



# San Diego Refugee Forum

## Annual Report: 2014

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## I. Membership and Attendance

### a. Member Organizations

2-1-1 San Diego  
Alliance for African Assistance  
Alliance Health Clinic  
Catholic Charities, Diocese of San Diego  
Chaldean – Middle Eastern Social Services  
County of San Diego, Health and Human Services  
Episcopal Refugee Network  
Horn of Africa Community  
Huda Community Center  
International Rescue Committee, San Diego  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  
Karen Organization of San Diego  
Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc  
La Maestra Community Health Centers  
License to Freedom  
Molina Healthcare, Inc  
National Conflict Resolution Center  
Nile Sisters Development Initiative  
Planned Parenthood of the Pacific SW  
Project Concern International  
Public Consulting Group  
Red Cross  
ResCare  
Somali Family Service of San Diego  
Survivors of Torture, International  
Union of Pan Asian Communities  
University of California San Diego  
Volunteers in Medicine  
Women's Empowerment International

### b. Member Individuals

Adela Mason, Casa Cornelia Law Center

### c. Attendance Summary

The forum was attended by 286 individuals, representing 88 different organizations.

## II. Task Force Reports

### a. Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force

#### Summary

Due to a transitional period, the Asylum Seeker and Asylee Task Force met twice in 2014 (June 19<sup>th</sup> and November 6<sup>th</sup>). Adela Mason at Casa Cornelia Law Center chaired the June meeting and the November meeting was co-chaired by Ayan Mohamed of Union of Pan Asian Communities and Kathi Anderson of Survivors of Torture, International. The meetings in 2014 focused on completing an asset map and gap analysis to identify issues that the task force can work on. The task force also set out to determine a monthly meeting time. Looking forward, the task force wishes to set achievable goals that the members can collaborate on, re-establish the Corrections Corporation of America detention center tours from 2013, and to compile information for asylum seekers and asylees for better access to resources in our community.

#### Minutes

##### Asylum Task Force Meeting Notes

Date: JUNE 19, 2014

Location: CASA CORNELIA LAW CENTER (CCLC)

#### Participants:

Kathi Anderson – Survivors of Torture International (SOTI)

Carmen Kcomt – La Maestra Community Health Centers

Jo Ann Julien – County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency

Adela Mason – CCLC

Meeting began with identifying gaps/needs for the asylum seeker and asylee community as a means of identifying issues the task force can focus on:

- Lack of information and knowledge
- Services for Asylum Seekers
- Tours of CCA for refugee forum members
- Identify resources around asylum seekers

- Social services (Shelters for asylum seekers)
- Basic services (food, medications, housing, clothing)
- Get some closed down parochial schools in SD to become shelters
- Asset mapping
- Interpretation Services

#### **MAIN ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Lack of housing is a major challenge for individuals who are granted asylum from the Immigration Court/Judge and released the same day – release generally occurs at the Federal Building downtown between 8-11pm. For individuals that have no family or friends to stay with they find themselves in downtown, late at night, with nowhere to go. Given that many individuals have never been in the U.S. and speak little to no English this is a potentially dangerous situation. This reality is particularly challenging for Transgender individuals because there is often no homeless shelter services available to them.
- Health Screenings and Obtaining Medical Records – asylum applicants are screened for tuberculosis at CCA (or other detention centers), accordingly the detention centers are a check point to identify who may have tuberculosis. If there were a method to obtain individuals health records from CCA and allow HHS the ability to access these files, may be able to avoid subjecting individuals to renewed health examinations that have already taken place. Additional issue is the challenge of identifying and conducting health screenings for individuals that enter the U.S. without inspection.
- Lack of Interpretation Services – Free legal services are available for individuals who are in removal proceedings before the Immigration Court. However, a lack of volunteer interpreters and translators causes certain limitations in being able to provide free legal services.

Next Asylum Task Force Meeting: Thursday, 8/14/14 @3:00 p.m. @Survivors of Torture International



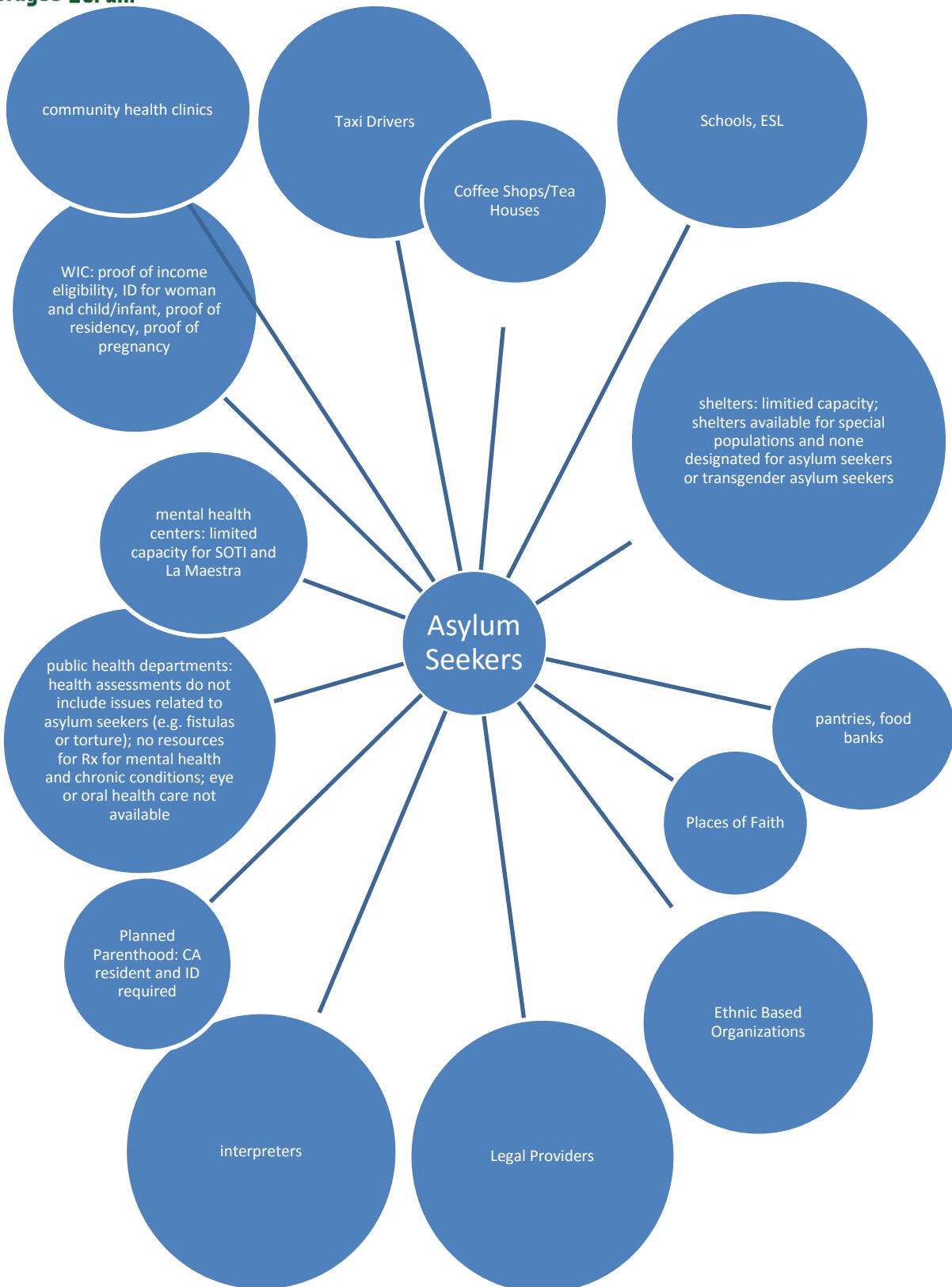
## Asylum Seekers & Asylees Task Force

### Refugee Forum

November 6, 2014 at 10:00 am

Attendees: Elizabeth Lopez (CCLC), Gabriela Guzman (CCLC), Ayan Mohamed (UPAC), Jo-Ann Julien (PHS/HHSA), Abdi Abdillahi (HHSA/Refugee Program), Maggie Fenn (HHSA/Refugee Program), Carmen Kcomt (La Maestra), Kathi Anderson (SURVIVORS), Erika Hess (SURVIVORS), Carin Anderson (SURVIVORS)

- A. Introductions from participants
- B. Asylum Seekers Asset Mapping (WORK IN PROGRESS)
  - a. See Page 2 for asset map
  - b. Who should be brought to the conversation:
    - i. Universities for research and data
    - ii. 211
    - iii. Allies in position of authority or have access to policy makers
- C. Gap Analysis
  - a. Limitations in capacity for all assets.
  - b. Lack of access to knowledge for asylum seekers, providers, and newcomers for what services are available.
  - c. Different assets are available for different asylum seekers depending upon if they have work authorization or not.
  - d. Transportation
- D. Priority and Feasibility Matrix
  - a. Health has a high priority and high feasibility in this order:
    - i. Infectious disease
    - ii. Chronic disease
    - iii. Mental health prescriptions
  - b. More access to legal resources has a high priority and medium feasibility
  - c. Collecting data and numbers on asylum seekers has a medium priority and a low feasibility
  - d. Asylum seeker specific housing has a medium-high priority and a low feasibility
- E. The asset mapping and gaps analysis was not completed within the time allotted for the meeting. It is to be continued at the next meeting.
- F. Next meeting time will be January. The task force would like additional time and agreed upon a 90 minute meeting. A doodle poll will be sent out via email to establish a date and time in mid-January.



## b. Domestic Violence Task Force

We struggled in the beginning of the year to get all of the organizations together to address issues of Domestic Violence. In the middle of the year some organizations joined the task force, like Center for Community Solutions, American Red Cross, Alliance for African Assistance, and other faith-based organizations. In November the representative from San Diego County Child Welfare Services joined the DV task force. We had approximately seven meetings and we tried to get as many people as possible to the table to aim and address the issues of domestic violence in a serious way. In October as a part of the DV task force activities License to Freedom and Center for Social Advocacy held a presentation about trauma informed care as a way to raise awareness about the barriers that surround victims of Domestic Violence in the refugee community. We hope to gain more members for the year of 2015 to join the DV task force and to do more activities.

Submitted by Dilkhwaz Ahmed



### c. Employment Task Force

We held monthly meetings for the Employment Task Force. The members included: Alliance for African Assistance (Bill Sutton and Rodney Johnson), Karen Organization (Nao Kabashima), ResCare (Deona Dorsey), Jewish Family Service (Becky Morines), Chaldean & Middle Eastern Social Services (Nawal Alkatib), and Sophie Cheetham (International Rescue Committee) and Carlos Mendez (Catholic Charities). Our meetings were held at either IRC or the Workforce Partnership building on University Ave. We had the 1 employer appreciation event in September. Out of pocket expenses were around \$300-400, but were reimbursed. The food was provided by Blue Shield of California.

Submitted by Carlos Mendez

## d. Health Task Force

In 2014, our 2 priority areas of focus were: 1) on ongoing Covered CA/ACA education and 2) mental health. Below is a summary of our events during the year.

- March 18 5-2-1-0 Childhood Obesity Initiative presentation to Forum
- April 8 Coordinated a community health dialogue with Office of Refugee Resettlement Re: *Key Health Issues Impacting Refugees in San Diego County*
- April 15 CalFresh presentation by County of San Diego Health & Human Services to Forum
- June 11 Several Refugee Forum/Health Task Force members participated in a panel on *Understanding the Reproductive Health Issues of the San Diego Immigrant and Refugee Communities at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Global Women's Health Symposium* hosted by UCSD's Department of Reproductive Medicine and Department of Medicine-Division of Global Public Health
- September 16 Volunteers in Medicine presentation to Forum
- September 22 *Happy & Healthy Together* Mental Health/Wellness event
- October Presentation on Planned Parenthood services to Forum

Total expenditures in 2014 = \$83.95 for gift cards for mental health event drawing.

Events planned: TBD by task force members with guidance from incoming chairs Bonnie Copland and Dianne Borque.

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Abdillahi	Abdi	San Diego County HHSA
Anderson	Kathi	Survivors of Torture International
Blanco	Jossie	Survivors of Torture International
Bourque	Dianne	San Diego County HHSA
Copland	Bonnie	
Drinkwater	Joanne	Red Cross WIC
Gutierrez	Vernita	Planned Parenthood
Hearnsberger	Kaley	International Rescue Committee
Ibrahim	Najla	Somali Family Service
Jama	Farah	
Josey	Michelle	MA candidate in Expressive Arts
Julien	JoAnn	San Diego County HHSA
Kabashima	Nao	Karen Organization of San Diego
Khadivi	Simin	Alliance for African Assistance
Ly	Michelle	UPAC
Murray	Kate	UCSD Family & Preventive Medicine
Schandera	Johanna	UCSD Family & Preventive Medicine
Miyagi	Fukiko	UPAC
Thornton-Stearns	Cecily	San Diego County HHSA - Behavioral Health



## **Minutes**

San Diego Refugee Forum  
Health Task Force Meeting 1/17/14

**Attendees:** Najla Abraham, Huda Ahmed, Joelle Bennett, Dianne Borque, Jojo Drinkwater, Emma Reyes, Dani Staub, Dawn Tol (co-chair),

### **2014 ACTIVITIES:**

#### **5-2-1-0 Initiative**

March is National Nutrition Month. In support of this, the HTF will focus on early nutrition for infants and young children. Time (1/2 hour) during the March SDRF will be requested to present information on resources and support (e.g. WIC's education programming, normalization of breast feeding), and to disseminate related collateral and informational materials. Jojo Drinkwater and Dianne Borque will spearhead this effort.

#### **Mental Health Education**

Ideas for addressing stigma associated with mental illness and mental health services were discussed, including need to increase awareness of all levels and types of services, how MH is viewed and approached (e.g. prevention and early intervention) in US culture and by US providers, the need to engage religious community leaders, and HIPAA in the context of accessing MH services. The HTF will assist with dissemination of information regarding awareness campaigns such as San Diego County's Up2US suicide prevention and mental health awareness efforts to the Forum membership.

Consideration was given to a panel presentation/Q&A, provider presentations, or an extended conference where providers and consumers could learn more about services. HTF meeting attendees will give consideration to discussion and bring back ideas for presenters, audience, format, etc to next meeting so final activity can be identified and planning can begin.

### **COMMUNITY RESOURCES:**

#### Blue Shield & CoveredCA

Emma Reyes, Outreach Manager for Blue Shield CA shared information regarding Covered CA community outreach. As an Outreach Manager, she is employed by Blue Shield, but is charged with supporting CoveredCA, and provides information at various sites in the community, such as schools or fairs; HIPAA compliance in their efforts includes collecting only contact information, and the person is called back later to ensure privacy.

Community members should ensure that if anyone comes to their door to discuss CoveredCA, that the person represents CoveredCA. They can confirm this by requesting to see the person's badge, which will include the Covered CA logo. This is especially important because there are reports of some brokers or other people not specifically representing CoveredCA going door-to-door to solicit enrollees and charging people for enrolling them in a CoveredCA plan.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

Friday, February 21, 2:30pm. Karen Organization (site to be confirmed)



San Diego Refugee Forum  
Health Task Force Meeting 3/21/14

**Attendees:** Dawn Tol (co-chair), Jojo Drinkwater, Najla Abraham, Huda Ahmed, Nao Kabashima, Dawn Tol (co-chair) Vernita Gutierrez (co-chair), Maureen Hartin, Katherine Blaser, Michele Lee, JoAnn Julien

**2014 ACTIVITIES:**

**5-2-1-0 Initiative Presentation**

The presentation was delivered at the March Forum meeting. There was a positive response, including comments about the relevancy of the information provided.

**Mental Health Education**

It was determined additional information needs to be confirmed prior to final determination of efforts (presentation or information fair). Focus will remain on wellness practices, stigma reduction and patient rights & responsibilities, especially HIPAA.

**COMMUNITY RESOURCES:**

**UPAC** – (Michele Lee) UPAC is developing content for community media for the purposes of removing/ameliorating barriers to mental health services. Focus is local Asian community, currently being developed in Vietnamese. Final drafts will be provided to HTF for purposes of supporting efforts – this may include identifying other media outlets or translators to assist with translating materials to additional languages, e.g. Karen.

