



Afghan Women's Organization

Annual Report

2010-2011

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is a pleasure to submit the Afghan Women's Organization's Annual Report for 2010-2011. This report describes the progress our organization has made in meeting our goals and objectives for 2010-2011. Similar to last year, we were faced with financial strain and increasing demand for services. Despite these times, we are pleased to report that we met our goals. Our programs and initiatives are making a positive difference in the lives of refugees and newcomers who have made Canada their home. This positive difference could not have been made without the contribution of our hard working board members, managers, staff and volunteers.

In 2010-2011 we exceeded the majority of our measure targets. For example, we had an increase in the number of our clients and volunteers. We were also successful in creating partnerships with other community organizations.

Our successes were not without challenges. Our organization faced financial strain due to budget cuts by our funders. However, financially we were able to deliver our programs within our reduced total budget. We made new alliances with other organizations and initiated steps to diversify our resources.

We look forward to working with our partners to build on these achievements in the year ahead. We will continue to make new partnerships and expand our resources and focus on working as efficiently as possible to maximize the resources we have.

We sincerely appreciate the leadership of our Board of Directors and Managers. Together we pledge to continue our mission to improve the quality of life of refugees and immigrants, and those who have experienced wars and persecution, with a special focus on women and their families. We seek to improve their social and economic inclusion in order to enable them to become contributing members of society and to live in dignity.

Asma Faizi, President

Adeena Niazi, Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

During the last 21 years, AWO staff and volunteers have worked hard at building a reputation of professionalism, courtesy, and enthusiasm in their program and service delivery. AWO's excellent track record for effectively identifying and addressing the needs and concerns of our clients is due to our staff's conscientious and diligent approach toward the provision of our services.

Currently, AWO's various projects and programs are assisting hundreds of immigrants and refugees immigrate to Canada; helping ease the settlement process for many new immigrants in Ontario; providing resources to find employment and training opportunities; offering psychological support; and creating individual and group counselling for families, seniors and youth.

We have also partnered with various non-governmental organizations over the years to provide the proper facilities, resources, information, and experience for our clients.

MISSION

AWO works with refugees, immigrants and those who have experienced wars and persecution, with a special focus on women. Its mission is to improve their quality of life and to promote their social and economic inclusion in order to enable them to become contributing members of society and to live in dignity.



VISION

Immigrants and refugees, as well as those who have experienced wars and persecution, are leading self-sufficient and dignified lives in a socially inclusive society.

VALUES

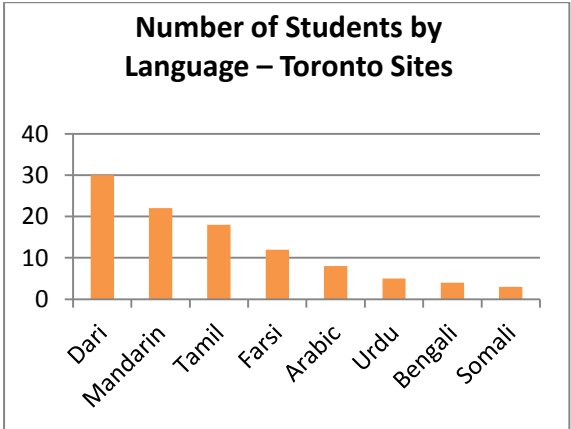
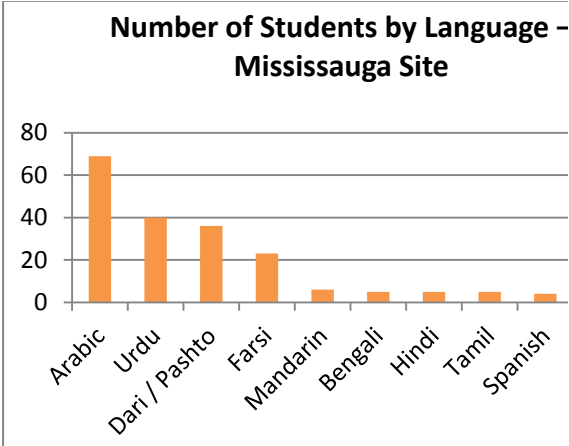
Access and equity; dignity and respect; social inclusion; and collaboration



LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) provides English language training for newcomers at varying levels of proficiency in both part-time and full-time classes. LINC assists newcomers to acquire the English language skills necessary for effective integration. The goal of the LINC program is to provide basic communication and life skills that are crucial for individuals to develop into productive, independent and active members in their new communities.

