

International

# maarif

Year: 6 ■ Issue 21 ■ October – November – December 2025

Journal

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE  
TIAN SHAN MOUNTAINS,  
THE HOMELAND OF  
PROUD NOMADS:  
KYRGYZSTAN

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## EDUCATION AS AN EXISTENTIAL STRUGGLE

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# ELDAR AITMATOV

*I would tell the children what my father would say. He always told me that it is important to have a goal and a mission in life.*

*As human beings, they should strive to improve themselves in the areas they are interested in.*

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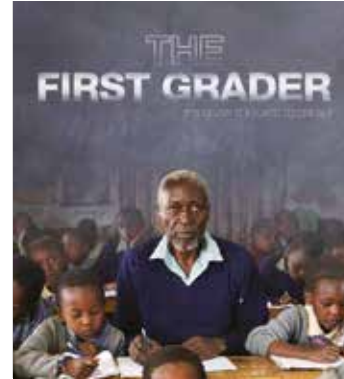
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We lost Niyazi Sayın, the greatest new player of our time and perhaps of all time, on 8 October 2025. He was not only a great musician, but also a master of prayer beads, a mother-of-pearl inlay artist, a rose grower, a bird enthusiast, and a photographer. **p.100**

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# PREFACE



**Mahmut M. Özdiil**

President of the  
Türkiye Maarif Foundation

In this issue of the International Education Journal, we draw a picture that extends from Ukraine to Palestine, from Sudan to Burundi, from Mali to other geographies of the world. This picture shows that learning, sharing and rebuilding are possible even in the shadow of hardships.

## THE RIGHT TO ACCESS QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE SHADOW OF WAR, POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

War, chronic poverty, forced migration movements and the systemic inequalities that deepen these processes emerge as the main obstacles to access to education. These obstacles target not only physical infrastructure but also the integrity of educational processes and social resilience.

For this reason, we see access to education not merely as a pedagogical issue, but as a sphere of responsibility that concerns human dignity and social justice. We are obliged to carry the goal of equality in education further. Ensuring that every individual has access to quality education is a shared duty of humanity. With this approach, we will continue to defend the right to learn and to support solution-oriented cooperation, wherever in the world it may be.

In this issue of the International Maarif Journal, we draw a picture that extends from Ukraine to Palestine, from Sudan to Burundi, from Mali to other geographies of the world. Within this challenging landscape, the selfless efforts we witness and the achievements of those who are constantly ignored and pushed outside the main frame show that learning, sharing and rebuilding, hope and standing back up are possible even in the shadow of the heaviest hardships.

In this issue, we address the theme of “Access to Education” from a multi-dimensional perspective. With contributions from distinguished academics and field professionals, we examine in depth the problems of access to education and open to discussion the challenges, opportunities and proposed solutions. Our aim is not merely to identify issues but to present concrete approaches and models that will redefine access to education.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to all our authors, our editorial team, and the experts who contributed to this issue, with the hope that this work, which places access to education at its center, will inspire educational policies and practices.

With the hope of meeting in a more just world...





## Family-Based National Early Intervention Program

Türkiye, has taken an important step in early childhood development and inclusive family services with the launch of the Family-Based National Early Intervention Program in Bursa. Implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Services and coordinated by the Strategy and Budget Presidency, the program is carried out with UNICEF's technical and financial support in close cooperation with the Ministries of National Education and Health.

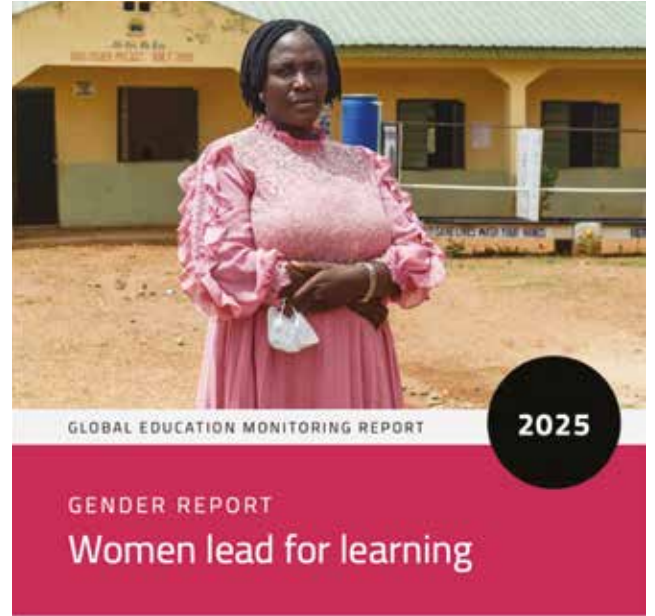
The new program aims to identify and support children aged 0–8 who are at risk of developmental delay or disability. The first Early Childhood Development Centers have begun operating in Ankara, Bursa, Mersin, and Kahramanmaraş.

### Investing in Children's Future

In his speech at the launch ceremony, UNICEF Türkiye Representative Paolo Marchi highlighted that early intervention is not only one of the most effective strategies but also one of the most compassionate and cost-efficient investments a society can make. He emphasized UNICEF's pride in partnering with the Ministry of Family and Social Services in such a project.

Minister of Family and Social Services Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş also stressed the importance of the project, stating: "The best way to support a child is to support the family. A society with strong families will also have a strong future."

## Gender Inequalities Remain a Major Barrier in Education



UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report reveals that gender inequalities in education remain deeply persistent worldwide. The report shows that although there has been progress in school enrollment rates for girls compared to previous decades, significant disparities remain in learning outcomes and access to leadership positions. Especially in low- and middle-income countries, girls' access to education remains limited, while boys fall behind in reading proficiency.

Inequality is not only gender-based; socioeconomic status, rural-urban divides, and digital access further deepen the picture. According to the report, girls are less encouraged toward STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields, while boys lag behind in reading and language skills. This indicates that education systems continue to reproduce entrenched social roles. UNESCO recommends updating curricula with gender sensitivity and strengthening equality-based approaches in teacher training to close this gap.

The report also highlights the increasing role of school leaders and administrators in the digital transformation process. In particular, the safety and access of girls on digital learning platforms are identified as issues that must be central to next-generation education policies. According to UNESCO, a sustainable future for education can only be built by ensuring gender equality. Otherwise, learning equity cannot be achieved despite technological advances.

**Source:** UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2025); "UNESCO Report Flags Gender Gaps in Global Education Outcomes and Leadership," NDTV Education (October 2025).



## A new era ends for ChatGPT: HERE ARE THE TOPICS NOW BANNED

*ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence application developed by OpenAI, continues to be used in many fields worldwide—from education to business. However, the company has decided to introduce new restrictions after users increasingly began treating the AI as a professional advisor.*

With the new regulation, ChatGPT will no longer be defined as an advisor, but as an “educational tool.” Situations such as seeking legal assistance in large-scale lawsuits played a significant role in this decision. From now on, ChatGPT will only explain general principles, introduce legal systems, and direct users to professionals such as lawyers.

### BAD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO USE AI TO DO THEIR HOMEWORK

With these decisions, which also lie at the center of ethical debates, ChatGPT is expected to face restrictions on providing investment advice, psychological counseling, or completing homework assignments for students. Thus, the use of artificial intelligence will be placed within a more controlled and safer framework.

## CONSCIOUS CONSUMER COURSE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

According to the information compiled from the 2026 Presidential Annual Program, quality and free pre-school education will be made accessible with equal opportunity so that children can acquire skills at a young age and become productive and social citizens. In this context, the necessary physical and human infrastructure will be established to increase access to pre-school education. Classroom construction needed for pre-school education will continue.

Various models will be developed for priority regions and families, taking into account economic and social development levels, to facilitate access to quality pre-school education. Models such as temporary village kindergartens, transport-center kindergartens, and home-based pre-school education access will be implemented.

Support from philanthropists and the private sector will be encouraged to be directed primarily to the field of pre-school education. All governorships will be informed and instructed to ensure that incoming support is directed primarily toward pre-school education.

### STUDENTS WILL BE MADE AWARE OF CONSUMER RIGHTS AT AN EARLY AGE

The program also aims to ensure a trade environment where producer and consumer rights are protected, and which is quality-oriented, simple, and low in transaction costs. In this context, legislation on consumer protection will be reviewed, special measures will be introduced for vulnerable consumer groups, and practices will be updated.

A conscious consumer course will be added to the primary education curriculum to raise awareness on consumer rights at an early age, and relevant elective courses will include content on conscious consumption.





## The New Threat: The “Homework Black Market: STUDENTS AT RISK

Muharrem Baki, Chair of the Cybersecurity Commission of the Consumer Confederation (TÜKONFED), stated that digital homework platforms pose a serious cybersecurity risk for students. Baki said, “A website entered for a homework assignment may steal your child’s account the next day.” He also noted that AI-supported cheating services are becoming widespread on fake homework assistance sites and secret groups formed on social media.

### CREDIT CARD INFORMATION IS ALSO BEING COLLECTED

Emphasizing that this information can be used in identity theft and cyberattacks, Baki stated: “These platforms do more than prepare homework; they collect students’ email addresses, school accounts, and even parents’ credit card information

### PHISHING ATTACKS ARE BEING CARRIED OUT

Baki noted that families see these sites as innocent homework assistance, saying: “Behind the scenes, phishing attacks are carried out. Usernames and passwords are stolen. Credit card information is obtained under the pretext of charging per assignment. Information given for one assignment can lead to all data being compromised the next day.”

### A CALL FOR REGULAR CHECKS FROM FAMILIES

Highlighting that cybersecurity is now a part of academic success, Baki stated: “Families must regularly check the platforms their children use. Homework submission platforms should be supported with security and identity verification systems. Information is our future; let us not hand our future over to the black market.”

Source: DHA



## In the UK, Three Million Children Need Social and Emotional Development Support

A report prepared by the education charity Nutureuk reveals that more than three million schoolchildren in the United Kingdom require support for social and emotional development. Data shows that approximately 1 in every 6 students aged 5–16 now has high levels of social and emotional needs. This figure was 1 in 10 in 2018, indicating more than a 50% increase.

The proportion of students facing high levels of difficulty increased from 10% in 2018 to 16% in 2024, meaning more than three million children nationwide are affected.

When the 27% of students with moderate needs is included, the analysis shows that nearly half (43%) of all schoolchildren in England now require social and emotional development support—amounting to more than three million children. Many of these students struggle with fundamental skills such as managing emotions, forming positive relationships, concentrating in class, and regulating behavior.

Source: <https://www.teachingtimes.com/three-million-schoolchildren-in-england-need-support-with-social-and-emotional-development/>



## The Hidden Danger in Stationery Products

During back-to-school shopping, children are undoubtedly most excited about stationery items such as pencils, erasers and paints. Although colorful, scented and uniquely designed products seem appealing, care must be taken while choosing them. Chemicals found in paints and pencils can cause allergic reactions when in contact with skin and poisoning if accidentally ingested. Some types of watercolors may contain heavy metals.

### Unscented Erasers Should Be Preferred

Small erasers and pencil caps also pose choking hazards. Therefore, stationery products should bear TSE or CE certification, and should not contain toxic substances. For safe choices, water-based and washable paints, unscented natural erasers, certified pencils and glues free of harmful chemicals, and products without small detachable parts should be preferred.



When Israeli bombardments destroyed their schools, Palestinian children whose education was interrupted continued their lessons in makeshift tents with volunteer teachers.

# THE LOSS OF EDUCATION IS THE LOSS OF THE FUTURE CHILDREN AND TEACHERS IN GAZA OUT OF SCHOOL FOR TWO YEARS

*The news article we cite from The Guardian focuses on the schools that have been closed in Gaza for two years and the lack of access to education. Thaslima Begum, an award-winning journalist known for her reporting on women's rights, conflict and human rights, now powerfully conveys the untold stories of Gazan children and teachers through her field observations. We find Begum's approach significant in showing that education is not merely a measurable indicator, but a symbol of human dignity, belief in the future and resilience.*



*With 97% of schools destroyed or damaged, 600,000 children have just entered their third year without formal education.*

*‘We don’t want pity, we want action’*

**Juwayriya Adwan (12), al-Mawasi, Khan Younis**

It has been two years since I last entered a real classroom. It has been two years since I heard the morning bell at Hawla Bint al-Azwar School, sat at my desk and raised my hand in my favorite lesson. Sometimes I still vividly remember the sounds and the smells: chalk dust, pencil shavings, the laughter echoing in the hallways. But my school is gone now; it was bombed by the Israelis shortly after the war began. My books were burned, and some of my friends were killed.

On October 7, I was in fifth grade. The last day I ever went to school. That morning, air-raid sirens echoed in the hallways. Some children were crying, others were holding hands tightly. Our teacher tried to calm us, but even her voice was trembling. I remember wishing for an ordinary day—lessons, recess, poetry recitals. But that day became the final page of my old life.

*“War has taken so much from us. But the greatest loss is education, because that is the loss of the future itself.”*

Now I live with my mother, father, two brothers, and sister in a crowded shelter in the al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis. The tent walls flutter in the wind; they keep out neither the cold nor the heat. We wait in line for water and food. Electricity is a dream, and privacy does not exist. Hope feels fragile.

I once dreamed of becoming a teacher to help Gazan children learn, even if life was difficult. Now I dream of becoming a journalist—to write, to speak, and to show the world what it means to be a child in Gaza. I want to tell our stories of fear and hunger, but also of courage. Because here, even among death and ruins, our voices refuse to be silenced.

