

Africa Reconciliation and Development Organization

The mission of the African Reconciliation and Development Organization is to prevent conflict in the African Diasporas through development and education.

Founded in 2014, the African Reconciliation and Development Organization (ARDO) has gained respect from both the Somali community and broader communities through its work on human rights in Minnesota and internationally. We are a conflict resolution organization.



We cannot move forward until we address the past. We are trying to bring Somali community together. It takes concerted effort to bring people together. We have a willingness to start the conversation; then others will join in. ARDO offers hope, reconciliation and healing for Minnesota's Somali youth, to allow them to grow to their full potential.

Kids can't thrive - they feel they are on hold. We see that Somali youth need structure to give them focus. Parents aren't able to give their kids enough attention because they are mostly focused on meeting basic needs. There are many people in our community dealing with psychological stress. So youth lack parent involvement in setting expectations and discipline. Most parents we've interviewed have very little idea of what's going on with their kids. Kids are bombarded with media and made to feel ashamed of their parents, of their culture, of their identity. So yes, youth feel embarrassed by the traditional ways their parents still carry. Youth need role models.

ARDO programs have a self-esteem component that makes them effective programs with youth. We offer debate circles that elevate their leadership, develop

their voice and conversations. It challenges them, and they have an opportunity to challenge each other and our culture. Debate allows youth to speak about their issues. What's more, we listen to them; that's powerful. *As adults, when we listen to kids, it elevates their skills and confidence.*

We also need to address their health and wellbeing. Through partnerships with other community organizations, ARDO also offers a swimming competition and yoga. Recently, we piloted spoken word activities. Many youth have sports role models, and Somali youth are drawn to Latino athletes because of our mutual love of soccer. Youth are very open to new ideas so we want to get youth exposed to different ideas, people, and activities.



We've learned that the best way to reach Somali youth is to cultivate dialog - across cultures, across generations.

We are in a society knows very little about us. Reconciling our differences is not easy – and people can resist it if they see it as an attempt to take leadership away from their community leaders. Reconciliation dialog between youth would encourage adults in our community to work together more to address the many issues we face, including extremism. We need to be in dialog that is ongoing – it takes a long time. Understanding is not easy, but it is necessary.