

SIR ROBERT JONES

# REFUGEE DAUGHTERS' SCHOLARSHIP

2020



RJH



RASNZ  
Refugee health  
& wellbeing



# RJH

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

# RASNZ

RASNZ congratulates the 2020 Sir Robert Jones scholars. The scholarship was established by Sir Robert in 2015 to assist young women from refugee backgrounds to complete a university degree or qualification from an approved tertiary institution. This philanthropic gift presents an opportunity for young women who aspire to a tertiary qualification but who may be denied the opportunity because of their circumstances as former refugees. Tuition is paid in full through to degree attainment, subject to satisfactory examination results. Hostel accommodation is paid for the first two years of study if the student attends a tertiary institution outside their hometown. 94 scholarships have been awarded since its inception. RASNZ thanks Sir Robert for his vision for a New Zealand where all members of society have the chance to fulfill their educational dreams.



Many people give generously of their time to ensure the scholarship process runs smoothly. I thank Greg Loveridge, Caitlin Venus and Craig Parks from Robt. Jones Holdings for their support. I also thank the selection panels in Auckland and Wellington: Tracy Bowell University of Waikato, Sue Heggie AUT, Sara Kindon Victoria University, Vivienne Anderson University of Otago and Janie Loveridge, Robt. Jones Holdings for their wise advice and counsel. I acknowledge the partnerships between Robt. Jones Holdings and Victoria University, the University of Waikato, the Auckland University of Technology and the University of Otago. These institutions match the scholarships by 50% for students attending their universities, enabling Robt. Jones Holdings to offer more scholarships each year. It also provides a valuable link between RASNZ and these universities so that we can work together to provide the best possible support for the students.

This year we farewell Irena Madjar from her role as coordinator of the scholarship mentoring programme. Irena has given 5 years of dedicated voluntary service to support the girls through the ups and downs of university life. All who are involved with the programme have benefitted hugely from her wisdom and generosity. We are delighted that Susan Hirst, our Scholarship Coordinator, will take on responsibility for mentoring as part of her larger role. Susan not only provides emotional and practical support for scholars but also ensures the scholarship programme runs efficiently and effectively.

The stories in this booklet are inspiring. They provide an insight into the challenges faced by refugee families when they are forced to flee their homeland, leaving behind everything that is familiar and meaningful. Many of the young women have had limited formal education and are the first in their family to go on to higher education. They describe their determination to make the most of every opportunity, to make their families proud and to contribute to New Zealand society. RASNZ is extremely proud of these outstanding young women and we wish them every success.

Ann Hood, CEO RASNZ



# ASMA

My name is Asma and I came to New Zealand as a refugee in 2014.

My parents' families fled the war in Afghanistan when they were very young and they resettled in Iran, where I was born. Life for Afghan refugees in Iran was very difficult. They were unable to work, could not go to school as of right and they could not gain citizenship. We felt we had no

choice but to leave and we moved to Indonesia. We registered with UNHCR as refugees and were chosen to come to New Zealand after 2 years.

I understand the meaning of hard work and have learned how to overcome challenges in my personal and academic life. My parents moved to New Zealand in order to give us a proper education and better opportunities. As the oldest child, I am the first in our family to attend university.

The value of education is something that I have understood from a very young age. Neither of my parents had the opportunity to attend university. However, they made sure this was not the case for my sister and me. When I first came to New Zealand, I struggled to adjust to the education system here and it was difficult for me to understand the lessons in school because I had very basic English. However, I achieved many excellent grades in each year of NCEA. The desire to use this opportunity helped me to push through the challenges I faced. I tried my best to improve my English and achieve my goal of going to university to study a subject according to my interest.

I am so proud of my efforts and resolve to stay optimistic and to never give up. Now I am studying for a Bachelor of Health Science (Midwifery) at AUT. The Sir Robert Jones scholarship is incredible. It means I can pursue my tertiary education without constantly worrying about my family's financial issues. This creates a foundation for getting me closer to my career goals. I will continue to apply the same values and involvement in the community and same diligence to my university studies as I have to this point. Thank you to Sir Robert Jones for the opportunities he has given to refugee girls.

