

30 YEARS

of DAFI



Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative [DAFI]
30th Anniversary 1992 – 2023 | Annual Report 2023

This report was developed by the Education Section in the Division of Resilience and Solutions, UNHCR.

The drafters would like to acknowledge the incredible written reflections, time invested and insights contributed by all the DAFI scholars and alumni whose experiences are reflected in this report. The drafters are furthermore grateful for the support of colleagues in regional bureaus and country operations, as well as partners and refugee students worldwide.

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This work is a product of the staff of the UNHCR with DAFI scholarship recipient contributions. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR or the governments it represents.

Cover Feature Photo:

Asia, 22, is a student of Business Administration at Peshawar University.
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FOREWORD

Annalena Baerbock,
German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

The family of Asma Rabi fled their home in Afghanistan because her mother and aunts feared being abducted or forced into marriage against their will. They eventually built a new life in Pakistan. Monicah Malith comes from a family of cattle herders in South Sudan. When the impacts of the civil war intensified, she fled to the capital of Juba in 2006 with some of her family members. From there, Monicah was sent to Kenya, where she was able to go to school.

As unique as their stories are, Asma Rabi and Monicah Malith have one thing in common: They both received a scholarship from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), which helped each of them build a better future for themselves and for others. With DAFI's support, Asma Rabi graduated in 2021 in Media Studies and Mass Communication. As a regional leader for the Tertiary Refugee Student Network, she is now working to improve access to education for boys and girls. Moreover, she served as an advisory board member for the UN Secretary-General's Transforming Education Summit in 2022. Monicah Malith joined the DAFI programme in 2021 to study law at the University of Nairobi. In 2023, she was elected president of the University of Nairobi Student Association, becoming the first female refugee student president at her university in Kenya. Today, she helps promote student engagement and participation in university affairs.

These are only two examples of how DAFI scholarships are making a difference in people's lives. For three decades, the German Government has been supporting the initiative to enable young refugees to pursue higher education in their host countries. It is no coincidence that the initiative is named after Albert Einstein, who himself had to flee Nazi Germany and found refuge in the United States of America. Our world today would be different if great minds like Einstein had not received support for their studies. It allowed him to continue his ground-breaking research – and to change the world. I would like to thank the UNHCR for its excellent implementation of the programme over the past 30 years. Through your commitment and tireless work, more than 24,000 refugees in 55 host countries have been given access to an academic education.

But the need is still great, and it continues to grow. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide has reached a new high of 110 million. Most of them find refuge in countries where resources for



education, even for their own population, are scarce. As stated at the First Global Refugee Forum in 2019, the German Government is committed to improving refugees' prospects to live self-determined lives in dignity. Through higher education, we can help young refugees develop skills and earn qualifications to develop self-reliance and sustainable futures. Higher education also has an impact on society as a whole. It improves the long-term stability of communities which host refugees, and it contributes to the peaceful development of their host countries and countries of origin. For those effects to materialise, refugees' right to enter the labour market of their host country is crucial. I therefore appreciate the UNHCR's efforts in many countries to reduce legal and technical obstacles that refugees are confronted with when looking for work or striving to start their own businesses.

Today, we don't know how many potential young Einsteins are living in refugee camps worldwide. However, we do know that scholarships can provide them with a future and opportunities – to build better lives for themselves, make positive contributions to their host countries, and accomplish great things for humankind. Together with UNHCR and all the other donors contributing to the DAFI programme, I am looking forward to granting scholarships to new students as part of the global commitment to achieve an enrolment level of 15 percent of refugee youth in higher education by 2030. It is stories such as those of Asma Rabi and Monicah Malith that we aim to support. Let us strengthen DAFI even further and make a difference in the lives of more and more talented young refugees!



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2022 marked the 30th Anniversary of the DAFI scholarship programme. Since its inception in 1992, the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarship programme has reached over 24,000 students worldwide. It is one of the most renowned and long-standing higher education programmes specifically for refugees. The programme, funded primarily by the German Government with additional support from the Danish Government and other private partners and foundations, was active in 56 countries in 2022. Furthermore, in 2022 the Aiming Higher Campaign – UNHCR’s global fundraising campaign for tertiary education – raised 8.98 million USD, which directly funded scholarships for refugee youth. The DAFI programme continues to be the cornerstone of UNHCR’s strategy to achieve and exceed 15 per cent enrolment of refugees in higher education by 2030 (the 15by30 target).¹ At the time of publication, enrolment of refugees in higher education around the world stands at 7 per cent.

Scholarship programmes that specifically support refugees, such as DAFI, are vital, even in those hosting countries that include refugees in the national education system. Nearly three quarters of countries where DAFI operates permit refugees to access higher education. However, even where refugees may attend university, they are rarely eligible to receive government-issued loans or other financial aid for their education, which is often an insurmountable barrier.

Further demonstrating the critical importance of scholarships like DAFI, in 2022 UNHCR published an independent evaluation of the DAFI programme to understand its relevance, effectiveness and impact.² Most notably, the evaluation found that knowledge of scholarship opportunities for refugees is associated with improved retention in secondary school. This effect is more pronounced for refugee girls and those living in camp settings. The evaluation also found that programme-wide graduation rates have steadily increased over time; the financial support provided by the programme is fundamental to maintaining high completion rates. In terms of student perspectives on the programme, job-readiness is a priority for DAFI scholars who frequently reported a desire for more career preparation and job placement opportunities.

In 2022, 15 per cent of DAFI scholars participated in job or career readiness trainings (1,396 scholars), 14 per

cent completed internships (1,273 scholars) and over 40 per cent engaged in community service or volunteering (3,895 scholars). DAFI country operations regularly organised career readiness, information sessions and workshops focused on employment and continuing education opportunities, including those specifically for women. For example, in Burundi, the DAFI partner organisation launched a mentoring programme for female DAFI scholarship holders called “DAFI Women Power” to prepare women for future community leadership roles. The programme also established connections with private and public sector organisations in Burundi to facilitate pathways for DAFI graduates to transition into employment. DAFI scholars around the world had access to a range of training and workshops focused on career planning, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, resume writing, interviewing and other career-readiness skills.

The economic returns for tertiary education graduates are the highest in the entire educational system – an estimated 17 per cent increase in earnings compared with 10 per cent for primary and 7 per cent for secondary education completion.³ Furthermore, the economic returns for female graduates of higher education are the greatest. Women with a secondary school education may earn twice as much as those with no formal education, and women with a tertiary

education may make three times as much.⁴ However, access to higher education cannot translate into higher earnings without the right to work. Over half of the countries where DAFI operates have policies that allow refugees to work. Yet in practice, refugees frequently face barriers to enter the formal labour market, may be excluded from working in the public or civil service sector, face complicated and costly processes to obtain work permits and are not consistently permitted to open bank accounts or register businesses. DAFI scholars, refugee leaders and partners stress the need not only to expand higher education opportunities, but also for states to ensure refugees’ right to work, so that they can apply their education, knowledge and skills to contribute to development around the world.

In 2022, 9,043 young refugee women and men from 50 countries of origin were enrolled on DAFI scholarships in 56 countries. This marks a notable increase of nearly 1,000 students compared to the 2021 cohort. Women made up 43 per cent of the 2022 DAFI programme (compared to 41 per cent in 2021). DAFI country operations continued to strive for gender parity, including by restructuring admission considerations to reduce unintentional discrimination, delivering focus groups with prospective female applicants and secondary students, and conducting community-based campaigns to raise awareness about the unique importance of higher education for women. The DAFI programme is on track to achieve gender parity in enrolment by 2025.

As illustrated by the programme data snapshot on the proceeding pages, in 2022 a majority of DAFI scholars were from South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria and programmes in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (EHAGL) region supported the largest share of DAFI students (38 per cent of the total DAFI student body). The programme continues to address

the needs of the world’s most urgent displacement situations, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, Colombia, Syria and others.

As the DAFI programme turns 30, this year’s report is composed entirely of reflections from 30+ DAFI scholarship recipients. In it, you will meet current DAFI scholars, recent graduates and alumni who studied in all regions where the DAFI programme operates. They attended national universities, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and connected higher education programmes. Furthermore, several graduates have gone on to pursue master’s degrees via complementary education pathways programmes in third countries. To gather their reflections, the global DAFI team coordinated closely with country operations and programme staff, without whom this report would not have been possible. Each reflection was written entirely by each individual scholar. To preserve the authenticity of each contribution, no changes have been made to grammar or syntax. Only minor wording changes were made to ensure clarity and are reflected in [brackets]. Finally, each writer was given the opportunity to write their reflection in the language of their choice. An English translation is provided where the original text is in another language.

Throughout the report, the writers reflect beyond the traditional asylum narrative that refugees are often asked to share. They focus on the specific moment that inspired them to pursue their chosen field of study, their work leading projects in the arts, sciences and community development, and the organisations and initiatives that they have founded or plan to pursue. Their insights, expertise and vision for the future reflect the dynamic impact of the DAFI programme as well as the true potential of investing in higher education for refugees.

¹ The five pillars of the 15by30 roadmap include the DAFI programme, enrolment in national universities, complementary education pathways, connected higher education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). As of 2022, 7 per cent of eligible refugee women and men were enrolled in higher education.

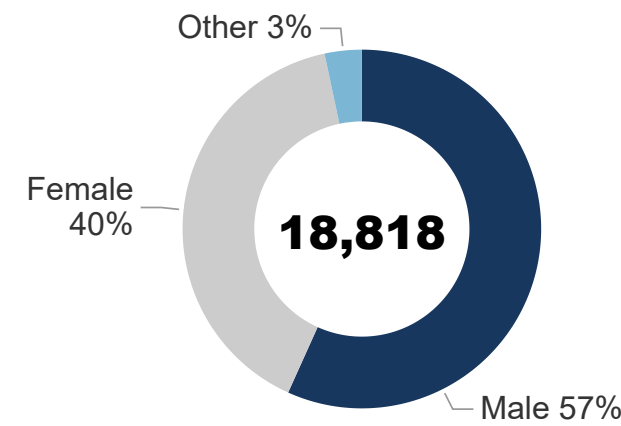
² The evaluation was conducted using a mixed methods approach. Surveys were administered to DAFI participants, implementing partners and UNHCR personnel and the evaluation team analysed nearly ten years of DAFI programme data (2014 – 2020). In addition, key informant interviews were held with a wide range of stakeholders in seven focus countries ([UNHCR 2022](#)).

³ [World Bank 2021](#).

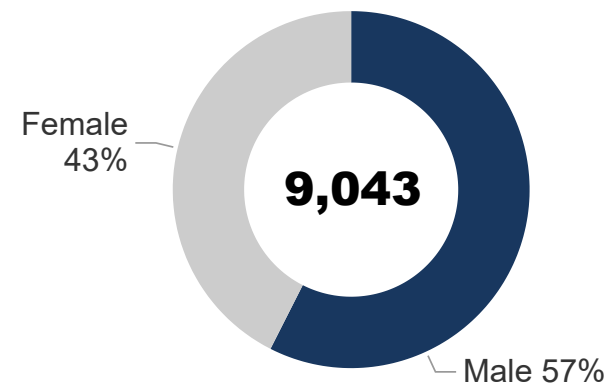
⁴ [World Bank 2018](#).

2022 GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

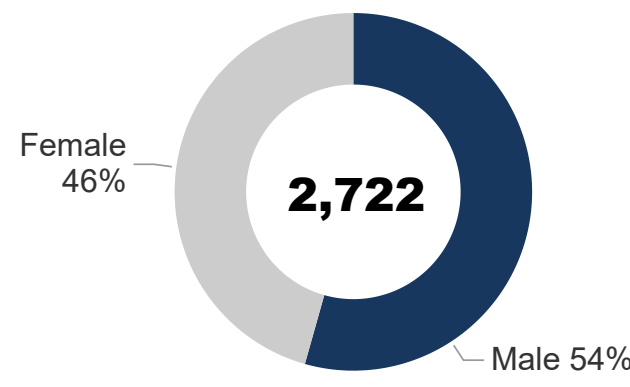
APPLICATIONS



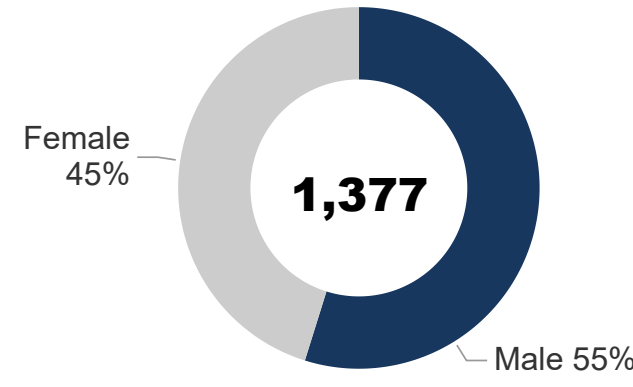
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



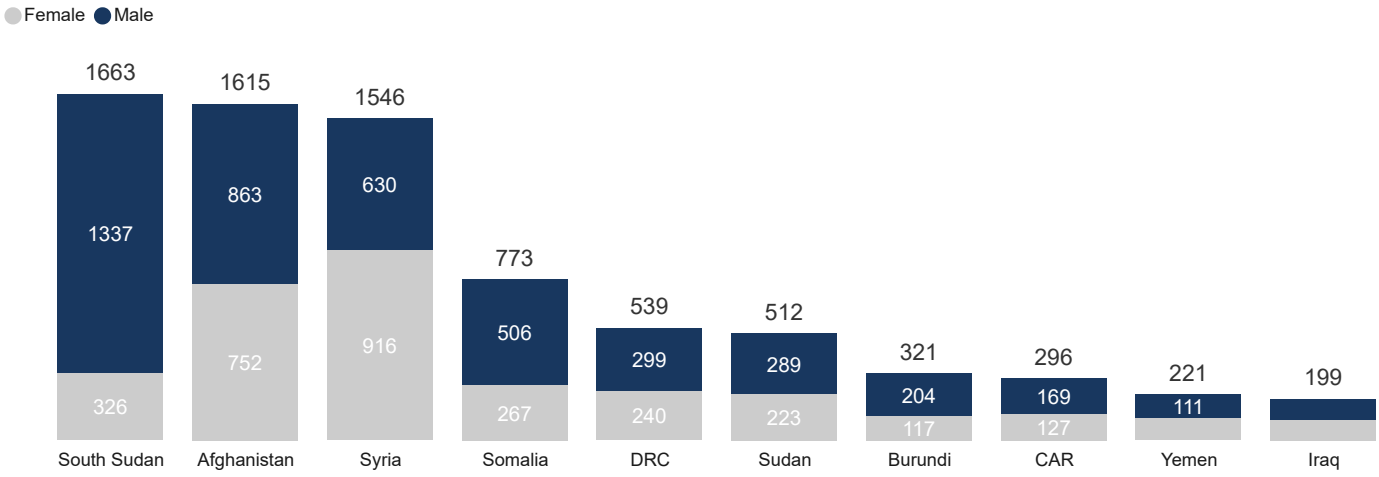
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



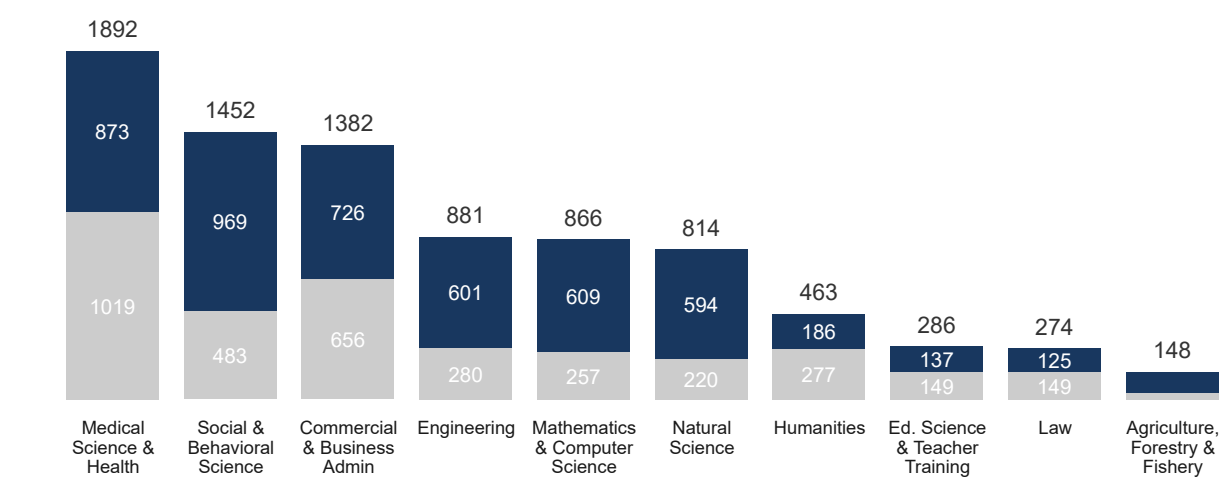
GRADUATES



TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



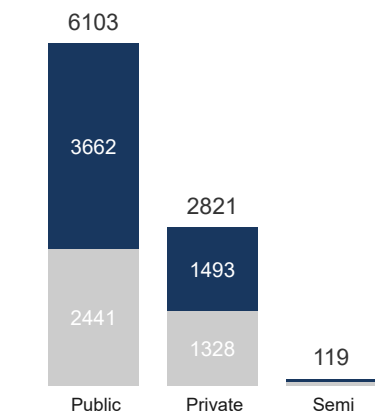
TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



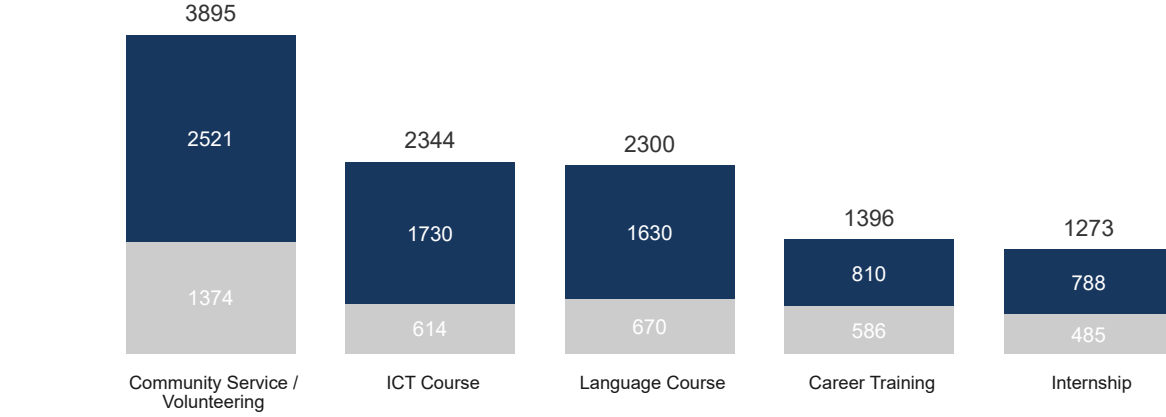
STUDENT LOCATION



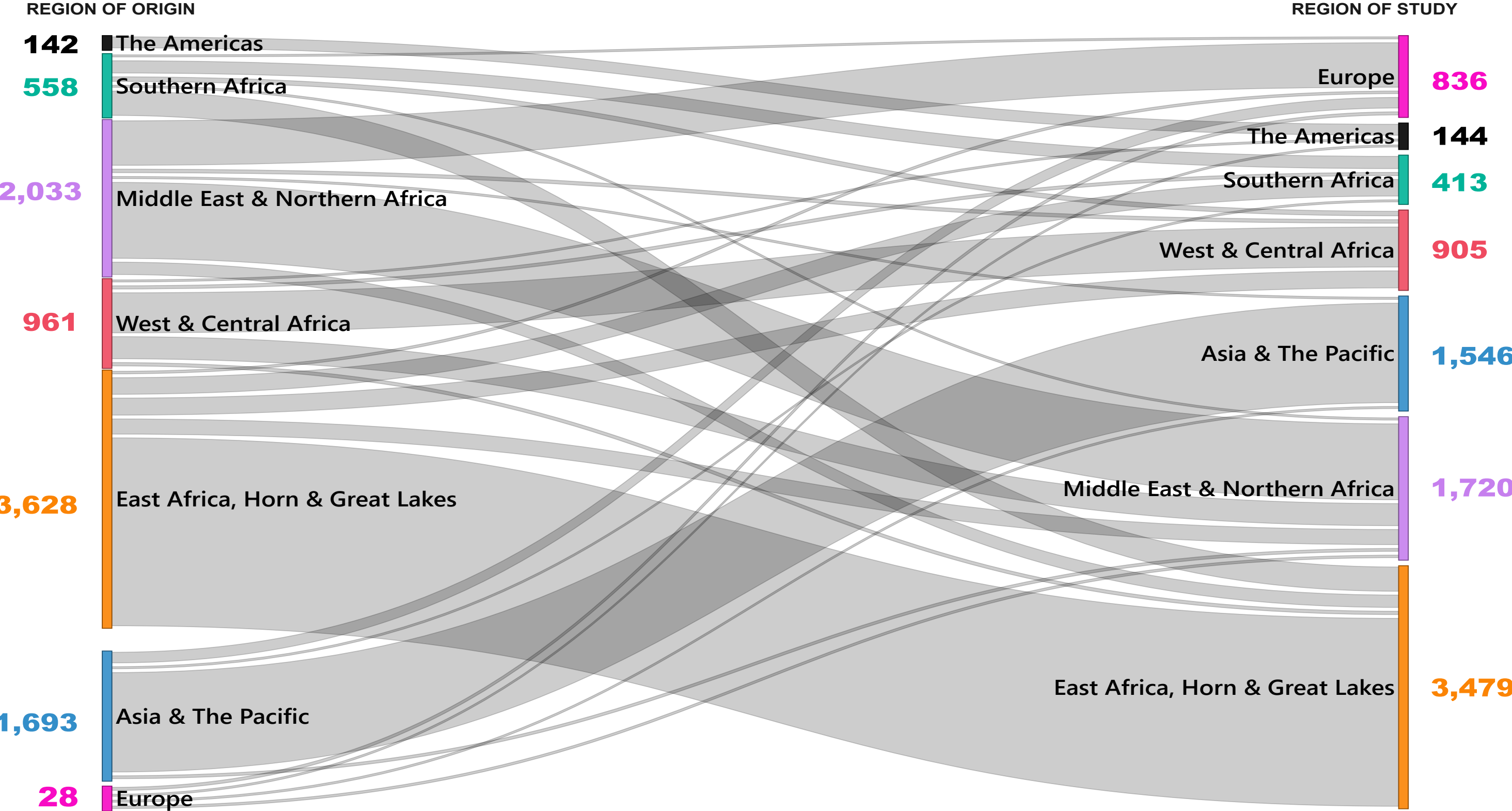
INSTITUTION TYPE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES



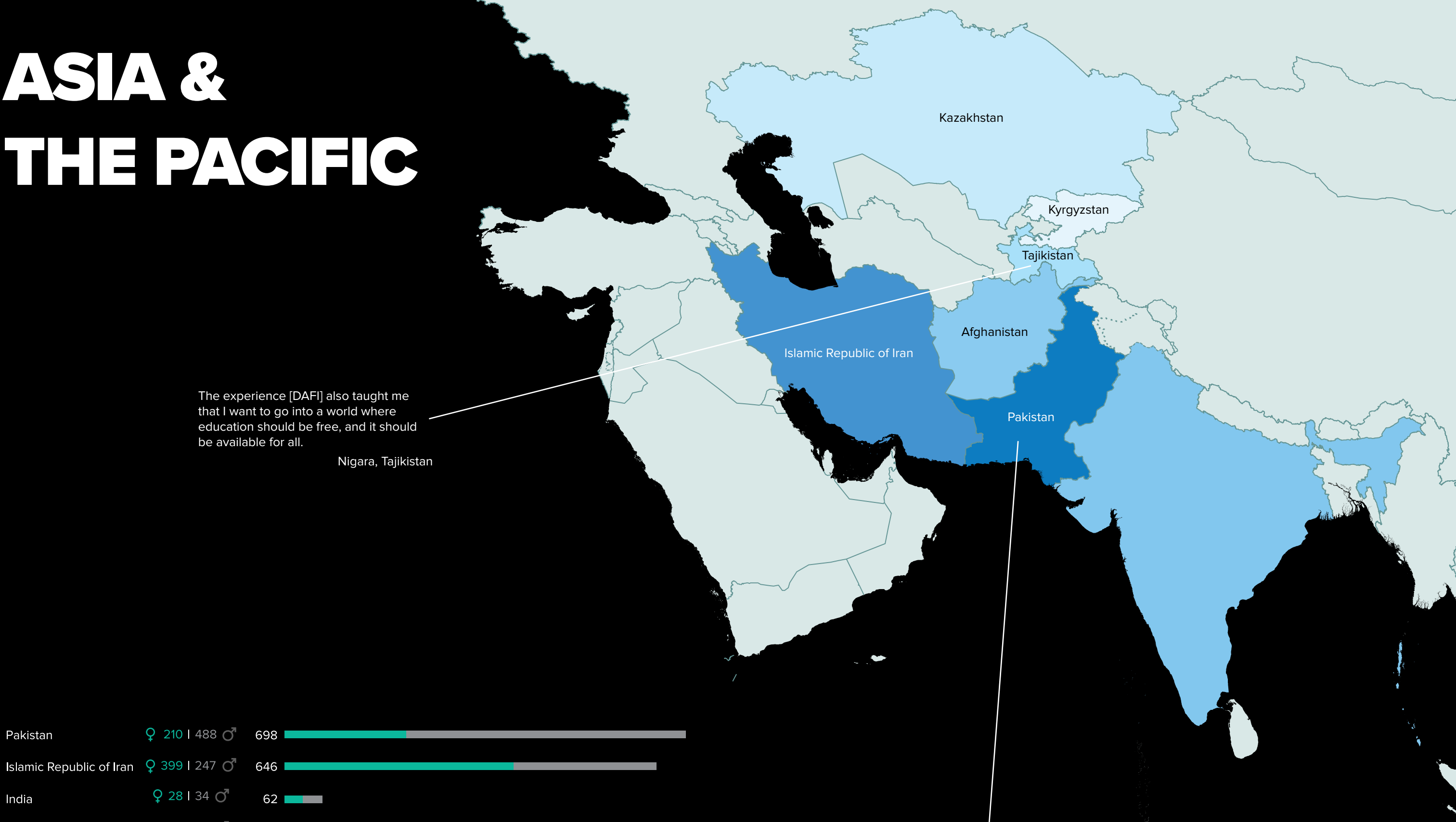
2022 GLOBAL SCHOLAR MOVEMENT





Kabul, Afghanistan (2021)
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

ASIA & THE PACIFIC



Pakistan	♀ 210 488 ♂	698	<div><div></div></div>
Islamic Republic of Iran	♀ 399 247 ♂	646	<div><div></div></div>
India	♀ 28 34 ♂	62	<div><div></div></div>
Afghanistan	♀ 30 25 ♂	55	<div><div></div></div>
Tajikistan	♀ 29 21 ♂	50	<div><div></div></div>
Kazakhstan	♀ 11 4 ♂	15	<div><div></div></div>
Kyrgyzstan	♀ 5 4 ♂	9	<div><div></div></div>

By focusing on women’s empowerment, [my] NGO can bring about sustainable change that benefits not only individuals but also entire communities and nations.