AWO offers six full-time and thirteen part-time classes in three different locations. This past year, a total of 530 students participated in the LINC program from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The charts below illustrate the most predominant language groups served in both the Mississauga and Toronto locations.



LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

As a large focus of our English classes is to immerse our students into Canadian culture, LINC students have been fortunate to hear from experts in various fields and to participate in many school trips this past year. Below is the list of guest speakers and trips enjoyed by the students this past year.

Guest Speakers

- Assault: Toronto Police Services
- Banking: TD bank
- Breast Cancer: Trillium Health Centre
- Breast Health :Public Health
- Child Safety and Protection: Peel Children's Aid
- Colon Cancer: Public Health
- Diabetes Prevention: Region of Peel
- Diabetes: Flemingdon Health Centre, South Asian Diabetes Prevention Program (three Clinics).
- Eating Well for Less: Peel Public Health
- Fire Prevention: Toronto Fire Services / Peel Fire Services
- Garbage/Recycling : City of Toronto
- Giving Back: Canadian Blood Services
- HPV and Cervical Cancer – Peel Public Health
- Peer Nutritionist: Public Health
- Rent & Housing Control: Toronto Tenant Association
- Sun Safety: Public Health
- Taxes: Canada Revenue Agency
- Tuberculosis (TB): Public Health
- Volunteerism: Volunteer Toronto
- Water: City of Toronto

LINC Excursions from all Sites

- Andrew's Scenic Acres
- Annual PLP picnic
- Art Gallery of Ontario
- Banks
- Bata Shoe Museum
- Black Creek Pioneer Village
- Casa Loma
- CBC Radio
- CN Tower
- CNE
- Credit Valley Conservation
- Eaton Centre
- Edwards Garden
- Kortright Centre
- Maple Sugar Bush
- Ontario legislative building
- Ontario Science Centre
- Public Libraries
- Strawberry Picking
- Super Markets
- Terra Cotta Conservation Area
- War Memorial



SETTLEMENTS SERVICES (ISAP AND NSP)

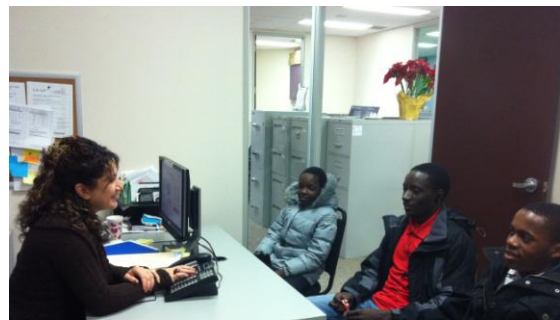
Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) and Newcomer Support Program (NSP) are providing services for newcomers to Canada to settle properly and integrate smoothly into Canadian society.

Our ISAP Counsellors provide direct settlement services to newcomers depending on each client's specific needs. Whether one-on-one or in a group setting, the focus is on needs assessments, referral to community services, information and orientation, interpretation, translation and solution-focused counselling. When appropriate, clients' family members are directed to AWO's other programs.

Serving clients in all 4 different locations has been an improvement for our organization as we are now able to serve clients one-on-one at a location convenient to them. We also provide itinerant services through partnership with other organizations. We have been an active member of different Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) such as Eglinton East and Kennedy Park, Don Valley, & Victoria Village to develop and organize programs and sessions for our target groups.

Majority of our clients are Afghan, Iranian, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pakistani and Middle Eastern women, youth and seniors receiving settlement services in a culturally-competent and linguistically-appropriate manner.

One of our greatest successes this year has been our Positive Parenting and Citizenship sessions. The workshops are very popular and are often overcrowded. The Citizenship sessions assist clients in getting ready for their Canadian citizenship test and cover topics such as the history of Canada, geographical characteristics, rights and responsibilities of citizenship in addition to the political, economic and social systems in Canada. Based on clients' high demand, a series of positive parenting sessions were held throughout the year covering topics such as the different phases of parenting, connecting parents and kids, the Canadian school system, the importance of healthy relationships, the power of positive thinking, communication in parenting, and so on.



SETTLEMENTS SERVICES (ISAP AND NSP)

We have successfully served over 18,000 clients this past year, well-exceeding our target numbers.

Number of ISAP Clients Served between April 2010 to March 2011	
Total Number of N. New Clients	563
Total Number of New Clients	800
Total Number of Returning Clients	15902
Total Number of Previous Clients	889
Total Number of Services	56384

Many information sessions are offered to clients on a monthly basis targeting different groups (seniors, youth, women) and their specific needs. The purpose of these sessions is to provide information to large groups at one time and also to generate ideas and discussion in a safe and welcoming environment.

Some workshops for Seniors include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breast Cancer • Chiropractic sessions • Denture clinic • Disability Equipment • Elder abuse • Fall Safety • Healthy lifestyles • Healthy Environment • Healthy Feet • Healthy Habits • Herbal medicine • Mental Health • Role of religion in family life • Skin care • Social events such as a tour of the Science Centre and Eid programs

Some workshops for Youth include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop In Session (23 sessions in total) • Aggression Replacement Training (18 sessions in total) • Canadian Law • Career Planning • Cashier Training • Civic Participation • Conflict Resolution • Focus group • Identity & Racism • Leadership • Parents Presentation Session • Peer Pressure • Self esteem • Team Building

SETTLEMENTS SERVICES (ISAP AND NSP)

Workshops for Families and all newcomers

- Better Money Management
- Canadian Law & Regulations – rights and responsibilities
- Child Tax Benefit
- Children Aid Society
- Citizenship sessions (10 sessions)
- Diabetes prevention
- Education
- Employment
- Family Nutrition
- Health
- Health System in Ontario
- Housing
- IFH/OHIP
- LINC/ESL
- Positive Parenting (8 sessions)
- Preschooler Nutrition
- Recreational and Community Information
- Settlement Stress Management
- Shopping/Finance
- Social Insurance Number
- Transportation & TTC



JOB SEARCH WORKSHOPS (JSW)

The Job Search Workshops (JSW) program helped newcomers find job in Ontario. Our workshops gave clients the job search tools necessary to succeed in the Canadian job market.

Our free programs were open to all newcomers who were looking for work and needed extra support and resources. We offered 3-4-day workshops at 2 locations, including day time, weekends and evenings. These workshops covered resume and cover letter writing, labour market trends, strategies to tap the hidden job market, interview skills, cold calling and networking, overcoming the barrier of 'no Canadian work experience', worker's rights and employment standards. We also offered shorter 1-day workshops which focus on computer skills and specific job search techniques and topics.

JOB SEARCH WORKSHOPS (JSW)

Clients also had access to one-on-one counselling, assistance developing an employment action plan, work experience placements, and referrals to job development. They also had access to the Internet, computers, telephones, and fax machine for job search purposes.

We offered 48 workshops that included day time, evening and weekend workshops last year. The total number of clients who attended these workshops exceeded 300 newcomers. Upon completion of this program, some clients found jobs while others preferred to upgrade their language skills. Most clients were admitted to educational institutions to obtain Canadian credentials.



YOUTH PROGRAM

As every year, AWO's youth program maintained its goals by providing various services to meet the specific needs of youth GTA-wide. AWO has empowered youth with skills and supported them in different areas of their lives. Our youth program includes settlement services as well as mentorship and civic engagement programs. We have provided supportive solution-focused counselling to newcomer youth to reduce their level of social isolation and to assist them in integrating into Canadian society by participating in wider community programs. During our once a week drop-in sessions, we have provided a number of skill development workshops which have assisted youth in building leadership, developing public speaking skills and bringing awareness about Canadian culture and society. We have also worked closely with the TDSB, and have been able to provide a number of conflict resolution and skill development workshops for Afghan youth at schools, such as the Woburn Collegiate Institute and Greenwood Secondary School.

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YOUTH PROGRAM

AWO has also served a number of at-risk youth. We have provided solution-focused counselling, assistance with court issues, interpretation, and referral to lawyers. Moreover, we offered a ten-week course called “Aggression Replacement Training” which has served as a valuable tool in conflict mediation for our at-risk youth.

Additionally, we have served as a member on “EE/KP Youth Service Network” and “Neighbourhood Action Plan” for Eglinton East and Kennedy Park priority neighbourhood and “Youth Service Network” for Flemington Park, Victoria Village and Thorncliffe Park priority neighbourhoods. With collaboration among youth serving agencies, we have planned various programs for youth in priority neighbourhoods.