***"I understand the meaning of hard work"***  
***- Asma***



# DIMA

My name is Dima. I am 21 years old and originally from Iraq.

At the age of seven, my family and I were fortunate enough to escape Iraq when an ethnic conflict broke out. As the war began, dead bodies on the road became a daily occurrence. My parents, who are both educated professionals, did not think that my siblings and I would be safe growing up in an

unstable environment like Iraq, let alone be able to receive an education. My parents made the decision for us to migrate to Syria as refugees, hoping to give my siblings and I the life we would never have in our home country.

The safety of Syria was short-lived as the country began to experience its own conflict. In 2016, my family and I arrived in New Zealand as refugees. Because I lived most of my life in third world countries with substandard health services, my academic goal has always been to make a positive difference in people's health. New Zealand has opened up great opportunities for me that I previously never thought were possible. I enrolled for year 11 at Birkenhead College at the age of 18 as I needed to improve my English and gain university entrance. After 3 years of college, I gained my UE and had the required English level to enroll. I also took summer courses to further improve my English language skills. Last year, I moved to live in a residential college in Dunedin to study Health Science at Otago.

My first year of tertiary education was enjoyable, but also stressful due to the competitive environment in my course. Through all the stress and competition, I successfully completed the year with an A- average and was offered a place in the Bachelor of Dental Surgery.

The initial barriers I faced in a new country with a different culture have moulded me into a person who will persevere through any challenge and embrace every opportunity. The big move and change that happened to me and my family when we moved to New Zealand shaped us to be grateful, thankful and always try to give back. I personally consider myself a lucky person to be a recipient of this scholarship, as many people in my home country would sacrifice anything to have the chance of a good education. For this reason, I am extremely thankful to Sir Robert Jones. This will give me the opportunity to give back one day, as a healthcare worker, to my new home, New Zealand.

**"I consider myself a lucky person" - Dima**

# FANUS

My name is Fanus and I am from Eritrea.

I came to New Zealand from Sudan in 2016 with my mother and my sister. Being chosen as a recipient of the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship is a miracle for me. I have never received an opportunity like this before and I would like you to know that I am in this to finish it!



I have always valued and honored education and it has always been my focus. I firmly believe that education is the key to a brighter future, especially for women. Growing up in a third world country is never easy, but with the help of my parents I succeeded and I was doing well at school.

When I was a first-year nursing student in Sudan, my mother and my sister and I were accepted for resettlement in New Zealand. This was my parent's dream, to come to New Zealand to have a good education for me and my sister. Therefore, I left my studies in hope of a better and safer country with an advanced education system. When I arrived in New Zealand, I assumed that I could pick up nursing where I left off. However, I needed to complete some English courses first. I studied English and then I did a Nursing Foundation course.

This semester, I started my Bachelor of Nursing at UNITEC with the goal of becoming a registered nurse. The journey is not easy, but I am persevering with the image of success in my mind. Nursing is a rewarding career, focused on helping others and bringing comfort to those in need. I want to give back to New Zealand and provide for my family. I also want to be able to look back at my life and smile and know that I made the best of myself and my hard work paid off.

I sincerely thank Sir Robert Jones, and everyone involved in this scholarship, for giving young refugees an opportunity to make their dream come true.

**"I am in this to finish it!"  
- Fanus**

# FATIMAH

Tēnā koutou,  
Ko Arafat te maunga  
Nō Afghanistan ahau  
Kei Ōtepoti tōku kāinga  
Ko Fatimah tōku ingoa  
He tauira ahau  
Ki ngā tangata whenua o Aotearoa, Kei te mihi  
Nō reira,  
Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa



Like many others, my family fled war-torn Afghanistan in search of a safer and more stable place to call home. My parents, along with their two children (my two older siblings), fled to Malaysia, where I was born. They waited until we were finally accepted under the quota refugee programme in New Zealand, where we settled in Christchurch.

