with a phone line could access to Wellness Line peer leaders. The AWO could expand its reach through Wellness Line and supported over 400 individuals either by provision of emotional support, connecting with food banks, mental health services, language classes, employment services, and vaccine registration. The Wellness Line connected over 100 people through group sessions with each other and (re)created a network of support for those who felt isolated in COVID pandemic.

Our Wellness Line Peer Leader program continued to provide a chat line and wellness sessions for community members who needed someone to talk to. Peer Leaders and AWO staff provided group sessions for the crisis clients on financial literacy, COVID-19 safety and one-on-one sessions teaching newcomer women how to use the technology e.g., writing emails, sending consent forms, how to use Zoom.

“My name is Maryam. I arrived in Canada with my husband and my 8-year-old son in 2019. A couple of months after our arrival, my husband and I got separated (during COVID). I was left with a lot of problems, confusion, and uncertainty. On top of it, I did not speak English very well. I joined a Telegram group and heard about Wellness Line from one of the volunteers who is a part of that Telegram group. She introduced me to the Wellness Line peer leader Pirouz. Wellness Line helped me get a legal aid lawyer and to start the process of my divorce. They also helped me find a new place to live. Pirouz also picked up groceries for me one day! I was not in the best place mentally. Wellness Line and the peer leaders helped me feel connected. The group Zoom sessions were really good. I found some friends in our community and I do not feel lonely anymore. The help and support to my son and me impacted our mental well-being and stability a lot. I feel more relaxed now and I know I have support here now”

Group
Sessions

35

Unique clients

404

Number of calls

1305



WELLNESS ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

2021 - 2022

WELLNESS LINE FOR SENIORS

The Wellness Line's check-in calls provided low-barrier connections to support vulnerable seniors in East Toronto during the COVID; and to provide seniors with emotional peer support, and connect them with resources. Wellness Line increased and (re)built seniors' social networks by offering them emotional support from their peers, provided them with senior-related information, and connect them with other resources and services when/if needed.

This was a collaborative project between AWO as the lead organization, Access Alliance, Applegrove Community Complex, Ralph Thornton Community Centre, and Toronto Community Housing. The collaboration provided the opportunity to reach out to a diverse group of seniors including Toronto Housing seniors. Peer leaders spoke different languages that contributed to a low barrier connection for those seniors with lower English skills.

Wellness Line Seniors Experience:

Two seniors had been quite agitated about getting their second dose of vaccine. There was a pop-up clinic near their home but due to their age and health conditions, they were not able to go to the pop-up clinic on their own. One of the peer leaders arranged to pick them up at their requested time and drove them to the clinic. She talked to the vaccine clinic organizers to ensure the two seniors could get priority access. Once the two seniors had their shots, they were driven back to their home. One of them said: I feel liberated now. I was so scared of going out without having my two doses."

United Way of Greater Toronto Emergency Fund and New Horizons for Seniors (NHSP) Emergency Modifications funding helped AWO to bolster supports for isolated newcomer seniors through a dedicated Wellness Line, increased programming to reduce social isolation, and assistance for seniors to meet their basic needs. The Wellness Line connected vulnerable, lonely, and /or distressed seniors with peer leaders via phone or digital

device to access one-on-one or group peer support, information sessions, and referrals to appropriate services and resources from collaborative partner agencies. The AWO was the lead organization in a collaborative with Access Alliance, Applegrove Community Complex, Ralph Thornton Community Centre, and Toronto Community Housing. The collaboration provided the opportunity to reach out to a diverse group of seniors including Toronto Housing seniors. Peer leaders spoke different languages that contributed to a low barrier connection for those seniors with lower English skills.

