

DAFI | 2024 Annual Report

A Refugee Higher Education
Scholarship Programme

CHANGING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATING
ONE REFUGEE AT A TIME.



THE GREATEST GIFT TO
A REFUGEE IS EDUCATION
THROUGH THAT, THEY ARE
GRANTED WINGS TO FLY
AND DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

SARAH. KOMBASA.

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

The drafters would like to acknowledge and extend their thanks to colleagues in regional bureaus and country offices, as well as partners and DAFI students and alumni worldwide, all of whom provided essential contributions and reflections to this report.

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

Cover feature photo: South Africa. Sarah is a DAFI graduate of Development Studies and Anthropology from the University of Johannesburg. © UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



FOREWORD

The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), UNHCR's flagship higher education programme, has shown what is possible when refugee youth are given the chance to pursue their ambitions and dreams through higher education, alongside their host community peers. Thousands of refugee students, many of whom are the first in their families to access post-secondary education, are now coders, advocates, engineers, entrepreneurs, teachers, researchers, nurses and leaders. From Afghanistan to Zambia, in refugee camps and universities, these students have gone on to build businesses, mentor younger generations, participate in local development, work in companies, shape reconstruction policy, and build more inclusive economies and societies. Each student and each education is indispensable to building a truly sustainable response to humanitarian crises.

Access to higher education and training for refugees is not just about earning a qualification. It is a pathway for transformation, allowing refugee youth to build their own better futures, express themselves and their ideas, shape their vision beyond day-to-day struggles, and prepare to contribute to local and global development goals.

Without access to quality education and access to work, refugee youth are often left on the margins – excluded from decision-making, economic participation and social contribution. Marginalization fuels cycles of poverty and frustration, and in fragile contexts, can exacerbate tensions and instability. Conversely, investing in refugee youth through education and learning-to-earning pathways contributes to short-term stability and self-reliance, as well as to long-term peacebuilding by addressing root causes of conflict such as inequality, unemployment and lack of opportunity. Through education, refugees become agents of change rather than recipients of aid.

DAFI stands as a unique beacon of hope. It provides thousands of young refugees with the opportunity to become independent and to take their future into their own hands.

The Global Compact on Refugees explicitly recognizes the potential of refugees. It calls for their inclusion in national systems and for greater access to education and employment opportunities. As funding challenges intensify and global displacement becomes increasingly protracted, the need for solutions that deliver both individual and systemic impact has never been more urgent. Higher education does just that. It supports pathways to self-reliance, enhances protection outcomes and builds the capacity of future generations to lead change.

Today, more than ever, our commitment to refugee higher education must be matched by resources, partnerships and political will. Through the DAFI programme, and in collaboration with national governments, academic institutions, civil society, the private sector and refugees themselves, we are working to expand access, improve equity and reach the target of 15 per cent of refugee youth enrolled in higher education by 2030.

Filippo Grandi,
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

SWITZERLAND. UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, addresses the final plenary of the 2025 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways.

© UNHCR/Jose Cendon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its founding 33 years ago in 1992, the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (Deutsche Akademische Flüchtlingsinitiative Albert Einstein, DAFI) scholarship programme has supported over 27,200 students in 59 countries in their pursuit of higher education. The DAFI programme remains the gold standard for higher education programmes for refugees and the cornerstone of the 15by30 roadmap (the goal to achieve 15 per cent enrolment of refugees in higher education by 2030). DAFI continues to transform the lives of tens of thousands of scholars and alumni, their families and their communities each year thanks to the long-standing commitment of the Government of Germany, as well as funding from the Government of Denmark and private partners and foundations. Furthermore, the Aiming Higher campaign – UNHCR's global fundraising campaign for tertiary education – raised \$7.4 million to directly fund scholarships for refugee youth in 2024, contributing to a total of over \$34 million since the start of the campaign in 2021.

However, for the first time since 2020, there was a decrease in the number of DAFI scholars. There was a total of 7,890 DAFI scholars in 2024, compared to 9,312 scholars supported in 2023 (the highest number of DAFI scholarships in a single year since the programme began). The only other year that reported a decline in the number of DAFI scholars supported was 2020, during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This decrease is the result of shifting international humanitarian and development priorities that have significantly impaired capacity to tackle global forced displacement crises. Worldwide, over four

million refugees are aged 18 to 24 (approximately 14 per cent of the global refugee population) and demand for higher education continues to grow.¹ In 2024, the DAFI programme received nearly 5,000 applications for just 879 places. With less than 20 per cent of those who applied receiving a scholarship, increasing opportunities is critical to enable thousands more refugee youth to access the vital benefits of higher education.

In 2024, the 7,890 refugee students enrolled on DAFI scholarships were from 54 countries of origin and studied in 58 different countries of asylum. For the first time, women made up 45 per cent of scholars (an increase from 42 per cent in 2023). This notable advance towards gender parity reflects dedicated recruitment and admissions efforts – over 60 per cent of students newly issued DAFI scholarships in 2024 were women (compared to just 40 per cent in 2023). It is also the result of intentional steps taken by DAFI country programmes and community outreach efforts led by women in the DAFI programme, particularly in countries with the largest historical gender divides in enrolment.

For example, Ethiopia achieved a 14 per cent increase in female enrolment and over three quarters of newly admitted scholars in 2024 were women. UNHCR and the implementation partner in Ethiopia established an outreach and academic tutoring programme in eight secondary schools to support female students to graduate from high school. Through this programme, financial aid is also provided to women in secondary school to support costs of sanitary and school supplies. This initiative helps to ensure that more young women are eligible to proceed to higher education.

The DAFI programme in Pakistan includes support for a bridging programme, which focuses on enabling girls to complete their secondary education and pursue higher education. Other DAFI programmes, particularly those in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes (EHAGL) region, are working closely with women in the DAFI programme to conduct outreach with families and in secondary schools. These initiatives promote the enrolment of women in higher education and are ramping up targeted efforts to equip women with the market-relevant and technical skills needed to pursue livelihoods and sustainable futures once they graduate.

Last year's annual DAFI report captured the increased focus of UNHCR and partners on preparing scholars for postgraduate opportunities within often challenging contexts. In most countries where the DAFI programme operates, restrictions on the right to work mean that even where policies may be inclusive, refugees continue to face unique, amplified restrictions on employment documentation and permit requirements, the right to open a bank account and the right to register a business.²

In this year's report, regional snapshots and stories from students and alumni hone in on the proactive, student informed and context relevant steps UNHCR and partners are taking to optimize the long-term impact of DAFI scholarships.

Examples include:

- Identifying and developing in-demand skills.
- An increased focus on practical work-based learning and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- Preparing students with context-relevant tools for the job-search process of today.
- Cultivating partnerships with local businesses and the private sector to carve out pathways to internships and employment.
- Conducting advocacy with government ministries to build more inclusive education systems.

Furthermore, DAFI scholars have cemented their seat at the table as advocates and speakers in local, regional and international fora. They also provide guidance to their peers and younger students to help them to succeed in higher education and beyond.

However, there remains a great deal still to learn about what happens after students graduate from the DAFI programme and its long-term impacts. This mirrors the larger knowledge gap which higher education stakeholders around the world have collectively identified - what is the impact of investing in higher education specifically for refugees on local and national development, individual and community self-reliance, prospects for return, the sustainable development goals and more? UNHCR will continue to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of short and long-term outcomes of the DAFI programme, including via student surveying and investing in research partnerships. These efforts, alongside a process of continuing to refine the DAFI programme to align with the context where it operates, will be the focus of UNHCR's strategy to ensure the DAFI programme not only continues to reach as many young refugees as possible, but that it remains at the forefront of sustainable responses to humanitarian crises.

¹ UNHCR, "Refugee education: Five years on from the launch of the 2030 refugee education strategy" (Copenhagen 2024). Available from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-education-report-2024-refugee-education-five-years-launch-2030-refugee-education>.

² UNHCR, "DAFI Annual Report 2023" (Copenhagen 2024). Available from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/dafi-annual-report-2023>.



TÜRKIYE. DAFI student from Kobani, Syria, studying nursing at Gaziantep University.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

“

With more support, we can have more opportunities.”

When Roshin arrived in Türkiye from Kobani, Syria, in 2015, she found herself facing a world where she didn't speak the language and felt the weight of discrimination. But she was determined to prove herself.

“I wanted to break down prejudices,” she says. Kurdish is her mother tongue, but she spent two years in an Arabic-speaking school before moving to a Turkish school. She worked tirelessly, asking questions, reading constantly and earning top marks. By ninth grade, she had the highest score in her school – 98 per cent. “The first five students were Syrians. We proved we could be just as good, if not better.”

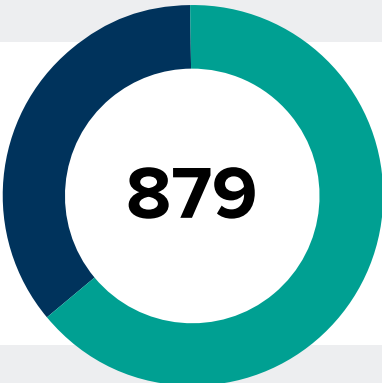
Roshin dreamed of becoming a brain surgeon, but medical school was too expensive. Instead, she chose nursing, starting at Gaziantep University in 2021. When she secured a DAFI scholarship, it lifted a huge financial burden. In her words, “With more support, we can have more opportunities.”

She wishes to specialize in psychiatry or psychology. Roshin says, “Mental health is a field that is more and more needed. Only human beings can understand other human beings. In other words, only humanity can heal humanity.”

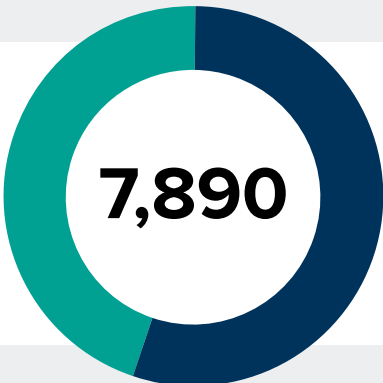
During the 2023 earthquake, Roshin used her nursing skills to help at a local clinic, realizing how much more there was to learn. Next, she hopes to further her education in the Netherlands and, continuing to demonstrate her ambition and determination to help others, Roshin is already learning Dutch.

Global DAFI Snapshot | 2024

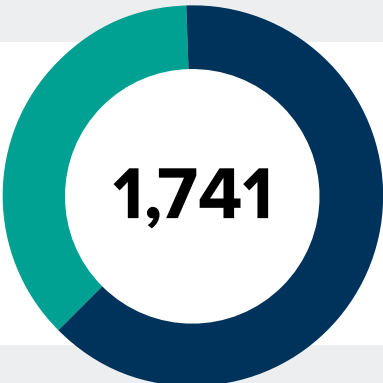
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



