

East Bay Refugee Forum

Meeting Notes

Tuesday, June 16, 2015, 10:00-12:00

Catholic Charities of the East Bay, 433 Jefferson Street, Oakland, CA 94607

Present: Christine Lemonda (IRC), Karen Ferguson (IRC), Hisham Zawil (IRC), Ballav Poudyel (Lao Family Community Development), Nicole Germanov (Refugee Transitions), Charles Jackson (African Advocacy Network), Whalen Peete (African Advocacy Network), Lila Katz (JFCS-East Bay), Sean Kirkpatrick (Community Health for Asian Americans), Amy Lam (Community Health for Asian Americans), Nate Dunstan (Oakland Unified School District), Pat Panko (ORR Regional Office), Hana Toma (Catholic Charities of the East Bay), Elisabeth Lang (Catholic Charities of the East Bay), Jack Tyler (Alameda/Berkeley One Stop), Niran Ghaley (Catholic Charities of the East Bay), Sue Pon (Oakland Adult School Adult Education programs), William Blackmer (Catholic Charities of the East Bay), Ernie Rivas (Alameda county Social Services Agency), Salai Tluang (Catholic Charities of the East Bay), Jennifer Tran (USC), Lovetta Tugbeh (Coalition for Justice in Liberia), Blythe Raphael (EBRF)

Welcome: Karen Ferguson, Executive Director of IRC, Northern California Programs

- A licensed clinical psychologist, Karen comes to IRC after over twenty years of overseas and domestic work with vulnerable populations to include refugees, immigrants, and victims of trafficking. Among other roles, she served for the past ten years as the Resettlement Director for Catholic Social Services and concurrently as the Alaska State Refugee Coordinator.

Welcome: Hisham Zawil, IRC Oakland Office

- Relocating from Los Angeles, Hisham will serve as IRCs new Case Manager Supervisor and of Reception and Placement as well as Intensive Case management Programs. Hisham has experience working with Middle Eastern refugees, specifically from capacity building work in Lebanon.

Welcome : Walen Peete, (New Volunteer at African Advocacy Network, law school student at Hastings), Jennifer Tran (USC doctoral student writing on refugee populations), Bowa Tucker (new staff of Regional Office of Refugee Resettlement), and William Blackmer (new volunteer coordinator at CCEB).

Resettlement Agency Arrival Updates from 10/1/2014-current time

Refugee Arrivals- Catholic Charities of the East Bay

October 2014- May 2015

Ethnic Origin	Arrivals	Language(s)
<i>Afghanistan</i>	51	<i>Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Urdu</i>
<i>Burma</i>	19	<i>Burmese, Karen, Thai, Kachin & Malay</i>
<i>Iraq</i>	12	<i>Arabic, English</i>
<i>Pakistan</i>	6	<i>Hindi/ English</i>
<i>Syria</i>	4	<i>Arabic</i>
TOTAL	92/ 150 projected	

Children ages from 5 to High School:

Elementary school: 14, Middle School: 1, High School: 7

ARRIVALS-International Rescue Committee**October 2014-May 2015**

Total: Cases FY15 : 252 total arrived out of 475 approved	
Africa : 21	
Somalia	8
Eritrea	7
Uganda	3
Ethiopia	2
DRC	1
East Asia : 53	
Burma	51
China	1
N. Korea	1
Latin America/Caribbean : 7	
Cuba	1
Colombia	6
Near East/South Asia: 171	
Iraq	19
Iran	7
Afghan	128
Syria	10
Sri Lanka	4
Bhutan	3
School Age (5 to 18 yrs)	60
Geo	213
Free	39
SIV	127

Total IRC and CCEB Combined Arrivals Oct.1-May 2015

Afghanistan	179
Bhutan	3
Burma	70
China	1
Columbia	6
Cuba	1
DRC	1
Eritrea	7
Ethiopia	2
Iraq	31
Iran	7
North Korea	1
Pakistan	6
Somalia	8
Sri Lanka	4
Syria	14
Uganda	3
TOTAL COMBINED	344

Top three countries of origin are Afghanistan (52%), Burma (20%), and Iraq (9%) Followed by Syria (4%) Somalia (2%), Iran/Eritrea (2%). Remaining collective 11% hail from all other countries listed in the agency arrival tables above.

CCEB and IRC have arrivals which are a bit lower than those projected. Refugees in Nepal have not been able to depart on schedule due to the earthquake while overseas processing in Bagdad has stopped.

JFCS-East Bay notes that they have already met projected capacity for the year (90 individuals) and have been granted an increase by the State Refugee Program's Bureau to resettle up to 140 total this year.

JFCS-East Bay Arrivals Oct. 1-May 2015

Afghanistan	69
Congo	1
Iraq	3
Iran	20
Syria	1
Uganda	2
Ukraine	1
TOTAL	97/140 total approved

JFCS-East Bay resettles new arrivals primarily in Contra Costa County but estimates that 25 % of their new arrival cases are resettled in Alameda County (Oakland and Hayward) with relative anchors from Afghanistan. Six of the above cases from differing countries of origin are LGBT free cases. JFCS-East Bay also notes that many Afghans are out migrating to Sacramento, Los Angeles, Colorado and Utah where family ties are in place.

Concern is expressed that cases noted as anchored may not accurately reflect the level of support the anchor family is able (or not able) to give, especially new arrivals from Afghanistan.

Since June 2013, OUSD Refugee and Asylee Student Assistance Program has enrolled 350 arrivals from Central America with 25% of the cases to date resolving with asylum granted. Of those, youth from Guatemala (indigenous Maya) are granted asylum while those from El Salvador and Honduras are being granted Special Juvenile Immigration status.

OUSD also notes an uptick in enrollment of children from Eritrea who are reunifying with family, usually a father, who is already in place.

OIHS continues to reserve space for new refugee arrivals but is at full capacity. An additional program has been opened in the district at Castlemont High to help serve families in East Oakland.

Coordinator Updates

- Forum members present asked to proof read latest edition of EBRF brochure prior to printing in mass for WRD event.
- Organization for Refuge, Asylum, Migration (ORAM) training set for July 21, 22. JFCS-East Bay volunteers to host the group (approximately 35 persons from 7 different forum member agencies combined). ORAM has compiled in-country condition reports for LGBTI persons seeking asylum on the basis of persecution due to sexual or gender orientation available for use by asylum lawyers representing such cases. Reports are free of charge. Contact ORAM via their website.

- A coding error statewide has resulted in refugee clients or those who have legal permanent residence status to lose their full scope Medi-Cal coverage and be assigned temporary (three month) Restricted Scope Medi-Cal for emergency services (or pregnancy related services) only. Staff should email coordinator with such cases for instructions on how to fix the coding error and revert client back to full coverage.
- EBRF Strategic Planning is set for August 11, 2015. For continuity's sake, current steering committee members have been asked to remain in place (some beyond their current terms) until strategic planning is complete. Seats on the Steering Committee will be available as rotations occur (likely in early fall). Along with updated Bylaws, applications for seats as they vacate will be sent forum wide for interested parties.
- EBRF thanks the English Center for not only donating but delivering dozens of fabulous office and desk chairs to several of our Forum member agencies.
- WRD Planning Announcements made. Panelists include: Pat Pianko (ORR Regional Rep.), Sadaf Siddiq (County Refugee Coordinator and former new arrival) , Adoubou Tratore (African Advocacy Network) , and Sushma Gurung (CCEB and former longtime resident of the camp featured in the film). Moderator Amy Lam will ask staff from Forum member agencies to stand and be collectively recognized. The documentary film screening and panel event is on a stricter timeline than originally planned with a new end time at the Grand Lake Theater of 11:30.

