



Afghan Women's Organization

From isolation to participation

www.afghanwomen.org

Annual Report 2012-2013



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Volunteer Appreciation



Neighbourhood Picnic, Mississauga



Youth cultural event, Taste of Asia



Message from the President and the Executive Director

2012 to 2013 presented our organization with many opportunities for growth and improvement. Despite funding challenges and changes in immigration policies and trends, our clients continued to provide us with the inspiration to move forward with renewed determination. Our role in helping refugees and immigrants feel at home in Canada is facilitated by the strength, resilience, and goodwill demonstrated by the women, men, and children we serve.

We have sought to meet our commitment to providing equitable access to services, dignity and social inclusion. Projects like the *Women's Sewing Collective* give newcomer women an opportunity to learn valuable business and entrepreneurial skills with the goal that these women will be self-sufficient in two years. Young women and men, ages 15-25, are developing leadership skills while spearheading environmental stewardship programming in the community as *Afghan Youth Ambassadors*. Along with these special projects, we've continued to serve our settlement clients, teach LINC classes, and provide services at four locations across the Greater Toronto Area.

We are deeply grateful to our generous funders and the hundreds of volunteers who donate so much of their time, expertise, and their hearts to make our programs successful. We also would like to recognize the professional, dedicated and knowledgeable AWO staff who understand and serve our clients so well. Our Board of Directors with their collected wisdom and commitment to the organization has been a driving force in the strategic leadership this past year. Together we look forward to continue expanding the individual and collective capacity of our vibrant newcomer community over the upcoming years.

Asma Faizi, President
Adeena Niazi, Executive Director

Our Board of Directors

Asma Faizi, President
Latifa Sarwari, Treasurer
Wajma Soroor, Co-Secretary
Najeeba Shairzay
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Zohra Safi
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Shakila Hassanyar
Hasiba Anna Esmatyar
Kobra Rasul
Shafiq Akbari

Our programs and initiatives are making a positive difference in the lives of refugees and newcomers who have made Canada their home.



Asma Faizi,
President



Adeena Niazi,
Executive
Director

Our Mission

Our mission is to improve newcomers' quality of life, to help them live in dignity and reach their full potential, and to prompt social and economic inclusion so that they may be contributing members of society.

Our Mandate

Our mandate is to provide settlement services to all newcomers, with a special focus on women, their families, refugees and people who have experienced war and persecution.

Our Vision

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

Our Values

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



Heart and Stroke event in Mississauga.



Eid Party

Settlement Services

The Welcoming Community program and Newcomer Support Program (NSP) provide services for newcomers to Canada to assist them in settling properly and integrating smoothly into Canadian society. Among our greatest successes this year has been our The Incredible Years session in partnership with Toronto Public Health. This is a 15-week parenting program for parents of children ages 6 to 12. The workshops were well-received and often overcrowded.

Lack of sensitive mental health-related services is a major concern for our organization. It is a challenge to serve clients so traumatized by conflict. Women often live in isolation, confined in their homes, unable to access language trainings. We have been able to reach out to large numbers of these women and encourage participation to increase their level of awareness and knowledge about their new home. As a first step toward successful settlement, our staff and dedicated volunteers create connection and offer sessions in their home.

Number of SETTLEMENT Clients Served between April 2012 to March 2013	
Total Number of New New Clients	785
Total Number of New Clients	992
Total Number of Returning Clients	17530
Total Number of Services	43732

We have successfully served over **19,000** clients this past year, well exceeding our target numbers. The majority of our clients are Afghan, Iranian, Pakistani and from Central Asian and Middle Eastern regions. They receive settlement services in a culturally competent and linguistically appropriate manner.

Our clients can also access settlement services in non-settlement settings in other agencies, community centres, schools, shelters etc. We provided itinerant services on regular basis

- East Scarborough Storefront
- Jenner Jean Marie Community Centre (English Conversation Circle)
- Uma Nabawi Mosque
- Newcomer Information Centre

- COSTI Employment Mississauga
- Al Faisal Mosque Peel

We are members of LIP (Local Immigration Partnership) committees and regularly attend meeting as well as inter agencies meetings. We have been an active member of a Peel / Halton partnership, regularly participating in exchanges with the following groups: Information, Awareness and Orientation, Language and Labour Market. This partnership provides us with the opportunity to know more about similar service organizations, which helps us when we need to refer our clients. We also attended multi-faith meetings to connect with the wider community. We made strong connections with different organizations and the health centre in order to offer the best services for our newcomer seniors and families



Clients and staff were thrilled to receive first-hand information about new regulations and procedures and have their questions answered by Honorable Mina Yung-Fung, Citizenship Judge Mississauga CIC Office.



