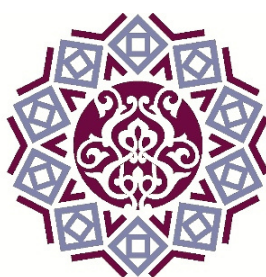




Refugee Women's Network

Impact Report



Refugee Women's Network

A Message from the Executive Director on Behalf of The Board.

Refugee Women's Network began as a registered charity to help newcomer women through settlement in Toronto and the GTA.

What it evolved to was an organization helping refugees across Canada through literacy and support while they navigate their resettlement in their new community.

All that changed during the pandemic. Our programs pivoted to an online format so women could continue to have a safe space to learn. But it became more than that. Women were sharing stories of the challenges they were facing and more and more women disclosed the abuse they face.

At the same time, the Taliban invaded Afghanistan and thousands of Afghans fled to other countries around Afghanistan and many arrived in Canada, staying in hotels. And they began joining our program after an orientation at the Toronto hotels. And they shared with their friends and family about the program and soon we had Afghan women joining from Tajikistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, Turkey, Europe, and the United States.

Our numbers grew quickly because the Afghan women were waiting to come to Canada and they wanted to be prepared for their arrival. They wanted to learn English, learn about the school system, and programs available. They began discussing inter-familial marriages and domestic violence and the lack of support. They talked about parenting, child development, and their children's education.

The Women Helping Women program became a safe haven for all women joining because they could share their stories within the safety and confidentiality of the program. Women shared their lack of education and understanding and were faced with the struggle to set up their new home in an unfamiliar place. The peer support gave them comfort and solutions. They shared their stories of resilience during the most difficult time of escaping the Taliban and how this impacted their children.

As an organization, the challenge has been to understand the different cultural needs refugees have and provide programming to reflect the cultural sensitivities of all refugee women. As an organization with our leadership representing our client base, we understand what refugee women have gone through and the challenges they will face as they settle in their new community.

Lastly, let me Thank our supporters, donors, staff, and volunteers who have been pivotal in the success of the programs and who have supported the needs of refugee women.
Thank you very much and we look forward to your continued support.



Zein Dhanidina
Founder & Executive Director

MISSION

To empower refugee and new immigrant women with tools and resources to enhance and develop their skills through education to successfully integrate into Canadian society while still maintaining respective cultural values.

VISION

To help refugee and new immigrant women become a vibrant part of Canada's economic and social development growth.

ORGANIZATION TIMELINE

	CLIENTS	DETAILS	OUTCOME
2022	350	Women joining from all across Canada from Newfoundland Labrador to Vancouver, BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual access with women from 12 countries• Numbers increasing
2021	90	The Taliban took over Kabul leaving Afghans to flee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Afghans arrived in Canada at hotels• Met 150 Afghan women at their hotels
2020	50	The pandemic shifted the program online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual programs increased access• Women join from 3 countries
2016-2019	14	Small group sessions held 3 times a week at 2 locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 women entered Seneca College to Pre-Apprentice ECE program offered free

Program Impact 2022



Programs

The programs at Refugee Women’s Network are all delivered virtually to engage the women who are living across Canada and around the World. The programs offer refugee women tools to help rebuild their lives.

The program is open to women who are planning on settling in Canada and awaiting their documents. The Pre-Arrival program offers the same program with the focus on learning English, easing their settlement.

The programs are based on the belief that education is power. Without education, a woman cannot understand what opportunities are available to her, what skills she needs, what her rights are, how to decipher between right and wrong, and how to make the choice that takes her forward.

Refugee Women’s Network offers the following programs, for free, in a virtual format through Zoom.

Empower To Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The Learning Lab offers free English classes for women by certified TESL Instructors.•TESL students can complete their practicums in the program.
Women Helping Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The support group offers newcomer women a safe space to share their fears and challenges and learn how to manage them.•Women facing gender-based violence find counselling and support through education and empowerment.
Digital Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The program offers refugee women an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in using technology.•Digital skills are employable skills and digital literacy increases refugee women’s confidence as they learn more.
Financial Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The program's focus is how to earn, save, and invest your money.•Financial Literacy is a critical component for refugee women to work towards being self-sustained, confident women.

Empower To Power

The Learning Lab is designed to offer refugee and new immigrant women English classes from Level 1-7 using the Canadian Language Benchmark guidelines taught by certified TESL Instructors. This program is for women only, taught by women. This program is open to any woman wanting to learn English regardless of her immigration status. Since the classes are offered virtually, women from countries around the world are joining to learn English as they prepare for a better opportunity.

