




Aman Lara



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

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A young girl with a joyful expression, wearing a striped hoodie, holding a white object. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

A Young Girl Refugee with a Cheerful Smile
PHOTO: Photo: Ahmed Akacha, Pexels

acronyms

CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CUAET	Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel
DND	Department of National Defence
EFPP	Extended Family of Afghan Interpreters
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GoC	Government of Canada
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
ITA	Invitation to Apply
JHR	Journalists for Human Rights
LCAs	Language and Cultural Advisors
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning, intersex. The + sign after the acronym is meant to acknowledge that there are many more sexual orientations and gender identities than the ones highlighted in the acronym
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PHAC	Public Health Agency of Canada
PSOP	Peace and Stabilization Operations Program
SHP	Special Humanitarian Program
SIM	Special Immigration Measures

message from our executive director

Reflecting on Aman Lara's journey over the past year, I am filled with immense pride and deep gratitude. In a year of remarkable growth, our organization not only maintained its commitment to vulnerable Afghans but also significantly broadened its scope, extending our support well beyond the Special Immigration Measures (SIM) Program to encompass a wider array of humanitarian initiatives. The integration of our Veteran Volunteer Program has been pivotal, forging a profound connection between the Canadian veteran community and Afghan refugees, honouring the shared bonds and mutual support during Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Our innovative initiatives, notably the Helmets to Hardhats project, which aims to provide Afghans with career opportunities in the skilled trades and Edtek Services Online Skills Training Program, are not just responses to immediate needs but strategic steps towards ensuring sustainable integration and success for Afghan refugees in Canada.

Over the past two years, Aman Lara has undergone a profound evolution, transitioning from responding to specific crises to developing a robust, universal solution applicable to global humanitarian challenges. The experience gained in Afghanistan and Ukraine has been instrumental in refining and perfecting our 5-step process, designed to

support vulnerable populations worldwide. This comprehensive approach has not only been a hallmark of our operations in Afghanistan and Ukraine but is also a scalable model for crisis response globally.

This year's growth reflects our commitment to inclusivity and comprehensive support, showcasing our ability to adapt and apply our refined model in any context. Our initiatives, rooted in unity and shared values, have proven effective in driving meaningful change and ensuring successful resettlements, affirming Aman Lara's role as a beacon of hope and a stronghold of resilience in the face of global crises.

In closing, I extend heartfelt gratitude to every individual who has been part of this remarkable journey. Your dedication, support, and belief in our mission have been instrumental in our achievements. As we stand at the cusp of new beginnings, your support fuels our commitment to turn every challenge into an opportunity for growth, resilience, and enduring success stories.



Jon Feltham
Interim Executive Director

our 2022-2023 board of directors



Janice Fischer
Board Chair
November 2022 to present



J. Drummond Fraser
Founder and Vice Chair
Vice Chair to July 2023



Nahreen Ahmed
Board Chair
December 2021 to November 2022
transitioned to a voting board member
until May 2023 | now a Board Advisor



Saeed Shajjan
Vice Chair
July 2023 - Present

Board Members



Denis Thompson



Dave Fraser



Marko Truvin



Bernard
Derible



Peter Bar



Scott Gilmore
until Dec 2022



Eleanor Taylor
until Jan 2023

our story

Aman Lara evacuates people at risk from nations in crises. Helping them find safety, dignity, and a new beginning in welcoming communities.

Established on August 16, 2021, as a federally incorporated Canadian non-profit and non-governmental organization, Aman Lara emerged in response to the escalating security and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The organization was founded with a distinct purpose — to aid vulnerable Afghans who supported Canadian missions in evacuating and finding refuge in Canada and other safe jurisdictions.

Since then, we have evolved into a key advocate for Afghans who risked their lives in support of Canadian missions while also demonstrating resilience and adaptability to address emerging crises within the changing landscape of global refugee needs.

Aman Lara stands as a testament to the collaboration between serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), Veterans, ex-Locally Employed Staff, and dedicated Canadian volunteers. This unique alliance underscores our commitment to a shared mission: to enable the evacuation of eligible people at risk, from nations in crises, for the purpose of resettlement in Canada and other safe resettlement jurisdictions helping them find safety, dignity, and a new beginning in welcoming communities.

From navigating the complexities of evacuating vulnerable Afghans amidst the deteriorating security situation in August 2021 to responding swiftly and flexibly to the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022, Aman Lara serves as a *vital lifeline* for those in dire circumstances, providing pathways for safe resettlement.

our vision

We are committed to not only providing immediate aid and safe passage to those in need but also to assisting them in establishing *a secure and sustainable new beginning.*

Through our extensive network, we connect refugees to professional resettlement agencies across Canada. These agencies offer temporary accommodations, critical healthcare, education, language and skills training, and other social services to ensure that refugees are welcomed into their new communities with open arms and given the best possible start to their new lives. In so doing, our vision is to be a leading force in the humanitarian effort of relocating at-risk refugees, ensuring they find safety, dignity, and a new beginning. Our commitment to our vision drives us to be the catalyst for meaningful and enduring impact on the lives of those we serve.

our value + impact

Operating as the sole entity in its field, we have achieved remarkable success, demonstrating unparalleled effectiveness in operating amidst conflict zones and leading large-scale logistical operations.

