ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.

ANNUAL REPORT 2020
How do and will we remember 2020? Each day we witnessed the emotional, physical, and psychological toll the COVID pandemic took on family, friends, colleagues, first responders, and people around the world we did not know. TV, radio, and social media were active 24 hours a day. Everyone everywhere was challenged. We saw the wonderful and helpful ways so many people adapted and helped others. Unfortunately, we also saw that equality and justice for all remain just out of reach for far too many American citizens and elusive for millions of refugees. We heard and saw the best and the worst.

From almost day one of the former administration, we witnessed anti-immigration executive orders and policies that included a discriminatory travel ban on 13 mostly Muslim-majority and African countries and the rapid decline in the number of refugees admitted to the U.S. The refugee admissions ceiling was set at 15,000 for 2020—the lowest number in 40 years since the signing of the Refugee Act of 1980.

For ECDC it was a year of working mostly remotely but in close contact with stakeholders and partners. The pandemic contributed to delays in refugee arrivals; however, high priority cases continued to arrive. ECDC and affiliate staff innovatively adapted to safely meet their clients’ needs. This was possible because ECDC has dedicated staff, affiliates, volunteers, donors, and community partners, who generously offered their time and contributed resources to support our work. ECDC welcomed clients with open arms albeit from a distance and resettled 486 refugees and 478 SIVs across our resettlement network. Through our subsidiary, the Enterprise Development Group, we disbursed $439,384.58 through the Pay Check Protection Program.

While we are hopeful the United States will soon become a place of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers, our thoughts and prayers remain with those separated from their families because of war, conflict, and COVID-19, including those in the Tigray region of Northern Ethiopia, where ECDC has worked since 1993.

We remain grateful to the many individuals, foundations, and federal, local and state government agencies that contribute to the work of ECDC. Thank you for your continued support!

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ECDC works and advocates with and on behalf of refugees and immigrants to lead lives of dignity, attain self-sufficiency, and integrate successfully into their new communities. ECDC defines integration as a dynamic, two-way process in which immigrants and the receiving community work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities. Driven by core values of diversity and minority leadership, ECDC collaborates with its affiliate network of Ethnic Community-Based Organizations (ECBOs) to help communities achieve successful integration.
In 2020, across the refugee resettlement field and the wider non-profit sector, organizations reflected on and made public their commitments to racial justice, diversity, and equity within their organizations and programs. As a majority Black organization, it was evident that ECDC had something to offer to those willing and interested to discuss race and racism, particularly related to refugees.

In collaboration with Switchboard, ECDC published three technical articles on the critical role refugee service providers play in discussing race and racism with newcomers. As they adjust to their new lives in the U.S., many refugees and their family members are likely to experience racism or discrimination first-hand. Refugees need to understand how they may experience racism personally and also how they may encounter racist policies and ways of thinking in their new communities. Such knowledge and awareness will prepare clients for the interactions they themselves may have and the news and media they will hear and see. Protests, police brutality, and rioting are potentially traumatic emotional triggers for those who have fled war and unrest. Furthermore, understanding what is going on in the news can be challenging and frightening for individuals who have limited English proficiency.

Through ECDC’s partnership with Switchboard, we explored these issues and provided resources and approaches for resettlement staff to use. In another effort, ECDC connected with the Tent Partnership for Refugees to discuss race and racism with over 50 global businesses that hire refugees. Looking forward, ECDC has set-up an internal working group to ensure the organization continues to have these discussions internally as well as with others working in the refugee resettlement field. In 2021, the group aims to create an organizational statement on ECDC’s commitment to racial equity and introduce new diversity and equity training for staff and our board of directors.

“We overlook ourselves in the equation so much. We put it on society, or schools, or agencies to fix racism or inequity, but it starts with us.”

– Dr. Stephanie Akoumany, contributing author to ECDC technical articles and founder at Bloom.
ECDC ACC DENVER WELCOMES REFUGEES FROM NAURU AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In FY20, ECDC ACC Denver provided enhanced services to six refugees who came through the Nauru or Papua New Guinea camps. These services included intensive case management, emergency financial support, and upward mobility support.

Nauru is a tiny island country in Micronesia, northeast of Australia, which uses the island for “offshore processing,” where it sends refugees seeking asylum and protection from their home countries. In 2016, during the Obama administration, the U.S. agreed with the Australian Government to resettle some 1,250 refugees living on Nauru in the United States.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

ECDC resettled 486 refugees and 478 SIVs across our network through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program: Reception and Placement (R&P). The majority of those resettled were Afghan (51%), Congolese (12%), and Burmese (9%). The Matching Grant (MG) Program enrolled 183 clients. This program supplements refugee resettlement programming by providing employment services, including job placement, preparing a resume, interviewing, and completing job application skills. The program generated a $225,776.05 non-federal in-kind match, which included 5,676 hours of volunteer services. The program also exited 449 clients as self-sufficient at the end of their 180-day program period.

In FY20, the refugee admissions ceiling was set at 15,000, a record low.
For the most part, the pandemic halted refugee arrivals; however, high priority cases continued to arrive. As a result, ECDC and affiliate staff were essential workers throughout the pandemic. Staff continued to collect donations and set up homes before refugees arrived, greet families and individuals at the airport, take them to their new homes, and help them settle-in. Staff also had to adjust to providing follow-up services remotely and worked tirelessly to meet the increased needs of newcomers due to the pandemic. Significant challenges faced included delays in new arrivals receiving public benefits such as food stamps, cash assistance, health insurance, and social security cards.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, new arrivals were welcomed with open arms (from a distance!) and provided everything they needed to start their new life in the United States. “Sisi ni America...!” one newly arrived woman said with a bright face and sparkling eyes. Her sense of joy was evident even with her facemask, explained ECDC’s affiliate in Chicago, Ill., the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago (ECAC). “Sisi ni America” is Kiswahili and means “We are in America!” “Karibu America” means welcome to America, and this was the first word of welcome used to greet the Zawadi Family, explained ECAC staff, who work to make newly arrived refugees feel welcome by greeting them in their native language and preparing a culturally appropriate welcome meal.

Because of COVID-19, newly arrived refugees required additional assistance. Through the R&P program, refugees are meant to begin working within the first 90 days they are in the U.S. Many of the jobs refugees are placed in when they first arrive are in the service industry, which COVID negatively impacted. Through funds raised, and given as additional program funding, ECDC made available $246,640.00 in direct assistance to support newly and recently arrived refugees meet their most urgent expenses such as rent and technological costs incurred to adjust to online learning for themselves and their children.
MOBILE TESTING ALLOWS CLIENTS TO CONTINUE WORKING

Community partnerships play an ongoing critical role in ensuring clients’ housing, food, transport, and employment needs are met, things that became more challenging to organize and sustain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. ECDC’s affiliates worked successfully with community partners such as volunteer groups, local employers, and health centers to address the increased services required to ensure their clients are safe and their basic needs, at minimum, are met during the pandemic.

Della Lamb Community Services, ECDC’s affiliate in Kansas City, Mo., partnered with the Truman Medical Center to provide COVID-19 mobile testing for clients enrolled in the MG program. The partnership allowed MG clients to get tested as needed before starting or returning to work; both previous and current MG program clients, as well as local employers, were informed about this mobile testing resource, which resulted in employers being able to refer employees and conduct testing as needed and clients to continue working throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

ECDC provides training, technical assistance, monitoring, evaluation and oversight to affiliate ECBOs to deliver the Preferred Communities (PC) program. The PC program provides individualized case management (ICM) to refugees and other eligible populations with vulnerabilities, including youth and young adults, single parents, women-at-risk, elderly refugees, refugees with psychological difficulties (including emotional trauma resulting from war, sexual or gender-based violence), LGTBQ refugees, survivors of torture, refugees who are HIV-positive, unanticipated refugee arrivals and secondary migrants.