At night, I look at the stars through the holes in our tent and wonder if my friends see the same sky. Some write to me when they can, saying they miss school and that they keep their old notebooks—

like treasures from a lost world. I feel guilty because I lost all of mine.

When I have internet, I try to study online. Sometimes I go to a small tent where volunteers teach us math and Arabic. The lessons are short; the electricity goes out or the airstrikes resume, but in those moments I feel alive. I remember who I am: The girl who loves numbers and poetry, who believes learning can change the world.

We have lost so much in the war—our homes, our schools, our families. I lost my uncle, his wife and their children. I lost my beautiful city, Rafah, which is now nothing but rubble. But the greatest loss is education, because education is the future.

I say this to the world: Do not let our dreams die. We do not want pity; we want action. The children of Gaza deserve books, schools, and safety. Education is not a luxury; it is a fundamental right. Gaza is not only destruction; it is the children who still dream beneath the drones at night. This is my story, and I will keep writing it, even if all I have left is a broken pencil and a torn piece of paper.

*Education has become an act of defiance, a way of saying “We are still here.”*

**Naglaa Weshah (40), teacher in al-Bureij camp, Gaza**

I have been teaching in Gaza for more than ten years. First in Khan Younis, then in Deir al-Balah, and now in the al-Bureij camp in central Gaza. Before the war began, I taught six classes, each with around 40 students. Teaching them was the purpose and joy of my life. I can still recall the sparkle in a student’s eyes when a new idea dawned on them.

I always believed that learning should be full of life. My classroom was a space of play, art, and movement. We drew maps, reenacted historical events, and turned lessons into stories.

When curiosity replaced fear, the room always filled with laughter. Yes, even before the war, children in Gaza lived in fear. My classroom was a safe place, but after October 7, everything changed.

My school became a shelter for families fleeing the bombs. Soon after, it was

targeted and completely destroyed. There are almost no functioning schools left in Gaza. For two years, nothing has been normal. The war has shattered every part of our lives—our safety, our homes, our schools, our dreams. Fear and sorrow are our constant companions.

Most of my students are no longer alive—children who dreamed of becoming doctors, artists, teachers. Even their right to exist was taken from them. Those who remain live with hunger, displacement and exhaustion, yet they still cling to the desire to learn.

Sometimes, when the internet allows it, I hear from a few of them. They message me saying, “Are you okay, teacher?” Amid the chaos, we share short words, short lessons—tiny sparks of connection. They ask whether things will ever return to normal. I tell them I don’t know.

Across Gaza, teachers, volunteers, and non-profit organizations try to provide education wherever possible—in tents, damaged classrooms, or crowded shelters. Education has become an act of resistance, a way of saying “We are still here.” As long as we keep learning, we will keep existing. Many of us are also parents. I am a mother of three, and my children’s education has been severely affected. Their days are spent waiting in water lines, searching for food, or collecting firewood. Their childhoods have been replaced by the struggle to survive.

As I remind my students, I remind them too that knowledge is power, and that one day they will return to their classrooms.

Despite losses beyond imagination, I still believe in the power of learning. I imagine a day when schools in Gaza will once again be filled with laughter, when lessons will not be interrupted by bombings, and when every child will be able to dream of a future again.

Until that day comes, I will continue teaching with every capacity I have, despite fear, debris, and darkness; because education is the only hope we possess.

**Source:** <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/oct/19/education-gaza-children-teachers-two-years-without-school>

## The Age Of Artificial Intelligence: **CONVENIENCE OR COGNITIVE DECLINE?**

*New studies reveal that AI-supported writing and thinking practices reduce mental activity.*

The widespread use of artificial intelligence tools in daily life weakens thought processes by lowering cognitive effort. In an experiment conducted by MIT researcher Nataliya Kosmyna, the brain activity of participants who used ChatGPT while writing was measured. Findings showed a noticeable decrease in regions associated with attention, comprehension, and creativity.

Experts evaluating these results emphasize that the rapid tendency to resort to digital tools may dull skills such as memory, analysis, and intuitive thinking. The shift of younger generations from being “content producers” to merely “digital users” is seen as a risk, especially regarding the retreat of critical thinking.



Although technology facilitates access to information, the danger of automated responses and ready-made content excluding mental effort is a major concern raised by researchers. Experts state that artificial intelligence can empower individuals only when used consciously, selectively, and in a balanced manner.

The fundamental question this research directs us to is this:

*Are we managing technology, or are we unknowingly surrendering to it?*

## ■ One Step Beyond Summit in Education: **TOWARD A NEW EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DECOLONIZATION**

The fifth “One Step Beyond in Education Summit,” organized by the NUN Foundation for Education and Culture, was held on 1 November 2025 in Beykoz, Istanbul, with the theme “Decolonization in Education.” Around seven hundred educators, academics, and students from different cities in Türkiye gathered to discuss entrenched colonial patterns in education systems and explore ways of building an indigenous educational language. In her opening speech, Esra Albayrak emphasized education’s link to cultural independence, stating, “Knowledge is never neutral; it always carries the traces of a geography, a power, a language, and a worldview.”

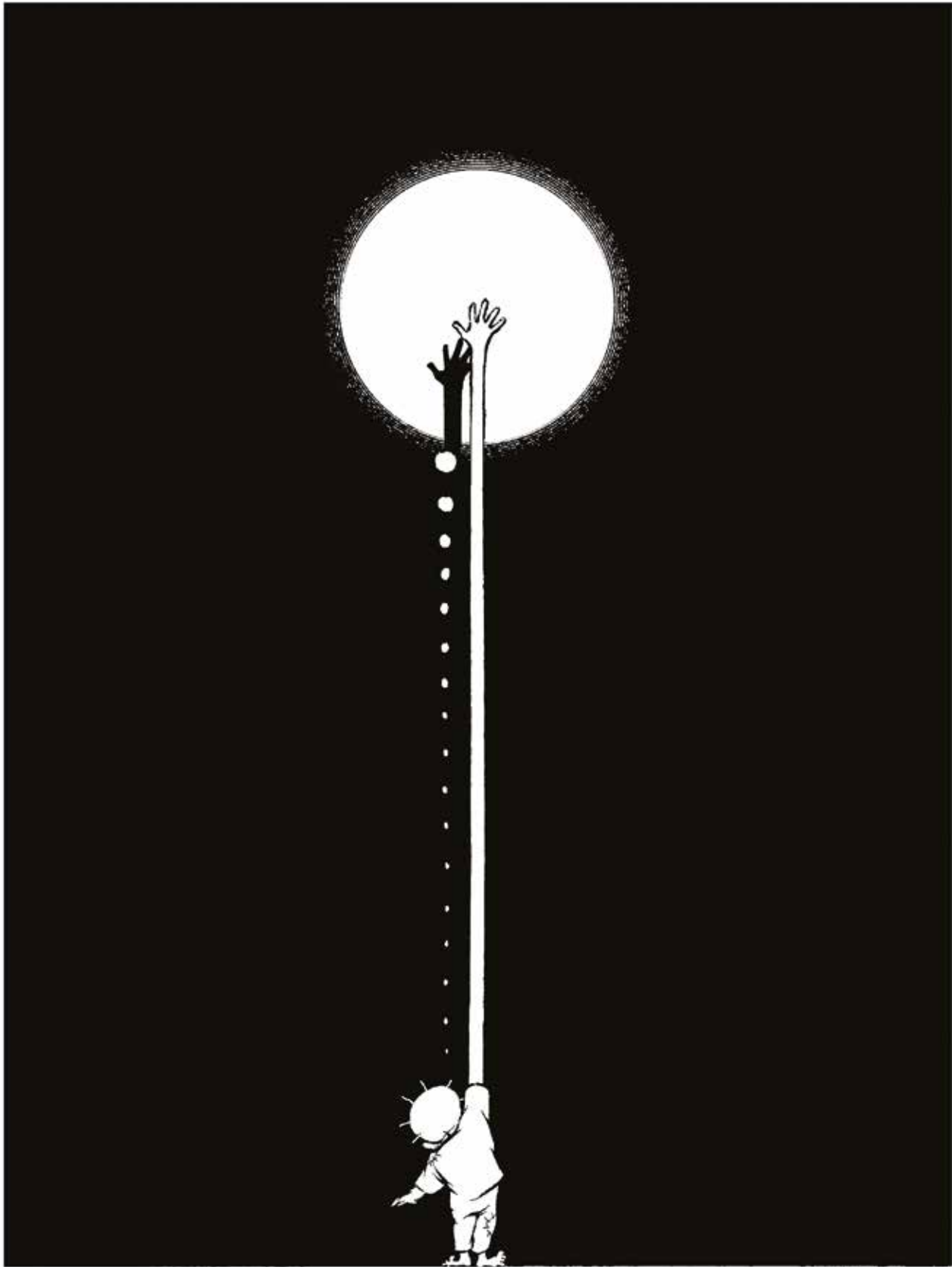
Presentations in various sessions highlighted the need for intellectual transformation in education. Participants agreed on the necessity of building new learning paradigms centered on Anatolia’s intellectual heritage, approaching global education models through a critical lens.

Mahmut M. Özdl, President of the Türkiye Maarif Foundation, presented “From Anatolia to Different Geographies: Maarif Stories,” reflecting the international footprint of Türkiye’s long-standing educational experience. This emphasis shows that the Türkiye-centered educational approach is regarded not only as a local model but also as an inspiring perspective on a global scale.

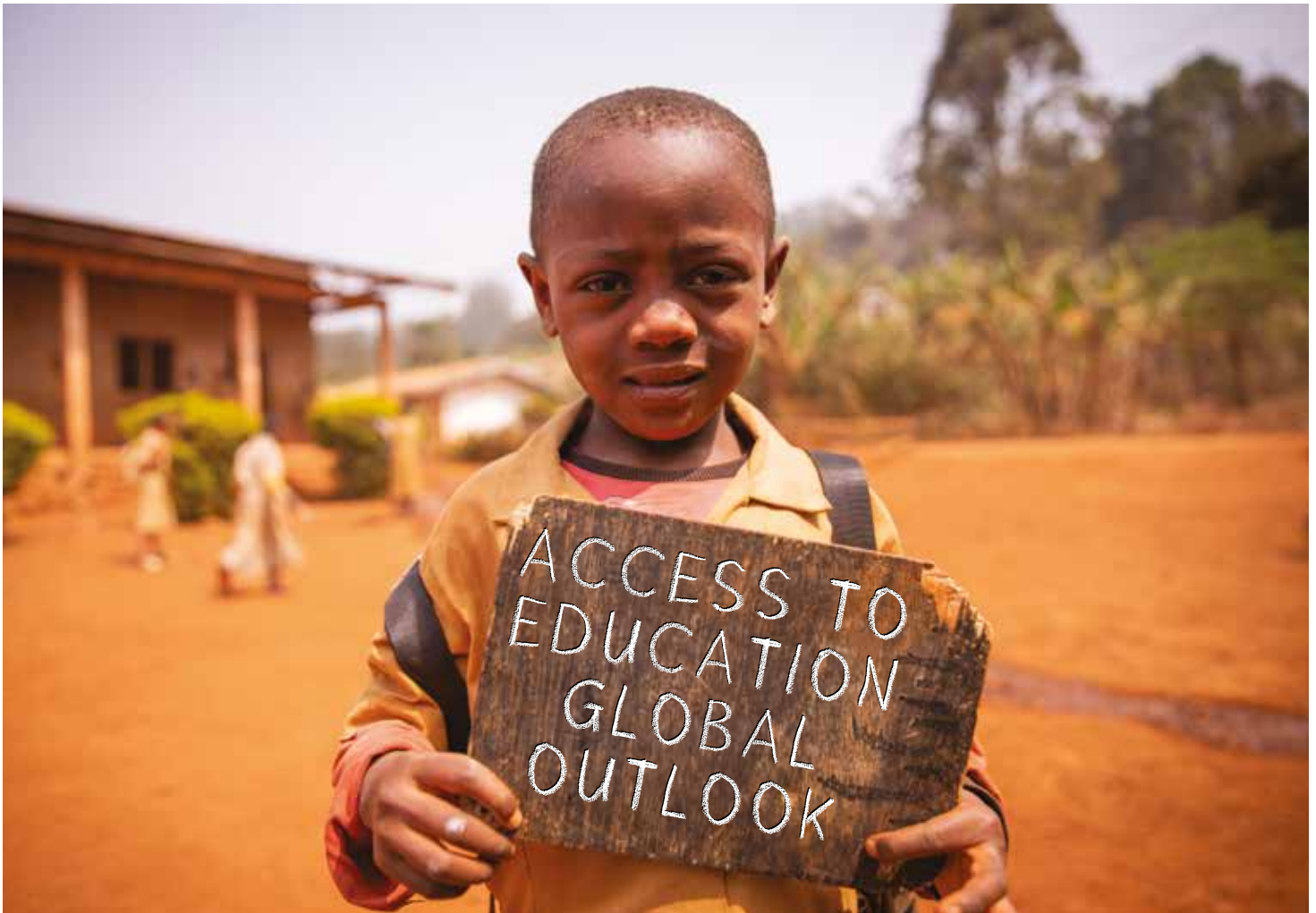


Esra Albayrak





Hasan



Beyza KORU

Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right to education based on equal opportunity, millions of children today remain out of school. According to UNESCO's 2023 data, the global number of out-of-school children increased by an estimated 21 million, reaching 272 million. This figure reveals the depth of the gap between countries' targeted enrollment rates and the current reality.

The UNESCO report titled SDG 4 Scorecard Progress Report on National Benchmarks: Focus on the Out-of-School Rate was prepared to monitor the progress of 164 countries that have assumed responsibility for the future of their education systems within the scope of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). SDG 4—one of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 and targeted to be achieved by 2030—aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, and

quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Within the national benchmarks set under SDG 4, countries have committed to reducing out-of-school rates to 2% at primary level, 5% at lower secondary level, and 16% at upper secondary level by 2030. Achieving these targets would require a reduction of 170 million in the current global out-of-school population. As the target date approaches, actions taken to meet these goals are becoming more critical than ever. The SDG

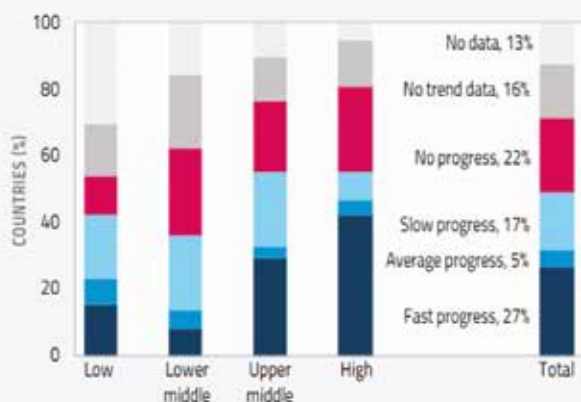
4 Scorecard uses a two-axis classification system to comparatively evaluate countries' progress in access to education. The first axis indicates the pace of progress made by countries toward their self-determined national targets. Accordingly, countries are evaluated in six categories: fast progress, average progress, slow progress, no progress, countries without trend data, and The second axis is based on grouping countries according to income level. The second axis is based on grouping countries



**FIGURE 6.**

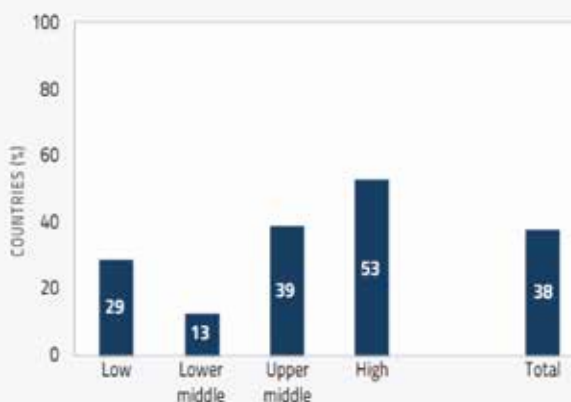
Country classification of progress towards the 2025 benchmark values, selected indicators, by country income group

*a. Early childhood education participation rate*

**FIGURE 7.**

Share of countries that achieved fast progress, selected indicators, by country income group, excluding countries without data or data for trends

*a. Early childhood education participation rate*



according to income level. To make contextual differences visible in global comparisons, countries are categorized into four income groups: low-income, lower-middle-income, upper-middle-income, and high-income. Evaluating data across these two dimensions allows the report to identify not only general progress trends but also structural inequalities associated with income levels.

#### A TREND OF STAGNATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Participation in early childhood education—forming the foundational stage of educational processes—has declined in 35% of countries. According to the report, this decline resulted from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had its most adverse effect on participation at the early childhood level. Consequently, nearly one-fifth of countries recorded no progress toward their early childhood education targets. Meanwhile, one-third of countries

succeeded in meeting their targets. On average, countries were found to be nine points behind their early childhood participation targets. However, this score does not indicate an overall decline in early childhood education; rather, it shows that the pace of progress is insufficient

#### PROGRESS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IS SLOWING

The report shows that the rate of improvement in secondary education learning outcomes is slowing. Countries with low proportions of students achieving minimum proficiency at the end of lower secondary education account for 84% of assessed countries in reading and 79% in mathematics. The decline in reading skills began in the early 2010s in middle- and high-income countries, while the decline in mathematics became more pronounced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding access to secondary education, 20% of young people are out of school. The upper

According to the report, countries were found to be nine points behind their early childhood education participation targets. However, this score does not indicate an overall decline; rather, it shows that the pace of progress is insufficient.



“The decline in reading skills began in the early 2010s in middle- and high-income countries, while the decline in mathematics became more pronounced with the COVID-19 pandemic.”

secondary completion rate across countries has been recorded at 30%. These two key indicators, in which countries show slow progress, remind us that achieving universal completion targets for secondary education remains a distant goal.

#### AS INCOME DECREASES, THE SHARE OF THE BUDGET ALLOCATED TO EDUCATION INCREASES

Countries' education budgets are assessed according to two benchmark indicators set within the Education 2030 Framework for Action. These benchmarks require allocating 4–6% of GDP to education and/or at least 15–20% of total public expenditure to education. Approximately 17% of countries meet both benchmarks. These include countries from different income levels, such as Mali, Mozambique, Bolivia, Tunisia, Kazakhstan, and Switzerland. About 34% of countries meet neither benchmark, including Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Bangladesh, El Salvador, and Greece from various income groups. When examining the progress of education budgets,

global education spending has declined compared to 2015. In 2023, an average of 15% of public expenditure was allocated to education, compared to around 17% in 2015. The report highlights some trends

associated with income levels. Chief among these is the finding that low- and middle-income countries are more likely than high-income countries to meet both benchmarks. About one-third of low-income countries allocate more than 15% of public expenditure to education while spending less than 4% of their GDP on education. In contrast, 55% of high-income countries allocate less than 15% of their total public expenditure to education, yet spend more than 4% of their GDP on it. This discrepancy stems from various factors, such as countries' revenue-generation capacities and demographic structures. High-income countries can increase public revenue due to broader tax bases, whereas in low-income countries, the large proportion of young people naturally makes education spending a priority.

#### THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL POPULATION IS INCREASING

In determining the out-of-school population—the main focus of the report—administrative records of enrolled students, census data, and household surveys (widely used in low-income countries are employed. However, inconsistencies among these data sources highlight the need for a model capable of producing reliable estimates. In 2022, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Global Education Monitoring

(GEM) Report developed such a model. According to the model, as of 2023, 78 million primary school-aged children, 64 million lower secondary-aged adolescents, and 130 million upper secondary-aged youth are unable to attend school. These figures correspond to 10.2% of primary-aged children, 14.8% of lower secondary-aged adolescents, and 31% of upper secondary-aged youth. Out-of-school rates vary significantly depending on countries' income levels. In low-income countries, the out-of-school rate stands at 36%, compared to just 3% in high-income countries. Although out-of-school rates have not reached the desired level, the report does not treat this as an absolute failure. It is noted that population growth can obscure improvements in participation, and the out-of-school rate has declined from 17.5% in 2015 to 16.8% in 2023.

#### THE GLOBAL CENTER OF EDUCATION ACCESS CHALLENGES: SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

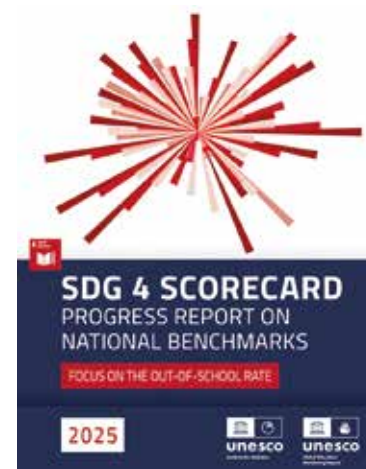
The report emphasizes that the most entrenched inequalities globally are found in Sub-Saharan Africa. Today, one in every two out-of-school children lives in this region, and the share of primary-aged children out of school rising from 32% in 2000 to 50% in 2023 signals a severe crisis in access to education. This situation illustrates not only income inequality but also how major factors such as war, conflict, displacement, and lack of infrastructure permanently undermine the right to education.

It is believed that the number of out-of-school children in conflict and war zones is far higher than current estimates. The report states that additional analyses for Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan indicate that an additional 13 million out-of-school children should be



taken While the out-of-school rate remains one of the fundamental indicators of access to education, the number of out-of-school children globally has once again entered an upward trend.

This trend is further intensified in regions where conflict and war systematically hinder access to education. Expanding access to education remains a core priority for all regions, especially crisis-affected areas. However, an increase in school enrollment alone does not imply the achievement of equal opportunities or access to quality education. Although quantitative indicators play an important role in measuring participation, they remain limited in reflecting the quality and depth of learning processes. Therefore, more studies are needed that evaluate access to education using multidimensional indicators such as learning outcomes, teacher quality, adequacy of educational infrastructure, and socioeconomic conditions.



*This article is based on the UNESCO report titled "SDG 4 Scorecard Progress Report on National Benchmarks: Focus on the Out-of-School Rate." (Full text: <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publication/2025-sdg-4-scorecard-progress-report-national-benchmarks>)*



*Interview: Bekir BİLGİLİ*

# ELDAR AITMATOV:

**The works of  
Chinghiz Aitmatov  
reflect the shared  
emotions that unite  
Turkic peoples.**

*One of the most significant places carrying Chinghiz Aitmatov's legacy into the present is the house in Bishkek where he lived, which has now been converted Eldar Aitmatov, himself a renowned painter and the president of the Chinghiz Aitmatov Foundation, welcomes us with Kyrgyz hospitality and gracious courtesy in this museum house where he was born and raised. We spoke with Eldar Aitmatov about his work, Kyrgyz culture, his father Chinghiz Aitmatov, and his enduring legacy.*

*Hello, first of all, I would like to say that it is a great privilege to conduct an interview with such a distinguished artist as yourself in a place full of meaning like this. Let us begin our interview here. Could you tell us a little about the place we are in right now?*

This museum house we are in is the place where Chinghiz Aitmatov and our family lived. Chinghiz Aitmatov lived in this house for 23 years. After his passing, it had always been our dream to transform this house, where he lived, into a museum. Today we feel the joy of bringing this ideal to life.

*It is small, but considering its content and meaning, it has truly become a rich museum.*

Yes, this is a small museum. This was the house where Chinghiz Aitmatov lived and carried out his work. Every corner of this house is filled with his memories. His works, his literature, and the legacy he left not only to our family but to all of Kyrgyzstan and our cultural life far exceed the limits of this museum.

*This museum forms a solid foundation. Do you have any further goals for the future?*

Our main goal is to build a center in his memory in about two and a half years, on the 100th anniversary of Chinghiz Aitmatov's birth. We attach great importance to establishing a center that can unite our cultures, bring together people interested in literature and the arts, and provide educational spaces. We envision this center as more than just a museum—an environment with theater and conference halls, educational workshops, and spaces where people can come together and exchange ideas about art. Such a center would offer opportunities not only for

Kyrgyz people but for the entire Turkic world and for anyone connected to Aitmatov's literature to create new works. In Kyrgyzstan, many people—especially young people—create artistic works inspired by Aitmatov's books. Many painters create works inspired by him; his writings inspire literature, cinema, music, and theater.

*We are truly speaking of an artist whose influence transcends his country's borders. In your view, what is Aitmatov's significance particularly in the Turkic World?*

In 2008, under Türkiye's term presidency, the Turkic world nominated Chinghiz Aitmatov for the Nobel Prize. Unfortunately, my father passed away before a decision could be made. It was very meaningful that the Turkic world united in his name and nominated him for the Nobel Prize. Because my father had been one of the most important figures in Soviet-era literature even before independence. Aitmatov's works reflect the shared emotions that unite Turkic states and peoples. In this respect, his works are especially significant.

As the president of the Aitmatov Foundation and as a painter, I want to take the idea of creating a new Turkic unity even further. In all aspects of my life, I consider this idea extremely important and believe that the unity we envision could open a new chapter in Turkic history. I hope that this Turkic unity will be realized in the future.





*Could you also tell us about the aims and activities of your foundation?*

The foundation was established in the 2000s by my father and mother. Its purpose was not only to promote our culture. Supporting young talents, enabling them to receive better training in their fields of interest, and helping them showcase their abilities at local and international levels were also among the foundation's core aims.

My father envisioned a foundation operating not only in Kyrgyzstan but in many countries. His greatest wish was to convey his message to the entire world. I believe that one day we will reach that point. We want to create a global impact starting from here. But for now, our primary priority is to preserve Aitmatov's cultural heritage—his works, his philosophy, and everything connected to him—and to transmit it to future generations. Therefore, the first and most important task for our foundation at this moment is to develop and safeguard this museum. The archival value of the legacy left by Chinghiz Aitmatov is immense, and this archive forms a solid foundation for the projects we plan to realize in the future. Based on this museum house, one of our foundation's goals is to build a cultural center and a modern museum elsewhere, allowing Chinghiz Aitmatov's life and works to reach wider audiences.

*Your father was a world-renowned writer, yet you are a painter. Did your father influence your interest in painting?*

Yes, of course... My family influenced me greatly. When I read Jamila, I always imagined that the little painter boy in the story was my father. I think becoming a painter had been his dream, but he described the world through words. Our family had a very wide circle of friends consisting of painters and artists, and we often hosted them in our home.



Aitmatov had been one of the most significant figures in Soviet-era literature even before independence. Aitmatov's works reflect the shared emotions that unite Turkic states and peoples. In this respect, his works are especially significant.





uring his ambassadorship, my father would provide opportunities for painters to hold exhibitions. When they came, they would stay for one or two months. I would learn painting from them. I took painting lessons from the famous Azerbaijani artist Toğrul Narimanbeyov. Being surrounded by these great painters nourished me deeply. These artists were undoubtedly far above the ordinary and were among the best of their time. Therefore, watching them—observing how they painted and how they lived—became an enormous source of inspiration for me. A year or two after I began studying at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, I realized that I could not live without art. I became aware of what painting added to my soul. I felt that I could reach the creative impulse within me only through painting.

*Your style is very interesting and impressive. You use colors in a striking way.*

Thank you. I can reveal the landscape in my mind only through abstraction. People may see certain figures in my paintings, but when I paint, I am usually not thinking about a specific subject. I cannot paint landscapes; I try to reveal what is in my mind.

I suppose the main issue is being able to approach life in its entirety. That is my primary concern as well: life itself. I do not draw a human being or a particular object. I am not trying to create an allegory or a metaphor of something. I very rarely paint figurative works.

*In Kyrgyzstan, one encounters traces of your father everywhere. What do you think explains the Kyrgyz people's love and devotion to your father?*

Actually, this question should be asked directly to the Kyrgyz people. Because beyond being a Kyrgyz myself, I am his son. Therefore, my answer may be somewhat partial, but I will try to respond.



**I would tell the children what my father would say. He always told me that it is important to have a goal and a mission in life. They should strive to improve themselves in the fields they are interested in.**



Chinghiz Aitmatov's writing desk



Chinghiz Aitmatov portrayed the Kyrgyz people in all their simplicity. These were the stories of ordinary people living in villages— their hardships, their struggle for life, their tragedies. Naturally, the myths of this nation also found a place in his works. From this foundation, he was able to construct a universal language. Although his protagonists were villagers and shepherds living simple lives, he succeeded in revealing the richness within their souls.

A person—no matter where in the world they may live—can feel and understand this. That is why his works are universal. For many Kyrgyz people, Chinghiz Aitmatov is one of the symbolic figures of Kyrgyz culture.

*Chinghiz Aitmatov seems to have become one of the fundamental pillars in revitalizing post-Soviet Kyrgyz culture. What would you say about this?*

Chinghiz Aitmatov is undoubtedly an important figure for Kyrgyz culture.

However, there are other significant legacies that nourish Kyrgyz culture as well. The most important of these is the Epic of Manas. In the Kyrgyz storytelling tradition, Manas is the main source of many figures and narratives. Chinghiz Aitmatov, too, was deeply influenced by the Manas tradition. During the Soviet era, my father was among those who openly opposed the censorship of this epic.

I believe that the contributions of writers like my father, as well as our epics such as Manas, have acted as catalysts in the revitalization of this culture. The Kyrgyz people are fortunate to possess such a deep-rooted heritage. I think Chinghiz Aitmatov means a great deal especially for the younger generations. Young people who did not have the chance to know him while he was alive draw inspiration from his works. They want to achieve something like Aitmatov; they want to become world-renowned writers as he did.

*Considering the developments especially in the field of technology, young people's interests have shifted to different areas. In such a reality, do you find young people's interest in Kyrgyz culture and literature sufficient?*

I see many talented young people who are interested in the arts and striving to create something in the field of art. Yes, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a turning point for us. Everyone was trying to survive, and for this reason, everyone was preoccupied with teaching their children ways to earn money. After the 2010s, conditions in our country began to change. Many young people now want to receive education in fields such as art, fashion, and computer technologies. Providing the right education to the youth is essential. I wish we had better infrastructure, better academies, and schools for them. We do have a few institutions offering education in these areas, but their number and quality need to increase.





*Photographs of Chinghiz Aitmatov taken with world-renowned artists, exhibited in the museum.*

*Our magazine Maarif is published in three languages and reaches nearly 60 countries. What would you like to say to young people living in different countries through our magazine?*

I would tell children what my father used to tell me. He always told me that it is important to have a goal and a mission in life. They should strive to improve themselves in the fields they are interested in as human beings. They should make an effort to contribute to culture, science, politics, and the arts. They should make good use of the opportunities that come their way and not overlook the details.

At the time, my father would tell me things a child could not fully understand. Over the years, I came to appreciate the value of what he said. He would tell me, "Do not spend your time merely for entertainment." Yes, enjoy yourselves, he would say, but use your time as productively as possible. An opportunity to open themselves to the

**Maarif offers  
underprivileged children  
an opportunity to open  
themselves to the world.  
For this reason, I support  
the work of the Turkish  
Maarif Foundation**

world. For this reason, I support the work of the Turkish Maarif Foundation.

Use your time to improve yourself in a field in which you are good. If you are good at mathematics, focus on mathematics; if you are good at art, turn toward art. Do something that gives you joy. Dedicate yourself to the work you love so that you may succeed. Experience the satisfaction of achieving something in your life. He would always say this.

*Lastly, we would also like to hear your thoughts on Maarif Schools. I know that your own child is also a Maarif student...*

Education—especially education carried out on an international level by opening schools in many parts of the world is an endeavor to be proud of. A significant number of these children come from very modest and impoverished families, and in this sense, Maarif offers them an opportunity to open themselves to the world. I personally follow and support the work of the Turkish Maarif Foundation closely.

I believe that the Foundation's initiatives aimed at preparing a hopeful future for children are highly important. For this reason, I am one of Maarif's leading supporters in Kyrgyzstan.

*Thank you. Hosting us in your home will always remain in my memory as an unforgettable experience.*



# EDUCATION AS AN EXISTENTIAL STRUGGLE

Learning Practices  
in Times of Crisis



Education is one of the most fundamental components of processes of social reconstruction. However, war, forced migration, climate crises, and structural inequalities threaten the sustainability of this fundamental right in many regions of the world. This dossier sheds light on contexts where education has been disrupted, access has become fragile, and learning has become intertwined with the struggle for survival.

Shaped by the contributions of authors from countries such as Palestine, Sudan, Mali, and Ukraine, this work approaches education not merely as an institutional structure, but as a practice of resilience and re-existence. Each article offers new insights into the universal dimensions of education, going beyond local experiences, and opens a discussion on innovative, inclusive, and sustainable solution models developed during times of crisis.

With this issue, our journal aims to cast an academic lens on the vulnerable points of education on a global scale, while also creating a shared space for reflection on a future in which access to knowledge, hope, and solidarity can be made possible.





**Alpaslan Durmuş**

Advisor to the  
President of the  
Turkish Red  
Crescent  
Academy

**In difficult times**, two powerful concepts lie at the foundation of education: justice and resilience. These two concepts emphasize that education is an inalienable right and a protective instrument during periods of crisis.

# The Power of Education in Difficult Times: **FROM LEARNING LOSS TO RESILIENT SOCIETIES**





The scene that emerged after the Israeli Air Force destroyed the Al-Hansa Girls' School in the east of Khan Younis and blocked the road.

**Education supports this process by equipping individuals with crisis management skills, psychological first aid knowledge, and problem-solving abilities.**

“Difficult times”—a term that refers to extraordinary circumstances ranging from natural disasters to human-made crises—may knock on our door with an earthquake that overturns our lives overnight, a war that forces people onto migration routes, or a pandemic that confines the entire world to their homes. Yet in these moments of crisis, it is not only buildings or systems that are lost; the greatest destruction is the loss of hope and of the future. It is precisely at this point that the power of education comes into play. For education is not merely a tool for transmitting knowledge; it is also a force that builds individual and societal resilience, transforms trauma, and nurtures trust in the future.

#### **THE FOUR PHASES OF THE DISASTER CYCLE AND EDUCATION**

The disaster cycle consists of four phases—preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and sustainability—and education plays an active role in each of these phases. Each phase requires the development of different skill sets that individuals and societies need. Education adopts a proactive approach to crises and takes part in these phases accordingly. In the preparedness phase, the aim is to increase risk awareness before disasters occur and to prepare society for possible scenarios. Disaster literacy is one of the fundamental pillars of this phase. Understanding disaster types (earthquakes, floods, fires), local risks (fault lines, flood-prone areas), and early warning systems enables individuals to make the right decisions during a crisis. Scenario-based drills, for example, help individuals internalize behaviors such as “drop–cover–hold on” during an earthquake.

During the crisis phase, the ability to make fast and accurate decisions is critical for survival and managing chaos. Education supports this process by equipping individuals with crisis management, psychological first aid knowledge, and problem-solving skills. For example, techniques such as “stop–drop–roll” during a fire, or knowing evacuation routes during a flood, can save lives. Media literacy helps

ensure access to accurate information against disinformation during crises; the approach developed under the umbrella of *sumud* in Palestine emphasizing solidarity and collective protection mechanisms also contributes to crisis management.

#### **IN THE RECOVERY PHASE, EDUCATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AGENT OF NORMALIZATION**

In this phase, education plays a pivotal role in helping individuals and communities recover from trauma, strengthening social bonds, and promoting a culture of solidarity. Psychosocial support programs Kahramanmaraş individuals’ emotional resilience, while *sumud* unity activities and volunteer initiatives reinforce a sense of collective belonging. For instance, in the extremely harsh conditions endured by Palestinians, the education provided through daily practices—such as rebuilding destroyed homes “even more beautifully than before” or using humor as a coping mechanism despite all difficulties—significantly sustains hope and resilience. Similarly, after the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, the resumption of education in tent classrooms and the study opportunities offered to students in the libraries established by the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) greatly supported disaster survivors in returning to their routines and restoring their hope.

The final goal of education is to transform the lessons learned from difficult times into a lasting culture of resilience. This phase enables individuals and institutions to become better prepared and more flexible in the face of crises; the skills gained through education encourage life practices that reduce disaster risks (such as environmental awareness, water conservation, and collective volunteerism). In the sustainability phase, the aim is to embed these lessons into permanent policies, curricula, and societal habits. Incorporating disaster awareness into school curricula, making drills a regular practice, and embedding the culture of solidarity into institutional structures





*A child with a school bag in the Adme Camp, Idlib, Syria*

are concrete steps of this phase. To give another example from Palestine, one may recall how the culture of *sumud*—passed down through generations by means of both informal and formal education protects the cultural identity and attachment to the homeland of individuals and communities, and how it roots resilience and resistance firmly, like the deep roots of an olive tree clinging tightly to the soil.

### THE CORNERSTONES OF RESILIENCE EDUCATION

Education for difficult times must be built upon multidimensional skills and pedagogical approaches. This approach not only transmits knowledge but also aims to strengthen the capacity of individuals and societies to cope with crises. Education for difficult times includes a variety of skill sets: cognitive, emotional, social, practical, and digital. Cognitive skills such as critical thinking, rapid information processing, and media literacy support swift decision-making during crises and protect individuals against misinformation. Emotional and psychosocial skills—such as empathy, stress management, emotional resilience, and motivation—enhance individuals' resilience and help them cope with trauma.



*Illustration: Zeynep Betül Ardic*

Social skills such as cooperation, mutual assistance and solidarity, community participation, leadership, and a culture of volunteerism strengthen society and hold it together in the face of crises. Basic life skills—such as first aid, essential health knowledge, and strategies for shelter and nutrition—enable individuals to survive during a crisis. The ability to use digital tools such as distance education platforms, early warning applications, and crisis communication tools is indispensable to modern crisis management.

Pedagogical approaches play a critical role in imparting these skills. Scenario-based learning, role-playing, drills, and fieldwork allow skills to be learned and practiced in a hands-on manner. Educational content must be adapted to different age groups, from children to the elderly, and supported by flexible models such as hybrid or distance learning. These ensure the continuity of education during times of crisis. Values education strengthens concepts such as social solidarity, environmental awareness, and ethical responsibility, contributing to individuals developing a more conscious attitude toward crises.



## JUSTICE AND RESILIENCE: BUILDING MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEMS

In difficult times, two powerful concepts lie at the foundation of education: justice and resilience. These two concepts emphasize that education is an inalienable right and a protective instrument during periods of crisis. With this emphasis, they point to the need for education to move beyond “normalization” and become a “transformative opportunity.” For the approach of “returning to normal” after a crisis may often lead to the reproduction of past inequalities. Crises, therefore, should be seen not as a call to restore education, but as an opportunity to make it more just and more resilient.

From the perspective of justice, education systems must enhance inclusivity by offering equal opportunities to vulnerable (mustazaf) groups such as migrants, persons with disabilities, and girls, and must be regarded as an opportunity to eliminate inequalities. Distributive justice (fair distribution of resources) and recognition justice (making visible the identities and needs of vulnerable groups) should form the foundation of this process. The use of radio and television for distance learning in Africa during the pandemic may be noted as an innovative step toward narrowing the digital divide. From the perspective of resilience, resilience refers to the capacity to withstand crises at individual, institutional, and societal levels. Individual resilience means that individuals acquire crisis-coping skills, emotional strength, and problem-solving abilities; institutional resilience refers to the education system’s capacity to function despite crises through infrastructures such as hybrid or distance learning; societal resilience refers to strengthening solidarity, social bonds, and



“**Education for difficult times includes a variety of skill sets: cognitive, emotional, social, practical, and digital**”

post-traumatic recovery through education. The way Palestinians use joy as a tool of resistance despite their hardships, adopt and transmit to younger generations the understanding of “organized popular struggle” and “collective protection,” and reinforce the symbolic power of the olive tree through every possible medium—from paintings to slogans—should be regarded as examples of individual, institutional, and societal resilience

## A CALL

Education in difficult times not only ensures the continuity of learning and prevents learning loss, but also enables individuals and societies to become more prepared, flexible, and resilient in the face of crises; it plays a transformative role in the reconstruction of society. Educators, international organizations, and governments must view crises not merely as challenges to be overcome, but as opportunities to build more just and resilient systems. Inspired by the coming together of people from different faiths and cultures within the Global Sumud Fleet, it becomes evident that education must be repositioned as a unifying universal instrument grounded in conscience and solidarity, and centered on justice and resilience. Just as the ships of this fleet—and the people aboard them—carry the flag of hope for the continued existence of humanity, an education structure centered on justice and resilience will plant a seed of hope that will forever remain alive in people’s hearts.