Despite the uncertainties inherent in such endeavours, our organization has evacuated thousands of Afghans from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan from Afghanistan into Pakistan and some onwards to Canada, overcoming the challenges posed by the Taliban's presence all while navigating the intricate administrative landscape involving three governments: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Canada. Concurrently, we've also provided assistance to Ukrainian citizens seeking refuge including the evacuation of pediatric cancer patients and their families.

Operating in seamless collaboration with the Government of Canada (GoC), our robust partnerships are fortified through weekly consultations with key stakeholders such as Global Affairs Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and active engagement with the Office of the Minister of IRCC. This steadfast commitment ensures the harmonization of our efforts with national priorities.

With strategic teams and service providers strategically positioned on the ground in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Poland and Ukraine, Aman Lara leveraged an extensive network and profound expertise. Our proven track record speaks volumes about our ability to deliver impactful results, establishing us as a reliable and effective force in global humanitarian efforts and resettlement initiatives



Woman walking in refugee camp
PHOTO: Ahmed Akacha, Pexels

afghanistan update

The past several years have been extremely challenging for the people of Afghanistan. Already suffering from decades of conflict and instability, Afghanistan's human rights, governance, humanitarian, and development situations deteriorated sharply after the Taliban takeover in August 2021 and only continued into this reporting period.

Situational analysis¹

In the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, Human Rights Watch reports highlight a distressing decline in human rights in Afghanistan with the Taliban imposing restrictive policies infringing upon the rights of women and girls. Fundamental freedoms such as movement, employment, education, and healthcare were impacted. The media and critics of Taliban rule were repressed, civil society organizations were forced to shut down, and government offices promoting human rights were dismantled. Taliban security forces engaged in arbitrary detentions, torture, and summary executions of former security officers and perceived enemies. The criminalization of same-sex conduct persisted, with the Taliban echoing the previous government's stance, vowing a strict stance against the rights of the LGBTQI+² community. Furthermore, an economic and humanitarian crisis deepened, marked by donor and foreign assistance cutoffs, wage cuts, liquidity issues, soaring food prices, and restrictions impacting the banking sector, leading to widespread food insecurity, acute malnutrition, and adverse impacts on women and girls.

In 2023, the human rights, economic and humanitarian situations in Afghanistan only continued to worsen. The Taliban intensified crackdowns on local media, freedom of speech, and increased arbitrary detentions of journalists, human rights defenders, and civil society activists, including women protesters. The UN reported a significant number of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances by Taliban forces. Nearly two-thirds of the population required humanitarian aid, marking it as one of the world's worst crises. Acute malnutrition affected millions, exacerbated by the loss of foreign assistance, a shortfall in humanitarian aid, and a prolonged drought intensified by climate change.

¹ Human Rights Watch. World Report 2024. © 2024 by Human Rights Watch.

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2023/01/World_Report_2023_WEBSPREADS_0.pdf

² Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning, intersex. The + sign after the acronym is meant to acknowledge that there are many more sexual orientations and gender identities than the ones highlighted in the acronym

specific challenges for designated groups

Women and Girls

The Taliban have imposed and enforced rules and policies that comprehensively bar women and girls from exercising their fundamental rights, including freedom of assembly, movement, work, and education³. These rules also undermine other rights, such as the rights to life, livelihood, and access to health care, food, and water.

In addition to the ban on women working in most jobs for the UN⁴ and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)⁵, Taliban authorities previously prohibited women from working in the public sector or holding senior positions within their central or provincial institutions. Most women who worked for the former government have been unable to resume their jobs.

In most of Afghanistan's provinces, authorities have issued regulations banning women from public spaces, including parks, and have prohibited women from traveling or leaving their homes without a male relative as a chaperone. This includes going to work, significantly restricting women's freedom of movement. In most places, women must wear a full hijab and have their faces covered in public.

³ Afghanistan remained the only country officially banning women and girls from secondary and higher education.

⁴ In April 2023, the de facto authorities extended this edict to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations (except in healthcare, nutrition, and primary education) in Afghanistan.

⁵ In December 2022, de facto authorities banned Afghan women from working for national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), a move widely condemned by the international community.

Journalists, Media and Human Rights Defenders

Taliban authorities enforced extensive censorship and used unlawful force against Afghan media and journalists in Kabul and the provinces. Hundreds of media outlets have been closed, and most female media workers across Afghanistan have lost their jobs. Foreign correspondents also face severe visa restrictions when coming to Afghanistan to report, and many Afghan journalists now live in exile due to safety concerns. The Taliban's Directorate of Intelligence engaged in a pattern of threats, intimidation, and violence against members of the media and were responsible for targeted killings of journalists.

LGBTQI+

LGBTQI+ individuals in Afghanistan, and others who do not conform to rigid gender norms, have faced an increasingly desperate situation and grave threats to their safety and lives since the Taliban took complete control of the country on August 15, 2021⁶.

Afghanistan's criminal code makes same-sex conduct a criminal offence, and the Taliban have echoed the previous government's support for the criminalization of same-sex relations, with some of their leaders vowing to punish LGBTQI+ individuals, many of whom live in hiding as a result.