Asia, Pakistan

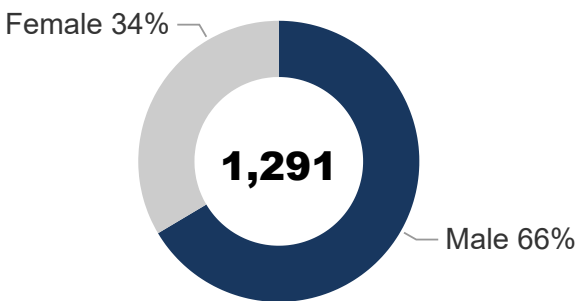
ASIA & THE PACIFIC

In 2022, DAFI programmes in Asia and the Pacific accounted for the third largest share of DAFI students, with 17 per cent of the total student body (1,546 scholars in total). This region includes DAFI programmes in Pakistan, Iran, India, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Most countries do not exercise a comprehensive, consistent legal framework to include refugees in national higher education systems. Just three of the countries in this region ensure refugees the right to higher education on par with nationals – Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan. In addition, only three countries in the region ensure refugees the right to work in practice and across the region it is largely difficult for refugees to obtain required documentation to work, open bank accounts and register businesses. Women refugees continue to face additional challenges due to prevailing gender and cultural norms.

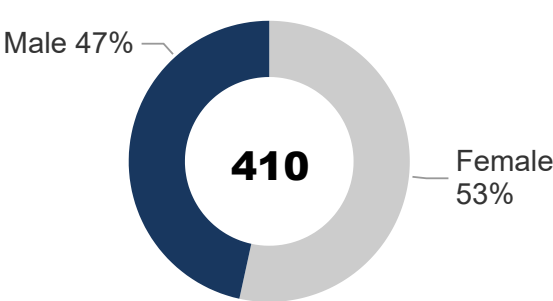
In 2022, new and ongoing political and security developments affected countries across the region. Most notably, the ban on access to secondary and tertiary education for girls and women in Afghanistan imperils the right to all levels of education without discrimination. The DAFI programme in Afghanistan is one of four DAFI operations specifically designed to support returnees (alongside Burundi, South Sudan and Somalia). Several DAFI countries also noted an increase in new arrivals from Afghanistan, including Tajikistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran and India, which expanded the demand for scholarships and access to higher education.

Although a few countries do ensure inclusion of refugees in their national higher education systems, financial support is needed to ensure that refugees can avail themselves of opportunities to enrol. Widespread protests in Iran, which has the second highest number of DAFI scholars in the region (646), resulted in restricted internet access for students and ongoing safety concerns. Finally, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, neighbouring countries throughout Asia and the Pacific received millions of Ukrainian refugees, among them thousands of young people seeking access to university. In years to come, the DAFI programme aims to expand support for refugee students in Southeast Asia, where demand is high but higher education opportunities and related support for refugees remain scarce.

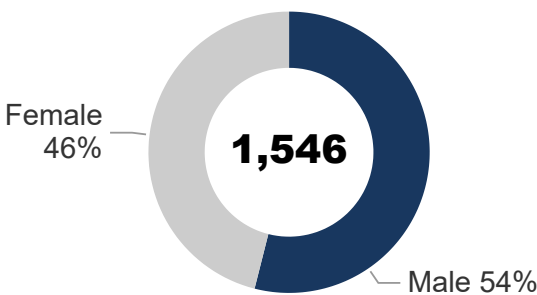
APPLICATIONS



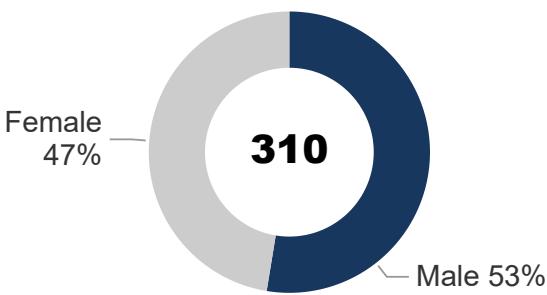
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



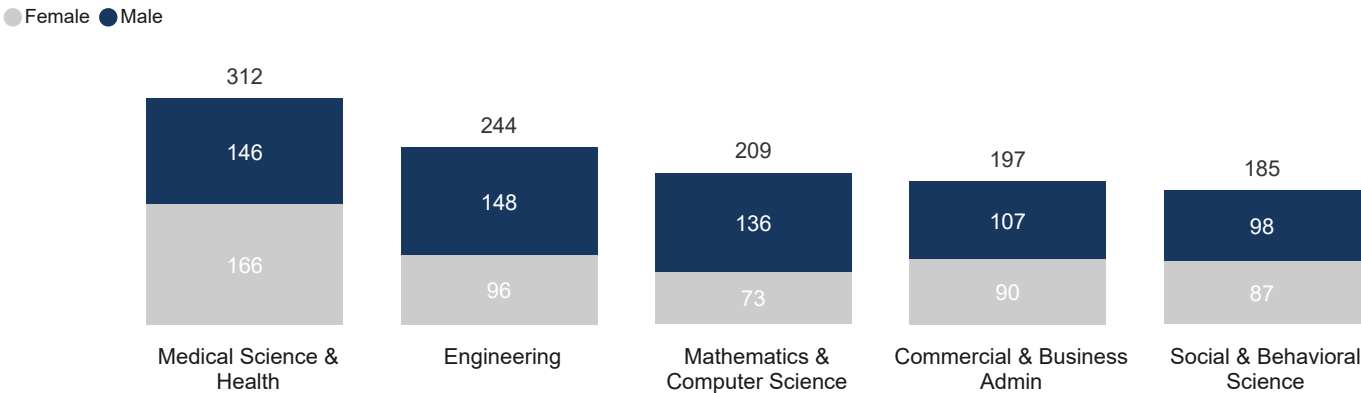
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



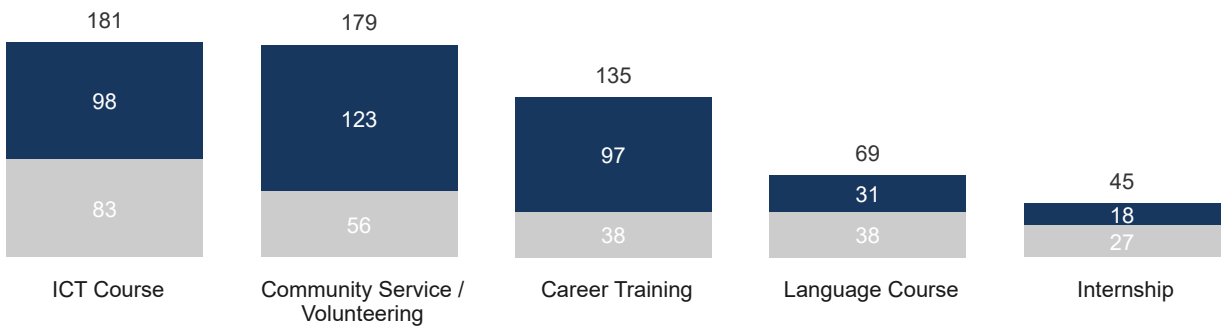
GRADUATES



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES



Nigara

DAFI Alumna | Founder of the Ariana Learning Center

Age: 23 | **Country of Origin:** Afghanistan | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Tajikistan

Institution of Study: National University of Tajikistan

Field of Study: Economics

“The experience [DAFI] also taught me that I want to go into a world where education should be free, and it should be available for all.”

Before the DAFI scholarship, I knew I wanted to attend and finish my university, but I always said I want to work two years then figure it out. My family pushed and poked my brain to really determine what I want to do in a country where you are a refugee with no guaranteed future. They made me realize how hard it is to start working and start a new life. I then figured out that I wanted to start my degree.

Not only did I want to get my degree in economics, but I also wanted to start an education system which will serve all Afghans. As I continued to learn about the area of education rights, I was drawn to the social work perspective because of my interest in an “education” approach to aiding women because they don’t have access to education in their own countries. I also learned that I am much more interested in establishing an education center where I could gather all and help them with what they need, such as educating them in different languages, which is better than sitting at home and doing nothing.

I enjoyed my time with DAFI and now, through experiencing the value of higher education and meeting new people, I have been able to refine my professional plan of creating an education center by the name of ALC (Ariana Learning Center). At ALC we are working for Afghan refugees and educating them with limited facilities we have here since 2020. Now we are the leading education center in Vahdat with approximately 1500 students of different levels. ALC includes IT classes and [instruction in] different languages.

Furthermore, we were able to provide education facilities for women in Vahdat and create courses for women that include tailoring, makeup, music, languages, yoga and mental health support. This experience has furthered my knowledge in working for refugees, their issues and will be beneficial for me to finish my education. I have discovered many different aspects of myself through my DAFI experience. While working with DAFI I realized that I do have an interest in educating and helping others with their dreams.

[My experience with] DAFI helped me to build the education center and start my work as founder. Now I’m busy with it all the time and I will continue to invest my time and future with ALC. The experience [of starting ALC] allowed me to observe the public service career path and now I believe it is a path that I want to continue. I learned from DAFI that I can do both and I do not have to rule out one or the other. The experience also taught me that I want to go into a world where education should be free, and it should be available for all.

Asia

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 22 | **Country of Origin:** Afghanistan | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Pakistan

Institution of Study: Peshawar Business School (Peshawar University)

Field of Study: Business Administration

“By focusing on women’s empowerment, [my] NGO can bring about sustainable change that benefits not only individuals but also entire communities and nations.”

If I had the opportunity to start any organisation, I would start a socioeconomic development non-governmental organisation (NGO) to serve for women in third world countries. My organization’s activities would include equipping women refugees and asylees with skills to secure employment and start their own businesses, preparing women to access education and training opportunities, fostering leadership skills, and providing relevant healthcare information and awareness programs.

Mission: Its mission would be to empower women in third world countries in socioeconomic development by providing them with the necessary tools, resources, and support to enhance their skills, promote gender equality, and create opportunities for sustainable growth.

This work is important for me due to several reasons, presented below.

Gender Equality: Third world countries often face significant gender disparities, with women being marginalized and disadvantaged in various aspects of life. My NGO will start promoting gender equality through women empowerment initiatives which can help address these disparities and will help in creating a more inclusive and just society.

Poverty Alleviation: Women constitute a significant proportion of the world’s poor population, especially in third world countries. By empowering women and enhancing their access to education, training, and income-generating opportunities, the NGO can contribute to poverty alleviation efforts. When women are economically empowered, they can lift themselves and their families out of poverty, leading to improved income and living standards.

Education and Skill Development: As in many third world countries, women face barriers to education and skill development. By providing educational and vocational training programs, my NGO can equip women with

the necessary knowledge and skills to secure better employment opportunities, start their own businesses, and contribute to the overall development of their communities.

Leadership and Decision-making: Empowering women to actively participate in decision-making processes at all levels, including community and government, is essential for the overall development of a country. By fostering leadership skills and promoting women’s representation in various spheres, my NGO can contribute to more inclusive and effective governance.

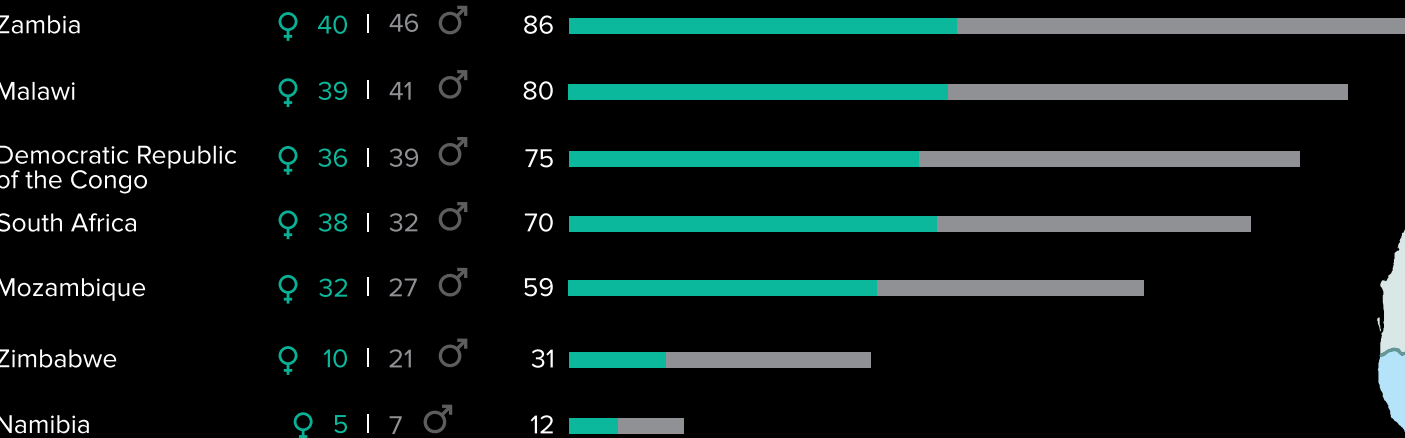
Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: When women are empowered, they become agents of change within their families and communities. They are more likely to invest in their children’s education, health, and overall well-being. By breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering women, my NGO can create a ripple effect that positively affects future generations.

Overall, the work of empowering women for socioeconomic development in third world countries is essential for promoting gender equality, reducing poverty, improving health outcomes, fostering leadership, and creating a more inclusive and prosperous society. By focusing on women’s empowerment, [my] NGO can bring about sustainable change that benefits not only individuals but also entire communities and nations.



Plain Savo, Democratic Republic of Congo (2022)
© UNHCR/Hélène Caux

SOUTHERN AFRICA



That [selection for the DAFI scholarship] was a turning point in my life because I could see the dream of becoming a journalist being actualized.

Noella, Zambia

One's gender should never be a hindrance to pursue one's passion, but rather a reason to smash down stereotypes and tear down boundaries.

Bernice, South Africa

Employment is not just a necessary step after education, but it also provides a pathway for refugees to contribute to their communities and create a better future for themselves and others.

Don, Malawi

SOUTHERN AFRICA

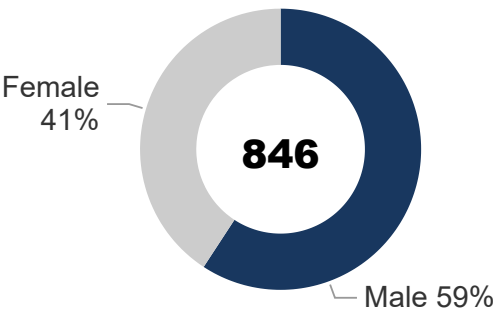
In 2022, DAFI programmes in Southern Africa accounted for nearly 5 per cent of the total student body (413 scholars in total). This region includes DAFI programmes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. According to national policies, nearly all countries in the region allow refugees to access higher education. In most, refugees pay the same tuition fees as national students and in all countries in the region, refugees can sit for the same examinations as their host-community peers. However, in practice, refugees do not have access to government financial aid programmes, which presents a significant challenge to inclusion. Furthermore, although according to policy over half of the countries in this region allow refugees to work, in practice, refugees can only exercise the right to work in two countries. Where refugees do have the right to work, they are not consistently able to open bank accounts or register businesses.

Beyond the DAFI programme, there are a limited number of post-secondary education and skills training opportunities for refugees in the Southern Africa region. These opportunities typically include teacher training positions, professional training in service industries and entrepreneurial training. However, many of these are provided by private institutions, which are typically more costly and often inaccessible to refugees.

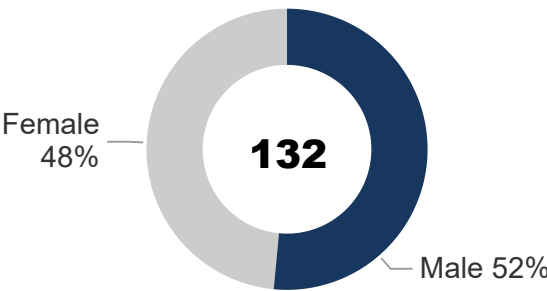
Several social, political and economic shifts in the region in 2022 affected access to higher education for refugees. The DRC reformed its national higher education structure to match the system applied by most countries in the European Union (licence-master-doctorate, LMD), thereby aligning with international standards and to facilitate

degree recognition across EU countries. However, strikes in public institutions disrupted the academic calendar, fuel shortages increased the cost of public transport and the ongoing war in the east of the DRC limited student mobility. In mid-2022, the government of Malawi began the implementation of an encampment policy requiring all refugees residing outside of the refugee camps, including for education purposes, to return to the camp. However, this did not impact DAFI scholars. Finally, Mozambique was hit by severe tropical storms and cyclones and there were new attacks by Non-State Armed Groups, resulting in increased insecurity and internal displacement, including in areas where DAFI scholars live.

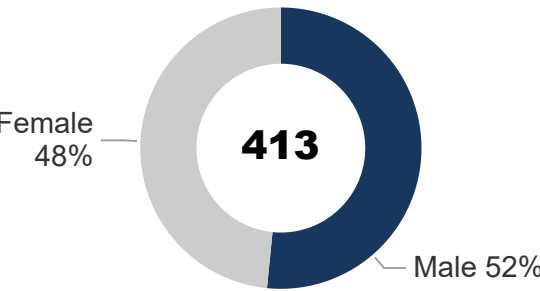
APPLICATIONS



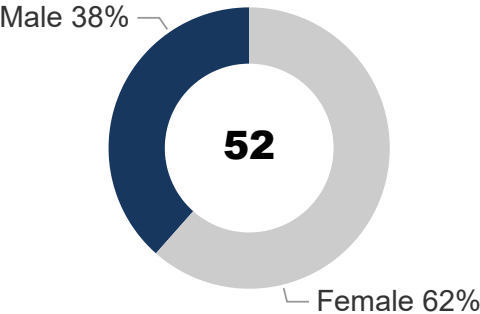
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



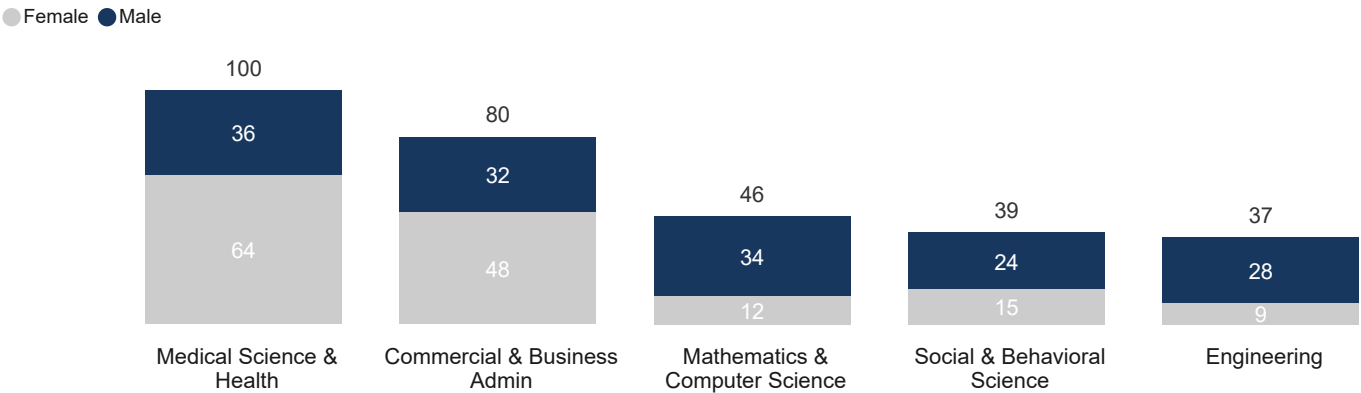
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



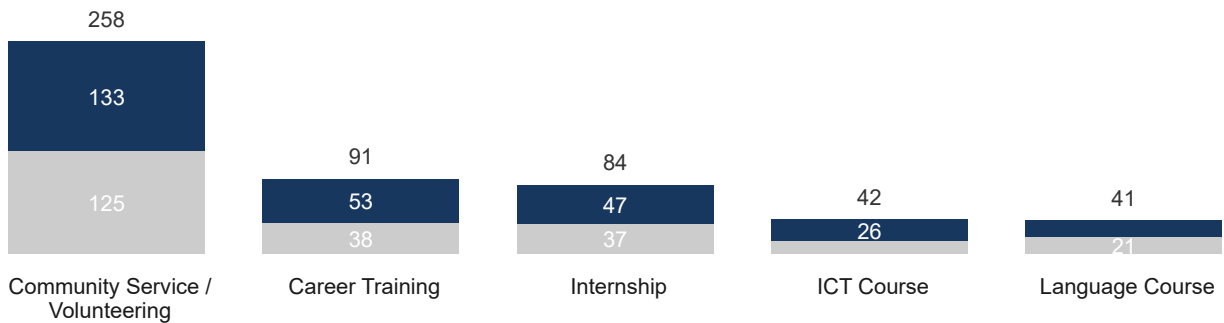
GRADUATES



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES





Bernice

DAFI Alumna | Master's Candidate in Computer Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity at the University of Caligari (Italy)

Country of Origin: Democratic Republic of Congo

Country of Study (DAFI): South Africa | **Institution of Study:** University of Johannesburg | **Field of Study:** Electrical Engineering

“One’s gender should never be a hindrance to pursue one’s passion, but rather a reason to smash down stereotypes and tear down boundaries.”

Being a refugee woman in the male-dominated field of engineering is a unique kind of challenge. The DAFI Scholarship not only transformed my academic prospects but also reinforced my belief in the power of empowering women in STEM. It gave me the means to pursue a master’s degree in Italy, enhancing my knowledge, abilities, and perspective on the world. I am eager to encourage upcoming generations of refugees, especially females, to follow their aspirations courageously and fearlessly.

As I think back on my experiences, I am incredibly appreciative of the DAFI Scholarship for giving me this chance to change my life. The DAFI scholarship did not only validate and accept my hard work, but it opened a door for a young refugee girl like me that I had never imagined possible. The financial difficulties that I experienced before receiving the scholarship would have not allowed me to follow my passion of becoming an Engineer. The DAFI scholarship gave me the confidence and motivation to dream big, to set ambitious goals, and to work tirelessly towards achieving them.

Being a woman in engineering frequently requires negotiating a male-dominated field where prejudices and biases can obstruct one’s progress. But the DAFI Scholarship has been a beacon of hope and inspiration, reminding me that my gender should not ever get in the way of my goals. One of my biggest goals under the DAFI scholarship was to create a project that will benefit others and, more significantly, inspire refugee women by making them realize that through education, you can create the world that you deserve. For my final year project, I created a near-infrared (NIR) vein detector that could be used in hospitals to assist doctors and nurses in finding veins. This project took first place and was awarded the best project of the year (2021).

Thanks to the great assistance of the DAFI Scholarship, I now have the chance to study a master’s degree in Computer Engineering, Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence in Italy through the UNICORE Project with UNHCR and Caritas. I am quite excited about this possibility since it will provide me access to a worldwide perspective on engineering, broaden my awareness of technological breakthroughs, and increase my network of international experts. In addition to advancing my academic skills, studying in Italy will help me develop the cultural sensitivity and adaptability that are essential in today’s worldwide society. The thought of undertaking a master’s degree in Italy fills me with a profound sense of gratitude. This opportunity is an investment in my future as well as my education. By expanding my horizons and educating me about new cultures, studying abroad will not only help me develop as an engineer but also as a person, positioning me for the chances and challenges that lie ahead.