To say that the journey my parents took was difficult would be an understatement and I was too young to understand. Being a first-generation refugee New Zealander, you are faced with a variety of difficulties. My parents had to deal with a lot of stress, moving to a foreign place, away from everything that was familiar and therefore I had to grow up much faster than my peers. I became the translator for family members in various situations and I think perhaps I owe my passion for medicine to this. From attending doctor's appointments with my mother, to hospital appointments with my grandmother, my curiosity within the health sector began.

No matter what I've done, I've enjoyed utilising and developing the key characteristics vital for a career in the medical field: resilience in the face of obstacles, being friendly and approachable in leadership roles, problem-solving as a member of the school council and compassion and empathy towards the refugee background youth I tutored at Homework Club. I hope one day I am able to apply these skills as a clinician.

Completing Health Sciences First Year at the University of Otago has helped solidify my passion for a career in medicine. I have successfully gained entry into the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) programme and look forward to my journey ahead. Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini – my strength is not mine alone, but due to the strength of many.

**"Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini"  
- Fatimah**



# IANGKU

Mingalabar, my name is Iangku and I am from Chin State, Burma.

I was six when my family arrived in New Zealand as refugees in 2006. My father left us to go to work in Malaysia when I was 1 and my mother, with the help of my grandmother, raised me and my siblings and cousins during the country's oppression under the military regime.

Throughout my life, I have always been determined to study in the health science and medical area. I studied Health Science First Year at Otago University, which was not successful. However, being the first in my family to attend university, I persisted with my studies and continued with a Bachelor of Health Science (Midwifery) at AUT and I love it.

There is a lack of quality healthcare for my people in Chin State and this is one of the reasons that I chose to study midwifery. We are very family-orientated; Chin people have at least 3 to 4 children per family and women give birth without a midwife. I would love to teach my people the basic skills and knowledge of health and safety, for the woman and her child. I would also love to help women in New Zealand, to provide them with the best care during this important stage of life, during pregnancy, during and after delivery.

I am so grateful to God and Sir Robert Jones for this blessing. It is an honour and a privilege to be one of the students selected for the 2020 scholarship. It is a huge motivation for all of us to work harder and to repay our gratitude through success in our various fields of study. Being able to study with reduced stress over financial issues is a huge blessing for myself, my family and my community. I'm looking forward to more success in my study and to finally graduate. Thank you!

**"There is a lack of quality healthcare for my people  
...this is one of the reasons I chose to study midwifery"  
- Iangku**



# LOUISE

My family and I arrived in New Zealand as refugees on the 6th of November, 2009. My parents were forced to flee Burundi in 1993. They reached Tanzania on foot with my older sister, who was only 4 years old. There, they were given a home in the first refugee camp in Tanzania, Ikeza, where they felt sheltered and protected - but still, life was challenging each day.

After 3 years, my older brother was born. Then a hunger crisis struck the camp. Food and water became harder to find and my parents almost lost hope. They moved to Ngara, another large refugee camp in Tanzania. I was born there in 1999, followed by my 3 younger siblings. There were many problems, few resources and not much food at most times, but everyone was supportive of each other.

I vividly remember school shutting down when I just started in year 3. I was 6 years old and I didn't get a chance to complete that year. For 4 years there were no schools. All children were deprived of education and the next time I stepped into a classroom was in 2009 in New Zealand. My parents are amazing in the way they have demonstrated a positive outlook on life to me and my siblings and they continue to guide us. They lived in Tanzania for 15 years, waiting to migrate to New Zealand.

Now I am at AUT, striving to become a midwife. I want to be one of the next generation's healthcare professionals. I want to provide support and act as a voice for those whose voices are unheard. I want to be part of a future community that teaches courage and peace.

This scholarship encourages me to feel confident in my education and my future. I believe that I can make a difference in the world. Perhaps one day I might go back home to support my people in Burundi. I am sincerely grateful to Sir Robert Jones and RASNZ for this opportunity and I will do my best to achieve at a high level so you can all be proud of my efforts.

**"For four years, there were no schools"**  
**- Louise**

# LUNA

I am a fifth-year student at Victoria University of Wellington, studying towards a Bachelor of Laws conjoint with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in English Literature and Public Policy.

I was born in Medellin, Colombia. Most of my mother's immediate family, my mother and I were forced to leave Colombia when I was three years old. After escaping the conflict in Colombia, we took refuge in Quito, the capital city of Ecuador. However, I grew up travelling within Ecuador and between Ecuador and Peru. We moved countless times. My mother sought to find a place where she could find a more reliable source of income and gain some financial stability.

In Ecuador, as Colombian refugees, finding permanent employment was impossible. Life in Ecuador was in some ways more peaceful but as Colombians, we struggled. We faced racism on a daily basis and the inability to fully integrate into society. We were not welcomed with open arms. Often, we were attacked and told to return to our country.

My role in the family was that of caregiver to my three siblings while my mother worked. I only completed one full year of primary school. After that, I attended school sporadically. I was able to quickly catch up every time I returned but never had the chance to complete primary school. Returning to the classroom became steadily more difficult as I reached adolescence.

Through my love of books, I was able to find my passion for learning. Despite my lack of formal education, I made it to university. I am the first person in my family to attend university. This scholarship will allow me to continue and complete my studies, which is something that I will forever be grateful for. Education has the power to change a person and the course of their life. There is a lot that I hope to do in the future and this scholarship will allow me to reach those goals.



**"Education has the power to change a person and the course of their life."  
- Luna**



# MADIHA

My name is Madiha, but Maham is my preferred name because I like its meaning, which is "light," as in brightness.

I was born into a Hazara family and raised within a Hazara community. Hazaras are an ethnic group native to the region of Hazarajat in central Afghanistan. When war broke out in Afghanistan, a lot of Hazaras migrated to different parts of the world to seek refuge, but most fled to Pakistan where they became an ethnic minority living mostly in Quetta, Baluchistan province.

Unfortunately, even in Quetta, the genocide started. The reason for the genocide was simply our religious beliefs. Extremist religious groups claimed responsibility for the various attacks that were carried out. My father was in danger because of his active membership in the community and because of his work as a television producer and director. Death threats to him and his two friends started in 2007 and both of his friends were assassinated. In 2013, the casualties and attacks reached their peak and, having no other option, we left Pakistan.

We arrived in Indonesia after weeks of journeying through jungles and on boats. Unfortunately, refugees in Indonesia are not allowed to get education or work, so I lost five years of my life that I could have spent studying. Even though I did not get a formal education myself, I volunteered as a teacher in a community-based learning centre for refugees in Indonesia. Life in Indonesia was years of hopelessness, helplessness and despair. However, it passed and now I am in New Zealand. When I left Pakistan, I was a high school student, but I could not complete my education in Indonesia.

Now I am enrolled in a double major in Law and Political Science. The reason I decided to study law was to be able to make a difference in people's lives. I want to be that helping hand to the underprivileged because I know how it feels to be deprived of normal privileges. I hope to become a successful Human Rights Lawyer in the future.

**"It was years of hopelessness and helplessness...but it passed"  
- Madiha**

# MAHBOBA

My name is Mahboba and I am 25 years of age.

I was born and raised in Afghanistan under very difficult and traumatic circumstances. The war in my country meant I was orphaned at the age of 3. I had no-one to truly care for me and I had no formal schooling in Afghanistan.



I had to work from a young age, getting up at 3am to help prepare food and travelling in extreme weather conditions to sell the food at markets or deliver it to people's homes. I was badly treated and often went to bed hungry. While I dreamed of a better life in the future, education seemed like an impossible dream!

When I was 18-years old I fled across Afghanistan to Pakistan in a very poor condition. After 2 months, I applied for Refugee Status and was granted this 2 years later by the United Nations. I then spent nearly 2 years in two camps with very little food and no comfort.

Eventually, I was chosen to come to New Zealand with my young son. After a short time in the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, we were initially settled in Hamilton but moved to Auckland in 2017. I enrolled in English classes at Manukau Institute of Technology and life began to finally improve for me.

