



ISSUE 7

# SOMALI GRADUATE JOURNAL 2016/17

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CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Graduate profiles  
Success stories  
Community perspectives



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*Somali Graduate Journal*

“Among our graduates are **doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, scientists, IT professionals, teachers and social workers.**”

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## ABDIRIZAK ABDI EDITOR

“

Despite the challenges of receiving graduate profiles in a timely fashion, the journal continues to be well supported by the Somali community in New Zealand. I am also encouraged by the many messages of support from Somalis around the globe for the journal and what it represents. Education is such a powerful rallying mechanism for community celebration and solidarity. I also continue to admire the Somali mothers and fathers who encourage their children to value education and provide moral and financial support for them during their years of study. A classic example is when I asked a mother in a conversation why her daughter wasn't helping her with the housework, her response was, "I just want her to focus on her studies and not worry about the housework" This contradicts the stereotype out there that Somali girls are always expected to help with the domestic chores while there is no such expectation of the boys. In the stories told by the graduates in this journal and in the previous publications, it is evident the key role the parents play in the education successes of the graduates.

Finally the Somali graduates are to be congratulated on their achievements as the continuation of this publication is testimony to their commitment to education. Over the years I have met many young graduates – some of them in this publication – who are determined to make something of themselves. It is not always easy for some of them as having a degree doesn't translate into a job straightaway - something they complain about, but they know that it definitely increases their chances of getting one eventually.

”

Welcome to this seventh edition of the Somali Graduate Journal. Like the previous six publications this one is full of inspiring stories from our Somali graduates around New Zealand. The graduates' stories are unique and varied reflecting the wide diversity of studies the graduates have undertaken. There are couple of special features in this edition that make it extra special. For example I find the story of Saynab Muse (see Page 42) extremely uplifting. Saynab is deaf but that has not stopped her pursuing her dream and passion as she is on her way to achieve a tertiary degree in photography. Or the story of Liban Ahmed who, at the age of 16, could not read or write and is now a graduate! Samira's artistic talent should be admired too – her drawings, influenced by her own identity as a Muslim Somali female, are impressive. All the more reasons I continue to be involved in this community publication.

# AHMED HUSSEIN SOMALI CANADIAN MP AND MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION



I am very proud to see so many Somalis succeeding in education in New Zealand. This journal is testimony to the talent and dedication of the Somalis who have resettled in New Zealand. Congratulations to each and every graduate featured in this seventh publication of the Somali Graduate Journal and those who have appeared in the previous editions.

Following the civil war in our homeland in the 1990s we fled to all corners of the world. There is a sizeable Somali community in every Western country today – some are even second or third generation Somalis. It is therefore an expectation that Somalis, wherever they are, hold on to their roots while at the same time getting involved in their local community and become positive role models for younger generations. We need to be proud of our heritage and at the same time aim to be productive and contributing citizens of our adopted countries.

Somalis are known to be resilient people who can bounce back from setbacks. It is in

our DNA not to be held back by past events. If you look around the Somali communities in North America, Europe and Australia, you will find many Somalis succeeding in business, education, sports and of course some are in key leadership roles in local or national politics in their adopted country. There are also those who have gone back home to make a difference in their country of birth. Education is such a powerful agent of change and one can only make a positive difference in their community or country when they take advantage of the educational opportunities on offer.

Finally, I would say to my Somali brothers and sisters in New Zealand – keep up the good work. Your success stories shared in this journal will in no doubt inspire many other Somalis to follow in your footsteps.





# ILHAN OMAR

## MINNESOTA HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE

I am humbled to provide this message expressing my support and admiration of the educational achievements of the Somali community in New Zealand. This journal encapsulates the value our Somali families place on education and the important role our parents play in supporting their children to succeed in their adopted country. I am very proud of you all.

Education is key to human development. It contributes directly to social prosperity as well as our broader goal of improving the quality of people's individual and collective lives. If we, Somalis, are to make a difference for our adopted countries (or country of origin), then we need to embrace education. I am glad to see so many of our Somali youth in New Zealand doing just that.

I am truly amazed at the number of graduates among the small Somali community living in New Zealand. I am particularly impressed with the number of female graduates; many in the prominent fields of law, science and health.

***Keep improving yourself  
and aim even higher. We  
need more educated youth  
to be agents of change in  
our homeland.***



## FIRST SOMALI AMERICAN ELECTED TO THE USA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

I would say to my fellow Somalis featured in the Somali Graduate Journal to not give up on your dreams. You have taken an important step towards making a difference in your life by gaining your hard won tertiary qualification. Keep improving yourself and aim even higher. We need more educated youth to be agents of change in our homeland so that the past mistakes that led our country to collapse are not only corrected but never repeated. We owe it to the next generations.

A special message to our Somali girls; I would say that we need more Somali girls taking up leadership roles. The old cultural mindset of girls being expected to be only a good wife and a good mother is not good enough. You can also be a good leader, doctor, scientist, engineer etcetera. Let your imagination run wild and be who you want to be. You owe it to yourself and society will be better for it. As they say if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.

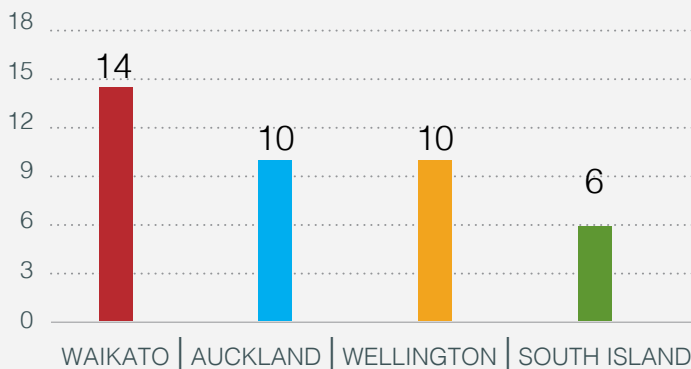




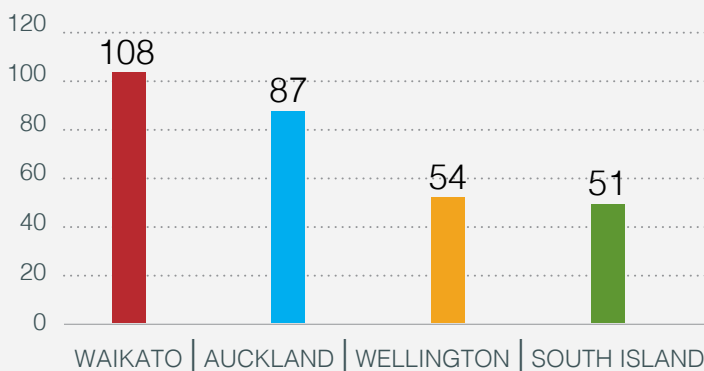
# GRADUATE ANALYSIS

Since the last edition of the journal (2014/15), 40 Somali graduates have graduated from New Zealand Universities and Polytechnics. However as some could not be reached or were unable to send their information in time for this publication. Hence 26 of these graduates are profiled in this seventh edition of the Somali Graduate Journal. The graduate numbers and the regional breakdown is shown in the first chart while the second chart shows the field of study breakdown. Here are the charts of the aggregate numbers, gender and field study breakdowns.

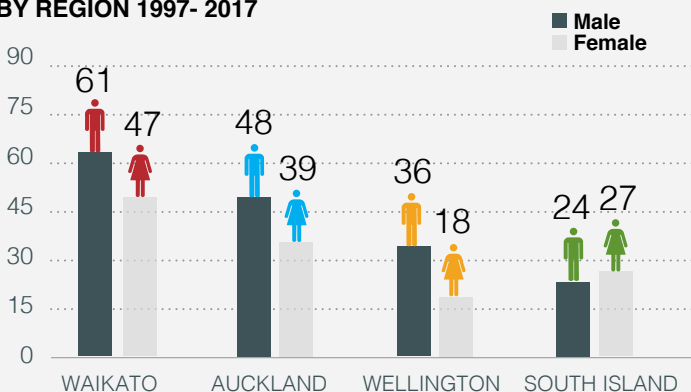
**SOMALI GRADUATE NUMBERS  
BY REGION 2016 - 2017**



**SOMALI GRADUATE NUMBERS  
BY REGION 1997- 2017**

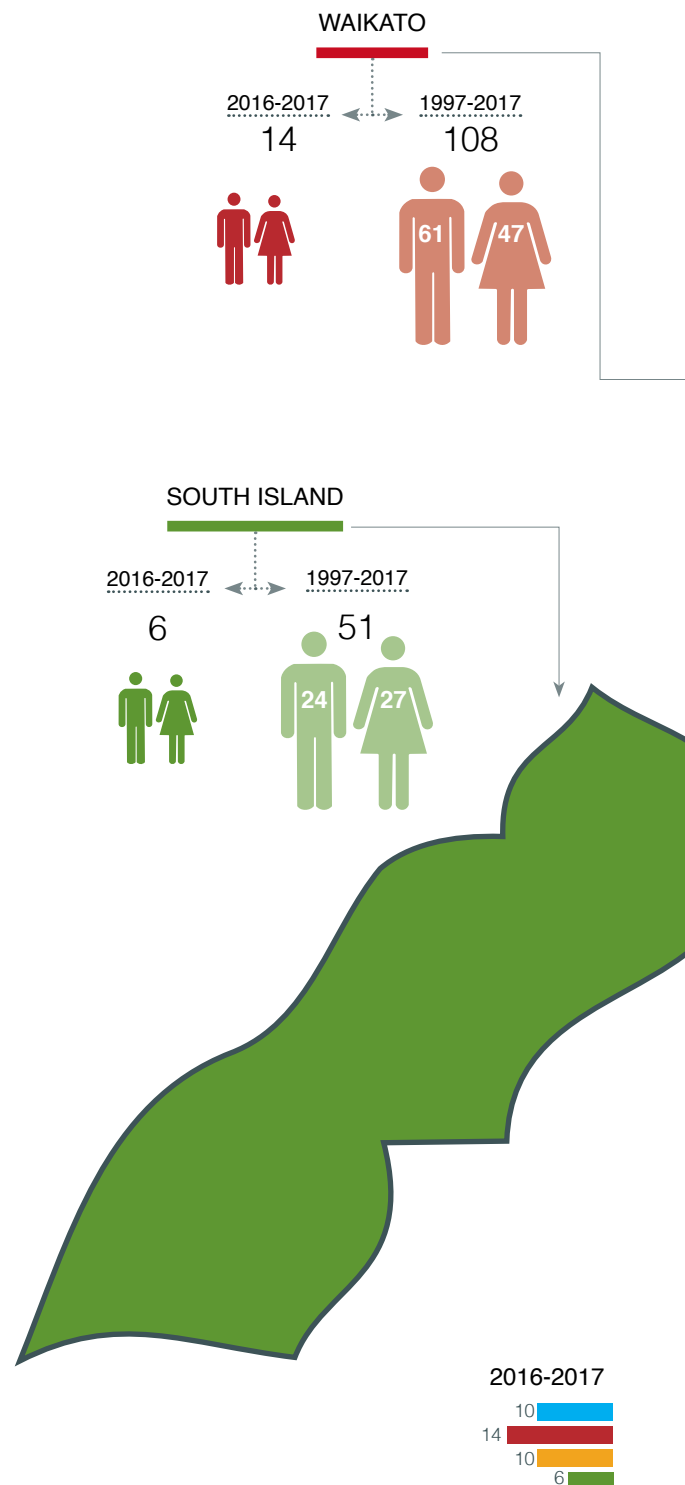


**SOMALI GRADUATE NUMBERS  
BY REGION 1997- 2017**



## SOMALI GRADUATES BY REGION

The graphic below shows the graduate numbers, the aggregate numbers and gender.





# ANALYSIS

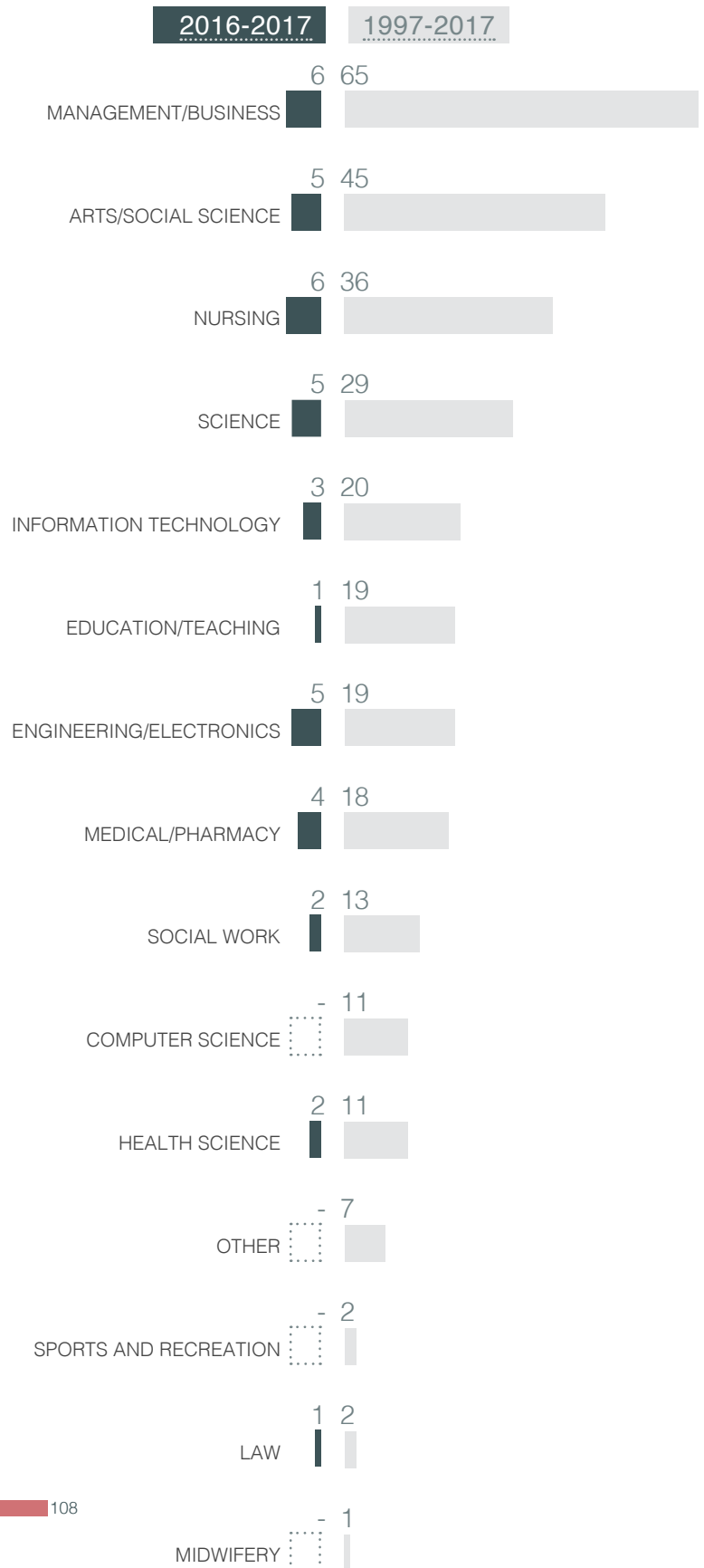
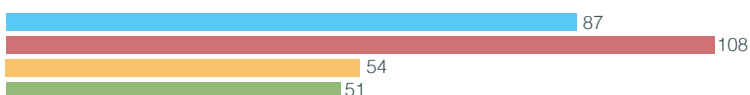
## SOMALI GRADUATES BY FIELD OF STUDY

This chart shows the field of study breakdown.



The **overall** number of graduates **since 1997** stands at **300** to date.

1997-2017



# GRADUATE PROFILES

Nasra Said	11	Sadia Mire	26
Liban Ahmed	12	Mohamed Abdulkadir	28
Ahmed Hassan	13	Ahmed Ibrahim	29
Ayan Said	14	Hassan Shire	30
Ahmeddahir Abdi	16	Liban Mire	31
Saleban Muse	17	Abdizamed Mohamed	32
Amal Gabose	18	Botan Muse Botan	33
Suad Mohamed	20	Hamda Barkhad	34
Fousiya Elmi	21	Hamse Sofe	35
Khadra Ali	22	Asiya M Ali	36
Saara Abdulrahman	23	Sadiq A Ali	36
Aneb Osman	24	Samatar A Ali	37
Leila Omar	25	Abdifah Ibrahim	37

# NASRA SAID

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
Born in New Zealand

**High School**  
Massey High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Health Sciences (BHsc) majoring in occupational therapy

**Tertiary education institution**  
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

**Year of graduation**  
2015

**Place of employment**  
Currently doing post graduate studies in mental health and addiction as well as working as clinical coordinator at Goodwood Park Healthcare Centre.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To our Somali students is to start thinking about your career in high school. Also do some research around the profession you see yourself in and how likely it is to gain employment once completing your qualification.



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

In high school I did well in health, sciences (Biology and chemistry) and statistics. I knew from a young age I wanted to be in the health field. During my time in high school I had done two gateway programmes shadowing different health professionals. This gave me the opportunity to ask questions about career choices in health and about the course programme. Those experiences showed me the reality of different health professions. I decided to study occupational therapy as I had a keen interest in mental health rehabilitation. Throughout my time in university I had a great support system from my family. Without my family I would not be in the position that I am today.



## CHALLENGES

It was hard to adjust to university when I first started, the first semester particularly coming straight out of high school, it was challenging because the timetable was different and expectation was also different from high school to university. I overcame this issue by attending workshops on how to manage and plan my time appropriately, how to write references and to plan and write essays, which helped me out a lot throughout my degree.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

My future plan is to visit Somalia, to give back and to continue on with studying and gaining more work experiences.



# LIBAN AHMED

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2008

**High School**  
Bossaso public secondary school

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Science Majored Logistics and supply management

**Tertiary education institution**  
Massey University

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Pacific Brands (Melbourne DC)



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

On my arrival to New Zealand in 2008, I only had one thing on my mind to pursue tertiary education. One of my biggest dreams was attain a degree, as I know first-hand what it is like to be illiterate. I did not have the opportunity to attend school when I was younger at the age of 16 I could not read or write so it has been a journey to get to this point. I know the value of knowledge and by the will of Allah; it is my plan to take every opportunity to gain knowledge.

I enrolled in a one-year English course at Auckland University of technology on completion. I when on to work a full-time job for the next two years. I enrolled Bachelor of Science Majored Logistics and supply management at Massey University. Logistics is the coordination and management of resources, people and facilities. It is a large, catchall term that can encompass the operations of a single warehouse or the entire fleet of vehicles for a massive multinational company.

I would like to acknowledge all the people that have made it possible for me to achieve my dreams, first and foremost I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents and family without their support and encouragement I could not have make it. I am forever grateful to the values that my mother and grandmother had planted in me, values such as of honest, hard work and helping others. Those values have contributed to my success. I am also grateful to the chance this beautiful country I call home has given me. Long live Aotearoa.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To my flow Somali students my advice is simple you have the chance to make a difference in your life, your family's life and your community. Take the opportunity and pursue your chosen field with passion, consistency and drive. Times will be getting challenging but it will be worth it all in the end.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

To work in the logistics industry for couple of years and gain the necessary experiences that will lead me to be able to set up my own start up business Insha Allah down the truck. An area that I am also very passionate about is community development. At this moment in time I am working on researching management plans that will hopefully one day help communities to be resilient in drought situation when I go back home.



# AHMED HASSAN

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
Born in NZ

**High School**  
Avondale College

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Information and Computer science

**Tertiary education institution**  
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

**Year of graduation**  
2017



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

My name is Ahmed and I have recently completed my bachelor's degree in Computer and Information Science at AUT. The reason for my choice was because I've always been interested in computers and also the field of IT offers a wide variety of specializations. I studied Networking and Security in detail and am in the process of finishing off my CCNA certifications. One piece of advice I can give to Somali students thinking about tertiary education is to set goals and work hard towards them. That was one of the main lessons I learnt in university.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Inshallah in the future I plan to immerse myself in the Networking and Security fields within IT. My plan is to help people using technology one day.



# AYAN HAJI SAID

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
1994

**Name of high school attended**  
Massey High School

**Programme of study**  
Master of Public Health (First class honours)  
Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health  
Bachelor of Health Science in Psychology and Health  
Promotion (Double Major)

**Tertiary education institution**  
School of Public Health & Psychosocial Studies , Auckland  
University of Technology

**Year of graduation**  
2015

**Place of employment**  
Community Child Health & Disability Service , Auckland  
District Health Board also PhD candidate



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

*(Inshallah) I would like to undertake a PhD focusing on policy mechanisms to address the social and structural determinants of health. Long-term I would like to move into global health in health management and policy.*



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

After I graduated high school, I wanted to pursue a higher education. I needed to be persistent and determined to achieve my career aspirations. However, I would not be at this level in my education without my family support and encouragement. The value of education is something that I have understood since a very young age.

My parents made a commitment early in my life to do everything within their power to instill in me a love for learning and understanding the importance of hard work and dedication. Their love and sacrifice over the years, was the reason why I devoted the time and energy necessary to achieve in my studies.

I have always had an interest in the non-clinical field of health and I have a passion for health equity and community health. After completing a Bachelor of Health Science in Psychology and Health Promotion (Double Major). I began a career in health promotion and health education. I knew that a postgraduate education was the best way to gain the knowledge,



skills and experience I needed in order to advance in my career. When I came across the Masters in Public Health, I knew immediately that it was the right course for me. I choose this path to learn about the multiple aspects of public health. The Mater Public Health program gives the tools and hands-on experience to have a strong background in research design and methods.

Professional Interests: I am interested in refugee health, global health, health and international policy, human rights, health equity, women's health, health promotion, Preventative Health, and health literacy.



### HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

A highlight for me was being a recipient of the AUT Summer Research Awards (SAG) 2013/2014: The research focused on social movements and charismatic leadership and women's health in refugee and migrant communities in New Zealand. This was during the summer of my Postgraduate Diploma studies; this was a great opportunity for me to get involve in the research process from the beginning until the end, before starting my own research.



### A WORD OF ADVICE

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure". - Colin Powell

Going to university is one of the most amazing experiences of your life. Be sure to get the best of both worlds and find the healthy balance between the studying and having fun. Use your time wisely and make sure the work you need to do is done before you go out with your friends. Don't forget that the main reason you are in university is to get an education and better yourself, so make that your top priority. Find ways to get involved both on campus and off. Network with fellow students and faculty and join some of the professional organisations; look for volunteer opportunities.



### PUBLICATIONS

Said, A., Conn, C. & Wilson, K. (forthcoming). Preventing Female Genital Mutilation: perspective of the New Zealand Diaspora. Kotuitui

Said, A., & Simunovich, P. (2014). Female Genital Mutilation Challenges in practice and policy within New Zealand. AUT's Public Health Bulletin. Retrieved from [http://www.aut.ac.nz/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/513327/Said-and-Simunovich-final-bulletin-2014.pdf](http://www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/513327/Said-and-Simunovich-final-bulletin-2014.pdf)

Said, A. (2014). Is bullying a problem in the community? A survey of New Zealand Muslims from Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea. Retrieved from <http://www.ummatrust.co.nz/recent-posts/>

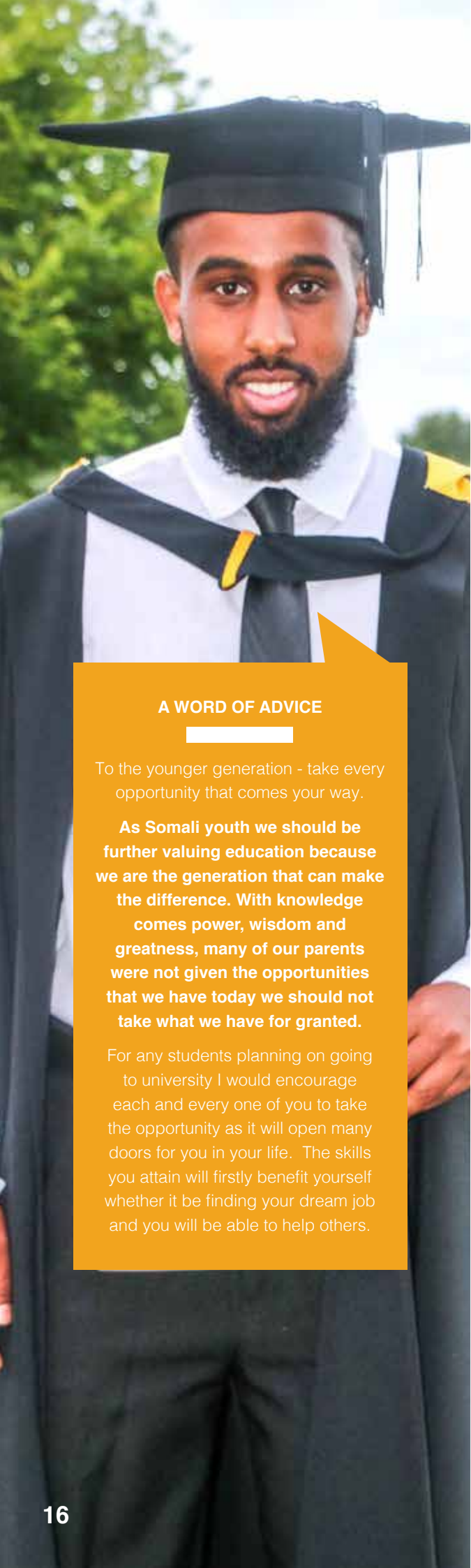
Chhichhia, P., Cranney, F., Moran, K., Said, A., Willcox, S., & Wilson, A. (2013). New Migrants and Refugee Swimming Programme Evaluation Report.

