

DAFI | 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



“I want to be an example for my family and to also contribute to the development of my country. My story is one that proves that no matter one’s circumstances, everything remains possible. I am willing to keep proving it and unlocking my potential. I am determined to carry the flag of DAFI as far as possible.”

Felix, DAFI alumnus living in Burundi and working for Lumitel telecom company.

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 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 Photos:

Top row: Joséphine is a final-year student of Clinical Psychology in Burundi. (©UNHCR/Antoine Tardy)

Second row, left to right:

- Muzawa is a medical doctor based in Rwanda who graduated in 2019 (©UNHCR/Antoine Tardy)
- Olha is a first-year student of Managerial Mathematics at Comenius University in Slovakia (©UNHCR/Antoine Tardy)
- Jeison is studying Industrial Engineering in Colombia (©UNHCR/Catalina Betancur Sánchez)
- Joud, from Syria, is a third-year student of Psychological Counselling and Guidance at Istanbul University (Cerrahpaşa, Türkiye (©UNHCR/Antoine Tardy)



FOREWORD

Roberta Malee Bassett, World Bank Global Lead for Tertiary Education and Senior Education Specialist

It is an honour to be given the chance in this foreword to advocate for a wider understanding of the value of higher education for displaced persons around the world. The World Bank recognizes the importance of assessing the human condition as holistically as possible, particularly in terms of the opportunities for self-actualization as well as the economic opportunities provided by accessible, quality education, including higher education. All too often, people are defined by the conditions in which they find themselves – refugee, migrant, poor – and not by who they are or what they value. It is a privilege to work alongside the team of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to build a global narrative around opportunities for all, for as far as their capabilities and ambitions can take them.

75 per cent of all refugees and other people in need of international protection take refuge in low- and middle-income countries and over half of refugees are in protracted situations.¹ As such, displacement quickly transforms from a humanitarian crisis into an economic and social development issue, which exacerbates existing national development challenges. Whether in the moment of an immediate humanitarian crisis or in the sustained development phase, the needs and opportunities of displaced persons require a long-term and collaborative vision for effective interventions. UNHCR and the World Bank are working together to build policy narratives and interventions that recognize both the immediate education needs of displaced persons and the long-term development impacts of displacement on individuals, as well as on their communities and the nations that host them.

Over the last decade, research has repeatedly shown that investments in tertiary education produce the highest returns – an estimated 17 per cent increase in earnings (compared to 10 per cent for primary and 7 per cent for secondary) – and the level of returns is even higher in low-income regions like Sub-Saharan Africa (21 per cent).² Likewise, evidence of improvements in social mobility, social stability, health and happiness as well as other non-monetary benefits and outcomes from tertiary education opportunities substantiate policies and interventions to support and expand higher education access. This expansion must be made available to displaced persons as far as possible. The DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme is making a difference not only to the lives of the scholarship recipients but also in the communities that support them. Now, more than ever, improving opportunities for those most in need requires a global coalition and we look forward to working with our partners at UNHCR and around the world to deliver these opportunities as broadly as possible.

Roberta Malee Bassett

Roberta Malee Bassett



1. UNHCR, "Global trends: Forced displacement in 2023" (Geneva, 2024). Available from www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023.
2. World Bank Group, "Tertiary education" (9 April 2024). Available from www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation.

Raouf Mazou, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations

Over the last decade, the world has witnessed a rising trend in the magnitude and complexity of forced displacement, with the total number of displaced people increasing from less than 42 million in 2013 to a staggering 120 million by mid-2024, the majority of whom have been displaced for more than five years. Forced displacement due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations is exacerbated by the impacts of fragility, poverty and climate change. As a result, humanitarian needs have significantly outstripped funding and receiving States, host communities, donor countries and international humanitarian aid organizations are overstretched.

In this context, it is clear that traditional approaches are no longer sufficient. We must accelerate toward sustainable programming, an approach that has become central to our global response to displacement, particularly within the framework established by the Global Compact on Refugees. Sustainable programming is about integrating refugees into national systems from the outset of displacement, ensuring they have access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. This approach not only fosters stability and growth within host communities, but also lays the groundwork for durable solutions – whether through voluntary return, resettlement, or local integration.

The 2023 DAFI report brings this approach into sharp focus, demonstrating how education serves as a catalyst for self-reliance and long-term resilience. For over three decades, the DAFI higher education scholarship programme, supported primarily by the Government of Germany, has enabled refugee scholars to integrate into national higher education institutions and to earn labour-market relevant skills and qualifications. In 2023, 1,653 scholars graduated from the DAFI programme and emerging data on alumni employment outcomes demonstrate how integrating refugees into higher education systems leads to tangible economic benefits, both for the refugees themselves and the societies that host them.

However, donor funding has not and will not keep pace with the rising numbers of forcibly displaced people nor the demand for DAFI scholarships. The pledges made at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) highlight the international community's commitment to tackle these challenges, but turning these commitments into reality requires a sustained, collective effort. Predictable, multi-year financial investments from both States and the private sector are more important than ever before to tap into the widespread, long-term benefits of refugee inclusion in higher education.

Applying a sustainable programming approach strengthens national systems, enhances stability and maximises long-term economic, social and political benefits by expanding the human potential of forcibly displaced people, minimising dependency on humanitarian aid and increasing self-reliance. Over the last 30+ years, the DAFI programme has allowed thousands of refugees to be included in national higher education systems on increasingly equal footing, and who are now positioned to take the sustainable programming agenda forward.

Raouf Mazou

Raouf Mazou



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since it began operating 32 years ago, the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (Deutsche Akademische Flüchtlingsinitiative Albert Einstein, DAFI) scholarship programme has reached over 26,300 students in 59 countries. Graduation rates have continuously increased over time and DAFI is one of the most renowned and longest running higher education programmes for refugees in the world. The programme supports more refugee scholars 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 over 8.8 million USD to directly fund scholarships for refugee youth in 2023. However, the number of new scholarship places that become available each year simply cannot keep up with demand. In 2023, the DAFI programme received 15,600 applications for just 1,942 places, with only 12 per cent of those who applied receiving a scholarship.

In 2023, 9,312 refugee students from 54 countries of origin were enrolled on DAFI scholarships in 59 countries. This marks an increase of nearly 300 new scholars compared to the 2022 cohort. Women made up 42 per cent of scholars in 2023 and the DAFI programme continues to advance towards gender parity, with most countries having made significant gains. Processes such as restructuring admission considerations to reduce unintentional discrimination and providing information sessions about the importance of higher education for women are contributing to this progress. DAFI scholars and alumni also play a key role and UNHCR and partners are devising ways to link the DAFI programme to skills development and dedicated pathways towards livelihoods for women.

In the context of the 15by30 target – to achieve 15 per cent enrolment of refugees in higher education by 2030 – the DAFI programme continues to play a critical role in strengthening the inclusion of refugees in higher education. Even in countries that allow refugees to access higher education, they are rarely eligible to receive government-issued loans or to access other types of education-related financial support. Moreover, in most countries, restrictions on the right to work mean that refugee students and families are rarely able to overcome the financial barriers to higher education on their own. Such severe limitations on access to higher education exacerbate the divide between refugees and their host community peers, with respect to both enrolment and future livelihood opportunities.

Over time, DAFI and other refugee scholarship programmes have begun to demonstrate the long-term benefits of including refugees in national education systems at all levels. Where refugee children and young people are supported to participate in the full cycle of education, learn the language of instruction, develop social networks and capital, earn

qualifications and progressively participate in the host economy, they can and do become contributing members of the communities and countries where they live. DAFI and other scholarship programmes strengthen these pathways and create the conditions for refugees to take advantage of new and emerging postgraduate opportunities, including livelihoods and further study.

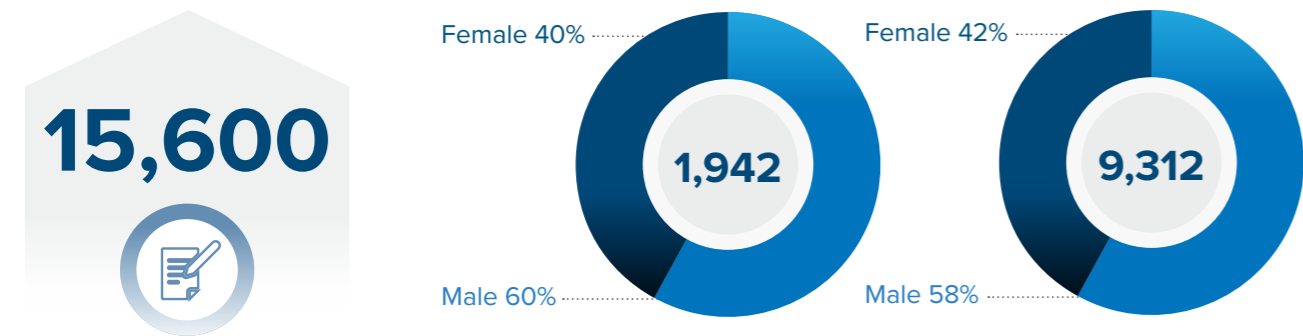
First and foremost, DAFI is a scholarship programme, which includes the payment of tuition and fees as well as associated costs such as room and board, books, local transportation and health care. However, in practice, the DAFI programme has evolved into so much more over the last three decades. UNHCR and partners are taking tremendous steps to promote career readiness and the development of in-demand skills; to facilitate pathways to internship opportunities and employment placements; to prepare scholars to thrive as entrepreneurs and business owners; to partner with local public and private sector partners to cultivate spaces for networking and to advance professional placement opportunities; and, in some cases, to advocate with government actors to improve the implementation of policies to include refugees in education systems and the labour market. Throughout, DAFI scholars and alumni have taken on leadership roles to enhance programming, support their peers and engage with policymakers to strengthen the pipeline from education to livelihoods.

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As a result, growing numbers of DAFI graduates are ready and able to step into postgraduate pathways that draw on the skills, practical experiences and relationships that they have developed through the DAFI programme.”

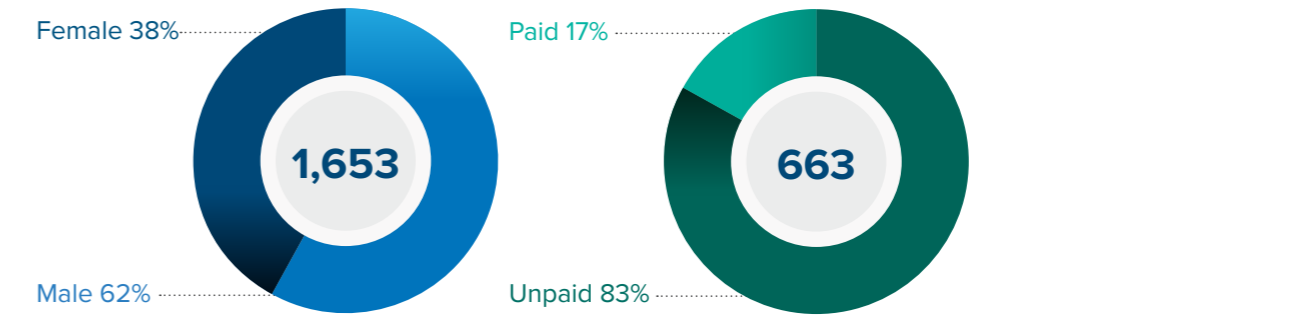
The dynamics of employment for refugees are moving in a positive trajectory, although persistent barriers remain. These obstacles may result in refugees experiencing unemployment, underemployment or engagement in the informal economy, leading to low-income levels and an inability to adequately support themselves and their families. The existing barriers also imply that the skills and capacities refugees could contribute to their host economies remain largely underutilized. The resilience displayed by refugees in overcoming these challenges stands as evidence of their untapped potential, ready to be fully realised. This year’s report therefore highlights specific initiatives that DAFI partners and UNHCR are leading on as well as the successes of scholars and alumni after they graduate, emphasising the critical linkage between the DAFI programme and the expansion of sustainable livelihood opportunities.

2023 GLOBAL DAFI METRICS

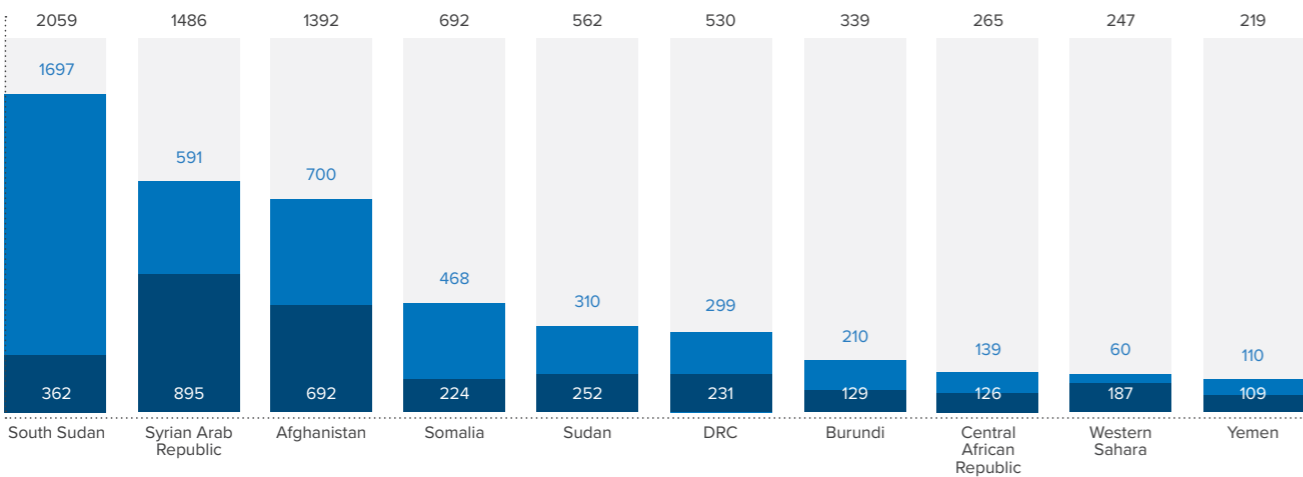
APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED | NEW SCHOLARSHIPS ISSUED | TOTAL DAFI STUDENTS