The effects of the DAFI Scholarship on my life have become a testimony for hope. It conveys a strong message not only for female engineers, but to all refugees that they can succeed in anything they put their mind to. It serves as a reminder that one’s gender should never be a hindrance to pursue one’s passion, but rather a reason to smash down stereotypes and tear down boundaries. In addition to completely changing my life, the DAFI Scholarship has established a precedent for refugee empowerment in education and encouraged others to believe in their own potential.

Don

DAFI Alumnus | Intern at technology company

Age: 26 | **Country of Origin:** Democratic Republic of Congo

Country of Study (DAFI): Malawi | **Institution of Study:** University of Livingstonia | **Field of Study:** Computer Engineering

“Employment is not just a necessary step after education, but it also provides a pathway for refugees to contribute to their communities and create a better future for themselves and others.”

As a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo residing in Malawi, my journey has been characterized by challenges and resilience. Witnessing the struggles faced by refugees in accessing education and opportunities inspired me to pursue a field of study that would empower me and contribute to the development of refugee communities. The DAFI scholarship program provided me with a ray of hope, allowing me to pursue a degree in Computer Engineering at the University of Livingstonia in Malawi. Technology has the power to overcome barriers and create opportunities for marginalized communities, and this resonated deeply with me.

Through my DAFI scholarship, I secured an internship at the University of North Carolina Malawi. I gained valuable knowledge and skills in software engineering, information management, and user-centered design principles. Although my specific projects didn't focus directly on refugees, this experience broadened my perspective on the needs of displaced individuals and reinforced my passion for using technology as a tool for empowerment. I am dedicated to leveraging this knowledge to develop innovative and sustainable solutions that address the unique needs of refugees, aiming to improve their access to essential services, education, and employment opportunities.

Upon graduating this year, I am excited to utilize my computer engineering knowledge and skills to create sustainable solutions for refugees. Currently interning at a local tech company, I am gaining practical experience in software development and project management. My goal is to develop innovative technologies and systems that address the challenges faced by refugees in Malawi and beyond.

For example, the forced relocation and encampment policy in Malawi highlights the urgent need for refugee advocacy. It is crucial to raise awareness about the rights

and safety of refugees and engage in dialogue with policymakers and decision-makers who have the authority to shape the nation's approach to refugee protection. By advocating for change and addressing the immediate safety concerns of refugees, we can work towards a more compassionate and inclusive society that values the well-being and contributions of displaced individuals.

Looking ahead, I envision advocating for bridging the gap between education and employment for refugees. This is critical for refugees, as it allows them to apply their knowledge and skills in meaningful ways and foster self-reliance. As someone who has recently completed my education, I deeply understand the significance of employment in shaping the future of refugees. Employment is not just a necessary step after education, but it also provides a pathway for refugees to contribute to their communities and create a better future for themselves and others.

To facilitate this transition, we can implement various strategies and initiatives. One effective approach is to create job placement initiatives in collaboration with local employment agencies, organizations, and businesses. These initiatives would focus on identifying suitable employment opportunities and connecting refugees

who have completed their education with prospective employers. By equipping refugees with up-to-date skills and certifications that align with the demands of the job market, we enhance their employability and increase their chances of securing meaningful employment opportunities.

Entrepreneurship and self-employment support are also valuable avenues to explore. By providing resources, mentorship, and access to microfinance or small business loans, we can encourage refugees to start their businesses and become self-reliant. Entrepreneurship offers a pathway to economic independence and allows refugees to create employment opportunities not only for themselves but also for other members of the refugee community.

Creating alumni networks and showcasing success stories of refugees who have successfully transitioned from education to employment can serve as powerful motivators for other refugees. By highlighting the achievements and contributions of refugee professionals,

we inspire hope and demonstrate the possibilities that lie ahead. Alumni networks can also serve as platforms for mentorship, networking, and sharing job opportunities within the refugee community.

By focusing on these initiatives, we can create a supportive and inclusive ecosystem that enables refugees to transition from education to employment successfully. Providing opportunities, resources, and role models, while challenging stereotypes and advocating for change, we can inspire hope and empower other refugees to follow our footsteps towards a brighter future.

As a DAFI scholar, I am deeply grateful for the support and opportunities provided to me. The program has not only granted me access to education but also nurtured my passion for using technology for social good. I am committed to making a meaningful impact in the lives of refugees and advocating for the importance of education and opportunities for displaced individuals. Together, we can create a future where every refugee has the chance to thrive and contribute to society.



Noella

DAFI Alumna | Volunteer at Revelation TV Zambia

Age: 26 | **Country of Origin:** Democratic Republic of Congo | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Zambia | **Institution of Study:** Zambia Catholic University
Field of Study: Mass Communications

“That [selection for the DAFI scholarship] was a turning point in my life because I could see the dream of becoming a journalist being actualized.”

Growing up in a child-headed home is something that is quite challenging in the sense that you get to learn things and experience life the hard way. Nevertheless, this made me mature quite fast and of course allow me to know exactly what I want to achieve academically. My academic journey hasn't been smooth sailing, especially where finances were involved. This affected me tremendously when I stayed home for 3 years after completing my secondary education. However, I decided not to give up on my dream of being a media practitioner. When I heard of a scholarship for refugees in Zambia, I decide to apply for it and hoped for the best. It was on a sunny Wednesday afternoon in October 2017 that I received a call from UNHCR that I had been selected for the DAFI scholarship that I applied for. My whole being was excited because it was too real to be true that I received the scholarship. That was a turning point in my life because I could see the dream of becoming a journalist being actualized.

I always go for opportunities that help change the way refugees are perceived. Behind a refugee is a father, mother and a young person who is able to contribute towards the welfare of their communities. This is possible with the right discussions, more networking and more positive stories about refugees in the media. I chose to study mass communication to make this possible and now being a graduate has further helped me achieve this. I learned how to operate particular software (such as Final Cut, Adobe Premier Pro, Adobe Audition and Adobe InDesign) that have enabled me to edit news stories as well as community stories. I also learned how to write news stories for print or broadcast media.

Indeed, education gives you dignity and respect of some kind. I am immensely proud that I succeeded in my studies. I know I was privileged to have received the DAFI scholarship. The scholarship financed my studies and actualized the dream of being a media practitioner. Because of the scholarship, I was privileged to be [elected as] the DAFI [student] club president (leader) for 2 years, this enabled me to know how to deal with my fellow scholars.

I endeavour to not only cover stories about refugees, although that's where my passion lies. I equally cover stories about the marginalized in various communities in Zambia. My work is exciting and dynamic. Therefore, it is satisfying to see the stories I have worked on being televised or published. For example, I covered a story on the DAFI 30 years celebration last year in November (2022). This story is meaningful to me in that various media organisations in the country aired the story and this also brought about visibility as well as awareness of the DAFI scholarship to refugees that are not camp based. Above all, the story gave hope to refugee youths in secondary school to work hard and possibly acquire the scholarship when they complete their secondary education.

In conclusion I would like to profoundly thank UNHCR, the German government and Caritas Czech Republic (who is the implementing partner of the DAFI scholarship in Zambia) for their commitment in ensuring that refugees have access to tertiary education.



Jules

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 23 | **Country of Origin:** Democratic Republic of Congo | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Malawi | **Institution of Study:** DMI – St. John the Baptist University
Field of Study: Computer Science

“I would love to pursue my master’s degree because I believe there is much more I can learn.”

I am currently finalizing my Computer Science course, and graduation will take place in November of this year [2023]. My passion for computer science started in 2016 when I was playing video games with a friend of mine called Jack. While playing, he asked me a question that stayed with me. He asked if I knew how video games were created, and I said, “No!” He replied, “It’s done through codes, and I have been creating some apps using the same codes for a year now!” He took me home and showed me his apps and told me about TakenoLab. Fortunately, they were accepting new students, so I joined. I chose the field of software development with Java, and since then, it has been my passion.

As a programming enthusiast with six years of coding experience, I always wanted to get freelance jobs on sites such as Upwork. However, most of them required a computer science degree. I had an opportunity to work as an IT intern at MyBucks banking corporation, but the payment was lower than the cost of living in Lilongwe. In late 2019, my mentor at TakenoLab, called Remy, told me about DAFI. I applied and got accepted into the program. It was tough to adjust to school life. Throughout the years, sometimes the stipends for helping us navigate through student life and meet basic needs arrived late, but I am grateful for it all. Regarding studying and life as a post-graduate and a refugee and some of the struggles that are faced, sometimes it’s advised not to tell our friends that we are really refugees and that is hard when making friends because sometimes you become a target of emotional bullying or get ignored by others. It may vary depending on what school and the type of students you

encounter; therefore, experiences differ. I managed to gain experience living with multiple students taking various courses in different fields and from different cultures. It provided me with both academic and university lifestyle experience that I can apply in real life.

I would love to pursue my master’s degree because I believe there is much more I can learn. If there is any assistance available for postgraduates, it would be highly appreciated because it seems like working as a refugee in Malawi is becoming less feasible these days. Because of the recent incident of the government relocating refugees to the Dzaleka Camp, it seems like it has scared potential job givers to employ refugees. The only option we opt for is if we get volunteering jobs or pray for migration. Otherwise, if there’s no other option, we just sit in the camp like before.



Adonette

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 24 | **Country of Origin:** Burundi | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Malawi

Institution of Study: University of Livingstonia

Field of Study: Food Security and Nutrition

“As I approach graduation, I am committed to continuing my efforts to combat malnutrition and drive sustainable solutions that ensure food security and improved nutrition for all.”

Choosing a field of study for my undergraduate degree was a decision I considered carefully, as I knew it would shape my career path and future aspirations. Ultimately, I was inspired to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Food Security and Nutrition, driven by the global concerns surrounding this critical issue. The prevalence of malnutrition and its impact on millions of people worldwide underscored the urgency to address food security and nutrition.

However, my decision to specialize in this field was not solely based on a general concern for global issues but also findings of a nutrition survey which was conducted in Dzaleka [refugee camp in Malawi]. In November 2016, a nutrition survey was conducted in the Dzaleka and Luwani refugee camps. As a resident of Dzaleka, I was particularly interested in the findings from my own community. The survey revealed a low incidence of acute malnutrition in both camps, but it starkly highlighted the high prevalence of stunting or chronic malnutrition among children. The results of the survey deeply impacted me and instilled a profound sense of concern. Witnessing the devastating consequences of malnutrition on the well-being and future prospects of individuals and communities compelled me to take action. I realized that pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Food Security and Nutrition would equip me with the knowledge and skills necessary to make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by this silent crisis.

Additionally, in refugee camps like Dzaleka, where I reside, there are several underlying problems and challenges that exacerbate the issue of malnutrition. Some of these challenges include limited access to nutritious food as camps often face constraints in terms of food availability, affordability, and diversity. Poor sanitation and hygiene also pose significant challenges. Overcrowded conditions, coupled with limited access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and proper hygiene practices increase the risk of waterborne diseases, infections, and diarrheal diseases.

These factors further compromise the nutritional status of individuals, particularly children. Furthermore, inadequate healthcare services in refugee camps exacerbate the problem. Illnesses can further deteriorate nutritional status, particularly in vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant or lactating women.

These challenges faced in refugee camps provide a compelling reason for me to study food security and nutrition. I developed a strong desire to gain knowledge and develop the necessary skills to address these complex issues and make a positive impact on the lives of my fellow refugees. As I approach graduation, I am committed to continuing my efforts to combat malnutrition and drive sustainable solutions that ensure food security and improved nutrition for all. With my passion for this field, the knowledge gained through my undergraduate studies, and practical experiences, I am confident in my ability to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the lives of individuals and communities affected by malnutrition. As I'm still exploring various career paths and opportunities, I have a strong interest in fields that allow me to utilize my skills in food security, nutrition, livelihoods as well as community development. I believe that by working with organizations in such fields such as the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Vision and CARE Malawi just to mention a few, I can contribute to meaningful projects and continue to grow both professionally and personally.



Patience

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 25 | **Country of Origin:** Burundi | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Malawi

Institution of Study: DMI – St. John the Baptist University

Field of Study: Computer Science

“I chose to study computer science because I wanted to gain the knowledge needed to be able to help find solutions to world problems, with the efficient use of computer technology.”

From my childhood, the idea of becoming a scientist was always in my mind. Of course, one of my inspirations was the knowledge and professional skills I would attain from this field; the creative ideas that I could bring into fruition would be endless.

After finishing my secondary school, I attended a short course in computer literacy at JRS. This became the specific experience, moment and interaction that led me towards my fascination and interest in computing and technology. Not only that, in this digital age we live in, computing and technology have the potential to revolutionise the way we work. Communication is becoming ever necessary in all jobs and everyday life, and this has motivated me to be part of it. Gaining a directly relevant degree qualification is a first step. I am currently enjoying, very successfully, A-level[courses] in artificial intelligence, mobile application, computer networking and many laboratory courses, which I chose as I believe they represent the broad base of skills essential in the modern world. Also I have always enjoyed

keeping up to date with the latest advances in technology. That is why, when I found the opportunity of going back to school, choosing to learn computing wasn't a hard decision to make.

When I graduate, I can apply my field of computer science to a wide variety of industry-desired specialties like artificial intelligence, cyber security, computer networking, data science and cloud computing. I will also have the opportunity to develop and conduct my own research project. Getting a master's in computer science can help to propel me into thriving technological industries. Therefore, it can help me to enter an incredibly fast growing and competitive industry, in the modern world.



MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

DAFI made me believe in myself and my abilities as a middle eastern woman, as the first woman in my family line to get the opportunity of higher education.

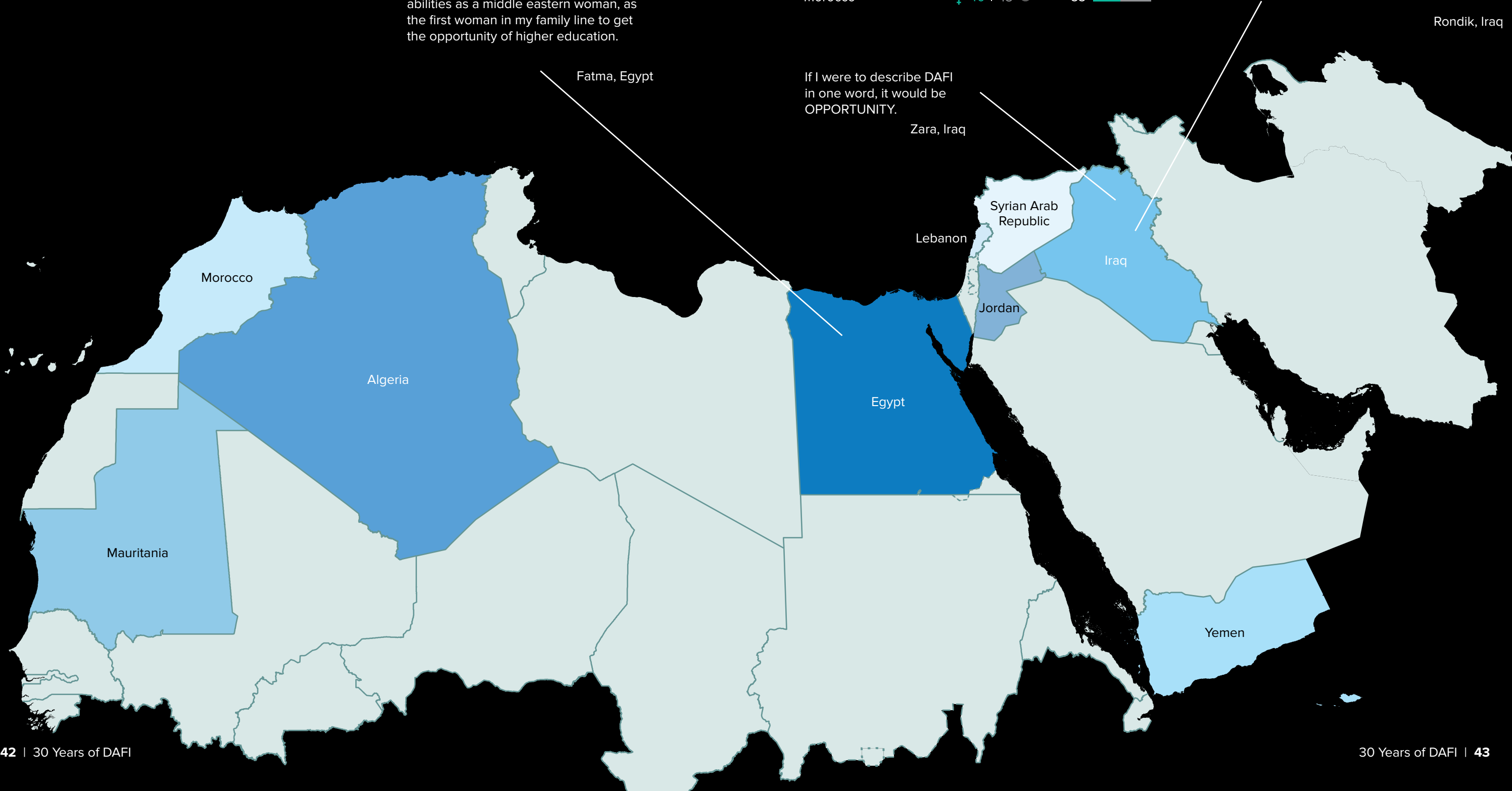
Fatma, Egypt

If I were to describe DAFI in one word, it would be OPPORTUNITY.

Zara, Iraq

Witnessing the impact of DAFI's support first-hand, I am driven to expand my organization's reach and help more people in the same transformative way.

Rondik, Iraq



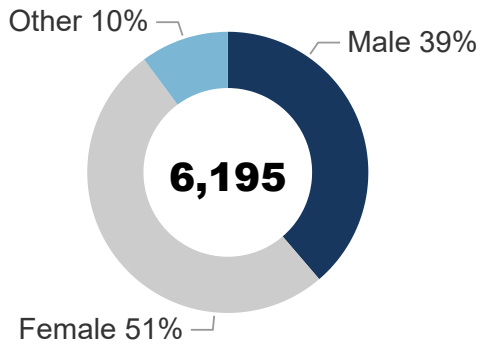
MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

In 2022, DAFI programmes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) accounted for nearly 20 per cent of the total student body (1,720 scholars in total). This region includes DAFI programmes in Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Mauritania, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Morocco. Nearly all countries permit refugees to access higher education on the same criteria as national students, in both practice and policy. However, in some instances, refugees are required to pay higher international student tuition fees, are not evaluated on the same admission criteria as national candidates (particularly those students who did not complete their secondary school in the country of asylum). In Jordan, UNHCR is currently negotiating an agreement with public universities aimed at reducing tuition fees for refugee students to match the fees charged to Jordanian students. So far, UNHCR successfully collaborated with four public universities to lower their tuition fees by nearly 40 to 45 per cent. In nearly all countries in this region, refugees do not have access to national education financial aid options. For example, tuition fees in Egypt vary by country of origin and higher education institutions regularly require that refugees submit extensive additional personal documentation for admission and for issuance of graduation certificates, which are not required for national students. Refugees may access other post-secondary skills training or TVET opportunities in some countries in this region, but participation is limited as a result of high fees (without scholarship) or other restrictions.

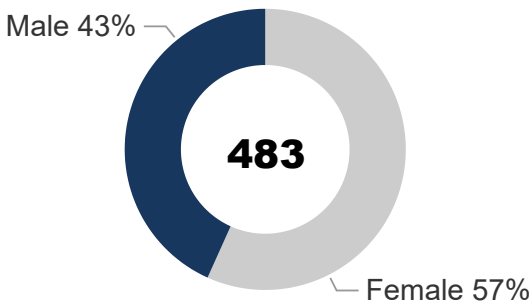
Only two countries in the region – Iraq and Mauritania – support limited avenues to employment for refugees. National policy in Iraq permits refugees the right to work, but in practice most work in the informal sector. In Mauritania, policy allows refugees to secure formal work, but in practice most employers are not aware that refugees have the right to work on the same conditions as nationals. The DAFI programme continues to be a critical mechanism to enhance access to formal employment, especially with NGOs and in the private sector. The MENA region continues to experience one of the world’s worst economic and financial crises following COVID-19, rapid inflation and currency devaluation. Lebanon, for instance, continues to be impacted by the dual effects of COVID-19 and the Beirut blast in 2020, which created critical supply chain gaps and limited access to basic resources and services. More than half of the Lebanese population currently lives below the poverty line. The impacts are even more pronounced for refugees with nine out of ten Syrian refugees in Lebanon living in extreme poverty.

Despite these challenges, several countries in the MENA region are working to strengthen the inclusion of refugees in their national education systems. For example, in 2022, Iraq launched the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP) in primary school. The policy grants refugee learners (grades one through five, as of September 2023) access to the public schooling system and will gradually be expanded to higher grades. In 2022, UNHCR Algeria coordinated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and higher education institutions to standardise the documentation and registration process for refugee students. The streamlined process reduced the waiting time for registration for higher education from months or years to only a few days. Several DAFI programme countries in the region, such as Jordan, are robustly engaged with the 15by30 strategy to increase refugee enrolment in higher education to 15 per cent by 2030. They are contributing to the global goal by building partnerships with and between universities, expanding connected higher education programmes, third country scholarships and opportunities for participation in TVET.

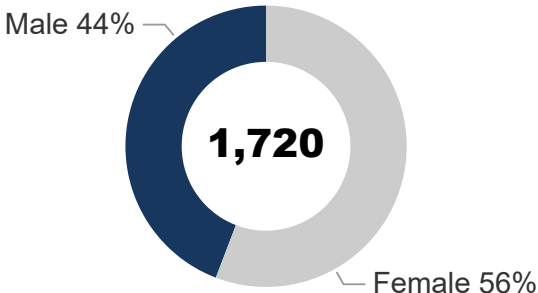
APPLICATIONS



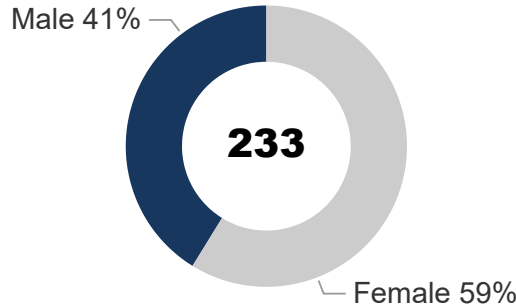
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



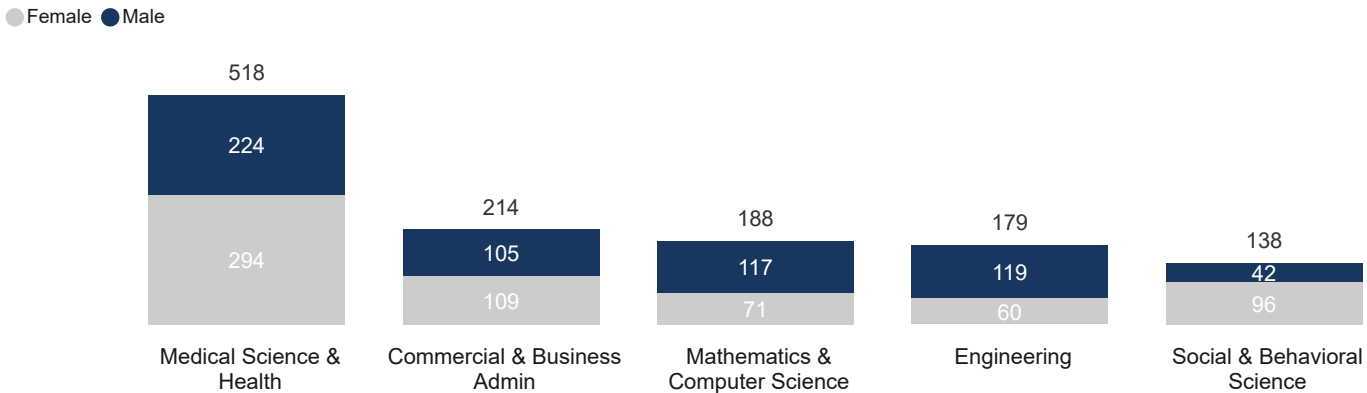
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



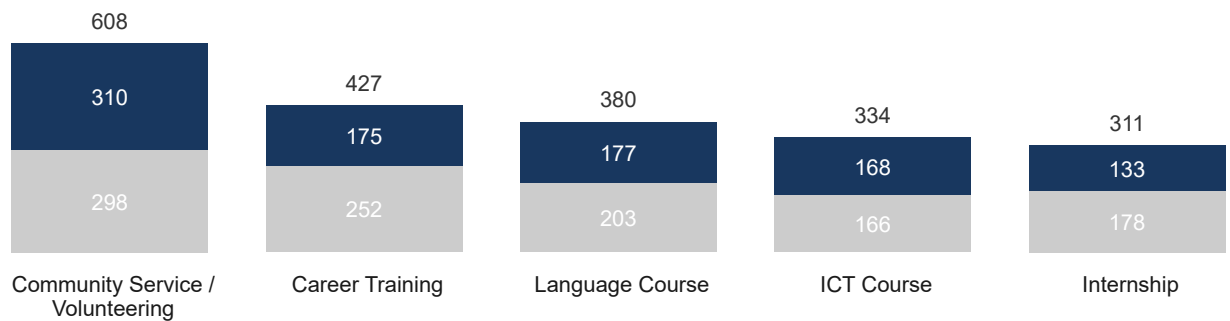
GRADUATES



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES





Fatma

DAFI Alumna

Age: 23 | **Country of Origin:** Yemen | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Egypt

Institution of Study: Cairo University

Field of Study: Medicine

“DAFI made me believe in myself and my abilities as a middle eastern woman, as the first woman in my family line to get the opportunity of higher education.”

