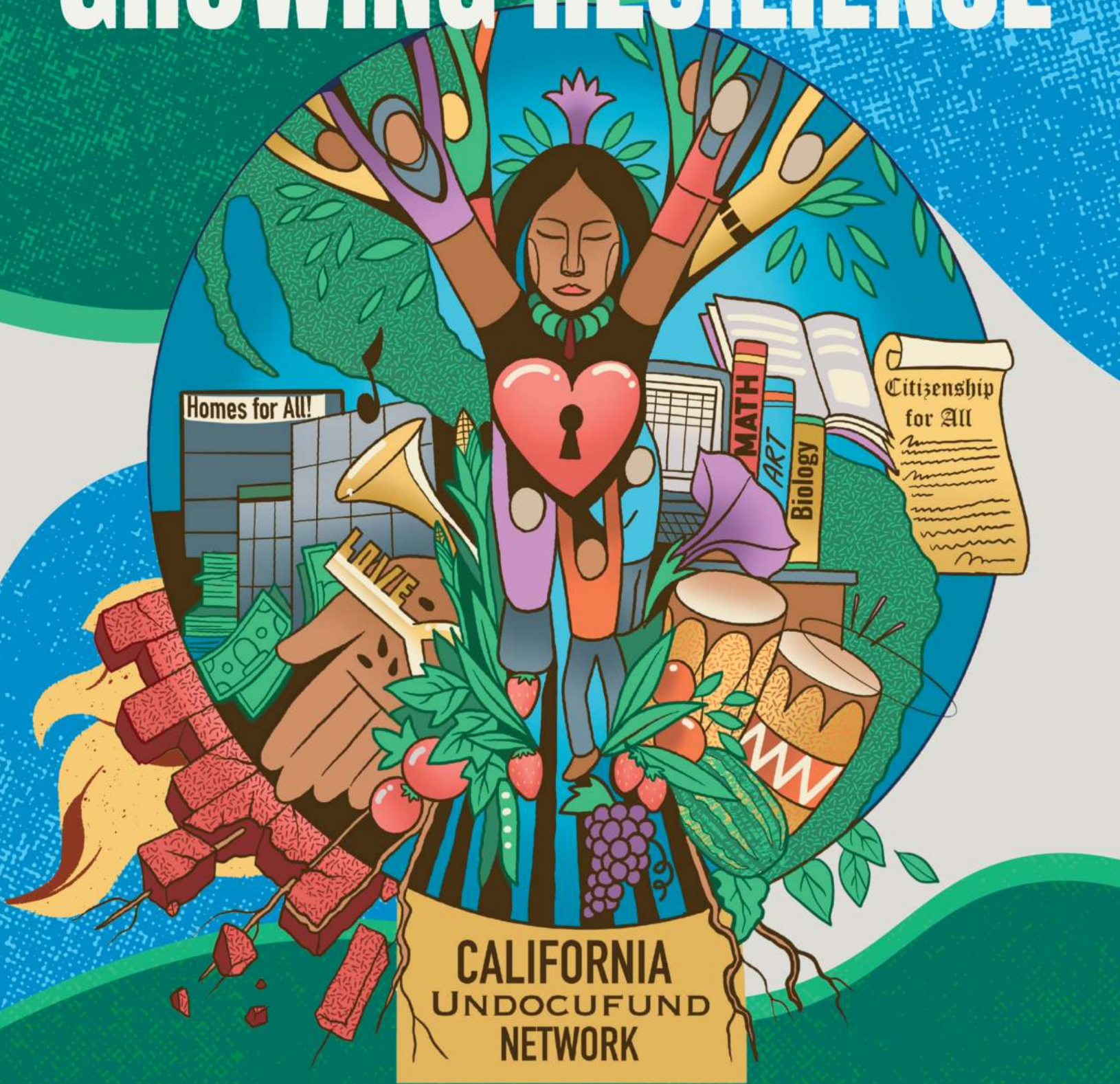


GROWING RESILIENCE



**California Immigrant Organizations Advocating
For and Serving Immigrants in Disaster**

GROWING RESILIENCE

California Immigrant Organizations Advocating For and Serving Immigrants in Disaster

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Cover art by Roberto Gonzalez



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tubbs and Nuns fires decimated Northern California communities in 2017 immediately plunging residents into homelessness, unemployment, and financial devastation. While citizens and documented immigrants could rely on state and federal disaster support services, undocumented people had no safety net.

The UndocuFund movement began in 2017 in Sonoma County, California, when a small group of organizations built a system for raising money and distributing it to undocumented immigrants to provide the type of support citizens and documented immigrants receive. The movement next spread to the central coast during the Thomas fire and throughout the state during the coronavirus pandemic. These immigrant-serving organizations that had provided a wealth of services during these disasters and others gathered in Sonoma County in September 2022 where they founded the California UndocuFund Network, combining their individual commitments to service and change into a statewide coalition.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, California is home to 10.5 million immigrants, more immigrants than any other state. California is also home to an estimated 2 million undocumented individuals and approximately 1.1 million undocumented workers. Undocumented workers play a key role in California's economy as they are 6% of California's workforce and account for \$3.7 billion dollars in state and local tax revenue.

California is also unique in the U.S. for the consistency and increasing severity of risk for disasters, such as wildfires and floods. The federal Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) declarations for large wildfires that risk becoming major disasters in California have increased substantially in recent decades, from an average of fewer than five per decade to an average of about ten per year – 100 per decade – since 2000.



Photos top to bottom: Suanne Mendez, The TransLatin@ Coalition, Daysi Carreño, North Bay Organizing Project

Undocumented workers play a key role in California's economy as they are

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in state and local tax revenue.

Like the many disasters Californians face every year, the coronavirus pandemic disproportionately impacted undocumented immigrants. In the first year of the COVID pandemic, California's unemployed citizen workers were eligible for up to 20 times as much economic aid as unemployed undocumented workers – a difference of \$35,000 to \$1,700.

Because disaster is a reoccurring phenomenon in California and undocumented immigrants live financially precarious lives, undocumented people will continue to be vulnerable. The new California UndocuFund Network is uniquely suited to respond to California's ongoing disasters and to work with government agencies to adapt policies and build systems. Even though many UndocuFund Network organizations had not provided disaster response services prior to 2020, they responded a humanitarian crisis affecting some of California's most impoverished people by simultaneously raising funds and providing direct services throughout the state.

Between 2017 and 2022, Network organizations provided services for nearly 60,000 people of all ages including children, adults, and the elderly (65+); distributed \$113,969,464.95 in direct financial aid; and provided a wealth of services including direct financial relief, housing and food assistance, medical services, legal services, and translation services. The UndocuFund model features disaster response clinics held at community locations that link undocumented people with services and offer client intake, case management, and follow up services. Network organizations all have a history of working in service to undocumented people. They understand the needs of the undocumented community, are trusted by the immigrant community, and have significant language capacity including bilingual or multilingual interpreters and translators, service providers, and written materials.

