**Minutes of the San Diego Refugee Forum Meeting**

**Date**: Tuesday, February 16, 2021

**Location**: Zoom meeting

**Time**: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Attendees:**

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| Abdi Abdillahi, SD County Refugee Coordinator | Jane Register, World Relief SoCal |
| Afrah Abdulkader, IRC Survivor Advocate | Jessica Hernandez, East Region Adult Education |
| Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET Project | Jessica Mier, Office of Rep. Susan Jacobs |
| Amanda Urena, SD Unified School District | Judy Amaro, PCG Central |
| Ana Lozano, United Healthcare | Kate Morrissey, SD Union Tribune |
| Ann Vilmenay, COSD-HHSA-BHS-AOA | Kenneth Lavigna, community member |
| Awichu Akwanya, SDRF Chair, UW East Africa | Kim Roser-Kedward, LCSW Miramar College CalWORKs |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary | Kim Thomas, American Academy of Pediatrics |
| Bowa Tucker, Office of Refugee Resettlement | Lauren Kocher, CA Refugee Programs Bureau |
| Brett Hall, CHIP Comm. Health Improvement Program | Lenda Hanna, SD County Off. Refugee Coordinator |
| Brittney Ochira, National Conflict Resolution Center | Lida Dianti, IRC |
| Carol Crisp, PCG | Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative | Maureen Hartin, Volunteers in Medicine |
| Casey Myers, One Digital World | Maya Shahar, County Community Health Services |
| Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture Intl | Mejgan Afshan, SDRF Treasurer, Borderlands of Equity |
| Cyrus Weigand, Alliance for African Assistance | Melissa Casanova, First 5 First Steps, Home Start |
| Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan | Mu Aye, Karen Organization of San Diego |
| Elizabeth Jackson, A Better Life Together | Nadia Moshirian Binderup, Sheriff's Dept. |
| Emily Merrill, Jewish Family Service | Nora David, County Community Health Services, Adult |
| Fardosa Osman, UWEAST | Paulina Torres, San Diego Youth Services |
| Frantz St. Phat, The Voice of Refugees | Rahmo Abdi, PANA |
| Giselle Barajas, Jewish Family Service | Renee Nasori, Grossmont College |
| Gloria Cruz, County Supervisor Lawson-Remer | Rita Shamoon, CALWORKS job developer |
| Graciela Mendoza, CA DPH, Binational Border Health | Roberta Krauss, SD Continuing Ed CalWORKs |
| Hassan A., Somali Family Service | Ross Fackrell, SDRF Vice Chair, IRC |
| Hawi Abdulkadir, Somali Family Service | Shlyn Guarian, County Child Welfare Services |
| Hector Peralta, community member | William Sutton, Catholic Charities |
| Jane Hoey, Women's Empowerment Intl | Zoe Murphy, IRC |

Meeting facilitator: Ross Fackrell, SDRF Vice Chair

**1. Greetings and introduction of attendees** Ross

**2.** **Treasurer’s report** Mejgan Afshan, Treasurer

Memberships have been coming in in January and February, thank you everyone for supporting and wanting to be part of the Refugee Forum. We are behind in processing them but will get that done and add you to our membership list.

Continuing and new members may pay annual dues for membership in the Forum for the year 2021 at any time. The preferred method is to pay at the website, using Paypal. It is possible to pay by check, but we would rather avoid the logistics and contact involved in handling physical payments.

**3. Resettlement update** Abdi Abdillahi, County Refugee Coordinator

For the month of January 2021, San Diego resettled a total of 32; out of this total, 10 were primary refugees (31%); 1 Asylee (3%); 14 Cuban/Haitians (44%), and 7 SIVs (22%). Also, out of the 32 arrivals for January 2021, 6 were singles or couples with no children, and 26 were families.

Total for the Year-to-Date FFY 20-21 (October 2020 through January 2021), San Diego resettled 112. Out of this total, 30 were primary refugees (27%); 2 Asylees (2%); 49 Cuban/Haitians (44%); and 31 SIVs (28%).

The top three arrivals for FFY 20-21, Haiti with 43%; followed by Afghanistan with 30%, and Iraq with 13%.

IRC expects to receive 6 in March. Other agencies reported none.

**4. Presentation:** Update on COVID-19 vaccination Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan

Vaccines

- Vaccines are the safest way to get immunity from COVID-19 and to get back to our normal activities. For example, in previous years there was an outbreak of Hepatitis-B, and we vaccinated our way out of that. The same can be done with COVID-19.

- There may be some challenges with new variants of the virus. But so far the vaccines we have can prevent them. At the end of the month the FDA will meet to consider a new vaccine from Johnson and Johnson.

- Fully vaccinated people presently do not have to quarantine when that is called for.

Delivery

- Many vaccination sites are open, including a new center in Vista.

- The main issue now is lack of sufficient vaccine. Delivery systems are ready. Petco Park center had to close temporarily.

- At the end of last week, the federal government started partnering with retail pharmacies CVS and Rite Aid in vulnerable communities to give vaccinations.

- The County is working with Metropolitan Transit System to offer free rides to vaccination centers for people who don’t have transportation.

- The County is trying to help more vulnerable communities. Communication is difficult and these are populations that are more affected. They are sometimes hard to identify in statistics, but officials focus on the zip codes where these populations live.

- He presented data on who has been vaccinated. We can see discrepancies such as, Hispanics make up 33% of the population but only 15% of those vaccinated.

- One site has started offering antibody treatment to those who have contracted the virus and are in the early stages. It keeps symptoms from getting more severe.