The danger now facing LGBTQI+ individuals in Afghanistan—in an environment devoid of legal protections, under authorities that have explicitly pledged not to tolerate LGBTQI+ people—is grave.⁷ The evacuation of people

⁶ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Plus
⁷ Human Rights Watch and OutRight Action International. "Even If You Go to the Skies, We'll Find You": LGBT People in Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover. Published 26 Jan 2022. ReliefWeb, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/even-if-you-go-skies-w-e-ll-find-you-lgbt-people-afghanistan-after-taliban>.

at extreme risk in Afghanistan is nowhere near over according to Human Rights Watch. All governments have an obligation to promptly and fairly process asylum claims, including those from LGBTQI+ Afghans who fear persecution under the Taliban. Whether LGBTQI+ people are seeking to flee directly from Afghanistan or from a nearby country, nations supporting the human rights of LGBTQI+ people should create safe and legal pathways for entry and assist in resettlement. Nations that have sent military forces to Afghanistan over the last 20 years have a particular responsibility to prevent people who face the risk of persecution from becoming stranded.

Afghan Nationals who assisted the Canadian Government

In numerous cases, Taliban forces conducted military operations and night raids targeting residents they accused of harboring or providing support to allied forces (including CAF and missions).

Canada's involvement in Afghanistan relied heavily on local support, particularly interpreters and other local contractors. Instead of directly hiring these individuals, Canada entered into contracts via the U.S. Department of State with the following companies: International Management Services, Mission Essential Personnel, and Tundra SCA. While these contracts helped streamline processes, they have also given rise to the challenges currently faced in substantiating individual cases. Many of these local workers were not included on referral lists provided by either Global Affairs Canada (GAC) or the Department of National Defence (DND), leaving them without support and at risk of detainment, torture, and even being killed after coalition forces withdrew.

Similarly, staff from Afghan/international NGOs contracted by the Government of Canada to provide services in support of Canada's mission were not included on GAC referral lists to the IRCC, primarily because the contracts were made with the organizations and not individual workers. Some of these organizations include: CARE Afghanistan; International Rescue Committee; Building Markets; and Afghanistan Human Rights Organization, to name a few. The hiring practices of DND (approx. 2002-2010) and GAC have left many individuals without invitations to Canada.

Despite the commendable work undertaken and the open pathways currently in place, Aman Lara remains deeply concerned about the urgent situation facing many of the Afghans we represent. Regrettably, a significant number of clients have yet to receive an Invitations to Apply (ITA) to resettle in Canada because their names have not been referred to the IRCC. These individuals, who have maintained an enduring and invaluable relationship with the Government of Canada (GoC) through their dedicated service in Afghanistan, both in military and humanitarian capacities, find themselves in a perilous situation.

Their commitment to our shared values and objectives must not go unrecognized, and their safety and well-being are of paramount concern. It is vital to acknowledge that they meet the eligibility requirements of the [Special Immigration Measures \(SIM\) Program](#), and there is a compelling moral imperative to give them a chance at resettlement in Canada. Swift action is needed to uphold our moral and ethical obligations to these Afghan allies who have placed their trust in our country.



our work

Our core program is Afghan Safe Passage. This program supports efforts to safeguard lives and upholding the human rights and dignity of Afghan nationals and their families.

During this reporting period Aman Lara continued to carry out its Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOP) in collaboration with Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) with funding support from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) through February 2023. In March 2023, Aman Lara transitioned its operations from the PSOP project to a similar initiative with IRCC named Afghan Safe Passage, enhancing alignment with IRCC immigration policies and bolstering execution capability.

The primary beneficiaries or clients of these projects are Afghans with a designated pathway to Canada, primarily the SIM program and [Special Humanitarian Program \(SHP\)](#), as evidenced by file numbers and ongoing application processing by IRCC. Throughout both projects we actively engaged with GAC, IRCC and other relevant Canadian government ministries, advocating tirelessly for the rights and well-being of at-risk Afghans.

key activities

Functioning as a comprehensive support network within Afghanistan for these clients, Aman Lara's role on this project remained unchanged encompassing the following project activities:

client engagement

- Leverage the Communication Network, staffed by a dedicated team and supported by Aman Lara volunteers, to:
 - Personally connect with eligible clients.
 - Identify and screen eligible clients, confirm their personal circumstances, update files, address queries, assess readiness for relocation, and prepare documents for evacuation approval and documentation status.
 - Maintain ongoing communication with project participants moving to Canada through Aman Lara's Pakistan Operations and Resettlement team and verify progress in the IRCC process.
- Adjust Communication Network processes as needed to focus on project-eligible clients

To support our efforts to identify and screen eligible clients we continue to leverage and enhance the IBM database and administrative user interface. The database developed in partnership with IBM Canada contains 20,000 cases of individuals with a significant and enduring relationship with the Government of Canada, which allows clients to upload their personal information and supporting documentation from their mobile devices. This tool is paramount to confirm the eligibility of the clients for support. Throughout this reporting period our case management team continued to review and vet supporting documents and claims, maintain communications with these individuals, and identify those in need of ITAs.

