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

Date: Tuesday, January 18. 2022

Location: Zoom meeting

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

Attendees:

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| Abdi Abdillahi, SD County Refugee Coordinator |
| Aida, Family Health Centers |
| Ailaa Al-Tabatabaee, Somali Family Service |
| Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET Project |
| April Moo, Karen Organization SD |
| Avonne Pace, A Better Life Together BRIDGE Project |
| Bethlehem Wolkeba, JFS Breaking Down Barriers |
| Bill Sutton, Catholic Charities Employment Specialist |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary |
| Carol Crisp, PCG |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative |
| Chelsea Hill, Nile Sisters |
| Cynthia To, SD County Community Health |
| Dalia Mohammad, License to Freedom |
| Dan Nyamangah, SAY San Diego |
| Fardosa Osman, UWEAST |
| Farhat Popal, City SD Immigrant Affairs Mgr |
| Farida Erikat, PANA |
| Graciela Mendoza, CA Dept of Public Health, Binational Border Health |
| Guadalupe Rodriguez, SD County |
| Haleemah Zulali |
| Hassan Abdirahman, Somali Family Service |
| Ismael Avilez, Casa Cornelia Law Center |
| Jane Hoey, Women's Empowerment Intl |
| Jane Register, World Relief SoCal |
| Jean Saito, First 5 First Steps |
| Jessica Hernandez, East Region Adult Ed |
| Judy Amaro, PCG |
| Kathryn LaPointe, Oasis |
| Kim Thomas, American Academy of Pediatrics |
| Lenda Hanna, SD County Off. Refugee Coord., Immigrant and Refugee Affairs |
| Liz Rosas, Somali Bantu Association |
| Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services |
| Nazira Adieva, County Office of Equitable Communities CAP |
| Prisci Quijada, Refugee Health Coordinator, SDCHHS |
| Renee Nasori, Grossmont College |
| Ross Fackrell, IRC, SDRF Vice Chair |
| Ryana Contreras, IRC |
| Simin Khadivi, Alliance for African Assistance/ Alliance Health Clinic |
| Winona Baetiong, Survivors of Torture Intl |

**Meeting facilitator**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

**1. Greeting and introduction of attendees** Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

40 attending, including 10 new

**2. Treasurer’s report** Carol Lewis, Treasurer

Carol Lewis of El Cajon Collaborative is the new SDRF Treasurer. She advised everyone that a new year is starting, and it is time to be sending in membership dues to become a paid member of the Forum. Members are elegible to vote in Forum elections and to run for office. Dues provide funds for Task Forces and our World Refugee Day event. This year we are making it easier to join by once again offering the option of mailing in a check (see membership form at website). You can also pay online through Paypal on the SDRF website <http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/members.html>

Carol can provide an invoice if you want one. Contact Carol at [carol.lewis@elcajoncollaborative.org](mailto:carol.lewis@elcajoncollaborative.org)

Let’s get our member numbers back up!

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

December 2021 saw 803 total arrivals: 725 Afghans (90%), 57 Haitians (7%), other (3%).

Individuals eligible for CalWORKs (including children): 654

Single adults and couples with no children under 18, eligible for RCA cash assistance: 149

Afghans:

- SIV status 0

- SIP status 0

- Humanitarian Parole 599

- refugee status 126

For the first quarter of FFY 2021-22 (Oct-Dec 2021):

Total arrivals: 1,886

Total Afghans: 1,593

Total individuals eligible for CalWORKs (including children): 1,560

Total single adults and couples with no children under 18, eligible for RCA cash assistance: 326

December had record numbers of arrivals; January and February should also be high. There are still 15,000 to 20,000 Afghans on military bases around the country. By the middle or end of February they should be moved out to their resettlement destinations.

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

**4. Task force updates** Task Force Chairs/representatives

Advocacy

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

Asylum

Alexis Burnstan reported:

* The group has not met this month. They continue to work on a survey to collect data to create a current list of resources available to asylum seekers. Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET Project, aburnsta@ucsd.edu

Domestic Violence

Dalia Mohammad reported:

* The group will be meeting next month. License to Freedom has been occupied with helping newly arriving refugees, especially Afghans. [dalia.bapeer@gmail.com](mailto:dalia.bapeer@gmail.com)

Education

Amanda Urena reported on the December ETF meeting:

San Diego Unified

* SDUSD COVID Testing <https://sandiegounified.org/covid-19_status/c_o_v_i_d-19_testing>
* SDUSD Vaccine Clinic Opportunities
* <https://sites.google.com/sandi.net/nursingwellness/covid-19-vaccine>
* SDUSD Vaccine Mandate Appeal - students 16 & up

<https://sites.google.com/sandi.net/nursingwellness/covid-19-vaccine/student-vaccine-faqs>

* The Children and Youth in Transition Department  has been reaching out to various community contacts to make connections with community organizations who support specially the Afghani new arrival families.  If anyone knows of any SD community contacts, please reach out to Amanda [aurena@sandi.net](mailto:aurena@sandi.net)

IRC

* After School programs at Crawford and Hoover will be offered virtually the next two weeks.
* IRS is offering academic tutoring, Girls Academy and Peacemakers programs.

Crawford Community Connection

* Welcomes two new staff members: Martha Salmeron <Martha.Salmeron@saysandiego.org>, and Iliana Salas, <Iliana.Salas@saysandiego.org>

SD College of Continuing Education

* New ESL program, English for Parents, to improve English of parents and their ability to help their children with learning. Register in January 2022 by appointment only, [www.sdcce.edu/esl](http://www.sdcce.edu/esl) .

Employment

Renee Nasori reported:

* The group met Jan. 12. Most members are back on board and work has resumed. Many people are working remote. Two new members from Grossmont College have joined the task force.
* A hiring fair is planned for March at Grossmont College, could be hybrid, mixed virtual and in-person. Companies are hiring, so there are opportunities. More information will follow.
* The task force is using the results of its Employment Needs Identification Survey and continues to collect data. Grossmont College is offering workshops for job seekers, including soft skills.

Health

Cynthia To reported:

* The Health Task Force is presenting at the meeting today.
* The group continues to work on maps of Medi-Cal services.

Mental Health

Bethlehem Wolkeba reported:

* The group has not met this month. they are continuing their work on identifying mental health providers in the area.

World Refugee Day Committee

We should begin thinking about forming a group to get started with planning this event, which takes place annually in June.

**5. Presentation: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health** SDRF Health Task Force

Refugee Health Assessment Program – Prisci Quijada, SD County Refugee Health Coordinator

Asylum Seeker Health Program – Graciela Mendoza, CA Office of Binational Border Health

Family Health Services – Aida

MediCal Map Project – Cynthia To, Health Promotion Specialist, SD County HSSA

Prisci Quijada has been in her position since May 2021. She has a background in communicable diseases with SD County and experience in the border region. She was state refugee health coordinator and oversaw the refugee health assessment program. [Prisci.quijada@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Prisci.quijada@sdcounty.ca.gov)

She talked about the Refugee Health Assessment Program. Its purpose is to screen and examine refugees and other arrivals to identify health conditions in this population. It is funded by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement through the state. The California Dept. of Public Health Office of Refugee Health provides the funding to counties. They work with resettlement agencies Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Health Centers and the International Rescue Committee. Family Health Centers of San Diego is the service provider refugees are referred to to conduct the health assessments. La Maestra is also a partner.

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/programs/phs/tuberculosis_control_program/refugee_health_programs.html>

The program provides services for refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, victims of trafficking, SIV cases, SQ/SI Parolees with pending SIV status, and Humanitarian Parolees. They are looking especially for incidence of tuberculosis, HIV, STDs, hepatitis, vaccine-preventable diseases, parasitic infections, high lead levels in children, mental health issues, and a variety of chronic conditions.

Refugees enter the program within 30 days of arrival and complete their participation within 90 days. The County sends the data to the state for compilation. It is important to know the health condition and issues of new arrivals so appropriate resources can be provided. The county is providing a list and map of health resources around the county. Suggestions on the mapping is solicited.

In the last FFY 2020-21, an estimated 25% of refugees entered into Refugee Health screening. The largest groups were Afghans, Syrians and Iraqis. They are working with the resettlement agencies to get referrals. Transportation has been one limiting factor.

Graciela Mendoza of the California Office of Binational Border Health highlighted the Asylum Seekers Health Services Project, a collaboration between the CDPH Offices of Refugee Health and Binational Border Health, Family Health Centers of San Diego, and County of San Diego HHSA Department of

Public Health Services. They are charged with surveillance and monitoring of infectious diseases. In 2019 they took on health assessments and services for asylum seekers, including for those waiting for immigration hearings. They are working on providing vaccinations. For assistance, this population should contact Family Health Centers of San Diego, 619-906-5363, asylumhealth@fhcsd.org

Through the Asylum Seeker Health Screening (ASHS) Project, adult and minor-aged asylum seekers can:

* Get enrolled in health care coverage
* Receive health screenings and treatment
* Get linked to primary care

Please note that clinic services for this program are all administered at a new site, which is centrally located at Family Health Centers Clinic at City College at 1550 Broadway. This designated clinic aims to provide culturally sensitive and language appropriate services. It has capacity to quickly schedule new patients who reside in San Diego County and who intend to apply for asylum.

Aida of Family Health Services noted that there was no time limit for asylum seekers to participate in the Refugee Health Assessment Program.

Family Health Centers of San Diego - RHAP | refugeecare@fhcsd.org | 619-906-5363

Cynthia To, Community Health Promotion Specialist, Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch,

County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency, presented the latest versions of the Health Task Force’s maps showing Medi-Cal Health Care service providers in El Cajon/East County and in City Heights. Medi-Cal Map suggestions please email to Cynthia at [Cynthia.to@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Cynthia.to@sdcounty.ca.gov)

**6. Community announcements**

April Moo, Karen Organization

San Diego’s Karen New Year 2671 celebration will be broadcasted next Friday, 1/21, at 6-7:30 PM on our Facebook Page or on our YouTube channel. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5Ya0pexbt3NqDHzLUBnzyQ

Renee Nasori, Grossmont College

Spring semester begins Jan. 31. Open classes, some online.

Dan Nyamangah, SAY San Diego

Working with various communities about education challenges. Next month meeting with Somali parents. Sessions discuss how the school system works and their role as parents.

Dan Nyamangah - SAY San Diego - Crawford Community Connection. [dnyamangah@saysandiego.org](mailto:dnyamangah@saysandiego.org)

Bethlehem Wolkeba with Breaking Down Barriers at Jewish Family Services

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

Culturally Qualified Mental Health Providers Form. Please continue to fill out and share with your networks.

Carol Crisp, PCG

We have many open job opportunities. Please have interested job seekers go to apply at: <http://www.publicconsultinggroup.com/humanservices/>

**7. Approval of the minutes of the November 2021 meeting** Bob Walsh, Secretary

Time did not allow.

**Adjournment**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair, 11:40 a.m.

**Next Meeting**: February 15, 2022

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary