

SOMALI CANADIAN  
ASSOCIATION  
OF WATERLOO REGION

SUPPORTING

# Community

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SOMALI CANADIAN  
ASSOCIATION  
OF WATERLOO REGION

SCAWR  
IMPACT REPORT  
2023

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# WE COULDN'T DO WHAT WE DO, WITHOUT YOU!

We are deeply grateful to the many funders who have supported the important work SCAWR does in community. With your support we are building a strong and united community where everyone can have equitable access to service in community.



LYLE S. HALLMAN  
FOUNDATION



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES



## OUR VISION

At SCAWR, our vision is to foster a strong, united Somali Canadian community that thrives and prospers in the Waterloo Region.



## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to motivate and empower our community through active participation, meaningful engagement, and collaborative advocacy with mainstream organizations.



SCAWR  
IMPACT REPORT  
2023



# A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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As the newly appointed Executive Director of the Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region (SCAWR), I am thrilled to share our impact report and the legacy of the Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region. It has been an honor to be a part of this remarkable organization's journey, driven by a mission to motivate and empower our community through active participation, meaningful engagement, and collaborative advocacy with mainstream organizations. We honor our past, and we are committed to learning from our wise elderly leaders that have laid the foundation and stepping stones for what SCAWR is today. We continue to build on their strengths and draw from their wisdom to dream big for the future. So much work and dedication has been put into making this dream a reality past and present and we are committed to a unified path forward.

SCAWR has continued to evolve over the last 30 years and serve the changing community dynamics. Through decades of experience centered around the community, we have been able to offer and to create services that respond to the needs of the Community. Our grassroots nature with wide-reaching membership, our diverse organizational partnerships, our significant experience in gathering community, and our focus on community empowerment has inspired

us to think and respond in a unified voice. SCAWR has built bridges to effectively address community needs by maintaining strong partnerships with a variety of organizations such as the Waterloo Regional Police Service, United for Literacy, WRDSB, Camino, the City of Kitchener, Family & Children's Services, Project Read, TLG and many other community organizations.

This year we have been navigating complex systems and working alongside the community to work toward community powered solutions, focused on affordable and adequate housing, increased mental health needs and isolation, the rising cost of living, as well as racial, social, and systemic inequities. We have learned that we can't solve community problems with an individualistic mindset but through a collectivist framework that builds trust across systems, and by finding ways to build community together.

This Impact Report celebrates our accomplishments, history, legacy of SCAWR and highlights the impactful work that is happening at the Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region right now. We are proud to report a remarkable achievement; through our partnership with the Region of Waterloo, 30 Somali families have been supported under the Building Better Future rent supplement

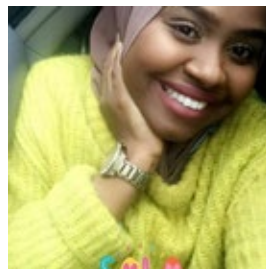


# SCAWR IMPACT REPORT 2023

program, alleviating financial stress and supporting these families' access to adequate housing.

All we have achieved so far is the result of our staffs' commitment and dedication to client care, the passion of our volunteers, the generous support of our funders, the involvement and engagement of the community we serve, and the willingness of our partners to do the hard work alongside SCAWR in the community. We could not have done this work without YOU! Thank you! Thank you for walking together with us in this journey - this is just the beginning - and we look forward to all that we will accomplish in unity.

With gratitude,  
Faduma Musse  
Executive Director of SCAWR



**We could not have done this work without YOU! Thank you!**

**Thank you for walking together with us in this journey - this is just the beginning - and we look forward to all that we will accomplish in unity.**



IMPACT REPORT  
VIDEOS



Watch here!

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Challenges faced by community members and broadly how SCAWR addresses this.

---

“

We benefit from all of them [the programs]. Especially the homework club. I can get my kids to study for free. they come here twice a week, they meet Somali kids; they meet their people and study at the same time.  
~ Feynus

”

“

We need a community for us to come together. Everybody needs a community. you can't just be somebody standing alone because that will just harm you and do you no good.  
- Hanan Roble

---

I think SCAWR is important because you get to interact with your people and be involved with your community. You might not be around them everyday but when you need them you can come together.  
- Amira



---

Sense of belonging amongst community members.

