



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Multicultural Women's
Health Services



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Ishar acknowledges the Wadjuk Noongar people as the traditional owners of the land on which we provide our services.

We continue to recognise and celebrate the spiritual connection that Noongar people have to country and waters and pay tribute to Noongar elders past, present and emerging.

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OUR VISION

Inspiring women, families and communities

OUR MISSION

To provide inclusive, holistic and culturally sensitive services for women and their families promoting healthy communities.

OUR VALUES

Respect

Upholding dignity, honoring diversity, and fostering empathy to create a safe and inclusive space for every individual.

Integrity

Demonstrating honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct, ensuring trust and accountability in all interactions.

Commitment

Dedication to our mission, driven by the empowerment and well-being of women and families from diverse backgrounds.

Collaboration

Embracing teamwork, partnership, and shared expertise to amplify our impact and create positive change within communities.

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OUR BOARD & PARTNERS

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

With incredible support from the WA community, this past year has seen Ishar develop new programs and expand services. This has meant more migrant and refugee women have been reached than ever before, with over 5000 clients from over 100 ethnicities. I would like to thank the Ishar team for delivering health, family domestic violence and family support services across metropolitan and regional WA.

This last year has been exciting - we started it with our 30-year celebration at the Duxton Hotel, with over 150 guests, including clients, service partners and past and present staff. It was a true celebration of the extraordinary difference Ishar has made in the lives of so many women and families. We also celebrated our CEO's 20 years of service at Ishar, and welcomed new Ambassador Hon. Ayor Makur MLC.



Thank you to the event donors Pod Consultancy, Multicultural Services Centre of WA and Alertise. Thank you also goes to the Tamil Ladies Association, Country Women's Association of WA, and North Beach Lions Club, who all generously raised funds to support Ishar.

We held an International Women's Day fundraising breakfast at which our inspiring Ambassador, Rabia Siddique, spoke eloquently about her stories of courage, resilience, and empowerment.

This year, we farewell three Board members who will be stepping down at the 2023 AGM when their six-year term ends - Sandy McKiernan, Buena Kortum and Fran Ferreria. Sandy has made an exceptional contribution as Chair from 2019 to 2022 and Vice Chair this past year; her leadership and passion will be missed. Fran's financial wisdom has brought much-needed skills to the Finance Subcommittee, and Buena has brought brilliant business management and governance skills. Thank you for the meaningful contribution you have all made. A very warm welcome to new Board member Nivedita Kelkar, who has financial management expertise; Joanne Ende, who brings not-for-profit CEO experience; Jolene Ellat, who has family and domestic violence expertise; and Kena Cabral Morales, who brings marketing and academic skills to the role.

On behalf of the Board, I would also like to thank Andrea for her ongoing leadership as CEO, and I would like to congratulate her on her commitment, leadership, and strategic successes this year. It has been another fantastic year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Sharp', with a long, sweeping underline.

Simmone Sharp

CHAIRPERSON

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

In 22/23, the team at Ishaar delivered ~36,000 services to more than 5800 women from 96 backgrounds speaking 100 languages through three service streams of Health, Mental Health, Family and Domestic Violence and Family Support Services. This stellar performance is delivered by a highly professional, multidisciplinary and multicultural team. Hence I begin this report by first thanking our team for their dedication and the compassionate manner in which all services are delivered. Ishaar, like any other organisation, cannot deliver impactful work in isolation, and I take this opportunity to thank our funding bodies for their support and for choosing Ishaar as their partner in providing culturally sensitive services to refugee and migrant women. I would also like to thank our volunteer Board members for their time, skills and dedication in governing a complex organisation like Ishaar.



Along with delivering our regular programs, we also delivered over 12 specialised programs and in partnership with other organisations, we explored new topics that now affect our communities, like climate change and food insecurity. Some of the organisations Ishaar partnered with to deliver programs in new areas were Climate Justice Union, Sexual Health Quarters, Vinnies WA, Dress for Success, Curtin University, and Indian Society of WA, whom we partnered with on a variety of programs ranging from workshops on climate change and impact of disasters on CaLD communities to exploring impact on food insecurity, researching issues affecting young CaLD women concerning the justice system, developing online resources on sexual health, helping women get ready for employment and other health and wellbeing issues.

This year, we added another service area to our Family and Domestic Violence Services through the newly established FDV Hub In Armadale. Our FDV program is now multi-pronged through its involvement in the metropolitan FDV Hubs in Mirrabooka and Armadale, in-house programs and education programs for service providers and community members.

In 1992, Ishaar was established to deliver health and wellbeing services to migrant and refugee women, and through 30 years, Ishaar has not wavered from delivering on this mission. With the trust of our clients, the support of our partners and funding bodies and the dedicated work of our volunteers and staff, we hope to continue delivering services and expanding our footprint in 2024 and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Creado".

Andrea Creado
CEO

WHO WE ARE

Since 1992, Ishar has been a steadfast provider of essential health and well-being support to refugee and migrant women, aiming to foster thriving communities. At Ishar, we adhere to the 'social model' of health, which recognises the intricate links between medical conditions and various factors such as personal circumstances, societal dynamics, economic considerations, cultural nuances, age, and gender-related aspects.

Our comprehensive range of services caters to women of all ages, from adolescent girls to seniors. These offerings encompass:

- Family & Domestic Violence
- Women's Health
- Mental Health
- Settlement, Engagement & Transition Services
- Community Health Education

As the sole women's health service specifically addressing the distinctive needs of multicultural women, Ishar has extensive experience in collaborative agency partnerships and adeptly fulfilling the criteria set by funding bodies.

In 2022, Ishar was recognised for our commitment to youth services and won the Youth Focus Sector Collaboration Award and the Minister for Youth's Most Outstanding Youth Worker award at YACWA's WA Youth Awards. We were privileged to be among the finalists at the WACOSS, IPAA and UN Human Rights Awards, recognising our work.

5800+

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN
ACCESSED SERVICES & ATTENDED EDUCATION
SESSIONS

36000+

SERVICES WERE DELIVERED

OUR CLIENTS

Ishar provides holistic services to women from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. Ishar is an LGBTQI+-friendly service and welcomes women of any sexual orientation, anyone who identifies as a woman and anyone who was assigned female at birth.

All programs and services are strength-based and client-focused, meaning they are tailored to people's needs. Interpreters are available for all Ishar services.

