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

**Date**: Tuesday, June 15, 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 |
| Aidee Roman |
| Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET Project |
| Amanda Urena, SD Unified School District |
| Angie Esparza, SAY San Diego |
| Anne Fosselman, El Cajon Valley HS Community Center |
| Aous Alhabbar, Somali Family Service |
| Awichu Akwanya, UWomen East Africa, SDRF Chair |
| Bill Sutton, Catholic Charities |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary |
| Brett Hall, CHIP Comm. Health Improvement Program |
| Brian Tam, Refugee Services Bureau, CDSS |
| Briana Leyva, JFS, Breaking Down Barriers |
| Brittney Ochira, National Conflict Resolution Cent |
| Camille Cross |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative |
| Casey Myers, One Digital World |
| Chris Williams, Catholic Charities |
| Christina Ames-Cotto, McAlister Institute – East Teen Recovery Center |
| Cipriano Vargas, Office of Sup. Lawson-Remer |
| Claire Enemark, SDRCC/UWEAST |
| Claire Riley |
| Dalia Mohammad, License to Freedom |
| Damaris Garduno, Miramar College |
| Daria Tomsky, IRC |
| Diane Landino, Office of Refugee Resettlement |
| Elena Klein, JFS Resettlement |
| Elissa, Somali Family Service |
| Farhat Popal, City SD Immigrant Affairs Mgr |
| Giselle Barajas, Jewish Family Service, Resettlement |
| Hassan Abdirahman., Somali Family Service |
| Hawi Abdulkadir, Somali Family Service |
| Irene Elizabeth Garcia, SD Co Child Lead Prevention |
| Ismahan Abdullahi |
| Jane Hoey, Women's Empowerment Intl |
| Janelle Acosta, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Judy Amaro, PCG Central |
| Kathi Anderson, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Katie, A Better Life Together |
| Lauren Kocher, CA Refugee Programs Bureau |
| Leanne Carroll, CDPH, Office of Binational Border Health |
| Lenda Hanna, SD County Off. Refugee Coord. |
| Lilian Matingkwony, SAY San Diego |
| Lily Mojdehi, Jewish Family Service |
| Lucia Gonzales, SAY San Diego, Crawford |
| Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services |
| Maria Adriana Gutierrez Sosa, Aetna |
| Maureen Hartin, Volunteers in Medicine |
| Mejgan Afshan, Borderlands for Equity, SDRF Treasurer, |
| Melissa Casanova, First 5 First Steps, Home Start |
| Mohammed Tuama, Newcomers Support and Dev |
| Nadia Moshirian Binderup, Sheriff's Dept. |
| Nazira Adieva |
| Paula Martinez-Montes, Office of Sup. Fletcher |
| Prisci Quijada, Refugee Health Coordinator, SDCHHS |
| Rahmo Abdi, PANA |
| Rashid Essa |
| Renee Nasori, Grossmont College |
| Rita Shamoon, CALWORKS job developer |
| Ross Fackrell, IRC, SDRF Vice Chair |
| Shadi Haddad, Chaldean & Middle Eastern Social Services / San Ysidro Health |
| Val Dama |
| Vernita Gutierrez, Planned Parenthood Pacific SW |
| Veronica Perez, CDSS RPB |
| Zac Norbash, JFS Employment |

65 attending, including 17 first time attending

Meeting facilitator: Awichu Akwanya, SDRF Chair

**1. Greetings and introduction of attendees** Awichu Akwanya, SDRF Chair

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

Membership levels are behind previous years, and the Forum needs to build back its membership after the pandemic. Participants are encouraged to join as paid members. Membership dues are $35/year for individuals and small ECBOs and $70 for other agencies and organizations. Thanks to all for their dedication in serving the community.

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

For the month of May 2021, San Diego resettled a total of 154 persons. Of this total, there were 10 primary refugees from Afghanistan, DR Congo, and Iran, and 1 Afghan SIV. Also 138 Haitians and 5 Cubans. Out of the 154 arrivals for April 2021, 24 were singles or couples with no children, and 130 were part of families. The total for May 2021 was larger than the totals in May 2020 and April 2019.