Although English classes have been a huge challenge, I have persevered and have passed levels 0 to 4 in 2 years. English is my fourth language. Now that I am safely in New Zealand, education is very important to me and the impossible dream that I had all those years ago has become a reality after all - especially now that I have been awarded the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship.

I am studying Level 5 English in semester one this year. After that, I would like to study the NZ Certificate in Study and Career Preparation - Police Studies, as I am determined to join the New Zealand Police Force in the future. Maybe after all my hardships and troubles, I might achieve my ambition to be fully-trained for a worthwhile career. I would indeed be very happy and finally content with my life.

**"I am determined to join the police force"**  
**- Anna**



# MAHTAB

My name is Mahtab. I was born and raised in the conservative, male-dominated society of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has been an active war zone for decades, where women are deprived of their basic human rights to education and more than half of the population lives in poverty. Despite all these challenges and hardships, my parents did their best for my siblings and I to go to school. My parents

never had a chance to do any tertiary education but always supported us to fulfill our dreams.

My family, like many other Afghans, left the country for a better future and a safe life. We resettled in New Zealand last year. Starting life in a new country with new people was exciting, beautiful, and peaceful, but it has its own challenges as well. It was really hard for all of us to adjust to a new environment, especially for my parents who cannot speak English. This language barrier has made it hard for them to get jobs and become involved socially in the community.

Being a girl in Afghanistan has its challenges. All those gender stereotypes in society make it difficult for women to grow, but I made my way into one of the private universities in Afghanistan. When we sought refuge in New Zealand, I was not confident that I could continue my studies. But my enthusiasm and determination to play a useful role in the community has encouraged me not to give up on my academic and career goals.

I am now enrolled in Bachelor of Commerce at University of Canterbury (UC). In my first semester, I found the education system to be totally different from Afghanistan. UC has a big and diverse community with many international standards. I found it quite challenging, but I believe it is the best place for growth, raising my capacity for learning about this exciting and troubling world. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I would like to complete my Master's degree and then a PhD.

I am determined to be a person who makes an impact in the future and this scholarship will assist me in achieving my goals. I want to be an example for other girls whose ability and potential is undervalued. Education for girls is an important factor in growing a prosperous community and bringing a positive change in all of our lives.

**"I want to be an example for other girls whose ability and potential is undervalued"**  
- Mahtab

# MALARINI

My name is Malarini and I was born in Sri Lanka.

My family was one of the many Sri Lankan Tamil families who fled from the civil war that went on for 30 years. We immigrated to New Zealand grasping onto the hope of building a new future on one hand, but also worried and uncertain on the other

hand. We were moving into a foreign, unfamiliar place.

However, the friendly and supportive environment of New Zealand made us feel welcome and safe. Every year, my family commemorates those who lost their lives during the Sri Lankan civil war; to remember the events and sacrifices of our people. We are fortunate to have been able to flee our war-torn country, but we must not forget our history, which has truly shaped our identity today.

My education is something that I will always cherish. Being the first in my family to attend university, I am grateful to be given an opportunity that my parents did not have; to pursue my passion and to choose my desired career path.

I am currently studying Bachelor of Science (Physiology) at the University of Auckland with the hopes of applying to the Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery through the postgraduate pathway. I have always wanted to pursue medicine, as it is something that aligns with my values of caring for people and my love for learning about human anatomy.

The Sir Robert Jones Scholarship will be of immense help, allowing me to focus on my dream of working in the medical field without any financial burden. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the scholarship committee and Sir Robert Jones, as this scholarship will not only support me financially but has motivated me to also give back to the New Zealand community and to the war-torn country I left behind.

I hope that one day I will be able to support and motivate other students in achieving their goals just as you have helped me.



**"...we must not forget our history, which has shaped our identity today."  
- Malarini**



# MAMATA

My name is Mamata and I am currently studying for a Bachelor of Science in Psychology at Victoria University of Wellington.

I came to New Zealand in 2010 at the age of 11 with my parents and two younger siblings. My parents were evicted from their homeland of Bhutan in 1992; they had to leave the country overnight and sought asylum in a refugee camp in Nepal for 18 years.

