

Why We Are Needed

Twenty-year war in the Sudan

Hundreds of thousands of villagers from Southern Sudan were made homeless and members of many families were killed. Most survivors fled to Kenya or to Egypt; some to Uganda. In recent years thousands of Sudanese from Darfur have been displaced and killed. Survivors fled to Chad and to refugee camps in Sudan itself.

Karen, Karenni and Chin people

Since shortly after the end of the Second World War the minority Karen, Karenni and Chin people have had their villages destroyed by the Burmese army in order to deny refuge for rebel independence fighters. They gradually fled from the upper Irrawaddy River Valley into the northeastern hills and jungles. Thousands have crossed the border to spend many years in refugee camps in Thailand.

Bhutanese families

Some 20 Bhutanese families have arrived in City Heights during 2009. They have been brought from camps in Nepal where they have lived for up to 10 years. In recent years they have fallen victim to the king's ethnic cleansing policies as they have retained the Hindu faith, which their ancestors brought when they moved to Bhutan from Nepal.

Iraqi Refugees

A large number of Iraqi refugees have recently been settled in El Cajon, a small city that neighbors San Diego. More than 6,000 Iraqi refugees have settled there in each of 2008 and 2009. The Refugee Network serves those Iraqis requesting help

within its family support system, tutoring, and food and household goods distributing services.

Services

The Episcopal Refugee Network helps new arrivals to register for food stamps, Social Security, school enrollment, medical registration, driving licenses, finding jobs, classes in hygiene, etc. Bedding, household goods and furniture are supplied to new arrivals through their resettlement agencies and through the Refugee Network.

Tutoring

Tutoring programs help the children improve their school performances. For middle school and high school students the tutoring classes have saved many from dropping out of public schools when they have insufficient English language skills to learn in their subject classes.

Resettlement funding for Refugees in San Diego

Two federal grant programs provide funding to four resettlement agencies that work in San Diego. Both programs stem from national legislation.

FIRST - Federal Matching Grant Program.

It provides for rent payment for a limit of 4 months as well as a cash amount of \$200 for each adult and \$80 for each child for each of these months. In addition, each adult may receive \$60 a month for transportation costs. This grant assumes that refugees will have learned enough English within four months to find a job to support their family.

SECOND - Wilson/Fish grants.

The resettlement agencies in San Diego receive these funds as well as the Federal Matching Grant. The Wilson/Fish grant provides cash for a refugee up to 8 months, but the payments stop as soon as the refugee obtains a self-sufficiency due to earned income. It also provides case management with social and employment services for up to 60 months. This program is referred to as a “sponsored” program as it depends on the new family having the agreement of another refugee family to initially accept them into their home, and to help them obtain an apartment and fill out their official paperwork.

The Role of RefugeeNet in Emergency Cases



Presentation of check for \$6,500 from Encinitas Rotary Wine Festival to Hilda Moera and Nadia Agory Refugee Network Outreach Workers.

The Network is called on in these cases, and others, where help is needed in interfacing with legal, medical and other government offices and schools. The Network responds to requests from resettlement agencies when a refugee family requires help they cannot provide, and to emergency requests from families referred to it by other refugees in the San Diego community. The Network also assists refugees to make connections with other service agencies when appropriate. The Network's ability to respond to refugee needs of this type, depends on its receiving financial donations to maintain a small staff of refugees, who speak the languages involved.

The Episcopal Refugee Network is also important to refugees who are termed secondary immigration refugees. This term refers to the fact that these individuals, by their own choice, move from the location where they were first settled. They often do this for purposes of family reunion. They cannot transfer their resettlement funds to

the new location and the Refugee Network is often asked to assist the new arrivals and the relatives on whom they have descended!

The Episcopal Refugee Network is an important link because the above resettlement programs receive Federal funding for only limited initial assistance. The grants need supplementing if refugees are to become fully-participating citizens of the United States of America. For example, refugees may be left without support by a resettlement agency if they take a job and lose it, as frequently happens with low-paid hourly jobs. Their support system has been exhausted and they must rely on poverty provisions such as Welfare, if they qualify on a personal basis. The paperwork for welfare applications take several weeks to process and a family is often left without money for food during that time interval.

In other cases, one small salary cannot support a whole family or bad luck may strike a family through illness or injury to a family member. Although Medical treatment may be available, it does not meet all needs and most often means that refugees use the emergency room for even small illnesses.

Transportation to medical visits and regular appointments (e.g. sickle cell anemia blood transfusions) are needed if the family cannot afford to buy a car, or cannot get a license owing to lack of driving experience.