



ANNUAL **REPORT** **2022-2023**

SOMALI IMMIGRANT AID ORGANIZATION

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ABOUT S.I.A.O

The history of Somali Immigrant Aid Organizations (S.I.A.O) in Toronto goes back to the early 1980's. It was not until 1985 that the needs of the Somali community became apparent with the growing number of refugees from Somalia. For this reason, Somali Immigrant Aid Organization started as a working group in January 1986 to facilitate awareness of the refugee needs, promote understanding of the impact of Canadian Immigration policies, practice on refugee relief and encourage direct services to Somali refugees. As a result, Somali Immigrant Aid Organization requested the Canadian Government to respond more effectively to settlement and the resettlement needs of Somali refugees and their families who were displaced in countries around the world due to the civil war in Somalia.

We collaborated and worked along side with other organizations like Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) to address the thousands of Somali refugees that were in limbo and the identity documents (ID) issues which were that the Somali refugees could not reunite with their spouses and young children outside of Canada. They could not go to university or college. They were not eligible for student loans. They could not travel outside Canada. They could not get better-paid jobs and people's mental health suffered as a result of their powerlessness. Also, we worked on Undocumented Convention Refugee in Canada Class (UCRCC), no moratorium on removals to Somalia, DNA tests, Bill C43, Bill C51, Bill C24 and barriers to the resettlement of Somali refugees. We have worked in close collaboration with all levels of government, IRCC and other partners, as well as the community to address these challenges.



VISION & MISSION

VISION

The goal of S.I.A.O is to ensure that all service users, regardless of race, gender, colour, country of origin, or length of residence in Canada have equal access to social services, education, employment, skills training and other relevant programs.

We meet the goal by providing individualized programs that are designed to meet the personal goal of the service user. These programs include: Settlement Counselling, Job Placement, English as a Second Language and. Literacy classes, Advocacy, Information and referral, and interpretation services for clients.

Somali Immigrant Aid Organization is dedicated to providing quality and inclusive settlement support services to newcomers.

MISSION

Somali Immigrant Aid Organization (S.I.A.O) is a non-profit community-based organization that is committed in addressing the immigration, integration, education, health, housing, social service, culture, and economic development needs of Somali Canadians and other immigrants in Canada through programs, service and advocacy.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide education, counseling and other support services for immigrants and refugees in need, including language instructions, employment training, job search programs on Canadian Culture and life.
- To establish, maintain and operate an employment-training center for unemployed individuals and low skilled workers.
- To provide assistance to needy persons in drafting resumes, searching for employment and preparing for jobs and job interviews.
- To provide counseling to individuals experiencing long-term unemployment.
- To develop employment training and education programs

CHAIRPERSON MESSAGE

On behalf of the board of Directors, it is with pride that I present our annual report for the fiscal year 2022-2023. As we reflect on the remarkable journey of the past fiscal year, and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead. Let us review our achievements, challenges, aspirations, and stand as a community united in our commitment to a welcoming and inclusive environment for our community.

In a era where the significance of black-led organizations cannot be overemphasised, our organization continues to be a beacon of hope for newcomers, particularly those who find themselves disproportionately marginalized. We recognize the unique challenges that they face, and we are dedicated to providing them with the essential resources and support they need to integrate successfully into Canadian society.

One of the key challenges we encountered was the pressing need for additional resources to facilitate the successful integration of newcomers. This encompasses two pivotal pillars: employment and housing, both of which significantly impact the lives of newcomers. The scarcity of employment opportunities and lack of affordable housing options continues to pose daunting barriers for those embarking on their Canadian journey. Our dedication to addressing these challenges remains priority, as we work to bridge the gap between these essential resources.

Furthermore, the mental health and well-being of our community have become increasingly paramount, particularly those who face challenges with substance abuse issues. The process of adapting to a new culture and society can be overwhelming and when compounded by these challenges, the need for comprehensive support services become all the more critical.

Somali Immigrant Aid Organization continues to serve as the trusted first point of contact for countless African refugees with limited access to support services. It is in the spirit of community solidarity that we have pooled resources to provide the most basic of needs. The word-of-mouth referrals we receive stand as a testament to the invaluable support services provided by S.I.A.O, reaffirming our commitment to culturally specific services to meet the unique needs of our community members.

The board is immensely proud of our collaboration with post-secondary institutions and Canada Summer Jobs, which has enabled young individuals to gain valuable cross-cultural experience and develop skills while contributing to the success of the organization.

As we approach the conclusion of the 2022-2023 fiscal year, our focus intensifies on creating a sustainable foundation, coupled with an eagerness to explore growth opportunities and enhance service delivery. In closing, on behalf of the board of directors I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our remarkable staff, dedicated volunteers, steadfast partners and generous funders, and our resilient community. Your support has been instrumental in our achievements, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

With deepest appreciations,

Bashir Nur
Chair

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

Dear Supports, Partners, and Community,

I am honored to present Somali Immigrant Aid Organizations (S.I.A.O) annual report, dedicated to support Somali Canadians, newcomers and greater community. As the Executive Director, I am incredibly proud of the achievements and progress we have made in the past year, thanks to the collective efforts of our dedicated team, volunteers, funders, and community partners.

Our organization remains committed to empowering individuals, fostering inclusivity, and promoting the well-being of Somali Canadians and newcomers. Throughout the year, we have worked tirelessly to create a supportive and nurturing environment where community members can thrive and find the resources they need to succeed.

One of our key accomplishments has been our commitment to community engagement and advocacy. We have actively sought opportunities to listen to the concerns and challenges faced by our clients. By providing a platform for dialogue, we have been able to address these issues and advocate for rights and integration of our community members. Our organization believes that every voice matters and that by working together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable society.

Education and training initiatives have also played a vital role in our mission. We recognize the importance of equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge needed for personal and professional growth. From language classes to career development workshops and mentorship, we have been dedicated to empowering individuals to achieve their full potential. By providing these educational opportunities, we are opening doors and creating pathways of success.

The health and well-being of our community members have remained at the forefront of our efforts. We understand that mental wellness is essential for individuals to thrive. Through our nutrition and mental health programs, we have facilitated access to counselling and educational workshops on wellness. Our goal is to ensure that every community member has the support they need to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Cultural preservation and integration are also central to our organization's work. We take pride in celebrating and promoting Somali culture and heritage, while also facilitating the integration of newcomers into Canadian society. By organizing cultural events, festivals, and supporting events, we create opportunities for cultural exchange and a sense of belonging. Our commitment to fostering intercultural understanding strengthens the fabric of our diverse community.

None of our achievements would have been possible without the power of collaboration. We have formed strong partnerships with local community organizations, government agencies, and businesses that share our vision and values. Through these collaborations, we have leveraged resources, shared knowledge, and amplified our impact. Together, we are creating a network of support that drives positive change.

As we celebrate our accomplishments, we also recognize the ongoing challenges faced by newcomers. Systemic barriers, social inequalities, and limited resources continue to hinder progress. However, we are undeterred in our commitment to addressing these challenges head-on. We will continue to advocate for equal opportunities, foster partnerships, and develop innovative solutions to meet the evolving needs of our community.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our incredible staff, passionate volunteers, generous funders, and steadfast community partners. It is your unwavering support that fuels our work and enables us to make a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve. Together, we are building a stronger and more inclusive community for all.

I invite you to explore this annual report, which provides detailed insights into our programs, initiatives, financial performances. It is a testament to the dedication and impact of our organization.

Thank you for your continued support as we embark on the next chapter of our journey. Together, let us strive for a future where newcomers have opportunities they deserve to thrive and contribute to the fabric of Canadian society.

Sincerely,






Mahad Yusuf
Executive Director

HEALTH & NUTRITION

Health Promotion and Nutrition Program at SIAO has a partnership with Program Without Walls (PWW). PWW is a coalition of six agencies working together to support the health and development of children aged birth to 6 years in the former city of York. Programs are funded through the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) under the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The SIAO Community Nutrition Programs assist the community in implementing a variety of information sessions on nutrition, cooking, budgeting, etc. The project also coordinates with community parents, volunteers and staff of other programs within PWW. It also provides support and referral services to families living in high-risk situations. In addition to that, it educates and assists parents in performing duties such as food handling, preparing, portioning and storing as well as introducing entire families to the Canada food Guide and the importance of healthy eating and physical activities

Participants gain a better understanding of healthy child development and the importance of nutrition. Lastly, our students, clients, and staff have all benefited from topics covered in the workshops below:

-  **HEART HEALTH**
-  **DIABETES**
-  **CHILD NUTRITION**
-  **MANAGING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**
-  **STROKE**

Delivering community-based nutrition education programs to help newcomers and immigrants make informed choices about food and lifestyles throughout the year.



PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAM



The PETP offers comprehensive pre-employment support to newcomers, focusing on essential skills development, language proficiency, job readiness training, and employer connections. Through workshops, individual counselling, and networking opportunities, the program aims to enhance participants' employability and facilitate their successful integration into the Canadian workforce.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023:

Program Expansion:

The PETP experienced significant growth during the fiscal year, expanding its reach to serve a larger number of newcomers. Through strategic partnerships with community organizations, settlement services, and employment agencies, the program extended its presence and effectively engaged with diverse communities across Toronto.

Enhanced Language Support:

Recognizing the language barriers faced by newcomers, the PETP created opportunities to develop and harness language skills. By tailoring programs and services to improve participants' communication skills and confidence in the workplace.

Customized Training Programs:

To address the evolving job market, the PETP developed specialized training programs aligned with industry demands. These programs focused on key areas such as job search strategies, resume building, interview preparation, and digital literacy. Participants received personalized guidance and acquired the necessary skills to compete in the job market.

Employer Partnerships:

Building strong relationships with local employers remained a priority. Through ongoing collaboration and employer engagement initiatives, we established a network of supportive local businesses willing to provide employment opportunities for participants.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

The past year presented unprecedented challenges for newcomers venturing into the workforce. As Toronto saw an influx of newcomers choosing the city as their new home, they encountered a multitude of hurdles, particularly in the realms of housing and employment. In the employment sector, clients shared their struggles, not just in securing table work, but also in retaining their current positions. Precarious employment opportunities have become scarcer, placing substantial financial stress on households. Concurrently, the current housing market dynamics have led to an alarming rate of housing instability, significantly impacting their mental well-being. These factors compound multiple risk factors, making the situation even more complex.



Looking forward, the Pre-Employment Program remains committed to addressing these pressing challenges faced by our community. Our focus will be on advocating, expanding our support networks, forging stronger partnerships, and tailoring our programs to address the evolving needs of our clients. We aim to empower our community with the tools and opportunities they need to secure meaningful employment, resulting in a brighter and more prosperous future from them in Toronto.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEW COMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

The LINC program has been instrumental in providing essential support to eligible clients, including refugees, family class immigrants, economic immigrants, and university-educated immigrants in the Weston area of Toronto. This curriculum-based initiative focuses on comprehensive language and skills development, facilitating a smooth integration into the longstanding newcomer community while serving as a vital tool for cultural and social cohesion, ultimately contributing to successful employment outcomes.

KEY ACHIEVEMENT

- 1** Delivered targeted English language training for LINC levels 1 to 6, along with a full-time literacy class, ensuring tailored support for newcomers' varying needs
- 2** Successfully provided 3,880 hours of language instruction to an average of 70 students monthly through continuous intake.
- 3** Maintained a commendable monthly class attendance rate of 70%, reflecting the program's effectiveness and relevance.
- 4** Enriched course content covered Canadian services, systems, life, and culture, providing a holistic learning experience for program participants.
- 5** Conducted regular evaluations to monitor and assess student progress, ensuring the program's adaptability and responsiveness.



OUTCOME HIGHLIGHTS

The LINC program has equipped clients with the official language skills necessary for effective functioning in Canadian society, spanning literacy to CLB 6. Notably, most clients progressed through three language levels during the project, attesting to the program's efficacy.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

Key Outcomes:

- Enhanced English language skills, encompassing Canadian dialects and expressions, through classroom settings.
- Facilitated meaningful interactions among students from diverse backgrounds, fostering relationships, friendships, and valuable social support.
- Mitigated feelings of isolation among newcomers, highlighting the pivotal role of language in gaining employment.
- Empowered students with practical skills, including resume preparation, interview techniques, leading to successful job placements.
- Cultivated cultural diversity, evident in increased enrollment rates and improved overall attendance.
- Provided comprehensive insights into life in Canada, covering laws, rights, responsibilities, and access to community resources.
- Fostered awareness of Canadian geography, government, and history, facilitating an understanding of the Canadian way of life.
- Equipped clients with the necessary life skills to function seamlessly in Canadian society, including navigating everyday tasks and accessing community resources.

The LINC program continues to be a cornerstone in empowering newcomers, enriching their language skills, and facilitating their successful integration into Canadian society. We remain committed to delivering impactful outcomes and look forward to the continued success of our program.



CARE FOR NEWCOMER CHILDREN (CNC)



The Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program is dedicated to inspiring children as they explore new possibilities and navigate the journey of growing up. Our attentive staff conducts assessments of each child's developmental needs, tailoring curricula to address their stages of growth and individual interests. By meticulously planning play and activity programs, we aim to facilitate developmental progress, providing children with consistent routines and a plethora of learning opportunities, ensuring parents feel secure in their child's safe and nurturing environment as they embark on the path of education. Our team is committed to constructing the foundations of learning during our time together, fostering an environment where every child can thrive.

A key focus of our program is creative engagement across all levels, with activities categorized for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Each program is designed to enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-awareness skills.

PROGRAMS ARE DEVELOPED WITH THE FOCUS ON FIVE KEY AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT:

**PHYSICAL → SOCIAL → EMOTIONAL → COGNITIVE → COMMUNICATION/
LANGUAGE**

Additionally, we place a strong emphasis on promoting healthy living for both children and parents. Recognizing the pivotal role of nutrition in child development, the CNC program ensures that children receive fresh, balanced, and nutritious meals aligned with Canada's Daily Food Guide. We extend our commitment to healthy living by providing parents with cost-efficient information on wholesome meal options for their children.

Our CNC facilities provide a warm and inviting atmosphere, fully equipped with learning materials, toys, washroom facilities, and a dedicated kitchen area. Compliant with National CNC requirements, our program undergoes regular monitoring by Child-Minding Monitoring, Advisory & Supports (CMAS) to maintain the highest standards of care.



MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The Mental Health program of the Somali Immigrant Aid Organization offers complimentary assistance to clients, incorporating various social support programs and community services.

Our array of services is designed to promote mental well-being and includes:

- Individual, family, and group counseling
- Crisis counseling
- Addressing issues related to trauma, addiction, violence, and anxiety
- Facilitating connections to community resources
- Providing support for relationship challenges and couples counseling

Challenges include cultural sensitivity, trauma, resettlement stress, and limited resource access. Addressing these requires ongoing cultural competency, reflected in participation in relevant workshops and training. Unique interventions tailored to each client, acknowledging past traumas, aim to mitigate the mental well-being challenges posed by resettlement.

Clients also encounter economic disparities, language barriers, and limited resource awareness, impeding access to crucial mental health support services.

Collaborative efforts are focused on ensuring these challenges do not compromise their quality of life. On a positive note, successes involve establishing rapport, empowering clients through education, and facilitating integration into Canadian society. Creating safe spaces and providing mental health education contribute to clients' improved well-being, fostering resilience and connections in their new environment. Testimonials underscore the impactful role counseling sessions play in supporting ongoing integration and personal academic success.



SETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION

The Settlement program at the Somali Immigrant Aid Organization has been a crucial source of support for newcomers in the Greater Toronto Area for more than 35 years. Our commitment to providing personalized services is evident in the numbers we serve through our individualized needs assessments and information orientation services. These services ensure that newcomers receive the appropriate information and referrals, assistance with interpretations and translations, supportive counseling, and help in completing applications related to settlement and immigration.

Furthermore, we conducted group workshops covering essential topics such as Immigration and Citizenship, Rights & Freedom, Education, Health Services, Housing, Daily Life, Financial Literacy, and Legal Services. These workshops aimed to empower newcomers and equip them with the knowledge necessary for successful settlement.

Settlement services were extended to eligible newcomer clients, including convention refugees/protected persons, individuals with Permanent Residence status, and those interested in applying for Canadian citizenship. In the fiscal year (FY3), our goal under NARS (Needs Assessment & Referrals Services) was to serve 975 clients. In the fiscal year (FY3), our goal under Information and Orientation services was to serve 1450 clients.

At the Somali Immigrant Aid Organization, we continue to prioritize in-person service delivery for settlement services. Our ongoing dedication to supporting, advocating, and empowering our clients remains unwavering. With gratitude from both new and longstanding clients over the past 30+ years, we are committed to continuous improvement, adaptation, and implementation of necessary changes to better serve our community.



THE SENIORS GATHERING & DISCUSSION HUB

The Seniors Gathering & Discussion Hub is a dedicated space for senior citizens to come together, engage in meaningful conversations, and discuss issues that matter to them. The program promotes social interaction, mental stimulation, and the well-being of its participants, allowing them to connect, share experiences, and offer insights on various topics in a supportive environment.

Objectives:

Social Engagement: To offer seniors a welcoming space where they can foster friendships, reduce feelings of isolation, and enhance their sense of community

Knowledge Exchange: To provide a platform where seniors can discuss relevant issues, share personal experiences, and gain diverse perspectives.

Mental Well-being: Through regular interaction and intellectual stimulation, the program aims to improve the mental health of seniors, potentially reducing the risks of cognitive decline.

Empowerment: To empower seniors by giving them a voice and a platform where their opinions, wisdom, and life experiences are valued.

Key Features

- 1 Regular Meetings:** Scheduled gatherings where seniors can engage in open discussions on preset topics or free flowing conversations.
- 2 Guest Speakers:** Occasional guest speakers from various fields to provide insights or start discussions on specific subjects.
- 3 Topic Suggestions:** Seniors have the freedom to suggest topics or issues they'd like to discuss, ensuring the program remains relevant to their interests.
- 4 Comfortable Environment:** The hub will be set up in a way that's comfortable and accessible, catering to the unique needs of senior participants.
- 5 Guided Discussions:** Facilitators present during sessions to guide discussions, ensuring a respectful and inclusive environment.

THE SENIORS GATHERING & DISCUSSION HUB

This program is designed for seniors' citizens, who have interest in connecting with their peers and engaging in thought-provoking discussions. Whether you're an avid conversationalist or someone looking for a space to listen and learn, the Seniors Gathering & Discussion Hub welcomes you.

Benefits:

Enhanced Social Life: Regular gatherings provide an opportunity for seniors to expand their social circle and establish lasting connections.

Stimulating Conversations: By discussing relevant issues, seniors can keep their minds active and engaged.

Emotional Support: Sharing personal experiences and challenges offers a sense of belonging and mutual support.

Stay Updated: Seniors can stay informed about current events and societal changes through collective discussions.

In an increasingly digital world, the need for face-to-face interaction, especially for seniors, cannot be overstated. The Seniors Gathering & Discussion Hub provides a golden opportunity for elders to keep their minds sharp, hearts full, and spirits uplifted.



FY3 OVERVIEW



**NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**

SERVICES
659
CLIENTS
614



**INFORMATION
&
ORIENTATION**

SERVICES
1770
CLIENTS
608



**GROUP
ORIENTATION**

SERVICES
578
CLIENTS
146



**SUPPORT
SERVICES**

SERVICES
1770
CLIENTS
608



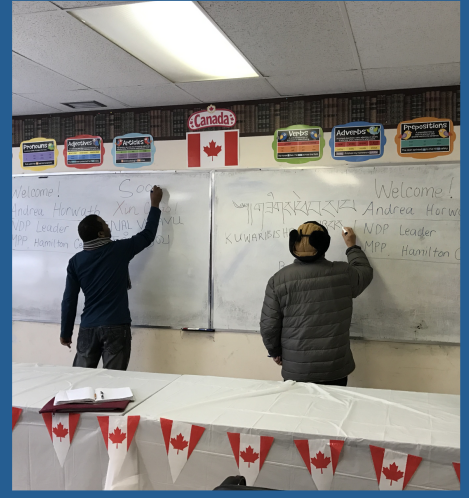
**REFERRALS
RECEIVED**

SERVICES
1343
CLIENTS
586



**ONE-ON-ONE
ORIENTATION**

SERVICES
1175
CLIENTS
523



SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Somali Immigrant Aid Organization would like to graciously thank the funders, partners, local businesses, volunteers, staff and larger community for the support of our programs and services this year. Your continuous support and outstanding contributions received have allowed us to deliver needed care to our newcomer community.

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Shukri Ahmed-Mental Health
Afnan Salim- Mental Health
Faduma Abdulle- Pre- Employment

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Child-minding Monitoring Advisory & Support (CMAS)
The Macaulay Child Development Centre
Midaynta Community Services
Tropicana Community Services
COSTI
Career Foundations
York University
Seneca College
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Network for the Advancement of Black Communities

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SOMALI IMMIGRANT AID ORGANIZATION



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