Like the rest of the survivors, my parents were living with anxiety and trauma. They spent their prime years in the refugee camp, clustered together under a plastic roof. My dad was offered a bilateral scholarship from the New Zealand government to study accounting in 1990. However, his passport, visa and air tickets were confiscated by the Bhutanese government a week before he was supposed to leave.

Resettling in New Zealand has been a dream come true, especially for my dad. I am thankful that I arrived in New Zealand at a very young age, as I grew up making good friends who helped me adapt to the new environment. However, being a former refugee and growing up in a new country meant learning to find a balance between two cultures. As a young person facing these challenges, it's been hard to find professional people who understand the cultural differences I faced growing up in two different countries. I found a communication gap when it came to discussing the cultural shock, identity crisis, and my parents' perspectives and expectations of how I should be.

This experience has led me to study Psychology, because I would like to help former refugees deal with their anxiety and trauma and provide care for their mental health. Mental health is not talked about in our community, even though many people still suffer fear and anxiety as a result of past trauma. I would like to work with different ethnic groups and be someone who is able to empathise with their situation and guide them through it. I hope that I can further my studies and do a masters' degree in clinical psychology. I want to provide a safe space for people to open up, acknowledge their feelings and learn to cope, without it being a taboo subject. I cannot express how grateful I am for this scholarship as it has helped me and my family ease our financial hardship.

**"My parents spent their prime years in a refugee camp"  
- Mamata**

# NAMITA

Kia ora, I am Namita and I am from a Bhutanese refugee camp in Nepal. I moved to New Zealand in 2015 with my family and I am a first-year nursing student at Universal College of Learning (UCOL), Palmerston North.

My parents left Bhutan in 1980 due to the ethnic tension prevailing there. The situation in Bhutan was so bad that people found speaking Nepali were arrested, tortured, given life sentences and even killed. This led my family to flee and we lived in a Bhutanese refugee camp for more than 20 years.

My parents aren't well-educated but they do understand the importance of education. They knew that a refugee camp would not provide my brother and I with a good education or a good future. Hence, in 2015, my parents chose New Zealand as our resettlement country. One of the reasons my father chose New Zealand was the education system here. I've always been interested in the medical field. I witnessed a lot of people dying due to lack of medical facilities in the refugee camp and I knew that, by becoming a nurse, I could help my community, my people and my family.

Coming to New Zealand was a privilege because I could turn my dream into a reality. My early days here were difficult; I was afraid to communicate with people because of my limited English skills. But slowly, I overcame the fears and have become a confident person who can communicate with anyone. My goal is to acquire a nursing degree and become a competent registered nurse so that I can provide comprehensive care to sick and needy people.

Someday, I would like to travel the world and help refugees as a health practitioner. I am grateful for this scholarship because it enables me to overcome financial difficulties and to focus on my studies. This scholarship will help me encourage other women in my community to get their tertiary education so that they can be self-reliant, financially independent and a help to their families. I would like to be an example to the younger generation of refugee background people and encourage them to contribute to this country, which has given us the opportunity of a new life. Thank you for your investment in my life. I will do all I can to succeed.



**"This scholarship will help me to encourage other women in my community to get their tertiary education"**  
-Namita



# NOELLA

My name is Noella and I feel honoured to be amongst these resilient young women fortunate enough to receive the Sir Robert Jones' Scholarship.

My story begins before I was born. Due to the genocide in Rwanda, my parents fled to Malawi. That's where I was born, along with my five siblings. My parents spent over a decade in

Malawi but were never able to get resident status. We were born and raised with refugee status, never truly knowing why we were different and not accepted by the people of Malawi.

Our story changed in 2007 when New Zealand invited us to take refuge and make this our new home. This meant new beginnings, new opportunities and, most importantly, security. I remember arriving at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, where I noticed how welcoming and hospitable people were. Mangere felt like paradise, I felt so protected and safe; my parents were the happiest I had ever seen them. I was shielded at Mangere as I was surrounded by others who had similar backgrounds to myself. We were all just thankful to be in a safe place.

It wasn't until we left Mangere for Wellington that I had to dive into New Zealand society. It was not easy at first because of the language barrier. Most people could not relate to my experiences, but I adapted.

I value education and that is the path I have chosen to fulfill my hopes for the future. I am currently a student at Victoria University completing a conjoint Bachelor's degree in Law and Arts - majoring in Law, Economics and International Relations. I am passionate about my studies and hope to one day complete a master's degree.

Having a refugee background, I know all too well about inequality. That's why I want to make a difference in the lives of people who have similar backgrounds to me, as well as others that are less fortunate in terms of the opportunity to better their lives. Who I am is strongly influenced by my family, my Rwandan heritage and my journey to New Zealand as a refugee. My hope is for more people to share their stories and for us to continue to empower one another.

**"Most people could not relate to my experiences, but I adapted"**  
**- Noella**



# SARA

My name is Sara and I was born in Pakistan.

My parents were born in Afghanistan, but fled to Pakistan when the war broke out. They were only young and they had to work to help their families survive. Pakistan was also in a state of political unrest. There was a lack of law and order and my parents faced many struggles.

The importance of education for women is obvious but, because of street crime in Pakistan, it was hard for girls to get to school safely, so we did not have much education and neither of my parents had the opportunity to attend school or university.

We came to New Zealand in 2015. I found studying in New Zealand so different to Karachi and I felt safe attending school here. I started at Hamilton Girls' High School when I was 15 and I graduated in 2018. My family made many sacrifices to allow me to focus on education in New Zealand. I now have the opportunity to become the first person in my family to attend university and it has become my responsibility to teach what I can to my parents.

I'm studying a Bachelor of Law with a second major in Public Relations at the University of Waikato. I have chosen Law because it will give me a chance to help others. Becoming a lawyer will help me to take a stand for people who are being persecuted. I want to help my clients find solutions that will enable them to find freedom and the ability to move forward with their lives. My long-term goal is to help support my family in our new life here in New Zealand. Being awarded a Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship is a huge financial help towards achieving my goals. Our family has not lived in New Zealand for long enough yet to be able to gain employment and save money for study or for our future. I was very happy and appreciative to learn that I was selected as a scholarship recipient. Now I can focus on my studies and work hard to be successful.

As a recipient of the 2020 Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship, I wanted to thank you for awarding me this scholarship. I am appreciative of your support of my education.

**"It was hard for girls to get to school safely"**  
**- Sara**

# SUMANTI

Kia ora, my name is Sumanti.

My parents were born in Bhutan, a beautiful country in the lap of the Himalayas. Sadly, there is immense oppression of ethnic minorities and human rights violations in Bhutan, with little knowledge of it in the outside world.

Ethnic Nepali people have been oppressed for decades in Bhutan. The majority of these people have always been subsistence farmers, working in the fields to sustain themselves, with little understanding of their basic human rights.

After the state-sponsored cleansing of ethnic Nepali people in 1992, my parents fled Bhutan to take refuge in Nepal, along with 100,000 other people. They lived in refugee camps for around 20 years. I was born in a refugee camp and spent 14 years of bleak existence, with limited access to education and healthcare.

In 2011, I came to New Zealand with my family as part of the UNHCR re-settlement programme. We came with a bundle of belongings and moved to a small town called Feilding. Initially, I was fearful of the changes and the unknown that was ahead of me. I studied hard and endeavored to learn the norms of New Zealand, as they were very different to what I was used to.

After high school, I studied a foundation course at the Universal College of Learning (UCOL) in Palmerston North. To my surprise I got accepted to study Nursing - something that I never expected to achieve, coming from a place where there was no hope of education. Nursing was just a distant dream.

Suddenly, it feels like that dream is within my grasp. Like many others in our community, I will be the first in my family and generation to have a degree. After I graduate, I want to be able to help the New Zealand community as a Registered Nurse and serve people of this great country who have welcomed us into their home. I am very appreciative of this scholarship and thankful that this has not only lessened the financial burden on me, but also shown me that there are people who believe in daughters of illiterate farmers and what we are capable of.

**"Suddenly, it feels like my dream is within my grasp"**  
**- Sumanti**





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