



GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

EMBARGOED
Release date
June 20, 2018

CONTACT: Aryah Somers Landsberger,
Director of Programs
PHONE: 707-483-2113
EMAIL: aryah@gcir.org

GCIR Releases Report in Honor of World Refugee Day

SEBASTOPOL, CA—In honor of World Refugee Day, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrant and Refugees (GCIR) is pleased to release *Philanthropic Strategies to Support Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, a report that describes recent philanthropic responses to humanitarian crises to inform action on the grave and urgent challenges now facing refugees and asylum seekers seeking refuge in the United States.

With the number of displaced persons in the world at an all-time high, and the United States in the midst of a historic rollback of policies and practices that protect refugees and asylum seekers, this report offers suggestions for how philanthropy can confront these challenges through bold and innovative new strategies that leverage resources, maximize impact, and expand collaboration. The report finds that U.S. philanthropy is responding to the difficult policy environment and limited resources by moving beyond ‘business as usual’, supporting systems change work, and mobilizing within the philanthropic community, among other tactics.

Written by GCIR Senior Strategist Suzette Brooks Masters, the report presents 10 case studies detailing diverse grantmakers responses to the recent Central American and Syrian refugee crises, as well as to deteriorating U.S. humanitarian policies. The profiled philanthropies vary in size, geographical location, and funding priorities, among other factors. They include the Global Whole Being Fund, John R. Oishei Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Polk Bros. Foundation, Robin Hood, Samuel S. Fels Fund, Solidarity MN, Texas Access to Justice Foundation, Unbound Philanthropy, and Weingart Foundation.

“The stark new realities facing refugees, asylum seekers, and the U.S. humanitarian system demand nothing less than a bold, innovative, and urgent response from philanthropy,” reads the report. “These profiles are designed to provide a roadmap for supporting refugees, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children seeking protection in the United States and abroad.”

Several of the profiled institutions shared why they are compelled to engage on these issues at this time:

“The Weingart Foundation believes in inclusion and opportunity for all,” said Fred Ali, the foundation’s president and CEO, “which is why we fund nonprofits supporting refugees and asylum seekers fleeing

violence and persecution. This moment of humanitarian crisis calls on philanthropy to collectively focus resources to assist impacted communities.”

“More than 60 percent of New Yorkers are immigrants or their children, so global events deeply affect our communities,” said Veyom Bahl, managing director of Survival at Robin Hood. “Robin Hood is committed to building exemplary local nonprofits that can provide refugees and asylum seekers a strong start in their new home.”

“In response to a growing global refugee crisis, Unbound Philanthropy has increased our funding for refugees,” said Taryn Higashi, Executive Director of Unbound Philanthropy. “We have concentrated on bridging the siloes between organizations working on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers and those working on behalf of immigrants, consistent with our mission of ensuring that all people can live with dignity regardless of where they were born.”

“Open Society has been committed to protecting the rights and well-being of refugees and immigrants since its founding,” said Laleh Ispahani and Bill Vandenberg, Acting Co-Directors, U.S. Programs, Open Society Foundations. “Whether protecting Syrians and Central Americans escaping persecution and violence, or Haitians displaced by natural disasters, or so many others who are forced to flee and seek safe haven in the world today, the plight of refugees and asylum seekers goes to the core of our work as a network of foundations committed to human rights and human dignity.”

“Samuel S. Fels, our founder, was the son of refugees. He helped to found the Hebrew Aid Society (HIAS-PA) when Philadelphia was a major point of entry for Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution,” said Sarah Martinez-Helfman, President of the Samuel S. Fels Foundation. “Samuel believed in serving all, regardless of race or religion, to build community and shared prosperity. This mission still animates our work today.”

Founded in 1990, GCIR works to influence philanthropy to advance the contributions and address the needs of the country’s growing and increasingly diverse immigrant and refugee populations. GCIR partners with a growing network of member foundations, as well as the greater philanthropic community, on a wide range of immigration and immigrant integration issues, including education, health, employment, civic participation, racial and economic justice, and other concerns affecting immigrant children, youth, and families.

###