

Civil Society & Reconciliation Programs

Somali Family Services (SFS) believes in the critical role civil society plays in Somalia's economic and political development. Civil society organizations (CSOs) build peace and provide vital services to the population. They also empower citizens to participate in the rebuilding and governing of their country. To advance civil society's ability to play its role as a key pillar of democracy, SFS works to support, strengthen and improve local CSOs in a variety of ways.

- In 2007, SFS established the Puntland Library & Resource Center, which serves as a platform for CSOs' work, providing them with a safe space to discuss and collaborate on sometimes-sensitive topics. It is also a venue at which they can hold meetings, forums and workshops with each other, government officials and members of the community.
- SFS hosts capacity-building workshops for other CSOs. These workshops offer CSO staff members the opportunity to improve their skills in areas such as advocacy, conflict resolution and gender sensitivity. The workshops enhance CSOs' abilities to provide social and other critical services to Puntlanders.
- Throughout Puntland, SFS holds Neighborhood Colleges and other discussions between members of government, civil society and constituents in order to build bridges between those groups and encourage peaceful dispute resolution. In the 27 Neighborhood College forums SFS has held in Garowe, Galkayo, Bosasso and Quardo, citizens have heard from their government officials, learned what the officials do and how they serve citizens. Constituents also provide government officials with feedback and requests.
- SFS leads human rights discussions and workshops to encourage respect for human rights and educate human rights defenders (HRDs). In conjunction with the UN Political Office for Somalia, SFS held a workshop on human rights in July, 2011, that brought together representatives from civil society, media, government and traditional leaders. Participants discussed how to better protect human rights in Puntland and what concrete steps should be taken, including the establishment of an Office of Human Rights Defenders.



In all of its programming, SFS strives to build peace and demonstrate non-violent solutions. It seeks to rebuild Puntland into a secure, democratic state where its citizens can thrive. To that end, it works with citizens' main representatives – civil society organizations and the government – trying to build bridges between the two and come up with the best solutions for Puntlanders.