Eligibility

- Currently at Phase 1A, moving into Phase 1B, age 65 and older. In 1-2 weeks will get to food service and agricultural workers.

- Informal caregivers may be eligible in the 1A category and can get a note to get vaccinated.

- The state has said that people ages 16 to 64 are also eligible for vaccination through their provider if they have certain listed diseases or medical conditions, including pregnancy.

- Are the undocumented and asylum seekers eligible for vaccination? –Yes, as long as you work or live in San Diego County. They don’t ask for documentation. Only Petco Park station did, but just put 000 at Social Security number. Or go to another site.

Information

- The County is hosting weekly Town Halls with Dr. Wooten and others.

- They hope to work on further translations of COVID materials.

- Vaccine hesitancy: Some cases of severe reactions to the vaccine are making the news; however, these affect a tiny number of people – like 5 out of 1 million – who already have susceptibility to other types of vaccines. Everyone is screened for possible issues when registering. Also, there is a 15 or sometimes 30-minute wait period after vaccination to see if effects show up, and all centers are equipped to handle any reactions.

It’s best for everyone to have a ‘medical home’ where you can get services. People who don’t have a provider should talk to an insurance specialist. Even without insurance, anyone can go to one of our area’s many community health clinics. They can get services at minimal cost, or funding can be found. In emergency, anyone can go to the emergency room or call 911. There are also video appointments, and there are translation services.

So—get the word out to the communities you serve. Everyone should have a healthcare provider lined up so that they will have a place to get medical services when they need them.

**5. Discussion on SDRF Task Forces** Ross, Bob

Statement from the Forum leadership:

The Task Forces in the past have played a key role in identifying and addressing issues that affect our refugee communities and in determining Forum priorities. They are made up of volunteers who have an interest in a particular area of focus and have experience, expertise, and energy to contribute to discussions, make recommendations, and plan and carry out actions.

The activity of the task forces has waned in recent years, especially since the pandemic started, but their work is important, and the Forum wants to see them get back in action. We would like to ask our members, meeting attendees and friends to consider joining with their colleagues in serving on one of the task forces. We will be sending out a separate communication on this. In the meantime, see the attachment on task forces that went out with the meeting agenda.

Discussion:

The document describing the task forces was shown and discussed. Task forces include: Advocacy, Asylum, Domestic violence, Employment, Health, and Education (proposed). In addition, there is a special committee that plans the Forum’s World Refugee Day event.

The World Refugee Day committee is the most urgent to fill at this time, as the event will be held in June.

**6. Community Announcements**

Mejgan Afshan, Borderlands for Equity

Her organization is hosting two sessions, one on anti-militarization of the border, and one on anti-surveillance in Chula Vista. Access online, on Facebook and Instagram.

Renee Nasori, Grossmont College

They are hosting Adult Reentry Center workshops on 21st Century skills and other topics such as opportunities for higher education. Events free to community and professionals. Email to: [Renee.Nasori@gcccd.eduworkshops](mailto:Renee.Nasori@gcccd.eduworkshops)

Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET (Tracing Asylum-Seeker's Experience & Trajectories) project

We are interviewing providers of services and asylum seekers to learn about experiences. Would love to hear about your experiences so please feel free to reach out so we can connect [aburnsta@ucsd.edu](mailto:aburnsta@ucsd.edu).

Brett Hall, County Suicide Prevention Council

Hosting monthly meetings. February meeting info:

-Tuesday 2/23/21 from 10:00am-11:30am

-Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/92317218306?pwd=OFYrcmo1RVQ5RDdhZzVtbzM2VUhZUT09

-Meeting ID: 923 1721 8306

-Password: spc2021

Also: SPC Priority Populations & Communities Subcommittee meets on the first Thursday of the month from 1:00-2:30 pm. Contact bhall@sdchip.org for more information or to join the mailing list.

Brittney Ochira, National Conflict Resolution Center

Interested in the NCRC's Refugee Work Readiness Exchange e-learning course? Available in Dari, Arabic, and English, self-paced course focusing on soft skills for work readiness. $50 gift card for completing the course! More info, contact Brittney at [WRE@ncrconline.com](mailto:WRE@ncrconline.com)

Kate Morrissey, San Diego Union Tribune Immigration Reporter

She is currently working on articles describing the effect of the pandemic on the refugee community. Please refer individuals or agency staff with relevant experience and information to her.

kate.morrissey@sduniontribune.com

Maya Shahar, County Community Health Services

To request a presentation for your organization, please click here: <https://www.livewellsd.org/content/livewell/home/community/speakers-bureau.html>

Vaccination Dashboard: <https://sdcounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/c0f4b16356b840478dfdd50d1630ff2a>

You can view the phases here: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/community_epidemiology/dc/2019-nCoV/vaccines/phases.html>

Monoclonal Antibody Regional Center: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/community_epidemiology/dc/2019-nCoV/CommunitySectors/Healthcare_Providers_Community_Clinics_Hospitals_and_Pharmacies/resources-and-guidance.html#MARC>

Here is the state site that details who in Food and Ag (and other sectors) will be eligible when we allow that sector to get vaccinated: <https://covid19.ca.gov/essential-workforce/>

Lida Dianti, IRC

The IRC in San Diego shares a biweekly COVID-19 newsletter for clients and community partners. You can sign up here: <https://rescue.us19.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=e3919f7745b3402aa0a1884c2&id=864754d657>

and you can also send updated and timely resources to share by emailing SanDiego@Rescue.org

**7. Approval of the minutes of the January 19 meeting** Bob Walsh, Secretary

**Adjournment**: Ross Fackrell, Vice Chair, 11:55 a.m.

**Next Meeting**: March 16, 2021

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary