



2022-2023



Laamiga Annual Report

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Laamiga mentors and mentees at annual picnic

Chair's Introduction



I'm incredibly proud to share the 2022/2023 annual report, showcasing the achievements of the previous year and hope that this inspires you to join in and support us however you can.

Laamiga continues to operate in difficult circumstances. In our post-pandemic lockdown world, millions of women in the UK struggle every day. The cost-of-living crisis continues to test our resolve and resilience, particularly that of vulnerable women from black, ethnic minority and refugee backgrounds in London. We persevere with our flagship mentoring programme which supports women on a one-to-one basis, empowering and championing them to realise their potential.

Continual hostility and threats to the lives, livelihoods, and prosperity of women from black, minority ethnic and refugee backgrounds are the reasons it is so important to support women to be more confident, grow their skills and support each other in peer-to-peer groups.

Recognising these needs, our project Athena 2, delivered through partnering with the Money Charity, supported 18 mentees to inspire financial confidence and build personal resilience. We are also in the delivery phase of Discover-Me, a project to support women to improve their communication and public speaking skills to help in their day to day lives and improve employment prospects.

We could not have achieved anything without the support of our volunteers, staff and trustees. As we reflect on the previous year, we look ahead to a more ambitious Laamiga that continues to support women across London to achieve their goals and grow in confidence.

In particular, none of this would be attainable without the support and time of our volunteer mentors and mentees that carry our mentorship programme. We need to specially recognise Dr Emua Ali, whose tireless efforts and dedication is the driver and the heart of Laamiga.

Mamataj Begum
Laamiga Chair

About Laamiga



Mentors' visit to Seville, Spain as part of Laamiga's partner Kairos Erasmus European-funded Cultivating Understanding of Refugees and the Environment (CURVE) project.

We are a for women, led-by women charity, striving to support marginalised and disadvantaged women and work alongside women to create the future they see for themselves. We push for empowerment in its true sense so that women can achieve their full potential.

Our vision

We have the vision to provide support and tools to empower and enable women from minority ethnic, migrant and refugee backgrounds to reach their full potential.

We do this by:

- Centring our efforts on mentoring, coaching and facilitating whilst ensuring that the support structure needed for success is in place
- Offering accessible and relatable training geared towards achieving improved financial literacy, as this is a critical element of empowerment
- Promoting and supporting opportunities for women's entrepreneurship and strengthening women's access to networks, resources and information so that they may gain meaningful and secure employment
- Creating opportunities for connections and collaborations; thus empowering women to flourish
- Providing opportunities for women to share their stories amongst themselves and to the wider community in order to foster social cohesion
- Framing empowerment as beyond individual women and their interpersonal relations. Supporting them to recognise the importance of active citizenship and nurturing a women's capacity to participate in the public life of their community.

Our work

Since 2012, we have worked to provide the support and tools to empower and enable women from minority ethnic, migrant and refugee backgrounds.

How we work

We lead and collaborate with like-minded organisations committed to the empowerment of women from minority ethnic, migrant and refugee backgrounds through skills development, networking and building community. In practice, this means giving women the training, connecting them with like-minded mentors and offering opportunities that can enable them to reach their full potential and aspirations. Laamiga aims to act as a bridge between the needs of these women and their future aspirations.

Maryam's story

In 2000, 28-year-old Maryam* arrived in the UK with her husband and young daughter, as Iranian refugees seeking political asylum. Since then, they have managed to carve out a new life as British citizens. For many years Maryam worked in law but was keen for a career change. She completed her Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) qualification but needed help developing her English literacy skills. During the covid pandemic, a therapist she was seeing told her about Laamiga and the services they offered, and she signed up for their mentorship.

Maryam was assigned a mentor who helped her to improve her writing skills. Maryam said: "My mentor has supported and encouraged me throughout the past year. She has helped me with getting me ready to start looking for employment by preparing interview answers, structuring my supporting information for a prospective administration role in the NHS and helping me to update my CV on a regular basis. She understands that everyone's life progression is different and never judges me if it takes me longer to complete tasks or goals."

Maryam wanted to improve her job seeking prospects by updating her CV and knowing how to write a cover letter. Lacking the knowledge and confidence to do it by herself, she turned to Laamiga. Not only were they able to provide her with the skills she needed, but she was also able get a promotion to her company's accounting department, then gained extra skills and experienced which helped to secure her current role.

Maryam still manages to stay in touch with her mentor. She said: "When we meet not only do we go through things as a mentor and mentee but have conversations as two friends. She was a perfect match for me."

**Name changed to protect identity*



Coordinator's report

Laamiga has had an amazing year 2022/2023 due to the generosity, commitment and invaluable support from our resourceful volunteers, mentors, mentees, trustees and partners.

We are coming to the end of our Discover-Me phase one project and our mentees will be telling their stories of growth and development during Black History Month, October 2023.

The Discover Me project outcomes for our mentees' personal development were to: develop self-confidence, develop confidence when speaking publicly, develop presentation skills and ITC skills.

As an organisation, we believe Laamiga can demonstrate environmental awareness and sustainability as we do not have premises and we use shared community spaces when we need to have face to face meetings. We have links to a variety of mainstream organisations in Camden and Islington. We are extremely grateful to our community partners Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre and Training Link for their support and partnership over many years.

We worked with our partner the Money Charity to deliver our Athena 2 financial resilience skills project to support mentees to develop financial literacy skills to manage their finances effectively. The Money Charity also delivered webinars to our mentees on money management.

We have worked with 30 volunteers, mentors and 50 mentees who have been supported to find employment, set up businesses, become self-employed and to develop more self-confidence to reach their potential.

We had a yoga session online for our mentees and mentors during international women's day in March. Our annual dinner in December saw mentors, trustees and volunteers get together for socialising and networking.

We are extremely grateful to our generous donors and funders who have enabled us to provide such essential services to our mentees. We have some mentees who have come back to join us as volunteer mentors, and they are using their experiences to deliver services and give us feedback to improve our service delivery.

We took our volunteers and mentees on local field trips to the British Museum and London Zoo. Our staff, volunteers and mentors went on adult education staff Erasmus+ European Union-funded refugee studies training trips to Europe organised by our partner Kairos Europe. The training workshops enabled participants to learn about the refugee situation in Europe and the work European nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) are doing to support refugees.

We are hugely indebted to some of our past volunteers, mentors and mentees who have come back to share their vast experience, knowledge and skills. They have joined us on our Project Advisory Group that meets regularly to oversee the delivery of our projects.

Our mentors have supported our mentees in providing them with mock interviews, CV building, and empowerment training webinars.



Mentor refugee study visit to Seville, Spain.

We had our annual picnic and walk at the Olympic Park, Stratford on 22 July and we were joined by 25 mentors, mentees, trustees and volunteers. We braved the rains to sing songs and dance to the rhythms of the music before we decamped to a nearby café in the park.

We welcome women volunteers to help us deliver our services as mentors. We are extremely grateful to our partner organisations that refer mentors and mentees to us. We are a volunteer-led organisation, and we rely on our members to help us to provide our services.

Dr Emua Ali
Coordinator

If you are interested in volunteering or would like to refer a woman mentee from a minority ethnic background, please email info@laamiga.org or call 020 8257 7317.

Finances and Fundraising

The funding and partnership from our generous sponsors and donors, along with the invaluable contributions from our volunteers, remain the lifeblood of Laamiga.

Over the past year we completed our Sheba project (funded by a grant from the European Social Fund and managed by Paddington Development Trust (PDT). This project supported unemployed women aged 18+ from black, Asian, minority ethnic refugee and migrant communities to develop resilience, to transfer skills from the private/domestic sphere and to gain self-confidence and motivation.

Another initiative completed was our Athena Project, funded by a grant from the Rosa and Smallwood Trust's 'Women Thrive Fund' where the aim was to help women improve their confidence with personal finance and gain financial independence.

Discover-Me is an exciting new programme for women from our target background living in Camden, Islington and neighbouring boroughs who would like to develop self-confidence, creativity, storytelling and communication skills. We are grateful to the Sage Foundation for the funding provided to make this happen.

The enabling of access to a virtual space prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the spend on technology solutions and broadband support have increased our reach and we are grateful to our project funders that allow us to continue our work in this new format where needed. We continue to focus on securing general, non-project specific, funding for fixed costs, to support the mentoring at the core of our service, as well the next round of project activity. In particular, we are pleased to recently have received a grant from the Yapp Charitable Trust specifically to fund ongoing expenses of this nature.

The contribution of our volunteers is the critical factor that makes Laamiga's work possible. Without their time and skills, we would not be able to achieve our aims. Beyond that, Laamiga is almost entirely dependent on grants, usually for specific projects. Our financial health is determined by the balance between the inflow of funds and keeping expenditure as low as possible without compromising proper governance. Our financial procedures are regularly reviewed by the trustees to maintain proper approval processes.

We have a small number of regular monthly donations, and we also receive individual contributions via Laamiga's website (www.kindlink.com/charity/Laamiga). These donations, with 25% extra through taxpayers signing up to Gift Aid, are very important, as they contribute to vital costs that make our work possible, like insurance, website hosting, travel and childcare.

Thank you to this year's donors

European Social Fund
Rosa and Smallwood Trust
The Sage Foundation
The Yapp Charitable Trust
And all of our generous individual donors

Imogen's story



Imogen Stevens has always been a 'people person' and has carved out a successful career as a psychologist and a professional coach in a variety of fields. Her career has seen her working for Vogue magazine and The Times. She has also worked in HR, helping to build organisational culture.

Imogen became a mentor for Laamiga in February 2023, when she discovered it while looking for a volunteering programme that aligned with her values. She said:

"I wanted to give my time to something that I'm passionate about. I'm super passionate about women, especially refugees. As soon as I learnt about Laamiga I said I want to be helping these women." As a mentor she is able to bring together her skills in coaching and HR.

Imogen has supported two mentees, helping them gain the skills required to further their careers. They were both also involved in Laamiga's first group coaching trial, which she led.

Commenting on the success of one of her mentees, Imogen said: "After nine months of attempting to get a job, one of my mentees got a new job within two months of us working together. She went on to gain confidence in her new workplace, using her voice and experience to create a positive impact in the workplace culture. She has smashed through two of her three goals in four months. I am so proud of everything she has achieved!"

"As a mentor, you are so much more than a traditional mentor. You are a coach, a wellbeing support, a champion, a cheerleader, an accountability partner, a manager and a friend. I take my role as a mentor as seriously as I take my career. Although we are volunteers, we are helping human beings and that means showing up to every session, asking how best can I serve my mentees today?"

As well as supporting her mentees, Imogen works as an app tech coach alongside running her own coaching business. Formal training is not required to be a mentor, but the willingness to support others is.

"I really recommend it.", Imogen said. "For me, it's been really rewarding working with the women. It makes you reflect on your life as well. And I feel just super lucky for my life and what I have and if I can even give back a tiny percentage of that to someone else, I 100% will."



www.laamiga.org

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