

Meet our Fieldworkers

For the fieldwork in the United Kingdom, we recruited and trained 13 young Syrians living in Britain. Ten of them are female and three male. Many of them have powerful stories about their own journeys and experience. Here are some of their stories.

"My name is Aber, I am 20 years old. I am from Syria. I live in Inverurie in Aberdeenshire. I was a student and a happy person, but when the war struck my country suddenly everything changed. I couldn't go to school, at that time we had to leave Syria and move to Jordan. One day UN phoned and asked us if we would like to move to the UK. I was worried at the first about how my life is going to be there, different language and country. At the same time the life in Jordan was quite difficult. I couldn't go to university and also it was difficult to get a job.

On 23rd February 2016 I arrived to Scotland I got a wonderful reception which made me feel better because all the people welcomed me. I am studying full time ESOL course at North East Aberdeen College, and I am volunteering at The Amal project which is a charity helping Syrian refugees integrate into their new society. My ambition are to achieve our ambitions and our aims with The Amal project and finish my ESOL course and go to university and study nutrition course. My life now has been so much better. I feel Scotland became my second home now."

– Aber

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“My name is Dured, 22 years old. I am from Syria and I live in Inverurie now.

I came to Scotland around 20 months ago from Amman, Jordan under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. We came here to start a new and make Scotland our new home.

When I arrived in Scotland, my life started again because I felt safe. When I arrived, I had some English words, but I was shy to use them because I was afraid of making mistakes but very soon with the great support I had from the Scottish people, I am no longer shy to use them, I am no longer afraid of making mistakes, because they taught me it is not my mother language and I should not be shy of making mistakes so I am happy to be here and I feel myself a Scottish person.

I am studying English and I hope to move on to university next year. I would like to continue my study and finish it, and I have a few ideas to start my own business so I hope to start my own business as well.

My dreams, as any person, are to continue my studies and start my own business and I expect I will do even so it is not easy for us to enter into education system because most of us have lost their qualifications because of the war and there is no obvious way to do it.

My only problem here is to enter to education system and I'm working to manage it. The last word that I would like to say it now thanks from the hearth to everyone has supported us to start a new life here.”

– Dured

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"I am currently studying electrical and electronics engineering at Glasgow Caledonian University but my main interest is being a politician, I am currently a member of the Scottish youth parliament as well as the Glasgow youth council. My life in the U.K. has been quite enjoyable. The U.K. gave me a wide range of opportunities and I feel optimistic about the future."

– Khaled, from Daraa

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“My name is Ourooba. I am 33 years old and I live in Newcastle upon Tyne. I am a Palestinian Syrian and I was born and raised in a community of Palestinian refugees near Damascus. I graduated from Damascus University in 2008 with a BA in English language and literature and from Montana State University in 2008 with a BA in English literature w/ a minor in Religious Studies. I came to the UK in 2010 to pursue my postgraduate studies. I finished my MA in Linguistics and Language Acquisition at Newcastle University in November 2011 and I am currently a PhD student at the same university. My PhD research is in the field of sociolinguistics and my project is on the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation by children and adolescents in dialect contact situations. I am currently working as a seminar leader for 1st stage students in the school of English language, literature and linguistics at Newcastle university and I hope to go into academia and research for a career.

My stay in the UK has seen many bumps mostly because of the unrest in Syria, which affected us all far and near, but things are getting a little better with time. It is an everyday struggle to establish one's self in a new country, but hopefully it will be worth in the end. Despite the trials I have been through over the 7 years I spent in the UK, this country has been kind to me and I love being here.”

– Ourooba

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"I am Rana. I am 27 years old. I live in Hamilton. I am from Syria. I have been here 1 year and 6 months.

I came to this country with my husband and my children through UNICEF to build ourselves after the war destroyed us.

I look for peace and security for my family. I am trying to build a better future here...

I studied business administration... I aspire to have completed my studies here, but I do not know where to start... I want someone to give me hand to complete my education...

I have finished studying the social care course...

I want to study accounting and business administration at the University of Glasgow I feel a sense of hope here in this country and aspire to prove myself and my work. I am an ambitious person, optimistic. Looking for a new beginning here...

I started here with a lot of obstacles such as the language of a new country and a different civilization. A difficult start with two children and many hopes... Fear, anxiety, loneliness... and alienation.

It is a difficult reality and we have to understand it. Every day we learn something new.

I search every day for a start.

Until I started working with the university in this research. This job gave me an opportunity to start my first step in this country.... I was very happy with this work.

Again my dream is that I will complete my studies at university. Then I want to start my business. I have a lot to do here.

I want to thank all the people I have met in this project... and I hope to stay in touch."

– Rana

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"This is Reem, from Syria. I am 35 and I live in Coventry. I survived the war in Syria and I came to the UK through a CARA fellowship. I am studying a PhD in Applied Linguistics. I am at the exotic stage of writing up. I did my PhD fieldwork in Turkey where I dedicated my knowledge and expertise to support Syrian teachers and students in camp and city schools. I am currently working as a Community Participation Officer at Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre. I work closely with the newly arrived families and support them to feel welcome and settled. I enjoy doing community work but I want to resume my academic career after completing my PhD.

I have great hopes that the war in Syria will finish and I will go back to contribute to rebuild my country. I have been through lots of ups and downs during my life in the UK. One thing I will remember is that every cloud has a silver lining."

– Reem Doukmak

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“My name is Shahla. I am thirty years old and I came from a small city called Hama which is located in the middle of Syria. Now I am based in Sheffield. I got a scholarship to do my PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Sheffield, and I am half way through to my third year. I was teaching university level students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) in Syria and I hope I will be able to get some teaching hours here at the university by next year. Given the fact that I did my master degree in 2012 at Essex University, it had always been an aspiration for me to come back to the UK to pursue my study.

My expectations were very high when I came to the UK. I dreamed about a successful future career as a researcher and a lecturer. When I first arrived in March 2016, however, things were not as they used to be four years ago due to the global changes (Brexit, Islamophobia, etc.). In fact, it was not easy to cope at all. The first six months were unbearable; I was desperate and lonely all the time. I just didn't feel that I belong to where I am. Fortunately, things changed ever since. The university and my supervisor, in particular, helped me to build a new social and active life. Now, I am really happy and proud of what I am doing, and I am looking forward to a very bright future.”

– Shahla

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“My name is Shereen. I’m 33 years old. I live in Edinburgh, but originally I’m from Aleppo, Syria.

I came to Edinburgh in 2008 with my husband as he was preparing for his PhD in Construction Management.

Currently I’m studying an MSc in Actuarial Science at Heriot Watt University. I should have my degree in 6 weeks; hopefully I will manage to find a job as an actuary after that.

I have a part-time job as well, I am an Arabic teacher. I teach in Merchiston School and I do private tuitions as well.”

– Shereen