DIMENSION	CONTENT AND SCOPE	WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS DO AFTER THIS TRAINING?
WHAT SHOULD WE KNOW?	<b>Disaster and risk awareness to make sense of disasters and risks:</b> Types of disasters, local risks, the disaster management cycle, early warning systems, the role of institutions and global approaches; understanding human made crises such as war, migration, terrorism, and economic crises.	They classify disaster types (earthquake, flood, fire, pandemic, etc.). They explain local risks (fault lines, flood-prone areas, etc.). They explain and demonstrate the disaster management cycle on the model (preparedness → response → recovery → mitigation). They evaluate the roles of early warning systems and official institutions (AFAD, municipalities, health institutions). They provide examples of the functions of digital disaster applications. They relate international approaches such as UNESCO EIE to national policies. They analyze the disproportionate impacts of disasters on vulnerable groups (refugees, persons with disabilities, girls). They explain and assess the exacerbating effects of the climate crisis on disaster risks (e.g., heatwaves, drought). They describe global solidarity mechanisms (e.g., humanitarian aid initiatives) and their roles in disaster management. They identify misinformation (disinformation) during crises and orient themselves and others toward reliable sources.
WHAT SHOULD WE BE ABLE TO DO?	<b>Practical behaviors and resilience skills to be activated during a crisis:</b> Safety, first aid, information verification, solidarity, and adaptation; coping with both the physical and psychological impacts of the crisis.	They prepare a family disaster plan and an emergency kit. They mark evacuation routes and assembly points on a map/diagram. They perform actions such as “drop → cover → hold on” during an earthquake and “stop → drop → roll” during a fire. They carry out basic first aid interventions during a crisis. They distinguish misinformation during a crisis and access reliable sources. They maintain communication through digital tools (location sharing, disaster applications, distance education). They develop rapid decision-making and problem-solving skills through scenario-based drills. They produce solutions for those who need help the most (vulnerable groups; refugees, persons with disabilities, children). They know and apply psychological first aid techniques (e.g., active listening, calming) during and after a crisis. They identify and manage emotional reactions during a crisis. They take precautions against disinformation by verifying information circulating on social media through cross-checking with multiple sources. They manage community resources (water, food, shelter) fairly and effectively during a crisis.
WHAT SHOULD WE THINK AND FEEL?	<b>Internalizing psychosocial resilience and values for societal resilience, justice, and ethical responsibility:</b> responsibility, solidarity, hope, inclusivity, patience, and respect for all beings especially human beings.	They assess community safety together with individual safety. They participate in volunteer and mutual-aid activities. They display and maintain a calm and hopeful attitude during a crisis. They contribute to reducing disaster risks through environmentally friendly habits (water conservation, sensitivity to deforestation, etc.). They actively participate in post-traumatic recovery processes (psychosocial support, art, sports, play). By embracing the understanding of sumud, they preserve identity, dignity, and hope in the face of adversity. They advocate for equal opportunities in education and make the rights of vulnerable groups visible.



Adem Hatemoğlu  
President of the  
Earth Education  
Association

# AS A MODEL OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION UNDER FIRE: THE GAZA EXPERIENCE

Education in conflict zones ranks among the most complex humanitarian challenges of our time. The impact of war goes far beyond physical destruction. It creates heartbreaking conditions that trample human dignity and obstruct access to the fundamental right to learning. In such environments, continuous education becomes not merely an academic process, but an act of resistance for survival and hope.







“Gaza represents one of the most challenging educational settings in the world. Years of blockade and repeated wars have damaged hundreds of schools and displaced thousands of students and teachers. Despite this, the learning process did not stop.”

### Education as a Universal Human Right

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognized education as a fundamental right, access to learning has been regarded as a measure of a society's moral integrity. However, millions of children are deprived of this right due to armed conflicts, displacement, and insecurity. Therefore, protecting education in times of war is not only a local responsibility but also a moral obligation of the international community. For the ignorance that war breeds carries the potential to ignite future conflicts.

### Gaza: A Symbol of Educational Resilience

Gaza represents one of the most challenging educational environments in the world. Years of blockade and repeated conflicts have damaged hundreds of schools and displaced thousands of students and teachers. Nevertheless, the learning process continued. Teachers carried on their lessons amid ruins or in makeshift tents, while children did everything they could to keep up with their education. They displayed remarkable resilience against all odds, striving to carry their hopes into the future despite destruction. In Gaza, school became a symbol of resilience and identity— a place that restored to children a sense of stability and belonging amid chaos.





*The state of the United Nations (UNRWA) school in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza after an Israeli airstrike.*

## Local Innovations for Access to Learning

Despite limited resources, local institutions developed innovative strategies to keep education alive. Hybrid learning models were implemented. In a setting where face-to-face instruction was limited, remote learning was attempted whenever electricity was available. Volunteer educational organizations and teachers broadcast lessons via radio stations for students who lacked internet access. Civil initiatives created “mobile classrooms” in shelters, mosques, and community centers with the support of volunteers to fill learning gaps. The grassroots cooperation among schools, families, and communities proved crucial in preserving education as a shared value throughout the war.

## Technical and Humanitarian Challenges

In this process, Gaza’s education system faced two major obstacles: prolonged electricity cuts, weak internet connectivity, and device shortages on the one hand; and emotional trauma caused by loss and displacement on the other. Remarkably, these constraints fostered creativity rather than despair. Teachers prepared weekly learning cards. Some recorded their lessons on mobile phones, enabling neighborhood study groups to follow the lessons through these videos.

Thus, Gaza became a symbol of perseverance and determination in the realm of education, as in every other field. Under immense pressure, Gazan teachers implemented innovative ideas—an effort that can serve as a global example of sustaining education during crises.



Displaced Palestinian students during a lesson in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza.

**In Gaza, the school has become a symbol of resilience and identity, restoring a sense of stability and belonging to children amid the chaos.**

## Education as a Tool of Resilience

In Gaza, education has gone beyond its cognitive function and has become a form of psychological and social healing. The lived experience of Gazans has demonstrated to the world that a school is not merely a space confined by four walls, but also a sanctuary of hope that is not bound to a physical place. In this terrifying and chaotic environment, teachers supported children by integrating art and drama into their lessons, helping them express their fears and dreams. “Resilience education” programs assisted students in coping with trauma and rebuilding themselves emotionally. Thus, learning itself became an act of defiance against despair and a bridge toward a future that values knowledge rather than destruction.

## Towards an International Framework for Education in Conflict Settings

The Gaza experience offers universal lessons on sustaining education in crisis settings:

1. Emergency financing mechanisms must secure teachers’ salaries and learning materials.
2. Affordable digital platforms should effectively reach isolated communities.
3. Regional partnerships—particularly with countries experienced in humanitarian education such as Türkiye, Qatar, and Jordan—should be strengthened.
4. Integrating education into early recovery plans ensures that reconstruction begins with human capital. Appropriate measures must be taken in this regard.
5. Training educators to address trauma and emergency contexts is essential for continuity.





*Palestinian students during class.*

Gaza's story teaches us that education is not a luxury to be postponed until after the war; it is the foundation of survival, resilience, and recovery. Even when classrooms are reduced to rubble, the collective determination to learn reaffirms humanity's enduring belief in the power of knowledge.

Education under fire is more than a challenge; it emerges as a message of hope that says: As long as a child can read and dream, peace is possible. If you steal children's future and hope, you can never deliver the world from chaos.

Education in conflict zones stands among the most complex humanitarian challenges of our time. The impact of war goes far beyond physical destruction. It leads to heartbreaking conditions that trample human dignity and block access to the fundamental right to learning. In such environments, continuous education becomes not merely an academic process, but an act of resistance for survival and hope.

**While teachers continued their lessons among ruins or in makeshift tents, children did everything they could to avoid falling behind in their education. Amid the ruins, they demonstrated remarkable resilience against every hardship in order to carry their hopes into the future.**



**Dr. Mehmet Rakipoğlu**  
Mardin Artuklu  
University







# The Destruction of Education in Gaza: **“SCHOLASTICIDE”**

Derived from the Latin words *schola* (school) and *cide* (killing), the term *scholasticide* refers to the complete destruction of the educational life of a national or ethnic group. Israel's systematic attacks on the field of education in Palestine aim to suppress society by targeting Palestine's historically strong tradition of learning and enlightenment.



**Israel's attacks have turned Gaza's educational infrastructure into ruins.**

**The campuses and buildings of all twelve universities in Gaza have been struck by Israeli bombs and reduced to rubble.**

The genocidal war waged by Israel against the Gaza Strip after 7 October 2023 not only destroyed buildings but also targeted the educational memory and future of Palestinian society. Indeed, Israeli bombardments leveled schools, universities, and libraries, depriving tens of thousands of students of their right to education. Therefore, one dimension of Israel's multi-layered destruction is the educational genocide. This situation constitutes "scholasticide"—the systematic destruction of a people's (the Palestinians') educational life. The concept makes it clear that Israel's multi-layered assault in Gaza amounts to a war on education.

### **EDUCATION: THE LIFELINE OF RESISTANCE IN GAZA**

Education in Gaza is regarded not merely as a public service but as the lifeline of national identity and the spirit of resistance. Following the Nakba (the Great Catastrophe) of 1948, when Palestinians were displaced from their homeland, the very first thing they did in the refugee camps was to establish schools for their children. Over the years, education has become one of the most cherished treasures

of Palestinian society. Even today, Gaza is known for producing the highest-scoring students in the high school graduation exams each year, despite all the hardships it faces.

In Palestine, where power outages are frequent, children study under the dim light of gas lamps or the glow of mobile phone screens, continuing their resistance in the field of education despite all adversities. Indeed, this persistence and success in the field of education is a vivid manifestation of the Palestinian society's motto: "to exist through learning."

However, education in Gaza has never been easy. Owing to Israel's continuous and unlawful blockade that has persisted for 17 years, schools in Gaza have long operated far beyond their actual capacity. Materials required for constructing new school buildings were obstructed by Israeli restrictions; therefore, most schools were forced to operate in double shifts—morning and afternoon sessions. Even under these harsh conditions, with class sizes reaching 50–60 students and severe shortages of learning





**“According to United Nations data, more than 90% of Gaza’s 560 schools have been damaged or completely destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of children have witnessed their schools reduced to piles of rubble or converted into temporary shelters.”**

materials, Gaza’s passion for education did not fade. Teachers worked selflessly to prepare children for the future, and students continued to learn despite all obstacles. In short, by the autumn of 2023, Gaza’s education system was exhausted yet standing firm—until the first bombs of the war began to fall.

### **SYSTEMATIC ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES**

The Israeli bombardment that began on 7 October 2023 rapidly reduced Gaza’s educational infrastructure to rubble. The campuses and buildings of all 12 universities in Gaza were targeted and one by one destroyed under Israeli attacks. For example, the Islamic University of Gaza the largest and oldest higher education institution in the Strip—was completely demolished in the first week of the war following intense bombardment. The young Isra University, which was preparing to celebrate its 10th anniversary, was blown up with dynamite in January 2024 after being occupied by Israeli soldiers. Other universities that shared the same fate include institutions such as Al-Azhar, Al-Aqsa, and Al-Quds Open University; as a

result of the Israeli attacks, nearly 90,000 university students have been left unable to continue their education. Similarly, almost all schools in Gaza have been consumed by the fire of war.

More than 90% of the 560 schools in Gaza have been damaged or completely destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of children have witnessed their schools turn into piles of rubble or be converted into temporary shelters. Due to tAl-Tabeenive

destruction, approximately 620,000 students have been deprived of their education. Between October 2023 and August 2024 alone, the Israeli military bombed school buildings at least 21 times, killing hundreds of civilians. One of the most horrific examples of these attacks occurred in August 2024, when bombs were dropped on families taking shelter in the Al-Tabeen School in Gaza City.

A missile that struck the school during the dawn prayer claimed the lives of more than 100 people, including many women and children. Classrooms where students studied—and even took



shelter because of the war—have turned into death chambers as a result of Israeli attacks. Israel's targeting of educational institutions was neither accidental nor “collateral damage,” but rather part of a highly systematic strategy. Some schools were used as military bases or outposts by the Israeli army and were subsequently declared “legitimate targets” and destroyed.

#### **‘SCHOLASTICIDE’: DESTROYING A PEOPLE’S COLLECTIVE MEMORY**

Karma Nabulsi, a Palestinian scholar at the University of Oxford, coined the term scholasticide as early as 2009 while examining Israeli assaults on Gaza, to describe this kind of systematic destruction of education. Derived from the Latin schola (school) and cide (to kill), the term denotes the complete annihilation of the educational life of a national or ethnic group. According to Nabulsi, Israel's systematic assaults on the field of education in Palestine aim to subdue society by targeting the historically strong tradition of learning and intellectual enlightenment.

