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The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR DONOR IMPACT SERIES

UNHCR TURKEY – DONOR IMPACT STORIES

**“WE ARE TIRED OF ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT THE WAR. WE DREAM OF BECOMING MUSICIANS, AND WE NEED HELP TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN”,
OSAMA, A SYRIAN ENTREPRENEUR IN ISTANBUL**

Istanbul - Turkey, November 2016 (UNHCR): Sitting in a semi-circle are five young Syrian musicians. There is an energy between them all and a sadness in their eyes. Two of the musicians Aboode and Mahdy are brothers, and their father was killed just two days ago, in Syria. Another two of the group, Osama and Zain, are enrolled in the “Entrepreneurship Boot Camp”, which is organised by UNHCR’s partner IMC/Habitat in Istanbul. Over the course of one week, Osama and Zain, will take part in an intensive entrepreneurship programme, on behalf of the five of them, who are in the early stages of setting up their own recording studio.

Funded by UNHCR, IMC/Habitat’s entrepreneurship programme connects participants to mentors and provides them with necessary skills for people new to the business world. The project begins with the week-long Boot Camp, which is followed by continuous support over a 24-month period. This includes further coaching provided by a mentor, connecting them to investors, and the potential of a micro-finance grant for selected projects.



Mahdi, Zain, Aboode, Osama and Saafi (from left to right), Istanbul. November 2016 @UNHCR/Esther Judah

With the welcoming announcement of the Regulations on Work Permit for refugees under Temporary Protection in January and for those under International Protection in April 2016, UNHCR has further scaled up its livelihoods activities. UNHCR currently runs a number of livelihood programmes through municipalities and partners: to help regularize small businesses owned by refugees, support the national structures (such as ISKUR), increase employment opportunities for refugees, help employers apply for work permits for refugee workers, provide vocational and language training, as well as continue to lobby the private sector to hire more refugees.

The boys are planning to open a recording studio for both Syrian and Turkish musicians in Tarlabaşı, Istanbul, a neighborhood hosting a large number of Syrians. “We are tired of always talking about the war. We dream of becoming musicians, and we need help to make this happen”, twenty-two year old Osama says. IMC/Habitat has helped the boys design their business model, test it with potential customers and briefed them on the legal procedures necessary to open a business in Turkey.

Thanks to the generous support of the Government of France and other donors, UNHCR Turkey is able to support Syrians with an array of protection and assistance activities above and beyond livelihoods activities. This support comes in the shape of community centers, child friendly spaces, safe spaces for women, durable solutions (such as resettlement), core-relief items, winter support, as well as education initiatives (certified Turkish language courses, university preparation courses and higher education scholarships). Over the course of 2016 and 2017, France has allocated 6,000 resettlement places for Syrian refugees in Turkey, a generous number on top of the important financial contributions it provides UNHCR.

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