



ORR QUARTERLY

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ORR ETHNIC COMMUNITY SELF-HELP PROGRAM: BUILDING BRIDGES TO STRONGER COMMUNITIES

All over the United States, Ethnic Community-Based Organizations (ECBOs) are the bridge builders on the road to success for refugee populations. As community organizations led by current and former refugees, ECBOs help new arrivals find jobs, learn English, attain citizenship, and access health and social services. ORR supports these self-help groups through its Ethnic Community Self-Help Program (ECSH), which is providing \$3.7 million in grant awards to fund 20 projects tailored to the unique needs of their communities.

ORR's ECSH Program helps grantees provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services during a refugee's first five years after resettlement. Additionally, community building and civic participation are an integral component of the program. Under the ECSH Program, ECBOs provide everything from employment assistance and academic enrichment to preparation for college, citizenship, and acculturation. Collaboration with local service providers and organizations is key: grantees partner with local law enforcement agencies, community colleges, universities, public schools, libraries, medical clinics, employers, and faith-based institutes.

The "bridge building" activities between self-help groups and mainstream organizations benefit the entire community. Refugees not only integrate into U.S. society but also bring contributions to the communities where they reside.

Refugees are eligible for ECSH Program services for up to five years, starting from their initial resettlement. Program requirements ensure that ECSH services complement rather than duplicate those provided by other federal agencies.

Cultural Competency at Work

The ECSH Program helps local communities harness and maintain the high level of cultural competency that they hold because their staff, board of directors, and missions reflect the communities they are serving. For example,



USFS/CALC volunteer Lydia Jakovski helps 3rd grader Youssif Esttaifo stay on track at his new school by providing one-on-one tutoring after school.

ORR grantee United Community Family Services/Chaldean American Ladies of Charity (UCFS/CALC) in Troy, MI is one of the nation's oldest self-help agencies with 57 years' experience in serving primarily the Middle Eastern community near Detroit.

UCFS/CALC offers services in English, Arabic and Chaldean, a dialect of Aramaic, to help refugee families become familiar with numerous aspects of their new lives in the United States. UCFS/CALC provides trainings and services for computer literacy, work readiness, and job placement, financial empowerment, English as a Second Language, after school tutoring assistance, immigration assistance to help refugees adjust their status, and more.

"Our clients trust us and they feel comfortable because we understand the cultural dynamics of their experiences," says Zina Asmar Salem, the CEO and president of UCFS/CALC. In 2017, thanks to ORR and other support, 3,200

individuals attended resource fairs and educational workshops and 400 youth benefited from mentoring, tutoring and other after school activities. Up to \$1,324,008 of aggregated increased income was earned for those assisted by career and job placement programs, according to UCFS/CALC's 2017 annual report. UCFS/CALC has such an enduring presence in the community that many former clients, especially teens who took part in mentoring and after school activities, return to help the next group of new refugees.

One Step at a Time

An ORR grantee in Raleigh, NC, Raleigh Immigrant Community (RIC) has a strong record of applying the self-empowerment and acculturation model to help refugees during the critical five-year period after arrival. Elias Nijru, Program Director at RIC, an immigrant himself from Kenya, says, "I went through the integration process myself and I feel obliged to share my experience and open doors for others going through the same process."

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ORR's ECSH Program is helping RIC focus on helping refugees in the Raleigh-Durham community obtain jobs, advance in their current jobs and develop new work skills. RIC, through its English Round Table sessions, aids refugees in English language proficiency. RIC also caters to a slew of refugee case management needs critical to their journey of integration and self sufficiency. It's not enough to help a new arrival to the United States apply for a job and get hired, Elias says. For refugees, the cultural adjustments can be overwhelming. His program ensures that before the job begins, the client has the appropriate clothes, knows where the job is, what time to be there, and how to get there by public transportation, and other practical considerations that can mean the difference between job success and unemployment.

Because language barriers have such an impact on resettlement, RIC offers free translation services in Swahili, Lingala, Chiluba, Sango, French, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, and Pashu thanks to the help of five trilingual staff with RIC. Clients in RIC's program use interpretation services to help with doctor's appointments, school meetings, and job needs, among many other areas. One local employer hired 30 people in the RIC job program in 2017 and RIC helped

make sure the new employees understood the tasks and instructions on the job to meet employer standards. RIC has since worked with the employer to embed a multilingual speaker on the job site to ensure effective communication for new refugee hires. This refugee has since been permanently employed at the job site.



Raleigh Immigrant Community staff (left to right) Felix Iyoko, Liz Mukau, and Elias Nijru.

Unique Needs = Unique Services

Highlights of other grantee activities include:

- Minneapolis, MN: Isuroon provides training to health care professionals on the health needs of Somali women, thereby providing important outreach to and education about incoming and existing refugee groups.
- Indianapolis, IN: The Burmese American Community Institute assisted 230 refugees complete the Form N-400 (Application for Naturalization) in a six-month period.
- Clarkston, GA: Women Watch Africa, Inc. provides preventative health care training to refugee women who then educate their families, friends, and neighbors.

Measuring Success

The unique nature of ORR's ECSH Program means that no two projects are exactly the same. That can be a challenge when developing evaluation instruments. With help from the HHS Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), ORR developed and implemented a standardized and OMB-approved data collection tool for the program. ORR is pilot testing the form.

The form is part of ORR's semi-annual reporting on the services, achievements, challenges, and success stories that grantees experience during the three-year project period.

As a client of one grantee put it, some benefits are immeasurable: "What matters most is just to have someone say to you, 'You can do it, you will be fine, your life will be changed!'"