**Volunteers in Medicine** - Maureen Hartin provided overview of organization, which provides a free (appointment only) medical clinic for those without insurance. They currently serve 300 adult clients per month.

**Visit to Southern CA – Meeting Request**

Representatives from ORR will be in southern CA and have reached out to the SDRF to request the HTF and other stakeholders in refugee health attend a meeting on 4/8 1:00 – 2:30pm at Alliance for African Assistance. ORR would like to hear about what is being done, service gaps, collaborations and current local efforts to meet the health needs of refugees. Attendance is limited to 45; an invitation list will be crafted and Najla will send out invitations when potential attendees and presenters are identified. Follow up meeting to finalize agenda tentatively scheduled for 4/2/14.

**NEXT MEETING** –Schedule pending. Please check subsequent emails for updates.



San Diego Refugee Forum  
Health Task Force Meeting 5/16/14

**ATTENDEES:** Jojo Drinkwater, Nao Kabashima, Dawn Tol (co-chair) Vernita Gutierrez (co-chair), Maureen Hartin, Genevieve Caston, Kathi Anderson, Bonnie Copland, JoAnn Julien, Dianne Bourque

**ACTIVITIES**

There was lengthy discussion about options for mental health/wellness awareness activities.

Event Overview: There will be an event “Happy and Healthy Together” September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1:30-4:00 pm at the Wellness Center. The event will focus on soft education surrounding mental health as a wellness issue, with music, art, spiritual leaders and other activities for attendees. Information regarding all levels of care and how to access care will be provided as part of initiating efforts to educate about spectrum of mental health issues/treatment, and to reduce stigmas surrounding mental illness and treatment engagement.

Considerations:

Interpreters (will activities translate visually, how much interpretation needed?)

translation of collateral materials; healthiness of any food provided (water, fruit, etc).

Promoting stigma reduction by having community members discuss their own experiences accessing mental health services. Event is intended to be more interactive, rather than having speakers; due to its potential significance, the HTF will continue to look at for future events/activities or presentations.

Isolation as an issue especially for those with other mental health concerns (e.g. Post-Partum Depression, Depressive Disorder, PTSD, Anxiety Disorder)



Ensuring ample collateral materials so attendees can bring into communities for those who did not attend and to otherwise spread the word.

Related tasks:

Artistic Activities - Kathi will reach out to Resounding Joy to provide drumming, and to master level interns to provide a variety of art therapy activities

Spiritual Activities - Dawn will inquire into a pastor in the Karen community; Vernita will reach out to Interfaith Center for Worker Justice for leaders from a variety of religious communities.

Passport/Prize Drawing – A “passport” to each exhibit and activity will be given to attendees. Completed passports will be placed in a drawing for prizes. Genevieve will look into farmer’s market options for prizes as part of promoting healthy eating as a component of wellness.

Outreach – Dawn will create flyer, task force members will reach out to community agencies, organizations and businesses to help promote once flyer is finalized (after activities are confirmed).

**NOMINATION/ELECTION OF 2015 CHAIRPERSONS:**

The HTF is accepting nominations for the 2015 co-chairs now through the first week of October. A final list will be compiled and voting will take place at the November HTF meeting. Any nominees must be an individual member, or a representative of a member organization in good standing at the time of nomination, and if elected, during the entirety of their tenure as co-chair.

**NEXT MEETING** –Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2:30pm, site TBD. Please check subsequent emails for updates.



## San Diego Refugee Forum

### Health Task Force Meeting - June 6, 2014

Attendees: Dianne Borque, Erika Hess, Juan Estrada, Vernita Gutierrez

Purpose of the meeting was to continue planning for "Happy & Healthy Together" event. We met at the Wellness Center to visualize how we could utilize the space.

#### Event Space

- Application needs to be completed and submitted before the space is officially reserved.
- A dance class begins promptly at 4:00 pm on Fridays; parents may drop off kids earlier. We would need to be done and the space prepped for the class before 4:00 pm. We might want to consider changing to another day of the week to avoid scheduling conflict. The WC closes promptly at 5:00 on Fridays but may stay open later other weekdays. Mondays are generally open.

#### Flyer

- Contact information needs to be added. Finalize and translate into Somali and Burmese languages once date and location are confirmed.
- Discussed ways to promote the event. Best option is to put flyers in places where refugees live, work, worship, eat, play. Also via appropriate social media and email listservs.

#### Setup

- "Stations" for each topic area: art, music, gardening, exercise, cooking, faith & spirituality, mental wellness resources (with refugee-centered mental health service providers).
- Once stations are confirmed, passport can be created in multiple languages.
- Is space for children needed? Nurse-Family Partnership may have some props which could be used if we want to designate an area for children. Dianne will look into it.

#### Refreshments

- Juan suggested that perhaps a WIC office could donate fresh fruit or other snacks.

- Suggested that volunteer “Happy & Healthy Ambassadors” be recruited through the RF. Imperative that we have native language speakers at each station.

#### Resource materials

- The County’s “Up 2 Us” campaign wallet cards might be a good piece to have available. Magnets may be less popular but still worthwhile. Erika from SOS will research printed materials they have in various languages.

Next meeting: June 20, 2014, 2:30 pm at Karen Organization of San Diego.

## San Diego Refugee Forum

### Health Task Force Meeting – August 1, 2014

Attendees: Abdi Abdillahi; JoJo Drinkwater; Vernita Gutierrez (co-chair); Nao Kabashima; Fukiko Miyagi; Kate Murray; Johanna Schandera

#### Member Roster

Everyone was asked to confirm their interest in HTF membership vs. guest status. Task force members must be representatives of Refugee Forum members in good standing.

#### Co-Chair Nominations

- Nao and JoJo nominated Dianne Borque
- Abdi nominated JoAnn Julien

**Nominees should be contacted by their nominators to confirm their acceptance of the nomination.**

Both Dawn and Vernita's terms as co-chairs will expire at the end of 2014.

#### "Happy& Healthy Together" Event Planning

Reviewed and updated task list. **Please note items in red as well as any deadline dates.** Also of note:

- Cooking demo replaced with interactive "Food for the Soul" activity.
- Discussed and agreed to integrate spirituality into the "Resources" station rather than have a "faith and spirituality" station.
- Children's activities deleted due to space constraints and possible issues with childcare and liability.

#### Immediate Action Items:

- Johanna - Finalize English version of flyer (this week).
- Kathi - Ensure that activities proposed by Resounding Joy and the Expressive Art Institute will fit with the format and venue.
- Genevieve - Ask if IRC can lead the gardening activity (possible tie-in to New Roots Farm).
- Vernita – Contact Alternative Healing Network
- Najla – Confirm whether SFS can provide translation of the flyer and/or interpreters at the event.

#### Next Meeting

Need to reschedule the August 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. A Doodle poll will be sent this week to select another date.



## San Diego Refugee Forum Health Task Force

October 17, 2014

Attendees: Nao Kabashima, Bonnie Copland, Vernita Gutierrez (Co-Chair), Abdi Abdillahi, JoJo Drinkwater, Dianne Bourque, JoAnn Julien

### **"Happy & Healthy Together" Debrief**

Reviewed the feedback survey results. The consensus is that it was a great first event: well attended, enjoyable, and with lots of potential for future activities. However, there was uncertainty about whether it was successful in reducing stigma around mental health. See survey results for details.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Larger space

- Shorter timeframe (2 hours vs. 3 hours)

- Make a clearer connection between activities and mental health/wellness

- Capture feedback from participants

- Ensure there are enough interpreters (1 at each station would have been better)

### **Co-Chair Nominations**

Nominations of Dianne Bourque and Bonnie Copland as co-chairs was unanimously approved. Their terms will begin in January 2015. Dawn and Vernita were thanked for their leadership over the last few years.

Submitted by Vernita Gutierrez

### III. Events

#### a. World Refugee Day

Planning for the World Refugee Day 2014 celebration began March 2013. The World Refugee Day 2014 Event Planning Committee members are representatives from various organizations serving refugee populations in San Diego, including the County of San Diego, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Charities, American Red Cross, Chaldean and Middle Eastern Social Services, Huda Community Center, Union of Pan Asian Communities, and Karen Organization of San Diego. American Red Cross sponsored the event as well as the SDRF. By sharing with attendees many contributions of our refugee community members, the San Diego Refugee Forum aimed to create a better understanding among community members vital to strengthening community relationships and creating more welcoming community. The World Refugee Day 2014 celebration combined educational material and cultural performances to create a culturally vibrant atmosphere. We had about 200-300 participants the day of the event, many of whom were refugee community members.

The World Refugee Day 2014 started at 11 am with speech by two guest speakers: Kevin Faulconer, San Diego City Mayor, and Bob Montgomery, IRC San Diego Executive Director. Programming included traditional dance and music programs presented by local refugee performers, refugee youth panel, activities for children, photo activities by the Museum of Photographic Arts (MOPA). The World Refugee Day 2013 event also included refugee owned businesses selling their merchandise and foods. These components provided attendees a multi-dimensional experience that familiarized them with the culture and experiences of the newer members of their community, what brought them to the United States, and the many contributions they make to their new home community.





#### (1) Cultural Performances

The World Refugee Day 2014 included 7 cultural performances from various countries: Haitian choir group, Iraqi music performance groups, one music performance group from East Africa, and two Karen dance performances by Karen Organization of San Diego.

#### (2) Refugee Youth and Adult Panels

As educational components of the event, we had two panels with youth and adult refugee community members. For the Refugee Youth Panel, four students from the City Heights and City of El Cajon shared their stories as refugees and their struggles and successes after their resettlement in San Diego. They are members of the IRC Peacemakers. For the Refugee Adult Panel, three former refugees from Uganda, Burma, and Iraq shared their experiences before arriving in the U.S. as refugees. Each panel discussion was followed by Q&A sessions.

#### (4) Photo Project by the Museum of Photographic Arts (MOPA)

The Museum of Photographic Arts (MOPA) provided photo project for the event attendees. Photographs were printed out on site and taped up to create an instant photo installation. More than 50 people participated in the project, and the photo installation showed how diverse San Diego is and how beautiful we are together. Colorful pictures with many different cultural outfits exactly showcased San Diego's diverse refugee communities.

#### (5) International Food and Craft Market

With more than six food and craft vendors from San Diego's refugee communities, the World Refugee Day event hosted an international market. We would like to invite more vendors for the World Refugee Day 2015 event.

### **Outreach Efforts and Some Challenges**

Outreach for the World Refugee Day 2015 celebration was conducted in a variety of ways to reach communities in San Diego as well as the San Diego County community at large. Press releases were sent to media outlets that reach communities throughout San Diego County. Event flyers were posted on the event website (<http://www.refugeedayevent.org/>) and the Facebook page and made available at local businesses in Southeast San Diego as well as surrounding communities. Event announcements were sent to agencies, organizations, schools, colleges, and supporters of the San Diego Refugee Forum's member organizations.

However, the San Diego Refugee Forum could have made more of an effort to reach out to the general public. Its media release was sent out to media outlets at the beginning of June 2014. This could have been done earlier to bring more media attention to the event. If we can improve our outreach and marketing efforts, we believe that the World Refugee Day 2015 event will be even more successful with more local media attentions and participants from the local San Diego community.

Press coverage can be found at the following links:

[http://www.speakcityheights.org/2014/06/photos-scenes-from-world-refugee-day-in-san-diego/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=photos-scenes-from-world-refugee-day-in-san-diego](http://www.speakcityheights.org/2014/06/photos-scenes-from-world-refugee-day-in-san-diego/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=photos-scenes-from-world-refugee-day-in-san-diego)

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2014/Jun/21/world-refugee-day-celebrate/2/?#article-copy>



JUNE 21, 2014 •

BALBOA PARK INTERNATIONAL COTTAGES  
AND HALL OF NATIONS

2125 PARK BLVD, AND

2191 WEST PAN AMERICAN RD.

SAN DIEGO, CA 92134

• 10AM-3PM

**Explore** THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY AND THE VARIOUS CULTURES THAT LIVE HERE!

**Learn** ABOUT THE RICH CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THOSE WHO LIVE HERE, THEIR HISTORY AND HOW THEY CONTRIBUTE TO OUR COMMUNITY; THROUGH PANEL PRESENTATIONS, LIVE MUSIC AND LAWN PERFORMANCES, INTERACTIVE DEMONSTRATIONS, YOUTH ACTIVITIES, LOCAL VENDORS SELLING TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AND FOOD, FILM SCREENINGS, AND MORE!

**Meet** YOUR NEIGHBOR!



RefugeeDayEvent.org

Sponsored by







**Press Release: For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Najla Ibrahim

P: (619) 265-5821 Ext. 209

E: [najla@sdrefugeeforum.org](mailto:najla@sdrefugeeforum.org)

(San Diego, CA) June 3, 2014—The San Diego Refugee Forum is excited to host “Meet Your Neighbor” in honor of the fourth annual World Refugee Day. The event will be held on June 21, 2014 from 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM at Balboa Park’s International Cottages and Hall of Nations on 2191 Pan American Road San Diego, CA 92101. This exciting event connects the many communities that coexist in San Diego, highlights the struggles and resilience of refugees thriving in their new homes, and showcases the rich cultural features through performances, food, music, panel presentations, youth activities, traditional arts and crafts, and interactive activities.

In recognition of the refugee experience, World Refugee Day commemorates the strength and courage demonstrated by refugee communities around the world. There are approximately 43.7 million displaced refugees whom have fled their homes as a result of persecution, conflict, and violence. San Diego happens to be home to one of the largest refugee populations in the United States.

Our “Meet Your Neighbor” theme showcases the different neighborhoods and the abundantly communities that reside within our county. One can walk through the event venue and experience almost every refugee culture found in San Diego. The event allows visitors the chance to hear stories of the refugees through panel presentations, performers from Haiti, Iraq, Congo, Burma, and the Karen community, see cultural exhibitions in the different regional areas of the park, attend a film screening, puppet show, international bazaar featuring refugee-owned local businesses, as well as participate in cultural arts and crafts that include leather work, Karen Bamboo Dance, Karen weaving, and more. Furthermore, there will be resource sharing on services and the information available from the San Diego Refugee Forum, UNHCR, Red Cross, United Nations Association, and Chipotle on their connections to the refugee community. It will be a memorable event that exhibits the contributions made by refugees to enrich the lives of San Diegans.

We invite you and your family to participate and attend this free event that is open to the public. Come discover the vibrant refugee communities of San Diego and those that have the privilege of working with them. Welcome to San Diego’s World Refugee Day 2014!

**Press Opportunities:** For additional information or to schedule an interview, please contact Najla Ibrahim, Chair of the Refugee Forum at (619) 265-5821 or [najla@sdrefugeeforum.org](mailto:najla@sdrefugeeforum.org)

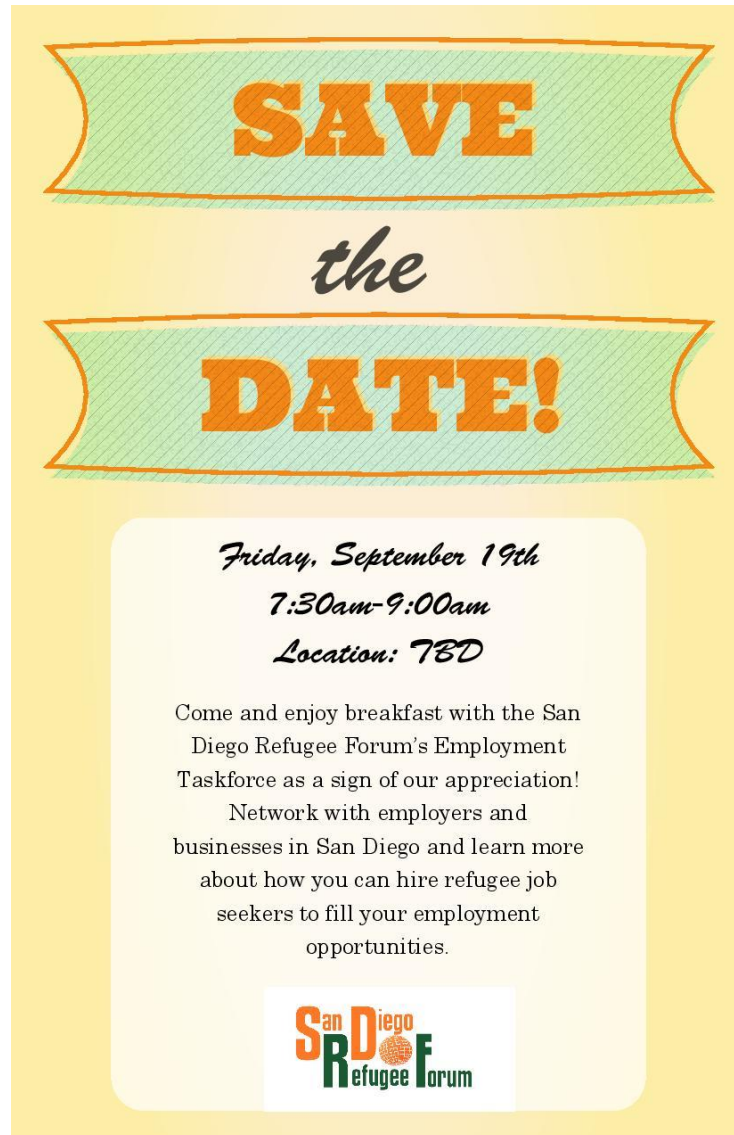
**Contact Information**



World Refugee Day 2014—[www.refugeedayevent.org/](http://www.refugeedayevent.org/)

Submitted by Nao Kabashima

## b. Employer Appreciation Breakfast



We had an event on September 19<sup>th</sup> at the Workforce Partnership office on University Ave. It was an Employer Appreciation event attended by some local companies. During the event we gave them some more background on the clients we service and even had a couple of clients speak about their experiences when they first arrived. I have attached the flyer we used to send out to the employers. I know the food was provided by Sharp Healthcare and we spent some out of pocket.

