ARM worked hard in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Pictured is one of the many families we welcomed in 2015.

In April, over 130 people joined ARM in celebrating Refugee Rights Day.

Program Coordinator Jenny Jeanes (2nd from right) celebrated her 10th anniversary with ARM. Over 70 guests attended a party in her honour.

In June, ARM organized a walk for World Refugee Day in partnership with the UNHCR and the YMCA. Over 130 people participated.

ARM raised over $22,000 during our Ride for Refuge fundraiser in October. We biked with 44 riders this year!

ARM published a report highlighting the experiences of detained refugee claimants entitled "Detained in the New Refugee Determination System" in March.

Detained in the New Refugee Determination System: Highlighting the Experiences of Detained Refugee Claimants

Syrian Refugee Crisis

Refugee Rights Day

Jenny’s 10th Anniversary

World Refugee Day

Ride for Refuge

Detention Report

Compassion & Justice For Refugees
Meet a family

Samira* contacted ARM to sponsor her sister, Lama*, who had fled Syria with her three teenagers. In Syria, Lama had been badly injured in a bombing. In 2013, her husband disappeared. To this day his whereabouts are unknown. ARM prepared the file and submitted it. In March, Lama was called for an interview, but was refused because the officer did not find her credible. The family was devastated. Along with a lawyer, ARM helped Samira with the judicial appeal. The case was overturned and after a new interview, Lama was accepted! They arrived in Canada in December 2015.

Samira had two additional sisters who were vulnerable and living as refugees in Lebanon. The first was a single mother, and the second had a child who was disabled. ARM found a local Presbyterian congregation who wanted to sponsor a Syrian family. The files for the two sisters have been submitted and they are expected to arrive within one year.

*Names have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality

Thanks to the hard work, patience, and generosity of ARM, my sister and her family are finally here.

- Samira
### Syria Highlights

#### ARM’s Busiest Year Ever

**January**

ARM starts the year with a quota for 45 refugee families and 150 people on the waiting list.

**January-July**

ARM staff work hard to answer the phones, provide information, and submit cases for clients.

**July**

Special workshops offered to train Canadian residents with family members in refugee situations to prepare and submit their own files in response to the growing wait list.

**Sept. 2nd**

The photo of Alan Kurdi’s body is widely circulated around the world. His death and the wider refugee crisis immediately become an issue in the 2015 Canadian federal election.

**Sept. 3rd**

In one day ARM receives over a dozen media enquiries from across Canada about the refugee crisis.

**Sept. 4th**

ARM begins receiving more than 100 phone calls and emails per day from citizens interested to help and Syrians who are desperate to bring over their family members.

**Sept. 11th**

110 people attend an information session organized in part by ARM to explain refugee sponsorship and how people can help.

**October**

ARM receives approval to increase its refugee file quota with Immigration Québec from 45 to 100 families per year.

**Oct. 14th**

ARM receives four major grants from different foundations allowing the hiring of two new full-time employees.

**Nov. 24th**

70 people attend ARM’s information session offered for churches, and other religious groups, interested to sponsor refugees.

**Nov. 25th**

The Government of Canada announces a plan to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees, including thousands of privately sponsored refugees.

**Dec. 3rd**

Lauren Lallemand is invited to offer feedback at a roundtable with the Honorable John McCallum, federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and Kathleen Weil, the provincial Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion.

**Dec. 12th**

The first Syrian airlift arrives in Montreal. The first family processed through the Welcome Centre is a client of ARM. They are profiled in the media across Canada.

**December**

5 major Syrian airlifts arrive in Montreal. ARM staff are at the Welcome Centre for each flight to meet newly sponsored families.

**44** Syrian files submitted to the government, bringing the total number of Syrian cases ARM has submitted to 83.

**58** Media requests related to the Syrian crisis from September to December 2015.

**53** Syrians arrived during airlifts in December.

**11** Churches committed to sponsoring a Syrian refugee family with ARM.
DETENTION PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- Provided assistance to 453 detainees in the Immigration Holding Centre (IHC), including:
  - 35 minors, 6 of whom were unaccompanied
  - 206 refugee claimants, of whom 187 were detained for identity verifications
- Published the report “Detained in the New Refugee Determination System: Highlighting the Experiences of Detained Refugee Claimants”

WHAT IS THE DETENTION PROGRAM?

