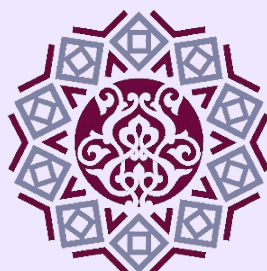




# *Refugee Women's Network*

## **Impact Report 2024**



*Refugee Women's Network*

## A Message from our Founder & Executive Director



In 2024, Refugee Women's Network grew from serving 400 women to over 790. All of the newcomer women were Afghan women who were at the literacy level. This required us to increase our resources to meet their needs.

As newcomer women continue to face barriers while settling in Canada, new services were introduced to support them through the challenges, including training and education and external services available.

We also collaborated with agencies to support our clients by providing translation services while communicating with the Police Services, Victims Services, Children's Aid Societies, and Women's Shelters.

We have also been successful in rescuing our client's children who were brought into Canada for safety and then being forced to work as domestic servants and denied access to their family. Since the family lived outside of Canada, we were able to work with the police and Children's Aid Society to rescue the child and place them in Foster Care.

This continued collaboration including lawyers, and immigration lawyers, has created an inter-agency task force to advocate for children on behalf of the parents of rescued children.

As we move forward, our goal is to develop a similar inter-agency focus group to create policy and advocate for change on how we help refugee women facing domestic abuse with a safe exit plan recognizing their cultural differences.

Over the next years, we will continue to create new programs to help support newcomer women, ensuring we enforce our mandate to empower them through education while respecting their cultural differences.

I want to thank our Board, our Staff, and our generous Donors without whom we would not be able to empower refugee women. And as you read through our clients' stories, please you played a vital role in impacting change in their lives.

*Zein*

Zein Dhanidina  
Founder & Executive Director

*Empowering Women Through  
Education and Community*

# 2024 Impact Report



**\$143k+**

Recieved in grants and donations



**8+**

Community Programs  
suceessfully implemented



**798+**

Women participating in our programs

## Education Support



**5883+**

English classes attended by our clients



**216**

students have advanced to employment or higher education

## Skills Training

**2105+**

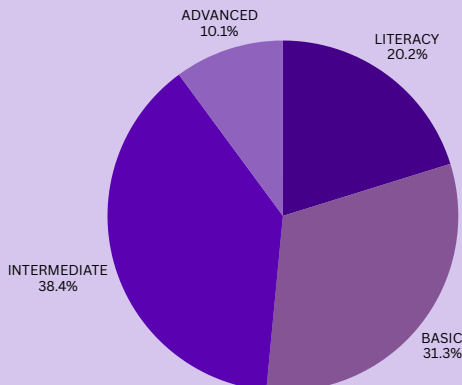
women helping women  
sessions attended

**280**

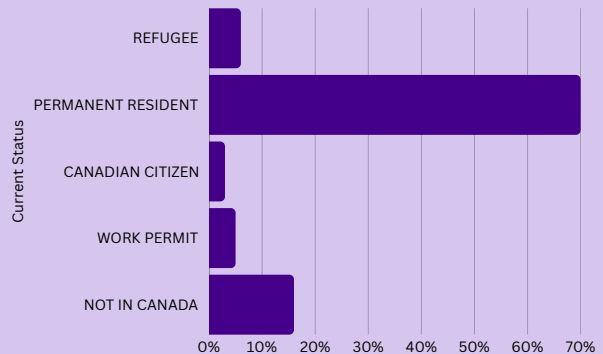
Chromebooks  
distributed in 2024

## Client Statistics

### Level of English



### Immigration Status



# OUR 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.

# OUR VISION

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



Our virtual classes, led by certified instructors, provide women with the tools to overcome language barriers, develop digital literacy, and grow their confidence. These foundational skills help participants become stronger communicators and advocates.

**EDUCATE**



This peer-led program creates a supportive space for women to share their challenges, access referrals, and build community. Through mentorship and connection, participants find strength in shared experience.

**CONNECT**



Refugee Women's Network offers wraparound support for women settling in Canada, including help with citizenship preparation, housing applications, and access to essential community resources.

**SETTLE**



# OUR MODEL OF EMPOWERMENT

At Refugee Women's Network, our holistic model is designed to support refugee women from their earliest days in Canada through to long-term empowerment. Each step builds critical skills, confidence, and community connection.



## CONNECTION & INTAKE

Referrals, outreach, or word of mouth bring women to RWN and into our supportive network.



## FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

We offer beginner English and digital literacy classes to help women navigate daily life with confidence and independence.



## HEALING AND PEER SUPPORT

Through safe spaces like Women Helping Women, clients build trust, process trauma, and connect with peers who understand their stories.



## EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

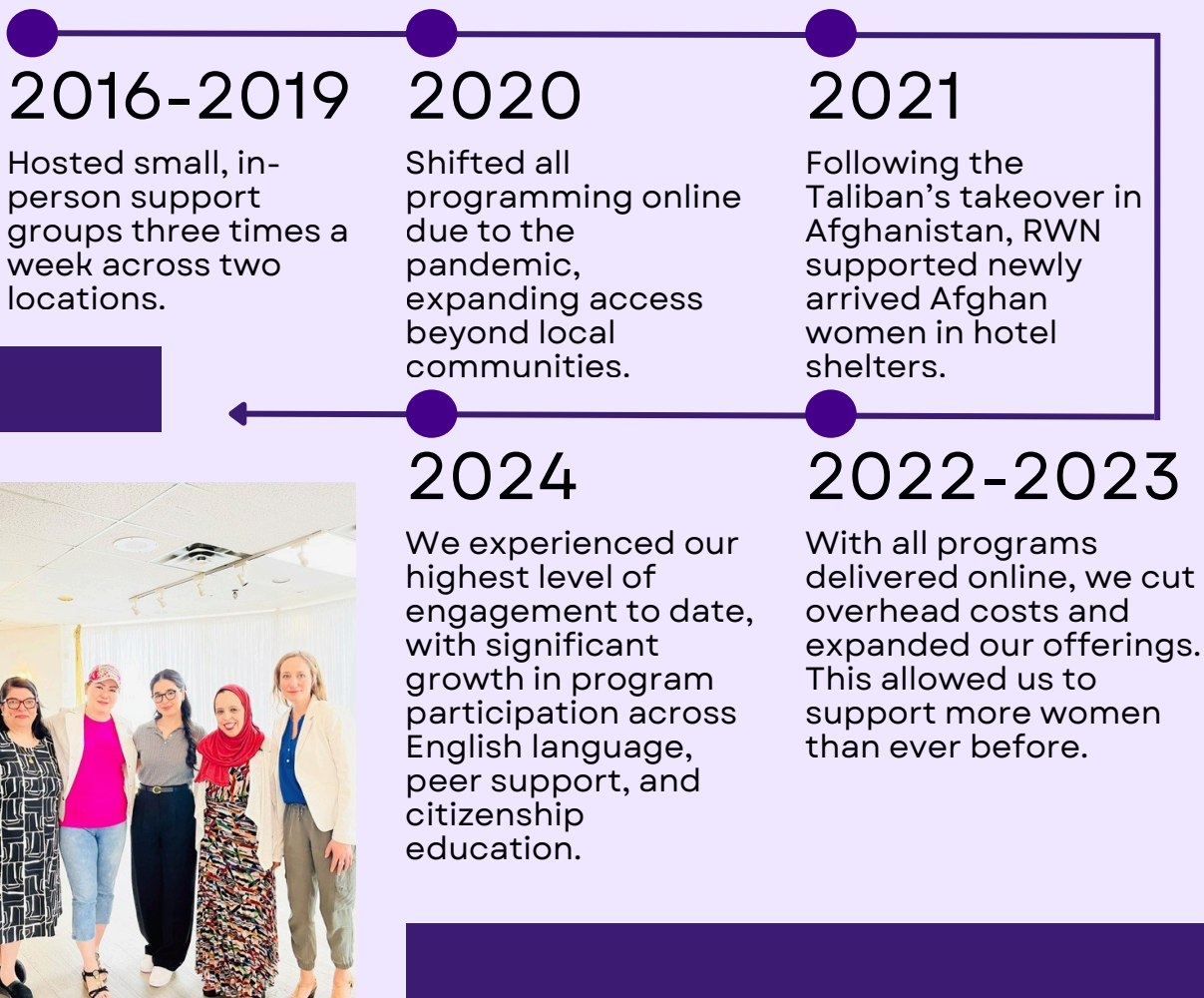
Women gain advanced language, financial literacy, and vocational training, unlocking pathways to employment and higher education.



## LEADERSHIP AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Clients become mentors, volunteers, and changemakers, empowered to support others and lead in their communities.