Youth clients have been taken on field trips to Ontario Science Centre, court house, and City Hall to promote civic participation. In collaboration with Ontario Justice Education Network, we have organized a second series of “Mock Trial” which helped youth learn about Canadian law and a career as a lawyer. In partnership with New Horizon-Healing and Hope Coalition, we provided a series of twelve-week workshops which enabled youth to cope with and overcome obstacles they faced during migration to Canada. With the help of our youth advisory group, we were able to plan a number of cultural, social, religious and recreational events for youth, to educate them about their heritage and to increase their awareness about Afghan culture among the broader community. The following events took place

- Khatem-ul-Qurhan during Ramadan
- Afghan Cultural Show for the 4th time at “Taste of Asia”
- Youth Picnic

This year our youth counsellor in Peel created a program where youth were actively involved in preparing power point presentations and presenting in front of groups. Their active involvement in these sessions gave them a chance to network and develop their social skills, as well as increase their ability to engage in public speaking and improve their self-confidence. Youth were also involved sporting activities such as yoga, cardio, and dance activities. Peel youth also participated in going out to the Central Library, Mississauga Art Centre, and Celebration Square.

SENIORS PROGRAM

The senior's program in Toronto and Peel targets the senior demographic of the Afghan and other communities who have experienced isolation, depression, and severe culture shock upon their arrival and while settling in Canada. As family members are often consumed with employment, children, and their own settlement needs, seniors are expected to be independent and self-sufficient during this time. They are expected to maintain their living quarters, travel to appointments and take care of all their needs on their own. These responsibilities are often too much for the senior family members to handle. Our frontline staff are well aware of senior's situations and needs. The program reaches out to those that are experiencing hardship, loneliness, obstacles, and possibly neglect.

In addition to the one-on-one settlement services, AWO offers services such as telephone support, group workshops and activities, and friendly home visits by our dedicated volunteers. We have conducted a variety sessions addressing senior related issues, concerns and needs.



HOMEWORK CLUB

Afghan Women's Organization runs a Homework Club for kids twice/week in two locations in Toronto and Mississauga by our dedicated volunteers. The program goal is to assist newcomer children with their homework to achieve higher marks for related subjects and gain better credits.

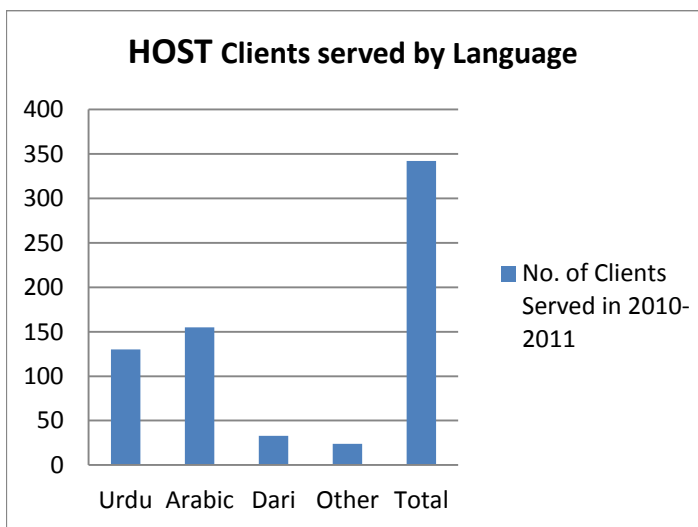
We ensure that every child receives individual assistance based on their needs to complete homework and assignments in timely manner. We also provide an opportunity for children to work together and provide encouragement and support each other. AWO's Homework Club is well-received by participants.



HOST PROGRAM

The Host Program was a great compliment to the other programs and services that AWO Mississauga offers. The program has helped many newcomers in their settlement and integration, as well as facilitating new friendships and cross-cultural learning.

There have been many successful matches made and new friendships have developed because of these matches. We have been able to provide services in a variety of languages such as Urdu, Arabic, Dari and Pashto. We have also been able to offer quality services and activities for our clients such as English Conversation Circles, basic computer classes, sewing classes, trips, and cultural and social events.



The Host Program at AWO offered a wide variety of group sessions and events for newcomers and volunteers. The sessions/events were delivered based on client needs and through discussions with clients. Some sessions were held on a regular basis and others were held on an ad-hoc basis.

MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S WELLNESS PROGRAM

AWO provided a multicultural women's wellness program, funded by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), which raised the awareness of mental health among our clients and educated them on mental health issues and resources in the community. Workshops were provided bi-weekly on different topics on mental health issues. Guest speakers were invited. The sessions were well received and many participants were benefited from them.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE

To assist parents with young children, our Women's Circle activity group has been designed specifically for women who are staying at home, busy taking care of their children, and who are feeling isolated from their community, mostly due to a language barrier. The sessions ran twice a month and were developed in partnership with Toronto Public Health. The sessions were well received by participants.

In our Mississauga location, we facilitated the women's support group once a month, and its focus was on providing information in a culturally-appropriate model and to establish a starting point for women's self-help and advocacy. Topics that were covered include: learning leadership and goal setting skills; learning how to access services; growing in self-confidence, particularly under stress; learning to work through issue/problems with other group members.



HELPING SEPARATED FAMILIES – REUNIFICATION AND ADAPTATION PROGRAM (RAP)

AWO developed partnerships with nine other agencies to deliver RAP services supported by the City of Toronto – Toronto Public Health.

The program targeted families who became separated during the immigration process. The effects of long-term separation often results in severe stress, loss of parent-child attachment and resentment which can lead to family tension and breakdown. For this reason, the Reunification and Adaptation Program used peer support and mentorship strategies to bring parents together to better understand the needs of their children/youth.

HELPING SEPARATED FAMILIES – REUNIFICATION AND ADAPTATION PROGRAM (RAP)

Similarly, youth come together to develop positive social skills to resolve intergenerational conflict and deal with social challenges such as bullying and racism. The project targeted the Filipino, Caribbean, African, South Asian, East Asian, Southeast-Central Asian and Hispanic communities.

The services included but were not limited to one on one and group support, development of ethno-specific parent/caregiver and children/youth support, development of community reference group & resource guide, and identifying gaps in services, programs

NEW HORIZONS: HEALING & HOPE COALITION– PARENTING & YOUTH SESSIONS

We had the privilege of signing an agreement with New Horizons: Healing & Hope Coalition to run Parent/Caregiver & Youth group sessions targeting newcomers who experienced war and political oppression in their country of origin.

Four staff members were trained and certified by the coalition to facilitate these sessions for 12 consecutive weeks in two different locations. Guest speakers were invited for presentations. Participants regularly attended these sessions and were involved in discussion and activities. The continuation of the sessions for the same group assisted the participants to feel comfortable and safe to share their personal experiences and stories with the group.

We had a graduation ceremony where the participants received their certificates and small gifts.



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers make an incredible difference in our ability to provide effective programs to the community. We are most grateful to each individual and group who gives their time and talents to make this difference to the Afghan Women's Organization.

Each year we rely on more than 150 volunteers to be a part of our team to assist with ISAP, youth, senior, the child minding program and a wide variety of seasonal and special events and activities. In the ISAP program, our volunteers escort our clients to the doctors, Ontario Works, lawyers, immigration, schools, housing and other service providers. Most of our volunteers are young adults with Canadian experience and they contribute their experience with newcomers to Canada. It is an excellent opportunity for our newcomers and clients to meet friends, learn new skills, and learn about Canadian society.

Volunteering is much more than just a job. For each individual volunteer we set an interview day and we have a discussion about their skills, area of interest and their ability. We also provide orientation about our services and mandate. We make sure that our volunteers gain valuable working experiences and we are a good reference for them when they apply for a job. Our volunteers received The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

FOREIGN TRAINED MEDICAL PRACTITIONER'S FOCUS GROUP

The Afghan Women's Organization is running a focus group for foreign trained Medical Practitioners. The group is led by Sara Ahmadi, an experienced volunteer lecturer, who has an immense knowledge with the requirements of this exam; more importantly, who knows how to break down complex material into manageable and simple pieces of information. Included in the course, are sample exams modeled on the actual EE and QE1.

By participating in this unique focus group, group members will be capable of contributing to fellow IMGs who face the EE exam in myriad ways, like sharing information and ideas in the networking session; participating in an existing group or creating a group of their own; or even by donating materials like notes, books, CDs, and other things they have used while preparing for examination.

FOREIGN TRAINED MEDICAL PRACTITIONER'S FOCUS GROUP

The Afghan Women's Organization has provided these foreign medical practitioners the opportunity to share the same vision of integrating all capable IMGs into the Canadian Medical System. This focus group provides every IMG with the opportunity to make a real difference in the community, while becoming a proactive individual who contributes ones time and talent and benefits from being part of a group of similar individuals who share the same vision.

STAFF TRAINING

Staff members have been fortunate to attend several training opportunities which have helped them to further assist clients. Below are some training workshops and sessions that they have attended:

- Community Legal Service (Legal Aid)
- Computer Training - Excel & Access (in house training - OCASI)
- Group of 5 information session (RSTP)
- I & R Training Program (CIC)
- JSW conference (CIC)
- Introduction to CLEO project (CLEO)
- ISAP conference (CIC)
- Mental Health and Social Change (in house training-staff)
- OCASI Conference (OCASI)
- Parenting Session (Children Aid Society)
- Serving Newcomer with Disabilities (Community Living)
- Youth Session (Children Aid society)

FUNDRAISING AND CULTURAL EVENTS

The Afghan Women's Organization has been host to many community events in the past. The most important one was Mela-E-Samanak, held in the month of April to celebrate spring and the Afghan New Year. This popular event was attended by almost 2100 community members.