Through an agreement with the Canada Border Services Agency, ARM personnel have access inside the Immigration Holding Centre (IHC) in Laval, Quebec. We visit two times per week and offer support by telephone five days per week. ARM volunteers accompany detainees to detention review hearings. Most people are detained either for identity verifications or to ensure their removal from Canada. ARM’s program gives priority to refugee claimants, some of whom are detained for weeks or even months.

MEET A DETAINEE

Meet 202-D, otherwise known as Ali*, a refugee from the Middle East. Many detainees start to call themselves by their room number, since that is how IHC personnel identify them. Cut off from loved ones, without access to internet or mobile phones, and subjected to strict rules, many detainees lose their sense of self. At ARM, we treat every detainee as an individual, not a room number.

Sometimes timing is everything. ARM met Maria* during a routine detention visit. She had planned to return to Burundi, but violence had erupted due to a political crisis, and relatives told her the situation was very dangerous. She met with a removal officer, who instead of helping her, sent her, along with her one year old daughter, to detention to ensure that she was deported three days later. We found Maria a lawyer and worked to find a solution. Maria’s removal was cancelled just hours before she was due to leave. It took over a month to release Maria and her daughter from detention. Eventually, the Canadian government imposed a stay of removal for Burundians in Canada, due to the extent of the violence. Maria and her daughter are now safe.

*Names have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality

A reflection on 10 years at ARM

by Jenny Jeanes

In 2015 I celebrated 10 years at ARM. One of the biggest challenges I have seen over the years is individuals who are denied access to the refugee claim process, but are still in great need of protection. The very first month I visited the Immigration Holding Centre, I met an Iranian who had been barred from making a refugee claim due to a technicality, and who faced immediate deportation. Since that time, I have met numerous others who have been in the same desperate situation. In 2015, I worked closely with over 20 people barred from making a refugee claim, including individuals from Eritrea, Iraq, Mali and Colombia.
TWINNING PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2015

- 32 active participants in the program, including 8 new matches
- Referrals from our Sponsorship Program
- Increase in group activities – now held monthly
- Support for a successful crowdfunding campaign for one of our participants to buy an adapted bicycle

MEET A TWIN

Laila*, from the Middle East, arrived as a refugee claimant in Canada with her three young children. She fled due to persecution under repressive anti-free-speech laws. Only able to speak Arabic, she was very isolated. Normally, the Twinning Program can only accept women who can communicate in English or French. Hanna, a dedicated ARM volunteer, agreed to be matched with her, knowing how much Laila could benefit from the program. Hanna had previously worked in the Middle East and was able to speak Arabic to create a bond of friendship with Laila. Though not always easy, through their twinning we have been able to provide support to Laila and her three children, by including them in our regular monthly activities.

*Name has been changed

WHAT IS THE TWINNING PROGRAM?

Newly-arrived women refugees are “twinned” with women volunteers. Twins spend time together developing friendship, exploring Montreal, and learning about each other’s realities. Each month, all participants are invited to join in a group activity hosted by ARM. We stay in touch and sometimes provide extra support when refugee participants face challenges with immigration, housing, or financial issues. More than anything, the program is about getting to know each other as individuals, while understanding the refugee experience.
In 2015, ARM continued to work promoting refugee issues among the general public, both through media appearances and presentations in many different venues. We appeared on CBC, Radio-Canada, RDI, TVA, MAtv, Global News and CTV, as well as on many French and English radio stations. We were consulted by La Presse, Le Devoir, L’actualité, Le Journal de Montréal, The Montreal Gazette, The Globe and Mail, and many magazines. ARM team members spoke to audiences at Concordia University, McGill University, Université de Montréal, and several CEGEPs, ranging from small classes to conferences with hundreds of people. We estimate over 3000 people attended presentations by staff during the year.

**EDUCATION**

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**MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**A YEAR TO REMEMBER**

What an incredible year we had! 2015 was the year the Canadian public truly demonstrated compassion and justice for refugees. Action Réfugiés Montréal responded by helping more refugees than ever before and informing public opinion in new ways.

Early in 2015 our Board adopted a new Mission Statement that begins with the words: **ARM is a strong voice for refugees in Montreal and beyond.** We truly lived our mission this year. In September, as many of you know, the public’s interest in refugee issues reached a tipping point with the image of Alan Kurdi, whose tragic death highlighted the plight of Syrian refugees. **The general public and media outlets reached out to ARM because of our experience and credibility.**

Our office became overwhelmed with countless offers of help: people wanting to sponsor refugees, offers of clothing and furniture, and individuals wanting to volunteer in all kinds of ways. Thanks to the interest and generosity of the community, we received donations from many new donors and first-time grants from various foundations. This has allowed us to enhance our services to reach more people. Although our donor base has increased, **we are incredibly thankful to our many loyal donors who have sustained our work over the years.**

In response to requests from all over Québec, Lauren Lallemand, Sponsorship Program Coordinator, developed an information package for church and community groups wanting to sponsor refugees. In partnership with other groups, ARM also provided information sessions to service providers and family members in the community.

**Our annual participation in Ride for Refuge generated gifts of over $22 000.** We were the recipient of the funds collected by the McGill Faculty of Law Christie Bike Ride: these funds were destined to expand our Detention Program.

We are proud to have helped over 400 persons at the Immigration Holding Centre, bringing legal information to people who truly need our support. Our Twinning Program took on a larger role as we increased the number of group activities and included some sponsored refugees.

The year 2015 brought many unexpected challenges to Action Réfugiés Montréal. We demonstrated resilience in the face of unexpected requests. **We provided support and hope to more people than ever before.** New sources of funding have allowed us to expand and we will work hard to sustain this growth to ensure that our services are available to all who need our help. Our supporters can help us continue to meet that goal.

At Action Réfugiés Montréal it is full steam ahead. Our brand new logo graces this report, and a revamped website is in the works. Despite many changes, we remain determined to provide **Compassion and Justice for Refugees.** We are inspired by the courage of our clients.

**Paul Clarke, Executive Director**

"Understanding the Syrian Refugee Crisis" conference - Photo Credit: The Concordian - Andrej Ivanov
2015 was a particularly challenging year for refugees around the world. The ARM staff, with the support of its Board of Directors and partners, really rose up and met that challenge.

Whether it was public engagement, media requests, answering thousands of phone calls, giving workshops and information sessions to lawyers and individuals, visiting the Immigration Holding Centre, or being at the airport until the wee hours of the morning to welcome sponsored refugees, the ARM staff were on the ground putting our mission to practice. Their efforts are truly commendable and have propelled the increased awareness of the situation of refugees.

As a result, staff size as well as the volume of our work has grown. This inevitably means some changes and adjustments. The Board is committed more than ever to supporting the staff strengths and needs, expanding ARM’s capabilities, and ensuring that our growth is managed well.

**Patil Tutunjian,**
Chair of the Board of Directors

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There was a significant increase of donations both from individuals and churches. We received new grants from donors such as the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Foundation of Greater Montreal, and TD Bank Group. With these funds, we were able to expand our team with a second sponsorship employee and an administrative coordinator on a full-time basis.

The challenge now is to ensure a sufficient stream of donations to sustain our expansion. The new employees who joined ARM greatly strengthen our activities but represent a substantial increase of annual expenses. Also, our larger group may require a bigger office space. We have already expanded our office but a move may be necessary.

In addition to its operating account, ARM manages a segregated In-Trust account containing funds provided by Canadian residents applying to sponsor refugees. In 2015, $208,506 was disbursed from the In-Trust account to refugees who had arrived in Canada. A total of $586,660 was deposited for new sponsorships. At year-end 2015 this account contained $1,345,882 for 121 files (a total of 300 persons).

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**Eliane Bastos,** Treasurer

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About Action Réfugiés Montréal

Action Réfugiés Montréal is a strong voice for refugees in Montréal and beyond. As a not-for-profit, faith-inspired organization we seek justice for asylum-seekers and refugees.

We promote partnerships among people in refugee and faith communities and society at large for mutual empowerment.

Through our Detention, Sponsorship and Twinning programs we provide hope and assistance while raising awareness of refugee rights.

Staff

Paul Clarke - Executive Director
Jenny Jeanes - Detention & Twinning Program Coordinator
Lauren Lallemand - Sponsorship Program Coordinator
Emily Woods - Sponsorship Program Officer
Maryse Meyo Akoulouze - Administrative Assistant (January-May)
Nino Maghlapieridze - Administrative Assistant (September-November)
Zehra Kavame - Administrative Coordinator
Lou Rioux-Goodall - Summer Employee

Student Interns

Virginie Locas - Université de Montréal, Faculty of Law
Marissa Doucet - Université de Montréal, School of Social Work
Malika Kilani - McGill University, School of Social Work
Laura Bosse - Université de Montréal, Faculty of Law
Vanessa Ntaganda - Université de Montréal, Faculty of Law
Pamela Becerra Jimenez - Université de Montréal, School of Criminology

Volunteers

ARM could not offer all of its services to refugees if not for the help of volunteers. A total of 39 volunteers generously donated their time in 2015.

Many thanks to Tamar Peled (www.ofait.ca) who generously donated her time to design this year’s Annual Report.

Note: This online version of our Annual Report does not contain the same photos as our printed report, in order to maintain confidentiality.

ARM relies on the support of individual donors - please consider a donation

Contributing Organizations and Foundations

Anglican Diocese of Montreal, QC
Blue Sea Philanthropy, Kitchener, ON
Briarwood Presbyterian Church, QC
Canada Summer Jobs
Canadian Visa Specialists, Hudson Heights, QC
Cedar Park United Church, QC
Centraide of Greater Montreal, QC
Christ Church Cathedral, Montréal, QC
Congregation of Notre Dame Visitation Province Inc., NS
Cole Foundation, QC
Concordia University Union of Support Staff, QC
CN Employees’ and Pensioners’ Community Fund, QC
Dawson Teachers’ Union, QC
Deep River Community Church, ON
Drummond Foundation, QC
Emploi Québec
Foundation of Greater Montreal, QC
Georgetown Presbyterian Church, Howick, QC
Government of Québec - Volunteer action support program
Grace Church of LaSalle, QC
Hypnosis Depot, Bryan M. Knight, MSW, PhD.
Jean Rich Foundation, QC
Jennifer Kruidbos Yoga, QC
Julien-Leblanc Traiteur Inc., QC
Kensington Presbyterian Church, QC
Knox Presbyterian Church, ON
Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, QC
Les Œuvres Josaphat-Vanier, Victoriaville, QC
Les Productions Daniel Picard Inc., QC
Maplewood Presbyterian Church, QC
McCarthy Tétrault LLP, QC
Missionary Sisters of Notre-Dame des Anges, QC
Mountainside United Church, QC
Northern Nitrogen Inc., QC
Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP, QC
Parish of St. Andrew and St. Mark, QC
Presbyterian World Service and Development
Rosemount Bible Church, QC
Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary, QC
Sisters of Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, QC
Sisters of Saint Martha of Antigonish, NS
St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Saint-Lambert, QC
St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Strathroy, ON
St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON
St. Columba by-the-Lake Presbyterian Church, QC
St. Mary’s Anglican Church, Kirkland, QC
St. Matthew’s Presbyterian Church, Wallace, NS
St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church, Peterborough, ON
Staples Advantage
Student Society of Presbyterian College, Montreal, QC
TD Bank Group
The Benevity Community Impact Fund Calgary, AB
The Charis Foundation, Oakville, ON
The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, QC
The George Hogg Family Foundation, QC
The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, QC
The Presbyterian Church in Canada - Canadian Ministries
The Presbyterian Church in Canada - Presbytery of Montreal
The Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, ON
The staff and community of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, QC
Thornhill Presbyterian Church, Women’s Missionary Society, ON
United Way / Centraide Ottawa, ON
Westminster Presbyterian Church, QC
Anonymous donors

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