

# UNHCR TURKEY

## HUMAN STORIES

Support from the People of Japan enables UNHCR to promote child protection and access to school for refugee children



*Ismail with his arms around his four younger brothers at home in Şanlıurfa, Turkey, July 2019 ©UNHCR/Davina Pirro*

Şanlıurfa, Turkey- “I want to be an engineer or a businessman”, says Ismail. “No, both!” he then exclaims. Ismail may not have figured out what exactly he wants to be when he grows up, but one thing is clear: he is going to be successful, and he is ready to study for it.

Ismail is a 13-year-old boy originally from Aleppo, Syria. For the last six years he has been living in Şanlıurfa in Turkey with his parents, older sister and four younger brothers.

The family struggles financially, Ismail's father runs a vegetable cart around the city, but some days he is unable to sell any produce. Ismail's mother stays at home to care for the children. Education, Ismail's mother says is of great importance in this family. She wants all of her children to be able to read, write and count. Now thankfully, all of her children, with the exception of the three-year-old, are learning to do so.

However, a couple of years ago, Ismail and his family were in a dire situation. Ismail as the eldest son, was the one to shoulder the heaviest weight. At that time, the school that he was attending was very far from his home and his family could not afford the transportation costs. Just to get to school, he had to walk up and down the hills of Şanlıurfa for over two hours a day. Eventually Ismail quit school and started to help his father. Out of school he followed his father around the city, helping him with the cart and tried to find ways to financially support his family.

During these difficult times, his parents never gave up on the future of his education. One day, Ismail's mother heard that an outreach team of UNHCR's partner, Association for Aid and Relief Japan (AAR Japan) was visiting their neighbourhood. When the doorbell rang, she told them everything she could about their financial situation. AAR Japan was able to gather enough information on Ismail's case and referred him to their child protection programme. Through this, Ismail was able to attend a new school and his parents were able to obtain financial assistance to help him to do so.

When asked on how he felt when he found out he was able to go back to school, with a big smile covering his face, Ismail says "I was ecstatic".

Ismail is not only an enthusiastic young man, but also a hard working student. When he returned to school after a long absence, initially it was decided that he was two grades behind. He was enrolled in the fifth grade, however after taking the assessment exams, the school moved him up to the sixth grade. His favourite teachers are his Turkish and Arabic teachers. Ismail has also made friends at his new school, both Syrian and Turkish. Ismail's family is very grateful to AAR Japan for the support it is giving them. His mother informs me that "they are always so nice and helpful when I call them for any issue".

Ismail is one of almost 1.4 million refugees under the age of 15 in Turkey. For the last five years Turkey has been the largest hosting country of refugees in the world, and today it hosts some four million refugees and asylum-seekers. Across Turkey, UNHCR supports community centres, community outreach teams, and awareness raising sessions to help with cases like Ismail's. Organisations like AAR Japan play a key role in identifying children at risk, and in helping them to access the care they need.

This work is possible thanks to the generous contribution of the People of Japan, through its key support UNHCR Turkey. UNHCR is thus able to support refugee children and youth, like Ismail, to access schooling and receive child protection services when they need to, in collaboration with its partners such as AAR Japan.

## CONTACTS

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