

November 1st, 2019

## PATHWAY TO PROSPERITY



The resettlement of African Refugees  
in Canada: more barriers for the most  
vulnerable refugees?

# The case of Somali refugees in Canada

## WHAT WE'RE COVERING

Context

Differential treatment of Somali refugees

Settlement difficulties

A story of resilience



SOMALI COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE



# CONTEXT

## DOWNFALL OF THE REGIME

- A fifth of the Somali population was thought to have left Somalia and sought refuge in other countries by 1990
- Between 55,000 to 70,000 Somalis arrived in Canada just between 1988 and 1996

## ARRIVAL IN CANADA

- No established Somali community waiting for them in Canada
- Very difficult experience settling for the first cohort
- Those arrived after 2002 fared relatively better in terms of socio-economic outcomes

# Differential treatment of Somali refugees

- Canadians were ill-prepared to receive Somalis compared to refugees from Indochina.
- Most Somalis entered Canada as refugee claimants and through family reunification. Somalis constituted only 2% of Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) landings from 1993-2001, and 4% from 2002-2009.
- The impacts of the Immigration Act (Bill C-86) introduced in 1993 particularly affected Somali and Afghan refugees. All applicants, including refugees, were required to have passports or 'satisfactory' IDs to be granted landing (permanent residence).
- The media did not always paint a positive image of Somali refugees.

SOMALIS RATES OF  
ACCEPTANCE AT THE  
IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE  
BOARD

90%

BETWEEN 1990 AND 1993.  
1993

57%

CURRENT RATES SINCE

## LANGUAGE

Most Somalis spoke neither English nor French when they arrived, increasing the isolation (especially women)

## MENTAL HEALTH

Somali refugees were prone to post-traumatic stress and other mental health issues



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# SETTLEMENT DIFFICULTIES

## HOUSING

Finding appropriate and affordable housing was a challenge especially as Somali families were often large.

## WOMEN & YOUTH

The amendments to the Immigration Act and the negative impact on family reunification took a toll on the Somali family unit.

## EDUCATION

Outcomes on education were lower for Somalis than for other immigrant populations.



# SETTLEMENT DIFFICULTIES

## EMPLOYMENT

They faced a number of barriers -including intersectional discrimination- to access non-precarious full-time employment.

# A STORY OF RESILIENCE

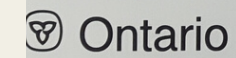
- Multiple services agencies targeting Somali communities have been established over the years.
- Self-help initiatives empowered local community members, some managed to recreate the social support system from back home. They also managed to bring some important policy changes that benefited other refugees and immigrants as well
- Success stories like Sharmarke Dubow or Honorable Ahmed Hussen.

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**Somali Center  
for Family Services**

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THANK YOU

