



SIR ROBERT JONES

# REFUGEE DAUGHTERS' SCHOLARSHIP

2021

RJH



**RASNZ**  
Refugee health  
& wellbeing

*I am delighted to welcome aboard a new group of young women to our refugee daughters' tertiary education funding scheme.*

*Most have harrowing background stories. While finding a haven in New Zealand provides relief from danger, it is still an alien land with an alien culture and language which confronts these girls at a young age. In many cases they are obliged to effectively become the head of the family dealing with the new order.*

*Having many daughters and thus aware of such matters, I take special pleasure in our supplementary provision over and above the fees and accommodation, of vouchers for two dresses.*

*I wish them all success in their studies and future lives.*

*Sir Robert Jones*

RJH

On behalf of RASNZ, it is my pleasure to introduce the 2021 Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship recipients. The Scholarship Programme was set up by Sir Robert Jones six years ago to provide young women from refugee backgrounds the financial security they require to complete a university degree or other tertiary qualification. Since its inception, an astounding 44 recipients have graduated. We would especially like to acknowledge this year's scholars for their determination to study and overcome the additional frustrations and challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Robert Jones Holdings' philanthropic donation creates a unique opportunity for our scholars to study without taking on a huge financial burden. All tuition fees are paid through to graduation (subject to an appropriate examination pass rate). In cases where students study outside their hometown, hostel accommodation is paid for two years.

Many people give generously of their time each year, to ensure the scholarship process runs smoothly. To name a few, I would like to thank Greg Loveridge, Caitlin Venus and Craig Parks from Robert Jones Holdings for their ongoing support. I would also like to thank the selection panels in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin: Lian-Hong Brebner AUT, Sara Kindon Victoria University, Vivienne Anderson University of Otago, Jo Oranje University of Otago. The partnership between Robert Jones Holdings and Victoria University, the University of Waikato, the Auckland University of Technology and the University of Otago is pivotal in expanding the pathway. These institutions match the scholarships by 50%, allowing Robert Jones Holdings to open up even more scholarship places each year.

I would also like to acknowledge our RASNZ Scholarship Facilitator Susan Hirst for her dedication and passion in administering this programme. Susan skilfully negotiates a smooth pathway of communication between our partners, and subsequently ensures the best possible support outcomes for our students. Additionally, I would like to mention the people who generously volunteered their time to assist the selection panel for 2021; this includes Ben Trieu, Areej Arif, Lorena Cuervo, Fatumata Bah and Maria Ahmad.

Lastly, I would like to focus on the true heroes of this Yearbook, the recipients of the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship. What an amazing bunch of young women! On reading their individual stories, it is worth noting that many of our students arrived in Aotearoa NZ with limited education and English language skills and have travelled a harrowing and emotional journey along the way. The drive and determination required to achieve these extraordinary results is a credit to them. They are trailblazers in their communities and inspirational to their contemporaries. On behalf of the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship, RASNZ thanks you for being our 2021 shining stars.

Sharron Ward, CEO RASNZ

**RASNZ**



# Alma

Kia ora, my name is Alma, a very proud and grateful recipient of Sir Robert Jones' Refugee Daughters' Scholarship. I'm from Syria and I arrived in New Zealand in August 2017. We came as refugees from Malaysia, where we lived for four and a half years. I attended primary school in Syria, where I learned to write and read Arabic fluently. In Malaysia, I learned to speak English, everyday Malay and attended intermediate and most of high school. The two years of high school I did in New Zealand made up for all the years of study I didn't get to enjoy as a refugee. I never thought it could get any better, but I gathered the courage to go to university. I grew more confident and learned to trust myself. I'm doing a Bachelor of Commerce, though I had no knowledge of commerce or business prior to university. I can confidently say that I made the right choice. It was challenging at first, but I would encourage anyone who's hesitant about going to university to take the leap of faith. I'm determined to graduate by 2022 and start applying my knowledge in the real world. I've always wanted to work at an airport interacting with people from all around the world and from different cultures and backgrounds. I also like the busy and fast-moving nature of airports. They are our first impression of a country and I clearly remember the time when we first arrived in New Zealand, the people we met and my thoughts at the time. I would love to be one of the welcoming faces refugees and immigrants see when they arrive in New Zealand. I also aspire to be someone who has the ability to guide people who might be feeling lost and uncertain about their future, the same way I felt. I appreciate all the support I received from my family, my friends, Victoria University, Wellington High School, and Sir Robert Jones' Scholarship interview panel. Without your encouragement, I wouldn't have made it this far. Ngā mihi nui!

My name is Brenda. I am 20 years old and I live with my father and two lovely sisters. I was born in the Anglophone region of the Cameroons. My father was forced to leave us in the Cameroons when we were very young. I had a very happy life growing up in a very large family with my siblings and my cousins and my grandmother who was very caring and protective. She had several farms in the village and I enjoyed working with her on her farms. Growing up, I loved cultural gatherings in the village including religious activities. I also had many friends.

I completed schooling as usual until I was about 16 years old. In 2017, I was in my first year of high school when an armed conflict erupted in our region. The government of Cameroon launched a war on the dissenting Anglophone minority who are seeking autonomy and independence from the Francophone majority in Cameroon. The conflict, which is still ongoing, severely disrupted economic and social life, and most schools in the Anglophone region, including my school, were closed. Our villages and towns were raided and occupied by the Cameroon military. Thousands of people fled internally and to other neighbouring countries and thousands of our people have died in the ongoing conflict. For close to two years, we moved around frequently for safety.

My two sisters and I were so lucky that our father was able to sponsor us and in 2019 we got our visas for travel to New Zealand. I am so happy to have reunited with my father after many years apart.

Although we have had some tough times starting our life here because of COVID-19 and we can't yet access student allowance and StudyLink, I cannot complain. Generally, life and opportunities here in New Zealand are tremendous and incomparable to the Anglophone region in Cameroons.

Now I am studying Bachelor of Nursing at Massey University. I am so grateful to the Sir Roberts Jones' Scholarship for offering me this support. I look forward to this next stage of my life which I believe will be very exciting and fulfilling. Thank you so much!

# Brenda





# Chanda

My name is Chanda and I am studying Bachelor of Nursing at Massey University (Manawatū). I am a Bhutanese refugee, but I was born and raised in Nepal.

My parents were born in Bhutan and came to the refugee camp in Nepal in early 1990s due to state-sponsored ethnic cleansing in Bhutan. The culturally and linguistically different people, mostly Hindus, in the southern part of Bhutan, were forced to shed their tradition and dress and to follow the ruling tribe's dress and religion. Many were killed or imprisoned and houses were burnt. The survivors fled and took refuge in India and finally in Nepal. After many rounds of repatriation talks between Nepal and Bhutan government failed and many years living in huts made of bamboo and mud my family was selected for resettlement in New Zealand and we arrived in 2014. We received New Zealand citizenship in 2019 and we are proud to call this beautiful country our new home.

The timing we got to New Zealand was perfect as I could start high school straight away. Although I knew how to read and write basic English, using it as a means of everyday communication was very challenging. I remember rehearsing my sentences internally before I said it out loud.

I met many welcoming friends and supportive teachers who helped me get through my high school life smoothly. I graduated from Palmerston North Girls High School in 2019. Now I am in my second year of Nursing and I am looking forward to gaining more practical experience.

I witnessed many people die due to a lack of proper hygiene and medical support in the refugee camp, so I've always had a strong interest in the medical field and I see nursing as a very rewarding career path.

I cannot express the gratitude I feel for receiving the Sir Robert Jones' Scholarship. It has reduced so much of the financial burden on my family and has helped many other talented and determined young women to be educated and empowered. I dream of helping refugees like myself someday as this scholarship has helped me.

My name is Danya and I came to New Zealand as a refugee in 2017. I am originally from Palestine, however no-one in my family has seen Palestine before, as we were born in Iraq, which means we were born as refugees. We moved to Syria from Iraq in 2006 due to the war, but we had to move again after a while because we were illegal in Syria. After that, we went to Cyprus in 2007 seeking refuge. However, after 5 years they rejected us, and we had to start from the beginning again. In 2013 we went to Thailand as our last hope. After arriving in Thailand, we registered with UNHCR as refugees. In Thailand, there are no rights for refugees, and we were illegal there, so we could not study or work. This meant my siblings and I stopped studying for 5 years. Back then my only dream was to live a normal life. We arrived in New Zealand in 2017 when I was nearly 18. I had no confidence. I could not speak English very well and I was worried that I could not achieve anything. However, I decided to take the risk and take every opportunity I had. The first thing I did was start High School in Year 12. It was a very big challenge for me, but I decided to work hard and improve my language and my ability to study. I finished High School with excellence and merit endorsements in all my subjects which was something that I never expected. Education was always a valuable thing for me. Since I was a kid, I believed that education is the key for a bright future and this keeps me motivated. Completing first year of Engineering at the University of Auckland was not easy at all due to COVID-19 and moving between on-line and in-person learning. However, it was a valuable learning experience and I enjoyed it. This scholarship is like a miracle for me. It encourages me and makes me confident in my study. Therefore, I would like to say thank you to Sir Robert Jones and RASNZ for this great opportunity. I will always do my best to achieve in my studies and become an Engineer that makes the world a better place for everyone.

# Danya





# Faduma

My name is Faduma and I came to New Zealand as a refugee in 2019. I am a Business student at Auckland University of Technology. I was born and raised in Somalia where I lived until the age of nine. We were fortunate enough to escape from war-torn Somalia. My family were in search of a safer and better place for us where we can get safety and education. My mom worked very hard so we could have a better life and get access to education. My mom used to encourage us to continue studying, not to lose hope, her dream was seeing me, and my siblings educated and successful. After graduating from school in Malaysia with high academic achievement, I could not go to university because I was a refugee and I did not have the rights to study, so I started working as a home tutor and worked for three years. I never gave up and believed that one day, I will complete my studies and make my parents proud, no matter how long it takes. My family and I were lucky to come to New Zealand. When we came to New Zealand, we were welcomed warmly and everything was made easy such as studying and the presence of volunteers who helped us to move around Auckland. We are very thankful for everything we have got and hopefully, one day I will give back to the people who have given me these valuable opportunities. I sincerely thank Sir Robert Jones, RASNZ and everyone who arranged this scholarship for young refugee girls. I am privileged and grateful for getting this opportunity to create a better future for me, my family and the community. This support makes it possible for me to achieve my educational and career goals. This generosity inspires me to give back to the community and has allowed me to be a step closer to my aspirations. Once again, I want to take this opportunity to express my most sincere appreciation and gratitude to Sir Robert Jones, RASNZ and AUT who made this scholarship possible.

Hello, Kia ora and Salam. My name is Farzana. I am 19-years old and I am an Afghan refugee living in Aotearoa.

From the age of two I began my journey from Pakistan and Afghanistan to New Zealand. My short life had already been lived amidst turmoil and fear like those who lived before me. Prior to settling in New Zealand, my family were constantly displaced due to uncertainty in safety and existence. Neither of my parents have a formal education and they chose to close the gap in precious knowledge between themselves and their children.

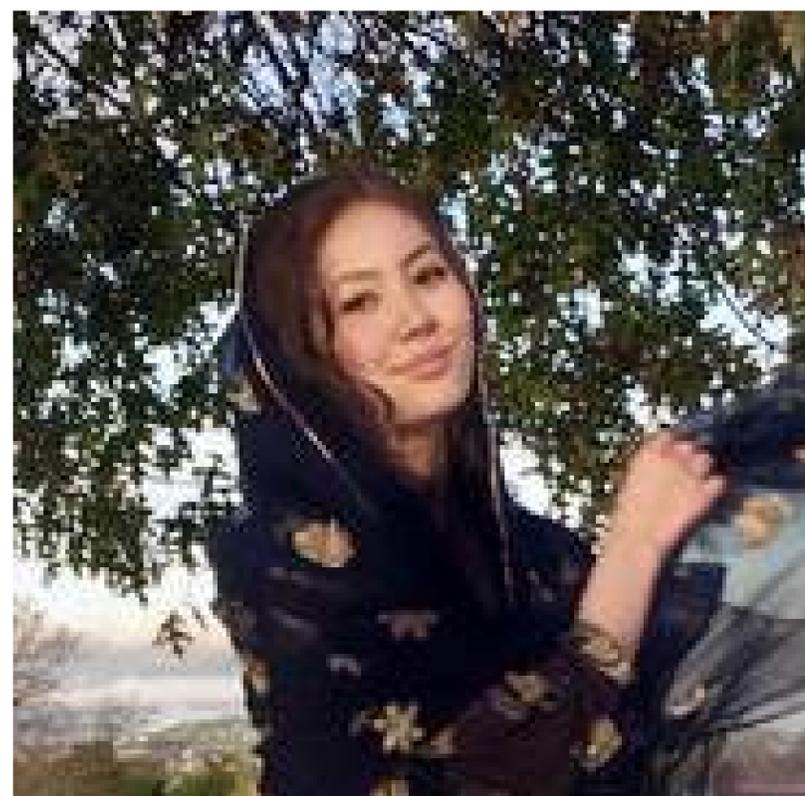
My father and many others took a chance on a small ship.... they left behind death, fear and uncertainty to jump into the uncertainty of a ship ill-equipped for the number of people and the journey. Luckily my father arrived safely to New Zealand on the Tampa and was given refuge.

In February 2004 I came to New Zealand with my mother and siblings. I am now studying a Bachelor of Laws at AUT. I am grateful every single day that I am able to pursue my dreams and work towards previously unimaginable goals.

My hobbies vary in creative work such as writing and art. I write poetry and short fiction stories. My writing is a very special and intimate portion of my life that reflects my life experiences, and what my life may have been if I had stayed in Afghanistan. Art has been a positive outlet for me to express experiences, feelings and understandings.

I plan to complete my Bachelor of Laws and then apply and be admitted as a barrister. I wish to visit Afghanistan once again and try to implement any positivity through my education and experience to the young and broken that could have easily been myself. My overall goal is to create educational aid to the unfortunate in Afghanistan, especially for females who already have difficulties gaining an education. I am grateful to the Sir Robert Jones' Scholarship for granting me the opportunity to share my experience and continue my tertiary education without any financial stress.

# Farzana





# Gracy

Firstly, I would like to give my thanks to God and Sir Robert Jones and all the organisers for awarding me a place on this honorable scholarship programme.

My name is Gracy and I am originally from Chin state, Myanmar. I came to New Zealand at the age of 16 with my mother.

I started college in Year 10 at Nelson College for Girls. My brothers and sister joined us later. I am now in my final year studying the Bachelor of Pharmacy at the University of Otago, expecting to graduate in December 2021.

Growing up in a small village in Myanmar meant there was a lack of healthcare and assistance to those in need. Surrounded by the lack of access to healthcare and witnessing the devastating impact it has on people's lives, I have always been inspired to contribute to the field that is crucial for us human beings. It may seem simple; however, my goal has always been to help others.

Despite not getting an offer from Pharmacy at my first attempt in 2016, I persevered to reach my goal via graduate entry. Being accepted to study Pharmacy following graduating from the Bachelor of Science (microbiology major – 2018), is an incredible opportunity for me and one I seized wholeheartedly. I aspire to help make a better tomorrow for others and build the personal bonds necessary for successful health outcomes and genuine trust. My hope and dream for the future is to be a registered pharmacist and work in New Zealand.

I am very honoured to be one of the recipients of the Sir Robert Jones' Scholarship. The final year of pharmacy requires additional cost as the students have to spend several weeks away on placements in different parts of New Zealand. Through the generosity and support of Sir Robert Jones Scholarship, I will be able to continue my education at the University of Otago and achieve my goal. God bless.

Kia Ora and Assalam u Alaikum. My name is Hania and I am originally from Pakistan. I came to New Zealand as a refugee in 2015. My journey as a refugee was very painful but at the end of this pain I was rewarded with a beautiful new home.

My family belong to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. We were treated as second-class citizens in our country of birth. We received death threats from religious clerics and from the people around us. In 2009 my father was arrested because of his beliefs. We tried to move around the country but we still felt unsafe. In 2014 we left Pakistan and moved to Malaysia; sadly without my mother, as she was receiving treatment for breast cancer.

