

## Refugee Integration & Economic Contributions to the United States

### Words from a Mayor

Utica, N.Y. Mayor, Robert Palmieri says: *We've had a rebirth into some of our older neighborhoods that were starting to decay. Refugees have come in here and revitalized them and made them a proud neighborhood once again.*

[Listen to the full interview.](#)

### A Family of Entrepreneurs

Bounthanh Phommasathit fled from Laos before receiving her Bachelor of the Arts in social work and settling in Ohio. She and her family started Diversified Health Management, which was ranked by Columbus CEO Magazine fifth best Home Care Agency of 2015.

Phommasathit spent a number of years serving the community and growing the family businesses in home healthcare and job placement. Now, one of Phommasathit's sons serves as the CEO of the ever growing Diversified Health Management while the other established Workline Solutions, Inc., becoming its CEO and employing 150 people.

### A Small Business Owner

Until Tara Dhungana arrived in Columbus, Ohio, he had no place to call home. His past as an exiled Bhutanese refugee inspired him to begin working as a program manager at a local refugee resettlement agency. In addition to his day job, Dhungana opened a restaurant featuring south Asian food.

Of refugees, Dhungana says: *They want to call this country their own because they did not have a country before. I did not belong anywhere; I did not belong to any country of the world until now.*

### QUICK FACTS:

- Refugees are willing and eager to work.
- Many refugees start their own businesses, creating jobs in their communities.
- Refugees are tax payers and pay into federal benefits programs.
- Overtime, refugees become homeowners.

Nationwide, research has shown that refugees are large contributors to local economies. Refugees revitalize cities and towns by offsetting population decline and boost economic growth throughout the country by opening businesses, paying taxes, and even buying homes.

### REFUGEES ARE WILLING AND EAGER TO WORK

- The average refugee population's workforce participation rate is 81.8 percent, well above the national rate of 62 percent.

### MANY REFUGEES START THEIR OWN BUSINESSES, CREATING JOBS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

- A 2014 study from Columbus, OH found that the rate of entrepreneurship among refugees is double that of the general population.
- In Lancaster, PA refugees and immigrants helped create or preserve 1,062 local manufacturing jobs that would have vanished or moved elsewhere.
- In Cleveland, OH, refugee businesses supported 175 jobs and \$12 million in area spending in 2012.

#### *Economic impact of refugee-owned businesses, Columbus MSA, 2015*

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total Impact
<b>Output (millions)</b>	<b>\$354.9</b>	<b>\$232.9</b>	<b>\$17.9</b>	<b>\$605.7</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>3,960</b>	<b>1,927</b>	<b>1,965</b>	<b>7,851</b>

Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding

Source: Community Research Partners analysis using regional multipliers from IMPLAN®

# Refugee Council USA

## Hard Work for the American Dream

Mihret Ketem finally found a home in the United States after she was forced to flee without her children to neighboring Ethiopia. After five years, her four children were finally able to join her. Ketem works two jobs, both in housekeeping, to support herself and her family. Her daughter is studying to become a nurse. To Ketem, working hard in exchange for the kind of freedom that the United States has offered her family is worth it. One day, she dreams of opening a small business.

## From Cuba to Public Service

José Luis Mas left Cuba at age twelve in 1961. Once he was of age, he followed the family tradition and became a lawyer. As a trial attorney, Mas represents newly-arrived immigrants and refugees as a way of giving back to the community that welcomed him. In May 2009, Mas was appointed by the Ohio Secretary of State to serve on the County Board of Elections. Mas' awards are many and he dedicates his life to public service.

Says Mas: *I was never received with anything other than kindness...this has given meaning to my life.*

## Welcome & Success Stories of Refugee Integration

- [Success Stories](#)
- [Contributions of Refugees](#)
- [Community Welcome of Refugees](#)
- [State by State Welcome Stories](#)

## REFUGEES ARE TAX PAYERS AND PAY INTO FEDERAL BENEFITS PROGRAMS

- A report in Tennessee found that refugees contribute more than they consume and pay almost twice as much in tax revenues – including for schooling and health care – in the past two decades.
- Although many refugees initially depend on public benefits, most quickly become self-sufficient. Benefits usage declines with the length of residence and after ten years only 3% of refugee households received cash welfare benefits, compared to 21.3% of the general population.

## OVERTIME, REFUGEES BECOME HOMEOWNERS

- Home ownership rates among refugees that have lived in the US for more than 10 years are comparable to U.S. born families.

## HOUSING WEALTH



Between 2000 and 2014, immigration to Lancaster County increased the total housing value in the county by **\$178.2M.**

Looking at just the period after the Great Recession, 2009 to 2014, immigrants raised the total housing value in the county by **\$52.0M.**

## REFERENCES

- “Impact of Refugees in Central Ohio: 2015 Report”. US Together, Community Refugee & Immigration Services, World Relief Columbus, and the City of Columbus. 2015.
- Center for American Progress, Fiscal Policy Institute: Refugee Integration in the United States. David Dyssegaard Kallick, Silva Mathema. June 2016.
- “The Integration Outcomes of US Refugees”. Migration Policy Institute. June 2015
- Vigdor, Jacob. 2013. “Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market.” Partnership for a New American Economy.
- “Economic Impact of Refugees in the Cleveland Area”. Chmura Economics and Analytics. October 2013.
- Krista Lee, A Study on the Federal Cost Shifting to the State of Tennessee as a Result of the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program for the Period 1990 through 2012, Nov. 12, 2013,
- Center for American Progress, Fiscal Policy Institute: Refugee Integration in the United States. David Dyssegaard Kallick, Silva Mathema. June 2016.

## OTHER ECONOMIC AND FISCAL IMPACT STUDIES

- Fiscal Policy Institute: Refugee Integration Report (June 2016)
- Tent Foundation: Refugees Work: A Humanitarian Investment that Yields Economic Dividends (May 2016)
- Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies: Refugees and Immigrants in Georgia: The Facts (2016)
- United Way of Amarillo and Canyon: Community Status Report (2016)