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

Date: Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Location: Zoom meeting

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

Attendees:

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| Abel Mucyo, Upwardly Global |
| Adeem Ismaeil, IRC, Employment |
| Ailaa Al-Tabatabaee, Somali Family Service |
| Ajazul Haq Azizi |
| Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET Project |
| Alison Borel, Alliance for African Assistance |
| Allie Clerget, Home for Refugees |
| Amy Diaz, American Red Cross |
| Annie Dunlap, COSD Community Health |
| Anya Kuzma, Nile Sisters |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary |
| Carol Crisp, PCG |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative |
| Christiana Coulapides, World Relief |
| Claire Enemark, United Women of East Africa, SD Refugee Communities Coalition |
| Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Constantin Zand |
| COSD Office of Border Health |
| Danielle Ohemeng, One Digital World |
| Dee Dorsey, SD Workforce Partnership |
| Eddie Robles, Aetna |
| Elissa Hill, Somali Family Service |
| Erik Asero, Alliance for African Assistance |
| Francis, Somali Bantu Assn. |
| Giselle Barajas, Jewish Family Service, Resettlement |
| Hassan Abdirahman, Somali Family Service |
| Hawi Abdulkadir, Somali Family Service |
| Iliana Salas, Crawford Community Connection |
| Ismael Avilez, Casa Cornelia Law Center |
| Jan Jarrell, SD College of Continuing Education |
| Janelle Acosta, License to Freedom |
| Jason Bercovitch, Rep Scott Peters |
| Juan Estrada, Molina Healthcare, Community Engmt |
| Judy Amaro, PCG |
| Karla Gonzalez, COSD CWS |
| Kathryn LaPointe, Church of the Brethren |
| Lamar Jackson, SDWP |
| LB |
| Lenda Hanna, SD County Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs |
| Liz Rosas, Somali Bantu Association |
| Luna Bellitto |
| Madisen Ferras, COSD Community Health |
| Mahsa Imani, IRC, Employment |
| Maria Sosa |
| Marwah Alobaidi, USAHello |
| Mary Joy Cunningham, IRC MSW Intern |
| Maureen Hartin, Volunteers in Medicine |
| Minda Schweizer, Home for Refugees USA |
| Moyosore Buari, United Women of East Africa, SD Refugee Communities Coalition |
| Navid Zamani, License to Freedom |
| Officer Homayoun Nabizadeh, SDPD Comm. Relations |
| Oralia Alvarez, Mission Driven Finance |
| Rahmo Abdi, PANA |
| Rayan Kaskos, IRC, Employment |
| Renee Nasori, Grossmont College |
| Ricardo Diaz, Al Otro Lado |
| Rola Kojok, COSD Community Health |
| Ruaa Albiyati |
| Ryana Contreras, IRC |
| Shirley Barajas, IRC |
| Sultana Aziz, IRC, Employment |
| Tammy Burmeister, SDC Child Welfare Services, East |
| Waheedullah Noorzai, IRC, Employment |

**Meeting facilitator**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

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

63 attending

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

The Forum’s account balance is currently $7,924. Recent expenditures include $200 for gift cards for the Refugee Resilience Awards awarded last month.

We are encouraging organizations and agencies to become members of the Forum. Members are eligible to vote in Forum elections and decisions and to run for office. They add to the strength of the Forum as an advocate for refugees.

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>

You can send checks to: Carol Lewis, Little House Family Resources, 131 Avocado Ave., El Cajon CA 92020. Fees are $35 annually for individuals/small agencies and $70 for organizations. Membership forms can be found online at http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/



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

**3. Resettlement updates** Lenda Hanna, San Diego County office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

For the month of June 2022, San Diego County resettled a total of 279.

* Primary Refugees (not including the Afghans) = 70
* Cuban/Haitian = 164
* Total Afghans for June 2022 = 45
  + Afghans with refugee status =0
  + Afghans with SIV status = 20
  + Afghans with Humanitarian Parolee (HP) status =25
* 199 out of the total 279 (or 71%) for June 2022 are number of individuals eligible for CalWORKs including children.
* 80 out of the total 279 (or 29%) for June 2022 are number of single adults/couples with no children under 18 eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).

For the FFY 21/22 (October 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022), San Diego County resettled a total of 3,998.

* Primary Refugee (not including the Afghans) = 367
* Secondary Immigration (refugees that resettled in another county and moved to San Diego) = 5
* Asylee = 5
* Iraqi with SIV status = 4
* Cuban/Haitians = 976
* Total Afghans for FFY 2021/2022 (October 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022) = 2,645
  + Afghans with refugee status = 329
  + Afghans with SIV status = 127
  + Afghans with Special Immigrant Parolee (SIP) status = 131
  + Afghans with Humanitarian Parolee (HP) status = 2,054
* 2,054 or 78% out of the total Afghans 2,645 that resettled in San Diego County for FFY 21/22 (October 2021 through June 2022) are Afghans with Humanitarian Parolees (HPs).
* 3,144 out of the total arrivals 3,998 (or 79%) for FFY 2021/2022 are number of individuals eligible for CalWORKs including children.
* 770 out of the total arrivals 3,715 (or 21%) for FFY 2021/2022 are number of single adults/couples with no children under 18 years eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).

For more details, see the County Arrivals Report for June 2022 on the SDRF website.

Ukrainians have been arriving, with the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs reporting 280 now receiving services. They are completing applications to apply for benefits.

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

Asylum

Alexis Burnstan reported:

The group has made progress on compiling a resource listing of mental health providers relevant to the asylum community, with 24 organizations having completed their survey. The information will be posted on the SDRF website Resource page. More information is welcome; please fill out the survey at

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfTAQiXxys1ab-cQaTLNzWHzc5YmPiXDwMAOv0Ym5xgd-YDFA/viewform?usp=sf_link>

Domestic Violence

Navid Zamani, License to Freedom, reported:

Events are being organized for the summer, with a multicultural fair around accessing services planned. They are promoting the idea of eliminating the stigma around reporting domestic violence. They want to be looking at DV beyond the primary focus of gender and culture and examining the role of deficiencies in social services such as housing, food, medical care, etc. They would like to foster a larger discussion on domestic violence in a fuller context.

Education

No report

Employment

Renee Nasori and Carol Crisp reported:

The Refugee Job Fair on May 10, 11-2pm at Grossmont College was a big success. They had good news coverage. She shared a video of the event from a local news program.

<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/videos/job-fair-aimed-at-helping-immigrants-and-refugees-held-at-grossmont-college/2942777/>

Health

No report

Mental Health

Claire Enemark reported:

The task force is on hiatus. They have been developing a tool to help community members with their counseling needs, and they are working on a resource list. More members are needed to carry out projects. Contact Claire Enemark claire@uweast.org or Bethlehem Wolkeba bethlehemw@jfssd.org

Other

Shlyn Guarian of San Diego County Child Welfare Services shared a resource list she has compiled. In their work with refugees and immigrants they need to be able to connect clients with trauma-informed and culturally responsive services in the community. If you have input or additions to this list, including information on social service supports and language capabilities, please contact Shlyn at [SHLYN.GUARIAN@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:SHLYN.GUARIAN@sdcounty.ca.gov) The list was distributed through the Forum email on 7/19.

**5. Presentation: Upwardly Global**  Abel Mucyo

Upwardly Global is a nonprofit that helps immigrant and refugee professionals rebuild and restart their careers in the U.S. It is based in San Francisco and works with clients in over a dozen states. Through its work, the organization has helped more than 1,000 skilled immigrants and refugees gain employment in well-paying jobs, with a 90% retention rate after one year. The program is free to participants.

It is a resource for skilled immigrants. Of their clients, 95% have a bachelor’s degree from their country. 34% are refugees, 47% are female, 80% live under the federal poverty line. Participants must:

- Have a green card or humanitarian visa and be work authorized

- Have a bachelor’s degree or equivalent be IT/Technology flexible

- Have live in the US for 7 years or less

- Speak English at an intermediate to advanced level

- Reside in California or other specified states

Program services include:

- Career mapping

- Resume development

- Job search strategies

- Professional networking

- Interview preparation

- Licensing certification

They will find free reskilling and upskilling programs for program participants. They offer support with credential evaluation and may work with WES (World Education Services – a nonprofit organization that provides credential evaluations for international students and immigrants planning to study or work). Job coaching is done out of the San Francisco office. They assess English proficiency, and if it is not sufficient, a client can be put on hold until their English has improved. Participants complete the program and are ready to go out to work in 6-12 months.

Clients can be referred through the UniteUS platform, or be introduced by emailing:

[abelm@upwardlyglobal.org](mailto:abelm@upwardlyglobal.org) or [cassidy@upwardlyglobal.org](mailto:cassidy@upwardlyglobal.org)

**6. Community announcements**

Mahsa Imani, IRC, Employment

For any career service for refugees/SIV/Asylees/Parolees please refer clients to mahsa.imani@rescue.org. We offer degree evaluation/relicensing or recertification services as far as short term certification training in healthcare, IT or any other trainings.

Adeem Ismaeil, IRC, Employment

IRC is offering employment and inclusive services with devices for special needs clients.

Rayan Kaskos, IRC, Employment

IRC offers a range of employment services. They help new arrivals find entry level jobs. Cash aid program. People are being reemployed in retail, hotel, manufacturing, and other areas. They are also supporting 25 cases from Ukraine. Please send Ukrainians to IRC for assistance. [rayan.kaskos@rescue.org](mailto:rayan.kaskos@rescue.org)

Jan Jarrell, Dean of ESL and Citizenship, San Diego College of Continuing Education

The school has scheduled Exploration dates in July and August at five campuses for those interested to find out about ESL classes, high school completion, and other instructional programs. All classes are free. Please share with clients and community members! <https://sdcce.edu/exploration-days/> If you'd like a table at one or more of our SDCCE exploration events in July and August, please copy the links below. Flyer can be found at https://sdcce.edu/exploration-days/

West City - Point Loma https://forms.office.com/r/xWAF5PuqJb

Mid-City - City Heights https://forms.office.com/r/5QdFmsxyJ9

Cesar Chavez https://forms.office.com/r/iU1ZzfhTsd

CE Mesa - Mesa College https://forms.office.com/r/5uenz0UZmN

ECC - Southeast San Diego https://forms.office.com/r/aYvztrUzWy

Registration online or in person for ESL, VESL, Citizenship, and English for Parents (ESL/Family Literacy) begins next week for fall! https://sdcce.edu/esl My email is [jjarrell@sdccd.edu](mailto:jjarrell@sdccd.edu)

Jason Bercovitch, Congressman Scott Peters office

A grants workshop for funding for healthcare projects will be held Wednesday, July 20.

<https://ushr.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_fUsF9LvBQZmR4X9DRepqcA>  
For questions: Call (858) 455-5550 or email Jason.Bercovitch@mail.house.gov

**Adjournment**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair, 11:45 a.m.

**Next Meeting**: August 16, 2022

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary