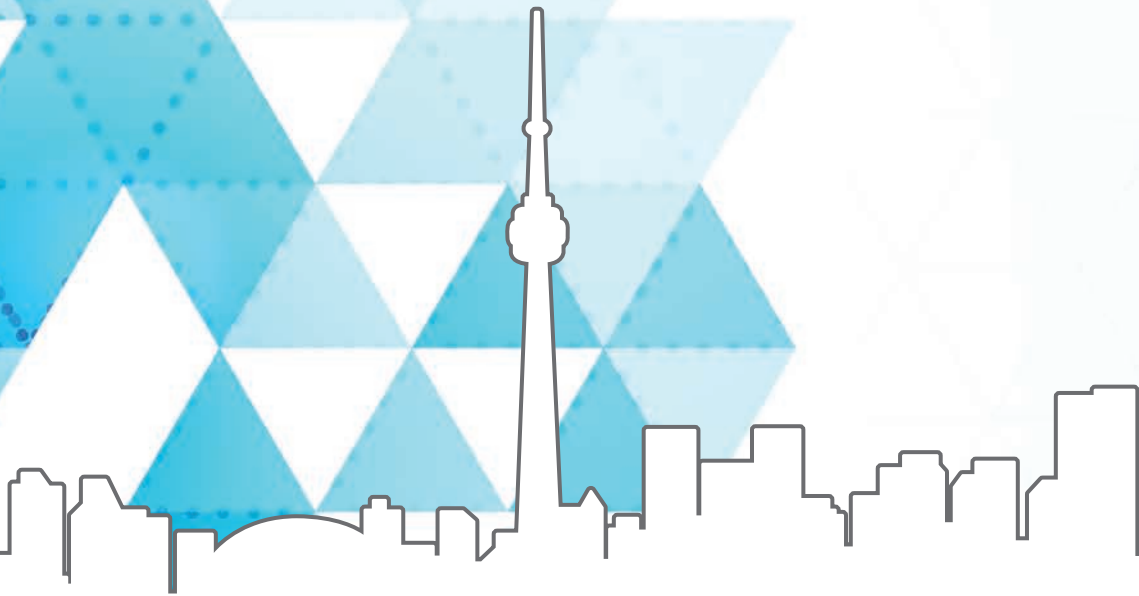




ONE PEOPLE, ONE COMMUNITY, ONE VOICE



**ANNUAL REPORT 2014 - 2015**

# Message from the President

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It has been such an honour to have been a part of Midaynta Community Services, which abides by a policy of non-discrimination and equity, and provides services to everyone, free of charge. It is an organization that unifies members of our community, of Toronto, and of Canada, so that great achievements can be accomplished and daunting obstacles can be overcome. Midaynta Community Services was established in 1993 as a family reunification project, and incorporated in 1995 as a non-profit organization committed to identifying and responding to the varied and unique needs of the newly arriving Somali community. Since that time, the organization has expanded to serve the wider community, and has had a long, exciting, and complicated journey, with many hurdles and challenges, as well as a wide array of successes and celebrations.

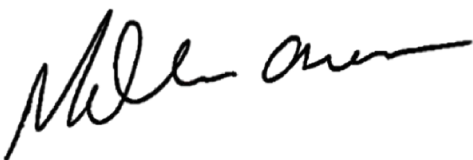
Midaynta has come a long way in the last few years. During our period of restructuring, in 2011, during a particularly difficult time for Midaynta, a series of Consultations were organized in order to determine the best course of action moving forward. The implementation of a key number of recommendations was ordered to fix the number of issues that Midaynta was having both internally and within the community.

We at Midaynta have been working tirelessly since then to address and resolve those recommended changes. Our current Board of Directors is committed, cohesive and open to learning, and are running according to the General Operating By-Laws. The focus of all staff, the Executive Director, and the members of the Board are now completely focused on achieving the charitable purpose, and in working together toward a common goal of community betterment and enhancement. Also among these suggested changes was that of increasing our funding, as this has been a major source of struggle for our organization. We have been increasing our fundraising efforts, and applying for new and further government funding. These efforts have been successful, and Midaynta is now entering a new era of increased funding, partnerships and a larger service provision for our community. Finally, we have resolved every single one of our past legal issues, allowing for greater transparency and accountability to our community, partnerships, and stakeholders and lastly, to our Funders.

This last year has been one of the busiest years yet, and we are entering a new phase that promises to bring even more growth and positive change to our organization and to our community. Our strategic planning for the future includes increasing our funding, complete with a comprehensive Fundraising strategy. We will also enhance our existing policies and procedures and work on creating new ones. There will be a renewed focus on capacity building for the organization, staff and Board members, as well as increased training for staff and volunteers. Finally, we will continue our dedicated efforts into addressing the crisis of youth violence and systemic oppression that affects our community so deeply.

We the Board of Directors at Midaynta are proud of the organization that we have become, and are looking forward to what exciting challenges and opportunities are coming next. Midaynta has come back from a position of struggle, and, through the tireless dedication and passion of the staff, volunteers, students, community members and fellow Board members, we have brought Midaynta to new heights and we are so very excited to see what will come next! A special thank you to our Funders, who have believed in us and given us another chance, and with your generous help we are dedicated to providing the best supports and services for our community.

Mohamed Omar



President

# Message from the Executive Director

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I am proud to report that we at Midaynta have been continuing to work hard to address the ongoing crises in our community, especially amongst our youth. I believe that the Midaynta team, together with our partner organizations, have the experience, ability, knowledge, skill, passion, commitment and leadership to address the many challenges that our community faces today. We have been so successful in establishing relationships with multiple actors in the education, criminal justice, and academic sectors, community organizations as well as all levels of government. We will be working on strengthening these partnerships so that we together we can continue to address the crises amongst our community.

In March 2014, we held the “Broken Dreams” Roundtable and Open Community Forum in Toronto and Ottawa in collaboration with Somali Action Alliance of Minnesota and the U.S. Consulate in Toronto. The purpose of this Forum was to discuss the crisis of the Somali Canadian youth and the roots of what was leading to violence and extremism. By opening this discussion with Somali community leaders, local Canadian law enforcement, all levels of Canadian government officials, settlement service agencies, education sector and social workers who are involved countering violent extremism work, we have generated strategies to counter the extremism and violence that is impacting our community. In February 2015, Midaynta co-sponsored a conference entitled “Youth Radicalization: Policy and Education Response” to examine the push and pull factors to youth radicalization. During the conference, mental illness was identified as one of the primary risk factors for susceptibility to radicalization. A further focus will be placed on the mental health and health of our community, and in ensuring that these services will be accessible and culturally specific towards our community.

Furthermore, Midaynta co-sponsored the first and second African Canadian Summits, which highlighted the need for targeted, culturally specific programming because our community continues to experience systemic racism, deportation, social exclusion, marginalization, criminalization, over-representation in the criminal justice system; high levels of unemployment, racial profiling in policing, serious security issues, trauma and mental health issues, extreme violence, highest dropout rate in education; disproportionate and extreme poverty. Midaynta will continue to work alongside our partners to address issues, using recommendations from these Summits to go forward.

As well, we held numerous roundtable meetings with ministers and senior bureaucrats at the federal, provincial and local levels, discussing problems such as the Somali youth clients who are involved in the criminal justice system and were facing deportation orders to Somalia under (Bill C-43). These youth have already been traumatized by the refugee/settlement experiences. We proposed solutions to the challenges confronting Somali youth and families, including the unintended consequences of various policies in citizenship and immigration, police checks, and schooling.

In addition to our efforts to educate the community and policymakers, we have continued to strengthen our programs and services to ensure better outcomes for youth, parents, seniors and people facing housing and homelessness issues.