Total for Year-to-Date FFY 20-21 (October 2020 through April 2021), San Diego resettled 629. Out of this total, 70 were primary refugees (11%); 3 Asylees (<1%); 503 Cuban/Haitians (80%); and 53 SIVs (8%).

The top three arrivals for FFY 20-21: Haiti with 74%; Afghanistan with 12%, and Cuba with 6%.

See the latest County Arrivals Report posted on the Refugee Forum website.

Brian Tam, Chief of Refugee Services Bureau, California Department of Social Services, reported the totals for California and the US overall.

California through the end of May resettled 1,319 – 427 refugees and 892 SIVs.

US overall resettled 4.354 – 2,823 refugees and 1,531 SIVs.

California accounted for 13 % of all refugees and 37% of all SIVs.

Haitians and Cubans will continue to make up the majority of resettlement cases for the rest of the fiscal year, as overseas entrants have not yet ramped up. Chris Williams of Catholic Charities said that generally Haitians are crossing over the entire border and Cubans are mostly crossing at San Diego. 138 Haitian arrivals this year, 5 in May.

**4. Task force update** Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary

Advocacy

Kathi Anderson reported for Clint Carney. No one has yet contacted Clint with an interest in joining this task force.

Asylum

Casey Myers reported:

She has been active with this on the Tijuana side of the border. Over 800 asylum seekers are at the border, most from Central America. They are having problems applying for asylum. Interviews with specialists are needed to verify their claims of persecution. Shelters are over capacity, people are waiting at the Chaparral Center outside the entry point. There are concerns about the children among this population.

Alexis Burnstan added:

- Asylum Connect is a nationwide website, as resource for asylum seekers.

The Asylum Task Force plans to schedule meetings a week before the general Forum meeting.

- At the last meeting they learned of the San Diego vaccination centers of Catholic Charities and Jewish Family Service, and they would like to work with them.

Domestic Violence

Dalia Mohammad of License to Freedom reported that Dilkhwaz is the Chair of the group and Dalia Mohammad is the alternate. New members – join at Dalia.bapeer@gmail.com .

Education

Amanda Urena reported:

- San Diego Unified School District is continuing with the Level Up summer enrichment program, students K-12. https://levelupsandiego.org/en/search Families can search for: IRC, Karen, or SAY San Diego to find free summer programs specifically for refugee youth. If anyone knows of families appropriate for this program, contact Amanda aurena@sandi.net.

- Services are available for deaf students. Email Dr. Michelle Einspar about this resource meinspar@sandi.net

Employment

Renee Nasori reported:

- The group needs Forum support to better engage with the community. Employers are opening back up and are hiring. They would like to work with the refugee community to prepare them. They would like to know what kinds of opportunities the community is interested in.

- To join, please connect with Carol Crisp-ccrisp@pcgus.com or Renee.Nasori@gcccd.edu

Health

No report

Mental Health

Claire Enemark of United Women of East Africa and San Diego Refugee Community Coalition said that this new task force will soon have its first meeting. Write in if you’re interested in joining - claire@uweast.org .

World Refugee Day

Lucy Jasso reported that the group is working on arrangements for the World Refugee Day event and is planning to hold a hybrid event on Saturday morning, June 19. Help is still needed if you can join them – email Awichu aawichu@unitedwomenofeastafrica.org

**5. Presentation 1:**  Asian Solidarity Collective Kuttin Kandi

The movement behind this organization started in 2016 with anti-racism against blacks. It is a grassroots organization whose mission is to activate Asian American social justice consciousness around all oppressed communities. Their work includes political education, community building and collective action.

With more than 500 members, their goal is to build a power base to build transformational leadership. They want to build the organization with the long term goal of building a movement. They are concerned with anti-Asian hate but want to build solidarity. They go beyond anti-black racism to build awareness in a community-based model. They will also do crisis response from the community. They’re developing outreach with Asian businesses. They want to do community needs assessment surveys, important to identify needs, especially in pandemic. They are developing an organizing program for the fall.

kandi@asiansolidaritycollective.org and visit website at www.asiansolidaritycollective.org

**Presentation 2:**  County Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs  
 Paola Martinez-Montes, Office of Supervisor Nathan Fletcher

Paola went over the background of the establishment of this new office. Fletcher and the new board want to bring racism and social justice to the fore, with transparency and environmental justice as part of their work over the last six months. They want to prioritize resources, wanted to go beyond refugees to serve the immigrant population, without regard to legal status. Many groups participated in planning this office, they wanted community engagement and ask for their direction. After the temporary use of the Convention Center, physical space where community members can go is needed.

They are now in the process of organizing their staff. They also want to provide for immigrant rights, including legal defense. They’re aiming at getting a budget of $8.8 million, final budget hearing is June 29. Organization can support with a statement.

Mohammed Tuama noted that Arab, East County resources were not involved in the planning. Paola acknowledged the lack of Arab representation and said they can do better on getting voices represented.

**6. Community Announcements**

Renee Nasori, Grossmont College Career Services

- A summer academy will be hosted at Grossmont College.

Career Academy: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\_7guBi9rnSOS9\_gRlbXrDkw

- They are hosting Adult Re-entry Open House on July 7, an opportunity to learn about their programs and services. Renee.Nasori@gcccd.edu

- Grossmont College free virtual events: July 7th: https://cccconfer.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUtcuCurDkjGNHdCIk779WlZD78G9Efr90L

Dalia Mohammad, License to Freedom

LTF held a vaccination clinic. They have hired a new staff worker.

Nadia Moshirian Binderup, Sheriff’s Department

Starting July 1, all phone calls and video visits will be free for anyone incarcerated in a county facility.

Cipriano Vargas, Office of Sup. Lawson-Remer

County Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer and the Social Services Advisory Board Enrollment Task Force invite you to participate in listening sessions to share your experience with public benefit programs. https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/hhsa/programs/ssp/social\_services\_advisory\_board/documents/Resident%20Listening%20Sessions%20Flyer\_ENG.pdf

Claire Enemark, United Women of East Africa

The agency will be starting a crisis program. They will provide emotional support through peer community workers. Refer people to UWEAST for this service, they will send out a flyer soon.

Brett Hall, CHIP/SPC

- Next week they will hold an annual stakeholders meeting. They will update information on suicide prevention. SPC Annual Stakeholders Meeting, Tuesday, 6/22 from 9:00 am-1:00 pm via Zoom. Link to register: https://spcasm2021.eventbrite.com

- For more information about the SPC and upcoming events please visit our website at www.spcsandiego.org or contact me (Brett Hall) at bhall@sdchip.org.

Mohammed Tuama, Newcomers Support and Development

This organization offers Arabic-language resources. “USA in Arabic” is a TV resource for Arabic speakers in San Diego and the US. Offered daily on Facebook and YouTube.

Melissa Casanova, Family Resource Specialist/Outreach Coordinator for Home Start's home visit program First 5 First Steps

We offer home visits to pregnant women and any mothers with children younger than 2 who are receiving CalWORKs. We are always taking referrals to serve the community. If you want to reach out to me via email mcasanova@home-start.org or phone (619)402-0278. I can share more information about our program.

Brittney Ochira, National Conflict Resolution Center

Connect with me if you'd like to chat about either offering a workshop or community circle for your nonprofit staff or for your refugee clients! Also, thanks for everyone who has been sharing the e-learning opportunities with their refugee/asylee/SIV clients! Brittney: bochira@ncrconline.com

Lucia Gonzales, SAY San Diego, Crawford HS

Crawford Community Connection will be offering 2 sessions for this week-long Level Up-Teen Leadership Connections Camp for high school students from 9AM-12PM

Session 1: August 2nd-August 6th http://bit.ly/TeenLeadershipConnections-S1

Session 2: August 9th-August 13th http://bit.ly/TeenLeadershipConnections-S2

**7. Approval of the minutes of the May 18 meeting** Bob Walsh, Secretary

**Adjournment** Awichu Akwanya, SDRF Chair, 11:48 p.m.

**Next Meeting**: July 20, 2021

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary