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

Date: Tuesday, November 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 |
| Ailaa Al-Tabatabaee, Somali Family Service |
| Amanda Urena, SD Unified School District |
| Anne Bautista, CCLC |
| Anne Fosselman, El Cajon Valley HS Community Ctr |
| April Moo, Karen Organization SD |
| Avonne Pace, A Better Life Together BRIDGE Project |
| Becky Moreno-Estrada, FBI Victim Specialist |
| Bethlehem Wolkeba, JFS Breaking Down Barriers |
| Bill Sutton, Catholic Charities Employment Specialist |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary |
| Bowa Tucker, Office of Refugee Resettlement, SF |
| Brian Tam, Refugee Services Bureau, CDSS |
| Brittney Ochira, National Conflict Resolution Center |
| Carol Crisp, PCG |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative |
| Casey Myers Doane, One Digital World |
| Claire Enemark, SDRCC/UWEAST |
| Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Cynthia Lopez, SDUSD |
| Dalia Mohammad, License to Freedom |
| Dan Nyamangah, SAY San Diego |
| Daria Tomsky, IRC Youth Program |
| Diana Jones |
| Dilkhwaz Ahmed, License to Freedom |
| Edith Sanchez Cruz, Sherrif’s Dept |
| Faida Malenga |
| Fardosa Osman, UWEAST |
| Farhat Popal, City SD Immigrant Affairs Mgr |
| Farhia Gelle, Horn of Africa |
| Giselle Barajas, Jewish Family Service, Resettlement |
| Graciela Mendoza, CA Dept of Public Health, Binational Border Health |
| Hassan Abdirahman, Somali Family Service |
| Hawi Abdulkadir, Somali Family Service |
| iPhone |
| Irene Elizabeth Garcia, County Child Lead Prevention |
| Ismael Avilez, Casa Cornelia Law Center |
| Jan Jarrell, SD College of Continuing Ed |
| Jane Hoey, Women's Empowerment Intl |
| Jeanine Erikat, PANA |
| Jennifer Biggins |
| Jennifer Olvera |
| Jenny Leverman, License to Freedom |
| Jessica Hernandez, East Region Adult Ed |
| Joey Beyer, Survivors of Torture |
| Juan Estrada, Molina Healthcare, Community Engagement |
| Judy Amaro, PCG |
| Justine Kozo, County Office of Border Health |
| Kathryn LaPointe, Oasis |
| Kybur Oberhaus, Rep. Jacobs office, intern |
| Lauren Kocher, CA Refugee Programs Bureau |
| Lenda Hanna, SD County Off. Refugee Coord., Immigrant and Refugee Affairs |
| Lily Mojdehi, Breaking Down Barriers, Jewish Fam Serv |
| Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services |
| Luis Monteagudo, 211 San Diego |
| Madison Bjork |
| Maribel Gunner |
| Mary Joy Cunningham, IRC MSW Intern |
| Maureen Hartin, Volunteers in Medicine |
| Melissa Casanova, Home Start, First 5 First Steps |
| Melissa Lindo, UPAC Teen Recovery Center |
| Michael Serban, FACE Dept., Cajon Valley Schools |
| Nao Kabashima, Karen Organization |
| Nazira Adieva, County Office of Equitable Communities CAP |
| Neil Hovland, SD Unified School District Family Engagement |
| Officer Homayoun Nabizadeh, SDPD Comm. Relations |
| Osvaldo Alcazar Pulido, United Health Care |
| Prisci Quijada, Refugee Health Coordinator, SDCHHS |
| Rachel Evans, Somali Family Service |
| Rahmo Abdi, PANA |
| Renee Nasori, Grossmont College |
| Rohan |
| Ross Fackrell, IRC, SDRF Vice Chair |
| Sandra D’Alonzo, Family Health Centers |
| Shadi Haddad, Chaldean & Middle Eastern Social Services / San Ysidro Health |
| Shlyn Guarian, SD County Child Welfare Services, Community Outreach |
| Tammy Burmeister, SDC Child Welfare Services, East |
| Tania Rivera, IRC Emergency Resources Coordinator |
| Thelma Navarro, County Office of Border Health |
| Vernita Gutierrez, Planned Parenthood Pacific SW |
| Zakiya |
| Zoe Murphy, IRC |

**Meeting facilitator**: Ross Fackrell, SDRF Vice Chair

**1. Greeting and introduction of attendees** Ross Fackrell, SDRF Vice Chair

82 attending, including 11 new in 2021

**2. Treasurer’s report** Ross Fackrell, SDRF Vice Chair

Ross has arranged with the previous treasurer and the bank to make the necessary arrangements for handing Treasurer duties over to the incoming Treasurer. He reported the value of the Forum’s account as of October 1 to be $7,217.61. We consider this a good base amount on which to build with next year’s membership fees. The money is used to fund activities by our task forces and to produce the Forum’s annual World Refugee Day event.

We end the year with 24 members, a number much lower than in previous years. COVID has taken a toll, but let’s bring that number back up next year. We will put out a membership call next month.

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

County Refugee Coordinator report

October 2021 began a new federal fiscal year, FFY 2021-2022, with 699 arrivals, the largest monthly total in at least eight years. In contrast, in October of 2020 there 20 arrivals, and in October 2019 there were 40.

The breakdown: 560 Afghans (80%), 122 Haitians (17%), 17 others (3%).

Afghans will now be reported in categories by entry type:

Afghans on SIV (Special Immigrant Visa) 29

Afghans on SIP (Special Immigrant Parole) 131

Afghans on HP (Humanitarian Parole) 366

… for a total of 526 in these categories. In addition, there were approximately 34 Afghans in the category of refugee.

Of the 699, 476 were eligible for CalWORKS (including children), 223 were individuals or couple with no children eligible for Cash Assistance.

For more details, see the County Arrivals Report for October 2021 uploaded on the SDRF website.

Resettlement agency reports

Alliance for African Assistance – not in attendance

Catholic Charities – Bill Sutton

For October, total 180, including 122 Haitians and Cubans plus numerous Afghans

Jewish Family Service – Giselle Barajas

November: 8 refugees from Iraq and Syria, 75 Afghan HP cases

IRC – Ross Fackrell

November: 13 arrivals, refugees from Iraq and Syria. 75 Afghan HP cases and expecting more.

Question from attendee: Where will the new arrivals be placed, as El Cajon is a common placement area and apartments are hard to find?

Response:

- Most Afghans want to be in El Cajon near family members, but resettlement agencies are also trying to find affordable housing in other regions. The situation has become more complicated because there has been a change in ownership on some properties and the previous partners are no longer involved.

- Dilkhwaz Ahmed of License to Freedom can help connect incoming Afghans to resources and is hiring more workers to assist. You may refer Afghans to LTF [Dilkhwaz@licensetofreedom.org](mailto:Dilkhwaz@licensetofreedom.org) .

**4. SDRF election results** Kathryn LaPointe, Election Committee

Voting in the officer election concluded yesterday, Monday, Nov. 15.

* There were three candidates for four open seats (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer). The three candidates were Bob Walsh, Carol Lewis, and Hassan Abdirahman.
* According to the Forum voting protocol, candidates run for office in general, and seat allocations are decided on by the electees according to the number of votes they receive – the top vote-getter gets first choice, etc. – and on their own preferences.
* Only the Forum’s 24 paid members were eligible to vote. Organizations each received two ballots, individuals one ballot. 12 members returned ballots.

The final tally of votes was:

Bob Walsh 22 votes

Carol Lewis 20 votes

Hassan Abdirahman 20 votes

Vice Chair Ross then said that the electees will meet to decide on their roles and will report back to the Forum by the end of the week, when we will send out an announcement. The new officers will start their term in January. Ross will assist in the transition.

Many thanks to the Election Committee of Clint Carney, Carol Lewis, and Kathryn LaPointe for their work in carrying out the election.

**5. Task force updates** Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary

Advocacy

This task force has been inactive this year. Let’s revive it next year and take on relevant issues.

Asylum

The Asylum Task Force presentation last month was successful and well received.

Domestic Violence

Dalia Mohammad reported:

A multicultural festival was held. Resources and places to find them were shared.

Education

Amanda Urena reported Amanda Urena reported on ETF meeting:

SD Continuing Education:

- Increase in beginning level ESL students. Over 200 students on a waitlist for EL levels 1&2.

- In spring onsite enrollment at additional campuses.

- Requirement to be fully vaccinated or negative COVID test.

- SDCCE Met with JFJ and Catholic Charities.

- Toys for Tots distribution through CalWorks.

IRC: In-person tutoring at Hoover HS and Crawford HS. Flyer, IRC hired a new youth staff team.

SD Youth Services:

Small groups, parenting groups for refugee families. Madison and Meriden English, Spanish and Arabic (serving Central SD - SD Unified)  Lucy Jasso spoke at Forum. Feel free to reach out to me for more information on Parenting Support Groups through the Prevention and Early Intervention Program: [ljasso@sdyouthservices.org](mailto:ljasso@sdyouthservices.org)

SD Unified School District:

- SD Parent Engagement and Crawford Community Connections hosted a virtual resource fair for SDUSD staff and community providers on Oct 27th.

- Youth in Transition Dept met with resettlement agencies and are working on strategies to streamline enrollment for new arrivals.  (A special note was that families who are living in temporary housing when they arrive meet the McKinney Definition of homelessness and are entitled to certain rights such as immediate enrollment at school site.)

- Under a vaccine mandate approved by the Board of Education, San Diego Unified will require students who are 16 and older as of November 1, 2021 and who wish to continue learning in-person to be fully vaccinated, effective January 24, 2022 at the start of the new semester/quarter. To meet these mandate requirements, it is recommended that students receive their first dose of the fully FDA approved Pfizer vaccine no later than November 29, 2021 in order to receive their second dose by December 20, 2021, which will allow for peak immunity to be reached before returning to school from the winter break on January 4, 2022. It is advised that all students receive their first and second COVID-19 vaccines prior to January 4, 2022 in order to submit full documentation by January 3, 2022 and avoid conditional in-school enrollment or alternatives to in-school education. See full requirements at District web link and COVID vaccine clinics for students and families: <https://sites.google.com/sandi.net/nursingwellness/covid-19-vaccine>

Next meeting: Monday, December 13th at 3pm  email: [aurena@sandi.net](mailto:aurena@sandi.net) if anyone would like to attend

Mike Serban of Cajon Valley Union School District reported:

CVUSD offers classroom support and family support in different languages. Contact Mike at [serbanm@cajonvalley.net](mailto:serbanm@cajonvalley.net)

Dan Nyamangah of SAY San Diego reported:

SAY San Diego – PSRO (Parent Student Resident Organization) is sponsoring an annual community dialogue on education. This community event aims to have a meaningful and respectful dialogue among parents, students, residents, School District, educators, and decision-makers in a facilitated discussion. The goal is to ASSESS the learning loss and the district interventions outcomes due to the pandemic, 2021-2022 \*LCAP\*, Community Schools and what it means for our schools and District New Superintendent Search process. Flyers are forthcoming.

Employment

Carol Crisp reported:

- The task force is growing, adding two new members, Rayan Kaskos and Adeem Ismaeil of IRC, to the team of Renee Nasori, Deanna Dorsey and Carol Crisp.

- The Grossmont College Virtual Job Fair, Wednesday, Oct. 27 (43rd annual, second virtual) was a big success. The Career Expo had more than 50 employers and over 200 job seekers attending. The interactive event lasted three hours.