Submitted by Carlos Mendez

### c. Happy and Healthy Together



Happy & Healthy Together De-Brief – 10/17/14

#### **Suggestions for improvement:**

Larger space

Shorter timeframe (2 hours vs. 3 hours)

Make a clearer connection between activities and mental health/wellness

Better evaluation of whether goals achieved

Capture feedback from participants

Ensure there are enough interpreters (1 at each station would have been better)



### **Happy and Healthy Together Event Feedback Survey Highlights:**

Of 11 participants in the survey, 7 rated the event "Excellent," and 4 rated the event "Very Good."

When asked what they liked about the event, some responses included:

- "Participants seemed to really enjoy it"
- "Turn out of community members, positive energy of the room, diversity of the clients"
- "Variety of activities and the raffle was exciting"
- "The cooperation of everyone, the variety of providers who came, the enthusiasm"

When asked what they disliked about the event, some responses included:

- "Not enough tangible focus on mental health"
- "Small space"
- "Setting up process was somewhat confusing"
- "That so many came at the beginning and new attendees were not as plentiful after the first hour"

When asked if the event was helpful in reducing stigma around mental health in the refugee community, 2 answered "Very helpful," 3 answered "Somewhat helpful," and 6 answered "Unsure."

When asked if the event was helpful in educating the refugee community about available mental health services, 3 responded "Very Helpful," 5 responded "Somewhat helpful," and 3 responded "Unsure."

When asked how organized the event was, 3 responded "Extremely organized," and 8 responded "Very organized."

When asked how you rate the venue/location, 1 responded "Excellent," 5 responded "Very Good," 3 responded "Good," and 2 responded "Fair."

When asked if the time of day was just right, too late, or too early, 10 responded "The time of day was just right," and one responded "Should be earlier in the day."

When asked if there is anything else you'd like to share about the event, some answers included:

- "Starting time of the event was right, but we can have another event for 2 hours, instead of 3 hours. It was too long. Also, some of our community members didn't understand the main point of the event, some didn't see the connection between those activities and mental health. We should make it clearer."
- "Want to be involved next time. Love to be in the dialogue about providing services to this community."
- "The location in Mid-City was excellent but the room was quite small. Also, the education about and stigma reduction of mental health in most cultures is a process. This was a good first step on which to build."
- "I was very grateful for all the collaborative efforts from all community partners."

## d. Office of Refugee Resettlement Special Health Dialogue

San Diego Refugee Forum

Minutes: ORR Special Meeting – Health Dialogue

1:00-2:30 pm at Alliance for African Assistance

5952 El Cajon Blvd, San Diego, CA, 92115

1. Welcome and Introductions – Najla Ibrahim: Chair of San Diego Refugee Forum (SDRF), Health Programs Coordinator at Somali Family Services
  - a. Present: Abdi Abdillahi, Kim Forrester, Kim McDermott, Zina Salem, David Hupkins, Maggie Lujan, Brittney Yackley, Kate Murray, Bonnie Copland, Genevieve Caston, Tracy Wilson, Kathi Anderson, Mahrash Alami, Nao Kabashima, Lar Paw, Hudo Ahmed, Lula Bom, Nancy Martey, Allison Boyer, Jo-Ann Julien, Kathleen Mosur, Laura Raju, Besma Coda, Dani Staub, Dawn Tol, Jonathan Hardy, Marisa Ramos, Kali Patterson, Dave Husdari, Curi Kim, Clelia Pezzi, Simin Khadivi, Walter Lam, Dixie Galgan, Maggie Fenn
2. Health Task Force: Overview of Efforts and Collective Impact: Dawn-Marie Tol-Resettlement Programs Supervisor at Jewish Family Services of San Diego (JFSSD)
  - a. We've worked hard over the last several years to position ourselves as a point of information, both disseminating information to clients and also providing information to services providers
  - b. We focus on including those with complementary roles and backgrounds, from the public & private sectors
  - c. Events we've hosted/Activities: Two language access events, ACA speakers, disseminating info on ACA, educating our clients, Mother and Child Health, 5210, WIC, Dental Hygiene Event in coordination with County Public Health and Karen Org.
  - d. Future Plans : arrange a speaker on mental health for an SDRF forum meeting, working on a wellness fair, focus on dental health, including long term health
3. Resettlement Agencies: Health Assessment, Early Healthcare Access, Related Agency Activities: Michael McKay, Director of Refugee Services, Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego (CCDSD)
  - a. There are four resettlement agencies in San Diego: Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Service, Alliance for African Assistance, International Rescue Committee
  - b. Mission is to connect refugees to MediCal
  - c. One issue we have is MediCal card has a delay, difficult for people with immediate medical needs upon arrival
  - d. All refugees get an immediate health assessment to give the refugee a medical file, which they'll take to their Primary Care Physician. The VOLAGs give them a hand-off, and make sure the children's immunizations are brought up to date so they can be enrolled in school.
  - e. JFSSD, IRC, and CCDSD use Catholic Charities' medical clinic for assessments, Alliance for African Assistance (AAA) uses Alliance Clinic
  - f. Res agencies provide acculturation, including an introductory lesson to the U.S. health care system, how to choose a physician, and gender specific issues. We have a doctor come in to provide public health information during the acculturation, including a discussion of how mental health affects health in general, nutrition programs, etc.
  - g. IRC has the Roots program for nutrition education

- h. JFSSD has a Project More initiative, which was originally made especially for the Karen community, but now is accessible to anyone enrolled in Welfare to Work
  - i. UCSD students have developed programs, and a nutritious recipe book to spread nutrition information for refugee health, and to get refugees into the U.S. health care system
  - j. The Refugee Health Assessment programs are the first point of contact, and after the refugees are transferred to the community clinic of their choice
- 4. Community Clinics – Healthcare Homes for Refugee Clients: Danielle Staub- Care Coordination Manager, Family Health Centers of San Diego
  - a. Family Health Centers of San Diego works with refugees, service providers, employer panels to encourage refugee hiring, and to do special outreach to refugees
  - b. We were contacted once by JFSSD for a new arrival with an immediate need, and patient was seen within 24 hours
- 5. Dental/Orthodontics: Current and Future Efforts, Dental Education for the Communities: Bonnie Copland-Manager of Central Region Public Health Center, Nao Kabashima-Executive Director of Karen Organization of San Diego
  - a. There has been a great collaboration between service providers in accessing dental health resources for refugees.
  - b. The Karen Organization had three children of about the same age come in with serious dental issues, that couldn't afford the \$300 to fix it, and MediCal couldn't cover it. We talked to Bonnie to solve the issue, and came up with a way to educate the community for preventive dental health too
  - c. We have discovered that nutrition was poor in the refugee camps, so we had an event with the Children's hospital to distribute toothbrushes and paste to everyone, and teach kids how to brush their teeth. Every Karen child had either metal caps or yellowing of teeth, cavities.
  - d. JFSSD is having kids arrive that already have braces, and need orthodontic help, but their appeals are being denied through MediCal
- 6. Mental Health: Stigma Reduction and Access Support Efforts: Dixie Galapon-Program Manager at Union of Pan Asian Communities
  - a. Oversees the mental health program for UPAC
  - b. We provide treatment and early intervention/prevention programs
  - c. Provide treatment to Asian/Pacific Islander community adults
  - d. Provides children/adolescent mental health services to other ethnic groups as well
  - e. Serves people with MediCal/Care
  - f. Serves Philipino, Latino, African, African-American, among others with day education services on mental health,
  - g. We also go out to the community to reach older adults
  - h. The Positive Solutions program target adults that are home-bound and susceptible to depression and other mental health issues
- 7. Health Navigation-Literacy Retention Issues: Dawn Marie Tol, Michael McKay
  - a. JFSSD – have a program called Preferred Communities – an intensive case management program, especially for medical services access
  - b. CCDSD – use Health Navigators through the Refugee Health Assessment Program, who have the language and cultural background of refugees. The medical issues of some refugees can be a disruptive and heavy load, but most acute things do get addressed.



Beyond the first few months, the community partners are responsible, but they may not have the time or ability to address all of these issues

8. Preventive & Wellness Health Practices: Current Efforts and Common Issues: Genevieve Caston-Resettlement Program Manager at International Rescue Committee
  - a. A majority of Iraqis are coming in with lifestyle health issues, also other groups
  - b. We have a brand new program coming to do much more nutrition awareness, cooking demos etc.
  - c. Crawford High School has a community garden, also in City Heights and El Cajon there are gardens and farmers markets
  - d. We have First 5 and First Steps programs for pregnant women through 5 year-old children. Right now we are just serving Karen and Swahili-speaking programs , but we want to expand to other groups
9. Youth Services/Programming-Laura Caldwell Raju – Program Manager at El Cajon Valley High School Family Resources Center and Tracy Wilson- Assistant Principal, El Cajon Valley High School
  - a. Our school has a higher refugee population than all the other 9 schools in the district combined
  - b. We are a recipient of the RSIG grant, where we do a summer school program with students that focuses on issues such as world view, US world view, personal world view
  - c. We also have a full-time Iraqi community liaison, Mr. Yousif, and 4 full time bilingual aids that work in the classrooms with students
  - d. San Diego Youth Services contracts with the High School to help connect students and families to resources they might need, such as mental health, housing, etc.
  - e. This year, out of the 30% of Iraqi students we work with 29% have been willing to work with a mental health therapist
  - f. We have marriage and family therapy on site
  - g. Our acculturation group for the students had about 50 students attend, they are learning to adjust as a teenager and as a refugee.
  - h. Once a month we do Coffee Talks, where we also invite parents to come out. There are 50% Arabic speaking 50% Spanish speaking parents, and we have a speaker come talk on a relevant subject such as gangs, drug use, nutrition
  - i. Teacher Development – a lot of the Social Science/Science teachers are learning how to teach English, how to interact with students that have gone through trauma
  - j. We do IEPs and 504s to develop a plan that is specific for that child and will allow them to be more successful
  - k. We see huge gaps in education that can sometimes be mistaken for special ed. There are also mental health disabilities or needs, this needs to be distinguished from a need to be tested in native tongue
10. ORR and Congress: Jonathan Hardy – Office of Congresswoman Susan Davis, 53<sup>rd</sup> district
  - a. Our job in congress is the appropriation of funds
  - b. I'm here to ask questions:
    - i. To ORR – is the funding currently meeting the needs of refugees?
    - ii. To Community Orgs – are you reaching out to the congressional representatives to get more funding? (a couple people raised hands)
    - iii. The orgs in the room – are you reaching out to your officials for letters of recommendation on grants? (a couple hands raised)

- c. Next time there is a grant at the federal level, contact your Congressional Representatives. I'm here at every refugee forum meeting, there are 4 Congressional Representatives in San Diego that can help you.
  - d. Get out, ask us questions
    - 1. Question from Dawn Tol: when orgs are in competition, how do you choose who to recommend?
    - 2. Answer: Congresswoman Davis has a social work background, and is passionate about helping social service agencies. She can recommend multiple organizations, as we don't want to create competition
11. Open floor to Attendees – Comment Period
- a. Laura Caldwell Raju – a lot of students are expressing difficulty getting transportation to medical appointments. Do any agencies here have answer to this struggle?
    - i. MediCal only covers some transportation
    - ii. CHG and Molina provide some transportation
    - iii. If you have SSI and MediCal you always get transportation
    - iv. Medicaid is different in every state. You should advocate to your state to change its policy to provide transportation, interpretation, etc.
    - v. Somali Family Service – a lot of our clients are afraid of using public transportation, which means they don't come to programs, events, appointments
    - vi. Ideas – we could work with MTS, agencies could have volunteer drivers, and we can educate pregnant women that they can access transportation services for free for their appointments. Public health nurses and Doctors can give bus passes, Welfare to Work gives bus passes. A lot of people are told about options, but because they are so overwhelmed with info, we should be reminding them.
    - vii. AAA had a grant 2 years ago to educate the Karen population on using the public transportation system, the need was too overwhelming. The barriers are learning the system, not having the language, the courage to actually use the system.
    - viii. AAA now uses a bus to drive people to appointments
    - ix. Many people get used to using the shuttles, and they don't use the public transport. We need to train them to use public, and push them
    - x. There is an issue that people don't always have a bus stop by their house, if they are sick or in a wheelchair they need a shuttle bus
  - b. How are we dealing with the mental health stigmas?
    - i. UPAC is doing a lot of ads that attempt to reduce stigma
    - ii. IRC is seeing very low 1-2% mental health problems - is it the stigma that's making them screen low?
    - iii. AAA is using a health screening function PHQ2 that screens 20% of people with having mental issues
    - iv. State is developing a new tool that will produce more accurate data on mental health issues
  - c. What is the possibility of getting MediCal to cover dental services?
    - i. State – I would push it at the federal level to incorporate it in with the affordable care act.



- ii. You can lobby to make the change at the state level with MediCal
  - iii. There is a rumor that adult dental will soon be covered by MediCal, there is a draft circulating, but there is no final letter
- d. ORR Refugee Health updates
  - i. This is an all new division that is taking a systematic look at refugee health. This is the first official ORR mental health monitoring visit
  - ii. ORR is always in financial crisis. The unaccompanied children are far surpassing our expectations. Congress did come through with some additional funding, which prevented us from getting totally gutted. This year we had budgeted for 25,000 kids, we may be getting over 60,000 kids coming
- e. Kim from San Diego County OES
  - i. Working on coming up with strategies to reach non-English speakers in emergency situations, I will be looking for support from the community organizations and faith based organizations to partner in information dissemination.
  - ii.
- f. Wrap Up/Adjournment: Najla Ibrahim
  - i. Conclusion 2:30pm



## e. Special Forum Meeting: Unaccompanied Minors

In September, the Forum hosted a special meeting on the facts, issues, and resources surrounding the migration of unaccompanied minors from Central America to the U.S. Doing so, the forum responded to growing concerns in the community regarding unaccompanied minors and brought together local and regional stakeholders for an open and productive discussion.

### Agenda

Special Forum: Unaccompanied Minors +  
Central American Refugee Migration  
San Diego Refugee Forum  
Price Charities Building, 6<sup>th</sup> floor conference room  
4305 University Ave. San Diego  
September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014, 10am-12pm

Meeting Purpose: To create an opportunity for learning and dialogue between the refugee and migrant communities. To share success stories and facts about the situation for unaccompanied minors in San Diego County.

We believe that none of us has all the solutions, but from each other we can learn and get support.

### **10am – Pre-discussion:**

Please review the fact sheet provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement

### **10:10am – Introductions and Welcome**

### **10:15am – Brief Responses by Featured Guests:**

Assemblywoman Shirley Weber

Francine Mague, Office of Assemblywoman Gonzalez

Jessica Mier, Office of Congresswoman Susan Davis

Elizabeth Camarena, Casa Cornelia

Ismael Avilez, Southwest Key Programs

- How does your agency view and understand the issue?
- What services do you, and can you, provide for unaccompanied minors?
- What has been working well (best practices to share), and what hasn't been working well?
- How can we support each other?



**11:00am – General Forum:**

All attendees will hold an open discussion on the four questions above.

**11:45am – Close and Informal Networking**



## IV. Financial Report

### SDRF financial Report 2014

<b>2013 Balance</b>	\$	9,243.24
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#### Income

<b>Memberships</b>	\$	1,890.00
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<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ 11,133.24</b>
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#### Expenses

<b>2013 Employment Task Force</b>	\$	359.64
2014 Employment Task Force	\$	205.14
Health Task Force	\$	83.95
World Refugee Day	\$	72.89
Event Insurance	\$	104.20
Website Hosting	\$	227.57
Refugees Achievement		
Appreciation	\$	600.00
Miscellaneous/ Supply	\$	344.80

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<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,998.19</b>
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Final Balance =Balance Income -Total Expenses

<b>2014 Balance</b>	<b>\$ 9,135.05</b>
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## V. Meeting Minutes

### **San Diego Refugee Forum**

#### *Minutes*

Tuesday, January 21, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

*Call to order at 10:40am*

- *Present:* Hassan Abdirahman, Genevieve Caston, Abdi Abdillahi, Rita Shamoan, Vernita Gutierrez, Lorna Strang, Sheryl Ashley, Mohammed Tuama, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Nao Kabashima, Besma Coda, Jason Martinez, Deona Dorsey, Mike McKay, John Ramirez, Sophie Cheetham, Celia Balestreri, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley, Renee Nasori, Dhusaw Alabsi, Stephanie Olivas, May Hasan, Mariana Vasconcelos, Star Bales, Dawn Tol, Elaine McLevie, Monica Perez-Santiago, Grace Chu, Debbie Miranda, Julia Navaro, Maggie Lujan, Robert Walter, John Ramirez, Kans Grunds, Yenly Thach, Adela Mason, Rich Benfante, Ute Maschke

#### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- New Members' Welcome: All attendees are encouraged to become members of the forum.  
Information
- for renewals will be sent out soon.
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance.

#### *Task Force Updates:*

- World Refugee Planning Committee: *The committee is on hiatus. We will need to re-start soon*
- Health Task Force:
- Vernita Gutierrez: US Conference on AIDS will be held in San Diego, in September. Vernita will be the co-chair for the "Global Village" committee and strongly recommends that the SDRF becomes a strong participant in the conference. Refugees should be represented.
- Cut-off Enrollment Date for the Affordable Health Care Act/Individual Coverage is February 15<sup>th</sup> for Coverage to begin March 1<sup>st</sup>
- Dawn Tol:

- 5-2-1-0 Initiative March is National Nutrition Month. In support of this, the HTF will focus on early nutrition for infants and young children. For March, the plan is to present information on resources and support (e.g. WIC's education programming, normalization of breast feeding), and to disseminate related collateral and informational materials.
- We are considering a panel presentation/Q&A, provider presentations, or an extended conference where providers and consumers could learn more about mental illness and mental health services. There is a need to increase awareness of all levels and types of services, how MH is viewed and approached (e.g. prevention and early intervention) in US culture and by US providers, the need to engage religious community leaders, and HIPAA in the context of accessing MH services. The HTF will assist with dissemination of information regarding awareness campaigns such as San Diego County's Up2US suicide prevention and mental health awareness efforts to the Forum membership.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: no updates
- Domestic Violence Task Force
  - Dilkhaz Ahmed: We did a lot of work last year, but that work was mostly done by *License to Freedom*. I will have updates in February.
- Employment Task Force
- Nawal: There will be a roundtable February 27<sup>th</sup>, 4 – 7 pm; for employers only. Please send the flyer (soon-to-be-distributed) to employers with whom you are working. RVSP Becky.
  - *Other Updates*
- VOLAGs
  - Jewish Family Services – 50 arrivals
  - Alliance for African Assistance – December 80 arrivals; January 82 arrivals; Iraqis, a few Somali and Burmese families
  - Catholic Charities – last quarter 225 arrivals; this month steady arrivals, predominantly Iraqis, plus Congolese and Afghan families
  - IRC – 70 arrivals; scheduled Burmese arrivals will be canceled due to

moratorium on exit from Thailand

- County: No updates
- State Advisory Committee: No updates; next meeting will be February 20<sup>th</sup>

#### *Discussion: Goals and Outlook*

What went well in 2013?

- organization of World Refugee Day (“We need to keep that going.” - Question: Should it be closer to East County?)
- monthly focus (on a specific topic); visit to detention center; panels with refugees
- information sharing and networking opportunities
- Which topics would you like to re-visit and/or discuss more in depth?
- Affordable Health Care Act
- visit to detention center (and perhaps L.A. offices)
- panel with refugees
- Which new topics would you like to explore in 2014? Is there any training you are interested in?
- updated and more informative website
- coordination of referral process
- youth and education issues
- more commitment to task force (more organizations should participate)
- presentations on what is happening at the regional and state level
- discussion of challenges organizations are facing
- best practices panel (e.g., how do different agencies organize orientation?)
- closer collaboration among agencies that are running similar programs
- presentations by employers
- have other community organizations and faith-based organizations become part of the forum
- develop on-boarding process/protocol for new forum members
- another panel on trafficking (presentation on “Blue Campaign”)
- consider reaching out to Registrar of Voters (language services are available)

*Focus: EITC*



- Stephanie Olivas (AAA) agreed to fill in for Teresa Smith (Thrive Coordinator)
- We all need the acronym, but what else is there to know. EITC is the largest anti-poverty campaign. As such it gets audited heavily but can also benefit refugees and former refugees tremendously. Free tax services are available at various places and online. 211San Diego has addresses and phone numbers. AAA provides both free tax services/facilitated assistance and training for volunteers and interns who are interested in helping. For more information see [www.irs.gov/eitc](http://www.irs.gov/eitc) and San Diego's Community Action Partnership. The latter has a lot of marketing materials, please contact Abdi Abdillahi ([abdi.abdillahi@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:abdi.abdillahi@sdcounty.ca.gov)) if you are interested. In general, refugees should be encouraged to do their taxes. Clients who work with a facilitated assistance site will be referred to Covered CA sites. Potentially, facilitated assistance sites could also work more closely with Covered CA entities.

#### *Community Announcements*

- Dawn Tol: February 15<sup>th</sup> is the cut-off date for enrollment with Covered CA. Coverage would begin March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- El Cajon has a new City Council Woman: Star Bales – Councilmember Bales encouraged attendees to communicate with her.
- Nawal Alkatib urged all members to participate in task forces and encouraged everyone to submit updates to the website and the listserv.

Adjournment: 11:40 am

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am-12:00pm at Alliance for African Assistance





## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, February 18, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

### *Call to order at 10:40am*

- *Present:* Hassan Abdirahman, Genevieve Caston, Abdi Abdillahi, Rita Shamoon, Alexa White, Lorna Strang, Sheryl Ashley, Mohammed Tuama, Nao Kabashima, Jason Martinez, Mike McKay, John Ramirez, Alex Kahn, Celia Balestreri, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley, Renee Nasori, Mariana Vasconcelos, Dawn Tol, Elaine McLevie, Maggie Fenn, John Ramirez, Kains Grounds, Rich Benfante, Rosanna Balistreri, Nancy Martey, Aileen Gulan, Abdi Baissa, Gregory S. Shroyer,, Valery Belloso, Shadiga Hagsuf, Nadine Pedusseau, Kim Hoang, Ghazia Hassan, Ute Maschke

### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- New Members' Welcome: Three members have renewed so far; all attendees are encouraged to become members of the forum. Renewal forms are available; the forum accepts cash and checks. The forum has a budget (carry over) of \$ 9,243.00. Members will be featured on the website and can participate in the task forces. Each task force receives \$500/year.
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance.

### *Task Force Updates:*

- World Refugee Planning Committee: First meeting will be held February 18<sup>th</sup> (right after the forum meeting).
- Health Task Force:
- Dawn Tol: In March we will present on *5210 Every Day! Campaign – childhood obesity initiative; "Healthy Habits for Healthy Communities"*
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: no updates
- Domestic Violence Task Force: no updates
- Employment Task Force: no updates

### *Other Updates*

- VOLAGs
- Alliance for African Assistance
  - 75 arrivals (including Pakistani and Somali families); launched new series of workshops for those who want to become interpreters, and a new initiative to train clients who are interested in working in home healthcare; AAA encourages referrals to and signing up for their IDA Savings Match Program
- Catholic Charities
  - 74 arrivals (mostly Iraqis, but also cases from Afghanistan, Congo, Somalia + Cuban/Haitians); new initiative: quarterly stakeholder meetings that bring together Volags, County, State and interested parties from the community to discuss arrival numbers, medical conditions that need immediate attention, and challenges that might arise with higher number of Congolese refugees arriving (later this year or early next year) – anyone interested in participating in stakeholder conference calls should contact Dr. McKay
- IRC
  - 88 arrivals in January and 33 this month (so far; including three large Somali free cases)
- JFS
- Burmese and Iraqi arrivals;
- County: No updates – question was raised regarding new arrivals with urgent medical needs and special health conditions; the public health coordinator should be contacted for answers
- State Advisory Committee
  - *Focus: Making Social Media Work for Non-Profits/Mastering Facebook in Ten Days*
- Presentation by James Reed, [Community Boost Consulting](#) (presentation available)

*Survey Results presented by Najla Ibrahim*

- Meeting times seem to work for almost everyone.
- Organizations that signaled interest in being featured as a spotlight organization will receive an email notice from the chair; all requests will be honored (for scheduling and programming see also below)



- Requested topics will be incorporate in the programming for this year
- Quite a few surveys voice interest in a larger meeting space/better parking

#### *Community Announcements*

- Valery Belloso, Business Development Officer at *Accion San Diego*: organization has been providing small business loans for the last 20 years; supports economic development of small businesses
- Rosanna Balistreri, *reach-diversity*: organization provides certification for health interpreters, and boot camps for English medical terminology
- Becky, AAA: reminds everyone that it is tax season and that AAA is offering assistance for refugees
- 211San Diego is also offering tax assistance
- Nancy Martey, Nile Sisters: organization has a new in home-daycare program; Covered CA counselors are available at their office
- John Ramirez, USCIS: over 800 persons were nationalized downtown over the last month; USCIS is offering free 2hr-workshops and materials for those preparing for the citizenship test; the agency partners with local libraries all over the region; interpreters are not provided that often – after all, the test is in English (exceptions: a person older than 50 years who has been a permanent resident for 20 years; a person older than 55 years who has been a permanent resident for 15 years )
- Nao Kabashima, Karen Organization: organization received a large donation of binders; anyone interested should stop by
- AAA has a new immigration coordinator

#### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Chair hasn't sent out minutes for January yet. Minutes for January and February will be approved (and corrected as needed) during the next general meeting.

Adjournment: 11:50 am

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance



## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, March 18, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

#### *Call to order at 10:35 am*

- *Present:* Hassan Abdirahman, Genevieve Caston, Abdi Abdillahi, Rita Shamoon, Sheryl Ashley, Thuan Nguyen, Nao Kabashima, John Ramirez, Alex Kahn, Celia Balestreri, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley, Renee Nasori, Elaine McLevie, Maggie Fenn, John Ramirez, Nadine Pedusseau, Kim Hoang, Hussein Nuur, Mohamed Dad, Deona Dorsey, Joelle Bennett, Marc Meyer, Kate VanSchyndle, Shaaayn Hagsufi, Grace Chu, Monica Perez-Santiago, Holly Crawford, Maggie Lujan, Jonathan Hardy, Bisma Coda, Kim Forrester, Jessica Rossier, Cristina Magara, Jo-Ann Julia, Juan Estrada, Simin Khadivi, Carlos Mendez, Becky Morines, Sophie Cheetham, Ute Maschke

#### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- Nawal Alkatib (Treasurer) welcomed new members, encouraged non-members to join, and provided an update on the forum's finances: 12 organizations have joined as members. All attendees are encouraged to become members of the forum. Members will be featured on the website and can participate in the task forces. Each task force receives \$500/year. Renewal forms are available; the forum accepts cash and checks. The forum now has a budget of \$9,390; \$513 has been spent so far.
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance.

#### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force:
- Today's presentation is a result of the task force's activities. The task force is currently planning a presentation for September. The next meeting will be Friday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2:30pm at Karen Organization.
- Employment Task Force:
- We finished our second employer round-table successfully. New co-chairs for the task force are Carlos Mendez (Refugee Services, Catholic Charities) and Sophie Cheetham (IRC). Meetings take place every 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday, 4-5pm.

- Domestic Violence:
- We will start meeting again; every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 10-11:30am, at License to Freedom. We are currently planning one-day training for staff from all organizations, and we are developing a curriculum and will recruit participants..
- World Refugee Planning Committee: The task force is co-chaired by Nao Kabashima (Karen Organization) and Michelle Evarrtt (IRC). We started planning the event for June 21<sup>st</sup> and will vote on a location today. The website is up; please save the date.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: no updates

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance
- 49 arrivals (China, Pakistan, Somali, Burma, Iraq); expected arrivals this month: 60
- Catholic Charities
- 70 arrivals in February (Iraq; Afghanistan, Iran, Somali, Ethiopia + Cuban/Haitians); expect the same number for March; across the Wilson Fish program, we had 11 asylees
- IRC
- 55 arrivals (including a Congolese case)
- JFS
- 46 (Iraq; Afghanistan; Columbia)
- State Advisory Committee - Thuan Nguyen:
- During FY 2013, 6382 refugees arrived in CA; as of January 13, 2014, 1964 have arrived. ORR's federal budget for 2014 is \$ 1.5 billion (an increase of \$ 470 million from last year). The budget will allow ORR also to provide proper services to the expected high number of unaccompanied minors.
- California's rate for refugees entering employment is currently the lowest in the country, hence, we are being asked to look at employment rates and seek ways to maximize outcome. We are looking at other states that are running successful programs. We intend to initiate projects that help improving employment numbers and might look at how to allocate single cases.
- R&P is holding quarterly consultations with the state; resettlement agencies are consulting with the state. The second such consultation will take place in April. (see also February minutes).

Consultations are going very well for San Diego, also due to Bob Montgomery's work.

- Because of screening processes, arrivals from Syria are being delayed. 2000 have been approved for the United States. Most Burmese refugees
- County – Maggie Fenn
- We got a "Get Fresh Grant" for nutrition education and will begin to roll it out over the next couple of weeks, together with IRC and also including community garden education.
- We are also working together with the Conflict Resolution Center to provide conflict management training that will go out to our CalWorks Refugee population.

*Focus: Emergency Communication: Where to go for Information during a Crisis*

- Presentation by Holly Crawford, County of [San Diego Office of Emergency Services](#) (OES)
- OES's mission is foremost to support first responders and disaster/emergency preparedness.
- OES partnered with health services and held focus groups to determine best practices how to get out information.
- OES communicates through partner relays, i.e., community partners are contacted and translate all information into other languages as needed. There are several platforms and resources for info sharing (also see handout, kindly forwarded by Holly Crawford) and access to disaster communication tools.
- During a disaster, 2-1-1 works with OES to provide information.
- [Informsandiego.ning.com](#) is the professional network site for sharing best practices and resources. The site is moderated by OES, and not public. For further information and gaining access to the site, contact Mike Davis ([mike.davis@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:mike.davis@sdcounty.ca.gov))
- "AlertSanDiego" is an automatic landline service. Anyone who wants to receive alerts on their mobile phone needs to registers with them. San Diego also has "Accessible Alert San Diego" – and is a forerunner in providing this service.

*Spotlight: 5-2-1-0 Initiative*

- Presentation by Bonnie Copland (Central Region Public Health Center) and Jojo Drinkwater (WIC Program)
- 5-2-1-0 is a 10-year childhood obesity initiative. We want to reach out to refugees and their families and support them in developing healthy habits. 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day;

2 hours of recreational screen time; 1 hour or more of physical activity every day; 0 sugary drinks, but more water and low fat milk.

- Fighting obesity, as Jojo Drinkwater pointed out, can start every early on: breast milk “is the best beverage for newborns.”

#### *Community Announcements*

- Hassan Abdirahman, Somali Family Services:
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Youth Summit will be held March 30<sup>th</sup>, 11am-6pm, at the Jacobs Center. This year’s theme: “Planting the Seeds of Change. Developing the Muslim Individual.”
- Somali Family Services is partnering with San Diego Workforce Partnership for a Community Resource Fair, Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 10am-3pm. The event is hosted by San Diego Metro Region Career Centers.
- Jonathan Hardy, on behalf of Congresswoman Davis:
- Congresswoman Davis invites participation in “The 2014 Congressional Art Competition,” open to high school students. The winning student will receive scholarship opportunities and two round-trip airfare tickets to travel to Washington, DC. The winner’s artwork will be displayed in the Cannon Tunnel of the U.S. Capitol Building.
- Congresswoman Davis will participate in a panel at SDSU, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 10-12noon.
- Anyone interested in receiving updates from the congresswoman, please sign up for E-News, and visit [house.gov/SusanDavis](http://house.gov/SusanDavis), [facebook.com/RepSusanDavis](https://facebook.com/RepSusanDavis) or follow her at twitter.
- Renee Nasori, Project Shine: We revised our flyer to include all classes and locations for our program. The program assists refugees with healthcare and ESL. Please feel free to refer clients to our program.
- IRC April 5<sup>th</sup> is also a date for us. We are participating in a Community Health Fair, at Colina Del Sol Park, from 10am-. The Homespun Project will give interactive demonstrations of the weaving, and there will be free dental health screenings and other health services.
- The World Refugee Task Force is always looking for more members.
- Anyone who has recommendations for our panel on youth programs in San Diego is encouraged to submit those to Brittney Yackley.

#### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*



- Corrected minutes for January and February were approved as read. Corrected versions will be distributed via email.

Adjournment: 11:50 am

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance





## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

#### *Call to order at 10:35 am*

- *Present:* Genevieve Caston, Abdi Abdillahi, Rita Shamoon, Nao Kabashima, Celia Balestreri, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley, Renee Nasori, Elaine McLevie, Maggie Fenn, Nadine Pedusseau, Mohamed Dad, Joelle Bennett, Marc Meyer, Besma Coda, Juan Estrada, Romana Tyler, Kains Grounds, Mary Rutland, Bonnie Copland, Rich Benfante, Yenly Thach, Kathi Anderson, Jake Young, Vernita Gutierrez, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Cindy Meacock, Adel Dankha, Will James, Mike McKay, Gregory Shroyer, Bill Sutton, Mohammed Tuama, Carmen Kcomt, Ute Maschke

#### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- Nawal Alkatib (Treasurer) welcomed new members. As of today, we have 10 new memberships, in addition to ten memberships in March. We still have fewer members than last year; all attendees and supporters of the refugee community are encouraged to become members of the forum. Members will be featured on the website and can participate in the task forces.
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance.

#### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force:
- The task force led a successful meeting with ORR. Issues discussed included mental health, youth services, dental services, and preventative services. We are planning our special event on mental health, "Reducing Stigma. Increasing Access." There won't be a meeting this month; our next meeting will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday in May.
- Employment Task Force: No updates.
- Domestic Violence:
- We are currently planning a one-day training for staff from all organizations, and we are developing a curriculum and will recruit participants. The training is designed as a "Train the

Trainers” workshop.

- World Refugee Planning Committee: We are in the midst of planning the event for June 21<sup>st</sup>. We will hold our celebration in Balboa Park, in the International College area, from 10 am – 3pm. The website is up; please save the date. We will announce everything you need to know about resource tables in May.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: no updates

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance
- 47 arrivals in March; 59 so far in April (Nepal, Sudan, Somali, Burma, Iraq)
- Catholic Charities
- Arrival numbers are as anticipated; 52 so far in April (Iraq; Afghanistan, Iran, Congolese)
- IRC
- 50 booked for April (mostly Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia)
- State Advisory Committee – no updates
- County: Please be alert – IRS scams are currently reported en masse. This pervasive scam is described in more detail on the IRS website, at <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/IRS-Warns-of-Pervasive-Telephone-Scam> The IRS notes that the IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. This includes any type of electronic communication, such as text messages and social media channels. The IRS also does not ask for PINs, passwords or similar confidential access information for credit card, bank or other financial accounts.

#### *Focus: Services and Pathways for Refugees – Beyond the First Year” (Panel Discussion)*

- DISCLAIMER: Below is a summary of our discussion. For more detailed information, please contact the forum and its members.
- Maggie Fenn on behalf of the County of San Diego
- All funding is utilized with the goal of newcomers being employed within the first year. Refugee

families with children are covered through CalWorks, and are usually referred to the program through family resource centers and resettlement agencies. Services are available for up to 60 months. For the newcomers, the services should be experienced as seamless and don't differ from any services offered to other clients (case management and employment services). For refugees, there are a VESL program (offered in collaboration with IRC), Project Shine (health literacy program; in collaboration with Cuyamaca College) and EMASS, a program for elder clients, run through UPAC. The county also has a Get Fresh program (in collaboration with IRC). For more detailed information, consult the attached handout.

- Nadine Pedusseau on behalf of the resettlement agencies ([IRC](#), [JFS](#), [Catholic Charities](#), [Alliance for African Assistance](#))
- Our work is mostly known because of the services we offer during the first 8- 12 months. Our goal is to support newcomers in being able to access mainstream services independently after their first year here in the U.S. However, our services extend to up to five years. We offer ongoing employment services and career development programs, and partner with different agencies and organizations. Each resettlement agency also runs special programs to which we refer clients whenever possible. Success beyond the first "survival" year depends on successful acculturation; we offer a comprehensive acculturation program that strengthens the refugees' independence in an all-encompassing way. Most resettlement agencies have immigration services. Refugees find us through word-of-mouth referrals; we strive to collaborate as much as possible to match the right services and the clients' needs. More often than not, we are cultural translators who mediate between agencies and organizations.
- Juan Estrada on behalf of [Molina Healthcare](#) (with guest speakers)
- Our work at Molina is successful because we are working closely with the refugee community and the agencies who serve them. It is important for us to clearly understand the needs of the community; therefore, we do a lot of community outreach. We have a core management program administered through interdisciplinary case teams. Patients can call a nurse hotline at any point, day or night, to get the right information in their preferred language. We provide patient education, disability literacy training, cultural competency training and constantly educate members about our services. More recently, we established the position of 'community connector' (bi-lingual advocates) to reach our members even more effectively and also to locate homeless persons. Molina is currently also distributing new flyers to educate Arabic-speaking

clients on the use of 911 and urgent care.

- Nao Kabashima on behalf of the [Karen Organization](#)
- Our mission and modus operandi haven't changed since 2009, when our organization was founded. We focus on community building based on needs assessment. There are four pillars: community building, youth development, self-sufficiency, and culture preservation. All programs are results of community discussions and needs assessment and closely linked. We offer programs for all refugees from Burma and reach out especially to those who do not receive government services. We offer summer programs for kids, intergenerational community events, case management, job development programs, youth and leadership programs, ESL programs for elder individuals who do not receive welfare services. We reach out to and need the help of other agencies for mental health and legal services. Of highest importance is constant encouragement, for all our clients. Failure is only another step towards success.
- Besma Coda on behalf of [Chaldean and Middle-Eastern Social Services](#)
- Our goal is to maximize communities and facilitate a better way of life for all. Our multi-lingual and highly qualified staff works in two major areas: We have a medical clinic open to everyone, and we provide social services to any Arabic-speaking individual. We offer, among other things. clinical case management, mental health programs, school-based mental health programs, survivor-of-torture programs for Arabic speakers, support groups, skills development for loss and anger management, psychiatric evaluation, assimilation and acculturation inside schools, cultural sensitivity training, educational workshops, and much more. We are a certified Covered California agency and handle CalFresh applications. Clients find us all the time; and we collaborate closely with other agencies.

### *Community Announcements*

- The Karen Organization received the National Association of Social Workers 2014 Social Work Month award for ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR! CONGRATULATIONS!
- USCIS is actively educating their own staff on how to work better with the refugees. We are organizing a special event for June 12<sup>th</sup>.
- The National Conflict Resolution Center now has an Arabic trainer (and materials in Arabic). We are looking for an experienced, bi-lingual consultant to work with us part-time.
- The Asian Cultural Festival will take place May 10<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 8 pm. Any organization interested in



having a booth at the event should contact Joelle, at the Karen Organization.

- Jonathan Hardy, on behalf of Congresswoman Davis:
- Congresswoman Davis invites participation in “The 2014 Congressional Art Competition,” open to high school students. The winning student will receive scholarship opportunities and two round-trip airfare tickets to travel to Washington, DC. The winner’s artwork will be displayed in the Cannon Tunnel of the U.S. Capitol Building.
- Anyone interested in receiving updates from the congresswoman, please sign up for E-News, and visit [house.gov/SusanDavis](http://house.gov/SusanDavis), [facebook.com/RepSusanDavis](https://facebook.com/RepSusanDavis) or follow her at twitter.
- Molina Healthcare is hosting its annual “Community Champions Awards” April 24, 2014. Please join. This is a unique opportunity to celebrate unsung community heroes.
- AAA is looking for refugee performers and speakers (June 20<sup>th</sup>). Please contact Brittney Yackley.
- La Maestra will open a clinic for the homeless in the near future.

#### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Minutes for March were approved as read.

Adjournment: 11:50 am

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance



## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, May 15, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

### *Call to order at 10:35 am*

- *Present:* Genevieve Caston, Abdi Abdillahi, Rita Shamoon, Nao Kabashima, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley, Renee Nasori, Joelle Bennett, Besma Coda, Juan Estrada, Kains Grounds, Jake Young, Will James, Ayan Mohamed, Jason Martinez, Anna Benedicho, Deona Dorsey, Nawar Yousif, Kathryn Shade, Dante Daut, Tammy Pham, Shadiya Hagsup, Hassan Abellrrahmen, Bridget Lambert, Bashar Amir, Hudo Ahmed, Ghazia Hassan, Julie Kaufman, Aileen Gulan, Ute Maschke

### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- Nawal Alkatib (Treasurer) welcomed two new members. Membership is (still) available. If you or your organization joined now, you would have an opportunity to showcase your organization's work at a table during our Word Refugee Day celebration. Membership fees can be paid in cash or by check.
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance.

### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force:
  - We are working toward our special event on mental health, "Happy and Healthy Together." Focus will be in wellness issues, with an emphasis on healthy activities.
- Employment Task Force: We are planning two events for late summer/September; a networking night and an employer breakfast to celebrate our clients' success.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: The task force hasn't been meeting; we are just getting up and running. We would like to focus on transgender individuals who are often getting released from detention during the middle of the night and have no place to go. Our goal is to find transitional housing. We are open to ideas. Casa Cornelia has done outreach work, working together with Catholic Charities. We provide presentations on asylum, what it is and what the remedies are. We were able to accept five to six individual cases. Based on this model, we have recently begun



to present at Somali Family Services.

- World Refugee Planning Committee: The flyer for the event is now available (and will also be distributed electronically). We are still looking for vendors for the event, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 10am – 3pm. We will have one table to present the members of the refugee forum. If you are interested in presenting, please contact Nao Kabashima.

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance
- 57 arrivals in May (34 so far)
- Catholic Charities
- 47 so far in May
- IRC
- 115 arrivals in May; first Syrian family came through 50 booked for April (mostly Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia)
- JFS 31 in April; 28 in May

#### *Focus: Youth Programs & Summer Opportunities for Refugee Youth*

- DISCLAIMER: Below is a summary of our discussion. For more detailed information, please contact the forum and its members.
- Joelle Bennett; [Karen Organization](#) – Summer Programs
- First Generation Youth Group (Monday afternoon): Leadership Building
- Youth Recreational and Creative Enrichment, including community and social activities, improvement of social skills
- Mentoring for at-risk youth (also through soccer)
- Youth Academic Enrichment, including English Reading and Writing
- Karen, Karenni and Burmese language classes
- Homespun: traditional weaving, cultural preservation and intergenerational exchange
- Together with Keep City Heights Safe computer classes
- Starting in July, lunch will be available Monday through Friday for youth under 18, 11:30am –

12:30pm; snacks will be available Monday through Friday, 3pm – 4pm.

- We are also planning our next fundraising planning
- Olivia Wong;YALLA (<http://yallasd.org/>)
- “using soccer to motivate refugee and immigrant youth to rebuild their lives through education and leadership programs”
- located in El Cajon; one of the first comprehensive programs to allow engagement in athletics and education for children and youth, ages 5 to 19
- next summer program runs June 30 – July 26; new participants are evaluated to find the best fit
- We have a holistic approach and, aside from soccer, offer yoga, gardening, excursions, eco therapy, surfing, movies, and much more. We partner with SOTI and IRC.
- We offer transportation from the refugees’ homes to our place; lunch is paid by the school as well.
- With us, children can get into competitive soccer teams for free.
- Please contact Janice (director) or Chelsey (soccer head coach) with questions.
- Farah Hussein; Somali Family Services (<http://www.somalifamilyservice.org/>)
- LION program (Leaders in our Neighborhood): educational workshops and recreational activities.
- Focus is on empowerment of youth ages 13-18
- Workshops on career development, health, financial responsibility, leadership training, community service
- Bridget Lambert; National Conflict Resolution Center
- We have a youth training program to support the development of communication skills and collaborative conflict management. Through effective communication, we can transcend cultural differences.
- The Youth Exchange Program has a 8-hours curriculum (which can be broken up into two-hour segments), and provides free, interactive training, tailored to your needs.
- We are very flexible and can add an adult curriculum. Lunch is provided by us.
- Please contact Marc Meyer at [mmeyer@ncrconline.com](mailto:mmeyer@ncrconline.com)
- Jason Martinez; Union High School District – International Newcomer Center
- Everyone coming through the newcomer center meets for at least three hours to make sure that the right network is developed and students are connected to the right resources.



- There are differences from school district to school district. Title I schools provide a huge range of services for refugees and immigrant. Make use of these services. Insist on these services and hold schools accountable. Parents need to get involved.
- Every school should provide at least three weeks of summer school for English Language Development.
- For suggestions, questions and inquiries contact Jason Martinez at [jmartinez@guhsd.net](mailto:jmartinez@guhsd.net).
- Dante Dauz; Alliance for Community Empowerment/UPAC
- We offer a broad range of services and programs throughout the summer.
- We have a mobile response team that goes out and helps in any violent event.
- We have empowerment programs for youth ages 12 – 17 years: Strengthen Families (10-12 years old); Leadership Academy (overcoming gang violence; building alcohol, drug and peer pressure resistance); Team Empowerment
- We have free-floating groups that meet every Wednesday (2:30pm) and every Thursday (2:30pm and 6pm). The latter focuses on gang awareness.
- We focus on mid-city and the South East. We do provide mentorship and home visits as needed.
- Please contact Dante Dauz (Program Supervisor) at [ddauz@upacsd.com](mailto:ddauz@upacsd.com)
- Dante also reiterated what all presenters had emphasized: Show youth a variety of things. Kids come up with the most amazing things.
- Brittney reminded all attendees that anyone interested in establishing a youth task force should contact the officers of the forum.

*Spotlight: Jonathan Hardy, Office of Congresswoman Susan Davis*

- Most importantly: “Know your congressional district and your congressional representative.”
- Susan Davis serves the 53<sup>rd</sup> district. We respond to constituents’ inquiries about laws and regulations and advocate for your community. Though we cannot endorse you, we can take a look at your grant proposals and, when appropriate, provide letters of support.

*Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Minutes for March were approved as read.



