



SIR ROBERT JONES

# REFUGEE DAUGHTERS' SCHOLARSHIP

2022

RJH



**RASNZ**  
Refugee health  
& wellbeing

**I am delighted to welcome 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.**

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

**Sir Robert Jones**

**Cover image: Fatumo Mohamud, Bachelor of Midwifery, WINTEC  
Photo credit: WINTEC - Waikato Institute of Technology**

It is my great pleasure to introduce and congratulate the recipients of the Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship 2022.

The Scholarship was established in 2015 to provide young women from refugee backgrounds the financial security they require to complete a university degree or a qualification from an approved tertiary institution. Since conception over seven years ago, 70 young refugee-background women have graduated, 16 have gone on to post-graduate study and this year we have increased our scholarship pledge from 23 to 25 places. In this, the third year of the pandemic, we acknowledge the challenges our scholars faced through the months in lockdown, isolation, and subsequently, for many, the certainty of contracting Covid-19. However, despite the difficulties, we can report that nothing has deterred the program's spirit. Our register of old girls and scholars associated with the Scholarship grows year on year. With that in mind, we are currently working toward creating an Alumni membership with a dedicated facilitator, ensuring this remarkable legacy is a lasting benefit to all involved.

The Robert Jones Holdings' philanthropic donation creates a unique opportunity for our scholars to study unhindered and without financial burden, which ordinarily is not the case for former refugees and asylum seekers arriving in New Zealand. All tuition fees are paid throughout the course, right through to graduation (subject to a reasonable examination level pass rate). Additionally, RJH will pay university hostel accommodation for students attending tertiary study outside their hometown, for the first two years.

We are delighted to announce our new 50/50 partnership between the University of Auckland and Robert Jones Holdings this year. University of Auckland are in the illustrious company of Victoria University of Wellington, the University of Waikato, the Auckland University of Technology and the University of Otago.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Greg Loveridge, Caitlin Venus and Craig Parks from Robert Jones Holdings for their generosity and ongoing support. We wish to acknowledge support staff and thank the selection panellists from our university partners – Prof. Sara Kindon and Kodrean Eashae, Victoria University of Wellington; Dr. Jo Oranje and Iain McGilchrist, University of Otago; Assoc. Prof. Tracy Bowell, University of Waikato; Prof. Bridget Kool, University of Auckland. Additionally, we acknowledge RASNZ supporters who also generously gave their time on the selection panel – Ben Trieu, Lorena Cuervo Hernández, Amanda Aye and Saniya Surani. A big shout out goes to RASNZ Scholarship Coordinator Susan Hirst, who skilfully administers this programme and ensures our students' best possible support outcomes.

Finally, to our outstanding scholarship graduates, you are a credit to us all – literal trailblazers in your communities and inspiring role models. On behalf of the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship, RASNZ congratulates you and celebrates your fantastic achievement.

**Sharron Ward, CEO, Refugees as Survivors**





# Aja

My name is Aja, I am 19 years old and I was born in Sri Lanka.

I lost my father in the civil war in 2009. My family lost everything and we had to stay in a camp. We left in 2011 and fled to Malaysia. We lived there under severe financial pressure for three and a half years. Through UNHCR, we came to New Zealand in 2015 as refugees, hoping for a better

life. The friendly and supportive environment of New Zealand made us feel safe here. I loved this place and I was very happy to start a new life here.

I started my education here in high school. At the start it was very challenging for me to learn English, but I put all my effort into it and was able to pass all my NCEA with merit endorsement. I am very grateful to be given the opportunity to attend university to pursue my passion. I am currently studying Bachelor of Science (Biomedical) at the University of Auckland. I love helping people and I am interested in learning about human anatomy.

The Sir Robert Jones Scholarship is a huge help for my family and I as nobody in my family is currently working full time. I can fully focus on my goal and achieve it without worrying about the financial circumstances. I would like to express my gratitude to the scholarship committee and Sir Robert Jones wholeheartedly. I hope one day I will be able to help others to achieve their dreams.

*The friendly and supportive environment of New Zealand made us feel safe here.*

Kia Ora, my name is Alaa, I am grateful to be a recipient of Sir Robert Jones' Refugee Daughters' Scholarship.

I am originally from Syria, and I arrived in New Zealand in March 2015 after spending time in Egypt as a refugee. Growing up in Syria before the war, I had good education opportunities as I went to a local primary school. When the Syrian civil war started in 2011, the living situation started to get gradually unbearable, and we had to escape Syria to Egypt in 2013 before eventually having the privilege to come to New Zealand.

Settling in New Zealand was challenging at first as I did not speak English and I also had to learn NZSL on top of that.

My parents have always supported me to continue my education and gain tertiary qualifications. I have just finished my first year at Victoria University of Wellington studying Biomedical Science.

Ever since I was a child, I had a big passion for science and science related studies, I've been doing science since my third year in primary school and continued doing mainstream science until year 13 of high school in New Zealand. This scholarship will help me follow my passion and turn it into a career.

**Alaa**





# Arezo

I am Arezo, I was born in Afghanistan and I am the youngest in my family. Back in my country, I loved school but we were forced to flee and seek refuge in Pakistan when I was in year 6.

In Pakistan, we could not speak the languages, and it was all a struggle to earn and survive every day. I longed to attend school. I had a dream for a future of fulfilment, but I wasn't in the right place. Although we had very little information about New Zealand, we were thrilled to hear that we were moving here and I could go back to school.