Conference proceedings and oral presentations

Conn, C., Sa'uLilo, L., Said, A., Andajani, S., & Antonczak, L. (2015). Can Auckland refugee and Pacific youth leaders influence decisions through mobile technologies? Australian Council for International Development 5th International Conference: Evidence and practice in an age of inequality, 4-5 June 2015. Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

Conn, C., Andajani, S., Baker, E., Said, A., Sa'uLilo, L., & Elston, D. (2014). Using mobile technology to enhance pacific youth leadership for health. 4th Mobile Creativity and Mobile Innovation Symposium 2014 (MINA, <http://mina.pro/>) 20-21 November, 2014, COLAB, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.

Lee, A., Said, A. & Said, N. (2014). Community-led Projects which Contribute to Refugee Women's Health and Wellbeing. Paper presented at the Centre for Asian and Ethnic Minority Health Research National Symposium, 4 July, Tamaki Campus, School of Population Health, University of Auckland.



# AHMEDDAHIR ABDI

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
1995

**High School**  
Hamilton Boys High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Electronic Engineering with Honours

**Tertiary education institution**  
The University of Waikato

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
LIC Automation

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To the younger generation - take every opportunity that comes your way.

**As Somali youth we should be further valuing education because we are the generation that can make the difference. With knowledge comes power, wisdom and greatness, many of our parents were not given the opportunities that we have today we should not take what we have for granted.**

For any students planning on going to university I would encourage each and every one of you to take the opportunity as it will open many doors for you in your life. The skills you attain will firstly benefit yourself whether it be finding your dream job and you will be able to help others.



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

Growing up in New Zealand from very young age led to going through the schooling system from the start of kindergarten. I didn't really put much thought about going to university not until year 11 at high school, but I always had an interest of how things worked and how things were designed, so I took an engineering subject and enjoyed it. I then decided I would like to pursue a career in some sort of engineering. At the end of year 13 I decided to enroll at the University of Waikato for a degree Electronic Engineer. In the first few months at University, I was blown away by the different kinds varied interests. I made some good friends for life with ever lasting relationships. University gave me lot of potential to hone my hobbies & interests



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

I'm currently working at LIC Automation and enjoy what I do; at LIC Automation we make farm automation system which enable farmers to improve their productivity and prosperity. My future plans are gaining experience in various fields of engineer to enhance my development as a professional engineer.

# SALEBAN MOHAMED MUSE

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2010

**High School**  
Hamilton Boys High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Applied Social Science

**Tertiary education institution**  
Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec)

**Year of graduation**  
2017



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

As the years go by and while being in college I desire to gain the most experience and intelligence to become a full fledge social worker and beyond my college years I believe in myself and hope to continue with my education.



## CHALLENGES

During my high school years, I struggled a lot and faced many challenges but with the help of others I managed to gain enough NCEA credit to enroll tertiary study.



## INTERESTS

I enjoy being able to lend a hand on anyone who needs it regardless of who they are. We all need someone's help in certain situations that come across our lives. The greatest and most important reason I pursue a career in Social work is because it is rewarding career to help others.

Not just stop myself to majoring in Social work but to achieve a higher degree and hopefully be able to become tertiary educator which with one having this higher level of education I will be able to help more people.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Helping others when in need is one of the greatest rewarding self-satisfaction one can feel and an excellent opportunity to give back to the community.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

The goals, future career plans and aspirations for college and beyond that I have are several. But my most and only important one wish to accomplish is to pursue a career in social work field.



# AMAL GABOSE

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
1999

**High School**  
Hamilton Girls High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Science in Nursing

**Tertiary education institution**  
Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTeC)

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Fremantle Hospital, Western Australia

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

*Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh*

I wanted to study nursing because it will be the start of a long and successful career in working in the medical field. My desire to take a course in nursing was established after my work placement at Laura Fergusson Rehabilitation Trust where I worked as Rehabilitation Assistant. During my time at Laura Fergusson, I enjoyed talking to and caring for residents and developing relationships with them and this is something that really attracted me to nursing. My initial interest in caring for people derived from working with these high needs clients and learning about their disabilities, severe brain injuries, and palliative care needs, has created a passion to make a contribution and impact in their lives, and I see nursing as a natural progression from my experience there.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To my fellow Somali students: In life, No ONE and NOTHING will help you until you start helping YOURSELF. Last but not least!!!! Expecting to get a good job without studying hard is like expecting to win a marathon without running it.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

My goal is to work in mental health field. I want to develop a set of skills, which will stay with me for the rest of my life and kick-start a career doing something I like. Nursing is a very challenging and demanding career, however I feel the rewards would be great and that I am ready to embark on this career.



## CHALLENGES

Nursing, in my opinion, is a career where you never really finish training. It is a highly demanding career that brings new challenges every day, but with it comes many rewards and a real sense of job satisfaction. At the moment I am working at Fremantle Hospital in Western Australia doing adult nursing



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly thanks to Almighty Allah for his mercies and blessings. Secondly thanks to **my mother, Amina Abdi** Isse, my role model, you have inspired and motivated me during difficult times when I needed words of encouragement. You are a blessing in my life. Thanks for all your support and useful advice. It would be impossible to count all the ways that you have helped me in my career. Thank you so much mum for all that you have done – I only hope I can return the favour sometime in the future I love you always and forever.

**WINNERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE  
HAVE THEIR OWN STRATEGIES AND  
PLANS BUT THEY ALL HAVE ONE  
THING IN COMMON – THEY TRY.**

**KEEP TRYING**



I would also like to thank my siblings who have been there for me during my studies I love you all. Special thanks to **my roommate Hodan Ahmed** and her son Mohamed Faysal who have helped and supported me during my studies. I can't thank you enough for all that you have done for me, jazakallahu khayr abaayo I love you both dearly.

I am also thankful to all the amazing, accepting and inspiring professors and students at Waikato Institute of Technology for inspiring me to achieve my dream as a nurse. I have gained knowledge from my professors. This was a great institute for me to learn at. It is a true blessing to be part of such an influential community. I am appreciative of the nursing department for their compassion, support and willingness to see me succeed as a student.

# SUAD MOHAMED

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2008

**High School**  
Somalia

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Information Technology, Diploma in  
Information Communications Technology level 5 & 6

**Tertiary education institution**  
Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec)

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Genesis Energy



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

Assalamu Alaikum Wa rahmatullah Wabarakatu.  
I arrived in New Zealand in 2008 along with members of my family. I did not speak English at the time, therefore, I was enrolled at Wintec to study English. After improving my English, I started foundation studies and was eventually accepted into the Diploma of Information Communications Technology. Upon completion, I continued with the Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT) which I graduated from in 2016.

During my study, I have obtained CCNA certification and Project Management Prince2 foundation certificate. I have also undertaken a 450-hour internship with Community Livings Trust in Hamilton as part of my final semester of BIT.

I worked at the Wintec Student Helpdesk while I was still studying; this has helped me to gain the necessary skills to transition into full time employment quickly. I am currently employed by Genesis Energy as a Service and Support Analyst.



## A WORD OF ADVICE

To my fellow Somali students  
is to never give up, and  
to keep going till the end.  
There will be barriers  
along the way but always  
remember that hard work  
pays off. Don't let anyone  
tell you that you cannot do it,  
you sure can!



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

My short-term goal career wise is  
to get into IT Business Analysis or  
Project Management. In the long  
term, I plan to own my own IT firm.





# FOUSIYA ABDI ELM

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2011

**High School**  
Parklands Girl High School (Kenya)

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Nursing

**Tertiary education institution**  
Waikato Institute of Technology (WINTERC)

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Nursing centre in Hamilton

## A WORD OF ADVICE

I advise the Somali youth that nothing good comes easy, don't expect things to be given to you. Go out there, achieve your goals and work hard for them. **Throughout my studies I was met with obstacles but this did not stop me from achieving my goals.** You will be met with constant bumps while on your journey to success it's all about how you overcome them and how focused you are. Surround yourself with people who have the same goals and are on the same journey as you. I say this because during my studies I witnessed some of our youth lose their drive and determination due to the types of friends they choose to surround themselves with.

"Associate only with positive, focused people who you can learn from and who will not drain your valuable energy with uninspiring attitudes. By developing relationships with those committed to constant improvement and the pursuit of the best that life has to offer, you will have plenty of company on your path to the top of whatever mountain you seek to climb." – Robin Sharma

As for the parents you play a big role in the success of your child. Stay involved, motivate them and support them throughout their studies because this makes a huge positive impact on their studies.



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

My family and I moved to New Zealand from Kenya just after I completed my High school studies. I always had a desire to work in the medical field and I chose a career in nursing because of the amazing work and holistic care they provide to their patients. I did a year of English studies and health studies to prepare me for the academic writing and science involved in nursing studies. After successful completion of this course I got into nursing and through hard work and determination I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. Nursing has broadened my prospects and has helped me focus outside myself. I enjoy being in a profession that helps people and makes a positive impact on their lives. I have also found the knowledge I have gained to be helpful in everyday situations which I can use for myself, my family, and my community, in addition to my patients.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

I want to do further study focusing and specializing in Acute care nursing as this is an area I'm very passionate about.

# KHADRA FARAH ALI

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2002

**Name of high school attended**  
Fairfield College

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of nursing

**Tertiary education institution**  
Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec)

**Year of graduation**  
2015

**Place of employment**  
Rosendale rest home and hospital Hamilton New Zealand

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To our youth is to never give up, have a goal in placed. Anyone can achieve what they want if they stay focused. While I was studying nursing I have encountered with some ups and downs but, what helped me was my determination and wanting to achieve my goal. To be honest we are very lucky to be in New Zealand which allows us to study not many people have this opportunity. Education is a very powerful and it will help u get the job u want. I am not telling you it's going to be easy ride but I am telling you it is going to be worth it.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

In the future I want to become a nurse specialist in cardiac and wound specialist. Then I want to continue studying and do my masters in nursing so I can become a nurse manger. One day I would like to go back home (Somalia) and help my people back home with the skills I have gained.



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh (Peace be upon you and so may the mercy of Allah and his blessings), all praise due to Allah.

From a very young age, I have always wanted to become a nurse. When I finished high school, I then enrolled at Waikato Institution of Technology and studied nursing so I can achieve my goal. This wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the numerous supports I have received from my family.



## CHALLENGES

There were many challenges that I encountered with while I was studying, the first one was being placed out of town and being away from my mother. This was one of the hardest aspects I have ever encountered, because I have never been away from home. It was challenging, but alhamdulillah my family encouraged me to not see it as obstacles but to see it as opportunity.

I chose to pursue a career in nursing because I want to help people.

# SAARA ABDULRAHMAN

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2000

**High School**  
Hillcrest High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Arts majoring in English and Psychology

**Tertiary education institution**  
The University of Waikato

**Year of graduation**  
2017

**Place of employment**  
ATC



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

I want to start off by thanking everyone who helped and supported me throughout this long tedious but also interesting and exciting journey from family, friends and teachers.

When I finished high school I didn't really know what I wanted to study or what I would enjoy studying. But I knew I wanted to go to university and get that experience of tertiary education.

So then I just took my parents advice to become a teacher and applied for a BA in English literature so I could become a high school English teacher. However, after taking an elective paper in psychology and finding myself really interested and passionate about social psychology I changed my degree to a double major incorporating what I was already studying and my new interest.

What really made me want to get a university experience was the fact that from a young age I knew that my parents wanted me to complete my tertiary education and to take full advantage of the educational opportunities given to me here in New Zealand, which they didn't have at my age. I feel like that was a huge motivation for me doing my undergraduate studies. But finding psychology made it a lot easier.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To the upcoming graduates and the Somali youth in general is that education is important and not just one form (eg. Going to uni) but in every form of gaining knowledge, learning something new and passionate is very important. By the way studying something you are interested in or passionate about doesn't mean you will enjoy the stress the deadlines bring, but it will definitely help you with staying awake during lectures.

.....

Believe in yourself and the fact that you can make it to your goal/s. Also networking and getting to know people in your field and related fields will make a huge difference in your university experience and even after, when you're looking for a job. Also while looking for a job keep in mind volunteering will make a huge difference in finding a job. Having clear goals also makes a difference. Work on some short term and long term goals and make sure they are SMART goals. Lastly **don't forget it's just outside of your comfort zone that you will grow most as a person.**



# ANEB A. OSMAN

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2004

**High School**  
Hamilton Girls High School

**Programme of study**  
Enrolled Nurse

**Tertiary education institution**  
Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec)

**Year of graduation**  
2017

**Place of employment**  
Strathallan Lifecare



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

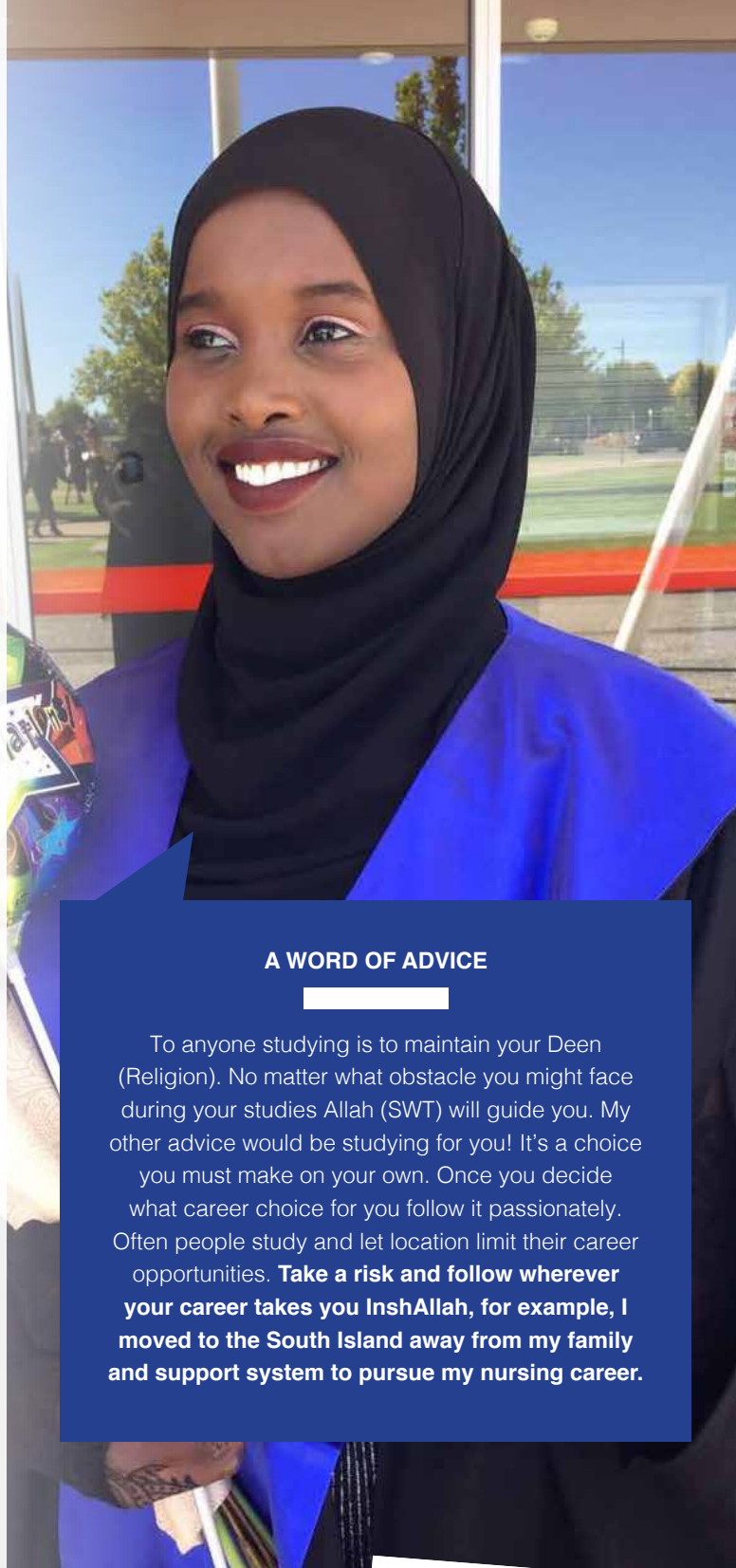
Assalamu Alaikum wa rahmantullahi wa barakatuh.

I came to New Zealand in 2004 with my family and we settled in Hamilton. My first introduction to schooling was at Fairfield Intermediate. Learning English at year 7 was difficult; however, I tried and eventually caught up with my peers. In high school, I developed a particular love for science. I was always curious about the human body and how it worked, this love for science encouraged me to read books about the human body. Eventually, I decided to pursue a career in nursing.

I believe nursing is a career that I can help people and build my understanding of the world.

Through nursing, I work with various people from different walks of life. In these interactions, I learn how to empathize and understand the importance of helping each other as a society. I have always wanted to work in a career where I could have a positive impact on people's lives. A job where I could care for individuals who needed my help. Growing up in a big family, taking care of people came naturally to me.

Studying can be difficult, however, through self-motivation and determination anyone can succeed. I would like to thank my family for their endless support and love especially my mom.



## A WORD OF ADVICE

To anyone studying is to maintain your Deen (Religion). No matter what obstacle you might face during your studies Allah (SWT) will guide you. My other advice would be studying for you! It's a choice you must make on your own. Once you decide what career choice for you follow it passionately. Often people study and let location limit their career opportunities. **Take a risk and follow wherever your career takes you InshAllah, for example, I moved to the South Island away from my family and support system to pursue my nursing career.**



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

InshAllah I would like to go back to studying and further develop my qualification. My long term goal is to travel and use my nursing skills to help particularly in third world countries.



# LEILA OMAR

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
1994

**High School**  
Hillcrest High School

**Programme of study**  
BSc. Biotechnology

**Tertiary education institution**  
The University of Waikato

**Year of graduation**  
2015

**Place of employment**  
Microbiology Laboratory Technician at Tatua  
Co-operative Dairy Company Limited

## A WORD OF ADVICE

University as we all know requires a lot of hard work and immense effort, however, anything is achievable if you put your mind to it. I strongly encourage my fellow Somalis to chase your dreams, whether it be big or small. Constantly push yourself and surround yourself with individuals who uplift and support you. Know that you are capable and have the ability to do anything you want.



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

I have always enjoyed science, particularly biology and all that it encompasses. I knew I wanted to get involved in a career which was science based, I hence made the decision to commence a degree in Science at the University of Waikato. I began my University journey in 2012, excited to start this new chapter in my life. I soon came to realise the copious hours of study required, along with all the dedication and hard work.

I majored in Biotechnology, this is an area of study which uses biological organisms to create and modify products. This is an area which particularly pertains to the agriculture, food and pharmaceutical industry. What really drew me to biotechnology was its diversity. There are several branches of biotechnology, however I have always been interested in pharmaceutical biotechnology. Especially how ones genetic makeup affects the way they respond to certain medicines. This area of biotechnology is exciting and is constantly evolving. My science degree allowed me to study other areas of science, such as microbiology, which I am also greatly interested in.

**I graduated in 2015 and was elated to have successfully completed my degree. I felt an immense sense of achievement when standing on that stage, hearing my name and receiving my award.**

Currently, I am working as a Microbiology and Chemistry laboratory Technician for a Dairy company based in the Waikato region. I thoroughly enjoy my line of work and the fact that I have gained hands on experience in the lab and also complete a range of different tests to ensure the products we release to consumers are at a high standard.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

In the future I may go back to University to continue on to doing further study in science and pursue a Masters, and perhaps a Phd in science.



# SADIA MIRE

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2003

**High School**  
Somalia

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Social Science (Major Education Studies)

**Tertiary education institution**  
University of Waikato

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Teacher aide at Knighton Normal School

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

My educational journey started in my home country, Somalia, after the collapse of the country's central Government in the 1990s. As a child I grew up in a small village and there was no formal school that was normal as schools existed in bigger cities and towns. I attended my first formal primary school in my early teenage years after we moved to a bigger city in early 1990s. It was self-enrolment that was due to my interest in learning new things and with the support of my family. There was no governmental authority mandating children to school attendance and schools were reopened after the war by self-organised teachers. Upon finishing my high school I subsequently enrolled in nursing and Midwifery College in 2000 in Bosaso. That was my first tertiary course though I never completed my goal of becoming a qualified midwife because an opportunity to come to New Zealand came my way. The reason I wanted to become a midwife was that my mother was a traditional midwife and I really admired how she voluntarily helped women.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To my fellow Somalis is to pursue their dreams but dreaming about something will not be enough.

You have to commit time and resources to reach your dream. If your first choice in education or anything you choose to do does not work out for whatever reason, remember there is always a second or even third option to try. I also like to emphasize that, no matter what your personal circumstances are, gaining knowledge should be a lifelong goal for you as Islam teaches us "seek knowledge from your birth till death".





### COMING TO NEW ZEALAND

My first couple of years in New Zealand, I was a stay home mother. Nevertheless, my ambition of gaining tertiary qualification was never lost. Continuing my education journey in New Zealand, first I had to learn English and also gain tertiary entry qualification since I never attended schooling in New Zealand. I have completed one and half year English language course that started from intermediate level to level four advanced English qualification. Then this was followed by level four foundation studies in 2010 while at the same time raising a family. My first aim was to continue studying the nursing I had started in my home country. I enrolled in the WINTEC nursing programme in 2011.



### CHALLENGES

I faced some challenges staying on the nursing programme because of the work placement requirements of the course. I was required to work in odd hours or shifts that did not suit my family situation. At that stage in my life I was a solo mother raising my children. So, I had to give up nursing, however I was not prepared to let go of my dream to gain tertiary qualification. I guess when you have children they are a big part of your decision making process and I was motivated by my children to pursue my current qualification in education. I became interested to learn about the New Zealand education after my children started school and in particular when I started receiving school reports that had many new terms that I never heard before like the National Standards.

I found the New Zealand system of education to be completely different from the education that I knew in my country. In Somalia, we only use pass or fail where in New Zealand children can be very good at something and not so well at something else. Then I made a decision to change my career into education and learn about different educational theories and what the



***I BECAME INTERESTED TO LEARN ABOUT THE NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION AFTER MY CHILDREN STARTED SCHOOL AND IN PARTICULAR WHEN I STARTED RECEIVING SCHOOL REPORTS THAT HAD MANY NEW TERMS THAT I NEVER HEARD BEFORE LIKE THE NATIONAL STANDARDS.***



researchers have written about education especially around pedagogical /teaching theories so that I could follow my children's learning experiences in New Zealand. This qualification also met a deep sense of self-awareness of my own education experiences in my home country and the possibility (perhaps one day) to go back and contribute in this important field.



### FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

(Inshaa Allah), I am thinking of doing my masters degree in education in the short term. But in the long term I would like to go back to Somalia to help contribute to the enhancement of the education provisions in my country.

# MOHAMED ABDULKADER

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2001

**High School**  
Hamilton Boys High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Environmental Planning

**Tertiary education institution**  
The University of Waikato

**Year of graduation**  
2015

**Place of employment**  
Australia

## **EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES**

Coming to New Zealand at a younger age meant I had more time to adjust to schooling in the new country and learnt the necessary language skills needed to progress through education at high school and later onto tertiary education. I did well at high school as I was lucky to attend a school that was focused on academic achievement for all students.

My subject teachers and the inclusive school environment were crucial foundation for my academic success at tertiary. I chose environmental planning for my degree because I was interested in how to preserve the environment while at the same time utilizing the resources in the environment for the betterment of society.

Environment plays an important role in the beauty of New Zealand which is what attracts a lot of tourism to the country.

## **A WORD OF ADVICE**

To my fellow Somalis, take high school very seriously as that is what prepares you for your future. Follow your dreams and expand your horizon. Everyone has the potential to achieve something. It is up to you to realize your potential. The good thing about New Zealand education is that you get a lot of support if you ask for it and you are willing to work hard at your studies. The system is there to support you so don't be your own enemy by not helping yourself. You got to be motivated and see a positive future for yourself.



## **MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS**

For the future I am hoping to utilize my education in this field and to grow into it as a professional environmental planner.



# AHMED M. IBRAHIM

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2000

**High School**  
Fairfield College as adult student

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management  
I am currently enrolled at WINTEC for Diploma in Culinary Arts

**Tertiary education institution**  
The University of Waikato

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Prolife Foods Ltd.

**Voluntary work**  
Refugee Driver Training

## A WORD OF ADVICE

The foundation to doing well in tertiary education is set during high school years otherwise uni life will not last long. So my advice to our Somali students is to work hard at your subjects in high school. Studying is like running a marathon, you need steps at same time you have to aim reaching the finish line and do not give up until you touch the line.

You also have to listen to good advice. Somali proverb says "you may not always get someone to give you something (e.g. money), but you will always get someone to give you an advice"

Finally, learning while you are still young is the best but if that opportunity is lost, never give up.



## MY COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

I have always been involved with voluntarily helping the community in the areas of Interpreting, helping to learn to drive and many other activities including training or coaching young boys in soccer.



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

Arriving here in New Zealand in 2000 I was ambitious to work hard and learn. My biggest challenge was what management field I would take while at same time having time for my family. I also was inspired by how the world of tourism works and why people like to visit places.

I looked at which school or institute would fit my personal needs and I found that Fairfield College was an answer for many reasons. Teachers at the school were helpful and supportive even though I was an adult student of 20 years of age.



## CHALLENGES

There were many challenges that I faced during my school year; language, school system especially NCEA. I stayed at Fairfield College for 3 years then I enrolled at the local Polytechnic to continue my study journey, first I enrolled in Advance English language as Second language in 2015 and completed level 1 and 2 in first semester. After that I decided to look for a full time job and found one so I was busy working till 2012. Then I decided to start learning one more time to accomplish the journey I had started.

I enrolled at Wintec to do Introduction of study level 4, and after completion I enrolled in the Certificate University Preparation (CUP). In 2013 I enrolled in the Bachelor of Tourism programme at the University of Waikato, completing my degree in 2016.



## INTERESTS

I enjoy reading, volunteering, and helping others in general.



# HASSAN SHIRE

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2005

**High School**  
Somalia

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Human Services (Social Work)

**Tertiary education institution**  
The University of Auckland

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Auckland vehicle



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

My name is Hassan Shireh. I describe myself as a father, husband, student, and employee.

I came to New Zealand in 2005 and I have four children. I always liked to gain more knowledge therefore I decided to go to the university of Auckland to study Social Work. Thank God recently I managed to finish my degree in Social Work.

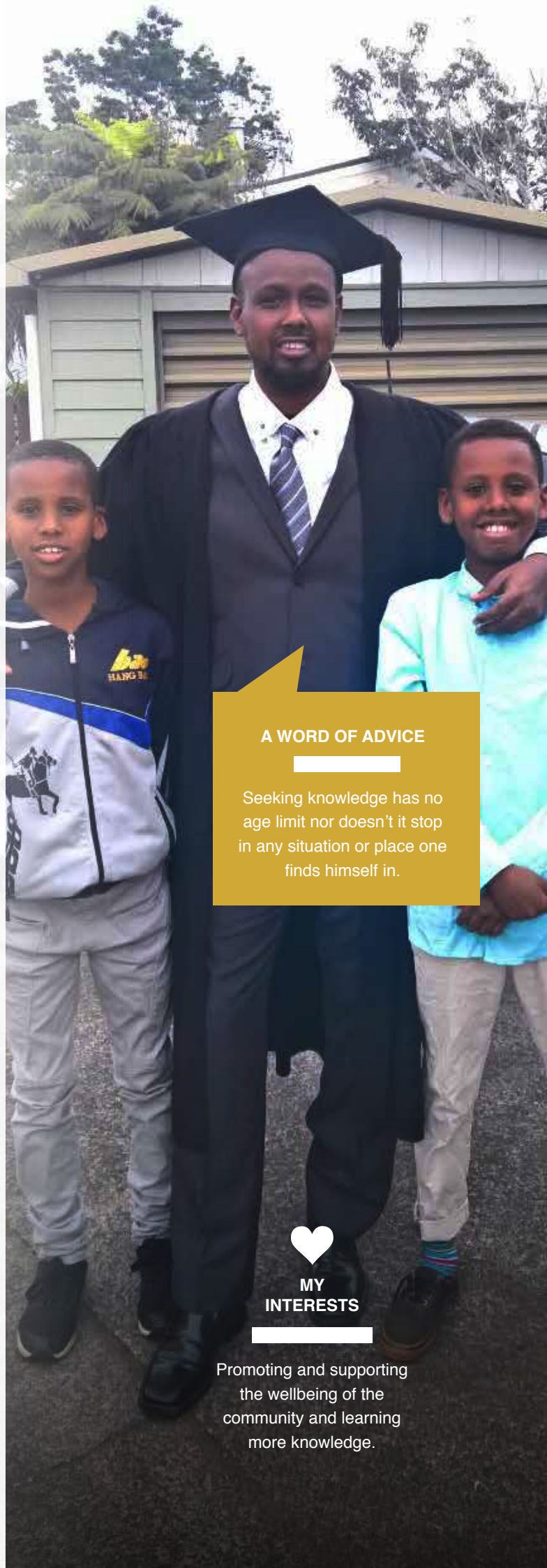
As a Somali refugee background I always believe to work hard twice in supporting and promoting the wellbeing of the community. This requires seeking knowledge from different sources either from secular academia and Islamic tradition sources for understanding a variety of theories.

I always believe a faithful and productive person is the one who constantly is gaining wisdom and learning new things and that was my motivation.



## CHALLENGES

As a Muslim the Islamic principle has been encouraging definitely there is no place of losing and long grief in any situation instead every situation a person is going through should be a benefit of life in learning and gaining more reward from God therefore any hard challenge and circumstance such as pain, loss and grief eventually will turn to your benefits.



## A WORD OF ADVICE

Seeking knowledge has no age limit nor doesn't it stop in any situation or place one finds himself in.



## MY INTERESTS

Promoting and supporting the wellbeing of the community and learning more knowledge.

# LIBAN MIRE

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2013

**High School**  
Hamilton Boys High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science

**Tertiary education institution**  
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

**Year of graduation**  
2015

**Place of employment**  
Labplus (fixed term contract)

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

My career choice stems from interest in science that I developed during high school. I wanted to be in one of the health care fields; medicine or medical laboratory science. My first choice was medicine, but I also liked medical laboratory science, which I eventually decided on doing. What I like about being a medical laboratory scientist is the fact that you get to have an impact indirectly on patient's welfare by helping clinician in the management of a particular disease, diagnosis or treatment, based on the variety of tests performed routinely on patient samples in a medical laboratory.

## CHALLENGES

The programme is challenging (but manageable) and requires a lot of time dedicated to your studies

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To anyone who is thinking about undertaking this course is to make sure to dedicate enough time outside class for your course.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Inshallah I plan on finding a stable medical laboratory scientist job, gain more experience in this field -particularly haematology and histology, and then enroll in the bachelor of medicine programme if everything goes according to plans.





# ABDIZAMED MOHAMED

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2004

**High School**  
Mount Roskill Grammar School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Engineering Technology (Civil Engineering)

**Tertiary education institution**  
Unitec Institute of Technology

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
MSC Consulting Engineers

## A WORD OF ADVICE

Studying is never an easy task, it requires patience and perseverance and once you set your goals straight, and identify your preferred career then you will achieve your dreams. During your study time attend guest speakers and industry events to get ideas of the real world work experience. This will help you choose a career path that you feel passionate about.

Also talk to your lecturers and final year students who have different background life experiences with work and study. Always be open minded, face all your fears and pursue your dreams.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

My future plans include getting great work experience in my current position. I am a graduate member of IPENZ (Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand), a non-profit professional body representing the engineering profession in New Zealand which gives members a career development. I am also planning on returning to study later in life to undertake master's degree to become a chartered professional Engineer. Land development is an area I am interested in and I am hoping that one day I go back to my homeland and create infrastructure.

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

Engineering was something that I had in mind since young age and I always wanted to become an engineer. Despite my engineering dreams, in high school, mathematics and science were never my favourite subjects and in my final years of school I did not take physics as a subject. After I finished school I started AUT University and studied for a certificate of science and technology to build my mathematics and physics science skills. Once I completed my certificate of science and technology I knew that I wanted to pursue civil engineering as career. In my first year at Unitec I took 8 compulsory papers which were a mix of practical and theoretical skills. Some of these papers were Land surveying, geotechnical engineering, civil material and civil & structural drawing. In these papers I gained knowledge of the earth (soil and rocks), engineering design and the type of civil material that are used in construction work.

During the third year of my study I took a few elective papers that covered the variety of specialties that was offered and after completing them I chose Roading-Transportation and geotechnical engineering as my specialty. I chose these specializations because they are the most demanding areas in civil engineering in terms of the work force. I also enjoyed and connected more to roading and geotechnical papers.



# BOTAN

## MUSA BOTAN

**NOW I AM WORKING  
AS A GRADUATE CIVIL  
ENGINEER FOR A CIVIL AND  
STRUCTURAL CONSULTING  
COMPANY. MY EVERYDAY  
TASKS INCLUDE PRODUCING  
CIVIL ENGINEERING  
DESIGNS, OBSERVATION  
OF CONSTRUCTION  
WORKS, CONSTRUCTION  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT,  
STORMWATER AND LAND  
MANAGEMENT REPORTS.**



### HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

I consider myself lucky because of the position and the type of work experience that I am getting. I am gaining skills both in the consultancy and construction field. My current work projects are designing subdivision developments, which is all the infrastructure that goes into the land. I am using civil engineering designing softwares such as AutoCAD and civil 3D. These softwares are used to develop and produce civil engineering designs and give solutions that support project performances. Most of the time I am doing office work and attending internal and external project meetings, but also doing site visits and observing the construction project works. I enjoy every bit of my work and I am grateful that I pursued civil engineering as a career.



**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2012

**High School**  
East leigh secondary school (Kenya)

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor in Civil Engineering

**Tertiary education institution**  
Unitec Institute of Technology

**Year of graduation**  
2016

**Place of employment**  
Higgins Contractors



### EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

I came to New Zealand with my family in 2012 and we settled in Auckland. I have found the first few months in New Zealand to be particularly challenging due to the different climate and culture. I was fortunate enough to be admitted into Unitec institute of technology that was located within closing distance of my residence. Alhamdulillah I was able to complete my bachelors despite the hurdles that presented itself along the way. This could not have happened without Allah mercy and compassion. I would also like to thank family and friends for their support. I am also very fortunate to have graduated with my fellow Somali and dear friend Abdisamad.



### A WORD OF ADVICE

My advice to the fellow Somali youth and prospective students is to be close to Allah (swt) and to make the most out of the opportunity that we have in this country.



### FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Inshallah my future plan is to back to go back to Somalia and contribute positively to the society.



# HAMDA BARKHAD

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2004

**Name of high school attended**  
Wellington East Girls' College

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Arts, in Education, Religion & Philosophy

**Tertiary education institution**  
Victoria University of Wellington

**Year of graduation**  
2017



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

Ever since I was a child I wanted to become a teacher but I did not know what kind of teacher I wanted to become. However I have a passion for education as a whole, mostly on how the curriculum works, the education policy and most importantly the psychological aspect of education. Thus, in my first year of my tertiary studies I majored in Education.

I then did a religion paper and I was intrigued by the concept of faith in different religions. It's quite enlightening to see and understand why people believe certain things strongly which made me curious in asking the big questions such as 'belief in God' and 'life after death' and many more that are fundamental in every faith. That led me to do minor in philosophy which helps me think critically and make rational arguments in every field of my studies. By the end of my studies I have built a middle ground education, religion and philosophy, which is why I want to get into policy now.



## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Next year I want to go back to university to complete my post graduate Masters in Primary teaching. I want to become a primary teaching. I am interested in looking at the curriculum but most importantly the 'hidden' curriculum, which is the reason we have many issues in the education system. I am also interested in looking into how the curriculum fits in with children with disabilities as well as refugee children that have faced many challenges and understand how to cater to all the needs of the children as an educator.



## CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge I faced was in high school where my career adviser in my last year told me that I could not get into university so I should consider looking into some polytechnic studies. It was true I could not get in because I did not have the requirements to get into university so I did a three month foundation course at Victoria University while studying at high school. That summer I finished the course and I passed then I was able to begin university with my friends at the same time. However I would have never been able to do that if it wasn't for that career adviser who told me I couldn't but thanks to her I worked hard to get where I was aiming for with the help of Allah (SWT).



## A WORD OF ADVICE

If I could advise the youth I would tell them that when someone tells you that you can't do something it's not a bad thing it only makes you want to prove them wrong. Plus I believe that anything is possible if you put the energy and effort in it, the sky is the limit but only if you put all your faith in Allah. For all the students who want to study in a tertiary level and for those who are already studying at University, university is only hard in the beginning because you have so many options study wise but once you know what you want to study, I won't say it's easy, but with the right mind-set you will survive university. One tip for students, make sure you meet the right friends at university you cannot make it out alone, but remember you are who your friends are. University is a great experience for self development, I wish every Somali girl and boy goes to university because we need more educated people to better our country and the youth is the key

# HAMSE SOFE



**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
1999

**High School**  
Somalia

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Information Technology,  
major in Networking

**Tertiary education institution**  
Wellington Institute of Technology

**Year of graduation**  
2016



## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

When I was in high school my favourite subject was IT and that is what led me to doing IT in my tertiary studies. I have a passion for learning about how the application of the computers store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate data works which is why I did networking as a major.



## A WORD OF ADVICE

I would advise Somali students who are thinking about doing tertiary education to not be afraid of it because it is a great experience and you gain useful skills and knowledge as well as gain friendships.



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

I worked very closely with the Somali Council in Wellington during my studies and I have gained many skills from working with the community. I would advise the younger people to help out in the community because not only will they be giving back to the community but they would gain life skills.



# ASIYA M. ALI



**Year of arrival in NZ**  
2002

**High School**  
Fairfield College

**Programme of study**  
Diploma in Science  
Technology

**Tertiary education  
institution**  
Wintec

**Year of graduation**  
2017

**Place of employment**  
CAIQTEST Pacific Limited

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

I knew I always wanted a career in science, in high school I especially enjoyed chemistry and biology. I wanted to work in an environment where I could regularly perform the tests and experiments I enjoyed doing in school. This lead me to start a diploma at Wintec where I found I had a special interest in microbial organisms and bacteria. So I pursued a career in a microbiology lab where I now work.

Studying was by no means easy but because I have such a keen interest in the sciences I was able to keep up with my studies and achieve good grades. I think the most important factor in helping with not only choosing a career path but reaching the other end, is interest in what you are learning.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To other Somali students is not to force yourself to complete a degree you have no interest in just to get a job. This will only stunt your potential and hinder you from finding your true aspirations.

## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

I hope to stay with this company and be a key person in helping it grow to its full potential. my own business and help my fellow community members.

# SADIQ A. ALI



**Year of arrival  
in New Zealand**  
1995

**High School**  
Shirley Boys High School

**Programme of study**  
Diploma of Business

**Tertiary education  
institution**  
Christchurch Polytechnic  
(Ara,Cpit)

**Year of graduation**  
2015

**Place of employment**  
Anzco bank

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

I studied at Shirley Boys Highschool where I gained NCEA Level 1 and 2 certificates. I then went onto Christchurch Polytechnic where I acquired a Diploma of Business. I studied Marketing, Business management, Economics and ICT. To complete these courses I had to focus on my studies, manage my time wisely and apply my knowledge to different tasks.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To students is to persevere through the challenges you face to gain the accomplishments you want.

## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

To apply the knowledge I have gained to start my own business and help my fellow community members.

# ABDIFATAH IBRAHIM



**Year of arrival in NZ**  
1995

**High School**  
Shirley Boys High school

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Commerce,  
Major in Economics

**Tertiary education institution**  
University Of Canterbury

**Year of graduation**  
2015

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

I came to New Zealand with my family in 1995 and have since completed my schooling and tertiary studies here. Growing up in New Zealand in a Somali household meant that I had to appreciate education to the utmost and work to the best of my abilities in achieving a high school or university degree.

Fortunately, I am the second person in my family to attend and complete a university degree, a journey that finished in 2015 with a major in Management. I am a member of the Nawawi Center Ltd organisation that helps fulfil the needs and requirements of the Muslim community in Christchurch.

## CHALLENGES

Time-management and anxiety. One way in which I overcame these difficulties was having an understanding of how long the course was and consulting a university student advisor every now and then to evaluate my progress. Additionally, surrounding myself with other Somali university members and joining a university club(s) to my liking alleviated some of the anxiety that accumulated with the pressure of finishing a degree.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

To my Somali brothers and sisters who wish to embark on a university programme is to always ask for help, either from advice a family member, friend or student advisor.

## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

I wish to use my Management degree to help the community that I grew up in - Christchurch. The areas of interest for me are in Community Development and Social Work. My long term plan is to use my degree and experience back in Somalia where my heart still remains.

# SAMATAR A. ALI



**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
1995

**High School**  
Shirley Boys High school

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Commerce,  
Major in Economics

**Tertiary education institution**  
University Of Canterbury

**Year of graduation**  
2015

## EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER CHOICES

I studied at Shirley Boy's Highschool gaining NCEA Level 3. I also received an excellence award for ICT while studying at this school.

At The University of Canterbury I completed many complicated courses containing Statistics, Accounting, Management and Marketing to gain my degree.

## A WORD OF ADVICE

The advice I would leave for future tertiary students is to focus, plan schedule and to use all resources available to maximize your experience while studying.

## MY FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

I hope to have a long and successful career in business.

**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
2008

**Name of high school attended**  
Hillcrest High School

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Science (Technology)  
Majoring in Biotechnology

**Name of tertiary education institution**  
The University of Waikato

# NADIFA SULEIMAN







### MY EDUCATION STORY

My name is Nadifa Suleiman. I was born in Yemen after my parents arrived from Somalia. My parents have made many sacrifices to allow me to focus on my education throughout primary and secondary school. The value of education is something I have understood since a very young age. Neither of my parents had an opportunity to attend school, and faced many struggles in their personal and professional lives because of this. They made a commitment early in my life to do everything within their power to instil in me a love of learning and an understanding of the importance of hard work and dedication.



### WHAT SUBJECTS DID YOU DO WELL AT HIGH SCHOOL?

Science, English, Mathematics and Physical Education.



### SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

David Johnstone Charitable Scholarship



### WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY STUDYING AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PARTICULAR FIELD?

I am currently studying a Bachelor of Science (Technology) Majoring in Biotechnology. I chose this field as science was my favourite subject in high school and I always had passion for it. I became interested in science when I was in year nine. I remember after school rushing home just to do my science homework everything was new and interesting. During the course of my high school years my love and passion for science kept growing and also the fact that the Somali community was underrepresented in this field inspired me more.

My future aspiration is to open the first Biotechnology laboratory in Somalia. And I also want to build my own foundation for orphan kids. Help Somali youth get the love and needs that every child in this planet deserves.



**MY FUTURE ASPIRATION  
IS TO OPEN THE FIRST  
BIOTECHNOLOGY LABORATORY  
IN SOMALIA. AND I ALSO WANT  
TO BUILD MY OWN FOUNDATION  
FOR ORPHAN KIDS. HELP  
SOMALI YOUTH GET THE LOVE  
AND NEEDS THAT EVERY CHILD  
IN THIS PLANET DESERVES**



### WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS? WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE

My future plan is to continue with my tertiary studies up to PhD inshallah as well as going back home and make Somalia great again.



### WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE SOMALI STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL?

My advice to high school students is to get as much education as you can. We are now in a society in which many jobs and careers require additional education or training beyond high school. We are blessed with so many opportunities so make the most of your time.



### WHAT DOES THIS SCHOLARSHIP MEAN TO YOU?

By having this scholarship it allows me to get step closer to my dreams. I want the chance to help make the world a better place, the opportunity to make a difference, and the privilege of having more than a high school diploma.

# SAMIRA

LOVE OF ART



For as long as I can remember, I've had a love for art, but it wasn't until after High school that I rekindled my passion for drawing. The reason for this was because I doubted myself a lot during my younger years and I didn't see this career path as a viable option for me.

Somali youth tend to be pushed towards conventional career paths. Whether consciously or subconsciously,

many Somali parents steer their kids away from pursuing their passions and encourage them to pursue safer career paths instead. This was the case for me when I was younger, and I made the mistake of listening to others when it came to planning for my future. Luckily, I broke free from that thinking as I got older and started teaching myself to draw in 2012.



## THE BEGINNING

When I first started drawing, my focus was mainly on learning as much as I could about the craft and bettering my technique. I would sketch and paint every day and never missed a day, even if I was scarce for the time. As I witnessed the progress in my work, I was empowered by it and ardent about the level of skill I'd acquire if I stayed diligent. As my art skills began to improve a great deal, I found myself wanting to channel my creativity into something I was passionate about. I felt inspired to create art that centered and celebrated my people. I wanted to showcase my Somali heritage and to have it be normalized and represented, so I started creating and sharing artwork that did just that.



## NOW

As a self-taught artist, I take great pride in my ability to draw in various styles. My years of experimenting with different illustration styles and methods have opened a lot of doors for me. I've had the privilege of creating all kinds of artwork for many different people. I've done portraits for people giving them as gifts, fashion illustrations for designers showcasing their work to clients, concept designs for people trying to start projects and businesses, graphics that were printed on apparel and more. I'm also eternally grateful for the constant support from the followers I've gained across different media platforms. Thanks to them my art has gotten a lot of exposure, and I've been gifted many opportunities.



## THE FUTURE

I will be going into writing and illustrating children's books soon, inshaa'Allah. Growing up, I always yearned to see characters that looked like me in mainstream art and media, but was always disappointed with the lack of representation. Never seeing art that reflects anyone who resembles you can be very disheartening and damaging to anyone, especially to a child, and to me that underscores the importance of representation. I hope to change that for some kids. If one day, a child that shares my narrative can pick up a book of mine and get lost in a tale with characters that look just like him/her, it will be a dream come true for me.



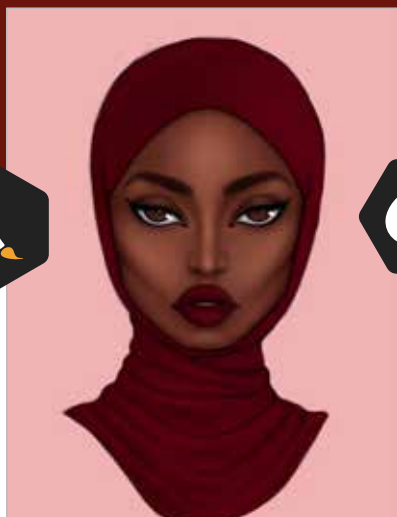
## LOVE TO DRAW

I specialize in portrait paintings, and I love to draw portraits of Somali women, many of whom are wearing the headscarf. I always aim to depict expressions in my pieces that exude strong, independent and vivacious personas. I do that because my art is a reflection and extension of myself and that's how I see Somali women. I also want my art to challenge the stereotypes, misrepresentations and misconstrued narratives disseminated about us in the mainstream.



## RETROSPECTIVE

I often think about how different my life would be if I didn't take the plunge and pursue my art, and it's a frightening thought. I've truly found my calling, albeit an alternative path that is rarely trekked by Somali people, I cannot imagine doing anything else. Waking up every day to do what you love is so nourishing to the soul, and I wish it for everyone. I implore anyone reading this to fearlessly work towards their dreams and be unapologetic about doing so.



## ADVICE

If you live your truth, work hard and stay focused, you're bound to succeed in all your endeavors inshaa'Allah.





The following interview  
was conducted by **Naima Ali**

# SAYNAB MUSE

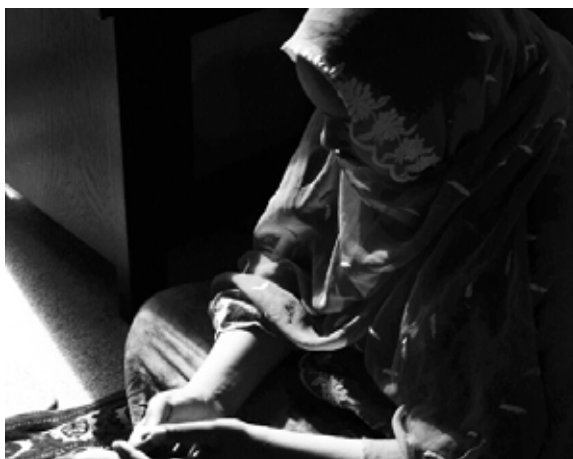
**Year of arrival in New Zealand**  
1998

**Name of high school attended**  
Kelston Girls' College

**Programme of study**  
Bachelor of Creative Enterprise (Photography)

**Name of tertiary education institution**  
Unitec

**Year of graduation**  
2016



*Saynab's video transcript*

## **WHEN DID YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN PHOTOGRAPHY?**

I really really love photography because when I took a photo, my friend [told] me "It looks beautiful". I am like "oh thank you". That is how I started photography. Photography makes me happy, I really really love it.



**Did you know?**  
Saynab Muse was born deaf.  
Saynab is a photographer.



**Saynab's video link:**  
<http://etuwhanau.org.nz/refugee-films-tell-moving-stories/>



## **WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING?**

I am studying photography. I really really enjoy it. Wow, really a lot. I love photography. So I picked it to study. I am really lucky. My parents said "its your choice" [to decide] what I want to study. That's why I picked photography. I really really love it.

# LOVE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

I enjoy taking photos of people, outside, beach, everywhere.

*I REALLY REALLY LOVE IT !*

I know I have a great future. Like I want to [own] a big photography business.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY TAKING PHOTOS OF?



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE IN THE FUTURE?

## DO PEOPLE DOUBT YOU?

Lots of people {told} me, you can't do it, but it's not true. And lots of people asked me "you can study?" Am like "yes", I can do it. I am confident. I am strong. I want to encourage all deaf people. You can do it. I hear noting, I feel. We can do anything. We just can't hear that's it.

## WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE TO THE WORLD?

I want the whole world to know that Deaf people can do it, like hearing and deaf people are the same, no one is like down [lower]. We are all the same. I want to show that deaf people can do it like take photos. We are just the same human. We are just normal.

## SOMALIS IN NEW ZEALAND: **TO THE END OF THE EARTH**

by **Conrad Heine**

(First published in the Journal of the Anglo-Somali Society, Issue No. 61, Spring 2017, pages 29-32)



*Farhia Ahmed & her family*

Blenheim, a small town in the Marlborough region, atop New Zealand's South Island, is more associated with fine Sauvignon Blancs than hot halal sauces. But the reach of the Somali diaspora is long. Here, Farhia Ahmed, who lives here with her family (seen in photograph above) since arriving 18 years ago, runs her own company, ZamZam Cultural Foods. Inspiration (and help from a local free business advisory service) came her way after the homemade sauces and samosas she produced for cultural days at her daughters' school went down a treat.

Now, her flagship product, ZamZam Somali Sauce (in hot and mild varieties, taste-tested by her four New Zealand-born children), based on a traditional recipe handed through her family, is sold throughout New Zealand and is

catching the attention of local supermarket conglomerates and media, and she has plans to expand her product range, with dipping sauces and Somali bread.

For the tiny Kiwi Somali community—1,617 people identified as Somali at the most recent census in 2013, against the 10,131 who claimed Somali ancestry in neighboring Australia's 2011 census—Farhia's story is unusual. First, she is in Blenheim, whereas most New Zealand

Somalis live in cities, particularly the North Island centres of Hamilton and Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, but also Wellington, the capital, and earthquake-struck Christchurch in the South Island. Secondly, it is, in media terms, a good news story.





As is that of Abdirizak Abdi (in photograph above), a community leader in Hamilton, a fast-growing university city one hour driving time south of Auckland, in the heart of rich dairy farming lands, which is home to one third of Kiwi Somalis. A resident (and now New Zealand citizen) since 1993, when he arrived from Kenya, where he had lived for a year as a war refugee, he works as an advisor in refugee and migrant education for New Zealand's Ministry of Education. On the side he is also the editor and founder of the Somali Graduate Journal, (<http://somaligraduatejournal.org/>) a print and online publication which publicises and analyses Kiwi Somali educational attainment with the purpose of informing and inspiring (of which more below).

## NOT ALWAYS GOOD NEWS



I meet up with Abdirizak at Mukalla International Ltd, a Somali-run emporium in the Auckland suburb of Mt Roskill, also home to a large mosque and hence many of Auckland's Somalis. [See photographs above and below. Alert readers will spot the previous Journal, Issue 60 - Ed.]



I am here to learn more about the Kiwi Somali community; Abdirizak is taking the opportunity to catch up with Auckland friends. As we walk from the mosque carpark, Abdirizak chats with Jawahir, a local university student; at Mukalla, Mohammed Hassan Hussein and Yasir Mohamed Said, the staff, proudly brandish Farhia's sauce. I leave with two bottles (one hot, one mild) for my London luggage.

Despite the success of the likes of Abdirizak and Farhia, the image of Somalis in New Zealand media coverage has not always been positive. Such as in reports of a 2012 incident in which Zakariye Mohamed Hussein, a Somali

#### Kiwi-Somalis



19.9 Y  
median age in NZ  
—  
2013 CENSUS



NZ\$8,700  
median annual income  
aged 15 and over  
—  
2013 CENSUS

refugee (with three New Zealand-university graduate siblings), went on a public rampage in Christchurch, stabbing two people and taking a hostage before being overpowered by police. Similarly, of an earlier incident in 2008 when another refugee, Asha Abdille, attempted to hijack a small passenger plane, stabbing both pilots. Much coverage played to stereotypes of inherently violent, war-traumatised Somalis, rather than highlighting wider points about mental health care needs.

Other stories have added fuel: allegations in a 2010 television documentary that local Somalis were selling khat at mosques, wished to introduce Sharia law, and were sending funds to al Shabaab, and reports on tensions between Somali and Tongan youths in Mt Roskill, which saw a young Tongan man stabbed to death. Such stories have led to victimisation and stigmatisation of Somalis, say community leaders.

These reports only add to an already challenging environment –for many Kiwi Somalis. Research by Hassan Ibrahim, a PhD candidate and community elder in Christchurch, has shown Somalis affected by war trauma, refugee flight, and lack of resources to address needs (for example, interpreters and educational assistance) for those struggling to integrate into Kiwi society. Challenges are multiplied by the youthful nature of the community, with the 2013 census giving 19.9 years as the median age, and its relative poverty, with a median annual income for those 15 and over of only NZ\$8,700.

Language barriers, cultural differences, social isolation, poor housing, mental-healthcare issues and racial discrimination have all been cited by local Somalis. Said

one woman who arrived as a teenage refugee in 1995: “Going to the beach for the first time was eye-opening. I had never seen a bikini before and I was shocked... it was like everyone was naked and they were sleeping in the sun. We had always run away from the sun to the shade and here people were sleeping in it.”

#### COUNTERING THE NEGATIVE

Thankfully, there are Somalis in leadership roles working to counter the negativity and address the challenges. Such as Hassan Ibrahim, who spoke up for Christchurch Somalis feeling insecure following the 2012 incident, and Mahdad MWarsame in Auckland, who helped ease tensions following the Somali-Tongan strife.

Abdirizak himself took to the media to counter the claims in the 2010 documentary, stating the whole community were “deeply hurt and devastated by the allegations”. From early on his time in New Zealand, he has taken a leading role in the community. “When I arrived, I already had some English – I could communicate. Two months after arriving, I went to the University of Waikato. My English was that good.”

“In 1994, I founded the first Somali community association [in Hamilton], and was president for seven years. The community is in my heart. Somalis tend to gravitate towards each other.”

That background, and his work, meant education would loom large. In 2008, he founded the Graduate Journal, specifically to show Kiwi Somalis in a positive light. “When you hear something bad about your community, you tend to react. How can you counter something



59.4%

Kiwi Somalis  
aged 15 and over  
hold a formal  
qualification

—  
2013 CENSUS



negative? Come up with something positive.”

The first journal focused on graduates and undergraduates in Hamilton, but went nationwide in 2009. The stories in the journal—now onto its seventh print issue, and strongly present online—show quite a different side of the Kiwi Somali community. Even Abdirizak was surprised by the numbers of Kiwi Somalis at university. The latest journal shows 56 graduates from New Zealand universities and polytechnics since 2013, and profiles 38 of them.

Among them is Mona Adam Alsomali, the first Somali medical graduate in New Zealand, who qualified at the University of Auckland in 2014 and has gone on to work at one of the city’s largest hospitals. As well as graduates, the journal also features stories about career paths and sports achievements and “different forms of success.” The positive stories the journal tells, says Abdirizak, have “done wonders.” He tells of one journalist who approached him wanting to talk about “Somali youth gangs. Instead, he wrote about the journal.”

Eventually, he would like to help out in his homeland too. “Good education is what will stop the madness of our people, and help future generations.” Figures indicate Kiwi Somalis understand its value: the 2013 census showed 59.4% of those aged 15 and over hold a formal qualification.

Yet there are problems. Hassan Ibrahim wrote the poor communication skills of the most vulnerable refugees meant “a poor relationship with schools [which] left them quite alienated. For many families the only time



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COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION [IN HAMILTON],  
AND WAS PRESIDENT FOR SEVEN YEARS. THE  
COMMUNITY IS IN MY HEART. SOMALIS TEND  
TO GRAVITATE TOWARDS EACH OTHER.”**

*ABDI Abdirizak*

they dealt with their local school was when summoned to discuss the infractions of their children and any subsequent disciplinary measures.” And in 2008, Shardell Quinn of the University of Waikato wrote about the “hands-off” approach to schooling. “There is a cultural difference, a cultural gap, between the parent and the school. Somali parents trust the school to get on with the job and don’t always realise the importance in New Zealand of being involved.”

Abdirizak believes the journal can help inspire. “Somalis tend to be competitive”. He tells of one father he knew who berated his non-studying sons after seeing the journal. “They started next semester.” “Somalis study in all sorts of fields, often practical stuff, health, law, teaching, sciences. Nursing is the biggest among Somali women. There are a lot of success stories across the board, accountants, engineers, high-flyers.”

However graduates are not always getting jobs, and he says he would like to do more to promote apprenticeships and trades. Kiwi Somalis now do all sorts of jobs—taxi drivers, Halal slaughtermen, fruit picking (especially women), professional careers—and he would like to ensure more “success”. “Success has to be the way.”

## **A LONG BACKSTORY**

Abdirizak’s own story encapsulates the history of the Kiwi Somali community. When he arrived in 1993, aged 24, he was one of the first group of Somali refugees resettled in New Zealand, along with 91 others, including members of his extended (but not immediate) family. His



new homeland, which he knew nothing about, was quite a contrast to his time in Kenya, and in Somalia during its collapse, when he narrowly survived being shot at close range in Mogadishu. “I knew nothing about New Zealand. To me, it was just a country full of sheep. I could not find it on the map at first... I just thought it was part of Australia.”

After six weeks at a refugee resettlement centre in Auckland, he found himself in Hamilton, in a part of the country more famed for cows than sheep, where he has been ever since, getting married and raising his own family. Somalis congregate in the city’s east: the local member of parliament, David Bennett, serves as associate immigration minister and has raised concerns in Parliament about the treatment of Somalis by border officials (see more below). Abdirizak was impressed with the welcome in Hamilton. “It was friendly, and there was excitement because we were among the first Somali refugees. We were welcomed by the mayor and allocated helpers. It was a nice feeling to see officials at high level taking an interest in us.”

Graduating from the University of Waikato with a degree in economics and geography in 1997, and returning to complete a Masters in Management, 12 years later, he has co-authored much research on Somalis in New Zealand and has now worked for the education ministry for 16 years. “I tend to support refugees, rather than migrants—and not just Somalis. I love it, I am very passionate about helping refugees.”

#### **DISTANCE’S ADVANTAGES**

With New Zealand taking a quota of only 750 refugees altogether annually, growth is only likely to come via the second generation. But distance and lack of scale may perhaps convey some advantages. Abdirizak says that some issues associated with Somali diaspora communities do not loom large in little New Zealand.