NHSP funding enabled us to connect with and provide care packages for newcomer and refugee seniors in the GTA and Peel. Seniors received assistance in meeting their basic needs in terms of access to groceries, personal care items, and connecting with medical and other professional appointments. Virtual sessions for seniors focused on health, facts and myths about COVID-19, games to strengthen mental capacity, gentle exercise classes, and a popular cooking together session. NHSP funding helped AWO pivot to provide a one-time purchase and delivery of urgently needed items including paper products and PPE to 150 seniors in Toronto, Scarborough, and Mississauga. The funding helped us to coordinate our seniors' programs across our organization and to extend beyond to vulnerable seniors who were not newcomers but experiencing extreme isolation in Toronto Housing buildings that were not easily accessible. Some seniors, many with mobility issues and disabilities, had not left their apartment in months. These seniors are at risk of diminishing social and interpersonal capabilities and are now on our list for check-ins and services.



Deliveries to at risk seniors



Unique seniors



Number of calls



Afghan Women's Organization
Refugee & Immigrant Services

CALENDAR & PLANNER 2022-23

NEW HORIZONS
FOR SENIORS
PROGRAM



Projects Making a Difference in the Lives of Seniors

Canada

The seniors and volunteers worked together on producing a calendar and a planner, with the support of funding from by NHSP

THE COMMUNITY FOOD HUT

Food insecurity increased exponentially in our communities during the pandemic. From April 2020 to March 2021 the demand for food bank support increased seven-fold, causing an enormous stress on staff and volunteers, who worked overtime to ensure that distressed community members had access to nutritious food. The indignity and suffering caused by loss of jobs, ineligibility for government benefits, and overall reduced income level had a devastating effect on the community.

Emergency funding was given to AWO for the one-time distribution of food items. The Salam Foundation donated Halal food items on a monthly basis and in December we had a turkey drive. The Community Food Hut, with funding from Second Harvest, served 150 households weekly, over 500 adults, youth, children, and seniors in the Thorncliffe and Flemingdon neighbourhoods.

4649 INDIVIDUAL VISITS (REPEAT) OVER THE FISCAL YEAR



The Community Food Hut, with funding from Second Harvest, served 150 households weekly in 2020-2021



Food delivery to AWO clients by UoT students & volunteers

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

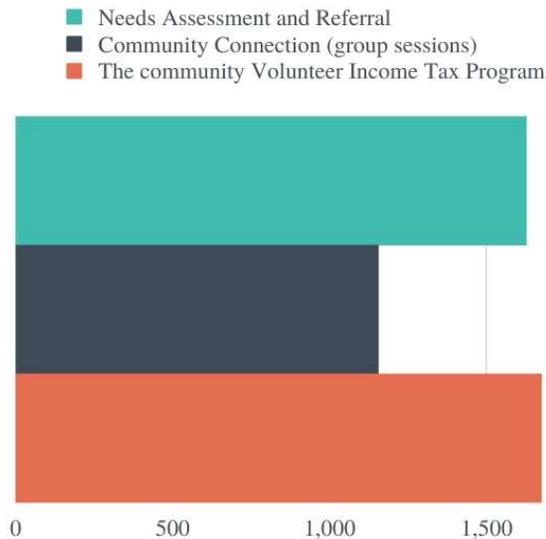
Our frontline settlement team was quick to make the transition from in-person to virtual service delivery. The periods of lockdown and expanded personal safety requirements were coupled with the increased needs of our refugee and newcomer communities who were experiencing food insecurity, unemployment, isolation, and escalating incidences of family and gender-based violence. Our first step was to switch to phone-based appointments for needs assessments, referrals, and filling out forms. It was, at times, challenging to ascertain eligibility but we managed to meet all our targets and to ensure that clients were informed about new benefits, CERB, and other important information about services. Within two days, the next step of moving to online programming was in place. AWO's staff began a steep learning curve with Zoom and other online platforms, including WhatsApp, to keep clients active and engaged. Many of the clients already communicated with loved ones in other countries via WhatsApp making it a good starting point for online programming with smaller groups. Larger groups were brought together on Zoom which required additional time for digital literacy and tech support during sessions. Our frontline workers flexibility, willingness, and fast adaptation of a new delivery model was remarkable and helped to mitigate the stressful circumstances.