Community Announcements

- Lao Family will move this week for a 1.5 year period to their old location of 1551 23rd Ave, Oakland, CA 94606. The previous location will undergo large scale renovation and re-open with added community services.
- Lao Family has a Summer Job Training Program for Low Income Youth (Age 16-21) who reside in Oakland Housing Authority Buildings. Training includes paid job readiness workshops and placement into paid internships for up to \$1,225 earnings this summer. Formal flyer attached to meeting note email.
- African Advocacy Network invites all to their annual BBQ in celebration of their 6th year anniversary. Date: Saturday, June 27, 2015 from 10:00-5:00 in Golden Gate Park. Formal flyer will be issued via the forum google groups list serve.
- CHAA invites all to join the One Africa Bay Area Collaborative to celebrate one year together of working as a PAN African movement to help survey different communities and needs. Date: Saturday, June 20 from 2:00-3:30 at CHAA on Grand Ave. Please RSVP so that purchase of food is in keeping with those who wish to attend. Ongoing meetings of this group are typically the 4th Tuesday of each month in the evening and rotate between the offices of CHAA and AAN.
- OUSD Refugee and Asylee Student Assistance Program gives a last call for those who wish to enroll in summer school programs, to include any children who arrived within the last week. Note, no student may miss more than three days of summer school. In addition, there are other opportunities for engagement for youth to include soccer camp, programs with Refugee Transitions and IRC. For OUSD programs, students should be in the U.S. for three years or less for the program to receive funding.
- Refugee Transitions announces that parent ESL classes with babysitting on site begin on Monday at Franklin Elementary. Classes run M-F all summer long from 9:00-12:00. Free of charge with no need to pre-register.
- CHAA will soon announce details and applications for internships in a pilot program to train paraprofessionals to be community mental health workers. The program will start in September and will offer scholarships for 8/15 interns. The goal is to have members who are out in the

community better trained and supported to work as paraprofessionals in the field. Training components will cover issues such as boundaries, self-care, best practices for serving clients, and educating to reduce stigma around mental health issues within diverse communities. Commitment: 3 hours per week for 26 weeks total (13 in the fall and 13 in the spring) with potential job readiness for work in the field.

Annual Overview of Refugee Employment for those enrolled into Alameda County Programs: *Ernesto Rivas, Alameda County Social Services Agency*

- Alameda County is relatively unique compared to others in California in that it contributes at least double amount of funds from its own general funds to match subcontracted services for employment programs.
- The data provided (and attached to meeting notes as a scan) pertains only to Refugee Cash Assistance Participants and is combined from all refugee employment service contracts issued. In all, there were 542 enrollments total into the program which is higher than the projected 350-400 per year. (A slight error may occur as data is synced using both the county FY calendar of July 1, 2014-May 31, 2015 and the FFY of Oct. 1-Sept. 30 2015. The number of individuals on General Assistance is insignificant as those only number 3 or 4 persons per year. Data does not include U or T Visa clients (also a very small number).
- Placement rate is one of the highest in the state at 42% (the state average hovers around 23%) with 92% of those placed attaining a 90 day job retention which includes both part time and full time positions combined. In contrast, placement rate in the state for general CalWORKS clients is 28.3%.
- Data reveals that those entering the program this year defy the traditional split between clients enrolled who are 50% cash aid and 50% non-cash aid. Currently, close to 70% are cash aid.
- Enrolling female participants still proves challenging. Men comprise 73% of the clients served, females only 27%.
- Current top three industries of employment are: retail sales related (cashiers, material/package handlers, sorter) at 33% of total placements for an average wage of \$11.10 per hour, food prep industry at 29% of placements and a wage of \$10.54 per hour, warehouse/production/assembly/laundry for 12% of placements at \$10.96 per hour and driving and transportation (delivery driver, parking attendant, taxi) at 12% of placements and \$10.96 per hour.
- There have been a higher than usual number of placements into professional and technical fields (5 % of placements as IT Technician, Accountant, data analyst, software engineer) for an average starting hourly of \$20.66.
- The estimated gross annual average/median wages earned by RCA clients places them between 100%-200% of the Federal Poverty Threshold but below the estimated the Alameda County livable wage.
- Top three countries of origin for RCA participants are Afghanistan (24%), Eritrea (16%) tied with Burma (Myanmar) at 16%, and Sri Lanka at 6% of participants.
- Concern over worker exploitation is raised. Employment counselors typically verify wages earned for hours worked with clients who return with the first paycheck. Suspected abuses are reported by various agency staff to the Labor Board. As part of refugee employment programs, clients should receive OSHA training for workplace safety. Social Adjustment Counselors for the

EBRF TA Project just completed a large outreach effort to educate refugees about the new minimum wage law in Oakland (12.25 per hour).

Update on Newcomer Center Proposal: *Sean Kirkpatrick, Community Health for Asian Americans*

- There have been two meetings in March and May with 47 individuals total at the table interested in engagement about a Newcomer Center Proposal. CHAA has received pilot funding to develop a position paper. The next meeting is scheduled for July 7th (and will come via formal announcement). Next step will be to conduct an analysis of all stakeholders with a vested interest or concern.

**Remaining meetings for 2015 are calendared for: August 18, October 20, and December 15*