Such as female genital mutilation. “I have never come across a single case”. Perhaps, as a man, you are not being told? “I believe I would have heard about it. This country is far away, and it is hard to take girls away.”

Likewise khat abuse. Khat is a class-C controlled drug in New Zealand, and there certainly have been reports of seizures by Kiwi border officials: in December 2013, it was reported that over 100kg had been seized since July 2011. But Abdirizak says it is now “largely not an issue. I am anti-khat myself.”

Youth challenges, he acknowledges, do exist. “There are a few boys we are worried about”, and a few in prison. “The scale is not big. But we focus much on youth issues”, with overnight camps and football tournaments organised by the community.

As for the lot of Somali women, it is noticeable that quite a few Somali female graduates feature in the journal. “You still see a lot of the scarf, but young women are dressing more casually than their mothers.” As for women working, although their primary roles still tend towards the home, they are doing jobs like cleaning, childcare and fruit picking, and the additional income is welcome.

Yet Kiwi Somalis have not proved immune to the targeting of remittance companies. “We have got a major issue with that now.” In January 2017, Steve Liddle, a New Zealand journalist wrote that he was “working with a group supporting Somali-New Zealanders as they attempt to re-establish a low-cost channel for

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*ABDI Abdirizak*

remittances into the Horn of Africa.” But de-risking requirements meant that no banks were willing to send money, causing huge problems for families back in the Horn. Says Abdirizak (who himself used to use a hawala): “The community is trying its best”. But so far, to no avail.

As for hostility towards Kiwi Somalis in a more Islamophobic world, as the coverage mentioned above indicates, “New Zealand may be far away, but that does not mean we have not been affected.” He has noticed, for example, a rise in “profiling” of Somalis at airports, and Somalis interviewed on New Zealand radio in late 2016 mentioned they were receiving more official attention. “I have often been stopped coming back from Australia. I don’t believe it is random.” The officials, he says, tend to be “polite and professional”. But he has “heard stories of people being harassed more.”

## LOOKING FORWARD

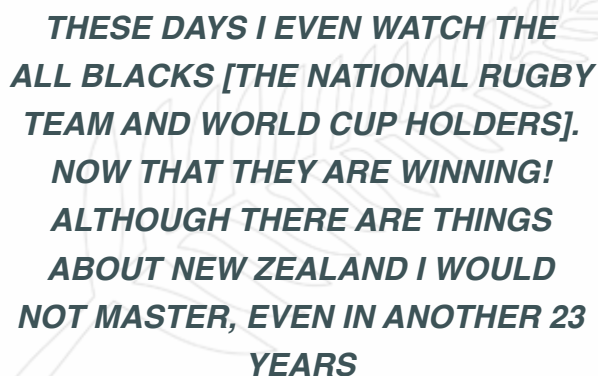
In general, however, Abdirizak presents an optimistic picture of Somali life in New Zealand. He praises the refugee support system, and says he himself “loves” the country. “These days I even watch the All Blacks [the national rugby team and World Cup holders]. Now that they are winning! Although there are things about New Zealand I would not master, even in another 23 years.”

Perhaps New Zealand can be an odd fit for Somalis, and they may prefer Australia if given a choice? Perhaps. Australia is bigger and busier, and “Somalis love a busy souk type of place”. Whereas New Zealand, with its population of only 4.7 million, can feel like a “retirement village”. And some Kiwi Somalis have written about how, besides all the other cultural differences, New Zealand “shyness” can bump up against Somali “directness”.

He acknowledges the concentrated nature of Somali communities—as in Hamilton—means they “might not appear to be integrating”. But it is relatively early days, and the community remains small. “We are still the first generation, although the second generation is coming through”. Community support has been important, especially to the many solo mothers and traumatised

and vulnerable arrivals. “Somalis are known to support each other quite well. Support and solidarity are needed.”

The growing second generation, he says, “have more friends outside the community.” He himself fully intends to keep serving his community and, via the journal, promoting its positives. And if all else fails, more friends can be made through cultural exchange. Perhaps every Somali in New Zealand should gift their Kiwi neighbours a bottle of ZamZam sauce. I’d attest to that.



***THESE DAYS I EVEN WATCH THE  
ALL BLACKS [THE NATIONAL RUGBY  
TEAM AND WORLD CUP HOLDERS].  
NOW THAT THEY ARE WINNING!  
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE THINGS  
ABOUT NEW ZEALAND I WOULD  
NOT MASTER, EVEN IN ANOTHER 23  
YEARS***

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

To help the Somali community achieve better resettlement outcomes in their adopted country, there are a number of support initiatives that are delivered to the community. These include the following:

- Recreational and leadership programmes for youth
- Parenting programme
- Adult literacy classes
- Cultural and language maintenance
- Study support centres for children
- Employment support
- Refugee Forums/Strengthening Refugee Invoices

## Employment support

One of the key challenges identified by the refugees in the resettlement process is lack of employment. There are a limited number of employment support initiatives being attempted. One service that is targeted at the refugee youth is the Migrant Youth Work and Training Service which is funded by the Ministry of Social Development in Hamilton. Hamilton, being one of the main resettlement centres in New Zealand, is home to a large refugee community including the largest Somali population in New Zealand. The director, Mohamed Abdi, has been providing this service for 10 years now for those seeking employment and need extra help.

The Migrant Youth Work and Training Service objectives are to provide practical support for job seekers from refugee backgrounds.



## Objectives:

- ~ *Help with career information (linking clients with career services)*
- ~ *Linking clients with ESOL assessment specially for English assessment*
- ~ *Organising specific workshops around employment*
- ~ *General employment and labour market information (weekly meetings)*
- ~ *Raising refugee and migrant clients awareness about the employment and training opportunities available for them*
- ~ *C.V preparations*
- ~ *Taking clients to employment agencies such as Job Finders, work sites or training agencies*
- ~ *Job search skills (newspapers, Internet sites)*
- ~ *Interview preparation*
- ~ *Help with filling out job application forms*

***This service is situated at  
46G Boundary Road.***

***Come and visit us or contact  
Mohamed Khalif Abdi  
(Service provider) for more details.***



“

**I WANT TO CONGRATULATE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THESE PEOPLE FOR THEIR MERITED POSITIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, AND FURTHERMORE ON BEING SUCH EXCELLENT ROLE MODELS FOR ALL SOMALIS WHEREVER WE ARE IN THE WORLD.** *Abdirizak Abdi / (Editor)*

”



**ILHAN OMAR / USA**  
Minnesota House Representative  
(first Somali American elected to the USA House of Representatives)



**AHMED HUSSEIN / CANADA**  
Somali Canadian MP  
(first Somali elected to the Canadian Parliament) Minister for Immigration

# PROMINENT SOMALI FIGURES IN THE DIASPORA

While my focus through this publication has been on showcasing the educational successes of our relatively small Somali community of about 1,600 people in New Zealand, I am also eagerly interested in the successes of Somalis in the *Diaspora* in general. I am pleased that we have received messages of support from two prominent Somalis in the *Diaspora* (Pages 5-6). A year ago, who would have thought that the Canadian Immigration Minister would be our own Somali born Ahmed Hussein, and that the first Somali-American Muslim, Ilhan Omar, would be elected as a legislator in the US House of Representatives. These personal stories of these two prominent Somalis are well-documented and a search on their names in Google provides a wealth of information about them – very inspirational and motivating. They are outstanding role models for us all and Somalis are exceedingly proud of their achievements.

As I searched Google for Somalis in the Diaspora who are contributing leadership in their adopted countries through political positions, I compiled a list to capture the breadth and wealth of talent that is found across the globe. Undoubtedly, I am sure



**ABDI WARSAME / USA**  
Minneapolis City Councillor



**ZAK IDAN / USA**  
Tukwila City Councillor

there are many others who I have missed. Notwithstanding that there are also many others who are making their mark in different fields, such as academia, business, humanitarian activities, media, writing, music, sports etc. I want to congratulate each and every one of these people for their merited positions and achievements. Furthermore -being such excellent role models for all Somalis wherever we are in the world.

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**A list of some prominent Somali figures who are currently holding political positions or have run for political positions in their adopted countries.**

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**ABDI ADEN / UK**  
Brent Councillor



**ABDULLAH GULAIID / UK**  
Ealing Councillor



**ABDUL MOHAMED / UK**  
Southwark Mayor ( 2013)



**HIBAQ JAMA / UK**  
Bristol Councillor



**AHMED HASSAN / USA**  
Clarkston City Councillor



**MOHAMUD NOOR / USA**  
*Ran for a Minneapolis City Council seat in 2017*

A list of some prominent Somali figures who are currently holding political positions or have run for political positions in their adopted countries.



**MUNA CALI / UK**  
Northampton Borough Councillor



**MAHAVADI HUSSEIN SHARIF / UK**  
Manchester City Councillor



**MUNIRA ABUKAR / CANADA**  
*Ran for a Toronto city council seat in 2014*



**AWALE OLAD / UK**  
Camden Councillor



**HARBI FARAH / UK**  
Brent Councillor



**LEILA ABUKAR / AUSTRALIA**  
Somali Australian political activist  
and Liberal National Party candidate  
for 2015 Queensland Election



**OMAR ALI / UK**  
Newport City Councillor  
(2013 – 2017)



**MAJID MAH / UK**  
Sheffield Councillor



**AMINA ALI / UK**  
A councillor in Tower Hamlets, East London. In 2015 she was selected to be Britain's Labour Party candidate for Bradford West seat, although she resigned few days following her selection for family reasons



# NEW ZEALAND LOCAL HERO AWARD

**My name is Mohamud Hassan Mohamed and I was born in Somalia. Even though I was born during the civil war, my understanding is that before the government collapsed, Somalia was a peaceful nation known as the Paris of Africa. It was a proud and thriving African country on track with economic, cultural and social development. However, unfortunately that was halted with the commencement of the civil war.**

My life experience is one that resonates with fellow Somali youth as I came to New Zealand as young child hoping to one day to positively contribute back to New Zealand. Like most other Somali youth when I came to New Zealand I could not speak English. I experienced what academics call the reversal of roles. This essentially is a situation in which two people have been forced to exchange their duties and responsibilities, so that each is doing what the other used to do. For example, I would often translate for my parents at the doctors and at parent – teacher interviews at school.

However, everything good in this world is surrounded by hardships and education is no exception. I believe that having a good solid education has helped me overcome various challenges in life. To me education is more than reading, writing and memorizing, as Aristotle said “Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity”. In addition, I believe that another skill that allowed me to overcome challenges was having resilience. I believe that patience and perseverance combined with resilience and a determination to succeed are vital ingredients to long-term success.

I was recently awarded a medal as a Kiwibank local hero. The Kiwibank Local Hero Award is New Zealand’s premier community award and recognizes a person whose selflessness and determination has

made a difference in the community. I am extremely humbled and honoured to be given such an award. It’s an honour to be amongst fellow medalists and local heroes who do incredible work in our communities. Thinking back on my background and where I have come since then, makes me feel proud of all that I have accomplished. I gained a B.A degree in Conflict Resolution and Social Sciences from AUT University and I am finalising my Master’s degree.

I know that many people reading this will be going through their own personal difficulties. My advice to you is to keep going, keep hoping and keep believing because success will be coming your way.

My final message is to try to give back to our communities. We should think about how we can build a more collaborative and cooperative society. We should also remain humble in our success. Likewise, we should acknowledge the fearless decisions made by our parent’s and families during adverse circumstances.

We thank them for their continued and unwavering support to help us reach our goals.





Check out the **Somali Graduate Journal** website. [www.somaligraduatejournal.org](http://www.somaligraduatejournal.org)



## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the graduates who have submitted their profiles and shared their personal stories with the wider community in this journal. Your individual stories and achievements will, no doubt, inspire your fellow Somalis especially those in high schools who are considering their future career aspirations. Your achievements are also a source of pride for your families and community.

I have enjoyed reading each and everyone's unique profile. Congratulations on your achievements and I wish you all the utmost success in all your future endeavours.

Many thanks also to everyone who has helped to collect of the graduate profiles from the community or have helped in some other way. It has been the efforts of many to put together this publication that is widely anticipated and celebrated across our Somali community in New Zealand and beyond.

**Special thanks to the Ministry of Social Development, specially the E Tū Whānau Team, for their ongoing support and engagement with our community.**

**Abdirizak Abdi**

Editor

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### PREVIOUS EDITIONS

2008



2009



2010



2011/12



2013



2014/15





