



# ILLINOIS REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

## FY17 ANNUAL REPORT

### REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A refugee is a person who fled from his/her country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The Refugee Act of 1980 created the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible after arrival in the United States.

The Trump Administration has made several changes to the refugee program. Fewer refugees are allowed to enter the U.S. New requirements are being added to the security vetting process for all refugees, especially those from Chad, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korean, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen, which may further limit which refugees can be admitted.

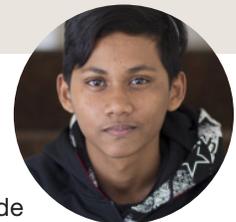
### ILLINOIS PROGRAM

The State of Illinois has operated a successful refugee resettlement program since 1975. More than 128,572 refugees from 86 countries have resettled in Illinois. Cuban/Haitian entrants, asylees and victims of human trafficking are also eligible for refugee services.

With funding provided by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Illinois Refugee Resettlement Program is administered by the Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services at the Illinois Department of Human Services.

The goal of the program is to help refugees gain early economic self-sufficiency and integrate successfully in their new community. The program has three main components:

- **Short-term cash assistance** administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services. Under this program, refugees not eligible for federal cash assistance could be assisted for up to eight months.
- **Refugee Health Screening** program administered by the Illinois Department of Public Health in partnership with five local health clinics.
- **Refugee Employment and Social Service** programs operated in partnership with Illinois non-profit agencies and a community college. Services include case management, employment, mental health, youth and senior support. The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago is contracted to manage the day-to-day operation of this program.



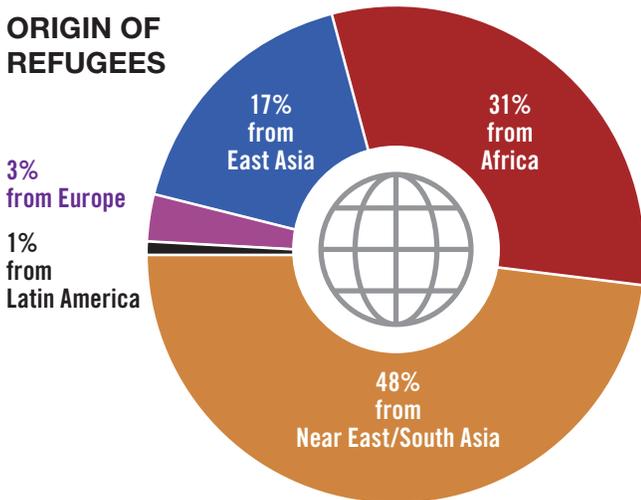
The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported 65.6 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide in 2016. Only 22.5 million were considered refugees and less than one percent may be eligible for resettlement in another country.

# REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN ILLINOIS

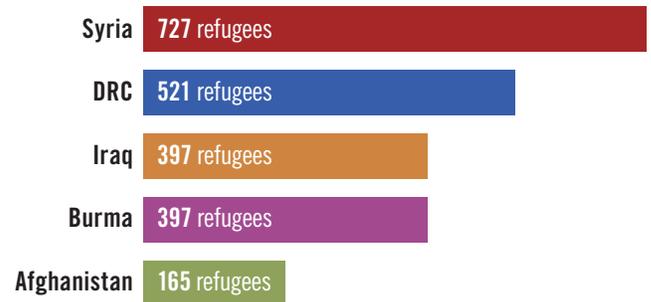
JULY 2016-JUNE 2017

Illinois resettled a total of **3,002 REFUGEES** in FY17. Another **76 ASYLEES** and **69 individuals with SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA** (such as Iraqis or Afghans who worked for the U.S. Government) were also assisted under Illinois' Refugee Resettlement Program.