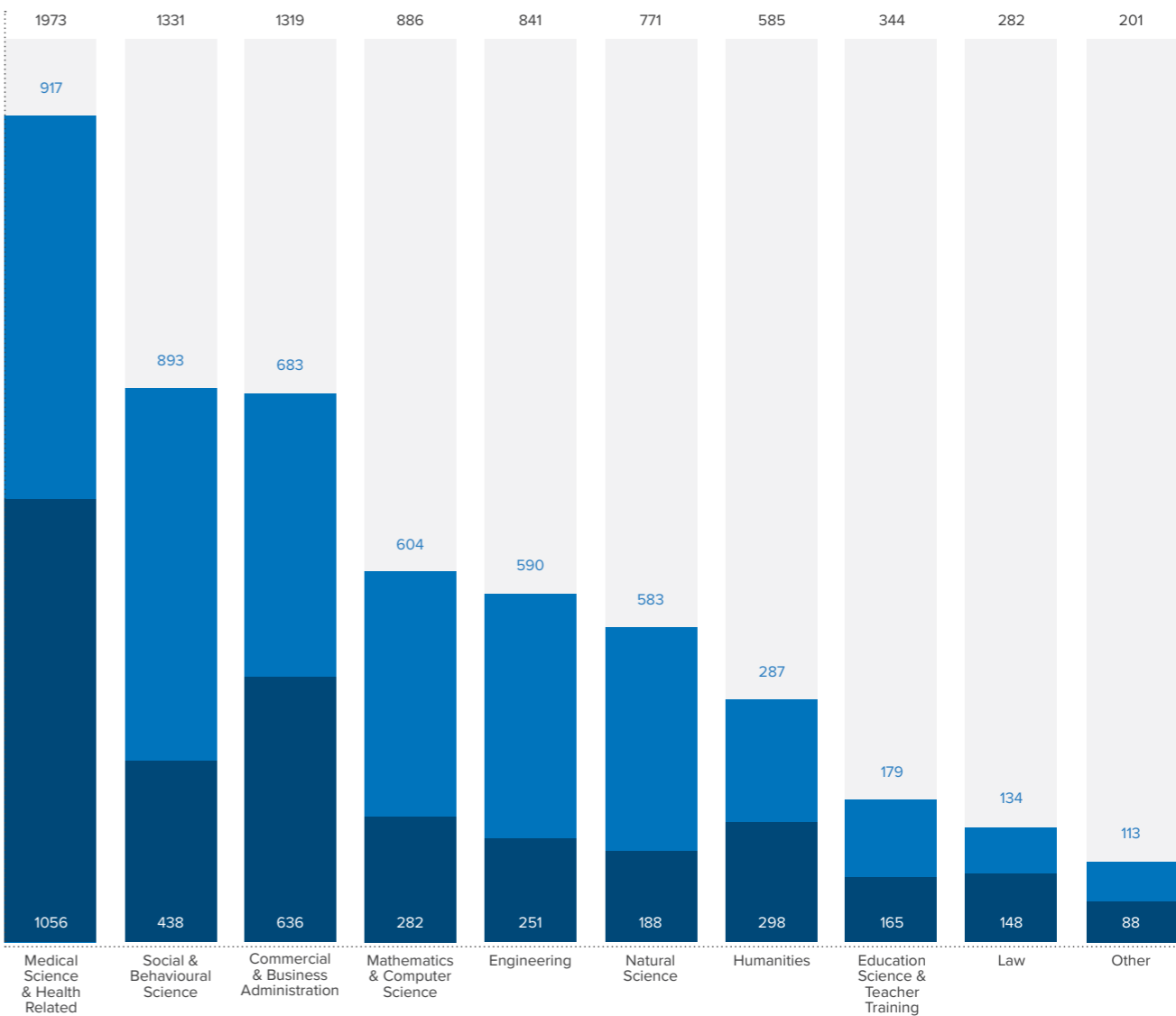
GRADUATES | ALUMNI IN INTERNSHIPS 2023 | Paid | Unpaid



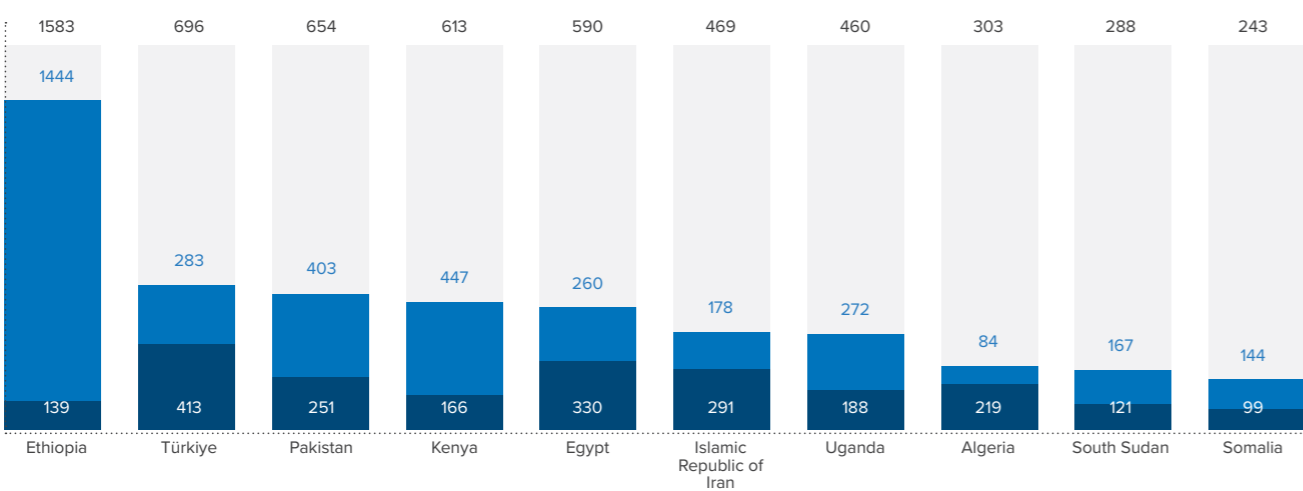
TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN | Male | Female



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY | Male | Female



TOP COUNTRIES OF STUDY | Male | Female



GLOBAL CONTEXT

As of May 2024, over 120 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, including over 30 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate. Compared to a decade ago, the total number of refugees in the world has more than tripled, reaching 43.4 million during 2023.³ This increase of 7 per cent, relative to 2022, was largely driven by large-scale new displacement resulting from the outbreak of conflict in Sudan and an increase in refugees from Afghanistan. The largest proportion of refugees are from Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela and Ukraine and, as in prior years, a majority (75 per cent) continue to reside in low- and middle-income countries.⁴ The DAFI programme strives to respond to the needs of the world’s most urgent displacement situations and in 2023, the majority of DAFI scholars were from South Sudan, Syria and Afghanistan, while students displaced from Ukraine, Colombia, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other locations affected by crises were also represented. Programmes in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region continue to comprise nearly half of DAFI scholars (41 per cent).



Over 31 million people in the world today are refugees under UNHCR’s mandate and nearly 14 per cent are young people aged 18 to 24 years.⁵ Five years after UNHCR and partners set the 15by30 target – to achieve enrolment of 15 per cent of refugee youth in higher education by 2030 –, refugee enrolment in higher education stands at 7 per cent.⁶ Among the pathways to higher education outlined in the 15by30 Roadmap, the DAFI programme is the cornerstone and a critical driver of UNHCR’s focus on strengthening avenues to higher education and beyond, towards sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance.

15BY30: THE ROLE OF DAFI

The 15by30 Roadmap report (December 2023)⁷ was drafted by UNHCR in collaboration with over 40 partner organisations and individuals dedicated to expanding pathways to higher education for refugees. The Roadmap highlights concrete actions that higher education institutions and university networks, national governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, development actors, employers, lending and financial institutions, foundations and private funders, connectivity providers and student leaders can take to reduce barriers, strengthen partnerships and increase opportunities in higher education.

Scholarship programmes that specifically support refugees, such as DAFI, continue to be vital. They play an important role reducing the high fees and costs associated with tertiary education, particularly where refugees do not have the right to work or where refugee students are charged higher tuition fees than national students.⁸ The need for additional support is clear, as the DAFI programme received 15,600 applications for just 1,942 new scholarship places in 2023. While over 80 per cent of the countries where the DAFI programme operates officially allow refugees the right to access higher education, in practice, refugees are rarely eligible to receive government-issued loans or other financial aid for their education.

3. UNHCR, “Global trends”. Available from www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

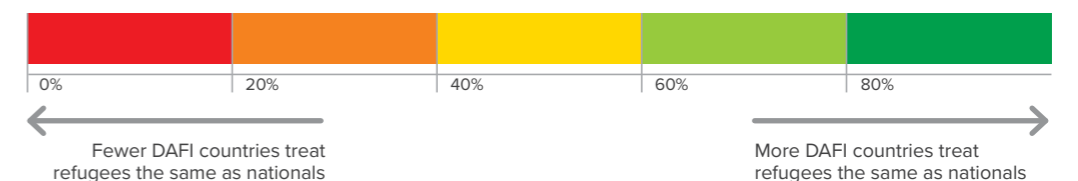
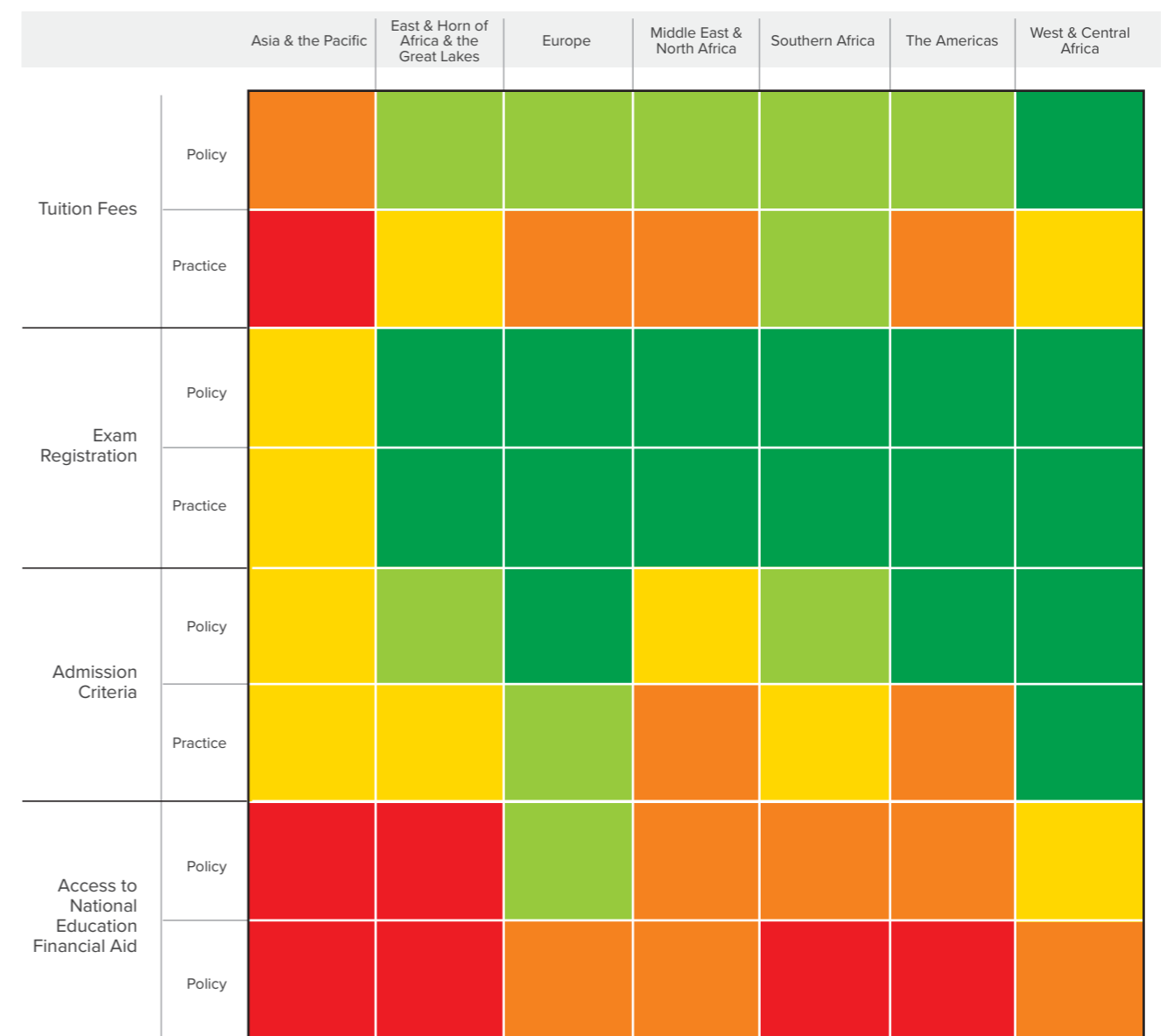
6. UNHCR, “15by30 roadmap”. Available from www.unhcr.org/media/15by30-roadmap-expanding-higher-education-skills-and-self-reliance-refugees.

7. Ibid.

8. This is most often when refugees are charged international student fees, which are typically higher than national student fees.

Inclusion across components of higher education in DAFI countries: policy vs. practice

This heat map illustrates the percentage of DAFI countries in each region that treat refugees the same as nationals, in policy as well as practice, across several areas directly linked to higher education access and inclusion. These include tuition fees, exam registration, admission criteria and national education financial aid offerings. For example, with respect to exam registration, over 80 per cent of DAFI countries in nearly all regions (except for Asia and the Pacific) apply the same standards to nationals and refugees in both policy and practice. On the other hand, noticeably fewer countries across all regions have education financial aid access policies that treat refugees the same as nationals. In practice, the gap visibly widens. For example, while at least 40 per cent of DAFI countries in both Europe and West and Central Africa have policies that establish equal access to education financial aid, this declines noticeably in practice.



The 15by30 Roadmap underscores the fundamental role of higher education in supporting sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance. The Roadmap also emphasises how higher education opportunities motivate secondary school completion⁹ as well as how refugees can use their higher education credentials, skills and experiences after they graduate. Although it is well known that the economic returns for tertiary graduates are the highest in the entire educational system,¹⁰ especially for women,¹¹ refugees face practical barriers to employment in nearly all countries where the DAFI programme operates. These include employer bias or misunderstanding of the laws in place, cumbersome or expensive documentation requirements, industry restrictions and even barriers to registering businesses and opening bank accounts.

To mitigate barriers, enable refugee graduates to pursue employment opportunities or even advocate for

policy changes, more and more DAFI implementation teams are taking steps to deliver more than a simple scholarship programme. DAFI programmes around the world continue to work towards gender parity in enrolment, while also investing in preparation for life after graduation by organising trainings and workshops that focus on preparing current scholars and alumni to excel in the job search process as well as on building other in-demand and professional skills, including in entrepreneurship. UNHCR and partners create opportunities for scholars to network and engage with prospective employers through career fairs and job site visits and promote partnerships with local and global organisations to facilitate pathways to internships, apprenticeships and employment. Finally, DAFI scholars and alumni are taking on leadership roles as well as engaging in advocacy efforts alongside UNHCR and partners.

RIGHT TO WORK: DAFI COUNTRIES

Without ensuring refugees the right to work, expanding access to and improving inclusion within higher education systems for refugees cannot translate into the well documented, significant improvements in livelihoods and earnings outcomes for refugees as well as host communities. Therefore, UNHCR and partners are intensifying efforts to improve the economic inclusion of refugees. This requires collaboration at all levels to adapt successful policies and programmes as well as ongoing evaluation to ensure their effectiveness in meeting the evolving needs of refugees and host communities.

While policies in two thirds of countries where the DAFI programme operates officially permit refugees the right

to work, in practice, refugees are able to participate in the formal labour market in approximately one third of these countries. The most common barriers to exercising the right to work in practice include discrimination or lack of information about hiring refugees and restrictive or costly documentation requirements. Furthermore, refugees may be unable to register their own businesses or open bank accounts. The DAFI programme seeks to mitigate these barriers in a multitude of ways – by providing scholars with dedicated career support, facilitating networking opportunities and partnering with companies and employers to raise awareness, create internship programmes and strengthen pathways to employment for DAFI graduates.¹²

Inclusion in the labour market in DAFI countries: policy vs. practice¹³

This heat map illustrates the percentage of DAFI programme countries in each region that treat refugees the same as nationals in policy versus practice, with respect to three categories that are directly linked to the right to work – work permits and other documentation requirements, the right to open a bank account and the right to register a business. For example, with respect to employment documentation, a majority of DAFI countries in four regions (Europe, Southern Africa, the Americas and West and Central Africa) have policies that establish equivalent standards for refugees and nationals. In practice, however, a majority of DAFI countries in only one region (West and Central Africa) treat refugees and nationals the same when it comes to employment documentation requirements.



9. In 2022, UNHCR conducted an independent evaluation of the DAFI programme to understand its relevance, effectiveness and impact. The evaluation was conducted using a mixed methods approach, including surveys administered to DAFI participants and implementers as well as the analysis of nearly 10 years of DAFI programme data (2014 to 2020). Most notably, the evaluation found that knowledge of scholarship opportunities for refugees is associated with improved retention in secondary school. This effect is more pronounced for refugee girls and those living in camp settings. UNHCR Education Section, "DAFI programme evaluation summary 2022: Relevance, effectiveness, impact" (Copenhagen, 2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/media/dafi-programme-evaluation-summary-2022-0.