When I arrived I started High School without knowing a word of English. I felt lost, but I could see the future. I could see peoples' lips moving but I understood nothing.

I worked hard on learning English and with the help of my teachers and friends I took an academic program and succeeded in getting NCEA Level 3. In these four years I learned about New Zealand's culture and history and have begun to explore this stunningly lovely country.

I am currently pursuing a four-year Bachelor's Degree in Food Technology at Massey University. I must admit the courses are challenging but I love it. I look forward to completing my degree and working as a Food Technologist.

I am very honoured to be awarded this Scholarship. It boosts my spirit to aim even higher. I am thankful to the Committee for this valued reward. Education is so valuable.

*Knowledge and skills, once acquired, can't be stolen.*



Kia Ora, Kia Ora to RASNZ, Sir Robert Jones for this amazing opportunity and gift. My name is Aria. I was a young girl when my family fled from the wars in Afghanistan. My Father described, with sadness in his eyes, his journey as a refugee to find a place void of the dangerous fighting surrounding him; a place he would not have to relive the traumatic memories of the past. He told us how many of the Hazara Refugees drowned in the oceans, how he was one of the few fortunate enough to be rescued on the ship '*Tampa*'. The help from the former Prime Minister Helen Clark was what allowed our peaceful life to blossom here, by allowing the *Tampa* to finally dock in New Zealand.

My experiences as a Refugee youth growing up here has built my characteristics and goals in life. The Scholarship is another uplifting opportunity Aotearoa is offering to the Refugee population and I'm astonished at just how much this country has come forward in its support for us; only deepening my gratitude.

With the encouragement of my number one supporters being my parents I am now studying for a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degree at the University of Otago, with aspirations of becoming a competent health professional for Aotearoa. I feel strongly that an individual's health should come before anything; well-being needs to be nourished for an individual to live their best life. Therefore, I aspire to gain the knowledge to treat, donate and volunteer for the communities in need, in hopes of also extending my aspirations to my home country in Afghanistan.

Thank you once again RASNZ and Sir Robert Jones for giving me a chance to achieve my dreams in life.

**Aria**





# Chu Moo

Tēnā koutou, my name is Chu Moo, and I am originally from Mae La refugee camp in Thailand.

My parents migrated to Thailand from Myanmar due to the civil turmoil. My parents prioritised our education and worked hard to support me

and my siblings. They sacrificed everything for their children to have a better life. We came as refugees to New Zealand in 2011.

The only English terms that I knew when I arrived here were “book open” and “book close”. With such a massive language barrier I struggled to communicate and to ask for help. However, all my difficulties and challenges encouraged me to focus and work extra hard to become my best version. A quote to conquer my challenges is:

*“One day you will thank yourself for not giving up”*

When I was a child I sold veggies around the hamlet and my parents would give free veggies to those in need. This life experience has inspired me to one day establish a business of my own to provide employment for my community and to save for those who need it in the refugee camp. This goal strengthens and motivates me.

The education system in New Zealand is amongst the best in the world and many doors have opened for me. I am now studying a Bachelor of Business degree in Business Marketing at AUT. I have been fortunate to get to study at university. This scholarship will help me with the financial difficulties of being a student. It also encourages young women to pursue higher education, to become independent and contribute to their homelands and various ethnic backgrounds with tremendous potential for a new future. Many thanks from my heart for this wonderful blessing. I will work to the best of my ability.



My name is Fernanda. I am 20 years old and I was born in Bogota, Colombia. We were forced to flee from our country due to death threats when I was 4 years old. We travelled from home to home and country to country. We lived and worked on a farm in Ecuador for a time; my only friends were the animals that we took care of. Due to the poor living conditions there, my health deteriorated, and doctors nearby were unable to treat me. My mother desperately searched for help while my father worked, as my health became life threatening. Her search led her to the Red Cross. They directed us to a doctor who could treat me and informed us about UNHCR and the refugee programme. My parents then worked day and night to supply me with the correct nutrition, medication as well as cover the daily bills. Through this chance meeting with Red Cross and UNHCR we were fortunate enough to be received in New Zealand in 2009.

My experiences with healthcare led me to focus on all science subjects in high school and do Health Sciences First Year at Otago university. I am now studying towards a Bachelor of Oral Health. My goal is to use my knowledge and skills in third world countries to improve oral health in communities who are enduring times of struggle.

From a very young age I have been working to contribute at home financially, and now to support myself. This is a load which will be greatly decreased by the wonderful Sir Robert Jones' Scholarship. This is an opportunity to focus on my studies and give back to the community, without the constant financial stress. I consider myself blessed to receive such generous help, for which I will be forever grateful.

# Fernanda





# Huda

My name is Huda. In 2009, my family was granted entry to New Zealand under the Family Support category. I arrived in New Zealand when I was nine years old and could not speak English. That did not stop me from applying myself and putting all my efforts into learning English and being an outstanding role model for my younger siblings.

For as long as I can remember I have always felt a duty to become the best person that I can be, not only for myself but also in order to repay this generous country for providing my family with valuable opportunities. Living in New Zealand has opened up so many opportunities for my siblings and I as it has meant that we were able to get access to a great education and a bright future. It's meant that I could make my dream of becoming a doctor a reality. I look forward to one day being able to give back to this country, my family and help thousands of others.

If living in New Zealand has taught me one thing, it would be to take risks and seize every opportunity that comes my way. To say that leaving my home and family to start the next chapter of my life at the University of Otago was difficult and terrifying would be an understatement. However I refused to let the stress and uncertainty get in my way and saw this as an amazing opportunity to be involved in everything that I love.

It has always been my dream to enter a field where I am able to help others and now that I am presented with this opportunity at the Otago Medical School, I am able to pursue my childhood dream. In the future I plan on going on to pursue Postgraduate Medicine.

Kia ora my name is Jame. I was born in Myanmar (Burma) and grew up in a refugee camp in Thailand for 14 years before coming to New Zealand as a refugee in 2014.

I faced many challenges when I came to New Zealand, the biggest was probably the language barrier. I always felt insecure to talk to people in school. However, I have a friend and teacher who helped me build my confidence to speak English with other people. Now I help my family using my English language skills and I am so proud of that.

My parents always said that "education is very important". However, education in the refugee camp was very limited. When I was told in the interview for New Zealand that I would be able to study, I was very delighted to hear that. My parents did not have the opportunity to learn.

When I arrived in New Zealand, I felt very happy about my future and the freedom that I gained at last. Since I was quite young, I was able to learn the language relatively quickly and I enjoyed going to classes and making new friends. I received high grades in every year of NCEA and this year I completed the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Level-5 diploma at MIT. I have been working part-time as an unqualified ECE relief teacher and volunteer at the Point England Kindergarten. I really love the course and my work, and this has inspired me to continue my studies to achieve a degree in Early Childhood Education.

I work hard to balance my full-time studies with family commitments and work. Receiving the scholarship will help me to better focus on my studies and become a registered teacher.

I want to say many thanks to Sir Robert Jones for the opportunity given to refugee students.

# Jame





A portrait of a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a light blue short-sleeved top and a dark skirt, sitting on dark steps.

# Jessica

Mingalabar, my name is Chia Ngo Aye Phuting and I am from Chin State, Myanmar. My family of 5 migrated to New Zealand safely from the ravaging wars of Myanmar to find a better life as refugees in New Zealand when I was 15.

Education has always been important to me, and it has always been my main emphasis. I believe that education is the key to a brighter future for everyone, especially for young children. Growing up in a third world country is never easy, but with the help of my family I was able to finish high school and I was doing well at school.

When I graduated from high school, I anticipated that I would be able to pursue a teaching degree. However, I realised that I wanted to improve my English language skills, so I pursued a Diploma in English Language at AUT before pursuing a teaching degree.

This year, I started my Bachelor of Education at AUT with the goal of helping young children in their education. The journey is not easy, but I am persevering with the image of success in my mind. Teaching is a rewarding career, focused on providing the power of education to today's young children. I have always wanted to give back to the community and make a positive difference.

For this blessing, I am eternally grateful to God and Sir Robert Jones. Being selected as a recipient of the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship is an honour and a privilege. It serves as a powerful motivator for all of us to work harder and repay our thanks by excelling in our various fields of study.

***"Education is the key to a brighter future"***

Kia ora, I'm Katerine, a first-year health psychology student at Victoria University of Wellington. I was born and raised in Cali, Colombia and came to New Zealand in 2018 with my brother and his family as refugees.

My story begins when my family and I were forced to leave our country and our dreams. Due to the insecurity in Colombia, we moved to Quito, Ecuador. Life in Ecuador was a constant struggle to try to belong, facing racism, trying to have a decent job and most importantly, looking for a place to live in peace. Insecurity and fear for our lives haunted us. Living in fear is not living. I consider myself fortunate to live in a safe country like New Zealand.

New Zealand has made me want to dream again and work hard to achieve my aspirations. I am aware that it will not be an easy journey. However, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I am working towards my goals. I recognize the importance and value of education on my path to becoming the woman I always wanted to be. As the first person in my family to go to university and as a refugee, I am motivated to pursue a profession in Health Psychology that will make a difference.

Helping transform problem behaviours to increase the health and well-being of the community, I feel pride and also responsibility to do great work that inspires those with the same background. Education is the way to a better and inclusive society. I want to be one of those who makes the changes. I feel privileged to be chosen for the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship. I will be eternally grateful since it means I can continue on the path to the achievement of my goals.

# Katerine





# Kiristika

Kia ora, my name is Kiristika and I graduated from the University of Auckland with a Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition. I am going on to do Master of Applied Science in Human Nutrition at the University of Otago.

I am a refugee from Sri Lanka who fled the country because it was unsafe for us.

My mother made the decision to flee Sri Lanka in 2010, after the civil war ended in May 2009. In the war, we lost our father, our home, access to education and our livelihood. Life as we knew it, was taken from us. We were put in migration camps for a year before the military let us out to live as normal civilians, but nothing was the same as before. Sri Lanka was not safe for us and my mother took her four children and sought refuge in Malaysia. We stayed there for four years and finally moved to New Zealand in 2014. I know the value of education because it was taken from me and my siblings when the war started and we were only able to get a proper education once we arrived in New Zealand. I am forever grateful for being able to pursue my dreams of studying human nutrition and I am honoured to be part of the Sir Robert Jones scholarship which will help me pursue my passions without having to worry about the financial aspects that come with studying my masters. I am glad to be given this opportunity, and I am forever grateful to share my story.