# Organizational Timeline




Since 2016, Refugee Women's Network has grown from small, local support circles into a national organization reaching hundreds of women each year. This growth reflects our deep commitment to ensuring newcomer women are heard, supported, and empowered.

As we look ahead, we're building on that momentum with new programs in immigration, housing, and skills development. Our continued expansion is rooted in one goal: to uplift and advocate for newcomer women at every step of their journey.

# Our Programs

The programs at Refugee Women’s Network are delivered virtually to engage women across Canada and around the world. The organization is committed to meeting the diverse needs of its clients by offering comprehensive in-house resources rather than referring them to external agencies. These programs equip refugee women with the tools they need to rebuild their lives and are grounded in the belief that education is empowerment. Without education, a woman may not be aware of the opportunities available to her, the skills she needs to succeed, her rights, or how to make informed decisions that support her growth. The overarching goal is to foster strong, meaningful connections with participants, so they feel safe and supported in seeking help when needed. All program details are below. Register for one or all. The programs are free and some with Dari translation.

Refugee Women’s Network offers all programs free, everyday, online on Zoom. Register by email to [info@refugeewomensnetwork.org](mailto:info@refugeewomensnetwork.org)

<b>Empower To Power</b>	<b>Women Helping Women</b>	<b>Gender Based Violence</b>
<b>Digital Empowerment</b>	<b>Financial Litteracy</b>	<b>Economic Empowerment/Enterprenuership</b>
<b>Mental HEalth Support</b>	<b>Canadian Citizenship Classes</b>	 <i>Refugee Women's Network</i>

# Empower To Power

The Learning Lab is an English as a first language (ESL) program that is designed to provide refugee and new immigrant women with English classes from Levels 1 to 6, following the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) guidelines and taught by certified TESL instructors. This women-only program is taught by women and welcomes all women seeking to learn English, regardless of their immigration status. Because the classes are offered virtually, women from across the globe are able to join and build their English skills as they prepare for better opportunities.

Breaking the language barrier opens doors to employment and promotes economic security. English proficiency helps refugee women support their children in navigating the school system, communicate effectively with healthcare providers, and advocate for their families' needs. Language skills are a powerful tool for empowerment, transforming women from feeling isolated and fearful to becoming confident, independent, and vocal advocates for themselves and others.

At the Refugee Women's Network, we have access to specialized resources and educators who can identify disabilities such as dyslexia in our clients. This enables us to support them by installing special fonts on their individual Chromebooks, as well as using the same fonts in presentations. These tools enhance their learning of the English language and help build their confidence in their abilities.

With increased confidence, refugee and immigrant women are often inspired to further their education, pursue higher learning, and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. When a woman's life is transformed, the impact ripples through her entire family.

She becomes a source of strength and inspiration—determined to lift her family out of poverty and model the value of education and self-sufficiency for her children.

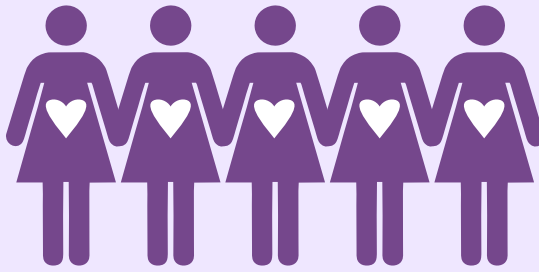
“

My favourite memory is joining this class and holding a pen for the first time  
-Sharifa

”



# Women Helping Women



The Women Helping Women program is designed to support newcomer women as they navigate the challenges of settlement and transition. It provides a safe, confidential, and nurturing environment where refugee and immigrant women can share their experiences and the difficulties they face, including feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression. This support group not only offers a space for open conversation but also connects women to counselling services and additional community resources.

Many refugee women struggle with mental health challenges stemming from trauma, displacement, and uncertainty. For some, the journey involves fleeing their home with very little and enduring long periods in transition before arriving in Canada. In many cases, they have not had the opportunity to process what they've experienced. The group offers a vital chance to begin healing—by first identifying their feelings and then learning healthy ways to cope and recover. Women Helping Women also empowers participants to take an active role in their caregiving responsibilities and access available support systems within their communities. Women share personal stories of resilience, exchange resources, and ask questions about parenting, settlement, and services. This peer-to-peer learning helps build confidence, improve language skills, and encourages women to advocate for themselves, their children, and their elderly family members.

Women find access to resources for their family like food banks, clothing banks, and household items. Newcomer women need support to access services such as, applying for housing, financial support, or medical questionnaires. They need help to read their child's report and learn what questions to ask their children's teachers, and how to help their children. At Women Helping Women, newcomer women can access various supports in multiple languages and find a helping hand as they resettle in their new community.

# Gender-Based Violence

To support women experiencing gender-based violence, refugee women are provided with education and emotional support to help them recognize the different forms of abuse they may face and to connect with others in similar situations.

Gender-based violence—which disproportionately affects women—can take many forms, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, name-calling, hitting, pushing, stalking, criminal harassment, sexual assault, manipulation, and controlling behavior. These actions are against the law in Canada. Abuse can occur within intimate relationships, among family members, or even by strangers and coworkers. It occurs in private places, often by people you know.

With the help of translators, women from diverse cultural backgrounds learn about their rights to be protected against any form of violence in Canada. Refugee women are provided with one-on-one counselling to be able to share their story and have someone to listen. With most of the clients being women from Afghanistan, there is a cultural awareness where the women are married within their family and so are unable to share the suffering they face with their family members. Many Afghan women are also unable to leave their home on their own or visit their doctors without a male family member with them. Thus, it does not allow them to be open with their doctor.

Within our program, women are given the space to share and learn what they need to do in order to leave their situation. Learnings are built into a “safe exit” scenario, ensuring they understand what they need to be able to leave and start on their own. Language is a critical tool because without the ability to communicate and understand, an Afghan woman will have a difficult time in the shelter. And without language, she will not be able to find employment and support herself and her children. Our program provides the essential tools to become more self-sufficient and confident, empowering them to safely leave abusive environments.

We also ensure to support our client through the process of a safe exit, include liaising with the Police and supporting you through the process of reporting and working with Victims Services.



# Digital Empowerment

Digital Empowerment provides women with access to technology that enhances their ability to learn, build confidence, access vital information, and become empowered through knowledge. It equips them with practical, transferable skills that support both personal growth and employability.

Refugee women begin with foundational training in digital literacy, learning how to communicate through email and platforms like Zoom. Most of the Digital Empowerment program is translated into Dari to support the increasing number of Afghan women participating. Participants are provided with a Chromebook donated by VISA Canada.

Digital literacy is more than just a technical skill; it's a powerful tool that opens doors to employment, connection, and self-reliance for refugee women.





# 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.

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.



**Managing  
Finances**



**Planning for  
Education**



**Saving for  
the Future**

# Economic Empowerment/ Entrepreneurship

Newcomer women will gain the skills needed to start their own small businesses from home—whether in catering, baking, sewing, or other areas of interest. This program equips participants with practical knowledge to launch and manage a business, helping them build financial independence and long-term sustainability. Training includes marketing strategies, understanding health and safety guidelines in the food industry, and handling administrative tasks related to running a business.



Participants also learn how to develop a business plan and apply for the necessary permits. Through this process, women not only gain technical and entrepreneurial skills but also develop a stronger sense of independence and self-confidence. Running their own businesses gives them control over their time, finances, and future. It opens the door to personal and professional growth, allowing them to expand their skills, explore new opportunities, and become empowered decision-makers for themselves and their families.



I always remind myself: it's never too late. I still want to achieve my goals.

-Tamana

This work is grounded in the belief that we are not here to save women, but to walk with them. We do not fight for them—we fight alongside them. By offering support, tools, and shared strength, we create a space where women lead their own journeys toward empowerment and self-sufficiency, on their own terms.

# Mental Health Support



Throughout our programs at the Refugee Women's Network, we prioritize supporting women, particularly those who have experienced physical, emotional, or psychological trauma, or who are currently facing abuse from a partner. We offer one-on-one support sessions where clients are given the space to share their stories in a confidential and respectful setting. With the help of trained translators, we work to create a culturally sensitive environment that helps women feel safe, heard, and understood.

By providing education and support, we empower women to recognize their rights in Canada and affirm their value as individuals. Rather than speaking for them, we walk alongside them—offering tools, knowledge, and encouragement as they find their voice. In doing so, we foster an environment of trust and safety, where women can speak up about their experiences and seek the help they need to protect themselves and move toward healing and independence.



# Canadian Citizenship Classes

This class is specifically designed for Afghan women wishing to take their Citizenship Test and become a Canadian citizen. The class is taught completely in Dari to ensure complete understanding of Canada's history and progress.

The classes run virtually on Zoom every Tuesday afternoon from 1pm to 3pm. Please register at [info@refugeewomensnetwork.org](mailto:info@refugeewomensnetwork.org) to sign up for the classes.

# Meet Our Clients

My name is Shagofa, and I am a single mother going through a very difficult time in my life. My health has been poor, and managing everything all by myself while caring for my child has been incredibly overwhelming. **I didn't know where to turn or how to ask for help.**

That's when I found the Refugee Women's Network, and they truly changed my life. They helped me communicate with my caseworker by translating everything with extreme patience and care. **I felt heard for the first time in a long time.**

They also provided me with a Chromebook, which has made a huge difference in my day to day life. I'm now able to access resources, fill out forms, attend online classes, and help my child with schoolwork. It has taken a huge burden off my shoulders. Their kindness and support gave me hope at a time when I felt completely lost. I am truly grateful not just for the services, but for the compassion and respect I was shown.

Thank you for being there when I needed it the most.



# Meet Our Clients

My name is Tamana, and my journey to Canada began in 2011, when I left behind the comfort of home and family to start a new life in a new country. It was a major change, one filled with both excitement and uncertainty. I arrived with hope in my heart and a strong commitment to build a better future for myself and my family.

In 2012, my first son was born. It was one of the happiest and most life-changing moments for me. Becoming a mother in a new country wasn't easy, but it gave me purpose and strength. Just one year later, in 2013, my first daughter was born. Now I had two little ones who depended on me, and they became my reason to keep going and to keep building a life here.



In 2014, I started language school because I wanted to learn English. But after only a few months, I had to stop when my second daughter was born in 2015. After a couple of months, I returned to class and studied for about a year. Then in 2019, my second son was born, and once again, I had to leave school.

I've always done my best to learn English so I could communicate better, but raising my children always kept me very busy. Things didn't go exactly as I had hoped, but I am still trying my best. **I always remind myself: it's never too late. I still want to achieve my goals.**

Last year, I attended a program where I met a kind and confident lady named Razma. She was hosting a beauty workshop, and I asked her if she knew about any English courses. That's when she told me about Ms. Zein and her special program designed for women. I joined this organization, and with its support and encouragement, I was able to get admitted to adult school, with the hope of continuing my education and eventually getting into college.

I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from such inspiring ladies. And I would especially like to thank my teacher, Ms. Susan. You are not only a wonderful teacher but also a very kind and caring person. You always take the time to explain things clearly and make sure everyone understands. **Your patience and support have made a big difference in my learning journey.**

Thank you for being part of my story.



# Meet Our Clients

My name is Farzana, and I wanted to express my deepest gratitude to Ms. Zein, dear Razma, and the entire team behind the Refugee Women Network program. **When all doors seemed closed to us and we had no one to turn to, this program became our light in the darkness.**

The network was more than just an educational program; it was a safe space where we felt truly seen and heard. **Through your kindness and consistent support, we found the courage to speak up about our challenges. For the first time, we felt that someone genuinely cared and was ready to take action.**

When we shared a very personal and painful situation involving a family threat, we were overwhelmed by the compassion and immediate support we received. **You didn't just listen; you stood by us, acted, and proved that humanity still exists.**

This program didn't just teach us; it empowered us. It helped us build a deep sense of trust and connection that allowed us to open up, seek help, and believe in ourselves again.

Thank you for giving us hope, knowledge, and a safe space to grow. We will never forget your kindness and patience.



# Meet Our Clients

My name is Munira, and I'm honoured to speak on this occasion. Over the past two months, this class has been an amazing journey for me. Attending classes five days a week, each for two hours, had helped me develop a strong routine and sharpen my English skills, especially in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

One of the best parts of the course was working with women from different developing countries. Each of them brought a unique perspective and life experience to the class, which made our discussions rich and meaningful.



I really enjoyed our breakout rooms, where we could talk, exchange ideas and support one another. It helped me grow not only in English but also in confidence and networking. Our teacher has played a big role in this experience. She is such a wonderful, kind and supportive woman. She has always encouraged us, listened to us with patience and created a safe space where we could express ourselves.

For me, this class was more than just learning English. It was about connection, empowerment, and growth. I have learned new vocabulary, practiced writing and had many chances to speak English, which I will carry all with me in my future learning and professional life.

Thank you so much to our lovely teacher and to all my classmates for making this experience so memorable. I'm grateful for the constant support of Mrs. Zein and good coordination of Razma.



# Meet Our Clients

My name is Nurziya, and ever since I've moved to Canada, my life has changed in so many positive ways. I'm incredibly grateful for the support I received through your program. For the first time, I started learning how to use a Chromebook; something I never had access to before. Now, not only can I use it confidently, but I can even help my mother-in-law with technology!

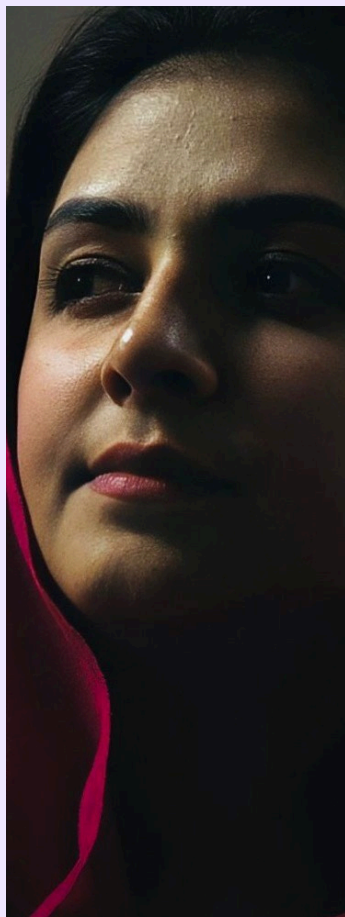
**Back in Afghanistan, I didn't have the right to study. But now, I'm learning English in both the LINC class and the Refugee Women's Network's English class, which makes me feel more independent and empowered each day.** Recently, I even found a part-time job, which is a big accomplishment for me.

Moving to Canada comes with its own struggles and challenges, but the most important thing I've gained here is freedom. And with that freedom, I'm finally able to grow, learn, and build a better future for myself and my family.

I really want to thank everyone who helped me through this program and didn't give up on me. Your support has meant the world to me.



# Meet Our Clients



My name is Sarah Faizi, and I am one of the immigrant women who arrived in Canada with a heart full of hope but no clear plan for what the future would hold. Back in my home country, life was stable; but when we arrived in Canada, everything changed. The first month was spent in a hotel, feeling lost and uncertain. It was during this time that I met a woman who introduced me to the Refugee Women's Network. I wanted to improve my English, so I reached out to Miss Zein Dhanidina, who welcomed me into her class with open arms and a warm heart.

From day one, I was amazed. It wasn't just about learning grammar; it was about learning crucial life skills. I still clearly remember my first class; it was about how to open a bank account, use cheques, withdraw and deposit money, and even apply for jobs; all things I had never done before. The skills I learned through this program helped me qualify for the LINC program, allowing me to reach Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 6 and 7.

When the Alberta government ended the LINC program after CLB 6, it felt like a door was closing. I was not able to pay \$5,000 per semester to attend college and continue my English education. At that same time, I had a baby and became a stay-at-home mom. I found myself isolated and struggling with loneliness, unable to speak to anyone who understood my hardships. But I refused to give up. I continued my desperate search for other English programs, but many were unstructured, and didn't sufficiently meet my needs.

**Then I remembered Miss Zein, and once again, she welcomed me back. She didn't just offer a class; she offered a loving community. For two hours a day, I felt like I had found myself again. I was learning, growing, and, most importantly, I was not alone. The Refugee Women's Network is more than just an educational program; it is a lifeline. Miss Zein and her team truly understand the unique challenges faced by immigrant mothers. There is no judgment, simply support, encouragement, and understanding.**

From everything Miss Zein provided me with, the program which helped me the most was Women Helping Women or “Problem Solving Day”. It took place on Tuesday, and allowed women to come together and share the struggles they face, from parenting and housing to mental health. Miss Zein goes above and beyond, bringing in doctors, nurses, social workers, and other professionals to help us address life’s challenges. She’s also working to help women improve their computer skills and provides support to ensure we all have the tools we need, like our own laptops, so we can study in peace.

**I have seen women who were not doing well begin to heal. They are learning to speak up, to dream again, and to believe in their abilities.**

Miss Zein has become a role model—not just for me, but for so many others. She teaches us not only English but also the values of dignity, courage, compassion, and kindness. Thanks to her, I now have the strength and confidence to pursue CLB 8 and eventually apply to college. My mother and sister, who were struggling just as much as me, have found new hope through the same program.

Through the Refugee Women’s Network, I was also connected to other resources that further built my confidence. Without this program, none of these opportunities would have been possible.

I am deeply grateful to Miss Zein and her team. In my eyes, Miss Zein is like medicine for every woman who walks through this program.

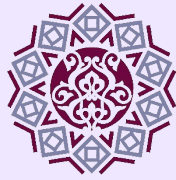
# Meet Our Clients

My name is Parisa, and this year, I had the wonderful opportunity to improve my English through the Refugee Women's Network. With the guidance, teaching, and patience of my teacher, Miss Amira, and the whole team, my confidence has grown so much. **I used to struggle with pronunciation, but now I feel comfortable having conversations and connecting with others.** The organization not only helped me learn English but also gave me valuable knowledge about Canadian laws, rights at work, tenant and landlord responsibilities, and how to access important services.

The organization also offered workshops on medical care, health, and beauty, both online and in person, which provided practical knowledge for our daily lives. Through their support, especially for women, they have made a positive impact on the safety and well-being of immigrant women. What I truly appreciate is the safe and supportive space they created for women, especially newcomers like me. **Through social gatherings and celebrations, I made new friends and learned to respect different cultures and religions.**

I am deeply grateful to Razma Khalily for introducing me to this community, to Mrs. Zein Dhanidina for her tireless efforts, and to my amazing teacher, Miss Amira, for helping me every step of the way. Thanks to this organization, I feel more confident, informed, and connected than ever before.





*Refugee Women's Network*

## Statement of Financial Position

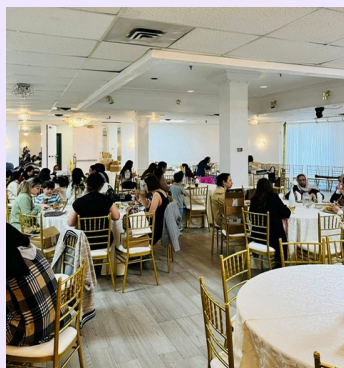
December 31	2024	2023
<b>Assets</b>		
Current Assets	\$1,524	\$3,818
Cash and Cash Equivalent	132,057	30,730
<b>Total for Current Assets</b>	<b>133,582</b>	<b>34,548</b>
<b>Total for Assets</b>	<b>\$133,582</b>	<b>\$34,548</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current Liabilities	\$110,269	\$8,898
Accounts Payable (A/P)		618
Accrued Liabilities	647	10,163
<b>Total for Current Liabilities</b>	<b>110,915</b>	<b>19,678</b>
Net Assets, beginning of year	22,666	14,869
<b>Total for Liabilities and Equity</b>	<b>\$133,582</b>	<b>\$34,548</b>

## Statement of Revenue and Expenditure

Year End December 31	2024	2023
<b>Revenue</b>		
Total Donations	19,147	93,417
Total Grants	124,354	20,000
	143,501	113,417
	<b>143,501</b>	<b>113,417</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Office/General Administrative Expenses	1,499	1,763
Marketing and Advertising	2,695	1,379
Professional expenses	2,853	422
Program Delivery	4,532	12,483
Legal and professional fees	11,930	1,145
Salary	85,963	85,856
Direct Project Expense	111,271	112,840
	<b>135,703</b>	<b>132,838</b>
<b>Excess of Revenue over Expenses</b>	<b>7,797</b>	<b>-19,421</b>



# Pictures from Events and Programs



# Our Sponsors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors and partners who make our work possible. Your generous support has helped us empower refugee and immigrant women with the tools, skills, and community connections they need to thrive. From funding essential programs to backing new initiatives, your investment has created real and lasting change. Thank you for standing with us and believing in the strength, resilience, and potential of every woman we serve.



*Refugee Women's Network*

**WOMEN'S  
CAPACITY  
FUND**

SEYI Women and Gender Equality Canada

**WE ARE  
RECIPIENTS**

**Canada**



**COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CANADA**

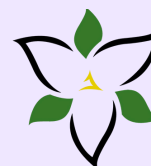
**VISA**



**CANADIAN  
WOMEN'S  
FOUNDATION**



**Ontario  
Trillium  
Foundation**



**Fondation  
Trillium  
de l'Ontario**

An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

**United Way  
Greater Toronto**





*Refugee Women's Network*