On behalf of Midaynta, I would like to thank our dedicated staff, Board, and volunteers, as well as our partners and collaborators: Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA), U.S. Consulate, Somali Immigrant Aid Organization, The Heart & Stroke Foundation, Northwood Neighbourhood Services, University of Toronto, BADC, OISE, OCASI, ACCO, ACLC, and OFL. Special thanks to our Funders in the Ontario Government and the City of Toronto whose support has been indispensable to our community. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Mahad Yusuf

# Midaynta History and Mission Statement

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**“Midaynta is committed to building vibrant, socially integrated and united communities.”**

Midaynta Community Services is a registered Canadian charitable organization that provides settlement services and other programs that advances education by providing courses, seminars, meetings, counseling and other support services for refugees & immigrants in need. We are a social and settlement services agency, working to improve the quality of life of newcomers in Toronto and vicinity.

Midaynta was established in July 1993 as a family reunification project, and incorporated in August 1995 as a non-profit organization committed to identifying and responding to the needs of the community. Midaynta abides by a policy of non-discrimination and equity, and our services are open to everyone and are free of charge. Midaynta has a team of professionals who are committed and passionate about their work. Midaynta’s success is built on strong working relationships with their stakeholders. Due to their diversified services, Midaynta is able to assist newcomers from their initial start-up process upon arrival until their full adaptation in the society. They are striving to provide services that promote accountability, transparency, social justice, equality and equity, partnership and diversity.

## Seniors Program

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Midaynta Community Services offers the ‘Breaking Down the Barriers’ seniors support program under the Multi Agency Partnership Project (MAPP), in partnership with St. Clair Seniors Services and Isra for Muslim and Caribbean seniors living in the Weston-Lawrence area. Through this program, seniors have access to recreational and educational programs, community meals, various health-related services, transportation and escort, home help/home-making, respite care, adult day programs and seniors’ case management (information and referral, crisis intervention and assistance).

Programming is once weekly, and has become extremely necessary, popular and in demand amongst the Somali senior population. The need for creating a larger network of services aimed at the specific and unique needs of our clients is becoming more essential, as proven by the overwhelming demand and positive response to our existing seniors program. We will be seeking new ways to provide these direly needed services to a larger number of clients and in a wider area of Toronto.

Many seniors in our community are living in poverty, and are often isolated from the society at large. There are also many language and literacy barriers that create difficulties in accessing many services and programs. Our ‘Breaking Down the Barriers’ program is a culturally and linguistically relevant and accessible program, and Midaynta is seeking to expand on this very successful model in the upcoming years. This is a very important program to us as we see daily the struggles that many of our

seniors are facing, and are committed to expanding our reach within this community. Going forward, Midaynta will be seeking ways to expand upon our funding to create a more comprehensive approach to providing much needed services to this often isolated and underserved clientele.



# Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) Program

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The Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) Program provides outreach, referral and follow-up services for youth 12-21 years old and their families to programs and services including but not limited to: Pre-Employment Development (i.e. Job search, Resume, cover letter, interview skills, etc.), Skilled Trades & Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, Bridging Programs to Post-secondary Education, Mental Health & Addictions Assessment & Treatment, After School & Summer Programs, Recreational Programs, Summer Job Readiness, Community Crisis Response, Parent Education, Conflict Mediation, Diversion & Re-integration Services, and Community Service/Volunteering Connections. Our services are offered in English, Somali, Swahili, and Bajuni.

