

Article

Seeking Real Knowledge

On International Girls in ICT day, UNICEF and partners empower Syrian youth to increase their employability through hands-on experience

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Rural Damascus, Syria, 26 April 2021 - When she first came to Damascus four years ago to pursue her childhood dream of studying telecom engineering, Madeleine was full of ambition and determination.

"It was hard to be on my own away from my family for the first time, but I was adamant to enter the world that had always fascinated me," says Madeleine, now 22, originally from As-Sweida governorate over 100 kilometres farther south to the capital.

Although the shocking death of her father during her first academic year weighed down on her, Madeleine remembered how much he cherished hers and her siblings' education, and this made her work even harder to achieve her dream.

During her senior year at the faculty, Madeleine felt that she lacked several technical skills she would need for the career she was soon to start.

"The lectures were heavily theoretical," recalls Madeleine. "However, to be able to get a job after graduation, one needs hands-on experience," she explains.



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Madeleine participates in a course on computer networks maintenance at the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD) in Jaramana, rural Damascus, supported by UNICEF thanks to a generous contribution from Germany.

To bridge the gap between her learning at the university and the market's needs, Madeleine signed up for a UNICEF-supported course in computer networks maintenance at the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD) in Jaramana, rural Damascus.

"I only started the course last month, and it's already teaching me a lot of the causes behind information that I only used to memorize without real understanding," adds Madeleine.

Madeleine is now one of 60 adolescents and young people participating in the course, mostly university students from different ICT majors, thanks to a generous contribution from Germany. The course consists of 60 hours of practical training on crucial skills needed for jobs in the telecom field. To help them manage the course besides their university hours, the course runs daily in two shifts that students can choose depending on their lectures.

Although her ultimate goal is to get a job and be financially self-reliant, especially after the loss of her father and having to rely on her elder brother to cover her life expenses, Madeleine turned down a job offer she received recently to be able to finish the course.

"I need a job desperately, but the knowledge I'm getting out of this course is priceless and will make me a better employee for any future job," she explains.

"This is what my father had always taught us; we should always seek real knowledge. It's easy to get the title of an engineer, but I want to be a real one in both knowledge and skills."



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