



REFUGEE AND MIGRANT WOMEN'S INITIATIVE, INC  
HOPE CAN, AND WILL HEAL THE WORLD

# Annual Report **2018**



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# Message from Founder

Dear friends,

In 2013, when I started our program, I believed I could help even in a small way restore the dignity and hope of the hundreds of refugee families that resettled in Tampa Bay. With the help of volunteers and community partners, we have done more than that. Together, we believe that ‘no matter where you’re from, your dreams are valid.’ We have seen firsthand that our community is richer and better when its members are offered the opportunity to start over, grow in safety and dignity, and contribute to the prosperity and wellbeing of all, including its most vulnerable population.

Our program has since grown as we entered our 5th year. 2018 gave us yet again many reasons to be thankful as we celebrate accomplishments, healings, goals achieved, and friendships made.

The mission of the Refugee and Migrant Women’s Initiative (RAMWI) is to **bring together Tampa Bay-area refugee, migrant and marginalized women, children, and their families for socio-economic and emotional support, by providing social support opportunities that consist of two important portions:**

- A **support group component** aims at empowering, equipping and connecting participants to help them set new goals, learn new skills, heal emotionally, take charge of their lives, and become leaders themselves.
- A **workshop component** provides refugee and migrant women opportunities to engage in arts and craft-making skills for the purpose of coming together as a community and learning how to generate a source of supplementary revenue for their families.

Our membership levels have grown over the years with over 400 families served. Weekly, our team of volunteers is presented with opportunities to assist, advocate, train, or care in tangible ways for refugees. Our program is constantly being refined. During the past year, many members said that they now feel that they have reasons to look forward to ‘tomorrow because of the family we have become.’

We are so grateful to our dedicated and faithful volunteers who generously gave their time, efforts, talent and love to serve those in need, as well as our Board of Directors, members, and community partners who have made all of this possible.

As you will see throughout this report, we have made strides toward accomplishing RAMWI’s mission last year, and with your support and feedbacks, we look forward to even greater accomplishments in 2019 as we continue to change and impact lives of women and children who need it the most, thus fulfilling our vision to be “a beacon of restored hope.”

Thank YOU for your support. The Board and I look forward to a very productive 2019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Florence Ackey". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Florence Ackey**  
Founder, Executive Director

# About Us

Thousands of people arrive in the United States each year as refugees and asylum seekers looking for safety and a welcoming environment. The Refugee & Migrant Women's Initiative (RAMWI) is a Not for Profit & 501(c)(3) Charity started in 2013 with the mission of bringing together newly

arrived refugee, migrant and other vulnerable women residing in Tampa Bay. RAMWI offers them the opportunity to come together in a welcoming and supportive environment that allows growth and healing. Together they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate through their new communities.

**To enhance the lives of refugee and migrant women in the community by providing an opportunity to engage with others while learning the skills necessary to become self-sustainable.**

**—OUR VISION**

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**Empower, engage and support the refugee and migrant women during the difficult phases of resettlement and transition.**

**—OUR MISSION**

# Our Work

## WOMEN SUPPORT GROUP

Through our monthly women support group, RAMWI empowers the women to preserve their cultural identity and at the same time, equips them with life skills to overcome barriers to integration with their new communities. In 2018, we have presented a variety of topics that address:



women's health



finance & budgeting



back-to-school preparation



trauma & self-care



safety & legal concern



community resources



life management



hurricane & emergency preparedness



conversational English

**“It was so good to know new people that when we didn’t meet for a few days we actually started missing each other. The variety of topics also gave us good experiences. Although some of the information we received was common knowledge, the way they explained it to us was very impactful. We found love and helpfulness in a new and strange world; this was awesome! They introduced the new world to us in a very nice way. They also educated us on health matters which have been very beneficial.”—Safaa Najm, Syria**



## SKILL WORKSHOP

Supported by our partner, Palma Ceia, we were able to provide the women with some skills (sewing, making jewelry and other marketable crafts) to encourage supplemental revenue generation, thus increasing their self-sufficiency and reducing dependence on welfare assistance.

**“My experience with RAMWI was so rewarding. I watched women from all over the world as they developed skills to sew and sell their products. They were able to learn at their own pace and socialize at the same time. I think it's essential that gaining skills is paired with supporting one another. They learned more from their friends than from the teachers! Loneliness is real for any foreigner struggling to navigate a new place, but together we can make it a positive—even fun—experience.”**—Gisele Lewis, Sewing Class Instructor

**“I knew nothing about sewing (sewing); they taught me and gave me a sewing machine which has been wonderful to me.”**—Shekina Mohamad, Syria



## CHILD AND YOUTH SUPPORT GROUP

RAMWI is also honored to facilitate group sessions for the participating women's children. During these meetings, we aim to match age-appropriate activities with the monthly topics. Doing so, we are able to facilitate a fun and friendly environment while also facilitating growth and learning. It's absolutely wonderful to watch each child grow personally and in their relationships with each other and volunteers.

Our activities include various games, purposeful movies, targeted arts and crafts, scavenger hunts, appropriate competitions, outside activities, cookie decorating, and more. By providing these interactions we help the children build necessary social communicative skills and self-esteem at an early age.

**“Having immigrated to the United States as a young child myself, I have lived through the obstacles that immigrant children face while growing up. When I started working with the children I realized that to help women, you must also offer resources to their children. I love working with them and I truly try my hardest to give them the support I needed when I was a child. I have seen them grow more confident in their-selves each and every month and the smiles on their faces make my day every time. My experience working with RAMWI will certainly be carried with me wherever I go!”**

—Valentina Acosta-Moreno, Child Support Group Volunteer



# Our Team

## VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers are the backbone of the organization and instrumental to the success we generate. RAMWI is entirely volunteer-led, allowing for the involvement of the most passionate and dedicated Tampa Bay community members. RAMWI has a volunteer base of approximately forty individuals ranging from University of South Florida students, refugees themselves, nonprofit organization leaders, and many more.

**“A diverse group of women requires a diverse group of volunteers. I have met so many incredible individuals during my time as RAMWI Volunteer Coordinator— it’s inspiring to watch our volunteers form connections with our RAMWI women and children through constant encouragement and positivity.”**

—Ashleigh Blersch, 2018 RAMWI Volunteer Coordinator

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**“Being an immigrant myself, I see these ladies as my own people. I have joined RAMWI for more than 3 years and I am very happy with my role of being a translator for the Arabic speaking families, providing transportation, and taking them to doctor appointment.”**

—Wafa Chami, Women Support Group Volunteer

## INTERNS

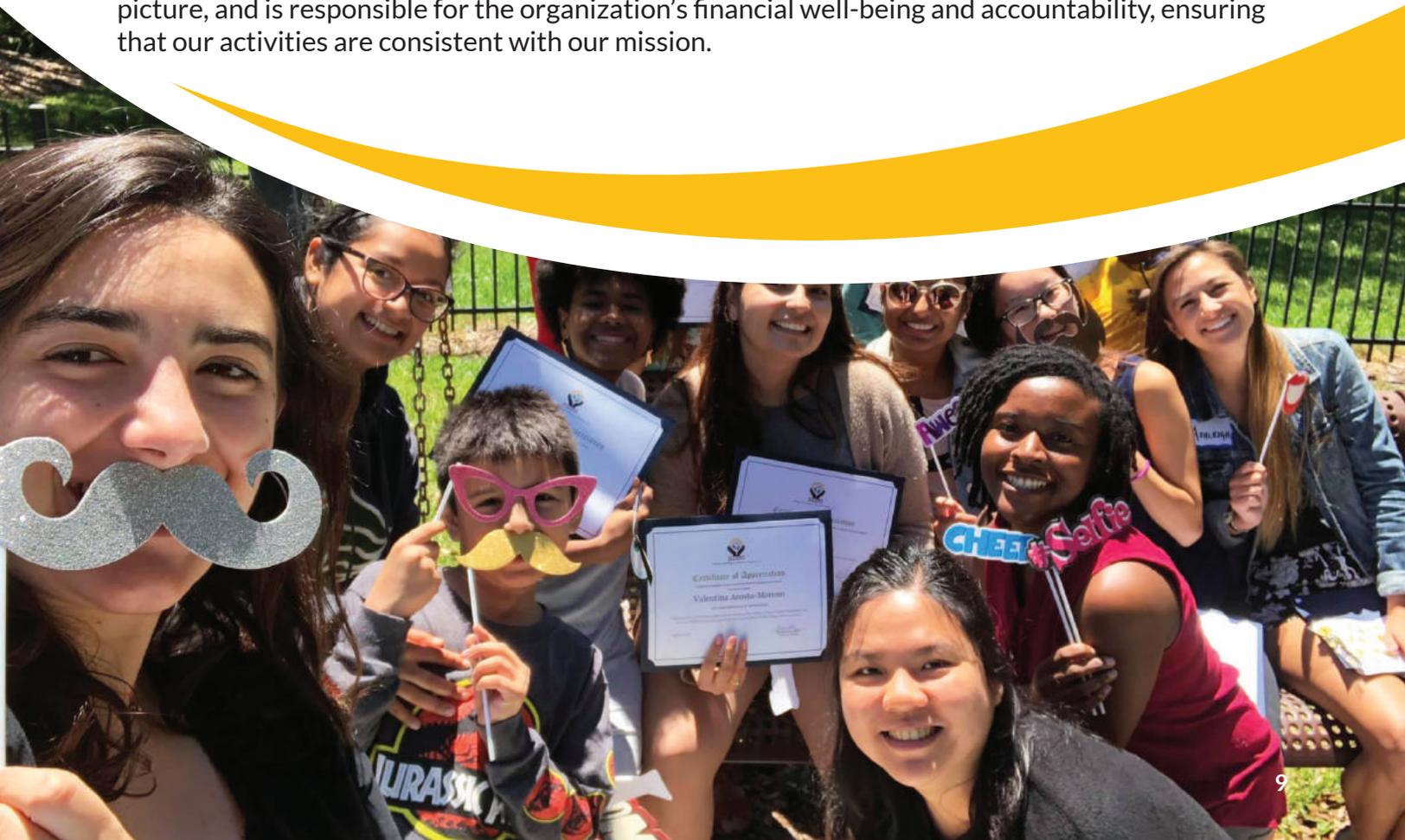
RAMWI welcomes interns in need of school credit. Our current and past interns have provided crucial administrative support and youth activities coordination. Our interns from 2018 described their time with RAMWI as a rewarding experience and have continued to volunteer with us even after their requirements had been fulfilled.

**“I have been with RAMWI since the summer of 2017. Though it started off as a temporary internship, I decided to stay on as the Child Support Group Co-Coordinator because I genuinely look forward to seeing the kids regularly. As a child of immigrant parents from Haiti, I know how challenging it is to be “just be a kid” when you are constantly worrying about your parents. RAMWI provides a learning, stress-free environment for kids to be kids. They are vibrant, eager to learn, and are always showing me new dance moves to help me stay ‘hip’. They will always have a soft spot in my heart. I am forever blessed to be a part of RAMWI!”**

—Jen Delva, Child Support Group Volunteer

## BOARD OF DIRECTOR

Our board of Directors is composed of individuals and professionals with extensive experience in multiple domains. The board supervises the activities of the organization, keeps track of the big picture, and is responsible for the organization’s financial well-being and accountability, ensuring that our activities are consistent with our mission.

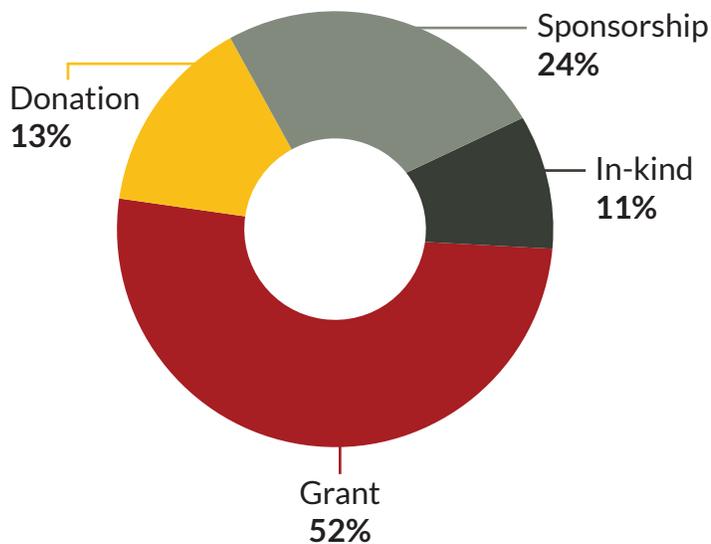


# Our Community Partners

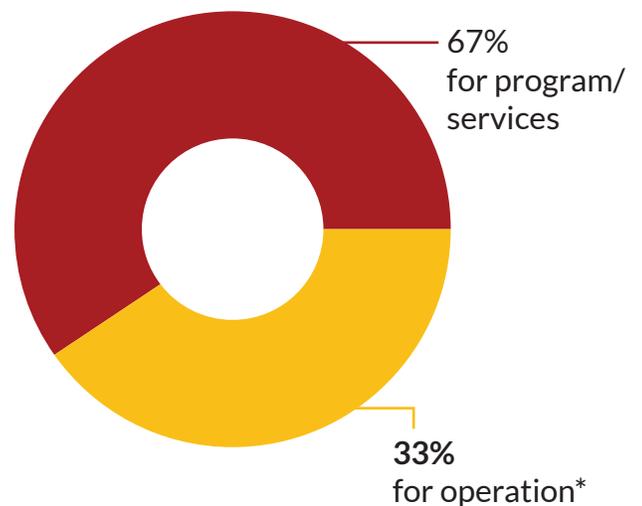
- Tampa Bay Refugee Taskforce
- Redeemer City Church
- Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church
- Mission Hill Church
- WellCare Health Plans, Inc
- United Nation Association of Tampa Bay
- By Design Technologies
- Project Prosper
- USF Swahili Association
- DARE at USF
- Global Refuge Services
- Hillsborough County Health Department
- The Healing Grace Project
- Office of Dr. Sylvia D. Campbell

# Our Resources

REVENUE: \$10,532.51



SPENDING: \$4552.35



\*) include the purchase of one laptop computer

# Our Beneficiary

Since our founding in 2013, RAMWI has served over 400 refugee and migrant families who have resettled in the Tampa Bay community. In 2018 alone, we provided services to over 145 women and their families, including 42 teenagers and young children. These families represent 17 different countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Afghanistan, Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, Uganda, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Haiti.

# Our Future Plans

- 1 Workshop series on topic suggested by members featuring experts from the community
- 2 Creative workshops (weekly sewing classes and other crafts)
- 3 Hands-on training
- 4 Community engagement
- 5 Health literacy
- 6 Peer-mentoring
- 7 Cultural competency and other training for the community

# Our Thanks

- Tampa Bay Refugee Taskforce
- Redeemer City Church
- Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church
- Hyde Park United Methodist Church
- Temple Terrace Presbyterian Church
- Mission Hill Church
- 200 Muslim Women Who Care
- United Nations Association of Tampa Bay
- GFWC North Pinellas Women's Club Foundation
- University of Southern California School of Social Work
- USF Health
- African Student Association at USF
- Hillsborough County Department of Health
- Dr. Sylvia Campbell
- Radiant Hand Tampa
- WellCare Health Plans, Inc
- Kaleisia Tea
- Alpha House
- By Design Technologies
- University Area Community Center
- Lutheran Services of Florida
- Coptic Orthodox Charities
- Temple Terrace Police Department
- Project Prosper
- Dr. Al Sawah
- Gisele Lewis
- ... and many other individuals, organizations and partners who have given their remarkable supports to RAMWI





## Refugee and Migrant Women's Initiative, Inc

PO Box 2792, Riverview, FL 33568

P.: (727) 900-5292

W.: [www.ramwi.org](http://www.ramwi.org)