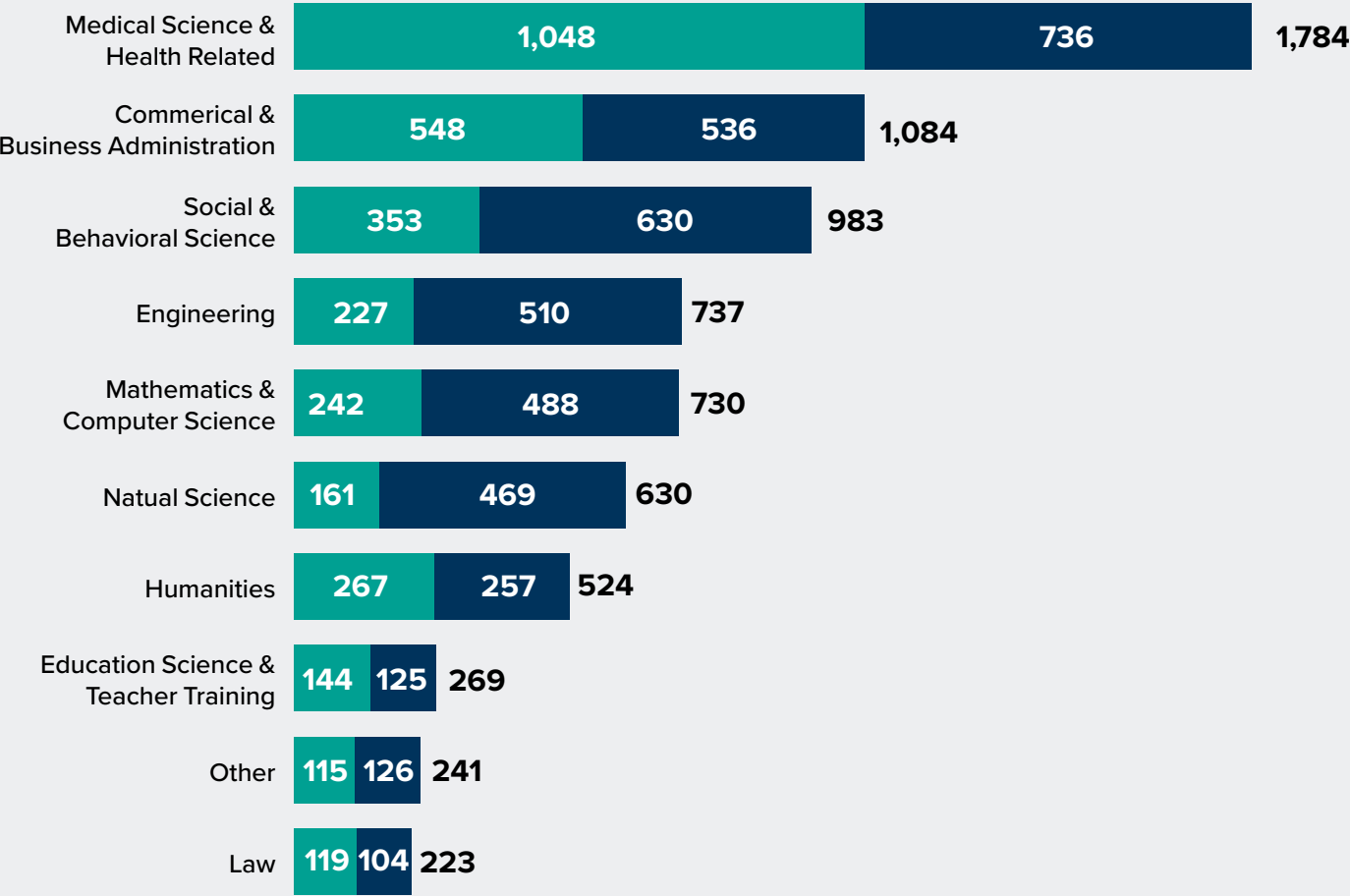
TOTAL STUDENTS



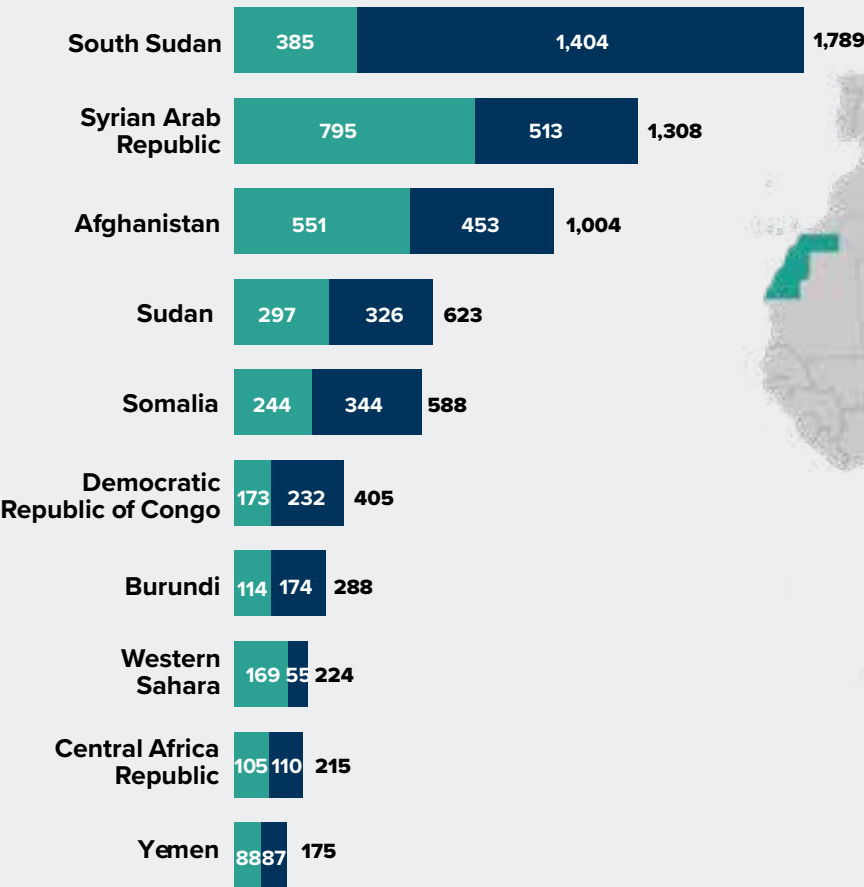
GRADUATES



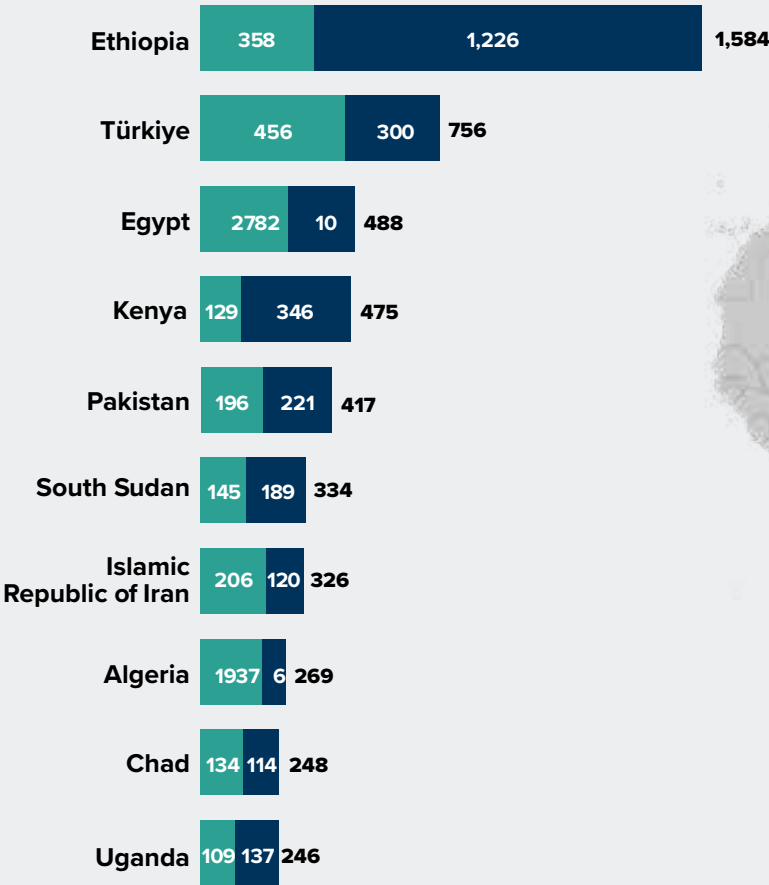
TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY | DAFI SCHOLARS



TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN | DAFI SCHOLARS



TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF STUDY | DAFI SCHOLARS



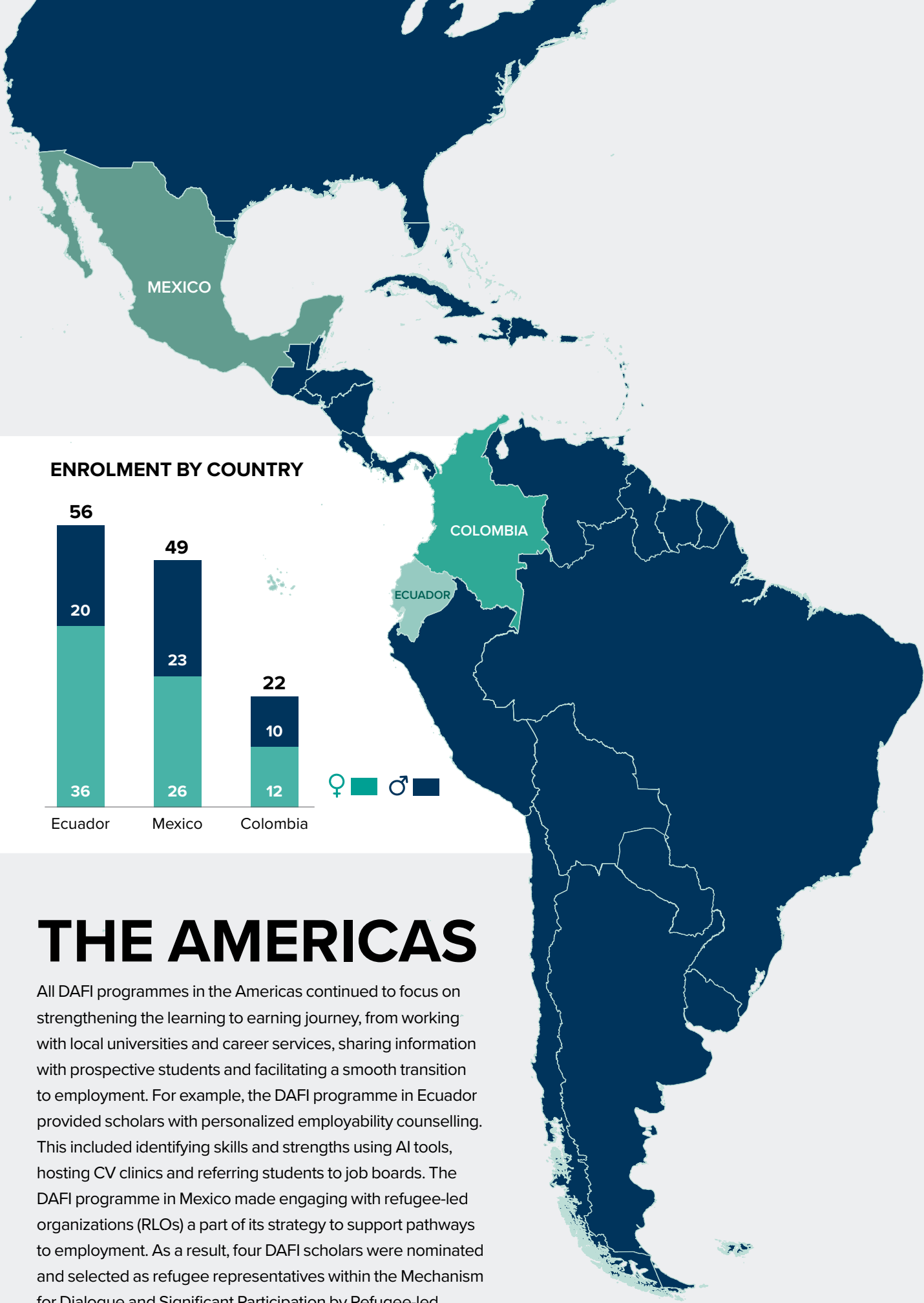
La educación es un
camino que me
permite triunfar.

EDUCATION IS A PATH
WHICH HELPS ME THRIVE.

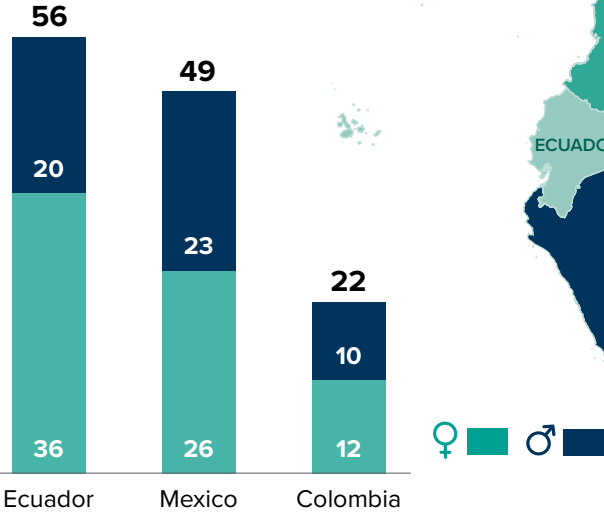
— Katherine, Mexico

MEXICO. DAFI scholar from Honduras
studies chemistry in Tapachula.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



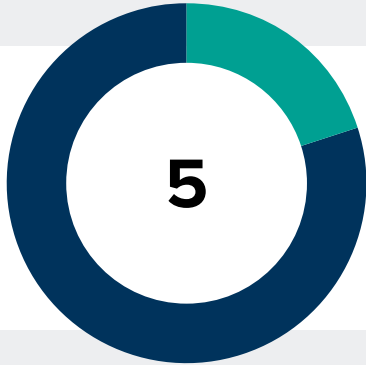
ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY



THE AMERICAS

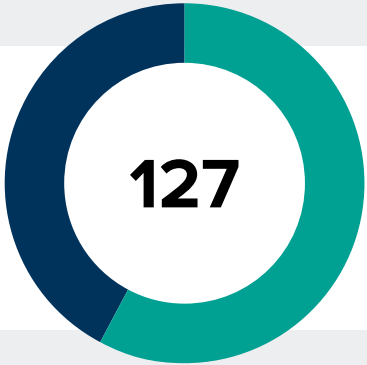
All DAFI programmes in the Americas continued to focus on strengthening the learning to earning journey, from working with local universities and career services, sharing information with prospective students and facilitating a smooth transition to employment. For example, the DAFI programme in Ecuador provided scholars with personalized employability counselling. This included identifying skills and strengths using AI tools, hosting CV clinics and referring students to job boards. The DAFI programme in Mexico made engaging with refugee-led organizations (RLOs) a part of its strategy to support pathways to employment. As a result, four DAFI scholars were nominated and selected as refugee representatives within the Mechanism for Dialogue and Significant Participation by Refugee-led Organizations (MERLOS).

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



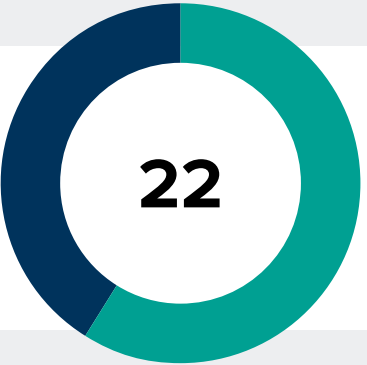
♂ 80% ♀ 20%
Behavioural

TOTAL STUDENTS



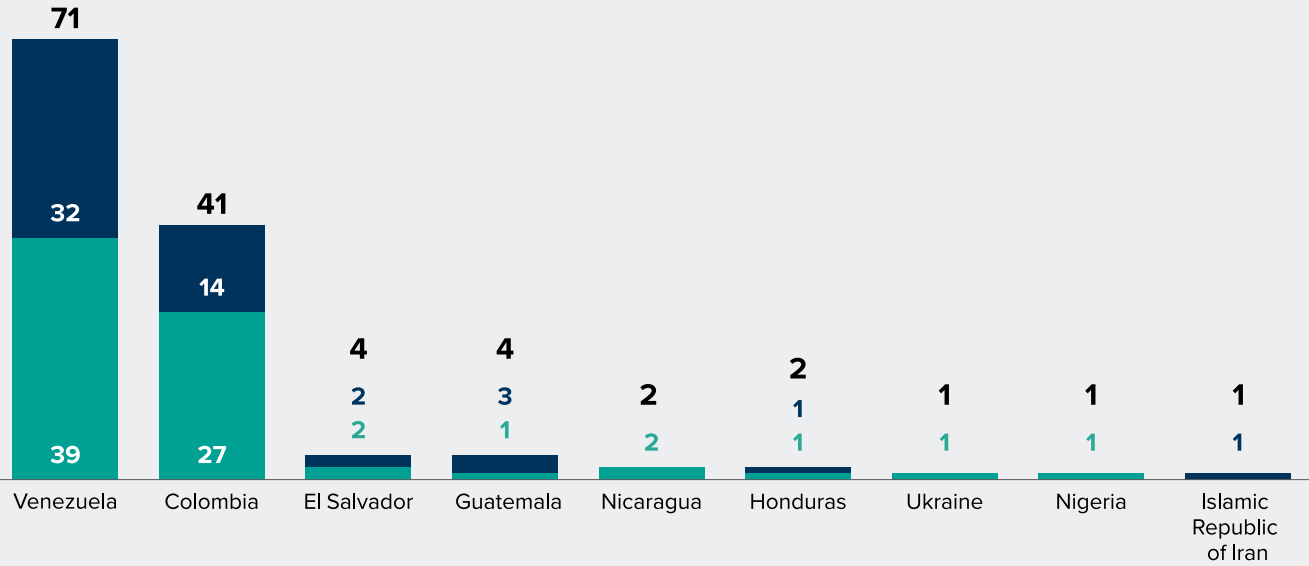
♂ 42% ♀ 58%

GRADUATES

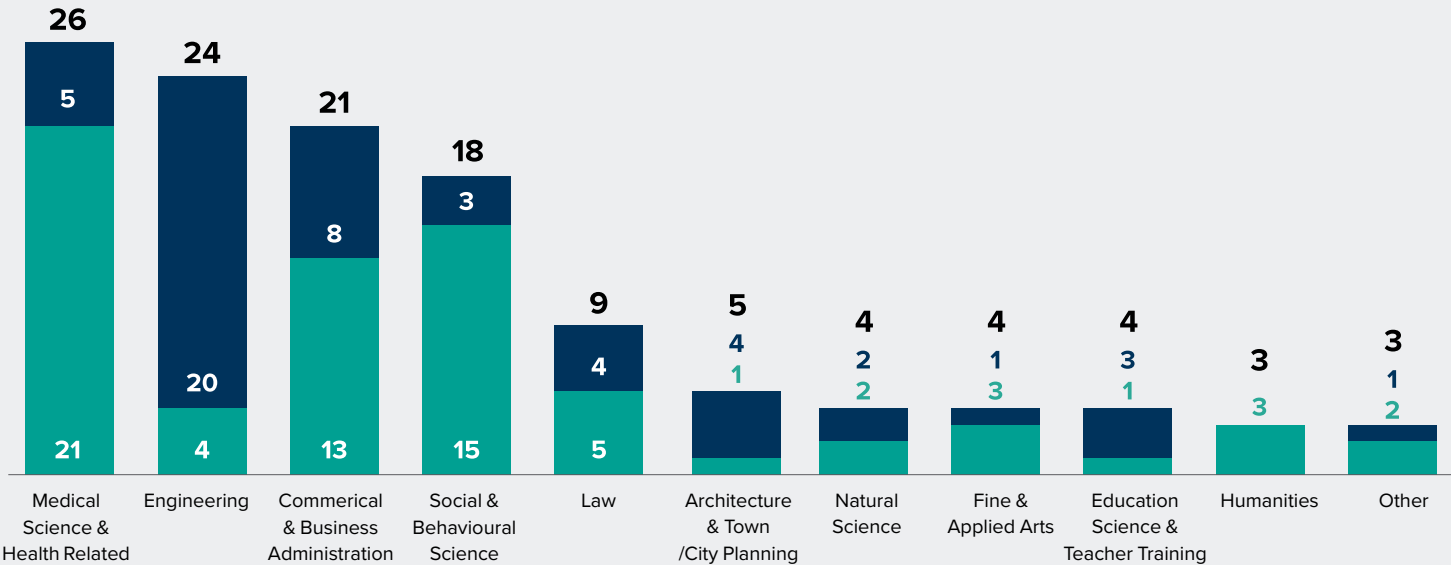


♂ 41% ♀ 59%

TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY



“Music is a
universal language.”

