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**Groundbreaking Minnesota Partnership to Create Change, Build Hope  
in Somalia and at Home**

**Minnesota's Somali Community, American Refugee Committee, City of Minneapolis,  
United Way, and UCare Lead Effort**

***“Neighbors for Nations” to Become International Humanitarian Relief Model***

Minneapolis, Minn. (April 13, 2011)—Minnesota’s Somali community, the American Refugee Committee, the City of Minneapolis, Greater Twin Cities United Way, and UCare are uniting in a first-of-its-kind collaborative effort to bring about change and to build hope in Somalia and here in Minnesota.

The effort—called “Neighbors for Nations”—aims to strengthen the fabric of local communities in the U.S. through uniting and mobilizing around providing desperately needed humanitarian relief in Somalia. The initiative combines the energy and heart of the Somali community, the generosity and creativity of Minnesotans, and the expertise and technical know-how of the American Refugee Committee to address one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

Members of Minnesota’s Somali community challenged the American Refugee Committee to provide relief in Somalia. The American Refugee Committee agreed under the condition that the effort would be done in full partnership. Together they created Neighbors for Nations.

“The Somali people are incredibly entrepreneurial—they work hard here in the U.S. and have been heroic in helping their family members and friends back home in Somalia,” said Daniel Wordsworth, President of the American Refugee Committee. “Neighbors for Nations will build on and support the incredible work the Somali people are already doing in Somalia. They are leading this effort.”

Minnesota is home to the largest Somali community in the U.S.—and Neighbors for Nations is benefitting from unprecedented input from that community. More than 800 Somalis have already met with the team to offer counsel, donate, and volunteer. Town hall meetings took place in mosques, community centers, and shopping malls.

The Somali community is also launching a “1000 Giving \$1000” campaign to raise \$1 million for humanitarian relief in Somalia. Thirty-five members of the Somali community have already stepped forward to contribute to this campaign. They want to challenge others around the country to join the effort, either agreeing to contribute or to raise funds.

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Other Minnesota partners are also playing key roles in this effort. Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis is excited about the opportunities this project offers, adding, “This unprecedented partnership taps the power and potential of the vibrant Somali community in Minneapolis to do good both here and in Somalia. It puts us at the forefront of innovative humanitarian relief efforts.”

The Greater Twin Cities United Way offered a generous contribution to support the development of Minnesota-based initiatives.

And UCare is stepping forward with a matching gift opportunity. “UCare has always been a vital partner with local communities, and so we are pleased to be a part of this powerful collaboration to build a strong and healthy Somali community locally and abroad,” said Nancy Feldman, CEO and President of UCare. “We are contributing a \$50,000 matching grant which will match the next \$50,000 in contributions and, we hope, stimulate even more giving to this worthy humanitarian effort.”

In Minnesota, Neighbors for Nations will engage volunteers in developing campaign concepts, which include awareness campaigns and venture funds to support Somali-owned businesses (dividends from which will support small business development in Somalia).

At the same time, Neighbors for Nations will support life-saving work in Somalia. In June 2010, two ARC senior staff members and two members from the Somali Advisory Council visited Somalia to lay the groundwork for humanitarian relief efforts there. The team witnessed desperate conditions. “We met mothers who told us they didn’t have enough to swallow....children who have never been to school a day in their lives...grandmothers who have spent 20 years moving from place to place looking for a place to live. The conditions are dire,” added Said Sheikh-Abdi, who traveled to Somalia as part of the effort.

Somalia is in the midst of one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. More than 3 million Somalis are in need of emergency assistance, and a drought is impacting every part of Somalia. Crops have failed and food is scarce.

The assessment team traveled to Garoowe, Galkaayo, and Boosaaso, Somalia. They identified sites to begin helping on the ground, and construction for a community center is underway. The center will provide concrete opportunities for young people by providing information on health issues and by building employment skills such as carpentry, mechanics, and community health work. Plans are underway to reach displaced people throughout the country.

“We see ourselves at the American Refugee Committee as a vehicle not only for the Somali diaspora in Minnesota—but also for the wider community—to become engaged. We want everyone who wants to take part in this effort to have a meaningful role,” added Wordsworth. “This is the right time and the right place to come together to create change in Somalia and here in our community.”

A community event will take place on April 13 at Minneapolis City Hall to launch Neighbors for Nations to a group of more than 250 people.

**KEY PARTNERS:**

**About the American Refugee Committee**

American Refugee Committee programs are built from the ground up. We work with people at the most vulnerable points in their lives, when they have lost everything to war or disaster. They let us know what they need most, and we work together to develop ways to help them get it. Our programs are as diverse as the people we serve, but they all work together for the same goal: to help people take back control of their lives. We help nearly 2.5 million people a year through programs around the world. We are based in Minneapolis, MN. To learn more, visit [www.ARCrelief.org](http://www.ARCrelief.org).

**About the Internally Displaced Somali Advisory Council**

The Somali Advisory Council is a group of 11 Somali professionals representing every region of Somalia. They have offered counsel to Neighbors for Nations and connected the initiative with other community members. The Council shares a vision for Somalia as a whole and is committed to a focus on humanitarian needs.

**About the City of Minneapolis**

Minneapolis is a vibrant and welcoming city that encourages learning and innovation and embraces diversity. A mixture of accessible housing, jobs and educational opportunities creates a livable city and stimulates growth. Minneapolis is a valued state resource and a city people enjoy visiting and calling home. The city's future is shaped through thoughtful and responsible leadership in partnership with residents and coordinated with a regional vision. To learn more about the City of Minneapolis, visit [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us).

**About Greater Twin Cities United Way**

Greater Twin Cities United Way creates a better life for us all by focusing on three key areas: Basic Needs, Education and Health. They attack poverty on multiple, interconnected fronts to achieve lasting change. To learn more, visit [www.unitedwaytwincities.org](http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org).

**About UCare**

UCare is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 220,000 members enrolled in state and Medicare programs. UCare partners with health care providers, counties, and community organizations to create and deliver innovative health coverage products. To learn more, visit [www.ucare.org](http://www.ucare.org).

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