



Resident Leadership Academy Refugee Training & Environmental Scan Report 2017



COMMUNITY HEALTH
IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) and the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Community Action Partnership would like to thank Newcomers Support and Development and Somali Family Service of San Diego for their work and collaboration to complete this Refugee Resident Leadership Academy (RLA) Program. The Program allowed CHIP to recruit residents from refugee communities and also conduct authentic community engagement to help motivate RLA participants to make positive changes in their neighborhoods' that will in turn help create healthy, safe, and thriving refugee communities in San Diego. In addition, we would like to give a very special thank you to the refugee youth and community residents that participated in the RLA's and the community forums to provide their valuable input and perspective on the needs and assets of the refugee community.

INTRODUCTION

Partner Organizations

In December 2016, the Community Action Partnership (CAP), utilizing Refugee Employment Services funding, contracted with CHIP, a 25 year old established public health focused non-profit organization based in San Diego (www.sdchip.org), to implement three Resident Leadership Academies (RLA) and conduct an environmental scan, utilizing the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analysis model, within the Health and Human Services (HHS) Central and East Regions. The purpose of the RLA is to build the leadership capacity of residents from refugee communities, and teach them to take action to improve the health and safety of residents within their neighborhoods. The purpose of the environmental scan is to learn more about the opportunities and areas of growth needed within the refugee communities. Information gathered through the RLA and the scan is outlined within this report, to be used in the development of future County of San Diego Refugee Employment Services Plans, and to inform community partners, stakeholders, service providers, and local governments about our refugee communities in San Diego.

HHS initiated this project with CHIP to help identify critical community needs of refugees, and to make strides in equipping refugee populations with the vital skills needed to implement community improvement projects aiming to transform quality of life in their communities. In order to respond effectively to the Refugee RLA scope of work, CHIP set out to identify strategic partnerships with two Ethnic Based Community Organizations (ECBOs) in HHS's Central and East Regions, to assess their capacity and interest in working on this empowerment and civic engagement project. After several meetings (over the phone and in-person) with a fair number of organizations, CHIP moved forward in solidifying subcontract agreements with Somali Family Service (SFS) in Central Region, and Newcomers Support and Development (NSD) in East Region. Both organizations identified community engagement and empowerment as central to their organization's business development practices, and both organizations demonstrated a sincere interest in supporting the types of activities outlined in the Refugee RLA scope of work with CHIP.

The goal of this effort was to develop capacity within the refugee communities in San Diego County to take action to improve the health and safety of residents; the focus of the RLA was to increase the capacity of refugee community leaders to identify the needs of their community and advocate for change.



BACKGROUND

Resident Leadership Academies (RLAs) provide local leaders in low-income neighborhoods with training and tools to take action in their neighborhoods to increase healthy behavior, improve safety, and create vital communities. RLAs were piloted by the County of San Diego in FY 2011-12 as a Public Health intervention funded through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act administered through the Centers of Disease Control. Working in partnership with CHIP the RLA was founded in 2011 and since its founding, the program has experienced exponential growth and built leadership capacity in a wide range of neighborhoods across San Diego County. The RLA is a 10 session, curriculum-based public health leadership program which aims to orient residents from underserved, under-represented communities in the areas civics, policy and systems change, advocacy and the implementation of public health focused solutions that aim to increase safety, healthy food availability and the quality of physical activity opportunities at the neighborhood level.

In addition to implementing three Refugee RLA training sessions in Central (one session) and East Region (two sessions), CHIP was also tasked with leading regional environmental scans, using the SOAR analysis method, of available resources to refugees to create a single source of information for the community to identify resources that currently exist to serve the refugee community, to identify gaps in services that are necessary to support refugee health, safety, and self-sufficiency, and conduct Key Informant Interviews with community stakeholders and collaborative groups currently working with the refugee population.

Based on data from the County's Office of Business Intelligence, the top two regions in San Diego where refugees access public assistance services are within the HHSA Central and East Regions, therefore the RLAs and SOAR analyses were focused there as these Regions represent the largest areas for refugee resettlement in San Diego CAP recognizes the need to make these communities stronger with leadership opportunities and civic engagement, and RLAs provide the opportunity to directly work with refugee stakeholders and residents to collect information that will better support the refugee communities in San Diego. The environmental scan and analysis allow for vital information to be gathered directly from the community which will help guide necessary improvements to current systems, and improve availability and quality of resources to support new and unique priorities identified.

The County of San Diego, Health and Human Service Agency (HHSA), supports the *Live Well San Diego* vision

of Building Better Health, Living Safely, and Thriving. *Live Well San Diego*, developed by the County of San Diego, is a comprehensive, innovative regional vision that combines the efforts of partners inside and outside County government to help all residents be healthy, safe, and thriving. All HHSA partners and contractors, to the extent feasible, are expected to advance this vision. Building Better Health focuses on improving the health of residents and supporting healthy choices. Living Safely seeks to ensure residents are protected from crime and abuse, neighborhoods are safe, and communities are resilient to disasters and emergencies. Thriving focuses on promoting a region in which residents can enjoy the highest quality of life.