---

“

I'm really bad at math. So Daryl, the homework help guy, he's actually helping me, and there's a lot of tutors who are like him who help me with math.  
- Hanan Roble

---

The homework club has helped improve my grades a lot.  
- Amira

I benefit from this program, especially tutoring, being able to improve my grades as well as socializing with my peers.  
- Ahlaam

---

I think it's important to be more involved because we don't really have that many events. so to be a part of something/have a community where people can come to each other for support, or if anything is needed. it's always good to have some type of community.  
- Ahlaam

---

I'm involved in the homework club and the girls basketball on Saturdays. I think I learned a lot about scawr and I made a lot of friend during it.  
- Ashwaaq

---

It's just a better way for us Somalis to connect to be with each other. We understand each other more because we're all in the same religion and culture, so it's just better for us to be together.  
- Hanan

”



“

I really like the sense of community that we have, and I really find fulfillment in addressing the housing needs of the members of my community, and just really being apart of an organization that supports and empowers our community  
- Ayan

All the tasks we do here are tasks I genuinely enjoy doing... The different work that the Somali community does for it's community members cannot be duplicated  
- Jamac

“

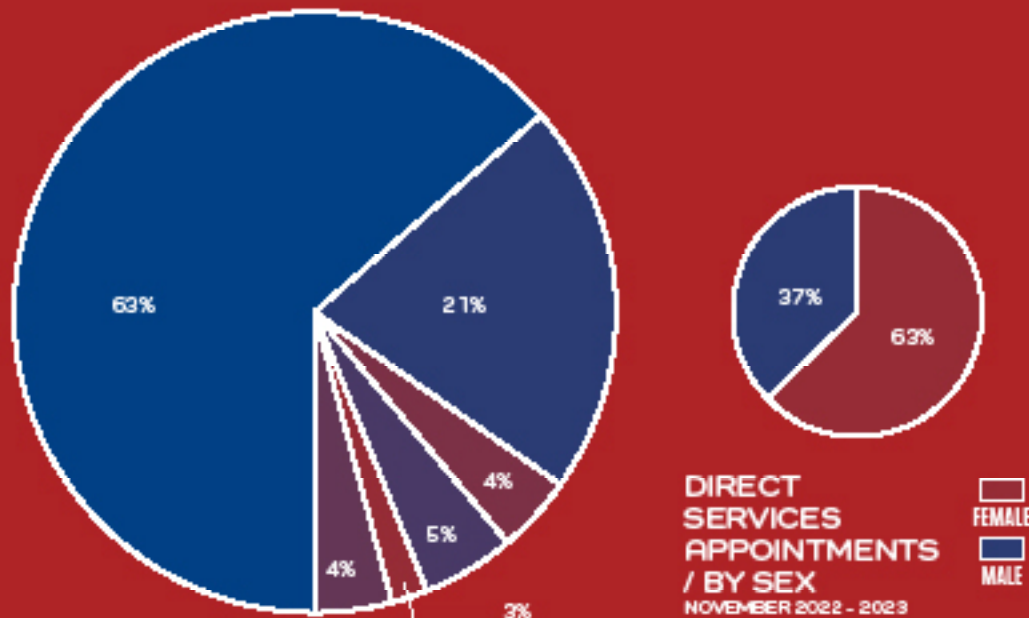
What I like most about working at SCAWR is seeing community members or anyone who has needs, their needs being met, giving them the support they need and fulfilling it.  
- Abdirazak



“

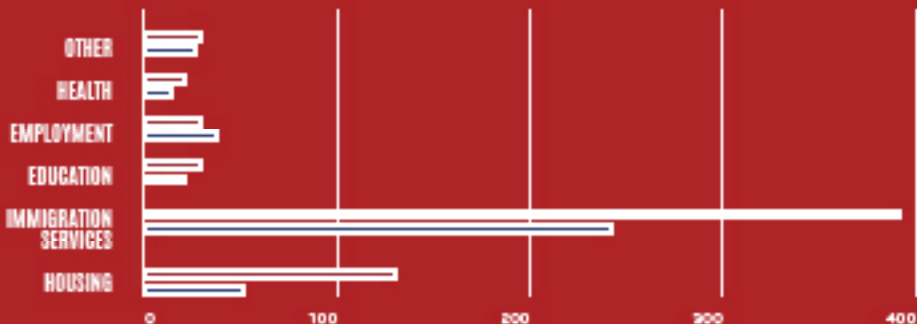
My favorite thing about being involved with SCAWR is [being] able to empower the Somali community in which I am also from. I'm excited to see the leadership and the structure and the organization grow and develop. I'm excited for all the youth and children that are currently participating in programing to be the new leaders and the future of tomorrow for SCAWR.  
- Faduma Muse

Personal growth/value from work  
(partners and SCAWR staff)



**DIRECT SERVICES OFFERED**

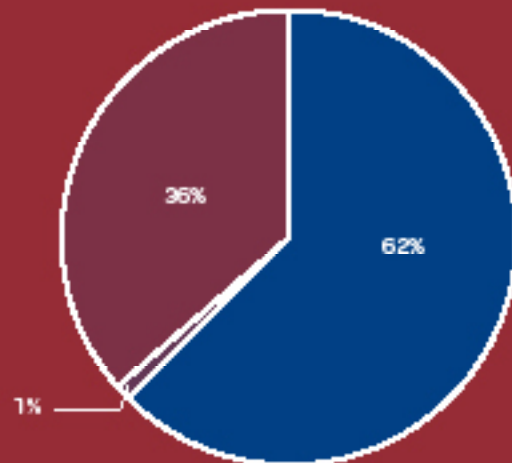
63%	IMMIGRATION SERVICES	4%	EDUCATION
21%	HOUSING	4%	OTHER
5%	EMPLOYMENT	3%	HEALTH



**DIRECT SERVICES APPOINTMENTS / BY SEX**  
NOVEMBER 2022 - 2023

FEMALE  
MALE

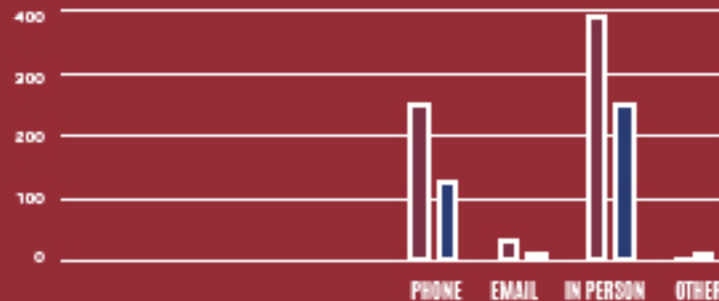
62% IN PERSON  
36% PHONE  
1% EMAIL



**APPOINTMENT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**  
NOVEMBER 2022 - 2023



We have learned that we can't solve community problems with an individualistic mindset but through a collectivist framework that builds trust across systems, and by finding ways to build community together.



**APPOINTMENT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS / BY SEX**  
NOVEMBER 2022 - 2023

FEMALE  
MALE





2023

## Key Achievements

# 300

Individuals received direct services at our office

# 30

Somali families supported through the Building Better Futures rent supplement program

Direct services were provided through

# 1,042+

"walk-in" appointments with our staff

This summer we were able to support employment both internally and externally for

# 25 Somali Youth

Over

# 30 families

supported through our intergenerational literacy program

# 55+ students

supported through the homework support program in partnership with Camino and United for Literacy, between the ages of 8 and 18 years old

# 80+ youth and children

participated in our sports programs, between the ages of 8 and 20 years old.



THESE PROGRAMS INCLUDE:



GIRLS BASKETBALL | AGES 8-18

30 PARTICIPANTS



BOYS BASKETBALL | AGES 16+

20 PARTICIPANTS



BOYS SOCCER | AGES 8 - 20

30 PARTICIPANTS

# INTRODUCTION

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In Canada, the Somali Canadian population embodies a rich history of settlement, spanning multiple immigrant generations across different waves of migration. Presently, there are approximately 38,000 first-generation Somalis, 27,000 second-generation individuals, and 600 third-generation Canadians of Somali descent. The growing Somali community in Waterloo Region, numbering approximately 1,795 individuals, is a diverse, resilient and thriving population despite having historically grappled with several challenges that have profoundly impacted their daily lives and integration into the broader community.

Language barriers for some community members creates challenges in accessing vital information and services, such as those focused on immigration and employment support. Furthermore, adapting to a new culture while experiencing discrimination or a lack of culturally-sensitive support poses significant challenges in navigating resources and systems. Many community members lack general awareness about their rights, what resources and services they are entitled to, and often find themselves seeking a sense of belonging from within and outside their ethnolinguistic community.

Based on the experiences of 73 youth in Waterloo Region who provided their feedback to SCAWR's Black Muslim Youth survey, most of whom are Somali, there are several trends of concern. A significant portion—32 percent—of respondents expressed that their mental health was not good or excellent, with 13 percent specifically noting poor mental health. Furthermore, 43 percent felt unable to comfortably discuss their mental health or personal difficulties with their parents or loved ones.

In the realm of work, education and safety, challenges were also noted. 40 percent reported facing stereotypes or biases related to their race or religion in their workplace, and a matching percentage did not consistently enjoy attending classes. The same percent of respondents also expressed that crime rates in their community disproportionately affect Black Muslim youth.

Concerns about the future, including career and schooling, weighed heavily on 70 percent of respondents, showcasing a prevailing sense of stress or uncertainty. Moreover, 19 percent indicated a lack of consistent access to familial educational support and 22 percent noted a less-than-positive relationship with their teachers. These data points underscore the multifaceted challenges



## SCAWR IMPACT REPORT 2023

faced by Somali youth in Waterloo Region, reflecting obstacles in mental health, familial support, education, discrimination, alongside their future aspirations.

Since its establishment in 1992, SCAWR has played a pivotal role as a bridge connecting community members to relevant services and navigating the complexities of Canadian society, while also advocating for their equitable inclusion and empowerment. SCAWR provides culturally sensitive and multilingual services, programming and referrals, attracting a substantial number of Somali individuals seeking assistance and a connection to their community in the Waterloo region.

To support SCAWR's efforts in better understanding the Somali community's evolving perspectives, needs and experiences, two consultants were hired to lead impact-focused data collection with Somali community members such as SCAWR's frontline staff, Somali women and mothers, and children and youth. Approximately 58 community members participated in focus group discussions. Their feedback, alongside other programmatic monitoring data, allows SCAWR to envision and advocate for a more empowered and engaged Somali community in the Waterloo region.





# THROUGH THE EYES OF SCAWR STAFF

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The existing service framework in the Waterloo Region often falls short in meeting the evolving needs and challenges of members of the Somali community. This is especially true for marginalized community members, newcomers and those who primarily speak their mother tongue. The cumulative impact of these challenges has led some community members to contemplate leaving Waterloo Region, and in some cases, Canada.

Housing, for example, is a significant issue for many residents in Waterloo Region. This is primarily due to the extensive wait times for community housing, which has amplified financial strain and feelings of hopelessness amongst resi-

dents. Moreover, within the Somali community, a lack of awareness about legal rights and protections has contributed to housing and eviction problems that staff members of SCAWR have noted as being on the rise.

Additionally, the community faces societal and structural barriers, and discrimination within educational settings, with an alarming increase in students reporting racial discrimination and Islamophobia. Schools are witnessing rising instances of hate crimes, bullying, and exclusion, with a number of Somali parents concerned about the outcomes of cases brought forward.

26%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents reported that they faced challenges or barriers in accessing employment opportunities because of discrimination due to their religious background or because of incompatibilities between their religion and the workplace

40%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents reported that they have encountered stereotypes or biases related to their race or religion in their workplace

46%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents feel as though crime rates in their community disproportionately affect Black Muslim youth



Somali community members don't have equal access to public services. For example a black person who is new to the country will not be able to access services as easily as someone from here. In addition, services are outdated because they are based on lower costs of living, and this creates persistent challenges for the community that exacerbate these access gaps.



Other challenges include gaps in skills and education hindering job market integration, employment discrimination based on cultural or religious attire for Somali women, and the lack of affordable childcare impeding their workforce participation. Relatedly, mental health challenges associated with isolation or limited capacity to integrate are further compounded among community members.