The pandemic intensified isolation for clients and community members, especially for seniors, newly-arrived families, and clients living alone. Frontline workers were supported by community-based Peer Leaders who reached out to clients with regular wellness calls and were available seven days a week to take calls from newcomer community members in need of extra support. Peer Leaders worked with frontline staff to provide online sessions for seniors, women in crisis, and other newcomer community members focused on: Physical and mental well-being; staying safe during an emergency; developing an emergency contacts list; and how to build and maintain a network of friends while confined at home.

Despite the relatively smooth transition to virtual service, our sector also faced some big challenges. Frontline workers spent additional, sometimes excessive, time assisting clients who had limited English language skills and needed support with English correspondence. There was a steep learning curve for and at times a lack of access to tools and equipment for virtual services for both clients and staff and volunteers. Extra equipment (laptops, computer cameras, and microphones) was needed for all staff and volunteers to be able to work effectively. Loss of employment and lack of safe employment was an enormous concern for our clients, as was gaining access to new benefits since many were not aware of what was available to them.

Prior to the pandemic, food security was a concern among newcomer families. After the pandemic, the need for AWO’s food hub at our Don Mills and Scarborough locations increased. Our settlement managers, frontline staff, and volunteers made emergency food deliveries to isolated newcomers who had little food left in their cupboards. Through University of Toronto student fundraising and food distribution, and staff fundraising, AWO was able to provide groceries to increasing numbers of newcomers. Seniors, single parents, and newcomers living on their own were at especially at risk for food insecurity.

Staff participated in a range of training areas to stay on top of skills and knowledge needed to serve vulnerable clients during the pandemic. Especially helpful were the trainings on trauma- and violence-informed approaches; mental health response training; CERB and government financial assistance information; and trainings on how staff can protect their physical and mental wellness during the COVID-19 crisis.



Settlement (Toronto & Mississauga) Statistics 2020-2021

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING

The AWO’s employment program is designed to assist newcomers with preparing resumes, cover letters, submitting job applications and developing networking strategies. The employment counselling sessions assisting the clients with building their skills and knowledge of the employer perspective and workplace culture this year were well above our predicted targets.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate has increased within our client base. Most newcomers, women, and youth who are employed in restaurants, retail, and in manufacturing jobs have been laid off. Many clients who lost their jobs applied to government benefits.

Staff organized online webinar sessions for clients to help them better understand their eligibility and the application process for government benefits and income tax. Clients were assisted with Employment Insurance applications and completing the biweekly reports as well as with their income tax inquiries. Employment staff conducted one-on-one and group sessions over the phone. Information sessions included workers’ rights, employment scams, and looking for work.

The employment program staff have continuously used social media—namely WhatsApp (a widely used platform among the AWO clients)—to keep track of service requests, services delivered, and general worker-client communication. These steps have proven to be user friendly and have created a smoother transition in delivering remote services.

With the gradual reopening of the economy, AWO’s employment program has increased the planning and allocation of employment services to fulfill the new demand. Our goal is for as many clients as possible to secure viable, safe employment.



AWO received donation from Canada Confederation of Fujian Association

YOUTH PROGRAMS

In 2020-2021, the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique social and mental health challenges that led to social isolation of the youth in the community. In response, our Youth Connection program provided assistance through a one-on-one youth mentorship program. Youth received online support and benefited from our online Zoom hangout sessions and phone call conversations focusing on personal resilience and physical/emotional well-being.