client manifest and coordination

- Develop a manifest of confirmed eligible clients and provide IRCC with client manifests for review and approval ("board" and "no board" review process)

logistical coordination and support

- Facilitate safe intra-Afghanistan movement of at-risk individuals by ground, ensuring accommodation in transit, security, and navigating complex border processes, in collaboration with CanAid Logistics.
- Communicate and coordinate with IRCC and the Canadian High Commission in Islamabad to ensure eligibility for International Organization for Migration (IOM) accommodations and onward movement to Canada. Facilitate travel and arrange accommodations with IOM for clients approved to move to a third country. Upon arrival in third countries, clients fell under the care of IOM and IRCC, undergoing biometric, medical, and interview assessments for further processing.
- Arrange relocation to Pakistan by CanAid Logistics for eligible project participants, in collaboration with Aman Lara's Communication Network, after IRCC completes the review process.
- Support clients during biometric, medical, and interview assessments in third countries
- Provide training options for clients to learn about Canada through JHR, building markets, or IOM.

after-move follow-up

- Conduct follow-up and after-action reviews after each move to address shortcomings and ensure participants are placed in IRCC-approved accommodations.

resettlement and relocation support

- Assist clients in selecting a resettlement city/community in coordination with resettlement agencies.
- Relocate clients to Canada with support from one of the 41 resettlement agencies identified by IRCC
- Facilitate the transition of applicants eligible for resettlement in nations other than Canada in select cases

key challenges and lessons learned

Aman Lara faced a number of challenges associated with the relocation and support of Afghan individuals and families due to evolving border situations and immigration policies, adverse weather conditions, "no board" outcomes from the IRCC review process, and self-relocation of clients. The situation was complicated by documentation acquisition issues and an influx of "no board" individuals in Islamabad, causing a suspected strain on both IRCC and CHC-ISBAD resources.

Unstable Afghanistan-Pakistan Region

The general situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan presents multifaceted risks and challenges, particularly for Afghans who have collaborated with ISAF or the former government. The Taliban's targeted actions against such individuals intensify the danger, leading to mistreatment and grave consequences.

Obtaining essential travel documents, including Afghan passports and Pakistani visas, compounds these risks. The process is not only extremely difficult and time-consuming but also imposes a significant financial burden. This creates barriers for Afghan interpreters and their families, hindering their ability to seek safety and stability.

Crossing the border into Pakistan adds another layer of risk to the evacuation process. The journey is dangerous with Taliban and Pakistani militia engaged in corrupt practices, accepting bribes and subjecting Afghans to mistreatment. This compounds the overall vulnerability of Afghan interpreters, increasing the threats they face during their attempts to escape the instability in their home country.

In essence, the unstable regional situation poses an overarching risk to the safety and well-being of Afghan interpreters and their families, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive and effective measures to address these complex challenges.

Heightened Risks Amidst Evolving Immigration Policies

Effective December 31, 2022, individuals within Pakistan lacking proper status (visa) or those identified as overstaying face imminent threats of deportation, incarceration, and potential blacklisting for future entry into Pakistan. Notably, officials from the IOM acknowledge the critical nature of the amnesty expiration issue. However, they emphasize their inability to offer support or protection to Afghans in Pakistan lacking proper documentation. This predicament is exerting significant psychological strain on Afghan clients, creating a pressing need for timely intervention. Failing prompt action, all individuals involved risk being thrust into a perilous situation with far-reaching consequences.

Obtaining Passports

Obtaining passports has also been a major challenge, with passport offices throughout the country being closed for several months and the fact that some passports obtained through key players in Afghanistan are not logged into the Afghan Passport database and lack any link to biometrics, making them less credible. This has caused general hesitation among the Afghan community in obtaining the necessary documents to move out of Afghanistan, particularly among those who have worked for foreign countries or foreign NGOs.

Low Approval Rates for Relocation

Aman Lara has made substantial strides in identifying Afghan individuals meeting the criteria for further processing in a third country throughout this reporting period. However, the approval rate for relocation has been relatively low at times. This leaves a significant portion of the Afghan population without the necessary support to relocate for further processing in the Canadian immigration system.

Despite cautioning against independent movements, a considerable number of individuals, undeterred, choose to relocate. It is crucial to note that Aman Lara explicitly informs them of our inability to support their movement. This underscores the challenging circumstances faced by many Afghans and the pressing need for more efficient and effective support systems to be established.

Family Separation in Relocation Process

Despite several accomplishments, including the submission of a robust manifest and efficient client transfers to Islamabad, we faced challenges related to the desired gender balance in relocation and the preservation of family unity during the relocation process. We experienced a situation where a family chose not to proceed with relocation because not all members received board status. This issue highlighted the need for a more nuanced approach to family unit assessments. Future operations should focus on preserving family unity throughout the relocation process.

Every challenge we encountered provided valuable insights and lessons, reinforcing the need for continuous improvement in our operational procedures. This includes collecting and utilizing client feedback to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments as necessary, refining our safe transportation policy for individuals approved for relocation to a third country, conducting thorough risk assessments for both individuals and their families in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and fostering increased transparency with our intra-Afghanistan clients who receive a 'no board' status, strongly discouraging movement to Pakistan. Additionally, we are committed to vigilant monitoring of the security landscape in Afghanistan and Pakistan, ensuring regular updates are disseminated across the broader Aman Lara communications network. These efforts are designed to ensure safer and more efficient relocation processes for all clients in the future.

impact by the numbers

Despite these challenges, Aman Lara successfully evacuated 1,375 individuals, and during this reporting period we tracked 2,109 clients having arrived in Canada.





success stories

The Journey of an Afghan Interpreter

G, a 37-year-old man from Herat, Afghanistan, gave his all as an interpreter for Major Christian Lillington and the reconnaissance Squadron Team in the dangerous Panjwai district of Kandahar in 2009 and 2010. Despite the risks he faced while serving, he left his job as an interpreter to start a small business. However, the collapse of the Afghan government in 2021 forced him to flee for his life and seek refuge in Kabul.

He was met with violence and had to return home, where he struggled to survive and hide from the Taliban insurgents. In his darkest hour, he reached out to Afghan-Canadian Interpreters (a strategic partner of Aman Lara) for help and was lucky enough to be connected with Aman Lara. After a desperate

phone call for assistance, Aman Lara helped G and his family, and once the family obtained passports and Pakistani visas, Aman Lara supported their movement, allowing them to escape to safety in Pakistan.

G and his family are finally at peace and grateful beyond measure for Aman Lara's selfless support. Their journey has been marked by heartache and hardship, but they hold hope in their hearts for a brighter future in Canada.



A Mechanic's Journey from Kandahar to Canada

O⁸, a dedicated and diligent mechanic, spent years serving the CAF at a Special Operations Forward Operating Base in Kandahar Province. Despite facing danger and uncertainty, he applied for the SIM Program as soon as it opened and experienced immense joy when his application was approved. However, his journey to safety presented numerous challenges. Like thousands of others, he made multiple attempts to reach the Kabul airport for evacuation with his family, yet each effort ended in failure. Forced into hiding, O felt a sense of hopelessness and fear for his family's future.

However, his situation took a positive turn when he connected with Aman Lara. Aman Lara played a key role by offering essential support when they discovered that O had

obtained the necessary passports and visas for relocating. With this newfound support, O and his family were able to leave behind the looming threats and find refuge in IOM accommodation in Islamabad. They now await their flight to Canada, grateful for the opportunity to start a new life.

O acknowledges Aman Lara's invaluable support throughout the challenges, expressing enduring gratitude for the chance at a brighter future in Canada.

⁸ To safeguard individual privacy and protect their identity, the use of a pseudonym is used



The Journey of X⁹, Human Rights Advocate

X, a Kabul University graduate in Law and Political Science (B.Sc.), dedicated his career to human rights advocacy. He served as a legal aid and advice project manager with the Afghanistan Human Rights organization in Kandahar, a position funded by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade from 2010 to 2012. Concurrently, X worked as a legal trainer with CIVIPOL, providing critical legal and technical support during criminal police training in Kandahar. Security concerns later led him to abandon his work and relocate to Kabul, where he worked in construction and logistics.

In July 2021, the Canadian government approved X's SIM Program application. Despite being registered with Aman Lara, he and his family encountered significant hurdles in obtaining travel documents and Pakistani visas. Struggling financially in Islamabad, X sought aid from Aman Lara to navigate the approval process and communicate with IRCC. With Aman Lara's support, he and his family eventually reached Calgary, Canada where they now reside. While X found safety, concern lingered for his extended family in Afghanistan. Miraculously, in February 2023, they received approval to travel to Islamabad, and by April 2023, they had successfully arrived in Canada.

Overcome with gratitude, X deeply appreciates Aman Lara's tireless efforts in rescuing him and his family from a life of uncertainty and danger, giving them a chance to rebuild their lives in safety.

⁹ To safeguard individual privacy and protect their identity, the use of a pseudonym is used

volunteer spotlight

Canadian Veteran and Volunteer Support for Afghan Refugees



Engaging veteran volunteers in the volunteer work aspect of the Afghan movement highlights the important role to be played by the veteran community in humanitarian efforts, establishing a bridge of solidarity that goes beyond borders and cultures.

While there are significant critical centers in place on all levels to ensure smooth resettlement of Afghans in Canada, a veteran volunteer support program was identified as a much-needed option in smaller communities. To address this need, a collaborative effort led by Aman Lara, Canadian Armed Forces veterans, and a dedicated volunteer team with the support of the True Patriot Love Foundation and our charitable partner Humanity First was launched in May 2022. The initiative aimed to involve the unique expertise of Canadian veterans in providing mentorship, aid and support to eligible Afghan interpreters, cultural advisors, locally employed people and their de facto families, who were essential to Canada's mission in Afghanistan in their resettlement to Canada.

At the heart of this initiative was the recognition of shared experiences and deep understanding between veterans and Afghans. Harnessing the collective strength of the veteran community, the initiative helped facilitate a more successful evacuation and resettlement process for Afghans, while offering veterans a renewed sense of purpose and a tangible way to make a real difference in the lives of their former comrades. In so doing, it further contributed positively to their mental health and helped to address moral injury following the Taliban's takeover.

project outcomes:



Veteran Engagement

Collaborated with 43 veterans across Canada.

Engaged with over 100 additional veterans through veterans organizations.



Immigration Support

Facilitated veterans in assisting Afghans with Canada's immigration system.



Mentorship and Resettlement Support

Paired Afghan refugees with veterans through an ad-hoc mentorship project, offering refugees better access to professional resettlement resources.