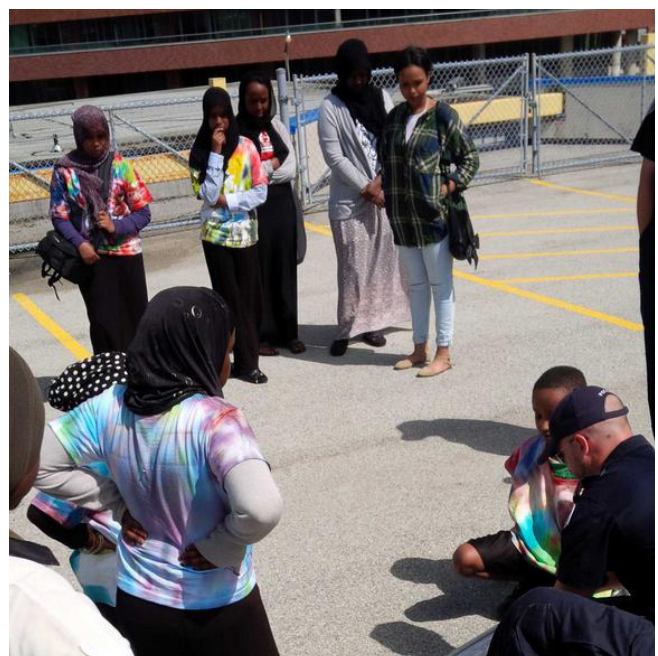
We have three Youth Outreach Worker (YOWs), two are targeted to Somali youth and one is based in Lawrence Heights. Since the addition of two Somali-targeted YOWs in 2013, the program has reached new heights and is widely recognized for setting a new standard for youth and community outreach, engagement, program delivery, and youth-focused advocacy.

The YOWs reach out to and engage at-risk youth, in accordance with the Stages of Change model, which promote assets, competencies and resiliency. They carry out brokerage, advocacy and resourcing functions that ensure youth have access to programs, services and opportunities needed for healthy development. Our YOWs engage youth to identify issues, needs, goals, aspirations, skills, abilities and services needed as well as barriers to accessing these services. They provide youth with general information, contacts, referrals services and support as needed to facilitate access to programs, services and opportunities i.e., recreation, housing, employment, education, health, including substance abuse, social abuse, social and emotional issues etc.

Program staff also organized more than 40 events serving more than 600 participants, including Somali Health Awareness Day (with Heart & Stroke Foundation, Toronto Public Health & Unison), Youth Radicalization: Policy and Education Response Conference (with the University of Toronto, Ontario Government, Toronto Police, and the U.S. Consulate in Toronto), The 2nd African Canadian Summit (with African Canadian Legal Clinic & Ontario Federation of Labour), Roundtable on Youth and Community Resiliency, Toronto Police CVE Roundtable, and the Summer Camp with TDSB.

Feedback from our youth and parents indicates the program has had a significant impact on their lives, reporting a reduction in risk factors and strengthening protective factors. Many of our youth have successfully transitioned to employment, post-secondary education and many more indicate greater awareness of community resources as a result of our outreach. Some of the challenges our program faces include managing community expectations of wholesale community change given the limited staff and resources. At the same time, we have been working extra hard to ensure better outcomes for our clients and have redoubled our effort to raise awareness of the root causes of the crisis facing Somali youth within the policy community. To do this, our YOWs sit on various community planning tables and work closely with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), the Toronto Police Service, City of Toronto, and Public Safety Canada to generate dialogue and find workable solutions to the problems our youth and their families encounter.

We thank MCYS and the numerous community partners for their generous support, encouragement and collaboration. Most of all, we thank our youth and their families for whom this program was created to serve and whose resilience inspires us on a daily basis. With your continued support, we look forward to going from strength to strength.





# Housing/Homelessness Prevention Program and Housing first

Midaynta's Housing Manager works with low-income individuals and families who face many barriers and challenges in finding and maintaining appropriate and affordable housing and who are struggling to pay the rent. Midaynta Community Services is continuing to strengthen our delivery of efficient and effective services that will meet the varied and unique needs of our clients. In this program we take a holistic approach and look at a number of issues, such as the number of children, financial status and neighbourhood, and health and mental health, all of which tend to have a negative impact on our clients' housing status. While we serve everyone who needs the service, the main emphasis of the program is to provide culturally sensitive

assistance to prevent homelessness in the Somali Community. Services also include assistance to find and maintain affordable housing, information, referral, eviction prevention, housing stabilization and counselling, mentoring programs and peer-support initiatives. In order to provide appropriate support to clients, we work in collaboration with a number of other services providers including Toronto Community Housing and Housing Connections. We encourage for home ownership when it is possible as we want our client to fully integrate to the society. During the year of 2014/2015, 650 repeated client and 490 new clients were served in the areas of housed, stabilization, eviction prevention and housed in shelter and transitional homes.