Adjournment: 12:10 am

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance



## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, June 17, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

### *Call to order at 10:30 am*

- *Present:* Abdi Abdillahi, Nao Kabashima, Najla Ibrahim, Brittney Yackley, Kains Grounds, Nawar Yousif, Shadiya Hagsup, Hassan Abdirahman, Deona Dorsey, Mohamed Dad, Bill Sutton, May Hasan, Kaoni Itoyama, Mancy Martey, Lorna Strang, Kathryn Shade, Kim McDermott, Maggie Fenn, Mike McKay, Marc Meyer, Sylvia Barron, Kim Forrester, Jessica Rossier, Sophie Cheetham, Carlos Mendez, Ute Maschke

### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- Ute Maschke (Secretary) welcomed PCG as a new member. Membership is (still) available. If you or your organization joined now, you would have an opportunity to showcase your organization's work at a table during our Word Refugee Day celebration. Membership fees can be paid in cash or by check.
- Three Refugee Forum Officers were in attendance.

### *Task Force Updates*

- Health Task Force:
- We are still working toward our special event on mental health, "Happy and Healthy Together." Interpretation and translation of some (more mainstream) materials might be too big of a challenge. We might consider a presentation instead of an event.
- Employment Task Force:
- We will hold an Employer Appreciation Breakfast September 18<sup>th</sup> (generously sponsored by Blue Shield). The event will feature a "Client Success" panel to showcase who the clients are and how they succeeded. IRC is offering business training events in El Cajon and City Heights, for clients who are interested in starting a business, driving for Uber, working from home, starting a restaurant, or internet marketing. Trainings will be held in English and Arabic. Contact IRC for questions and inquiries (619-641-7510).
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force:
- The task force will meet Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 3-5pm, at Casa Cornelia.
- World Refugee Planning Committee: We are looking forward to the event, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 10am – 3pm. We will have special guest speakers: Mayor Kevin Faulconer and Bob Montgomery, Executive Director, IRC San Diego. Please join us and celebrate with us. There will be seven vendors and resource tables for forum members.

### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance: 32 arrivals (from Iraq, Afghanistan, Cuba)
- Catholic Charities: 64 arrivals in May (including asylum seekers, SIVs)
- JFS: 51 arrivals
- IRC: Steady flow of arrivals (SIVs, refugees, asylees)
- County: We might be able to help refugees with new services – We offer housing assistance, assistance repairing your vehicle, and crisis counseling for you or your child. Please have your clients contact their welfare-to-work case manager to see if they qualify.

### *Focus: Career Development – Getting Refugee Clients to the Next Step*

- Carla Decina, IRC, Career Development Coordinator
- Career Development is a process and, depending on the client's professional background, placement is sometimes difficult. It requires short and long-term planning. Clients are interested in getting back into their careers or getting into college but are often at a loss which steps to take when. The challenge is always how to keep up with clients.
- The program started in August 2009, in response to the influx of clients with high levels of professional experience. IRC's program supports clients in understanding how to bridge the gap from where the client is at the moment (usually in his or her first job) and where they want to be in a competitive job market.
- The program is open to all clients and starts with an orientation. ("Sometimes, it's just not a good fit right now.") Deciding factors include: time length in U.S.; work experience in U.S.; work experience abroad; skills; education; English; realistic frame; type of training and programs interested in; motivation and readiness. All clients are working when starting this career development program.
- The Career Development Cycle consists of four major points/stages.
- Know yourself – be clear about interests and motivation. 2) Explore Possibilities – research is important. 3) Make Choices – set realistic goals and a plan of action. 4) Make it happen.
- 3 hours per week of Work Readiness training. Components: Resume building and cover letter writing; Interview practice; how to read job descriptions; "thinking like an employer;" employment networking; financial counseling; help with grant research and degree evaluation; help with loans (up to \$5,000 for training programs) through IRC's loan program.
- Program successes: For the enrolled 60 clients, the average wage received is \$15/hr. For the three years of the program's existence, the average wage is \$17/hr.
- Answers to questions from the audience:
- The next group orientation is coming up in July. It usually takes place in El Cajon, but there is flexibility.
- There is no age limit. Clients only looking for help with college applications should contact IRC's special program.

- Industries open and paying fairly well: trucking (but that's really hard work) and HVAC (around \$13-14/hr.). The latter is a good field for engineers or clients with a background in construction. There also maintenance engineer positions at various hotels.
- Asylum seekers can join the program as long as they have a work authorization.
- Loans have an interest rate of 7.25%. Depending on the client's situation, paying back can take between one and three years. (There is also an option for administrative fees for those whose religious beliefs prohibit loans that involve interest.)
- There is usually a cohort of 10 clients every other month.

*Spotlight: [Women's Empowerment International](#)*

- "It all started with an idea shared by 35 women. Since then, through your generous donations and the efforts of others like you, WE will have funded well over 15,000 small business loans for deserving women in Honduras, Mexico, Benin and Ghana. In addition, San Diego's poor women have been able to start or strengthen over 200 businesses."
- Since 2006, we have been working with IRC's STAR Center for Women.
- We just started a new project with PCI a partnering with PCI, "for an 18-month pilot to develop self- managed and self-sustaining village savings groups for low-income Latino, Filipino, and East African women in San Diego. This pilot is attempting to adapt the concept of Village Savings Groups, which have been highly successful in rural areas of other countries, to the urban, developed environment of the United States."
- Our next big event is coming up July 13<sup>th</sup>: WE's Annual Celebration (Great Hall, UCSD, 2- 4pm)

*Community Updates*

- Marc Meyer, NCRC
- The center offers new opportunities for refugees; at no cost. Participants in various trainings can gain more life skills and community engagement. A next exchange training is planned: "The Exchange brings conflict management skills & strategies to City Heights. We teach an easily learned, structured process to key community members, who can then effectively address and resolve the conflicts that occur every day in their neighborhoods, workplaces, organizations and families." Anyone interested should contact Alison Aragon at [aaragon@ncrconline.com](mailto:aaragon@ncrconline.com) or 619.238.2400 ext. 215.
- Brittney Yackley, Alliance for African Assistance
- World Refugee Day is June 21<sup>st</sup>. AAA is holding its 13<sup>th</sup> annual celebration at the La Jolla Presbyterian Church, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 – 11:30am. A few tickets are still available.
- Kim McDermott, Emergency Services Coordinator, San Diego County Office of Emergency Services
- We are finalizing a County-wide communication strategy to disseminate information to various language communities during an emergency. We are interested in input regarding trusted ethnic



community media resources. If you have suggestions and information, please contact me.

[Kim.McDermott@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Kim.McDermott@sdcounty.ca.gov)

- Ramla O. Sahid, The Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans
- We are a new refugee support group. We want to figure out how to locate the best resources for refugees. The partnership is dedicated to building the civic participation capacity of immigrants and refugees in SD County. “Our mission is to put into action winnable strategies that promote the fair treatment and equitable inclusion of immigrant/refugee communities through policy and organizing. We utilize grassroots organizing at the community level to advance policy change. We are also interested in supporting the non-profit infrastructure that serves refugees by advocating and leading efforts that brings in more resources to refugee serving CBOs in San Diego.”

#### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Minutes for May were approved as read.

Adjournment: 11:20 am

Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance



## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, July 15, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

#### *Call to order at 10:35 am*

- *Present:* Abdi Abdillahi, Rita Shamoan, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley, Elaine McLevie, John McLevie, Joelle Bennett, Marc Meyer, Juan Estrada, Mary Rutland, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Carlos Mendez, Ramla Samid, Nancy Martey, Lula Bom, Paige Newman, Veronica Mikho, Ismad Cortes, Maggie Lujan, Dan Nyamangah, Sophie Cheetham, Monica Nelson, Veronique Rodriguez, Sylvia Barren, Lamar Jackson, Yu Yu Khaing, Deona Dorsey, Kathryn Shade, Mariana Vasconcelos, Ute Maschke

#### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting with a reminder that the forum is soliciting nominations for the panel on successful refugees (to be held in August); we want to celebrate and honor refugees who have made extraordinary steps toward self-sufficiency
- General Introductions
- Nawal Alkatib (Treasurer) welcomed two new members: PCG and Horn of Africa. The forum is now 30 members strong.
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance.

#### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force: no updates
- Employment Task Force: Our breakfast event has been scheduled for September 19<sup>th</sup>. (Community Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Workforce Partnership). Blue Shield is donating the breakfast. We want to present successful refugees and their stories to employers.
- Domestic Violence: no updates on the task force; we are looking for a new chair or co-chair.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: no updates

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance
- 136 arrivals in June; finding appropriate housing is a challenge at the moment

- Catholic Charities
- 140 last month, expect around the same number for July
- IRC
- 130 new arrivals; we see a spike in SIVs
- State Advisory Committee – no updates
- County: Certain policies at HHSA have changed recently, and we are no longer able to sign letters of support for your grant proposals. All requests and letters have to go through the executive office; the process can easily take more than two weeks.

*Focus:* [National Conflict Resolution Center](#)

- Marc Meyer and Veronica Mikho
- The center was founded 31 years ago; its headquarters are in San Diego but its efforts and activities are at the local, national, and international level.
- NCRC provides full services for alternative dispute resolutions and trains people to manage their own conflicts.
- NCRC is involved in the refugee community; SDRF meetings are some of the most productive and supportive ones.
- NCRC has three divisions:
- training institute: open to everybody; mediation and conflict management training; everybody needs communication and conflict management skills.
- Business Center: paid arbitration services for corporations; there is a fee for these services, and profits feed back into community work. Negotiation settlements can be legally binding. We train supervisors, managers, staff (also internationally).
- Community Division: free mediation services for any resident in San Diego county (except North County); we want to be a tool in your toolbox, and we want you to seek us out when disputes need to be resolved
- Our professional mediators (some of them bilingual) facilitate confidential meetings between disputing parties and guide discussions of issues toward a mutually acceptable agreement. Disputes that can be mediated include neighbors, landlords and tenants, families, local communities, small claims court matters and restraining order cases.



- To make a bigger impact, we share mediation skills with community members, especially through our [Exchange training](#). The latter can be offered for local communities, now also in Arabic and Spanish, for youth, work-readiness training, health care workers, and other interested parties. The next community training has been scheduled for July 31<sup>st</sup>. If you are interested, contact Ashley Virtue at 619-238-2400 ext 221, or [avirtue@ncrconline.com](mailto:avirtue@ncrconline.com)
- We can also offer presentation to any interested group.
- We are also introducing a new initiative: Restorative Community Conferencing. We partnered with the Probation Division to help youth who find themselves in the criminal justice system. We are working with juveniles under 18. Our goal is to grow a program that would help eliminating juvenile detention centers altogether.
- Our work is funded through contracts (with the County of San Diego, for example), through our business division, and through grants and private donors.

*Spotlight: [Nile Sisters](#) – Development Initiative*

- Nancy Martey and Lula Bom
- The organization was founded by a former refugee in 2001.
- We support refugees and immigrants and their families in becoming self-sufficient through education and other services.
- We are located at 6035 University Ave, Ste 22 and can be reached at 619-265-2959.
- We offer various programs for refugees who have been in the U.S. for less than 5 years:
- Certified Nursing Assistant vocational training (long waiting list; limited space; extensive screening process)
- Home Childcare Provider vocational training
- CA Driver's license training (funding for driving practice; long waiting list)
- We also do Covered California enrollment and outreach (as a certified enrollment entity); job search/job readiness activities; parenting orientation and cultural and healthcare orientation.
- We hold several events every year, fundraisers, World Refugee Day, and program graduation included.

*Community Announcements*



- SD county wants to remind everyone of the county's Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. We can present our Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at your agency or organization. Contact us at [www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/clppb](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/clppb)
- AAA has free cubicle divisions and filing cabinets. Please contact Brittney Yackley.
- AAA is looking for bicycle donations.

#### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Minutes for June were approved as read.

Adjournment: 11:50 am

Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance



## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, August 19, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

#### *Call to order at 10:30 am*

- *Present:*

Vernita Gutierrez, Abdi Abdillahi, Dan Breuninger, Paige Newman, Joyce Thompson, Mary Rutland, Will James, Jessica Mier, Kim Forrester, Sheryl Ashley, Ladywinnie Okot, Nao Kabashima, Dan Mu, Hser Kaw Moo, Lauren Raju, May Hasan, Alea Smalls, Faduma Jama, Afrah Abdulkader, Nadine Peddusseau, Dr. Thabit Khalaf, Mohamed Dad, Neda Gisu, Claudia Moreno, Dawn Marie Tol, Deona Dorsey, Nawar Yousif, Bill Sutton, Jessie Blanco, Renee Nasori, Rita Shamoan, Colleen Kruse, Lamar Jackson, Kathryn Shade, Mariana Vasconcelos, Hassan Abdirahman, Perla Vallejo, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley

#### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- Nawal Alkatib (Treasurer) welcomed new members. The two new members for August are UC San Diego and the Otto Family Foundation.
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance with the exception of Ute Maschke.

#### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force:
  - We are preparing for the Happy and Healthy Together event. We are looking for involvement from the refugee forum and from anyone in the community. We want to address mental health issues and take away some of the stigma that goes along with it. The event is a wellness and information fair and it is on September 22<sup>nd</sup> from 3-6pm at the Wellness Center. We are looking for nominations of new chairs for the task force.
- Employment Task Force:
  - We are preparing for an employer appreciation event this Friday at Workforce Partnership.
- Domestic Violence:
  - Our August meeting was at Center for Community Solutions. We discussed how to get and use

volunteers that can fill in the gaps when we don't have enough full time staff, and also discussed ways to recruit interpreters to assist with court hearings and other needs.

- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force:
- No updates. This task force is looking for chairs and members.

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance
- 74 arrivals this month (Iraq, Somalia, Cuba, Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan)
- Catholic Charities
- Don't have exact numbers but it's a steady pace, not the expected surge. Majority from Iraq.
- Jewish Family Service
- July arrivals were 56, August at 49 so far (Iraqis, Afghanis, Congolese)
- IRC
- No one present to comment.
- County: Kim Forrester – we are working on a proposal with our community action partnership to promote a work experience program at Grossmont College. As we get more info we will bring it to the group.
- State Advisory Committee – No new updates

#### *Focus: Successful Refugees Panel*

- DISCLAIMER: Below is a summary of our discussion that is paraphrased. For more detailed information, please contact the forum and its members.
- *Names, where you are from, how and when did you arrive in the U.S.?*
- Maryam Abdul Sattar- from Afghanistan, arrived in January of this year
- May Hassan- from Iraq, arrived in late May 2013
- Thabit Khalaf and Nisreen Hasan – June 2009 from Iraq

- *What are some of the biggest successes you feel you've achieved here? Where are you working? What are you doing now?*
- Maryam – success without challenges is neither possible nor enjoyable. I had a lot of challenges in my life, and I think my life is an example of success as well. So whenever I attempt, I get it, if I don't get it, I keep trying with a better experience.
- May – success for me was to find a job that I'm passionate about. I found a job at San Diego Youth Services as a case manager after 2 months of being in this country. I'm working with families and students. I feel successful and blessed.
- Thabit and Nisreen – We arrived in June 2009 after some time in Jordan. We had a lot of problems in Iraq with Al Qaeda. They had kidnapped our boy and we had to leave the country. When we left my Nisreen especially had a hard time because so many people asked about our kids and it was too painful to always be reminded about this. We found help through Survivors of Torture International (SOTI). They provided a doctor for Nisreen to talk to and they are even helping us up till now. I (Thabit) was a professor of architecture in Iraq, and SOTI helped me find a fellow professor here to befriend. Nisreen wrote a memoir especially for mothers about her experiences in Iraq and the sorrows she faced and that women faced from 1980-2010. Many nights I would wake up to find Nisreen crying and typing her novel. She wrote it in Arabic and had it published in Cairo. She is now looking for a sponsor to have it translated into English. She wants American leaders to know and understand what happened to Iraqi ladies during this time. She is now working on a second novel.
- *What are some challenges you have faced?*
- Maryam – In my life I had faced many challenges. I was born blind and people weren't ready to accept me as a blind child. Luckily I had an educated father and a kind and literate mother and I was given all the rights a normal child would have. I forced my parents to get me into school because I am a curious child. After 1 or 2 years of school, the situation in Afghanistan got bad and we had to leave the country. I finished my high school in Pakistan. I showed my relatives that a blind child could do a lot if given the chance. We were accepted by UNHCR as refugees and then accepted by the U.S. to be resettled. Coming here was another challenge, but I have a quality that helps me to always struggle. I am thankful to Catholic Charities for their help. Still there are challenges, but not as tough as what I had before.
- May – What challenges are there for Iraqis? Do you have the rest of the day? Four wars

minimum, leaving houses, loved ones, friends, fear, suffering. I've encountered many types of fear in my life. Without encountering this I wouldn't be sitting here with people like you that are doing marvelous job for refugees. I was resettled through Jewish Family Service and the transition was so smooth. It wasn't easy to come to the U.S. as an Iraqi female. I was worried about how my family and my culture would be accepted here. I was proud of my culture, but also wanted to learn from U.S. culture.

- Thabit and Nisreen – In Iraq we were middle class, I had my job at the university, and we were well off. One mistake I made was that I was thinking logically. The U.S. Army had a program for the Redevelopment of Iraq, which I thought as a professor of architecture I should help with. Al Qaeda asked me to stop working with the Americans and I didn't – and we paid a high price for that. We had to leave the country and come here. We had to plan how to raise our other two boys. We have two other boys here and when we moved we had to talk to them about the rule of law in America, how to be a good citizen, and how to contribute to society. At 70, it isn't easy to be an architect here when everyone is looking for fresh ideas. I decided to be useful in other ways by volunteering for SOTI and Neighborhood Healthcare. Nisreen comes from a well-informed family of writers and thinkers. She wrote her book as a way to contribute to American society. We still want to keep the life we've been used to and also contribute to American society.
- *What are your future plans?*
- Maryam – I have finished high school and 2 semesters in English Literature from a university in Pakistan. I want to continue my studies and become a professor.
- May – I have my Masters in Business Administration and 15 years experience in the UNDP. With this wealth of experience in project management and training I realized I'm passionate about transferring my knowledge and training others.
- Thabit and Nisreen – Nisreen is writing her 2<sup>nd</sup> book. The first book is about the suffering of women in Iraq since 1980. This second book is to show she's not only focused on suffering, and that she can write about love and young people. Thabit: At the moment we are in the society with the best technology in the world. In Iraq we are currently short 4 million dwellings. The U.S. liberated us, then left. Now the contracts for redevelopment are going to countries that had nothing to do with our liberation, such as China and Korea. There are so many highly educated Iraqis in the U.S. whose hearts are still in Iraq and we want to use the new technologies to

rebuild Iraq, while safely working remotely from here. California construction companies are almost out of work because everything is almost developed. We want to make the connections between these companies, the highly qualified Iraqis, and the redevelopment that needs to be done in Iraq.

- *What advice would you give to someone that just arrived here or is in a similar situation?*
- Maryam – I'm a student, so I'm not in a position to advise, but I would want to share my commitments that I personally make every day in front of my God to the United States. My commitment to the U.S. to be loyal and faithful to my new homeland. I'd tell people not to rush into the wrong business, go step by step because there are a lot of opportunities here. If you don't know your rights and duties, then study your duties. If you know your duties, then your rights will automatically be given. Perform your duties, and you will be given your rights.
- May – Don't panic, look for a job that fits your passion, if you can't find a job, study and use the time. Don't just sit and think about what happened to you. I encourage people to volunteer because that is a foreign concept to Iraqis. I tell them your time is valuable, you can use any small free time to volunteer. Most of all, accept whatever happened to you. With acceptance comes peace.
- Thabit and Nisreen – Thabit: I want to tell a little story. In 1979 I was sent by the Iraqi government to Chicago, because we were building a new university in Iraq and we wanted to sit down with the architects to see what kinds of designs and criteria they were using. I found that there was a young man, 35 years old, responsible for the whole concept of the project. I asked him, "how do you get these concepts?" He said, "We have a community of 20 educators of different professions and every 2 weeks we do a book club where one person gives a report. We do books from all over the world, and throughout the years I have collected a lot of knowledge about different cultures and people. I use this knowledge for my ideas." I found out that he wasn't even working for the architectural company, he is a free-lancer, paid to give his ideas to different companies. Now you are presented with a great opportunity: a country where every person can be president. In the Middle East, you find presidents and kings that are less educated even than the average citizen. In the U.S. they have to be smart and go on TV and do a lot of debates, then people decide whether or not to vote for him. In the Middle East, either he is the son of the king, or he comes out with a machine gun and everyone is afraid of him, so he is in charge. My advice is to think about exactly what you want to do and continue planning for

the future.

- *Question for Thabit: Have you ever talked to any Iraqi men in the same situation as you?*
- Thabit – as a friend, if someone at SOTI asks or at the mosque. Only if they come my way – I'm not searching.
- *Panelists are presented with a certificate of achievement and a check of appreciation for \$100 each..*

*Spotlight: Alliance for African Assistance: IDA Program (Ladywinnie Okot)*

- Individual Development Accounts program is a federally funded program provided through the Health and Human Services program and through ORR. It is a savings matching program for refugees, asylees, and SIV holders. The qualifications are: that you are working and that you fit one of these immigration categories. The goal of the program is to encourage savings. Participants in the program set a goal to either: buy a home, start a business, go to college, buy a car. We are here to help them start or achieve that goal. If a client is single, they qualify for up to \$2000 worth of matches. If they are living in a household in which you claim a dependent, they qualify to save up to \$4000. We have achieved some goals that are beyond belief. I've had several clients actually purchase a goal. A client named Amer Al Nashi has been working at Goodwill for 2 years and has now purchased a home. If you know refugees that work hard and you know of that can commit to a savings program please refer them. We are the only organization serving the San Diego area. They can be resettled from any agency. They have to be in the country less than 3 years to buy a car or pay for school; they have to be in the country less than 5 years to buy a home or start a business. It is a one-to-one match grant, not a loan. We help them from start to finish with home buying, car buying, etc.

*Community Updates*

- On September 23<sup>rd</sup> we'll be having a special meeting for the Refugee Forum to address the issue of unaccompanied minors.
- Alliance for African Assistance Micro Enterprise Child Care program is teaming up with Head Start in El Cajon to provide free child care for ages 1.5-5yrs of age. This gives business to the child care providers and also free, in-language kindergarten prep for Farsi and Arabic speakers.
- October 25 and 26 there is a free dental, medical and eye clinic at San Diego Academy for clients





with low or no insurance. First come, first served. Sponsored by Refugee Assimilation Project, Adventist Medical Evangelist Network. For anyone, not just refugees. No ID will be required. Starts 8am.

- Hostelling International is putting on its 7<sup>th</sup> annual Peace conference. We will have a panel with refugees and organizations that serve refugees. This will be an opportunity for people to talk to students and the larger community to decrease stereotypes. We are also looking for service projects for our volunteers to help out with.
- International Security and Conflict Resolution Society at SDSU has a great pool of potential employees/interns
- Childhood Lead Prevention Program from San Diego County brought materials about keeping children safe from lead exposure.
- Center for Community Solutions is providing a 60 hour crisis-intervention domestic violence training for staff and volunteers. Our next training starts September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Looking for people that speak different languages and can volunteer for the community.
- Child Welfare Services provides training to refugees on child welfare laws, can be done in Arabic.
- *Approval of Meeting Minutes*
- Minutes for July were approved as distributed.

Adjournment: 12:00 pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance



## San Diego Refugee Forum

### Minutes

Tuesday, September 16, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

#### *Call to order at 10:40 am*

- *Present:* Vernita Gutierrez, Abdi Abdillahi, Paige Newman, Will James, Kim Forrester, Sheryl Ashley, May Hasan, Afrah Abdulkader, Mohamed Dad, Deona Dorsey, Renee Nasori, Rita Shamoon, Mariana Vasconcelos, Cheryl Dorenbush, Dilkhaz Ahmed, Hillary Smith, Jane Hoey, Juan Estrada, Justine Kozo, Merdin Mohammed, Lorne Strang, Melesa Flores, Mike McKay, Kathi Anderson, Cleve McLevie, Maureen Hartia, Jason Martinez, Alexa White, Katie Judd, Jessica Skidmore, Maggie Fenn, Lynn Scelfo, Hudo Ahmed, Nancy Martey, Rebecca Paidá, Neda Rivera, Romalyn Watson, Ayaa Mohamed, Afrah Abdulkadr, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley, Ute Maschke

#### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting with a special announcement: The San Diego Refugee Forum will be hosting a **Special Forum** meeting on issues regarding the Central American Refugee Migration, including unaccompanied minors. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 23, 10am-12pm, at Price Charities (4305 University Ave; 6<sup>th</sup> floor conference room). This dialogue of shared expertise and insight will greatly benefit all of us, and we hope to have your attendance at this forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance.

#### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force:
- *Happy and Healthy Together*, our family-friendly event to decrease the stigma around mental health,, will take place September 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 3-6pm, at the City Heights Wellness Center. There will be many resources and fun activities. Please join and encourage others to join. Also, we are looking for nominations for new co-chairs for the task force.
- Employment Task Force:
- We are preparing for an employer appreciation breakfast Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, at Workforce
- Partnership. 27 employers will join.

- Domestic Violence:
  - We found a strong partner in the Center for Community Solutions. We need new volunteers. Volunteers who commit for at least six months will receive training and a certificate. Next month is DV awareness month; we would like to encourage everyone to wear purple to honor all those who work in the field of DV.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: Kathi Anderson, Executive Director of Survivors of Torture International, accepted the nomination for chair of the task force. If you are interested in this area, please let Kathi and/or the forum officers know.

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance
- 78 arrivals this month (Iraq, DRC, Somalia, Russia, Afghanistan, Burundi)
- Catholic Charities
- We expect steady arrivals. There were 50 new arrivals in August. We will close the year with about 800 arrivals.
- Jewish Family Service
  - No one present to comment
- IRC
- We will close the year with 995 new arrivals. In addition to newcomers from Iraq and Afghanistan, we had 3-4 families from China.
- County: No updates.
- State Advisory Committee – During the last meeting, issues around unaccompanied minors were brought up. There are no solutions (yet). Please join our special forum meeting for more information.

#### *Focus: Continued Need for Free Clinics in Our Community – Maureen Hartin, Volunteers in Medicine*

- Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) has been offering services in East County for the last eight years; serving residents between the ages of 18 and 64 who do not have health insurance and are without access to medical care. The majority of our clients is between 45 and 64 years old and suffers from chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

- We are a part of the National Association of Free Clinics (a nationwide program of 1500 clinics), and a community-based training site. We provide high quality care and have expertise serving most vulnerable populations.
- We are open Monday through Saturday. New patients arrive every day.
- In 2013, we cared for 3500 patients in East County. (Some data: East County has a population of 469,000; 21% or 9,800 of them do not have insurance. 39,000 are not citizens; 9% are from the Middle East.)
- Despite the Affordable Care Act (ACA), free clinics will not go away. There will always be gaps in coverage. The Department of Human Services predicts that there will be 30 million uninsured in 2018. 16% in East County will be uninsured. For many, coverage will remain unaffordable. Also, there are gaps in service: there is a shortage of providers and there is a lack of medical appointment available.
- We work with over 100 volunteers, including 13 medical providers (three general practitioners and 10 specialists) and 22 nurses. We do not have dentists on staff. We do not do medication refills. However, most of our patients can qualify for free medication.
- On staff, also, are interpreters for Arabic (seven), Kurdish, and Spanish. We are always looking for more interpreters.
- Volunteerism bestows benefits to patients. Our capacity for extended conversations with a patient allows for in-depth, holistic assessment.
- Volunteerism bestows benefits to medical providers. Our volunteer providers enjoy a supportive, less competitive medical practice arena. Senior physicians get satisfaction out of preserving their skills.
- We are located at 1457 E. Madison Ave, El Cajon, and can be reached by phone (619)440-4591 or email [VIMSD@sbcglobal.net](mailto:VIMSD@sbcglobal.net)
- We are funded through grants and donations, and do our own fundraising. The Grossmont Healthcare District supports us heavily.
- We accept volunteers from medical schools, MSW and public health programs.
- We can do presentations and visit classrooms.

*Spotlight: International Tracing Services (American Red Cross) – Mariana Vasconcelos*

- We coordinate with the International Red Cross, offering free and confidential tracing services

for individuals who have been separated internationally from their families due to migration, disaster, armed conflict, human trafficking, domestic violence or other humanitarian emergencies. Tracing Services are available post conflict. A full search can be conducted when a family is no longer located at their last known address. It is always up to the family member whether they want to re-establish communication or not. Whenever we start a tracing service, we need the community to help us.

- Red Cross Messages are a way to contact family members in areas without access to phone, mail, or the Internet. We collect messages locally, send them through national processing centers and International Family tracing centers, and dispatch them locally. Through the international dispatch we ensure that all messages contain only family news.
- We can also help with Certificates of Detention, Travel Documents, International Disaster Welfare Inquiries, Health and Welfare Inquiries, and Referral Services.
- For more information, please contact Mariana at (858)309-1488 (Mariana. [Vasconcelos@redcross.org](mailto:Vasconcelos@redcross.org)). We are located at 3950 Calle Fortunada, San Diego.

*Emergency Communication Update – Kim McDermott and Justine Kozo, County of SD Office of Emergency Services*

- Following up on Supervisor Holly Crawford’s presentation, we would like to provide an update on existing services and ask you to join us in our partner relay network. San Diego has more than 400,000 individuals who speak languages other than English, and we work hard to be able to reach them in case of an emergency. We need your help in disseminating information. Our main mode of communication is our website <http://www.sdcountyemergency.com/>, which also includes a link to our mobile app, <http://www.readysandiego.org/SDEmergencyApp/?nomobileredirect=true>
- Our Partner Relay Network works by invitation only. The network allows for more detailed and rapid exchange of information. Please join our network and support us in making every effort to translate and send to clients, customers, congregations or network disaster information during natural, man-made and health emergencies. We distribute information via our websites, twitter, Facebook, and our app.
- Summary of resources: 211 San Diego; [informsandiego.ning.com](http://informsandiego.ning.com); [www.countynewscenter.com](http://www.countynewscenter.com); [www.sdcountyemergency.com](http://www.sdcountyemergency.com); [www.readysandiego.org](http://www.readysandiego.org); [www.sdcountyrecovery.com](http://www.sdcountyrecovery.com); mobile



app; social media

### *Community Updates*

- On September 23<sup>rd</sup> we'll be having a special meeting for the Refugee Forum to address the issue of unaccompanied minors.
- On October 25<sup>th</sup> (1pm-7pm) and 26<sup>th</sup> (7am-6pm) there will be a free dental, medical and eye clinic at San Diego Academy, 2800 E. 4<sup>th</sup> St, National City (Bus Route #13 and Route 968) for clients with low or no insurance. First come, first served. Sponsored by Refugee Assimilation Project, Adventist Medical Evangelist Network. For anyone, not just refugees. No ID will be required.
- SDFF (San Diego Futures Foundation) is offering free Youth Technology Training (ages 17-21). Participants have to have the legal right to work in the U.S. and bring proof of low-income. We also offer training programs for adults, long-term unemployed (min 27 weeks) or underemployed since 2008. Applicants must have prior work experience in IT or a related technical field. For more information, go to [www.sdfutures.org](http://www.sdfutures.org)
- Project Shine is recruiting tutors and volunteers.
- Somali Family Services will hold their "Day of Dignity" November 8<sup>th</sup>. Focus will be on low-income families and the homeless.
- AAA will hold a Bill Clinic every Wednesday in November. We will help with enrolling for discounts, contesting unfair bills and charges, and more.

### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Minutes for August were approved as distributed.

Adjournment: 11:43 pm

Special Meeting: Tuesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 10:00 – 12:00 pm @ Price Charities, 4305 University Ave

Next General Meeting: Tuesday, October



## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, October 21, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

#### *Call to order at 10:35 am*

- *Present:* Vernita Gutierrez, Kim Forrester, Sheryl Ashley, May Hasan, Afrah Abdulkader, Mohamed Dad, Deona Dorsey, Renee Nasori, Rita Shamoan, Dilkhaz Ahmed, Hillary Smith, Jane Hoey, Juan Estrada, Merdin Mohammed, Kathi Anderson, Jason Martinez, Neda Rivera, Ayaa Mohamed, Afrah Abdulkadr, Perla Vallejo, Nawar Yousif, Jessica Mier, Annika Parks, Nadine Pedusseau, Nao Kabashima, Jessica Rossier, Ismad Cortes, Elaine McLevie, Carin Anderson, Besma Coda, Najla Ibrahim, Brittney Yackley, Ute Maschke

#### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting with a special announcement: The San Diego Refugee Forum is requesting nominations for 2 new Forum Officers. Please email your nominations to Nao at [nao@karensandiego.org](mailto:nao@karensandiego.org).
- General Introductions
- Three Refugee Forum Officers were in attendance. The treasurer had to miss the meeting due to illness.

#### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force:
- *Happy and Healthy Together*, our family-friendly event to decrease the stigma around mental health,, was a big success. We had 40-50 participants and were able to take a first step toward reducing the stigma attached to mental health.
- Dawn-Marie Tol stepped down as the chair of the task force (due to new job responsibilities). We do have two new co-chairs: Bonnie Copland; Dianne Borgue
- Employment Task Force:
- We held a successful employer appreciation breakfast Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, at Workforce
- Partnership. We are looking for new co-chairs. Our next event is planned for March or April next year,
- just in time for the tourist season (and the increased hiring in the hospitality industry).

Attendance at our

- task force meetings is rather low.
- Domestic Violence:
- We met October 13<sup>th</sup> and reviewed how we can promote our ideas and establish a volunteer program and more training opportunities. The East County DV rally October 17<sup>th</sup> was a huge success.
- Our next regular meeting will be the second Monday of the month, at CCS.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: We met to discuss which direction we want to go and are recruiting for task force members now. We want to figure out which resources exist for asylum seekers and how we can make the most of them. Kathy Anderson and Ayan Mohamed are co-chairing the task force.

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance : 137 arrivals in October; We see an increase in newcomers from Afghanistan/SIVs.
- Catholic Charities: 60 new arrivals so far in October
- Jewish Family Service: No one present to comment
- IRC: 80 arrivals are scheduled for October, among them 2 Burmese, 2 Somali, and a Chinese family.
- County: No updates.
- State Advisory Committee: No updates

*Focus: Domestic Violence Awareness* – Dilkhawaz Ahmed, [License to Freedom](#); Afrah S. Abdulkader, [CCS](#)

- After a short video presentation that featured an Iraqi woman who had suffered from domestic violence (DV) and called attention to a lack of social services to support those affected by DV, the co-presenters (and some meeting participants) performed a role play showcasing different responses to someone requesting support. The discussion following the role-play brought to the fore the following urgent key points:
- DV is something we have to address as a community.
- Our services need to be trauma-informed services that provide the one in need with true



options.

- We must be extremely careful not to create another cycle of abuse by labeling the one in need, by asking her or him “What did you do?” or “Why?” or by not listening.
- Active listening is crucial. (Even if we feel like we have seen it all; we never know enough about the person in front of us.)
- We need to meet the client where they are: validating, acknowledging, empowering. Sometimes, all it takes is to know a few words in the client’s language. (Empowerment means to help the client understand that she/he her/himself has the power to change things.)
- We need to make sure that the client is safe (in the office, when they leave the office, when they are requested to show up for appointments).
- We need to support the client in developing her/his own safety plan. (Where do I go, to whom can I turn in times of need? Where will my children be? Etc.)
- We need to be extremely mindful of the language we use and be aware of cultural differences.
- We need to make sure the client understands all documents.
- We need to ensure that interpreters working with us are trained and certified.
- Resources are available through License to Freedom and CCS.

*Spotlight: “Care. No Matter What.” – Vernita Gutierrez, [Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest](#)*

- True to our tagline, we provide health care services for all. We are one of 105 affiliates nationwide, and one of 8 in Southern California. Last year, we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ensuring broad access to reproductive care. We serve three counties and have 14 health centers in San Diego. We served 146,958 patients in 2013, and are a training site for UCSD and the Navy Hospital. Half of our patients are seen the same day, by mid-level clinicians and/or physicians. 88% are women, 70% are between the ages of 18-29, and 50% are newly insured under ACA. 1 in 3 households in San Diego is a former current patient of ours. We don’t turn anyone away for inability to pay and don’t ask for verification of immigration status.
- We have a Community Engagement Department and provide community-based, culturally appropriate education for schools and community-based groups. Our 50-minute presentations cover:
  - Reproductive anatomy & physiology (including puberty)
  - Pregnancy prevention methods (including abstinence and birth control)

- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Healthy relationships
- Family communication (geared toward adults)
- Our curriculum is evidence-based and “provides youth with knowledge, motivation and skills necessary to change their behaviors in ways that reduce their risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as to avoid unintended pregnancies. Our “Positive Action” curriculum is geared toward parents and adults and “takes a holistic approach to fostering healthy dialogue about sexuality by laying the foundation for better overall family communication.” To learn more you can contact our SD office at 619-88-4597 or email [rfrausto@planned.org](mailto:rfrausto@planned.org).
- We also do cross-training with CCS and work across the border with a bi-cultural team.
- Donations go directly to the affiliate you choose and are directed toward local services.

### *Community Updates*

- Nao Kabashima: The [Karen Organization](#) received funding for the next three years. CONGRATULATIONS!!! The organization will be able to expand their office space. There will be a community potluck October 31<sup>st</sup>, Please join us for Burmese/Karen food.
- Vernita Gutierrez: October is not only DV awareness but also Let’s Talk Month. We want to encourage family communication. 38% of teens say that: their parents are the biggest influence on how they think about sex. Planned Parenthood has materials available to support that conversation..
- Renee Nasori, Grossmont College: A \$5K college scholarship is available through Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs, offered at Grossmont College. Please see the attached flyer for more information.
- AAA will hold a Bill Clinic every Wednesday in November, 1-5pm. We will help with enrolling in discount programs, contesting unfair bills and charges, and more. First come, first served. Call Cameron at 619-286-9052, ext. 241 for further information. We will take notes on every case to be prepared for conversations with SDGE (and even for putting pressure on SDGE). Interpreters will be available.
- Somali Family Services will hold their “Day of Dignity” November 8<sup>th</sup>. The event will take place at the City Heights Community Park. Focus will be on low-income families and the homeless, and



we will have free health screenings, social services, and food.

*Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Minutes for September were approved as distributed.

Adjournment: 11:43 pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 10:30-12:00pm at the Alliance for African Assistance



## **San Diego Refugee Forum**

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, November 18, 2014, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Alliance for African Assistance, 5952 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA, 92115

### *Call to order at 10:30 am*

- *Present:* Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Bonnie Copland, Jane Hoey, Neda Rivera, Ghazia Hassan, Abdi Abdillahi, Mary Rutland, Priscilla Guerra, Lorna Strang, Sheryl Ashley, Elizabeth Lopez, Artemisa Valle, Kim McDermott, Kathi Anderson, Nao Kabashima, Mike McKay, Deona Dorsey, Nawar Yousif, Carmen Kcomt, Rita Shamoan, Hassan Abdirahman, Kristen Aster, Madelyne Wagner, Elizabeth Lou, Jason Martinez, Jackie Hardick, Kim Forrester, Lamar Jackson, Aileen Gulan, Merdin Mohammed, Renee Nasori, Ayan Mohamed, Najla Ibrahim, Nawal Alkatib, Brittney Yackley

### *Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introduction:*

- Najla Ibrahim (Chair) opened the Forum meeting.
- General Introductions
- All Refugee Forum Officers are in attendance with the exception of Ute Maschke.

### *Officer Elections:*

- Election Committee Chair Nao Kabashima introduced candidates: Kathi Anderson (Survivors of Torture), Aileen Gulan (Alliance for African Assistance), Carmen Kcomt (La Maestra), Nancy Martey (Nile Sisters), Ute Maschke (Catholic Charities), and Madelyne Wagner (Alliance for African Assistance). Each candidate present introduced themselves. Ute Maschke and Nancy Martey had statements read for them in their absence.
- Each member organization got two votes, while each individual member got one vote.
- Kathi Anderson and Carmen Kcomt were elected to come on board as officers, as Brittney Yackley and Najla Ibrahim step down. Kathi Anderson will serve as chair, Nawal Alkatib will remain as treasurer, and Ute Maschke and Carmen Kcomt will serve as either Vice Chair or Secretary, to be decided at the next officers meeting.

### *Task Force Updates:*

- Health Task Force: No member present to comment.
- Employment Task Force: Nothing new to report. Next meeting we will be electing the new

officers.

- Domestic Violence: No new updates. Please contact Dilkhwaz if you would like to join. There will be no meeting in December.
- Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force: The asylum seeker/asylee task force met for one hour on November 6. Ten people attended. The participants worked on asset mapping, a gap analysis and a priority/feasibility matrix for asylum seekers. This project will continue into the next meeting and work will commence on something similar for asylees. The task force decided to meet again in January for 90 minutes. Exact meeting date is to be determined via a Doodle Poll.

#### *Other Updates*

- Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs)
- Alliance for African Assistance : 51 arrivals this month
- Catholic Charities: arrivals are lower, 41 arrivals this month. If this continues it will be a slow start to the year. Arrivals are primarily from the Middle East.
- Jewish Family Service: No one present to comment
- IRC: No one present to comment.
  
- County: The fiscal year has ended, so we have collected arrival numbers from all resettlement agencies for the October 2013-September 2014 fiscal year. We had 3,324 refugees arrive in San Diego, with 2,243 or 67% from Iraq, 315 or 9% from Afghanistan, and 231 or 7% from Somalia.
- State Advisory Committee : Next meeting is December 9th

#### *Focus: Casa Cornelia and Immigration Q + A (Elizabeth Lopez, Artemisa Valle – Casa Cornelia)*

- Elizabeth Lopez:
- We are a non-profit organization that represents individuals who suffer human rights violations primarily in the immigration department.
- U-Visa – people are eligible if they have been a victim of a serious crime. Domestic violence is an example. Security guards that get beat up is another common occurrence. This is pathway to citizenship, but it takes about 3 years to adjudicate a U Visa because there is a cap that gets met

sooner and sooner every year. There is a huge backlog. This is something to bring to our legislators for revision.

- Violence Against Women Act – people have to be married to a legal permanent resident or US citizen and a victim of domestic violence to be eligible. There is no cap on the number for this. For Haitians with their status in limbo this could be a good option.
- T Visa - is primarily given to victims of labor trafficking, especially in the agricultural sector of North County. The biggest problem with the T Visa is finding the trafficked individuals who are eligible for it. The traffickers are well hidden and they threaten the trafficked individuals to prevent them escaping by holding all their passports and documents or threatening their family.
- If anyone works with a population that you suspect is experiencing labor trafficking, please bring them to us. Education is really important. There are tips and signs to look for.
- The T Visa takes 6 months to adjudicate, and gives a pathway to citizenship
- Children's Program – This program is for unaccompanied children. In San Diego it's different from other parts of the country. San Diego is basically a processing center. Our job is to screen the children. They are only here for 10-15 days. In 2013 there were 25 beds in the housing centers and children stayed for an average of 30-45 days. Now there are 125 beds, so there are more children passing through here, but for less time. There isn't always enough time to meet with them and figure out if they have a case. They take a packet with them to see if they have a case at their next place. These children may be entitled to a U Visa, T Visa, or asylum. There is also a designation called Special Immigrant Juvenile Status – when a child has been neglected, abandoned, or harmed by their parents. Many children are coming from Central America because their parents have been killed or are drug addicts, or because there is no food. They are not coming because they've heard on the media that they can get some relief - it's because they can't stay home anyway. Courts are not granting asylum to "open the dam" because it would triple the number of kids.
- To get asylum you must be persecuted – this is worse than discrimination, and usually involves some kind of physical torture based on political opinion, race, ethnicity, religion, member of specific social group (females, victims of female genital mutilation, LGBT individuals, family members of targeted individuals.)

- Persecutor must be a government actor or member of a group that is not controlled by the government or that the government is unwilling to control. This includes cartels, and terrorist organizations.
- Refugees obtain entrance to the US when outside of US, maybe in a refugee camp. Asylum seekers present here at the border. Refugees are entitled to benefits in US but asylum seekers are not until their status is granted. Many people are detained then paroled out, with no source of income, food, or access to welfare benefits. Attorneys are now trying not to get people paroled because a parolee is entitled to a work permit but only after 3 months. Some are bonded out, but then their sponsor doesn't have any additional money to help. They may not get a work permit for 6 months to 1 year.
- We work with the Immigrant Justice Program to screen asylum seekers, and we work with Catholic Charities for parolees to do a Know Your Rights Clinic. We can't take cases without an interpreter, which sometimes prevents us from serving Haitian Creole speakers.
- Artemisa Valle:
  - Coordinator for volunteer interpreters and translators
  - Our mission is to provide quality legal services, and we need quality interpreters and translators that have been trained. We use about 80 volunteers throughout the year, but have over 200 in our database.
  - Most volunteers are Spanish speakers, for a total of 20-25 different languages.
  - We have a challenge of finding rarer languages. We don't always have enough Creole volunteers- so we sometimes use French interpreters. We haven't found 3 languages: Mam (Guatemala), Mandinka, and Tagalog. We also need a Somali document translator.
- Q + A
  - For paroled Nigerian cases, it can take up 2 years to get the case approved.
  - Affirmative asylum has 10,000 people backlogged. There is a law suit against the courts for the large backlog, so in protest, they aren't doing anything. The courts believe a negative reputation of Nigerians that they are trying to commit fraud so there is some discrimination against those cases.
  - There is a mental health docket for people that aren't able to communicate. The judge in charge of this is not sympathetic, so many cases are getting appealed. We try to get people into

institutions that can help them, but that might not even be happening now.

*Spotlight: Karen Organization of San Diego (Nao Kabashima)*

- The mission of the Karen Organization is for educational and social enhancement. Not just for the Karen community, but also for other ethnicities from Burma. We started in 2009, and got an office of our own in 2011.
- I started with the behind-the-scenes work and getting 501c3 status, in 2008 the community wanted its own organization to feel stronger and more connected.
- Most Burmese refugees started coming in 2007, but were spread out throughout the US.
- Karen Organization has 4 programs: Self Sufficiency, Community Building, Culture Preservation, and Youth Development.
- We were awarded the National Association of Social Workers 2014 Organization of the Year Award
- Karen Organization has 25 community leaders/section leaders (like how they organized and led in the refugee camp. Each section meets together, communicates needs and movement with KOSD and resettlement agencies, tell the community members what events and services and programs are there, what's missing as far as services.
- First Generation Youth Group: Does community services, canvassing, leadership training, fundraising, culture preservation projects. The youth really care about their culture and ancestry so much.
- Women's Empowerment Group: A place for women community leaders to organize. They do a Homespun weaving program - making surf bags to sell. They also operate a Domestic Violence Response team.
- Senior Club: This is a new meeting starting this month to share poems, songs, music, field trips, activities with youth, culture classes for youth (cooking and history) . Many have never been to the beach or Balboa Park, etc. so this is a chance for seniors to experience more of San Diego.
- Youth Development: Operate a First Generation program, and after school tutoring, etc.
- Recently we celebrated our 3 year anniversary, 300 people came and fit into the little office.
- KOSD just got a grant from ORR to continue for another 3 years. We need your help to keep going strong!





### *Community Updates*

- Kathi says she is excited to serve as chair and pull other members in to lead in other ways
- Project Shine - has flyers about new programs, call Renee Nasori if you need help enrolling
- Elizabeth Lou - Nile Sisters has upcoming diabetes event this Saturday 11-1 pm. We have 5 covered ca enrollment councilors. We also offer courses in CNA, driving, and childcare training.
- Nao - KOSD - Karen New Year is Dec 21, but we will be celebrating January 10<sup>th</sup>. Usually about 900 people come celebrate and enjoy music. Please come. This year will be at Colina Park most likely.
- Alliance for African Assistance will be operating one more bill clinic to assist refugees and community members with their bills. We have been able to save people hundreds of dollars. It will be Wednesday afternoon at our office.
- Chaldean Middle Eastern Social Services - Health and Wellness fair this Friday 1-4pm, 11/21, Saint Michael Church, will have speakers and entertainment for kids. There is another toy drive for kids Dec 21, 11-3, at Crystal Ball in El Cajon.

### *Approval of Meeting Minutes*

- Minutes for October were approved as distributed.

Najla Ibrahim, chair, gave a goodbye statement, thanking forum members for the opportunity to serve as their chair for the year.

Adjournment: 12:00 pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 – 12:00 pm @ Alliance for African Assistance

Report compiled by Brittney Yackley