* All positions are listed on our College Central Network (Job Board): <https://www.collegecentral.com/grossmont/>
* Event press release:<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/communities/east-county/story/2021-10-21/grossmont-college-career-expo-moves-online-again-this-year-due-to-covid-concerns>

- The task force’s Employment Needs Identification Survey continues. It has 31 participants as of 11/17/21. Please continue to share with refugees so we can capture more data: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-S727SFJJ/>

Survey results so far:

* 83% of respondents have previously been employed.
* Rank order of industry interest, after category of “Other”:
  + Education
  + Health care
  + Hospitality/retail
  + Culinary arts
  + Law enforcement
* Desired work basis:
  + Full-time 34%
  + Part-time 32%
  + Internship 20%
  + Seasonal 14%

Health

No report

Mental Health

Claire Enemark reported:

Work is progressing on putting together a map of mental health providers who can serve the refugee population. The group has produced a survey to identify “Culturally Qualified Mental Health Professionals”. The purpose of this survey is to gather information about mental health providers in SD who are equipped to provide mental health services to the refugee/newcomer community in SD. If you know any individual therapists, please share with us, so we can add it to our SD County mental health resource list. The task force is aiming to have a list of culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible mental health providers for the refugee community by January.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UvK1-s5zPU-vwLTWlV5JSZ2_onwb_1tKg0dDvHKvMpFURFdTV09FRlpPNjlXSjZFTVExRjlMN1FZUy4u>

**6. Presentation: Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)** Rahmo Abdi, Jeanine Erikat

Rahmo and Jeanine spoke about PANA and presented an overview of its recent activities.

PANA’s mission is to advance the full economic, social, and civic inclusion of refugees in the San Diego region, throughout California, and across the country.

Recent projects:

Redistricting

* Hosted multilingual sessions on the basics of redistricting with partners across the county
* Hosted 13 virtual and in-person Community of Interest sessions with more than 200 residents in a variety of languages.

Get Out the Vote campaigns

* Greatly increased contact rates for their Get Out the Vote campaigns
* Trained youth
* Reached out to household in several languages
* Plan to have voting centers

Supporting Afghans

* Working to meet the needs of newly incoming Afghan entrants
* Advocating for humanitarian parolees to receive benefits, adjustment of status, and fee waivers
* Supporting new Afghan community groups
* Assisting in advocacy for unaccompanied Afghan children

The 2021 Refugee Experiences Report

Every two years, PANA conducts a survey of refugees in San Diego County to better understand the experiences, challenges, and needs of our communities. The findings of this year’s 77-question survey on refugee experiences were published in the 2021 Refugee Experiences Report. This year’s report is particularly timely as it reveals how refugees are faring through the global pandemic, the economic downturn, and the rise in white supremacy, Islamophobia, and hate crimes. In our 2020 survey, we interviewed 544 refugees and first-generation community members about health, employment, housing, COVID-19, education, and their sense of safety and belonging.

Key findings include:

* Employment: Only about one-fourth of respondents reported being employed. For those that have jobs, a large number work at low wages.
* Housing: Two-thirds live in crowded housing situations.
* Safety: Fear persists across the refugee community because of anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric and activity.
* Mental health: The majority of respondents reported depression and/or anxiety.
* Health: Refugees may be at higher risk of COVID infection, with the majority of respondents remaining unlikely to be vaccinated.
* Well-being: High levels of job loss, increased food insecurity, and increases in domestic violence were reported. School closures due to COVID-19 have negatively impacted learning.

The Executive Summary of the report is available at <https://www.panasd.org/refugee-experiences-report>

**7. Community announcements**

Elementary school teacher Kumud Khattar introduced a student tutoring program called Nova Spero that is now opearating at Colina Square on Saturday mornings. It was organized and is run by high school students and includes students from UCSD. They offer one-on-one tutoring, homework help, enrichment activities, and sports. It is an opportunity for students from different areas to interact. Contact [khattark@yahoo.com](mailto:khattark@yahoo.com)

April Moo, Karen Organization

Candlelight event in support of the oppressed in Burma/Myanmar on Sunday, Nov. 21 at the City Heights Performance Annex.

