

# Fostering Refugee Empowerment in Community Building Efforts



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Photo Credit – CDF: A Collective Action Initiative

Fostering Community Engagement and Welcoming  
Communities is supported by the  
Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR/ACF/DHHS)



WELCOMING  
AMERICA



Building a Nation of Neighbors

# Engaging the Receiving Community

## Leadership

Engage credible, mainstream leaders to help foster a positive climate.

## Contact

Foster meaningful connections between U.S. born and foreign-born.

## Communications

Use messages that speak to unity, common values, and shared contributions.

# Refugees are the Key Ingredient!



# Today's Agenda

## 1. Opening Remarks

Bao Nguyen, Governing Board member, Garden Grove Unified School District

## 2. The Role of Ethnic-Based Community Organizations

Mukhtar Idhow, Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, NH

## 3. Community Organizing Approaches

Folabi Olagbaju, Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service, DC

## 4. Lessons for Refugee Resettlement

Zeljka Krvavica, Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services

## 5. Moderated Discussion

# Opening Remarks: Bao Nguyen



# Ethnic Community Based Organizations (ECBO)s

## Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success:

Aids in the resettlement of refugee and immigrant groups in New Hampshire by providing assistance, training, resources, and opportunities that promote self-sufficiency.



## Evolution of ORIS' Work

- Created in 2006 by Somali Bantu leaders in Manchester
- Provided translation and interpretation regarding U.S./ NH schools, healthcare, and social services
- Received two rounds of ORR funding
- Variety of services to Somali Bantu, Bhutanese, Congolese, adolescent refugees, and refugees interested in agriculture

# New American Sustainable Agriculture Project & Fresh Start Farms marketing collective (2008)





# Farm and Food Leaders

SNAP at Manchester Farmers' Market



# Computer and Communications internship

ORIS staff and **Mayor Ted Gatsis** present interns with certificates



# Refugee Leadership

## Interpretation for Social Justice

Partnership with National Immigrant Farming Initiative



## Diverse Leadership

### Inclusion of receiving community

Manchester Immigrant Integration Initiative (fall 2013)



## Community Organizing: Empowering Former Refugees to be Leaders and Advocates

- LIRS' long track record of successful refugee resettlement
- Priority to empower migrants & refugees to be strong advocates
- LIRS offers opportunities to contribute talents, mentor others and exercise leadership to create a more robust and longer-term welcome.



## Leadership Training and Advocacy

- Bringing together refugee leaders for 3-day training designed to hone leadership skills, network; and advocate for issues of concern
- Lifting up the voices of all refugees to promote welcoming communities around the country.

# Academy Highlights

- 51 former refugees from 23 states and representing 16 countries of origin
- Key portions of training led by refugees
- Legislative advocacy training and Congressional visits
- Action plan development



Photo credit: Intercambio Uniting Communities

# Lessons Learned

- No substitute for face-to-face meetings to build a network of leaders and develop lasting relationships.
- Training is not a one off experience. Important to build a structure for sustained engagement
- Create leadership opportunities for team members and support network for their efforts.
- Be cognizant of, and respectful of former refugees' time and prevailing situation.



“My greatest success has been my ability to encourage and empower fellow refugees to have a voice” -- Omar Bah, 2013 Refugee Academy Participant and Trainer for 2014 Refugee Academy



World Refugee Day Advocacy Event June 15-20, 2014

# Lessons from Refugee Resettlement

- Individualized case management
- Extended cultural orientation
- Empowering refugees to reach self-sufficiency
- Elderly services



Photo Credit: Welcoming Michigan

# More Lessons from Refugee Resettlement

- Women's empowerment program
- Medical and mental health case management
- Advocate for receiving expanded health and mental health screenings overseas
- Ensure that refugees are aware of and have access to the benefits of the new healthcare reform laws



# Moderated Discussion



Type your questions in the Q and A box

# Speaker Contacts

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## Represent 2020: Toward a Better Vision for Democracy

# New American Leaders Project



LEGEND				
A	B	C	D	
F				

% Asian & Latino population,  
2010

# Refugee Congress



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## The Refugee Voice

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### Refugee Congress gathering brings new voice to US policy debate

WASHINGTON, DC, United States, December 13 (UNHCR) – Refugees and asylum-seekers from Syria, Sudan and 20 other nations took steps this week in Washington, DC, to ensure their voices become an integral part of United States policy discussion on how best to protect people fleeing violence and persecution around the world.

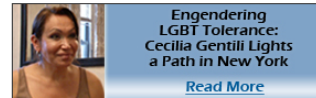
At the end of the [2013 Refugee Congress](#), organized by UNHCR on Monday and Tuesday, the 48 delegates each signed a [letter](#) calling on the US authorities to “invite refugees and other affected persons to participate meaningfully in discussions” on refugee and asylum policy issues.

The letter was handed by the delegates to their representatives in the US Congress during meetings on the “Advocacy Day” that followed the gathering, an action that participants said underscored the drive to push refugee advocacy forward from the conceptual to the practical.



“UNHCR supports the Refugee Congress as a way for refugees and asylum-seekers in the United States to help themselves and to develop a credible voice for advocacy,” said Shelly Pitterman, UNHCR’s regional representative. “I think that this year’s Refugee Congress took an important step in the right direction,” he added.

### A Day in the Life: Spotlight on 3 Refugee Congress Delegates



Learn more about our delegates below:



<http://www.refugeecongress.org/>

<http://www.refugeecongress.org/refugee-congress/delegates>

# Leadership Training: The Welcoming Institute





# Thank You for Making National Welcoming Week a Success!



Visit [www.welcomingamerica.org](http://www.welcomingamerica.org) for our event round-up