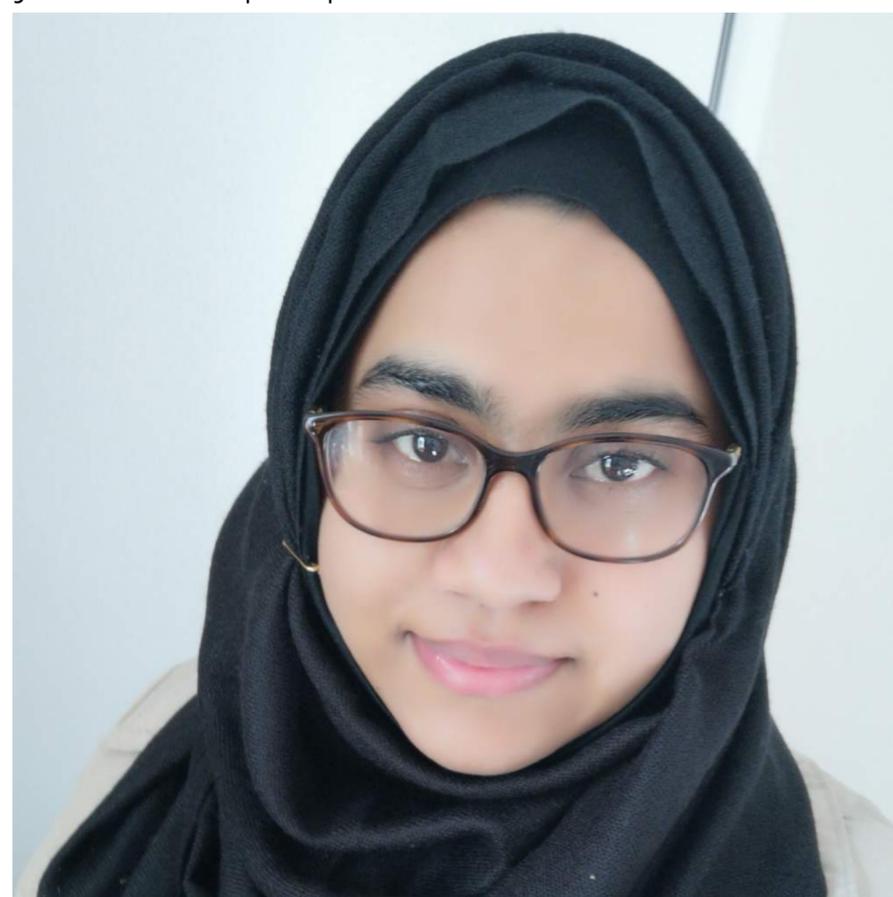
Life in Malaysia was filled with more pain and troubles. My father was arrested by Malaysian immigration as they do not accept UNHCR refugees and my brother and I were left alone to take care of ourselves. Eventually UNHCR helped us to move to New Zealand.

In 2016 I finally got the opportunity to start studying again as an NCEA Level 1 student at Mangere College. That year was very hard as I did not know how NCEA and the New Zealand education system work. I struggled to learn English, which is my third language. Year by year I've improved my English and my grades and in 2019 I finished high school with NCEA Level 3. I wanted to do something which would benefit others and I am enrolled as a Bachelor of Social Practice student at UNITEC.

My dream is to become a social worker counselling new refugees who have faced so much pain before their arrival in New Zealand. I will be able to give back to New Zealand, a country which has given so much to me. I would also love to be a motivational speaker to encourage youth and people from refugee backgrounds.

Life is a beautiful struggle....nothing is impossible; even the word *Impossible* says *I'm possible!*

# Hania





# Juliet

My name is ... I never imagined I would have to write a nickname for such a great personal achievement, or that I would be afraid and worried to share a photo of myself, but let's call me Juliet for now.

I am Egyptian and I haven't been in New Zealand for very long, but I already feel at home. I always say I am an Arab, I am a

Muslim and I am a refugee. I come from a minority within a minority, and I would love to help others like me as well as give back to the country that became home. I want to be hope to the future generations that their circumstances, ethnicity or religion will never prevent them from becoming the people they want to be. I want to be a shoulder to cry on and applauding hand in every celebration. No wonder I chose to be part of the health care system, as I know the only way to fix the issues with refugee and minorities' health is to empower them and put them in decision-making positions, as well as increasing their representation in the health care profession!

I just finished my first year of Biomedical Science in 2020. It wasn't a normal year but definitely it taught me a lot! I am excited to start studying Pharmacy in 2021. I am very grateful for this amazing opportunity. Hearing I was to be a scholarship recipient was one of the best pieces of news I had last year. I see great potential in such scholarships to reduce inequity in refugee-background communities. Reducing inequity will empower New Zealand as a whole, and that's the best outcome to aim for....everyone in New Zealand to feel empowered, represented and treated fairly.

My favourite quote when reflecting on my experience as a refugee would be "Grow through what you go through". I am grateful for all the hardships that made me grow not only older but wiser and more responsible.

“The shining pearl”...is the definition of my name, Jummanah. It has such a beautiful meaning that I really value. I'm one of four children, born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and raised in Saudi Arabia. I have always been interested in a career in medicine and health care due to my curiosity and fascination in science and the human body.

Although I was a top student through school, being a female in a society with unfair socioeconomic systems really limited my future. Coming to New Zealand with my mom and siblings has enlightened every corner of my life. The 2nd of June, 2016 was the day of a new beginning for me. My mom made the hard decision to seek asylum in New Zealand with no idea about how things might turn out. That has given me the strength to conquer obstacles I face, such as the language barrier and the financial hardship we've struggled with.

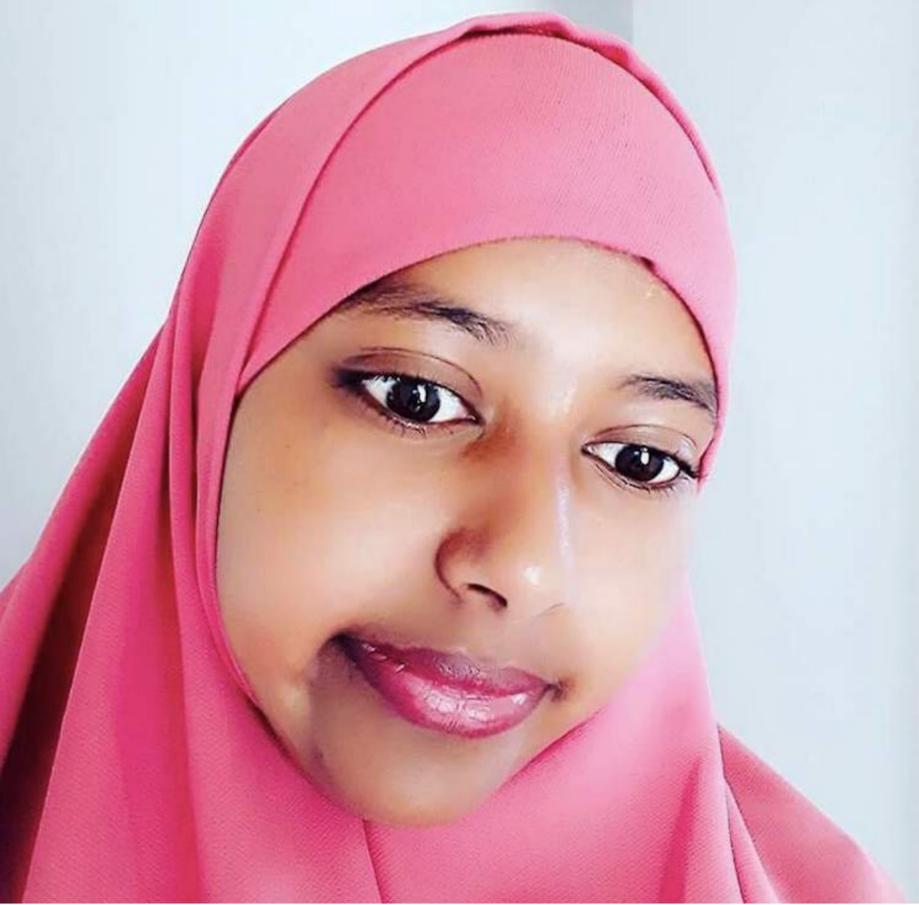
My first year in school in New Zealand was Year 12 and I simply wanted to 'pass'. I didn't think I could compete for higher grades with those in the mainstream. However, I was one of the top 3 students in the science subjects and received a scholarship from University of Auckland; then being chosen as a recipient of the Sir Robert Jones' scholarship was such a blessing for me. To be recognised by such generous and amazing people was unbelievable. Now I can focus on my goals without worrying about financial needs.

I had many teachers saying to me “your academic achievements have made New Zealand proud”, but really what I can say is that it's a payback for the indescribable good treatment from the people in New Zealand. I've learned to get along and respect other peoples' cultures, religions and personal opinions...that there is always good in the world that can change lives starting with a smile.

I'm in my final undergraduate year in medicinal chemistry/drug design and really wish to take my studies further and contribute to the wider community. To continue shining...

# Jummanah





# Khadija

My name is Khadija. I was born and raised in Somalia. I went to school there up to year nine. We moved to Ethiopia in 2011 for safety proposes and also looking for a better future, however, I could not continue my studies there due to financial difficulties.

I lost valuable time in my teens, without school and doing nothing other than staying home and helping my mum with the house chores. In 2014, we moved to New Zealand. I restarted my education journey but it wasn't easy. I did not know any English, so I went to classes at WINTEC for a couple of years, quickly moving from level one to level five. I was determined to pursue my dream of becoming a nurse. In future I plan to be a diabetes specialist nurse to help people to manage their condition better.

My responsibility for my family is huge. I am from a big family of nine brothers and three sisters most of whom are now married and living with their spouses. Spending time with and helping my mother is one of my favourite pass times. I am the one who's looking to achieve a high level of study to make my family proud. My mum has always tried to give me the best life that she never had. I want to show her how grateful I am that she brought me to New Zealand for a better future and to also show her that I can overcome any challenges. I want her to be proud when she sees me as her first daughter to graduate.

From a young age, living not an easy life, I learned how important it is to be kind and a helping hand for people. I am a member of the Somali community and Waikato Refugee forum where I meet different people from different countries. I love being a part of this, as we have common backgrounds and interests.

I am now in my third year of Bachelor of Nursing. I will continue working hard and being the best student and nurse that I can be. I will be forever grateful for the opportunities in New Zealand. I am so grateful to be one of Sir Robert Jones' Scholarship recipients.

My name is LweeZar. I was born in Thailand, but I come from a Burmese background. My widowed mother, my older brother and sister and I came to New Zealand in 2006 with the hopes of a better life. Life in the refugee camp back in Thailand was tragic. We lived in a bamboo shelter with barely any money or clothes to keep us fed and warm throughout the years. My father was an abusive man and my mother has endured a lot of pain throughout her life. A big part in my determination to live a life I have dreamed of is for her and to thank her for all her sacrifices. My father died of alcohol poisoning when I was very young and my mother had to work day and night in order to feed us. These were just a few of the circumstances which made our old life very difficult; the transition to New Zealand when I was about five, set out new challenges and beginnings. I went to Royal Road Primary School where I was made Head Girl in year eight; then St Dominic's Catholic College for my high school years. Various traumatic childhood experiences lead to mental health challenges during my school years and to the present day.

I am currently attending AUT studying Oral Health. My goal is to finish my degree and eventually volunteer in third world countries or struggling communities to help aid in their oral health needs. I know what it is like to survive with little money. I have a passion to impact people's lives for the better and I am driven to do what it takes to make this possible.

I have been working part time since the age of 15 to help support my family financially but the help from Sir Robert Jones' Refugee Daughter's Scholarship, will be greatly beneficial to my life in many ways.

Through all the obstacles and tragedies I have endured, this has only made me a stronger woman and I am determined to finish my course and become the first woman in my whole family heritage to go to a university and live a successful life, which means to live comfortably and make history to my family's name.

# LweeZar





# Mary

My name is Mary, and I am 18 years old. I was born in Myanmar, and my ethnic background is Kachin. I am studying for a conjoint degree in Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Science at the University of Auckland.

After I lost my father at the age of five, our family faced many hardships. My mother was the only breadwinner working as a farm labourer. Our circumstances worsened when the Burmese military came to our village. They physically- and sexually-abused the villagers of our minority ethnic group in many inhumane ways. They also destroyed farms - our primary source of income. Each day, we lived in fear.

Due to the intolerable circumstances, my mother was forced to flee to Malaysia without us. Fortunately, I was able to escape alone with my brother in 2012 to Malaysia. It took us a challenging one-month journey. We travelled mostly on foot and sometimes by boat without sufficient food and water. We hid during the day and only traveled at night to avoid getting caught. I vividly remember crossing a big river on foot and my head was barely above the water. I thought that I might not make it out alive. Despite the challenges, we settled in Malaysia for two years; then, we were given a chance to migrate to New Zealand in 2014.

Coming from a small village, I only attended school until 4th grade. It was challenging for me to adapt to school in New Zealand. My English was very basic. I was not confident that I could do well. However, with the teachers' help and hard work, my English improved very well after year 9 and I could take up mainstream subjects instead of ESOL. Eventually I gained entry to the University of Auckland with a Top Achiever Scholarship for my first year. I am very thankful to Sir Robert Jones for providing such a great opportunity for my education and a stepping-stone for the rest of my life. I want to use this opportunity to become a person that can make a difference in society. My childhood as a refugee sparked my passion for people in need. In the future, I aim to be an impactful entrepreneur.

I came to New Zealand from Iran, at the end of 2019 and have been warmly welcomed by the friendly community in Dunedin.

Iran has a rich culture and is known for its lovely poetry, amazing scenery, astonishing history, and diverse cuisine but with the male-dominated oppressive system and the political/social issues, Iran is not a safe place for some, with riots and protests a common occurrence. I have experienced first-hand the daily struggles and injustice of being a female in Iran, but I am grateful for the many blessings I do have and consider myself fortunate to be where I am now and acknowledge that my past has had a part in that. I don't regard my hardships as a burden but rather try to make the most out of the hand that I've been dealt. My experiences have allowed me to appreciate the simple things often taken for granted in New Zealand and I make a bigger effort to be compassionate and understanding of other people's problems and circumstances. I hope to be able to someday give back what I have received by helping others with similar experiences and backgrounds.

I was unable to attend university in Iran, but in New Zealand my dream of tertiary education has become a reality! I was successful in Health Science First Year at Otago and I am now studying Medicine.

I am passionate about learning and have always challenged myself academically despite my difficult circumstances. Now that I know I can remain at university, I am even more determined to achieve my goals.

I don't know how I can sufficiently express my gratitude to Sir Robert Jones, The University of Otago and everyone involved with the scholarship for their kindness and generosity. (I am amazed by how wonderful you all are!)

I will return the kindness to someone else who needs a helping hand in future.

**Maryam**





# MiMi

My name is MiMi and I am from Lei Kang, a small village in Myanmar. I will start my Midwifery studies at the Auckland University of Technology in semester two 2021. I have had the privilege of receiving the Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughter Scholarship and will forever be grateful for this opportunity.

My family and I arrived in New Zealand in 2007 as refugees. My father left for Malaysia before I was born to support my mother and I back in Myanmar. Coming from a smaller village in Myanmar resources were limited, we were outcasts in a country governed by the military during the military regime. Arriving in New Zealand was very rewarding for my family, but a lot of obstacles were encountered such as the language barrier, as well as adapting to the culture. This is no longer an issue for my parents as I am able to help out as much as possible.

Starting from an early age, I've always had the passion for helping others, which is why I knew I wanted to be involved in the health science field. As the eldest child in my family, I grew up in a non-English speaking household which led me to help my parents and extended family from a young age in terms of appointments and English orientated things. As a young girl, this helped me to figure out what I wanted to do in the future and helped to motivate me academically. Through my love for helping people, I always dreamt of becoming a midwife. Bringing a new life to earth is such a beautiful thing, I wish to be a part of. Having younger siblings, it is so rewarding to see kids grow as individuals and I am very blessed to be able to expand my knowledge and aid women in giving birth safely.

Receiving this Scholarship is not only beneficial for me but my hard-working parents. I am now able to achieve my goals and also inspire other women from refugee backgrounds to study hard. I know that the difficulties I have experienced as a refugee do not limit the endless opportunities I have and will continue to grasp.

Kia Ora and Mingalabar. My name is Monica. I am from Myanmar. The traumatizing history that my family experienced and cannot forget is the failed democracy event in 1988. On the 8th of August, the whole country was protesting for justice against the brutal dictator Ne Win. The protest was met with violence by the military, thousands of people were killed, many students were jailed and tortured. My father was jailed for 4 years and for another 2 years for becoming a BBC journalist and exposing the truth about the Burmese military. After escaping to Ranong (Thailand) with my mother, my father was still wanted by the military but he was working on the far side of Thailand. Instead the military arrested my pregnant mother and she was jailed for one year; in fact my mother gave birth to me in jail. My father paid a heavy price for the release of me and my mother. We lived in Nu Po Refugee Camp (Thailand) for more than 10 years before we were accepted into New Zealand as refugees in 2012.

Adjusting to a new country and culture with a completely different language was extremely difficult. I found it hard to balance and find my own identity, and the same for my brothers. I was bullied in Intermediate school for being Asian and not speaking English. However, I am always thankful that my parents endured and sacrificed their way of life to come to look for a better future. My parents say: "We did not have the chance to achieve our dreams, so you should be able to achieve yours." These words influence me to work hard and not give up through any hardships I experience. I want to do my best and make them proud.

The education that I receive from AUT will develop and deepen my knowledge in the tourism industry. For me, it is important to graduate not only for myself and my family but also to be a role model for the wider Burmese community. I am delighted to be awarded the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship. It will greatly assist me and my family in my efforts to achieve my career goals.

# Monica





# Nadia

As-salamu alaykum and kia ora. My name is Nadia and I am 22 years old. I come from Jaghori which is a city in Afghanistan. I was 6 years old when my family fled as refugees to New Zealand to escape the genocide committed against the Hazara ethnic minority, which my family belongs to.

Due to the distinct Asian features of a Hazara person and our religious belief in Shia Islam, there are ethnic groups such as the Pashtuns who believe we do not rightfully belong in the country. The prejudice against Hazaras meant that we were killed, expelled from our own lands and enslaved. Life for my family in Afghanistan was very difficult. Both my parents became orphans at a young age. They also went through a lot of hardship in order to provide for our family of nine. My father was the only one working and he endured backbreaking labour in order to put food on the table, which mainly consisted of low-cost ingredients that managed to fill our stomachs till the next meal. Regardless of the struggles, my parents made a promise to provide as much as they could for us.

I have always been interested in helping out people in need. During high school, I was involved in many groups such as Amnesty International which I was the leader of in my year, Positive Behaviour 4 Learning, Rights of Kindness, SPCA and other similar groups. I was also an active candidate in the United Nations Global Youth Ambassador program in my final year of school. Helping and giving back to the community, especially the less fortunate, is my biggest dream. I would love to go on to study Pharmacy. Without this scholarship, it will be difficult to complete my degree as in my final years I will not be funded in any way. Pharmacy is a medical field which is people orientated, and I believe my experience in this job will benefit my philanthropic endeavours in the future.

I cannot express how grateful I am to have this opportunity and to be a recipient of the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship.

I'm originally from Al-Diwaniya, Iraq. I arrived in Aotearoa, New Zealand 17 years ago and have called Wellington home since then. My family had to leave Iraq to escape the violence of Shia persecution. My mum wanted to offer my brother and I a life with more opportunities, especially in terms of education, and she sacrificed a great deal to make that possible. We initially fled to Australia in 2001 but because of policy changes, we were turned away to the offshore detention centre on Nauru where we stayed for over 2 years until NZ accepted our asylum claim in 2004.

I recently completed my Bachelor of Arts with a double major in International Relations and Political Science and a minor in Public Policy. The decision to study these subjects was informed by the reality that politics affects every aspect of our lives, more so for refugees. It was politics that forced us out of our homelands and what allowed us to be accepted in another country. I wanted to understand the world we live in and the power structures that can influence and enforce change.

I am pursuing a Master of International Relations in 2021 and hoping to carry out my own research on Shia persecution, a topic close to my heart and lived experience. It's under-represented in academia and I hope to bring attention and wider understanding to it.

I aspire to work in foreign policy in the future and to also work in spaces where intersectional activism is valued. While I'm really interested in policy, I will always be a believer that change begins within communities and grassroots organisations. Community building is very important to me and I try to dedicate time to a platform I co-founded with wonderful people, Voice of Aroha. We aim to demonstrate that not all refugee/migrants are the same, many of us have different experiences and perspectives that cannot be categorised as a homogenous group with a single voice. Our main objective is to shift the narrative around refugees that's either dehumanizing or victimizing and instead lead our own stories. I am grateful and honoured to be a recipient of this scholarship and hope I can always give back to my community through anything I'm involved in.

## Narjis





# Rahaf

My name is Rahaf. I am originally from Syria. I came to New Zealand in March 2017 with my family. I attended Queen's High School in Dunedin. I grew up watching Disney and Harry Potter, which is really where I started learning English. Being the only girl in my family, my

parents wanted me to be bilingual and to have a passion for Science. I highly respect my parents' sacrifices and decisions, leaving home behind and caring for my future. I have a feeling of responsibility that it is my turn to give back to them and my Kiwi and Arab community.

The transition from one part of the world to this new one made me grow up so fast. However, I genuinely appreciate that I grew up experiencing the richness of both worlds entirely, observing from both and adapting from both. My two worlds taught me to learn with passion.

Being a Muslim Syrian girl has significantly impacted my character. It has developed my morals and cultural upbringing. I work hard to demonstrate that where I come from is a lot more than a war zone. I really care about being a good representative of my roots. I am very aware of the challenges along the way, but I don't settle for what is easy.

Last year was a tough pill to swallow from its beginning. It was an exceptional year with Covid-19 and the stress of Health Science First Year. However, I learned a lot about myself, the human body and the world and I'm grateful for it. I never imagined that in 3 years in New Zealand I would be able to jump the cultural barrier, get endorsements in high school, gain UE, pass one of the hardest courses at university, get a writing piece published and be awarded by a generous scholarship.

I feel so privileged to be a recipient. Thank you so much for trusting me. I will continue to prove myself worthy.

Kia ora, my name is Reena. My parents are from Afghanistan. I have two sisters and a younger brother. My parents migrated to Pakistan due to the war in Afghanistan when rival factions fighting for power pounded the capital “Kabul” with rockets.

My father died in 2003. Life was hard for us. I had to struggle for things such as books, uniform and school fees. Education was very important to me, but during my Year 9 studies in Pakistan I had to start work in a call centre; working the night shift for 9 hours and then studying for 4 hours during the day. I kept going like that until I graduated from high school in 2015. I wanted to pursue my education, but I was supporting my family financially, so I couldn't attend university. Also there was no student allowance or loans and even though I was born in Pakistan, I didn't have any official identity.

I came to New Zealand as a refugee in 2018. I had never experienced a happier moment before. I was in Auckland for six weeks in Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. We were welcomed by lovely people of New Zealand and we resettled in Palmerston North. I struggled a lot at first. I was not familiar with New Zealand education system. I did a Certificate in Study and Career Preparation Level 3 and I did New Zealand Certificate (Nursing pathway). All those difficulties that I faced during my foundation course made me resilient; especially having English as a second language.

I completed the course with good grades. Now I'm in second year Bachelor of Nursing at Universal College of Learning (UCOL). I am the first person in my family who got an opportunity to do a degree.

My dream is to become a nurse and serve the country which gave me and my family a safer place to live. The scholarship committee gives refugee-background girls like me a chance they never had in their country.

I sincerely thank Sir Robert Jones and the people who are involved in this scholarship. It will relieve some of the burden off my shoulders. Now I can focus on being a student.

Ngā mihi

# Reena





# Sandrine

My name is Sandrine. I was born and grew up in the Anglophone region of the Cameroons. My father was pushed by the poor human rights conditions there to leave us at an early age to seek refuge in New Zealand. I grew up with my grandparents and uncles and aunties.

My maternal grandmother was particularly very caring and supportive and brought me up in the Roman Catholic faith. In 2017, my second and final year of high school in the Cameroons, war started in the Anglophone region. The Anglophone minority sought separation and autonomy from the Francophone majority and the government retaliated with military force. The conflict caused humanitarian, economic and social crises. Schools were closed, including my own. We went from students who were doing well and loving life in a boarding school, to being a fugitive as our towns and villages were raided by the military.

In the past 3 years, hundreds of our villages have been burnt, thousands of our people arrested, killed and displaced. My sisters and I were so blessed that our father was in New Zealand. He was able to sponsor us. As we waited for the visas in 2018, every day felt like a year. Finally, our visas were approved in 2019 and we travelled to New Zealand. I was so excited to have come out of the conflict, and to be here in this beautiful place with my family, and more importantly, to be in a country where I can have the best chance to reach my potential.

I will complete the Certificate of Health and Wellbeing at UNITEC mid-2021. I hope to gain entry to the Bachelor of Nursing. My goal is to become a mental health nurse and to work with people from refugee backgrounds in New Zealand. Even though the start of our life in New Zealand in 2020 was tough because of COVID-19 and difficulties accessing student allowance and loan from StudyLink, I have been very blessed to be awarded the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship. It has made my future look much brighter and lighter. I cannot wait to complete my current study and to commence the Bachelor of Nursing. Thank you so much Aotearoa New Zealand.

Kia ora. My name is Sara. I am a 19-year-old asylum seeker from Saudi Arabia. My mother is originally from Ethiopia. My mother, four siblings, and I came to New Zealand in June 2016, and our life has been blessed ever since. We went through a lot back in our home country and struggled to live a normal life. Luckily, we were fortunate enough to become accepted as permanent residents in this amazing country.

I also faced many challenges when I came to New Zealand, the biggest was probably the language barrier. I couldn't speak English when I first came here, and I always felt insecure to talk to people in school or join extra-curricular activities. However, with time, effort, and so much support from people, I was able to speak fluent English and excel in my studies, as well as join in activities such as football. I moved out of ESOL class within two terms and was able to achieve high grades in mainstream English.

I graduated from Avondale College in 2019. Last year I studied first year Biomedical Science at the University of Auckland through which I have gained entry to Optometry school. I have always had a passion for science, and I am extremely lucky to be studying in a top university such as Auckland University, let alone become a Sir Robert Jones Scholar!!

This scholarship gives me hope and encouragement for what is to come in the future, and I am beyond thankful for this opportunity. No matter the path I take from here, I want to give back to the New Zealand community and help people in need, just like Sir Robert Jones Scholarship is helping young refugee girls to shine!

# Sara





# Tai-iba

Kia ora koutou. My name is Tai-iba and I'm from Afghanistan. I'm 19-years old and live in Christchurch with my Mum, Dad and five siblings. We moved to New Zealand in 2004, after escaping the conflict and strife caused by the war. We are from a small but proud tribe called the Hazaras. In 2001, we fled Afghanistan

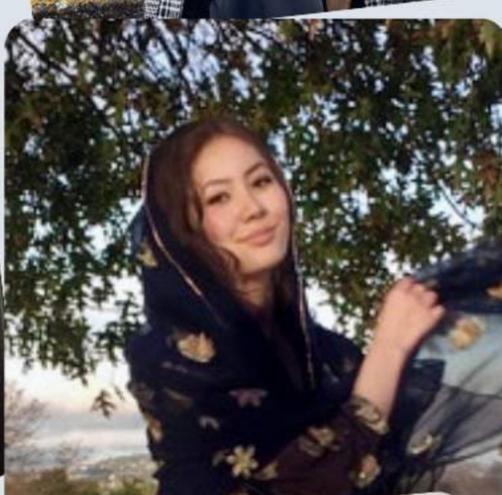
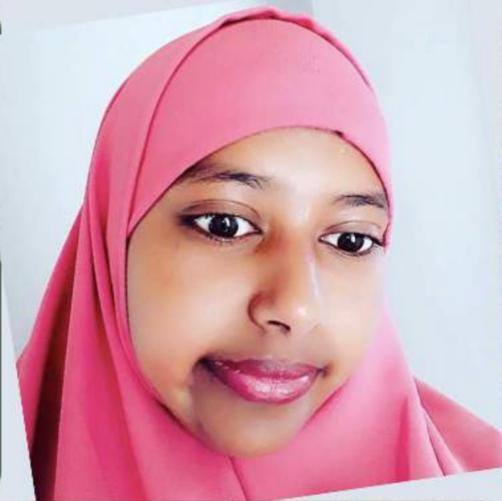
when the threat of violence from the Taliban became more prominent. Not only were we a persecuted ethnic group, but we also practised a different branch of Islam. This made us even bigger targets for attacks and killings.

Eventually, we escaped to Pakistan and lived there for three years before New Zealand extended their generosity and offered us a new home safe from war. Back then, we didn't even know that New Zealand existed and had no idea what to expect from the tiny island nation and its people. We couldn't have been luckier.

When I first arrived in New Zealand as a three-year-old, I barely knew how to read and write in Farsi, let alone speak English. I've come a long way since those days at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. I accompanied my family members to doctor appointments as a little translator. Though it doesn't seem very grand, I like to think this is where my passion for working in health stemmed from. In 2020, I was offered a place in the Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery programme at the University of Auckland after completing a challenging first year in the Health Science programme.

With this scholarship, I can commit myself wholly to my education. It demonstrates that the education of individuals like me matter and that New Zealanders want us to thrive. Like many refugees, who initially struggled with integration, these initiatives teach me that my refugee status is not necessarily a weakness. Instead, it should act as a source of motivation. I am wholeheartedly excited for my future; building a career centred around the lives and wellbeing of the New Zealand people.

*Poipoia te kākano kia puawai.....Nurture the seed and it will blossom.*





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