

# BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

## A MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL PILOT PROGRAM

February 2015

### FACT SHEET

**OVERVIEW:** Minnesota is home to the largest number of Somali immigrants in the United States. The largest concentration is located in Hennepin County. Beginning in 2007, more than 20 Somali-Americans left Minnesota in order to train and fight for al Shabaab in Somalia. This included 26-year-old Shirwa Ahmed, a Somali-born American citizen, who on October 29, 2008, became the first documented American suicide bomber. More than 20 young Somalis have been convicted in U.S. District Court in Minnesota on terrorism-related charges. Beginning in 2013, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) began recruiting Somali Minnesotans to travel overseas to fight with the terrorist organization. A number of Somali-Minnesotan men and women have traveled, attempted to travel, or taken steps in preparation to travel to join ISIL. The Somali Minnesotan community wants this cycle of recruitment to stop.

**BACKGROUND:** The FBI, DHS, Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, St. Paul Police Department and Minneapolis Police Department each have long histories of effective community outreach and have built solid foundations of trust on which to build the Pilot Program. Local law enforcement agencies in Minnesota now have sworn Somali law enforcement officers. They participate in Community Advisory Committee meetings, develop youth programming and have made great strides in building community partnerships.

**STRATEGY:** The Minneapolis-St. Paul pilot program, "Building Community Resilience" was developed in partnership with the Somali Minnesotan community. It seeks to address the community-identified root causes of radicalization through increased opportunities and support. Beginning in 2014, law enforcement and the U.S. Attorney's office held meetings with a broad range of community members, including: religious leaders, youth leaders, women, mothers, mental health professionals, elders, victims of recruitment and others. The purpose of these meetings was to listen to the concerns of the Somali community and discuss potential solutions to the root causes of radicalization. Meetings were also held with local partners, including the Minneapolis and St. Paul school systems, non-government and nonprofit organizations, interfaith organizations and with state, county and local governments. Together, these stakeholders crafted an action plan that directly responds to the identified root causes and community needs. In addition, they partnered with community leaders to develop two intervention models that allow the community to respond to radicalization at its earliest stages. Simply put, this is a community-led effort to break the cycle of terrorist recruiting.

**NEXT STEPS:** The pilot program is now engaged in identifying partners and sources of funding to implement the action plan. Terror recruiting in Minnesota is a pressing problem and we must act decisively to break the cycle. We have already received commitments to implement our action plan. These include corporate and foundation funders, organizations to lead mentorship programs, job trainers and placement officers and schools and mental-health professionals to intervene at the earliest stages of radicalization. Additional partners and federal funding are essential to implement this plan.

# DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTION PLAN

MEETINGS WITH COMMUNITY	
RELIGIOUS LEADERS	ATTORNEYS
ELDERS	LAW ENFORCEMENT
WOMEN	YOUTH
MOTHERS	SOCIAL WORKERS
BUSINESS LEADERS	VICTIMS OF RECRUITING



*COMMUNITY IDENTIFIED ROOT CAUSES*

COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED ROOT CAUSES	
DISAFFECTED YOUTH	IDENTITY CRISIS
LACK OF CONNECTION TO RELIGIOUS LEADERS	LACK OF TIES TO BROADER MINNESOTA COMMUNITY
DIFFICULTIES IN SCHOOL	GENERATIONAL DIVIDE
LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY	LACK OF SOCIAL OPPORTUNITY



*ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES*

BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE ACTION PLAN	
INCREASE YOUTH PROGRAMMING	SCHOOL & COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTION MODELS
MENTORING	INCREASE YOUTH/IMAM ENGAGEMENT
HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS	INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
ADDITIONAL DIVERSE LAW ENFORCEMENT	SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS
ENHANCED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	PARTNERSHIPS WITH TSA & CBP