Indeed, this “educational genocide” is regarded as one dimension of the broader genocide campaign Israel has waged in Gaza. It is no coincidence that in a preliminary assessment issued in January 2024, the International Criminal Court emphasized that there were reasonable grounds to believe that Israel may have committed

the crime of genocide in Gaza. Genocide entails not only physical annihilation but also the erasure of a people's cultural and intellectual heritage. Destroying schools and universities, killing teachers and students, eliminating the infrastructure that makes education possible— all of these actions can be understood as efforts to extinguish the future of an entire people.

In fact, under international law, deliberately targeting students and educators and destroying cultural heritage are considered war crimes. The scale of Israel's educational destruction in Gaza paints a horrifying picture when expressed in numbers. According to data from the Palestinian Ministry of Education, during the first year of the war at least 4,200 students were killed and more than 7,000 were injured. More than two hundred teachers and academics were also killed in the bombardments, while hundreds more were left wounded or permanently disabled. These losses are not mere statistics; each one represents human treasures embodying years of effort, knowledge, and experience. A professor of history, a physicist, a poet, a classroom teacher... When Israeli missiles took these individuals from us, they also targeted the students they would have taught and the knowledge they would have produced. Thus, Israel is not only killing people; it is also extinguishing the knowledge within them and the science they generate. Every academic killed means burying decades of education and expertise



in the ground. The destruction of hundreds of teachers means countless children in society have lost their educational guides. Destruction on this scale aims to damage the collective memory of Palestinian society and to narrow the horizons of future generations.

### **A GENERATION FACING A BLEAK FUTURE AND THE VOICE OF HOPE**

Although a ceasefire has now been reached, in Gaza—where the school bell used to ring every morning only two years ago—hundreds of thousands of children and young people are being forced to spend their third academic year without school or are trying to continue their education with extremely limited means due to the massive destruction caused by the genocide. Therefore, Israel's genocide in Gaza means the deprivation of Palestinians' right to education, the seizure and destruction of their future through education. Despite the educational annihilation carried out by Israel with the full support of the West, the fact that Palestinians continue to preserve their desire for learning shows that resistance against occupation and ethnic cleansing still endures. This picture can be seen as evidence that education in Gaza has not been entirely extinguished and that Palestinian children and youth persist in their passion for learning and literacy with remarkable resilience. Nevertheless, Israel's deliberate destruction of Gaza's educational infrastructure carries the grave risk of darkening the future of an entire generation. Unless the tens of thousands of children who cannot attend school and who constantly grapple with trauma and loss receive adequate support, it is certain that they will fall behind academically and suffer deep psychosocial wounds. School desks in Gaza are currently empty, laboratories lie in ruins, and libraries have turned to ashes. To reverse this grim picture, the mobilization of the international community is essential. The educational genocide must be ended, attacks on civilians and schools must cease, and subsequently, the process of rebuilding and rehabilitating Gaza's education system must begin. In this sense, making Gaza once again a land of schools and universities cannot be achieved solely by reconstructing buildings. Training new educators to replace those who were lost in the war, providing psychological support to traumatized children, and restoring Gaza's academic ties with the world are also crucial pillars of this process.







**Dr. Anna Kolodka**  
Economy and  
Education Specialist





# EDUCATION AS A FRONT OF RESISTANCE IN UKRAINE

Today in Ukraine, education is not merely a matter of numbers. Teachers, students, and parents who choose to cling to knowledge have become the silent heroes of a kind of civil resistance.

*A school building in Donbas reduced to rubble*





“ The anticipation of explosions, the worry for relatives on the frontline, exhaustion, and lack of sleep reduce the cognitive performance of both children and adults. ”

*A kindergarten in Ukraine.  
Windows covered with sandbags.*



The war in Ukraine, while causing instability across all areas of public life, has shown one of its deepest impacts on the education system. The education sector—still struggling to recover from the shock of the COVID-19 global pandemic—now faces the challenge of surviving amid armed conflict and a constantly threatened atmosphere. Educational institutions have found themselves responsible for ensuring the safety, continuity, and accessibility of learning under the restrictions and security risks brought about by war. Since the full-scale invasion began in 2022, 3,793 educational institutions have been affected by shelling and bombardment, 365 of which have been completely destroyed. These figures are not just statistics—they represent thousands of children who have lost their familiar learning environments, been forced to abandon their schools, or have lost teachers and friends. The war has deepened problems regarding both the physical safety and the accessibility of education. Many children cannot regularly participate in schooling; meanwhile, teachers continue to give lessons under the threat of shelling and bombardment in areas where clashes persist or may erupt at any moment. Despite all this, Ukraine's education system continues to function—enduring the fatigue, anxiety, and scarcity of resources caused by the war.

### **An Underground Reality of Education**

Today, the availability of shelters has become a decisive criterion for the continuation of education. In regions with high levels of danger, the construction of new underground schools is progressing rapidly. To date, 33 underground schools have been completed in areas close to the front line, with 156 more planned to be operational by the end of 2025, and an additional 47 schools expected to open in 2026. These efforts represent remarkable solidarity and determination to ensure that children can access a safe learning environment even under wartime conditions. Currently, three primary modes of education are implemented in Ukraine:

- Face-to-face (offline) education,

- Distance learning,
- Hybrid education

However, even in regions where face-to-face learning continues, air-raid alarms shorten instructional time; lessons are frequently interrupted as students must move to shelters. Power outages and internet connectivity problems constitute another factor that threatens the continuity of learning.

### **Psychological and Cognitive Effects**

The constant sense of threat brought about by the war leaves lasting psychological impacts on both students and teachers. Waiting for the sound of explosions, anxiety for relatives on the front line, exhaustion, and sleep deprivation reduce the cognitive performance of both children and adults.

**Education is seen not only as the transmission of knowledge, but also as a part of coping with trauma and the process of social recovery.**

Attention, concentration, the ability to learn new information, and memory retention are negatively affected; children become fatigued more quickly, and learning losses continue to grow. Addressing these learning gaps without overwhelming students is extremely difficult. Moreover, access to the internet and technical equipment is limited in war-affected regions. Ukrainian children living in safer areas or those who have relocated abroad, on the other hand, enjoy far more favorable learning conditions. This situation creates a regional and socioeconomic learning gap among students and lays the groundwork for deepening social inequalities in the long term.

### **Community Solidarity and Reconstruction Efforts**

Not only state institutions, but also civil society organizations, international bodies, and local initiatives are making significant efforts to revive education. A wide network of actors – from psychologists working one-on-one with children to aid organizations providing technical support to schools – has mobilized to ensure the continuity of education. Access to learning processes for children with special educational needs, in particular, has become a priority issue. In frontline areas, the need for rehabilitation specialists, defectologists, and psycho-emotional support professionals is steadily increasing. Education is regarded not only as the transmission of knowledge, but also as a component of coping with trauma and a broader process of social healing.

### **Education as a Form of Resistance**

Ukraine, education is far more than a collection of numbers. Teachers, students, and parents who choose to cling to knowledge have become the quiet heroes of a kind of civil resistance. Teachers giving lessons in shelters despite weak internet connections; children who dream of sitting next to their classmates while attending online classes; parents who refuse to lose faith in the future as they continue searching for a safe school...All are different expressions of the same sentence: Education must go on.

In Ukraine today, every lesson is an act of resistance. Every school that opens its doors is a symbol of hope; every child who continues to learn is living proof that a future is being built. Education means not only the transfer of knowledge but also the preservation of national identity, the strengthening of civic consciousness, and the maintenance of belief in the future.

Even under the shadow of war, Ukraine's education system stands on the strongest front of resilience: learning itself has become a struggle for existence.

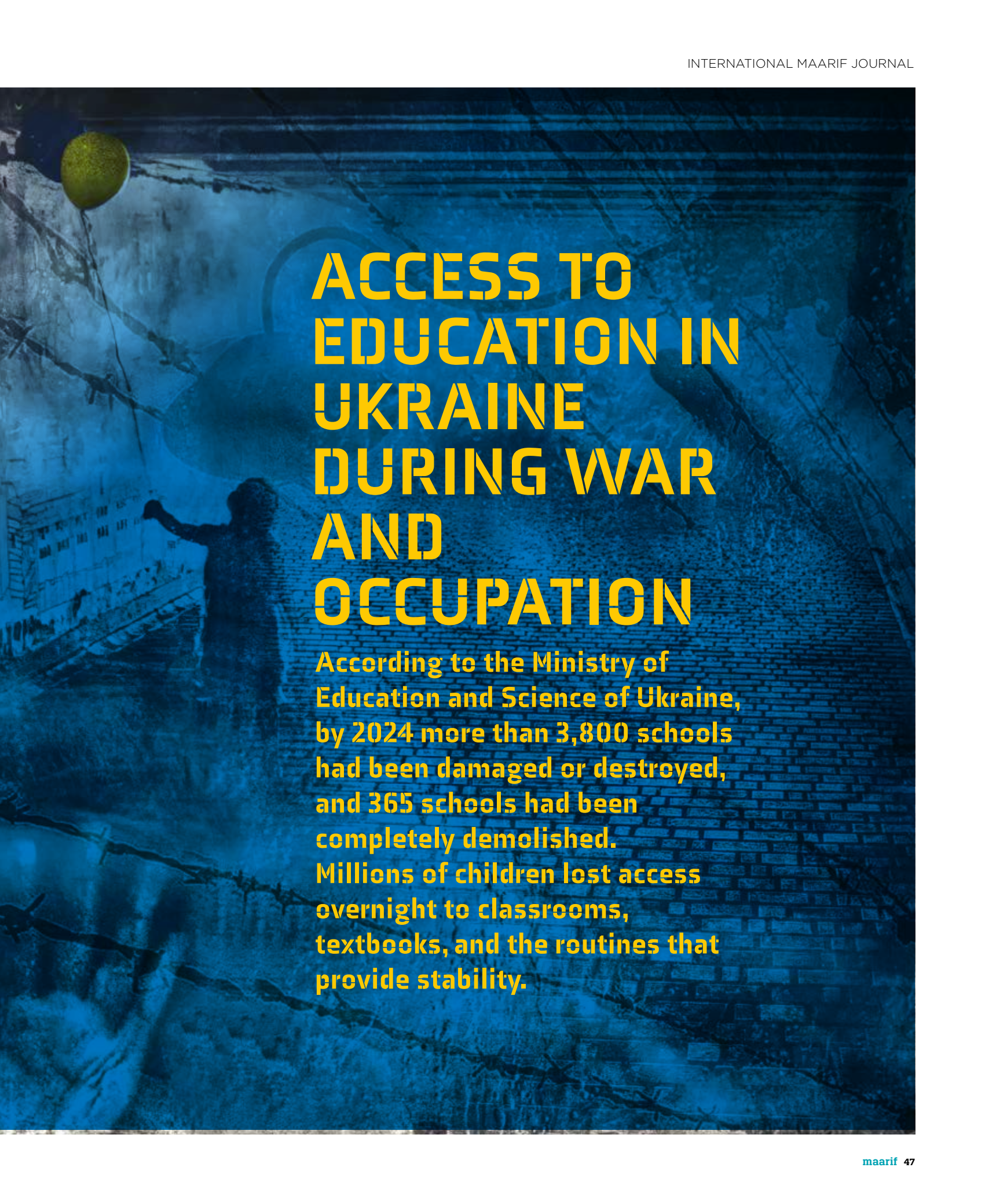


**Yanina Shved  
Doğrul**

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# ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN UKRAINE DURING WAR AND OCCUPATION

According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, by 2024 more than 3,800 schools had been damaged or destroyed, and 365 schools had been completely demolished. Millions of children lost access overnight to classrooms, textbooks, and the routines that provide stability.





“Supporting mental health is just as important as rebuilding classrooms or providing textbooks.”

Education is far more than a pathway to knowledge; it is a lifeline for social stability, personal development, and the future of communities. Yet across the world, millions of children remain out of school due to war, conflict, natural disasters, or forced displacement. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (1,315 days) clearly demonstrated how sudden crises can disrupt education.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (1,315 days) clearly demonstrated how sudden crises can disrupt education. Schools were destroyed, families were forced to flee, and millions of children faced interrupted learning alongside intense psychological pressure.

Although Ukraine is currently confronted with numerous challenges, its experience offers important lessons for other countries

as well. From digital classrooms to community-based initiatives, innovative approaches show that education can adapt, continue, and even thrive in the face of adversity. These lessons hold great significance beyond Ukraine's borders and offer valuable insights to countries striving to maintain resilience and ensure continuity of learning during crises.

### **The Impact of Armed Conflict on Access to Education**

War and the destruction of infrastructure are two major factors affecting Ukraine's education systems. Armed conflict directly damages schools and related facilities, striking at the very heart of education.

For example, according to the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, more than 3,800 schools had been damaged or destroyed by 2024, and 365 schools were completely demolished. Millions of children lost overnight access to classrooms, textbooks, and the sense of stability provided by daily routines. The situation in the Donbas region has presented a tragic picture since April 2014. Even today, there is no reliable information on how the Russian occupation continues to affect education in the region. This issue is not unique to Ukraine. Conflict zones around the world—including Palestine, Syria, Yemen, and many African countries—experience similar disruptions. Schools often become unsafe or are converted into shelters, depriving children of a secure learning environment.