Supported 208 Afghan individuals directly



Collaborative Partnerships and Capacity Building

Built alliances with various veteran organizations and businesses.

Access to 45 professional resettlement agencies across Canada due to membership on the National Afghanistan Resettlement Steering Committee.

Partnerships with veteran-led entities such as Edtek Services, Helmets to Hardhats (H2H), Toronto Police Service's Project Hope, Veteran Association Food Bank of Edmonton, Canadian Special Operations Regiment Association, One9, and Treble Victor Group.

The impacts of this initiative extended beyond direct interventions, fostering international research interest, developing critical resources for resettlement communities, and establishing an international entity in Germany to prevent future conflicts. At the same time, with the support of strategic partnerships, Aman Lara has honed its mission and operational approach, contributing significantly to capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and evacuating individuals from crisis-stricken regions.

project spotlight

Helmets to Hardhats Collaboration with Aman Lara to connect Afghan refugees to careers in the Skilled Trades



For many Canadian newcomers, finding and securing well-paying, meaningful employment is a critical yet difficult step in their resettlement journey. To aid refugees in securing a livelihood, Helmets to Hardhats (H2H) has partnered with Aman Lara and Canada's Building Trade Unions to provide career opportunities in the skilled trades. H2H focuses on supporting the military affiliated community, including Veterans, Cadets, Reservists, and military family members transitioning into second careers in the skilled trades.

H2H has widened its program eligibility to include resettled Afghan nationals who supported the Canadian military while they were deployed in Afghanistan. Together, we believe that after their sacrifices and support of the Canadian military, it's now time to assist them.

The initiative aims to ease their transition into Canadian society by providing career and apprenticeship opportunities in the unionized construction industry.

Program benefits and services*

*All H2H services are free of charge



Direct Referrals to the Skilled Trades

With over 60 different trades and occupations available, H2H collaborates with Canada's 14 Building Trades Unions and Aman Lara to offer registrants a wide range of opportunities



Earn-while-you-learn training

Offers earn while you learn apprenticeship opportunities along with pre-employment safety training to Ontario based clients



Health benefits and pension plans

Unions offer benefits and pension plans along with the safest job sites



Financial stability through apprenticeship

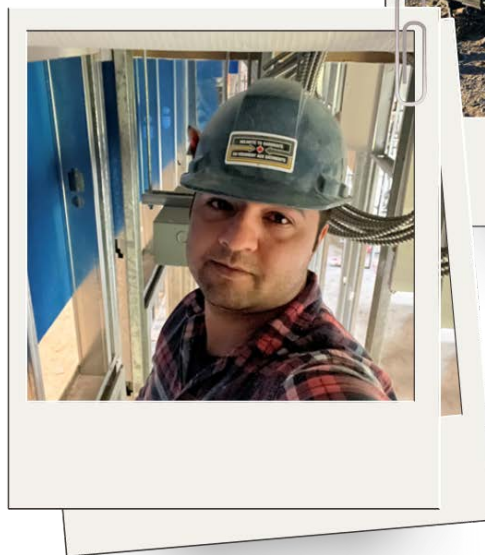
“Aman Lara is proud to be part of this collaborative effort with H2H and trade unions across Canada, providing meaningful employment opportunities in the skilled trades to recently resettled refugees. This project contributes to the growth and diversification of Canada’s skilled workforce and supports our clients in establishing themselves in their new home. We are committed to this initiative and believe that it will have a positive impact on our clients’ resettlement journey,”

— Jon Feltham, Interim Executive Director

H2H in Action

H2H registrant Sardar worked as an interpreter with Canadian and American Special Forces in Afghanistan for a decade. He immigrated to Canada in August 2021 under the SIM Program for Afghan Nationals (and their families) who assisted the CAF.

When Sardar arrived in Canada, he reconnected with a CAF Captain whose unit he assisted in Afghanistan. The captain suggested contacting H2H to find employment in Canada. When Sardar registered online with H2H, within a matter of days, he received a call from an H2H career advisor. H2H then connected Sardar with Tomorrow's Trades for a free experiential learning program to help him start his new career in the unionized construction industry. Sardar chose to pursue Carpentry and has since been a member of Local 1946 in London, ON. Sardar had much to overcome as a Canadian newcomer and new to the workforce. Thankfully, with support from his fellow Union members and leadership, Sardar felt comfortable raising his questions or concerns, which were always handled quickly and professionally by his Union. Sardar continues learning new skills with local 1946 and positively contributes to his new community while supporting his young family.





Volunteer helping Ukrania Mother and Child
PHOTO: Halfpoint

ukraine update

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, initiated on February 24, 2022, has resulted in extensive loss of life, destruction, displacement and suffering, and left at least 17.6 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Among them are 6.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 6.9 million individuals who are still in their residences, and 4.4 million returnees. The most critical needs are observed among those residing in regions not governed by the Ukrainian government and in areas directly impacted by ongoing hostilities.¹⁰

In response to the Russian invasion, the Canadian Government, namely IRCC, introduced a new Temporary Public Policy in March 2022, by the name of the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), which provided temporary safe haven to over 185,000 Ukrainians. These measures were designed to expeditiously aid Ukrainians and their accompanying family members in relocating to Canada while also affording them the opportunity to engage in work and educational pursuits within the Canadian context. The overseas application intake under CUAET closed on July 15, 2023.

