



سازمان زنان ایرانی اونتاریو Iranian Women's Organization of Ontario (I.W.O.O)

IWOO Board Report Annual General Meeting September 15, 2012

**2011-2012:
A Year in Review**

***We put the people we serve first
We focus on partnerships and collaborations
We commit to transparency and accountability
We listen to learn and learn to listen effectively***

Dear members, friends and supporters,

The Board of Directors of the Iranian Women's Organization of Ontario-IWOO extends its warmest welcome to you to the 2011-2012 Annual General Meeting and receive its report.

During this period, we embarked on many new initiatives and enhanced our programs and services as a viable social service organization with much cultural competencies. With a passionate team of volunteers, staff, and a strong support from the community, we have developed and implemented many successful programs and achieved our objectives in delivering quality service to our community.

The growing profile of IWOO has encouraged us to significantly build on the organization's strength, infrastructure and human resources. Simultaneously, the community's expectation for a strong, transparent and accountable service provider base has guided us to enhance our understanding of building a strategic and sustainable path for the services we provide to our members, clients and the broader community. We have continued to operate under a thoroughly examined and best practiced service delivery models.

IWOO has been a proud presenter of many exemplary weekly programs: Moms & Pre-school program, Older Adult Program, Volunteer Development courses, Youth Club, leisure outings and wellness programs. Our vision in strengthening lifelong learning and continued capacity building for our community has enabled us to profoundly invest in these programs and receive strong endorsement from program participants and partner organizations. In addition, we continued to provide educational workshops, organize cultural celebrations, take part in civic and neighborhood activities and offer counseling to those who trusted us with their issues and challenges and sought our assistance.

Throughout the past year, with over 25000 volunteers hours offered by a slate of 50 dedicated volunteers, four staff, as well as 14 volunteer board directors and committee chairs have kept the office open on daily basis providing programs and services, organizing incredible fundraisers, listening to and accommodating our community's needs. Our goal has remained to advance the organization's vision and mission in providing quality services here at IWOO.

In their unique contributions, ***Mehrnoosh Aghdasi, Sheida Bamdad, Akram Basiji, Pouneh Biazarikari, Niloo Boroun, Afsaneh Borzooei, Halimeh Hamidi, Afkham Mardukhi, Leily Pourzand, Maliknaz Sadooghi, Marzieh Sarvi, Negar Shakoori, Macy Tatari, Samira Zarghami*** have continued to serve on the Board as a working as well as a policy governance model. Together we have set our objectives and worked hard to meet our benchmarks. In working with a larger Board we had to develop new models of working in concert to accomplish our mandate. We continued to seek innovative strategies to recruit qualified individuals with specific expertise in increasing IWOO's capacity in governance and in service delivery model.

IWOO's volunteers who with their selfless and invaluable efforts contributed to the organization's programs development and delivery on a regular basis are: ***Susan Abdolhamidi, Beheshteh Abadimehr, Behnaz Afaghi, Hani Ahmadi, Sara Amini, Shamsi Amirpour, Behrouz Amouzgar, Dr. Mandana Attarzadeh, Behnaz Azad, Dr. Fariba Bashiri, Pari Farsi, Maryam Farzanehnejad, Sedigheh Gandomi, Nazireh Ghannadi, Tina Hessami, Narges Jalali Kushki, Bahar Karimi, Mahnaz Karimi, Nahid Marandi, Maryam Marashi, Azar Mehrabian, Behnaz Moein, Mitra Mohseni, Leila Mojtahedi, Fatemeh Mossavat, Peykan Pezeshki, Dr. Roya Saati, Parvin Samadzadeh, Takin Nateghi, Masi Padyab, Mehri Rezaei Boroun, Reyhaneh Rouhani, Maha Shamlou, Farah Taheri, Fereshteh Touyserkani, Shahla Yaghoubian, Mehri Yalfani.***

IWOO's slate of dedicated staff is composed of ***Nasrin Khatam, Dr. Noushin Khavarian, Felora Ghadiri, and Soudabeh Mofrad.*** *Maha Shamlou* is kindly filling in for a staff's leave of absence.

We have secured professional development opportunities for our volunteers and staff, including IT literacy, effective communication, conflict resolution, and on-going orientation to social service sector. To ensure quality, the staff is expected to develop an annual work plan and is supported by regular evaluation and yearly performance appraisal.

The Board is scheduled for monthly meetings, with frequent additional insertions for extracurricular business of the organization.

IWOO's sources of funding consisted of membership fees, government grants, income from Bingo, nominal fee for service from some of our recreational programs, as well as income derived from a very successful Gala event and other cultural celebration. We have been able to increase our income and remained diligent as how best to allocate the funds. While expanding on our services, we have developed a systemic approach to our organizational infrastructure, including a comprehensive accounting and membership system.

The Board has strategically pursued a sustainable approach for the organization's financial and program growth. A consistent effort has been in place though, to establish regular communication with various sources of government, corporate and foundation funding. The future for IWOO looks very promising.

Mr. Farmers Rashid, Charter Accountant, has continued to be the organization's auditor. Mr. Davood Jazayeri from ING has remained as IWOO's insurance broker.

Without the support we have received from our community partner agencies we would have not been able to offer such diverse and enriched programs. Our generous partners have been: ***SAFSS, TNO, Macaulay Child Development Centre, FST, Toronto Public Health, CRCT, Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Fairview Public Library, Workman Arts Theatre/CAMH***

IWOO's office is open five days a week and we provide counseling, information and referral services to our clients by telephone, or in person. We have developed an intake and follow-up process to secure a more effective service delivery practice. IWOO has been in a strong partnership with SAFSS where we receive settlement staff allocation on a weekly basis.

Our two offices remain in North York, an admin office at 2800 Don Mills Road where we have secured program space at Advent Lutheran Church, as well as our Head Office at the Oriole Community Centre. We soon will be moving to 1761 Sheppard Ave. East. This newly built office on Sheppard Subway line has been custom fitted for 6 community organizations, including IWOO, through a \$145,000.00 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

A Brief Account of IWOO Activities and services, May 2011-April 2012:

- **Intake & Referral Services-** IWOO has consistently provided intake and referral services in the fields of settlement, family issues, violence against woman, immigration, finance, housing, education, women's health, and seniors' issues. Our clients have received supportive and clinical counseling through internal & external resources. Our referral system has improved tremendously as we have established partnerships and joint ventures with many other professional organizations.
- **Settlement & Newcomer Services-** Through a partnership with SAFSS, IWOO is able to offer settlement related services to newcomers on a weekly basis. Information is provided about resources, training, education, housing, health care, laws & responsibilities. Assistance is also available in filling forms and connecting to other social and service organizations.
- **Accessible Healthcare-** IWOO has continued setting up regular visits by a Mobile Health Clinics in partnership with the Immigrant Women's Health Centre. Cancer and gynecological

screening and other tests are offered to women free of charge on a scheduled basis and often with Farsi speaking health professionals.

- **Educational Services-** More than 120 workshops were held on Parenting, Family & Youth Issues, Settlement, Mental Health, Family Law, Nutrition, Health & Wellness, Self Esteem, Effective Communication, Health & Safety, Community Engagement, Financial Literacy, and Arts, Craft & Cooking
- **Cultural & Community Programs-** Celebration of significant and national days such as Nowrouz, Chaharshanbeh Souri, Mehregan, Yalda, International Women's Day, Seniors Outings, Members' Appreciation Luncheon, Annual Gala Fundraiser were accomplished through hard work and by much enthusiasm and community engagement. Over 8000 community members have enjoyed these events and programs.
- **Mental Health** - We collaborated with CAMH (Workman Arts) at the Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival. 2011 Iranian film was: ***We Will Get Used To It-Mental Illness, Addiction, patriarchy in Iran***, a film about mental health/illness issues resulting from complex social and cultural norms and practices. The film was screened by over 250 at a Dinner Theatre setting and followed by an expert panel presentation. Participating in this annual film festival is a true opportunity for IWOO and in tune with its mandate in keeping mental health on the forefront of its programs and activities to support an inclusive approach toward community health.
- **A Community Guide to Mental Health Resources in Toronto** was translated into Farsi through a partnership with CRCT. This book is a great resource about mental health services for communities, especially for newcomer communities in Toronto.
- **Jane's Walk** continued to be a popular civic engagement opportunity where IWOO organized a neighbourhood walk in Peanut Plaza and surrounding communities. This annual walk is in celebration of Jane Jacob's contribution to healthy urban life and community activism. IWOO has been one of 200 proud sponsors of Jane's Walk in the past four years.
- **Moms & Pre-school program** has been offered on Tuesdays with a focus on raising healthy and competent families and promoting networking and social inclusion. Over 1200 women, mothers, caregivers and children have enjoyed these weekly programs.
- **Community Building by Networking & Teamwork-** IWOO uses many opportunities to strengthen the community, especially among women with young children and older adult populations. To achieve this goal, we take people on day trips, provide participatory learning opportunities, occasional community cooking classes are held, where healthy and affordable ingredients are provided for interested community members to form teams to cook nutritional meals and enjoy it together. This program is well received and continue to expand.
- **Wellness & Fitness-** The weekly Yoga classes continue to have a loyal following by a very dedicated group. Picnics and regular outings incorporated in many of IWOO programs are meant to promote physical activities and healthy life styles. A very special fitness component has been added to IWOO's Older Adults program on regular basis.
- **English Conversation-** Weekly English Conversation Classes were held to support the participants with their day-to-day language needs. We were lucky to be able to hire a qualified ESL instructor to teach this program.
- **Literary/Book Club-** Bi-weekly Literary/Book Club sessions are held. Participants enjoy reading, writing, debating and critiquing books and other literary works. This program is growing and has now the capacity of incorporating other forms of arts and literature.
- **Older Adult programs-** 2 older adult programs were offered in the course of the year. Our 4 month long summer program was focused on health promotion, in a park setting geared to outdoor

activities and recreational nature. This program operated from Earl Bales Park. Our indoors program for the remainder of the year operated from the Oriole Community Centre and was well received based on educational workshops, presentations, literary activities and community eating and integration strategy. 3000 seniors contact were made over these two programs.

- **Trips & Outings-** This year, the focus was placed on day trips and wellness and leisure activities in and out of the city and on program sites. This new strategy has been very successful, more inclusive and cost effective. The goal throughout all activities has been to strengthen friendship and networking opportunities for older adult population. More men and women have joined our programs this year and many lasting friendship have been formed. We can proudly say the IWOO's Older Adults Program has made a significant contribution to keep this population socially inclusive and active.

- **Research & Development-** Our partners in academia continue to work with IWOO in various research projects. Professors and researchers at York & Toronto Universities and Seneca College continue to conduct research in various fields to identify gaps in services for seniors, newcomer women, and children and youth population. The studies and reports resulted from these projects are aimed to reach officials and decision makers of the country in order to improve the quality of life, community building, problem resolution, and social justice and inclusion. We are grateful to our friends t these institutions and look forward to further development in our relations.

- **Membership-** IWOO continued to outreach to community members and significantly increased our membership. A strong membership base affirms our position with the funders enabling us to showcase community support.

- **Re-structuring-** Based on the organization's growth, funders request and human resources needs assessment, IWOO has gone through a re-structuring process. There will be more consistent approach to allocating staff time for programs and a consolidated strategy to human resource development. With additional funding in place, the new staffing model has made great improvements to time management and quality of services we provide.

- **Policy Development-** IWOO is committed to advance its agenda in an efficient and competent manner.

- a. This year, our colleagues on the Board have developed many policies in running an effective and efficient HR and Finance Committee. We have been determined to ensure adequate space for IWOO's administration and programs. This approach with much diligence and in partnership with the City of Toronto has resulted in securing Below Market Rent Space at 1761 Sheppard Ave. East.

- b. We have also embarked on developing a reserve policy, to secure the financial viability of our growing organization. A strong focus has been placed and will continue on developing the governance model with policy & procedural organizational guidelines.

- c. This Year, the Board, staff and volunteers have gone through formal trainings in organizational development and preparing for a sound strategic planning.

- **Service with a focus on Excellence-** Our biggest accomplishment has been serving you and retaining your trust. I wish to thank you, the community for all of your participation, input, dedication and support. Here at IWOO, we renew our commitment to serving the women, their families and all community members in an inclusive, transparent, and collaborative hub. We are committed to establishing stronger ties with all the available resources to further our mandate in ensuring a happy and fruitful integration for women in our community and to promoting their civic, social, economic advancement with outmost integrity and success.

Comments like these are the sources of our motivation & inspiration:

I come here every Friday as if I am going to my sister's house!

My son had Attention Deficit and Hyper Activity Disorder, thank you for helping me understand it and seek help!

The friendly visits and phone calls when I felt lonely and isolated revived my energy to pull together and move forward!

My parents don't bother me about coming here on Fridays. I love it because I am with other young people, feel safe, happy and do new and fun things. I loved community mapping through photography!

Once again, our sincere gratitude is extended to all of you, our volunteers, members, staff, media, community partner agencies and funders.

Respectfully submitted,

Afkham Mardukhi, President
Iranian Women's Organization of Ontario-IWOO