It's been such an amazing journey. I am almost in disbelief that four years have passed, and without exaggeration, DAFI was the compass that guided me to my fate. It's hard to capture what DAFI has granted me, not only academically, but also in many other aspects of life in general. It helped me become a better person, a person who can give and participate in her community. DAFI made me believe in myself and my abilities as a middle eastern woman, as the first woman in my family line to get the opportunity of higher education. It's undeniable that DAFI was an integral part of my journey, facilitating the hardships and paving the way to reach my goal of becoming an efficient, experienced doctor, and more importantly, a person who gives back to her community.

I have countless special memories with DAFI. DAFI taught me how to be a giving person, through giving me the opportunity to work with disadvantaged kids. It was so heart-warming to have the chance to teach kids leadership skills among other things and be an influential model in their lives. First, I had to break the ice and get to know the personality of each of the 20 individuals separately, just to formulate a plan to teach them presentation skills, communication skills, and leadership. The purpose of the sessions was to provide them with what they need to become young, influential leaders. To me, working with disadvantaged children is an opportunity and not charity. They teach me as much or even more than what I teach them, for example, smiling regardless of hardships, being eager to learn more and building a brighter future. Even though it was just few days, they remain so precious to me, just as precious as the notes that I received at the end of the course.

There are way too many positive experiences that I had with DAFI, that can't be summarized in a few paragraphs. But one of the most memorable ones was being chosen by DAFI as a role model for new DAFI scholars. I remember being in a complete shock after receiving the news, wondering why I specially was chosen from a big number of students for this moment. This is what makes

DAFI special – their capacity to see things within yourself, that escape your attention. In other words, it's like they water flowers to make them bloom.

All the challenges gave me the chance to grow my skills and become a better version of myself. The thought of speaking in front of a big number of people was scary, but through the many times that I spoke, I became more confident and influential. And that's when I realized what I want to do in the future. I want to have an audible echo, not only in the medical field, but also in a more inclusive circle, specifically the community and maybe, who knows, extending to further generations. There are many topics I want to highlight, one of which is making education available for all children regardless of their socioeconomic status. Knowledge is the key to building a better environment for everybody and awareness makes individuals participate more in building up communities, which is something the middle east is most in need of in the current times.

Last but not least, I want to thank the UNHCR, DAFI, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and all the participants for providing me with this experience, helping me in every step towards my goal, and making the journey more enjoyable and bright.



Zara

Current DAFI Scholar | Network and Security Engineering Intern,
Art Director and Senior Designer

Age: 20 | **Country of Origin:** Syria | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Iraq
Institution of Study: Salahaddin University | **Field of Study:** Software and
Informatics Engineering

“If I were to describe DAFI in one word,
it would be **Opportunity.**”

I am Zara from Syria, specifically a city called Afrin, and I was born in 2003. I spent my early years in Aleppo until 2013 when my family and I lost our house due to the Syrian war. As a result, we had no choice but to leave Syria and seek refuge in Kurdistan, Iraq, specifically in Erbil. My parents, both lawyers, also lost their jobs during this difficult time.

I became aware of the DAFI program while I was still in school, and the opportunity to become a DAFI scholar was like a dream come true. The application process brought a mix of excitement and fear of rejection. If I were to describe DAFI in one word, it would be “Opportunity.” Without DAFI’s support, I wouldn’t have been able to pursue higher education, study engineering, and follow my dreams. They provided me with an opportunity to focus on my journey and studies, becoming a role model for other refugee youth to never give up on their dreams.

In addition to my involvement with the DAFI Club as the Vice President, I actively engage in volunteering and professional work that enriches my skills and knowledge. One initiative that had a profound impact on me was my participation in the Youth Advocacy Group (YAG) as the representative of Syrian youth refugees in Iraq within the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative. NLG is a collaborative effort among UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) dedicated to assisting Syrian people affected by the war and Syrian refugees in countries like Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.

As the representative of Syrian youth refugees in Iraq, my responsibilities involved engaging with fellow Syrian refugees and gathering their perspectives and stories. I embarked on visits to numerous refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, particularly in Erbil, as well as various NGOs’ offices to gain comprehensive insights into the challenges faced by Syrian refugees in Iraq. I diligently documented these experiences and compiled detailed reports to be shared with NLG and the participating INGOs.

One significant highlight of this initiative was the Brussels Conference held on June 14 and 15 2023, where I had the privilege of representing Syrian youth refugees virtually. Prior to the conference, I engaged in virtual discussions, consultations, and collaborative efforts with NGO officers in Erbil, as well as distinguished university lecturers specializing in refugee studies and Middle Eastern issues, particularly Syria.

Through this experience, I not only had the opportunity to raise awareness about the unique struggles and aspirations of Syrian youth refugees in Iraq but also to contribute to shaping policies and decisions at an international platform. This initiative held immense meaning for me because it empowered me to amplify the voices of those who often go unheard, shedding light on the challenges faced by young Syrian refugees and advocating for their rights and well-being.

DAFI has been instrumental in my personal and professional development. They have not only provided financial support for my education but also helped me gain leadership skills and build a strong network. Looking towards the future, I plan to continue working as a human rights activist with the UN and UNHCR, giving back to my community. Additionally, I aspire to establish my own tech company, with a particular focus on cybersecurity, to contribute to the technical development of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and provide opportunities for others, just as DAFI has done for me.

Rondik

DAFI Alumna | Co-founder and Volunteer with “We Are Strong”

Age: 27 | **Country of Origin:** Republic of Türkiye

Country of Study (DAFI): Iraq | **Institution of Study:** University of Duhok

Field of Study: Basic Education (Department of Psychology)

“Witnessing the impact of DAFI’s support first-hand, I am driven to expand my organization’s reach and help more people in the same transformative way.”

My experience with DAFI has been incredibly rewarding and has imparted valuable lessons that have shaped my perspective. This program provided me with substantial support, enabling me to focus on pursuing my goals and aspirations without the burden of financial constraints. Thanks to their assistance, I could alleviate my concerns about navigating the academic year and instead concentrate on meeting my personal requirements.

As a cancer survivor, the financial aid provided by DAFI proved instrumental in helping me overcome the challenging times that followed my diagnosis and treatment. The assistance I received significantly contributed to my mental well-being, as it relieved the financial burden associated with my education. Without DAFI’s support, I would not have had the same level of self-assurance and comfort during this difficult period.

The continuous support I received from DAFI beginning in 2017 influenced me profoundly, prompting me to make a life-changing decision. Inspired by their assistance, I decided to establish a volunteer humanitarian organization called “We are strong”. The organization is aiming at supporting others in need. Over the past six years, our organization has been active, extending help to numerous individuals facing various challenges. We provide assistance to those fighting illnesses, struggling with financial issues, orphaned, or displaced as refugees. The help we provide includes distributing food and groceries to families in need, money for medical expenses to be covered, helping people in need of financial aid by giving them sums of money they can spend on their families, collecting donations to distribute, renovating the homes of people that have bad living conditions and so on. Additionally, we have provided young volunteers with valuable experience in the field of humanitarian work.

Through my personal experiences and the influence of DAFI, I have learned that those who are in need deserve our attention and assistance. Witnessing the impact of DAFI’s support first-hand, I am driven to expand my organization’s reach and help more people in the same transformative way. I plan on turning my organization into a big and welcoming organization for everyone in need. Examples of that include a part of the organization being dedicated to raising mental health awareness and assisting people in need of support by directing them to the right kind of help, a portion being dedicated to a chain of food and groceries distribution that is on-going and working at all times to reach the people in need, and a portion dedicated to helping young people reach their goals and be able to handle their education despite financial difficulties, the way DAFI helped me. I am deeply grateful for the help I received from the program, and I am committed to spreading the message of kindness, humanity, and sharing.

Throughout my life, I have encountered numerous struggles, but I have also witnessed the profound effect that a single act of kindness can have on someone’s world. This realization fuels my determination to make a difference and serve those who are in need. By continuing to advocate for kindness, compassion, and generosity, I hope to inspire others to follow suit and create a more compassionate and supportive society.

Sajeda

DAFI Alumna | Refugee Status Determination Senior Legal Officer
at Saint Andrew's Refugee Services organization

Age: 26 | **Country of Origin:** Syria

Country of Study (DAFI): Egypt | **Institution of Study:** Zagazig University

Field of Study: Law

“I thought it [law school] would be the best way to get more involved in governments’ policies, international laws and regulations, and refugees’ profiles.”

After I fled Syria to Egypt following the Syrian uprising, I started to learn more about politics as I watched the TV 24/7 to follow the news of what was happening in Syria. I learned many things quickly and became very interested to learn more about the Syrian situation and other countries during the Arab Spring. At the same time, I registered with UNHCR Egypt as an asylum seeker along with my family. At that time, I did not know what it meant to be an asylum seeker or refugee, but we registered on a recommendation from the community.

Over the years, with the influx of Syrians, the refugee context and refugees’ legal status became clearer, at least for me. After I finished high school, law school was my second option to enroll as I thought it would be the best way to get more involved in governments’ policies, international laws and regulations, and refugees’ profiles. At that time, I planned to work with organizations that help refugees in Egypt because I knew I would not be able to use my law degree due to the lack of authorization for Syrians to work in Egypt. Along with my acceptance at law school, I applied for the DAFI scholarship that Catholic Relief Services (CRS) announced and, thankfully, got accepted.

The DAFI scholarship provided great opportunities to explore the humanitarian field in which I planned to be involved. With DAFI, I attended several conferences during which I built my network in the field and gradually learned about different INGOs and NGOs. At the very end of my senior year in university, I came across a vacancy at Saint Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) organization for a Canadian Immigration Support Caseworker. At that time, I did not know much about StARS services or the

exact job requirements, but I thought I fit the qualifications and should apply for the job. Shortly after I applied, I was invited to the interview and accepted. When StARS asked for references, my academic supervisors at CRS supported me with a reference letter, facilitating my acceptance.

In my position, I learned [a lot] about different refugee categories in Egypt [that affect] Syrians. It triggered me to invest in myself and try my best to develop. One year later, I was transferred to the Unaccompanied Children and Youth Department as a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Legal Officer. The position was purely legal, and my law degree helped me to take this position. Later, I was promoted to a supervisory position as the Canadian Immigration Support Supervisor and, finally, RSD Senior Legal Officer. Around 2020, I applied for a Master's degree at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Thankfully, I got accepted into two Master's programs, LLM and Migration and Refugee Studies. Due to my work field, I chose to study Migration and Refugee Studies in order to support my career path. I am very proud of all the decisions I took in my academic and career paths, and I am thrilled to have many people supporting me during my journey.



Hosam

DAFI Alumnus | Master's Candidate at Lebanese University

Age: 26 | **Country of Origin:** Syria

Country of Study (DAFI): Lebanon | **Institution of Study:** Lebanese University

Field of Study: Journalism media and communication

“Media and communication studies might be used as a field of study for peace-building. As I have experienced the Syrian civil war, the role of media was so obvious in its path.”

The major of media and communication is a very rich field of study which allows the student to get so much information on an issue. As a media worker you have to know about the whole situations of any issue now and in the past, and to have historical background in order to understand what is happening now and what to expect in the future. This includes policy, economy, sport, environment, science etc. That is one of the reasons why I decided to pursue my field of study.

The other reason and the most important one in my opinion, is that media and communication studies might be used as a field of study for peace-building. As I have experienced the Syrian civil war, the role of media was so obvious in its path. All the parties used media tools to polarize themselves and distort the others. However, the media could be used as a healthy, unharmed instrument to communicate with others in the public sphere. If we go deep in the big nations' history like France, USA, or the UK, we will observe how media and communication played a great role in rising these nations and resurrecting the soul of democracy across them. Despite the fact that all those nations experienced conflicts like civil wars or revolutions, they finally found their way to peace with the help of healthy communication provided by media.

Unfortunately, nowadays, the social media which we thought could give people the best possible way of communication and sharing ideas is now pushing the societies into small fanatic groups. This is due to the flaws in social media app ideology and [poor] practice by social media users. Although I am not now working in my field of study, I always try to share my ideas with people around me about the role of media and social media and how it could reach its ideal point in order to have the maximum benefit for them.

Now I am preparing my master's dissertation about the media and collective memory to prove how the media is used to force narrow perspectives instead of making it a space for sharing political ideas freely. After that I intend to get my PhD, which will be about the destruction of the public sphere by media and social media.



Thanaa

DAFI Alumna | Mathematics Teacher

Age: 27 | **Country of Origin:** Syria

Country of Study (DAFI): Iraq | **Institution of Study:** University of Sulaimani

Field of Study: Mathematics

“My hobby was always teaching. When I was young, I would make myself a teacher and I would teach my younger siblings.”

My name is Thanaa. I am 27 years old and currently a mother of three beautiful children. I was like anyone living a normal life in my mother country (Syria) until I reached my second year in college (Science Department of Mathematics). When things started to deteriorate because of the war, we were forced to leave, and we came to Kurdistan Iraq. I was determined to complete college because of my great love of studying.

On January 7, 2017, I had my first day at Sulaimani University to complete my dream of studying mathematics, which was all with the help and support of the DAFI scholarship. I love mathematics because I am good at it, and I see myself in this field.

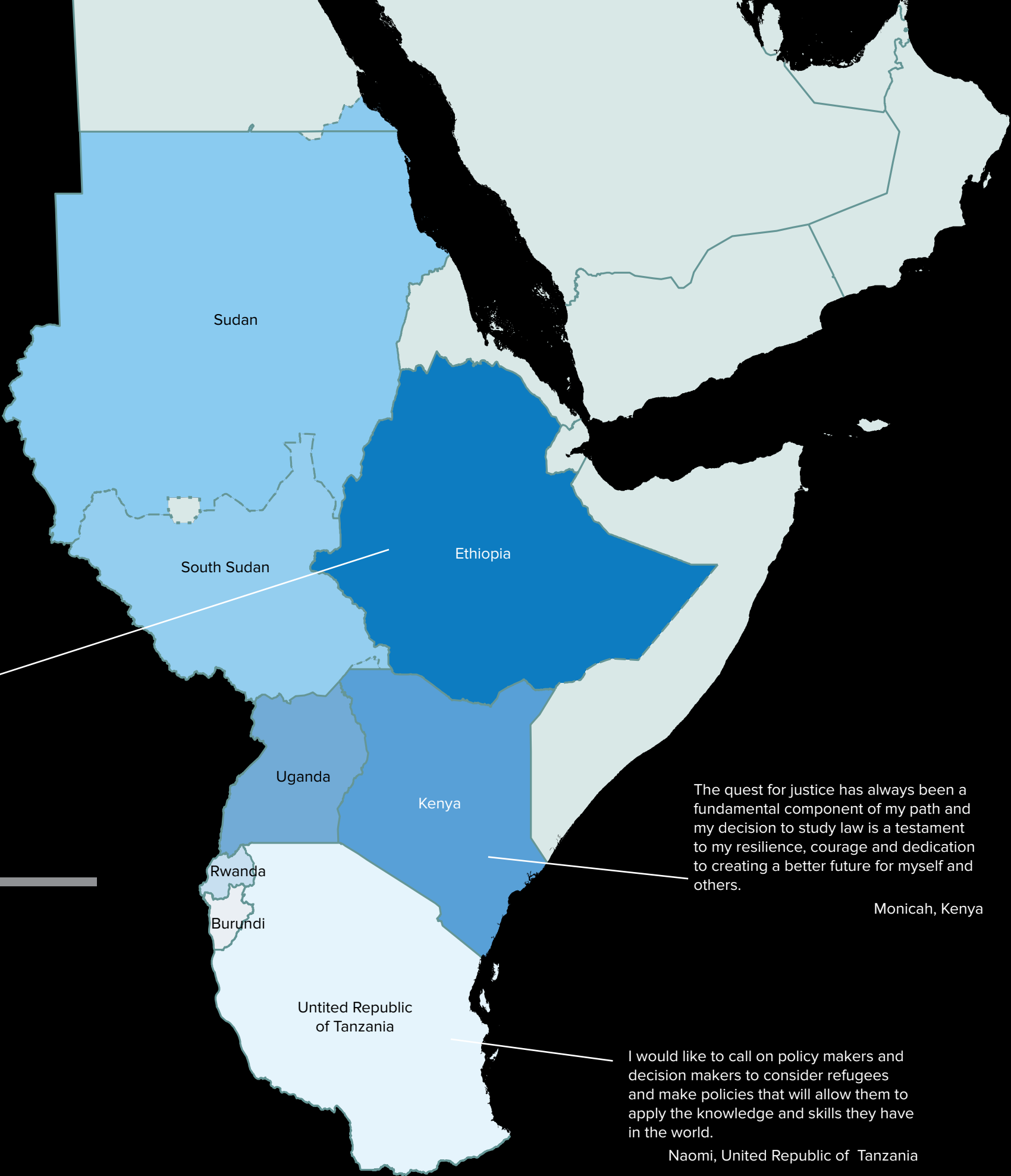
Thankfully, in 2020-2021, I graduated from Sulaimani University and obtained an undergraduate degree from the college of Science of the Department of Mathematics at a high rate. I ranked first in my class for the past four school years. I now work as a teacher at the Basic School of Amuda in Arbat Camp for Syrian refugees. I teach mathematics for eighth grade and have 115 students.

My hobby was always teaching. When I was young, I would make myself a teacher and I would teach my younger siblings. I grew to love teaching, and my love for that grew even more when I became a successful teacher. All of my students who were in ninth grade did really well in math.

My dream did not stop. I am very eager for a master's degree and a doctorate in mathematics. Because I am very interested in mathematics and love it very much and I want to do research in this field in the future and make my own mark, but my financial conditions don't allow me. I hope there's a way or an organization that supports students who want to complete their higher studies and can't. Studying a master's degree requires a lot financially so I am currently teaching, hoping that one day I can do that.



EAST & HORN OF AFRICA & GREAT LAKES



As a DAFI scholar studying medicine, I have always been inspired by the idea of using my education to make a positive impact on the world.

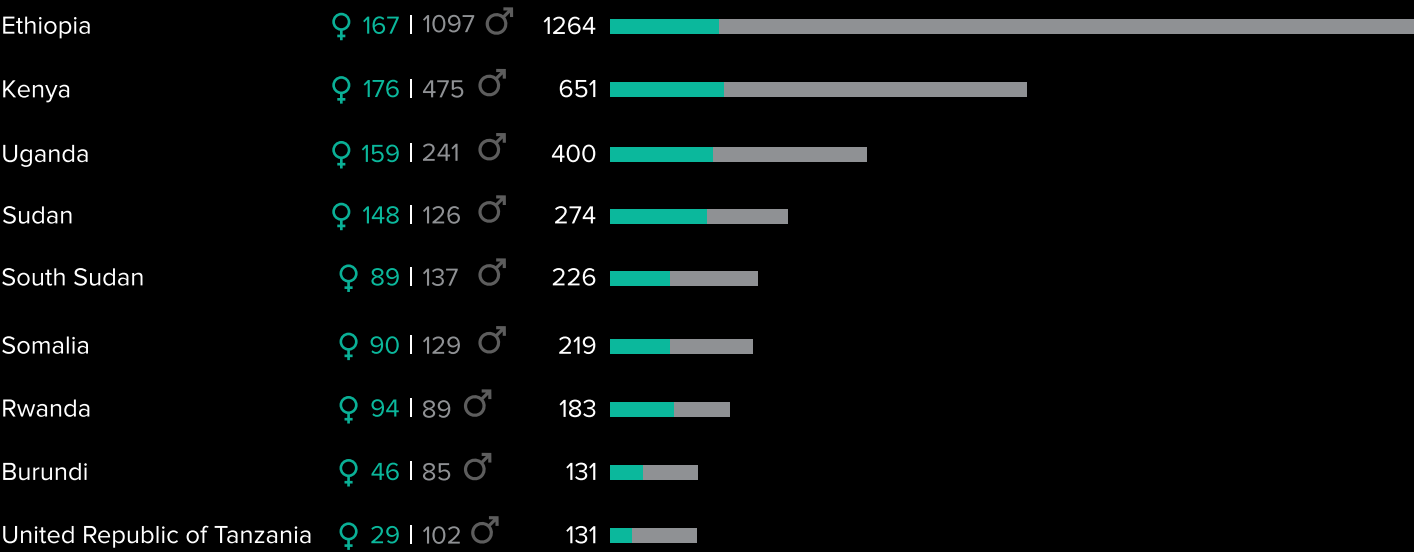
Shukri, Ethiopia

The quest for justice has always been a fundamental component of my path and my decision to study law is a testament to my resilience, courage and dedication to creating a better future for myself and others.

Monicah, Kenya

I would like to call on policy makers and decision makers to consider refugees and make policies that will allow them to apply the knowledge and skills they have in the world.

Naomi, United Republic of Tanzania



EAST & HORN OF AFRICA & GREAT LAKES

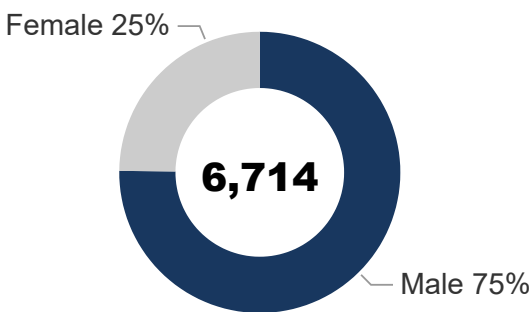
In 2022, DAFI programmes in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region accounted for over one third of DAFI students (38 per cent of the total student body). This region includes DAFI programmes in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. According to national policies, all countries in the region allow refugees to access higher education. However, in practice, refugees continue to face many barriers to accessing higher education on par with national students, which include higher international student tuition fees and priority given to nationals for limited university spaces. Furthermore, most countries in the region do not permit refugees to benefit from government sponsored financial aid programmes or scholarships, which highlights the critical importance of scholarship programmes, such as DAFI, to address the gap between inclusive policy and meaningful practice.

Many countries in the region provide opportunities for refugees to pursue accredited TVET as well as other post-secondary skills development programmes, with a particular focus on opportunities for women in several countries. However, only half of the DAFI programme countries in the region allow refugees the right to work in practice. Barriers include restrictions on registering businesses, work permit and other documentation requirements and extensive and time-consuming procedures.

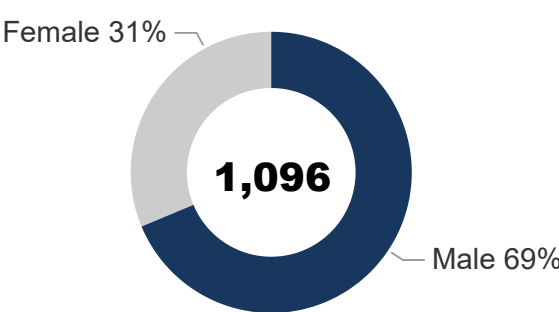
Finally, 2022 saw relatively smooth political shifts take place across the region. However, in Sudan the military coup at the end of 2021 created a fragile social and economic situation, with outsized effects on refugees.

Increases in the costs of goods and services led to many families choosing to pull their children out of school. The conditions facing DAFI students in Sudan continue to be monitored. High demand for new scholarships is rising in neighbouring countries, such as Egypt, where large numbers of Sudanese youth fled. Furthermore, although at the end of the year a peace deal was signed in Tigray, the country is experiencing widespread food insecurity, gender-based violence and new influxes of refugees. The region continues to be home to some of the most protracted refugee situations in the world as well as some of the longest running and largest DAFI programmes, which have served refugee students, in some cases, for decades.