”

From the age of 12, Sayd studied in ‘El Sistema’, formally known as the Foundation for the National Network of Youth and Children Orchestras of Venezuela.

The school is committed to promoting music as the primary route to social and intellectual transformation. The founder – Maestro Anibal Antonio Abreu – was known to say, “Someone who picks up an instrument will never pick up a gun”.

This is where Sayd fell in love with music. He explains, “I found it and it found me in a way. I saw so many possibilities, so many opportunities. Music is a universal language.” He eventually achieved semi-professional status and was playing in an orchestra while teaching as well. However, the situation in Venezuela deteriorated rapidly and Sayd had no choice but to leave the country. “It was very unstable. I could not pursue my objectives nor my dreams. In the end, I was just surviving, not really living.”

“My mother is really the one who encouraged me to study and to pursue my dreams. She used to tell me the words of Simon Bolivar, who said “A man without education is an incomplete being”.”

He arrived in Mexico alone, with only his suitcase and his violin. Almost immediately, he researched ways to resume his studies. He learned about the Faculty of Music at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), spoke with students and met Savarthasiddh Uribe Moreno, who oversees violin studies at UNAM. Moreno became a mentor to Sayd, helping him to prepare for his audition, and Sayd was admitted.

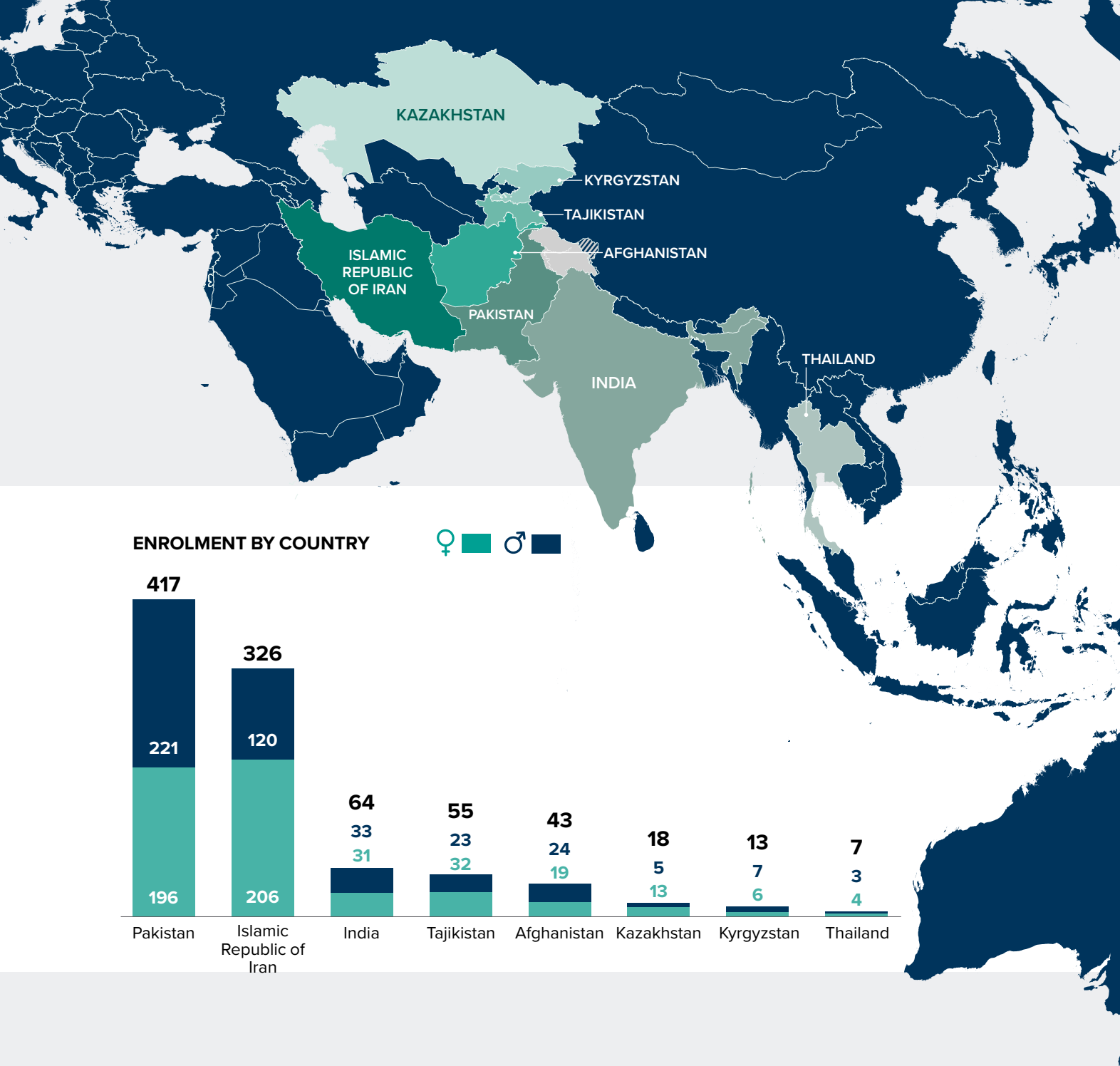
Once Sayd started his degree programme, receiving the DAFI scholarship gave him “the support and tranquillity I need to be able to concentrate on my studies and dedicate time to my instrument.” Without the support of DAFI, he would not have been able to continue his studies and pursue his dream of becoming a professional musician.

“I really could not see myself doing anything else than music. Many of my friends are working in fields they do not like and did not get the same opportunities as I did. They think they have missed their chance. But I tell them: “Look at me: I was just like you, but I pushed through and made it in the end. You have to keep believing in yourself and keep fighting”.”

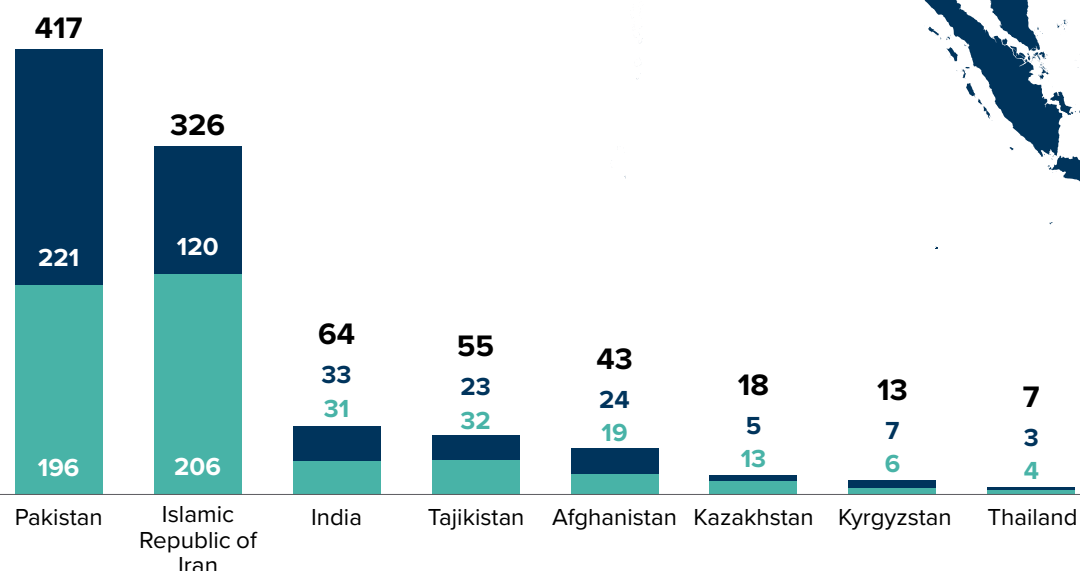


MEXICO. DAFI student from Venezuela, studying music at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico City.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



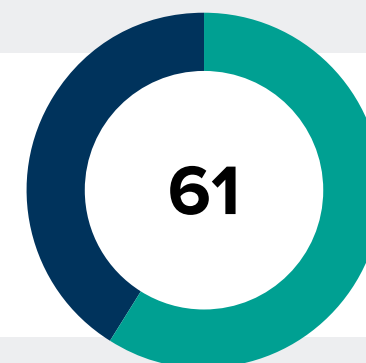
ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY



ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

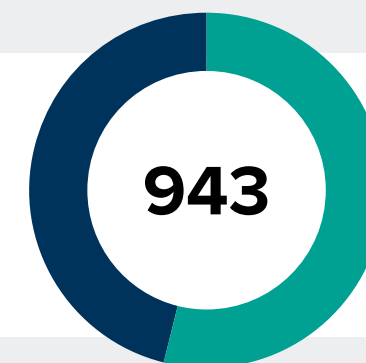
In the Asia and Pacific region, thanks to a dedicated focus among country teams to strive for gender parity, over half of the region's DAFI scholars in 2024 were women (54 per cent). Community-based outreach efforts in India, Pakistan and Tajikistan, including with families, women's groups and youth groups, promoted the importance of women's participation in higher education. UNHCR country teams also focused on career readiness, developing scholars' in-demand skills and facilitating internship opportunities. In Kyrgyzstan, DAFI scholars developed communication and critical thinking skills as members of a debate club and actively participated in global speaking engagements. In Kazakhstan, DAFI scholars organized a summer camp at KazNU university for teenagers to develop their leadership, entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills. There is also a growing regional investment in work-based learning and TVET. For example, in India, UNHCR colleagues conducted a mapping of TVET institutes to improve information and encourage refugee scholars to enrol in TVET programmes and courses.

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



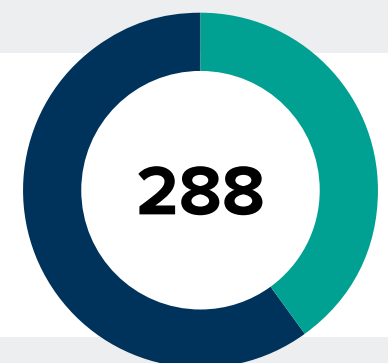
♂ 41% ♀ 59%

TOTAL STUDENTS



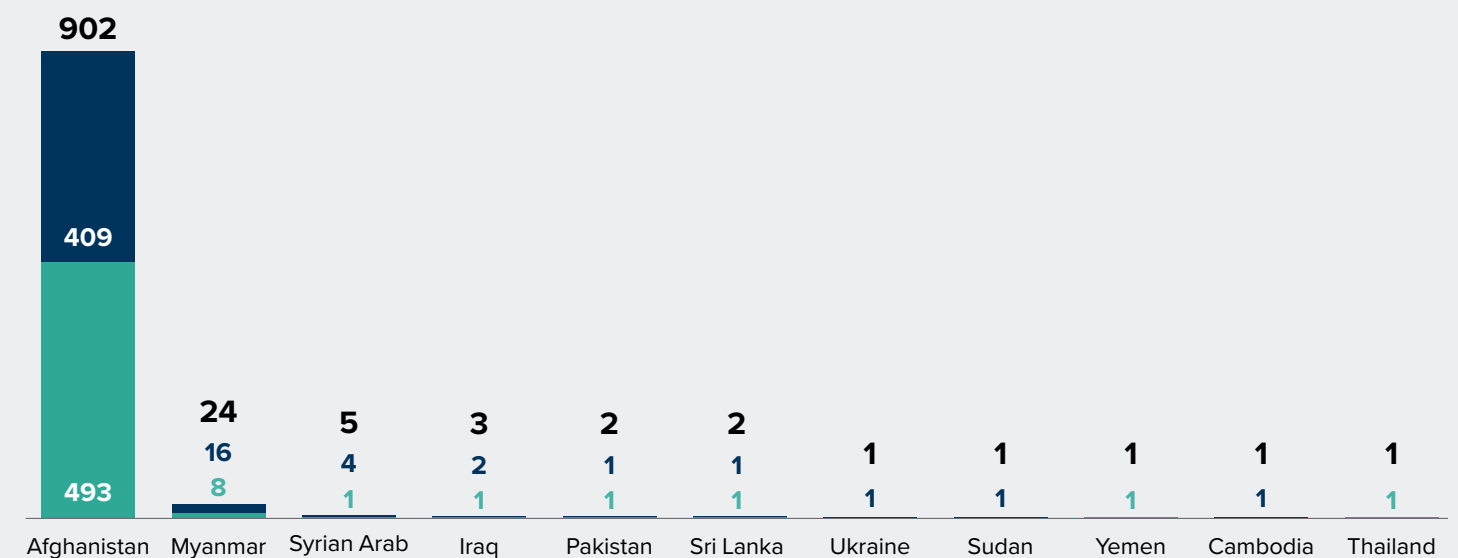
♂ 46% ♀ 54%

GRADUATES

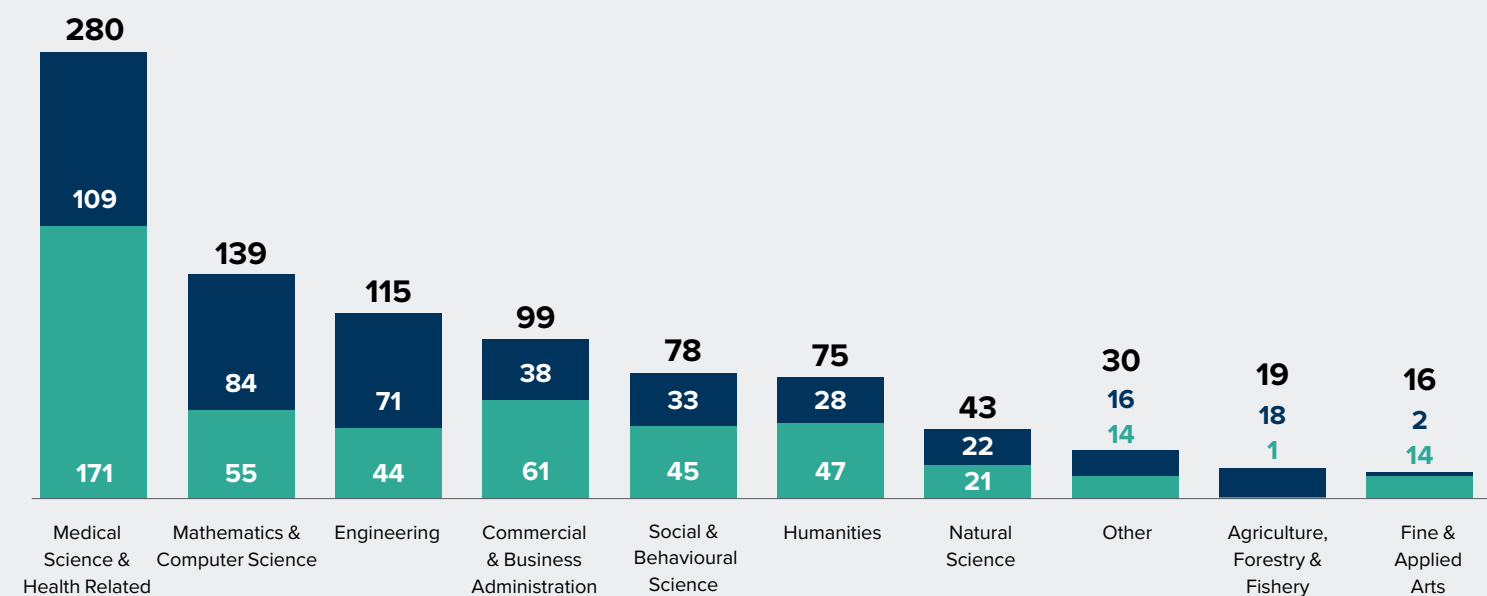


♂ 60% ♀ 40%

TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY





“

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

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

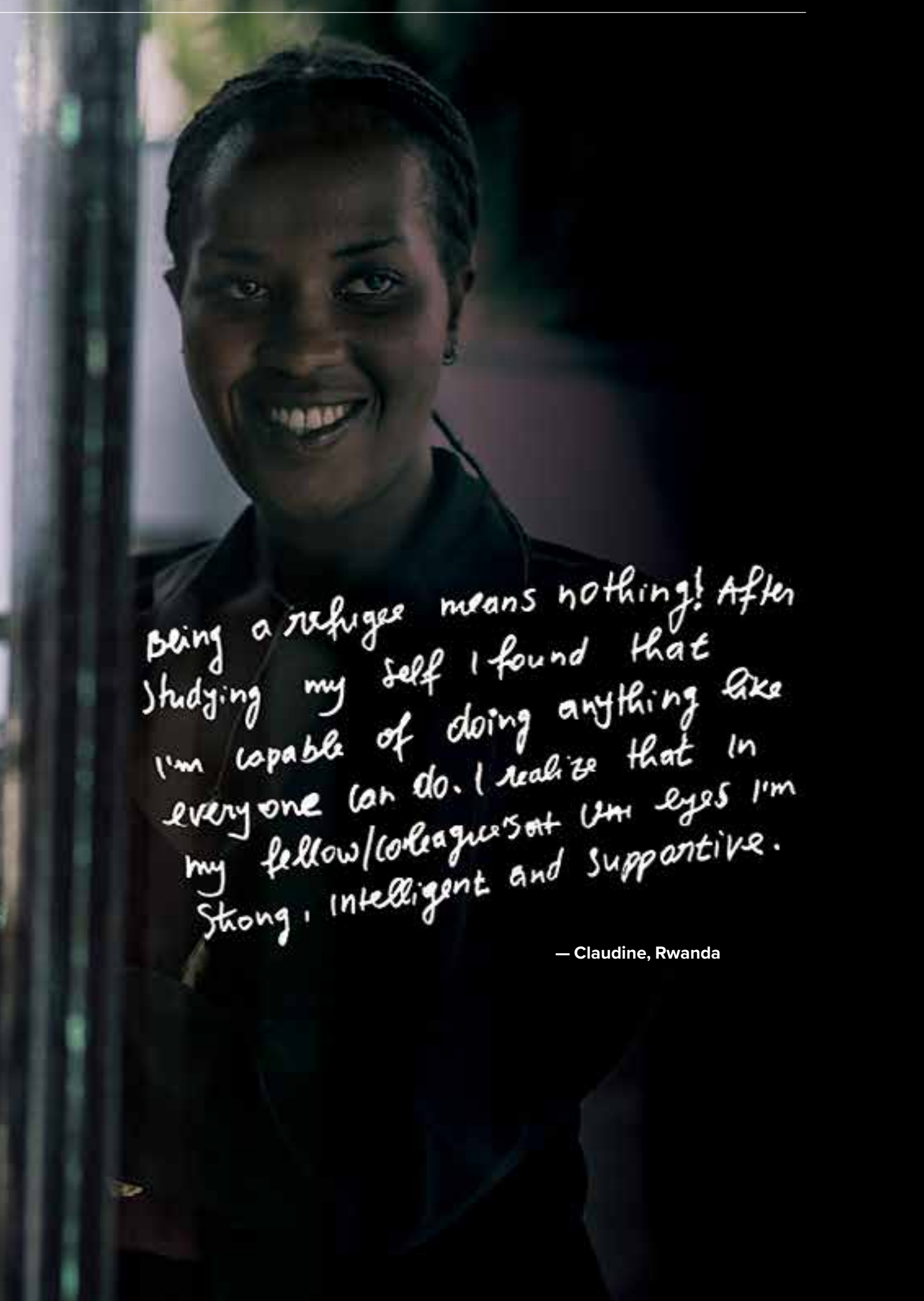
TAJIKISTAN. Afghan refugee and DAFI graduate, Nigora established the Ariana Learning Centre (ALC) in Vahdat in 2021, providing a range of classes – including English, Mathematics, Art, fashion design and baking – to both Afghan refugees and the local community.

© UNHCR/Elyor Nemat



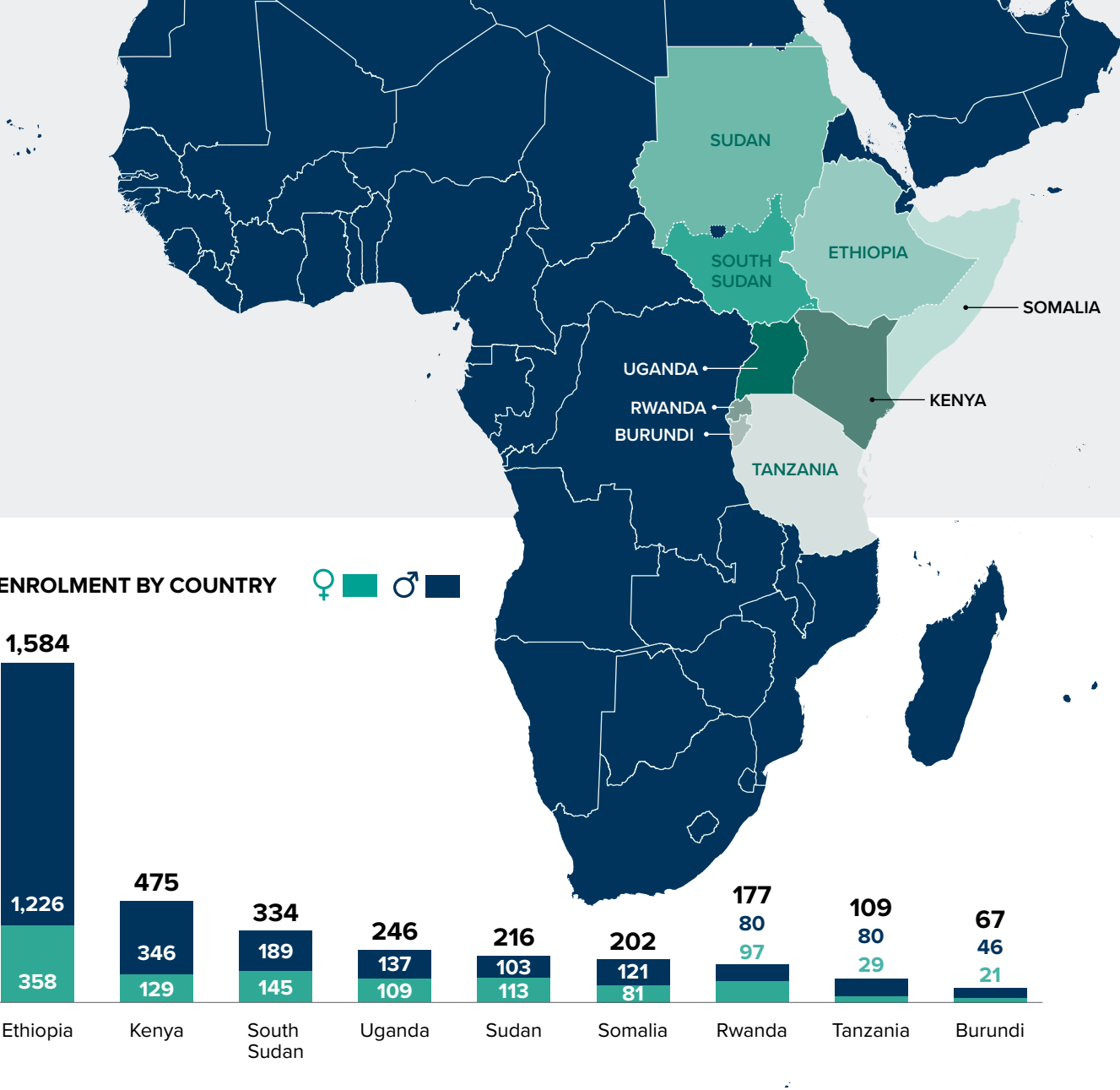
RWANDA. DAFI graduate of Law from the University of Rwanda.

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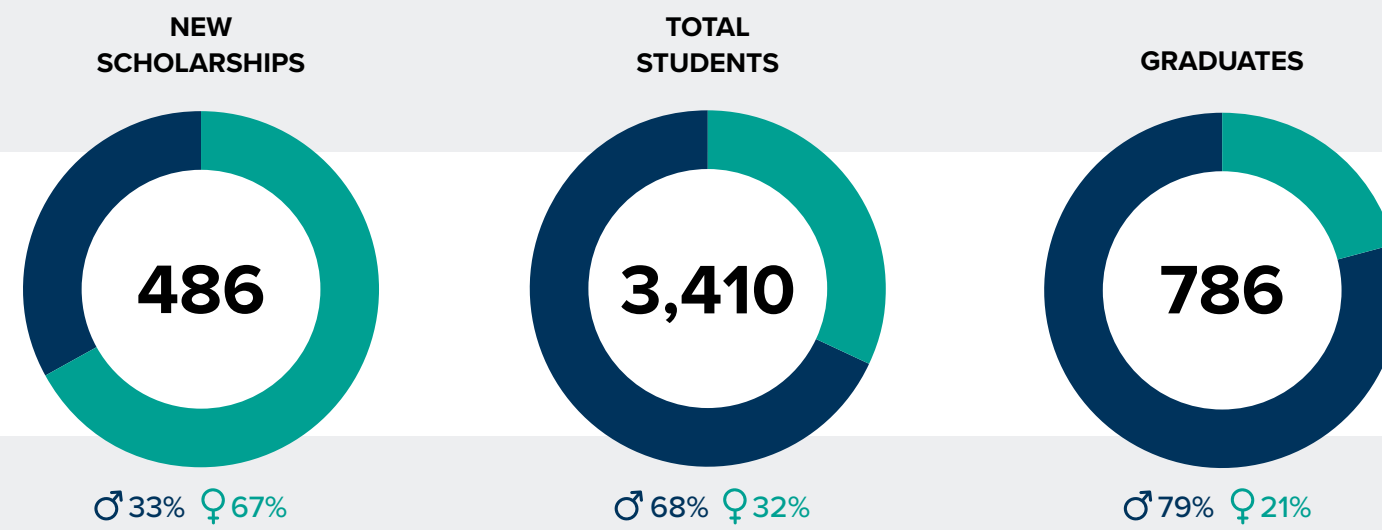
Being a refugee means nothing! After studying my self I found that I'm capable of doing anything like everyone can do. I realize that in my fellow/colleagues at the eyes I'm strong, intelligent and supportive.

— Claudine, Rwanda

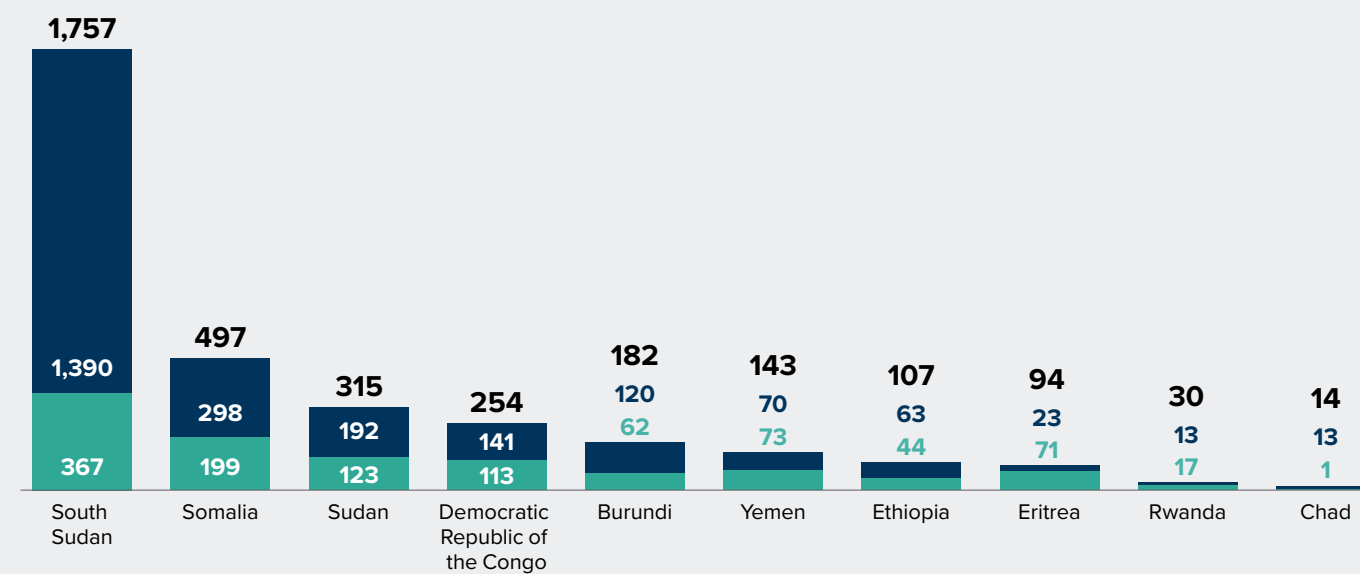


EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA AND GREAT LAKES

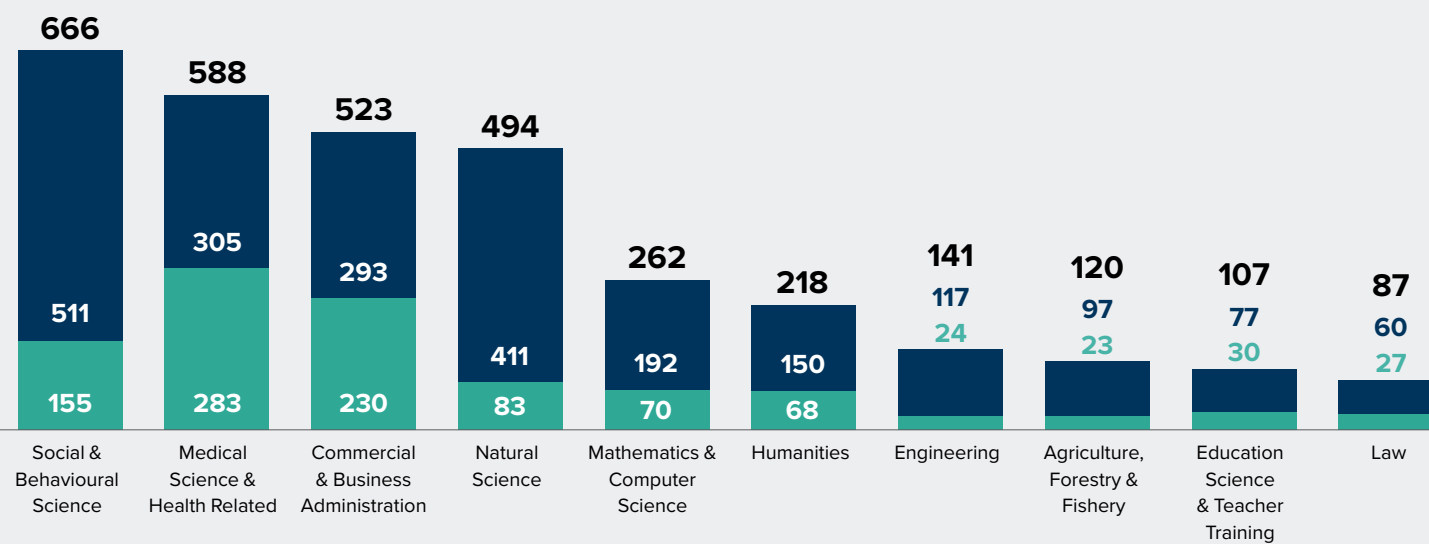
The East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes (EHAGL) region delivered holistic career readiness training to prepare scholars to confidently navigate the job market. This region also showcased tremendous growth in TVET and skill-based training. In Tanzania, a focus on field practicals has helped prepare scholars for work. For example, DAFI students in psychology or similar health fields had the opportunity to conduct community-based counselling and guidance, and scholars pursuing marketing and entrepreneurship planned and set up their own businesses as part of their coursework. South Sudan launched a TVET Management Information System to collect the most accurate metrics to date on TVET scholars. The launch featured the presentation of summary TVET statistics, including the DAFI scholars currently enrolled in TVET programmes, as a sample output. In Uganda, UNHCR engaged with policymakers, universities and employers to promote recognition of refugees’ professional and academic qualifications and help remove barriers to employment. Country programmes in the region also invested heavily in equal access to higher education for women – including a secondary school tutoring programme for girls in Ethiopia, provision of financial support to mothers in higher education in Tanzania, and a newly established Peer-to-Peer guidance counsellor position in Kenya to deliver outreach to girls in secondary school and cultivate partnerships with businesses to support internship opportunities for women.



TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY





ETHIOPIA. DAFI alumnus working as a freelance web and app designer as well as in database management.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

“

Don't give up.
Try, try and try again.
Every time you try,
you move to the
next level.”

Ismael, from Yemen, is a BA graduate of Management of Information Systems from Haramaya University (2017-2021), in eastern Ethiopia, thanks to a DAFI scholarship.

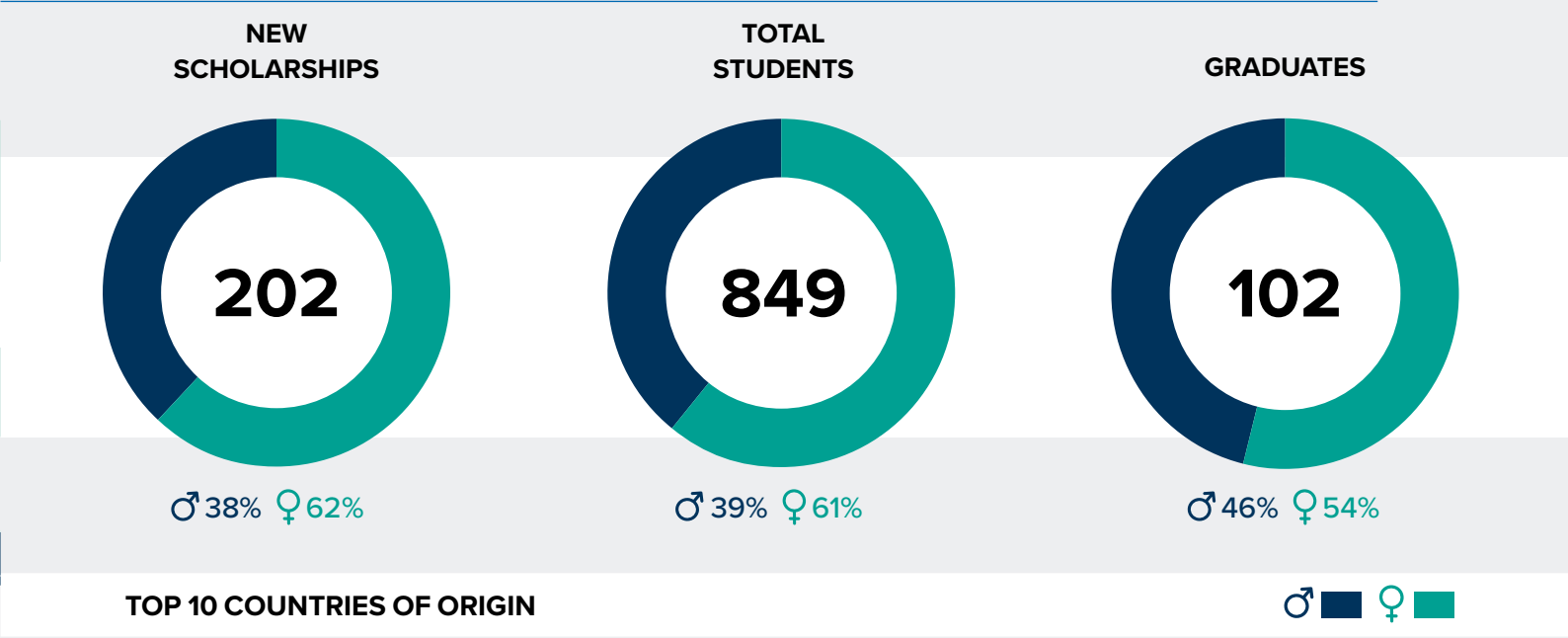
Ismael sought safety in Ethiopia in 2015 and settled in Addis Ababa. He taught Islamic studies and maths for a year before he was given the chance to sit the placement exam organized specifically for refugees by the Government of Ethiopia's Refugees and Returnees Services.

He then obtained the DAFI scholarship and enrolled at Haramaya University. As his final project, Ismael developed a voice-controlled desktop assistant software in C# (C sharp programming language) for persons with disabilities, including visual impairment.

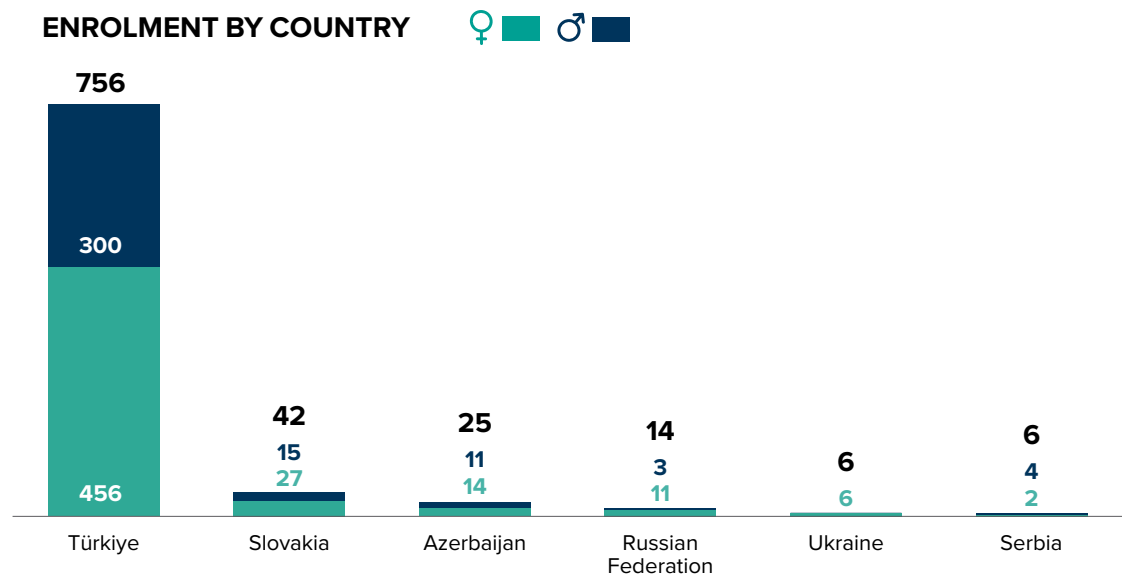
He graduated in 2021 and has since been freelancing in web and app design, as well as database management.

“I would like to thank every person and every institution who has been involved, in one way or the other, in providing us with this opportunity.”

“My message to my fellow refugees is the following: always keep going. Don't give up. Try, try and try again. Every time you try, you move to the next level.”

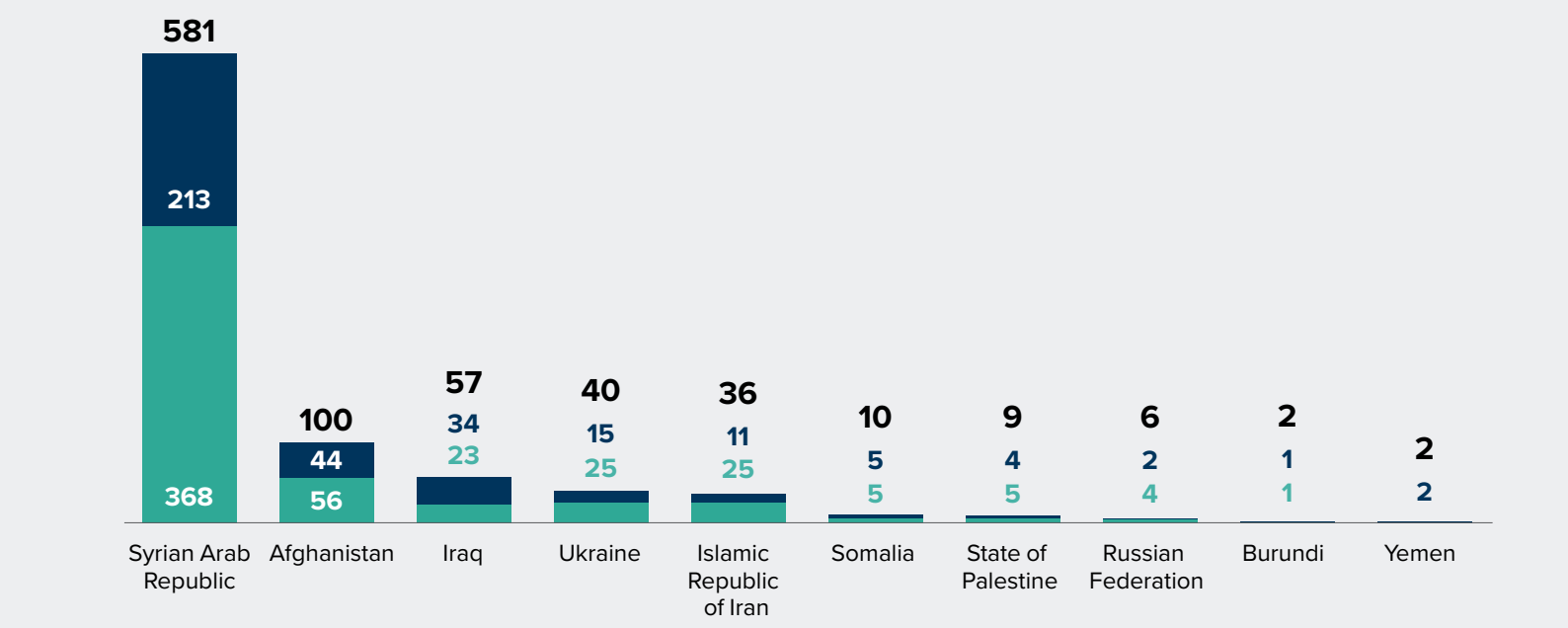


TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

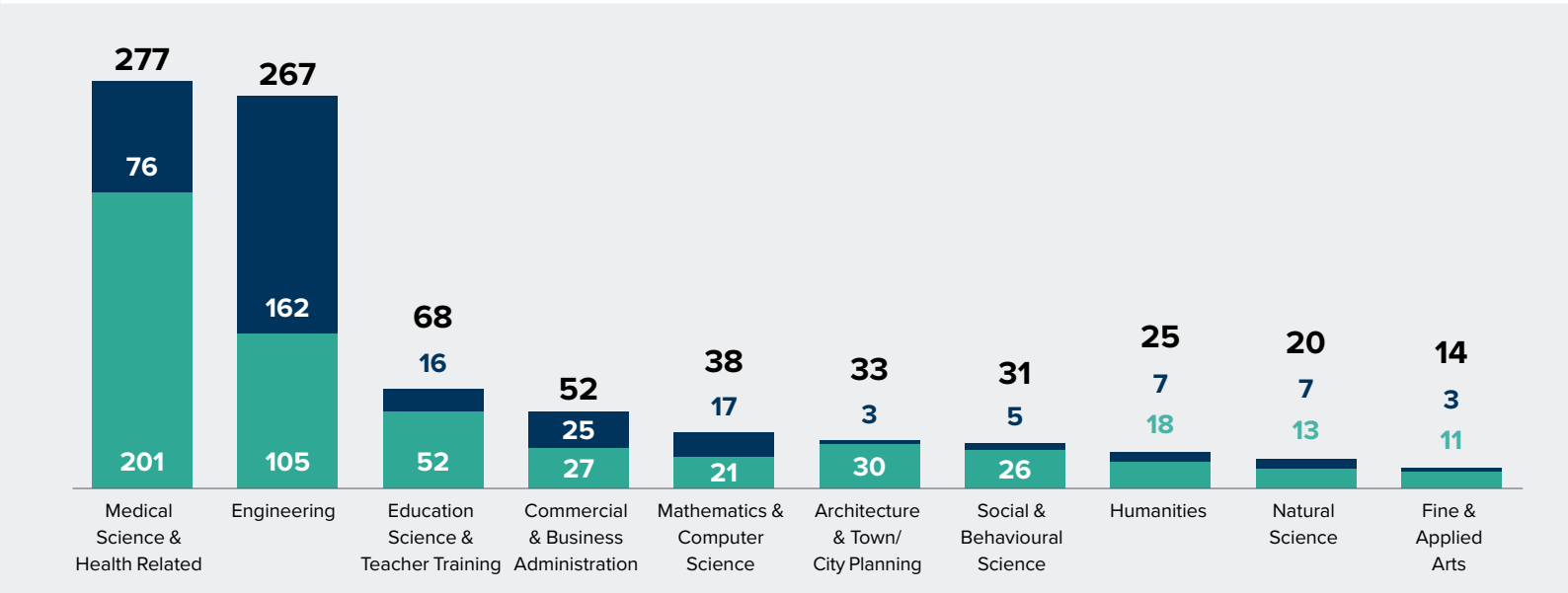


EUROPE

DAFI programmes in Europe focused on career readiness, student leadership and practical work-based learning options for refugees. In Türkiye, UNHCR and the DAFI implementing partner organized career and motivation camps to equip scholars with professional skills, seeing particularly strong participation among women. Slovakia – the newest programme in the region – began implementing career readiness sessions focused on practical job search and application skills, internship opportunities and soft skills development. In Serbia, DAFI scholars received mentorship and academic guidance and had the opportunity to participate in speaking engagements. In response to increased demand in Azerbaijan for certified skilled professionals, as well as greater government investment in TVET, the DAFI programme held a community awareness session for young people and their parents. This event promoted TVET opportunities at state-certified institutions and explained the application process.



TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY



“My dream is to become an academic in civil engineering one day.”

