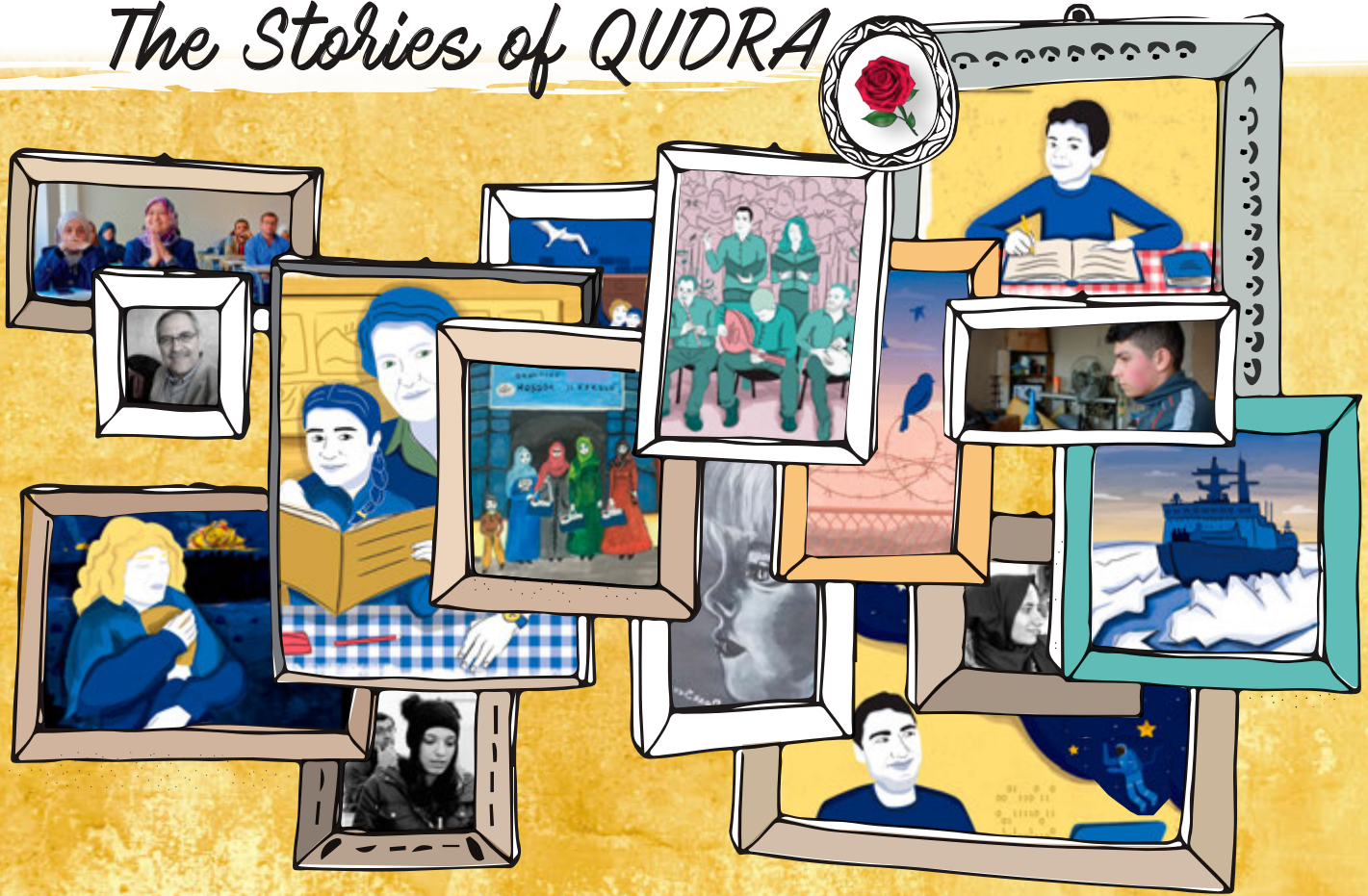




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From Migration to Heartbreak, From Heartbreak to Resilience: *The Stories of QUDRA*



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*"People will forget what you said, people
will forget what you did, but people will
never forget how you made them feel."
(Maya Angelou)*

From Migration to Heartbreak, From Heartbreak to Resilience: The stories of QUDRA

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Stories collated and written by : Tuba Çameli
Editing : Şöhret Baltaş
Illustrations : Banu Önal
Cover Design : Aslı Tanrıkulu
Layout : Burcu Bek Bozkır
English Translation : Kennedy Ajans

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FROM MIGRATION TO HEARTBREAK, FROM HEARTBREAK TO RESILIENCE: THE STORIES OF QUDRA

The title of this book in Turkish is: 'Hicretten Hicrana, Hicrandan QUDRA'ya'. The words hicret (migration) and hicran (heartbreak) come from the same Arabic root comprising the letters h, c and r. They are two sides of the same coin. Hicret signifies a parting, and hicran refers to the deep pain, the sense of separation, that is caused by that departure.

Every book that you open has its own voice, its own music.

The voice of this book is the "ney", a kind of flute¹.

May the stories told in the book fill your mind just like the whispering of the "ney"!

They say that the life of the ney is like the life of a human being. In the beginning, it is a reed that is separated from the soil where it has grown and flourished. It migrates. And with the pain of that migration, its body is wounded and perforated with holes. Heartbroken, the ney shares the same fate as humanity, which has been migrating ever since it first appeared on the scene. And for thousands of years the ney has been whispering its most beautiful melodies into the ear of the human being, its partner in sorrow.

Jalal al-Din Rumi, or Mevlâna, begins his Masnavi with this couplet:

*Listen this reed, how it makes complaint,
telling a tale of separation*

Thus, the tales the ney tells are as old as the history of humanity. It is the voice of those who leave the lands where they grew up, and who experience the bitterness of separation.

Qudra (resilience), from the Arabic root q-d-r, denotes strength, or competence – not a physical, external force, but an inner strength, a spiritual reinvigoration.

¹ An end-blown flute that figures prominently in Middle Eastern music.

The book you are holding in your hands was prepared as part of the work done by Expertise France in the context of the Social Cohesion module of the Qudra Programme². “From Migration to Heartbreak, from Heartbreak to Resilience: QUDRA” lends an ear to the people who took part in courses and activities that were offered at five different public education centres in the three provinces of Turkey with the largest migrant populations after Istanbul: Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa. These are the stories of their resilience.

The Social Cohesion activities under the Qudra Programme related to this book, were implemented by Expertise France in cooperation with EDUSER Consulting in the framework of a set of implementation principles developed with the General Directorate of Life-Long Learning of the Ministry of National Education. A series of language classes, courses in personal and vocational development, and social and intercultural events was initiated with the aim of strengthening social cohesion among the refugees and host communities in the three provinces. The aim was to reach 11,000 people, but thanks to the devotion, hard work and support of all those engaged in the process, this target was soon surpassed. Between September 2018 and 31 March 2019, 273 educators and master trainers provided a total of 69,127 hours of language and vocational skills courses at the five public education centres and in the extension venues determined by the public education centres, and a total of 16,498 persons were reached.

Five different ecosystems were formed in the three provinces headed by the public education centre managers and encompassing the Qudra team, the efforts of the educators, the characteristics of the region, the nature of the demand, and the strategies adopted for dissemination. From this point of view, the life-stories in the book – collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with a total of about 350 individuals – can be regarded as individual or collective “selfies” of the target groups and people producing services for them.

In his interpretation of the experiences, and potential experiences, of this age of mass migrations and expulsions, Italian writer Giorgio Agamben has made a point that may radically alter this “selfie” viewpoint. “If we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead,” he says, “we will have to abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political, and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the refugee.” For this reason, it is neither right nor possible to speak of migration, and what follows or will follow it, in mere numbers and generalisations.

Aside from the map and the final narrative, which give an overview of the work that has been done, no numbers or generalisations have been included among these stories. Dwelling within all the numerical data in the map and the final narrative are thousands of human dramas. And it is by choosing from among these thousands of stories that a series of original narratives has been generated in collaboration with those who agreed to take part in the book project, the women, men, children and young people, who constituted the target groups of the programme.

As a matter of fact, what makes the stories so powerful is that they continue beyond the last line. Each struggle for life is unique, and even just a part of it, if it makes that person’s effort to stand on her own feet visible, sheds light on the whole adventure, sometimes in a moment of elation, and sometimes with a profound sadness. The problems and joys that came to the tips of the tongues of all those who shared their stories for this book – the discrimination they encountered from time to time, the efforts they made to travel to other countries against all odds, and everything else which came to their minds, but which they never actually mentioned – all these remain outside the margins of the pages and are left to the imagination of the reader.

While the illustrations that accompany these narratives display some of the characteristics of real people, they have been designed to be representative of similar people in similar situations. Apart from professionals, the surnames of the course participants have been used strictly with their permission. Since some of the contributors did not want their names to be mentioned, only their statements appear in the narratives. In such cases, they are necessarily referred to using phrases like “a Syrian”, “a migrant”, “an Aleppo man” or “a women from Gaziantep”.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all the contributors who shared their life stories with us – sometimes for hours, and with great sincerity – during the course of the fieldwork. We are equally thankful to everybody who helped with interpretation, whether professionally or voluntarily, and above all to all the children whose time we stole while their mothers and fathers were talking to us.

In the hope that you will hear the tone of the “ney” and the message of Qudra in these stories...

Let’s begin without further ado.

² The Qudra Programme is a regional action financed by the European Union Regional Trust Fund (Madad), established in response to the Syria and Iraq crises, and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It seeks to strengthen the resilience of Syrian refugees, displaced persons and host communities. Qudra – an Arabic word meaning “strength”, “ability” or “resilience” has been implemented simultaneously in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Northern Iraq since June 2016. The aims of the programme are to improve school infrastructure and access to extracurricular activities, improve basic vocational skills, strengthen social cohesion through community-based services, strengthen the capacities of local administrations, and promote dialogue and exchange of experience about policies facilitating the development of the resilience of refugees, displaced persons and host communities (For more details, see <https://www.qudra-programme.org/>)



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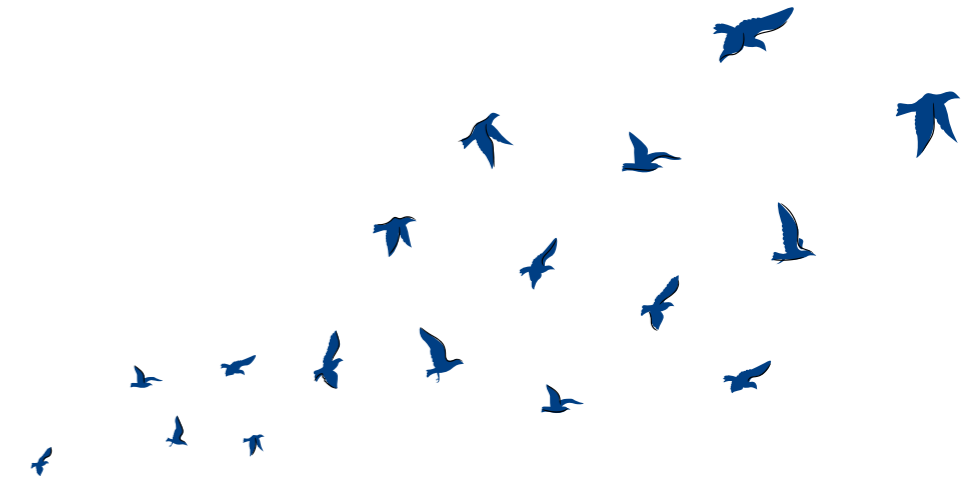
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Qudra Programme Social Cohesion Component Implementation Centres and Extension Areas in Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa

GAZİANTEP

Şahinbey

Şahinbey Public Education Centre (Main Centre) 

- Kızılay Community Centre

Ezogelin Public Education Centre (Main Centre) 

- Hoşgör Primary School

- Hacı Firdevs Konukoğlu Primary School

- Fatih Sultan Mehmet Primary School

- Burç Secondary School

- Municipal Social Facilities

- Gaziantep Union of Chambers of Traders and Artisans

Şehitkamil

- Beekeepers Union

Nizip

- Nizip Mehmet Akif Ersoy Public Education Centre

Nurdağı

- Nurdağı Public Education Centre

Oğuzeli

- Oğuzeli Public Education Centre

HATAY

Antakya

HATAY

Antakya

Nedime Keser Public Education Centre (Main Centre) 

- Women and Family Consultation Centre

- Exhibition and Sales House

- Erol Bilecik Vocational and Technical High School

GAZİANTEP

11,409 people were reached with a total of 42,400 hours of training and activities.

2,600 people were reached with a total of 8,132 hours of training and activities.

Suriye

ŞANLIURFA

2,489 people were reached with a total of 18,595 hours of training and activities.

ŞANLIURFA

Haliliye

Haliliye Public Education Centre (Main Centre) 

- Metropolitan Municipality Süleymaniye Vocational Training Centre

- Metropolitan Municipality Ahmet Yesevi Women's Cultural Centre

- Metropolitan Municipality Ferahkent Handicrafts Centre

- GAP-RDA Ahmet Yesevi Multi-Purpose Community Centres

- Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan Anatolian Religious High School

- Şanlıurfa Anatolian High School

- Şehit M. Cihangir Çubukçu Anatolian High School

- Halide Nusret Zorlutuna Primary School

- Prof. Dr. Abdülkadir Karahan Primary School

- Cengiz Topel Primary School

- Bağlarbaşı Youth Centre

Eyyübiye

Eyyübiye Public Education Centre (Main Centre) 

- Abacı Mansion



Main Centre



Extension Areas



Qudra Fraternity Choir

QUDRA FRATERNITY CHOIR

“Asfur”

- Which floor?
- 1st basement please.

The lift keeps going up and coming down. Course attendees gather at the classroom on the 1st basement floor of Nedime Keser Public Education Centre. There are notes written on a staff drawn on the white board in the classroom, where chairs stand in neat rows. The Turkish classical music module attendees, who have gathered in that classroom every weekday since December 17th take the attendance by checking the empty chairs. One notes, “Mr. Fehmi, the ney player is absent. Where could he be?”

Mr. Fehmi is 67 years old. He is a national artist in Syria. He had to leave his hometown of Damascus six years and three months ago. He spent the first three years in Lebanon and he has been living in Antakya with his wife and two children for the last three years and three months. Of his two sons, musicians like himself, one lives in Germany and the other in Dubai. The rest of the class is anxious and impatient. The first person to ring up Mr. Fehmi delivers the good news: “He’s just now getting on the lift.”

Soon after, Mr. Fehmi enters with his ney in its case. Pointing at the case, he begins to explain: “It is all because of this ney. We got separated at the park. It took me some time to go back and find it.”

As Mr. Fehmi carefully takes his life’s companion out of its case, he continues his story: “According to the legend, there was a shepherd called Nail, a descendant of Adam. He heard the sound of a reed makes and then made the first ney. Ever since, the ney has been a friend to people in need. So, it is with me. This ney has been through so much with me. When I was a famous national artist back in Syria, this ney appeared with me on television. It was the subject of poems I wrote, pictures I painted, but it was still jealous of the oud³ and the darbuka that I played. The ney migrated with me and we suffered heartbreak together. Just when I thought we had finally found peace, it suddenly tried to desert me today.”

As soon as he sits down on his chair, he begins to play a short piece of his composition Homeland and gives the gist of it: “If we cultivate the land we live on together, there will be food, there will be mothers, fathers, and children.” Opening a notebook, he adds: “It was not for you but for the ney that I played this melody. Since we

³ Oud: A form of lute or mandolin played principally in Arabic countries and Turkey.

now live here, since this is where our home is, this is our second homeland. I played the melody so that the ney would never forget that.”

Mr. Sergen the teacher, begins the lesson, saying “Now that our ney player is here, we may begin.” Notebooks containing Arabic and Turkish lyrics are turned open. Mr. Sergen is 23-years old. He graduated from a music school. As only a few of the attendees had ever been trained in music, he taught everyone voice lessons for the first few months. He compiled forty to fifty songs with the class, forming a repertory of Arabic and Turkish songs.

Mr. Sergen wastes no words in explaining how they have evolved from a course attendees to a choir: “In the early days, Syrian and local participants sat apart. But we closed the distance with the first lively song. This is the thing with music: once you begin singing and dancing together, acquired differences disappear. Weeks passed, we enjoyed singing together very much and decided to form a choir. We now have about 25 choir singers. Some of them were musicians back in Syria. There was so much demand for the course, there are those who come to sing with us despite not being registered at the course. We are generally accompanied by one ney, two darbukas, sometimes an oud, guitar or keyboard. Some members of the choir took leave from work, members who are shopkeepers closed early to attend the lessons. Now, we have all become one, like the lines of the melodies we sing. We meet outside of class and sing whenever we get the opportunity.”

As a native of Antakya, Mr. Sergen speaks Arabic, which has played a major role in bringing together people during the course. He gets his point across in both Arabic and Turkish. The age range of the multi-lingual course is between 18 and 67. Just as there are people who are from Idlib, Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Latakia, there are people from Antep and Adana, while the majority are from Antakya. The instruments are tuned. “Let us play Asfur first”, says Mr. Sergen. First the sound of the ney is heard, the darbuka and the oud join it soon afterwards. Music comes into play where there is no more room for words:

*A bird stood at my window,
Called my name “Lûlû”,
Hide me with you, hide me,
I beg of you, Lûlû,
“Where are you from?” I asked.
“From the edge of the sky,” said he.*



*"Where did you come from?" I asked.
"From the neighbouring house," said he.
"What are you afraid of?" I asked.
"The cage of the rotten order" said he.
"Where are your feathers?" I asked.
"Time has done away with them," said he.*

Asfur, a mournful song by Marcel Khalife, is a song that has a significant place in the memory of Arab people. It is a song for people searching for freedom. Lûlû (rose/diamond/pearl) speaks with *Asfur* (a small bird such as a sparrow or nightingale) throughout the song. Its feathers ruffled by time, the bird comes in from the neighbourhouse and escapes the cage of the rotten order. Whenever they sing this piece, melancholy reigns over the class. Music is, after all, the form of art that is closest to tears and memories.

When the song ends, a bright-eyed migrant woman speaks: "This song tells of a someone who has escaped the cage of a skewed order of things. Freedom is like breathing." All members of the choir are of one mind on this point.

"Sometimes" says a young man from Antakya, "our hearts are heavy even if we're not migrants. One feels as though stuck in a cage." A woman member of the choir says, "We shall overcome it all together" and adds: "In these songs we find ourselves, we relax together. That is the way of this town. Antakya is a town of civilisations. Turks, Greeks, Kurds, Armenians, Jews, Orthodox Christians and Muslims, we have all lived together here for thousands of years. Our Syrian friends escaped war, just like *Asfur*. We, like Lûlû, heard their voice and opened the window of our hearts."

A middle-aged man, who used to be an actor in Syria adds: "See, we were on a course and formed a choir. We now call ourselves the Qudra Fraternity Choir. We're always together at the weddings or funerals." They all speak out for unity and equality. "It doesn't matter whether we're Syrians, Turks, from Hatay or Adana. We have become one. We want to continue this unity. We've performed ten concerts in town and our only desire is to take it around Turkey, around the world in fact."

A comment by a middle-aged woman from Antakya gives food for thought to all: "Perhaps the peace that we need in the Middle East is hidden in these melodies."

The language of music and the tragedy of humanity are both shared. Members of the Qudra Fraternity Choir, united by their shared feelings voiced in melodies are happy to be experiencing this moment, even if tears may have swelled up in their eyes by the melody they sang to. A young woman says, "We encouraged one another. They sing the Arabic words to the song without fault, we sing in Turkish and we meet on the same notes. It is like life. I admire to the self-confidence of our Syrian friends. Noticing this has had positive effect on my own life." Another choir member chimes in "That's not all. This group has increased our ability to empathise with migrants. I would like everyone to be aware of this."

Mr. Fehmi, the ney player says: "Music and musicians are very important to civilisation. In these lands, artists were very valuable back in the day, they were given pride of place. Now thousands of artists have been driven from their homeland. If it weren't for social media, we would not know about who is where, and what they are composing. The spirit of the age has ruffled our feathers, just like *Asfur*. If the arts and artists were given the worth, they are due, there wouldn't be any wars. Here we do not care about who is engaged in what, or where they hail from; we perform our art and that is good for our soul."

Mr. Sergen decides to take a short break before moving on to livelier pieces. Hamza, who puts his darbuka on his knee is 33-years old and earns a living by repairing household electronics. When he plays, he makes the darbuka come to life. "The darbuka is a special instrument. I can't stop, I play with my whole body. I could go on for 24 hours, if you let me. I heard about the course from a friend. Life is unpredictable, you never know what sort of opportunities it may bring your way. A person can experience wonderful things one day and terrible things the next. Before the war, I owned a delivery business. Then the war broke out and I came here. I'm all alone here. Some of my family members are in Syria, others are in Europe. I haven't seen any of them for five years." He takes his darbuka from his lap and embraces it, as though it were a person. The lesson continues, and the next song is *Ada Sahilleri*. Beating his darbuka to the rhythm, Hamza voices the wistful "aaah" at the beginning of the song so deeply, that for a moment, he is louder than his darbuka.

*I await on the shores of the island,
I only watch the road you'll take.
I ask your hand of you, my beauty!
Make me happy, Şadiye, on our heads be it.*

*Where are now the fragrant lilacs,
The leaves about to fade and wither.*

*When the earth becomes my resting place,
Remember me, my beauty, on our heads be it.*

Perhaps Hamza is thinking of his fiancée, whom he was preparing to marry before the war and as he thinks, he beats his darbuka with greater feeling. A few seats across is 24-year old Ahmed, whom everyone calls Temmem. Other than Arabic and Turkish, he speaks English and French. When the war began, he was about to complete his studies in Law in Aleppo. While studying Law, he became a Lebanese citizen. When the war engulfed the entire city, he had to leave Aleppo, where he had returned, to be close to his family. "Actually, we had all collapsed before the war. First there was fighting among ourselves. Then came the torture and the oppression. I'm here with my immediate family. Unfortunately, I have relatives and friends from whom I still have no news." His greatest desire is to complete his interrupted studies in Law. When he first arrived in Antakya, he worked as a waste collector. Then he worked in computers and accounting, as he had experience in these fields. During the exchange rate crisis last year, he was fired along with other Syrian co-workers. Temmem is the energetic one in the choir, he dances all the time. He is cheerful. But once the music stops, heartbreak creeps back in and sorrow takes hold of his eyes. "I forget about everything else, when I sing and dance. When we were singing *Asfur* earlier, I thought about the war. My father recently passed away. He wanted to be buried in Syria, but I couldn't fulfil his wish. I thought about the country where I couldn't bury my father. Life is strange. My sister married a Turk. I now have nephews. They speak Turkish at home. They don't speak Arabic; they know nothing of Syria. We are here now. It's as though my life is half-lived. I can't help asking myself 'What did we do to deserve this.'"

The choir member sitting next to Temmem is Ms. Nursel, 40 years of age, from Antakya. She suffers from an illness, which requires regular treatment. Despite this, she tries not to miss a single lesson. "This place healed me, the choir, the music, my friends made me feel better. A year and a half ago, married for only three years, I lost my partner, my lover, my friend, my rock. I was caged up, like *Asfur*. I didn't leave home, didn't want to see anyone. I was lost. My wings were broken. Mr. Sergen told me about the course and I decided to come along. Since then, I feel like I live again. At the time of the last concert, I was in the hospital for treatment. I implored the doctor, I said 'Please let me go, being at that concert will make me feel better than any medicine that you can give me here.' I got permission from the hospital and went to the concert and I really felt very well." Next up is the famous pop track *Mavi Boncuk*:

*What this world needs is love.
Everyone needs to love, be loved.
Be friends with everyone, be pals.
Moment by moment, our lives pass.*

Mr. Sergen wants to practice *Asfur* one more time for the concert.

*A bird stood at my window,
Called my name "Lûlû",
Hide me with you, hide me,
I beg of you Lûlû,
A tear fell down his cheek,
His wings were bent.
He said, "I'll tread carefully and go my own way".*

As the bird in the mournful song says, the Qudra Fraternity was set up by people who "want to tread carefully and go their own way." From the concerts they gave during the course, the choir has made a name for itself in town. Nedime Keser Public Education Centre has given them permission to use a room in the centre when the course is over. The choir seems determined to continue singing. The music course has given spirit to the universe, wings to reason and imagination and life to everything, as Plato put it.





Hacer

HACER

“By learning Turkish, I began to dream of the future again.”

Hacer is 39 years old. She is a lawyer and has three children. Her husband is a furniture maker. She used to live in Aleppo, which was once considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Now she lives in Şanlıurfa, miles away from the land where she was born and raised, where she planned for her future. Over the past few months, she attended Turkish language courses held by the Şanlıurfa Eyyübiye Public Education Centre, has received a certificate for A1 Turkish and registered with the A2 course. The story of Hacer’s life is the story of war, flight, clinging on to life, and striving for empowerment. It is the struggle of a woman from migration to heartbreak, from heartbreak to Qudra.

When I was young, I used to follow what was going on in Palestine and used to think, ‘How do people manage in war, how do they survive?’ I was always concerned about Palestinians. It never occurred to me that one day Syria would suffer the same fate. I was a happy person before the war, I used to smile all the time, see the fun side of life. These days, I try to maintain the same attitude, but I also do something else; I think about how the war that turned the lives of millions of people like me upside down began. First there was ‘sedition’ among people. The clashes began, followed by a deep economic crisis. Everything became more expensive; people’s purchasing power fell. Cruelty became widespread. Then the planes came, they flew low and dropped bombs for intimidation. As we hang up the drying, we would see the planes in the distance, we would run into our house. After a while they began to drop bombs directly on houses, on people.

I never forget the day our neighbourhood was bombed. We were having dinner with my brothers. The power went out immediately. That night, one of my brothers set out for Afrin, and the other in another direction with my daughter. He said ‘If I can save just one of you, it’s something.’ We were left alone with my son at home. My husband had gone to Lebanon at the beginning of the war to secure us a better life. He went through a great

deal in Lebanon; he was attacked by armed men, so he decided to move on to Turkey. My husband is 44, he is a master carver, a furniture maker. After a while we went to join my brother in Kobane, we couldn't stay any longer in Aleppo.

In Kobane, it was relatively peaceful, my son even went to school there. My brother brought my daughter to me. After a while, my husband called, he said 'This war isn't going to be over any time soon, so don't stay there. I've rented a house in Bağlarbaşı, Urfa, come and join me here.' I decided to go back to Aleppo to retrieve a few belongings and my son's asthma medication. At the time everyone said the same thing; 'Snipers fire on cars heading towards Aleppo, the roads are very dangerous.' But I had to go. My son was having asthma attacks and there was no medicine to be found. So, we got on the bus, our seats were at the front. My brother was with us. I could never bear the thought of anything happening to him. I sat in the front so that he would not be killed if they fired from that side. We made it to Aleppo, gripped by fear every moment along the way. I went to our house. I had a box of biscuits with me for Aunt Imriyat, our neighbour on fifth floor. The town was blockaded, food was hard to come by. I had rang her up before leaving Aleppo and she had told me in a wretched voice 'Daughter, Aleppo is done for, there is nothing left. You should leave, save your lives, we're old anyway.' When I dropped by the apartment, I planned to convince her to come with us. I was going to say to her, 'Come with us, my husband has rented a place in Turkey.' When I was at home, a bomb struck. I was stuck between some columns. All around me things collapsed into a heap of dust. I left home with only my son's medicine and my small handbag. I couldn't see our neighbour. She was under the ruins of the building. I couldn't find her. I fainted a while later. When I opened my eyes, it was too late. Our home had been destroyed.

I returned to Kobane. We began preparing to migrate to Turkey. It was then that ISIS attacked Kobane. One night there was a knock on the door. I still tremble when I think of that day. The things I have seen with my own eyes! My neighbour was at the door, she said 'Get a move on, ISIS is coming, they will massacre us all.' People were on the road in droves, fleeing like sheep from slaughter. ISIS was firing on people; planes were dropping bombs from the sky. That was the scene we emerged into with my son. I took the asthma medicine; I took my son under my arm and we began to run. All around me people were falling to the ground, dying. I wanted to put my son inside myself. In our pyjamas, we walked to Suruç and went to Urfa. I had nothing with me but my small handbag. We barely made it out with our lives. Even today sudden noises startle me. Just a couple of days

ago, a boy bust a balloon nearby and I was even afraid of that. Thankfully, when I lay my head down on my pillow now, I no longer hear explosions.

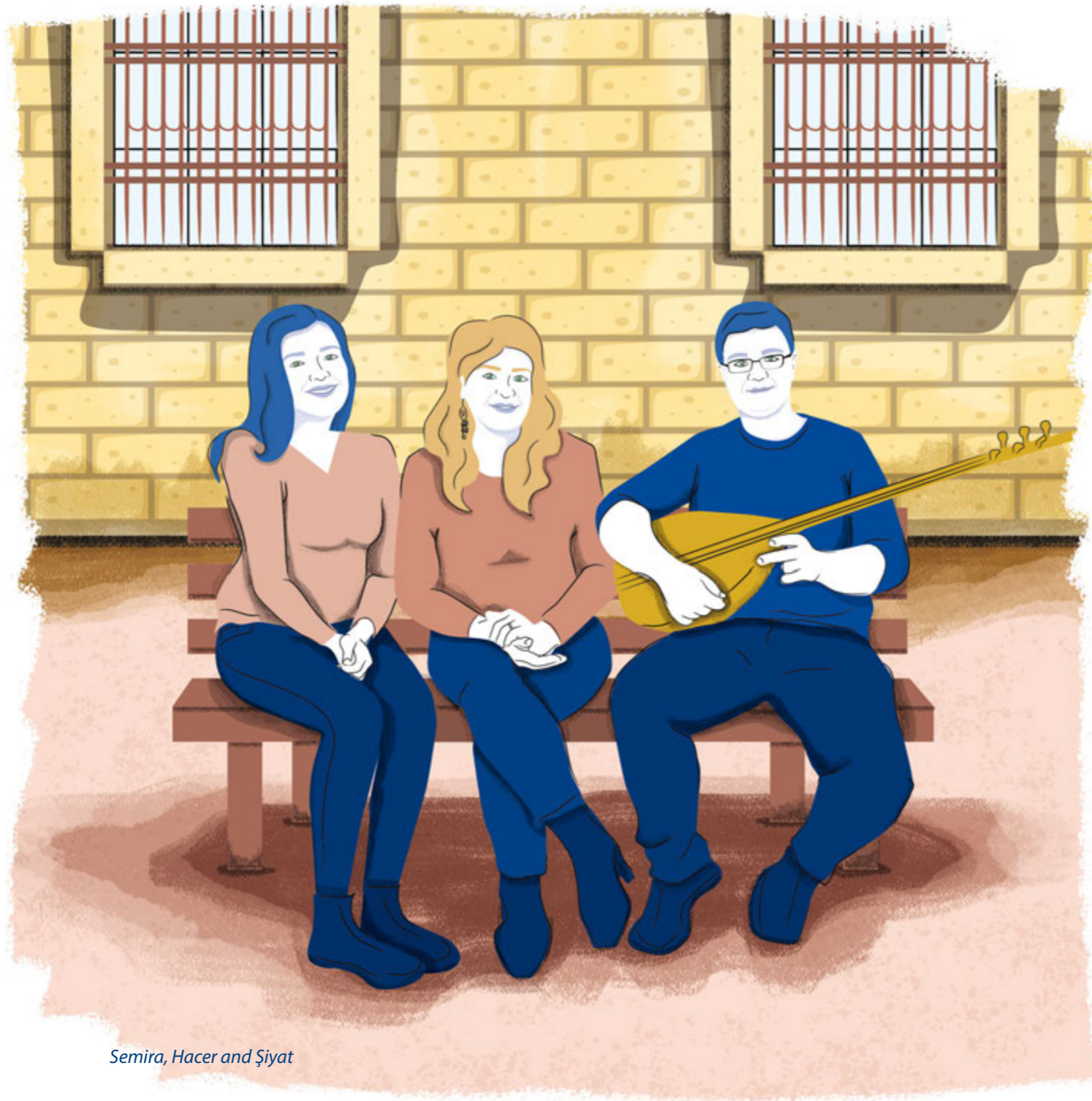
Where I came from was full of blood, war, and bullets. Because of this I did not think 'I'm leaving my homeland behind.' I did not know back then how difficult living abroad would be, how unceasing a pain being a migrant is. I left behind everything I had, my neighbours, my relatives. At first, I used to think I had left all my memories and my aspirations in my homeland too.

After 2014, we began to live in Urfa as a family. My two children began going to school and I gave birth to my third child, Can, here. Because my husband wants the best for the children, he works constantly so that they can go to school. His job is very taxing and as a result he has injured his back and his foot. So, he worked at any job he could find, being unable to practice his own profession. Those who know me now say 'You're so young, why does your husband look so old?' And I tell them 'That man grew old, sacrificed himself, so that I could stay young and beautiful.' He loves me, and I love him. I know he works day and night so that we should not miss anything. Although we are poor and deprived here, we give praise, because we do not know what else life will bring.

My daughter completed her secondary and high school education here, now she wants to study environmental engineering. Her dream is to become an artist, a celebrity. She's dreamed of this ever since she was little. She's preparing to take the university entrance exam. My son Şiyat is 16, he plays the saz⁴. He has a repertoire of sixty pieces. He wants to become an architect. These days his closest companion, his confidant is the saz. I unfortunately cannot practice Law. I've taken on small jobs here, like cleaning. At first, I resented it, then I learned to think about the fact I am doing it for the good of our children.

I found out Qudra on Facebook. I was really fortunate in being able to take Turkish language course with two of my children. We studied together at home. Our Turkish improved. Because they have attended to school here, they speak Turkish much better than I do. We have limited options, so the course was a great opportunity. I thought, 'If there is anywhere, I can learn the language, this is it' and applied to the Eyyübiye Public Education Centre. I want to learn Turkish as well as I can and support my children's education. Also, to find work so I can take some of the load off my husband.

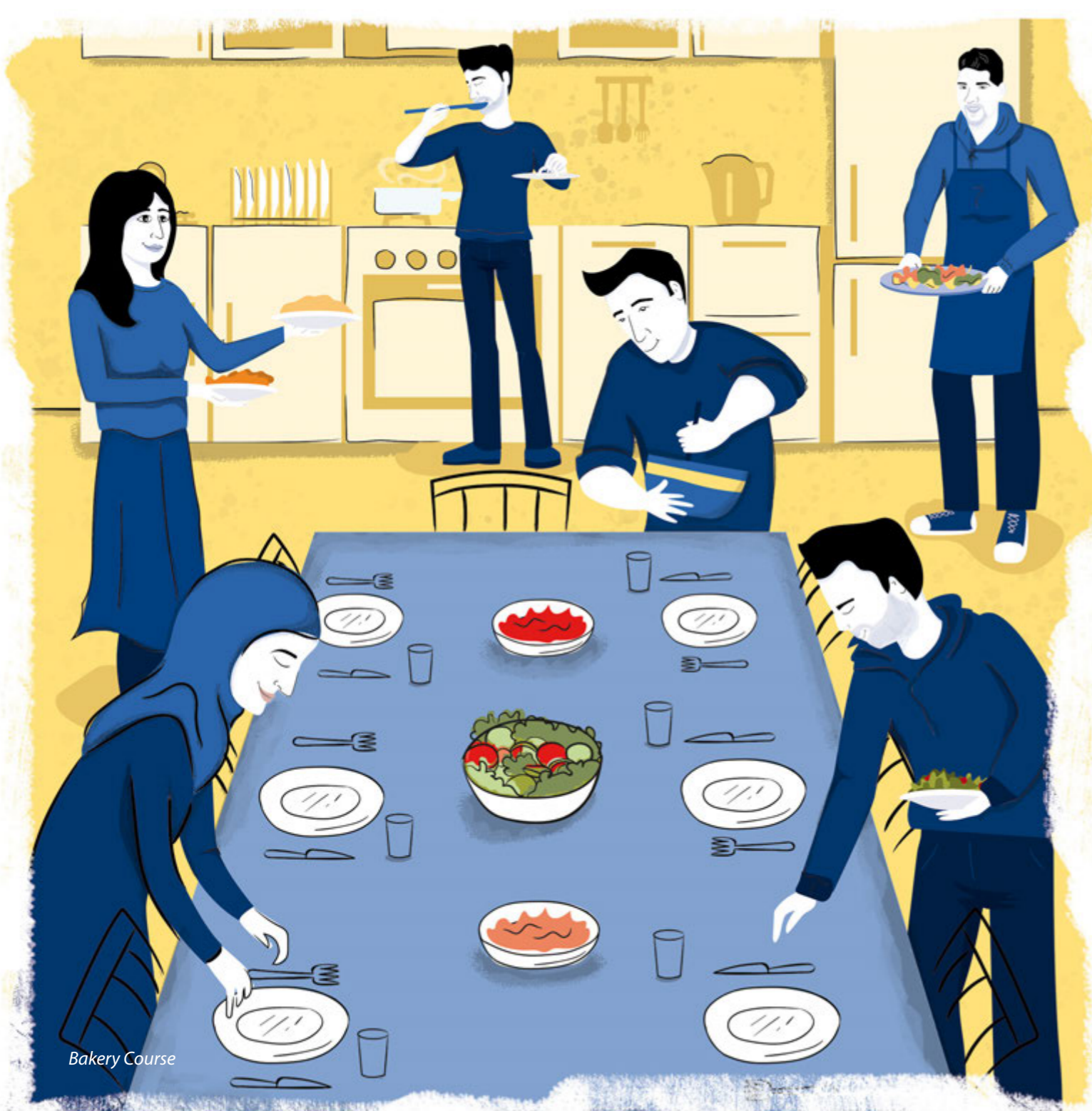
⁴ Saz: A long-necked stringed instrument of the lute family



Semira, Hacer and Şiyat

My only wish is for the Qudra programme to continue. Everyone involved with the course was very understanding. Being understood is worth the world to me. We are people who know the ways of the world; whoever provides us with support, we will appreciate it and never forget about it. Perhaps if my profession were something else, I would not have found not speaking the language so awkward. As a lawyer in Syria I could plead in both Arabic and Kurdish. When I first came here, it was as though I was mute. Now I can get my point across, voice my family's demands in Turkish. Learning Turkish with Qudra, I began to dream of the future again. What I want most of all, should I or my husband go to the doctor's for example, is for us to be able to explain ourselves and to have enough money at hand for food and medicine for our children. I want my husband to work at a better job. We want to live the same life as everyone else, here or in Syria. Everyone wants something; but I have love, I have a family. I just want us to have our daily bread, I do not covet anything else. Life is very difficult, but I know this much; you need to stay strong by laughing in life; not by turning your back to it, not by weeping.





Bakery Course

THE BOUNTY OF THE TABLE

"We offer innovation and entrepreneurship in abundance"

The bakery courses at the industrial training kitchen on the ground floor of Nedime Keser Public Education Centre has become a meeting place for participants from Syria and Hatay. People who are taking the course and those who aren't meet around the table laid in the kitchen. The bounty of the table feeds all. Today there are recipes from Antakya and Syrian cuisines on the menu. There is tabouleh and falafel from Syria and kömbe, külçe and pesto with walnuts from Antakya. Participants from Hatay and Syria work in harmony around the same countertop.

Boiled chickpeas, onions, garlic and fresh-picked and washed parsley are put through the food processor and placed in a large pan. Two young Syrian men add eggs, flour, baking soda, cumin, coriander, black pepper and salt to the mixture. After chilling in the fridge for an hour, the mixture is placed in the heart-shaped slots of a baking tray, before being removed from this and fried in oil. A delicious smell fills up the kitchen. One of the young men jokes "There's fire in our hearts", pointing at the heart-shaped falafel that are being removed from the frying pan.

Gülhan Yurdağül teaches the bakery course. She has a smile on her face, she is friendly and calm. During her recent kidney transplant operation, she got to see how true-hearted her Syrian students were. Participants in the course offered to donate tissue and even their kidney. She talks about frying techniques, calmly and with determination, taking no notice of the talk all around the kitchen, as the participants strike up conversations while working.

Berad is all ears for what the instructor has to say, as he fries the falafel. Back in Syria he used to play football. He first attended Turkish language courses and is now continuing on with the bakery course. His greatest desire is to play football, as an amateur or professional. Until he achieves his heart's desire, he is improving his skills to help him to get a job.

Two young male participants watch with interest while kömbe is made. They explain their reason for attending the course as “Discovering the tastes of Hatay to better serve their customers.” They first took A1 and A2 Turkish language courses.

One of the young men, the 22 year-old M. Misri is from Hamaa. His uncle runs an eatery in Antakya. “We don’t know when things will be back to normal in our own country. Actually, in the Middle East, we all have a shared past. Our food, our tastes are similar. We use a lot of chickpeas, tahini and olive oil in our cooking too. At our restaurant, we mainly cook Syrian dishes. I am taking this course in order to add some diversity to the dishes. We have working permits and we pay tax. I repeat this everywhere I go, because there are misperceptions about Syrian shopkeepers. Our businesses are inspected, so we have to follow the rules. Look around you, we have brought joy to this region. We are happy people, even when we are suffering, even when our lives have been turned upside down, we manage to see the happy side of life. I think we have contributed some new flavours to the cooking here. Customers from Hatay and Syria are happy with our service, because we greatly respect our customers.” He picks up the kömbe mould with determination and tries to make his first kömbe.

26 year-old M. Ellsum started his own cake shop with the confidence he developed due to attending the Qudra course. He arrived from Idlib five years ago and is the father of two. He wants to become a Turkish citizen and settle down in Hatay. He only misses his parents, whom he has not seen since the war began.

As the teapot boils and hisses steam on the stove, women chat among themselves. Women from Syria talk about the kitchens in their houses which were destroyed. “In the villages large families all lived together. In those houses there were large kitchens. In the cities, they lived like people do here.” A woman from Hatay who had visited Aleppo before the war recalls the town resembling Antakya and says “There are strong historical ties”. A Syrian participant adds “We’re the same, yet different.” Meanwhile, the kömbe are placed in the oven.

Ammar is in his 20s, he came to Antakya seven months ago. A short while later he started taking Turkish language course. He most recently registered on the computer course. Today, he is visiting friends at the bakery course. His friends won’t let him go. They pass him plates, saying “Go on, set the table.”

What the young people who meet at the kitchen have in common is that they all started taking the Turkish language course at Nedime Keser Public Education Centre six to seven months ago. They’ve been together ever since. Their Turkish has improved over the months and they can now talk almost without hesitation. “We don’t want to leave this place; we’re used to our friends and instructors here. We were saddened to hear that Qudra is coming to an end.”

After the Turkish language courses, they continued on to vocational courses and earned their certificates. They also became friends with young people from Hatay who attended the vocational courses. They not only attended the course over the months, but also held social activities and went on trips with their instructors. “We went to Samandağ to play football. We often watch films at the centre’s hall. Just yesterday we watched Hababam Sinifi, it was so fun.” They all wear hair gel. In keeping with the current fashion, they are wearing low-cut socks and trousers which leave their ankles uncovered.

M. Habak, 20 years of age, is a tall and lean young man. “We used to live in Idlib before the war and we were very happy. I was at high school and the war began before I had finished school. As we had relatives in Antakya, we came here. I was 17. First, we stayed with relatives in Narlıca, then we got a place of our own in the city centre. My life would have gone completely differently if it wasn’t for the war. I lost my father. If not, he would have taken care of us all. Now I take care of my mother and siblings. I work whenever I find work. I found it very difficult when we first came here. My older brother went to Istanbul to find work. When I heard about the Qudra course, I started coming to the Nedime Keser Public Education Centre. I took the A1 and A2 courses. I can read and write in Turkish, but I want to learn it better. Only then will I be able to express myself more clearly. I want to complete the B1 course and study at the open high school. I used to want to become an actor back in Syria. If I can do it, I still want to become an actor. I need to work to survive. I’ve been coming to this centre for four months. This place is home to us. Everyone is so friendly. It had been a long time since I felt like a student, but here I do. I like Turkey, I could live here.” The very idea of becoming an actor puts a smile on M. Habak’s face.

M. Ellsum takes his leave, saying he’s needed at the cake shop. Other friends, M. Hazemşatir and Ahmed appear at the door. They’ve just finished their lessons upstairs and they’ve come to visit their friends. M. Misri, M. Habak, Ammar, Berad, M. Hazemşatir and Ahmed immediately strike up a deep conversation. The subject is going to Istanbul to find work. Almost all of them have friends in Istanbul. Some have relatives there. Some were told not to go to Istanbul by their parents. But they say “We could work in restaurants, if not, then in factories” and add sadly “If we had the means, we would like to continue with our education.” Open education programmes continue to offer them all hope. M. Habak speaks while laying out the knives and forks; “There aren’t enough jobs to go around in Hatay, but in Istanbul it is different. It’s a huge city, there are many job opportunities there. I know it is a difficult place to live, my older brother keeps telling me. But what else can we do? Has anything been easy for us since the war began? We need to be brave, bold even. When we’re together like this, we feel braver.”



The table is set, the tea is brewed. As they put food on their plates, they continue to talk. Ahmed had to quit university because of the war. He has already read the couple of books he managed to bring with him many times over. Now he reads books he downloads online. He enjoys literature, especially Arabic literature. Turning to his friends, he tells them the following, calmly and clearly: "We're like icebreaker ships. Our families escaped the war and saved our lives, they raised us. Now it's our turn. Those who come after us will follow the same path we take. We need to work like icebreakers to carve out new channels. These ships do not keep going forward. When the ice is too thick, they first reverse and then ram the ice with full force to break it. Ammar asks "What if it doesn't break?" Ahmed answers with determination in his voice; "It will. It only needs time. Our only way out is to make use of opportunities like these courses, to learn and to work. Our only way out, like icebreakers, is to gather all our strength to overcome obstacles." "God willing" says his friend, as they enjoy their meal of falafel, fried chicken and salad.

Taking out his phone, M. Misri shows them an announcement for a course by the International Labour Organisation for Syrian entrepreneurs in three cities. It was just this week that they covered career planning and entrepreneurship with Qudra. M. Misri says "Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation of Turkey and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey will hold similar activities." They discuss the two new terms 'innovation' and 'entrepreneurship'. "What could be more innovative than surviving war and starting a new life here? As for entrepreneurship, it depends on your dreams. So, we have innovation and entrepreneurship in abundance" says Mr. Hazemşatir and smiles assuredly.

It's time to taste the kömbe. The sweet, warm kömbe melts in the mouth, it is delicious. A fresh round of tea is served. Ms. Nurcihan, the deputy director of the centre, is sitting at the head of the table and looks at the young people with pride. She is happy with the cheerfulness of these young people, who first came to the centre looking timid and desperate. They all take turns to save an image of this happy moment. Selfies are taken one after another. It is a photograph of a large, happy family: Syrians, locals of Hatay, men and women, gathered around a table on a mild spring day.

The lesson will soon be over and everyone will go back to their homes and neighbourhoods. Qudra courses will also end soon. And what then? Then adventures await. As the author Maya Angelou put it: "People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel." These young people will never forget how Qudra made them feel.



THE WELDER WHO WANTS TO BECOME AN ASTRONAUT

“For me to use my abilities, just a bit of correct guidance would be enough.”

*In their uniform blue overalls, participants in the night course held at Hatay Erol Bilecik Vocational and Technical High School work at counters under the warm, yellow glow of the iron workshop. With Qudra, the school's blacksmiths, which was founded in 1964, opened its doors to 25 course participants, 10 from Hatay and 15 from various towns in Syria. The instructor talks about the finer points of welding and demonstrates what he says in practice. As with all other vocational courses held under Qudra, the aim is not only to impart vocational skills, but also to furnish the grounds for participants, who may meet in the street, at work, at parents' meetings and who live next door to each other in the same neighbourhoods and buildings, to get to know one another and engage in direct relationships. As it is a night course, people from Hatay and Syria can attend without interrupting their daily jobs and their shared objective is to develop their knowledge of welding and get a certificate for it. **Muhannad El-Zayyat**, a striking participant due to his black wool hat, his height, and his large hands, is 48 years old. He is married with six children. When the war began, he was living in Latakia and had to move within Syria a number of times. He finally crossed into Turkey when the war threatened the tent settlement on the other side of the Turkish border.*

I used to be a physical education teacher before the war. Then, as now, I believed in freedom and the republic. When unrest began in the country, they wanted me to pick a side, they threatened me. I thought about it, everyone involved are children of Syria, who could be the enemy? I chose neutrality. As an educator, I knew that there could be no winners in war.

There were attacks on our house in Latakia. In 2012, I decided to move with my family and moved to Jabal al-Akrad. There we took shelter in an abandoned house. In 2013, the place where we lived was bombed, I was injured and brought to Turkey while injured. I was treated in Gaziantep, platinum plates were put in my arm. I went back to Syria, to my family. I'm not a warrior. I just wanted to ensure my family's safety. When the fighting intensified in the area we were in, we moved as a family to the Yamadi region near Yayladağı. There was little food, no water, and we were living in handmade tents. We were very close to the border with Turkey. The Syrian government was increasing the pressure. We were trapped. Then, Turkey opened the border and we crossed the border to Hatay on March 16th 2016. My wife was pregnant then, she gave birth to our youngest child, our daughter, here. For two years, I waited to be taken under temporary protection and for an ID. Because of this, I could not work at all. Now, I work in ironwork and my wife works as an assistant teacher at the Temporary Education Centre. Thank God, we've rented a house and just about get by.

As a Physical Education teacher back in my homeland, I was also a basketball coach. Teams I trained had even won places in the Syrian basketball league; I was a respected basketball coach. My idol was Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. I also coached swimmers, trained to become a basketball referee, earned a brown belt in judo and had medals. I miss teaching, basketball and swimming so much. Would you believe that I haven't watched a game since 2012?

These things aside, I had a car, a house in Syria, I had so much to do. We owned some land with fruit trees and beehives. I had a store under our house. I had a good income; I was at peace; I did not have any concerns regarding the future. Now all of that is history. We were oppressed; we had to migrate. These issues used to bother me a lot and made me unhappy. Then I thought 'What matters is what you do when things are getting worse'. I could not stay home all day and wait for someone to come up with a solution to my problems. I could not live on the diminishing aid. I had a spouse and children, and I needed to build a future for them. I wanted my children to become qualified people. When I thought about these things, I asked myself what we should do next? Life doesn't stop despite all the destruction, all the wars, so how could I? A person can only make his way in this world by putting forth his experiences and his differences. So I decided to make the most efficient use of my energy and knowledge.

Significant support, such as Qudra, helped me make the best use of my energy and knowledge. Before enrolling on the welding course, my spouse and I took the Turkish A1 and A2 courses, and we learned Turkish. We applied



Muhannad El-Zayyat

Turkey, Canada, Syria

to the Nedime Keser Public Education Centre to register with the Turkish B1 course. It was then that I learned there was a welding course. I decided to make use of this opportunity, which will allow me to get a certificate for the job I do and to learn it better. Now at the course, I learn the finer points of my job.

Just a few days ago, some young people were playing basketball on the court here. I haven't played since the war. First, I watched them for a while. I hadn't held a basketball for years. I was excited, and I took the ball, shot, scored. I shot again and scored despite the platinum plates in my arm. I can't begin to tell you how happy I was.

To be frank, I don't think there are enough job opportunities in Turkey for migrants. There are young people, people out of work in this country who are looking for jobs too. Yes, Turkey gave us a home after the war, and for that, it has our everlasting gratitude. It did what no other state did and opened the doors for us. We will never forget this, and for this, Turkey will always have a place in our hearts. But thinking of the future, I'm forced to make other plans. I think we may go abroad for the future of my children. I'm planning to move to Canada. With the certificate I will earn from this course, I may make a fine welder there. My son and I speak English. We've applied to migrate to Canada, we were placed on a list, but there has been no word yet. We will not give up if we are not accepted. I could start a business here with my course certificate to provide for my family. What will make it all possible is the certificate from the course and what I learn here. If courses are held again, I would like to advance my Turkish. The atmosphere on the course is very good, we learn so much. I keep following up new opportunities.

Unfortunately the solution to the problem in Syria is neither in my hands nor in the hands of any other Syrian. I wish it were. Whenever international powers think it is time for peace, then there will be peace. For this reason, it doesn't seem possible for us to settle into a life in Syria any time soon. It's like we're lost. Will we stay here or will we go on to another country? We keep asking these questions because we don't know when things will improve in our own country. If barriers were removed for people like us who are educated, who are workmanlike, who are determined to make a new life for themselves in Turkey, I would regain what I had in Syria within four or five years. I like to work, whether as a welder or as a teacher. For me to use my abilities, correct guidance would be enough.

Mohammed Hüssam is 16. He comes to visit his father, Muhannad El-Zayyat towards the end of the evening course. He is now a student at the Erol Bilecik Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School, where his father attends his course. He is currently



Mohammed Hüssam

not in compulsory formal education because he failed his class due to absence for two years in a row. His father's friends gather around Mohammed Hüssam. They want to make use of his skills with smartphones; they show him their phones, ask questions. Young Mohammed Hüssam answers the questions with a smile.

When I was my son's age, I used to dream of the future like him, and, would you believe me, I wanted to become an astronaut. My son is just like I was. He dreams beyond the circumstances. He is getting training about anti-virus software. He makes use of distance learning opportunities in the USA; he's earned certificates. He wants to specialise in cyber-security. He has reached out to some people and companies online.

Qudra Hatay Coordinator Öner Doğan explains to Mohammed Hüssam that he could get his high school certificate by continuing with open education, then he could study cybersecurity and would have an opportunity for an education and a career. His father insists that Mohammed should consider this advice. Young Mohammed insists on saying that there could be other solutions. He thinks that he can contact many global companies like Google and Amazon, as he did with Nokia, and that his cyber skills would be enough to get him ahead. Öner Doğan is determined to convince him. As he says goodbye, he takes a moment to say to Mohammed "Come to Nedime Keser Public Education Centre for a chat."

Another day of the course is over. The power switches are turned off. The workshop is now dark. The gigantic, bolted door is locked. The light winking in the school yard is diffused by raindrops and spreads around, just like the attendees going their own separate ways now. Muhannad El-Zayyat and his son Mohammed Hüssam have already made it to the avenue with swift and determined steps, without heed for the rain.



ALL THE CHILDREN AND PARENTS OF THE WORLD HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS...

“Love and conscience”

The happy voices of students at Gaziantep Hoşgör Primary School resonate in the classrooms: playtime is over. Students of class 4-B, sitting at their desks, lined up like in an amphitheatre, have already started reading out the sentence written on the board, “All the children of the world have equal rights”.

The in-class discussion begins with the question “What is equality?” Some children stand up when replying; others answer sitting down. The class is full of life, they all have something to say, some opinion to express.

- Equality is brotherhood.
- Being the same despite our differences.
- It's sharing.

Well, what do we share?

- The classroom.
- The school.
- The neighbourhood.
- The world. (Children sitting at the back laugh together as they say “space”.)
- The moments we stay together, time.

What do we do in those moments?

- We play games.
- We have fun.
- We talk.
- We work.
- We show respect.

What do we respect?

- Opinions.
- Rights.
- What we are told.
- Everything we own.

Okay then, what is love?

- It's friendship.

- It's intimacy.
- It's solidarity.
- It's being merry.

You know, despite all this, there are still wars, there is still injustice. What if we don't feel we're getting equal treatment at school, in the street, in the city, or when we think that we are being treated unjustly?

- We should speak with those acting unjustly.
- We should invite them to develop empathy.
- We should stand in solidarity with our friend, who is being wronged.
- If we can't solve it, we should tell about the incident to our teacher if it happened in school or classroom.

(Fatma is the last one to reply, she sits back at her desk as she throws her plaits back...)

With these answers, Ms. Yasemin's trust in her students, whom she has taught since first grade, grows stronger. She looks at her students proudly, one by one. They have used all the values she had explained conceptually in their proper place. She thinks about the day Fatma first came to school, and who now answered confidently, in fluent Turkish.

Fatma, who shares a desk with her friend from Antep, was born in the village of Düden, Aleppo. She has four siblings. She lives with her mother, brothers and close relatives in a stove-heated, three-room house. The first thing she does as soon as she gets back home is to do her homework in a quiet corner. She wants to complete her education and become a teacher.

“When we came to Turkey, I was four or five years old. I love my school and the other students very much. My friends are really good people. When Ms. Yasemin told me about the Turkish language course, I told my mother first. My mother and my sister Diyana enrolled in the A1 course. They went to school during the weekends. I tried to help them with their lessons as much as I could.”

Fatma's mother **Süreyya** first migrated to Gaziantep with her husband and children. Her husband looked for work in many places, including Istanbul and Izmir. When he couldn't find a job, he returned to Syria. She worries about her husband, whom she last heard from about three months ago. As a mother, she does all she can for her children. Occasionally she says “I will return to Syria if I marry off my daughters”, but she wants her little daughter Fatma to get a good education.



Fatma and Ms. Yasemin

“Ever since I enrolled Fatma at Hoşgör, she goes to school as happy as if she were going to a wedding party. Hoşgör Primary School is right next to our house. We are grateful both to the school and Ms. Yasemin. When Ms. Yasemin sent news, we decided to go to the course with my daughter Diyana. My son Hüseyin is 15 years old; he is a cautious sort. He wouldn't allow us. He is the head of the household after all; he shoulders the burden of providing for us. What could we do? We went to the course in secret. In our country, women are not usually allowed to study and work. But Ms. Yasemin is a very good teacher, and we couldn't refuse her offer. It is truly beautiful for someone to go to the same school as her daughter, have the same teacher. We studied together at nights. I hope the A2 course begins too, so we can keep going. Ms. Yasemin has a soft spot in her heart for her students; even if she gets angry, it doesn't last long; she taught us reading and writing, thank God.”

Ms. Yasemin has nineteen years of experience in her profession and this year, she taught reading and writing in Turkish to Syrian parents who applied to A1 course as part of the Qudra, especially parents of the students in her 4-B class.

“For the last five years, I have had migrant students, hence migrant parents. Both in the classroom and at parents' meetings, I take a stance right from the first week of the school. In my classroom, all children and parents are equal; they have equal rights. Love is my guiding principle. When you give love and attention, you always reap the benefits. For a teacher, it doesn't matter at all whether your student is Syrian, Iraqi or Turkish. There is just a child facing you, and you are her teacher. It's as simple as that. Fatma, Tesnim, Muhammed, Fuat and Ahmet are just some of my students who were born in Syria, we have been together since first grade. There were brothers, Kasım and Mustafa, who returned to Aleppo. They called me while they were crossing the border overland, and their father said: “Thank you for everything, Ms. Yasemin.” Former students frequently contact me online. They miss their school, their friends, and we sometimes send them photos. There was Fediye, for example. Her family started to earn more; they moved to another neighbourhood. She couldn't get used to her new teacher, school and classroom. She was a successful student in my class, and now she doesn't want to go to school.

I hear people who say ‘Syrians should go back to their country now’. That is not our business; it is a decision for the family to make. We don't know about their circumstances. The children are our students now; their families are the parents we work with. It is our duty to provide for them with the best education we can. You know what, you get back from children what you give to them. If you love them, they love you back, if you show interest in them they will show interest in class.

For successful education and teaching, you should win over not only the students but also the parents. With the Turkish language courses, we reached out to many parents. They learned the Turkish language. They felt appreciated. They made friends. They were timid at first, just like their children; they didn't know how to act, or what the experience was going to be like. When we gave affection and attention, their nervousness faded away. They now know more about the school they send their children to, their teachers, the school administration and they trust us more, compared to before the course.

The courses had another benefit. There is a lot of information pollution, which supports hate speech about Syrians. Parents from Antep who attended the reading-writing courses got to know Syrian parents closely, they learned about the war they survived, how they make a living. They saw that the hate speech was unwarranted. Relations between neighbours improved in town.

If other projects like this are held, my specific suggestion is to include activities which bring parents and children together. We hold the key to establishing a shared life and cohesion in the long run. If we, as teachers, work hard, reach out to children and parents without discrimination, and give them affection, I think we can overcome all problems."

*In the classroom right underneath that of 4-B, **Ms. Berna** is tidying up the lesson notes on her desk. 1-A is one of the most crowded classes in the Hoşgör Primary School. Students are in high spirits; playtime has just ended. There are still whispers in the classroom into which the students rushed moments earlier. Melik from Aleppo looks around with proud and smart eyes. His aim is to become a doctor. Half of the class of 46 is just like Melik; it consists of the children of families who escaped from the war in their country and took refuge in Turkey.*

"I have been a classroom teacher for 22 years. For two to three years, I had students of Syrian origin. Parents from Antep, not at this school but my former school, didn't want Syrian students to attend the same school as their children. There were no such issues at the Hoşgör Primary School, where harmony was established.

Teaching is a matter of conscience. A teacher with a conscience doesn't discriminate among students and doesn't allow anyone else to. Once we close the door to the classroom, we are alone with the children; they will be shaped by the education we give them, by how we treat them. I also know this, the children we have here



Ms. Berna, Mr. Hassan, Murat and Melik

are the lucky ones. There are also children who have no educational opportunities. For this reason, every child in my class is a child we saved from vulnerability in life, which I think makes our job more critical.

I had another new experience as a teacher this year. I taught Turkish to the parents of my students. The A1 course training we gave parents at our school as part of Qudra had important benefits for both them and us. Relations in the classroom and at school changed positively.

As part of the literacy campaign which started last year, we held literacy courses for parents both from Antep and Syria. This year, we started a basic A1 Turkish language course, thanks to Qudra. The amount paid to parents for their daily expenses affected the attendance of parents, even if it was just a little. Instead of taking the courses at the public education centre, the parents preferred to take the courses at their children's school. They were very glad for the course to be held at this school. Attendees, most of whom consist of women who haven't left their home since they came here, were affected positively regarding their relations with the neighbourhood and city. For our parents, the school, which they call medrese, is very important, they value teachers. Teachers were also valued in Syria.

It is a critical period for everyone. Hate speech is on the rise. For this reason, everyone should do as much as they can. The experience we gained at Qudra courses is very important. We didn't just follow the curriculum during the courses we taught parents; lessons went like parents' meetings. The course which Mr. Hassan and Murat took was quite something in that regard. We talked about life, developments at home. The atmosphere was very pleasant."

*Melik's father, **Mr. Hassan**, migrated from Aleppo with his family when he was 28. Today he is 36 years old, and he is a father of four, including Melik. He and his eldest son Murat took Ms. Berna's A1 course together.*

"I am a shoe-maker. Before the war, I was a shoe-maker in Aleppo. My eldest son Murat went to school in Syria, and he was a very successful student. When we first came here, we weren't able to enrol him in school to continue with his education, because we didn't know how. We didn't know the place, our rights; we had a very hard time during those years. Today, my two sons who are younger than Murat attend Hoşgör Primary School; we are very happy about that.

Actually, Gaziantep is very similar to Aleppo, that's why we're here. If I could, I would return, I wouldn't leave my country behind. I don't know how the situation in Syria might get better. See now, the matter of Golan

Heights was brought up. If the war ends, I will travel there and back, but we are trying to make a life here for ourselves. I started my own workshop this year. We share the same place with master craftsman Murat, who is a local I worked together with for years. We work for different companies. I've handled the financial process. I have a work permit. We live in a two-room house in Hoşgör. Don't be fooled by our conditions here; we are from an established tribe; we are grandchildren of Suleiman Shah. We used to have a house, a social circle; we are experienced people. Now we are trying to recover everything we lost to war.

I always had it in mind to learn Turkish and its rules, to be literate in it. Ms. Berna sent us word that the A1 Basic Turkish course was to begin. My wife Emine was pregnant back then, she couldn't go, but my son Murat and I enrolled in the course together. We learned everything from Ms. Berna, who is the teacher of my younger child. We are grateful to her. I attended some private courses before; they weren't as disciplined as the courses under Qudra Programme. Everything aside, Murat will have the chance to continue his education with this course."

***Murat** works at his father's workshop. Unlike his brothers, he wasn't able to continue with his education. He wants to complete the A2 and B1 courses and then enrol in the open high school.*

"Before the A1 Turkish course I wasn't able to read the written documents given to me when I went to companies or factories, I wasn't able to write down the information they asked for. Now, I can read and write easily. When I was attending the course, I realised that I missed school, doing homework, sitting in the classroom. If the A2 course begins, I will keep coming. When high school ends, I want to study to become a movie actor. Being an actor is my only goal."

There are frantic preparations underway at Hoşgör Primary School, involving everyone from teachers to administrators. Parents from Antep and Syria, who participated in the Qudra courses, will come to the parents' meeting to be held at the school on March 23rd -24th. Announcements are being made in classes; messages are being sent to the WhatsApp groups formed during the courses. The goal is clear; to improve the harmony established with the courses, to strengthen relations further.



WE COULDN'T GO TO THE COURSE; SO THE COURSE CAME TO US

"We were lost; with Qudra we have only recently felt the power to find ourselves again"

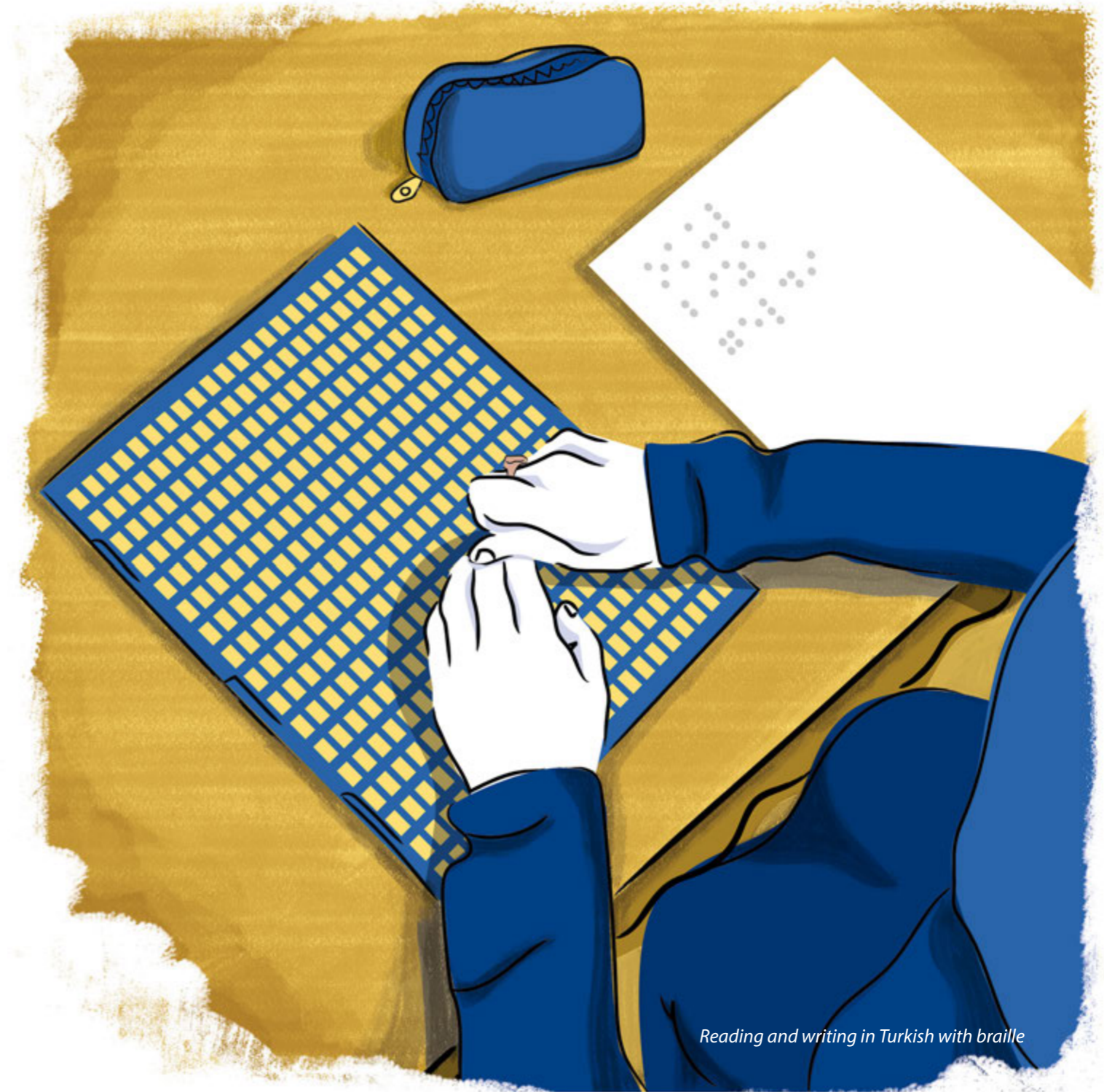
Hale descends the stairs of the apartment they have just moved into, in a pair of slippers she hastily put on her feet, skipping steps one or two at a time. She is trying to pass her brother Kemal and be the first person to meet her teachers Süreyya and Ekrem. She makes it. As she says "Welcome", breathlessly, the joy of winning the first stage of the race shines clearly from her eyes.

Hale studies the reflections in the mirror of the lift they take together, of Ms. Süreyya, who has her hair in a bun and a kind but firm posture, and Mr. Ekrem, whose always wears a smile on his face. Her older brother Kemal is tall enough to reach the fifth-floor button, so she doesn't even try. The last stage of the race is to ring the doorbell. Hale stays behind as she helps Mr. Ekrem, who, like her brothers and sisters, is visually impaired, and Kemal rings the doorbell. Whoever is the winner of this race that has been going on for five and a half months, Hale and Kemal always greet the teachers with joy, just like their mother Ms. Rihab told them to.

Ms. Rihab opens the door, welcoming the teachers into the living room. The young people wait for their teachers around the dining table in the modestly decorated living room. Zehra is the eldest in the house; she is 24 years old. Abdülhamit is 22, Emine is 18 years old. All three have been visually impaired from birth. Their blue braille tablets and pens are on the table. Their hands are steady. The lesson starts. The Turkish Literacy Course with Braille, which has lasted 220 hours since October, will end today.

When the teachers, Süreyya and Ekrem inquire after the health of Ms. Rihab and her children, 10-year-old Hale and 13-year-old Kemal, the children, as if they were waiting for this moment to come, talking about the developments in the last 24 hours without drawing breath. The most important development is that their mother Ms. Rihab, has just received her A1 Turkish course certificate. Hale quickly gets and shows the certificate. Ms. Rihab says "Without you, it wouldn't have happened. I learned Turkish through the lessons you gave to the children; then I improved it by going to the Ezogelin Public Education Centre", and she offers them tea.

Before Qudra provided the opportunity, Zehra, Emine and Abdülhamit were not able to receive any educational services. In five and a half months, all three young people were able to learn reading and writing in Turkish with braille. They now speak Turkish sufficiently to express themselves.



Reading and writing in Turkish with braille

As Ms. Süreyya reads out a poem, the subject of the last lesson, Zehra, Emine and Abdülhamit process the words one by one with their special blue pens onto the cardboard in their writing tablets while repeating the verses with their teacher. When the poem is read, Ms. Süreyya asks them to read what they wrote. The young people start reading the poem perfectly by inverting the cardboard they remove from the tablet.

The second part of the lesson was set aside to talk about plans for the future. Ms. Rihab tops up the tea, sits at the table with the tea tray in her hands and starts the conversation: "We were lost. With Qudra we only recently began to find the strength to feel ourselves again. We moved to this house. My son Ahmet works to provide for the family but it's not enough. We have to ease his burden. Now, we all have learned Turkish. I have I even got my certificate. If there are any new courses, we would like to continue. If it is possible, we will look for work."

The others then speak in turn. Abdülhamit says he can do minor office jobs with the Turkish he has learned, while Zehra says that she will make plans after the wedding, since she is set to marry a young man from Antep who she met at the Solidarity Centre for the Visually Impaired. Emine says she wants to keep taking different courses in the public education centre and continues, smiling: "We couldn't get to the course; but the course came to us. A lot has changed in our lives. We weren't able to leave the house, or understand what we were told. Now, we not only leave the house, but also go wherever we want in the city." Ms. Süreyya says that they can meet up occasionally, just as they did during the course; that they should keep discovering the city and Mr. Ekrem says that they should keep reading and writing in Turkish, even though the course has ended. Ms. Süreyya turns to Hale and Kemal and asks: "Well, what are your plans?" Their answer is quick in coming: "We will study."

Suddenly, a deep silence envelops the room, as if time itself had frozen. Ms. Rihab puts the tray from her lap on the table, takes out a handkerchief from her pocket and wipes her eyes. Filled with sorrow, she says she has memories that will never go away. Together with her two daughters, she was injured during the attack on their house, and despite all efforts in Turkey where they came for treatment, one of her daughters died. As she remembers the difficult days in the Reyhanlı and İslâhiye camps, she lets out a deep breath aloud to ease her heart, and praise. Her praise of God breaks up the melancholy and once again, people become more energised. As Zehra, Abdülhamit and Emine put new pieces of cardboard onto the braille tablet, Mr. Ekrem has already chosen a new reading. Meanwhile, Ms. Süreyya fills in the lesson attendance sheet.

"What about your plans?" Abdülhamit asks his teachers. They both say that they will continue teaching the visually impaired and emphasise that over the past few months they have felt as if they were members of



Abdülhamit, Ms. Süreyya, Mr. Ekrem, Emine, Hale and Zehra

the family, and that they will continue the friendship they started here. They talk about how happy they are to see how their students have advanced since the day they met. In addition to his teaching, Mr. Ekrem is also the head of a non-governmental organisation working for other visually impaired people. He points out the importance of the experience they have gained thanks to the Qudra course. For both teachers, this was their first experience of teaching students whose native tongue is not Turkish. While they say that they can utilise the experience they have acquired here, Mr. Ekrem underlines the fact that not only migrants with disabilities, but all people with disabilities across the country have difficulty accessing education. Ms. Süreyya adds “We have Syrian students with disabilities at schools; they all have difficulty using the Turkish language. People implementing Qudra in the field have fortunately aimed at providing language education first; this is very important. For the purposes of integration, there is the need for strong communication, and for strong communication there is the need for a common language, the need to speak Turkish.”

Hale, struck by the word her mother just used, can't help asking: “What does it mean to be lost?” Emine begins speaking on behalf of herself and her visually impaired siblings: She starts speaking, “We became lost in our own country, one we knew very well; where we were used to the voices, the smells, because of the war. Before the war our relatives were alive, we were all living in the same neighbourhood. We were a big family, we were always together. We always went for walks, we had a school. The war turned everything upside down. The sounds of the city changed. The bombs, gunshots, yelling, groaning, curses, the screams of those crying for help... I'll never forget those sounds. Particularly the sound of the ambulance; the sound of the ambulance that brought my mother and sisters to hospital, is always in my mind. The hospital in Turkey, the camps we were brought to, were all very strange to us. Like I said, it was like we were lost. Until when? Until we found this house, started taking lessons and got used to Antep. Today I hear the voices I heard in Idlib before the war, I feel like I am in a familiar place.”

Ms. Rehab speaks of her feelings using words that show that she uses the expression ‘being lost’ synonymously with ‘being without a country’. “Before the war I had never thought of leaving my country. It had been years since I lost my husband, but I had a happy life in the land where I was born and raised. I learned that a homeland is very precious thing. Being without a country is like being lost. Maybe once the war ends, we will go to visit. Especially younger people don't know Syria very well. They have got used to living here, but I miss Idlib very much.”

The doorbell rings. Ahmet enters the room after a 12-hour shift, tired but smiling. He is 23 years old. He does whatever jobs he can find. He is more hopeful nowadays, having seen his siblings become able to move around more freely.

Hale is still thinking about the meaning of being lost. She picks up the tablet given by the school and decides to take a picture of what is being spoken about, the faces, expressions, people and the happiness filling up the room may never fade. As she takes a selfie turning around the table she repeats the same sentence again and again, “Smile, look at the tablet. Smile, look at the tablet. So nothing is ever lost...”



WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

“Nazan, Sena and Hasip”

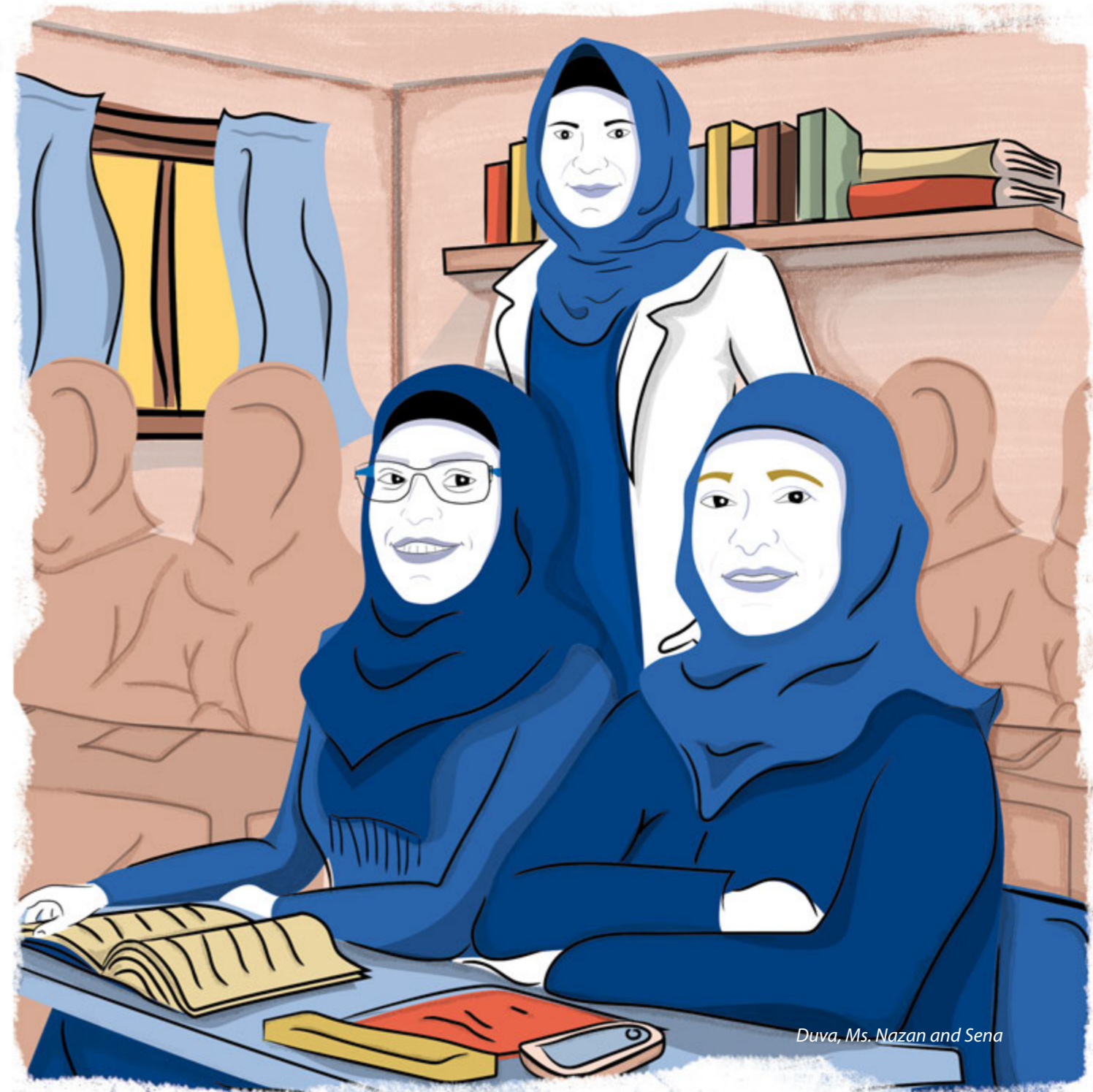
The war first took away children’s sleep, then left people without a home, mute and exhausted. People had to leave their past behind to save their future. When the yearning for their home is gripping their hearts, they all ask the same question: “Do you know how it feels to yearn for a place that is not safe?” Stuck between leaving and staying behind, they look for a way out. On the road to salvation, women shouldered essential burdens. They first learned Turkish, then about the city’s socio-cultural life, and went on to create an oasis full of colour.

At the Course

The Turkish B1 course is one of the weekday courses at the Gaziantep Şahinbey Public Education Centre. There are 25 women who attend the class. They are comfortable knowing that their children, whom they could not leave at home, are in the kindergarten just across from their classroom.

Sunlight enters the second-floor classroom, filtered through the thin curtains hanging at the window. Desks stand in neat rows. The Turkish suffix “-de” is marked in red on the sentences on the white board, indicating usage that native speakers of Turkish can sometimes find difficult.

Every morning, **Ms. Nazan** welcomes her students with the same smiling expression. She has been giving Turkish lessons to Syrian and Iraqi migrants for four years. She started teaching Sena’s class with the Qudra Turkish A1 course in September. She begins describing her work by saying “First of all you need to win their hearts, the rest comes easily and their inner potential shines through.” “There are people who have lost a spouse or children. In their own country they had been living in their basements for months. I look at the women on the Turkish course; they are so strong despite having experienced so much suffering... They are always full of life. In the initial sessions, we get to know one another and talk. Our aim in the course is for them to become able to properly express themselves, to be able to get their point across without needing help from anyone, in the hospital, street, everywhere. I really have faith in this kind of project. During the A1 course we practice



Duva, Ms. Nazan and Sena

speaking and listening. In the A2 course, students become able to express themselves in writing. In the B1 course, they become able to read short stories and write fully.”

On the desks there are the Turkish language textbooks and the attendees’ striped notebooks. With pencils in hand, they meticulously write in their notebooks what Ms. Nazan writes on the board. Mobile phones are kept on silent mode and to one side on the desks. Their phones have become their personal memories; a memory that is their only connection to their relatives far away. They also contain photos from the trips organised by Qudra. Most of the screens are cracked, but like their will to hold on to life, their phones also work perfectly, regardless of the cracks.

Everyone in the class wants the war to end as soon as possible. Their common wish is a comfortable life for their children. Some want to return to Syria and some want to stay in Turkey. Some want to go to their relatives in Europe, whatever the cost. As they talk about memories, they take out handkerchiefs from their pockets to wipe away the tears. Religious holidays, birthdays, graduations, weddings and the pleasures of Friday holy days in Syria are what come to mind first.

The women’s ages range from 20 to 50 and most of them are married; almost all of them have more than one child. They came from all across Syria, including Damascus. Most have been in Turkey for five or six years, only a few arrived a year or six months ago. Almost all of them had visited the provinces of Turkey bordering Syria before. They heard about Qudra from their friends and social media. They say that, compared to the Turkish language education they received in the camps or at private courses, they found Qudra language courses to be higher quality. All of them want to learn Turkish as well as they can, but from here their expectations diverge:

“I am a professional, I speak three languages. I want to work. Here, I learn Turkish grammatically. I will become a translator.”

“I want to study and become a pediatrician. That is why I need to improve my Turkish.”

“I was studying Arabic literature in Syria, I was close to graduating. I want to finish my studies here, so I need to learn Turkish best as I can.”

“My spouse died in the war, I was left alone. One of my children is 15 years old, other is 18.

They both work. For them to receive an education I need to work, so I need to learn Turkish.”

“I want to educate my children. I am learning Turkish to help them.”

“My husband can’t learn Turkish because he works; I need to learn it so I can resolve problems at the hospital or school. Whether we stay here permanently or not, while we live here, we need to be able to speak Turkish.”

Everyone has a different story. **Duva**, who is sitting at the front of the desk near the windows, rapidly details her expectations. She is 26 years old. She came from Aleppo five years ago and now lives in Gaziantep. She worked at a factory for a couple of years; 12 hours a day, for 200 liras a week. “We came here together with my husband and children, leaving the war behind. We were separated from my husband in Antep. He took the children from me and took them back to Syria. I saw them last year during the holidays. I miss my children a lot. My daughter’s name is Syria. The war started when I was pregnant with her. I named her Syria, so both her and my country could enjoy good fortune. Today I yearn both my daughter and my country. I learned about Qudra through my friend. I came here as soon as I heard about the course. I want to learn to speak Turkish as well as I can. I can paint, I know how to use a computer. I want to become a designer. I want to take care of my children with me, work as a designer and for us to live together. This is my only purpose...”

Towards the end of the class, **Sena** takes the floor; declaring that she expects to see everyone at her place: “People from the courses at Ezogelin will also be coming. It would be my pleasure to have you all.” She tells people her address before leaving the classroom. Sena’s house is within walking distance to the Centre. As soon as she gets home, she sends her location to the WhatsApp groups of friends at Şahinbey and Ezogelin Public Education Centres.

At Home

Sena and her family lived in a house without windows for four years. She has put a lot of effort in to the house they moved into last year: “Nobody had lived in this house for 14 years. I cleaned it, painted the walls, made it liveable. I also gave money to a middleman. As it is in every part of our lives, intermediaries make money from us, even when we rent a house. That aside, when I rented the house, the rent was 300 liras. When the landlord saw the house spotlessly clean he raised the rent, and now he wants 500 now. I have no neighbours, because all around me, there are repair-shops.”

Pictures of elder members of the family hang on the snow-white walls of the living room. As she arranges the cushions covering the house from end to end, she warns the children to behave when guests arrive. Her

children Hasip, Bayram and Merve go to primary school. Like all children, all three of them have dreams. They are happy with their teachers. Iman is Sena's youngest child; he was born in Turkey. He comes to the Qudra course on weekdays together with his mother and spends time in the kindergarten. They have been living in Antep for six years. They are from Aleppo.

The first guests arrive. Duva greets the children right away. She asks the children in Turkish where they are from. 10-year old **Hasip** answers: "It's like we are locals here. My great-grandfather fought at Çanakkale. I talk about it in class. My grandfather Ömer died at the age of 103. He told us about my great-grandfather when we came here." Hasip speaks Turkish fluently. He came here when he was four years old.

Sena was forced to choose between her country and her children. "I never wanted to leave the house. During the war, I lived under the bombing for eight months in the basement. My husband was detained by armed men. He came back after five days. He had torture marks on his arm. After that my father-in-law said 'We are going to Turkey. If you don't want to come with us, you can leave the children and go to your father's house.' I had no choice but to accept. We left everything back there. Some people taught us how to walk over mined land. We crossed into Turkey on foot." **Hasip** joins in the conversation: "I heard that people stole whatever we had in our house, and that mice have invaded the house. It was destroyed." He tears up, leaning firmly against the wall, and adds: "My tricycle was also in the house." As they speak, his brother Bayram is looking for his glasses. Merve calmly listens the conversation. Iman has only just woken up, and plays with his mother's phone as he rubs his eyes.

Sena's husband was a shoe-maker in Aleppo; they had a shop on the ground floor of their house. In Turkey, he designs and makes slippers. "He works but it is not enough. Life was cheaper in Syria. We didn't pay rent. I was living in my father-in-law's house. I had to manage with just one room there. Now, I have a house with two rooms here."

There is a knock on the door, her sister and classmate Nesrin arrives. **Nesrin** is 36 years old. She came to Antep four years ago. Her husband is a body-shop worker. "I am happy with Qudra. We have learned Turkish very well. I want my children to have a good life. We have been suffering since the start of the war. We have to keep being strong, because life goes on". This is how she sums up her story.

Sena welcomes the guests who are arriving one after another. The women from Syria and Antep who are visiting Sena met during the hairdressing, computer, and clothing courses and the social activities held under

Qudra. Some local women from Antep look around in wonder at being in a Syrian family's house. When asked what they would like to drink, they reply "Whatever's convenient". "I just brewed some tea" says Sena and goes to the kitchen, which is separated from the room by a see-through curtain.

Some of the guests attend the hairdressing course. The hairdressing courses, run by the Şahinbey Public Education Centre, are held at the Red Crescent Community Centre. The vocational instructor at the hairdressing course is Ms. Ayşe, who sits next to Ms. Nazan, the school teacher. She says a few words to get the conversation going. "I see that the way you tie your headscarves looks the same now. The women from Antep tie their scarves the same as you do." "Yes, yes" says a woman from Antep who wears a headscarf, "Theirs is better, it covers our neck and shoulder more easily."

A Syrian woman of the same age answers: "We are getting used to each other. But there are some who are not getting used to it. On the contrary, they jeer at us, not including the friends here of course. As the time we have been in Turkey becomes longer, the voices of those people expressing their displeasure has become stronger. We suppose that it is not easy for the people here either. But it is not easy for us too. We didn't come here of our own volition. I stayed there for a year while the war was raging. When a bomb exploded right across the road from my house, I knew I had to escape. When I came here, I thought it would be for a month. Six years have passed now and I couldn't return. Even if I wanted to go back my house now, I don't have one. A part of it was destroyed and there are squatters in the other parts."

A Syrian woman next to her, fixing her child's hair, says "Wherever they come from, there are good people and bad people." A middle-aged woman from Antep sitting across from her joins in. "Speaking for myself; I set up homes for four Syrian friends when the migration began. I helped four women give birth. Now, when I hear those people who don't want Syrians here, the people who speak ill of them, I feel sorry. I wonder why they behave like this. I have become like a grandmother to the children I helped deliver. I love them all; my door is always open to them. Honestly, I would miss them if they left..." As soon as she stops speaking; a Syrian woman makes a comment that the others strongly approve of. "Yes, when we first arrived here we needed a lot of things. Today we only need a smile, a bit of friendship."

Vocational instructor Ms. Ayşe says that whether they are migrants or from Antep, all women without exception need to be informed about their rights to participate in social life and she makes an observation: "Remember the first days of the course; you were very shy, all afraid to say a single word. Are you the same now? Look around, everyone seems content with themselves." Their voices are united in expressing their gratitude. Ms.

Nazan responds modestly “We just did our bit. Without your willingness and dedication there would be no courses or cohesion. With you, my belief has been restored in the power of women.” Laughing, she adds “Women will save the world.” “The feeling is mutual Ms. Nazan” says a young woman from Antep. “The course environment was good, our teachers were very supportive. With our Syrian friends we have shared both our joys and sorrows. We learned together. To be honest, I had some prejudices. I used to think that the Syrians were living a life of ease. Now, I see that they are living like the rest of us, maybe living under even worse conditions. We did not know each other before. As we got to know each other, we became friends. I realised that I could spend time with most of these people outside of the course.”

The courses should continue, no one thinks any different. The people who have learned Turkish want to participate in the vocational courses. And the people who took vocational courses after the Turkish A1 course want to improve their Turkish. “Since I started taking this course” states a Syrian Turkmen woman, “my husband has been so happy that he said to me ‘If only you had attended this course before.’ At home my attitude towards him and my children changed. I’ve become more cheerful and have felt a lot of changes within myself.” Women point out that working men’s Turkish improves more slowly, as they cannot take courses, and they add that this is the reason women themselves have had to deal with most things associated with the schooling of their children.

Ms. Ayşe talks about something she has observed, looking Syrian attendees in the eye: “Yes, after all, for you this is a foreign land. In spite of that, you now have far greater self-confidence to participate in daily life, compared with a couple of years ago.” Syrian women readily respond “It’s true. In Syria, we mostly stayed at home; our husbands would do the shopping or other work outside. Here, we deal with these jobs as they don’t have the time.” Another woman, dressed in black from top to toe, adds: “Yes; I go outside much more here.”

An attendee at the Ezogelin Public Education Centre, takes the plate passed by Sena and now that women’s talk is truly underway she feels at ease to ask: “How are things between you and your husbands? How did the war and migration affect your relations at home?” There is some giggling. A young Syrian woman bursts in, “They don’t have anyone else, so they are more into us.” Other Syrian women agree with what she says.

A young Syrian woman, who keeps shifting in her seat because she is pregnant, says “What should we do if things are bad between us? Who can we talk to? If we complain, they could be deported. Then we would be left here alone. Being alone here is harder for us. I have a friend. When she arrived here, she didn’t know it very



Sena and Hasip

well, and she became a second wife to a man from Antep. In our country, men can marry many women. And what was the result? That man threw her out. She has no insurance. No one knows what will happen to her..."

A Syrian woman sitting near the window says, "I am happy living in Antep. The lifestyle here is a better fit for my own. We are grateful to everyone here who has given us support. If my husband had a better job, we wouldn't have any other problems". Most Syrian women say that their husbands are going through hard times because they can't practice their own professions; they seem to have aged ten years since they arrived. In response, as some women from Antep say that their situation is not that different, a middle-aged attendee from Antep talks about how her spouse is unable to work due to his sickness and they are going through hard times. A woman who gained citizenship recently and acted as a translator during the courses has the final say on the matter: "When you are a woman, the problems are the same whether you are from Antep, or a migrant. But if you are a migrant, you may have a harder time to find someone to talk to."

"The problem is not just our situation here" says a Syrian woman, gripping the tea glass in her hand tightly, "there is also what we lived through, our losses, our pain. We can't talk about all of it. Everything we lived through, we have it imprinted on our minds, word for word. We can't forget it, even as the years go by." A younger woman sitting next to her remembers that whenever they heard an aero plane they put on their shoes, to run away if the bombs started falling and lived like that for days and weeks on end. She says that they slept with their coats on. "We started wearing black because of ISIS. Before them we didn't wear black, we dressed up colourfully" she starts summarising what they've been through. She says "For example we would dye our hair blonde", and with a sudden, graceful movement, she unties her headscarf; revealing her long wavy hair. The woman sitting across her also removes her scarf, her hair is in shades of red and blonde. "So no one should assume we don't dress up all fancy, that we wear dark colours all the time. Look, are we in any way different from you?"

A while later, a blonde woman from Antep asks, "Don't get me wrong but I'm curious about something. We aren't as bold as you when it comes to having children. I admire your courage. How do you do that?" With her dark eyes sparkling, a young Syrian woman answers without a moment's hesitation: "We lost so many people, so many loved ones, we think that when we give birth to children we will be able to find our home, establish our homeland again, that we will be able to return to the good old days much sooner." Another woman sitting near her adds: "My sister-in-law lost three children in a single bombing. What is she going to do, except have children?"

There are no easy generalisations today. Everyone listens to what others say carefully, trying to understand.

As the company clears away the empty plates, the children start to filter in from the other room one by one. Hasip has a book in his hand. He is reading *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, written by Richard Bach, which tells the story of Jonathan Livingston's struggle on the way to freedom. To engage him in conversation, Ms. Nazan asks "That is a great book you're reading Hasip. What is the story about?" Hasip starts spinning himself around in the middle of the room, stretching his arms out like wings, "It's about someone like me who likes to work. He has dreams for the future. He spends his days practicing flying faster, flying perfectly. He says 'The seagull who flies the highest is the one who sees the furthest.'" Those in attendance applaud Hasip's extraordinary performance.

Now that the tea and coffee and delicious treats are finished, some of which Sena prepared, some which the guests brought with them, singing in Arabic and Turkish can begin. An attendee from Aleppo, who brought along her darbuka, starts singing *manis*⁵, a part of Arabic culture. After a mani is recited for a person present, a song usually follows. Right after a mani for teachers is sung, they begin reciting a *mani* for Qudra: "Qudra Qudra you are the best / Your every move is golden / You bring us freedom." Ululations are in order. The attendee from Aleppo drops her darbuka to one side and says "Want me to tell you something? Before the war, possessions were more important than our lives. Now, they are of no importance at all. Now, only three things are important; the here and now, our friends and our family. After the migration, if not for these courses, we would have locked up ourselves in our houses. Qudra set us free in a way. In all the activities we carried out, the trips we took, we felt that we were valued. We had forgotten about things like that. For example, we also felt joy today, and had so much fun." Everyone is in agreement.

As the guests get ready to leave, one of them says "After the courses end, we should stay in contact. I hope to see you at my place" says a middle-aged woman from Antep. As Nesrin says, "Besides, Ms. Nazan will give birth in autumn, let's do something for her", Sena cracks a joke: "You never know, the baby may start reading one of the texts from the book as soon as she is born; she has been listening to us for months now after all..." "You must be from a movie" says Ms. Nazan and Duva answers "If what we've been through were made into a movie, it would break box office records" as she puts on her shoes.

It's already getting dark. Hasip runs to the window, waving goodbye to the guests with her mother.

As she closes the window, he asks her mother: "Do they have seagulls in Antep?"



⁵ Mani: Best wishes rhyme that is part of oral culture

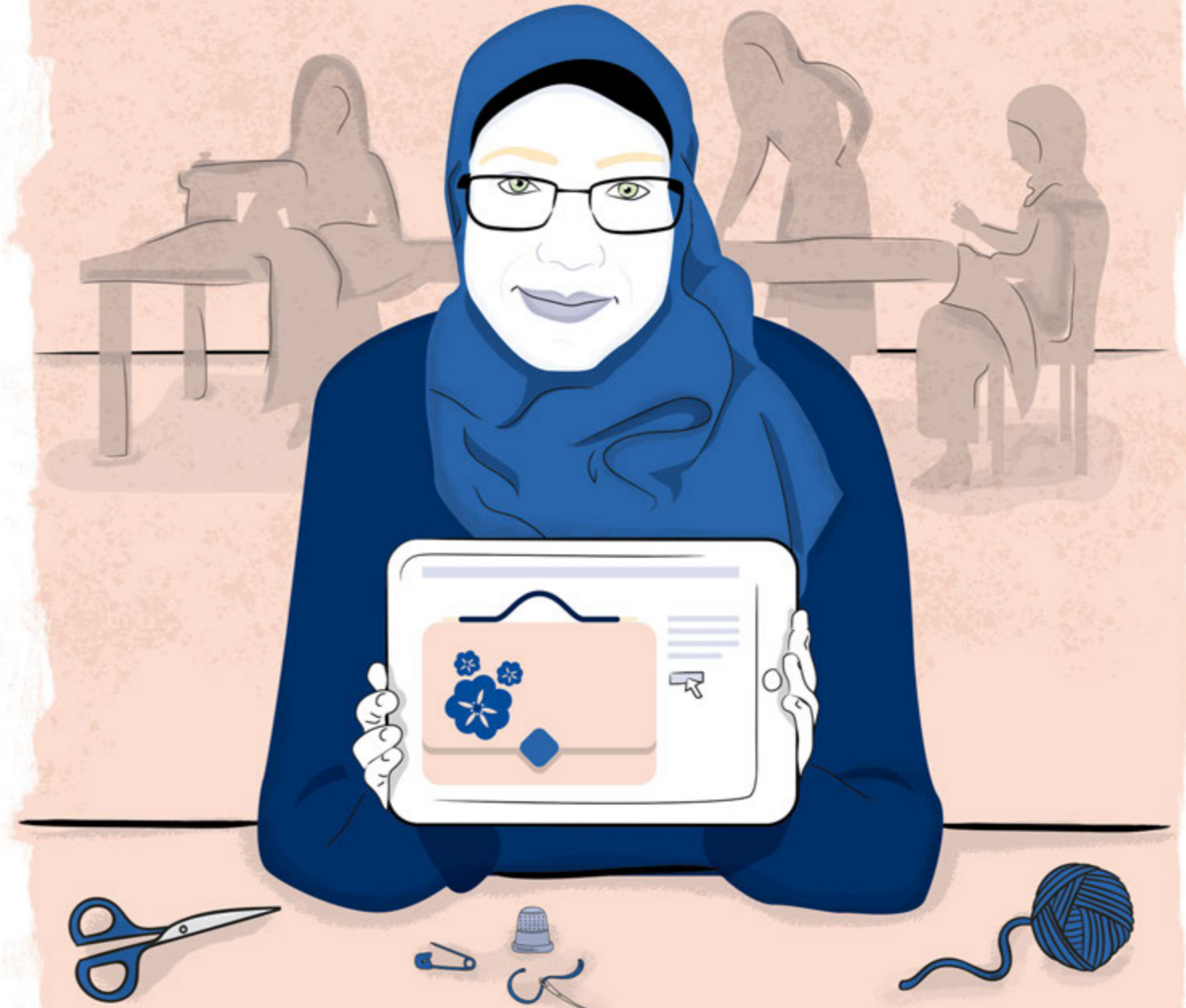
HALA AND AYA

“You shouldn’t waste time waiting, you should make something instead”

*The narrow path passing by the Women, Family Consultation and Production Centre leads to Kurtuluş Avenue, known to have been lit by torches during ancient times, which mean it’s the world’s first illuminated street. Dozens of women take part in the courses organised in the rooms overlooking the stone courtyard of the historical two-storey house. Under Qudra, various courses such as hairdressing, jewellery and embroidery were held. One of the courses most in demand is the felt accessory making course. The course’s qualified instructor Hatice Aşık waits for her student Hala in the iwan overlooking the courtyard. Ms. Hatice has taught the felt course three times as part of Qudra. She has great things to say about the experience “We learned a lot together, we socialised, we shared much which helped us break down mutual prejudices.” As she speaks, her student Hala steps through the stone arch into the house, carrying a bag in containing the handiwork she is about to complete. **Hala** learned about making felt bags, fairy dolls and scarves, and she can already work silk and felt together.*

I am 26 years old. I have a 10-year old daughter and an 8-year old son. I am from Aleppo. My husband worked as a nurse. He was killed during the war. He was 28 years old, so young. My family came to Aleppo. When my husband died, I was left alone in the middle of the war with my children. With nothing else to do, I migrated to Hatay four years ago, to my family’s house. I don’t blame fate for my husband’s death, but I can’t forget him, the happy days we had and the country I left behind. People migrate, but when they do, heartbreak is inevitable. When I arrived here, I had to make a life for my children and myself here. I heard about courses from my friends. I applied straight away. I already enjoyed making handicrafts.

Ms. Hatice joins in, laughing. “It’s always the same. At first, women wonder what felt is, and then they can’t stop working with it. Felt is sturdy material, it shows off craftsmanship beautifully. When we make ornaments we use pure wool, which takes all the static away from your body. It relaxes people.” Hala adds, “It’s not just that. As you stick the needle in, you think about the things that bother you, as if you’re sticking the needle into your problems, which relaxes you. I improved my fine motor skills with the felt. I attended other courses. Qudra



Hala

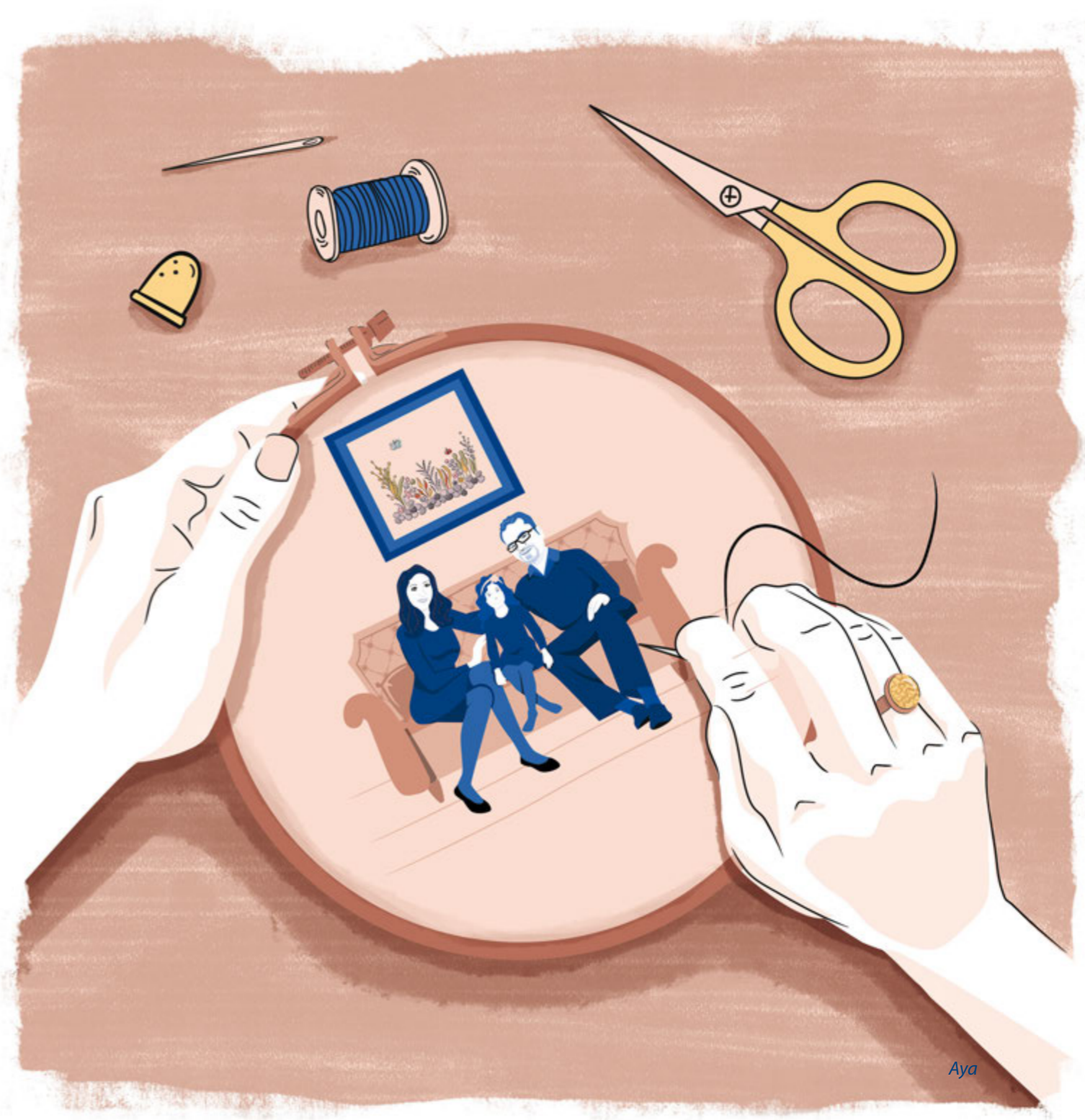
reimbursed me for my attendance. It was almost like a lifeline to me. I was very lucky. Ms. Hatice is a very good instructor and our classmates got along very well. Some of our friends at the course were women from Hatay. We had such a good time, it's as though our souls were rested. The Qudra courses have come to an end, but I still come to the other handicraft courses at the Centre, I keep learning.

Ms. Hatice proudly adds, "Hala has started selling her work." Hala confirms this with a nod: "Yes, there are associations in Hatay established for women who lost their spouses like me, or whose husbands were wounded. I go there several days a week, to show what I learned in the course to other women. I see Ms. Hatice as a role model. The association buys my work and the work of women I teach to compensate our efforts, and sells them on trade websites. I provide for my family and children with the money I earn from these sales.

If peace returns to my country and I feel life there is safe for my children, I would like to go back. Although my children like it here, it would be hard for them. They love their school and speak to me in Turkish at home. In fact, I would like to stay in Hatay. This place is similar to Syria in many ways. There are people as many people who want us to stay as there are who want us to leave. We get along very well with our neighbours. Wherever we go, I need to make a life for my children.

I want to own a house here, but in my dreams, I see Aleppo. There should be more vocational courses. Only then would people, especially women like me, be able to get their lives in order again instead of desperately looking for help. For the last seven years, we became accustomed to receiving things all the time, I think we should break down this habit and start giving. We Syrians are not freeloaders, we are productive. I keep telling everyone 'You shouldn't waste time waiting, you should make something instead.' Women are particularly good at that, it's in our nature, we are productive people.

Products made at the Nedime Keser Public Education Centre are put up for sale in the Exhibition and Sales Centre. The Sales Centre is on Kurtuluş Street, right opposite the Habibi Neccar Mosque. It is a typical Antakya house. Standing at the wooden patio overlooking the stone courtyard, Aya and Saadet wait for their course to start. Mr. Saadet is from Hatay. She came to the course to learn handicrafts and improve herself. She met Aya at the course. As she introduces Aya she says "She is the same age as my daughter-in-law. Whenever I look at her, I think about how young she is. When she came to the class, she made a real effort to get to know us. We, women from Hatay, at first didn't know how



to act around Syrian women. We wondered whether we would upset them by saying something untoward. After all, they had just escaped from a war zone, and they might have been sensitive to various things. We saw that we were worrying quite a bit during the first week of the course. Now, we make house calls to each other, we meet socially outside the course."

Aya is 27 years old and she came to Turkey six years ago.

I arrived on February 12th, got married on February 14th in Mersin. My fiancée Mohammed's family and my family came to Turkey together. Mohammed was a pharmacist. I was studying French Language and Literature at the University of Aleppo. I had four courses left before graduation. Both the house I grew up in and the house my husband and I were preparing for after the wedding were destroyed, all our belongings were gone.

Back in Aleppo, I was a young girl who studied day and night, and occasionally gave private lessons. Today, I am a migrant woman living in a foreign country, who got married in wartime and the mother of a child. Compared to the past, I became more resilient. I also acquired citizenship. It's like living a single life twice. I had to create a new Aya from scratch.

Before I started the handicraft courses, I wouldn't have been able to sew my own socks. Now, I make handmade portraits using my old socks, I am able to produce colourfully embroidered bags. Qudra helped me create a new Aya. I will leave some of my work at the Exhibition and Sales Centre. Meanwhile, one of my brothers is in Dubai, and the other is in Saudi Arabia. They really liked the bags I made and placed orders. My husband says 'Who knows, maybe we can start a business this way'. I tried working here, I was a secretary in a Syrian company. But my child was very young and it was hard.

I had a wonderful childhood and great teenage years. I would listen to chansons, watch movies describing the city of love, Paris. I can smell the scent of Miss Dior when I recall those days. Aleppo was under French occupation, I recall it lasted until 1947. That's why you could see the marks left by the French in the city. I was very curious about that time, you know, since I was studying French literature. Anyway, I can tell you about the former Aya for hours if you let me... French poet Charles Baudelaire speaks of tears of hope in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. I am trying to wipe away the tears of hope now. I want to make a happy and secure life for my daughter Lûlû. You never know, maybe with these hands, which now know how to hold the needle and the thread thanks to the course here, will make me a new life like they put ornaments on étamine.



EDUCATION IS THE ROOT OF SOCIAL COHESION

"Families and children need to feel valuable."

Hoşgör, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Antep, is about a kilometre from the centre of town. Like in the song Antep'in Hamamları (Antep's Bathhouses), the houses' roofs grow out of one another. Houses with bare walls rise up, with numerous upper floors. Every roof sprouts a few satellite dishes, and there is the occasional birdcage. In spite of the roofs' uniform brown colour, there is colourful washing hung out to dry everywhere you look.

Before it even had the opportunity to cope with the experience of internal migration, in recent years, the neighbourhood came to host Syrian migrants. In this sense, poverty is experienced in cycles. Men, women and children of the neighbourhood work in insecure jobs.

Hoşgör Primary School is right at the heart of the neighbourhood. There is a small grocery shop facing it, and the neighbourhood marketplace is close by. Children gather in the school building's concrete yard, which has four floors. Almost all of the children walk to school. They carry backpacks that must weigh as much as they do, and have to catch their breath after climbing up the hill. The bell is about to ring.

Two young women and three little girls enter the headmaster's office on the second floor. They came to Antep from Maraş. Principal Mürsel Öztürk says "Please take a seat", motioning to the armchairs across from his desk. The Syrian family want their children to be transferred to the school. The girls have their report cards from the previous term with them. Mr. Öztürk explains the process to the women step by step, with help from the children. As

the Syrian family leave the room to complete the formal process, Mr. Öztürk summarizes their fundamental approach, saying “We are here to serve all children, whether they’re registered with us on the e-school system or not. We haven’t turned away a single parent yet.”

Mürsel Öztürk has been an educator for twenty six years. As far as he is concerned, education is the basis of social cohesion. Education is a whole. Parts of this whole are the school, parents and teachers, as well as the neighbourhood/society that surrounds it. Success lies in the ability of the parts that make up this whole to work together in harmony.

“The school was founded in 1972. Along with Vice Principals Abdullah Er, Öner Polat and 48 teachers, we try to make the school a tolerant place, to do justice to the name it bears.⁶ We have over a thousand students. Around a third of them are children of parents who are under temporary protection, or parents who have become citizens. Our school also serves as the venue for the Temporary Education Centre, and all accreditation examinations in Antep. Due to migration from the east of Antep and because of the war in Syria over the last five/six years, the school has become a diverse cultural melting pot for parents and children alike. I say “diverse”, because, for me and for my colleagues who teach here, differences do not matter. They are our children and their families are the parents we work with.”

From literacy mobilisation to Qudra

“There was an incident last year. Exams were being held at the school. The police came, said that a complaint had been filed against one of the teachers for hitting a student with his car, and that an investigation had to be launched. The pupil’s parents had complained. We went to their house. It was a Syrian family. The child was badly injured. We asked him what had happened. He said ‘I fell’. We asked him ‘But why did you tell the police that the teacher had hit you then?’ The child said to the teacher ‘Sir, you visit everyone else at school at their home, but you’ve never come to where we live. I thought by doing what I did, I could give you a reason to visit us.’ The family gave us refreshments, we had a chat. The issue was resolved. This incident gave us much to think about. Families and children need to feel valued.

⁶ “Hoşgör” means “tolerate” in Turkish.



Course attendees (inspired from drawing by Fatma Adod, attendee)

Hoşgör Primary School

“At a teacher’s board meeting we held at the end of the year, we decided to offer literacy training to parents from Antep and those who migrated here as part of the nationwide literacy mobilisation programme, and to support active parental participation in the education and learning process. We started with around 10 classes. Then, as though by miracle, Director Recep Öztürk of the Ezogelin Public Education Centre told us about Qudra. The Turkish literacy and A1 level basic Turkish courses we held for parents increased to 28 classes. Teachers at the school taught some of the courses. We planned it so that teachers taught their student’s parents in these courses.”

We’ve taught Turkish to around five hundred parents

“Through Qudra courses, we have taught Turkish literacy and speaking classes to around five hundred parents, or our students’ other family members, such as siblings above the age of compulsory education. Some classes were taught during the week, while others, especially those for working parents, were in the evening.

The migration history of most of the parents goes back between four and seven years. Household size can often be ten and sometimes up to 15. Families share their houses, which usually have one or two rooms, three in rare cases, with their close relatives. Most parents are at the 20 to 40 age range. In terms of occupations, women are mostly not employed and fathers and boys work in day jobs. There are some who are shopkeepers. In fact, some among them were teachers like me back in Syria and earned their living as white-collar workers. They are in need of courses here to plan their working life.”

Life skills have improved

“Attendees to Qudra courses were paid 15 TRY for food and travel. They were very enthusiastic anyway, so even such little reimbursement made a difference to attendance. Parents were told during registration that they should not miss classes in the A1 course, and that they would have to take an exam to earn their certificates. The teachers gave the parents one-to-one support in these classes. Think about it; you get an education at the same school and at the very same desk as your child, you get to know the school in a physical sense, and in terms of how it operates. Your child’s teacher teaches the class and you get to know her/him. There were other social activities outside of courses, we held parent-teacher meetings. Parents were shy at first and the courses served to help them overcome it. They can now come in and talk to us about anything. They used to be unwilling to have their photos taken, now they come up to me in the school yard to take selfies. We told them about Antep’s culture in the courses. We talked about which services they could ask for from which institutions, and about their rights. It wasn’t just the way they learnt the language that got better over time, but their life skills improved too.”

The relationship between the parents, the school and the students has grown stronger

“The courses have allowed us to get to know one another and they started to see who we were. They also developed positive relationships with parents from Antep through these courses and social activities. The greatest role was played by our teachers. They worked incredibly hard during the week and at the weekends, early mornings and late nights. They used to say ‘I wish the week was eight days long.’ Most importantly, they believed in the project. As a result of all this, the 2018-19 school year had fewest incidents and problems. Most of the problems that had occurred in previous years dropped to a record low, as there was greater cohesion. The smallest of interventions created a very positive outcome. When they first arrived, the parents and children were extremely shy and self-conscious. Today, they know they have the same rights as parents and children from Antep, and can assert themselves properly. Two basic indicators show the effect the courses have had: First of all, we no longer need interpreters. Second, there are fewer issues in terms of conflicts, bullying and adjustment, and this has strengthened the relationship between the parents, the school and the teachers. Another significant point should also be made here. Because Syrian students learned Turkish very well at school, they had to manage the relationships between their families and the outside world, whether they wanted to or not. It was as though they had taken on their parents’ role. The courses strengthened the parents’ language skills and contributed towards normalising the relationship between parents and children at home.”

We are more experienced and demanding about next steps

“When recently discussing these issues with the teachers, some very out-of-the-box suggestions came up. Programmes or projects such as Qudra gives us more of a voice, they make us more experienced, we can say that right off the bat. While planning the courses, it’s really important to think of the student and the parents together. There have been many projects carried out at schools like ours over the years, these need to be made widespread. Teacher and administrators at schools with migrant students and parents should be given on-the-job training; there are huge advantages to be gained from learning about current practices. It’s important to share experiences. From what we have observed, a revision of the A1 and A2 course modules would help. The curriculum for the first grade should also be updated with migrant students in mind. Through no fault of their own, teachers have a hard time going through the entire curriculum with migrant students who form almost half of the class, and who don’t speak the language at all. Most importantly, the teachers’ selfless efforts should be encouraged and rewarded. Once the projects are over, demand can often be left unmet. If I had the power to so, I would not stop after Qudra and I would start summer courses for both the children and parents. I would

hold programmes such as getting to know the environment through play, rights training and communication skills as part of these summer courses. When Syrian parents have to deal with the school, they think some things are the same as in Syria because they are not aware of how things are done here. For example, they are not aware of the Civil Code. They think they can continue being polygamous. They need to be told about these things. These type of cultural awareness activities should be held on an ongoing basis, not just as a one-off, which is crucial for social cohesion.”

We shared recipes and tastes

***Pelin Acun**, is a pre-school teacher. The children who graduated from her first pre-school class are now in their third year of primary education at the same school.*

“Despite nearly all of them having been born in Turkey, almost none of the migrant children who start pre-school know the language. When they first come to class, we communicate using signs. By the time they have finished pre-school, they will have learned enough of the language to meet their basic needs and to express themselves. Pre-school education is very important for integration. We teach language through songs, nursery rhymes and games. This is why we make very rapid progress. All Syrian children should receive pre-school education. With pre-school education, they learn the language faster and easily adapt to school. This year, I taught parents literacy as part of Qudra. The course solved many of our problems. Food was a big problem for us. Every day, one parent would bring food for the whole class, for twenty children. However, Syrian children did not like börek and cheese and they found Antep cooking too salty. Children from Antep found the fat Syrian families used in their cooking strange. During the course, we not only taught literacy to parents but also made the food something shared. We made the recipes together and we discovered shared tastes. Now, the children are very happy and whichever parent brings in the food, they enjoy eating it. The course has had such a wide-ranging impact.”

Everything is for the good of the child

***Sercan Yılmaz** has been a teacher for five years. He works with us as a school counsellor. He organises a letter writing activity for the children.*

“Whether they are from Antep or from Syria, increasing the awareness of parents has positive effects on education and teaching. The Qudra course has served this purpose. The awareness of parents regarding the school and how it operates has increased. Parents got to know each other during the courses and social activities and interacted directly. At the same time, we found a way to get children from Antep and from Syria, including those at Temporary Education Centres to get to know each other better by writing letters. We thought that this activity would contribute to cohesion within the schools. Just like adults, when children do not know each other well, they develop negative feelings. They are only at the stage of getting to know each other, they ask questions like “What sort of food do you like”, and “What is your favourite colour”. Children and parents become more open to mutual interaction once they overcome the language barrier. As long as the language barrier remains in place, they have difficulty expressing themselves. Most of them already have problems with their accommodation. They live in crowded houses and may be victims of domestic violence. They do not have play areas or toys. Fighting with each other becomes a sort of game. For the good of the child, the family should be included in the process. I think we are a step closer to this with the training for parents that we provided.”

They learn about popular culture

***Sait Kökocak** is a school counsellor. He thinks he chose a job that suits his personality well. He organises drama and chess classes at school.*

“We take a close interest in every child who has someone in their family with a history of substance abuse, who might have a parent in prison, or who experiences poverty and violence. What the child goes through has a direct impact on their interest in lessons and their ability to communicate. These children can experience anger control issues. It is important to ensure that children learn positive behavioural traits at primary school. This becomes more difficult as the years go by. We work towards ensuring that all children, without discrimination, learn positive behavioural traits. During breaks, between forty and fifty students visit me in my office. At least half of them are children of migrant families. We listen to music and we dance. For those who want to paint, I make sketchbooks myself. I also teach chess and drama. When we get positive results, when a child’s star begins to shine, our star also begins to shine and we find ourselves full of energy. From what I have seen over the past few years, children from migrant families are more introverted in the first grade. They open up in second grade. They almost peak in third grade. By the time they are in the fourth grade, they have become some of the most popular students in school. They learn about popular culture in Turkey and they listen to singers such as Tarkan. During Qudra courses, we talk to parents about activities at the school, which is very important for organising activities.”



Hoşgör Primary School

Ragat is a wonderful child

Aysun Bülbül is a special education teacher at the school. She teaches 11 students directly. One of them is Ragat, who was born in Aleppo.

“Ragat has Down Syndrome. His family migrated six years ago. Like many other Syrian parents, Ragat’s family take a close interest in their child. Ragat is a wonderful child. He is very good at imitating, so he can repeat anything you do or say. He is a happy child. He has a happy family. According to his mother, at home he repeats what he learned at school. On 21 March, World Down Syndrome Day, I held an activity for Ragat, visited all the classes with him and presented him to his friends. Thanks to Qudra, I was able to teach Ragat’s family Turkish. This helped me get to know the family of my special education student better. It allowed us to work together on Ragat’s special education.”

Happy days

Cemile Subaşı became a classroom teacher after studying French Language and Literature. She is very happy to have become a teacher. She has been working for 20 years and is in her second year at Hoşgör Primary.

“Whether they are from Antep or are migrants, parents’ work is temporary and insecure. They earn just enough to keep the family fed. I have witnessed the difficulties Syrian parents faced because they did not speak the language. I was very enthusiastic about teaching the Qudra A1 course when it began. We did not just study the subject on the blackboard during the course. We watched films together, for example. On my last course, we watched and had a debate about Neşeli Günler (Happy Days), starring Adile Naşit and Münir Özkul. Even if their knowledge of the language is very patchy, people understand the basic message, it is only how they express it that differs. We talked about daily life with course participants, we sang songs and we had breakfast together. We shared our joys and our sorrows. We became close, we became friends. They are waiting for the next course and tell me ‘Give us a call when A2 begins.’ As people get to know one another, as they discover how much they have in common and they begin to view one another more positively. At Hoşgör Primary School, we have made a lot of progress to this end. We all have a share in the success: classroom teachers, administrators, the school counsellor and pre-school teachers. Qudra helped us in every respect.”

The last bell rings at the school. The mother who was just in Mr. Öztürk's office, asking for the transfer of her children to Hoşgör Primary, is chatting with other parents waiting for their children by the door. The first grades come out into the yard from their classes on the ground floor first. Children emerge into the yard in turns from their classes on first, second and third floors; laughing, chatting, hand-in-hand, alone, thoughtful, tired, happy, rough-and-tumbling, quietly. Another day is over. Those who have to go home immediately leave through the school's iron gate out onto the street. Those who remain in the playground have already begun to play with spinning tops and skipping ropes. The children's voices that vibrated throughout the school hallways spread first to the yard and then around the neighbourhood. With the children's voices, Hoşgör Primary floods out over the walls into the neighbourhood, with the hope carried by its principal, teachers, counselling department, pre-school, its parents and students.



WE BELIEVED IN QUDRA AND WORKED HARD

"We touched the lives of those who attended courses, which in turn touched our hearts."

The odometer of the car leaving Ankara at dawn reads 100,000 kilometres. The distance travelled on the Ankara-Gaziantep-Şanlıurfa-Hatay route in just six months is the equivalent of twice around the world. As is usual on these trips, Qudra Field Coordinator **İzzet Çevik** is in the driver's seat. What kept the Qudra team covering these distances for months is their belief in the work they do. The project team drew from their experience in education and regional development for their work. What they want is to create value. Mr. Çevik always has the same question on his mind: **"How many course attendees have a smile on their face because of us?"**

"Public education aims for social development, from the individual and local upwards. Therefore, public education centres are the most suitable institutions for implementing the social cohesion component of Qudra. We began work at five public education centres in three provinces. Directors of public education centres, deputy directors responsible for the project, Qudra representatives, teachers and vocational trainers all worked in cooperation and put in a great deal of effort. At the centres, we were successful to the extent that we could perform teamwork with a firm grasp of the essence of public education. We took care to build trust between project management and workers in the field. I think we succeeded in that.

The same trust relationship was also developed between the Directorate-General for Lifelong Learning and the Qudra Programme Team. Two points were significant for establishing this relationship. The first was the implementation principles that were developed with the Ministry of National Education Directorate-General of Lifelong Learning under Qudra. The second was the MoNE Qudra team speeding up the decision-making process. These two factors allowed activities in the field to be carried out without being hindered by the obstacles of "project bureaucracy".

Our basic approach was to listen to what was being said at a local level for all activities during the project period. To create value, we followed a strategy of moving from the parts to the whole. We viewed value in not just economic terms, but also in social terms. We aimed to increase capacity at public education centres because the centres will continue to provide services once the project is over.

We supported the types of courses that are not covered by the usual activities of the public education centres. We sought out fields in which there were more employment opportunities at a local level, such as agriculture, livestock keeping and construction and held courses that would allow people to work in those sectors. This approach resulted in the extension strategy. There are hundreds of projects targeting migrants at a regional level. We realised that they were concentrated in various centres. We focused on extension work to overcome centralisation. We spread Qudra out to districts and neighbourhoods from public education centres in town centres.

In this, we were guided by another principle of public education: Education is possible wherever you find people ready to learn. Schools, district public education centres and social facilities were used for this purpose. We cooperated with public and professional organisations. We wanted to ensure the socialisation of individuals, just as much as we wanted to provide them with vocational skills. When you examine towns at a neighbourhood level, the problems experienced by migrants and the local population overlap. For this reason, we ensured the joint participation of the two groups on our courses, especially vocational skills courses, and social activities. In this way, Turkish courses and vocational courses became a means of social coherence and stopped being an end in themselves. We think that the smile on the face of someone attending a course and feeling valued is a more valuable indicator than how many modules we have launched. We tried to make the most progress in this area.”

The first stop on the road from Ankara is Gaziantep. Ezogelin and Şahinbey Public Education Centres are being visited.

Qudra changed our perspective on migrants

*The Ezogelin Public Education Centre in the Bahçelievler neighbourhood of Gaziantep, despite having only been opened recently, reaches out to thousands of people. Ezogelin Public Education Centre’s Director, **Recep Öztürk**, Deputy Director Hüseyin Yel and Qudra liaison Aziz Yılmaz worked tirelessly for Qudra activities. Before announcing the courses, they first cooperated with public bodies and non-governmental organisations.*

“Our fundamental strategy was to reach out to Syrian migrants living in peripheral neighbourhoods and outlying districts, not just those who could come to the town centre. In addition to courses, we held seminars and

social activities. This helped us reach Syrian migrants who could not leave their neighbourhoods or even their homes. We cooperated with Nurdağı, Nizip and Oğuzeli Public Education Centres to offer agriculture courses. In cooperation with primary and secondary schools in the town’s peripheral neighbourhoods, we organised Turkish language courses. Mothers and fathers got to learn Turkish from the teachers of their children, the atmosphere at the school changed completely. We held courses at home for children with visual impairment. During the first stage, we started basic Turkish courses with people we could reach. By the end of these courses, Syrian migrants had learnt enough Turkish to manage in daily life. Then, we referred them to vocational courses in line with their requirements. In short, we didn’t give them a fish, we taught them how to fish. We keep discovering amazing abilities. We have held conferences and seminars to improve the life skills of participants and to contribute to their empowerment. We held some courses as a part of the probation programme. We wanted to contribute to social cohesion without excluding anyone, including children and young people, women and men, people who were displaced and who were former convicts. Migrants need to take part in production and for this, we need to work and provide them with training. With Qudra, we did not feel the weight of bureaucracy that we have felt with other projects and we made progress easily. We believed in Qudra and worked hard. And we saw the benefits. Attendees of Qudra courses continue to participate in courses that are run with public resources alone. We put the products of course attendees on display and try to encourage sales. We make efforts to ensure that participants can benefit from exhibitions, fairs and similar events held in the region. Teamwork is our greatest asset. We have a highly qualified team of vocational trainers. We have seen awareness of our activities and our visibility increase. With Qudra, our personal experience improved in working with migrants. Qudra changed our perspective on migrants, we are now like a family to them.”

The language we use should be positive

*Şahinbey Public Education Centre is the oldest public education centre in Gaziantep. The centre’s Director is **Salih Erdemci**, the Deputy Director responsible for Qudra is Sefer Serin, and its Qudra liaison is Burçin Güzel. As part of outreach work they also utilised the Kızılay Community Centre. Course attendees’ success in language courses affected their participation in vocational courses directly and positively.*

“Turkish language, hairdressing, garment making and computer courses were those most in demand. There are very capable people among the participants. Most of those with vocational skills are employed, there are even some who have set up their own businesses. It is said that throughout Turkey more than 10,000 businesses

have been launched. They contribute to the economy. Significant labour is needed for the process. To begin with, we need projects like Qudra, which offer quick solutions, then we will need long-term local projects, especially practices that bring together local people and migrants. The language we use should be positive too. I wish we could talk without distinguishing between Syrians and locals. For example, I prefer to say 'our brothers and sisters', which they appreciate very much. With Qudra, the process for procuring goods and services went especially well with no problems at all. All the inventory stock that was purchased under Qudra have been recorded and the items will be used to ensure the sustainability of the courses."

The next province we will call on is Şanlıurfa, home to 444,923 Syrians. Directors of Eyyübiye and Haliliye Public Education Centres talk about the activities run by the centres.

We put ourselves in the shoes of Syrian attendees

Mehmet Salici, Director of the Eyyübiye Public Education Centre in Şanlıurfa, a district with a high concentration of Syrians, has been an educator for 24 years. He has been the Director of Eyyübiye Public Education Centre since 2018. The Deputy Director is **Birgül Meryem Elgün** and Qudra liaison is **Muhsin Elgün**. Focusing on employment-centred vocational courses, the centre cooperated with the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry. The kindergarten, which was established using the centre's own assets contributed positively to course participation, especially for women.

"This is the first time I have been involved in an international project. There has been significant planning for Qudra. We participated in the workshops held in Ankara. We gained important information for the work we do today and carried out brainstorming. Back here, we first ran publicity activities. For this, we made use of social media. In a short time, we reached 2000 people. The courses take place both in the main building of the centre and at Abacı Mansion which is close to the living areas of migrants. Some of the courses we held were on telkari (silver working), sewing and embroidery, cookery and decorative wooden ornaments. We empathise, we put ourselves in the shoes of Syrian attendees and we treat them the way we would have others treat us. With the infrastructure established by Qudra and the capacity it has developed, we will continue to run the courses."

Programmes such as Qudra speed up the process of social cohesion

Ömer Haydarlı, an educator for twenty-eight years, is the Director of the Şanlıurfa Haliliye Public Education Centre, which is close to the town centre. He has been the Director of the centre for the last four years. The centre's Deputy Director responsible for Qudra is **Mehmet Toğa**, and the Qudra liaison is **Ümmügülsüm Bulut**. **Ömer Haydarlı** ensured efficient use of resources to procure teaching materials by holding sous-chef courses at schools with boarding houses. For courses held in the town centre, he got other bodies and organisations to cooperate and hold courses using their facilities.

"Qudra is a very good programme and the vocational teachers we assigned put their hearts into their work. We put announcements on Facebook and our official website and we quickly received applications. The Qudra team is solution-focused and aims to touch the lives of many people. For the vocational skills courses, we brought together 10 attendees from Syria and 10 attendees from Urfa. Programmes such as Qudra speed up the process of social cohesion. On the condition, of course, that they are run by dependable teams as is the case with Qudra."

Hatay Nedime Keser Public Education Centre is the last stop. Courses for migrants have been held at the centre for the last five years.

We have had attendees who now pursue a life in business

The centre's Director **Sabri Tazeaslan** has a background in vocational education. He ensured that a Qudra course took place at his former school, where he was the Director. He thinks that cooperation between bodies and organisations has transformative effects on social cohesion.

"I have been working with international projects for the last nine or ten years. I have never seen a project that was as systematically organised and, more importantly, carried out as effective monitoring and assessment for needs in the field as Qudra. They provided support for every issue. We have had attendees who now pursue a life in business. Qudra attaches as much importance to social and cultural activities as it does to training. The

idea to hold a music course, which eventually led to the Qudra Fraternity Choir , emerged during one of these activities. When we travelled to Paris in April as part of the Qudra Programme, we visited the National Museum of the History of Immigration. People who migrated to France had donated belongings that left a mark on their lives during their migration to this museum. In doing so they formed a space for memories. I thought about whether we could do something similar while visiting the museum. Such places contribute to sharing feelings.”

Qudra pursues quality with discipline

*The centre's Deputy Director responsible for Qudra is **Nurcihan Yurdagül**, the Qudra liaison is Oya Dikey. The bakery course held on the ground floor of the centre and activities held in the meeting hall had a direct positive impact on participation, especially among young people. The creation of the Qudra Fraternity Choir served as a symbol of harmony among cultures.*

“We began holding Qudra courses in September. Qudra is a programme with discipline. In the past, under other programmes, there was something I objected to, which was awarding certificates to those who did not successfully complete the courses. One of Qudra's initial demands was for people who did not complete the course successfully not to be issued with a certificate. This is because Qudra pursues quality with discipline. It stands by its formulation of the programme. I think that such projects and programmes should continue in the future. Öner Doğan was the Hatay coordinator of the programme. We worked well together. The vocational trainers paid individual attention to the attendees. Young people especially were influenced very positively by the atmosphere that we managed to establish at the centre. Bakery, felt working, handicrafts and hairdressing are our most popular courses. The Qudra Fraternity Choir, which we established, held concerts around the town and made a name for itself. We display and sell participants products at the sales centre and the income goes to them. We accumulated a lot of experience with Qudra. Most importantly, we touched the lives of our attendees with the social and cultural activities we held, which in turn touched our hearts.”

The aim of the final visit to Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa was to carry out observations and see the results obtained on the ground in the provinces. On the way back to Ankara, MoNE Qudra Coordinator Sevgi Cansu, Expertise France Programme Director Fatma Özdemir Uluç and EDUSER Grants Director Aişe Akpınar

*are in the car. With just miles to go until Ankara, Ms Cansu reads out a part of an interview with Director General of Lifelong Learning **Mehmet Nezir Gül**.*

“As you know, the Ministry has been running work on the access to education of Syrian children since the very first day of mass migration. As of the end of March, 62 per cent of Syrian children were included in education system. We have completed planning for the 2019-2021 period. Accordingly, 211 Temporary Education Centres will be shut down and all students at these centres will be referred to schools. Temporary Education Centres will be transformed into language education centres. Our core priority is extending Turkish language teaching. To establish the language ability of all the guest children, a nationwide Turkish Proficiency Examination was held. By this means, it will be ensured that students get language education in keeping with their level. Students are being given Support and Remedial Education in order to make teaching at schools more adequate and efficient. Nearly 60,000 students have benefited from special education courses until the present. We are working in cooperation with international organisations to increase the professional skills of educators and teachers, as well as Syrian volunteer educators. We are holding information meetings with families to inform them of formal and non-formal education activities and access to education opportunities. We have sped up psychosocial support activities at schools. We are running training for school administrators and school counsellors in cooperation with international organisations. Around half a million Syrian students benefit from Conditional Transfers for Education. Among our core priorities is increasing the capacity of public education centres, which play a key role in social cohesion. We are working very hard with public education and vocational training centres in order to increase rate of participation in vocational training. This year, the Directorate General has prepared a social cohesion module in cooperation with the Directorate General of Migration Management.”

The contents of the interview put a smile on everyone's faces. The phone rings. İzzet Bey, who is at the wheel, puts it on speaker so that everyone in the car can hear the conversation. The project team, which has been crunching numbers for days, says that as of 31 March 2019, the project had reached out to 11,849 migrants under temporary protection and 4,649 Turkish citizens. All the results obtained are written in the e-mail, which the project team will shortly send to the inbox of everyone in the car.



Since September 2018,

a total of **69,127** hours training and activities have benefited **16,498 people, 79 % of whom are women.** **273 instructors** took part.

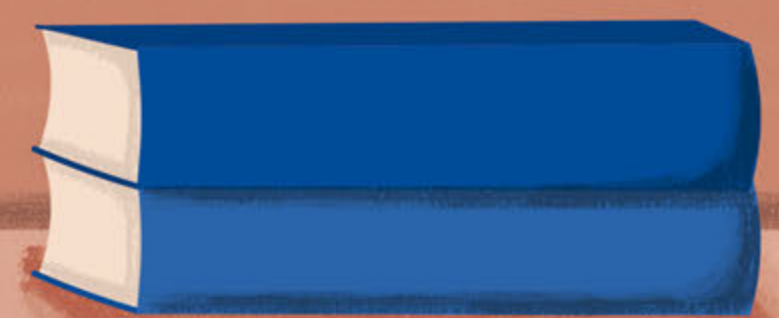
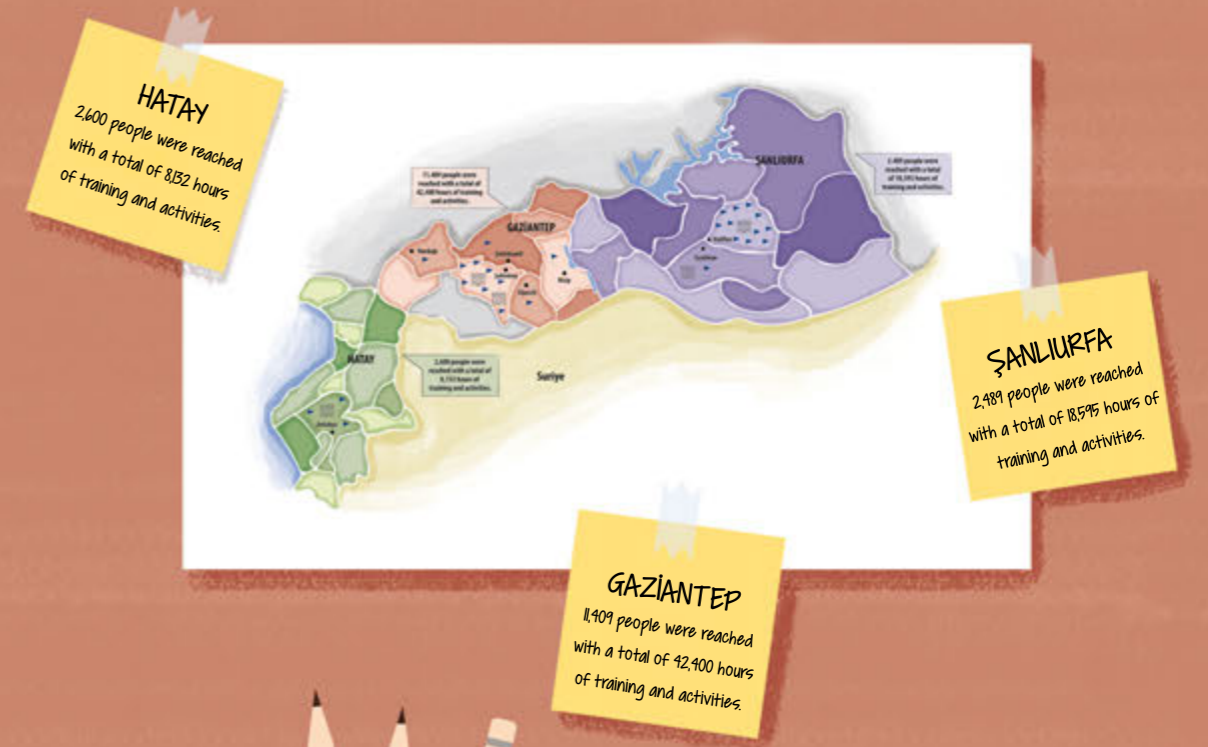
Turkish A1, A2 and B1 and braille courses were held.

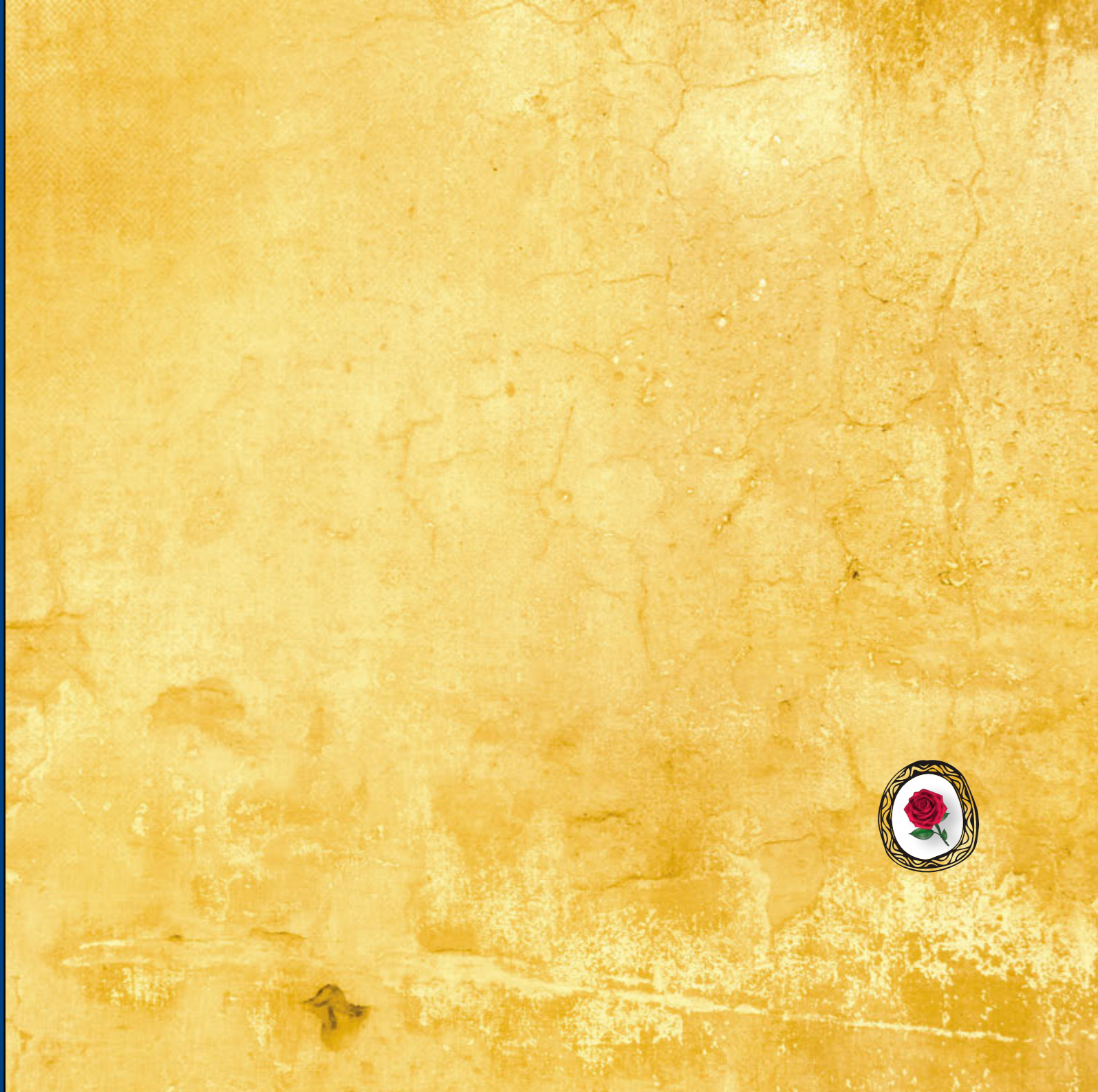
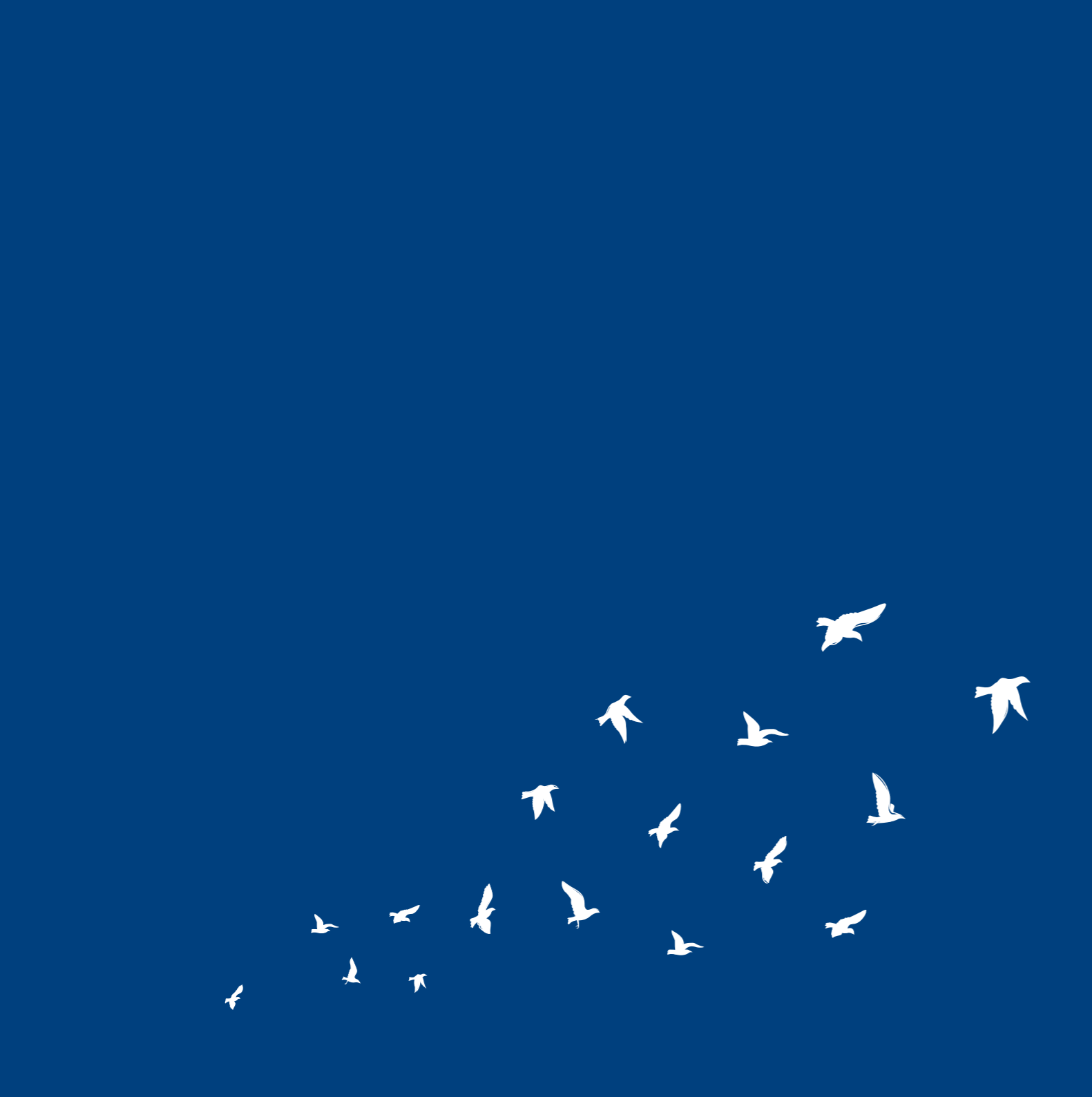
5,056 migrants/refugees attended language courses. **85 people from Turkey** took courses in literacy and Arabic A1. Nearly **7,000 educational materials** were distributed.

For the **11,849 migrants/refugees** under temporary protection have been reached through the courses and activities organised in Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa.

A total of 4,838 people benefited from **personal development courses, 216 of which were vocational and 12 of which were social and cultural.** **Around 7,000 migrants/refugees and people from Turkey** participated in **social and cultural activities.**

Expertise France, a French public organisation that provides international technical assistance, would like to thank all stakeholders, especially the **Ministry of National Education** and all members of the Qudra family who worked in activities organised as part of the **Qudra Programme** in line with **2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the priorities of the European Union.**







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