Our Citizenship Classes are successful and well received.



Outreach

The AWO staff and volunteers are in constant contact with other service-providing organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. We continually promote programs and services through community media, reception centres, community events, partnership events and meetings, workshops, presentations, and school events. We have developed partnerships with other agencies (e.g., Access Alliance) and schools (e.g., Greenwood Secondary School) for weekly regular information and outreach sessions. Alternatively, satisfied clients are always very eager to refer newcomers to our organization.

Our Peel office connects with: East Mississauga Community Health, MIAG Centre for Diverse Women & Families, Trios College Mississauga, Mosques (Brampton, Mississauga), William Oslar Hospital Brampton, Brampton Family Shelter, Heart House Hospice, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, and RDR (Reginal Diversity Roundtable).

Staff Development

Professional trainings and attended conferences

- JSW Training (COSTI)
- OCASI Conference
- CNC Conference
- TESL Ontario
- NCON Professional Development Conference
- Canada Learning Bond- All AWO staff attended
- Stress Management CAMH
- Police Diversity Department
- Victim Services of Peel
- Healthy Communities
- OCASI Conference
- Bill C-31 information session

Partners

To improve service delivery and to meet clients' needs, AWO has developed partnerships with many other organizations:

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

Across Boundaries

African Canadian Legal Clinic

Canadian Council for Muslim Women

Canadian Mental Health Association

Catholic Crosscultural Services

Centre for Information and Community Services (CICS)

City of Toronto

Costi

Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)

CultureLink

East Metro Youth Service

Family Education Centre

Flemingdon Health Centre

Heritage Skills Development Centre (HSDC)

Hispanic Development Council

Jenner Jane Community Centre

Kababayan Community Centre

Mother Craft Institution for Early Development

Nabawi Mosque

National African Integration and Families Association (NAIFA)

Neighbourhood Link Support Service

Overland Learning Centre

Rehma Foundation

Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services (SAFSS)

Skills for Change

Skills International

Toronto Public Health



Art class, Mississauga



Sessions

(General, Women, Youth and Seniors)

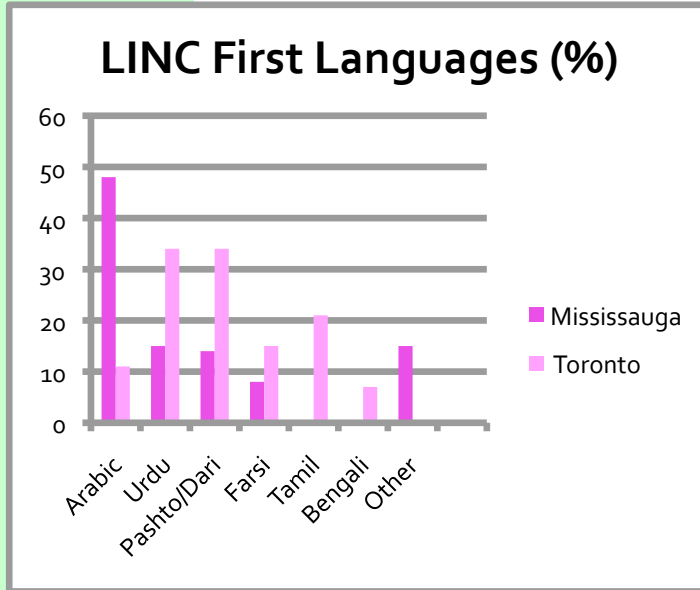
- Citizenship Class
- Life in Canada General Information
- Housing
- Incredible Years
- Positive Parenting
- Stress Management
- Women's Circle
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Healthy Body
- Healthy Diet
- Healthy Life Style with Chronic Pain
- Healthy Skin
- Herbal Medicine
- Housing
- Mobile Clinic- Breast cancer
- Social Gatherings
- Stress Management
- Winter Safety
- School Issues
- Body Image
- Intergeneration Gap
- Parents-youth Conflicts
- What are newcomer youth challenges?
- Family Issues
- Goal Setting
- Career Planning
- Essence of Keeping Fast
- Immigration Experiences
- Peer Pressure
- Self-esteem
- Stress Management
- Substance Abuse
- Why do youth drop out of high school?
- Youth - Academic programs
- Youth - Co-facilitation planning
- Youth - Issues in school
- Youth - Leadership skills
- Youth - Rights in the community
- Youth - Violence
- Conflict Resolution
- Cultural integration
- Gender Equality
- Social Media Networking
- Cultural Integration in to Canadian society

LINC Programming

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. The program goals are to provide basic communication and life skills that are crucial for individuals to develop into productive, independent and active members in their new communities. During 2012/13, 395 students participated in the Toronto and Scarborough LINC programs and 263 students in Mississauga programs. Along with the regular classroom LINC curriculum, students enjoyed

talks presented by guest speakers, such as Service Canada, and a number of fun and educative field trips, including a trip to the Sugar Bush and an AWO picnic.



A primary focus of our English classes is to immerse our students into Canadian culture. To give LINC students a truly immersive Canadian experience we have taken many trips outside the classroom this past year.



LINC class visits Premier Kathleen Wynne in the Ontario Legislature.

Sponsorship

We have a sponsorship agreement contract with the Government of Canada. As Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH), the AWO has successfully resettled refugees from refugee camps. The majority of refugees sponsored by AWO have been successfully established and are contributing and productive members of Canadian society.

Heritage Program

Young Afghans who were born and raised in Canada usually adopt English as their first language and find it difficult to learn their mother tongue. This, at times, can make the communication with parents difficult.

To bridge this gap and help second generation Afghans stay connected to their roots and heritage, AWO has been running Heritage Language Program since 1995. Through games and fun activities, we help Afghan children and youth (6-14) to learn and maintain reading, writing and speaking skills in their mother tongue to allow them to better communicate with their parents as well as enriching the notion of Canadian multiculturalism.

The classes are held every Saturday from 9:30-12:30 in our Mississauga location.

Job Search Workshop

During 2012 - 2013, the AWO facilitated 24 modules (12 module one and 12 module two). One hundred and ninety-four clients participated in the Job Search Workshop program (74 in module one and 65 in module two).

Clients were referred to high schools, colleges, language assessment, and ESL and LINC classes. They were also referred to Employment Ontario programs, career fairs and various employment agencies. Some clients were referred to apprenticeship programs to obtain their licenses in various trade jobs. Job-ready clients and foreign professionals were referred to Skills International for further assistance with their job search. Foreign professional were referred to services provided by International Credential Assessment Services Canada, World Education Services and University of Toronto to evaluate their credentials. Other clients were referred to computer trainings, enhanced language training, occupation-specific language training, customer service and restaurant training programs.

All clients had the chance to create, update and target their resumes during the workshop or on a one-on-one basis at the resumes clinic and had access to the Internet, photocopying and fax machine for job search purposes. In order to assess clients' progress, they received follow-up services within six weeks to three months after completing the program. About 30% of clients obtained employment with the assistance of the JSW staff.



JSW is a great opportunity for newcomers. And I'm glad I could participate in this workshop. Thanks to the staff's great work I learned what Canadian employers expect from the applicants, how to write a resume/cover letter, how to introduce myself to the employers in a right way. I hope all my knowledge I've got from this workshop will help me effectively in the future. Special thanks to my facilitator for the individual approach to each participant.

Anna Mkhitaryan, teacher and translator of English and Armenian and a holder of Master Degree in Pedagogy from Yerevan State Linguistic University in Armenia.

Homework Club

The Homework Club provides different kinds of volunteer-based, outside the classroom homework support for students. The Afghan



Women's Organization runs a clubs for children and youth in Toronto and Mississauga. The goal of the program is to assist newcomer children and youth with their homework so they are able to achieve higher marks

for related subjects and gain more school credits. We ensure that every child receives individual assistance based on their needs in order to complete homework and assignments in a timely manner.

We also provide opportunities for children and youth to work together and to encourage and support one and other. The AWO's Homework Club is well received by participants.

Senior's Programs

Newcomer seniors are often among the most vulnerable newcomer groups. Language barriers, culture shock, fear, and the loss of social network and strong family ties, mainly due to the busy schedule of their children or having no family, are only a few of the contributing factors to the seniors' social exclusion. The Afghan Women's Organization is committed to ensuring that seniors over 55+ live in dignity and are socially included. *The Senior Connection* reaches out to Afghan senior women that are experiencing hardship, loneliness, obstacles, and possibly neglect and assists them in becoming more active and healthy members of Canadian society. We offer a variety of services to our clients including friendly home visits and telephone support, support group meetings and outdoor activities.

The English Circle Social Group meets twice weekly to help seniors learn how to use English in their communities, e.g., at the doctor's office or the grocery store. Seniors from the program understand how to fill out forms and the pricing of items, giving them more confidence and independence to shop and attend appointments.

The seniors also meet for outdoor and exercise activities, including walks through the local parks in the warmer months, and yoga and other indoor activities during the winter months. Activities are structured so that seniors have opportunities to interact with other seniors, and with youth, in order to exchange experiences and ideas.



Youth Programs

The AWO's youth program provides various services for youth across the GTA including settlement services, mentorship and civic engagement programs. Our programs work to reduce their level of social isolation and to assist young newcomers in integrating into Canadian society through participation in the wider community. Weekly skill-development drop-in sessions build leadership and public speaking skills and greater awareness of Canadian culture and society. In collaboration with the Toronto District School Board we provided Afghan youth with conflict resolution and skill development workshops. We also serve a number of at-risk youth.

As members of the "EE/KP Youth Service Network" and "Neighbourhood Action Plan" and the "Youth Service Network" we produce different programs for youth in priority neighbourhoods. Field trips to the Science Centre, the court house, and Toronto City Hall, a "Mock Trial", and a mentorship program with the Afghan Association of York University and The Afghan Canadian Sports Association, and a number of cultural, social, religious and recreational events are just a few of the programs and activities for youth that we offer.



The Women's Circle



The Women's Circle program is designed to meet the needs of young women and mothers to adapt a healthy diet and follow Canada's food guide. The project is based on a certificate program in which participants are required to attend 8 sessions. A guest speaker from public health sector comes on a regular basis to educate and inform the participants on how to maintain a healthy diet. Demonstrations on how to prepare simple, yet delicious and healthy food for their families helps motivate and encourage healthy lifestyles in the community.

Afghan Women's Sewing Collective

Every week, The Afghan Women's Sewing Collective meets to develop a small social enterprise that will positively change the lives of its members. The dedicated members of this collective are working diligently to improve their skills to operate a business sewing clothes that they can market and sell. In this special program,



students learn English, sewing skills, business and accounting, and about leadership and empowerment. In this first phase of the project, the collective is focusing on their sewing, English and leadership skills. The second phase will emphasize business, accounting, and marketing.

Members of the collective are enjoying the training process, making new friends and developing skills in a respected trade that will help them contribute to the family income.

This is a comprehensive program designed to empower marginalized women through the formation of a business that

requires teamwork, confidence and mutual support. With funding from the **International Development and Relief Foundation**, participants are succeeding in overcoming barriers to their integration into Canadian society by educating themselves within a friendly environment while developing an income-generating enterprise.



New Horizons' Playing with Rainbows

We were privileged to have signed an agreement with **New Horizons: Healing & Hope Coalition** to run children's group sessions targeting newcomers' children who have experienced war and political oppression in their country of origin. This program is for children affected by war and migration. These children often suffer due to separation from family members and country, having to learn a new language, financial issues, and loss of culture. They often end up internalizing their confusion and pain resulting in out of character behaviours and personality changes that are triggered during certain situations.

New Horizons' Playing with Rainbows program helps children address their issues through

various programs and activities. The activities help them to surface and let go of the frightening thoughts that keep them awake at night, to feel more comfortable with the changing cycles of life and to embrace their new surroundings and experiences, while appreciating their own cultural heritage.



AYA - Afghan Youth Ambassadors Environment Project

The Afghan Youth Ambassador Environment project, funded by the Ontario Trillium Fund (OTF), enhances environmental awareness,



and develops leadership skills and civic participation among Afghan youth between the ages of 15-25. Our goal was to increase youth participants' connections and involvement in environmental education, enhance their self-esteem and engage adults in youth-led environmental activities.

One hundred and fifty youth and 27 adult volunteers took part in 35 educational

workshops to learn about wastewater, the ecosystem, natural resources and pollution prevention. To enhance participants' social skills, these workshops were combined with hands-on experience such as, presentations, connecting with environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs), writing formal letters and creating promotional materials.

The youth helped organize 27 outdoor activities including tree planting, tending a garden plot, organizing lost river walks, and 3D recycled art days. These events



The AYA has been a valuable experience. I particularly enjoy teaching and the AYA has given me the opportunity to take what I love doing and use it towards a good cause.

- Susan Imani,
Ambassador



engaged youth, adults, and children in the community. In addition to our continuous partnership with Mark Garneau High School and North Park Secondary School, ten youth ambassadors were connected with colleges and universities including, University of Toronto, Ryerson and Humber College leading to a partnership with the University of Toronto Green Club.



Be Set Be Safe & Block Party

The community safety program “Be Set Be Safe” was created in partnership with the Peel Regional Police, Crime Stoppers, and The City of Mississauga, Fire Department, Victim Services of Peel and



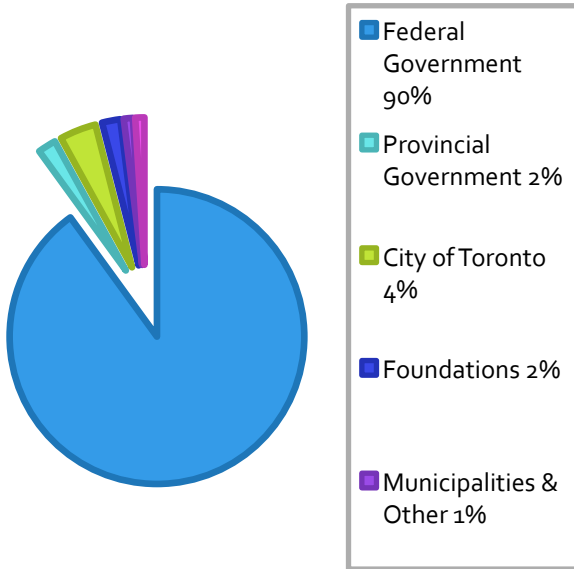
Children Aid Society. The informative sessions taught the community about the available services and who to contact in case of any emergency. The dedicated

community volunteers, who ran the program, were awarded plaques by the **United Way and the Region of Peel** at an evening of celebration.

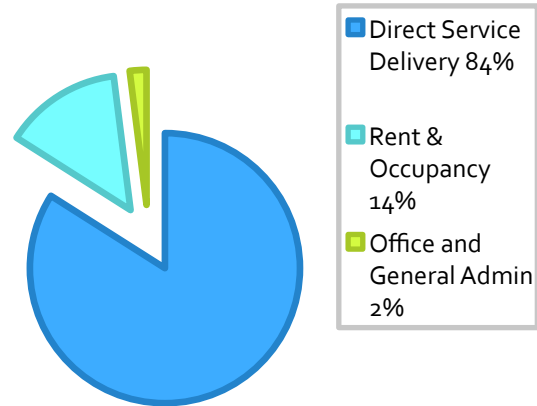
The “Block Party” program was for residents who wanted to continue to socialize and learn together. A variety of activities were organized including: two focus groups, yoga sessions, health workshop series, bingo, two potluck socials, a mothers’ day celebration and a very well-attended children’s day camp. Over time, participants have established deeper friendships with each other and feel that the activities have created a warm and welcoming environment. Our activities will continue through December 2013.



Revenue

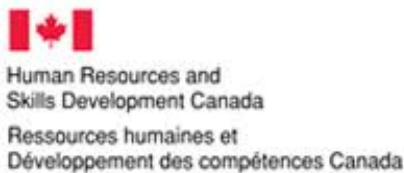
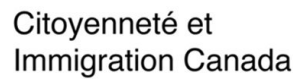
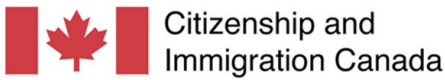


Expenditures



Full audited statements available upon request.

Our Funders



A Warm Thank You to All Our Volunteers!



Afghan Women's Organization - Locations

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