Sessions provided further opportunities for youth to stay connected with their social networks. Our approach during the pandemic was modified due to the health regulations. We adapted the program to provide additional one-on-one sessions to replace cancelled field trips, and social and cultural events. While the negative effects of pandemic restrictions decreased the number of participants, the positive effect was that many youth transitioned to becoming volunteers providing essential services to seniors. Youth volunteers assisted seniors by teaching them basic computer skills and internet navigation; delivered food to seniors; accompanied them to appointments; and provided interpretation. We are proud of the way that our youth stepped up to help others in the community and hope that this will be a path for further intergenerational programming in upcoming years.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

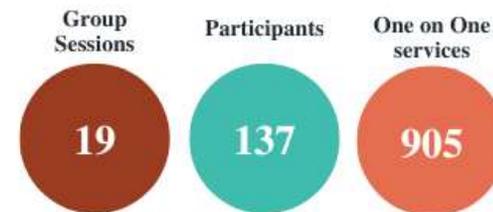
I would like to thank you for everything you have taught me through this year, I was able to learn a lot from you and thanks to the AWO for having a placement student there.

Student PS.

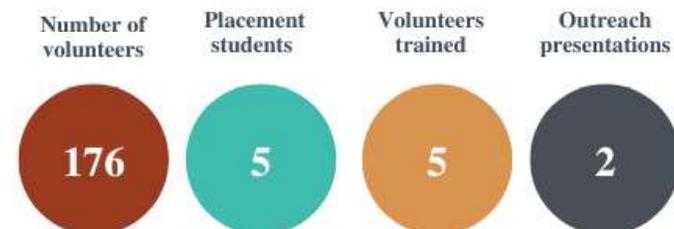
TORONTO - YOUTH PROGRAM



TORONTO - EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM



PEEL - VOLUNTEER PROGRAM





Youth staff and volunteers assisting with donations drop offs

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

AWO's LINC program has been successful in providing appropriate language training specifically for women. Our monthly attendance levels for all our classes in the first few months of the pandemic were under 80% but attendance picked up throughout the rest of the year as learners became more accustomed to the online learning platform. The program has been successful not only meeting its goals of much-needed language training but it also has provided essential mental health support and guidance to learners during this difficult times.

There were significant challenges to all programming areas due to the pandemic and LINC was no exception. Staff and learners found it equally difficult to move to completely virtual learning with little to no experience providing or taking online classes. However, the staff and LINC learners worked hard to get surmount the obstacles and managed to be fully operational on the virtual platform by the end of the first quarter. Many of our learners used their cell phones as the only way of communication and to attend the virtual LINC Classes. Our assessment centre remained closed for in-person assessments. By the end of the year, we still had a waitlist of clients who prefer to have an in-person assessment instead of online because they are Literacy students with little to no English language skills and / or they are newly arrived with no access to laptops nor digital tech knowledge.

“My name is Y.S. and I am from Afghanistan and I live in Toronto. I came to Canada in 2017. I also go to school called “AWO” that’s where I learned English. When I came to Canada, I didn’t know English. I am married and I have four kids. My kids go to a great school and will get the best education. I am also working. My husband just graduated from program. We feel really safe in Canada and hopefully my kids will have a bright future.”

Y.S. (Level 2/3 student)

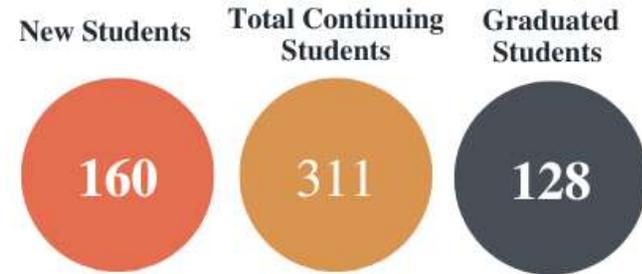
During the training period, LINC has worked closely with our settlement program, and other AWO projects/ programs such as mental health and wellness. We have been providing important information and covered educational sessions on COVID -19 health protocols related to different environments: at home, at schools, and while in public places such as grocery stores. We have offered specific sessions on accessing the financial supports available to families that are offered by the Municipal, Provincial and Federal Governments. We provided information sessions on vaccines and the importance of keeping up with vaccinations and booked vaccine appointments for LINC learners and their families.

In-house professional development sessions for both LINC instructors and CNC workers were provided. The instructors completed several trainings to equip them with the skills and tools for providing online instruction. The CNC has completed many online PD sessions offered by CMAS, and other online trainings. We completed a comprehensive program evaluation focusing the on LINC and Settlement programming delivery during pandemic year.

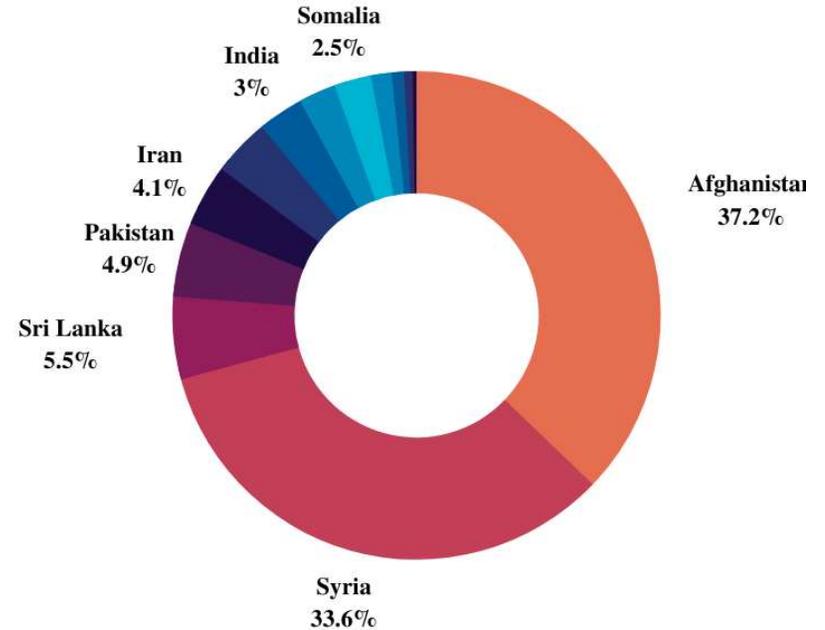
“I am very grateful for this online school. This online class was a great opportunity to keep learning and also it kept us motivated throughout this pandemic. I really got used to virtual school and I have learned a lot. It is a really good experience since I can get a lot of housework done as well as my homework and spend time with my family. I like learning online, I got to learn more about how to use a laptop. It was also a good distraction from all the stress. Getting used to this online world and learning new things/continue learning English was almost impossible for me. But since I had one of the best teachers, these things were easy and fun for me. I am always going to be grateful for having a teacher like E. who taught as in the best way possible to learn and I really appreciate it that AWO has made this great program for all women like me.”

S.A. (Level 4/5 student)

LINC Learner Numbers for Toronto, Scarborough, and Peel Locations:



LINC Learner Numbers for Toronto, Scarborough, and Peel Country Of Origin

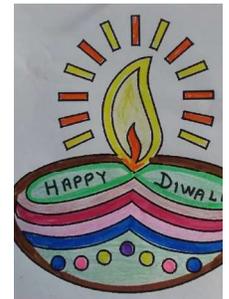
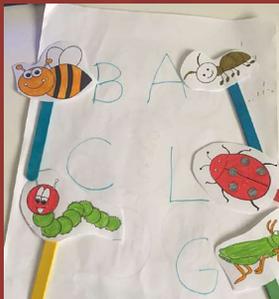


During these tough times the CNC teams became even more united, helping each other with both professional and personal issues. Professional development and skill building were key areas of focus. The CNC teams completed intensive training with CMAS, including how to start Early Childhood Learning Programs online during COVID-19. CNC programming was carried out on Zoom, Facebook, via one-to-one programming, and through monthly check-ins with families not attending Zoom sessions.