In 2020, 617 clients were enrolled in the PC program, and 7,123 hours of specialized case management was delivered in mental health counselling, medical, social adjustment services, and assistance services. Community partnerships are key to meeting the individual needs of clients in the PC program. Across our network of ECBO’s, 16 new community partnerships were established in 2020.
WOMEN AND YOUTH

Women and youth programs continued to serve as a bridge to the communities we serve, although the majority were transitioned to online programs. We Made This (WMT), a social enterprise run by ECDC’s local office in Denver, Co., provided training to 35 women. We also had 210 youth participate in the Mambo Youth Life Skills program in Northern Virginia, and 252 students attended programs offered by our East Colfax Youth Center in Denver, Co.

DRIVING SCHOOL PLANS IN PLACE

With support from Mile High United Way, Deloitte, and Social Venture Partners, ECDC ACC Denver planned to launch a new driving school for refugee women in the spring. However, because of COVID-19, the launch was postponed. ECDC ACC Metro used to offer a similar program in the D.C. Metro area. We look forward to the program taking off post-COVID-19.

WE MADE THIS: A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Soad and her husband came to the U.S. in 2009 as refugees from Iraq. Although Soad lacked English skills and confidence, she wanted to get an education and a job. Soad tells the WMT Program Coordinator that this program “changed her life.” She says that WMT was the catalyst for her work in the community as a census enumerator for homeless populations and deciding to make masks for her neighbors and friends during COVID. She’s now a community college student, and she regularly speaks to other women, encouraging them to believe that they can realize their dreams with education. She’s a real inspiration to those who know her, and ECDC ACC is proud that WMT provided her an outlet to influence and nurture her leadership skills. She now serves as a contract interpreter for ACC and is a point of contact for many in the Arabic-speaking community. Last October, the City and County of Denver posted a video story about Soad as part of the #IAmDenver campaign.
“I am learning to share hope with the people who have lost it because of the circumstances that they are in. I was there. I saw it and felt it. There is a better, brighter, and safer future at the end of the tunnel.” – Tony Bisima

Ntwali “Tony” Bisimwa first came to ECDC ACC Denver East Colfax Youth Center (ECYC) during ECYC’s OnTrac College Program in the summer of 2019, and he made a positive impression on the staff and students. ECYC staff explains, Tony made friends right away as he is a natural leader. He has unlimited energy, an unwavering vision. Tony always takes the time to help the many people he meets on his journey, no matter where it takes him. From the beginning, Tony had a mission—to attend college and become a doctor. Tony had only been in Colorado since November 2018, and right away, he stood out. He qualified for the International Baccalaureate Program at Hinkley High School, took a college class at the University of Colorado Denver, became a leader in his church and school, all while driving his family members over 400 miles a week to their jobs and back.

Tony and his family spent the better part of their lives dealing with shooting, shelling, bombing, disease, family separation, and death. His family fled the Democratic Republic of Congo and then waited almost six years in Uganda to come to Colorado. They continued throughout this time to believe their long road would lead to a better life. Now that he is here, he is making it count every day.

The ECYC offers multicultural connections, academic assistance, and life skills support to youth as they navigate their transition to adulthood. ECYC’s programs include an after-school program, tutoring in teams, family dinners, OnTrac and Ambassador programs, and alumni mentoring.

In his senior year, Tony continued his college application work through ECYC. He worked diligently in the College Advising Program, became an outstanding member of the 10-week Ambassador Leadership Scholarship Program, came to the After-School Tutoring Program when his schedule allowed, and often helped other students with their homework. He has always been a positive member of any group. Tony was accepted by the University of Denver (UD) with merit and need-based scholarships and grants and enrolled in the fall of 2020. He wants to be a doctor, and he knows the difficulties and challenges inherent in that plan. He is a very committed undergraduate student and is thrilled to be attending UD and involved in all the STEM programs and opportunities.

During the ECYC Summer Melt 2020 Program, Tony helped recruit new high school seniors to College Advising and the Ambassador Program 2021. Tony is committed to education not only for himself but helps other students have opportunities.

Tony is one of those rare students who has not only overcome incredible hardships during his life but realizes the importance of making a difference, no matter where he finds himself. Tony shares his story with grace and humility. Tony is the refugee example of perseverance without rancor. We work with students with difficult stories from all over the world. Tony stands out in that group, as well as here in the United States.
SMALL BUSINESS LOANS
EDG PROVIDES ACCESS TO SBA PPP LOANS TO BUSINESS OWNERS IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Through our subsidiary, the Enterprise Development Group (EDG), $439,384.58 was disbursed via 52 SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans given to former refugees, immigrants, and low-income individuals. EDG is a cornerstone of our approach to ensuring self-sufficiency among the populations we serve. EDG’s focus on communities of color, and low-interest loan rates, has been particularly helpful this year as the need for equalizing access to business ownership—and the capital it requires—was made visible by the pandemic.

AXUMITE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

In FY20, ECDC’s subsidiary, the Axumite Heritage Foundation (AHF), renovated an elementary school in Tigray, Ethiopia, initially built in 1995. AHF also built additional classrooms for the local high school. The addition included one block of five new classrooms for secondary school students. Work continued on the AHF library, which was opened to the public in 2019, and included building a market space outside of the library. Designed as an income-generating space to support the sustainability of AHF’s local work in the community, the area was successfully leased to a local bank under a five-year contract.

TAKE ACTION FOR TIGRAY

In November, a full-scale humanitarian crisis unfolded in Tigray, Ethiopia, the region where ECDC’s Axumite Heritage Foundation (AHF) is located. Within the first two weeks of the war, more than 20,000 people were forced to flee to neighboring Sudan for safety. Families were separated, conditions for children became extremely harsh, and women and girls continue to face protection issues. Today, more than 2 million people have been displaced, and over 60,000 people have fled to neighboring Sudan.

ECDC has partnered with local organizations working to provide emergency assistance to refugees who have fled Tigray and are now in Sudan. We are raising funds to help develop two youth centers to provide education to young people living in the camps who do not have access to school classes. Funds raised will help build the youth centers, creating a safe place for learning, teacher compensation, and learning materials.

It is estimated that 30 percent of those who fled to Sudan are children. These young people should not be left behind without an education. Please donate today to help provide them with education; so their learning is not disrupted, some normalcy is brought back to their lives, and they have a safe place to learn.

You can donate on ECDC’s website or by mailing a check to ECDC, 901 S. Highland St., Arlington, VA. 22204.
ECDC is able to meet the individual needs of the clients we serve across the country because of the dedication and commitment of our affiliate network members; volunteers who offer their expertise and time; through partnership and collaboration with local businesses and foundations; and because of individuals who give generously.

**VOLUNTEERS**

In 2020, 220 volunteers contributed their time, expertise, and energy to ECDC. We could not be more grateful for their generosity. Each volunteer plays a different role, helping to make our programs possible. At our local offices, volunteers are coordinated through our **First Friends** program.

Through the First Friends program, volunteers are recruited, trained, and matched with newly arrived refugee individuals and families. The volunteer First Friends meet regularly with the individuals and families to whom they are matched. Refugees practice their English conversation skills with their First Friend, talk about life in the U.S., participate in community events (free concerts, community festivals/celebrations, and other activities), or visit area resources (libraries, botanical gardens, national parks). The goal of First Friends is to enhance the refugees’ integration through social bridging. Although COVID-19 provided a challenge to First Friends, several matches were made before ACC moved to remote services and put the matches on hold.

“Diana and I first started meeting as First Friends in December of 2019. Diana has a 1.5-year-old son and gave birth to a daughter in June 2020, so she is very busy with childcare and keeping up her family’s home, as her husband works six days a week. I have really enjoyed meeting with Diana weekly! Unfortunately, when COVID first became a problem in March, we took a couple of months off due to the lockdown order. After she gave birth to her daughter in June, we started to meet again. We were able to meet outside and stay socially distanced. Since the weather has been colder and COVID cases have spiked again, we started meeting virtually via FaceTime or a phone call each week. We are mainly working on English conversation practice, as I can’t do many lessons or give worksheets/homework over the phone. I’m thankful technology has still provided us a way to connect, even during a pandemic. I’m very excited for the time when it will be safe to meet in-person again!”

- Elise Heyen, ACC Volunteer since 2017
TAKE ACTION
Join ECDC’s growing number of Refuge Members by donating $25 per month (or more!).
In 2020, ECDC partnered with its affiliate organization the Refuge Empowerment Center in Omaha, Neb., to support their candle making efforts. ECDC purchases candles in bulk and in return for our recurring donor’s generosity, we send them a candle four times a year. We view it as a win-win-win!
The candles are made by recently arrived refugees who participate in the candle-making program as way to earn supplementary income, meet new people, and practice their English language skills.

YOU CAN DONATE ON ECDC’S WEBSITE OR BY MAILING A CHECK TO ECDC, 901 S. HIGHLAND ST., ARLINGTON, VA. 22204.
IN MEMORY OF LARA KINNE

Lara Kinne worked tirelessly on behalf of immigrants and refugees, including dedicating her time volunteering at ECDC ACC Metro. In July, Lara passed away unexpectedly at the young age of 34. More than 30 of Lara’s family and friends donated over $9,000 to ECDC in Lara’s memory. The funds given in her memory provided newly arrived refugees with warm meals cooked with love and gratitude during the holidays and helped meet some of the most urgent costs for ECDC ACC clients. Everyone at ECDC is terribly saddened by the loss of Lara and grateful for her contributions to our work and the contributions made in her memory, which have been an ongoing reminder of her generosity and commitment.

NATIONAL RUN FOR REFUGEES

Join ECDC’s new and recently launched event, the ECDC National Run for Refugees. The virtual event is an opportunity to bring together ECDC supporters in a collective effort to show support for refugees across the country while also raising funds for our operational costs. We had 157 participants from 16 states join the event and raised 24K in gross income. Details about our upcoming event are below. We hope you will join us!

TAKE ACTION RUN FOR REFUGEES

As a run-up to World Refugee Day, show your support for refugees and join ECDC’s 2021 Run for Refugees (R4R) taking place June 1 – June 13! To register, visit ECDC’s website or Facebook. Last year, peer fundraisers were critical to the success of the event. Become a peer fundraiser and in celebration of your fundraising efforts:

- RAISE $250 - RECEIVE COMPLEMENTARY ENTRY.
- RAISE $500 - RECEIVE A WE MADE THIS QUILTED BOWL COZY.
- RAISE $750 - RECEIVE A STITCH-ED TOGETHER BON APPETIT CHEF’S APRON.

At the start of the pandemic, local foundations stepped-up, responded-quickly, and provided a flexible approach to funding that allowed ECDC to respond to the most urgent needs of our clients, adapt as necessary, and limited time-consuming reporting; making it possible for our staff to spend their time where it was most urgently required. ECDC is particularly grateful for the support given by the local foundations in the Northern Virginia area, including the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, the Arlington Community Foundation, and the ACT for Alexandria: Community Foundation for Alexandria. We thank these foundations for their timely, generous, and flexible financial support in 2020.
Revenue Source | Amount      | Percent of Total Revenue |
----------------|-------------|--------------------------|
Federal, state, and local government grants | $10,918,463 | 81.7%                    |
Private grants | $787,083    | 5.8%                     |
Monetary contributions | $255,119 | 1.9%                     |
Fees for service | $197,138    | 1.4%                     |
Rental Income | $479,388    | 3.5%                     |
Microloan origination, penalty fees, and interest | $473,734 | 3.5%                     |
Contributed goods and services | $116,689 | 0.8%                     |
Other | $541,570 | 4.0%                     |
**TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE** | **$13,350,640** |                          |

2019 Revenue Sources: 76% Federal, state, and local grants, 7% Income generation, 5% Other grants and contracts, 1% Contributions

2018 Revenue Sources: 84% Federal, state, and local grants, 8% Income generation, 5% Other grants and contracts, 3% Contributions

Net Assets

2020: $13.3M
2019: $17.7M
2018: $16.3M