The 2022 California UndocuFund Summit survey and focus groups highlighted the Network organizations' desire to keep moving forward, to expand existing systems, and to advocate for new solutions to meet the needs of undocumented people. Network organizations are committed to building a coalition that will continue to enhance disaster and emergency response for immigrants.

They called out important next steps in this work:

1. Build the capacity of the California UndocuFund Network to meet ongoing disaster-related needs and to support member organizations.
2. Engage in strategic planning efforts that expand funding, clarify priorities, and guide expansion.
3. Leverage the Network's understanding of the undocumented experience and the geographic scope of the Network's service area to impact advocacy and policy efforts throughout California.

Between 2017-2022, the UndocuFund Network organizations provided services for nearly

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in direct financial aid; and provided a wealth of services including direct financial relief, housing and food assistance, medical services, legal services, and translation services.



Genevieve Flores-Haro, MICOP; Gloria Cruz, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, Gabriela Orantes, North Bay Organizing Project

SECTION 1:

THE CALIFORNIA STORY



SECTION 1: THE CALIFORNIA STORY

When disaster strikes, communities focus on survival. We grab our loved ones, pets, and prized possessions and flee a firestorm. We all seek cover when the earthquake shakes our foundation. We stay home when authorities announce a global pandemic.

Every time something bad happens in California, we eventually turn to rebuilding. We look to government systems to support us and help us fix and rebuild our homes, our security, our lives. What would you do if there was no government system to support you – if it existed, but it was out of your reach?

The Tubbs and Nuns fires decimated Northern California communities in 2017 immediately plunging residents into homelessness, unemployment, and financial devastation. American citizens and documented immigrants had access to state and federal disaster support services that include financial relief, housing services, medical services, and mental health services, among others. Undocumented people in the communities impacted by these fires did not have access to any of these resources because their status forces them to live without these safety nets.

The UndocuFund movement began in 2017 in Sonoma County, California, when a small group of organizations took action and began building a system for raising money and distributing it to undocumented immigrants in an attempt to provide the type of support citizens and documented immigrants receive.

The movement spread to the central coast the same year when 805 UndocuFund implemented the UndocuFund model of raising funds and providing case management and financial relief to help undocumented immigrants affected by disaster rebuild their lives. The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 created the tragedy that led to the implementation of the UndocuFund model throughout the state of California, as immigrant-serving organizations raced to meet a vast need for support.

The first UndocuFund in Sonoma County (UndocuFund) and 805 UndocuFund secured the funds necessary to bring organizations serving and advocating for undocumented people in California together in September 2022. It was at this first meeting in Santa Rosa that this group of dedicated grassroots organizations founded the California UndocuFund Network, combining their individual commitments to service and change into a statewide coalition. The new California UndocuFund Network is uniquely suited to respond to California's ongoing disasters and to work with government agencies to adapt policies and build systems to meet the needs of all Californians – including those who are undocumented. The UndocuFund Network is building the systems to help undocumented people rebuild.



GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION

Grassroots organizations are primarily made up of civilians advocating a cause to spur change at local, national, or international levels.

The United Nations Refugee Agency

Disasters are something that always keep us in fear . . . They affect us in every way. . . During the 2017 Tubbs fire we found everything completely in ashes. There was nothing there. We who struggle to have things, we know the value of those things. There's sentimental value. That chair that cost me hours of labor when I went back to work even though I was sick. . .

For us, the process has been quite difficult because we have daughters who have processed the trauma in different stages . . . And if we are talking about this as an immigrant, it is much more difficult. Because there are immigrants who are alone without family in this country.

Having already gone through a wildfire in 2017, when another fire happens, that fear comes back. It was so difficult in 2019 when we experienced the Kincadee fire. The girls started to feel desperate, Carlos went into shock and depression.

You try to live a normal life, and then COVID hits. It affects how you work, financially, everything. . .

In these situations, you realize the government will not help you. I knew that FEMA was helping a lot of people, but as an undocumented immigrant you think, 'How am I going to go to FEMA if the first thing you hear from people is that FEMA is going to throw you to ICE?'

Then you find an organization like UndocuFund.

- DAYSI CARREÑO
Sonoma County





Attendees of the first-ever California UndocuFund Summit 2022

THE BIRTH OF CALIFORNIA'S UNDOCUFUND NETWORK

During the devastating Tubbs and Nuns fires in 2017, all Sonoma County warnings and alerts, press conferences, and updates were issued in one language – English.

Hundreds of families whose first language was not English, approximately 25% of County residents, escaped to the Sonoma coast, fleeing the firestorm, without any information about evacuations or resources. In addition to challenging language barriers, undocumented people impacted by this disaster had no access to financial relief or other support services.

In response to this crisis, three grassroots organizations that are trusted by the undocumented community – Graton Day Labor Center, North Bay Organizing Project, and North Bay Jobs with Justice – came together to create UndocuFund, the first of its kind, in Sonoma County.

These organizations recruited volunteers to record undocumented people's experiences and tragic losses, advocate to change Sonoma County's response to future disasters, and provide support services to help undocumented people survive. UndocuFund raised and distributed approximately \$6 million in direct assistance to almost 1,900 families who lost homes, possessions, and earnings in the devastating 2017 wildfires.

Just months later, UndocuFund organizations in Northern California received a call from their immigrant rights colleagues on the Central Coast who had also just been hit by a major wildfire. After receiving guidance from Sonoma County partners, 805 UndocuFund first launched in January 2018 in response to the Thomas Fire and Montecito Mudslides

These events impacted thousands of people who lost their homes and jobs and experienced acute and chronic injuries. Disaster aid from the state and federal governments was a critical part of the recovery process, and yet undocumented residents — who are estimated at 10% of the population in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties — were ineligible for millions of dollars in support that was made available to others.

805 UndocuFund also launched a massive joint effort among three respected grassroots immigrant-serving Central Coast organizations: Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), Central Coastal Alliance United for A Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) and Future Leaders of America (FLA). Together, these organizations, alongside philanthropy partners like the McCune Foundation and the Ventura County Community Foundation, raised and distributed millions of dollars in direct aid, and provided case management services, serving victims of the Thomas, Hill, and Woolsey wildfires; Montecito mudslides; numerous other wildfires that afflict the region each year; and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Again, crisis resulted in action. These immigrant serving organizations launched a grassroots effort using a model of co-governance and a foundation of public and private partnership to raise the funding needed to ensure that California's undocumented people had access to financial relief, housing assistance, food, personal protective equipment, COVID vaccines, medical care, clothing, personal items, and employment assistance.

When COVID hit California in 2020, millions of undocumented people faced job loss, illness, and uncertainty without access to federal disaster relief or critical social safety nets that are available to citizens.

In response, according to a 2021 report by Grantmakers Concerned for Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR), more than 60 grassroots immigrant serving organizations across California distributed more than \$150 million in emergency cash aid provided by individuals, foundations, and one-time state resources to California's undocumented immigrant residents affected by the coronavirus pandemic in dozens of other urban and rural settings. This first-in-the-nation, one-time, statewide public-private partnership mobilized immigrant-serving organizations throughout California to respond to a humanitarian crisis impacting undocumented people when formal frameworks failed. As a result, undocumented Californians had access to financial relief, housing assistance, food, personal protective equipment, COVID vaccines, medical care, clothing, personal items, and unemployment assistance. Similar efforts arose across the country in states such as Texas, Illinois, New York, and Florida.

Moved by the need to understand lessons learned from this unprecedented effort to meet the basic needs of undocumented people during disaster, the desire to improve the lives of millions of undocumented Californians, the call to strengthen disaster response efforts for undocumented people, and the commitment to connecting organizations throughout California's wide and diverse geography that are doing this work, UndocuFund and 805 UndocuFund secured the funds necessary to bring organizations serving and advocating for undocumented Californians together in September 2022. At this first meeting in Santa Rosa, California, this group of dedicated grassroots organizations founded the California UndocuFund Network, combining their individual commitments to service and change into a statewide coalition. The new California UndocuFund Network is uniquely suited to respond to California's ongoing disasters and to work with government agencies to adapt policies and build systems to meet the needs of all Californians – including those who are undocumented.

Disaster is a reoccurring phenomenon in California. Undocumented immigrants will continue to be especially vulnerable to disasters. The UndocuFund Network must continue to function in three specific ways to respond to the needs of undocumented Californians:

1. Strategic planning efforts will clarify priorities and frameworks for building the Network and, fundraising and advocacy efforts, and ongoing direct service.
2. Fundraising to support the work of the UndocuFund Network is constant. Without the aid of tax-based systems that provide financial relief and other services for citizens, the UndocuFund Network must rely on private donations.
3. Direct service to undocumented people continues. California's wildfires, floods, droughts, and earthquakes continue to create disaster circumstances.
4. Advocacy work that draws attention to the humanity and economic impact of undocumented workers in California's economy will encourage policies that include undocumented immigrants in government-funded safety measures.

TIMELINE OF DISASTERS IN CALIFORNIA



2017

OCTOBER

Creation of UndocuFund in Sonoma County



2018

JANUARY

Creation of UndocuFund 805 in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties in CA's Central Coast

2020

Creation of SLO UndocuSupport in San Luis Obispo County

Creation of UndocuFund Monterey Bay on CA's Central Coast

2017

2018

2019

2020



OCTOBER

Tubbs & Atlas Wildfires

- Napa
- Sonoma
- Yuba



JULY

Holiday Fire

- Santa Barbara



JANUARY-FEBRUARY

Winter Storms

- Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Los Angeles, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Shasta, Sonoma, Tehama, Trinity, Ventura, Yolo



MARCH

COVID-19 Pandemic

- Statewide



DECEMBER

Thomas Fire

- Ventura
- Santa Barbara



NOVEMBER

Hill & Woolsey Wildfires

- Ventura
- Los Angeles



AUGUST

LNU Complex Wildfires

- Statewide



SEPTEMBER

Creek, El Dorado, and Valley Fires

- Fresno
- Madera,
- Mariposa
- San Bernardino
- San Diego



OCTOBER

Kincade, Tick, Saddleridge Wildfires

- Los Angeles
- Sonoma
- All 58 counties affected by high winds



SEPTEMBER

Glass and Zogg Fires

- Napa
- Shasta
- Sonoma

A MOVEMENT TOWARD MUTUAL AID

Since the founding of UndocuFund in Sonoma County in 2017, various UndocuFunds have surfaced across the country and turn to our network for reference during disasters.



2020 on...

Several UndocuFunds pop up through the pandemic across California to provide relief to undocumented individuals and families.



Anabella Bastida, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles

2021 ————— **2022** ————— **2023**

COVID-19 PANDEMIC



JANUARY
Winter Storms

- Monterey
- San Luis Obispo



JULY
Drought

- Inyo, Marin, Mono, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz



OCTOBER
Drought

- Statewide



OCTOBER
Storms

- Amador, Butte, Contra Costa, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, Placer, Plumas, San Francisco, Solano, Sonoma, and Trinity



DECEMBER
Winter Storms

- Alameda, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Humboldt, Lake, Los Angeles, Marin, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Placer, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Sierra, Trinity, and Yuba



JANUARY
Colorado Fire
• Monterey



JULY
Alisal and Colorado Fire
• Santa Barbara



AUGUST
Route Fire
• Los Angeles



SEPTEMBER
Tropical Storm Kay
• Imperial, Inyo, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino



**DECEMBER 2022-
JANUARY 2023**
Severe winter storms

- Statewide



FEBRUARY-MARCH
Severe winter storms

- Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Del Norte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Lake, Los Angeles, Madera, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sierra, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yuba

The 2022 California UndocuFund Summit

The first California UndocuFund Summit was held in Santa Rosa in September 2022. The location was chosen to honor the birthplace of the movement and UndocuFund for Disaster Relief in Sonoma County (UndocuFund).



Maria Melo (805 UndocuFund), Beatrice Camacho (UndocuFund), Suguey Hernandez (Xareni Consulting)

The 2022 California UndocuFund Summit convened organizations providing disaster relief for undocumented people for the very first time. 805 UndocuFund, UndocuFund, and funding partner The Latino Community Foundation organized the summit, with additional financial support from The Fund for Santa Barbara, The McCune Foundation, and The California Community Foundation.

The goal of the summit was to learn from the efforts that had been implemented to date, establish the Network, and build systems to enhance future service delivery.

Summit objectives included:

1. Provide opportunities for Network members to meet in person for the first time and build connections
2. Record the lessons learned during the coronavirus pandemic
3. Explore strategic next steps to enhance fundraising and service delivery
4. Build a system for advocacy in pursuit of policies that reduce the vulnerability of undocumented individuals and families in disaster
5. Initiate strategic planning efforts
6. Provide opportunities for Network staff members who were on the front line of the coronavirus disaster to heal from the trauma of that experience

Methods

The California UndocuFund Summit offered a unique opportunity to collect and analyze data about the impact of disasters on undocumented people, the needs of this specific service population, the services organizations provide, the systems they need to provide support efficiently, mechanisms for strengthening the Network, and resources required to continue to meet the needs of undocumented people facing disaster.

Summit organizers engaged Dr. Michael Méndez, Assistant Professor of Environmental Planning and Policy at the University of California, Irvine, an Andrew Carnegie Fellow, and a Visiting Scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) to provide these services. He won Cal Poly Pomona's 2023 William R. and June Dale Scholas Prize for urban planning excellence and served as the inaugural James and Mary Pinchot Faculty Fellow in Sustainability Studies and Associate Research Scientist at the Yale School of the Environment. The California UndocuFund Summit survey was conducted by Dr. Michael Méndez with assistance from doctoral students Carlo Chunga Pizarro and Claudia Valencia.

Methods (cont'd)

Dr. Méndez designed a cross-sectional survey tool that gathered qualitative and quantitative data prior to the summit in August 2022, conducted focus groups in breakout sessions with participating organizations during the summit in September 2022, and summarized major themes and comments from the breakout group activities. A total of 33 nonprofit organizations and granting agencies responded to a self-administered questionnaire and participated in the focus groups.

The resulting data addressed the following:

- Type and scope of disaster response services provided for immigrants and undocumented people.
- Undocumented people's demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic classifications
- Nonprofits' strengths and weaknesses
- Nonprofits' successes and challenges related to the field of undocumented immigrant disaster services
- Procedures for building systems for dispensing aid
- Efforts to impact government policies related to providing aid to undocumented people during disasters
- Strategies for achieving positive change and building a statewide coalition



Maria Cadenas, Ventures



Suanne Mendez, The TransLatin@ Coalition



Jeffrey Lambert, Ventura County Community Foundation and
Eva-Vera Burns, Black Alliance for Just Immigration

IMPERATIVE

adjective:

of vital importance, crucial.

noun:

an essential or urgent thing.

Google English Dictionary
provided by Oxford Languages

THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

California's Undocumented Immigrants

Fausto, a Mixteco and Spanish interpretation volunteer for 805 UndocuFund, came to California in search of opportunity. He wanted "a better place to live than in my country of origin and for my children to grow up and have a better future."

Fausto lives with fear and worry because he is undocumented, but his work in California is the key to a new life for his family. The COVID pandemic intensified the difficulty of Fausto's already precarious financial position when he got sick and could not work on the strawberry fields for three months. As an undocumented immigrant, Fausto did not qualify for unemployment benefits or stimulus checks.

Fausto was in crisis when he reached out to 805 UndocuFund and Future Leaders of America, two nonprofit organizations that mobilized to serve the undocumented community in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties throughout the pandemic.

These organizations provided one-time, short-term cash assistance for Fausto to help him feed and house his family for the three months he was sick and out of work. These organizations provided the safety net Fausto needed to help him recover his health and find work to provide for his family. Later, they also created a space for Fausto to help his community.

“

For the 2023 winter storms, I volunteered as a Mixteco/Spanish interpreter and helped 805 UndocuFund interview affected Mixteco farmworkers at the City of Santa Maria Disaster Relief Center (DRC).

Many families lost vehicles or housing due to the storm and didn't have access to personal insurance or FEMA assistance to recover, but they showed up anyway.

They were desperate and many got help from 805 Underfund like me. I was happy to help make that possible.”





Staff and volunteers of 805 UndocuFund inviting community through a distribution intake process.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, California has more immigrants than any other state. California is home to 10.5 million immigrants – 23% of the foreign-born population nationwide. The majority of California's immigrants were born in Latin America (49%) or Asia (39%).

California is home to an estimated 2 million undocumented individuals and approximately 1.1 million undocumented workers. Undocumented workers play a key role in California's economy as they are 6% of California's workforce, filling one in every 16 jobs and accounting for \$3.7 billion dollars in state and local tax revenue.

Many undocumented immigrants live with family members who are citizens. It is likely that 12.3% of California's K-12 school children have an undocumented parent, according to estimates by the Pew Research Center. Additionally, more than 200,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in California, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Undocumented workers face far greater levels of economic insecurity. More than twice as many noncitizen workers (38%) have less than a "living wage", when compared to citizen workers (18%). Living wage is based on geographically specific expenditure data related to a family's likely minimum food, childcare, health care/insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities such as clothing and personal care items. The living wage considers these costs and income and payroll taxes to determine the minimum salary necessary to meet a family's basic needs and maintain self-sufficiency.



COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

Disproportionate Disaster in California

According to the report *Essential Fairness: The Case for Unemployment Benefits for California's Undocumented Immigrant Workers* published by the University of California Merced Community and Labor Center, California is unique in the U.S. for the consistency and severity of risk for major environmental disasters. California faces the highest risk for major environmental disasters, including wildfires and floods.

The California Legislative Analyst's Office lists flooding and storm damage, fires, and earthquakes as California's most common disasters. The number and frequency of disasters in California is increasing. The federal Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) declarations for large wildfires that risk becoming major disasters in California has increased substantially in recent decades, from an average of fewer than five per decade to an average of about ten per year – 100 per decade – since 2000. In addition to floods, fires, and earthquakes, California's residents also cope with threats posed by climate change such as historic heat and drought, which impact the number of jobs available, resulting in displacement and income loss for undocumented workers, according to the 2022 University of California Merced report *Essential Fairness: The Case for Unemployment Benefits for California's Undocumented Immigrant Workers*.

The coronavirus pandemic was a historic disaster that, like the many disasters Californians face every year, disproportionately impacted undocumented immigrants. In the first year of the COVID pandemic, California's unemployed citizen workers were eligible for up to 20 times as much economic aid as unemployed undocumented workers – a difference of \$35,000 to \$1,700. According to a June 2020 policy report published by the University of California Merced Community and Labor Center, 852,065 immigrants in California lost their jobs when COVID-19 first hit in the spring of 2020, including 357,867 undocumented workers.

“[I came to California] to have better job opportunities and support my parents financially. As an immigrant, I struggle to find a job that pays well in order to support my family financially. Disasters have affected us a lot. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, my wife has been unemployed. Because of the recent rain, there is no work for me and it has been difficult for me to find a new job. My main concern is not being able to pay the rent because I am currently unemployed.”

- ISRAEL, VENTURA COUNTY

In the first year of the COVID pandemic, California's unemployed citizen workers were eligible for up to 20 times as much economic aid as unemployed undocumented workers



A Lack of Government Systems

Because undocumented immigrants regularly live in fear and cope with high levels of economic insecurity, they are highly vulnerable when disasters strike. Current policy frameworks fail to protect them. Unlike citizen disaster victims, undocumented people are excluded from federal disaster relief, and long-term state and local disaster policy and budgetary frameworks. Without these economic support systems, undocumented communities experience more severe and longer-lasting economic impacts after each disaster that strikes California. The lack of equitable access to tangible resources that help undocumented immigrants survive and rebuild their lives with dignity after disaster slows the recovery for every Californian.

In 2020, California's undocumented residents' ability to cope during the COVID pandemic was diminished because they had limited access to emergency alerts; suffered massive wage loss without unemployment insurance; and faced food and housing insecurity and increased anti-immigrant sentiment in many regions. Distrust of local institutions and limited access to health care further complicated their lives.

Taking Steps Toward a More Complete Response

In recognition of the severity of the problem, Governor Gavin Newsom California created a first-in-the-nation, one-time, statewide public-private partnership to provide \$125 million in COVID-19 disaster relief assistance to an estimated 150,000 undocumented residents across the state.

California has also passed two bills designed to improve emergency services for immigrants. Assembly Bill 1877, Limón, passed in 2018, requires the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and the governing body of each political subdivision (County Offices of Emergency Management) translate any emergency communication into the most commonly spoken language other than English in the impacted county or counties. California Senate Bill 160, passed in 2019, requires counties to integrate cultural competence into any new emergency plans. Unfortunately, these pieces of legislation have not been widely implemented and currently do not have state budget allocations to fund implementation.

California's undocumented immigrants do not have access to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) resources including:



HOUSING ASSISTANCE



REPAIRS



PURCHASING REPLACEMENT ITEMS



MEDICAL COSTS



FUNERAL COSTS



UNEMPLOYMENT SUBSIDIES



FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES



PROFESSIONAL SERVICES LEGAL/TAX ASSISTANCE



CRISIS COUNSELING



VETERANS AND SOCIAL SECURITY SUPPORT

SECTION 2:
HISTORIC,
UNPRECEDENTED
CALL TO ACTION



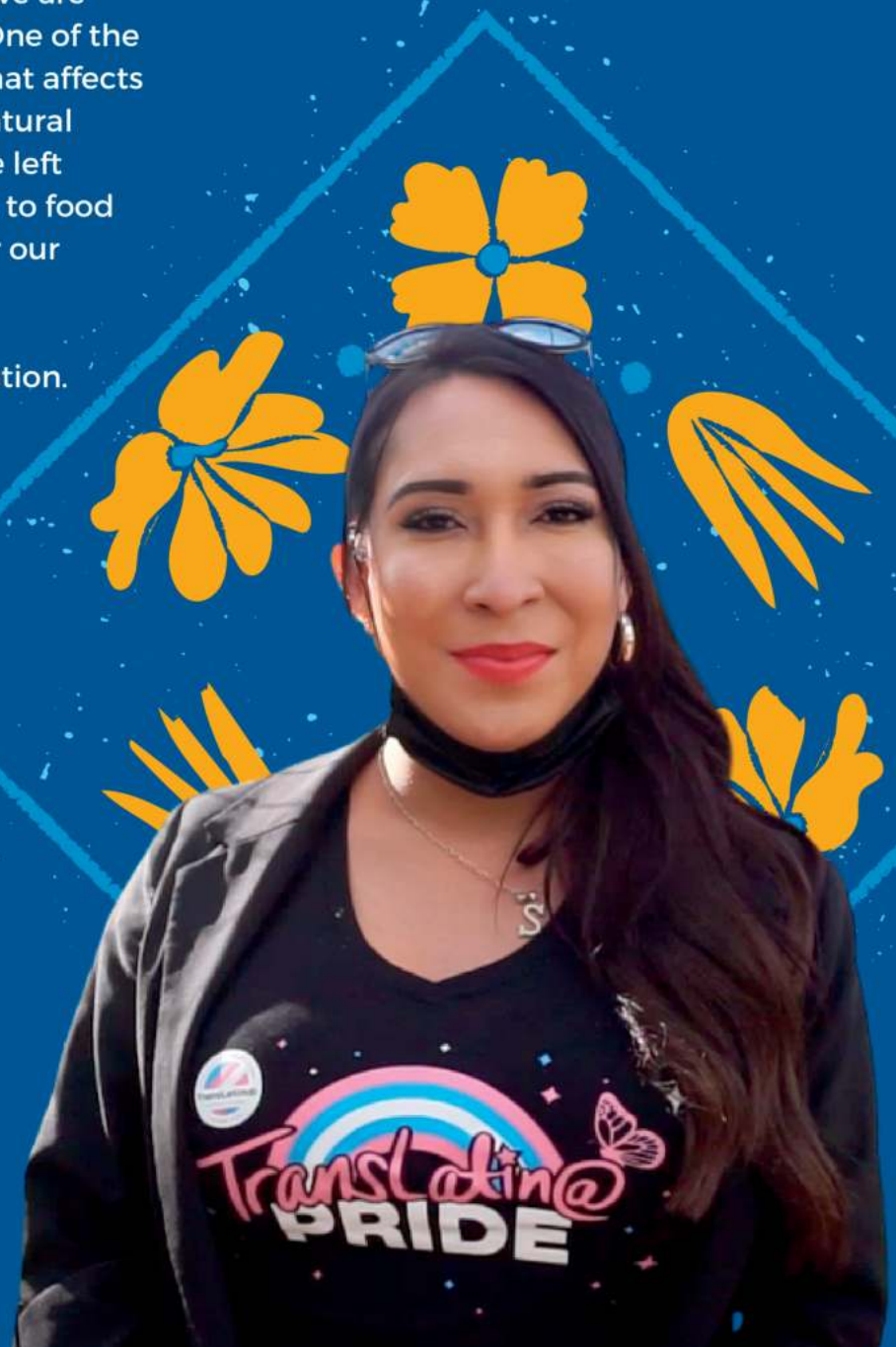
The reason I came to this country is because in my country there is a lot of violence and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. As a trans woman, I was in danger . . . One day in the news there was a call that said in the apartment where I lived they didn't want to see trans women because they would kill us and so I had to immigrate to this country.

Life as an undocumented person is not easy in this country because we are denied many opportunities. One of the biggest causes in California that affects us in Los Angeles are these natural disasters and diseases. We are left homeless and without access to food when these fires happen near our homes. We have to evacuate to be safe . . . the water is scarce, and we suffer dehydration. We do not have documents.

We do not speak English. That makes it difficult for us to have a job and be well economically.

My life changed radically thanks to the TransLatin@ Coalition . . . Today I am a person who has the documents . . . I have a job, my own apartment, and a lifestyle which helps me to help other people who are coming to this country.

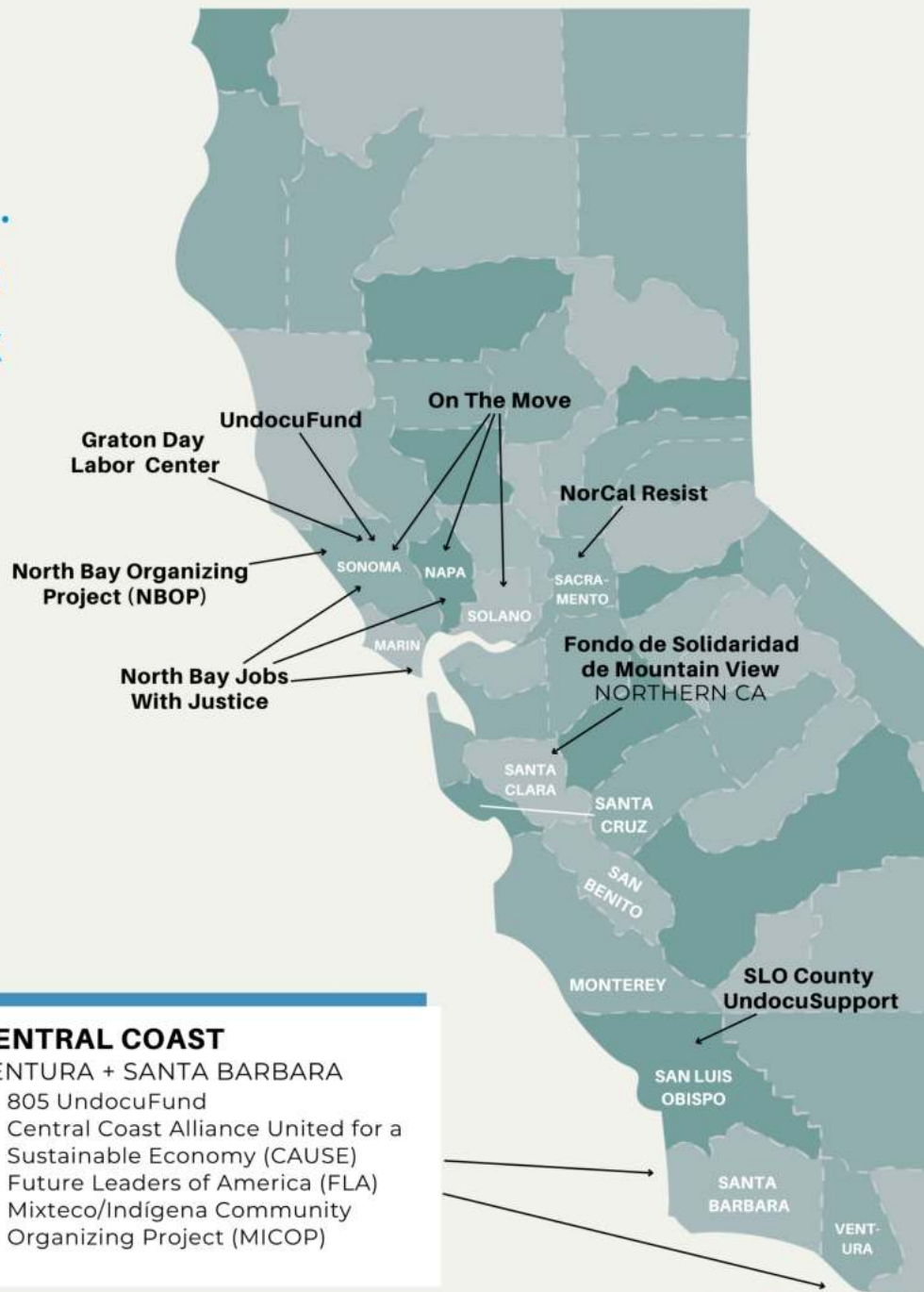
- **SUANNE MENDEZ**
Los Angeles County



Building a Communal Response

“We are all connected. Immigrants serve as a critical building block to our economy. If they are struggling, we will all struggle in the long run.”

- RUDY ESPINOZA,
LOS ANGELES COUNTY
INCLUSIVE ACTION FOR THE CITY



COMMUNITY

A society of people living in the same place, under the same laws and regulations, and who have common rights and privileges.

Black's Law Dictionary, 2nd Edition

While many UndocuFund Network organizations had not provided disaster response services prior to 2020, they responded to the needs of immigrant communities because they had trusted relationships with undocumented people and experience providing services for local immigrant communities.

This colossal effort to respond to a humanitarian crisis affecting some of California's most impoverished people by simultaneously raising funds, providing direct services to undocumented people, and building a Network of providers to ensure that services were available statewide was extraordinary.

The geographical scope of the effort included:

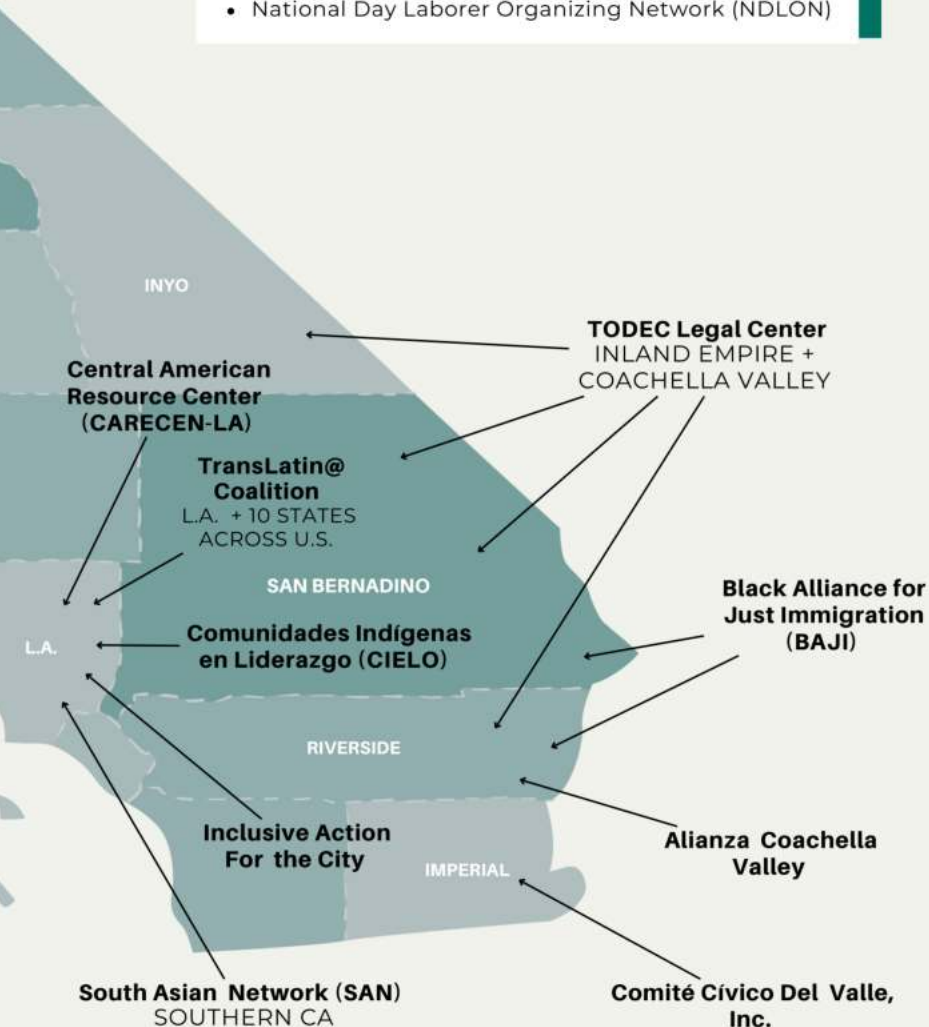
- 28% of organizations in the Network serve Southern California
- 25% serve the Central Coast Counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Monterey
- 22% serve Northern California, including San Francisco, Napa, Sonoma, and Marin Counties
- 16% provide statewide services
- 6% serve the Inland Empire
- 3% serve the Central Valley

STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS

- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of L.A (CHIRLA)
- California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)
- Immigrants Rising
- Visión y Compromiso
- Alliance for a Better Community

NATIONWIDE ORGANIZATIONS

- National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)



MUTUAL AID

Mutual aid is a voluntary exchange of services and resources between members of society for mutual benefit. In this way, people are able to build new social relationships, give what they can and receive what they need. In the face of challenges such as economic crises, pandemics, and natural disasters, mutual aid is increasingly needed to fill current gaps in society and to meet people's needs, such as providing food, medical care, and supplies.

Building Access

The California UndocuFund Summit Pre-survey captured data about the member organizations' efforts from 2017 to 2022.

The survey results indicate that the Network was able to provide an extraordinary service during this period, including:

- The California UndocuFund Network provided services for nearly 60,000 people.
- They served people of all ages including children, adults, and the elderly (65+).
- They distributed \$113,969,464.95 in direct financial aid.
- They provided a wealth of services including direct financial relief, housing and food assistance, medical services, legal services, and translation services

The Network consists of organizations that work closely with immigrant communities and have the capacity to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services that made it easier for undocumented people to access the support systems they needed.

Amount of people assisted by UndocuFund Summit attendees when COVID-19 hit

TOTAL AMOUNT



Nearly 60,000 households

AGES



Under 18 (children)

College students

Young adults

All ages and elderly (65+)

MAIN GROUPS SERVED



Food vendors

Agricultural workers

Elder care workers

Domestic workers

Landscaping

House cleaning

Childcare workers

Mix status families

DACA recipients

Unemployed individuals

Construction workers

Food processors

Retired individuals

Hospitality workers

Majority all/most undocumented or no citizenship status

Cash mutual aid distributed when COVID-19 hit

More than \$113,969,464.95 distributed by UndocuFund Summit attendees with non-public funds between 2017-2022.



Anabella Bastida, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles

Types of mutual aid provided by UndocuFund Summit attendees



“ From our inception in 1990, South Asian Network (SAN) has been serving undocumented immigrants . . . SAN has sought from the outset to embrace the diversity of the South Asian community as a strength rather than a liability . . . South Asians belong to a large and rapidly growing immigrant community in the United States . . . California has the largest South Asian population of any state.

[Our] work is important to the [South Asian immigrant] community because there is no other organization that is providing culturally and linguistically specific services to the community. We translate all our materials in-language and work with the community to solve issues . . . SAN has over a 30-year history of addressing the needs of the South Asian American community and has deep connections, trust, and in-roads in the Southern California Asian American community.

We look forward to engaging more actively with the UndocuFund Network. We have made great connections with member organizations and are learning about best practices and how we could work together to solve issues.

- **HINA AHMAD**
Southern California
South Asian Network



Building Systems

"The stronger we build our networks of mutual aid now, the more prepared we will be to help each other survive those disasters and transform our ways of living together toward liberation."

**-DEAN SPADE,
MUTUAL AID: Building Solidarity
Through This Crisis (And The Next)**

The California UndocuFund Summit pre-survey also highlighted several notable successes. The people and organizations of the California UndocuFund Network created a disaster relief and response model that is scalable and can be adapted to the variety of disasters that impact Californians. Because the Network is statewide, when one county or area is in crisis, other members of the Network that are operating in safety can provide administrative services and volunteer recruitment. In addition, Network organizations successfully fundraised almost \$114 million to meet the needs of undocumented people during the pandemic.

The UndocuFund model features disaster response clinics held at community and member organization facilities that link undocumented people with services such as CalFresh, vaccinations, food distribution, immigration services, bail bonds, mental health services, medical services, rental assistance, and financial relief. These clinics offer client intake, case management, and follow-up services to ensure that service delivery and fund distribution is data-driven, transparent, culturally competent, and provided with full financial accountability, while still maintaining the undocumented person's privacy.

To ensure proper data intake, management, and integrity, member organizations hired temporary staff. Member organizations also developed partnerships with local banks to make it possible for undocumented people to have access to free banking services without proof of legal status. Because the model was being designed and put into practice simultaneously, there was some trial and error, especially in the first year of the pandemic.

Perhaps the UndocuFund model's greatest strength is its ability to leverage the existing resources of member organizations. Many undocumented immigrants fear government agencies and any organization they believe might report them to authorities. In addition to the fear of deportation, many undocumented people fear that any indication that they need public support will prevent them from accessing a legal path to residency. In deciding whether to grant some applicants a green card or a visa, an immigration officer must decide whether that person is likely to become dependent on certain government benefits in the future, which would make them a "public charge" according to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. The Network organizations all have a history of working in service to undocumented people. They understand the needs of the undocumented community and already had their trust, which alleviated these fears.

Because Network organizations had been working with immigrant communities prior to the onset of the COVID pandemic, they also had significant language capacity including bilingual or multilingual interpreters and translators and service providers, as well as the ability to provide materials in a variety of languages, and train staff to communicate with clients in native languages. Language resources and an intake process that made it possible to build a client database allowed organizations to conduct more thorough outreach and follow-up services for disaster victims via text, phone, and personal visits when needed.

Language services also helped Network organizations to more accurately document their clients' stories and share those stories with donors and government agencies. These advocacy efforts were further enhanced by Network organizations' existing capacity to advocate for policy improvements for undocumented immigrants. By capturing their stories and training undocumented immigrants to tell their stories, the Network has successfully amplified the voices of the immigrant community.

Individual organizations also expanded their capacity during the pandemic, when they drafted strategic plans, secured funds to hire new staff members, created executive councils to guide and prioritize programming, expanded their volunteer support, hired full-time staff for the first time, and expanded services and staffing to incorporate qualified case workers and social services.



Anabella Bastida, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles

Building Solutions

The 2022 California UndocuFund Summit survey and focus groups highlighted specific challenges that prevented Network organizations from reaching their full potential. In this era when the Network is just getting started, attending to these opportunities for improvement will significantly enhance overall success.

Too frequently, Network organizations had too few dollars, food boxes, case workers, vaccinations, mental health services, and other resources to meet the needs of undocumented people who lined up at their disaster clinics in need of help.

The most significant challenge the Network faced during the pandemic and continues to face is the need for sustained, reliable funding streams that will support the work and pay the wages of the people who do the work.

When funding is tied to specific disasters, operations must shut down between disaster events, resulting in staff layoffs, volunteer attrition, and a loss of institutional knowledge about effective systems for providing efficient and effective relief.

The Network also needs to enhance its ability to serve marginalized groups within the immigrant community. Member organizations continue to need and advocate for the provision of emergency-related information in a variety of languages including indigenous languages, and West and East African languages.

Additionally, some undocumented people living in rural communities have limited access to WIFI, electronic devices, and the Internet, resulting in a need for informational services provided via other means, such as radio.

Transportation limitations, such as lack of access to a vehicle or fear of driving on freeways, also prevent undocumented people, especially those in rural communities, from accessing services.

Finally, the Network acknowledged the need to strengthen mental health resources for undocumented immigrants and the people who serve them. The constant fear associated with their undocumented status compounded by the trauma of a disaster puts an exorbitant amount of pressure on undocumented people's mental health. In addition, they are subjected to anti-immigrant sentiment that is often heightened during disasters.

Staff members and volunteers who work with undocumented immigrants during disasters face burnout at a high rate. The work is emotionally and physically difficult, as these workers spend very long (more than 12-hour) days working to meet the needs of people in crisis with very limited resources. Too often, the employees of Network organizations must turn people away because they do not have enough money or other resources to meet the needs of every person.

Network organizations are looking to strengthen and expand their coalition, develop strategic planning and fundraising efforts, and advocate for policy changes that will help them to address these challenges.

“Creating communities of wellbeing requires that we address systems that have inequities imbedded in them, including barriers for immigrants, regardless of documentation status. The Central Coast has one of the highest number of undocumented workers in the state, many working in low-wage jobs like agriculture and hospitality.

As we look at an equitable recovery, it is imperative that any solution includes insuring the wellbeing of immigrants.

We leaned on other UndocuFunds to launch our effort in the Central Coast. The Network is just getting started, but we hope to find space to learn, leverage, and collaborate to build not only the resources in times of emergency, but advocacy and policy changes that benefit undocumented workers.”

- MARIA CADENAS
Ventures,
Founder of
UndocuFund
Monterey Bay



SECTION 3:
**MOVING
FORWARD
TOWARD
SYSTEMIC
CHANGE**



I am an immigrant, and as immigrants, we arrive with dreams and determination to work hard and to be able to provide a better future for ourselves and our families . . . I have seen a lot of suffering. COVID has affected the most vulnerable communities the hardest . . . I think about how privileged I am to have a roof over my head and food. So many struggle with simply having food to eat.

I know we can't help everyone, but we can support as many people as we can.

What's important to me is providing these services with dignity and without judgment, and, at the same time, try to empower them . . .

As immigrants, we are all people and are here with the same feelings, aspirations. We have families. I would like the immigrant communities to be seen with humanity, as people, not just as another number in a crisis.

We deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

- ANABELLA BASTIDA
Coalition for Humane
Immigrant Rights of
Los Angeles





Attendees at the first ever California UndocuFund Network Summit.

Building Coalition

The 2022 California UndocuFund Summit survey and focus groups highlighted the Network organizations' desire to keep moving forward, to expand existing systems, and to advocate for new solutions to meet the needs of undocumented people.

Network organizations are committed to building a coalition that will continue to enhance disaster and emergency response for immigrants.

They called out three important next steps in this work:

1. Enhance fundraising efforts to secure funding necessary to support the work.
2. Engage in strategic planning efforts that clarify priorities and guide Network expansion efforts.
3. Build the capacity of the California UndocuFund Network to meet ongoing disaster-related needs and to support member organizations through shared experience, resources, and enhanced collaboration during emergencies.
4. Leverage the Network's understanding of the undocumented experience and the geographic scope of the Network's service area to impact advocacy and policy efforts throughout California.



SUSTAINABILITY

For charitable nonprofits, the phrase “sustainability” is commonly used to describe a nonprofit that is able to sustain itself over the long term, perpetuating its ability to fulfill its mission.

Sustainability in the nonprofit context includes the concepts of financial sustainability, as well as leadership succession planning, adaptability, and strategic planning.

Cornell Law School Legal
Information Institute



Daniela Alvarenga, California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC); Erika Cervantes, Alliance for a Better Community (ABC); Quetzal Sanchez, Future Leaders of America; and Amanda Hernández, On the Move (CURA)

Building Capacity

“Love. Trust. Hope. This is why the Latino Community Foundation partnered with social justice organizers to create the California UndocuFund Network. Love for immigrant communities. Trust in the brilliance of grassroots leaders. Hope that a new future is possible for our families.”

-SAMANTHA SANDOVAL,
Grantmaking and Special Projects
Director at the Latino Community
Foundation

Capacity building efforts for the California UndocuFund Network are focused on creating service delivery structures that already exist in disaster response systems for citizens. The Network is utilizing disaster response best practices as a guide and making specific adaptations to accommodate the realities undocumented immigrants face.

The capacity limitation that causes the most stress among member organizations and is the most significant limitation to their work is funding.

The priorities for UndocuFund Network enhancement include:

1. Expand and enhance the Network’s capacity to effectively prepare for and respond to all four phases of disaster: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
2. Expand and enhance fundraising efforts to secure necessary financial resources.
3. Create a Network leadership team that will develop and implement the Network’s strategic plan, oversee fundraising, and provide administrative support when the Network needs to scale up efforts in response to disaster events.
4. Recruit new member organizations to expand service delivery, disseminate information, and share resources.
5. Build Network organizations’ ability to effectively advocate for policy changes that will improve disaster response mechanism for undocumented people.
6. Continue to build language access systems so that disaster information and services are provided in increasing numbers of immigrant community languages.
7. Build training systems to onboard staff and volunteers quickly when disaster strikes.
8. Expand the provision of mental health services for undocumented people experiencing disaster and those who serve them.



Attendees at the first ever California UndocuFund Summit.

Building Sustainability

“Leadership for me personally is love put into service to others . . . I am convinced that the individual, the institutions, and the community must work in unity of vision and action.

We are all called to contribute to this great process of change. We are all welcome. We can all contribute. We must find and ask for those spaces to grow together and to be able to achieve that transformation.

I felt it openly at the California UndocuFund Summit, and I live it every day at Fondo de Solidaridad de Mountain View, on the frontlines, where I serve.”

- **NADIA MORA,**
Santa Clara County Fondo de
Solidaridad de Mountain View



Strategic planning and fund development efforts focus on development of efficient systems to ensure that this vital work will continue to provide for undocumented people’s basic needs during disasters. The California UndocuFund Network is in the process of developing a strategic plan that will have goals related to identifying new funding partners in specific geographic regions and statewide; expanding the Network’s capacity to provide services that effectively respond to all four phases of disaster: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery; and policy and advocacy work that includes messaging about the Network’s efforts and the people member organizations serve.

Fundraising objectives include building diverse funding sources that include institutional giving, individual donors, and major gifts. Network organizations are exploring mechanisms for sharing resources and expertise to implement effective annual campaigns and build fundraising capacity.

Member organizations are also exploring strategies related to identifying new fundraising partners that will consider support for a specific geographic region or the entire Network. By leveraging the scope of the full Network’s efforts, member organizations are working with institutional donors to position their investment to serve more people throughout California.



Attendees at the first ever California UndocuFund Summit.

Building Change

The solution does not lie in building two separate systems – one for citizens and documented immigrants and one for undocumented people. This division calls for the unnecessary financial burden of paying for components of the disaster response and mitigation system twice.

Consequently, the California UndocuFund Network recognizes the value of advocacy and policy change work that results in the integration of disaster-related communication and service delivery systems whenever possible. The Network will focus on developing short and long-term goals for policy change in the area of culturally competent disaster preparedness and response, language services, communication methods, and unemployment benefits.

“Disaster recovery does not begin for anyone until it begins for everyone.”

**- CALIFORNIA UNDOCUFUND
NETWORK FOUNDING DOCUMENTS**

Network organizations with a background and interest in policy work will support the effort at local, regional, and statewide levels and will look to partner with government agencies such as city councils, county board of supervisors, and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services when appropriate.

Advocacy efforts will magnify the voices of undocumented people by sharing stories of undocumented individuals and families who are coping with disaster.



Building Together

805 UndocuFund and UndocuFund would like to thank their funding partners who made the 2022 California UndocuFund Summit and the publishing of this report possible.

The Latino Community Foundation was instrumental in providing seed funding to make the Summit possible. Additional funding from the Fund for Santa Barbara, The McCune Foundation, and The California Community Foundation allowed for the inclusion of organizations throughout the state and helped the California UndocuFund Network to capture and disseminate the story of its efforts in this report.

We are grateful for your trust, investment, and partnership. We thank you for joining us at the beginning.

The UndocuFund Network cannot continue its vitally important work without the support of our friends and neighbors.

If you would like to learn more, make a financial contribution, or volunteer at a member organization, please reach out.

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