¹⁰ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis. 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/topics/ukraine-humanitarian-crisis#overview>

our work

Aman Lara established its Ukraine Operations in March 2022 to support at-risk Ukrainian citizens seeking refuge amid the ongoing conflict. Throughout this reporting period, our teams in Ukraine and Poland continued to identify candidates for evacuation and supported them through the CUAET application process. Direct collaboration with GAC and IRCC ensured a secure and seamless evacuation process for all beneficiaries. Aman Lara further led the coordination of logistics, including all travel (charter flights) from the point of evacuation to onward destinations.

key activities

Between August 2022 and July 2023, the Aman Lara Ukraine Operations Team directed its efforts towards assisted and self extraction of at-risk individuals. Efforts under this initiative involved identifying evacuation candidates, facilitating the CUAET application process, and coordinating with GAC and IRCC to ensure a safe and seamless evacuation process. Aman Lara led logistics coordination, including all travel from the points of evacuation to Canada.

Aman Lara engaged the services of the non-profit Peace of Mind and CanAid Logistics to coordinate the extraction of at-risk Ukrainians from their homeland to Poland, with the ultimate destination being Canada. Peace of Mind, entrusted with this responsibility, took proactive measures by establishing a safe house near the Ukrainian border in Lechów, Poland. This strategic location served as a vital point of contact with at-risk Ukrainians, enabling Peace of Mind and CanAid Logistics to meticulously plan, coordinate, and execute various options for their safe evacuation.

impact by the numbers

Between August 1, 2022 and July 31, 2023, we facilitated the evacuation of 8 clients from Ukraine to Poland, with onward movement to Canada.





success stories

The Mishechkin family's Journey from Ukraine to St. John's, Newfoundland

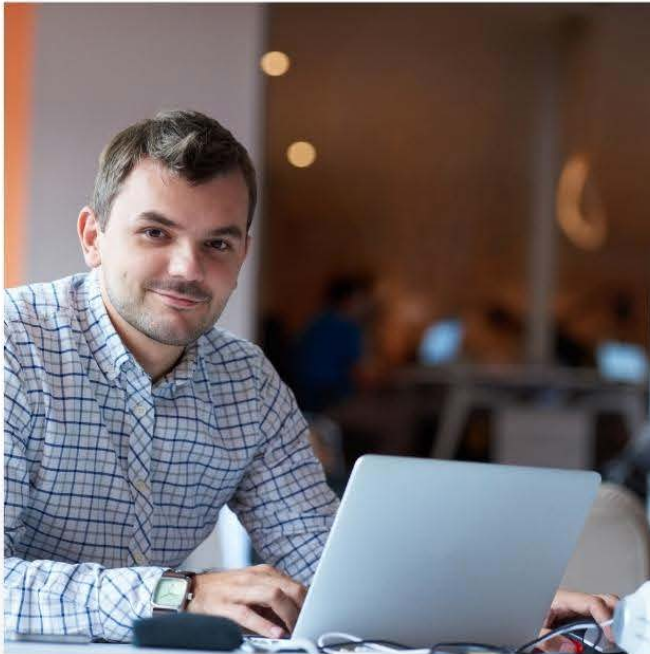
"Today our family arrived in Canada!!! All this is only thanks to you, Sheldon, Tetiana, Walter, Anna and, of course, Mr. Jon Feltham and the organization that donated the funds for our relocation! All of you are amazing! Thank you for having our dogs with us!"

We understand how difficult it was. Canada fascinates us with its beauty. St. John's is a fabulous city with amazing nature and architecture! Every home is a work of art.

What we have already seen turned out to be better than all our expectations. Our gratitude knows no bounds. No words can express how grateful we are to all of you!"

project spotlight

Online Skills Training Program to Assist Afghan and Ukrainian Refugees



Aman Lara’s aim is to empower Afghan and Ukrainian refugees in Canada and abroad by providing essential skills for a successful transition into their new lives and preparation for employment opportunities.

To support these efforts, Aman Lara collaborated with EdTek Services and partnered with Topyx, Learn eCORE, Valemount Consulting, and The Value Exchange to launch an Online Skills Training Program, free of charge to Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, removing financial barriers to education.

Key program features:

More than 350 soft skills’ courses covering diverse topics, including:

- Administrative Skills
- Career Development
- Human Resources
- Sales and Marketing
- Information Technology
- Microsoft Office, and many more

Engaging video lessons, interactive content, readings, quizzes, and exercises to ensure an engaging and effective learning experience

our supporters + partners

At Aman Lara, our unparalleled strength lies in the power of collaboration. We unite Canadian Armed Forces members, Veterans, ex-Locally Employed Staff, volunteers, and various governmental, operational, charitable partners, and service providers for a singular mission. We are grateful to our supporters and partners and look forward to expanding these collaborations.