SPONSORSHIP

As a sponsorship Agreement Holder organization with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), AWO sponsors refugees from Pakistan and other refugee camps to come to Canada. During this fiscal year, 39 refugees arrived in Canada and received settlement services and other supports to help them upon their arrival.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

AWO provides Heritage Language classes in Pashto and Dari for Afghan children as it is important for families to maintain elements of their culture and identity while living in Canada. In addition to our classes for children, our dedicated volunteers continue to provide a Dari and Pashto literacy program for Afghan women and seniors in Toronto.

AWO volunteers to provide these programs to many children and women as a way to give back to the community.



OMID –E-MERMUN ORPHANGE

The Omid-E-Mirmun orphanage was established by the Afghan Women's Organization in 2004 in Kabul, Afghanistan with the support of Canadian Women for Women of Afghanistan. This orphan-age provides shelter and basic needs for approximately 30 girls between the ages of three to seventeen years. The girls have a safe and comfortable home, access to schooling and extra-curricular activities, as well as emotional support and care from the dedicated staff. We are thankful for the generous funding from Canadian Women for Women of Afghanistan, and other friends and supporters for making it possible for this project to persist and grow in its success.



PARTNERSHIP/ITINERANT SERVICES

AWO has been fortunate to broaden its client base by partnering with agencies and providing Itinerant services to:

- Access Alliance Community Services
- Neighbourhood Link Office
- Newcomer Information Centre
- Uma Nabawi Mosque

We take pride in being part of LIP (Local Immigration Partnership) committees. We are actively participating and attending meetings for Don Valley LIP, Victoria Village and Eglinton East/ Kennedy Park LIP.

To improve service delivery and meet clients' needs, we have developed partnerships with many other organizations, such as:

- Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- African Canadian Legal Clinic
- Canadian Council for Muslim Women
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan
- Centre for Information and Community Services (CICS)
- City of Toronto
- Community Resource Connection of Toronto
- Council of Agencies Serving South Asians
- CultureLink
- Family Education Centre
- Flemingdon Health Centre
- Ismailic Women's Economic Development
- Mississauga Community Legal Service
- Mississauga Library System
- Heritage Skills Development Centre(HSDC)
- Hispanic Development Council
- Kababayan Community Centre
- Mother Craft Institution for Early Development
- National African Integration and Families Association (NAIFA)
- Neighbourhood Link Support Service
- On Track
- Overland Learning Centre
- Rehma Foundation
- Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services (SAFSS)
- Skills for Change
- Skills International

TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

THANKS YOU!

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Ontario

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MAYTREE

For Leaders. For Change.

LOCATIONS

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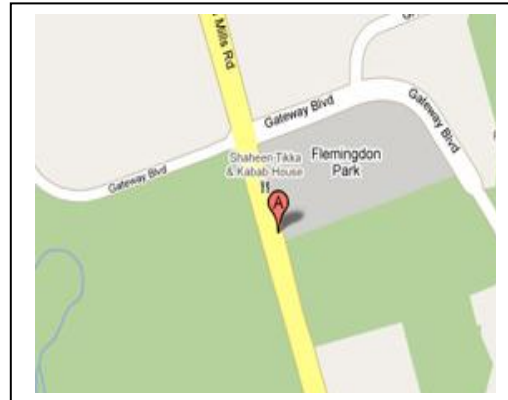
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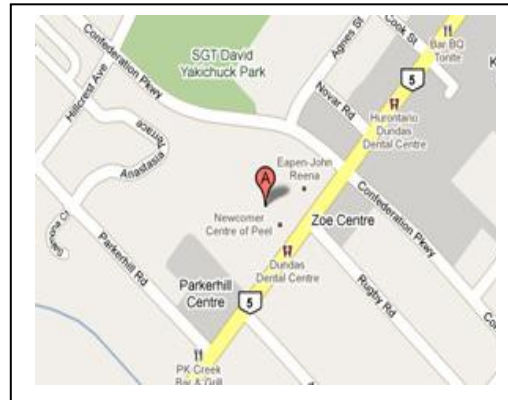
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