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UNHCR TURKEY – DONOR IMPACT STORIES

Building a pathway to a better future through higher education

Konya - Turkey, December 2016 (UNHCR): It took just six months for both Amani and Menel to perfect their Turkish. Both of them fled war-torn Syria four years ago. Desperate to finish their education, both girls knuckled down, studied hard and very soon successfully received a certificate of advanced Turkish language proficiency needed for admission to Turkish universities.

Turkey provides access to the full spectrum of educational opportunities to refugees and asylum-seekers.

They offer free primary and secondary education and have waived the tuition fee for Syrian students for programmes offered at state universities, for a third year in a row for the 2016-2017 school year. UNHCR supports the government's efforts in maximizing education opportunities to Syrians by providing scholarships for the TOMER-certified Turkish language courses, both inside and outside of the refugee camps. Additionally UNHCR provides university



Menel's exercise books for her university degree in primary education that was made possible thanks to the DAFI scholarship, Konya, Turkey @UNHCR/Esther Judah

scholarships, funded the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Albert Einstein German Academic Initiative (DAFI) in partnership with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB).

Studious and dedicated, Amani graduated from the UNHCR-funded TOMER course in Hatay and Menel in Osmaniye Camp. As soon as they successfully passed the TOMER language course the girls both applied for DAFI scholarships to study Primary Education. After a selection process, both girls succeeded in their application, and were awarded places to study at Necmettin Erbakan University in Konya, they are in their fourth and final year of their studies.

For the 2016 to 2017 academic year, UNHCR is providing 750 DAFI scholarships to Syrian students, in addition to the 82 DAFI scholarships which have been awarded to Syrian students since 2014. Almost 6,600 applications were received this year, for this limited number of places, indicating a high interest among refugee students for higher education. In pre-war Syria 20% of Syrian youth were enrolled in university degrees compared to less than 3% of Syrian youth in Turkey who are currently studying for university degrees. "When we came to Turkey, we were just children" Amani tells me, "and what we went through forced us to grow up fast." Menel, whose family are still in Osmaniye refugee camp, is alone in Konya where she met Amani who is on the same course. "I chose to come to Konya alone, with my parents support, knowing this path will lead me to build a better future for myself." Menel flicks between the pages of her note book showing me her meticulously completed exercises ahead of her university examinations the following week.

Amani jumps into the conversation adding: "we chose this degree because we know that while we came as children to Turkey, we will return as adults and have the responsibility on our shoulders to teach the next generation once we return to Syria." The girls tell me how without the scholarship they would not have been able to study at university, "we have to succeed, both for ourselves and the next generation of Syrian children who need teachers to teach them all of the basics that they have missed", Amani adds.

Thanks to the generous support of the Government of Germany which has provided over USD 17 million in 2016 and supported the DAFI scholarship programme, UNHCR Turkey is able to provide holistic support for Syrian refugees, which includes an array of protection and assistance activities.

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