Kia ora my name is Laya and I am a student of architecture who has been awarded this Scholarship. In 2018, I made my way to New Zealand. My family fled Afghanistan because living there was no longer safe. We spent five years in Indonesia as refugees, unable to attend school. I'm grateful for the option of homeschooling and the opportunity to learn from other academic refugees. When I first arrived in New Zealand, I was unsure that I would be able to attend school because I was 18 years old, which is the normal graduation age. I was enrolled in school and began in year 11 after a bit of a struggle.

I've always wanted to be an architect and worked diligently to improve my grades to study architecture. I graduated from high school in 2020. My first year of university exceeded my expectations. I made new friends and gained new experiences that will last a lifetime. I'm incredibly happy to have been chosen as one of the scholarship recipients. I hope to become an architect and to assist other young people in achieving their dreams, just as the Sir Johns Scholarship assisted me.

Ngā mihi nui!

# Laya





# Madina

Kia Ora, my name is Madina, a very proud and grateful recipient of this scholarship. I am 18 years old and I am from Afghanistan. In the 1990s my parents relocated from Afghanistan to Pakistan due to violence. Still life was very difficult. My father died of cancer when I was seven years old. I have two siblings and we were all so young when he died.

My mother had been a nurse for 15 years and worked even when my father was alive. Despite pressures against her as a female she worked hard in Pakistan, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day to provide us with food, education, and a place to live, working only for us and our bright future, and she never gave up. My father couldn't work because he used crutches, so no one was willing to hire him.

We arrived in New Zealand as refugees on August 26, 2015.

I went to Mangere College and achieved my NCEA level 1, 2 and 3. Although it has been challenging, we have learned to communicate in English. I am now multilingual and hope that I can use my different languages to help support others. My mom encouraged me to study hard and improve my grades with the help and support of my school teachers. Now I love everything about New Zealand.

I have accomplished a lot, and my hard work has led me to my current career choice. I finished my Diploma in Education at MIT, and now I am studying a Bachelor of Education (ECE).

Success doesn't mean you need to know the language or be born in New Zealand. It's up to the person how they take the opportunity which is given to them; on how you can take advantage of it and achieve your goals and inspire other people from your story. Though being a refugee, you can still achieve a lot, nothing can stop you if you have the passion of accomplishing your goals and dreams.

الأفضل بينكم هم أولئك الذين يحققون أكبر قدر من الفوائد للعديد من الآخرين.

'The best among you are those who bring greatest benefits to many others.'

The Holy Quran

As a Muslim, one of my biggest values is that helping others is the most rewarding form of work. Before New Zealand I had eyes, but I could not see, I had a mouth, but I could not speak, I had arms, but I could not reach. New Zealand gave me the ability to speak for my rights and reach for opportunities that were not available to me previously. My name is Madina, an Afghan refugee that migrated from India to New Zealand in 2007 and this is my story.

Coming to New Zealand was a big challenge for my family and I because we did not know how to live in a culture so different from our own. My parents were illiterate and spoke no English. We could not use general household items and thought blocks of cheese were bars of soap.

I started to attend school for the first time in New Zealand and found this to be a great challenge. I could not communicate with anyone in my class and was considered to be the abnormal child. I did not know how to play simple primary games such as tag or hide and seek and you would always find me sitting down in play time, observing my peers. This trait of mine has stuck with me ever since. I find it so fascinating observing the world around me and trying to understand how people react and learn from certain situations. This has allowed me to learn from others at a greater depth and has allowed me to study the Bachelor of Law and Commerce at Canterbury University.

The Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters Scholarship will help me achieve my purpose in life of helping others and giving back to the country which gave so many opportunities to my family and me. Thank you, Sir Robert Jones Scholarship team, for seeing potential in me to succeed.

**Madina**







# Mahboobah

Kia ora, my name is Mahboobah, and I am a Hazara refugee from Afghanistan.

The Hazara are an ethnic minority in Afghanistan, who have been the victims of ethnic cleansing since the late 1800s due to our historic background and our religious

beliefs (being Shia Muslim). To escape the atrocities against the Hazaras, my family fled to Pakistan where we waited to gain acceptance into Aotearoa under the refugee quota programme.

My brother sacrificed his teenage years for the sake of our family. He was one of the refugees who travelled on the Tampa. He was accepted into New Zealand, after three years on Nauru. Five years later he was able to bring us to Aotearoa. I am very grateful to my hard-working brother for paving the way for us. His efforts provided new opportunities for me to set and achieve my goals. Being the first in the family to receive my Bachelor's degree, I have made my brother proud and made his hard work well worth it. I am happy that I can contribute to New Zealand society to show my gratitude for welcoming my family into the country.

Whilst I was completing my Bachelor of Science in Anatomy, at the University of Otago, I applied every year for acceptance into the Bachelor of Radiation Therapy program, which has been my ultimate goal since High School. My perseverance finally paid off and I gained graduate entry to the program at the University of Otago's Wellington Campus. I knew it would not be easy living in Wellington and sometimes worried at how I was going to support myself and cope with University study. I am so grateful for the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship for Refugee Daughters, it has assured me that even though I will be away from family for a few more years, financially everything will work out. I am honoured to be a 2022 recipient alongside some of the most hardworking and deserving refugee women. Thank you.

Kia ora, My name is Paw, and I am studying Engineering at the University of Auckland. Present-day, I live with my single mother and two younger sisters. This is an ordinary introduction to some of us, but personally, it reflects on my journey and the barriers I have overcome.

My mother and I came to New Zealand in 2011 after my mum fled Myanmar (Karen state) from the country's civil war. I grew up in a very conservative household where women were viewed as less valued. This did not sit right with me. At 16, I resorted to finding my income to help my mum out and working late nights at a restaurant whilst trying to balance school. During this period, it helped me become the independent woman that I am today. I've learnt the value of Education. Learning was the only escape I had. I aim to achieve at my highest in school because knowledge is the most powerful tool one can have.

I found interest in Physics and Technology in a male-dominated field, helping debunk the conservative view on gender equality. I want women to know that a woman can have a successful career; a daughter is enough to help support the family; one should not stay in a toxic situation because "we're supposed to". As refugees, we may have fled from the conflict, but societal strife follows.

Being the eldest child, you have a natural pressure and responsibility to pave the way for your family.

Funding from Sir Robert Jones and RASNZ would help take off a massive weight us refugee daughters carry. Thank you, It has been an honour for Sir Robert Jones and RASNZ to back my goals and help support my future endeavours.

**Paw**





# Samu

My name is Samu and I am currently studying a Bachelor of Laws conjoint with Commerce, majoring in Marketing at Victoria University of Wellington. I arrived in New Zealand in 2010 when I was around 8 years old with my parents and two siblings.

My parents were forced to flee their birth county of Bhutan in 1992 due to the ethnic tension prevailing there, and they spent the next 18 years seeking asylum in a refugee camp in Nepal.

My parents understood the importance of good education and knew the refugee camp would not provide that for me and my siblings thus decided to move to New Zealand as our resettlement country. Coming from a refugee background, I am all too accustomed to inequity. That's why I want to make a difference in the lives of those with comparable backgrounds to mine, as well as others who are less fortunate in terms of opportunities to improve their lives. I want to help those who have limited knowledge of their rights. In my community, especially women, I have seen many of them being exploited due to not knowing their rights. I know and have experienced first-hand the struggle that comes with having a language barrier just by being in a foreign country. People know the minimum of their rights and settle for the bare minimum because the legal rights are different in each country. Making a difference, even for a small group of people would mean a lot.

Being a recipient of this honourable scholarship relieved a lot of financial burden from my family. I am extremely grateful for Sir Robert Jones and his team for believing in me and my goals. I hope to one day help others as this scholarship has helped me!



Hi, my name is Samira. I am originally from Somalia but was born in Yemen. I migrated to New Zealand in 2008 with my single mother and 11 siblings. From a young age, I understood the importance of hard work through my mother's struggles. Raising 11 kids on her own in a western society was not always easy for my mother. I witnessed how she sacrificed her studies to provide us a better life. In every assessment that I attempt I aim to apply myself to the best of my ability because I know that it will make my mother proud and remind her that her sacrifices were made for a good cause.

I chose to study law at Waikato University because I want to be the voice for those who feel their differences placed them at a disadvantage in the legal system. Facing prejudice due to my racial and religious heritage over the years has inspired me to support others who are being marginalized in society. I'm passionate about embracing diversity and being a role model for those who share similar experiences.

Furthermore, my long-term objective is to leave my footprint where I hope to inspire young women like me to reject the stigma that surrounds us and value their true identity.

Because my mother is my role model, I want to be the person that people look up to when they are in a difficult situation. I aim to offer others hope, since every obstacle we face eventually comes with ease.

# Samira





# Shwe

Kia Ora and Mingalabar, my name is Shwe. I am a 20-year-old student at Whitecliffe studying for a Bachelor of Fine Art. I am grateful for the Sir Robert Jones scholarship and RASNZ for awarding me this scholarship. This enables me to achieve my dream goal of becoming an Art Therapist.

I was born in Myanmar and raised alongside my older brother by our single mother. My mother has Chinese and Burmese ancestry, and experienced constant ethnic persecution from Myanmar authorities despite her family having lived there for generations. My mother fled to Malaysia in 2006 and received refugee status three years later, leaving me and my brother behind because of the expensive bribes.

For as long as I can remember, my brother and I did not have a stable environment to grow up in, constantly facing uncertainties. Life in Myanmar was difficult, we were surviving rather than living. I started working at six years old alongside my grandmother to provide for the family while my brother attended school.

In 2012, I arrived in New Zealand and was given the opportunity to receive an education. It was difficult to adapt to a new country and learn a different language. I was bullied for being different, however, I was able to overcome the obstacles by focusing on my strength, which was Art. My first memories of my childhood were using art as an escape from reality, helping me through many difficult times. Art is a universal language. When words fail us, we can use art to express our feelings and understand others. I am determined to finish my degree so I can support struggling people using art therapy, offering an alternative to traditional therapies.

I have many people who care about me and encourage me to follow my dream, supporting my journey and personal development. RAS Youth have also provided me with invaluable support and opportunities such as RAS Youth forum camps, clubs and sports. I would not be here without my mother's hard work and resilience and the constant support and encouragement of Allie, my foster Mum, and her family.

My name is Ted and I was born in Thailand, however, I am from a Burmese background. I was the only child, and my family came to New Zealand in 2011 to hope for a better future. Back in the refugee camp, life was hard, and there was not a lot that we could do, and the education is just there to provide the ability to read and write and nothing more. My family went through a lot, and the biggest dream I had was to give my parents a comfortable life and a warm house. I was nine when I came to New Zealand and there were so many challenges - the very first thing we faced was the language barrier. All my parents have is me, so, I have to say that I have had quite a lot of pressure on my shoulders since then.

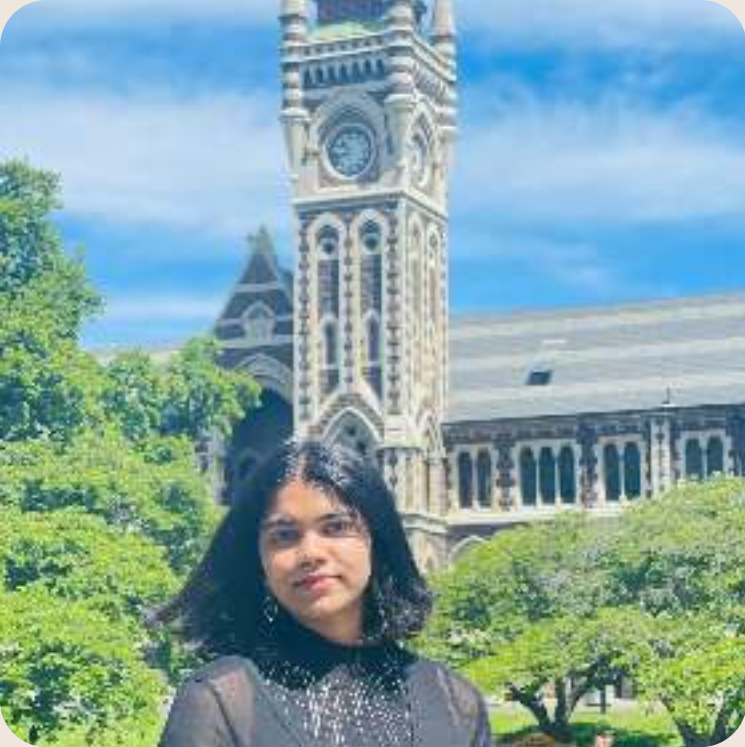
I am studying Bachelor of Nursing at Massey University, aiming to complete Master's as well. My goal is to become a Nurse Practitioner and become someone who can help people in need and struggling because of their financial needs. I know what it is like to survive in this world with very little money from my experience in the refugee camp; people died from not getting the proper treatment and not having enough medication.

I work part time to help with the household groceries. I've been very stressed about my university fees so receiving the Scholarship has a tremendous impact on my study and life.

The obstacles and challenges I have gone through have shaped me into an independent and strong woman. I am determined to reach my goal. I will make my family proud by becoming the first child in my family to attend university and develop my own life, step by step.

**Ted**





# Teshalini

Kia ora, my name is Teshalini and I am from the beautiful island of Sri-Lanka.

I am so thankful to Sir Robert Jones for awarding me this scholarship. I sincerely appreciate everyone who is involved in helping young refugee

girls like me to achieve our dreams despite our financial struggles. I am confident that I will be successful in my studies now that the financial burden has been lifted.

Me and my mum started this hard refugee journey together. As a single mother, she was determined to support and help me get an education. We had to leave our country and wander around the world for 4 years before coming to NZ. I did not go to school during that time but I had that hope that no one could destroy. It was like a flame of fire in the midst of darkness.

I came to New Zealand as a beginner in English. I always loved to study from my childhood and my dream is to work as a healthcare professional. Despite a new environment, I gave all my effort as soon as I arrived here. I made a significant improvement both in language and academics. The Ekkaallam Church in Wellington helped us to settle down in NZ. It is God through this Church who has shaped me into a better person who I am now.

Health Science First Year at Otago was a tough year as it is one of the competitive courses. With God's grace I was offered a place in Bachelor of Dental Surgery. I learnt that all you need to achieve something is God's grace, determination and generous people like Sir Robert Jones.

In time I will pay it back through my service to my new home, New Zealand!



Mingalabar, my name is Thet. I am studying for a Bachelor of Urban Planning at University of Auckland. I was born in Bangkok, Thailand, but I have a Burmese and Karen cultural background and was raised in a refugee camp with my two younger sisters.

My parents fled Myanmar in their teenage years during the 8888 uprising in 1988 and had to settle in a refugee camp. During my time living in a refugee camp, my parents worked hard to provide food, but sometimes I remained hungry. The temple would offer me food, and I would eat and study at the temple. During those times, I learnt Burmese literature, drawing and Buddhist texts along with my friends. We stayed in the refugee camp for five years and arrived in New Zealand in 2011.

I started attending school and began to receive a proper education. I struggled with English and writing during my primary school years up to my university years. During my years living in New Zealand, my parents split, my mother became a single mother, and I had to take responsibility as the eldest sister.

To fulfil my duties as the eldest sister, I manage school and work a part-time job to assist my mother and siblings financially; therefore, my siblings would always have enough food.

I appreciate Sir Robert Jones for supporting my education and my dreams of becoming an Urban Planner.

Becoming an Urban Planner will allow me to improve people's lives in struggling communities and improve their living conditions, as I can sympathise and relate to those communities.

# Thet





# Victoria

My family had to flee Russia as refugees to New Zealand. We faced many challenges. Despite that, I've always tried not to let circumstances overwhelm me, doing my best and working hard to realise my dreams.

I wanted to be a good representative of Russian culture in my amazing new home, New Zealand. Initially, I did not know English, but I worked hard on my English-language skills, dabbling in poetry, which ultimately led to being recognised and published in "Ko Aotearoa Tātou" (2020).

Being challenged and facing challenges head-on has built a resilient character in me, which has a real passion for helping others in hardship, approaching others with a compassionate and empathetic attitude and outlook.

Having received a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Oral Health from AUT, I felt that I had not yet satisfied that yearning I have always had of becoming a doctor, deciding to extend my knowledge and skills.

New Zealand has offered me an amazing opportunity and it is time to give back and contribute to this great society in the most positive way I know. This being said, with a sense of gratitude I find the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship is pivotal in pursuing and attaining my dream, sustaining me through all the coming struggles and allowing me to concentrate on the ultimate goal – the study of Medicine.

Kia ora my name is Zahra and I was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. I lived my childhood at war but came to peaceful Palmerston North, New Zealand in 2017. My mom, my sister and I fled from Afghanistan to Pakistan in 2013.

In my childhood due to cultural restrictions as a girl I was not allowed to attend formal schools. However, I did get a basic education behind closed doors in a neighbour's home. Life was scary and full of risk. I lived and studied with the risk of losing my life every day in Kabul. I was 16 when my father was murdered. To keep us safe my mother fled with us to Pakistan, where life became even harder, as we had no identity documents, so there was no school or education for us.

In 2013, we were given refugee status by UNHCR and our case was selected by the Government of New Zealand in 2014. Soon after settling in Palmerston North, I started full-time learning English language at English Teaching College (ETC). This was followed by a Foundation Certificate since I had not finished my high school. At present, I am a 2nd year Bachelor of Science student with a double major in Mathematics and Earth Science at Massey University.

After I finish my study, I plan to work on earth modelling related activities (e.g. predicting disasters and their impact).

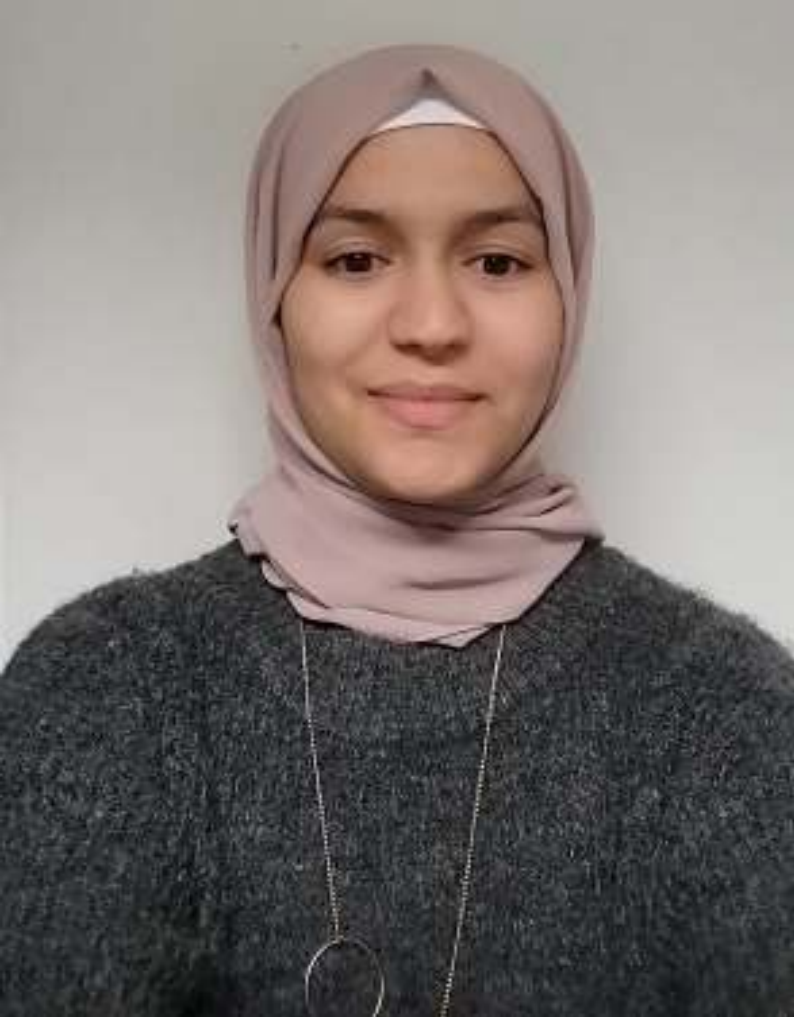
I am Vice-President of Manawatu Afghan Society and Vice-President of Manawatu Refugee Resettlement Forum Incorporated (MRRF). I volunteer in many community-related activities, as I am one of only two females representing our women in the community which has a 70% female population.

I am really honoured and grateful to receive this scholarship from Sir Robert Jones, It has changed my life and is a miracle for me. Thank you so much!

# Zahra







# Zahraa

Assalamu Alaikum, my name is Zahraa, I am 20 years old and I came from Iraq to New Zealand in 2018, escaping with my family from the war in "Mosul" where I was born. My family and I lost everything we had.

It was very difficult to survive there due to the different kinds of sufferings; killing, no education, fear and unknown future.

I saw murder and torture of people horribly in front of my eyes. Despite my young age I only cared about my family's lives, not about myself. I always believed through those three years that I am strong and all that will pass, and it happened. Alhamdulillah.

My parents did their best for me and my siblings. We faced many challenges to escape to live in a healthy environment and to continue our education, to achieve great goals and be successful. Here we are in a new country, with a new language, where the whole system of life is different, but we are working very hard to build everything here again.

I attended Zayed College, Māngere and now I am currently studying a Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science. I feel very grateful and proud to receive the Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship.

A new chapter of my life started the moment I came here. I am looking at the future, hoping to continue my achievements and do my best to give back to New Zealand. I wish to be a changemaker and a positive inspiration for others. Thank you.

# Congratulations to our graduates

**2015 scholars:** Joelle Kusimweray, BNurs, Manukau Institute of Technology; Jenny John, BCom (Accounting) Victoria; Julyseng Lahpai, BCom (Info Systems & Management) Victoria; Rosy Cinzah, BSc (Hons) (Microbiology & Immunology) Otago; Viyan Basharati, BCom (Marketing & Management) Canterbury; Nasra Said, BHlthSc & PGDip Health Science (Occupational Therapy) AUT; Nimo Mohamed, BHealth Science (Nursing) AUT; Roda Shire BHealth Science (Occupational Therapy) AUT; Pasawhtee Kuku, MArchitecture (Professional) UNITEC; Pyo Pyo Chan, BSc & GradDip (Computing, & Cyber Security) Otago & UNITEC; **2016 scholars:** Naheed Said, BSc (Physiology) Auckland & MBChB, Otago; Fatumata Bah, BHealth Science (Psychology & Business) AUT; Giselle Iradukunda, BA (Political Science & Public Policy) Victoria; Grace Kamundu, BBusiness (Financial Analysis) Auckland; Rahma Siraj, BA (Education & History) Victoria; Juliana Gjo, BInformation Technology, Whitireia Polytechnic; Naziyeh Fayaz, BCom, Auckland; Suleqa Habbad, BMedical Imaging, Ara Institute of Canterbury; Shamsia Askari, BApplied Science (Hons), AUT; Mehria Nouri, BA (Anthropology) Massey; Fartun Hirsi, BSc (Technology), Waikato; Hana Mender, BHealth Science (Nursing) AUT; Sara Chapagai, BNurs, UCOL; **2017 scholars:** Amani Ireng, BNurs, UNITEC; Thi Aung Nyunt, BSc (Conservation & Environmental Science) AUT; Chandra Chhouk, BSc & PGDipSc (Chemistry) Auckland; Khatima Mohammadi, BSc & PGDip (Bioscience) Auckland; Sediqa Mohibi, BCom (Accounting & Finance) Victoria; Aya Metlek, BEng(Hons) (Civil) Waikato; Habiba Safi, BHealth Science (Midwifery) AUT; Nida Fiazi, BA (Creative Writing) Waikato; Ansa Mohamud, BSocial Work, WINTEC; Aishah Oziullah, BSc (Chemistry & Statistics) Auckland; Shekiba Maqsoodi, BBusiness (Human Resources Management & Employment Relations) AUT; Zainab Mohibi BSc (Biomedical Science) Otago; Fatumo Mohamud, BMidwifery WINTEC; Maryam Mohseni, LLB AUT; **2018 scholars:** Ilham Akhlaqi, BCreative Technologies AUT; Clench Enoke, BGraphic Design (Hons) Massey; Melika Hassan, BHealth Science (Counselling) AUT; Zainab Kamali, BHealth Science (Nursing) AUT; Kim Van Nguyen BCom (International Business) & MApplied Data Science, Canterbury; Jenny Nguyen, BSc (Anatomy & Physiology) Otago; Samera Omidwar, BPharm, Otago; Pragya Pradhan, BSc (Computer Science) Victoria; Fatima Qadami, LLB, Waikato; Sakina Sarwari, LLB, Waikato; Dina Tesfay, BA (Politics & International Relations) Victoria; Htawee Thin, BCommunication Studies, AUT; Dilukshi Thurairajah, BArchitectural Studies, UNITEC; **2019 scholars:** Alshaima Alsaie, MHealth Sciences (Nutrition & Dietetics) Auckland; Diana Fusha, BSc (Psychology) Auckland; Htoo Paw Thin, BCommunication, Massey; Krishna Ogwaro, BCommunication Studies, AUT; Maha Jaffari, BA (Politics & International Relations) Auckland; Mahdie Karimee, BNurs, Massey; Najiba Muhammad, BNurs, WINTEC; Saraswati Biswa, BApplied Sci (Medical Imaging Technology), UCOL; Yasmine Aqeli, BCom (Accounting, Commercial Law, Economics) Victoria; Zinab Al-Khaleefa, BEngTech (Civil), WINTEC; **2020 scholars:** langku Thang, BHealth Science (Midwifery), AUT; Luna Arango, BA (English Lit & Public Policy) & LLB, Victoria; Mahtab Mahjor, BCom (Finance & Economics) Canterbury; Malarini Kukanenthiran, BSc (Physiology) Auckland; Mamata Dahal, BSc (Psychology) Victoria; Sumanti Chhetri, BNurs, UCOL; **2021 scholars:** Faduma Ismail, BBusiness (Finance), AUT; Gracy Tlumang, BPharm, Otago; Khadija Mire, BNurs, WINTEC; Jummanah Nahhas, BSc (Medicinal Chemistry) Auckland





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