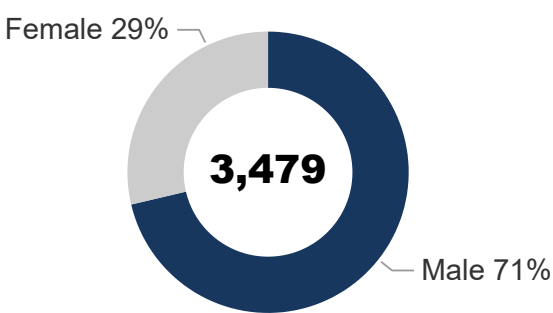
APPLICATIONS



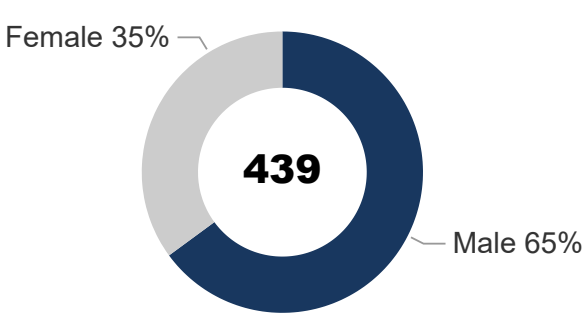
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



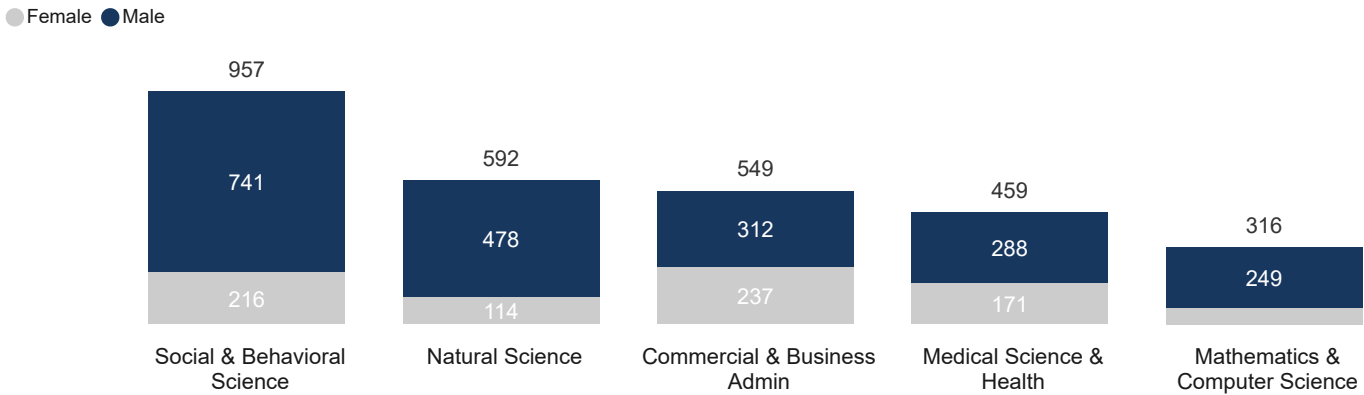
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



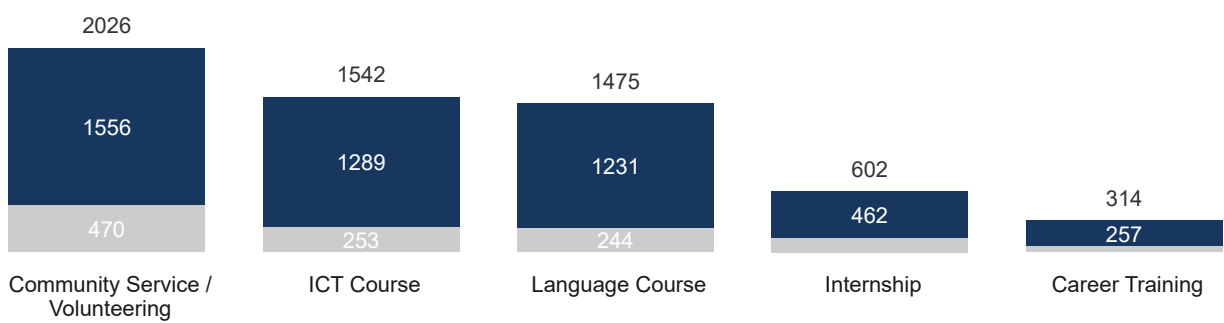
GRADUATES



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES





Monicah

Current DAFI Scholar | President of University
of Nairobi Students Association

Age: 25 | **Country of Origin:** South Sudan

Country of Study (DAFI): Kenya | **Institution of Study:** University of Nairobi

Field of Study: Law

“The quest for justice has always been a fundamental component of my path and my decision to study law is a testament to my resilience, courage and dedication to creating a better future for myself and others.”

As a young refugee girl growing up in a foreign country, I have ever wondered how I could be the game changer and a beacon of hope to the larger refugee community in order to do away with the systemic problems that refugees face. Well aware of the importance that law as a profession plays in the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms of marginalized communities as ours, I made the life-changing decision to pursue a career in law. Specifically, I want to contribute to the creation of international legal frameworks that defend refugees' rights, and this I believe I can only realize with a background in law.

My decision to pursue a career in law was catalyzed by my experience as a refugee in Kenya. My early life was affected by innumerable obstacles and struggles. I experienced the suffering of my fellow refugees, the injustices they encounter, and the obstacles that prevent them from accessing the legal system as well as basic amenities such as education and documentation. A majority of the refugees don't know basic laws, rights and privileges [they have] as refugees.

In addition to my personal experiences as a refugee from South Sudan, I have witnessed human rights violations and abuses and fully understand that the law can be used to protect the vulnerable and promote social change. The quest for justice has always been a fundamental component of my path and my decision to study law is a testament to my resilience, courage and dedication to creating a better future for myself and others. Indeed, I have stamped myself as a motivation to all the refugees out there who would want to have such a platform as myself by making history as the first ever refugee student to be elected as the Chairperson of the University of Nairobi Students Association.

I am highly passionate and committed to using advocacy as a tool for social change, especially in matters of human rights and development, and I am inspired by the platforms which give young people the voice to do so. As a law student, my passion lies in empowering the youth by promoting legal awareness, social justice, access to justice, youth representation, and mentorship. I believe that by empowering the youth, we can foster a generation of informed, engaged, and active citizens who can bring about positive change in their communities and society as a whole. I am doing this largely with peer-to-peer mentorship and encouraging more students to take up law degree. My main aim is empowerment.

Back in my country, the law in place has not been able to fully protect the citizens from mass human rights violations that are a result of the occasional civil wars. This too motivated me to choose a career in law so as to be able to analyze the current trend of human rights in South Sudan, and subsequently propose amendments to the law to improve the situation of human rights protection in the country. Studying law gives me the ability to not only comprehend the intricacies of the legal system but also to criticize its flaws, know where there are possibilities and impossibilities and know how to overcome them.



Muhindo

Current DAFI Scholar |

Founder of “Dynamic Youth for Community Transformation”

Age: 31 | **Country of Origin:** Democratic Republic of Congo

Country of Study (DAFI): Uganda | **Institution of Study:** Bugema University

Field of Study: Education

“The future plan is to create more opportunities for the community to build a resilient and self-sustainable society.”

I founded an organization called DYNAMIC YOUTH FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION (DYCT), with a main vision of community empowerment through providing equitable and inclusive education for sustainable development. My community is affected by many challenges, including unemployment, illiteracy, famine and general deterioration of livelihood. There is a reduction in humanitarian assistance to refugees that has led to family neglect by some parents, of which I was victim, after my father disappeared from 2010 up to now.

This organization [DYCT] is very important to spearhead a socio-economic change and to reduce such problems by increasing avenues for employment opportunities. To me, through this organization I’m going to serve my community. The organization is going to help me get self-employed as most people are grappling with the problem of unemployment even after graduation. During my course of study, I found out that a refugee has limited chances of finding a better job from where to exercise his profession in the host country. This can make one go back to the original situation of poverty.

This compelled me to think of an alternative, of using the knowledge I acquired from the University and from the trainings we have been getting as DAFI scholars. The organization [DYCT] started an early child development (ECD) center that’s providing pre-primary education

to young children. We are also implementing a project in hygiene and sanitation through soap making as an income generating activity. Altogether we have employed 9 people, and I managed to get legalisation of the operation from the local government.

The future plan is to create more opportunities for the community to build a resilient and self-sustainable society. I wish to grow the soap-making business to become a major supplier of soap. We are planning to plant palm trees in valleys to conserve our environment and easily get palm oil for soap making and other domestic use. I’m working harder for this organization to reach international standards and to also take part in providing humanitarian assistance to people affected with problems.



Shukri

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 23 | **Country of Origin:** Somalia

Country of Study (DAFI): Ethiopia | **Institution of Study:** Jigjiga University

Field of Study: Medicine

“As a DAFI scholar studying medicine, I have always been inspired by the idea of using my education to make a positive impact on the world.”

As a DAFI scholar studying medicine, I have always been inspired by the idea of using my education to make a positive impact on the world. Growing up as a refugee for more than decade, I saw first-hand the immense health challenges faced by my community, and I knew that I wanted to be a part of the solution. One specific experience that led me towards my chosen field of study was the illness of my grandmother. She suffered from dyspepsia, and I saw how much she struggled with her health and how difficult it was for her to access medical care. I felt helpless and frustrated that I couldn't do more to help her, and I knew that I wanted to be a part of the solution (She died in 2016).

When I learned about the DAFI program, I saw it as an opportunity to pursue my dream of studying medicine and to make a positive impact on my community and the world. The program provided me with financial and moral support, which allowed me to pursue my education and gain the skills and knowledge that I need to make a difference.

One of the most significant experiences that I had as a DAFI scholar was participating in a medical outreach program in a refugee camp. This experience opened my eyes to the immense health challenges faced by refugees and the critical need for medical professionals to serve these communities. It was a humbling experience to see the impact that even a small amount of medical care could have on the lives of those in need.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I had the opportunity to work for six months volunteering in a healthcare setting. This experience was significant to me because it allowed

me to apply the knowledge and skills that I gained through my education to help others during a time of crisis. It reinforced my commitment to serving others and has informed my future goals and aspirations.

After graduating as a medical professional, I plan to return to the refugee camp where I grew up and work to improve the health and wellbeing of my community. I believe that my experience as a DAFI scholar has prepared me well for this challenge, and I am excited to use my skills and knowledge to make a positive impact.

As a post-graduate, I am willing to improve my education and to specialize in the field of general surgery, specifically cardiothoracic surgery. Overall, my experience as a DAFI scholar was transformative, and it prepared me well for a career in healthcare. I am grateful for the support that I received from the program, and I am excited to use my education and experience to make a positive impact on my community and the rest of the world.

Naomi

DAFI Alumna |

Child Protection Volunteer with the Danish Refugee Council

Age: 24 | **Country of Origin:** Burundi | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Tanzania

Institution of Study: Vocational Education & Training Authority Shinyanga

Field of Study: Design Sewing & Cloth Technology

“I would like to call on policy makers and decision makers to consider refugees and make policies that will allow them to apply the knowledge and skills they have in the world, not to keep them in one place and refuse to allow them to do anything.”

I chose to pursue sewing in [my] vocational training program because in Nduta Camp there are many children that do not wear clothes, and some are not taken to school. The reason behind [this] is that they do not have clothes. Others have dropped out of school; when you approach them [it is because] they do not have clothes. So I was inspired to go and study [Design Sewing and Cloth Technology] so that I can come back and solve this problem.

Another thing led me to choose that program. There are a big number of youth who are doing nothing to prepare their future. Many of them did not get the chance to go to school, and females are [having] child marriages and pregnancies. This was a very big problem in camp because you can find some families [where] no one is producing something to ensure family needs, and you find children are the most vulnerable population in those families.

The above two reasons inspired me to pursue the sewing course. I can gain knowledge and skills in that sector so that I can make a good project of tailoring and sewing, whereby I will train a number of young people, especially survivors of early pregnancies and marriage, to end the problem of joblessness and lack of clothes. And after training them I will employ them and those who are interested in starting their own business will be free. This will lead to a decrease of joblessness in the camp.

After graduation, I came back to the camp with different fashionable clothes and bags I made, and people loved the pieces I showed them. The challenge was that, as a refugee, I am not allowed to do any business inside and outside the camp. And I proposed to start the project but I was not allowed to start or even continue tailoring. So my post graduate experience is not very good because all my plans failed just because I am a refugee, but I decided to volunteer with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in child protection case management in Nduta camp. I help children under eighteen years who are sexually abused report cases to the police, take them to the hospital, connect them with psychologists and other social networks that they might need and continue with follow-ups until they recover.

I would like to call on policy makers and decision makers to consider refugees and make policies that will allow them to apply the knowledge and skills they have in the world, not to keep them in one place and refuse to allow them to do anything. This will allow refugees to have a better future.



James

DAFI Alumnus | Co-Founder and Volunteer,
Nasir Community Healthcare Center

Age: 32 | **Country of Origin:** South Sudan | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ethiopia
Institution of Study: Debre Behran University
Field of Study: Public Health

“Although I was born into chaotic and war-torn zones and environments, I chose to be inspired by the great work of strangers in my motherland.”

I'm an ambitious, self-driven and hardworking young citizen of the world. I was born and raised in a small village or Payam of Luakpiny, one of the sub-divisions of Nasir Constituency. My father being [semi]-educated and my mother a mere housewife, we lived a traditional African family setting. Life was neither a cup of tea nor a bed of roses. We lived from hand to mouth, through war-torn South of Sudan. A series of civil wars attacks left numerous tragic effects on the livelihoods of the many inhabitants of the land.

From an early age, I was inspired by the rescue missions of International Red Cross (IRC) health workers in my hometown of Nasir. They provided humanitarian assistance to our poverty-stricken, pregnant and lactating mothers who could not [access] pre-natal clinics, and [provided] essential sexual and reproductive health education. These philanthropic and kind-hearted health personnel selflessly served our dying and suffering community wholeheartedly, with no reservations. I was inspired by their selfless service to our mothers. From then, I dreamed of being a health officer one day. Although I was born into chaotic and war-torn zones and environments, I chose to be inspired by the great work of strangers in my motherland.

The DAFI scholarship gave me an opportunity to achieve my dream course of study of Bachelor of Science in Public Health, at one of the best universities in Ethiopia. I graduated at the top of my class.

In the words of an American renowned neurosurgeon, Dr. Benjamin Solomon Carson, “Service to our fellow human beings is the sole purpose of our own existence.” Coupled

with my early and earnest inspiration by the healthcare workers in my village, I chose to come back home to serve my dying population, especially our mothers, and to be one of the changemakers in my community.

With my training and vast acquired knowledge and experience in public healthcare and clinical nursing, I co-founded Nasir Community Healthcare Center (NCHC), an organization whose aims and objectives is to advocate for healthcare services for our perishing population, where children and elderly people die of preventable diseases, such as diarrhea.

We also advocate and create sexual and reproductive health education awareness within Nasir Community and the nearby neighborhoods. We have trained over fifteen young people on first aid and vaccination techniques. The future is quite luminous, though we have challenges accessing equipment and funding to enable us give efficient and sufficient service delivery. Mostly, we depend on well-wishers and little contributions by local leadership. This is giving back to my community.



Mielena

DAFI Alumna

Age: 26 | **Country of Origin:** Eritrea

Country of Study (DAFI): Ethiopia | **Institution of Study:** Adigrat University,
Haramaya University | **Field of Study:** Clinical Laboratory Science

“I have been thinking to raise awareness to help ladies like me to continue their school so that they can lead an educated family and community.”

I am Mielena, born in a town called Dekemhare, Eritrea. Though I was an outstanding student, over time I started to sense and feel biology and it was my ultimate wish to become a medical doctor. I kept working hard and excelling in my class.

After I joined the Eritrean Institute of technology (EIT), things didn't get comfortable so I went to Ethiopia. During the times I was in a camp I faced different health challenges, motivating me to take the matriculation exam in Ethiopia. As I wished, I joined Adigrat University in the year 2018. I attended school there for three years, then due to the conflict in the northern part of Ethiopia I transferred to Haramaya University and graduated from the department of clinical laboratory science in 2022.

All thanks to the almighty God and DAFI I have fulfilled one wish of my dream. At the moment, due to our uncompleted documents from Adigrat University, as the situation isn't stable yet, I am not qualified for any additional scholarships but I am sure that I am not done with my steps. Next, I want to keep on with my classes for a master's and PhD. As a project, I have been thinking to raise awareness to help ladies like me to continue their school so that they can lead an educated family and community.

Chop

DAFI Alumnus

Age: 33 | **Country of Origin:** South Sudan | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ethiopia

Institution of Study: Adigrat University, Debre Behran University

Field of Study: Law

“[My] project will provide solutions to these existing problems by creating legal awareness in the community and empowering institutions to protect the rights of citizens.”

Brief reflection of my project: Jonglei State Community Capacity Building on Laws and Conflicts Management (JSCCBM)

This is a community-based initiative that aims to create legal awareness to the Jonglei state community on the one hand and to empower judicial and non-judicial means of conflict management on the other hand. Its main purpose is to address the needs for justice and human rights protection in Jonglei state and the mechanisms for achieving that objective.

Problem Statement: The problems that led me to come up with this initiative were the rampant violation of human rights that affect South Sudan in general and Jonglei state in particular. It's very hard to describe the situation faced by Jonglei State society due to the lack of justice in the entire State. The cause for all these situations is lack of legal awareness or qualified personnel and the rudimentary structure of laws enforcing institutions.

Henceforth, the way conflicts are managed in Jonglei State is still at rudimentary stages. Therefore, in order to change the existing situation, there is a high need for intervention from concerned individuals and stakeholders for the effective realization of better and equal protection of the rights of citizens.

Thus, this project will provide solutions to these existing problems by creating legal awareness in the community and empowering institutions to protect the rights of citizens.

Vision: Call for human rights protection and fight against injustice in Jonglei state.

Missions:

- Empower judiciary structure of Jonglei State Community by providing adequate training to judiciary personnel about substantive and procedural laws of the country.
- Encourage non-judicial means of conflicts management, which include Negotiation, Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration.
- Enhance awareness of police institutions and prison service administration about the human rights of every person, including prisoners, which are incorporated in both national and international instruments.

Expected outcomes:

- Strengthen the justice system in Jonglei State for equal and better protection of the rights of all citizens.
- Raise awareness of Jonglei State police community and prison services administration about the human rights of every person, including prisoners, for the respect of human dignity.

Target stakeholders include the South Sudan ministry of justice, Jonglei State Government, United Nation Mission in South Sudan (Human Rights Branch) and the United Nation Development Program (UNDP).



College
of law



THE AMERICAS

La propuesta es sencilla pero poderosa. A través de la plataforma, estudiantes refugiadxs en todo el mundo podrían conectar con sus pares que comparten los mismos sueños y objetivos, participar en proyectos colaborativos y fomentar la interacción y apoyo mutuo.

Anibal, Mexico

Creo firmemente en el valor de la educación como herramienta de transformación social y en el poder de la sensibilización para generar cambios positivos.

Roxana, Mexico

Mexico

Ecuador



Ahora puedo decir que soy una estudiante de la carrera de psicología, una carrera que me permite explorar mi propia mente y la de los demás, y que nos enseña a identificar qué es lo que nos afecta, qué nos hace diferentes, qué nos motiva y qué nos puede hacer mejores en un futuro.

Yisel, Ecuador

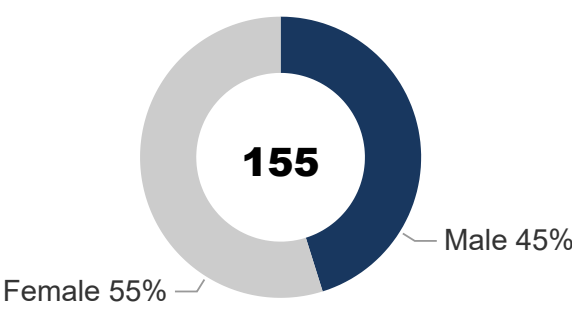
THE AMERICAS

In 2022, DAFI programmes in the Americas accounted for just over one per cent of all DAFI students. This region includes DAFI programmes in Mexico and Ecuador. In addition, a new DAFI operation opened in Colombia at the end of 2022. According to their national policies, both Mexico and Ecuador ensure refugees the right to higher education on par with nationals. However, neither allow refugees to benefit from government sponsored financial aid programmes. Furthermore, although both DAFI countries in the region have policies that grant refugees the right to work, in practice, this does not apply in Ecuador. Refugees in Ecuador face limitations in private sector employment, movement restrictions and recruitment processes frequently favour nationals.

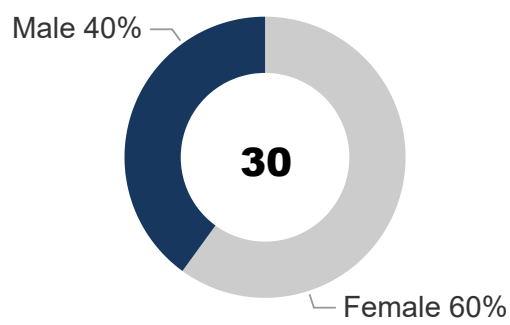
In the last year, Ecuador faced a number of socioeconomic, health, safety and security challenges due in part to slow economic recovery following COVID-19. This resulted in political demonstrations and demands for government action to improve living conditions. The country is also seeing an increase in violence and insecurity, which directly affected DAFI scholars and their continued education. Some evening classes were shifted to earlier hours and more classes were held online to safeguard students' wellbeing and to comply with curfews and mobility restrictions.

Forced displacement in the region and the consequent increase of new arrivals at Mexico's southern border continued in 2022, largely from Honduras, Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela. Since 2016, UNHCR's relocation, job placement, and local integration program has enabled more than 29,000 asylum seekers and refugees to be employed in the formal economy in Mexico. UNHCR continues to work with the Mexican Ministry of Education (MoE) to facilitate access to TVET centres for refugees and asylum seekers across a number of disciplines. DAFI programmes throughout the region benefit from strong, complementary youth support programmes and refugee-youth-led initiatives.

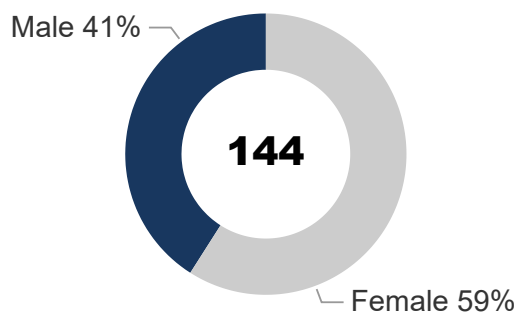
APPLICATIONS



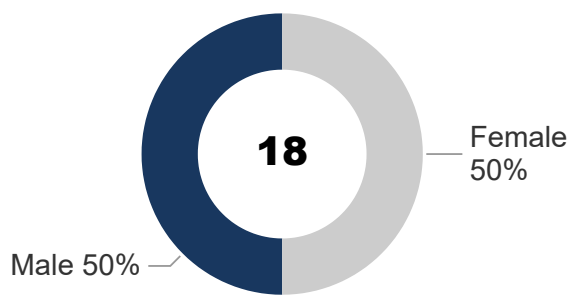
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



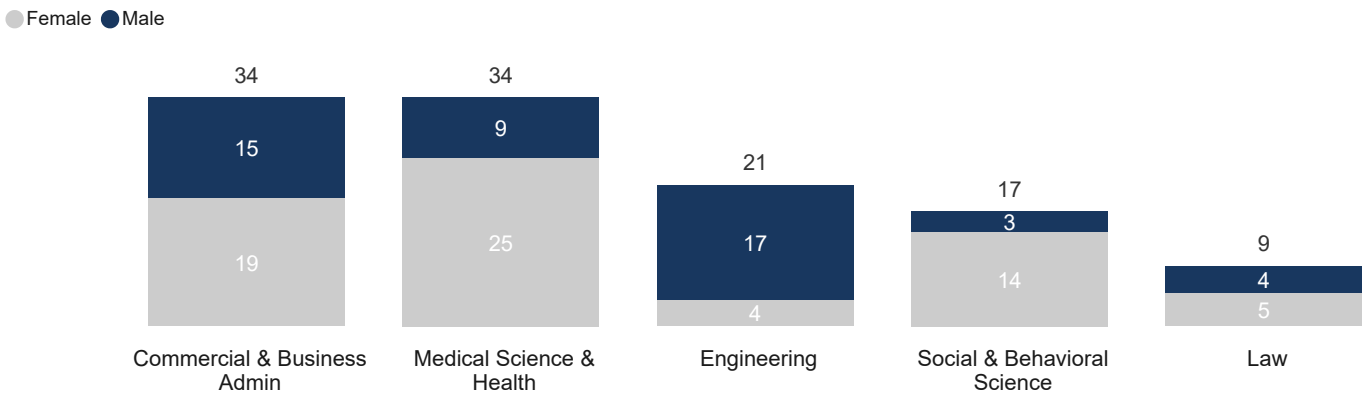
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



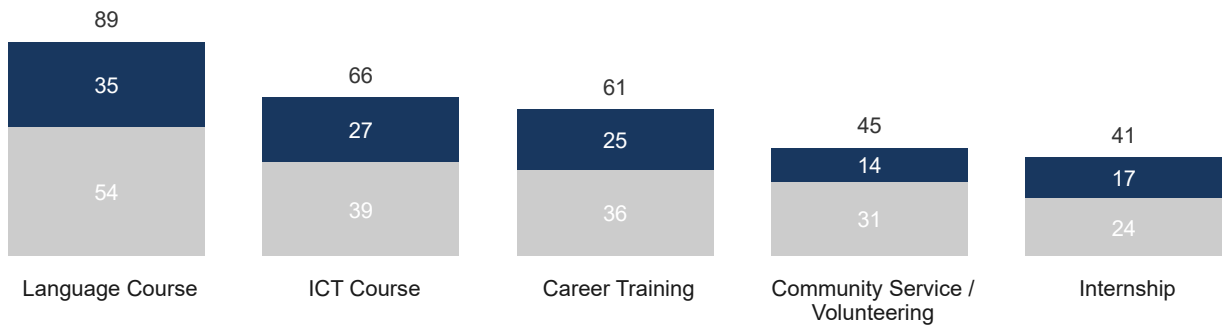
GRADUATES



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES





Yisel

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 20 | **Country of Origin:** Colombia | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ecuador

Institution of Study: La Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja

Field of Study: Psicología (Psychology)

“Ahora puedo decir que soy una estudiante de la carrera de psicología, una carrera que me permite explorar mi propia mente y la de los demás, y que nos enseña a identificar qué es lo que nos afecta, qué nos hace diferentes, qué nos motiva y qué nos puede hacer mejores en un futuro.”

Hola, soy Yisel Neira. Soy colombiana y tengo 20 años. Si hoy me preguntaran que me inspiró a estudiar psicología, podría responder con gran facilidad que escogí mi carrera soñada. Desde que tengo 12 años y llegué a Ecuador, yo estudiaba en un colegio fronterizo donde tenía que cruzar todos los días la frontera entre Colombia y Ecuador. Esto me ayudó a conocer muchas personas que cruzaban la frontera a diario y a conocer cada una de sus historias, lo que y fue muy relevante para mí. Un día, conocí unas psicólogas de una fundación que justamente llegaron al colegio a darnos unas charlas. Podría decir que me llamó mucho la atención. En ese entonces una psicóloga extranjera muy joven que realizaba su trabajo espectacular y con mucha ética, nos contó muchas historias de personas con problemas psicológicos de cada lugar del mundo. Esto me motivó muchísimo a querer saber más y mucho más de la psicología. Comencé a investigar todo acerca de la carrera y sin duda me enamoré de una carrera sin saber si podría pagarla. Es así como, junto con mi familia, decidimos que yo estudiaría mis últimos años de bachillerato en el Ecuador para poder ingresar a una universidad pública.

Me gradué y me puse a estudiar para poder rendir los exámenes de admisión a la universidad pública y ¡Oh!, sorpresa no pude inscribirme por falta de documentación legal. Fue muy triste para mí ver como mi sueño de poder estudiar psicología se fue abajo, yo no tenía más opción que regresarme a Colombia sin nada y empezar de cero para poder estudiar o quedarme y trabajar duro para pagarme una universidad particular. Es así como tomé la decisión de quedarme y luchar por mi futuro.

Con mucho esfuerzo mi madre y yo comenzamos a vender comidas a domicilio y yo tomé la decisión de emprender con lo que más amo hacer, que es hacer artesanías en porcelana y arcilla, todo esto para poder

recolectar para mi primer semestre. Lastimosamente, no logramos recolectar para todas las 6 materias del semestre, pero si pudimos pagar 4, lo que fue para mí era un gran esfuerzo que valía oro.

Me comentaron acerca de las becas DAFI, y decidí postularme. Siendo sincera, nunca esperé nada a cambio. Pensé que no podría tener la capacidad de ganarme una beca. Sin embargo, hace 8 meses recibí la noticia que cambió mi vida. Cuando me dijeron que fui una de las ganadoras de las becas DAFI no tenía palabras para expresar la felicidad y la paz mental que esta noticia me generó. Recuerdo que llegué llorando a mi casa y dije: “mami, ya no te preocupes por el dinero de las

otras materias, me gané la beca.” Nunca voy a olvidar las lágrimas de orgullo y agradecimiento de mi madre. Para poderles responder que me inspiró a estudiar esta carrera [psicología], con seguridad les puedo decir que fue las ganas de seguir mis sueños, la disciplina y el esfuerzo tan grande que tuve que pasar con mi familia. Ahora puedo decir que soy una estudiante de

la carrera de psicología, una carrera que me permite explorar mi propia mente y la de los demás, y que nos enseña a identificar qué es lo que nos afecta, qué nos hace diferentes, qué nos motiva y qué nos puede hacer mejores en un futuro. Nunca olviden que los sueños sí se cumplen y el secreto es nunca rendirse.

Yisel

English Translation

Hi, I am Yisel Neira. I am Colombian and I am 20 years old. If you asked me today what inspired me to study psychology, I could easily answer that I found my dream career. Since I was 12 years old and arrived in Ecuador, I studied at a border school where I had to cross the border between Colombia and Ecuador every day. This helped me meet many people who cross the border daily and get to know each of their stories, which was very relevant to me. One day, I met some psychologists from a foundation who just came to the school to speak with us. I could say that it caught my attention. At that time a very young foreign psychologist who carried out her spectacular work with great ethics, told us many stories of people with psychological problems from every part of the world. This motivated me a lot to want to know more and more about psychology. I started researching everything about the degree and without a doubt I fell in love with a degree without knowing if I could afford it. That is how, together with my family, we decided that I would study my last years of high school in Ecuador to be able to join a public university.

I graduated and began to study to be able to take the admission exams for the public university and oh, surprise I couldn’t enroll due to a lack of legal documentation. It was very sad for me to see how my dream of being able to study psychology fell apart, I had no choice but to return to Colombia with nothing and start from scratch to be able to study or stay and work hard to pay for private university. This is how I made the decision to stay and fight for my future.

With a lot of effort my mother and I started selling meals at home and I made the decision to start what I love to do most, which is making porcelain and clay handicrafts, all this to be able to collect for my first semester. Unfortunately, we were not able to collect for all 6 subjects of the semester, but if we were able to pay for 4, for me this was a great effort that was worth gold.

They told me about the DAFI scholarships, and I decided to apply. To be honest, I never expected anything in

return. I thought that I might not have the ability to win a scholarship. However, 8 months ago I received the news that changed my life. When they told me that I was one of the winners of the DAFI scholarship, I had no words to express the happiness and peace of mind that this news brought me. I remember that I came home crying and said: “Mami, don’t worry about the money for the other subjects, I won the scholarship.” I will never forget my mother’s tears of pride and gratitude.

In order to answer what inspired me to study this career [psychology], I can safely tell you that it was the desire to follow my dreams, the discipline and the great effort that I had to extend with my family. Now I can say that I am a student studying psychology, a course that allows me to explore my own mind and that of others, and that teaches us to identify what affects us, what makes us different, what motivates us and what can make us better in the future. Never forget that dreams do come true and the secret is never to give up.

“Now I can say that I am a student studying psychology, a course that allows me to explore my own mind and that of others, and that teaches us to identify what affects us, what makes us different, what motivates us and what can make us better in the future.”



Anibal

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 18 | **Country of Origin:** Guatemala | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Mexico

Institution of Study: Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas

Field of Study: Desarrollo de Software (Software Development)

“La propuesta es sencilla pero poderosa. A través de la plataforma, estudiantes refugiadx en todo el mundo podrían conectar con sus pares que comparten los mismos sueños y objetivos, participar en proyectos colaborativos y fomentar la interacción y apoyo mutuo.”

Como amante de la tecnología, me apasiona la idea de conectar con las personas y crear experiencias conjuntas. Sueño con la posibilidad de desarrollar un sitio web en donde podamos alcanzar ese punto de encuentro, un lugar donde estudiantes jóvenes puedan conocerse, adquirir habilidades y brindarse apoyo mutuo.

Me gustaría implementar una plataforma interactiva en donde los jóvenes estudiantes refugiadx, intercambiamos experiencias sobre nuestros estudios en México, los desafíos y logros, así como nuestros planes a futuro, para lograr crear una comunidad sólida de universitarix.

A lo largo de mi experiencia como estudiante refugiado universitario, he notado que la falta de trabajo en equipo es una realidad en muchas instituciones educativas. Lo me llevó a tomar acción, y decidí implementar un taller de asesorías en de las instalaciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, en donde estudié la Ingeniería en Desarrollo de Software. Mi objetivo, diseñar con los estudiantes estrategias para trabajar de manera conjunta y mejorar nuestras habilidades de comunicación. El primer día, un grupo de estudiantes acudieron con entusiasmo y mostraron interés. Sin embargo, el segundo día, la asistencia disminuyó y el tercer día, nadie se presentó.

Esta situación me hizo reflexionar y darme cuenta de que necesitamos un enfoque distinto para lograr nuestro

objetivo de fomentar el trabajo en equipo y el crecimiento personal. Es en este punto es que surge mi idea de crear un espacio virtual donde la tecnología sea la herramienta que nos conecte y nos permita alcanzar nuestras metas.

Imagino un espacio donde estudiantes con intereses similares tengan la oportunidad de compartir experiencias y aprender juntos. Un sitio donde podamos desarrollar habilidades tanto técnicas como interpersonales, y donde siempre haya alguien dispuesto a brindarte una mano amiga cuando la necesites.

Creo que la propuesta es sencilla pero poderosa. A través de la plataforma, estudiantes refugiadx en todo el mundo podrían conectar con sus pares que comparten los mismos sueños y objetivos, participar en proyectos colaborativos y fomentar la interacción y apoyo mutuo. Si bien en ese momento no logré concretar mi propuesta, estoy convencido que durante los siguientes años continuaré trabajando para aplicar los conocimientos de mi carrera a favor de la conexión entre jóvenes refugiadx y la inclusión educativa.

As a technology lover, I am passionate about the idea of connecting with people and creating joint experiences. I dream of the possibility of developing a website where we can reach that meeting point, a place where young students can meet, learn skills, and support each other.

I would love to implement an interactive platform where young refugee students can exchange experiences about their studies in Mexico, their challenges and achievements as well as our plans for the future, in order to create a strong community of university students.

Throughout my experience as a refugee college student, I noticed that a lack of teamwork is a reality in many educational institutions. This led me to act, and I decided to implement an advisory workshop in the facilities of the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, where I studied Engineering in Software Development. My aim was to work with students to design strategies together and improve our communication skills. On the first day, a group of students came enthusiastically and showed interest. However, on the second day, attendance was lacking and on the third day, no one showed up.

This situation made me reflect and realize that we needed a different approach to achieve our goal of

promoting teamwork and personal growth. It was at this point that my idea arose of creating a virtual space where technology is the tool that connects us and allows us to achieve our goals.

I envision a similar space where students with interests can share experiences and learn together. A place where we can develop both technical and interpersonal skills, and where there is always someone willing to give you a helping hand when you need it.

I think the proposal is simple but powerful. Through the platform, refugee students around the world could connect with their peers who share the same dreams and goals, participate in collaborative projects, and foster interaction and mutual support. Although at that time I was not able to materialize my proposal, I am convinced that during the following years I will continue working to apply the knowledge of my career in favour of the connection between young refugees and educational inclusion.

“The proposal is simple but powerful. Through the platform, refugee students around the world could connect with their peers who share the same dreams and goals, participate in collaborative projects, and foster interaction and mutual support.”

Roxana

Current DAFI Scholar | Employed with KPMG (Mexico)

Age: 24 | **Country of Origin:** Venezuela | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Mexico

Institution of Study: Universidad de Guanajuato

Field of Study: Contador Público (Public Accountant)

“Creo firmemente en el valor de la educación como herramienta de transformación social y en el poder de la sensibilización para generar cambios positivos.”

Durante mis estudios superiores, me apasioné por el proyecto de crear conciencia y promover la inclusión de los refugiados en la sociedad a través de diversas iniciativas. Esta iniciativa es de suma importancia para mí debido a las dificultades que enfrenté como estudiante refugiada y al impacto que tuvo en mi vida y en la de otras personas en situaciones similares.

A través de mi experiencia personal y al entrar en contacto con el ACNUR y otras personas refugiadas, me di cuenta de la falta de conocimiento y comprensión que existía en mi ciudad adoptiva respecto a la cultura de los refugiados. Esto no solo generaba obstáculos en el acceso a la educación y al empleo, sino que también contribuía a la violación de derechos laborales y estudiantiles. Sentí la necesidad de cambiar esta situación y brindar oportunidades a otros refugiados que enfrentaban los mismos desafíos que yo.

Con este propósito en mente, me enfoqué en crear proyectos de divulgación en mi universidad. Organizamos charlas, talleres y eventos culturales que permitieran a los estudiantes y a la comunidad en general comprender mejor las realidades y desafíos de los refugiados. A través de estas actividades, buscábamos sensibilizar a la sociedad, romper estereotipos y fomentar la empatía hacia esta población.

Esta iniciativa es importante para mí porque no solo se trata de brindar oportunidades educativas y laborales

a los refugiados, sino también de promover la diversidad, la inclusión y el respeto mutuo en nuestra sociedad. Creo firmemente en el valor de la educación como herramienta de transformación social y en el poder de la sensibilización para generar cambios positivos. Quiero que esta iniciativa impulse un cambio cultural en mi ciudad adoptiva, donde los refugiados sean reconocidos, valorados y respaldados en su proceso de integración.

Espero que esta iniciativa me lleve a establecer alianzas con otras organizaciones y actores clave en la comunidad para ampliar su alcance y efectividad. Me gustaría que se convierta en un modelo replicable en otras universidades y ciudades, para que más estudiantes refugiados tengan acceso a la educación y más personas comprendan la importancia de la solidaridad y la inclusión. Además, aspiraría a que esta experiencia me brinde oportunidades de colaboración con organismos internacionales y ONGs que trabajan en la protección y el apoyo a los refugiados, para contribuir de manera más amplia a esta causa a nivel nacional e internacional.

During my time at university, I became passionate about the project of raising awareness and promoting the inclusion of refugees in society through various initiatives. This initiative is of utmost importance to me because of the difficulties I faced myself as a refugee student, and the impact it had on my life and the lives of others in similar situations.

Through my personal experience and coming into contact with UNHCR and other refugees, I realized the lack of knowledge and understanding that existed in my host city regarding refugee culture. This not only created obstacles in access to education and employment, but also contributed to the violation of labor and student rights. I felt the need to change this situation and provide opportunities for other refugees facing the same challenges as me.

With this purpose in mind, I focused on creating outreach projects at my university. We organized lectures, workshops and cultural events that would allow students and the community at large to better understand the realities and challenges of refugees. Through these activities, we sought to raise awareness in society, break stereotypes and foster empathy towards this population.

This initiative is important to me because it is not only about providing educational and employment opportunities for

refugees, but also about promoting diversity, inclusion and mutual respect in our society. I strongly believe in the value of education as a tool for social transformation and in the power of awareness to generate positive change. I want this initiative to drive a cultural change in my adopted city, where refugees are recognized, valued and supported in their integration process.

I hope that this initiative will lead me to establish partnerships with other organizations and key players in the community to expand its reach and effectiveness. I would like it to become a replicable model in other universities and cities, so that more refugee students have access to education and more people understand the importance of solidarity and inclusion. In addition, I would aspire for this experience to provide me with opportunities to collaborate with international agencies and NGOs working on refugee protection and support, to contribute more broadly to this cause nationally and even internationally.

“I strongly believe in the value of education as a tool for social transformation and in the power of awareness to generate positive change.”

Andrés

Current DAFI Scholar | Business Owner

Age: 22 | **Country of Origin:** Colombia | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ecuador

Institution of Study: La Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja

Field of Study: Tecnologías de la Información (Information Technology)

“A los 12 años, pude ensamblar mi primer ordenador básico, el cual me servía para realizar mis trabajos académicos y escuchar algo de música.”

Mi hermano es mi inspiración. A los 10 años me uní a su taller de reparación de computadores, era algo fantástico el poder aprender a darle solución a diferentes tipos de problemas que presentaba cada ordenador. El adquirir conocimiento me hizo querer profundizar más sobre el tema, querer adentrarme en el mundo de la tecnología. A los 12 años, pude ensamblar mi primer ordenador básico, el cual me servía para realizar mis trabajos académicos y escuchar algo de música. Sin embargo, para mí no era suficiente, con este tuve la oportunidad de aprender todo sobre la informática.

A los 13 años arreglé mi primer computador, era de un profesor y no era nada grave. La verdad es que los nervios me consumían – un montón de ideas pasaban por mi cabeza, quizá algo podría salir mal. Sin embargo, el conocimiento ya lo tenía muy bien aprendido. Sabemos que el trabajo bien realizado habla por sí mismo y se abren muchas más oportunidades, las cuales me permitieron ganar unas cuantas monedas. Pasado algunos meses pude comprar un ordenador decente, y el primero que tuve lo sigo teniendo de recuerdo como un tesoro. Fue la que me dio la mano y es muy difícil despojarse de algo que fue de mucha utilidad.

Como becario DAFI, mi experiencia ha sido excepcional y transformadora. Desde el momento en que fui seleccionado como beneficiario de una beca, supe que se abría un mundo de oportunidades para mí. La beca DAFI me brindó el apoyo financiero necesario para continuar con mis estudios superiores, algo que de otra manera habría sido muy difícil de lograr.

Una de las cosas que más valoro de la beca es el enfoque integral que tiene en el desarrollo de los

estudiantes. No solo se trata de recibir una ayuda económica, sino que también se nos brinda apoyo emocional y académico. A lo largo de mi experiencia, he tenido acceso a mentores y asesores que me han orientado y motivado en mi camino académico y profesional. Además, me ha permitido formar parte de una comunidad de becarios increíblemente diversa y talentosa. He tenido la oportunidad de conocer y compartir experiencias con estudiantes de diferentes partes del país, lo que ha enriquecido mi perspectiva y me ha permitido entender y apreciar diferentes culturas y formas de pensar.

También he tenido la oportunidad de participar en diversas actividades extracurriculares, como talleres, conferencias y programas de voluntariado. Estas experiencias complementarias han fortalecido mi desarrollo personal y me han brindado habilidades y conocimientos adicionales que son fundamentales para enfrentar los desafíos del mundo actual.

La beca DAFI ha sido más que un apoyo financiero para mí. Ha sido una oportunidad de crecimiento y superación personal. Me ha permitido tener acceso

a una educación de calidad, ampliar mis horizontes y desarrollar habilidades que serán clave en mi futuro profesional.

Estoy sinceramente agradecido por la oportunidad que se me ha brindado como becario DAFI. Esta experiencia ha dejado una marca duradera en mi vida

y me ha motivado a seguir luchando por mis sueños y contribuir al desarrollo de mi comunidad y de mi país. En resumen, mi experiencia como becario ha sido enriquecedora, inspiradora y transformadora. Estoy convencido de que esta beca está cambiando vidas y construyendo un futuro mejor para todos nosotros.

Andrés

English Translation

My brother is my inspiration. At the age of 10 I joined his computer repair shop, it was fantastic to be able to learn how to solve different types of problems that each computer presented. Acquiring [this] knowledge made me want to delve deeper into the subject, want to enter the world of technology. At the age of 12, I was able to assemble my first basic computer, which I used to do my academic work and listen to some music. However, for me it was not enough, with this I had the opportunity to learn everything about computing.

At the age of 13 I fixed my first computer, it belonged to a teacher and it was nothing serious. The truth is that my nerves consumed me – a lot of ideas were going through my head, maybe something could go wrong. However, the knowledge was already very well learned. We know that a job well done speaks for itself and many more opportunities open up, which allowed me to earn a few coins. After a few months I was able to buy a decent computer, and I still have the first one I had as a treasure. It [the computer] was the thing that lent me a helping hand and it is very difficult to throw away something that was very useful.

As a DAFI scholar, my experience has been exceptional and transformative. From the moment I was selected as a scholarship recipient, I knew this would open up a world of opportunities for me. The DAFI scholarship provided me with the necessary financial support to continue with my higher studies, something that otherwise would have been very difficult to achieve.

One of the things I value most about the scholarship is the holistic approach it takes in student development. It is not only about receiving financial aid, but also emotional and academic support. Throughout my experience, I have had access to mentors and advisors who have guided and motivated me on my academic and professional path. Additionally, it has allowed me to be part of an incredibly diverse and talented community of scholars. I have had

the opportunity to meet and share experiences with students from different parts of the country, which has enriched my perspective and allowed me to understand and appreciate different cultures and ways of thinking.

I have also had the opportunity to participate in various extracurricular activities, such as workshops, conferences and volunteer programs. These complementary experiences have strengthened my personal development and have given me additional skills and knowledge that are essential to face the challenges of today's world.

The DAFI scholarship has been more than financial support for me. It has been an opportunity for growth and personal improvement. It has allowed me to access a quality education, broaden my horizons and develop skills that will be key in my professional future.

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity that has been given to me as a DAFI scholar. This experience has left a lasting mark on my life and has motivated me to continue fighting for my dreams and contribute to the development of my community and my country. In summary, my experience as a scholar has been enriching, inspiring and transformative. I am convinced that this scholarship is changing lives and building a better future for all of us.

“At the age of 12, I was able to assemble my first basic computer, which I used to do my academic work and listen to some music.”

Esthefany

Current DAFI Scholar | Freelance Translator

Age: 23 | **Country of Origin:** Venezuela | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ecuador

Institution of Study: La Universidad Técnica del Norte

Field of Study: Comunicación (Communication)

“Cuando comencé la carrera, me encantó. Es un campo muy amplio que permite aprender de muchos temas y me encontré a mi misma rápidamente interesada en muchas cosas más que en la escritura, como la fotografía, el diseño, marketing e investigación periodística.”

Lo que me inspiró a seguir este campo de estudio en realidad fue una de mis profesoras en mi último año de bachillerato. En ese momento estaba bastante indecisa en cual carrera tomar. Pensaba en psicología, arquitectura e incluso diseño gráfico, sin embargo, ninguna parecía realmente ser lo que buscaba hacer. Sentía que les faltaba algo.

Para ese entonces era bien conocido por mis profesores que me gustaba mucho la lectura y la literatura en general, más de una vez me habían preguntado si estudiaría algo relacionado y no sabía muy bien qué responder a ello. Si bien me encantaba leer y la escritura también me apasionaba, hacer la elección de dedicarse a algo más inclinado a la creatividad parecía inseguro e inestable a futuro. La opción de comunicación ni siquiera pasaba por mi mente en ese entonces. Sin embargo, debido a un evento dedicado al día del libro, en mi colegio me pidieron escribir algo al respecto y presentarlo frente a los alumnos y representantes del plantel.

Las instrucciones eran simples “escribe algo que anime a los otros a leer y que al mismo tiempo nos cuente algo sobre la fecha”. Preparé un pequeño escrito de no más de unas 400 palabras, a los profesores les gustó y gracias a eso la profesora de nuestro curso me separó del resto de mis compañeros para preguntarme si hubiera considerado la escritura como algo profesional.

Tengo la fortuna de tener padres que querían apoyarme sin importar que carrera decidiera seguir, pero era muy diferente oírlo de alguien externo a mi familia. Se sentía un poco más real y posible. Hablamos por un rato sobre como estudiar literatura realmente no garantizaba que me mantuviera escribiendo y me sugirió que quizás algo más práctico como comunicación o periodismo sería una mejor opción para mí. En esa semana no pude pensar en nada más, y en la siguiente fueron las pruebas vocacionales. En los resultados se veía en primer lugar Licenciatura en Comunicación, como si de una confirmación se tratara.

Cuando comencé la carrera, me encantó. Es un campo muy amplio que permite aprender de muchos temas y me encontré a mi misma rápidamente interesada en muchas cosas más que en la escritura, como la fotografía, el diseño, marketing e investigación periodística. Ahora mismo, no puedo pensar en dedicarme a nada más y sigo agradeciendo que mi profesora se tomara esos diez minutos para hablar conmigo y guiarme.

Sin duda marcó un antes y un después para mis elecciones a futuro.

Lamentablemente, debido a la situación en Venezuela no fui capaz de continuar mi carrera, ese tiempo que pasé sin estudiar fue como perder el rumbo e hizo que adaptarme a un nuevo país fuera mucho más difícil. Afortunadamente, pude retomar este sueño gracias

a DAFI. En 2021, tras múltiples intentos, pude ingresar al sistema de educación ecuatoriano. El volver a hacer lo que me gusta y apasiona fue lo que realmente me hizo ver este país como mi nuevo hogar. No puedo más que estar sinceramente agradecida por esta oportunidad y continuar dando lo mejor de mí a lo largo de mi camino universitario.

Esthefany

English translation

What inspired me to pursue this field of study was actually one of my professors in my last year of high school. At that time I was quite undecided about which career to follow. I thought about psychology, architecture and even graphic design, however, none of them really seemed to be what I was looking to do. I felt that they were missing something.

By then it was well known by my teachers that I really liked reading and literature in general, more than once they asked me if I would study something related and I didn't know how to answer them well. Although I loved reading and was also passionate about writing, making the choice to pursue something more creative seemed uncertain and unstable in the future. The communication option didn't even cross my mind back then. However, due to an event dedicated to World Book Day, my school asked me to write something about it and present it to the alumni and representatives of the school.

The instructions were simple "write something that encourages other to read and at the same time tells us something about the day." I prepared a small piece of no more than 400 words, the teachers liked it and thanks to that the teacher of our course pulled me aside from my classmates to ask me if I had considered writing as something professional.

I am fortunate to have parents who wanted to support me no matter what career I decided to pursue, but it was very different to hear it from someone outside of my family. It felt a little more real and possible. We talked for a while about how studying literature wasn't really a guarantee that I would be able to keep writing and he suggested that perhaps something more practical like

communication or journalism would be a better option for me. That week I couldn't think of anything else, and the following week it was the vocational tests. In the results the bachelor's degree in communication was listed first, as if it were a confirmation.

When I started the degree, I loved it. It is a very broad field that allows one to learn many subjects and I quickly found myself interested in many things other than writing, such as photography, design, marketing and investigative journalism. Right now, I can't think of doing anything else and I'm still grateful that my teacher took those ten minutes to talk to me and guide me. Without a doubt it marked a before and after for my future choices.

Unfortunately, due to the situation in Venezuela I was not able to continue my degree, that time I spent without studying was like losing my way and made adapting to a new country much more difficult. Fortunately, I was able to resume this dream thanks to DAFI. In 2021, after multiple attempts, I was able to enter the Ecuadorian education system. Going back to doing what I like and am passionate about was what really made me see this country as my new home. I can only be sincerely grateful for this opportunity and continue to do my best throughout my university journey.

“When I started the degree, I loved it. It is a very broad field that allows one to learn many subjects and I quickly found myself interested in many things other than writing, such as photography, design, marketing and investigative journalism.”

Andres

Current DAFI Scholar | Web Developer

Age: 22 | **Country of Origin:** Venezuela | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Mexico
Institution of Study: Unidad Profesional Interdisciplinaria en Ingeniería y Tecnologías Avanzadas – Instituto Politécnico | **Field of Study:** Ingeniería (Engineering)

“Todos merecemos una oportunidad para salir adelante, y lograr las metas que nos proponemos; y, muchas veces, es necesario una ayuda para conseguir oportunidades.”

