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Somali Family Services
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Executive Summary



Somali Family Services in partnership with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) facilitated a forum for 60 young men and women from different youth organizations in Bosaso, Galkacyo and Garowe to elect five representatives to the Somalia United Nations Country Team (UNCT) Youth Advisory Panel (YAP). Of the five youth that were elected to join the YAP, two came from an IDP and minority group, with the other three representing their respective hometown of Bosaso,

Galkacyo, and Garowe. The purpose of the Youth Advisory Panel will be to promote meaningful dialogue between the Puntland youth representatives and UNCT and therefore help involve the youth in advising the UN to design youth friendly strategies, policies and programs.

Background

The youth comprise 70% of the population in Puntland and yet they are the most affected. This important population has been excluded from participating in the country's development and peace building due to unemployment, inaccessibility to information, low education level, non-involvement in governance and human right issues. A feeling of marginalization among the Puntland youth is responsible for extreme negative outcomes and despair, as reflected in the increase in the number of youth (particularly among young males) engaging in Piracy, khat-chewing, and radical Islam. These barriers have affected the youths and many have gone to join local militia groups, government troops and/or got involved in other illegal activities due to these frustrations as earning decent livelihoods gets increasingly difficult with no education/skills coupled with limited employment opportunities in the region. In addition, youth

especially women in the region have come under great scrutiny due to these barriers with many getting forced into early marriages, widespread FGM and among others.

It is in response to the above needs that Somali Family Services and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) facilitated the establishment of the Youth Advisory Panel.

The objectives of the panel are:

- Increase dialogue, information exchange and knowledge sharing between the UN system and Somali youth, on best practices and lessons learned from youth policies and programmes as well as major opportunities and challenges.
- Increase young people's understanding of the role of the UN, the comparative advantages within the UNCT and the UN Somalia's development and humanitarian priorities.
- Provide a means for young people to discuss issues with the UNCT both to build their understanding of development issues, particularly as they relate to young people and to influence the thinking of the UNCT in their priority setting, strategy and programme development and implementation.

Introduction

Somali Family Services held forums in Bosaso, Galkacyo and Garowe where 60 young men and women, 20 from each region were mobilized to discuss issues affecting the youth, discuss compatibility of the Somali youth charter to the needs of the youth and elect a representative from each region to serve on the youth advisory panel. The selection of the youth followed set criteria.

The youth were very active and more or else came with the same issues affecting youth politically, socially and economically.

The youth cited non- involvement in political and governance issue as a main political hindrance and cited the Puntland constitution as a limiting factor with the cut off age of being a member of parliament as 30 years. They wanted it reduced to 25 years like in Somaliland to allow the involvement of young people. Other political challenges discussed include; low female involvement in politics, lack of political courses in schools, lack of juvenile courts and cultural barrier where only old people are believed to be leaders. Social issues affecting the youth include; clanism, piracy,



access to education and health, drugs and gender-based violence were mentioned.

Economic issues mentioned include lack of resources, unemployment, lack of financial institutions, no career guidance for youth and the youth despising cheap labour and vocational skills.

The youth were very active in coming up with the solutions especially dealing with political and economic issues.

The representations of the young men and women was key, reduce minimum age bracket to be in parliament to 25, civic education, introduction of political courses for example political science in schools and post graduate recruitment in government offices allowing graduates to gain political grounds were cited as part of solutions to the political challenges.

The youth wanted micro-finance institutions established to enable them get loans to start businesses, promote vocational skills, promoting relationship between the youth and business people and creation of youth centers.

The youth then discussed the Somali Youth charter that declares the empowerment of the youth. The young participants accepted the charter to be compatible with their needs and recommendations.



The first election of the Youth Advisory Panel took place in Galkayo. Mohamed Abdiqadiir Ali from Dud, Mudug was elected by his peers to serve as the Galkacyo representative to the YAP, finishing ahead of two young men and a young woman in an open and transparent voting process. In Bosaso, Abdihakim Ahmed Mohammed won a landslide victory against his opponent whereas in Garowe Abdirahman Jama emerged the winner.

All elected representatives will then meet in Garowe for an orientation and introduction to United Nations where UNFPA will take forward the panel and introduce them to Somalia United Nations Country Team (UNCT).

The Youth Advisory Panel are expected to recommend on priorities for the UNCT's strategies and programmes, identifications of strategies and mechanisms to ensure youth friendliness of UN policies and programmes establishment(for example, internships, consultancies, employment and skills development

opportunities),Development of joint advocacy initiatives, and practical guidance on youth participation.

Conclusion



The young people have not been able to have their voices adequately heard as they still lack the necessary skills and platform to be able to contribute meaningfully to political, social and economic issues. With adequate support, guidance and skills, they can provide the foundation for empowerment, development and rebuilding lives and communities. Their participation in decision-making processes is of concern to them in particular where the future of their country and peace

building is at stake can empower them to be agents of positive change in their society.