Information about *Live Well San Diego* can be found on the County's website and a website dedicated to the vision:

- http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/hhsa/programs/sd/live_well_san_diego/index.html
- <http://www.LiveWellSD.org>

REFUGEE RLA PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP): CHIP is the established leader in orchestrating collaborative solutions to address critical community health issues in the San Diego region. We envision communities where everyone has the opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being. We achieve this through our mission to advance long-term solutions to priority health needs through collaboration, advocacy and community engagement. Based on a rigorous community health needs assessment process, CHIP's current community health priorities are obesity, mental health, violence and injury prevention, access to care, and social determinants of health. CHIP supports activities on behalf of the community that would not otherwise be accomplished or that collectively can be done more efficiently. The Strategic Goals of CHIP include:

- Empowering local residents to create positive changes by improving public safety, quality of life and physical activity opportunities in underserved communities.
- Striving to increase access to healthy foods and beverages, and increase opportunities for safe physical activity;
- Working to increase consumption of local, healthy, seasonal foods within schools and hospitals;
- Preventing and eradicating suicide;
- Encouraging high quality independent living homes for adults with mental illness;
- Ensuring individual health literacy to support appropriate health decision making;

Today, CHIP is tackling San Diego's most critical health issues through a range of programs and initiatives, including Resident Leadership Academy, the Suicide Prevention Council, San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative, Independent Living Association, Kaiser Permanente Healthy Eating Active Living Zone Project - Lemon Grove, Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Project - Chula Vista, Nutrition and Healthcare Leadership Team, Farm to School Task Force, and Health Literacy San Diego.

Somali Family Service (SFS): Somali Family Service of San Diego was established in 2000 as a non-profit, community-based social service organization. Since its inception, the organization has provided culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and services to members of the San Diego Somali and other East African communities, easing their transition and ensuring successful functioning in their new home. In San Diego, there is a serious lack of support services for Somali and other East African immigrants and refugees. Somali Family Service of San Diego fills this gap in the community, since most organizations serving East African immigrants and refugees are not staffed by or dedicated specifically to the population. The mission statement of Somali Family Service, guided by its community champions, helps Somali and other African families in becoming responsible, independent and contributing members of San Diego through its programs that promote health, educational and economic success and leadership efforts. Somali Family

Service envisions a better quality of life for Somali and other East African population in San Diego. Its vision is reached through educational programs focusing on leadership skills, financial literacy, health education and career planning. In addition, SFS activities promote equal opportunities and establish a great understanding and communication among Somalis and other East Africans in the community.

Newcomers Support and Development (NSD): Established in 2017, the Newcomers Support and Development emerging non-profit organization works to support newcomers in the development of life plans beyond basic needs through acculturation and integration services, community and civic engagement and small business support and development. The organization's director and founder, Mohammed Tuama became a certified Resident Leadership Academy trainer in 2013, and was just recently recognized as one of the Grossmont Healthcare District's Local Hero Awardees for his organization's work in the Iraqi community. Tuama, a new U.S. Citizen, helps newly arriving refugees understand the job market, culture and healthcare systems, and also helps people make healthy decisions in physical activity and food choices. In a very short amount of time, NSD has created pathways for local Iraqi and Syrian refugees to communicate effectively with City officials, department divisions, local non-profit organization and civic groups to improve cross cultural relations, partnerships, and quality of life. For this young organization in its nascent stages, the best is yet to come.

PREPARATION AND LOGISTICS

As is standard procedure for CHIP, preparation to conduct the RLAs was completed by gathering information about the communities where the RLAs would take place. CHIP researched a variety of components, including but not limited to: the target population, community based organizations that represent the population, the culture, potential language barriers, and other items that may need to be addressed to support the completion of the RLAs for these communities. CHIP took special considerations and conducted more research than usual to begin and administer these RLAs since working with refugee populations was a new and unique opportunity. Additional coordination (for translation and interpretation needs) and education and learning style adaptations were utilized to ensure that the content of the curriculum was provided to the refugee participants as intended.

East Region

CHIP staff met with Newcomers Support and Development (NSD) Director, Mohammed Tuama to discuss and decide upon the cultural and linguistic approach to the RLA education process with the target audiences in the East Region. The two groups that would participate in the RLAs were community soccer teams, comprised of Iraqi men ages 16 to 30, and a group of young Iraqi and Syrian adults aged 15 to 30. The location for the training was at the NSD office, which was familiar and accessible to each of the groups.

CHIP was not financially able to facilitate a complete translation and interpretation of the RLA for each session, so the RLA session content was provided to NSD prior to the training to ensure their staff was familiar with and understood the information that would be covered during the RLA sessions. NSD staff provided language interpretation as needed during sessions and, once again, at the closing of each session the summary learnings were highlighted for participants and space was given to ask clarifying questions.

Central Region

CHIP staff met with SFS Executive Director - Ahmed Sahid and staff to plan for the approach to RLA education process with the target audience – SFS- LION Somali youth group which is called, Leaders In Our Neighborhood (LION). The program, through educational workshops and recreational activities provides the target population, the East African youth, with skills that are needed for a self-sufficient, confident and responsible generation. This program is focused on empowerment of youth ages 13-18. LION guides youth toward positive activities through educational and recreational activities that promote knowledge and growth. The goal of LION is to improve the potential and stability of the East African community by creating educated, self-sufficient young members of the community. SFS has worked to comprehensively develop LION into a program that educates, fosters, and shapes the East African youth into the next leaders in our neighborhood. To accomplish this, SFS has focused on making LION a program that not only provides a safe space for fun-filled and meaningful recreational activities, but also making LION a program that is culturally appropriate and relevant to the East African youth in the U.S.

Having the LION group and RLA alignment was ideal for the collaboration and although resources were too limited to facilitate a complete translation or interpretation of the RLA for each session, the agreed approach was to provide the RLA instruction in the English language to youth that had better understanding of the English language, but also having a SFS staff that could interpret when needed and we allowed for times and spaces for clarification in Somali language to facilitate the understanding of the more complex public health issues and topics explained throughout the RLA.

Every RLA consists of key components/milestones that are achieved throughout the training and build upon previous sessions; the end result is a structured and knowledgeable resident leadership group. The key RLA components, which are further defined on Page 7, are a common vision, development of an action plan, a focused Community Improvement Project, and clear group roles and responsibilities.

RLA COMPONENTS

Vision

The RLA process gives the resident leaders an opportunity to create a common vision for their community in which they are proud to share and sponsor. The vision becomes the focus point in their advocacy that takes their entire community into consideration, not just those participating in the RLA. Advocating for improvements in your community as resident leaders is more effective when there is a clear vision to address the concerns shared by the community

Community Improvement Project Development and Action Plan

RLA participants identify potential Community Improvement Projects (CIPs), which are projects developed and implemented by resident leaders, and create an action plan to help guide and assist them to achieve the goals of their CIP. To ensure the advancement of an effective CIP, it is imperative that the ideas and solutions presented to the community and stakeholders are clear, concrete, understandable, and substantiated by qualitative and quantitative data and information. Having a clear plan of action, defined roles, and responsibilities is essential to achieving community victories.

Community Improvement Project Implementation

Implementing the CIP puts the vision and action plan into motion. The goal of the CIP is to achieve visible, tangible, and concrete changes in target communities, based on the projects that were identified and refined during the development process. It is important to note that the RLA is intended to help towards narrowing ideas down to a more feasible three to five goals and objectives. Participants identify actions to mobilize community stakeholders and support the project, ultimately leading to achievement.

Group Roles and Responsibilities

Solidifying structured roles and responsibilities within each RLA training group is one of the key components to the RLA process. It provides the infrastructure to assist the group successful create, execute, and implement their vision, action plans, and CIPs. Each of the roles and their responsibilities of the RLA group are listed to the right.



GROUP LEADER

- Represents the RLA group as a whole



SPOKESPERSON

- Communicates with media, elected officials, and stakeholder staff/community representatives



ORGANIZER

- Shares information with different community circles/collaborations, and mobilizes around community issues



RECORDER

- Tracks community issues through photos, observations, and reports



DATA COLLECTOR

- Finds sources of data to substantiate the community issues



COMMUNITY BUILDER

- Supports activities, events, and tasks related to the community

RLA #1- EAST REGION

CHIP + NSD | El Cajon, CA

IRAQI YOUTH RLA EDUCATION PROCESS

- **Meet & Greet** – Friday 2.17.17 (5am-7pm)
- **RLA Sessions 1-2** – Tuesday 2.21.17 (5am-8pm)
- **RLA Sessions 3, 4** – Friday 2.24.17 (5am-8pm)
- **RLA Session 5, 6** – Tuesday 2.28.17 (5am-8pm)
- **RLA Sessions 7-10** – 3.3.17 (5am-8pm)

**All education/training took place at NSD offices – 165 E. Main Street #C, El Cajon, CA 92020*

The first East Region Refugee RLA training was conducted with a Iraqi youth soccer team and their coaches from the City of El Cajon over a five-week period, from February to March 2017. The group came together and identified the need for additional opportunities for physical activity in their community. Specifically the lack of accessibility of soccer fields during the evening hours. A total of seventeen participants graduated and launched their CIPs to help increase access to physical activity for refugee youth soccer teams in City of El Cajon parks.

RLA PARTICIPANTS COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- There is a need to improve English language programs in El Cajon
- Need to increase the number of places to engage in physical activity
- Need more playgrounds and park space; the ratio of available park space versus the population size of El Cajon is not equitable
- More lighting in parks is needed, to allow residents and youth to play soccer when it is dark
- Allow soccer teams to play the sport in the parks at night
- Improve walking infrastructure in the City of El Cajon
- Improve cross-cultural unity and relations among different ethnic groups in El Cajon
- Stop people from smoking in the parks especially near and/or around of children playing in the parks
- Positive activities exists for youth 18 and under but are virtually non-existent for Transitional Age Youth 18-25

DEMOGRAPHICS

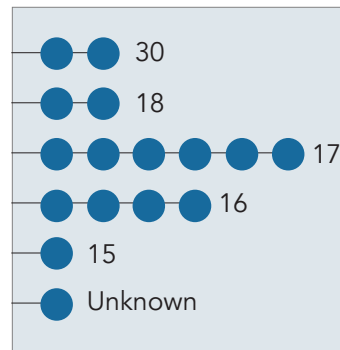


100% Male

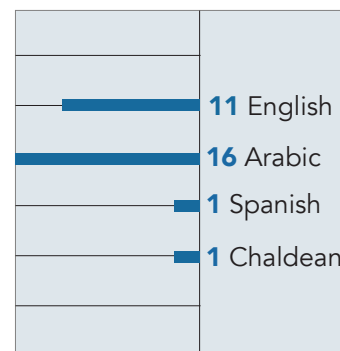


Country of Origin: **Iraq**

Participant age by year



Languages spoken



Some participants speak more than one language



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- Have a representative take the necessary steps to join the City of El Cajon Park and Recreation Council as Executive Member.
- Establish a partnership with the City of El Cajon Parks & Recreation, through volunteerism
- Engage with the City of El Cajon Parks & Recreation, to learn about possible opportunities to increase soccer activities in parks in El Cajon

DESIRED RESULT

Soccer teams and leagues obtain the formal access to utilize parks in El Cajon for extended evening hours.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In February 2017, the RLA group began collecting information and taking steps to gain formal acceptance into the El Cajon Parks and Recreation Advisory Council. The group will need to meet specific criteria to sit on the Council; they have begun following the steps to meet the criteria. *Note: The process of acceptance onto the Council takes a minimum of 1 year.*
- On May 20, 2017, participants of the RLA volunteered at “America on Main Street”, an event organized by the El Cajon Parks and Recreation Department to create strong partnerships with the City. Volunteers helped with the event set-up, information booth, flyer distribution, and event clean up.
- The RLA participants, in conjunction with Creative Labs¹ created a video to showcase themselves and their quest to increase physical activity opportunities for youth and adults in El Cajon. The video also highlights the advocacy and community building efforts of Newcomers Support and Development, a critical partner to this RLA project.

RLA #1 EAST REGION

Planning and Implementation Plan Community Improvement Project

VISION

We envision a great community that is beautiful, clean, safe, organized, respectful and knowledgeable.

GOAL/OBJECTIVE

We want a safe and thriving El Cajon where youth and adults have access to a multitude of physical activity opportunities in the community.

RLA ACTION PLAN

TIMELINE



Activities	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Opportunities	Desired Outcomes	Communications/ Media Opportunities
<p>Engage with City Departments & Staff</p> <p>Join the City of El Cajon Recreation Council as an Executive member</p> <p>Establish a partnership with the City of El Cajon Parks and Recreation through volunteerism</p> <p>Engage with the City of El Cajon Parks & Recreation to learn details of what is possible for increasing soccer opportunities at parks in El Cajon (e.g. Kennedy Park, Wells Park)</p>	<p>NSD</p> <p>El Cajon Collaborative</p> <p>Community Iraqi Soccer Team</p> <p>CASA, Inc.</p> <p>Meridian Baptist Church</p> <p>Mosque(s)</p> <p>Local Business Owners</p> <p>CHIP/RLA</p> <p>City of El Cajon – Police Advisory Council members</p> <p>HHSA – East Region</p>	<p>Grant-funding</p> <p>City of El Cajon – Community Development Block Grant Funds</p> <p>Grassroots fundraising efforts (e.g. bake sales, car washes)</p> <p>Grossmont Healthcare District</p> <p>El Cajon Collaborative</p> <p>East County Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Private Donors</p> <p>Health-focused philanthropic organizations</p>	<p>El Cajon Parks are more active with soccer after hours and it's permissible</p> <p>El Cajon Parks are cleaner and more family friendly</p> <p>More people are interacting in El Cajon Parks</p> <p>El Cajon Parks become a place where people aren't afraid to go to due to homeless concerns</p> <p>El Cajon Parks become smoke-free</p> <p>Kids are playing in the Parks and they are not fearful</p> <p>The El Cajon community is safer and people are engaging in more physical activity</p>	<p>San Diego Tribune</p> <p>City Beat</p> <p>East County Gazette</p> <p>KPBS Radio and TV</p> <p>County Television Network</p> <p>East County Herald</p> <p>East County Magazine</p> <p>East County Californian</p>

RLA #2 EAST REGION

CHIP+NSD | El Cajon

IRAQI AND SYRIAN YOUTH RLA EDUCATION PROCESS

- **Meet & Greet** – Thursday 5.11.17 (5pm-7pm)
- **RLA Sessions 1-3** – Saturday 5.13.17 (3:30pm-6pm)
- **RLA Sessions 4-6** – Tuesday 5.16.17 (3:30pm-6pm)
- **RLA Session 7-10** – Wednesday 5.24.17 (4:30pm-6:30pm)

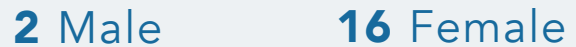
**All education/training took place at NSD offices – 165 E. Main Street #C, El Cajon, CA 92020*

The second East Region Refugee RLA training was conducted with another youth soccer team from the City of El Cajon over a three-week period in May 2017. The group came together and identified the need for improvement opportunities for safety in their community, specifically to improve the safety at Wells Park in El Cajon. A total of sixteen participants graduated and launched their CIPs to help increase safety for youth in Wells Park.

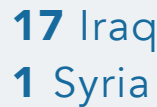
RLA PARTICIPANTS COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- There are a lot of disruptive homeless people in Wells Park, which makes the park feel unsafe.
- It is too dark in some areas of the community, more lighting is needed to make it feel safer
- Many of the young females reported that they feel unsafe (they are fearful and concerned) walking within the community due to comments made about them from passerby's in cars.
- El Cajon could have safer and wider sidewalks
- Some areas of El Cajon have a lot of trash along the streets and in public spaces.

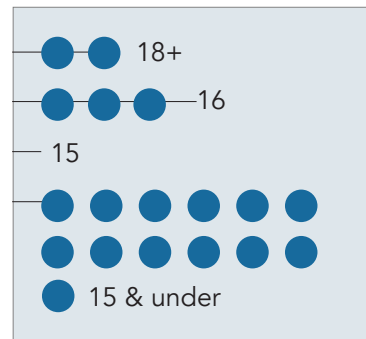
DEMOGRAPHICS



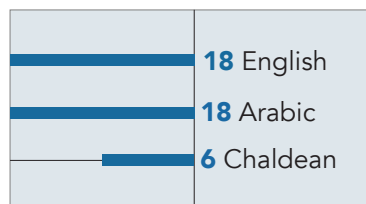
Country of Origin:



Participant age by year



Languages spoken



Some participants speak more than one language



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- Data Gathering: Conduct Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) safety assessments at Wells Park (data acquisition) to verify the concerns the group had regarding the Park and brainstorm solutions (e.g. cut shrubs to 2.5' to avoid hiding places where illegal activity might take place and to assist with community surveillance
- Improve lighting and walkability infrastructure surrounding Wells Park
- Establish a partnership with the City of El Cajon Parks & Recreation Department through volunteerism
- Gain support of diverse allies who also want Wells Park to become more family-friendly
- Explore the feasibility of conducting a cultural fair at a park site to showcase various cultures within El Cajon (e.g. dance, music, food, resources, vendors)
- Significantly improve the safety and family-friendliness at Wells Park

DESIRED RESULT

- Soccer teams and leagues obtain the formal access to utilize parks in El Cajon for extended evening hours.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- On July 17, 2016, advocates met with City of El Cajon's Recreation Service Director, Frank Carson and shared their park assessment observations and recommendations for safety improvements at Wells Park.
- Mr. Carson and the City of El Cajon are actively exploring several ways to provide a safe environment at the site. The City will install a gate at the entrance of the parking lot to keep cars and individuals out when the park closes at night, and will paint several parking spots red to decrease the number of individuals who live in their cars from parking around the church.
- Parks and Recreation is encouraging a joint meeting between NSD and Meridian Baptist Church to develop a sustainable, long term, community safety improvement program to deter crime and illegal activity at and near the church. They would like the church to adopt this program as their own, but have indicated that working long-term with NSD would be preferable.

RLA #2 EAST REGION

Planning and Implementation Plan Community Improvement Project

VISION

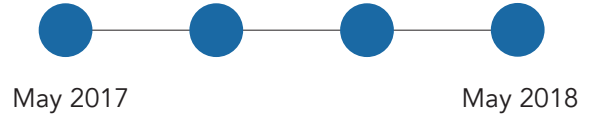
We envision a community that has nice places, is safe, clean, has more activities, lights, and good grass in the parks and public spaces for all sports.

GOAL/OBJECTIVE

To make Wells Park safer and more family-friendly.

RLA ACTION PLAN

TIMELINE



Activities	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Opportunities	Desired Outcomes	Communications/ Media Opportunities
<p>Engage with City Departments & Staff</p> <p>Data Collection: Conduct CPTED safety assessments at Wells Park. Present concerns/ issues to City Council + Park & Rec staff and offer low-cost solutions (e.g. cut shrubs to 2.5')</p> <p>Address traffic calming around Wells Park for pedestrian safety</p> <p>Improve lighting and walkability infrastructure around Wells Park</p> <p>Establish a partnership with the City of El Cajon Parks & Recreation through volunteerism. Gain support of diverse allies who also want Well Park to become more family-friendly</p>	<p>NSD</p> <p>Community Iraqi Soccer Team</p> <p>Arabic Resident Leadership Academies #1 & #2</p> <p>El Cajon Collaborative</p> <p>El Cajon Resident Leadership Academy</p> <p>Creative Lab 1</p> <p>Churches / Civic Organizations</p> <p>Neighborhood Watch Groups</p> <p>Neighborhood Associations</p> <p>Meridian Baptist Church</p>	<p>Grassroots fundraising efforts (bake sales, car washes)</p> <p>City of El Cajon – Community Development Block Grant Funds</p> <p>The California Endowment</p> <p>Price Charities</p> <p>Health-focused philanthropic organizations</p>	<p>More happy people at Wells Park</p> <p>More people utilizing Wells Park</p> <p>Less homeless people (Provide services to homeless!) in Wells Park and other areas</p> <p>An indoor soccer facility built for community use</p> <p>New soccer field built for the community at Wells Park</p>	<p>KPBS Radio and TV</p> <p>San Diego Union Tribune – South + East County Section</p> <p>County Television Network</p> <p>Voice of San Diego</p> <p>Cable Companies: Public Access Channel</p> <p>East County News</p> <p>East County Californian</p> <p>East County Herald</p> <p>East County Magazine</p> <p>Creative Lab 1</p>

Activities	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Opportunities	Desired Outcomes	Communications/ Media Opportunities
<p>Explore feasibility of conducting a Cultural Fair highlighting Middle Eastern culture at the park site (e.g. dance, music, food, resources, other vendors)</p> <p>Build Alliances with Individuals/Organizations with similar goals to diversify coalition:</p> <p>Meet with and share project's vision and goals with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Meridian Baptist Church -Mosques -El Cajon Collaborative -Creative Lab 1 -CASA, Inc. -HHS East Region Staff -Live Well San Diego – East Region Leadership Team 	<p>HHS East Region Staff</p> <p><i>Live Well San Diego</i> – East Region Leadership Team Participants</p> <p>Seniors Groups Apartment complex associations</p> <p>Area home-based daycare providers</p>			

RLA #3 CENTRAL REGION

CHIP+SFS | City Heights

SOMALI YOUTH RLA EDUCATION PROCESS

- **Meet & Greet** – Wednesday 4.5.17 (4pm-6pm)
- **RLA Sessions 1-3** – Wednesday 4.12.17 (4pm-6pm)
- **RLA Sessions 4-6** – Wednesday 4.19.17 (4pm-6pm)
- **RLA Session 7,8** – Wednesday 4.26.17 (4pm-6pm)
- **RLA Sessions 9,10** – Wednesday 5.3.17 (4pm-6pm)

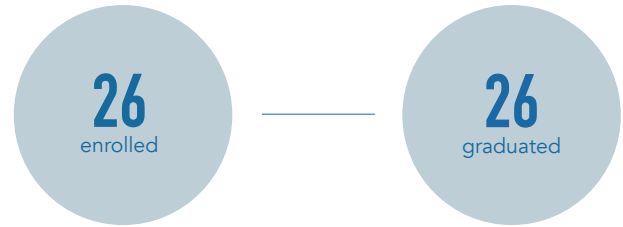
**All education/training took place at SFS Offices — 6035 University Avenue #6, San Diego, CA 92115*

The third Refugee RLA training was conducted in the Central Region with an East African Refugee leadership group from City Heights over a five-week period from April through May 2017. The group came together and identified the need for safety improvements and opportunities in Colina Park in City Heights. A total of twenty-six participants graduated and launched their CIPs to help increase safety for refugee youth and their families in Colina Park.

RLA PARTICIPANTS COMMUNITY CONCERNS

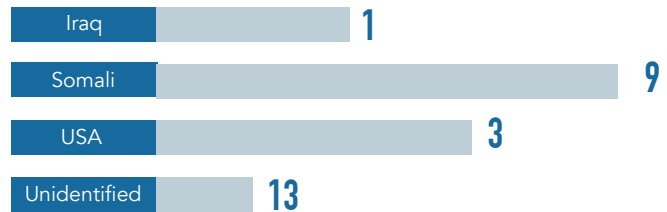
- Road conditions in City Heights need improvement, there are too many potholes
- There is a lot of traffic congestion in the College area, which is an area within the Central Region where many of the participants live and go to school
- The overall hygiene of City Heights and surrounding areas could be improved with additional garbage cans, street sweeping and community trash pick-ups for larger items.
- There is a perceived lack of safety in many of the parks in the area, including Oak Park, Martin Luther King Park, and Colina Park. Participants feel that the parks are overrun by dangerous activities (such as – public drinking, illegal drug activity) that make them feel unsafe.

DEMOGRAPHICS

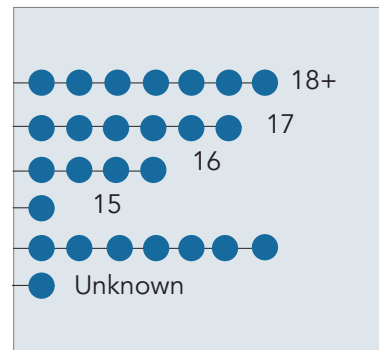


12 Male 9 Female 5 Unidentified

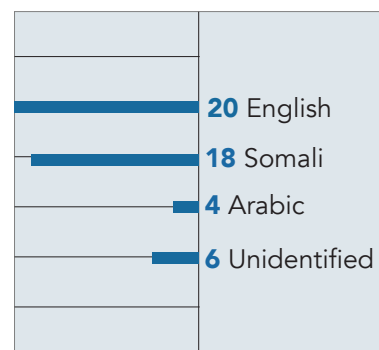
Country of Origin



Participant age by year



Languages spoken



Some participants speak more than one language



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- With the assistance from the City of San Diego's Volunteer Services Department, apply the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)-safety focus to improve landscaping and eliminate hiding places that are prime areas for dangerous/unwanted behaviors that have been witnessed in Colina Park
- Address traffic calming (via speedbumps, intersection murals, roundabouts, etc.) to slow cars and traffic near and around Colina Park
- Seek information regarding the specifics of the Adopt-A-Park Program with the City of San Diego, Volunteer Services Department
- Discuss farmer's market opportunities with other interested groups
- Advocate for park improvements, beautification, and modifications with the City of San Diego, Planning Department

DESIRED RESULT

Reduce safety problems in Colina Park through landscaping improvements

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- This particular RLA was concluded towards the tail end of the creation of this report and they were just beginning to look at how to start tackling their action plans so there aren't any accomplishments to report at this time.

RLA #3 CENTRAL REGION

Planning and Implementation Plan Community Improvement Project

VISION

We envision a community that is safe, productive, clean, green, diverse, fun with more equipment, better playgrounds and more activities.

GOAL/OBJECTIVE

To improve safety at and around Colina Park.

RLA ACTION PLAN

TIMELINE



Activities	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Opportunities	Desired Outcomes	Communications/ Media Opportunities
<p>Engage with City Departments & Staff</p> <p>Apply CPTED-safety focus to improve landscaping and eliminate hiding places in Colina Park (e.g. City of San Diego, Volunteer Services)</p> <p>Address traffic calming around Colina Park for pedestrian safety</p> <p>Seek Adopt-A-Park Program specifics for possible SFS adoption of Colina Park with City of SD, Volunteer Services)</p> <p>Advocate for Park improvements/beautifications/modifications (e.g. City of SD, Planning Department – Michael Prinz)</p>	<p>Somali Family Service of SD, Inc. (LION)</p> <p>Mid-City CAN</p> <p>City Heights Building Healthy Communities (BHC)</p> <p>BHC Built Environment Work Team</p> <p>City Heights Business & Neighborhood Associations</p> <p>Asociación de Liderazgo Comunitario (ALC)</p> <p>City Heights CDC</p> <p>City Heights health & safety focused organizations</p> <p>Churches / Civic Organizations</p>	<p>Grant-funding to support public education forum discussions</p> <p>City of San Diego – Community Development Block Grant Funds</p> <p>Grassroots fundraising efforts (bake sales, car washes)</p> <p>The California Endowment</p> <p>Price Charities</p> <p>City Heights Business & Neighborhood Associations</p> <p>Private Donors</p> <p>Health-focused philanthropic organizations</p>	<p>Colina Park earns a better reputation</p> <p>Colina Park shows a cleaner environment</p> <p>More people are interacting in Colina Park</p> <p>Colina Park becomes a place where people aren't afraid to go to</p> <p>Colina Park becomes a more family-friendly environment</p> <p>Colina Park becomes smoke-free</p> <p>Kids are playing in the Park and they are not fearful</p> <p>The community is safer and people are engaging in more physical activity</p> <p>City Heights is a cleaner community to enjoy</p>	<p>City Heights Live</p> <p>Azalea Park – Parkster newsletter (monthly)</p> <p>Speak City Heights</p> <p>San Diego Tribune</p> <p>City Beat</p> <p>El Latino</p> <p>The Reader</p> <p>KPBS Radio and TV</p> <p>County Television Network</p> <p>Voice of San Diego</p> <p>Cable Companies: Public Access Channel</p>

Activities	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Opportunities	Desired Outcomes	Communications/ Media Opportunities
<p>Share action plan with City of San Diego's representative and staff for City Heights area.</p> <p>Discuss Farmer's Market and Community Gardens opportunities at Colina Park with other interest groups</p> <p>Build Alliances with Individuals/ Organizations with similar goals to diversify coalition:</p> <p>Meet with and share project's vision and goals with potential partners</p>	<p>EAYO- East African Youth Organization</p> <p>YEF- Youth Empowerment Focus</p> <p>PANA- Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans</p> <p>Aja Project</p> <p>Pro Kids</p> <p>United Women of Africa</p> <p>HUDA- Masjid Al Huda (HUDA Community Center)</p> <p>Somali Business Owners @ 50th + University</p> <p>Seniors Groups Apartment complex associations</p> <p>Area home-based daycare providers</p>	<p>Grant-funding to support public education forum discussions</p> <p>City of San Diego – Community Development Block Grant Funds</p> <p>Grassroots fundraising efforts (bake sales, car washes)</p> <p>The California Endowment</p> <p>Price Charities</p> <p>City Heights Business & Neighborhood Associations</p> <p>Private Donors</p> <p>Health-focused philanthropic organizations</p>	<p>Kids are playing in the Park and they are not fearful</p> <p>The community is safer and people are engaging in more physical activity</p> <p>City Heights is a cleaner community to enjoy</p>	

REFUGEE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN SUMMARY

After the completion of the RLAs, the second component of this project was to complete an environmental scan of the refugee communities in East and Central Region, using the SOAR analysis method. The purpose of this scan was to determine the needs of the community and where there are opportunities to build upon and enhance services to refugees in San Diego County. CHIP and the RLA participants worked together to conduct outreach within each community to ensure a variety of refugees (age, countries of origin, time in the US, etc.) were in attendance; a total of 52 refugees took part in the two discussions, 34 in the East and 18 in the Central Region. The summary of the information collected through these community discussions is found on the following pages; this information will be shared with community partners and stakeholders to inform with future plans for refugee services.

I. Strengths

What are some of the refugee community's greatest assets, and what type of services or programs do they utilize to help make them successful?

- Refugees bring diversity, new ideas, world views, and entrepreneurial opportunities into a community.
- Having an established community to welcome newly arriving refugees allows for easier integration and access to the services and programs to help them succeed.
- Refugees utilize a variety of services and programs to assist them with their needs including County public assistance (CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, and Welfare-to-Work), Resettlement Agencies and Ethnic Based Community Organizations for language and interpretation, citizenship, training, employment services, referrals, and other social services.

II. Opportunities

What can be improved upon to better serve and provide for the refugee community to ensure they are successful in their new homes?

- Employment, including increased job placements at local organizations, volunteer and on-the-job training opportunities.
- Cultural Competency for community members, staff, and employers. Ensure that staff at social service agencies that serve refugees include individuals

that were refugees themselves; shared experiences, language and culture is an effective way to serve this population.

- Family Resources such as domestic violence and divorce services, there is also a need for a space to gather and provide additional programs for seniors.
- Programs and services for skilled refugees to provide assistance with degree programs, a center to provide support and guidance to navigate the US education system, credit and degree evaluation.
- Ensure there is refugee representation within local government, on police and fire departments, etc.
- Access and availability of supports, such as transportation, housing, and language/interpretation.

III. Aspirations

How do you define success for yourself as a refugee and what does a successful refugee community consist of?

- Success is defined by having a good job/career, being integrated and acculturated, getting an education, being a good and law abiding citizen, being engaged both emotionally and politically with your community, getting past old traumas, providing for your family (housing, food on the table).
- The Somali group discussed in detail the importance of adapting and continuing to learn; they recognized that it is necessary to take the new experiences one step at a time and have reasonable expectations when learning a new language and way of life.

IV. Results

How do we know or measure success, what can be done to sustain it, and what is the best way to share success?

- Indicators of success can include business ownership, high graduation rates from high school and secondary education, representation in local government and on police departments, and employment that allows for reduced need or elimination of public assistance.
- The best way to sustain and share success is through networking within various communities, social media, business mentorship programs, and relationship building.

LESSONS LEARNED

English Functionality and Job Training is a Must:

English language training and job training are critical success factors for refugee populations to become self-sufficient in the US. More pointedly, refugees that have access to job specific, hands on training with a component of English language training (such as vocational ESL) to increase skills and fluency is fundamental for success in the US.

Readiness of Refugee Populations: There is a significant difference in the educational and job readiness levels of newly arriving refugee populations. For some, fundamental education training is needed to teach basic language and reading skills both in their native language and English in order for individuals to live at a higher level of functionality in the US. Others arrive to the US with significant education, language skills, and job experience so their need is for clear career paths and assistance to transfer their skills and foreign degrees and education credits to the US workforce.

Encourage Refugee Success: Refugee populations need to know that government officials and the general public sincerely want to see their population thrive and be successful; while local communities have made progress in promoting diversity and inclusion; many refugees continue to feel unwelcome.

The American Experience for Refugee Youth vs. Adults:

Many refugee youth and adults are in different places of social integration into American society because the youth have more access to acculturation and support at school, where adults do not. Many refugee parents and older generations fear that their youth will neglect or lose sight of traditional customs and beliefs after being immersed into American culture; they believe this is a distraction or barrier to achieving life goals and becoming successful. Many first and second generation refugee children feel caught between two cultures, they feel comfortable and integrated into American culture but also want to honor their family's traditions and customs.

Refugees may not Recognize Opportunities for Advocacy: Refugees from war-torn countries do not typically recognize the inequities that are occurring in American society; the situations they leave behind are often times more extreme than what they will encounter in the US. Additionally, because of those same conditions they left behind, many do not realize there are opportunities to advocate for equitable conditions for themselves and their communities.

More Significant Investments are Needed in San Diego Refugee Communities: Organizations like Newcomers Support and Development (NSD) and Somali Family Service of San Diego, Inc. (SFS) can occupy a necessary, evolving niche market of ethnic-focused organizations that

can play a key role in facilitating refugee self-sufficiency and success in San Diego County. Organizations that can play the role –of a “cultural broker” or “liaison”– to assist refugees access education, employment opportunities, and health and social services, are in need of financial investment and support. As an example, refugees in both City Heights and El Cajon expressed the need for a one-stop shop community center to address the comprehensive and evolving needs in their respective communities.

Increased Capacity For Ethnic Based Community Organizations (ECBOs):

ECBOs like, NSD and SFS are very small, often family run organizations that provide valuable resources to the refugee communities. They are trusted and respected in their communities and understand the intricacies of the challenges faced by refugees populations. Generally ECBOs have limited staff and resources which make it difficult to consistently respond to the evolving needs of the community. Support in the form of additional staff, business development, and mentoring are some examples of how ECBOs can learn to build their capacity and grow as organizations.

Refugee Communities Focused on Basic Needs: While the Refugee RLA project provided a wonderful opportunity to engage refugees in dialogue about their communities and how to advocate for change and improvement them, how our environments support or undermine health, and how to advocate for healthier, safer communities; over the course of this project it was very apparent that getting involved in advocacy and community efforts is difficult when families are still learning and struggling to make sure their basic needs are met. Not until individuals can find stable employment and have a sense of security in their daily lives, will they have the ability to connect with organizations and groups to focus on their communities and making them a better place to live, work, and play.

Partnership Opportunities for Future RLAs: In addition to building the capacity of their organizations, ECBOs that have participated in the RLA process, such as NSD and SFS, have a demonstrated commitment and genuine interest in building leadership capacity among their target populations. Due to their limited resources and staff, as mentioned above, many do not have the capacity to maintain or continually guide the community groups that have formed as a result of the RLA to advance their advocacy and projects within the community. Smaller ECBOs with less capacity would benefit from partnering or subcontracting with more established organizations to carry out projects like the Refugee RLA, to assist with financial, staffing, and mentorship needs.

CONCLUSION

The Refugee RLA Program was a rewarding experience overall for Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP); it was the first time the organization was challenged to complete a fairly aggressive community engagement and leadership scope of work within the refugee communities. As stated earlier in this report, the experience with both Newcomers Support and Development (NSD) and Somali Family Service of San Diego, Inc. (SFS) was exemplary given the limited resources CHIP had to share with each organization. The value they brought to this process was priceless in comparison to the limited resources CHIP had to share with each organization for this program.

The leadership capacity built during this process for each of the youth-focused groups was very powerful for these organizations. The exposure to the high quality information of the Resident Leadership Academy experience has hopefully inspired both the participants and organization leaders to think differently about the importance of leadership and civic life for the younger populations as they enter into adulthood, which for many is right around the corner. Valuable insight from working together with these two refugee populations, some key take-a-ways:

- Healthy eating, one of the components taught through the RLA, is not a priority or concept the youth in this RLA identified with; at this point in their lives they do not see the long term benefits or need to establish healthy eating habits.
- It is necessary to establish ground rules and expectations before any instruction begins when working with youth. CHIP learned through this RLA process that the attention span of youth is very different than adults, to address this breaks were during the trainings (which were broken into short, focused lessons) so cell phone time and other interruptions did not disrupt the training.
- The perspective of physical activity was a unique difference CHIP noted between the refugee populations in East and Central Region. Those in East viewed physical activity, specifically soccer, as a way to stay connected to their culture and help them avoid getting involved with things like gangs and alcohol/drug use. The youth in Central Region focused more on their faith and activities centered on that rather than physical activity to help them avoid the need to turn to less desirable activities.

Discussions during the environmental scans that involved adults, seniors, and youth in each target community yielded highly in-depth information that will enhance and inform refugee programming in San Diego both now and in the future, which is very much needed in these communities. Common themes that emerged from both regions included the following:

- English language training is vital for the majority of the refugee population, as it was the top barrier to employment and/or self-sufficiency indicated in all of the feedback received during the course of this program.
- Vocational job training that provides specific skills tailored to a job or industry is a necessary component to the success of refugees entering the job market in the US.
- Refugees arrive with varying levels of education, language capabilities, and literacy in both their native and English language skills; conducting individual assessments with a focus on these areas is critical. Training options can then be tailored to the individuals' needs, and classes and workshops can be offered at various levels based on those needs.
- There is a continued need for San Diego to demonstrate itself as a welcoming and inclusive community, refugees feel unwelcome a majority of the time.
- More outreach and partnership from government officials and the general public is needed to show that there is an interest in the refugee communities and demonstrate that their success and ability to thrive is a priority.

Investments with the aim of facilitating comprehensive refugee community success on multiple levels are needed in both communities; examples of suggested focus areas for community investment include but are not limited to: education, employment, housing, language training, social integration, and access to health and social service resources.

It is important to point out that El Cajon and City Heights consist of different refugee communities, in significantly different places of their development and social integration into American culture, which should be recognized because the needs of these communities are not the same. However through this process, it was evident that both of these refugee communities believe they have valuable assets to share with their new



communities, including but not limited to: workforce availability, strong family orientation, strong cultural values, spirituality, value of safety, and the desire for a good quality of life for the whole community to enjoy. Finally, it was apparent that the emergence of a growing niche market for smaller, Ethnic Based Community Organizations (ECBO) with the capacity to serve as “cultural brokers” or “liaisons” in their respective communities represents an important opportunity for collaboration going forward. ECBOs have the ability to assist residents to access and more fully understand the services that are available to them with more cultural competency and understanding. ECBOs connect and provide residents services such as, but are not limited to:

job development, health and social services, housing and financial resources, and opportunities for social integration. It is recommended that regional refugee stakeholders and partners should continue to explore models in other resettlement states like Minnesota and Ohio, where refugee success is viewed as a critical achievement factor and foundational quality of life indicator to demonstrate healthy living and the overall quality of the community.

As demonstrated by the results presented above, during this short term a great deal of knowledge was exchanged that will help us adapt existing programs and create new initiatives to meet the community’s evolving needs. Together, much more can be achieved.