Migration and internal displacement emerge as another major factor



“According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, by 2024, more than 3,800 schools had been damaged or destroyed, and 365 had been completely demolished.”

undermining education. Crises often force families to flee across borders or relocate within the country. For example, in Ukraine, approximately 345,000 children are continuing their education abroad, while countless others have been displaced within the country. Ensuring that displaced children can continue their education requires more than simply enrolling them in new schools. It also means integrating them into new systems while preserving their connection to their national curriculum and cultural identity. Similar challenges are experienced in occupied or underdeveloped countries. Displaced children often face long-term interruptions in their education.

The psychological and social consequences of war must also be carefully considered. The impact of crises extends far beyond physical destruction. Children and teachers often experience trauma, anxiety, and depression. For instance, studies conducted in Ukraine—such as UNICEF’s 2024 Situation Analysis of Children in Ukraine—indicate that more than 60% of parents report stress symptoms in their children, including insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and social withdrawal. While remote learning is essential for ensuring

continuity of education, it can also increase isolation and decrease motivation. This naturally undermines learning outcomes. Therefore, supporting mental health is just as important as rebuilding classrooms or providing textbooks.

### Strategies to Ensure the Continuity of Education

Remote and blended learning have become crucial for maintaining education during crises. Digital platforms and various learning models enable schools to continue instruction when classrooms are unsafe or when transportation becomes difficult. For example, Ukraine rapidly developed online classrooms, digital libraries, and interactive assignments to reach learners. According to data published by the Ministry



*The unusable sports hall of a school in the village of Bohorodychne, Donetsk region.*



*A school in Barmoshovo destroyed by the Russian occupation*

**“Building a resilient education system today is critically important so that, when the war ends, this system can evolve into a more sustainable model capable of meeting future needs.”**

of Education and Science of Ukraine, more than 400,000 children inside the country and 350,000 Ukrainian children abroad continue their education through these platforms. Technology-focused approaches—such as online modules and mobile learning applications—have proven vital for keeping children engaged when traditional schooling is impossible.

Mobile schools and community learning centers offer flexible solutions specifically designed for conflict or disaster-affected areas. These projects bring teachers and learning materials directly to temporary shelters, community centers, and even outdoor spaces, ensuring that children can continue their education despite disruptions. For example, in Ukraine, underground classrooms were established in Kharkiv in cooperation with UNHCR and local partners, allowing students to study safely despite frequent air-raid alarms. Similarly, the Olena Zelenska Foundation equipped shelters in ten schools and kindergartens in the Chernihiv region, enabling more than

13,000 children to continue their education under safer conditions. UNICEF’s Spilno Child Spots provide educational activities, psychosocial support, and learning kits in temporary shelters and metro stations across Ukraine.

International support and partnerships are also essential for emergency education in Ukraine. Organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and Save the Children provide funding, digital resources, teacher training, and emotional support. For instance, more than 51 million USD has been mobilized through grants and in-kind assistance to support remote learning, ensure the continuity of education, and provide psychosocial support for children affected by the war. International programs in Ukraine help refugee children integrate into the country’s education systems while also addressing their mental-health needs. Ensuring the continuation of learning under such harsh conditions requires governments, NGOs, and local communities to work together.



Crises can trigger rapid changes in education; however, these disruptions may negatively affect children's future prospects. In Ukraine, initiatives such as the Junior Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (JASU) play a key role in maintaining student engagement during these challenging times. Through dedicated centers and online platforms, JASU offers special STEM activities, coding programs, and robotics workshops. These programs not only help students stay connected to their lessons but also develop critical-thinking and problem solving skills. As of 2023, JASU has engaged more than 250,000 students across Ukraine in research activities spanning 64 scientific fields, including physics, chemistry, biology, and computer science. This broad reach highlights the importance of such initiatives in cultivating the next generation of scientists and innovators. Furthermore, JASU's cooperation with international organizations—such as its status as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre for Science Education—strengthens its capacity to provide high-quality science education and promotes educational diplomacy for Ukraine worldwide. These efforts demonstrate how, with innovative approaches and international partnerships, education can continue—and even improve—during emergencies. However, the most effective way to safeguard education is to resolve conflicts and establish lasting peace.

### **Redesigning Resilience Education in Ukraine**

Despite these adaptation strategies, significant challenges persist. Issues such as unequal access to technology, shortages of trained teachers, psychological trauma, and limited resources for rebuilding schools pose serious threats to long-term recovery. To overcome these obstacles, Ukraine must implement rapid changes while also planning for the long term. This means updating infrastructure, ensuring that teachers are prepared to handle emergency conditions, and developing school curricula that include and support all types of

learners. Building a resilient education system today is crucial so that, once the war ends, this system can transform into a more sustainable model capable of meeting future needs. Such transformation depends on the cooperation of governments, international organizations, and civil society. It is essential that all children have equal access to resources, digital tools, and mental health support. Education systems can remain strong in the future and continue to function effectively only if everyone contributes.

Ukraine's experience shows that when communities, governments, and international partners work together, education can endure—and even improve—despite adversity. Ukraine should continue to work closely with like-minded countries and educational authorities. In this context, the Türkiye Maarif Foundation stands out as one of the key potential partners for transforming education both during and after the war.

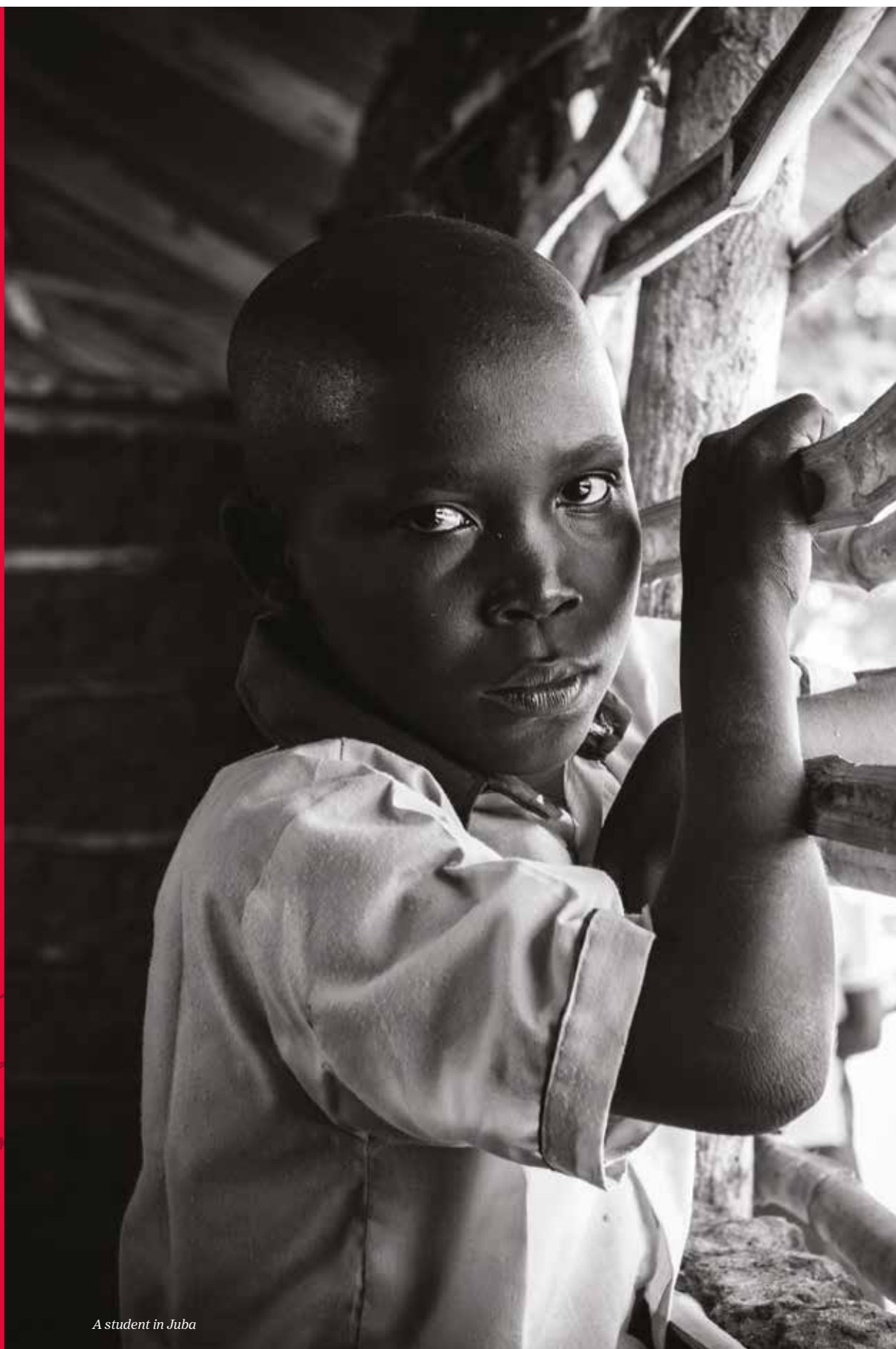
Distance learning, mobile schools, international support, and new teaching methods are critically important for ensuring the continuity of education and maintaining social stability. In crisis environments, education enables people to continue learning, helps them feel stronger and safer, supports social cohesion, and contributes to the development of future leaders. All children—regardless of their background—must have equal access to education. It is vital to invest in education systems that are adaptable, inclusive, and technologically equipped. Such investment will help safeguard the right to learn even under difficult circumstances. What is happening in Ukraine is influencing the entire world. If we work together, stay creative, and remain resilient, we can ensure that education survives crises—and provide children with the knowledge, skills, and hope they need to build a better future.

**UNICEF's 2024  
*Situation Analysis of  
Children in Ukraine*  
report reveals that more  
than 60% of parents  
reported their children  
showing signs of stress,  
such as insomnia,  
difficulty concentrating,  
and social withdrawal**



**Dr. Mazahir Hassan  
Abdel Ghaffar**

Former Director of  
Special Education  
for Sudanese  
Middle Schools



*A student in Juba*





# EDUCATION IN SUDAN UNDER THE SHADOW OF WAR AND INTERNAL CONFLICTS

The First Civil War (1955–1972) between the North and the South, followed by the Second Civil War (1983–2005), led to the destruction of schools, the displacement of millions of students, and the disruption of education across much of the country.

Education in Sudan has passed through various historical phases shaped by the country's political and social transformations. Before the Ottoman administration in 1821, education in Sudan was carried out through traditional institutions known as khalwas, established to teach children reading and writing, the Qur'an, and the fundamentals of religion. These schools, supervised by sheikhs and scholars, were widespread across many regions of Sudan. With the onset of Ottoman rule (1821–1885), a limited number of formal schools began to be established to train personnel for administrative mechanisms and the army. Sudan's first modern school was founded in Khartoum in 1835.

During the Mahdist administration established in 1885, educational activities focused predominantly on Qur'an-based and Sunnah-based religious instruction. When the British, together with Egyptian forces, brought this administration to an end in 1898, Anglo-Egyptian rule began in Sudan. This period, which lasted until 1956, is regarded as the time when the modern education system in Sudan was truly established. During these years, primary, intermediate, and secondary schools were founded, though the system remained limited and mainly served the needs of the colonial administration. Among the higher education institutions founded during this period was the Kitchener School of Medicine (1924) in Khartoum, which later became the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Khartoum. It was followed by Gordon Memorial College (1902), which subsequently formed the core of the University of Khartoum. With Sudan's independence in 1956, public education expanded significantly, and new schools were opened in many cities across the country. As importance was placed on girls' education, the establishment of universities and higher institutes, the adoption of a national curriculum, and the provision of equal educational opportunities for boys and girls all contributed to increasing participation in education. Alongside the University of Khartoum, the establishment of new universities and institutes enabled higher education to reach a wider segment of the population.

### Women's Participation in Education in Sudan

Although the first official girls' school opened in Omdurman in 1907, girls' education remained limited and largely under the control of colonial authorities and missionaries. However, the local population did not accept this limitation; particularly in the 1920s, schools exclusively for girls began to be established in Omdurman and Khartoum through entirely national efforts. The first private girls' schools established by educated nationalists, merchants, and open-minded families in Omdurman were significant steps for women's educational participation. Among the notable contributors was Sheikh Babiker Badri, recognized as the true pioneer of private girls' education. In 1907, Babiker Badri founded a small school for girls in his home in Rufa'a, undertaking a pioneering mission for women's education. He was followed by the first state girls' school, Omdurman Primary School, founded by Mrs. Skinner, the wife of missionary Skinner.

When we examine the stages experienced by Sudan's education system—which has undergone numerous changes since the “Popular Education Revolution” of 1990—we observe the following: initially, primary, intermediate, and secondary education each lasted four years. Later, primary education was extended to six years, while intermediate and secondary education were set at three years each. After some time, basic education was extended to eight years and secondary education limited to three. At present, Sudan offers six years of primary education and three years each of intermediate and secondary education.