The Peel CNC staff volunteered to work with children and their families via Zoom throughout May and June 2020 while Peel's LINC program was on a break. When regular programming commenced, children who were not enrolled in the Monday to Thursday Zoom sessions could access videos for infant, toddler, and pre-school levels posted daily on Facebook to keep up with early learning activities.

Initial fears and concerns about conducting early learning sessions online were eventually dispelled as staff, parents, and children became more confident delivering and participating in online sessions. Now CNC staff is delivering engaging online programming via Zoom and Facebook, and parents and children are at ease creating and sharing video content. CNC staff and parents have been pleased with the quality of early learning online programming despite it being a huge learning curve for staff and families alike!

Some activities organized by the CNC staff



CARE FOR NEWCOMER CHILDREN (CNC)

LET'S TALK NOT HIDE

AWO's Let's Talk Not Hide's neighbourhood campaign to destigmatize conversations concerning domestic violence within newcomer communities began 5 years ago. An ongoing program priority is to establish a space where newcomer women and men are willing to openly take part in discussions about domestic violence, and to become active bystanders.

Despite the COVID-19 restrictions, lack of technology, and digital literacy, the program was able to achieve a great deal of its goals for bringing newcomer participants together to discuss this important and potentially life-saving topic. Direct participation in online or in-person sessions increased from the previous year, as has their willingness to share life stories and experiences. Participants reported increased knowledge and satisfaction in their comments and text messages shared within the groups and with AWO staff. Invaluable help of from volunteers and staff has increased Let's Talk Not Hide's reach using participants and community members' preferred online and digital platforms. An increasing demand from newcomers in some target communities pushed the team to organize weekly instead of biweekly sessions, which led to the program exceeding its target number. Meeting with stakeholders and partners became easier and faster because of the shift to virtual programming.



Staff, volunteers and participants in one of Let's Talk Not Hide sessions

COMMITTEES

JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

AWO's Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) met weekly for most of the year. While our organization has some of the most resilient people on staff, no-one had ever encountered a global pandemic or had experience with the daunting challenge of addressing the multiple levels of Health and Safety issues that were affecting AWO's clients, staff, and wider community.

We processed the daily influx of new information about the pandemic right alongside everyone else in the world. Staying on top of changing public health recommendations was not always smooth sailing, however, we developed a working draft of AWO's COVID-19 Safety Protocol that covered all aspects of AWO's work environment and programming to share with the staff. We did our best to field questions about staff's concerns and created procedures for disinfecting, gaging physical distance, infection tracking, screening procedures, and clear signage that was translated into the main languages of our clients. When limited in-person was allowed, we implemented rotating schedules for each location. JHSC representatives from each location evaluated their office sites for any outstanding issues with ventilation and for PPE and plexiglass needs. As we move into a new fiscal year, AWO's staff and community are better prepared for the worst, but are hoping for the best.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE COMMITTEE

AWO's Board and senior management saw the provision of active, up-to-date communication platforms crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee was struck in early December and comprised of staff with myriad of substantial skill sets that could accelerate the operation. The work on preparing a policy document to guide the organization's website and social media commenced early on and included internal and external consultations, as well as professional advice from individuals with expertise in the field. Terms of Reference for committee work and an AWO comprehensive policy was developed and shared with management and staff.

The committee creates regular content to promote AWO's services and activities and to observe support and acknowledgement of days and events that are of interest and value in the lives of communities we serve or work with. Upgrading and maintaining the website is a work in progress. The committee works to ensure the AWO website functions as a true reflection of the exceptional work of the organization, its dedicated Board, staff, and volunteers.

This committee takes its directions from AWO's mission, vision and objectives and is guided by the organization's strategic plan. We strongly encourage input and participation from of all members of the AWO family.

SUCCESS STORY: ZAHIDA PARVEEN

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and thanks to Fauzia Khan from the Afghan Women's Organization Refugee and Immigrant Services Mississauga office for the tremendous support I have received over the past 4 years since I moved to Canada.

I came to Canada in 2017 without the relevant skillset to land a job in the Canadian job market. While I had my family here, I wanted to gain confidence to be successful in my new life in Canada. I did not know a lot of people in Toronto and job opportunities were hard to come by.

I had only briefly worked in an office environment back home before becoming a full-time housewife and running my own business from home. I did not have enough experience working in an office environment nor the transferable skills to find a desk job. My husband was retired, and I wanted to help my family as much as possible. Sitting at home, without a source of income, I was beginning to feel anxious and stressed.

After struggling to find a job, meet new people and make friends, I was introduced to AWO Peel's Settlement Manager, Fauzia Khan, through a common connection and the rest is history!

I was given the opportunity at Flemingdon Health Centre in Toronto to enroll into Nordic Walking Instructor Certification and Activator Fall Prevention courses. After successfully completing the courses, I became a Pole Walking Instructor at the Flemingdon Health Centre. I was then given the opportunity to lead Pole Walking classes at different community centres in and around Toronto. This was one of the best experiences of my life.

While this was a huge success for me, I wanted to continue to learn more. I was given the opportunity to enroll into a Senior Fitness Instructor Course at Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging.

“I received constant support from AWO”

After completing the course, I started to lead Low Impact Exercise classes at Flemingdon Health Centre in Toronto and at AWO in Mississauga. In addition to these two locations, I also traveled to Parkway Forest Community Centre and Neighbourhood Information Post in Toronto. All of this gave me immense confidence and a sense of accomplishment. I felt like I was contributing to the wellness of others. Whenever I faced any difficulties, AWO was always there to fully support me.

As an active member of AWO Mississauga, I was able to enroll in Kitchen Skills Certification and Food Handler Certification classes. I also took basic computing classes as well English Conversation Classes to help improve my computer and English language skills. AWO Mississauga also organized bazaars which gave me the opportunity to showcase my culture through setting up a small clothing shop of my own. I used to run a clothing boutique business back home in Pakistan and through the bazaars, I gained my confidence and now run this business from home.

Fauzia Khan was and remains my biggest supporter. She is family for me now and I can't thank her and AWO for the incredible work they are doing.



“I've been inspired to continue to work hard and accomplish the impossible things in life. Thank you for everything!”

**AFGHAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION INCOME STATEMENT
FOR THE PERIOD OF APRIL 1, 2020 TO MARCH 31, 2021**

Revenue

FEDERAL	\$	4,821,272
PROVINCIAL	\$	196,150
MUNICIPALITIES	\$	338,655
FOUNDATIONS		\$107,374
DONATIONS	\$	326,953
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	\$	48,036

Total Revenue \$ **5,838,440**

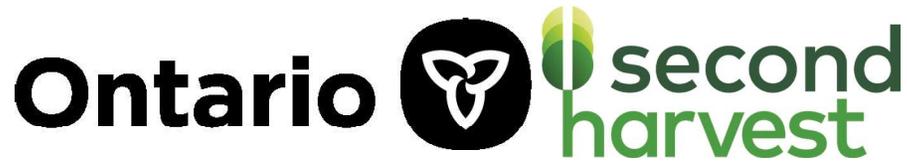
Expenditures

SALARY, MERCS & BENEFITS	\$	3,853,782
BUILDING OCCUPANCY	\$	663,277
PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$	365,146
PURCHASE OF SERVICES	\$	421,014
OFFICE AND GENERAL	\$	123,462
STAFF TRAVEL	\$	5,372
STAFF TRAINING	\$	1,931
VOLUNTEER EXPENSE	\$	300
REFUGEE SETTLEMENT	\$	402,745
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,837,029

EXCESS REVENUES OVER EXPENSES \$ **1,411**

FUNDERS

Immigration, Citizenship, and Refugee Canada (IRCC) and Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI), generous funding has enabled AWO provide settlement services to newcomers, with a special focus on women, their families, refugees and people who have experienced war and persecution. The following project and program partners have supported access to specialized services, including domestic violence counselling services, health and mental health education, legal education, seniors' programming, emergency services, food security, and youth mentorship.