Each year, Ishar engages more than 5800 women with 36,000+ service delivery contacts across all programs. The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) was used on 1374 occasions and engaged interpreters who spoke 44 languages.

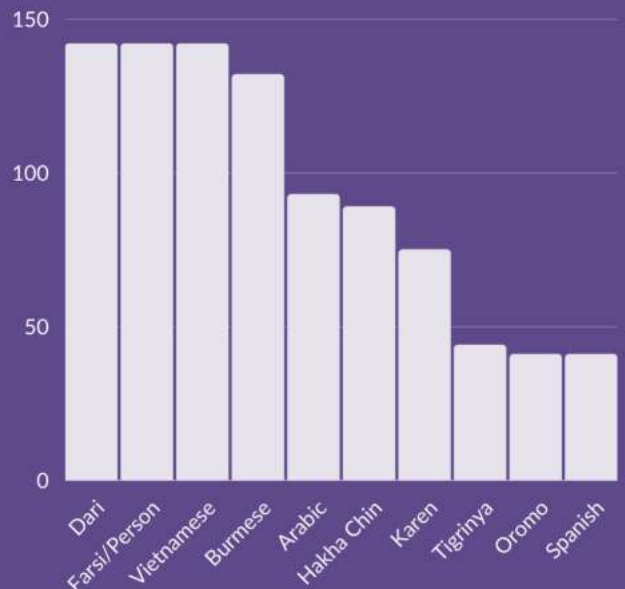
1325

APPOINTMENTS WITH INTERPRETERS

44

LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY INTERPRETERS

FIG. 1 TOP 10 LANGUAGES FOR CLIENTS ENGAGING TIS INTERPRETERS





*Dear friends,
I am safe here. And everybody look after us.
We are friendly members of Ishar.*

-Ishar Client

WOMEN'S HEALTH

WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC

At Ishaar, we are committed to providing women with comprehensive and culturally safe health services. We understand many women's unique challenges in accessing affordable and culturally sensitive care.

Our Women's Health Clinic is staffed by a dedicated team of female doctors, clinical psychologists, clinic nurses, midwives, and dietitians. These experts bring a wealth of experience and understanding, ensuring that women receive the care they need in an empathetic and nurturing environment.

We prioritise female reproductive health and antenatal care, offering tailored support to women at every stage of their journey. From addressing gynecological concerns to providing comprehensive antenatal care, our clinic is equipped to cater to women's diverse needs.

Our clinic primarily focuses on female reproductive health and antenatal care, but our doctors can also write Mental Health Treatment Plans for Ishaar clients. Our other specific services include diet education for women with gestational diabetes, iron infusions and support for women experiencing FDV.

1071

YOUNG CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN ACCESSED OUR WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC

2734

NUMBER OF 1:1 SESSIONS DELIVERED

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES: A CASE STUDY OF COLLABORATIVE CARE

Sunflower, a 35-year-old Ethiopian refugee who arrived in Australia in 2019, found care with Ishaar. With Oromo as her primary language, her journey through the healthcare system was complex. Referred by a Clinical Nurse from Refugee Health, Sunflower's story began at 24 weeks into her pregnancy. Despite language barriers, Ishaar ensured her comprehensive care. Discussions covered medical results, pregnancy advice, and educational information, aiding appointment scheduling due to language gaps.

As Sunflower's pregnancy progressed, accessing appropriate care grew intricate. Collaborative efforts by Ishaar's midwife and Refugee Health Nurse coordinated her hospital visits. Identifying Sunflower's housing struggles, Ishaar's midwife connected with Settlement Engagement Transitional Services and Edmund Rice. This collaboration provided Sunflower's stability.

Sunflower's postnatal phase was managed by Ishaar seamlessly. A home visit reinforced connections, highlighting childcare and immunisation importance. The midwife discussed contraception and booked a follow-up appointment with Ishaar's doctor.

Sunflower appreciated the practical collaborative support. Her journey underscored the value of coordinating healthcare units to ensure comprehensive care. Her case exemplified Ishaar's holistic commitment, emphasising the importance of addressing multifaceted aspects of a woman's life for overall well-being.

**Name has been changed for confidentiality*

**Please note: The woman pictured is not Sunflower*



I don't have family, so I found family here. People who are willing to listen

-Ishar client

WOMEN'S HEALTH

MIDWIFERY SERVICES

Ishar's Midwifery service, funded by the Department of Health, embodies our commitment to comprehensive care. Our wraparound support system bridges hospitals, Ishar GPs, and specialist providers by leveraging a shared care model. Our midwife offers in-home and clinic consultations, understanding the unique challenges refugees and newcomers face in an unfamiliar healthcare landscape, especially during pregnancy and childbirth.

Language barriers intensify stress for those expecting and birthing in a new country. Our midwife is a vital bridge, using interpreters to ensure expectant mothers are fully prepared, reassured, and supported. From lactation consultants to child health nurses, we demystify the journey ahead.

We cultivate a nurturing community with a free advice group for new mothers. Amidst sharing insights on childhood milestones, they also find respite through relaxing sessions and soothing massages. Additionally, we guide mothers and babies to the nationally accredited Mother Baby Nurture group, a therapeutic haven of support. Our midwifery service truly encapsulates Ishar's dedication to holistic well-being.

145

YOUNG CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
WOMEN ACCESSED OUR MIDWIFERY SERVICE

782

1:1 IN PERSON SERVICES WERE DELIVERED

NAVIGATING HEALING: A CASE STUDY

Sunflower, a 34-year-old, Dari speaking Afghan client on a refugee visa, is embarking on her journey to motherhood. Her history of anxiety and depression was later diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder. With determination, she sought Ishar's support, self-referring to seek help for her mental health, exacerbated by recurrent miscarriages. She discontinued antidepressant medication upon confirmation of pregnancy. Her consent became a cornerstone for Ishar's comprehensive approach. The midwife, GP, and psychologist collaboratively created a space of understanding in each appointment. The extended appointments allowed time for discussions regarding results, health guidance, and education, including strategies for managing nausea and nurturing mental well-being. It also enabled the GP and midwife to delve into her mental health concerns and restart her medication.

