

Charter for Change

A product of The Somali Youth Summit, 2012

Oslo, Norway

Preamble

Together as a group constituted of 2 youth representatives from each of the Nordic countries at the Nordic Somali Youth Summit we brainstormed for 3 1/2 hours to create a draft for a charter for Change.

In this charter we identify key issues that need to be resolved to create a positive change in the situation of the Nordic Somali community.

Although many of the points raised in the charter benefit several areas of society, we have, for practical reasons, grouped them into five main categories. These are: Education, Employment, Resources, Government Engagement and Advocacy and Organizing.

Stake Holders

This charter has a dual benefit. It is meant to benefit Somalis living in the Nordic countries, being an integral part of each Nordic countries population, and it addresses the issues mentioned in the charter will further well-functioning, inclusive societies that bring out the best from all of its citizens.

Here are identified stakeholders and we believe everybody has an obligation to participate in the process.

Education: School board, Kommune municipalities, parents, youth.

Employment: Ombudsman, private sector, employers unions, trade unions, job centers, recruitment companies

Resources: European union, youth councils, national youth council, NGOs, schools, local government, regional governments, representatives

Government engagement:

Politicians, city council, mayors. Somali community: can campaign for a representative, become politician and participate in democratic processes by voting. Religious leaders also have a leading role to play.

Advocacy and Organizing:

All of us / voice of the community, leadership training programs, study-organizations and ourselves.

In the same way that the issues raised in this charter will provide a mutual benefit, they require a mutual obligation by all the stakeholders mentioned as well as every individual in the Nordic Somali community.

Advocacy and Organizing

Concerning the point of advocacy and community organizing, we feel as though there exists opportunities to improve current practices. The following are suggestions to better achieve this aim:

- We believe that investment in research to capture the desires of Nordic Somali youth to determine the true desires of Somali Youth is worthwhile. This is to be done on an ongoing basis.
- We acknowledge that networks are important to success in many different realms and this is the same for Somali youth throughout the Nordic counties. By establishing a stronger network among Somalis in Nordic countries we can better mobilize around current issues, organize events, create a universal platform to share among Somalis and act united on issues that exist.
- We acknowledge that cooperation is better than competition. For example, we submit that ten Somali organizations working independent of each other, are less efficient and capable as one organization of equal size to the ten independent organizations. We desire a united Nordic 'umbrella' organization to encourage cooperation among all Nordic Somalis. This will empower the community because it would offer a united front against bad media coverage, untrue perceptions of the Somali culture, current issues within the community, and future issues to come.
- To this point of media coverage of the Somali culture, it must be mentioned that we perceive the media only acknowledges reports of negative acts by Somalis and not positive acts by Somalis. This conveys a general misperception of the Somali culture that is to the detriment of Nordic Somalis. We demand a change in this.

Education

Concerning the point of education, we feel as though there exist opportunities by practice of education of both Somalis and others through the Nordic nations. The following are suggestions to better achieve this aim:

- Courses and training aimed to improve leadership roles and capacity within the Somali community with the aim to be examples for the youth within the communities.
- Engage highly educated students, both Somali and others, to promote the Somali community and culture as to create awareness. This would encourage an open conversation between all Nordics to invite a more accurate representation and perception of Somalis. We suggest this could be done through events that bring people with Somali backgrounds and others together to converse and learn from one another.
- With the acknowledgement that not all people aspire to the same career paths, we call for more diversity of Somali role models to create confidence in youth exploring career paths. Youth feel pressure from parents and other community leaders to certain career paths and are not encouraged to explore other options unless a role model exists. Display of these examples and role models is very important. We would suggest that forums and conversation be started to educate parents on a more diverse understanding of career paths.
- We identify career counseling to be inefficient. Us youth feel as though this could be improved by offering more culturally aware personnel as staff to better aim the youth to their desires rather than telling them what to specialize in.

We determine that these improvements best stem out of a better relationship between the schools and the home of the youth. We desire a better dialogue between the schools and the home (teachers and parents). For example, often interpreters only interpret the language and miss cultural differences and subtleties. Cultural awareness and sensitivity is detrimental to this process.

Employment

Concerning the point of employment, we feel as though employment of Somalis in the Nordic countries is something that can be approved. We identify that cultural discrimination based on practices and appearance often lead to lesser opportunities to Somali youth throughout the Nordic nations.

To do so, we suggest that services to start businesses are to be provided in one central location (per local community) that is accessible to those in need and the services provided are specific to Somali people. To this end, the staff that provides the services needs to be culturally competent to the clients which may demand that the staff be Somali. This central location will not only provide the desired service but will also create a learning and an inspirational environment with successful role models present.

Such an environment will provide services that give increase access to employment opportunities, apprenticeships, internships, volunteering opportunities and other opportunities of this nature. This could be achieved through job fairs and other events to increase not only employment opportunities but also education of obtaining employment and networking opportunities.

Government Engagement

Concerning the point of government engagement, we feel as though there exists opportunities to improve current practices.

There exists a need for an increase in government responsibility and involvement in this process. We identify a lack of awareness of the challenges to the Nordic Somali communities on the part of their respective governments. We believe that governments play a very important role in this cause and for that reason, can have a prominent role in correcting current challenges.

The government can do this by offering capacity to do research and increase success in the realms of education, employment, and other resources.

Our call to action to the governments located in the Nordic countries is to reach out further and become more familiar with the Somali community and understand and respect our right to be regarded equally as the citizens that we are of our respective countries. We are assets to our country.

Resources

Concerning the point of community resources, we feel as though there exists opportunities to improve current practices. The following are suggestions to better achieve this aim:

- We submit that a centrally accessible 'Help Center' that aims to improve multiple aspects of Nordic Somali lives would be a great asset to the community. Again, it is important that the staff be culturally competent.
- Acknowledging that parents are integral part of a youth's life, we call for aid to parents in understanding challenges to youth living a multicultural life. Differences often times exist between school and the home and understanding is needed. These centers would also provide needed services for parents raising children and other difficulties that exist. For example, we have identified child care issues that exist that stem from a misunderstanding between Somali parents and local child care authorities. We believe that increased education for both sides would help address this problem. It is important that both schools and parents be involved in this process. One of the primary benefits of such a place is not only a location for service but also a network and affiliation with others that will give support to those in need.
- Acknowledging the same benefit of network support can aid in the life of a youth, a youth center would address issues in the life of a youth such as concerns for employment and educational help. Another benefit to this center is that the youth will be surrounded by successful role models that are willing to help and guide youth. This will provide motivation to the youth to succeed. This center would be built off a mantra of "For the youth by the youth."