# Midaynta Events





## New Settlement Program

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Over a period of two years, Midaynta implemented an initiative designed to improve integration and social outcomes for Somali youth, particularly youth involved in the Criminal Justice System, and youth who are at-risk of becoming offenders. The project offered individual and group community services, information and referrals, educational workshops for youth and parents, various opportunities for skills development and connecting youth with peer mentors.

During this innovation and settlement project, our focus continued with a service approach that is collaborative, holistic and adaptive, with a strong dedication to youth and families. Planning is unique in each situation, and provided services respect the values, cultural diversity and needs of both individuals and families. Our structured and safe environments include a balance of academic, life skills and recreation that foster positive life changes for at-risk youth to increase their self-esteem and confidence. We encourage family involvement, and we encourage members of each youth support group to contribute to program planning, and participate in advisory panels and focus groups.

Through this programming, we continued to interact and support a number of Somali youth who are facing deportation orders, some in connection with Bill C-43, and have been addressing this emerging challenge, as well as advocating for them at different levels to bring awareness to their plight. As well, in addressing the ongoing violence amongst our youth, our Navigating Education workshops are now also geared to the real possibility of violence in and our schools and ways in which both parents and youth as well as school staff can engage in dialogue ensuring safety for all. As well we continue to engage members both formally in workshop and informally in conversation about unraveling the stigma around mental health, as we have been seeing a large number of Somali youth and parents with unaddressed serious mental health problems

We have also seen an overwhelming demand for settlement services despite the large cuts to federal settlement programming. Despite our reduced funding, we have still been providing settlement services to this clientele. Also, many youth are experiencing a service gap accessing existing programming in the community due to transportation costs, and language barriers. We endeavor to deliver our workshops close to where our clients live and deliver programming in both languages (English and Somali).

We have been successful in engaging youth and families in our community by assisting them in finding opportunities, solutions and resources to address social, behavioral, educational and economic needs. This program also resulted in the parents and families reporting increased knowledge of the risk and protective factors, and suitable interventions available and that they have improved their skills and are more aware and involved in their children's education, and accessing justice services. Midaynta has been working actively, and continuing to work with community agencies, schools, community housing, hospitals, community health and mental health facilities, faith community, settlement services, local police, probation, parents and youth to link youth and their families to appropriate community services by identifying barriers to access, and ways to overcome these barriers.











# Thank you

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The Board of Directors of Midaynta Community Services acknowledges with thanks, the outstanding contributions, support, and inspiration received from our funders, partners, clients, volunteers, and staff for the last 23 years

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Abdurahman M. Ahmed - Treasurer  
Kaja Richards - Secretary

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Abdinur Ali Farah  
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Hassan Dahir Sheer  
Tanwir Anwar

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Mahad Yusuf – Executive Director  
Amina Noor – Program Manager / YOW  
Mohamed Jama – Youth Outreach Worker (YOW)  
Fowzia Duale – Youth Outreach Worker (YOW)  
Ubah Farah – Housing Manager  
Saido Sheiknur – Senior Outreach Coordinator  
Farhia M. Abdi – Settlement Worker

## PARTNERS

African Canadian Community Organizations (ACCO)  
African Canadian Legal Clinic (AFLC)  
Black Action Defense Committee (BADC)  
Canadian Labour Congress  
Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA)  
Northwood Neighbourhood Services  
Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)  
Somali Immigrant Aid Association (SIAO)  
The Heart and Stroke Foundation  
University of Toronto (OISE)  
U.S Consulate  
St. Clair West Services for Seniors  
Islamic Social Service and Resources Association (ISSRA)

## We are extremely grateful to our funders



## Thank you for your belief and support of our organization





**Midaynta Community Services**

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