## ORIGIN OF REFUGEES



## TOP FIVE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



**70% of all arrivals came from these 5 countries.**

## KEY ILLINOIS RESETTLEMENT SITES

County	Number of Persons	Percentage
Cook	2,043	(65%)
DuPage/Kane	539	(17%)
Winnebago	382	(12%)
Rock Island	183	(6%)

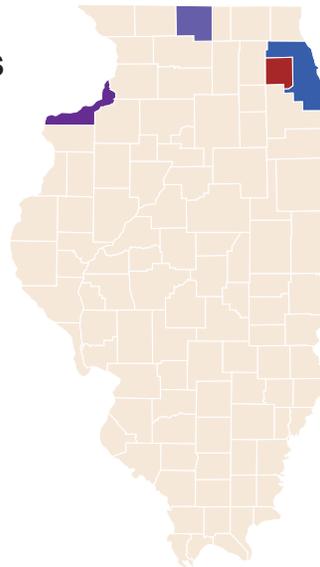
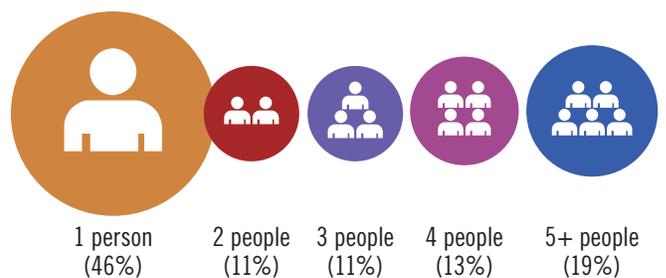


Photo by RefugeeOne

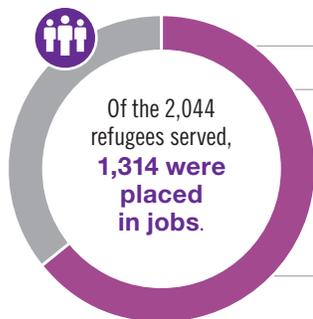
## AGE GROUPS



## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



- Of the refugees who were placed in jobs:*
- 1,181** (90%) retained jobs after 90 days
  - 903** (69%) were on assistance
  - 1,197** (91%) had full-time job placement
  - 1,103** (84%) of the refugees placed arrived in the U.S. within the last 12 months
  - \$11.35** Average full-time hourly wage



Photo by RefugeeOne

# OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

## CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

**2,918 refugees** were provided with orientation and assistance to connect with health and human services and education opportunities designed to help them integrate successfully into their new communities.



## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**326 clients** were serve.

**291** (89%) reported positive progress



## EDUCATION ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEE CHILDREN

**785 refugee children** were served in after school programs.

- 451** (57%) improved in English
- 243** (31%) improved one grade level in a core subject



**443 parents** were provided with services.

**404** (91%) improved their understanding of U.S. schools

## SENIOR SERVICES

**181 refugee seniors (60+)** accessed dedicated senior services designed to link them to programs such as food, income and utility assistance (SNAP, SSI and LIHEAP) and public transportation. In addition, seniors attended holiday parties, field trips and other group activities on a regular basis to help reduce social isolation. Based on client needs assessments, referrals to other mainstream senior services and necessary follow-up at the one- and three-month mark were provided.



## REFUGEE HEALTH SCREENING

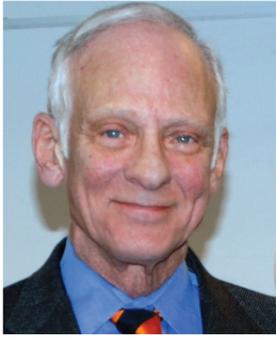
The Refugee Health Screening program provides linguistically appropriate comprehensive health assessments and early intervention. Services provided include vaccinations, follow-up and referrals to treat health conditions identified in the assessment process. The program aims to reduce the spread of infectious disease, treat any current ailments, and promote preventive health practices.

**3,299\*** refugees were screened.



**404** (12.25%) screened within 60–90 days

\*This number is higher than the arrival total because some refugees arrived in the previous fiscal year and were screened in the FY17 fiscal year.



## IN MEMORIAM

# DR. EDWIN B. SILVERMAN

Dr. Edwin B. Silverman led the Illinois Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services for 38 years helping thousands of refugees and immigrants to build new lives and integrate successfully into Illinois. Throughout his career, he was passionately involved in the development of program and policy at the federal level, including the drafting of the 1980 Refugee Act. He received awards from the federal government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and various community groups for his contributions to refugee resettlement. To highlight just a few: he received the Assistant Secretary's Public Service Award from DHHS; in 1995 was one of five national recipients of the American Society for Public Administration's National Public Service Award; and in 2016 received an honorary doctorate from DePaul University's College of Law where he gave the graduation address.

Dr. Silverman had an extraordinary dedication to advancing the welfare of refugees and immigrants and a fierce determination to hold any sector that could help, accountable for doing so. Under his leadership, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights was established in 1986; the first state funded citizenship initiative was created in 1995, and he was appointed by Mayor Daley to the Chicago Commission on Human Relations where he chaired the Advisory Council for Immigrant and Refugee Affairs from 2003 until 2011.

Dr. Edwin Silverman died on September 13, 2017. At his passing, colleagues and friends paid tribute not only to his professional accomplishments, but also to his humanity. While his innovative spirit made him a giant in the field, he was very much a people person. More than a colleague, he was a mentor, a supporter, an ally and a friend. The effort to create and advance a generous, compassionate and welcoming US refugee program was made better because of his many contributions.

In his honor, let us be inspired to continue to welcome refugees and immigrants with the warmth and generosity exemplified by Dr. Silverman.

## ILLINOIS REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

### *Administration*

Illinois Department of Human Services/Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services

### **Refugee Employment and Social Service Programs Administration**

- Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago

### **Service Providers**

- Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago\*
- Chicago Public Schools
- Heartland Health Outreach, Inc.
- Heartland Human Care Services, Inc.\*
- Iraqi Mutual Aid Society
- Pan-African Association
- RefugeeOne\*
- Rock Valley College
- World Relief – Chicago\*
- World Relief – DuPage/Aurora\*
- World Relief – Moline\*

\*These agencies are known as Resettlement Agencies which have Refugee Reception and Placement contracts with the U.S. Department of State to assist refugees in their first 90 days of resettlement in Illinois. Three other Illinois Resettlement Agencies include Catholic Charities in Rockford, HIAS Chicago (a Division of Jewish Child & Family Services) and the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago.

### **Refugee Health Screening and Health Promotion Program**

#### **Administration**

- Illinois Department of Public Health/Center for Minority Health Services

#### **Community Health Clinics**

- Aunt Martha's Clinic
- DuPage County Health Department
- Mt. Sinai Touhy Clinic
- Rock Island County Health Department
- Winnebago County Health Department

#### **Health Education, Interpretation and Case Management**

- Heartland Health Outreach
- World Relief – DuPage/Aurora
- Pan-African Association

# THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF REFUGEES

In recent months, there has been a growing debate about the cost and value of the U.S. refugee resettlement program. As a humanitarian program designed to rescue persons fleeing persecution, the assumption has been that most refugees escaped war-torn situations and arrived in the U.S. with few or no possessions. While initial support is needed to assist refugees rebuild their lives, refugees' long-term economic and civic contributions to the U.S. was not well understood until the release of two recent studies completed in June, 2017.

Using census data, the New American Economy's *From Struggle to Resilience, the Economic Impact of Refugees in America* report and the National Bureau of Economic Research's *The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the U.S.* provide the following findings.

## REFUGEES CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE U.S. ECONOMY AS WORKERS, TAXPAYERS AND CONSUMERS.

- Demographically, 77.1% of refugees are of working age as compared to 49.7% of the U.S.-born population. As the U.S. population gets older, refugees can help to lessen the strain on the workforce.
- In 2015, refugees earned a collective \$77.2 billion in household income and contributed \$20.9 billion in taxes. As a result, refugees had \$56.3 billion in disposable income which benefit U.S. economy.
- In 18 states, refugees hold more than \$1B in spending power. They possess the greatest amount of spending power in California at \$17.2B and Texas at \$4.6B. Illinois refugees fall in the top 5 states with spending power totaling \$2.4B after contributing \$589.5M in federal and \$319.2M in state and local taxes.

## REFUGEES ARE ENTREPRENEURIAL.

- In 2015, there were nearly 182,000 refugee entrepreneurs who generated more than \$4.6B in total business revenue. Refugee rates of entrepreneurship (13%) exceed other immigrants (11.5%) as well U.S.-born (9%).
- The most common industry for refugee small business was in the customer-serving fields including dry cleaning, automotive, appliance repair, and hairdressing. Second most common was retail. Small refugee-owned businesses contribute to the revitalization of neighborhoods where they resettled.

## SAIGON SISTERS

Mary Nguyen Aregoni and her sister, Theresa Nguyen, came up with the name Saigon Sisters and an idea to sell Vietnamese spring rolls at farmers markets similar to the ones that their mother and grandmother successfully operated in Laos and Vietnam. Thirty years later, after leaving everything behind to start a new life in America as a refugee, Mary passed a sign seeking food vendors for the new Chicago French Market and was inspired to act on their concept. Thanks to Mary's grit, Theresa's pluck, their mother's support, and their combined courage to cash out savings and retirement accounts to get their business started, Saigon Sisters was chosen as one of the initial vendors for the market.

Saigon Sisters has been recognized and has received awards from Zagat, the Michelin Guide, TimeOut and Chicago Magazine. Thanks to this success, Mary and Theresa have been able to expand the business into three more locations: a full-service restaurant in Chicago's West Loop, a quick-service restaurant at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, and a new storefront called Bang Chop Thai Kitchen.



Mom Suu, Mary and Theresa

Photo courtesy of Mary Nguyen Aregoni

Mary and Theresa appreciate the opportunity to rebuild their lives and become successful entrepreneurs just like their mother and grandmother. Their businesses help create jobs for local residents and contribute positively to the local economy. Mary and Theresa Nguyen will celebrate the 8th anniversary of their first business venture in December of 2017 in Chicago.

# THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF REFUGEES

## REFUGEES ARE HIGHLY MOTIVATED TO INTEGRATE AND INVEST IN THEIR NEW COUNTRY.

- Refugees become citizens at a higher rate than non-refugee immigrants. In 2015, 84% of refugees who have been in the country 16 to 25 years were citizens as compared to 51.1% of other immigrants.
- When eligible to vote, refugees exercise that civic duty at a significantly higher rate (43.2%) than other immigrants (34.1%) and slightly higher than U.S.-born (42.7%).
- Refugees have high levels of home-ownership with 57.4% of households headed by refugees (nearly 600,000 households) owning homes. One in 7 of those households owned their homes outright. Homeownership has often been in neighborhoods which have struggled helping to revitalize the community while reversing the trends of population decline.



## ELIAS KASONGO

Elias Kasongo was a student in the Congo when he had to flee for his life at the age of 22. After four years spent moving between refugee camps, Elias was provided with the opportunity to resettle in Chicago.

Having survived harrowing refugee experiences, Elias overcame many challenges in the U.S. and has accomplished much in his new country. Less than two months after his arrival, Elias was provided with assistance to get a job on the cleaning crew at the Eli's Cheesecake Company. Now, 20 years later, he is the Purchasing and Materials Manager at Eli's, overseeing a multi-million dollar budget.

While working full-time, Elias also earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Management at Northeastern Illinois University. He, his wife, and their three children have reached the American dream of owning a home. Elias also serves a member of the board of RefugeeOne where he is able to serve as a role model to help other fellow refugees thrive and reach their dreams.

Photo courtesy of The Eli's Cheesecake Company

## REFUGEES ARE ABLE TO OVERCOME INITIAL RESETTLEMENT CHALLENGES.

- Median household income of refugees in the U.S. less than 5 years is approximately \$22,000. It more than triples in the following decades and reaches \$67,000 for refugees with at least 25 years.
- Refugees' utilization of public benefits declines over time. After ten years, refugees' use of public benefits is at the same rate as native-born U.S. residents.
- Refugees pay \$21,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits.
- Refugee children do as well as U.S.-born residents on measures of educational attainment. Older teens with an English language barrier require more assistance.
- Refugees' fluency in the English language improves significantly over time. 53.6% of refugees in the U.S. more than five years speak English well, compared with 26.5% who have been in the U.S. for less than five years.



## PABITRA BASNET

Pabitra Basnet, who goes by Pabi, recently received a full college scholarship through philanthropist Bob Carr's Give Something Back Foundation (GSBF). Pabi stood out among 40 applicants and 20 finalists at Aurora West High School to be one of seven scholarship winners. To be eligible for a GSBF scholarship, a student must carry a 3.0 grade point average and have good character.

Pabi will be the first in her family to go to college in the U.S. Pabi came to Aurora, Illinois with her family as refugees from Bhutan in 2010. Pabi was just in 5th grade when she entered school and spoke no English. She remembered having a lot of fears. "For a month I cried every night," she recalled. She received help from her teacher, Nepali friends, and the After School program.

With the scholarship, Pabi plans to attend Northern Illinois University. Her dream is to become a businesswoman someday so that she can create jobs and help others. One of Pabi's friends has called her a "warrior", and it is just that attitude that is leading this young woman to overcome her fears and see a bright future for herself.

Photo courtesy of World Relief DuPage