SCAWR's strategic priority in promoting accessible and culturally-sensitive support, evident through their downtown Kitchener office and programming in areas densely populated by the Somali community, has proven instrumental for many.

The establishment of a central location, serviced by transit methods covering Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, has offered members of the Somali community new possibilities. Direct support from employees who comprehend their challenges, strengths, and cultural needs has also been considered invaluable. This heightened accessibility, coupled with Somali language services, has fostered a sense of hope and comfort within the community, encouraging them to openly share their challenges and needs with confidence that they can be addressed with SCAWR staff support.

Staff members diligently follow up with individuals they support, providing direct services and aid in navigating complex processes like immigration procedures for permanent residence or citizenship. Their aim is to assist those within the community who might otherwise fall through society's proverbial cracks. Witnessing the positive impact on motivation and morale within the community is particularly rewarding for staff, contributing to a shared sense of fulfillment and gratitude.



I had challenges immigrating to Canada when I was nine. I had to help my mom access services. We didn't have organizations like SCAWR to help us. I had to be the one to translate and fill out immigration documents I didn't understand. Being able to help other families with this means the world to me.



SCAWR staff frequently observe significant alleviation of stress, anxiety, and emotional distress among individuals who receive direct services. This relief manifests in various forms, often stemming from seemingly minor yet impactful assistance. For instance, aiding clients with eviction-related issues, such as contacting regional authorities or sharing information, visibly reduces their stress and uncertainty. Staff believe that their work is especially meaningful today, as there has been a reduction in Somali-speaking service staff in other immigration-serving organizations across the Waterloo Region.

The organization's role as an advocacy entity has also grown over the years, symbolizing the Somali community's voice amidst structural and systemic barriers. Staff members seek to facilitate empowerment toward self-advocacy as the community continues to deal with implicit and explicit biases based on their race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, language skills and religious background.

32%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents **did not indicate that their mental health was either good or excellent**, with 13% indicating that their mental health was poor.

43%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents **did not agree that they can comfortably discuss their mental health and or personal difficulties with their parents and loved ones.**

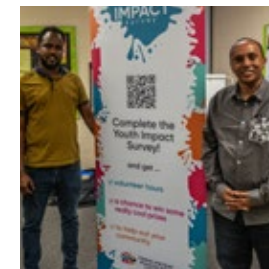


According to SCAWR staff, their programs and services significantly contribute to fostering a sense of belonging among participants. Operating at both front-line and systems-levels, SCAWR actively forges partnerships with numerous organizations, local government bodies, and planning networks. Notably, their involvement in groups like the Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region (CYPT), comprising over 60 local organizations, amplifies the Somali community's voice in decision-making and local governance processes. Collaborating with various service-provision agencies, SCAWR fills information gaps, ensuring that services reach vulnerable or marginalized Somali individuals.

Moreover, the organization's collaborative efforts with partners and their capacity to actively engage and listen to the community's needs have yielded unexpected outcomes. Notably, SCAWR has witnessed an increasing number of non-Somali community members seeking support due to positive word-of-mouth recommendations from their Somali friends. This inclusivity extends beyond Eastern African communities to diverse groups like Syrians, Nigerians, Serbians, and others, reflecting SCAWR's commitment to openness and accessibility. One staff member emphasized:



Our doors are open for everyone - the Somali community works through word of mouth here and our community members are very active in promoting what we offer within and outside the Somali community.





Looking toward the future, SCAWR envisions a more unified approach, locally, provincially, federally, and globally, aiming to create opportunities for Somali communities to learn from and support one another. This begins with acknowledging the need for better local data on the Somali community to shape their programming effectively.

As mental health remains a significant concern within the community, SCAWR aims to allocate future funding toward programs addressing these needs. Additionally, they aim to invest in the Somali community's labour market integration and participation through education and dedicated assistance.

Future initiatives may also include reconnecting Somali members in Waterloo Region with their families abroad through reunification or sponsorship processes.

Establishing a central community center owned by the Somali community, akin to facilities offered by other cultural groups like the Portuguese club, is a longer-term goal for SCAWR. Such a center could consolidate existing services and programs, provide a hub for community engagement and support, and further enhance cohesion and unity within the Somali community.



“ Looking ahead, I harbor a sincere hope and belief that with augmented resources, SCAWR can transcend local impact, reaching significant echelons on a provincial scale and, ambitiously, contributing on an international level.

The prospect of SCAWR becoming a force for positive change beyond community borders is both an exciting and profound vision.



On a personal level, staff members have shared that they are proud to be involved with SCWAR and feel a strong sense of belonging within the organization. Their ability to witness tangible changes in the lives of those who they assist has fostered excitement and passion in their work. At the same time, the team's overall commitment to the community and collective problem-solving approach has created an environment conducive to their professional development.

For many staff members, providing direct assistance to families in navigating services evokes a sense of familial closeness that resonates deeply due to their own personal experiences facing immigration-related challenges. This bond is reinforced through advocating for families encountering similar barriers, especially those related to self-advocacy or legal and housing services.

The impactful testimonials and anecdotes shared by staff further highlight the immense difference made in individuals' lives through SCWAR's interventions. Instances where newcomers faced bureaucratic hurdles post-arrival to Canada or individuals encountering non-lawful evictions exemplify the critical role played by SCWAR in resolving complex issues. Through advocacy, relationship-building with service providers, and diligent support, SCWAR effectively addresses language barriers, racial stigmas, and procedural obstacles, ultimately enabling individuals to access essential services, secure housing, and navigate bureaucratic processes successfully.



Working alongside such dedicated individuals has not only allowed me to contribute positively to the Somali Canadian community but has also been a tremendous learning opportunity. I am excited about the prospect of continuing to learn and grow, with the aspiration of making a lasting impact on both my team and the clients we serve.





# THROUGH THE EYES OF SCAWR PARTNERS

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The partnerships that SCAWR seeks to establish are built on the shared objective to reduce access barriers, particularly for families unable to afford private tutoring, or those with parents learning English at home or who are occupied with work commitments. The safe and supportive environment created by these programs allows youth to access educational support, and foster relationships with tutors and peers. The high attendance from the Somali children, youth and adults also highlights SCAWR's expansive connection to the community, with the number of program registrants regularly exceeding capacities.



“

Behind the scenes, this is a true partnership and we all know our roles to play – we have trust, which is invaluable. If there's an issue, we can figure it out together. For me, that's something I really value. With other programs, you don't know if anyone is going to show up. With SCAWR, we have too many people interested which is a good problem to have.

”

# “

SCAWR makes it as easy as possible for the families to participate by providing access to things like childcare, technology, or computers, that allows the participants to really learn and connect with one another. It's a unique organization.

# ”

Partners of SCAWR have had long-standing collaborations, sharing their impactful experiences and dedication to working with the community-based organization. For many, their involvement spans years or decades, from tutoring to leading programs, each recounting the immense rewards and learnings derived from their engagement.

For instance, some partners have worked with the homework club for over two decades, progressing in their career paths from volunteer tutors to community coordinators, deeply invested in aiding students throughout their educational journeys. Others led computer literacy programs or facilitated home literacy initiatives, aiming to empower parents with resources to assist their children's learning. A shared sentiment among partners is the gratification derived from witnessing tangible progress and the positive impact of their collaborative efforts on the lives of SCAWR participants, motivating their long term engagement.

The partners collectively agree that the sense of community fostered by these programs is profound, providing learners with a space to build relationships, gather regularly, and have a stronger sense of belonging.



“

All of the learners are part of a community that they're building among themselves and with the tutors.

They get into the routine of being part of something, which builds great habits for working and studying, and feeling like part of a community.

It's wonderful to see them with their friends.

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Only when a child's foundation is strong in literacy, can they really be successful.

We are trying to strengthen this foundation and the community makes this easier through their levels of engagement.

”



Despite the success in community building, the most important challenge lies in accessing consistent funding. These programs, often overlooked by donors, provide direct support to marginalized community members, necessitating greater investment for expansion and growth.

Looking ahead, discussions between partners and SCAWR aim to optimize program duration, considering community members' schedules and learning needs. Balancing session duration with comprehensive content remains a priority. SCAWR and partners also seek to assess other priority areas, such as how to best secure long-term tutors and how to showcase the benefits of community-based volunteer engagements for the community.

Overall, SCAWR's partnerships have been mutually enriching, with seamless collaboration and shared roles, facilitating trust and effective problem-solving. The commitment to accessibility, ease of participation, and community engagement exemplifies the uniqueness and success of SCAWR's partnership model.







# THROUGH THE EYES OF SOMALI MOTHERS: THE INTERGENERATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAM

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The intergenerational literacy program participants - Somali mothers dedicated to supporting their children, families and community - shared profound challenges that they, and their children, faced before joining SCAWR. Many experienced difficulties in accessing essential support and resources, and feeling disconnected from the Somali community. In addition, parents found it challenging to assist their children with homework due to various barriers, including language constraints, lack of prior education, technological hurdles, and time constraints.

Some mothers highlighted the struggle of aiding children at home, and emphasizing the contrast between home learning environments and the structured, focused learning offered by SCAWR's homework program:

“

It's hard to help  
our kids at home.

It's hard to help your kids  
at home when you don't have  
the language or the former  
education yourself.

This is helping them.

I have four kids here  
who are benefitting  
from the homework  
program. It's really  
helpful for me and  
the kids.

”

This is a common experience across the Somali community. Kids are distracted at home and it's not the same as what the program offers. Also, at least for the homework program's 2 hours, they're focused on learning rather than being on their screens.

19%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents reported that they do not have access to educational supports from their family always or often.

This sentiment is shared by many mothers, who believe that the children’s programs offered by SCAWR are important as they provide a dedicated space where their children can concentrate on learning without distractions, where they can foster connections and relationships with their Somali peers, and where their academic improvement is prioritized.

SCAWR also considered the time and opportunity for these mothers, who frequently drop off their children at a number of programs, to participate in relevant programs. The intergenerational literacy program became a crucial space for mothers to explore their own personal learning and connections too — a vital opportunity described as missing before their involvement with SCAWR.

Overall, these participants unanimously expressed the transformative impact of SCAWR’s programs, citing other positive outcomes for both themselves and their children. They identified key improvements such as acquiring new skills through programming, fostering cooperation among community members, feeling a stronger sense of belonging, and gaining support in accessing essential resources and referrals. Participants also highlighted a considerable reduction in stress, anxiety, and emotional distress, enabling them to contribute better to local governance and community affairs.



Participating helps with stress relief because you’re with your peers. We’re always alone with our kids all day and it’s exhausting. It helps to come out and talk to your peers and connect with them.





Testimonials also revealed instances where program participation proved crucial, such as acquiring First Aid and CPR skills that enabled a participant to save their child's life during an emergency, highlighting the practical and immediate impact of the programs.

Attending SCAWR's programs significantly alleviates stress for participants by providing an environment where they could connect with peers, learn, laugh, and feel a sense of belonging, a relief from the daily stresses of managing households and childcare.

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**The program participants also shared other ways in which SCAWR has supported them through direct services related to housing and immigration, which were also contributing factors to their overall stress.**

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Looking to the future, participants expressed desires for earlier programming, longer session durations, and the expansion of children's programs, noting the enjoyment and importance of these activities for their children. This expansion specifically includes the wish for opportunities for their children to learn and retain the Somali language through weekend programs. They also expressed a desire for more social gatherings for mothers in the community, potentially over tea or coffee.

Long-term aspirations included the evolution of SCAWR as a platform to formalize diaspora assistance during crises, supporting efficient and targeted aid to Somalia. Similarly, moms envision a platform where sponsorships or reunification initiatives are centralized for Somali members separated from their families.

“

Even for us as adults, it's important for us to see each other, and speak with someone who speaks our language. Before, there weren't a lot of Somali people in the area and we weren't as connected. With SCAWR, the community is a lot stronger.

We haven't seen this type of community elsewhere.

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I moved from another city – I didn't know where to go or what to do; I connected with them and they helped me find housing I could afford.

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Before SCAWR opened, it was very hard to get access to resources, know where to go, or get help. Now, with the direct services, everything is available.

Anything we need, we can go to SCAWR.

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# THROUGH THE EYES OF SCAWR'S YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

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As shared throughout the report, there are several data points collected through the Black Muslim Youth survey that underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by Somali youth in Waterloo Region. However, qualitative and quantitative data collected from the youth participating in SCAWR's homework program share the positive impact that their participation in the program has had on their academic performance, skill development, and a sense of community connection, based on a supportive learning environment provided by SCAWR and partners.