Aman Lara's services are aligned with its charitable purposes and contribute to the achievement of its mission, which is to: enable the safe journey of eligible people at-risk, from nations in crises, for the purpose of resettlement in Canada and other safe locations. Aman Lara delivers its service while abiding by its guiding principles and values of compassion, transparency, diversity and inclusion, and cultural-sensitivity.

how we work

We've established a well-crafted five-step approach that underpins our work and bolsters our capacity to assist individuals in crisis while ensuring a seamless and safe end-to-end journey:



Consolidate | We bring together the right people, build essential partnerships, establish seamless procedures, and mobilize vital resources. This sets the stage for our mission's success



Communicate | We prioritize effective and timely communication to ensure that our clients can safely and successfully leave their home countries and embark on their resettlement journey



Manifest | We design tailored plans for clients ready to travel, coordinating all aspects to make sure successful evacuations



Evacuate | Safety, dignity, and success are at the core of our evacuation efforts. We focus on safely moving our clients from their danger zones to secure locations, increasing their chances of successful arrival and eventual resettlement



Connect | Beyond physical relocation, we aid in the integration of newcomers into their new communities, serving as a connector to resources, services, education, networks and economic opportunities for a fresh start

These efforts align with the broader societal goal of fostering inclusivity and support for individuals seeking refuge. Aman Lara's initiatives contribute to meeting the public need for humanitarian assistance and global refugee support, especially given ongoing crises.

our operational excellence

At Aman Lara, our operational excellence is the foundation of our commitment to facilitating the safety, dignity, and new beginnings of vulnerable individuals in crisis. Our team brings this excellence to every facet of our mission. Together, we've honed a set of core capabilities that set us apart, including:

Developing and Implementing Comprehensive Plans

We excel in crafting detailed, end-to-end plans that ensure the safety and successful journey of our client populations. From application to evacuation and resettlement, we leave no stone unturned.

Building a Common Operating Picture

We possess exceptional knowledge of the operational environment, not only in crisis zones but also in transit and resettlement countries. This depth of understanding enhances our credibility with applicants, partners, stakeholders, prospective donors, and the general public.

Coordinating the Evacuation Process

We are dedicated to overseeing the entire evacuation process, ensuring eligible individuals are safely moved from crisis zones to resettlement destinations. This includes initiation, thorough follow-through (applicant care), meticulous movement planning, life support, medical assistance, education, and necessary training.

Fostering Applicant Relationships

We prioritize open and effective communication, offering tailored support to our client and applicant populations throughout every step of the process. Building

trust and understanding is at the core of our approach.

Forming and Managing Partnerships

We excel in establishing and managing partnerships to address operational needs, both in crisis zones and domestically in Canada. Collaboration is at the heart of our approach.

Data Management and Analysis

Our commitment to exceptional data management and analysis guarantees we have accurate statistics, up-to-date data, and a comprehensive understanding of applicant populations at risk. We continuously refresh our data picture and perform comparative analysis with other relevant sources.

financial statements

statement of financial position

As at July 31, 2023

	2023	2022
Assets		
Current		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 68,441	\$ 164,005
Accounts receivable	40,328	233,539
Prepaid expenses	1,942	1,307
	110,711	398,851
Capital Assets		
	1217	2,646
Guaranteed Investment Certificate	10,344	-
	\$ 122,272	\$ 401,497
Liabilities		
Current		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 94,074	\$ 397,710
Deferred revenues	18,043	-
	\$ 112,117	\$ 397,710
Net assets		
Unrestricted net assets - Page 3	10,155	3,787
	\$ 122,272	\$ 401,497

statement of operations and changes in net assets

For the Year Ended July 31, 2023

		2023		2022
Revenues				
Funding	\$	1,759,977	\$	1,791,280
Direct donations		1,250		155,267
Interest income		344		-
		1,761,571		1,946,547
Expenditures				
Project:				
Transportation and security	\$	524,533	\$	329,631
Accommodations and meals		60,000		701,330
Marketing and communications		14,816		11,884
Travel		11,038		8,732
Personnel:				
Salaries and benefits		670,603		294,351
Contracted services		364,008		495,624
General expenses:				
Accounting and legal		28,716		6,875
Technology		27,258		5,992
Rent		17,684		45,333
Travel		17,244		6,895
General		12,370		31,988
Insurance		5,504		3,121
Amortization		1,429		1,004
		1,755,203		1,942,760
Excess of expenditures over revenues		6,368		3,787
Net assets, beginning of year		3,787		
Net assets, end of year	\$	10,155	\$	3,787

future vision

As we look beyond our current objectives, our action plan demonstrates our dedication to financial and programmatic stability, as well as our commitment to operational continuity and strategic growth. By doing so, we aim to make a meaningful and enduring impact on the lives of those we serve.

Key initiatives include:

- Extending our Afghan Safe Passage project with IRCC and JHR
- Collaborating with Rainbow Railroad to support LGBTQI+ individuals within the Afghan Safe Passage Program
- Becoming an independent referral partner for Local Staff in Afghanistan and potentially the Hazaras population, with IRCC alignment
- Launching a pilot through IRCC's Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot, a unique initiative that merges refugee resettlement and economic immigration
- Partnering with Sponsorship Agreement Holders, tapping into private sponsorship opportunities
- Regional expansion, assessing stand-alone programs or a universal service model in new conflict zones
- Strategic planning for the Ukraine Program, with future direction to be determined based on context of the conflict and need for support

Our action plan integrates short, medium, and long-term initiatives, all structured to ensure that we embark on no new venture without the prerequisite funding, staying true to our vision of facilitating new beginnings for those in need.



THANK YOU



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