

San Diego Refugee Forum

Minutes

Tuesday, May 18, 2010, 10:30a.m.-12:00p.m.

Spring Field College, 5348 University Ave. Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92105

I. *Call to order at 10:35a.m.*

Present: Ralph Achenbach, Sara Vaz, Elizabeth Lou, Christine Seisun, Sheryl Ashley, Deqa Said, Esther Byrd, Lina Shalabi, Phil Mamuad, Paige Newman, Mike McKay, Sean Riordan, Brent Freeman, Vernita Gutierrez, Crystal Meister, Abdi Mohamoud, John McLevie, Elaine McLevie, Erika Tapia, Jill McGougan, Marlene Cuevas, Juan Estrada, Bryan Nazareth, Jibriel Blejani, Jacob Gathuoth, Mariana Vascoleros, Amanda Cropper, Virgilio Feliz, Barbara Fisher, Majur Malou, Ahmed Ahmed, Beth Ruland, Said Abiyou, Brenda Flores, Morisito Malilo, Mike Buchanan, Jojo Drinkwater, Kathy Moser, Paulino Paidá, Andrea Rocha, Rahmo Abdi, Honey Hira, Noemi Duenas, Daniela Alvarado, Shukri Adam, Dawn Tol, Jamie Regalbuto, Jen Cordaro, Tim Slade, Margaret Higgins, Deana Noble, Dung Le, Hamse Warfa, Chris Bajkiwicz, Joseph Ziauddin, Thomas Hanna

II. *Introduction and Announcements*

- Jen Cordaro will shortly be leaving AAA for San Francisco, but is willing to remain a resource for those serving the Burmese communities in SD. She can be reached at jen_cordaro@yahoo.com.
- Somali Family Service will be hosting a Health Fair in honor of World Refugee Day. The event will take place from 11:00 am – 4:00 pm on Saturday, June 19th at the City Heights Community Park. (3796 Fairmount Ave., San Diego CA) Admission is free and open to all.
- East County Refugee Center will once again be offering ESL courses and computer training courses. For more information contact Joseph Ziauddin at joseph@eastcountyrefugeecenter.org
- Horn of Africa's next round of workshops on obtaining a state license as a home childcare provider will be held on Thursday, June 3rd, at 3:00 pm. The location is the Horn of Africa's offices, located at 5296 University Ave., Ste F, San Diego CA.

III. *New Members Welcome- Elizabeth Lou*

- There were no new members.

IV. *Task Force Updates*

■ **Census Task Force**

- No update from census initiative participants was available. The program will be ending in June, so a final update will be given at the next Forum meeting, and all census initiative participants are encouraged to attend.

■ **Health Task Force**

- Shukri Adam announced on behalf of Bonnie Copland, task force co-chair, that the California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative will be holding a meeting to finalize the logic models. This "Community Congress" will be held at Hoover High School, from 1:00pm – 4:00pm on June 5th. The "Momentum Teams" will be presenting their work at this event, and sometime thereafter RFPs will be sent out.

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■ **Asylee Task Force**

- The co-chairs of the Asylee TF were not in attendance, and an update on the detention center tour was tabled until the next meeting.
- Sean Riordan (ACLU) announced that a "Refugee Protection Act" was making its way through Congress. This piece of legislation would include reforms addressing detention and due process issues. He requested that forum members contact their legislators to express their support for the legislation.

■ **Employment Task Force**

- Bryan Nazareth, task force co-chair, confirmed that the "International Night of Networking" would be held on Wednesday, July 14th at the Price Charities Building in San Diego, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm. Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.
- The Employment TF is partnering with RefugeeWorks to put on the event. They are seeking nominations of refugees who would be good candidates to attend the event; they are open to suggestions from all member organizations (not only the Volags).
- NOTE: The event is not intended to be a direct-hire, job fair-type event. It aims to contact professional newcomers with professional organizations in the local area. Nominees must understand that there is no guarantee (even implicit) that this will result in employment.

V. *Other Updates*

- Timothy Slade from Catholic Charities was appointed Secretary of the Forum by acclamation of those assembled.
- Bryan Nazareth brought forward a question regarding an asylum seeker who needed an address within the community for his/her court date. While the seeker's ethnicity was not divulged, various community agencies offered to assist in finding an address for them.
- Bryan Nazareth announced that a document highlighting the issues raised by the community hearings for refugees had been produced, and he sought feedback from the forum regarding point persons and action steps for each item. The document will be posted on the Forum website, and input should be addressed to Bryan at bryan.nazareth@sdcounty.ca.gov
- The California Department of Social Services' *20th Annual Refugee Summit* will be held on June 24-25, 2010 in Sacramento. The deadline for early registration is June 7th.
- Dung Le of Catholic Charities and Brent Freeman of IRC provided updates on primary arrivals for the current month, both indicating a continuing majority of Iraqi cases.
- Dr Mike McKay of Catholic Charities commented on the increase in initial cash assistance for resettled refugees by the State Department and the impact this

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has had on resettled individuals and families. A discussion ensued about the resettlement agency's need to ensure the funds are spent for their intended purposes and the resulting practices in releasing the total amount in two installments to the clients. It was also noted that resettlement agencies have the option of allocating up to \$200 per individual into an emergency account. This is not commonly done in San Diego.

VI. FOCUS: Health

- Dr. Kathy Moser of the County's Refugee Health Assessment Program (RHAP) described the program's process and services.
- When immigrants are still overseas, they undergo a health exam that screens for various conditions, including communicable diseases. This exam is conducted according to guidelines set by the Dept. of State and the Centers for Disease Control.
- For non-refugee immigrants, the overseas screenings go no further (unless the immigrant tests positive for tuberculosis).
- For refugees, the results of the screenings are passed to the Volags and the RHAP for follow-up health exams.
- Asylees are eligible for RHAP health exams once asylee status has been granted, but not while status determinations are pending.
- RHAP funding ultimately comes from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). It is then filtered through the State of CA's Refugee Branch, distributed to the counties, and ultimately delivered to UCSD's Medical Center and Catholic Charities.
- Formerly, immigrants were allowed into the U.S. even if they tested positive for TB, and would be treated here.
- Currently, immigrants are to be treated to cure while overseas, and are not permitted to enter the country until they have been fully cured. This is often a lengthy process.
- Children 2-14 are, however, permitted to enter if they are determined to have an *inactive* TB infection.
- The screenings have long tested for parasites; approximately 3% of those tested are found to have parasites. Now the health programs are beginning to treat those parasitic infections.
- Some money within the RHAP has been set aside for cardiovascular screenings for Iraqi refugees; the result is a Cardiovascular Prevention Program jointly operated by Catholic Charities and Chaldean Middle Eastern Social Services.
- There is a new, more-accurate blood test (the quantiferon blood test) being administered to children >12 years of age. (Children under 12 continue to receive the standard skin test.)

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 15, 2010, 10:30a.m.-12:00p.m.

Honoring World Refugee Day and the 30th Anniversary of the Refugee Act, at Springfield College