

2017 YWCA TORONTO WOMAN OF DISTINCTION

TRANSFORMING LIVES



HIBAQ GELLE

Community Development – *Community Development Coordinator,
Community Action Resource Centre*

Hibaq Gelle is a community mobilizer and social justice champion who advocates for Somali refugees and immigrants, and mentors young women who are navigating systemic barriers.

Day-to-day you can find this 27-year-old working on the frontlines as a community development professional where she is empowering women and girls. Whether she is working on provincial action or securing food security for women in Somalia, her imprint can be found locally and internationally. Her deepest desire is to help the most marginalized and vulnerable people in our society. It is Hibaq's bold ideas and passion for giving people the support they need that has led to watershed achievements far beyond the scope of her job.

She led two fundraising campaigns, Feed Somalia and Teach Somalia, raising millions of dollars in humanitarian and educational aid, demonstrating the power of using local action for global impact. In 2015, Hibaq was invited to Mogadishu by the Somali government to attend the National Youth Conference and to participate in building the first-ever National Youth Policy.

Mirroring that success at home, Hibaq became one of two Black Muslim women appointed onto the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities where she advises the government on policy issues. She is also a key advisor on local municipal strategies that impact marginalized communities. Always keeping her Somali roots at the forefront of her work, she also volunteers as a director for Positive Change – an initiative tackling violence in collaboration with Somali mothers, Toronto Police Services and other social service institutions.

A true force of nature with a generous spirit, Hibaq can often be found connecting young women with resources or opportunities.

Hibaq holds a unique perspective and has her finger on the pulse of the communities she serves. Sought-after for her expertise, she has spoken on CBC Metro Morning, The National, BBC and has been featured in Canadian publications such as Metro Toronto, NOW Magazine, and the Toronto Star. She recently received the CivicAction Emerging Leader Award for her outstanding commitment to improving her community.

Hibaq's efforts in challenging norms and making a tangible difference in the lives of Somali refugees and immigrants will be felt for generations to come.


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