”

When Aicha fled Syria for Türkiye in 2013, she was just one year away from completing her civil engineering degree at Damascus University.

But war put her dreams on hold.

“When we arrived here, I immediately thought: how could I complete my studies?” she recalls. The answer wasn’t simple – she didn’t speak a word of Turkish and was in a new country.

Determined, Aicha taught herself Turkish, worked as a secretary and, by 2015, secured a place at Istanbul University. The first semester was overwhelming. “I didn’t understand anything, so I was about to quit university.” But she pushed through, translating every word, and soon her grades soared.

Financial struggles remained. Her family of five survived on two small salaries, so Aicha took extra courses while continuing to work as a secretary, desperate to graduate as soon as possible. Unfortunately, economic hardship forced her to stop. Then came a lifeline – she learned about the DAFI programme and won a scholarship in 2016. She says, “My economic burden was lightened, and I was able to focus more on my studies.”

Graduating in 2017, she struggled to find work until gaining Turkish citizenship in 2018. Now, at Relief International, she helps people with disabilities and at the same time she is pursuing her master’s degree in civil engineering. “My dream is to become an academic in civil engineering one day.”



TÜRKİYE. DAFI alumna now pursuing a Master of Civil Engineering while working for Relief International.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



SLOVAKIA. DAFI student of Central European Studies at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

“

My whole life belongs to me now.”

Growing up in Pavlohrad, Ukraine, Reidzio always had a passion for studying. He was nine years old when the conflict started in Donbas (Ukraine) in 2014 and it had a great influence on his view of the world, questions about human behaviour and interest in politics.

Reidzio reminds us “History is key. A lot of people use it as a weapon whereas it should be used as an instrument to learn from the issues that happened and the mistakes that were made, in order not to repeat them.”

He is now a student of Central European Studies at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia on a DAFI scholarship. His mother and younger brother also live in Bratislava while his father remains in Ukraine.

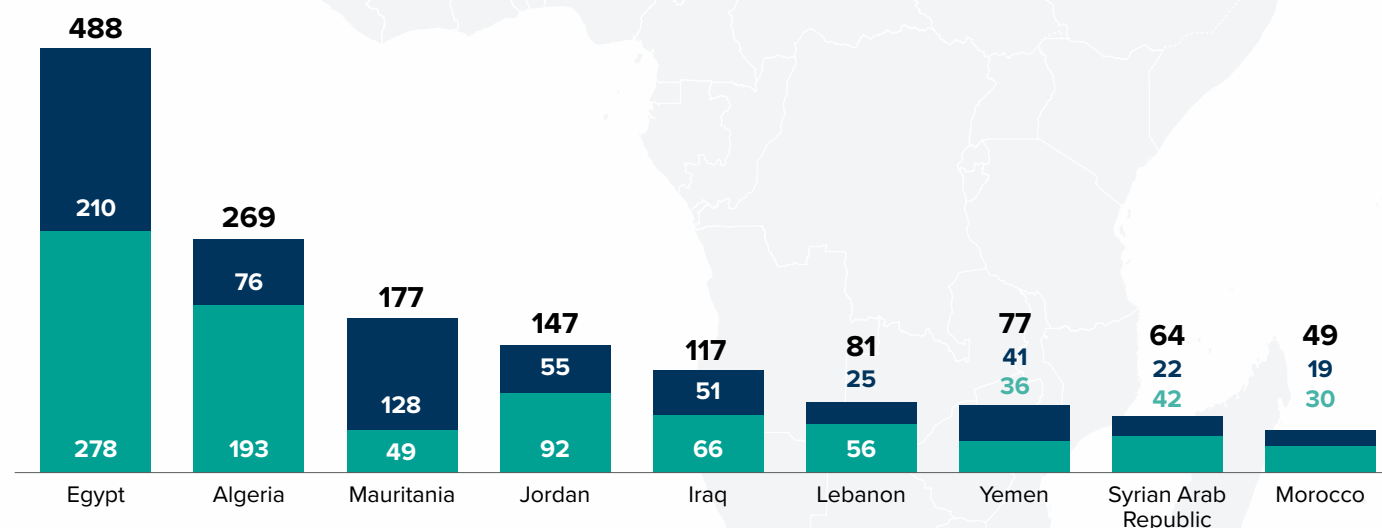
When war broke out in Ukraine in 2022, Reidzio was evacuated with his mother and brother and eventually they crossed the border with Slovakia. He explains “We had no idea where to go next. We did not know anything, including the language. The first month there, we were in a state of shock. We could not process what had happened.”

After spending a summer working as a bartender in a hotel to support his family, Reidzio moved to Bratislava on his own to study in university. At that time, it felt to him like the war had “grabbed away my youth, my past, my friends, like everything had disappeared. From one moment to another, boom, I had a totally different life.”

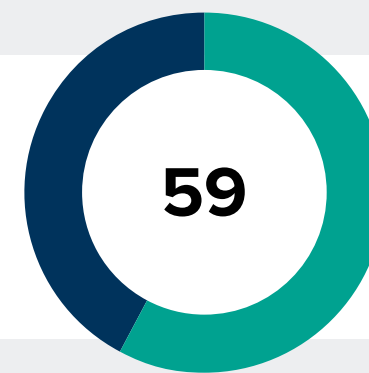
During his first semester, Reidzio found it difficult to balance a full class schedule with work on the weekends. After securing a DAFI scholarship, Reidzio can dedicate more time to studying and building a new community of friends in Bratislava. He explains that because of the DAFI scholarship “My whole life belongs to me now. University has allowed me to progress, to become someone who has more confidence, who is not afraid to speak in public, to express their views, to be more open.”



ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY ♀ ♂

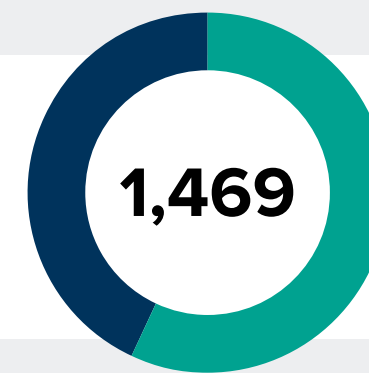


NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



♂ 42 ♀ 58%

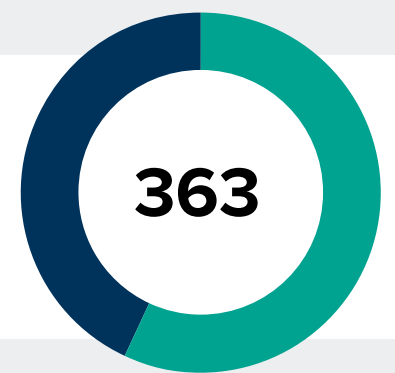
TOTAL STUDENTS



1,469

♂ 43% ♀ 57%

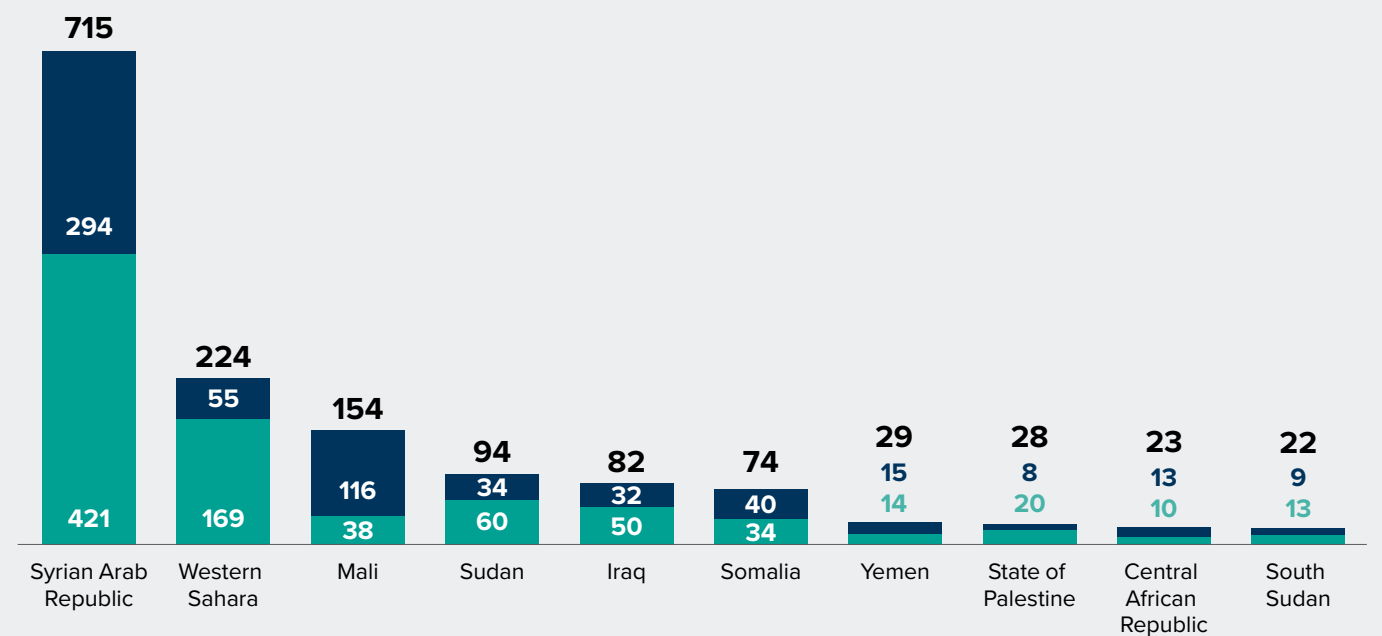
GRADUATES



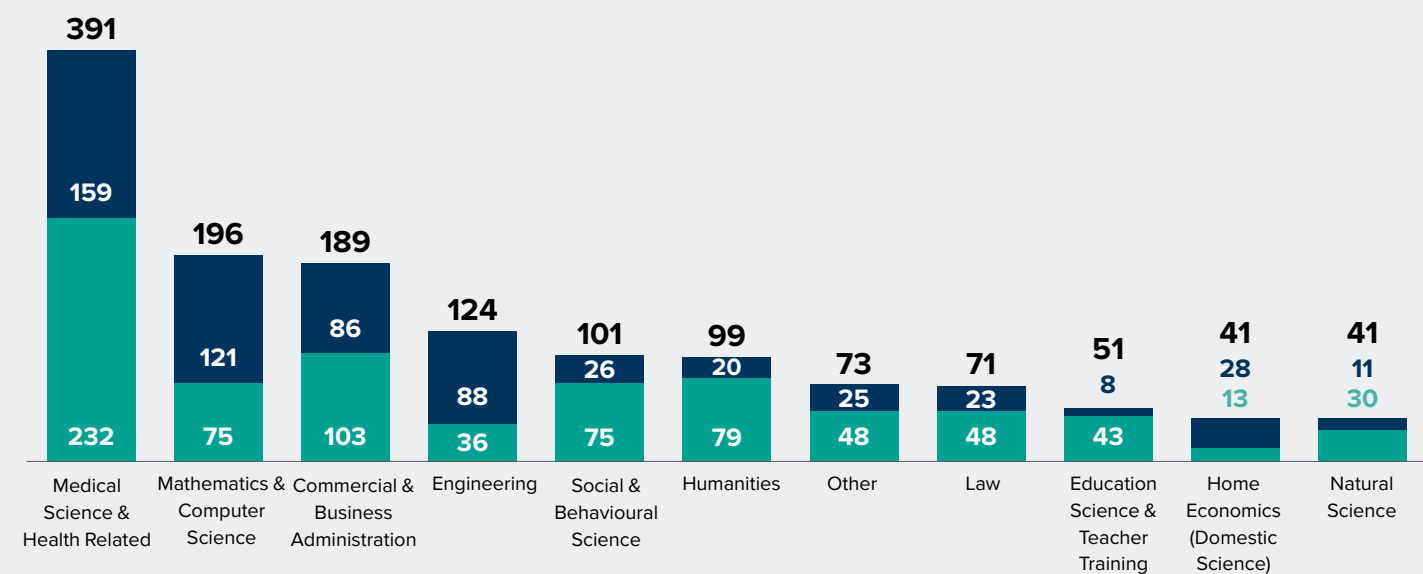
363

♂ 43% ♀ 57%

TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN ♀ ♂



TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY ♀ ♂



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region demonstrated a continued focus on equitable access to higher education for women. Other priorities included delivery of career-readiness and in-demand skill development, with a concerted focus on student-led training. In Jordan, DAFI students developed an online academic support platform in collaboration with 'Jordan Start' with the launch set for 2025. In Lebanon, student passion and leadership turned the idea of a Robotics Club into a fully-fledged organization that conducted its first workshops for students in 2024. In Yemen, students requested specialized technical training aligned with their fields of study, including in 3D MAX, information security and clinical pharmacy. Career readiness training covered CV writing, job search techniques, career planning and preparing for English language exams, but also evolved to cover LinkedIn profile optimization and digital competencies needed to navigate the job market. In Egypt, iCareer provided graduating students with support to pursue internships. Subsequently 12 scholars secured internships in fields such as project management, sports analysis, programming and customer service.

“

We cannot add days to a patient's life, but we can add life to their days. I am proud to help people and make a difference in this community.”

Fawaz, a DAFI alumnus and Syrian refugee in Iraq, runs a busy physiotherapy centre in Erbil.

He and his Iraqi colleagues provide treatments like electrotherapy, acupuncture and dry needling to help both refugees and locals manage pain.

After fleeing Syria in 2013, Fawaz pursued higher education in Erbil. He earned a bachelor's degree and overcame financial challenges with the support of a DAFI scholarship. He was determined to integrate into his new community and volunteered as a physiotherapist while studying at university. Later, Fawaz co-founded his own centre with local graduates. This is more than a job for him; it is a chance to give back and help patients regain mobility and independence. Fawaz explains:

“We cannot add days to a patient's life, but we can add life to their days. I am proud to help people and make a difference in this community.”

IRAQ. DAFI alumnus running a physiotherapy centre.

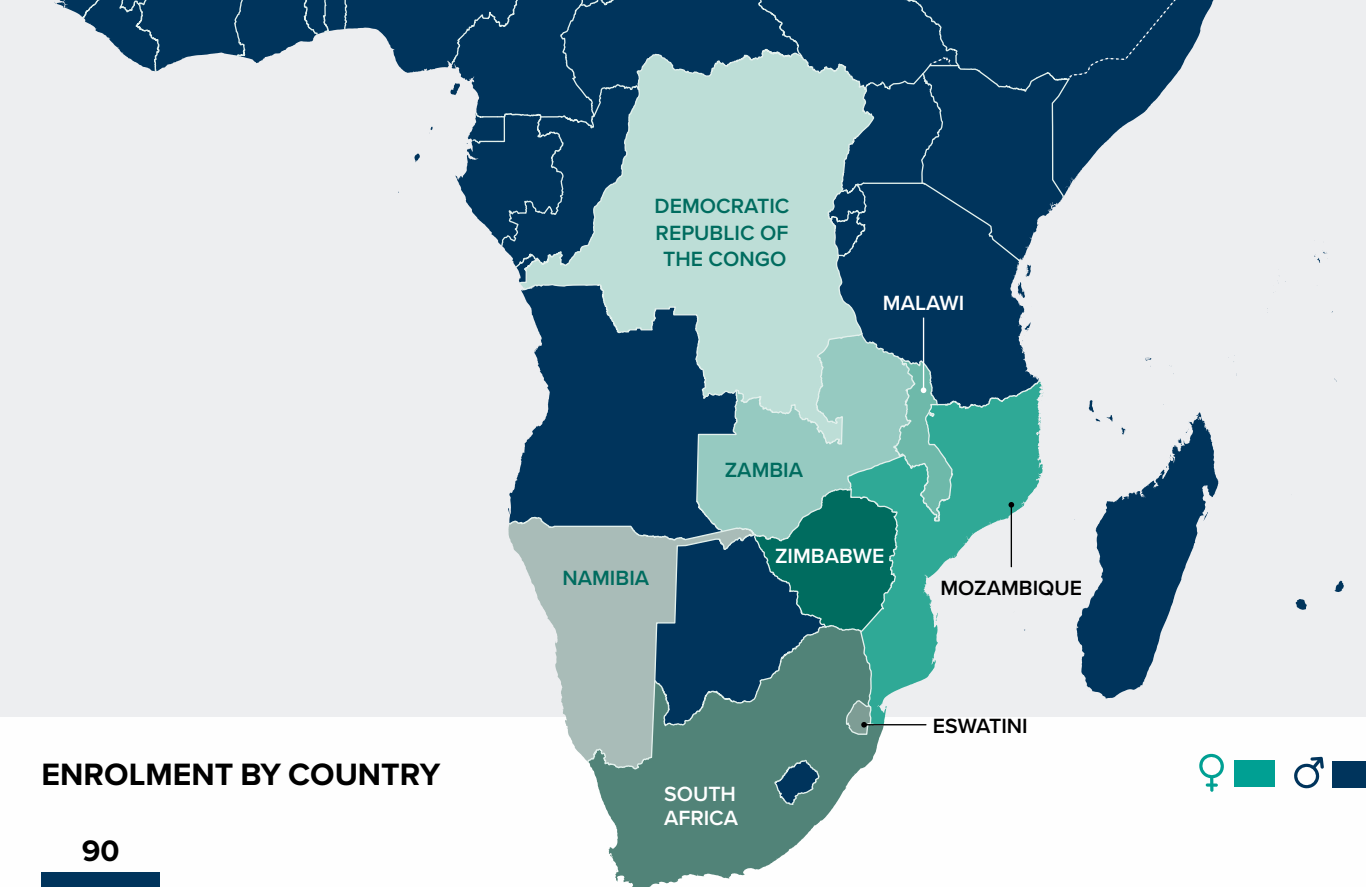
© UNHCR/Rasheed Rasheed

SOUTH AFRICA. DAFI alumnus of Photography and Journalism from Cape Peninsula University of Technology, now working as a Digital Community Manager for DKMS Africa.

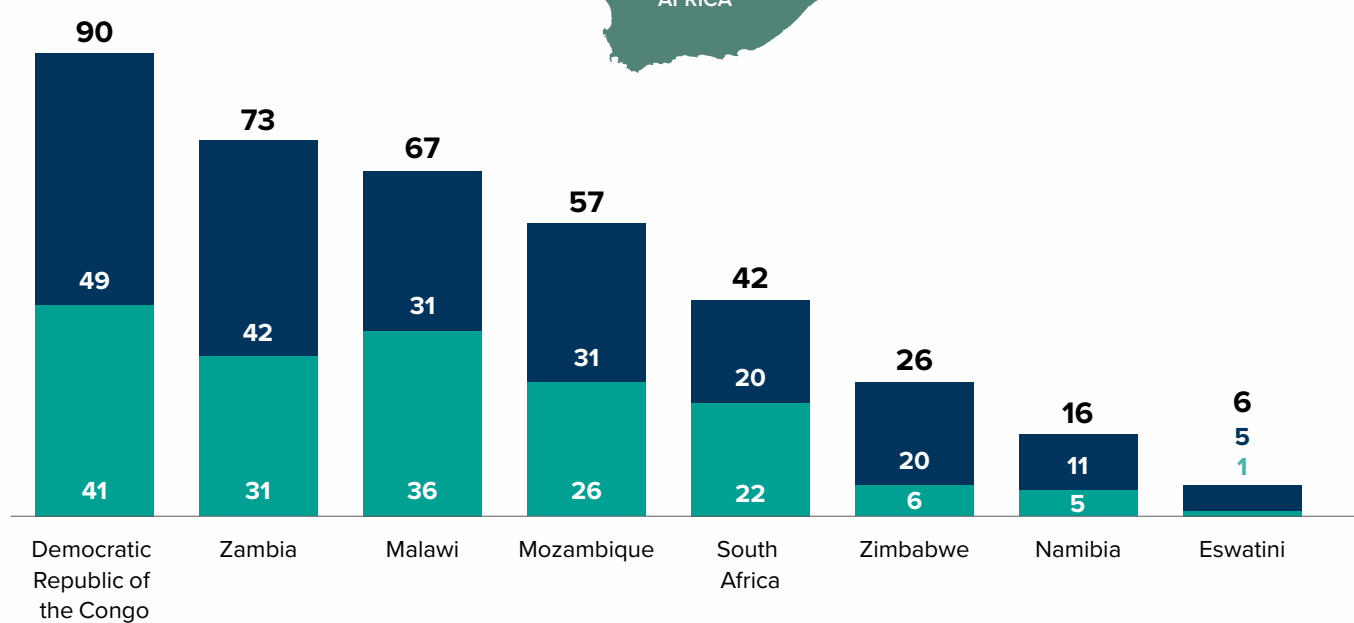
© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

Being part of DAFI meant that I was part of a network of purpose driven minded people. DAFI helped me direct my life and install the principals of giving back. Now I know that my purpose in life is to put refugee issues in the forefront, by highlighting my lived experiences, and sharing my thoughts on how things can become better for all.

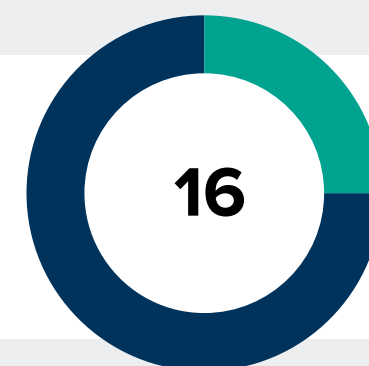
— Murphy, South Africa



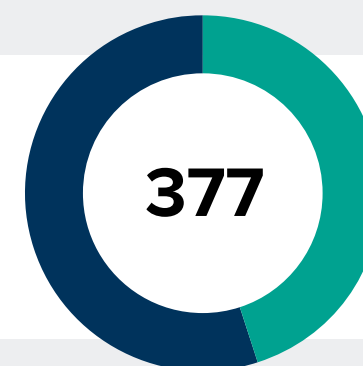
ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY



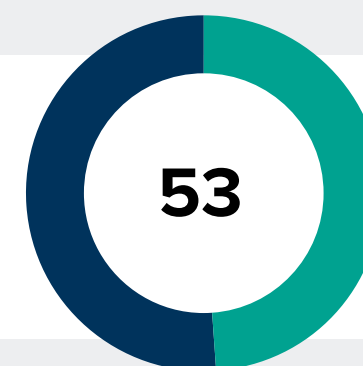
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS



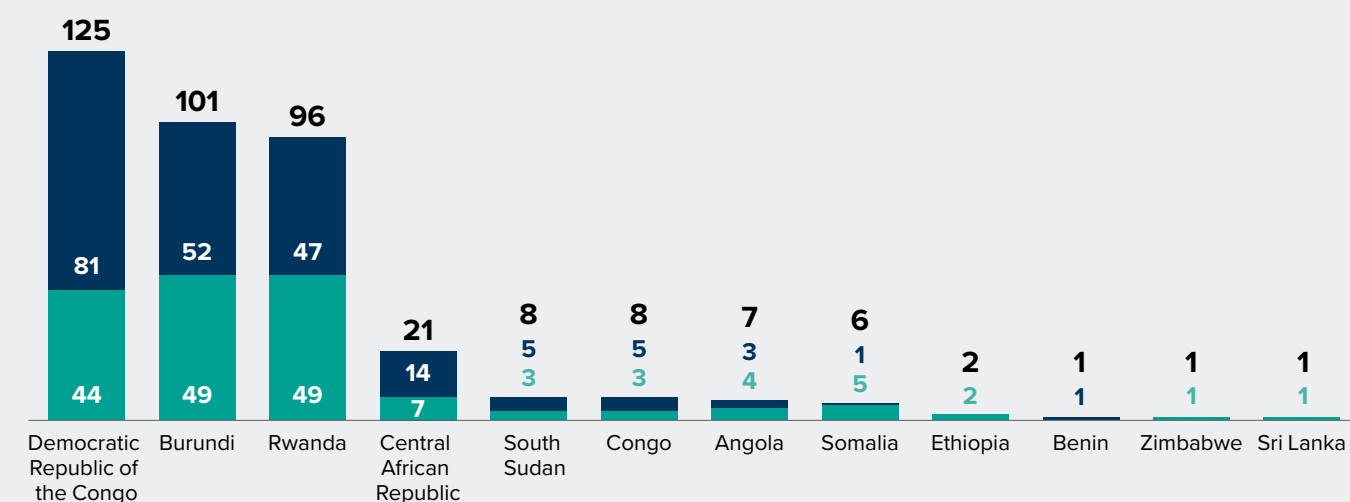
TOTAL STUDENTS



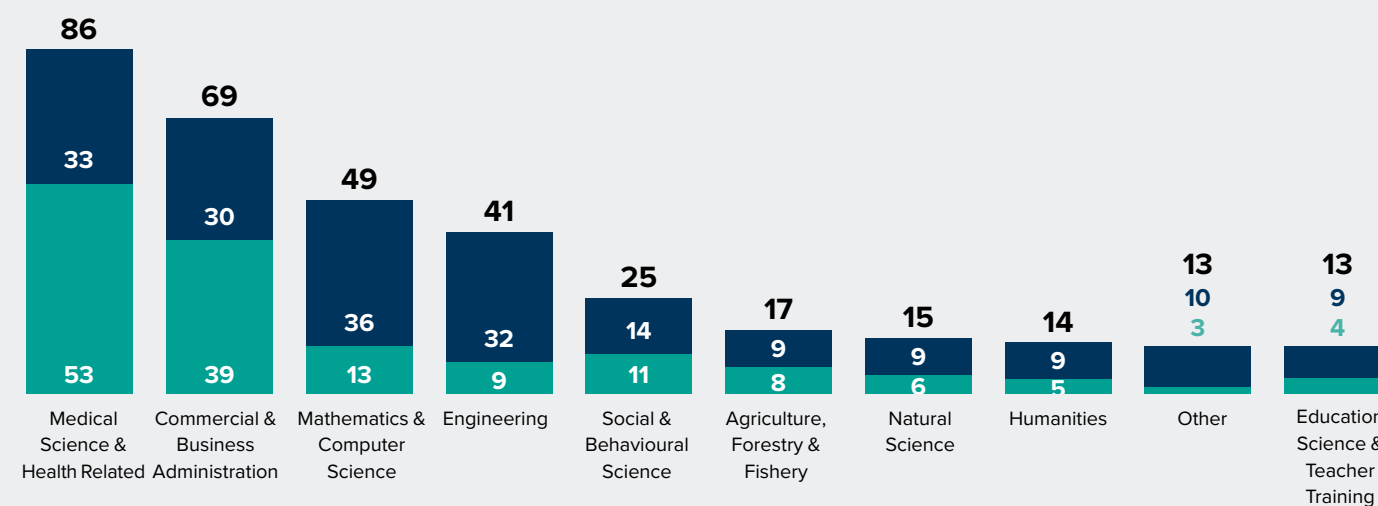
GRADUATES



TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY



SOUTHERN AFRICA

DAFI country programmes in Southern Africa continued to prioritize information sharing and outreach, with a focus on opportunities for women to pursue higher education as well as employability training and targeted skills development to prepare graduating students for employment. In Malawi, female scholars play an active and influential role within the DAFI club and led career guidance sessions for girls in secondary school. Zambia developed plans to conduct a country-wide mapping of employment opportunities for refugees. This will be used to build an online database and facilitate matching between profiles of DAFI graduates and companies who are hiring. UNHCR country teams also collaborated with DAFI scholars to conduct key advocacy efforts. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 80 refugee students, employers and representatives from the public and private sectors gathered to discuss and develop solutions related to refugees' access to employment. This 'Refugee Youth Employment Forum' also facilitated exchanges with employers and gave DAFI scholars a platform to advocate for internship and employment needs.

“Education is my future. I cannot see a bright future without educating myself and making a career for myself.”

”

Serna was born and raised in South Africa to parents from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A talented and deeply motivated student, Serna loved using the internet.

She stayed after school to use the classroom computers and to learn from the IT staff about how she could study computer science or engineering in the future.

She first learned about the DAFI scholarship from her mother, who attended an outreach session led by Study Trust, the UNHCR implementing partner in South Africa. Receiving the DAFI scholarship and the opportunity it gave her to study and build a better future was a “blessing”.

“My motivation to study is to help those around me and to better my community. I personally want to give my parents the satisfaction of knowing that at least one of their children lived the dream that they could not achieve. Education is my future. I cannot see a bright future without educating myself and making a career for myself.”

At first, she struggled a little to integrate into the college environment and to prove herself. At times she felt judged for having documents identifying her as a refugee. Still, as ever, she remains optimistic and focused on her studies. She plans to start applying for internships soon.

“I believe that my future is very bright. I’m already praying and working hard to be employed by this time next year. I believe that the career I’m going into and my attitude towards life will keep me calm and I’ll change my life even more when I eventually graduate.”



SOUTH AFRICA. BA student of Engineering Technology in Computer Engineering at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, on a DAFI scholarship.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

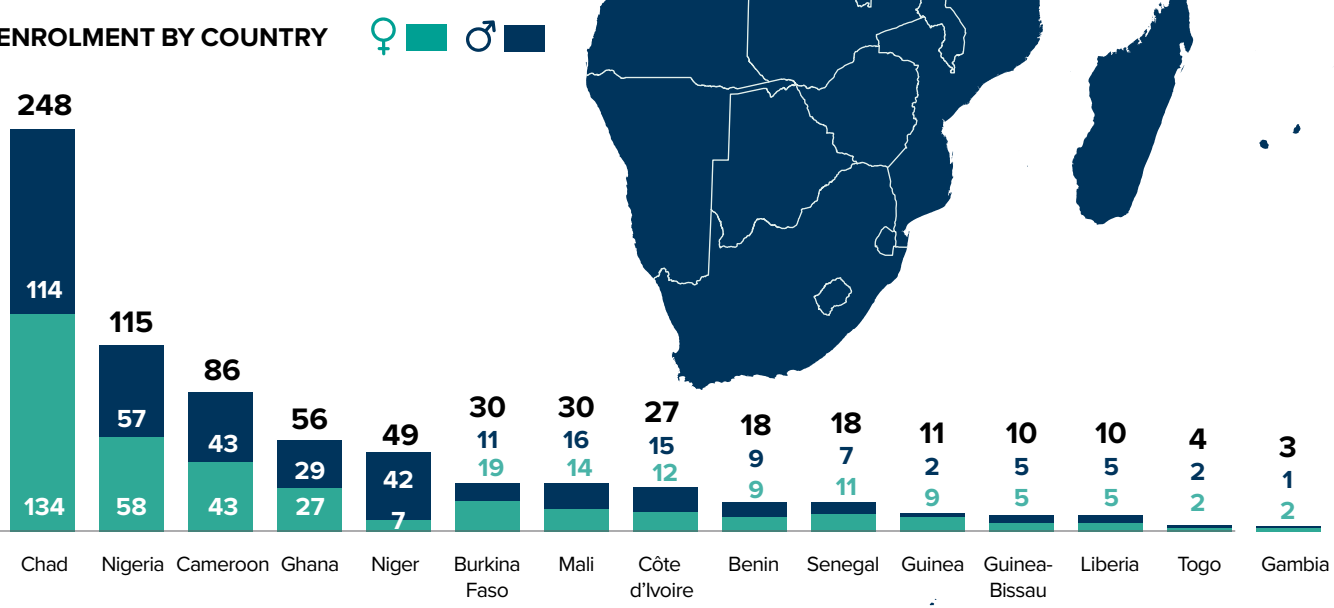
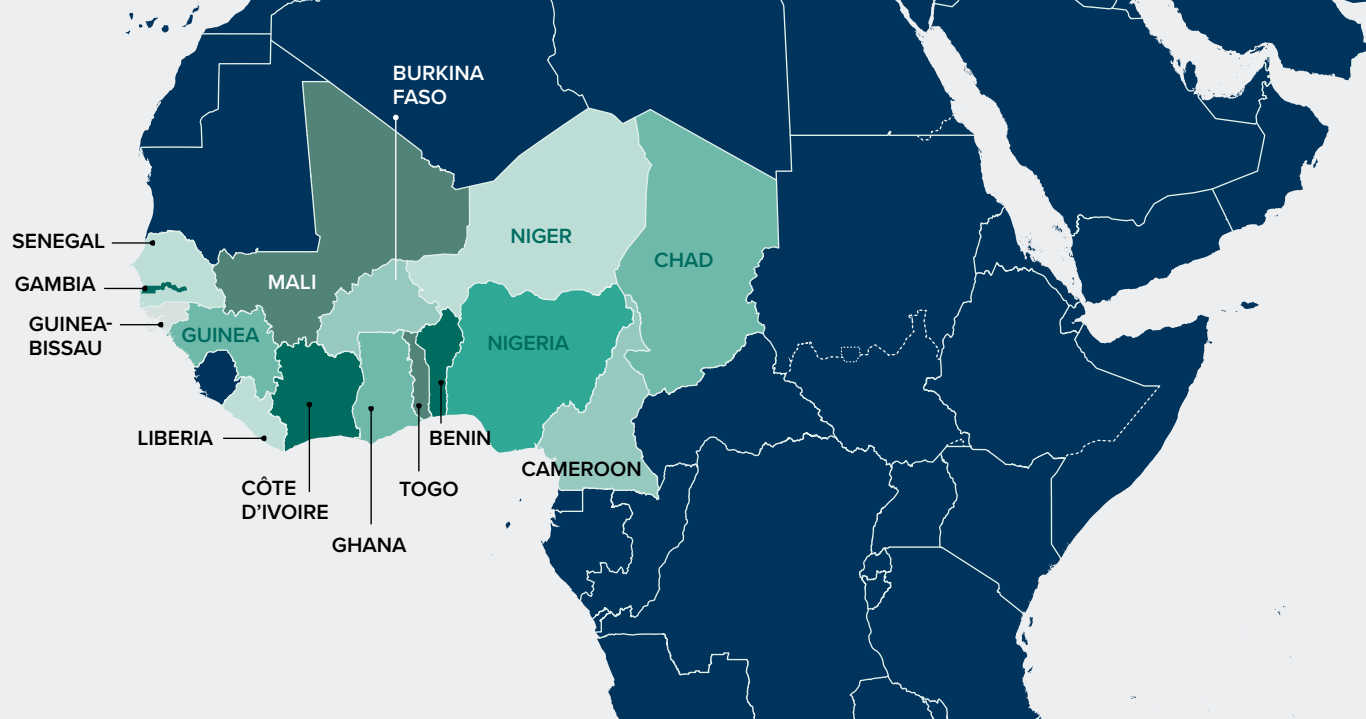
Rien n'est facile,
c'est juste le courage

NOTHING IS EASY,
IT'S ALL ABOUT COURAGE.

— Raïssa, Chad

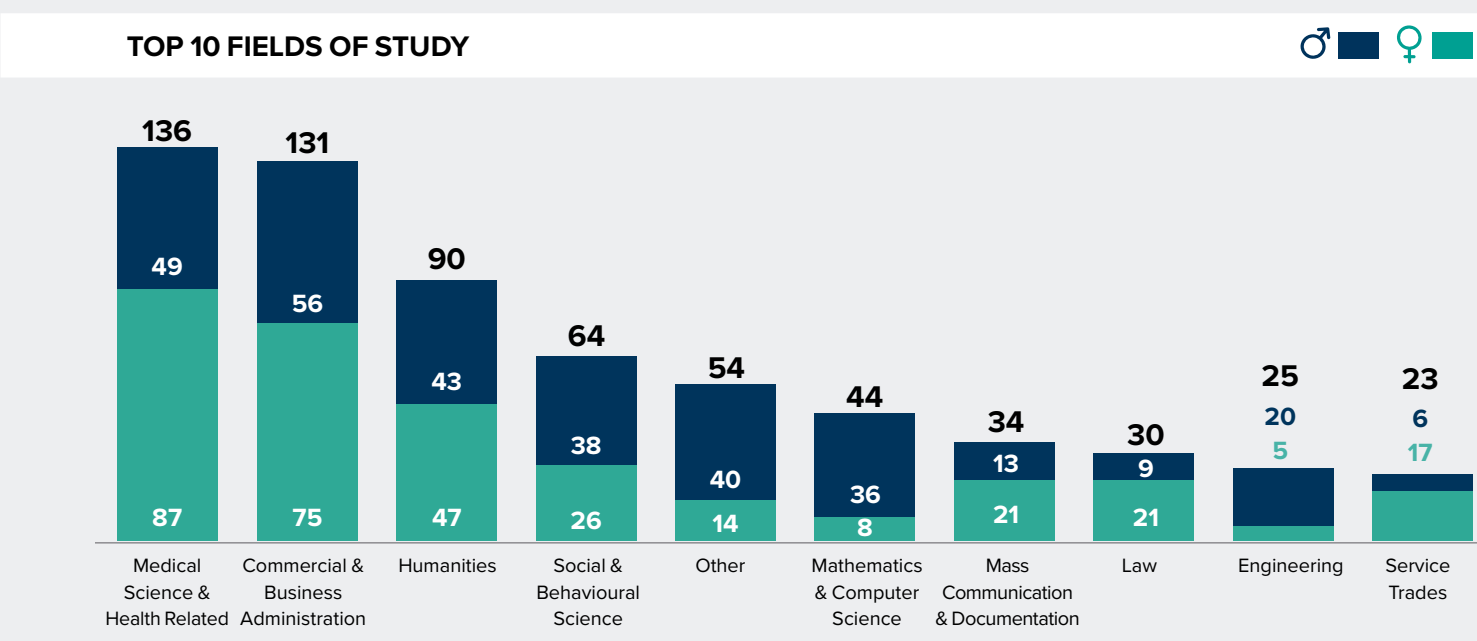
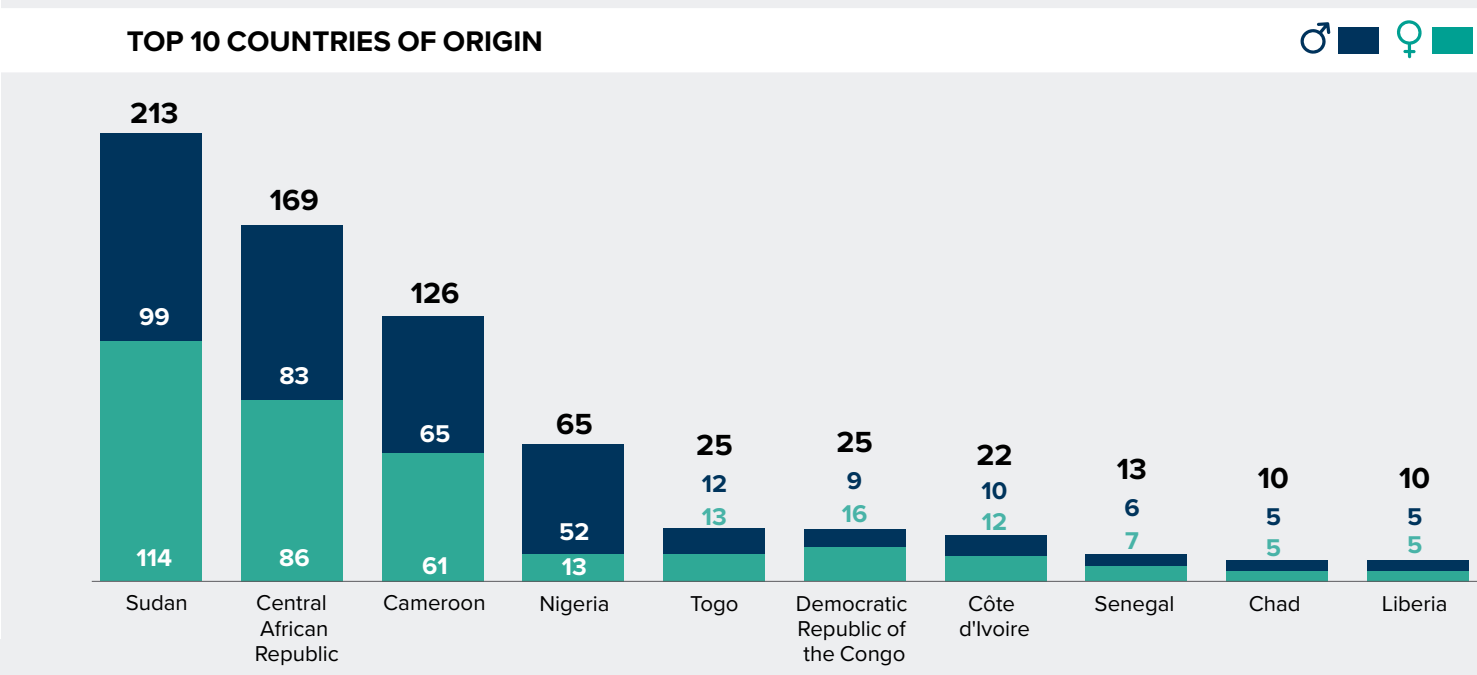
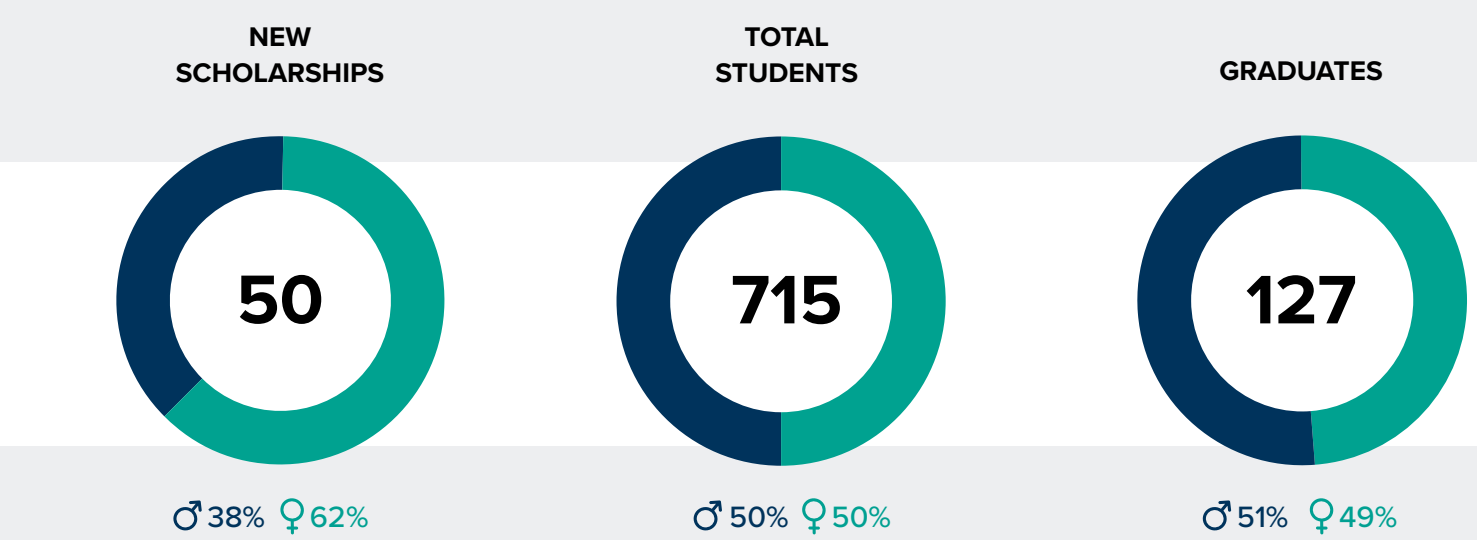
CHAD. Mother and DAFI scholar of Communications and Marketing at Emi Koussi University in N'Djamena.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

DAFI programmes in the West and Central Africa (WCA) region delivered targeted skills development and career readiness training, including by establishing and strengthening partnerships with national employment agencies to facilitate access to work for refugees (including in Chad, Niger and Senegal). Community-based outreach continued to promote the importance of higher education opportunities for women, including in information sessions led by DAFI scholars in Burkina Faso. In Nigeria, women were encouraged to participate in career training, which included LinkedIn account creation and optimization as well as other essential digital and professional skills. Cameroon also focused on digital skills training, conducting a Canva Pro design workshop, as well as seminars on e-trading, digital marketing, website design and IT skills for the workplace. Finally, in Ghana, six TVET scholars and graduates took part in Africa Skills Week 2024, which was organized by the African Union. It included a session hosted by UNHCR and partners GIZ, ILO and FCA titled 'The potential of TVET and higher education for the social and economic empowerment of refugees and host communities.'





NIGERIA. DAFI student studying Sport Sciences at Ogun State University with hopes of pursuing a career as a physical education teacher.

“

"Every help provide to refugees to attend tertiary education is a a help to prevent one more person becoming a refugee, it is an assistance to the host country into creating much need skills and saving a life a purpose"

— Alphonse, South Africa

"Dafi Family the beacon of light that brought me out of my dark days as a refugee."

— Abdikhaliq, South Africa

La educación es un camino que me permite triunfar.

EDUCATION IS A PATH WHICH HELPS ME THRIVE.

— Katherine, Mexico

"Life is beautiful"
"la vie est belle"

— Jules, Malawi

Being a refugee means nothing! After studying my self I found that I'm capable of doing anything like everyone can do. I realize that in my fellow/colleagues sat under eyes I'm strong, intelligent and supportive.

— Claudine, Rwanda

I am Building South Africa.
~~Tomorrow~~ I would love to go
Build DR CONGO.

— Henoc, South Africa

Rien n'est facile,
c'est juste le courage

NOTHING IS EASY,
IT'S ALL ABOUT COURAGE.

— Raïssa, Chad

Being part of OAFI meant that I was part of a network of purpose driven minded people. OAFI helped me direct my life and install the principals of giving back. Now I know that my purpose in life is to put refugee issues in the forefront, by highlighting my lived experiences, and sharing my thoughts on how things can become better for all.

— Murphy, South Africa

Tu puedes ser luz
y una voz para cambiar
el mundo

YOU CAN BE THE LIGHT AND A
VOICE TO CHAGE THE WORLD.

— Stephanny, Mexico

I started the journey with huge passion and a great dream. DAFI was the push and the hope towards this goal.

— Sajeda, Egypt