Si tuviera la oportunidad de iniciar una organización, en unos años fundaría una organización para ayudar a los jóvenes a que puedan acceder a centros de formación educativos. No exclusivamente a la universidad, también a otras formas de aprendizajes de tecnologías modernas. Como un estudiante DAFI y como refugiado he experimentado la dificultad de poder acceder a medios de formación. Quiero ayudar a otros jóvenes refugiados a que puedan acceder a centros de formación, ya sea a través de apoyos económicos y/o con cursos de capacitación dados por mi organización.

De ser posible, me gustaría que mi organización fuese quien imparta las capacitaciones; y dichas capacitaciones serían enfocadas en las tecnologías emergentes como programación, desarrollo de software, informática, diseño y creación de equipos electrónicos, uso y mantenimiento de equipos celulares y de computadoras. Puesto que cada día, el mundo continua con su digitalización, es necesario tener más personas que entiendan estos conceptos. Además, son áreas bien remuneradas, con un gran crecimiento. En esas áreas no importa tu lugar de procedencia, lo único que importa es que tengas la determinación de siempre estar aprendiendo.

Esta idea es muy importante para mí porque sería mi forma de devolverle, a la vida, todo el apoyo que he recibido, de mi familia, amigos y de la beca DAFI. En los casi 5 años que tengo siendo refugiado en México, he experimentado lo difícil que es poder estudiar en esta situación. Uno se tiene que enfocar en conseguir un trabajo y un lugar para vivir, y se vuelve muy difícil poder pensar en otras cosas, como estudiar. Por ello, quiero ayudar a otros jóvenes a lograr tal objetivo. Todos merecemos una oportunidad para salir adelante, y lograr las metas que nos proponemos; y, muchas veces, es necesario una ayuda para conseguir oportunidades.

Andres

English translation

If I had the opportunity to start an organization, in a few years I would found an organization to help young people access educational training centers. Not exclusively university, also other forms of modern learning technologies. As a DAFI student and a refugee I have experienced the difficulty of accessing [these] training facilities. I want to help other young refugees to access training centers, either through financial support and/or training courses provided by my organization.

If it were possible, I would like my organisation to be the one to deliver these trainings. The said trainings would be focused on emerging technologies such as programming, software development, computing, design and creation of electronic equipment, use and maintenance of cell phones and computers. Each day, the world continues its digitalization, and it's necessary to have more people that understand these concepts. Also, they are well-paid areas, with great growth. In these areas, your place of origin does not matter, the only thing that matters is that you have the determination to always be learning.

This idea is very important for me because it would be my way of giving back, to life, all the support I have received, from my family friends and the DAFI scholarship. In the almost 5 years that I have been a refugee in Mexico, I have experienced how difficult it is to be able to study in this situation. You have to focus on getting a job and a place to live, and it becomes very difficult to think about other things, like studying. Therefore, I want to help other young people to achieve this goal. We all deserve an opportunity to get ahead and achieve the goals we set for ourselves; and, many times, help is necessary to get opportunities.

“We all deserve an opportunity to get ahead and achieve the goals we set for ourselves; and, many times, help is necessary to get opportunities.”



Innsbruck, Austria (2019)
© UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

EUROPE

Leaving [Ukraine], I made a promise that I would do everything to acquire certain knowledge and skills that would help me and my country in the post-war period.

Liudmyla, Slovakia

Slovakia

Ukraine

Serbia

Russian Federation

Azerbaijan

Türkiye

I always had a notebook and pen with me. The reason is that I always wanted to create and design something.

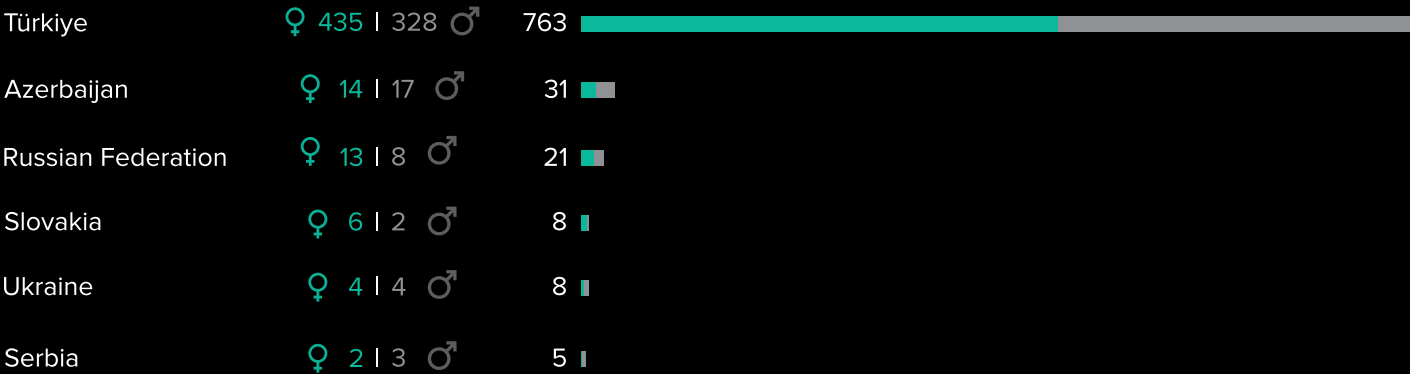
Mahdiyya, Azerbaijan

“Мені просто хочеться жити” — почуття і прагнення безпеки, знайоме кожному біженцю, фундаментальне право людини на життя.

Daria, Ukraine

I aim to serve communities that are in need of accessible and compassionate healthcare, particularly those affected by conflict or displacement.

Heba, Ukraine



EUROPE

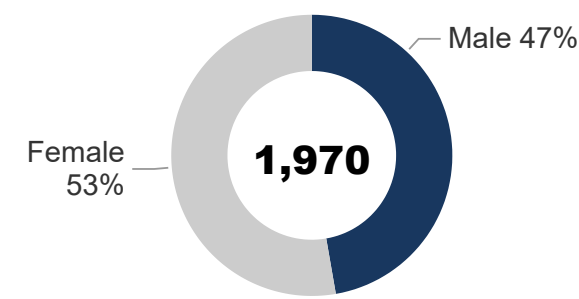
In 2022, DAFI programmes in Europe accounted for just under ten per cent of the total student body (836 scholars in total). This region includes DAFI programmes in the Republic of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Serbia. The DAFI programme in Slovakia opened in 2022 in response to the refugee crisis resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that has seen nearly six million Ukrainians flee their country since February 2022⁵. Universities throughout Moldova, Poland, Slovenia and other countries absorbed significant numbers of Ukrainian students. Recognising the vital importance of higher education and continuity of learning, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science launched an online education platform for blended and distanced learning to provide free and equal tertiary education access regardless of where students are located. On the recommendation of Ukrainian authorities, many Ukrainian students continue to follow their Ukrainian university classes online.

Other refugees in the region are primarily from Afghanistan, Syria, Azerbaijan and Iraq. Policies in all DAFI programmes in Europe provide refugees the right to higher education, but this does not always translate in practice. In Azerbaijan, refugees who did not complete secondary education in the country are subject to different admission criteria than national students. Barriers to equal access in the Republic of Türkiye include higher tuition fees levied on all foreign nationals, differences in language and alternative university entrance exams for students from other countries. Only two countries in the region – Russia and Slovakia – allow refugees to access national education financial aid options.

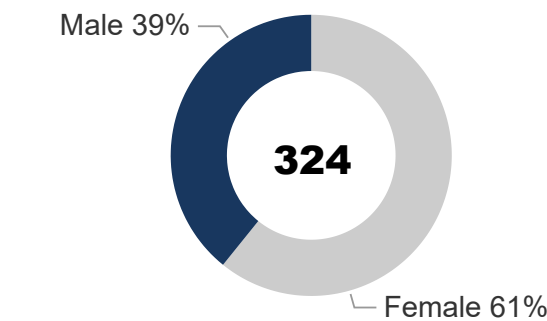
There is high demand across the region for post-secondary opportunities, and DAFI scholarships can only meet a fraction of the needs. In Europe, the range

of post-secondary options include TVET schools and colleges, internships and exchanges (such as Erasmus+), vocational skills courses, public education centre trainings, workshops on employment options for refugees and online training options. Only two DAFI programme countries in the region allow refugees to seek formal employment. Azerbaijan allows refugees the right to work, but they still face challenges registering businesses and opening bank accounts. In Slovakia, refugees have the right to work in all industries, register businesses and open bank accounts. In practice, however, companies struggle to employ temporary status protection holders, which many refugees are, due to the limited duration of their legal status in the country. Overall, European universities have responded quickly and comprehensively to support Ukrainian students displaced both in and outside of the country.

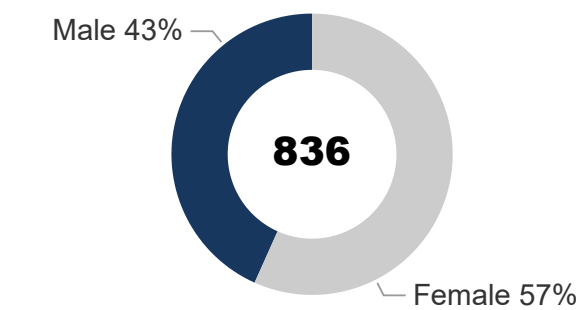
APPLICATIONS



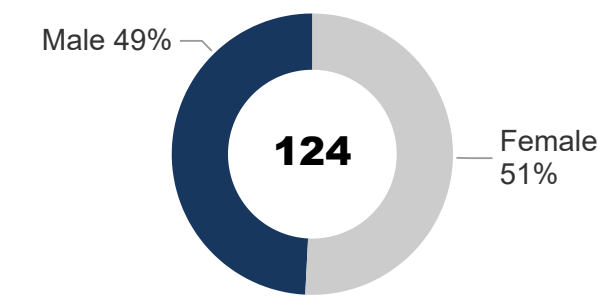
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



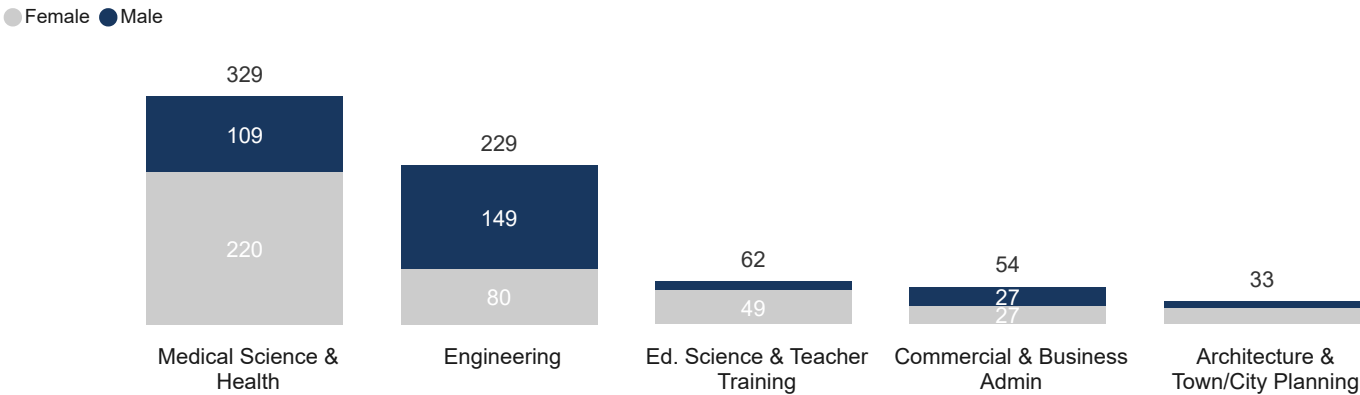
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



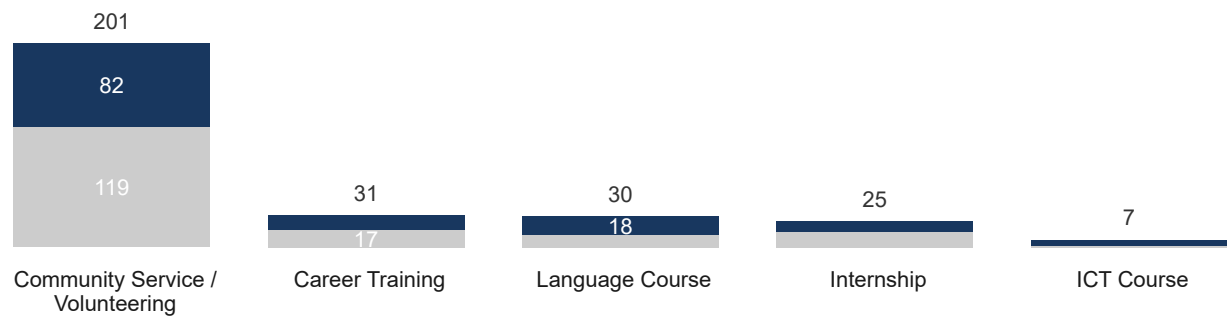
GRADUATES



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES



⁵ [UNHCR 2023](#).

Daria

DAFI Alumna

Age: 22 | **Country of Origin:** Russia | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ukraine
Institution of Study: Kyiv National University of Theater, Cinema and Television
Field of Study: Theater Studies

“Мені просто хочеться жити” — почуття і прагнення безпеки, знайоме кожному біженцю, фундаментальне право людини на життя.”

Найцінніше, що сталося зі мною завдяки ДАФІ — знайомство з новими людьми, а відтак і набуття нового досвіду. У 2019 та 2020 роках я стала учасницею тимблдінг-семінарів для студентів ДАФІ. Там ми познайомилися з Алі Турабі, біженцем з Афганістану. Відтоді ми реалізували декілька проектів разом. Першим стало створення неформальної молодіжної організації “Youth integration club”. Разом із іншими учасниками був проведений ряд подій та лекцій, спрямованих на створення ком'юніті серед людей із досвідом біженства, а також підвищення обізнаності українців про біженців.

Алі бажав продовжити розвиток проекту. Одного дня він написав мені: “Дашо, ти знаєшся на театрі. Давай організуємо театральну виставу!” Спершу ця ідея здалася мені нереалістичною, але завдяки підтримці друзів та працівників УВКБ ООН і БФ “Рокада” ми отримали грант на від УВКБ ООН та здійснили постановку вистави на сцені Київського академічного театру юного глядача на Липках. У ній були розказані історії біженців, засновані на реальних подіях. У процесі підготовки сценарію були взяті інтерв'ю в людей з Конго, Афганістану та Білорусі, що знайшли прихисток в Україні, а також ВПО з Криму та Донецька. Їх історії були розказані майже дослівно у жанрі документального театру. Була розказана також моя історія й причини мого переїзду в Україну. Акторами стали студенти Київського університету театру, кіно і телебачення ім. Карпенка-Карого, в якому я навчаюся. Усім учасникам була небайдужа соціальна тематика проекту. Деякі з них самі мали досвід вимушеного переселення зі сходу України до Києва, а драматургиня, що працювала над сценарієм, має афганське коріння.

В процесі збору інтерв'ю для сценарію ми зустрічалися з людьми з унікальним і водночас страшним досвідом. Було важко чути їхні розповіді про втечу від війни, переслідувань, проте бачити цих людей щасливими

та сповненими енергії, планів на життя — дуже цінно. “Мені просто хочеться жити” — почуття і прагнення безпеки, знайоме кожному біженцю, фундаментальне право людини на життя. Саме так ми називали виставу і саме цей меседж хотіли донести: біженці — люди, що заслуговують на гідне та неупереджене ставлення. За три покази виставу відвідало близько 150 людей, а відеозапис на ютубі набрав 375 переглядів, а отже більше 500 людей стали більш обізнаними про досвід біженців, причини, що змушують їх шукати прихистку, а також перепони, що можуть спіткати їх у незнайомій країні.

Досвід роботи над цим проектом був неймовірно цінним для мене, адже дав мені змогу реалізуватися у професії, опанувати та вдосконалити навички роботи з командою, розвинути свої лідерські якості. І разом з тим — говорити мовою мистецтва на соціально важливу тематику — розповідати людям історії біженців. Цей проект став потужним стартом моєї діяльності у театральній сфері. Я дуже вдячна ДАФІ за підтримку у здобутті освіти та можливості нетворкінгу з людьми, що пережили схожий життєвий досвід. Сподіваюся продовжити свою професійну реалізацію в театральній сфері у проектах, що несуть потужний соціальний посил та відстоюють права людини.

The most valuable thing that happened to me thanks to DAFI was meeting new people, and thus gaining new experience. In 2019 and 2020, I became a participant in team building seminars for DAFI students. There we met Ali Turabi, a refugee from Afghanistan. Since then, we have implemented several projects together. The first was the creation of an informal youth organization “Youth integration club”. Together with other participants, a number of events and lectures were held aimed at creating a community among people with refugee experience, as well as increasing the awareness of Ukrainians about refugees.

Ali wanted to continue the development of the project. One day he wrote to me: “Dasha, you know theater art well. Let’s organize a theatrical performance!” At first, this idea seemed unrealistic to me, but thanks to the support of friends and employees of the UNHCR and Rokada Foundation, we received a grant from the UNHCR and performed the play on the stage of the Kyiv Academic Theater of Young Spectators in Lypki. The play told the real stories of refugees. In the process of preparing the scenario, we conducted the interviews with people from Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Afghanistan and Belarus who found refuge in Ukraine, as well as IDPs (internally displaced persons) from Crimea and Donetsk. Their stories were showcased very realistically in the genre of documentary theater. My story, including the reasons why I moved to Ukraine, was also performed. The actors of the play were the students of the Kyiv University of Theater, Cinema and Television named after Karpenka-Karoy, where I study. All participants were interested in the social theme of the project. Some of them themselves had the experience of forced relocation from eastern Ukraine to Kyiv, and the playwright who worked on the script has Afghan roots.

In the process of collecting interviews for the script, we met with people with unique and at the same time terrible experiences. It was hard to hear their stories about fleeing war and persecution, but seeing these people

happy and full of energy and plans for life is very valuable. “I just want to live” is a feeling and desire for security, familiar to every refugee, a fundamental human right to life. That’s how we called the play and that’s exactly the message we wanted to convey: refugees are people who deserve dignified and impartial treatment. Over the course of three performances, about 150 people attended the performance, and the YouTube video received 375 views, resulting in more than 500 people who became more aware of the refugee experience, the reasons why they seek asylum, and the obstacles they may face in an unfamiliar country.

The experience of working on this project was incredibly valuable for me, because it gave me the opportunity to develop myself in my profession, master and improve the skills of working with a team, and develop my leadership qualities. And at the same time, to speak the language of art on socially important topics and to tell people the stories of refugees. This project became a powerful start of my activity in the theater field. I am very grateful to DAFI for the support in obtaining an education and the opportunity to network with people who have gone through similar life experiences. I hope to continue my professional development in the theater field, in projects that carry a powerful social message and defend human rights.

““I just want to live” is a feeling and desire for security, familiar to every refugee, a fundamental human right to life.”

Mahdiyya

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 19 | **Country of Origin:** Afghanistan | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Azerbaijan

Institution of Study: Western Caspian University

Field of Study: Interior Design

“I always had
a notebook and pen with me.
The reason is that
I always wanted
to create and design
something.”

I want to go back to my childhood a little bit. I always had a notebook and pen with me. The reason is that I always wanted to create and design something. Everything I saw intrigued me and I wondered who had done it and how. I was in the 8th grade, and it went on like this until I realized that this feeling inside me is about “ARCHITECTURE.”

After that, I tried to improve myself on this subject. I am currently studying Interior Design at Western Caspian University. And I spent 5 months interning at the Design Bureau company (LLC). Now I work as an intern architect. I would love to be the architect of a mosque project. I could even say that this is my biggest dream. I love mosques so much and I think they are very peaceful. And my favorite mosque is: “Sheikh Zayed Mosque”. The application of Islamic architectural lines of many countries enriched the architecture of the mosque.

I feel very spacious and free in this field. We humans don't like being in a circle anyway. The red lines can [limit] us sometimes. I feel very happy because this does not happen in the field where I work. Because there is no limit against my creativity. Like every business, architecture has its own hard aspects. Sometimes it's very stressful you know. That's why you need a strong reason to stay in the field.

Liudmyla

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 18 | **Country of Origin:** Ukraine | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Slovakia

Institution of Study: Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

Field of Study: Business Management

“Leaving [Ukraine], I made a promise that I would do everything to acquire certain knowledge and skills that would help me and my country in the post-war period.”

The first step to my choice of field of study was the example of my grandfather, who was a Doctor of Economic Sciences and taught at the university. One day I happened to see him at a lecture he was giving to his students. After I listened to his report, I realized that I listened to him without taking my eyes off and without losing attention, because I was so interested that I wanted to learn more and more. And that's when I realized that I'm not interested in just one area, but many. These include certain moments from logistics, how it will be more profitable to deliver cargo to another country. From marketing, certain moments in advertising that make you want to buy right now a certain [product]. From economics, because sometimes it is interesting why the exchange rate rises and falls or why two countries with the same size, population and territorial location have radically different standards of living. And I was incredibly interested in the rules and traditions of different countries, for example in etiquette of diplomatic relations. Therefore, I needed a profession and a field of study that would combine all my interests and provide opportunities for growth. Thus, I chose the field of study “Business Management,” which includes all my interests.

After starting my studies in this specialty, an incredible tragedy happened in my country, because the war started. There was no opportunity to stay in Ukraine, so I had to leave my homeland. But leaving there, I made a promise that I would do everything to acquire certain knowledge and skills that would help me and my country in the post-war period. Thanks to this promise, I searched for and took part in many projects. This included the DAAD program, which provided a parallel study program for an online semester, thanks to which I received detailed knowledge in the field of planning and creating various projects. And of course, I took part in the DAFI program, which helped me develop in the directions in which I was interested. For example, it was an opportunity to improve

[my knowledge of] Slovak and English languages, which I am sure I will need in the future. Thanks to the DAFI program, I got the opportunity to visit some countries and learn more about their culture and traditions, exactly what you will not learn on the internet.

At the moment, a bloody war is still going on in my country, and every Ukrainian is suffering from this. Therefore, as a Ukrainian living abroad, I would like to found a charitable organization to help countries suffering from war. And this can give help, for example, to Ukrainians who cannot leave Ukraine, but need certain specific medicines that are in short supply in my country.



Elmurat

DAFI Alumnus

Age: 20 | **Country of Origin:** Kyrgyzstan | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ukraine
Institution of Study: Educational and Scientific Center of Vocational Education of the
National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine
Field of Study: Autodiagnostics

“Вибрав цю сферу через любов до Автомобілів та техніки, завжди хотів що б у мене було своє СТО для ремонту автомобілів де я б міг ремонтувати машини і одночасно давати кільком людям роботу.”

Мене звуть Ельмурат, мені 20 років, я з України, хотів би розповісти, чому я вибрав професію Автодіагност. Я народився 30.06.2002р в Киргизії, в місті Ош. Мій тато був токарь, він із металу міг зробити все що завгодно, у цій країні було дуже мало таких професійних Токарев.

Я у 2023 році закінчив вищу бакалавру на автодіагност та на автомеханіка. Вибрав цю сферу через любов до Автомобілів та техніки, завжди хотів що б у мене було своє СТО для ремонту автомобілів де я б міг ремонтувати машини і одночасно давати кільком людям роботу. Моя дитяча мрія була створювати Багі (це такі саморобні позашляховики).

У 2014 році ми переїхали в Україну і проживали в місті Мелітополь де я закінчив 11 класів і в 2019 році вирішив вступити до Києва на автодіагности, оскільки в місті Мелітополь не було такої сфери навчання, спочатку батьки були проти того, що б я вчинив до Києва, тому що це дороге задоволення і в мене були великі проблеми з українською мовою, але я наполіг своєю і вмовив їх тим, що в майбутньому відкрию своє СТО в місті Мелітополь, і працюватиму з татом і разом з ним ми створимо Багі, відкриємо сімейний бізнес, йому це ідея дуже сподобалася, і нарешті вони погодилися відправити мене до такого великого міста. Я вступив на навчання, намагався не пропускати жодної пари, тому що мені була дуже цікава ця сфера діяльності. І протягом 6 місяців я дуже сильно підтягнув свою українську мову. І паралельно я почав працювати у великому супермаркеті «Сільпо», де у мене все вийшло і протягом 8 місяців роботи вдалося мені піднятися від консультанта до завідувача відділу і забезпечувати себе в такому великому місті. У 2020

році почалася пандемія Коронавірус, де нас усіх відправили на карантин і навчання було закрито на якийсь час. Я повернувся до Мелітополя і почав удома ремонтувати стару машину тата, яка не їздила і в мене виходило. Побачивши результати моєї навчання мої батьки були задоволені.

У 2021 році закінчив молодшого спеціаліста автодіагности. І я вже мав вибір надходити далі або ж повернутися до Мелітополя і працювати, отримувати практику в цій сфері. І все-таки я вирішив продовжити навчання і почав заробляти на це і наприкінці серпня 2021 року Права на Захист запропонувала мені взяти участь у програмі DAFI, де потрібно було заповнити анкету та пройти інтерв'ю для отримання стипендії. Я спочатку не вірив, що в мене вийде, але коли вже пройшов інтерв'ю і мені сказали, що я пройшов, я був найщасливішою людиною на світі і розумів, що зможу здійснити свою дитячу мрію. Завдяки стипендії DAFI я зміг забезпечувати для себе у всіх приладдях для навчання у вищому бакалаврі і ось у 2023 році отримав диплом спеціаліста.