PARTNERS AND FRIENDS

A positive trend that came out of the pandemic conditions was the strengthening of partnerships among agencies from different umbrella groups. AWO partnered with a wide range of other agencies and other organizations to share resources, supplies, ideas, and funding opportunities for refugees and newcomers.

Our work successfully settling new refugees was greatly assisted by AWO's new partnerships with a variety of organizations, including the Arab Community Centre, Lifeline Syria, Madison Community Centre, and many private group sponsors.

Our AWO team is deeply thankful to all our partners and friends who assist us in serving refugees and newcomers.

Absolute Health Centre
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
Across Boundaries - An Ethnoracial Mental Health Centre
Afghan Canadian Islamic Community
Agincourt Community Services Association
Ajax Public Library
Arab Community Centre
Bangkok Garden Restaurants
Canada Revenue Agency – Tax Centre
Canadian Confederation of Fujian Associations
Canadian Mental Health Association - Toronto Branch
Catholic Cross-cultural Services
CCVT
Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute
Centennial College
Centre for Education & Training
Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Collège Boréal
Community Engagement Workers
COSTI Immigration Services
Credit Valley Conservation

Dorset Park Community Hub
East Scarborough Storefront
Eglinton-East Kennedy Park
Employment & Social Services
First Book Canada
Flemingdon Community Legal Services
Flemingdon Health Centre
George Brown College
Global Experience Ontario
Green Standards
Greenwood Secondary School
Heart House Hospice
Jane Alliance Neighbourhood Services
Kids Up front
Labour Education Centre
Le Centre Francophone de Toronto
Lifeline Syria
Madison Community Centre
MCIS
MIAG
Micro Skills West Brampton
Mobile Health Clinic Coordinator
Mothercraft College
Muslim Families Outreach & Awareness Committee
Nabawi Mosque
New Circles Clothing Donation
Newcomer Information Centre (NIC)
OCASI
Ontario Justice Education Network (OJEN)
Peel Police
Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services
Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP)
SAFE Program Coordinator
Salam Foundation
Seneca College of Applied Arts & Technology
Sheridan College
Skills International

Social Planning Toronto
The Scarborough East Storefront
The Peer Project
Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership
Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership
Toronto Police (Division 54 and 53)
Toronto Public Health (TPH)
Toronto Employment and Social Services
Tropicana Community Services
Uma Nabawi Mosque
University of Guelph-Humber
University of Toronto Schools (UTS)
University of Toronto Professors & Students
Unisphere Canada & Food Prep Inc
Victoria Village Action for Neighbourhood Change
Working Women Community Centre
YWCA

AWO OFFICE LOCATIONS

AWO HEAD OFFICE:

150 Consumers Rd unit 203, North York, ON M2J 4G9
416-588-3585

AWO DON MILLS:

747 Don Mills Road, Unit 200 Toronto, ON M3C 1T2
416-422-2225

AWO SCARBOROUGH:

2555 Eglinton Ave. East, Unit 211 Toronto, ON M1K 5J1
416-266-1777

AWO MISSISSAUGA:

3050 Confederation PKWY, Unit 302 Mississauga, ON L5B 3Z6
905-279-3679



**AFGHAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT SERVICES**

EMAIL: receptionhd@afghanwomen.org

WEBSITE: afghanwomen.org

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/afghanwomengreatertoronto/>

INSTAGRAM: [@afghanwomensorg](https://www.instagram.com/afghanwomensorg)

TWITTER: [@afghanwomensorg](https://twitter.com/afghanwomensorg)