

San Diego Refugee Forum

General Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2007

Call to order at 10:22 am

Ahmed Said

Present: Lejla Voloder, Diana Ross, Barbara Tucker, Ralph Achenbach, Virginia West, Kathi Anderson, Jane O'Shaughnessy, Jacob Gatkuth, Gerald Brown, Bob Montgomery, Ryan Apperson, Mallory Callahan, Meredith Huston, Jenna Carlsson, Elizabeth Lou, Florence Clark, Sahra Abdi, Bryan Nazareth, Dung Le, Suzanne Coates, Ester Herrera, Paulino Paida, Carlos Zavala, Laura Hardcastle, Constance Combs, Carl Rubenstein, Lisa Vang, Thuan Nguyen, Mike McKay, Ahmed Sahid, Hamse Warfaa, Jaye Yohonis, Alexander Sandoval, Etleva Bejko, Jimmy Dervishi, Casey Nguyen, Dan Breuninger, Thuok Bol, Bichok Kirssuy, Jayce Harper, Karen Harris, Bonnie Copland, Rebecca Leister, Hamadi Madisa, Hamadi Jumale, Aden Mohamed

I. Introductions

II. Approval of Minutes

- With exception to one correction already marked on the minutes, there were no further additions or edits.
- Motion to approve minutes: Kathie Anderson, Second: Mike McKay
- All approved, no nays, no abstentions

III. Public Announcements

- Mike McKay reported on behalf of the Education and Outreach Committee that the committee's goal has been set to increase involvement of other service-providers interfacing with refugee communities in light of the large anticipated increase of refugee arrivals during the next year and encouraged Forum members to invite potential new members to the January meeting. Kathie Anderson circulated a draft invite/flyer. It was noted that the Education and Outreach Committee is currently accepting new members.

IV. Nonprofit Management Solutions: Strategic Planning, Committee Reports

- Karen Harris noted that this was her and Joyce Harper's final Refugee Forum meeting, that Nonprofit Management Solutions will also conclude its assistance to individual member organizations, and encouraged all sub-committees to name a chairperson.
- Hamse Warfaa reported on behalf of the Advocacy Committee that there had not yet been a meeting.
- Diana Ross reported on behalf of the Event Committee that a chairperson has been nominated and their appointment is pending acceptance of the nomination, and that the committee is planning on obtaining corporate underwriting for the planned event(s). Ahmed Sahid added that the committee is accepting new members.
- Ralph Achenbach reported on behalf of the web-design committee that the new Forum website will be hosted on www.SDRefugeeForum.org and that the committee is exploring options that combine a user-friendly interface with a professional look, including Google Applications.
- Barbara Tucker reported on behalf of the By-Laws Committee that the by-laws are being revised and that a new draft will be presented by the outgoing and incoming officers at the January meeting. Karen Harris suggested Hamse Warfaa as the chair of this committee. The mission statement will be revised following this.

V. *Introduction of ORR representatives*

- Mike McKay introduced Carl Rubenstein (ORR), Constance Combs (ORR), Laura Heartcastle (State of CA) and Thuang Ngyuen (State of CA)
- Carl Rubenstein reported that ORR has a new acting director, Brent Orrel, who is also the acting assistant secretary for children and families and who will remain in these capacities until the end of the current federal administration. A new appointment is anticipated approx. six months following the change of administrations. OOR's new assistant director is David Seagal.
- Budget: ORR is currently operating on 'continuing resolution' based on FY07 allocation levels pending Congress' passing of the appropriations bill.
- Arrivals: in FY07, just over 48,000 refugees were admitted to the US (the presidential determination had been 70,000), as well as 6,300 Havana parolees and approx. 25,000 asylees
- The populations with the highest numbers of new arrivals are Burmese, Somalis, Iranians and Former Russians.
- Of all arrivals, 23% came in the last month of the fiscal year.
- Funding: Total FY07 funding for Wilson/Fish was \$28 mio, incl. \$21 mio for cash & medical and \$7.8 mio for social services. Of that, \$3.9 mio went to San Diego, the only county-wide Wilson/Fish program, with \$2.7 for cash & medical and \$1.2 for social services.
- Constance Combs noted that a report of ORR's monitoring visit will be provided to the state contacts within 45-60 days following the conclusion of their visit.
- Thuang Nguyen shared information of actual numbers of arrivals in the state of California broken down into counties.
- A newly issued letter on Cuban/Haitain entrants outlining benefits and services eligibility will be shared with service providers via the Forum.
- Constance and Carl provided updates on several ORR workgroups, which are a result of the national consultation.
- Laura Heartcastle provided an update on a new grant award from the Centers of Disease Control for bio-terrorism syndrome surveillance and on state efforts to establish an e-mail alert system for foreign-borne infectious diseases as well as to incorporate malaria and HIV screening into the health screening process.
- Questions from the floor and answers included:
 - i. Anticipated number of Burmese arrivals; no information currently available
 - ii. Modes of involvement with ORR for small community-based organizations; direct contact with ORR was encouraged
 - iii. Cultural profiles for Iraqi communities; ORR is working with Office of Global Health Affairs on physical/mental health needs profile, other resources available atCenter for Applied Linguistics and Culturegrams.com
 - iv. Anticipated number of asylum cases granted; data not available
 - v. Extending eligibility for health screenings to asylum seekers; past advocacy on this issue has not been effective, asylum seekers will receive treatment and have restricted medical eligibility

VI. *Financial Report*

- Barbara Tucker reported the year ending balance to be \$1,303.81

VII. *Next Meeting*

- January 15th, at 10:30 am