Overcoming the language barrier opens the door for women to many opportunities of employment, promoting economic security. Understanding English assists refugee women with helping their children navigate the school system, communicating with doctors, and supporting their families.

Proficiency in English is a significant empowering tool which will change the life of a woman from being withdrawn and afraid to empowered and an advocate. The confidence motivates refugee and new immigrant women to upgrade their education and pursue higher education. An educated woman can help provide for her family and feel like a contributing member both to her family and to her community.

When you change the life of a woman, the effects are felt through the entire family. She will be determined to help move herself and her family out of poverty and become self sufficient. Her strength makes her a role model her children will look up to and will pursue their own education. This may also motivate her to pursue further education.

Practicum Training

As part of empowering women, we offer spaces for Practicum to support women completing the TESL(Teaching English As A Second Language) programs through Canadian College of Educators and ONTESOL. The practicum students complete their Observation and Teaching hours based on the College requirements and then they complete a Volunteer program providing 20 hours of volunteering with our clients.

This program supports women participating in the program and provides a supportive and guided practicum with our Certified TESL Teachers who initially completed their practicum through our program.

We are pleased to offer a space where women can complete their practicum.

We also offer practicum spaces for women completing their Social Services Program – Immigration and Refugee two-year College Diploma through Seneca College.



Women Helping Women

The Women Helping Women program is designed to help newcomer women feel safe as they navigate through their settlement. It's a support group offering refugee and new immigrant women a safe space to share the challenges they may be facing. For newcomer women facing isolation and depression, this confidential, nurturing, supportive environment gives access for support and referrals to counselling.

The Women Helping Women support group also encourages women to take an active role in their caregiving duties and access support systems in their communities. They also help women to become advocates for their children and elderly family members by seeking support from the group. Newcomer women do not have a place to find help, be directed to professional support, or understand the need for medical intervention. Whether they are in Canada, in Afghanistan, or other parts of the world, our goal is to provide women with support as they navigate challenges within their home, in their marriage, and outside of their family life.

Refugee women are also learning about gender-based violence and what they can do to protect themselves from abuse. The Women Helping Women support program offers counselling as well as tools to become self-sufficient and employable if they choose to leave their situation. Abused refugee women, without the ability to communicate, cannot survive within the shelter system and provide for their family. In many cultures, women are married to a relative and seeking help or leaving their home is not an option without sustainable support. With skills and education, refugee women can not only survive, but thrive.

The group is also a great space to practice their English-speaking skills with other women going through the same journey. Practicing pronunciation and proper etiquette in communication provides skills that refugee women use to blend into the Canadian culture.



Women Helping Women

Gender-based Violence

With the support of the Shock-Proofing Grant, through the Federal Government, to support women facing gender-based violence, refugee women are receiving education and support to learn about the types of violence they may be facing and find support amongst other women in the same situation.

Gender-based violence is the abuse that women, and refugee women, who are at highest risk of experiencing, are facing. It can be physical or emotional abuse such as: name-calling, hitting, pushing, stalking, criminal harassment, sexual assault, control, manipulation, and many more. These are against the law. It can happen between spouses or other family members, and it can happen by strangers or people you work with. It occurs in private places, often by people you know.

With the aid of a translator, women from different cultures learn that violence is against the law in Canada and are given tools to become self-sufficient and confident to leave their environment. With many refugee women arriving from Afghanistan, cultural support becomes vital in understanding how women are married to their immediate relative. Typically, Afghan women are married to their mother/father's brother/sister's son. Leaving their husband becomes a difficult decision because they are leaving their entire family. Thus, they are learning what other choices they have or just being able to have a safe space to discuss their struggle. They are also learning how the importance of skill-building helps their decision to leave and become self-sufficient when they are ready.



Digital Empowerment

The digital literacy training program offers refugee women an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in using technology. Gaining skills in digital literacy increases refugee women's confidence.

Computers are part of everyday use and make our lives easier. With changing technology, refugee women are able to keep up with the new changes and use this tool to keep connected to the outside world.

At Refugee Women's Network, the programs are all offered virtually and it is important for refugee women to learn to use their computer to access all the available programs. This also includes using Zoom and learning the different tools within it.

Clients are also taught to use emails to share and receive information that is pertinent in their settlement. They develop virtual etiquette skills along with basic computer skills. They also learn how to use Google as a search engine as well as a learning guide.

Digital Literacy is an empowering tool giving refugee women skills that help them feel confident. This program is supported by VISA Canada with a sponsorship of Chromebooks through Human IT for clients to use to further their education.



Financial Literacy

Financial literacy skills are about learning how to earn, save, and invest your money. For refugee women, access to money is limited but learning how to save and grow your money is important for all.

At Refugee Women's Network, we believe financial literacy is a critical component for refugee women to work towards being self-sustained, confident women. We have introduced various programs about financial literacy with subject-matter experts in banking, savings, starting an RESP, RRSP, and learning how to manage their investments. We have also provided basic tools from opening their own bank account and learning about online banking.

We also offer the VISA Practical Money Skills training which we translate in Farsi/Dari for our clients. This training is an introduction to personal financial literacy to help refugee women understand the fundamentals of personal finance and learning to set financial goals. Refugee women will learn how to make informed decisions about their finances, how to budget, how to plan and how to save. Learning about financial literacy will help refugee women feel empowered and give them the ability to control their finances.



Impact of Technology

Technology played a pivotal role in helping refugee women attend virtual programs at Refugee Women's Network during the pandemic. With the Government of Canada's Covid relief funding, we secured laptops for 75 refugee women to be able to attend the programs. This gave refugee women access to a support system to help them navigate their new community and help them face the challenges and fears as they resettle in Canada. Access to technology gives refugee women employable skills as they learn about Digital Literacy. In 2022, Visa Canada sponsored chromebooks through Human IT in order for refugee women to attend the programs virtually. They sponsored over 50 Chromebooks and provided refugee women the opportunity to learn about managing their finances through the Practical Money Skills program. Having access to technology has given refugee women a window to their new world and it has helped them through their resettlement.



Meet our Clients

Fi had the biggest impact using the chromebook. Here is what she had to say:

Receiving a Chromebook from Refugee Women's Network and Visa Sponsorship and attending English classes has truly transformed my life, and I cannot thank them enough. Before, trying to learn English with just my phone was so difficult due to its small screen, but now with the Chromebook, attending classes has become so much easier. I've even started to understand the various parts of the Chromebook and their functions, like using the "@" sign for writing emails.

Everyday I'm gaining the confidence to speak in public and read the signs on the streets, especially the office and clinic boards. The most significant change in my life has been the newfound confidence to venture out on my own without fear. I now enjoy spending time alone, going shopping, and even ordering coffee for myself. I can proudly spell out my name and my daughter's name, a skill that has enabled me to fill out forms and write down date in the correct order.

One achievement that brings me immense joy is being able to load up my Presto Card for transportation without anyone's help, using my credit card instead of cash as I did before. Furthermore, I can book appointments with the food bank all by myself. I've gained the confidence of finding addresses with Google Maps, and I was able to guide my husband to a location he couldn't find on his own. These seemingly small victories have made huge difference in my life.

With the Chromebook and English classes, I am not only learning a new language but also gaining the confidence and independence to navigate life in a new country. My gratitude knows no bounds for the opportunities Refugee Women's Network and Visa Canada's sponsorship for chromebooks have provided me.

They have given me the tools to rebuild my life and create a better future for myself and my family.



Meet our Clients

Mimi found the impact of the chromebook gave her more than access to learning English.

I would like to share how grateful I am to Refugee Women's Network for their support and the opportunity they have provided me. Thanks to Visa Canada's generous donations of Chromebooks, my chromebook has opened doors to a world full of knowledge.

With the Chromebook, I am able to participate in the Women Helping Women program, where I have a deeper understanding of my rights in Canada and as a woman. The program also introduced me to practical financial skills through Visa Canada's Practical Money Skills, which was translated into Farsi for me to better understand. This has helped me budget my finances to save for my children's future.

The Chromebook has also been instrumental in helping me overcome my illiteracy and lack of formal education. Learning how to use a computer and navigating online platforms like Zoom has been a transformative experience. I now have the ability to join online sessions, interact with instructors, and utilize tools like the Reactions feature and raising my hand, which were entirely unfamiliar to me before.

Beyond the practical skills I've acquired, the Women Helping Women program has provided me with a vital support network of women who share similar challenges and triumphs.

This sense of community has been invaluable in my journey towards self-improvement and integration into Canadian society.

The assistance provided by the Refugee Women's Network has been life-changing for me. I am incredibly thankful for their commitment to empowering refugee and immigrant women like me. The Chromebook they provided has not only enriched my life but also expanded my horizons in ways I couldn't have imagined.



Meet our Clients

A message from Anika:

Attending English classes has completely transformed my life, and it's hard to put into words how grateful I am. I couldn't communicate effectively with my children's school before, but now I can send emails and messages. Our teacher has been amazing, focusing on daily topics that have not only boosted our confidence but also expanded our vocabulary. This newfound vocabulary has been a game-changer at my workplace, a restaurant, where I can now communicate better with my colleagues and customers.

What means the world to me is how patient our teachers have been in answering all our questions. In my other classes, I never got the chance to ask questions, and even if I did, I couldn't explain what I meant. But in these classes, the teachers and everyone in the class care about whether we understand the topic or not, and they repeat it until we do. This level of support and dedication is priceless.

These classes have given me the confidence to visit doctors without hesitation and communicate with them effectively. In emergencies, I can contact hospitals and doctors, which was unthinkable before. I owe so much of my progress to Refugee Women's Network, who created these opportunities and motivated and helped us become active participants in society. I cannot express enough how these resources have changed my life, and I am eternally grateful.



Meet our Clients

Sana is grateful for Women Helping Women:

At 21 years old, I am married with 2 children under the age of 3, and have 2 stepchildren who are teenagers. My husband, who is 20 years older than I, married me in Afghanistan after his first wife died. He brought me to Canada and forced me to care for him and his children.

He is violent and keeps me isolated from my family. I am not allowed to leave the apartment or even attend prayers at the Mosque. Even after my two babies were born, I could not go anywhere. I live in fear of what he will do to me and I am afraid of his two teenage children. If I don't have food ready when he wants it or keep the babies from crying, he gets violent and threatens to throw me out of the house.

I know I will not be able to survive on my own with 2 young children because I cannot speak English and I don't have any skills to find a job. But when my neighbour told me about Refugee Women's Network's programs, I began joining in the afternoon when my husband naps.

In the program, I am taking the English classes, taking the Digital Literacy class, participating in Women Helping Women where I am learning about my rights as a woman, and my right to being safe. I have an online network of support. I have also learnt to take my passion for baking and turning it into a business. In the Financial Literacy program, I have learnt how to manage my expenses, calculate costs, and determining prices to make a profit. And how to re-invest my profits and how to save.

Today, after 3 years at Refugee Women's Network, I have a successful small catering business baking and selling breads and pastries. I sell them to local stores and customers. I am making a profit and able to provide money for my family.

My husband's behaviour has changed towards me too. He has more respect for me, treats me kindly, and has stopped hitting and abusing me. He knows, I am now able to live on my own with my business and he encourages me to attend the online programs at Refugee Women's Network.

I am so grateful to Refugee Women's Network because today I am confident, I know I have the skills to grow my business, and be self-sufficient. I am able to take care of myself and my children if I have to live on my own.





Refugee Women's Network

Statement of Financial Position

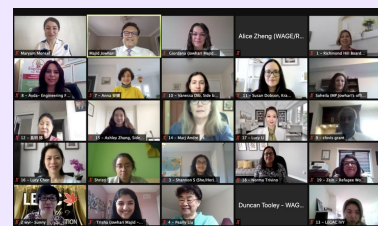
December 31	2022	2021
Assets		
Current		
Cash	\$115,834	\$30,467
Prepaid Expenses	\$1,933	
	<u>\$117,768</u>	<u>\$30,467</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$5,714	\$8,392
Deferred Contributions	\$70,520	
	<u>\$76,234</u>	<u>\$8,392</u>
Net Assets Restricted Funds	\$41,533	\$22,075
	<u>\$117,768</u>	<u>\$30,467</u>

Statement of Revenue and Expenditure

Year End December 31	2022	2021
Revenue		
Grants	\$133,480	\$113,243
Donations	\$19,590	\$44,086
	<u>\$153,070</u>	<u>\$157,329</u>
Expenses		
Operating Expense	\$141,232	\$137,822
	<u>\$141,232</u>	<u>\$137,822</u>
Excess of Revenue over expense for the year	\$11,837	\$19,506
Net Assets, beginning of year	\$22,075	\$2,569
Net Assets	\$33,912	\$22,075

Pictures from Events and Programs

We are grateful for Visa Canada, Human IT, and Hyundai Canada, presenters at Empowering Women's Summit for their support.





Refugee Women's Network