



General Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 17, 2017 10:30 am to 12:00 pm
International Rescue Committee (IRC) – 5348 University Avenue, San Diego, CA 92105

1. Call to order at 10:30 am

Present: Abdi Abdillahi, Adhara Muceri, Akhlas Putras, Andrea Frost, Andrew Rice, Anne Hosley, Awichu Akwamya, Ban Bakkal, Bernardo Mazón, Bridget de la Garza, Carla Croft, Cathy Lee, Chris Miller, Ciria Brewer, David Gangsei, David Murphy, David Robertson, Diana Rhoades, Eric Miller, Gilli Weinstein, Guerline Jozep, Ham Abdulalad, Jane Hoey, Jason Porter, Joel Day, Juan Estrada, Julio Rivera, Karen Longstreth, Kate Morrissey, Kathi Anderson, Kevin Mitchell, Kirsten Moore, Kristell Denlka, Kristen Mahar, Lisa DuGolt, Lisa Vang, Long Bui, Loredana Miteso, Lori Gutierrez, Madelyne Wagner, Maggie Fenn, Margaret Lujan, Mariano Diaz, Michele Estill, Mohammed Tuama, Munquith Alhajjaj, Neda Rivera, Neil Hovland, Oliver Cabana, Oren Robinson, Rebecca Paida, Ric Oquita, Rita Shamoan, Rosario Iannacone, Roseann Castaneda, Ryan Williams, Sara Boldan, Susan Hagos, Sysvanh Kabkeo, Tarryn Mento, Tiffany Tang, Yadira Dickey

2. Executive Committee Announcements and Participant Introductions

- a. Rebecca Paida (Chair) opened the Forum meeting, welcomed attendees, and thanked previous Forum officers for their work and dedication.
- b. Forum participants introduced themselves.
- c. Oren Robinson (Treasurer) reported that SDRF membership in 2016 included 40 paid members (36 organizations and 4 individual members). It is time for organizations and individuals to renew their membership for 2017. Benefits of membership include being able to vote in elections for forum officers, serve as a chair or co-chair of a task force, having a resource table at the World Refugee Day festival, and having the name of the individual or organization posted on the SDRF website. Membership fees are \$60 for an organization and \$30 for an individual. Oren is working on initiating an online payment system that can be accessed on the forum website. Click the link below to access the payment portal: <https://paysubsonline.com/ThirdpartyRegistration.aspx?clubID=4dc739f06656338f983b44c1a7efb12d>
- d. Social Media. The forum's Facebook page has been updated (www.facebook.com/SDRefugeeForum). Attendees are encouraged to visit and "like" the page.
- e. Refugee Forum Officers: Rebecca Paida (Chair), Kirsten Moore (Vice Chair), Bridget de la Garza (Secretary), Oren Robinson (Treasurer), and Abdi Abdillahi (ex-officio) were in attendance.

3. Task Force Updates. Rebecca Paida (Chair) encouraged participants to review the list of task forces on the forum website and consider becoming involved in a task force.
 - a. **Advocacy Task Force:** The Advocacy Task Force has had approximately 20 participants in recent months. More participants are welcome. The next meeting is Feb. 9, 2017 at 12 p.m. at Alliance for African Assistance. Contact Oren Robinson to confirm meeting date.
 - b. **Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force:** The Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force last meeting was at the offices of 2-1-1. More participants are welcome.
 - c. **Domestic Violence Task Force:** No updates
 - d. **Employment Task Force:** No updates.
 - e. **Health Task Force:** The Health Task Force met on Jan 11, 2017 and identified Susan Hagos as new co-chair. The task force is working on identifying a project for 2017. The next meeting will be Feb. 7, 2017 at 1 p.m. at Nile Sisters Development Initiative.
 - f. **World Refugee Day Task Force:** World Refugee Day event will be in June with possible location of City Heights Library, same as last year. The next meeting will be in February. Maggie Fenn will send out an email to the SDRF listserv with possible meeting dates.
4. County Agencies & Committees.
 - a. Reception & Placement. Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs) Arrival Data and Updates
 - i. Alliance for African Assistance: No updates.
 - ii. Catholic Charities: No updates.
 - iii. International Rescue Committee: The International Rescue Committee reported a recent drop from the surge late in federal fiscal year 2016.
 - iv. Jewish Family Services: No updates.
 - b. County (Abdi Abdillahi)
 - i. Total number of refugee arrivals for the month of Dec. 2016 to San Diego County was 365. This included: Afghanistan (47); Democratic Republic of County (7); Egypt (5); Guatemala (1); Indonesia (50); Iraq (206); Sri Lanka (2); Uganda (34); Uzbekistan (7). Arrival data is posted on the SDRF website under "Resources."
 - ii. Total refugee arrivals in San Diego County for federal fiscal year 2016 (Oct.1, 2016-Sept. 30, 2017) was 1,187.
 - c. **State Advisory Council (Mohammed Tuama):** The State Advisory Council meets on a quarterly basis. The last meeting was a phone conference held on December 8, 2016.
 - d. **Refugee Health (Christine Murto):** Christine Murto was not present.
5. Updates from Sacramento from Sysvahn Kabkeo, Chief, State of California's Refugee Programs Bureau

- a. Sysvahn thanked the forum for their support and thanked Kathi Anderson for her work as immediate past Chair of the forum.
- b. U.S. arrival numbers for the first quarter of the current federal fiscal year: 25,671. Southern CA is set to get quite a few arrivals in the month of January 2017.
- c. Funding.
 - i. California will continue to have eight impacted counties. Funding will be divided amongst the eight counties.
 - ii. Targeted assistance augmentation funding should be coming out in February. Last year, this was about \$600,000.
 - iii. Cuban-Haitian Entrant Program. Small amount of the funding will be available. At this time, no decision about which counties will receive this funding. Last year, the Wilson Fish Program in San Diego was allocated the entire amount.
- d. Upcoming Events. A Refugee Summit (state conference) will be held in San Diego at the Wyndham Hotel from August 29 - September 1, 2017.
- e. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) will conduct a monitoring visit in Sacramento during the week of Feb 6, 2017.
- f. January is Human Trafficking month. Sysvahn encouraged partners to promote awareness of human trafficking. The Refugee Programs Bureau has a small state-funded program with plans to train county welfare to work staff in central California regarding human trafficking.
- g. Syrian support project. \$360,000 received in California. Funding can be used to support any refugee, but the emphasis for this support is on Syrian refugees.
- h. Sysvahn responded to question regarding "brain waste." There is a White House task force addressing this and the Refugee Program Bureau is developing a resource for refugees who are professionals to help them find services to assist them in establishing equivalent professional credentials in the U.S.

6. Focus. FBI's Role in Refugee Interaction. Special Agent Carla Croft, International Human Rights Unit, FBI San Diego and Yadira Dickey, Community Outreach Specialist

- a. The FBI's international Human Rights Unit leads the FBI's efforts to investigate violations of the five primary US human rights laws: genocide, torture, war crimes, the recruitment/use of child soldiers, and female genital mutilation.
- b. The International Human Rights Unit addresses all tips to identify an U.S. nexus to war criminals and other perpetrators and provides support to other U.S. agencies and international partners.
- c. FBI has a strong victim assistance program, immigration status doesn't matter. Victim services are based on what the individual victim needs.

7. Spotlight. IRC Asset Building. Lending and Tax Preparation. Zachary Bezold, Microenterprise Business Counselor

- a. Housed in the IRC's Center for Financial Opportunity. Goal is to improve financial well-being of the client. Four major areas: Employment, Career Development, Vocational ESL, and Microenterprise services.

- b. The Financial literacy program teaches the basics of the U.S. financial system and encourages good habits in budgeting, credit, tax preparation, and banking.
- c. IRC's Microenterprise Program supports refugees to start and expand their own businesses by providing intensive technical assistance and micro-loans.
- d. Free tax preparation is available to anyone who meets income eligibility requirements.

8. Community Announcements

- a. Nile Sisters Development Initiative provides behind-the-wheel driving instruction.
 - b. The IRC accepts vehicle donations. Contact person is Andrea Source.
 - c. Intrepid Theatre has started an 8-week project with Crawford High School refugee students. The goal is to create awareness of refugees. Performance will be March 12, 2017 at the Horton Grand Theatre. The performance is free and open to the public.
 - d. La Jolla Athenaeum has commissioned a theatre piece for young audiences which will tour schools in San Diego. Public performances are scheduled for Feb. 27, 2017 and March 6th at noon. Contact person is Ric Oquita.
 - e. Nile Sisters Development Initiative is hosting a short film screening and dialogue on female genital cutting on January 25, 2017, 6-8 p.m. at University of San Diego (USD). For tickets, access Eventbrite at www.nilesisters.org.
 - f. Newcomers Support and Development is assisting refugees with college degrees and professional licenses to obtain professional certification in the U.S.
 - g. The Museum of Man is undergoing a re-imagining and want to reengage the community. Contact person is Jason Porter.
 - h. David Robertson, University of California, San Diego (UCSD) may have graduate students interested in examining the impact of refugees on the San Diego economy.
 - i. Joel Day, City of San Diego advised the mayor and city council on human rights issues that affect lives of those in San Diego and invited participants to contact him with input. dayj@sandiego.gov.
 - j. There will be a peaceful prayer circle with Juan Vargas and Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher on Sat, January 21 at Chicano Park.
 - k. Cajon Valley Union School District has open part-time position of community liaison. The job announcement is on the Cajon Valley Union School District website.
9. Approval of Minutes. Kathi Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting (November 2016), and Oren Robinson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Adjournment: 12:00 pm

Next Meeting: February 21, 2017 from 10:30 am to 12:00 pm at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) - 5348 University Avenue, Suite 205, San Diego, CA 92105.