Between appointments, the midwife was accessible to support Sunflower when concerns arose. Guiding Sunflower, she facilitated referrals to the Psychiatric Liaison Service and a hospital social worker. Sunflower embraced motherhood through an elective Caesarean section and gave birth to a beautiful baby. The midwife's postnatal home visit coordinated referrals for antenatal support services, emphasising attendance at child health nurse appointments and immunisation sessions. A comprehensive postnatal check conducted by Ishar's female doctor incorporated a mental health review, detailed discussions on contraception, and education to support Sunflower in making informed choices on her healing journey.

**Name has been changed for confidentiality*

**Please note: The woman pictured is not Sunflower*



*Thank you for your relentless support...you are
the main person who inspired me to push on*

-Ishar client

WOMEN'S HEALTH

PERINATAL SUPPORT

At Ishar, we recognise the significance of perinatal mental health and its profound impact on vulnerable refugee and migrant mothers and their families. Our Perinatal Support Services is a strength-based, client-centred, culturally responsive program that reduces perinatal anxiety and depression within CaLD communities. Perinatal mental health is a significant public health concern with potentially long-lasting, intergenerational consequences. One in seven Australian mothers experience postnatal depression and anxiety, and refugee and migrant women face a fivefold higher risk of developing these conditions. The well-being of new mothers is intricately linked to their infants' socio-emotional development and future mental health.

Ishar's perinatal mental health initiative receives funding from the Smith Family Mirrabooka as a vital component of the Communities for Children comprehensive services in the Mirrabooka region. Pioneering as a pilot program, Ishar's perinatal mental health initiative caters to migrant and refugee women. The program extends free one-on-one social work support and participation in the accredited Mother Baby Nurture therapeutic group to referred women. This nationally accredited program is tailored for mothers and pre-crawling babies, offering a nurturing environment for their well-being.

66

YOUNG CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
WOMEN ACCESSED OUR PERINATAL SERVICE

918

1:1 IN PERSON SERVICES WERE DELIVERED

MOTHER, BABY, NURTURE

Born in Afghanistan with a changing political system, Sunflower disguised herself as a boy to attend school and qualified as a lawyer. However, she was forced to flee her country after it became unsafe for her to remain there.

With no family support in Australia, Sunflower and her husband lost their first child and had a second soon after. Sunflower self-referred to the Mother Baby Nurture group as she had been experiencing anxiety and low mood and was having trouble enjoying the motherhood she dreamed of. On the first day she arrived, Sunflower appeared nervous. She placed her son on a small mat that a family member had sent her and would not allow him to touch anything in the room, cautious about the risk of germs. She faced her son out to the group, never making eye contact with him, and the baby was rigid and quiet.

Sunflower and her baby attended two terms of Mother Baby Nurture. She shared her experiences with the other mums over lunch, laughed, cried and met up with another participant for shopping. Over six months, we watched her emotional connection with the baby improve, becoming more confident in picking up the baby's cues and noting the moments that became more frequent when she and the baby locked eyes.

During the last session, Sunflower told us that she felt less anxious. The mat had disappeared. Sunflower confidently allowed her baby to scoot across the room on the carpet and, in doing so, demonstrated that her confidence in caring for him had significantly increased.

**Name has been changed for confidentiality*

**Please note: The woman pictured is not Sunflower*



*I felt better going out in public with my baby.
The group was a safe place and it gave me courage
and confidence*

-Ishar client

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

HEALTH IN MY LANGUAGE

Since June 2022, Ishar has delivered Health in My Language – a nationwide health education program for migrant and refugee communities. Funded by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, this program addresses health literacy barriers. Ishar's Bilingual Health Educators deliver health education in Sinhalese, Hakha Chin, Karen, Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, Nepali, and Tagalog. Armed with insights into their communities' cultural norms, beliefs, and practices, they offer culturally sensitive education. Drawing from their experiences within these cultures, they adeptly convey concepts that lack direct English equivalents.

Over the past year, Ishar has expanded the program's scope to accommodate a broader array of languages, ensuring heightened access to essential health literacy across various communities. Collaborating with community organisations and cultural centres, we've successfully reached marginalised groups, bolstering health education and awareness. The overwhelmingly positive feedback participants show substantial interest and engagement, accompanied by notable improvements in health awareness following each session. Health in My Language remains a cornerstone of Ishar's commitment to enhancing the well-being of migrant and refugee communities.

3499

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
WOMEN ATTENDED HEALTH PROMOTION TALKS

332

SESSIONS DELIVERED BY BILINGUAL HEALTH
EDUCATORS IN: SINHALESE, HAKHA CHIN, KAREN,
ARABIC, FARSI, HINDI, NEPALI, TAGALOG

BREAKING THE SILENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH – A FAMILY'S JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING

Our Karen bilingual health educator organised a Mental Health education session within the Karen community. This session would unknowingly become the turning point in the family's journey towards understanding and supporting their daughter's mental health struggles. The daughter, a young woman in her early twenties, was silently battling severe depression. Though she had been seeing a counsellor, her family members were unaware of her ongoing struggle.

During the session, the bilingual health educator skilfully navigated through the mental health topic, debunking myths and fostering an atmosphere of empathy and understanding.

Toward the end of the session, the young woman bravely mustered the courage to open up in front of her family. She candidly revealed her ongoing battle with depression, which she had kept secret for a long time. The session, delivered in language, provided a safe platform for her to open up. Mental health is not fully recognised or understood in many cultures, including the Karen culture.

This case emphasises the significance of delivering health education in language by someone who shares their cultural background and experiences. The impact of culture shock, war trauma and refugee migration are specialist areas of wellbeing that refugee families are not readily equipped to deal with upon settling in Australia.



Bilingual health educators are not 'just interpreters'. They are skilled professionals who draw on their own experiences living within a culture and require ongoing health training.

-Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

HEALTHY FOODS, HEALTHY CULTURES

Healthy Foods, Healthy Cultures (HFHC) seeks to enhance the health outcomes of newly arrived refugees and migrants by bolstering nutritional health literacy and reducing food insecurity. Ishar employs a three-pronged approach:

1. Delivering nutrition education workshops led by dietitians
2. Crafting resources and workshop messages that integrate cultural food examples and guide individuals in selecting, preparing, and storing nutritious food
3. Culturally responsive service provider training

HFHC encompasses ten modules, spanning various life stages from pregnancy to healthy eating in later years. Recognising the gap in culturally sensitive nutrition education, Ishar identified a need among their clients. Translating existing resources alone failed to address the intricate requirements of diverse CaLD groups in WA. These groups expressed dissatisfaction with translated resources that needed to align with their foods and nutritional challenges. Acknowledging the trauma and safety issues faced by refugees and migrants, the HFHC workshops create a culturally sensitive and responsive space that fosters discussions around nutrition improvements. This intersection of trauma, safety, and food choices has led to valuable dialogues, enhancing dietary practices. The Healthway-funded initiative is delivered with the Refugee Health Service at CAHS.

327

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
WOMEN ATTENDED 36 HFHC WORKSHOPS

64

SERVICE PROVIDERS ENGAGED IN HFHC'S
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TRAININGS

FOOD INSECURITY: NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT

Vinnies WA and Ishar have collaboratively launched a joint needs assessment report, paving the way for a WA-first Community Food Centre (CFC), to be established in Mirrabooka. CFCs adopt a holistic approach that simultaneously addresses individual, communal, and systemic factors contributing to food insecurity – a mounting concern in Western Australia.

The research has yielded several pivotal insights concerning food insecurity, social isolation, and loneliness within the Mirrabooka community, encompassing:

- 44% of surveyed participants disclosed experiencing food depletion within the past year due to financial constraints.
- Over 90% of households facing food scarcity included at least one child, underscoring the extensive impact on children.
- Respondents grappling with social isolation and loneliness were more inclined to adopt unfavourable coping strategies if they did not have enough money to buy food.

These findings resoundingly advocate for establishing a CFC in Mirrabooka, a decisive step toward addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by the community.



We are all aware of the extent of the current cost-of-living pressures, and the findings of this report highlight the impact of food insecurity on some of the most vulnerable members of our community. The Community Food Centre is an innovative, evidence-based approach of addressing food insecurity and supporting people.

-Vinnies CEO Susan Rooney

YOUTH SERVICES

YOUTH SERVICES

Since its inception in 2020, Ishar's Youth Service has continually evolved, fortified by the legacy of previous youth work initiatives. The Office of Multicultural Interests and Minderoo Foundation's funding in 2023 propelled this service to deliver advocacy, education and outreach across the Perth Metro.

Our service recognises the unique challenges faced by young refugee and migrant women. These challenges demand specialised solutions, which our skilled Youth Advocates provide. The service aids young women, their families, and communities in navigating cultural adjustments, the aftermath of war trauma, and settlement in Australia. Our service model is adaptive, person-centred, and inclusive. It encompasses one-on-one interactions, outreach efforts including digital platforms for remote areas, and collaborations with trusted partners like Ishar's allied health services, Perth Children's Hospital, and ACAP psychology clinic.

Catering to ages 14-25, Ishar's Youth Service empowers young women impacted by sexual assault or domestic violence. The youth advocates offer holistic support, advocacy, and information on various critical areas, including abuse, relationships, family dynamics, friendships, financial concerns, accommodation, along with gender and sexuality matters.

883

YOUNG CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN ACCESSED OUR YOUTH SERVICE, INCLUDING EDUCATION SESSIONS.

1155

SERVICES WERE DELIVERED, INCLUDING IN-PERSON ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION SESSIONS

EMPOWERMENT AMIDST ADVERSITY: FAMILY HEALING AFTER TRAUMA

Sunflower is a 16-year-old high school student with a refugee background who has lived in Australia for four years. The school recognised her struggles, utilising specialist referral pathways to Ishar's Youth Advocate (YA). The immediate rapport between Sunflower and the YA was rooted in a shared background. This connection provided Sunflower with a safe space to disclose her war trauma and childhood sexual abuse—a silent trauma casting shadows on school relationships and her bond with her mother. Guided by the YA, Sunflower received mentorship and guidance. She hesitated to share her challenges with a stranger because she was sceptical about traditional counselling. The YA's alternative approach utilised her refugee journey and cherished family ties. With consent, in-home outreach visits facilitated dialogue between mother and daughter, which fostered a deeper understanding. They let her mother voice concerns about her daughter's growth in a new land—a pivotal moment.

Despite school disengagement, Sunflower's confidence grew with her mother's and the YA's support. Encouraged, she embraced a transformative event—the school ball. Reflecting on her growth, Sunflower embraced counselling, engaging with Perth Children's Hospital specialists for healing. Her journey radiates empowerment and resilience. The strained bond with her mother transformed into unbreakable strength. Bolstered by newfound support, Sunflower embarks on a healing path, gradually recovering from war trauma and sexual assault.

**Name has been changed for confidentiality*

**Please note: The woman pictured is not Sunflower*



They recognise me, they accept me how I am. I am like a person to them

-Ishar client

FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SUPPORT SERVICES

At Ishar, we are committed to empowering culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) women through our Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Support Program. Our mission is to strengthen their confidence, equip them with essential knowledge and skills, and provide unwavering support to make decisions that serve their best interests.

Our team of dedicated social workers provide case management, risk assessment, safety planning and advocacy for women experiencing or at risk of FDV.

Women from various cultural groups utilise Ishar's FDV Support Group that operates fortnightly during each school term. The support group provides the women with activities such as group counselling sessions, yoga classes and creative art therapy workshops.

669

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN
ACCESSED OUR SUPPORT SERVICES

3952

SUPPORT SERVICES WERE DELIVERED

OUTREACH

Ishar continues to respond to demand for culturally safe FDV outreach services across the Metro area.

Ishar has provided FDV support in the City of Gosnells for women from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Located at Women's Health and Wellbeing Services in Gosnells, the program offered support and individual advocacy through our social worker, counsellor and the FDV support group.

Ishar's outreach programs give participants a better understanding of the key identifying features of FDV and how it can impact their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. It also increases their knowledge of rights under Australian law and how to access FDV support services. This includes support to leave an abusive relationship or take out a Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO) against their partner.

“SUNFLOWER”

THE COMPLEXITIES OF PURSUING JUSTICE: A CASE STUDY ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE FDV SERVICES

Sunflower, a student at a Western Australian University, arrived in Australia on a scholarship, with her husband as her dependent. Following safety concerns, her student support officer referred her to Ishar. Her husband had left, making threats over the phone, demanding her scholarship documents, or he would harm her and her family. She disclosed past violence to the university. Ishar supported her in seeking legal advice throughout her criminal case against her husband, who faced five criminal assault charges. Ishar also contacted the Department of Immigration to help her husband's visa case being considered for cancellation.

Sunflower faced pressure, intimidation and harassment during this time, with her husband contacting various other third parties to pressure her to drop all charges against him. Sunflower continued to experience deteriorated mental health, and Ishar was able to link her to an internal Psychologist, where she received Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy to assist with panic attacks and trauma associated with the past assaults. Sunflower now believes that her husband used her and her visa to try and come to Australia, whereby he planned to leave her and remain here independently for his financial gain.

Support Provided:

- Information about domestic violence risks.
- Safety planning skills.
- Trauma counselling from Ishar's Psychologist.
- Restraining order advice and legal referrals.
- Regular contact for advice.
- Assistance with university extensions and court-related matters.
- Link to religious authority and Red Cross relief.
- Help to draft court statements.
- Moral support through legal processes.
- Liaison with Victim Support at court.

Outcomes:

Sunflower felt validated and accepted regarding her experience of domestic violence, which she had initially considered normal due to cultural influences. She gained empowerment in navigating the legal system with support from professionals and friends. Her Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO) case didn't proceed to trial due to financial limitations; however, her lawyer secured an 18-month conduct agreement before the criminal case.

The criminal case ended unsuccessfully, with the client perceiving a lack of empathy from the judge, who dropped all charges against the perpetrator. The family Doctor, a friend of her husband, provided a dishonest statement, which hindered evidence collection, preventing the Border Force from cancelling the perpetrator's visa.

Sunflower is focused on completing her PhD, she is facing financial struggles and relying on charitable organizations for support.

This case highlights the complexity of pursuing justice in domestic violence cases, where evidence burden and financial strain can hinder victims. Continuing low-cost victim support services is essential for empowering victims to take action against their abusers.

**Name has been changed for confidentiality*

FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

FREE FROM FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ishar's Free from Family and Domestic Violence program launched in 2019. The program is co-designed and co-facilitated by the members of this consortia:

- Ishar (lead agency)
- Ethnic Communities Council of WA
- Multicultural Services Centre
- Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
- Orana House - Women's Refuge and Crisis Services

Domestic violence is the leading preventable contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15-44. This project acts as a preventative approach to FDV by conducting workshops with schools, women's groups, community leaders and community groups. The workshops focus on respect, relationships, and the insidious nature of FDV. This program enhances the choice of support services that CaLD survivors of FDV can access by delivering culturally appropriate FDV training for the CaLD and FDV services sectors.

This year, Ishar conducted 71 community workshops with 283 participants. Service provider workshops were facilitated six times to a total of 300 participants.

283

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
WOMEN ATTENDED 71 COMMUNITY
WORKSHOPS

300

SERVICE PROVIDERS ATTENDED 6 CULTURALLY
RESPONSIVE TRAINING SESSIONS

SOUTH EAST FDV HEALING SERVICE

To be launched 2023/2024

The South East FDV Healing Service will be an FDV Hub in Armadale, that will serve as a central hub for accessing a comprehensive range of health, legal and social support services. This holistic approach ensures that clients can receive the support they need under one roof, making their journey towards healing more accessible and streamlined.

The hub is being established by the collaboration of esteemed agencies, including:

- Hope Community Services (lead agency)
- Yorgum Healing Services (lead partner)
- Ngala
- Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services
- Marmun Mia Mia
- Aboriginal Legal Service of WA
- Women's Legal Service WA
- Ruah Community Services
- 360 Health and Community

Each agency brings unique expertise and a shared commitment to meeting the community's diverse needs.



I felt like I was in a hole and couldn't get out, but now I feel so happy

-Ishar client

MENTAL HEALTH

PSYCHOLOGY & COUNSELLING

Ishar's psychologists and counsellors specialise in working with women from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Ishar works from a model that actively acknowledges Ishar client's strengths and challenges to their psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing daily. Our practitioners support women with mild to moderate mental health conditions, and these services are bulk-billed under a Mental Health Care Plan.

Our counsellors and psychologists work alongside social workers to assist women experiencing FDV to heal from their traumatic experiences. Ishar's mental health practitioners use evidence-based models of therapy such as Cognitive-Behavioural Therapies (CBT), Creative Arts Therapies and trauma therapies, including imagery re-scripting and Eye-Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), which are adapted to each client's circumstances.

57

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN ACCESSED OUR PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

406

PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES WERE DELIVERED

79

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN ACCESSED OUR COUNSELLING SERVICES

317

COUNSELLING SESSIONS WERE DELIVERED

REBUILDING THROUGH COUNSELING

A 30-year-old woman, Sunflower, referred to Ishar by the Red Cross, faced a challenging situation. While on holiday in her home country, she separated from her husband, escaped to Australia secretly, filed for divorce, and pursued permanent residency. However, her ex-husband discovered her return to Perth, leading to a series of threatening messages, including threats to her family.

Sunflower, exhibited severe stress and depression, marked by anxiety, sleep disturbances, and recurring nightmares since her return. She expressed feelings of identity loss, low self-esteem, and self-confidence, coupled with deep concern for her family in her home country. These symptoms stemmed from verbal, emotional, and mental abuse, as well as harassment and isolation inflicted by her ex-husband and his family. Engaging with Ishar's social worker, she was subsequently referred to a counsellor. The approach encompassed psycho-education on FDV, self-esteem, sexual abuse within marriage, CBT, and mindfulness techniques to manage anxiety.

Sunflower reported that counselling helped her regain self-confidence, improve her sleep quality, and empower her to confront past sexual abuse. She now feels more knowledgeable about her desires and boundaries in future relationships. As a result of her progress, Sunflower resumed her medical studies in Australia and secured a Resident Medical Officer position at a Perth hospital, demonstrating her regained stability and confidence.

**Name has been changed for confidentiality*

**Please note that the woman pictured is not Sunflower*



This is the only place, any problem I have I can call to explain.

-Ishar client

MENTAL HEALTH

CARER SUPPORT

The Carer Support Program is committed to empowering our clients and carers alike, ensuring they have access to essential knowledge and fostering a supportive and enjoyable environment for everyone involved.

For migrant and refugee women, the weekly support group connects them to the community and allows them to have fun. Our primary objective is to promote physical, emotional, and mental well-being through various well-being activity sessions. These sessions include yoga, dancing, flower arrangement workshops, oil-based perfume-making workshops, candle-making workshops, and sound healing sessions. Additionally, we organised enjoyable outings such as trips to the beach, picnics at Mundaring Weir, morning tea and a walk in Perth's hills to foster a sense of community and relaxation.

87

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE CARERS
ATTENDED GROUP SESSIONS

147

CARER SUPPORT SERVICES WERE DELIVERED

40+ WOMEN'S LIFESTYLE GROUP

Social isolation is highly prevalent among multicultural women from refugee backgrounds, causing many adverse health and well-being impacts. The support group addresses the significant levels of social isolation and loneliness in women over 40 from CaLD backgrounds.

This program encourages women to leave the house and socialise with women of similar age but from different cultures. The groups foster a safe environment where women can learn skills, celebrate diversity and culture, and connect with other women to build friendships.

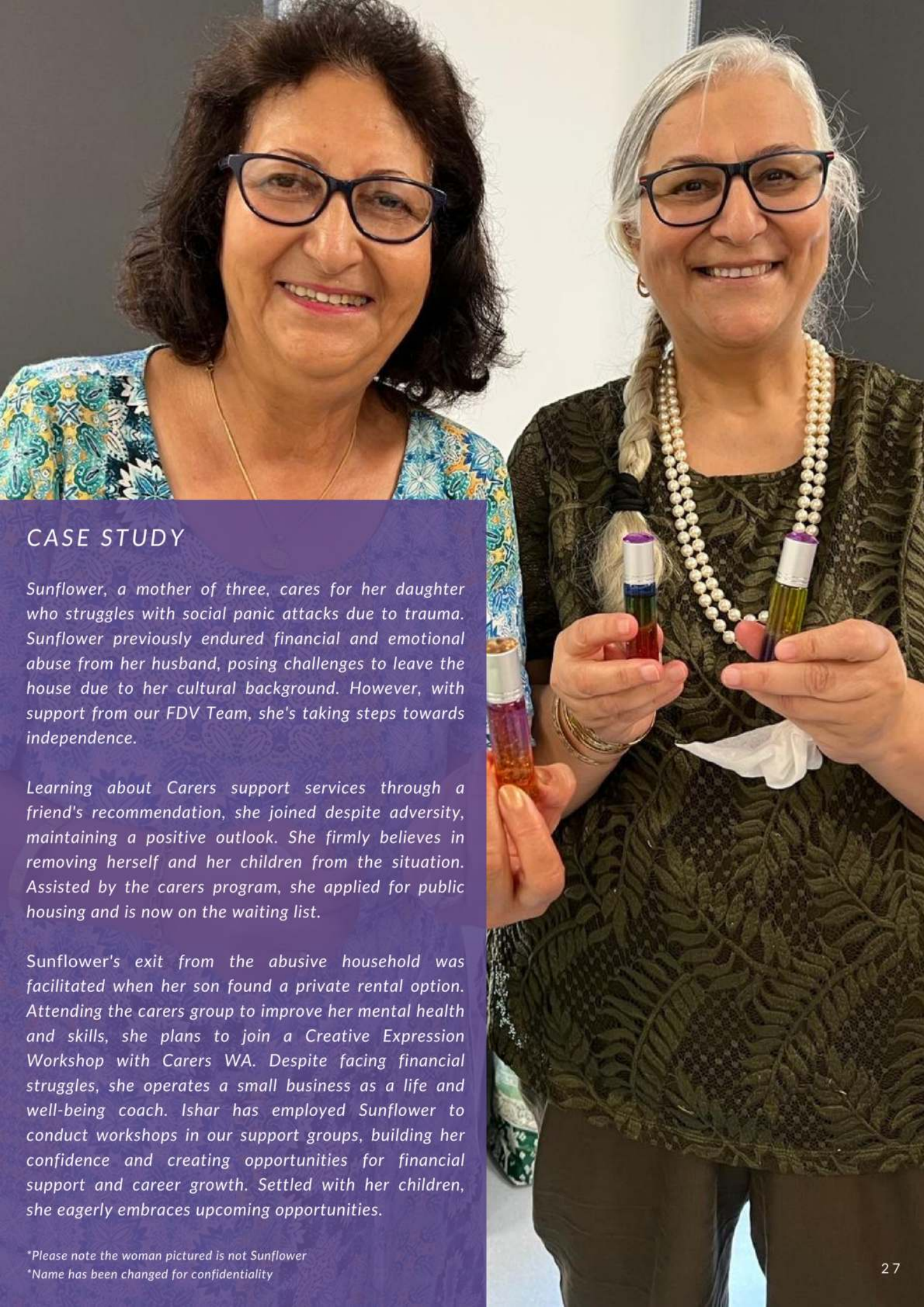
This program has seen a significant increase in the number of women attending regularly, confirming the benefits and necessity of this program.

80

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE
WOMEN AGED 40+ ATTENDED SESSIONS

73

40+ WOMEN'S GROUP SESSIONS WERE DELIVERED



CASE STUDY

Sunflower, a mother of three, cares for her daughter who struggles with social panic attacks due to trauma. Sunflower previously endured financial and emotional abuse from her husband, posing challenges to leave the house due to her cultural background. However, with support from our FDV Team, she's taking steps towards independence.

Learning about Carers support services through a friend's recommendation, she joined despite adversity, maintaining a positive outlook. She firmly believes in removing herself and her children from the situation. Assisted by the carers program, she applied for public housing and is now on the waiting list.

Sunflower's exit from the abusive household was facilitated when her son found a private rental option. Attending the carers group to improve her mental health and skills, she plans to join a Creative Expression Workshop with Carers WA. Despite facing financial struggles, she operates a small business as a life and well-being coach. Ishar has employed Sunflower to conduct workshops in our support groups, building her confidence and creating opportunities for financial support and career growth. Settled with her children, she eagerly embraces upcoming opportunities.

**Please note the woman pictured is not Sunflower*

**Name has been changed for confidentiality*

SOCIAL SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

NEIGHBOURHOOD MOTHERS

Neighbourhood Mothers is a program provided for mothers and young children who are newly arrived or have resided in Australia for up to ten years. This program addresses mothers' difficulties in parenting their children in an Australian context. It prepares mothers for their children to attend school and helps them understand developmental issues.

This year, we delivered 40 information sessions and art activities in Gosnells. These sessions included education on parenting skills, women's health and accessing support services. Weekly workshops regularly attracted 15 mothers and 10 children. These sessions were supported by bilingual creche workers and provided children with activities to enhance their development and motor skills.

SEWING SEEDS

Sewing Seeds aims to enhance economic independence and self-confidence by addressing barriers refugee and migrant women face in gaining employment due to language, discrimination, work experience gaps, and family responsibilities. SS drew 30 migrant women who underwent sewing training led by a seamstress, including optional upskilling sessions. In addition to job readiness workshops, the training taught the repurposing of materials into items like duffle bags, hats, and bags for resale within the industry.

126

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ACCESSED
NEIGHBOURHOOD MOTHERS, SEWING SEEDS AND
RAISING THRIVING CHILDREN

3064

SERVICES DELIVERY CONTACTS IN 188 SESSIONS

RAISING THRIVING CHILDREN

Raising Thriving Children (RTC) offers essential parenting support and education to refugee and migrant mothers, including extended family members like grandmothers. Its goal is to bridge the cultural gap and address the unique challenges parents face while raising children in Australia, preserving their cultural values. With a focus on early childhood development, RTC empowers parents with crucial information, skills, and advocacy tools to promote proactive health-seeking behaviours to address barriers such as:

- Lack of understanding of childhood developmental milestones and early childhood issues due to limited awareness and educational obstacles. RTC fills this knowledge gap, highlighting the significance of early childhood education and intervention.
- Low health literacy - children of refugee and migrant women often encounter difficulties accessing services due to language barriers, health literacy gaps, and unfamiliar systems.
- Social isolation often affects the well-being of refugee and migrant mothers, impacting their children as well.

RTC caters to mothers and young children who have recently arrived or have lived in Australia for up to 10 years. Across 24 sessions, topics encompass women's health, service access, nutrition, parenting, and engaging craft activities guided by bilingual childcare staff. Serving 36 women and 35 children, the groups fostered social interactions with participants from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, India, Macedonia, and Korea. The program was funded by the Office of Multicultural Interests and concluded in December 2022, leaving a positive and enduring impact.



I can feel like in my own country when I talk to my friend.

-Ishar client

SOCIAL SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

SETS

Since 2018, the Settlement, Engagement and Transition Services (SETS) have been a pillar of support for Ishaar clients. This program caters to eligible individuals who have arrived in Australia on refugee visas within the last five years. Collaboratively, Ishaar teams up with four other service providers within the SETS consortium:

- City of Stirling (lead agency)
- ASeTTS
- Youth Futures
- Multicultural Social Services Centre

Ishaar's services include:

- Casework: advocacy, referrals, and advice on well-being/necessities, physical health, legal/migration/education and housing.
- The program engaged a total of 86 casework clients, yielding 397 contacts.
- English Classes: Enabling 14 clients to participate in 40 classes, led by a TAFE teacher and a volunteer, accumulating 560 contacts.
- Information Sessions: Reaching 51 clients, sessions on Healthy Relationships (FDV), settlement and health sessions. These sessions resulted in 1,284 contacts across the program's diverse offerings.

151

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN AND FAMILIES ACCESSED SUPPORT

1284

SUPPORT SERVICES WERE DELIVERED BY OUR SOCIAL WORKER

AFGHAN WOMEN'S SUPPORT

Due to the influx of Afghan migrants to Australia in recent years, Afghan communities have required additional support. The Migration Council of Australia issued funding for Afghan communities. This funding provides community members emotional and practical support with visas, in bringing vulnerable family members to Australia.

To meet the needs of Afghan women, Ishaar introduced weekly support groups. The groups have offered a space for connection and community while providing information, activities, childcare and referral to services. The support groups are offered in Mirrabooka, Gosnells and Joondalup and have seen a great turnout. Local service providers and health educators facilitate the groups to discuss women's health, respectful relationships and healthy lifestyles. Referrals to female doctors, social workers and counsellors are also available.

These groups have supported Afghan women to make new social connections outside their Afghan community, which has benefited their mental health and sense of community, knowledge, and confidence.

132

AFGHAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN ACCESSED THE SERVICE

5280

SERVICES WERE DELIVERED



The first couple of years was very hard because you don't do anything, you don't know anyone, you are isolated, you miss your family.

But when you come to Ishar and you see people like you and you share your things and you think 'oh it's not just me'.

-Ishar client

CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

LET'S TALK CULTURE

Between 2020-2024, Ishar is delivering 'Let's Talk Culture' seminars. This series of seminars aims to provide professionals with the knowledge and skills to work in a culturally responsive way with clients from CaLD backgrounds, especially in relation to mental health.

In the last year, Ishar hosted three Let's Talk Culture Seminars:

- ADHD in Adults and the impacts on the CaLD Communities
- Neurodisability in CaLD Children and Youth
- Autism Diagnosis and Barriers for CaLD Communities

At the seminars, 76 organisations were represented. Attendees were surveyed with a 100% satisfaction rate and a 100% increase in knowledge or awareness regarding the issue, its effect on the CaLD community and how to work in a culturally responsive manner.

76

ORGANISATIONS IN THE PERTH METRO AREA WERE REPRESENTED AT LET'S TALK CULTURE

394

ATTENDEES

100%

SATISFACTION RATE

100%

INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE AND/OR AWARENESS

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

In addition to "Let's Talk Culture", Ishar received numerous requests from other service providers and universities for culturally responsive training for staff and students, due to our reputation as a lead agency for migrant women's health. Over the past year, Ishar has delivered 14 training sessions attended by over 300 professionals and allied health students. Ishar conducted service provider training for:

- WA Refugee Health Network
- Cancer Council WA
- Curtin University
- ECU
- AMSA Global Health Conference
- North Metro TAFE
- Drug and Alcohol Youth Service
- Mental Health Commission
- Lifeline

This program is part of our comprehensive advocacy work to ensure our clients are treated with respect and have their needs considered when accessing service providers.

The workshops are adapted to meet the needs of the stakeholder groups and provide information regarding the barriers CaLD women face when accessing services, how to assist in overcoming these barriers and the available resources.

302

PROFESSIONALS ATTENDED TRAINING

14

TRAINING SESSIONS WERE DELIVERED

Jamiela Sungkar

Psychologist
Director - Private Practice



(Ishar) really helped me find myself. When you walk into the office there's someone that kind of looks like you, even from the get-go.

-Ishar client

EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023

Ishar is pleased to report the remarkable success of our recent fundraising effort's for International Womens Day, supporting women affected by family, domestic and sexual violence. The event featured an enlightening discussion with Monika Kos and Rabia Siddique, shedding light on the challenges faced by women and the need to address inequality, harassment, and abuse in our community.

Rabia Siddidue emphasised pressing issues, including toxic masculinity and alcohol abuse in Australian culture, advocating for collective action to forge a better future. She shared insights from her experiences as a human rights lawyer, army officer, and a child of migrants, emphasising a women's role in holding communities together and the significance of our decisions during tough times.

Monika Kos facilitated an engaging Q&A session where attendees explored critical topics. We extend our gratitude to Rabia Siddique and Monika Kos for their valuable contributions and to our attendees and donors for supporting our mission to create a more equitable world.

30 YEARS - A CELEBRATION OF ISHAR

Since 1992, Ishar's primary purpose has been to serve and support the refugee and migrant women in the community. We believe that if women are inspired and empowered, they can empower their families and communities and create change at a collective level.

On November 16th, we celebrated this incredible achievement with our community, clients and partners in service delivery. We want to acknowledge our community of supporters, staff and members - we are grateful to you.

A special thank you to Dr Anne Aly, Meredith Hammat MLA, Ayor Makur Chuot, Rabia Siddique, Mark Irwin Mayor and our partners in service delivery for taking time from their busy schedules to celebrate with us.



*Women hold communities together, even in the darkest spaces...
Change starts in the home, to move towards a gender-equitable
future we need to call it out when we witness it, as uncomfortable
as it may be.*

-Ishar Ambassador, Rabia Siddique

FINANCIAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Income	Note	2023	2022
Grant Income	2	3,246,656	2,346,316
Other Income			
Interest		10,171	118
Participant fee & cost recovered		39,009	32,051
Donations		24,451	10,928
Miscellaneous Income		2,092	1,253
Total Income	3	3,322,379	2,390,666

Expenses	2023	2022
Advertising	30,998	4,356
AGM/Meeting Expenses	1,364	434
Auditor's Remuneration	8,650	8,050
Bookkeeping	81,438	70,704
Conference/Seminar Costs	7,591	21,658
Contractors	193,676	231,308
Depreciation	17,187	26,914
Depreciation – Right-of-Use Asset	35,292	47,500
Donations	-	-
Finance Costs – Right-of-Use Asset	4,300	4,943
Fundraising Expenses	-	-
Hire (Transport & Venue)	65,922	35,555
Insurance	53,807	33,694
Materials & Supplies	12,335	4,383
Memberships & Subscriptions	6,107	19,266
Office Expenses	23,055	28,028
Postage	76	144
Printing & Stationery	12,630	3,656
Recreational & other activities	9,580	10,353
Repairs & maintenance	13,279	13,215
Replacements (equipment)	803	355
Salaries, wages & other employment expenses	2,222,487	1,676,523
Staff Training & Welfare, Professional Development	13,619	11,400
Superannuation	241,500	164,532
Telephone	21,439	18,691
Travel & Accommodation	6,939	1,464
Workshop, Session & Catering Expenses	54,355	18,370
Total Expenses	3,138,429	2,475,496
(Deficit) / Surplus for the year	183,950	(84,830)
Accumulated surplus at the beginning of the financial year	572,910	657,740
Accumulated surplus at the end of the financial year	756,860	572,910

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Current Assets	Note	2023	2022
Cash & Cash Equivalents	4	1,988,767	1,659,681
Trade Receivables		87,785	62,301
Prepayments		-	-
		2,076,552	1,721,982
Non-Current Assets			
Furniture & Equipment	5	89,772	59,569
Right-of Use Assets	6	156,232	191,524
		246,004	251,093
Total Assets		2,322,556	1,973,075
Current Liabilities			
Trade & Other Payables	7	79,758	101,586
Provisions	8	169,898	188,443
Income in Advance	9	1,147,127	904,484
Lease Liability	10	41,145	36,922
		1,437,928	1,231,435
Non-Current Liabilities			
Lease Liability	10	127,768	168,730
Total Liabilities		1,565,696	1,400,165
Net Assets		756,860	572,910
Members Funds			
Accumulated Surplus		756,860	572,910
Total Equity		756,860	572,910

A copy of the audited financial statements for Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services Inc. are available upon request.

OUR BOARD & PARTNERS

BOARD

Simmons Sharp
Chair
Sandy McKiernan
Vice Chair
Fran Ferriera
Buena Kortum
Zainab Zaki
Carina Huong
Jolene Ellat
Kena Cabral Morales
Nivedita Kelkar
Joanne Ende

FUNDING

Australia Post
Carers WA
COTA
Curtin University
Department of Communities
Department of Health
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
Department of Justice
Department of Local Government, Sport & Cultural Industries
Department of Social Services
Healthway
Lifeline
Lotterywest
Mental Health Commission
Minderoo Foundation
Migration Council of Australia
Northern Suburbs Legal Centre
Office of Multicultural Interests
The Smith Family
Scanlon Foundation
WA Department of Communities
WA Department of Health
WAPHA
YACWA

SERVICE DELIVERY

Association for Culturally Appropriate Services
Australian Childhood Foundation
Breastscreen WA
City of Canning
City of Stirling
Communicare
Dianella Secondary College
Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation
Ethnic Community Council
Karla Kuliny
Legal Aid Commission of WA
LOOP Upcycling
Mercy Community Services
Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC)
Multicultural Services Centre
Ngala
North Metro TAFE
Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre (WREN)
Orana House - Women's Refuge and Crisis Services
Patricia Giles Centre for Non-Violence
Relationships Australia
Sister Project
Sudbury Community House
The Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS)
Women's Health and Wellbeing Services
Wadjak Northside Aboriginal Community Group
Youth Futures

FUNDRAISING/DONATION

Tamil Ladies Club
Country Women's Association
Lions Club - North Beach
Reece Bathrooms
Nood Co



SPECIAL THANKS

With deep gratitude we honour Lesley Cangemi's memory and her incredible generosity. A retired nurse and social worker, Lesley continued her work as a volunteer at Ishar and despite her fragile health, she seldom missed a day of work. Lesley passed on to her heavenly abode in July 2022 and we express our heartfelt gratitude to her family for their donation to Ishar which enabled us to subsidise the costs for an older women's support group for two terms.



Multicultural Women's
Health Services

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services Inc.
21 Sudbury Road, Mirrabooka WA 6061

Call **08 9345 5335**

Email **info@ishar.org.au**

Visit **www.ishar.org.au**

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