Anne Fosselman of El Cajon Valley High School Community Center

Vaccine clinic at the school on Saturday, Nov. 20. See flyers sent to Forum listserv.

Farhia Gelle of Horn of Africa

The agency offers First 5 Steps program to refugees and others in City Heights. They help mothers with child development, activities, developmental guides. Refer mothers, pregnant mothers to them [farhia@hornafrica.org](mailto:farhia@hornafrica.org)

Brittney Ochira, National Conflict Resolution Center

We are updating their work readiness curriculum. Give us your input. If you are interested in a focus group or want to complete a survey, please email me at bochira@ncrconline.com

Please consider filling out this short link to share your input on what work readiness training would be most helpful for our new arrivals! https://forms.gle/GzFRW8JEARPbZ4EG8

Dalia Mohammad, License to Freedom

For information on vaccines and booster shots please contact me at Dalia.bapeer@gmail.com We have many vaccination events going on this month!

Tammy Burmeister, SD County Child Welfare Services

CPS (Child Protective Services) is organizing a virtual refugee resource fair to inform county social workers of refugee resources. If you would like to participate, please contact me at Tammy.Burmeister@sdcounty.ca.gov or by calling 619-401-3767. Invitation beginning of January.

Edith Sanchez Cruz, Sheriff's Dept.

Edith Sanchez Cruz, Community Inclusion Director with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, can be reached at 619 323-6430 and via email [Edith.sanchezcruz@SDSheriff.gov](mailto:Edith.sanchezcruz@SDSheriff.gov)

From Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services

Feel free to reach out to me for more information on Parenting Support Groups through the Prevention and Early Intervention Program: [ljasso@sdyouthservices.org](mailto:ljasso@sdyouthservices.org)

Dan Nyamangah, SAY San Diego

5th ANNUAL COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON EDUCATION: This community event aims to have a meaningful and respectful dialogue among parents, students, residents, School District, educators, and decision-makers in a facilitated discussion. The goal is to ASSESS the learning loss and the district interventions outcomes due to the pandemic, 2021-2022 \*LCAP\*, Community Schools and what it means for our schools and District New Superintendent Search process. RSVP at: https://forms.gle/c8g1UG6rvsFzYttE7

Amanda Urena, SD City Schools

SD Unified Vaccine Mandates -- students 16 years & older, and Vaccine Clinicshttps://sites.google.com/sandi.net/nursingwellness/covid-19-vaccine

Daria Tomsky, IRC

IRC is offering afterschool tutoring at Crawford and Hoover High Schools T-Th. Here is a flyer with more information - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fZ5QNC1w53pK9EX87y1l\_FZWCWL-7rWi/view?usp=sharing

Lily Mojdehi, JFS

Please fill out the Mental Health Task Force Survey: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UvK1-s5zPU-vwLTWlV5JSZ2\_onwb\_1tKg0dDvHKvMpFURFdTV09FRlpPNjlXSjZFTVExRjlMN1FZUy4u

Renee Nasori, Grossmont College

Please continue to share the Employment Needs Identification Survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/X5K5PFX

Jeanine Erikat, PANA

If you would like to learn more about our report and any of our campaigns please email me at [jeanine@panasd.org](mailto:jeanine@panasd.org). Link to our report: <https://www.panasd.org/refugee-experiences-report>

Officer Homayoun Nabizadeh, SDPD Community Relations Officer

Please contact me for any hate crime incidents or crimes. Officer Nabizadeh (619)515-2714 (24/7) hnabizadeh@pd.sandiego.gov

**8. Approval of the minutes of the October 19 meeting** Bob Walsh, Secretary

The minutes were approved.

**Adjournment**: Ross Fackrell, SDRF Vice Chair, 11:45 a.m.

**Next Meeting**: January 17, 2021

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary