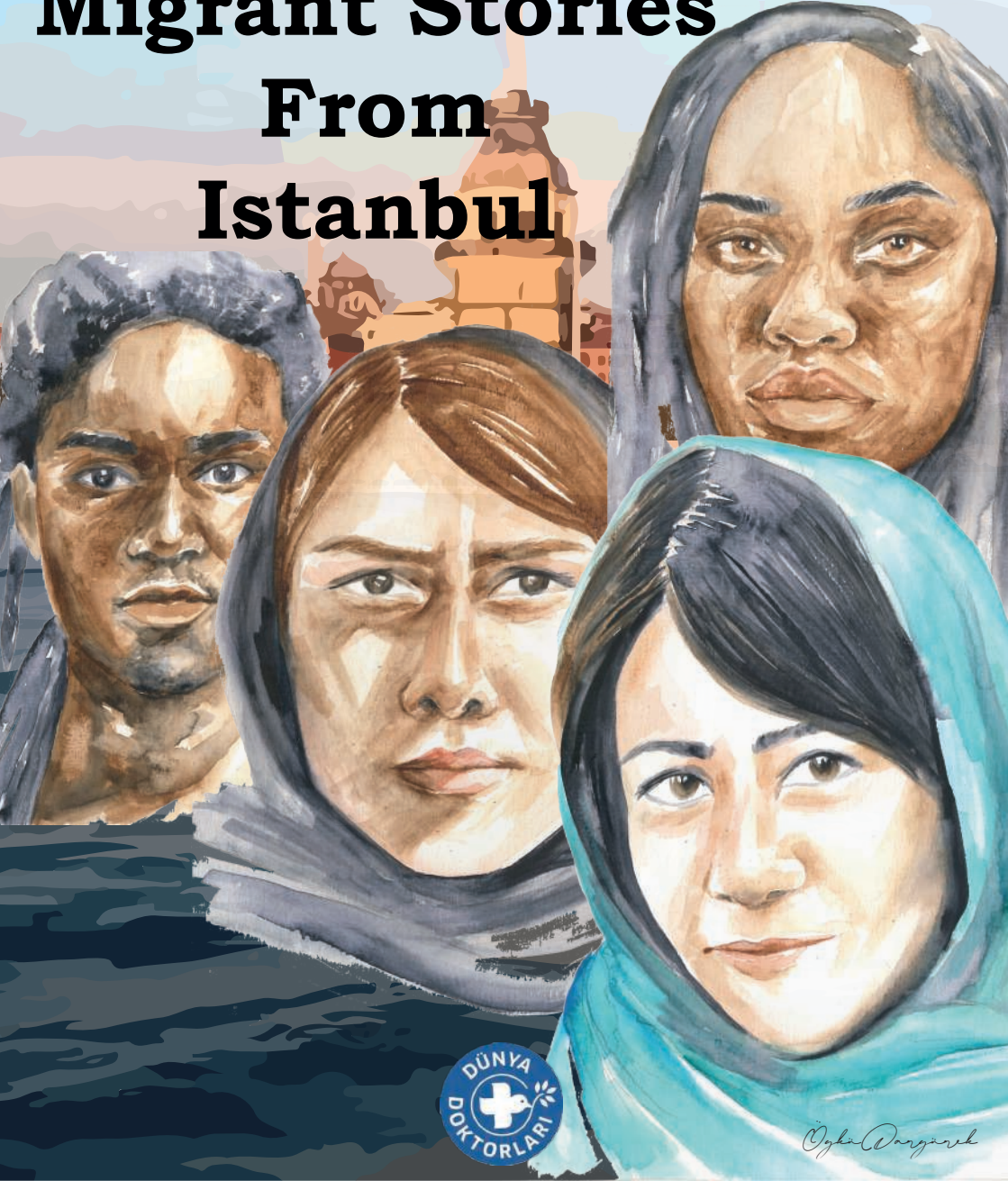


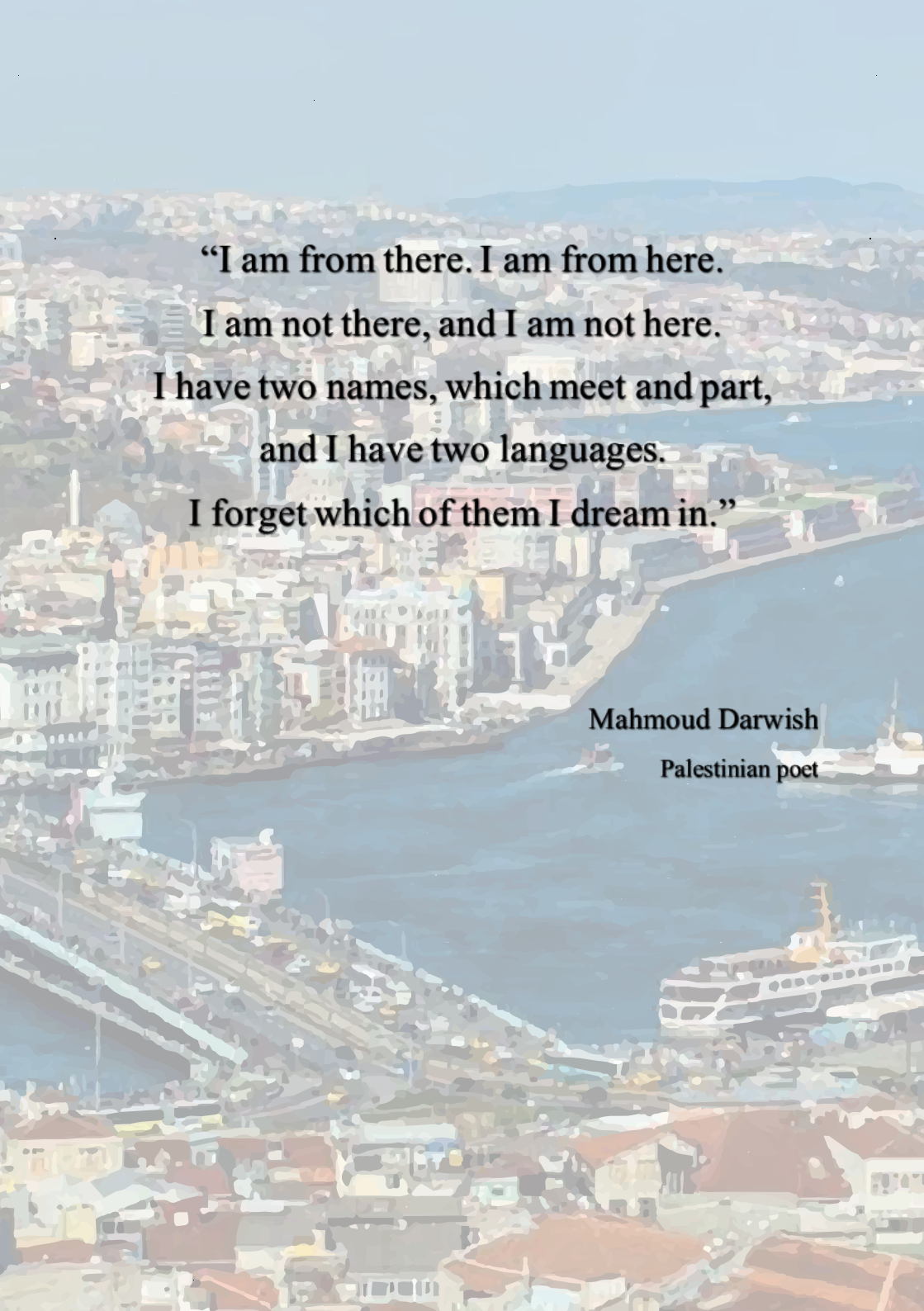


This project is funded by the European Union

Migrant Stories From Istanbul



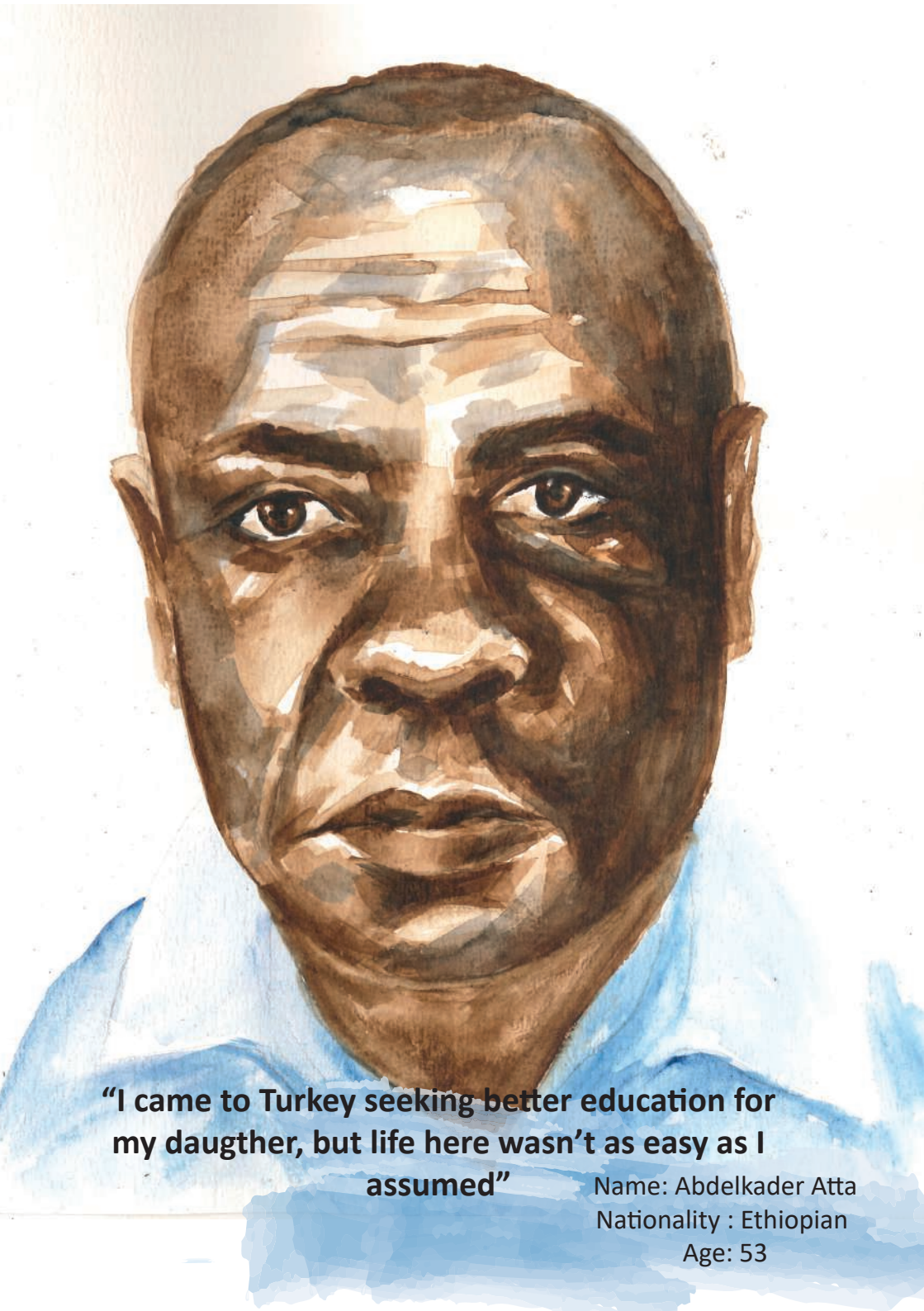
Özge Öngören

An aerial, painterly-style illustration of a coastal city. The foreground shows a dense residential area with red-tiled roofs. A large, multi-lane bridge spans across a wide body of water. In the background, a city with various buildings and a prominent dome is visible on a hillside. The sky is a clear, light blue.

**“I am from there. I am from here.
I am not there, and I am not here.
I have two names, which meet and part,
and I have two languages.
I forget which of them I dream in.”**

Mahmoud Darwish

Palestinian poet



“I came to Turkey seeking better education for my daughter, but life here wasn’t as easy as I assumed”

Name: Abdelkader Atta
Nationality : Ethiopian
Age: 53

My name is Abdelkader Atta and I am from Ethiopia. I have been living in Turkey for one year. I came here hoping that my daughter can enjoy a higher quality of education.

I came to Turkey from Saudi Arabia, where I spent the last 25 years working. I left Ethiopia because of the instability from the fighting. Saudi Arabia was a very challenging place to live but I had an ok life until the Saudi government started imposing more restrictions on foreigners and higher taxes on education for non-Saudis. I could not afford these taxes on my wage, so I decided to leave. But I could not return home to Ethiopia because of the poverty and lack of opportunities. I wanted a better future for my daughter, so I came to Turkey.

Unfortunately, the grass wasn't greener here in Turkey. I have faced many problems since I first arrived in October 2019. One of the problems I faced was that I couldn't enrol my daughter in schools here since she couldn't get a residence permit. I don't know why the authorities refused to issue her a residency permit. I showed them all the necessary custody documents they asked for to prove that I am her legal guardian, but she still has not been registered! It hurts me to see her not going to school.

The challenges I have faced in Turkey aren't only related to my daughter's situation. I have health issue and have also faced many difficulties trying to access health services.

Before learning about the services Dünya Doktorlari Derneği (DDD) offers, I tried to go to hospitals myself. Sometimes I could get health care but other times I could not afford to pay as I don't have health insurance. I also had problems explaining my health issues to doctors as most of them don't speak English and I don't speak Turkish.

This leads me to mention my other challenge that I face in this country which is language. In Turkey it can be hard to find people who speak English and as a person who doesn't speak Turkish, I find it so hard sometimes to communicate with people around me. This is why I don't have many Turkish friends.

DDD contributed a lot to my life in Istanbul. They booked me an appointment with a hospital, and I went and underwent my medical check-up. They explained how the Turkish health system works and they also helped with providing necessary medication from the pharmacy. Now I'm attending the Turkish classes offered by DDD. I have completed the first level and I will start the second level. I'm learning more and I hope to get better in the future.

I usually spend my free time in the African and Ethiopian restaurants and cafés around Istanbul where I get the chance to chat to people from my country and to taste out traditional food.

For me it is hard to go back and live in Ethiopia due to the current political situation in the country. All I want is to have a better life for me and my daughter here in Turkey, and I hope that my daughter gets the chance to return to school and study again so she can become the person she wants to be in the future.

Abdelkader Atta




An African musician in Turkey

Name: CABATI

Nationality: Ethiopian

Age: 40 years old



Hello, my name is Chabati. I'm 40 years old and I'm from Guinea. I have been working as a musician for the last 20 years. I started playing in Guinea where I'm originally from. I also spent a few years in Senegal before coming to Turkey.

The first time I came to Turkey was in 2008, I remember going to Izmir city to participate in a musical festival organised by the municipality there. In the following year, I visited Izmir once again as I participated in another festival called Deniz festival.

In 2011, I was again invited to Turkey to participate in a festival in the city of Amasya. At that time, some friends suggested I try to settle in Turkey as there might be more chances for me to participate in different festivals around the country. I welcomed the idea. Even with the first elections, the economic situation in Guinea was still deteriorating and it was getting harder to earn money there.

I chose to live and settle in the city of Istanbul since it is one of the major cities in Turkey. I didn't have any friends or acquaintances in Istanbul back then. I was lonely in a city where I knew nobody.

I rented a flat in the area of Yenikapı where I started to live. I didn't have a proper job and I only looked for music jobs as I expected that I would continue my music career here as well and that I would be working in festivals. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case, and the reality was very different from what I expected. I didn't receive any jobs-offers, so I had to look for a job to be able to cover my monthly expenses.

Since I didn't speak Turkish during that time, it was really difficult for me to find a job. So, I started to do occupations that don't require high levels of Turkish language such as working in construction fields and selling watches.

Despite the difficulties and challenges I have faced in Turkey I did not consider going back to my country since the situation there is worse. There are no economic opportunities in Guinea and its getting more violent because of political instability. I am responsible for providing for my family here and in order to be able to help and support them I must have a sustainable work, which I can't find in my country.

Now, after a few years of living in Turkey, I'm happy that I am managing to settle in and I'm becoming more integrated into Turkish society. However, there are still some challenges that me and other African migrants are facing.

It is not easy to find a job in Turkey. Now I do Çabuk- Çabuk work (factor labour jobs are known among African migrants in Turkey as Çabuk Çabuk work) and it is difficult. You have to work for long hours in a factory, they do not treat you well, and the pay is not enough.

The other challenge is the access to health facilities. Hospital services in Turkey are very costly: we don't have health insurance and some of my family are undocumented. If my wife or I get sick, we have to go to the hospital and pay a lot of money which we cannot afford. My wife is pregnant and needs medical check-ups and care to deliver our baby. There are a few NGOs that support us and other members of the African community from time to time, but it is never continuous.

The last challenge that I want to mention here is the struggle we face regarding legal documentation. My son who was born here in Istanbul still has no papers. I tried many times to register him with the Turkish authorities but its hasn't been successful. I worry about him and how he will go to school or get health care.

Despite all the challenges I mentioned, I now consider Istanbul as my second home. I have many friends here and I'm well connected with the Turkish society. I love the Turkish culture and I love being part of it. I play Turkish songs with my African instruments and I also listen to Turkish songs on a daily basis. I still play and the type of music I do is a mixture of different African folklore music. I compose songs as well as I play different African musical instruments. I try to build a bridge between the African and the Turkish culture through music because I believe that music is one essential key to unite people from different backgrounds.

Cabati



“I am a citizen of the world; Africa is just a reference.

What concerns us today is not race, it is humanity.

So many years have gone by with wars and hatred...

I promote peace and love with my songs, I try to wake
people up and make them aware.”


ENZO IKAH

Congolese musician living in Istanbul



“We are integrating into Turkish society.”

Name: Aysha
Nationality: Sudanese
Age: 37

The background of the page is a stylized, low-poly illustration. It depicts a coastal town with buildings in various shades of brown, orange, and grey, situated on a hillside. A long, thin bridge spans across a body of blue water in the middle ground. The sky is a light, pale blue. The overall style is modern and artistic, using flat colors and geometric shapes.

Hello, my name is Aysha. I'm a Sudanese doctor and a mother of three.

I came to Turkey as I wanted my children to have better opportunities. The situation in Sudan is not good. Our country now is entering a new phase [in April 2019, President Omar Al-Bashir was removed from power by civilian protests after 30-years], and it seems like it will take time until Sudan is fully recovered. Now I'm happy that we made it to Turkey. I am not able to work but my kids are attending schools and the quality of education is very high. My children prefer Turkey over Sudan for the quality of education.

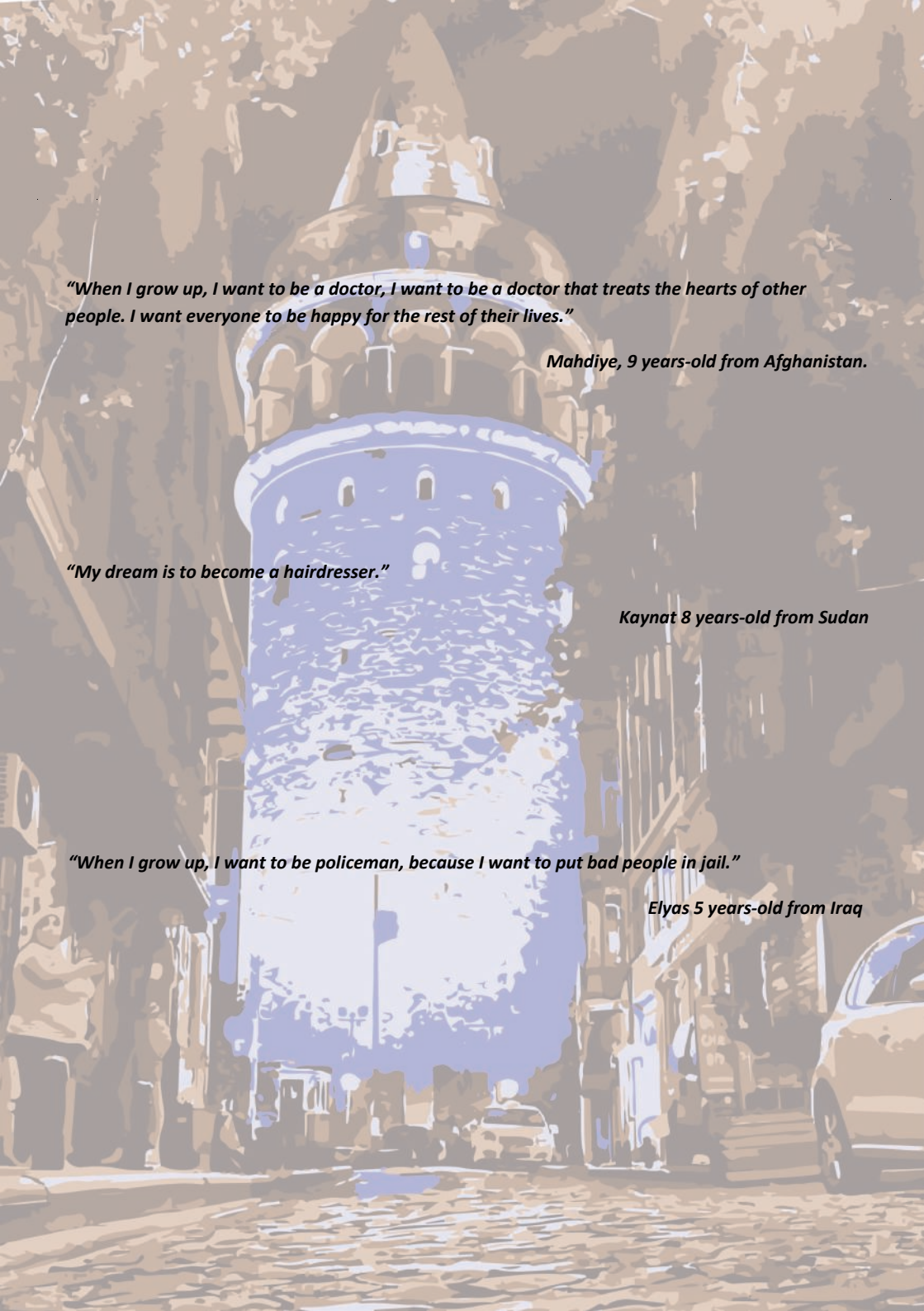
We are trying to integrate into Turkish society. My children can speak Turkish very well. I'm not as good as them in Turkish that's why I usually ask them to undertake the duties that requires good knowledge of Turkish such as talking with the taxi drivers and ordering food and water to the house. I didn't learn Turkish very well. But I'm now attending Turkish language course and I believe I'm doing better. I try to talk to my Turkish neighbours whenever we meet, and this is how I try to practice my Turkish. I also started to learn to cook some Turkish food. My children love eating Borek and now they refuse to eat Sudanese breakfast and insist that I make them Borek every day!

Integrating in the Turkish society is not easy, and it requires a lot of effort, now with the help of some associations like DDD, our integration with the Turkish society is becoming easier and we are building a bridge between us and the Turkish community.

I really appreciate the role that DDD plays especially in regards to facilitating access to health services for migrants in Turkey. I'm aware of how difficult it is to visit hospitals and other health facilities for migrants living here in Turkey especially as most of us don't have health insurance.

I hope that one day I will be able to contribute to this field of humanitarian aid by using my expertise as a doctor. But first I should be able to speak Turkish, that's why I'm focusing now on learning the language through the courses offered by DDD.

Aysha



"When I grow up, I want to be a doctor, I want to be a doctor that treats the hearts of other people. I want everyone to be happy for the rest of their lives."

Mahdiye, 9 years-old from Afghanistan.

"My dream is to become a hairdresser."

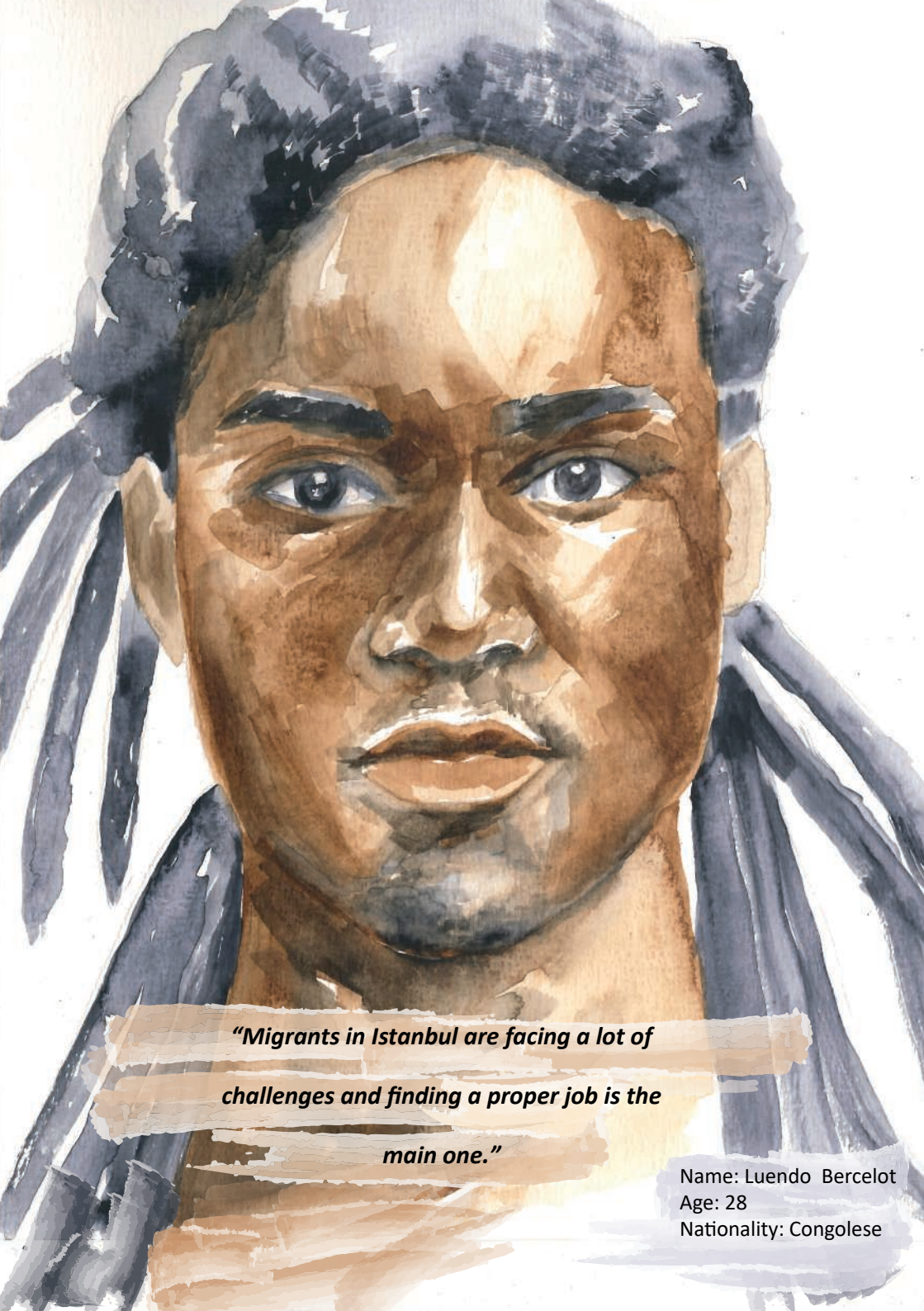
Kaynat 8 years-old from Sudan

"When I grow up, I want to be policeman, because I want to put bad people in jail."

Elyas 5 years-old from Iraq



FCC kids and their future hopes!



"Migrants in Istanbul are facing a lot of challenges and finding a proper job is the main one."

Name: Luendo Bercelot
Age: 28
Nationality: Congolese

I'm Barcelo, I'm 28 years old and I'm from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I came to Turkey in 2017 as I was seeking for better job opportunities. My elder brother was already living and working in Turkey before I came, so it wasn't hard for me at the beginning to settle in here as my brother already knew a lot about the country.

I'm currently living in Istanbul in the Fatih district. I love the city so much and I also like the people here. They are very friendly.

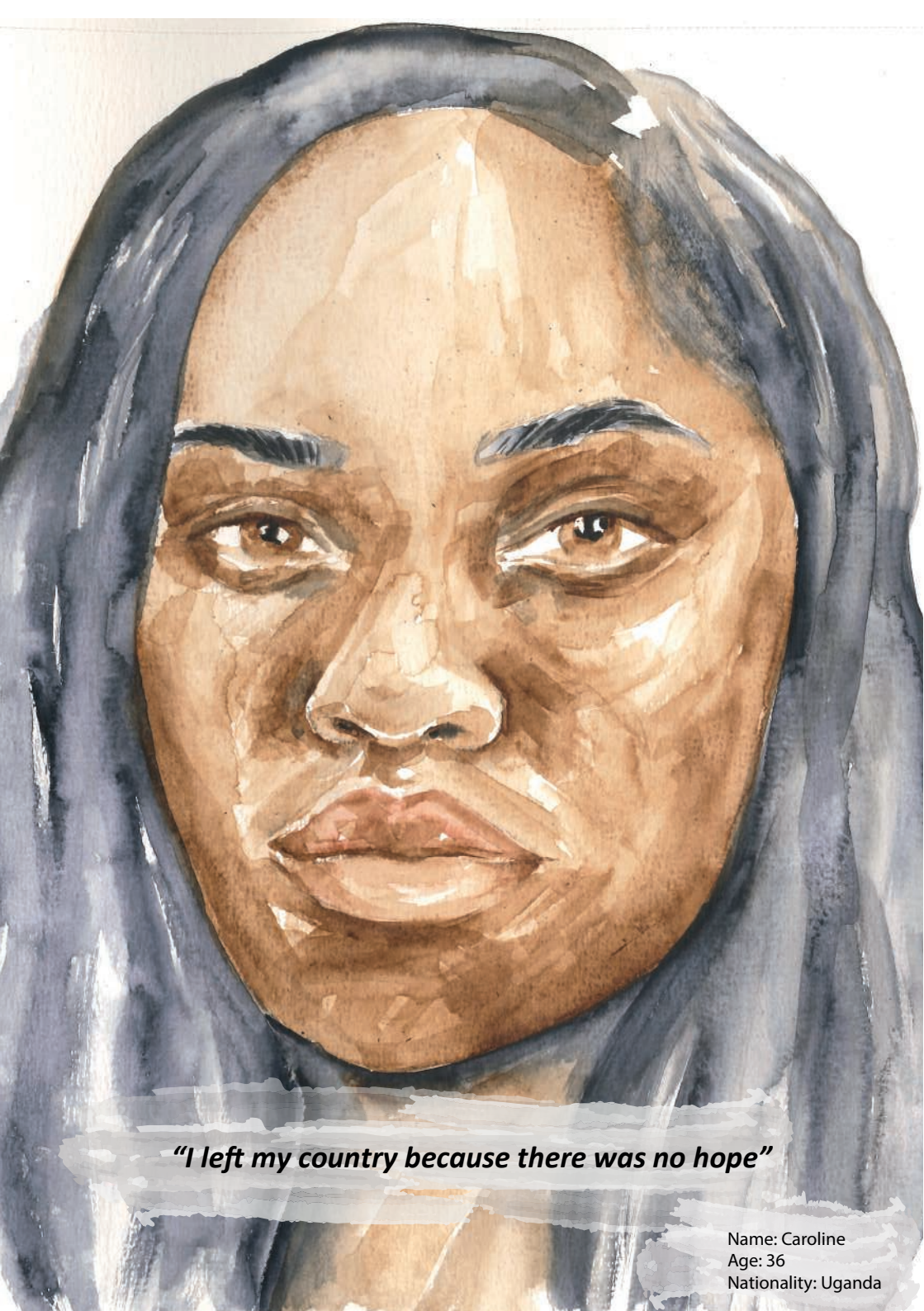
Having a regular income here in Turkey is really a tough challenge. There are many African brothers and sisters who are still facing the difficulties of finding a sustainable job here. Even for me, the income I receive for doing working is not sufficient that's why I always try to find extra jobs to do.

I believe that the best way to find better a job is to learn the language. Learning Turkish is another big challenge that migrants face in Turkey, that's why I enrolled myself in DDD's Turkish course. My Turkish language has improved and become better.

There are other challenges that we as African migrants face here in Turkey. One of these challenges is trying to legally register. Many migrants suffer from the consequences of not knowing the latest changes that occurs in the migration laws in Turkey. I think there should be a common place where all migrants can go to receive an orientation about recent legal changes. I was a victim of this and did not know about changes to the law and as a result I am undocumented now and I'm trying to sort it out with the authorities.

Another challenge is the access to health services. It is almost impossible for us as irregular migrants to go to hospitals. All public hospitals don't accept migrants who has ID problems. There are some private hospitals that do accept people with no legal ID, but the costs of the treatments and examinations are quite high and unaffordable for most people like me. Now things are changed, and both my wife and I benefited from the hospital referral services offered by DDD.

Luendo Bercelot



"I left my country because there was no hope"

Name: Caroline
Age: 36
Nationality: Uganda

Hello, my name is Caroline and I'm from Uganda, I came to Turkey in 2016.

In my country, there are few economic opportunities and a lot of corruption with some people favoured over the others. It doesn't matter how qualified you are, what type of certificates you have or which schools you have been to. In Uganda, your tribe determines if you are going to be selected to fill the vacancy or not. That's why you can find many educated people like me who are unemployed. On the other hand, you can see some other people who have never been to school and they work in the highest positions of the country.

This discriminatory system was the reason why I decided to leave. I left Uganda and I travelled first to Dubai where I struggled to make a living as finding a job there wasn't easy there. From Dubai I came to Turkey Istanbul. When I first came to Turkey, I applied for the international protection status and accordingly I was assigned to live in the city of Kutahya.

I didn't like Kutahya, it was so different from Istanbul. There were no jobs there. I felt very lonely as there were no other African people in the city and I was the only black person living there. I returned to Istanbul after staying for a few months in Kutahya.

I started to work in Istanbul as a cleaner, but unfortunately this job is not regular and it's very competitive. Mostly people from east Asian countries are selected to do the job over Africans.

I lost the right to benefit from the health services because I became undocumented as I did not stay in my city 'Kutahya. That's why if I go to hospitals, I have to pay a lot of money. I remember on one occasion I paid 800 TL for a medical check-up. As accessing health services was too expensive for me, I was taking all the necessary precautions in order to not to get sick.

One day, a friend of mine told me about DDD and the services that they provide. I visited the centre and I met with team there. They assisted me and they referred me to a private hospital where I got examined and helped me get the necessary medicine. I also appreciate that DDD provide migrants here with different type of supports to build their capacities. I am taking Turkish language classes and I will also call my friends to come and attend the legal awareness session as many of them have legal concerns. There are many African and other people living in Istanbul who are vulnerable and in need for support.

Caroline



***"Afghanistan is not safe anymore tha's why I
decidedto come to Turkey. I walked for 15 hours in
a snowy weather as in order to enter to Turkey"***

Name: Mama Fatima
Age: 34
Nationality: Afghan

My name is Mama Fatima. I'm from Afghanistan and I'm a mother of two. I want to share with you my story and talk to you about my life in Turkey. I came to Turkey almost one year ago. I left Afghanistan since it is not safe to live there anymore. I was forced to leave Afghanistan because of an incident that happened to me and my family.

One day a group of people attempted to kidnap my son. Thank god my son managed to run away from them. These kinds of incidents happen a lot in Afghanistan as the kidnappers target families so they can ask for a ransom for the return of their children. When the incident happened, my husband was in another city. I called him to let him know that I'm leaving the country immediately as we don't feel safe anymore. We didn't even meet to say goodbye to each other. We packed our belongings and we booked the first flight to Iran.

I didn't consider staying in Iran when I arrived because I believed that Turkey would offer better life conditions. I only went to Iran in order to cross the border to Turkey from there. We were smuggled into Turkey through the land border. The route we took was very tough. We had to walk for 15 hours to reach Turkey. The road was full of hills and the weather was snowy. I walked all the way to Turkey with my two children. I can't explain to you how painful the experience was, even talking about it hurts me a lot.

Thankfully, we made it to Turkey after a very long trip. We first entered to the city of Van and from there we took a bus to Istanbul where we currently live. I'm currently living in Zeytinburnu with my two sons. I'm happy that I made it to Istanbul alive after this long trip.

I did not want to risk the life of me or my children by taking that road, but that was the only way to make it to Turkey. If you are wondering why I didn't apply for a visa to enter to Turkey legally, it is because the visa application process is very expensive, and most Afghani people get rejected when they apply for the Turkish visa.

Now I have been living in Turkey for a year. If there is one word that can describe my experience in Turkey during this year it would be the word "bittersweet." I'm happy because I'm here safe and my children are no longer in danger. But at the same time, I'm very sad because my children can't go to school.

I came to Turkey to apply for the international protection status as I wanted my children to have a better education. Unfortunately, I couldn't apply. I have been to different cities such as Yalova and Sakarya in order to apply for the status, but I was told by the authorities there that the registration is no longer available.

Now I live in Turkey without any ID or legal papers. We can't go to hospitals and my kids can't attend schools. I only managed to go to hospital for the first time in Turkey through DDD. My life here is very difficult. If it was just for me, I wouldn't complain but I have kids who at least should get the right to go to school.

Education has always been important for us in our family, I studied three years in dentistry department, but sadly I couldn't complete my education due to some family-related issues. I know what it means to study and to go to school, that's why I feel so sad for my children and I'm so worried about their future.

Mama Fatima

DDD, Fatih Community Center Migrant staff

Abdellatif Zibeir - Sudan

Community and Events Officer at DDD.

Abdellatif arrived in Turkey 10 years-ago. He studied International Relations and Political Science at Istanbul Kültür university.

Abdellatif joined DDD one year ago and he currently works as a Community Events Officer

Abdellatif is responsible for following the implementation of the project activities such as, legal awareness sessions and Turkish languages courses and seminars.



Ali ZOUNGRANA – Burkina Faso

Case Management Officer at DDD.

Ali came to Turkey 8 years-ago. He completed his master's degree at Yildiz Teknik University. Alongside his work with DDD, Ali is currently doing his PHD at the same university.

As a case manager, Ali's tries to listen to beneficiaries' problems, provide guidance on navigating services, and refer them to the ideal service provider.



Tiyha Wakanda - Cameroon

Primary Health Care Officer at DDD.

Tiyha came to Turkey two years ago. She studied nursing in Cameroon. She has worked in several African countries in the humanitarian field and in August

In 2020, Tiyha joined DDD's team as a PHC officer and she is responsible for conducting health as well as health referrals to hospitals.





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Özge Öngören