Their engagement at SCAWR programs appears to offer a supportive environment that not only aids in academic improvement but also fosters social connections and a sense of community among the students. Youth shared many reasons as to why they attend SCAWR programs and how these programs have positively impacted them. For example, the benefits of their engagement have resulted in:



40%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents shared that they did not always or often enjoy going to their classes.

70%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents reported feeling concerned or stressed about their future path (e.g., career and school)





Access to help with challenging homework questions within a structured support system.



Building relationships with peers, where they can assist one another, creating a supportive academic environment.



Improvements in academic performance, including better grades and increased knowledge on how to navigate tests.



Having dedicated study time and individualized support that is not available in larger classroom settings at school.



Motivation and a conducive learning environment away from home, contributing to better focus and productivity.



Opportunities for socialization, making new friends from various schools, and enjoying peer interaction.

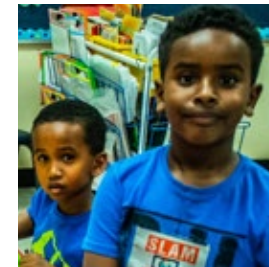


Specific academic assistance in challenging subjects like chemistry, math, and biology, alongside indirect support for other subjects from peers.

Many participants expressed gratitude for the program's assistance with specific subjects, notably science and math. They felt supported in understanding class materials and completing assignments. Some highlighted improvements in their grades, citing a significant boost in academic performance after attending the program. They also found the teachers and tutors to be kind, helpful, and patient, even when dealing with multiple students simultaneously.



I'm doing better in school - we learn more through this program than we do through other tutoring programs.



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**Survey data from 42 youth who participate in the homework program reinforce these findings:**

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The youth participating in SCAWR programs also value the welcoming and less stringent atmosphere compared to other tutoring options, which eliminate opportunities for youth to connect on a personal or community level. They appreciate the opportunity to connect with their Somali peers, as they do not always have the chance to interact with each other because of how dispersed they are across Waterloo Region – this is uniquely offered by SCAWR and not by any other programs based on their experiences.

Youth focus group participants also shared their interests and excitement about other SCAWR programs, such as sports programs, and their interest in expansion of sports programs to include other sports such as volleyball.

While very satisfied and excited to participate in weekly homework programs, youth participants suggested a few aspects that could enhance their motivation. They expressed interest in having snacks available during sessions and, at times, a bit more flexibility in program duration, especially during busy school periods. Additionally, they desire opportunities to delve deeper into specific topics or interests relevant to their curriculum that may not be conventional subjects like Math or English. This tailored approach could increase their engagement and cater to individual learning interests.

95%

of respondents were very satisfied with the homework support program

95%

of respondents believe that the facilitators/mentoring staff were effective

95%

of respondents shared that the support provided was relevant in addressing their academic needs

95%

of respondents believe that the facilitators created a welcoming and inclusive environment

93%

of respondents have connected to others in the program

93%

of respondent feel a stronger sense of belonging to their community

93%

of respondent have gained knowledge, learnings and/or skills that are applicable to their studies/schooling

91%

of respondents reported that their relationships with others has improved because of their participation in the program

# 44

Last year, I was getting 50 percent. After attending this program, I got 70 percent by the end of the semester. I was up by 20 percent. This program is extremely helpful.

We don't always get to see other kids who are Somali because we don't live close to one another - we wouldn't get to hang out with other Somali kids if it wasn't for these programs.

I feel motivated being away from home to do my homework because it's a better learning environment for me, and being around my peers helps too. We help each other with these subjects, like math, but other subjects too.

For me, I enjoy being surrounded by my community.

I gained more skills for learning the materials in my classroom. The homework program gave me a better understanding of what I was doing.

The [homework] program is an open place, and people really help you.

I made a lot of friends because of the soccer program.



22%

of Black Muslim Youth respondents shared that their relationship with their teachers was not positive.



# 77











SOMALI CANADIAN  
ASSOCIATION  
OF WATERLOO REGION

# SCAWR IMPACT REPORT 2023

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