Також завдяки стипендії DAFI мені вдалося трохи допомогти своїм батькам у фінансовій допомозі. Хочу подякувати програмі DAFI за допомогу мені та багатьом біженцям, завдяки DAFI здійснюються дитячі мрії.

My name is Elmurat, I am 20 years old, I am from Ukraine, I would like to tell you why I chose the Autodiagnost profession. I was born on June 30, 2002 in Kyrgyzstan, in the city of Osh. My dad was a turner, he could make anything out of metal. There were very few such professional turners in this country.

In 2023, I graduated with a bachelor's degree in autodiagnosics and automechanics. I chose this field because of my love for cars and technology. I always wanted to have my own service station for car repair where I could repair cars and give several people work at the same time. My childhood dream was to create Bug i (these are self-made SUVs).

In 2014, we moved to Ukraine and lived in the city of Melitopol, where I also finished the 11th grade. In 2019 I decided to enter a college in Kyiv to study autodiagnosics, since there was no such field of study [autodiagnosics] in the city of Melitopol. At first my parents were against what I would do in Kyiv, because it is expensive and I had big problems with the Ukrainian language. But I insisted and convinced them that in the future I will open my service station in the city of Melitopol, I will work with my father and together with him we will create a family business. He really liked the idea, and finally they agreed to send me to such a big city.

I enrolled in studies, and I tried not to miss a single class because I was very interested in this field of activity. During 6 months, I improved my Ukrainian language very much. At the same time, I started working in the large "Silpo" supermarket, where everything worked out for me. Within 8 months of work I managed to rise from a consultant to a department head and support myself in

such a big city. In 2020, the Corona virus pandemic began, where we were all sent to quarantine and education was closed for some time. I returned to Melitopol and began to repair my father's old car at home, which did not drive and I had trouble. Seeing the results of my studies, my parents were satisfied.

In 2021, I graduated as a junior autodiagnostic specialist. And I already had a choice to go further or return to Melitopol and work, get practice in this field. Still, I decided to continue my studies and started earning for it, and at the end of August 2021, Rights to Protecion [UNHCR partner NGO] offered me to participate in the DAFI program. I had to fill out an application form and go through an interview to receive a scholarship. At first I did not believe that I would succeed, but when I passed the interview and was told that I passed, I was the happiest person in the world and understood that I would be able to fulfill my childhood dream. Thanks to the DAFI scholarship, I was able to provide myself with all the supplies for studying at a higher bachelor's level, and in 2023 I received a specialist diploma.

[Thanks to the] DAFI scholarship, I was able to help my parents a little with financial aid. I want to thank the DAFI program for helping me and many refugees, thanks to DAFI, children's dreams come true.

“I chose this field because of my love for cars and technology. I always wanted to have my own service station for car repair where I could repair cars and give several people work at the same time.”

Heba

Current DAFI Scholar

Age: 29 | **Country of Origin:** Iraq | **Country of Study (DAFI):** Ukraine
Institution of Study: Institute of Biology and Medicine of Kyiv National University
Field of Study: Medicine

“I aim to serve communities that are in need of accessible and compassionate healthcare, particularly those affected by conflict or displacement.”

*Note, for privacy reasons,
this scholar requested that
her photo not be included.*

My name is Heba, and I am a DAFI scholar. I chose the field of medicine based on my previous education in radiotherapy, which unfortunately, I couldn't complete in Iraq due to the difficult circumstances I faced. Determined to find my true calling, I explored various career paths, but it was within the healthcare field that I discovered my passion.

One specific experience stands out vividly in my mind, solidifying my decision to pursue medicine. I remember volunteering at a local hospital, where I had the opportunity to interact with patients and witness the impact that medical professionals could have on people's lives. It was during my time spent with a young cancer patient that I experienced an overwhelming sense of purpose and empathy. Seeing the resilience and strength of this young individual, coupled with the compassion displayed by the healthcare professionals, deeply inspired me.

The DAFI scholarship provided me with an invaluable opportunity to continue my education in medical school. It not only eased the financial burden but also accelerated my path towards achieving my dream of becoming a doctor. With the scholarship's support, I was able to access quality education, resources, and mentorship, all of which have been instrumental in shaping my academic and professional journey.

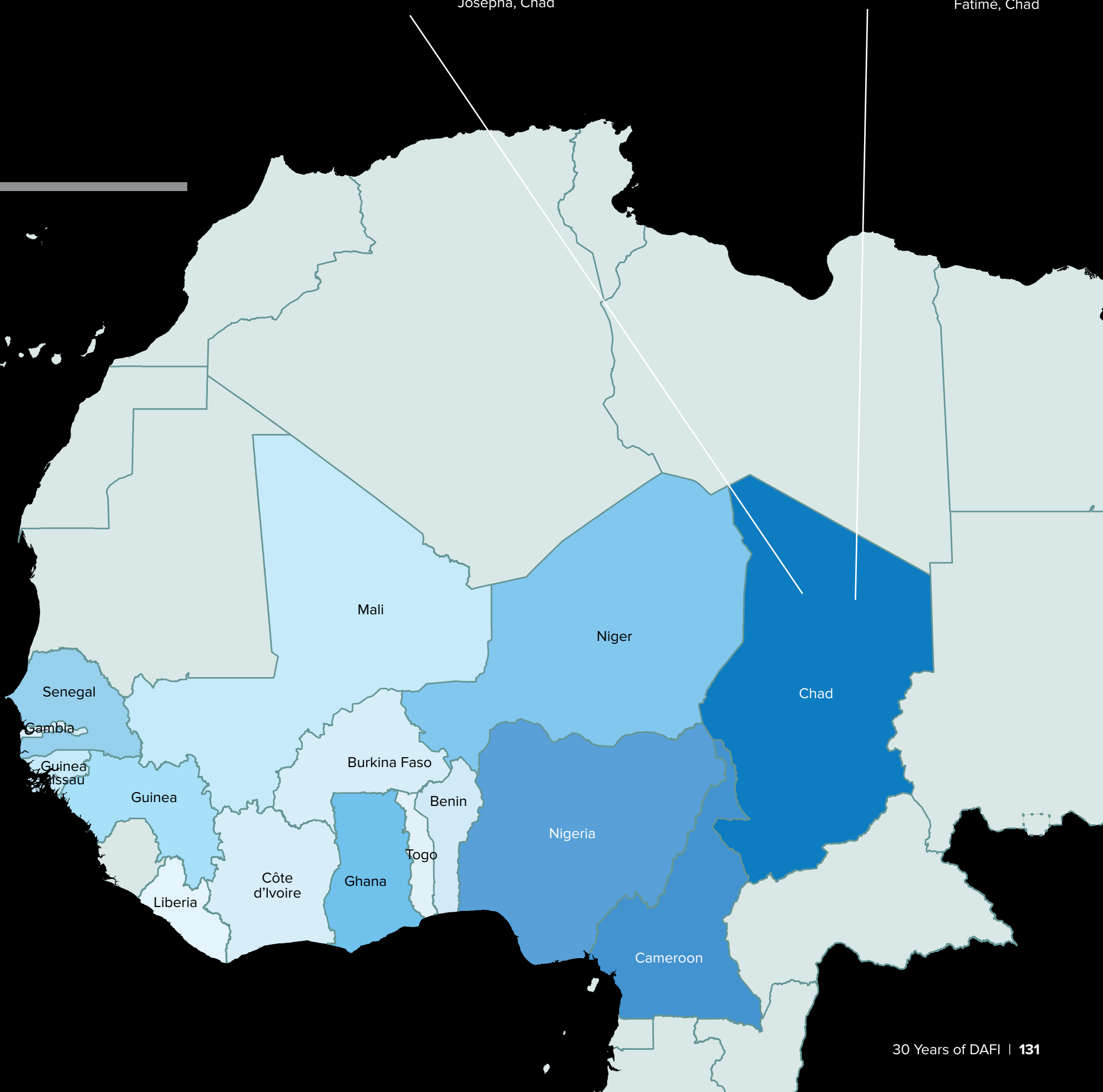
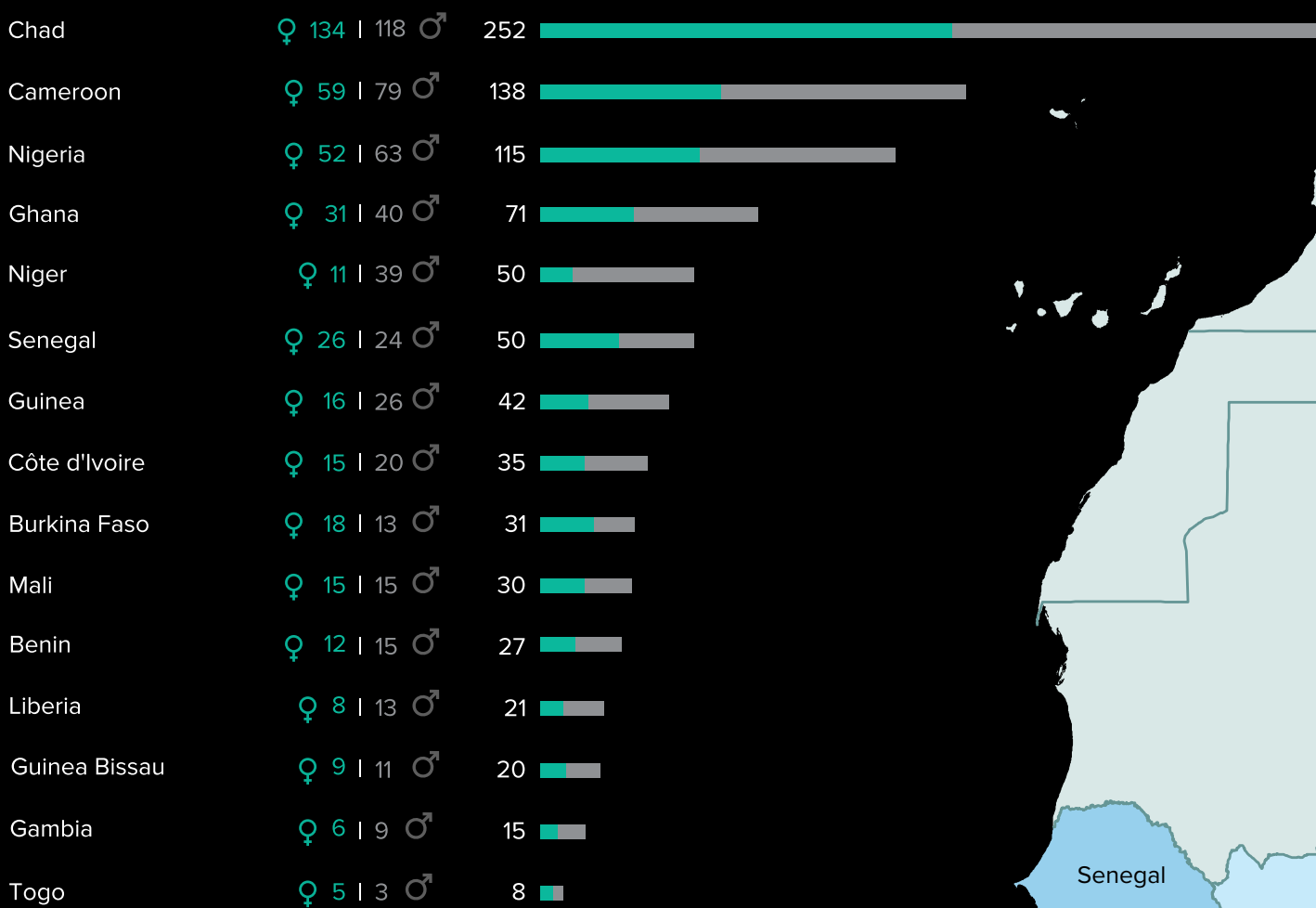
The invasion of Ukraine has significantly impacted my academic journey, necessitating pragmatic adaptability to navigate through its disruptive consequences. The ongoing aggression has led to the suspension of universities, prompting a shift to online learning

for safety reasons. the virtual platform cannot fully replace the practical training required for my medical qualifications. As a result, I have sought opportunities in Europe to continue my studies, but face new challenges and requirements, such as language. It's as though my life's trajectory has been forcibly reset to zero. Leaving behind my home, friends, and everything familiar, I find myself in a perpetual search for safety, hope, and a new beginning. Each step towards my dreams is fraught with uncertainty and hardship. It is a constant struggle to build a new home and life, far from the land that shaped my identity. Yet, amidst the chaos and heartache, I cling to the belief that one day, I will find peace. I yearn for a time when the ravages of war will cease.

As I approach the end of my medical studies, I eagerly anticipate the day I will graduate and become a family doctor. Throughout my post-graduate experience, I intend to apply my field of study in various ways. Firstly, I aim to serve communities that are in need of accessible and compassionate healthcare, particularly those affected by conflict or displacement. Drawing from my own experiences as a refugee, I empathize with the challenges faced by marginalized populations and aspire to make a difference in their lives.



WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA



After my studies, I want to work within the community by educating them on good practices for the preservation of their health and to improve it.

Josépha, Chad

While there are few women in the field of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in Central Africa, they are proof that it is possible, and this became my dream for the future.

Fatimé, Chad

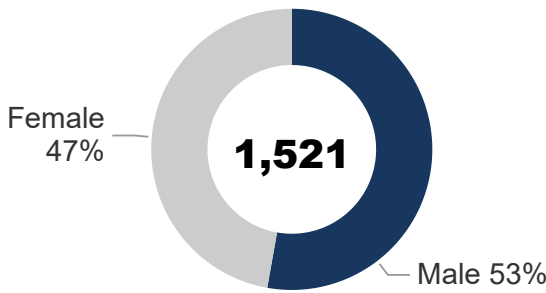
WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

In 2022, DAFI programmes in West and Central Africa (WCA) accounted for ten per cent of the total student body (905 scholars in total). This region includes DAFI programmes in fifteen countries: Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Niger, Senegal, Guinea Conakry, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia and Togo. Nearly all ensure refugees the right to higher education on par with nationals in both practice and policy. Most higher education institutions evaluate refugees on the same admission criteria and allow refugees to register for higher education entrance exams on the same conditions as national students. However, in just under half, refugees are charged higher fees and two thirds do not allow refugees to access government sponsored education financial aid options. As a result, the DAFI scholarship programme is the only way for many refugee students to afford higher education. Niger presents a unique example where a few private companies grant refugees fully funded scholarships for higher education, and other countries in the region also support additional scholarship opportunities. In Côte d'Ivoire, there is a draft law in development that would reduce the tuition fees refugees pay to match those levied on national students.

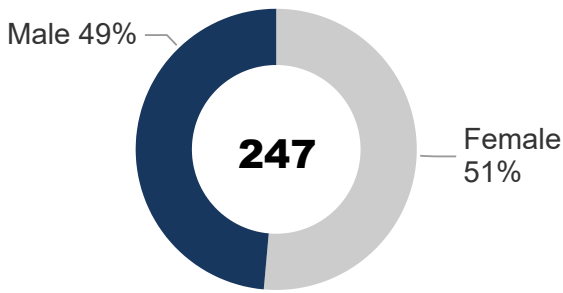
Beyond DAFI, increasing numbers of post-secondary and higher education opportunities are being introduced, such as new refugee-specific scholarships, third country complementary education pathways programmes, practical skills training, TVET and connected higher education programming. Two thirds of countries in the region ensure refugees the right to work in practice and most allow refugees to open bank accounts and register businesses. However, opportunities for refugees to integrate into local labour markets are often limited by poor economic conditions, high unemployment and precarious security situations – including military coups, protests, strikes and extremist violence – in several countries.

In 2022, Burkina Faso experienced increased insecurity coupled with socio-political unrest dominated by two military coups. Luckily, apart from a few days of school closures, the DAFI programme was not significantly affected. Throughout 2022, Niger, Mali and Togo experienced attacks perpetuated by violent extremist groups. The government of Togo continues to work in coordination with the national Employers' Council to facilitate the integration of qualified refugees into local companies and employment training institutions. Niger is affected by regional insecurity, but has developed strong relationships with employment institutions, including the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment, to facilitate access to the labour market for refugees, including DAFI programme graduates. This type of coordination to facilitate pathways to employment for refugee higher education graduates is helping to combat youth unemployment across the region and to ensure that refugees can translate their education into sustainable livelihoods.

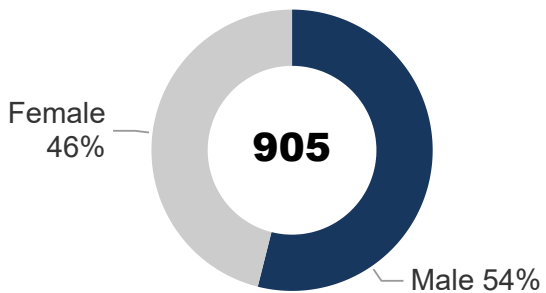
APPLICATIONS



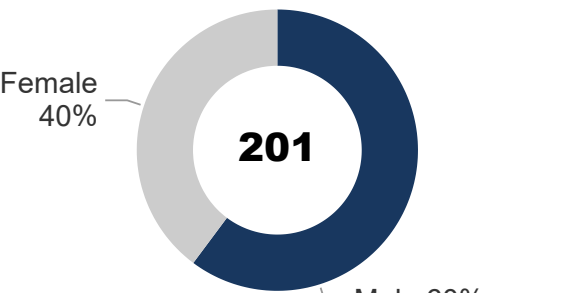
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



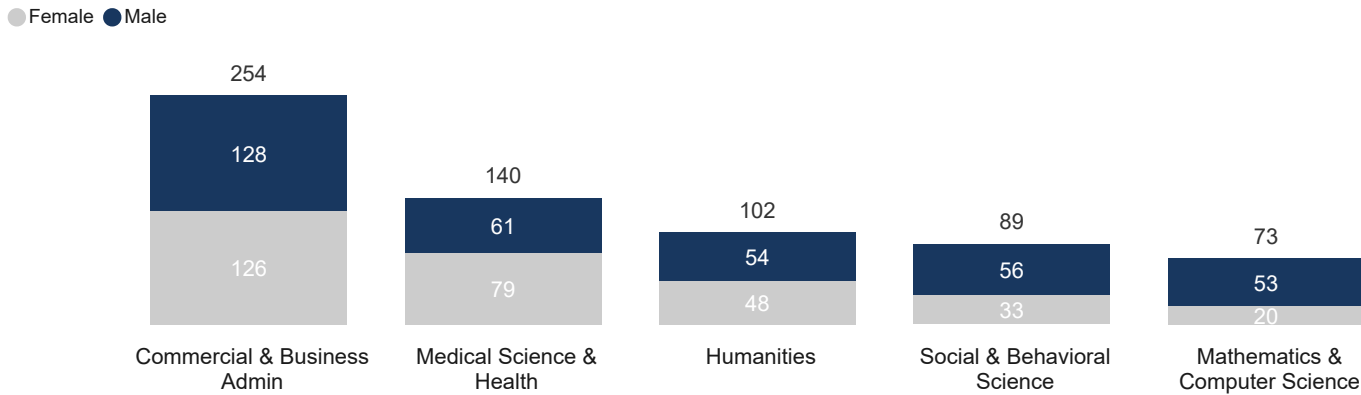
TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



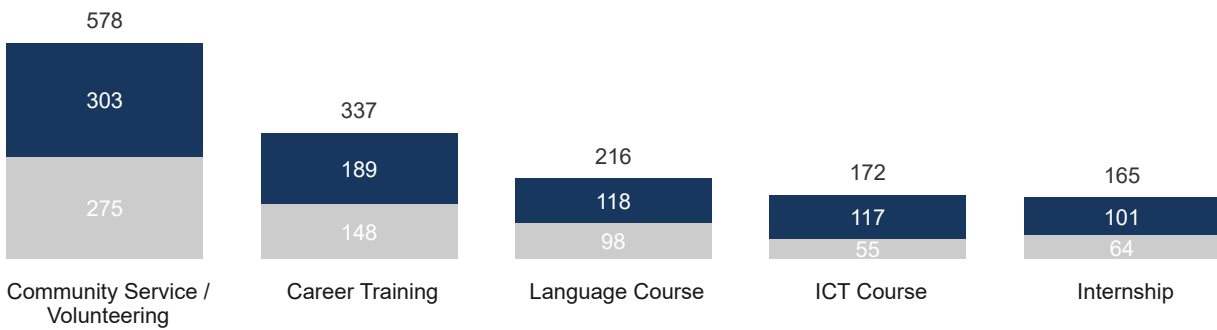
GRADUATES



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAREER READINESS ACTIVITIES



Fané

DAFI Alumna | Intern at the Food Quality Control Center of Chad

Age: 22 | **Country of Origin:** Central African Republic

Country of Study (DAFI): Chad | **Institution of Study:** La Francophonie University | **Field of Study:** Biomedical Science

“If I could pursue any job next, I would work with a humanitarian organization in the health sector to reinforce the medical centers and systems in refugee camps and host villages throughout Chad and even at a regional and global level.”

I chose to study in the field of health for my studies because I saw how illnesses ravage communities, particularly vulnerable people. Diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDs are some of the leading causes of death in both my home country and host country, yet there are treatments that exist in other countries. Environmental hygiene, a preventable problem, is also one of the major causes of sickness in our society. So, I chose the health field to help the whole of society to prevent and respond to diseases that plague the African communities. Even though I am a student with little financial means, I use awareness raising as a weapon to battle preventable diseases. I orient people to medical clinics and encourage them to get screening and diagnostics early so that illness doesn't worsen and spread.

For my end-of-studies project, I focused on community awareness raising about bacterial and viral diseases, focusing on typhoid fever, HIV/AIDS (specifically breaking down stigma to regular voluntary testing), and malaria. This initiative is of capital importance because it makes it possible to avoid diseases which are at the heart of society. These problems affect society at all levels (economic, social, etc). I would like to expand this project beyond my studies and implement it with vulnerable communities, especially among refugees, passing the messages in schools and in remote communities who don't normally have access to awareness raising. I would like to launch mass screening [and make it] available in all places such as markets and high schools.

If I could pursue any job next, I would work with a humanitarian organization in the health sector to reinforce the medical centers and systems in refugee camps and host villages throughout Chad and even at a regional and global level. I would also focus on community awareness raising so that people can prevent diseases even before they need to go to the clinic. I would like to use what I have learned at university and in my community to contribute to society and help others. I would also like to study a master's in Public Health to further my skills and be more competitive for these jobs.



Josépha

DAFI Alumnus

Age: 22 | **Country of Origin:** Central African Republic
Country of Study (DAFI): Chad | **Institution of Study:** Private School of Health and Development of Doba | **Field of Study:** Nursing

“After my studies,
 I want to work within the community
 by educating them on good practices
 for the preservation of their health
 and to improve it.”

The sources of inspiration for the field of nursing I have chosen are multiple. It was first a childhood dream which then grew into determination when I was in secondary school and really noticed the enormous health problems within the refugee community, aggravated by the lack of qualified personnel at the refugee health center and the other surrounding structures. The lack of qualified staff led to an overload of patients with a high mortality rate, especially infant mortality, and high morbidity (disease rate). This caught my attention before obtaining my baccalaureate [graduating from secondary school], which is how I decided to choose the state-certified nurse option (IDE) as a field when I applied for the DAFI program. I wanted to make a contribution to the population during and after my studies and to promote the socio-economic development of the community and even, if possible, of the country.

I hope to continue to complete a master's degree in Public Health in order to become a specialist in this field and respond to problems related to the health of the population. After my studies, I want to work within the community by educating them on good practices for the preservation of their health and to improve it. I want to

create public health projects to promote access to quality care in an efficient and equitable way for everyone. If possible, [I want] to also work internationally if the program can provide me with support in this direction in the countries having huge health problems.

Fatimé

DAFI Alumna | Master's Candidate in NGO Management

Age: 23 | **Country of Origin:** Central African Republic

Country of Study (DAFI): Chad | **Institution of Study:** National School of
National School of Information and Communication Technology

Field of Study: Information and Communication Technology Management

“While there are few women in the field of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in Central Africa, they are proof that it is possible, and this became my dream for the future.”

I was inspired to go into ICT management due to my passion for technology and everything related. No matter where you are, if you have technology, you can be connected to the world. I didn't know if this dream would be possible – my family had little financial means and as a woman, sometimes it is harder to break into tech fields. When I was 18 years old, I attended a conference for the International Girls in ICT Day organized by the Ministry of Posts and Digital Economy [in Chad]. I got to meet and talk with women telecommunications specialists and computer scientists, which motivated me a lot. They made me realize that while there are few women in the field of ICT in Central Africa, they are proof that it is possible, and this became my dream for the future.

Thanks to the DAFI scholarship I was able to study, and I earned my [bachelors] degree in 2022 with honors. The [DAFI] programme also helped me get work experience – I did two internships during my studies. The first was with one of the national telecommunications companies, Moov Africa Tchad. The second was a private telecommunications and digital marketing

company, Fifty Business, who then hired me after my graduation as a webpage and social media manager. Upon graduating, I cofounded [Chad Hub Digital](#) – an ICT consulting company with the mission to contribute to the development of Chad through innovating information technology solutions and training youth of the next generation in digital literacy skills.