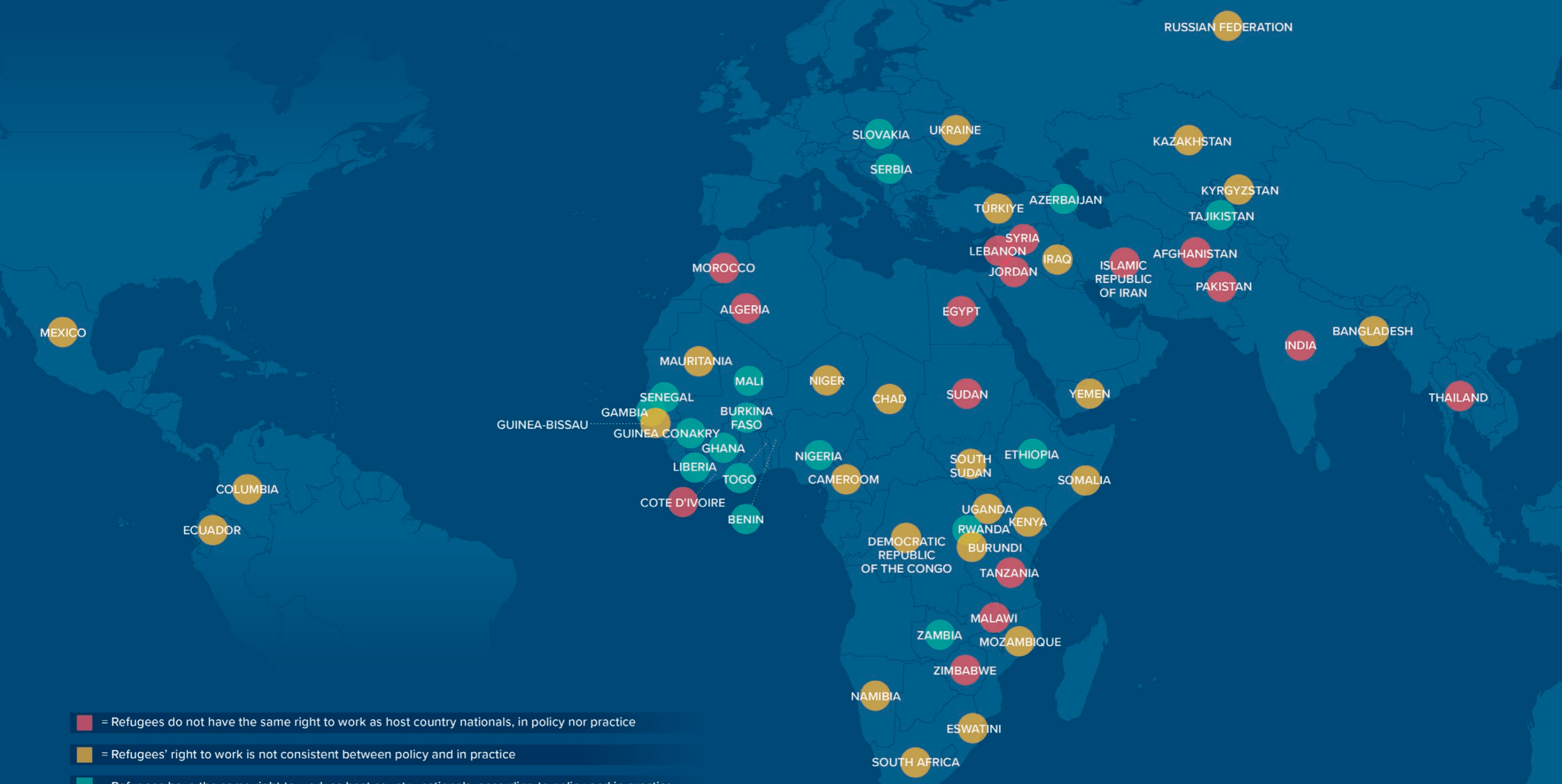
10. World Bank Group, "Tertiary education". Available from www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation.

11. Quentin Wodon, Claudio Montenegro, Hoa Nguyen and Adenike Onagoruwa, "Missed opportunities: The high cost of not educating girls" (Washington, DC: World Bank). A

12. UNHCR conducts a biennial Global Survey on Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion that seeks to identify and highlight progress towards expanding refugees' access to economic and social rights whilst calling for collaboration between partners and ongoing evaluation. The latest survey was published in 2023 and is available from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-survey-livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion-report-december-2023>.

13. DAFI 2023 annual reporting data (UNHCR 2024).

RIGHT TO WORK IN POLICY VS. PRACTICE – DAFI COUNTRIES¹⁴



- = Refugees do not have the same right to work as host country nationals, in policy nor practice
- = Refugees' right to work is not consistent between policy and in practice
- = Refugees have the same right to work as host country nationals, according to policy and in practice

¹⁴ DAFI 2023 annual reporting data (UNHCR 2024).

SLOVAKIA. Sofiia, Reidzio and Mariia (from left to right) are DAFI scholars enrolled at Comenius University. Reidzio is a second-year student of Central European Studies.



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

PREPARING DAFI SCHOLARS FOR THE JOB MARKET AND BEYOND

For many years, DAFI programmes in all regions have provided current scholars, new graduates and, in some cases, alumni with career readiness training, information on local labour laws and how to adapt to the work environment. Employment counselling often includes teaching scholars how to create and refine their CVs, write cover letters and prepare for interviews. This aligns closely with recommendations made by DAFI scholars and alumni. When asked what support and resources would best enable refugee higher education graduates to prepare for and secure employment, scholars repeatedly emphasised the importance of personalised support, coaching and industry-specific skills development to help them identify their career goals and navigate the job market.¹⁵

For example, in 2023, 20 graduate DAFI scholars and alumni in Jordan participated in a two-day employability skills training course which focused on the most in-demand labour market skills to boost participants' employment prospects.

DAFI programmes also forge partnerships with both public and private sector actors to strengthen training offerings. In Mexico, UNHCR partnered with consulting company Accenture to deliver a virtual soft skills workshop for DAFI scholars and alumni. This training covered the fundamentals of successful interviewing, leadership, time management, high impact presentations, teamwork and negotiation. In Cameroon, UNHCR and the DAFI implementation partner collaborated with the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the National Employment Fund and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to organise a job search workshop. 62 DAFI scholars and alumni from the cities Yaoundé, Douala and Bertoua learned how to develop CVs and explore job platforms through role-play exercises.

Beyond application and job search techniques, DAFI implementation partners and UNHCR have developed and led training for DAFI scholars and alumni on public speaking, project management, sustainable development, social media management, IT and computer skills, as well as English, French and other language courses. For example, in Ghana, the DAFI implementation partner organised a research seminar for 16 final-year students to improve their research methodology and analysis skills. Finally, the implementation partner in Pakistan developed the DAFI Learning Management System – an accessible online platform offering courses on reading comprehension, academic writing, listening and speaking skills. This online tool gives students much more flexible access to skills development compared to on-site training, and 100 DAFI scholars have successfully completed courses to-date.

Training led by Simplon in Burkina Faso

Recognising the need for skilled workers in the digital sector, UNHCR and Simplon are working in partnership to train refugee higher education graduates for recruitment in digital professions in Burkina Faso and beyond. In the second phase of a pilot project, 15 DAFI alumni joined Simplon for eight months of intensive training, supplemented by a one-month internship for on-the-job immersion to deepen their skills.

Learners are accompanied by an employment mediation officer during and after the training to support their transition to professional placement. The employment mediator directs the students to job opportunities, monitors their job applications and provides general advice and support relating to the transition to work. As a result, six months after completing the training, roughly 80 per cent of refugee participants from the second cohort were placed in professional positions.



Burkina Faso. Maiga Faïçal graduated with the support of a DAFI scholarship from the Université Libre du Burkina in 2023 with a degree in Business Administration and Management. He now works for SERTA Telecom as a web developer.

“A specific moment that led me to my field of study was when I had the opportunity to work in a small local business during my studies. I was fascinated by the complexity of day-to-day management, the operational challenges and the need to make informed decisions to ensure the growth and sustainability of the business. This reinforced my belief that business management and administration is an area where I can make a significant contribution.

Through the Simplon/UNHCR training I gained a solid understanding of web programming languages such as HTML, CSS and JavaScript, as well as frameworks and libraries such as React.js and Angular. The training also gave me the opportunity to work on projects as part of a team, which strengthened my communication, collaboration and project management skills. Focusing on practical learning through concrete projects is crucial to the effectiveness of the Simplon training. I was able to put my knowledge into practice by developing real web applications, which gave me hands-on experience and prepared me for real challenges in web development.”

¹⁵ DAFI 2023 annual reporting data (UNHCR 2024).

Training led by the Bioforce Africa Centre in Senegal

In 2021, UNHCR and Bioforce launched a pilot project integrating refugee students into professional training courses offered by the Bioforce Africa Training Centre in Dakar, Senegal. Proving successful, the pilot developed into the Refugees Capacity Building in Humanitarian and Development Professions, which is highlighted as a good practice initiative¹⁶ under the Global Compact on Refugees.

A strong example of a strategic partnership between UNHCR, industry and government, the programme has enabled 22 young refugees in West and Central Africa to pursue higher diploma courses in the humanitarian sector at the Bioforce Africa Training Centre in Dakar, followed by a six-month internship. This project supports their professional integration into humanitarian or development sectors, delivering relevant vocational training to facilitate their participation and representation in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives.

The project also includes a local component designed to address community needs within Niger by providing training to community agents and facilitators from diverse backgrounds, including refugees, internally displaced persons, and members of host communities. These training sessions fostered exchanges centred around crucial topics, such as enhancing the efficacy of community facilitators' efforts in Niger.

Thus far, nine participants have secured either an internship or employment, but professional integration remains challenging as long as refugees continue to face restrictions on access to the formal labour market. At the launch ceremony, UNHCR's then Deputy Representative in Niger, Kahilo José Katounda made a plea to potential employers: "I would like to take advantage of this launch to invite you to join us in this

advocacy [...] You also have a direct role to play, not least in considering recruiting these young refugees and internally displaced people to work in your organisations."

Guide Fidèle Ibuka graduated from the *École Polytechnique De Thiès* (Thies Polytechnic School) in Senegal in 2020, where she completed a degree in civil engineering on a scholarship from the DAFI programme. Having always wanted to work in the humanitarian sector, she continued her studies in civil engineering and determined that she could combine her studies and passion by pursuing work in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector. Through a training and internship opportunity facilitated by Bioforce, Fidèle secured an internship with the UNHCR Regional Bureau of West and Central Africa, where she gained practical experience addressing the risk of drought and flooding in 17 refugee camps in Chad. In the role, she was able to practice skills developed during her bachelor's studies, including in Geographic Information System (GIS) software. Her experience and future contribution, she hopes, will enable humanitarian actors to better plan for and respond to WASH challenges in the region.

Reflecting on her experience as a DAFI scholar, Fidèle notes that the DAFI scholarship gave her serenity and peace of mind, allowing her to focus on her studies. She also highlights the difficulty that many refugees, including DAFI alumni, continue to face in accessing and integrating into the job market due to labour market restrictions, lack of information and employers' preference for national candidates. For this reason, she explains, more support to enable refugees to obtain internship opportunities and advanced studies, develop their professional skills and build understanding of their fields of choice is essential to facilitate a better and more effective transition to work following graduation.

Senegal. Fidèle graduated with a degree in civil engineering in 2020, on a DAFI scholarship.



¹⁷UNHCR/Global Compact on Refugees, "Good practices: Refugees Capacity Building in Humanitarian and Development Professions – RECAPREF" (no date). Available from globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/refugees-capacity-building-humanitarian-and-development-professions-recapref.



Colombia. Kris, from Venezuela, is studying early Childhood Education at university in Colombia.

NETWORKING & ENGAGING WITH EMPLOYERS

Beyond training and skills development, DAFI scholars and alumni highlight the importance of networking and community support to enable scholars to connect with local employers at events and through online exchange forums. In 2023, many DAFI implementation partners and UNHCR facilitated such opportunities through job fairs, site visits, web-based employment exchange platforms and alumni portals to enable graduates to share information about opportunities and to interact with employers.

For example, in both Jordan and Algeria, DAFI scholars had the opportunity to visit Hikma Pharmaceuticals'

manufacturing sites and laboratories. This allowed the scholars to engage in discussions with managers about the evolution of the company, product distribution and the experience of working for Hikma.

Also in 2023, the University of Namibia organised a career fair event, which resulted in five scholars securing internships in the fields of medicine, cybersecurity, civil engineering and informatics. Finally, in Colombia, open online platforms, university and municipality job exchanges, job fairs, and job boards helped to connect DAFI scholars and alumni with employers and professional opportunities.

PATHWAYS TO INTERNSHIPS & EMPLOYMENT

In order to support refugees to access work after graduating, many DAFI partners and UNHCR are working to build practical, on-the-job training opportunities into scholars' higher education. This includes placement in internships and apprenticeships, including by collaborating with private and public-sector partners to create and subsidise opportunities. For example, in Egypt, the implementation partner provided career advice sessions through a service provider, E-Youth, to 50 DAFI scholars. Subsequently, 30 participants were placed in internship opportunities. In Burundi, the implementation partner worked with the Association of Guides of Burundi as well as the Research and Improvement Centre to place DAFI scholars in internships. The initiative involved identifying 29 professional organisations that agreed to host DAFI scholars as interns as well as coaching sessions to teach participants how to search for jobs and prepare for interviews. As a result, eight DAFI alumni secured employment in 2023 and nine

alumni were placed in internships. In Mali, the DAFI programme advocates with institutes and organisations to help scholars and new graduates obtain internships and employment. As a result, in 2023, two DAFI scholars secured internships with SOS Children's Villages Mali.

In Pakistan, DAFI Plus is an ongoing programme that was developed to connect current DAFI scholars, alumni and other educated refugees from Afghanistan with digital skills and on-the-job training opportunities. The goal is to equip participants with marketable professional experience and skills. In 2023, 252 young people participated in the DAFI Plus programme, half of whom were women. All completed three to five months of training and 100 DAFI scholars were placed with different companies and organisations aligned with their educational experience and professional goals.



Darlene, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a DAFI graduate of Finance from Kigali Independent University (ULK) and is the mother of three children.

“Studying at university and benefitting from the DAFI scholarship helped me open my mind and gain confidence. It was a change of mindset for me. I gained opportunities and skills, and I built connections with national [students]. Ok, things have not turned out as I had hoped, but I am not giving up. I will keep looking for a job because it would change my life and that of my family or even my community. Refugee students and youth are highly skilled, capable, knowledgeable and strong, sometimes more than others. However, we can hardly get jobs. This is not fair. We need more advocacy so that we can apply and compete with others on an equal footing. Even when only a few of us succeed, it really inspires others.”

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy



Anna, from Pereiaslav, central Ukraine, is a second-year BA student of Business Management in the Faculty of Economics and Management at the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, on a DAFI scholarship.

“After my bachelor’s, I would like to continue at the master’s level, probably in the field of international management. I would also like to keep practising my skills at work. DAFI has actually supported me in this area already. Tomorrow will be my first day at work! I will be starting an internship in Bratislava, at a large logistics and industrial real estate development company. I will work there for one year, two days per week. I am very excited about it! UNHCR supported me throughout the entire application process. I am super motivated to improve myself, to improve my knowledge. I am not afraid to be given a lot of tasks. At this point, I just want to gain as much experience as possible.

This internship is a good opportunity to find the direction I want to take in the field of management, and to know where I would like to work in the future. It is better to start this process early on. It will also be useful in order to write my thesis, on the topic of interactions between Slovak and foreign workers. My message to the world is that people should never give up. They don't know how their life will change and they simply need to go after their dreams and try to be strong in every situation. Everything can be overcome.”



Felix is a DAFI alumnus living in Bujumbura, Burundi. He is employed by Lumitel Burundi, the country's largest telecom company.

When the DAFI programme opened in Burundi, "It was like a miracle. Hope was finally back." With the support of the scholarship, Felix enrolled at Université Lumière de Bujumbura in Computer Science. "My motivation came from the opportunity I was given, when I least expected it, as well as from the situation of crisis in Burundi. I had to make the most of that opportunity in order to open new doors for me and take my life to a new level." Based on his performance, Felix was selected to be part of an internship programme where he worked for six months in the IT department of Econet Wireless Burundi, a large telecommunications company. In 2014, Felix was hired by the technical department of Lumitel Burundi, and has been working there ever since.

In 2020, Felix received a microfinance loan and started a small print shop, where clients can make photocopies and print documents, or hire photo and video services. "You never know what is going to happen so one has to be ready. It is good to diversify your activities. My advice to young DAFI scholars is to learn how to sell themselves. They should not wait for the programme to cater for all their needs. We are students like everybody else. What matters is our competencies. Recruiters look for skills and performance. They are not interested in our status or personal story. That means we constantly have to learn new skills, in and out of university, in order to prove ourselves."

Today, Felix is determined to complete a master's degree and has been looking for every opportunity to do so. "My dream is to complete a PhD one day. I want to be an example for my family and to also contribute to the development of my country. My story is one that proves that no matter one's circumstances, everything remains possible. I am willing to keep proving it and unlocking my potential. I am determined to carry the flag of DAFI as far as possible. DAFI has lifted me out of the mud and taken me where I am today."

Apprenticeship programme in Jordan

In Jordan, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation identified an opportunity to enhance prospects for DAFI graduates by developing an apprenticeship and internship programme. The programme forges partnerships with private sector businesses and delivers targeted skills development. Demonstrating success in its first year, 18 of 20 participants completed their internship assignment, while one dropped out due to family reasons and one left the programme after securing a formal work contract.

Crucially, the programme sought to match each student's internship with their academic track. For example, those studying engineering and renewable energy interned in energy consulting and construction, pharmacy and medicine students interned with local pharmacies and medical labs, and architecture and interior design students interned with architecture and design firms.

In pre- and post-assessments of the programme, participants were asked to evaluate their perception

of their own skills in a range of areas. The post-assessment revealed a marked increase across all skills, including practical, scientific and academic knowledge; meeting deadlines; communication; teamwork; problem-solving; prioritisation; task adaptability; multitasking and seeking help. These findings demonstrated the significant value added by the internship and its training components.

The sustained success of the internship programme in Jordan will require long-term monitoring and overall, the programme recommends the following actions based on the findings from the first year of implementation: increase the number of apprenticeships available; expand the range of industries; offer periodic training for alumni to ensure continued professional development; explore options to increase financial support during the internship programme; promote networking among alumni, companies and other potential employers; provide additional language training and finally, continue to use labour market research to ensure that job readiness training and apprenticeship experiences remain aligned with the evolving job market.

“Thanks to the DAFI scholarship programme, I gained practical experience in renewable energy engineering during my apprenticeship with a leading company in renewable energy and solar solutions. Working closely with industry experts, I learned about the design, implementation and maintenance of renewable energy systems first-hand. This experience not only deepened my understanding of the sector but also honed my problem-solving and project management skills. Grateful for the support, I’m now prepared to make meaningful contributions to the renewable energy sector.”

Sameh Haj Ali, Jordan apprenticeship programme participant

Sameh Haj Ali, DAFI scholar, participated in the apprenticeship programme in Jordan.




© Noor Al Hussein Foundation/
Mohammad Debajah

STUDENTS AS ENTREPRENEURS & BUSINESS OWNERS

Through the DAFI programme, scholars have stepped into roles as entrepreneurs and business founders. Particularly in those countries where employers discriminate against or are unwilling to hire refugees, even when refugees officially have the right to work, entrepreneurship training and business development support is critical to expand livelihood opportunities for refugees.

For example, with technical support from the implementation partner, the DAFI Club in Guinea-Bissau promoted a micro-project management training. Participants, including DAFI students, refugee farmers and other young people, developed knowledge, skills and values to help them build social and local

community initiatives. Through this initiative, they engaged in non-formal education, community health projects and environmental and cleaning campaigns. In Niger, 30 DAFI scholars nearing graduation participated in a one-year training in entrepreneurship and job search techniques, which included helping them to create their own micro-enterprises. The programme aimed to empower participants and strengthen their socioeconomic inclusion in the host community. Finally, in Malawi, the theme of the annual DAFI workshop was “Preparing for life beyond university: Workforce & entrepreneurial mindset” and students gained knowledge of how an entrepreneurial mindset transcends specific industries and can prepare them to drive innovation and positive change.

A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt and khaki pants, stands in a furniture shop. He is surrounded by several large, dark leather armchairs. The shop has blue-painted pillars and a stone wall in the background. The lighting is warm and focused on the man.

François, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is an entrepreneur based in Kigali, Rwanda, where he runs a furniture shop. François graduated in 2021 with a bachelor's degree in Supply and Procurement Management from the University of Kigali with the support of a DAFI scholarship.

“ I had seen refugee graduates going back to the [refugee] camp and being jobless, so I decided to keep my job and attend evening classes.” Eventually, the two were difficult to reconcile and François had to quit his job. That is when he started making furniture on his own, one piece at a time. “I was able to put into practice many of the learnings I was acquiring at university in terms of networking, entrepreneurship, tender applications, etc. I also acquired more confidence to build my network.” Using his entrepreneurial mindset, François handled his DAFI living allowance “like a salary” and was able to save some of it in order to use it as seed capital for his business. “It meant that I was making a lot of sacrifices in order to save every cent I could. Yet, university opened my mind and allowed me to become resilient enough so that I could be successful in running my business. ”



Dr Balinda Rwigamba created the Independent University of Kigali (Université Libre de Kigali, ULK) in 1996, with a specific focus on entrepreneurship skills.

He completed his education while in exile in then Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and always dreamed of helping young people pursue their education. In 1995, he returned from exile to his home country, Rwanda. Noting the scarcity of universities in Rwanda and the challenges students faced when trying to secure a place at the country's only national university, he decided in 1996 to found Rwanda's first private university: ULK.

“If you create your own enterprise, you create jobs for others, you pay taxes, etc., which means you create a prosperous environment for your relatives, your community and your country.”

In this vein, the University runs a Business Incubation Centre as well as a Career Advisory Centre (with courses on company culture, CV building, presentation skills, searching for jobs, etc.). Furthermore, ULK has taken steps to be more accessible to prospective refugee students, including waiving admission and application fees, charging refugees the same academic fees as national students, offering evening classes and providing orientation sessions for DAFI scholars on academic requirements and university life.

Rwanda. Patience, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a final-year student of finance on a DAFI scholarship at Kigali Independent University. Patience is writing her final dissertation on e-banking and doing an internship within ULK's finance department. She is due to graduate in December 2024.



“[Next] I will try to get a job. I have managed to save a bit of funding from the scholarship, which will help me once I graduate. I will also use the good connections I've built, as well as the entrepreneurship skills I've acquired here at ULK through various training sessions.”

STUDENT MOBILISATION & LEADERSHIP

DAFI scholars and alumni routinely take the initiative to lead outreach, peer-to-peer communications and to support one another in their pursuit of higher education as well as postgraduate opportunities.

Information sessions for secondary school students about the DAFI programme and the importance of higher education, especially for women, are particularly valuable when created and delivered by students themselves. For example, at the end of 2023, DAFI alumni and current scholars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo organised an outreach day with young refugees to share their experiences pursuing higher education. 150 refugees participated and external experts, including professors from the National Pedagogical University, were invited to speak on entry, selection and recruitment at universities as well as opportunities for refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Furthermore, scholars have established peer-to-peer support networks and resources, both online and through student-led in-person meetings, which include current scholars and alumni. These support structures and networks are growing rapidly and play an essential role in helping refugees successfully pursue higher education and beyond. For example, in Jordan, six DAFI scholars were selected to serve as refugee guidance counsellors by World University Services Canada. The counsellors will form a core group responsible for conducting information sessions and providing support to their peers in target communities.

Burundi. Salima, Merci, Bienvenu and Estella (from left to right) are senior high-school students at Kinama refugee camp, in Burundi. They are originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).



“Education is our future. I am curious by nature. I look up to people who have knowledge.”

Bienvenu, high-school student in Kinama refugee camp, Burundi

Slovakia. Varvara, from Kramatorsk, in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, is a first-year bachelor's student of Dance Arts (Dance for Children and Youth) at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, Slovakia, on a DAFI scholarship.

“We also learn how to work with children and youth, and for me, this is very important. I think that a lot of problems in society come from the fact that many people have limited cultural knowledge. The cultural education we provide is very important. It is some kind of responsibility as well, so we have to study hard and grow our knowledge not only in dancing techniques and dancing history, but also in arts in general as well as pedagogy. Art is a bridge for multicultural understanding.”



WOMEN IN DAFI

In 2023, 42 per cent of DAFI scholars were women. Intensive work is under way to achieve gender parity, such as through targeted awareness-raising activities, including townhall meetings, focus-group discussions and individual and group counselling, to boost the rate of female applicants, particularly in countries with high gender disparity.

DAFI scholars and alumni also play a key role, by leading awareness-raising sessions and mentorship initiatives for young women in secondary school. These activities are especially important, as academic counselling and awareness of the DAFI programme improves secondary education retention rates, especially among women.¹⁷

For example, in Malawi, DAFI students organised and led awareness sessions for secondary school students and community members, with a focus on improving the enrolment of women in DAFI as well as career guidance. In Ghana, UNHCR and the implementation partner facilitated a mentorship event for nearly 30 women in junior high school, which focused on career guidance as well as information about higher education. All sessions and discussions were led by current DAFI scholars and alumni. In India, during the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence,”

DAFI scholars promoted women in DAFI as role models in their communities. Specifically, women in DAFI played a central role in community mobilisation efforts to motivate girls to continue their education. Finally, three women on DAFI scholarships in Mozambique participated in a consultative event with partners on the role of women in business and challenges that refugee women face in pursuing tertiary education and employment. Participants emphasised that women in higher education are an important source of motivation for other women to pursue higher education and livelihood opportunities. UNHCR is leveraging these insights to enhance awareness campaigns to encourage more women to apply to the DAFI programme.

In addition to pursuing an equal balance of women and men in the DAFI programme, implementing partners and UNHCR are also working to strengthen skills development and dedicated pathways towards livelihoods for women. This included digital skills development initiatives in Ghana and Cameroon. For example, in Cameroon, 32 women in DAFI took part in a boot camp entitled “Female Leadership in the Digital Age”, set up by UNHCR, the DAFI implementation partner, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the National Employment Fund and the United Nations Volunteers programme. The boot camp encouraged participants to explore digital professions, strengthened their skills and expanded their network in the sector, with one participant obtaining an internship in IT after the bootcamp. Operations also offered entrepreneurship skills training and development opportunities for women. In Pakistan, small grants (up to 180 USD) were provided to DAFI scholars who demonstrated their capacity for leadership and community development. Eight out of nine grants were provided to women who implemented networking initiatives, social activism to support orphaned children and awareness-raising activities focusing on health and hygiene.

The DAFI programme in Namibia collaborated with local organisations to raise awareness about employment resources, opportunities, support networks and to facilitate internship opportunities for

refugee women. As a result, several women secured internships and engaged in career development and volunteering initiatives. For example, one DAFI scholar pursuing her bachelor’s degree in cybersecurity secured an internship with Welwitchia Health Training Centre, a local organisation specialising in health-care education and training. During her internship, she gained hands-on experience implementing cybersecurity measures within health-care systems and learned about efforts to safeguard sensitive medical data and ensure data privacy compliance. Another scholar pursuing her bachelor’s degree in medicine and surgery obtained an internship with a local hospital, gaining practical experience in patient care, diagnostics and treatment protocols.

However, girls’ participation in education, especially in upper primary and secondary school, continues to be a challenge due to social and economic barriers as well as a lack of targeted support.

For example, in Ethiopia, a disproportionately low number of refugee girls complete secondary education, which in turn negatively impacts the transition of women into higher education. Therefore, the DAFI programme in Ethiopia delivered awareness sessions in 15 camps that highlighted the importance of gender parity in higher education. Furthermore, the UNHCR office in Ethiopia is implementing a small pilot intervention with the goal of increasing the

Globally, progress towards gender parity in the DAFI programme overall has not increased significantly over the last few years. This is primarily due to challenges increasing the enrolment of women in only one or two countries, which have significant numbers of beneficiaries.¹⁸ As part of the continued commitment to gender equity, implementing partners and UNHCR are taking important steps to improve gender balance among prospective DAFI scholars. As in many countries, access to quality secondary education in host countries plays a central role in protecting refugee youth, and adolescent girls in particular.

retention of girls in secondary school. This initiative includes activities that provide both childcare services for school-going mothers and menstrual health supplies. Supporting more girls to complete secondary education and transition into higher education in Ethiopia as well as Kenya, Pakistan, Tanzania, Mauritania, South Sudan, Somalia and Uganda is essential to positioning the DAFI programme to achieve gender parity.

¹⁷UNHCR Education Section, “DAFI programme evaluation summary 2022” Available from www.unhcr.org/media/dafi-programme-evaluation-summary-2022-0.

¹⁸In 2023, the Ethiopia supported the largest number of beneficiaries in the DAFI programme (1,583 scholars), but only 9 per cent were women. The global gender balance of the DAFI programme, excluding Ethiopia, stands at 49 per cent women.



DAFI WOMEN POWER CLUB

In Burundi, the DAFI Women Power Club is a mentoring initiative that was launched by students in 2022 with the goal of preparing young women DAFI scholars for future leadership roles and positive community change. The Club also established connections with private and public sector organisations to facilitate pathways to employment for women graduating from the DAFI programme.

Grace, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a final-year student of public health at Université Lumière de Bujumbura (Mutanga campus) on a DAFI scholarship. She is currently writing her final thesis, after having completed several internships at various health institutions across Burundi. She is also the current President of the DAFI Women Power Club.

“I want to promote female leadership. As educated women, we still have to fight the idea that an educated woman will not be a good wife. But we keep moving forward and mentoring younger refugee girls and women who come after us so that they can become leaders and have some impact in this world. Mentalities are slowly evolving. In order to have a job, you cannot rely on the fact that you are a refugee and that you might be positively discriminated for it or blame that status in case you don't succeed. The first thing, in order to get hired, is to be competent and have the right skill set. That's why we need even more trainings and workshops that are specific and job oriented.”

Burundi. Conseillères of the DAFI Women Power Club, from left to right: Murielle, Joséphine, Dorcas, Grace.



Espérance, from Burundi, works as a Community-Based Protection Associate in UNHCR's Muyinga office in Burundi.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Social Work (with a specialty in Correctional Education) from the *École Nationale des Travailleurs Sociaux Spécialisés* (National School of Specialized Social Workers – ENTSS), in Dakar, thanks to a DAFI scholarship. “I was in the camp, with no means whatsoever. My daughter was still a baby. I had to leave her there with her dad in order to pursue my university studies. My husband was very supportive. DAFI gave me the opportunity to go to college and have a better life, to become independent. My professional ambition was to work in the field of children's protection and rehabilitation.” In December 2003, Espérance returned to Burundi as part of a repatriation programme. She immediately began looking for jobs and less than six months later, she was hired by UNHCR's community-based protection unit, in the Ruyigi office. She has worked for the organisation ever since. Espérance's daughter is now 25 and recently completed her bachelor's degree in Nicosia, Cyprus.

“The fact that I was able to support my daughter's education is a result of the DAFI scholarship programme. By giving us access to knowledge and skills, DAFI accompanies us towards independence and equips us for the job market.”



ADVOCACY & ENGAGING WITH POLICYMAKERS

In addition to taking a leading role in peer-to-peer and community engagement, DAFI scholars and those implementing the DAFI programme readily engage in advocacy and dialogue with national government actors and other policymakers to discuss how to advance the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, higher education and the labour market.

For example, 14 DAFI Club members in Erbil, Iraq participated in the Kurdistan Education Forum – Middle East Education, Technology, Students Congress and Exhibition, the largest forum and exhibition for education in the Middle East and North Africa region, organised by the Ministry of Education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The students presented the DAFI programme and discussed refugee children's access to education in KRI with the Minister.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR organised a forum for employment (in early 2024) to bring together employment-sector stakeholders, discuss challenges and best practices to support refugees, identify solutions to promote the employment and inclusion of refugees and advocate for sustainable economic development. This included representatives from the National Commission for Refugees, the General Labour Inspectorate, the General Tax Directorate, UNHCR, local companies, employment service providers, training institutions, humanitarian organisations and young refugee job seekers. The forum generated a number of recommendations, including promoting and improving awareness about refugees' legal rights to work.

2023 GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

At the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, the 15by30 Roadmap for refugee higher education and self-reliance was at the centre of a global multi-stakeholder pledge that generated over 100 individual commitments from academic, faith-based, State, civil society, international organisations and private sector stakeholders to expand refugee access to higher education. The multi-stakeholder pledge emphasises that to reach 15 per cent enrolment by 2030, a range of contributions are needed to realise substantial numbers of refugee youth newly enrolled in higher education. Commitments by partners, expressed as pledges, address and support critical issues such as academic guidance services, scholarships, refugee-student-led initiatives, testing fees, hardware and connectivity, policy barriers, complementary

education pathways, data collection, higher education in emergencies, soft skills development, student solidarity actions, university rankings, access to information and more. Crucially, the Governments of Germany and Denmark reaffirmed their financial support for the DAFI programme through new pledges at the GRF.

DAFI student leaders were among the delegation representing refugee students from around the world. Students brought their specific experience and expertise to official panel sessions and delivered global pledge statements, speaker's corner interventions and independent networking and planning sessions across all thematic areas of the Global Refugee Forum, not limited to higher education.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM: Five DAFI scholars in Jordan participated in a Global Refugee Forum session that focused on identifying challenges facing refugees across sectors and proposing achievable solutions. Furthermore, a DAFI scholar from Syria studying in Jordan presented on the challenges facing students like him as well as his accomplishments. His presentation underscored the importance of inclusion of refugees in higher education.

The multi-stakeholder pledge was driven by an active co-leadership group comprising:

- Open Society University Network
- Times Higher Education
- Tertiary Refugee Student Network
- Duolingo
- Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network
- International Labour Organisation
- Global Student Forum
- Finn Church Aid
- Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium
- Global Task Force on Complementary Education Pathways

- World University Service of Canada
- Refugee-Led Research Hub

The 15by30 pledge was represented in a high-level side event featuring the Government of Türkiye, the Principality of Monaco, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), DAFI alumni and current master's students, UNHCR's Division of Resilience and Solutions, the University of Addis Ababa and Times Higher Education. Specific pledges were announced by the Government of Denmark, the Open Society University Network, the International Labour Organisation on behalf of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) Leadership Group, the Mastercard Foundation, Duolingo, the Government of Kazakhstan and the Interagency Steering Group on Higher Education in Emergencies.

FUNDING & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

The Government of Germany has been the primary supporter of the DAFI programme since its founding in 1992. In 2019, the Government of Denmark joined the DAFI partnership, having announced a multi-year contribution at the first Global Refugee Forum. To continue to expand and better meet the needs of the thousands of refugee students who are not admitted to the programme each year due to resource limitations, additional State donors to the programme are urgently sought. As pressure mounts to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals¹⁹ and to realise the objectives outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees,²⁰ UNHCR is confident that additional States will recognise the invaluable and unique role that the DAFI programme plays in reducing inequality, supporting self-reliance and promoting responsibility sharing. Access to higher education and

the opportunity to develop skills, earn credentials and build expertise is the essential link between learning and earning.

Launched in 2021, the Aiming Higher fundraising campaign responds to the immense interest in and support for refugee higher education from within the private sector. Global companies such as Hikma, BNP Paribas, Transsion, Volkswagen and others, along with foundations including the Saïd, Voss, Nanji and Tamer Foundations recognise the value and potential of higher education. Thousands of individual donors have also stepped up with contributions large and small, collectively creating a groundswell of new higher education opportunities for refugees everywhere. 8.8 million USD was raised to provide direct support to DAFI scholars worldwide in 2023.

19. UNDP, "What are the Sustainable Development Goals?" (no date). Available from www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals (accessed 18 July 2024).
20. UNHCR, "The Global Compact on Refugees" (no date). Available from www.unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/who-we-are/global-compact-refugees (accessed 18 July 2024).

Life Sciences Building

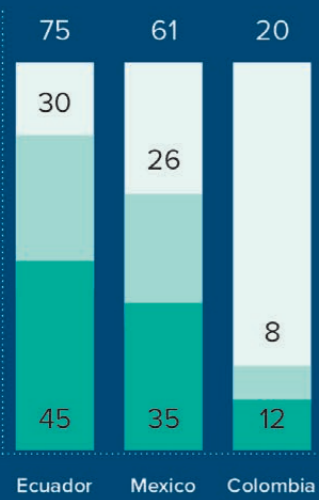
South Africa. Glory, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a third-year student in sport science at the University of Western Cape in South Africa.





REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY

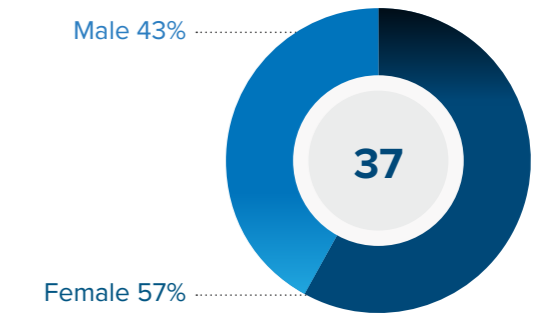


The Americas

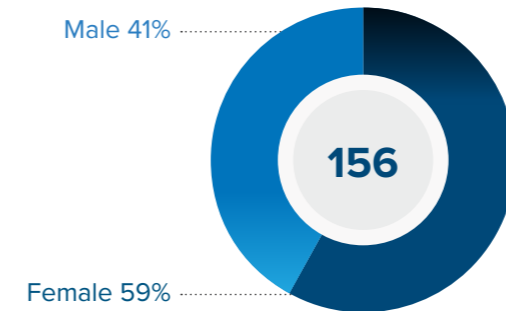
APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED



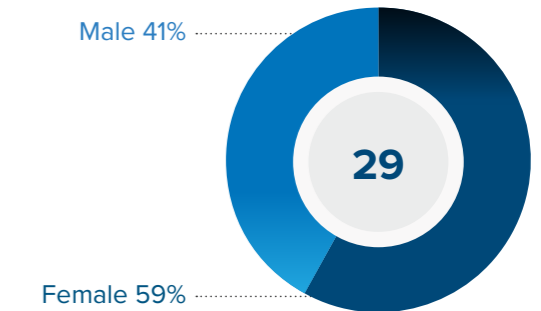
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS ISSUED



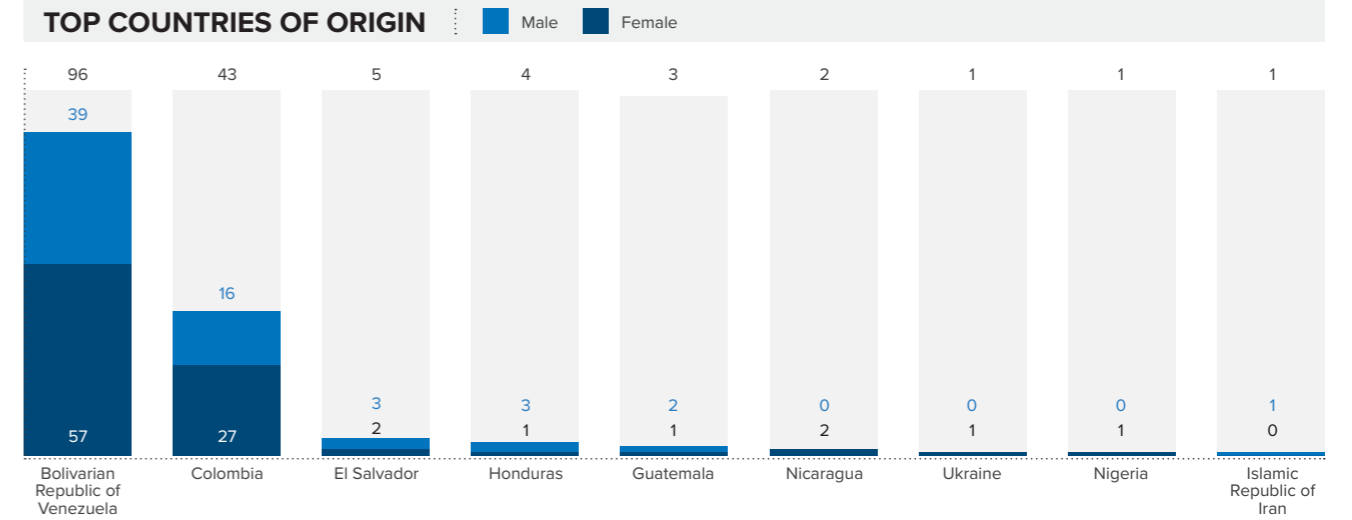
TOTAL DAFI SCHOLARS



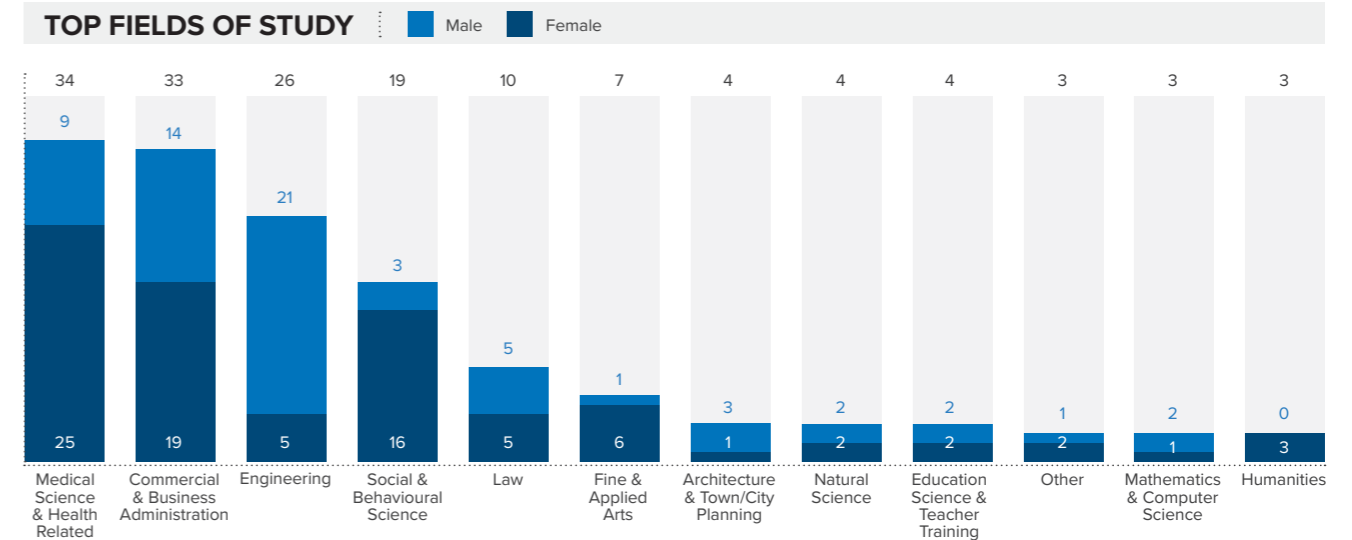
GRADUATES



TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



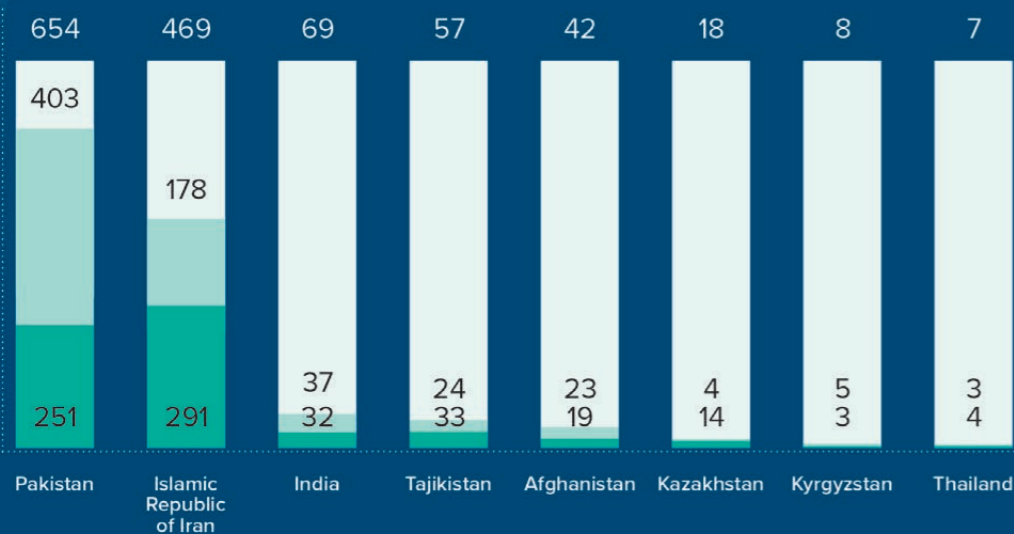
TOP FIELDS OF STUDY





ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY

Male Female



Asia & the Pacific

APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED

1,222



NEW SCHOLARSHIPS ISSUED

Male 36%

160

Female 64%

TOTAL DAFI SCHOLARS

Female 49%

1,334

Male 51%

GRADUATES

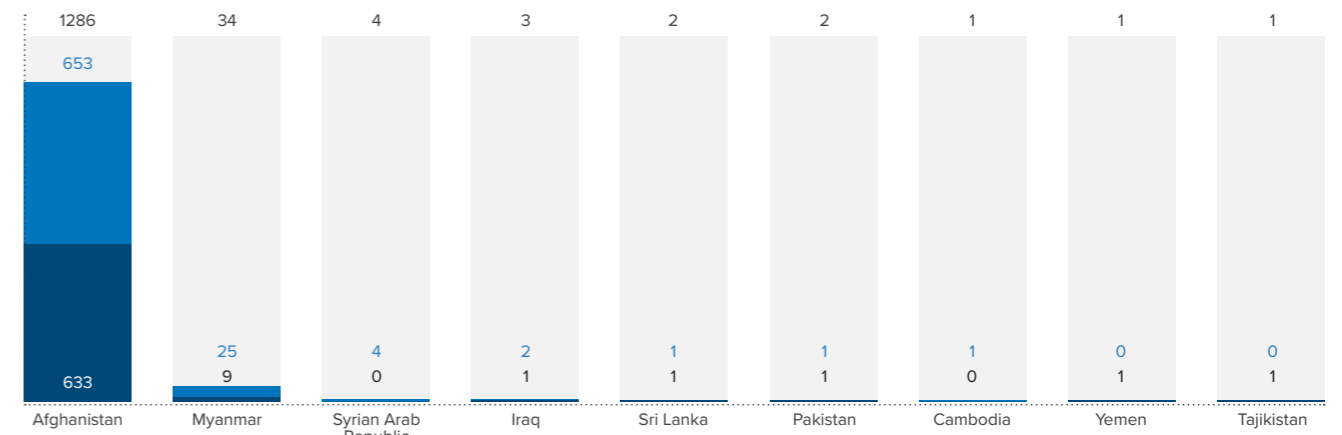
Female 36%

393

Male 64%

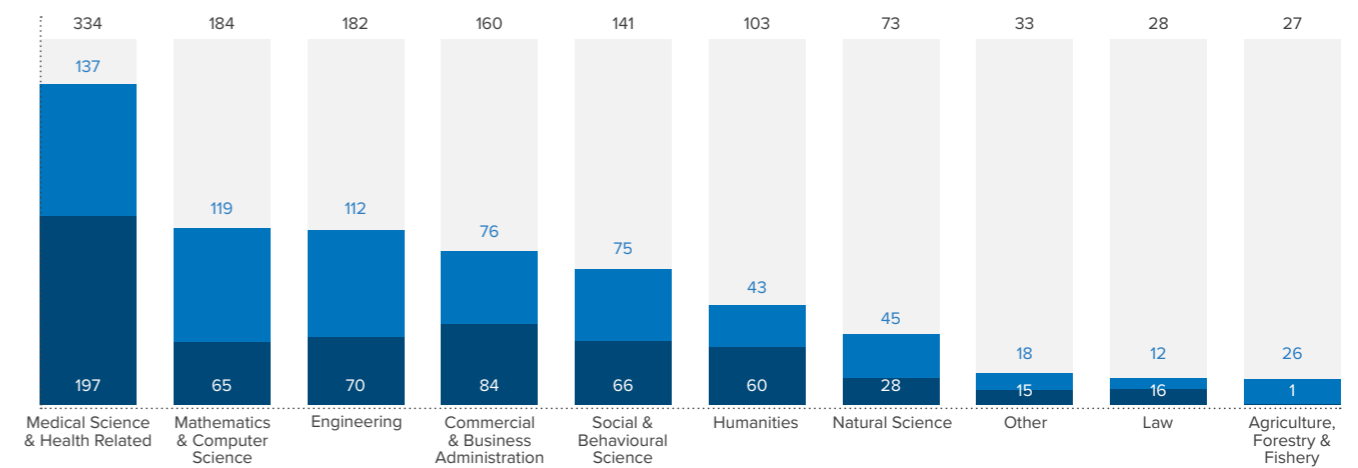
TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Male Female



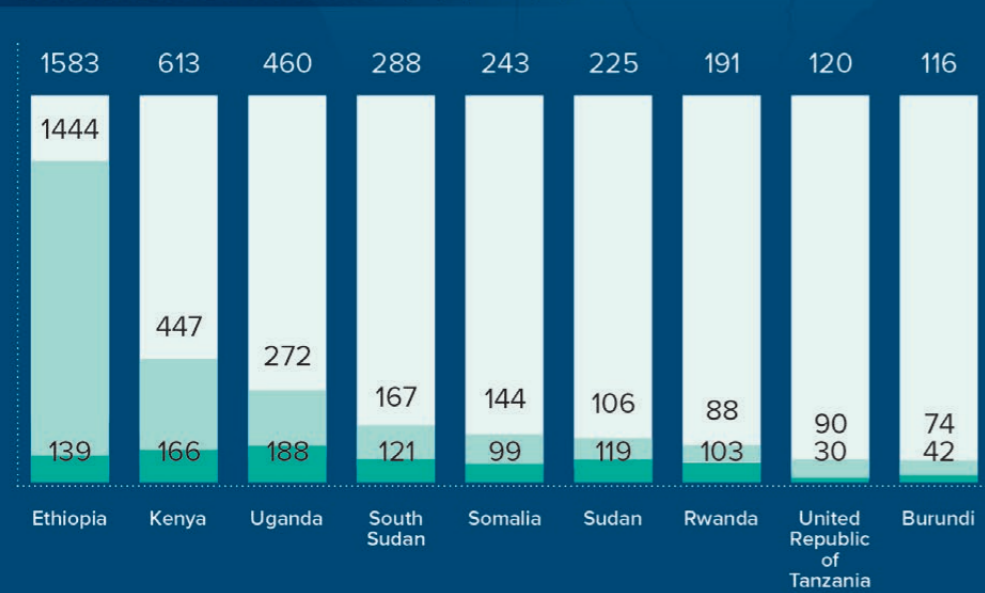
TOP FIELDS OF STUDY

Male Female





ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY

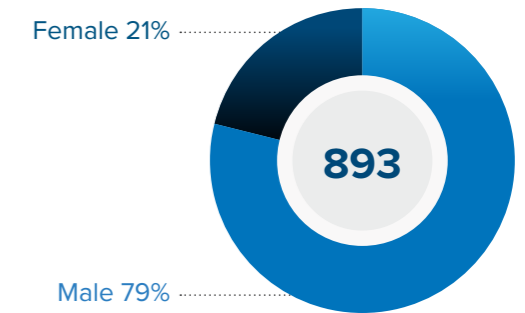


East & Horn of Africa & Great Lakes

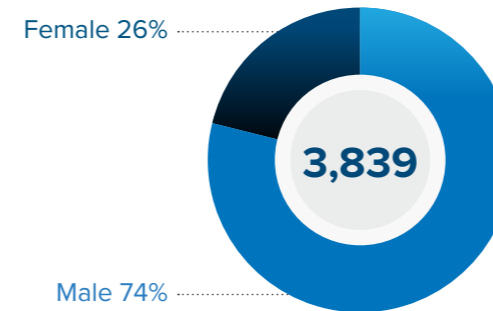
APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED



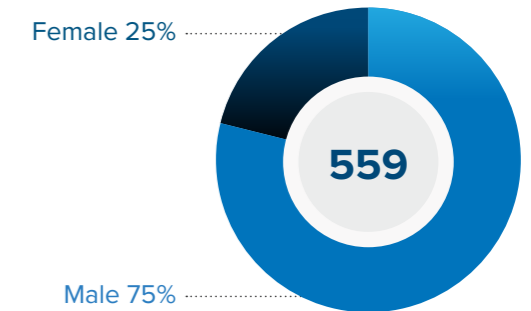
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS ISSUED



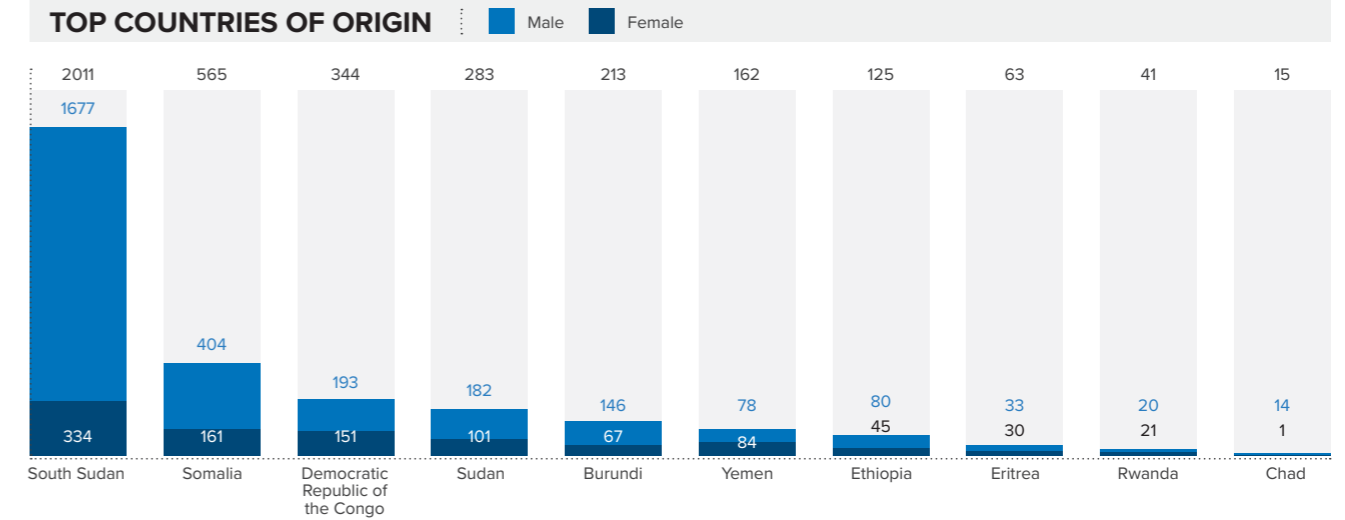
TOTAL DAFI SCHOLARS



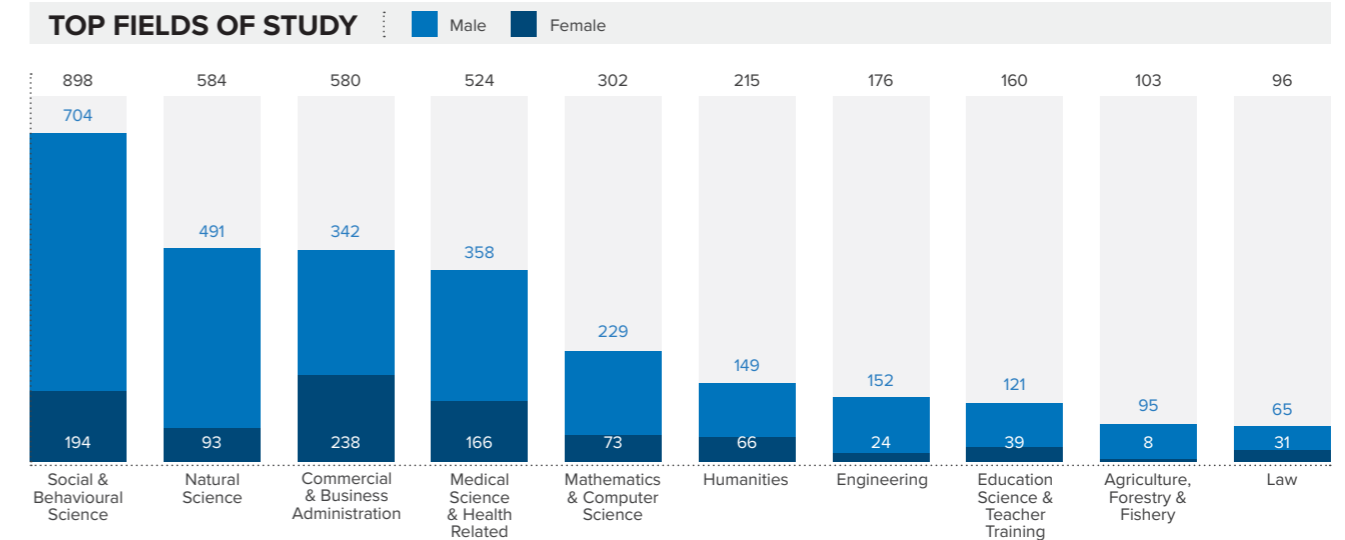
GRADUATES



TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

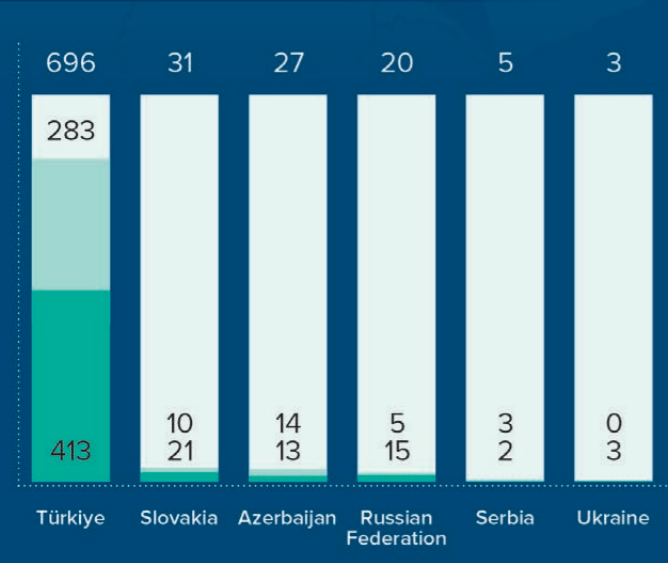


TOP FIELDS OF STUDY





ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY

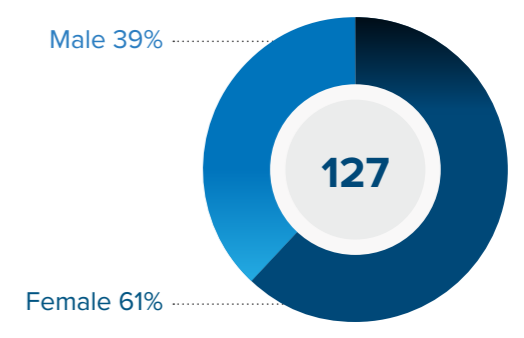


Europe

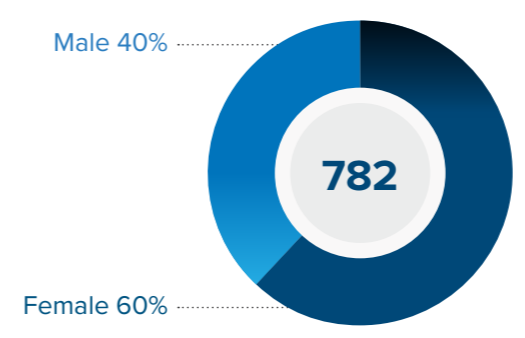
APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED



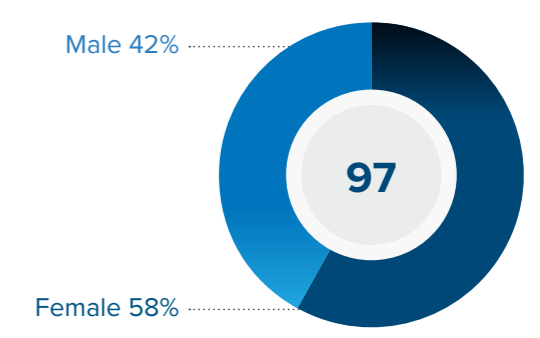
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS ISSUED



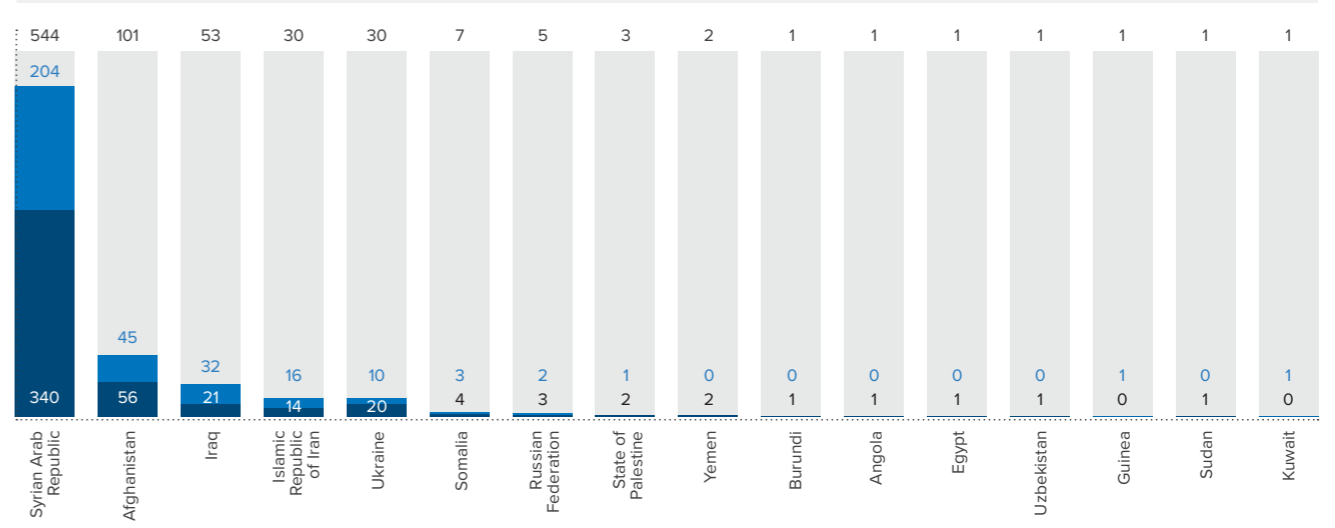
TOTAL DAFI SCHOLARS



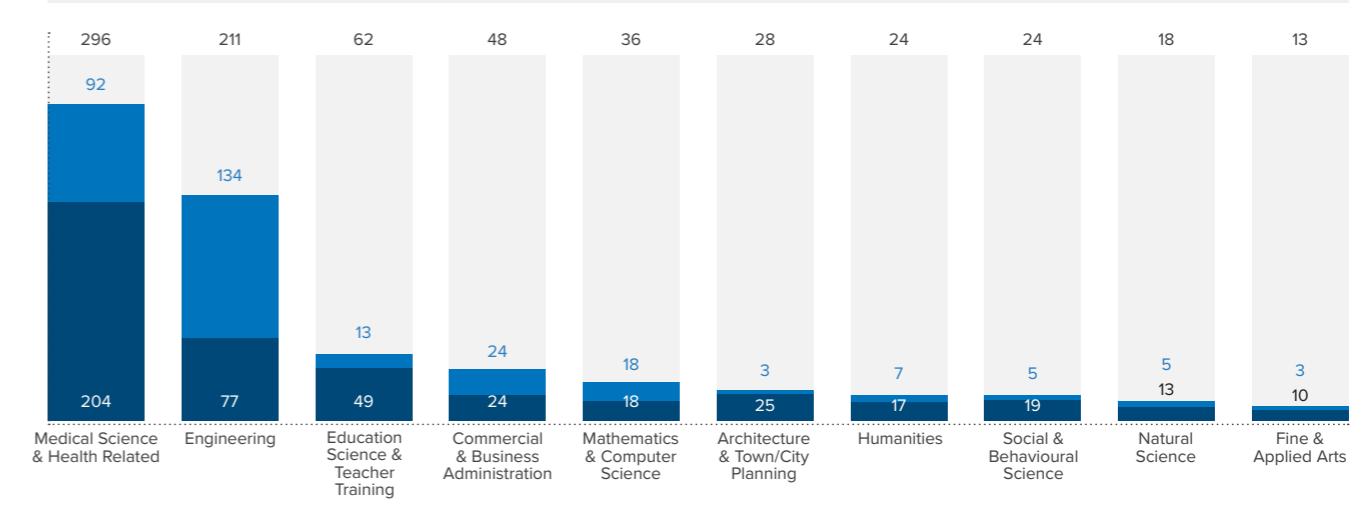
GRADUATES

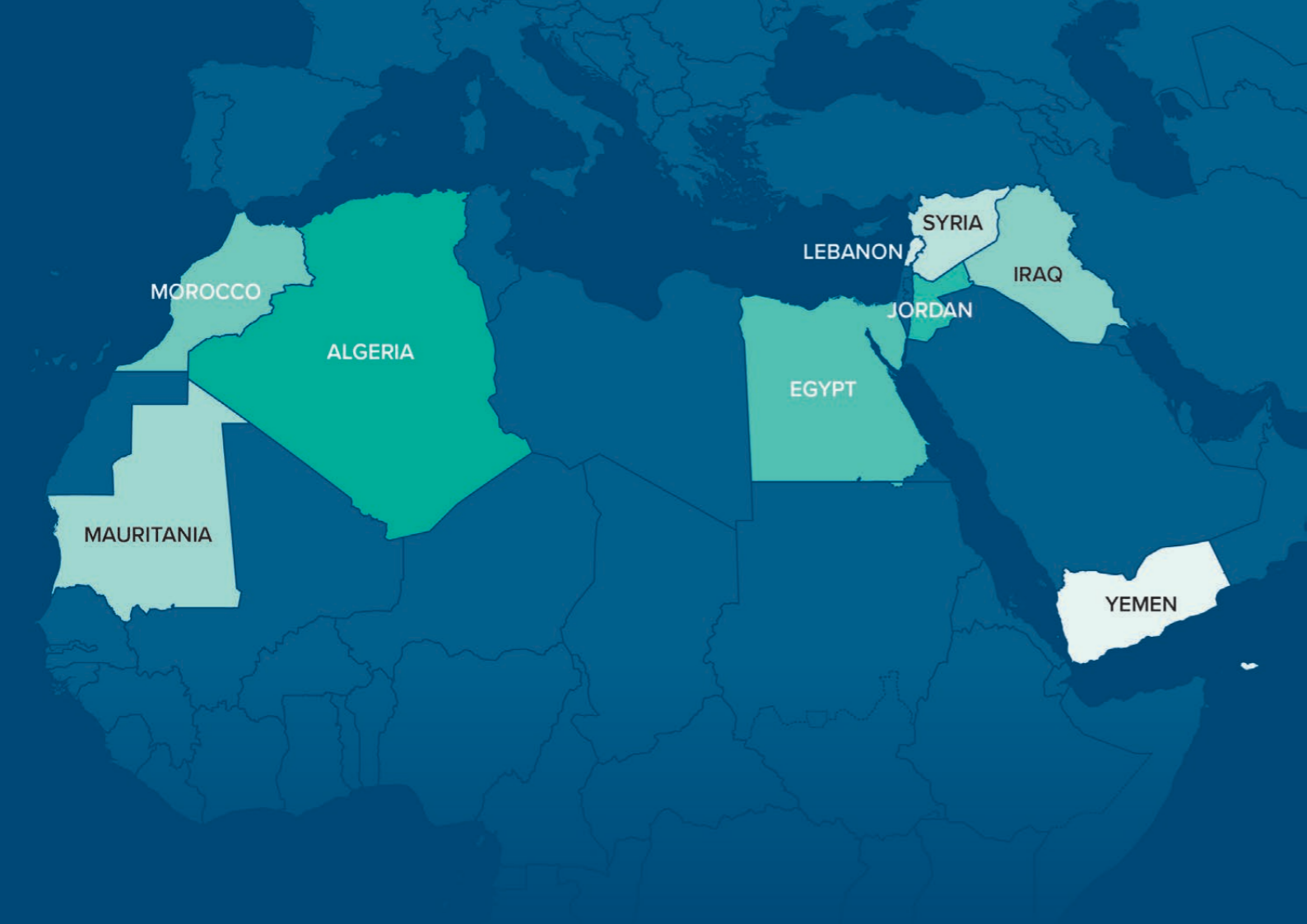


TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY

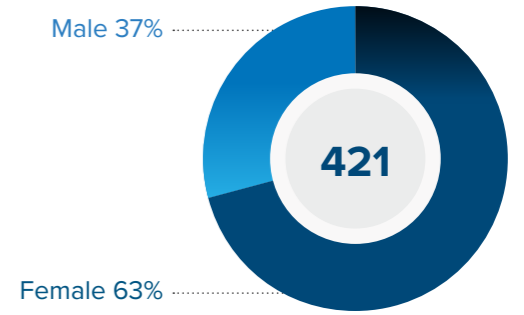




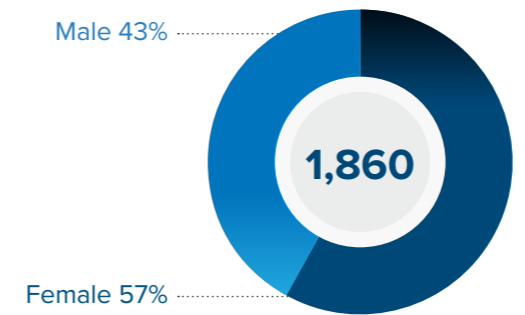
APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED



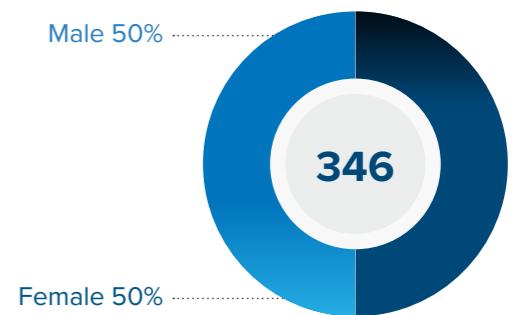
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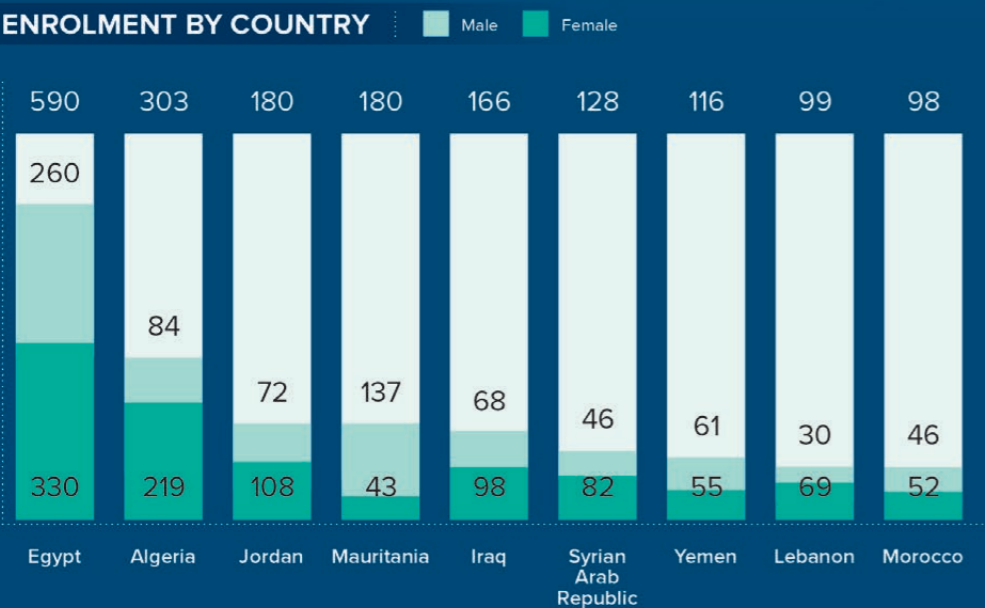
TOTAL DAFI SCHOLARS



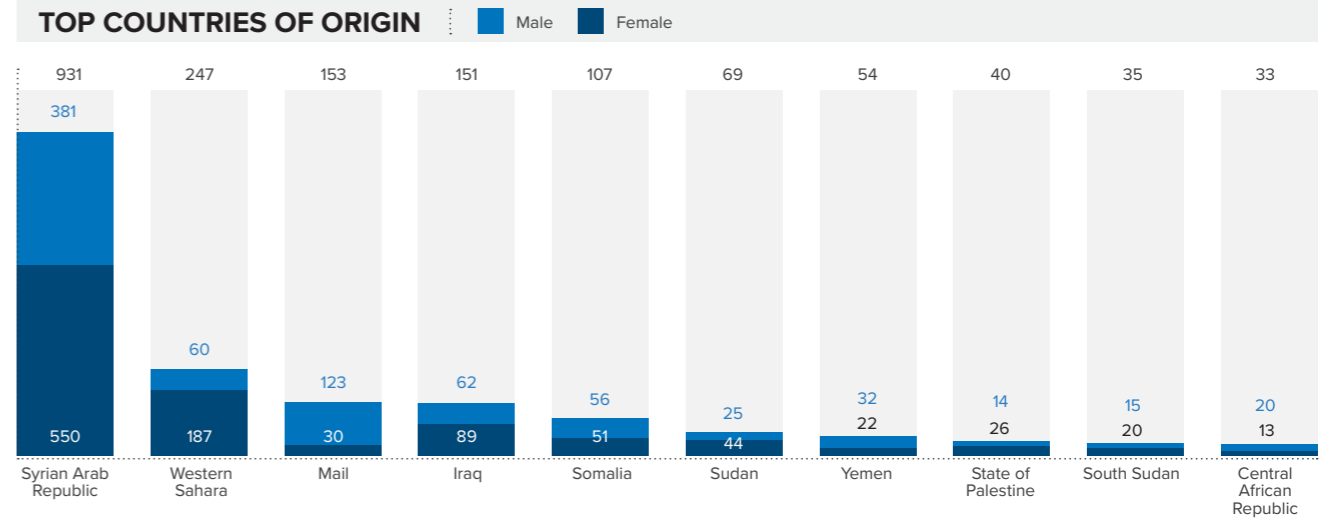
GRADUATES



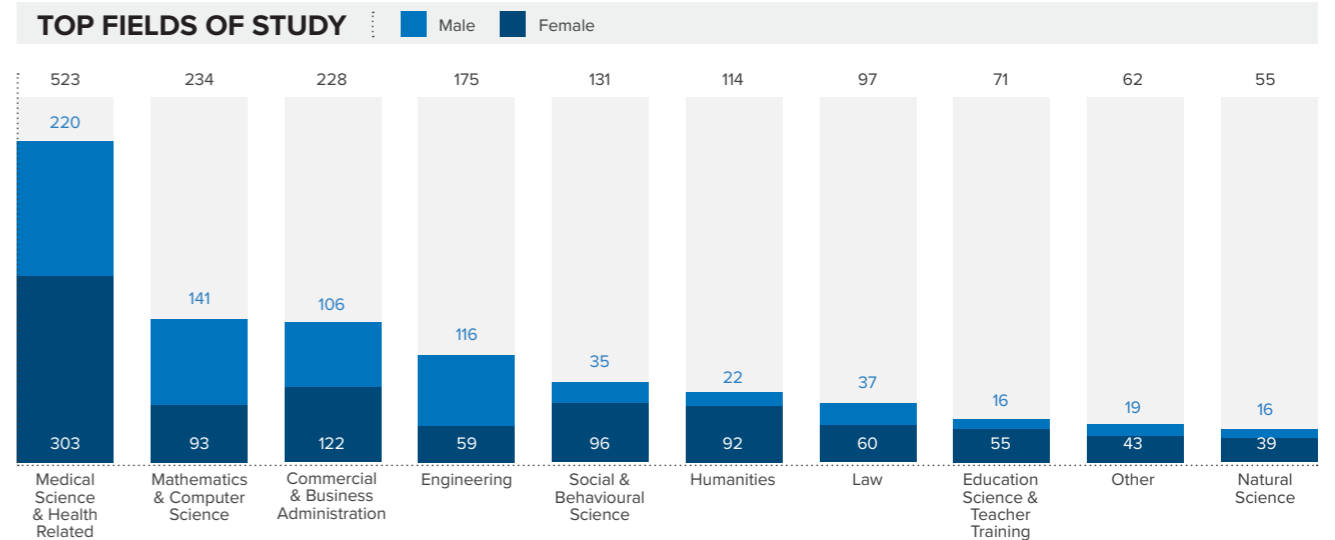
ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY



TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



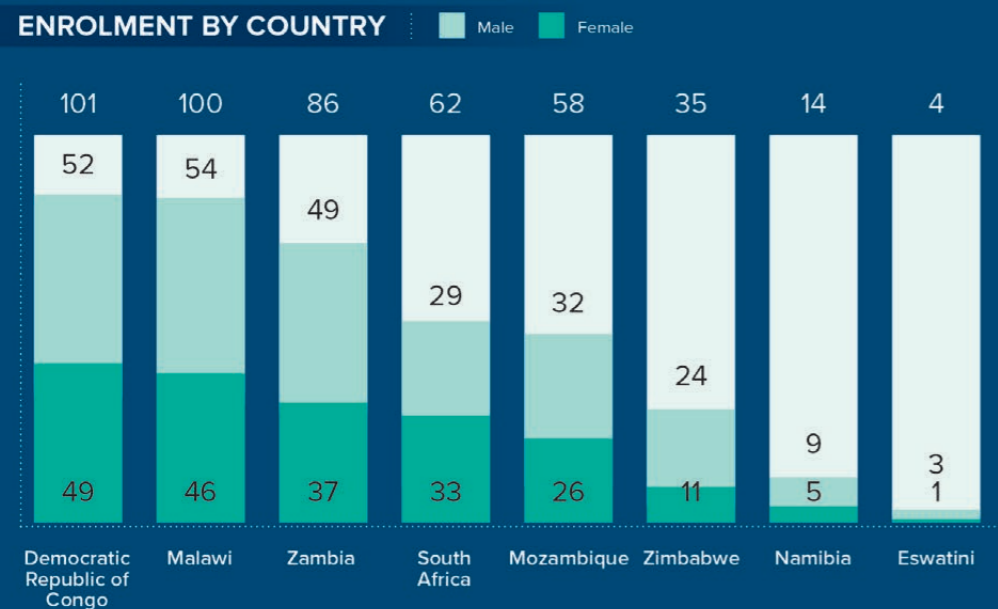
TOP FIELDS OF STUDY



Middle East & North Africa



ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY

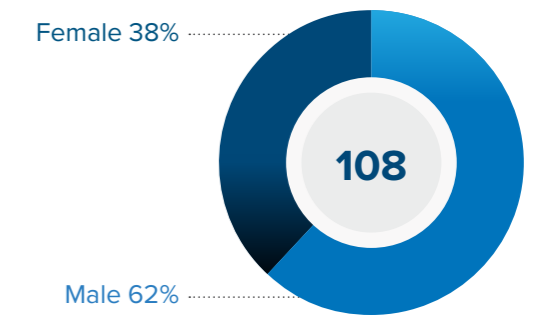


Southern Africa

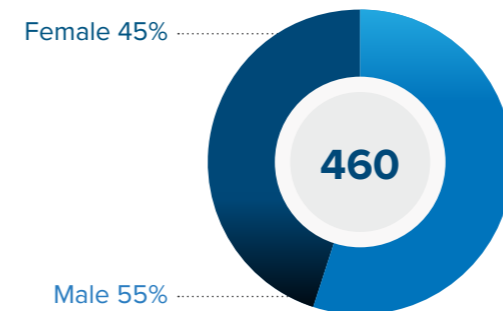
APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED



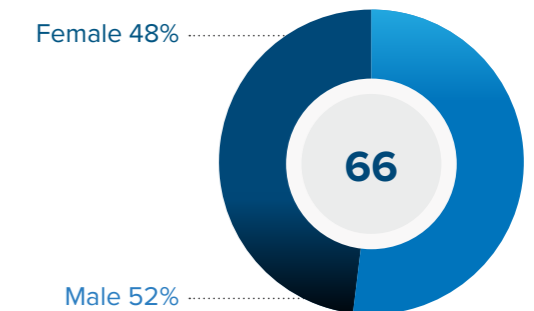
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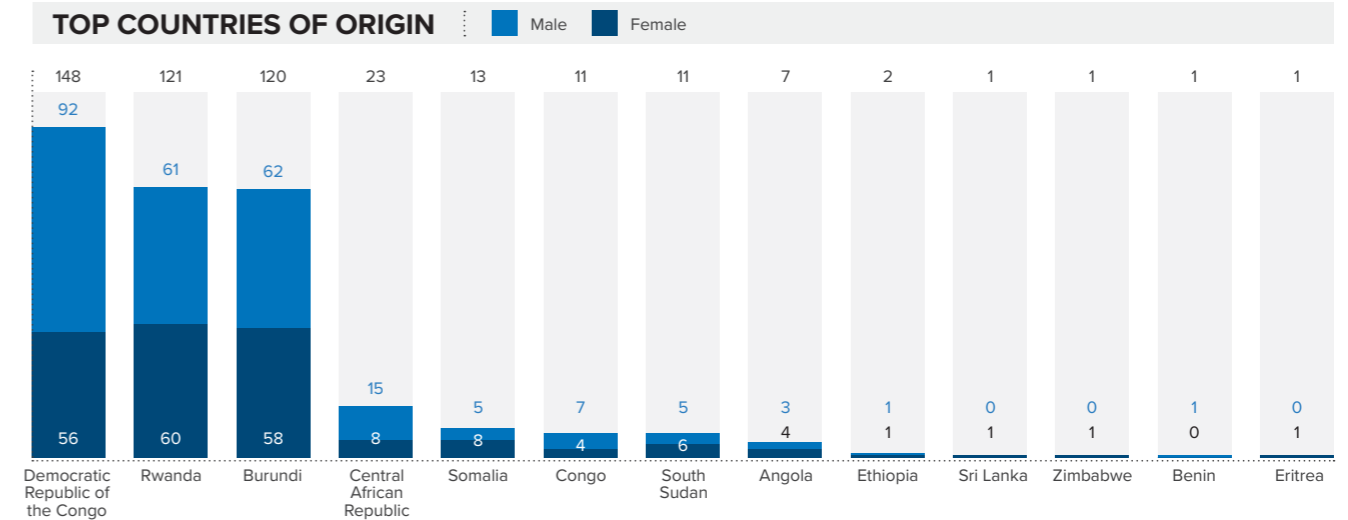
TOTAL DAFI SCHOLARS



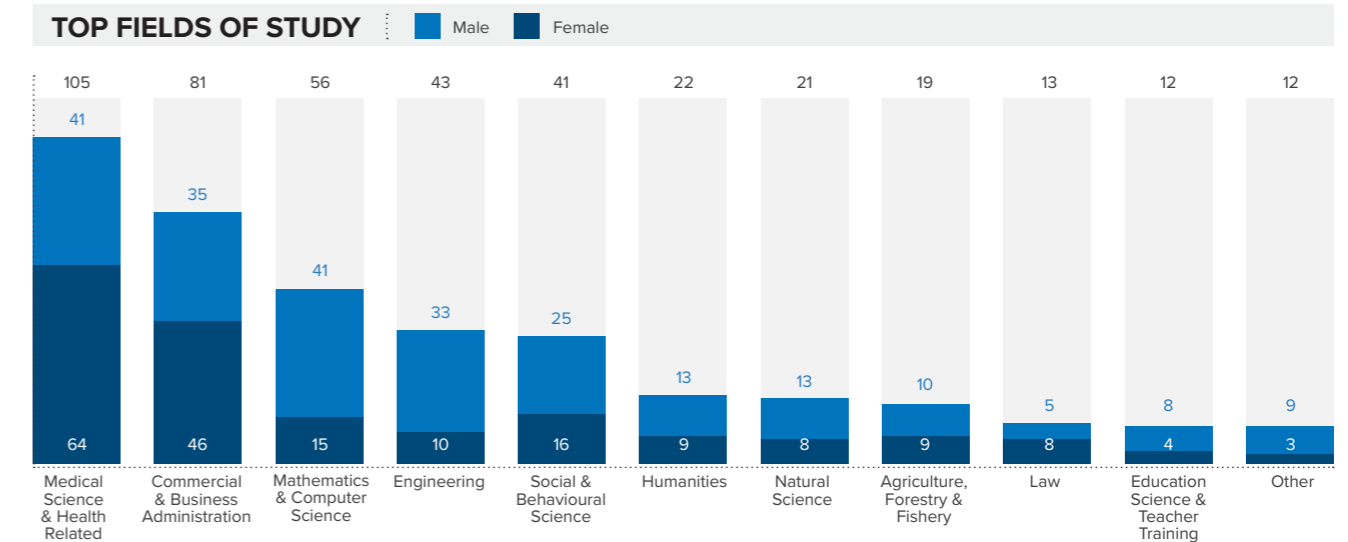
GRADUATES

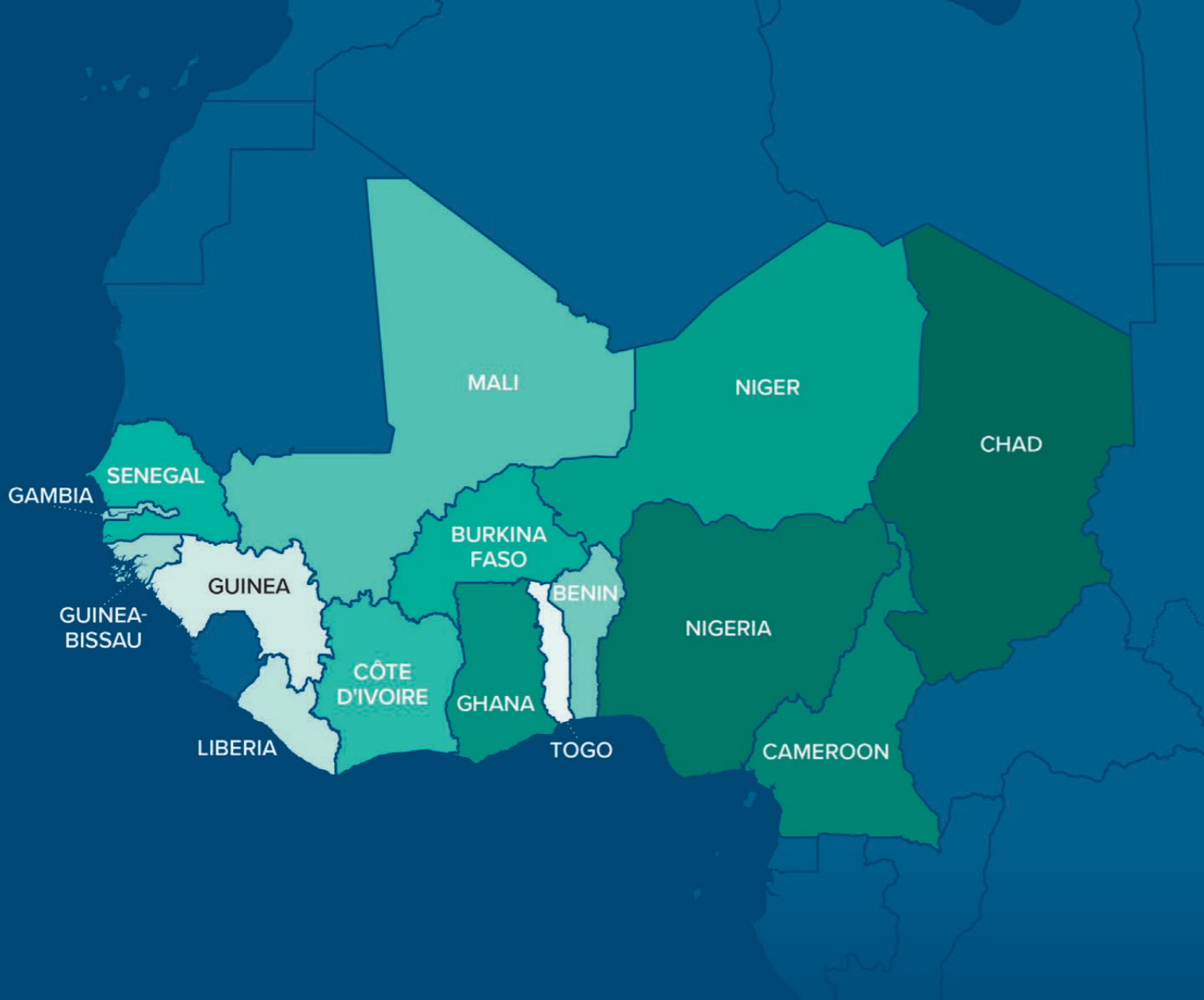


TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY





ENROLMENT BY COUNTRY

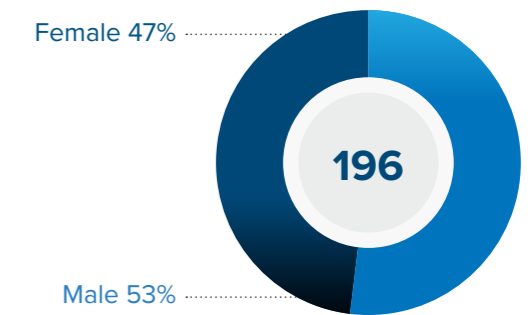


West & Central Africa

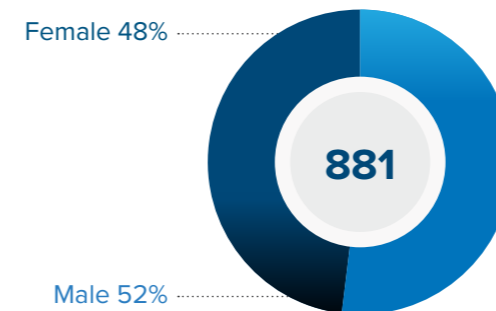
APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED



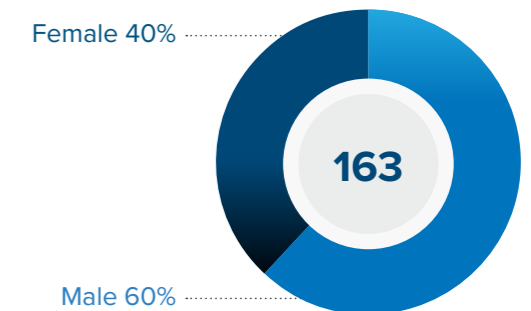
NEW SCHOLARSHIPS ISSUED



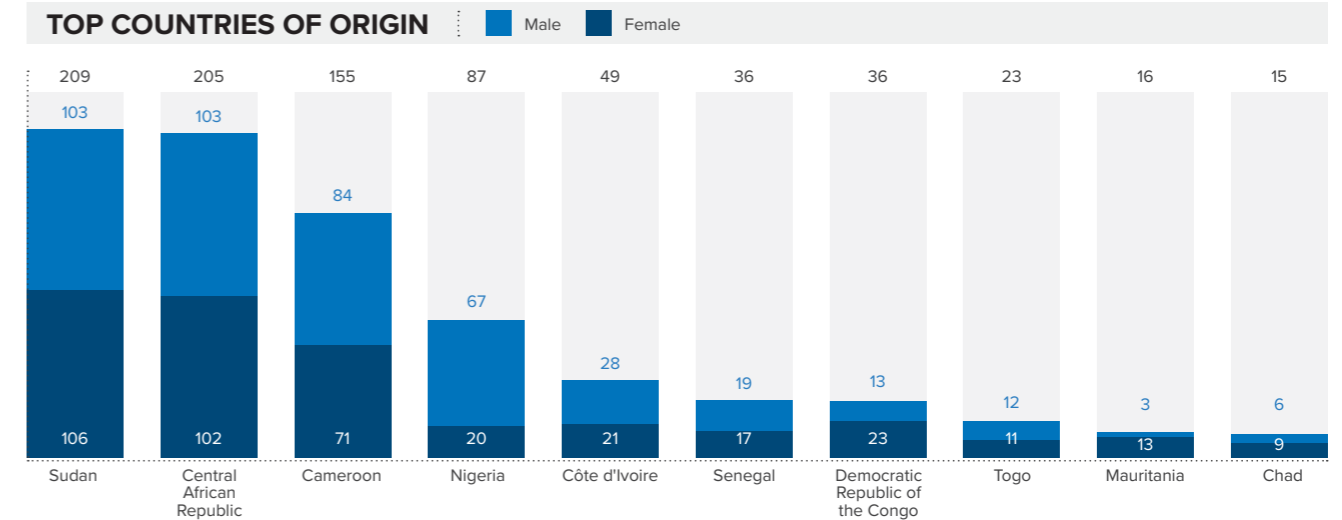
TOTAL DAFI SCHOLARS



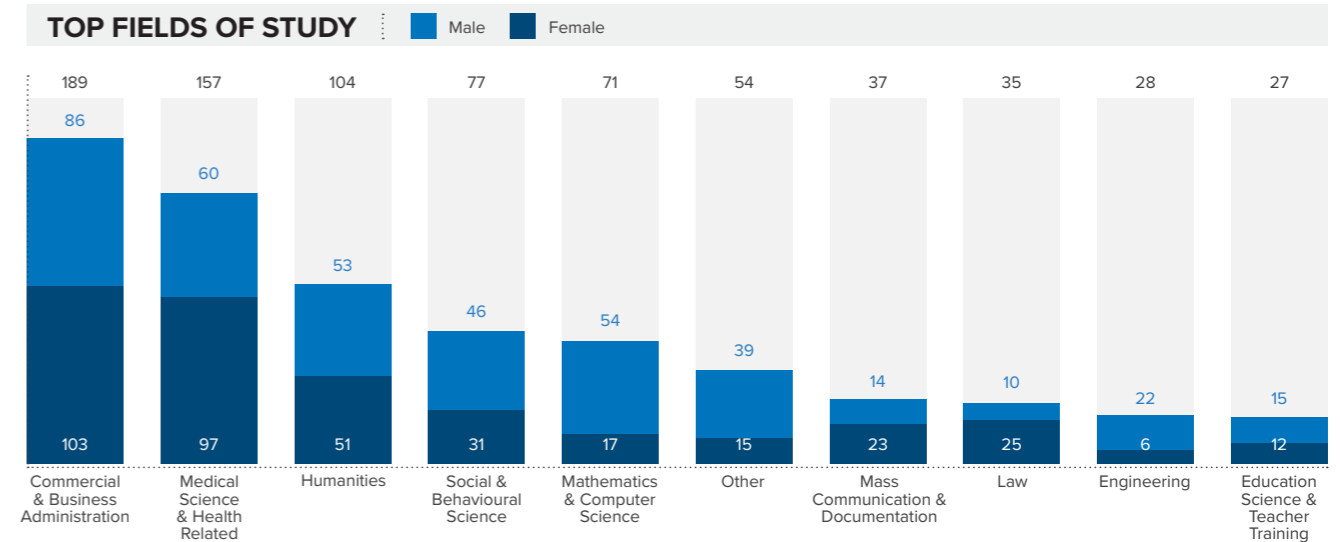
GRADUATES



TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



TOP FIELDS OF STUDY





UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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