### Collapsed Infrastructure Negatively Affects Education

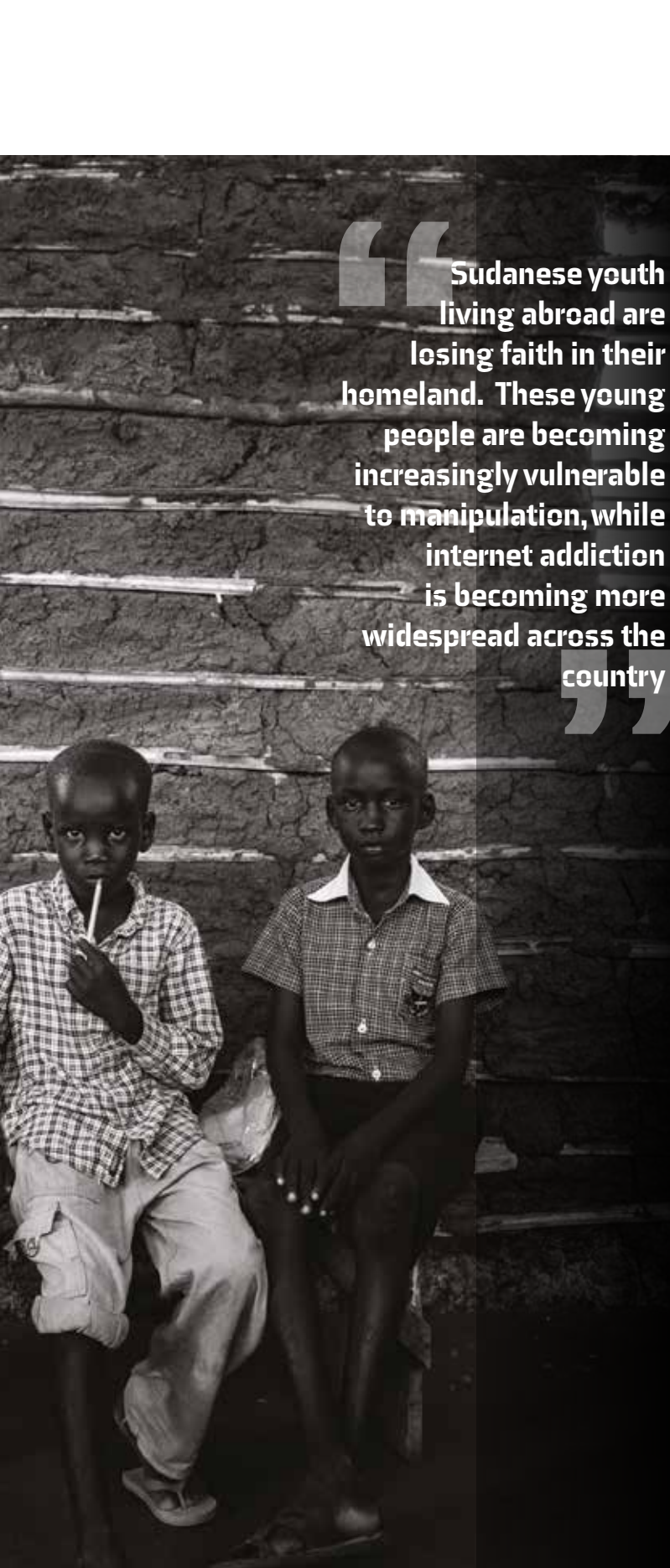
The First Civil War (1955–1972) and the Second Civil War (1983–2005) between the North and the South resulted in the destruction of schools, the displacement of millions of students, and the interruption of education across large parts of the country. The displacement of many students or their involvement in conflicts negatively affected access to schooling. The environment of war and instability also created a severe shortage of teachers. The subsequent Darfur War (2003), along with the conflicts in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile regions, led to thousands of schools being burned down or converted into shelters for displaced people. Due to security concerns, many families became reluctant to send their children to school.

Conflict continues in Sudan to this day. In Khartoum and other states, the near-total destruction of educational infrastructure and the closure of universities and schools in conflict-affected areas make access to formal education impossible for many students. The belief Sudanese youth living abroad have in their homeland is diminishing. These young people are becoming increasingly vulnerable to manipulation, while internet addiction is becoming more widespread across the country. Sudan is heading toward a major catastrophe due to insufficient funding allocated to education compared with sectors such as health and security.



*A classroom in Juba*





**“Sudanese youth living abroad are losing faith in their homeland. These young people are becoming increasingly vulnerable to manipulation, while internet addiction is becoming more widespread across the country”**

Wars, which have deprived millions of children of schooling and destroyed essential infrastructure, remain the greatest obstacle to education. This, in turn, contributes to the spread of poverty and infectious diseases.

### **Keeping Hope Alive**

As the Sudanese Ministry of Education, we are fully aware of the conditions currently facing the capital. We are witnessing major upheavals that affect the labor market, economic development, and overall social conditions. Although shortened, the previous academic year was recognized as a full academic year, and those who had the opportunity to continue their education abroad were able to obtain their certificates, which will benefit their future studies.

Sudanese people have been dispersed across the world due to the current situation in the country. Events in neighboring countries—such as coups, earthquakes, floods, and environmental and natural disasters—also negatively affect Sudan. Nevertheless, the Sudanese people are doing their best to cope with disasters, adapt to circumstances, and mend the broken hearts of those affected. This situation compels us to manage crises and find solutions that ease the burden on citizens, including placing new students in schools located in safe states.

The integration of teachers into the education system according to the increasing number of students in safe areas also emerges as an important issue requiring attention.

As teachers and parents, we must confront this difficult situation and approach matters realistically. We are responsible for producing solutions to prevent our children from drowning in a sea of despair, wasting away in the streets, or being driven toward irreversible paths, and to safeguard their future. Indeed, in Sudan, education has never come to a complete halt, even in the most challenging periods of war; on the contrary, alternative solutions and initiatives have always emerged to sustain learning. The Ministry of Education has taken an important step by opening offices in the Red Sea and Gezira states. It also organized sixth-grade completion examinations, granting students their diplomas.



*Physical education class at a local primary school. El Arr village, Fourth Nile Cataract region*

**“We are responsible for producing solutions to prevent our children from drowning in a sea of despair, wasting away in the streets, or being led down irreversible paths and to safeguard their future.”**

Educational institutions in Sudan did everything within their power until the hardships reached a point that could no longer be ignored or dismissed as isolated incidents. They made tremendous efforts to remain unaffected by the violence spreading across the country. Thus, these initiatives became a beacon of hope for sustaining education amid the wars and conflicts in Sudan. Educational activities carried out in refugee camps for displaced people and the establishment of schools in these areas were among the effective solutions. Within this framework, temporary educational tents were set up in camps for internally displaced persons and refugees in Darfur and the former South Sudan, ensuring the continuation of education. Additional support was received from UNICEF, UNHCR, and local organizations for the provision of books and stationery supplies.

In these areas, schools and teachers provided education to displaced children

through simple yet effective methods. Subsequently, in villages where schools were not operational, communities and local initiatives stepped in. Local residents established small Qur'an classes and centers to teach reading, writing, Qur'an recitation, and religious sciences. Volunteer youth initiatives also emerged in neighborhoods, major cities, and safer towns to provide education for displaced children. Before 2023 in Khartoum, and more recently in Wad Madani and Port Sudan, displaced students were placed in public schools and received supplementary lessons to help them catch up with their peers.

#### **Efforts to Sustain Education**

Some universities and schools in Khartoum and major states attempted e-learning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 conflict, but poor internet connectivity and power outages prevented sufficient effectiveness. Solutions included ensuring flexibility in examinations and





*A refugee camp in Darfur*

curricula, postponing national exams (basic education certificate, secondary school diploma) several times during conflicts, streamlining curricula to accommodate shortened instructional periods, and allowing students in conflict zones to sit for exams in safer states. Many effective methods were implemented—such as parallel education, distance learning, and transportation-based education (moving students to safer areas)—and these efforts achieved notable success.

In Darfur, some local associations established mobile schools to reach children in conflict zones and eastern states. Some schools conducted educational activities via radio broadcasts for children living in remote areas and for displaced children in camps. In certain regions, temporary schools were established to provide psychological and academic support. Despite all the challenges brought by the armed conflict that has continued since April 2023, some states have been able

to administer primary school completion exams. These efforts—carried out with the support of local initiatives—have fostered hope that education can continue even under difficult conditions. According to data from the Sudanese Ministry of Education, the results of the “2023 primary school completion exams” in certain Sudanese states are as follows:

A total of 79,010 students participated, including 43,266 boys and 35,744 girls. Of those who sat for the exam, 73,326 candidates (40,427 boys and 32,899 girls) passed. This corresponds to an overall success rate of 94.9%.

These figures should be interpreted as evidence that, despite ongoing conflicts, the “2023 primary school completion exams” were successfully conducted in several Sudanese states, reflecting the extraordinary effort devoted to ensuring educational continuity under difficult circumstances.

**Sudanese people have dispersed across the world due to the country's current situation. Events in neighboring countries including coups, earthquakes, floods, and environmental and natural disasters also negatively affect Sudan.**



**Cyriaque  
NDAYIKENGURUKIYE**  
French Language  
Teacher, Türkiye Maarif  
Vakfı Burundi Schools





*“Education is the most powerful weapon which  
you can use to change the world.”*

*Mandela*



Challenges and Solutions for  
Access to Education in Crisis Zones:

# THE CASE OF BURUNDI

In Burundi, due to widespread poverty, education still remains a privilege that thousands of children struggle to access. Although the wars in Burundi have come to an end, another enemy continues to prevail an enemy that silently erodes the future of children and casts a shadow over the country: poverty.

In the hills of Burundi, where birdsong never ceases, children set out for school with their patched bags, yet their dreams of education fade a little more each day. Although primary education has been declared free in this small East African nation, widespread poverty continues to make schooling an unattainable luxury for thousands of children. The wars in Burundi may have ceased, but the struggle against another adversary persists—poverty, which quietly consumes children's futures and hangs over the country like a dark cloud.

### A Suffocating Reality

According to 2025 data from the Financial Times, 63% of Burundi's population lives on less than USD 2.15 per day. This situation forces families to choose between education and basic needs. When faced with a choice between food, shelter, healthcare, and education, schooling rarely finds itself at the top of the priority list.

In recent years, some positive developments—such as the gradual introduction of free primary education—have led to more than 354,000 children enrolling in school between 2018 and 2023, and an increase of 70,000 in preschool registrations (RPA, 2025). Although participation in education has increased to an extent, this quantitative improvement has not translated into quality due to inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and teacher burnout.

A 2025 study revealed that Burundi's schools lack 797,000 desks and 16,000 classrooms. While UNESCO recommends a maximum of 40 students per classroom for quality education, class sizes in Burundi can reach up to 150. The situation is even more severe in rural areas.

### The Invisible Faces of Poverty in Schools

Although student registration is theoretically free, indirect expenses such as stationery, clothing, transportation, and meals impose a heavy financial burden on many families. Many schools lack clean water, functioning toilets, and electricity. Particularly during the rainy season, teaching in classrooms with collapsing roofs becomes an act of courage.

Teacher shortages further exacerbate the crisis. According to SOS Médias Burundi, 1,120 teachers resigned during the 2024–2025 school year due to low salaries, delayed payments, and poor working conditions. The president of the Burundi National Federation of Education and Training Unions (FENASSEB) announced that the country needs more than 10,000 additional teachers.

Malnutrition directly affects learning. However, some initiatives have yielded positive results. School canteen projects supported by the WFP and China reached 46,200 children in 2024–2025, particularly in provinces such as Bubanza, Cibitoke, Bujumbura, Muyinga, Kirundo, Makamba, and Ngozi, leading to a notable decrease in dropout rates. The school canteen budget rose to USD 7.5 million in 2023. However, of the country's 2 million children, only 670,000 were able to benefit from this system. Most of the total cost is covered through external funding, leaving the system at the mercy of donors and vulnerable to financial instability.

### The Most Vulnerable Are Being Left Behind

Poverty disproportionately affects rural children, especially girls. Household chores, early marriage, and pregnancy frequently interrupt their education. The phenomenon of young mothers who have dropped out of school has reached alarming levels.

Efforts by organizations such as ABUBEF to help these young women return to school remain insufficient given the scale of the problem. Stigmatization, lack of psychological support, and the absence of a clear legal framework constitute major barriers preventing their reintegration into education. The dropout rate in basic education for the 2023–2024 academic year is estimated at 26.5%. This means that approximately 200,000 children left school within a single year (RPA, 2025).

According to the Global Education Monitoring Report, 11% of dropouts occur at the primary level, while 15% occur in lower secondary education. This figure is more than just a statistic. This means lives that have been put on hold, and at







*A child carrying water in Mabanda*

**Teacher shortages further exacerbate the crisis. According to SOS Médias Burundi, 1,120 teachers resigned during the 2024–2025 period due to low salaries, delayed payments, and poor working conditions.**

times destroyed, simply because adequate opportunities are not available.

### **The Social Cost of Disruption in Education**

The problems arising from the lack of quality education extend far beyond the walls of a school. As society weakens, schools—which are vital for socialization, cultivating civic consciousness, and transmitting values—also lose their effectiveness. Without education, young people become more vulnerable to violence, political manipulation, informal groups, or child labor.

The country, lacking confidence in its economic future, also suffers structurally. Without an educated human capital, Burundi cannot reach the desired level of productivity, which in turn hinders development. It is a known fact that remedial programs cost far more than consistent structural investments. In Burundi, the share of education in the national budget dropped from 20.6% to 14.8% within a single year (UNICEF, 2023). Cuts of this scale will inevitably produce irreversible consequences. The reduction in the education budget affects teachers most severely. Qualified teachers and the country's brightest minds, lacking adequate support, seek opportunities abroad or turn to the private sector. This situation diminishes the quality of education, which is a public service.

### **A Ray of Hope: Local and International Initiatives**

Despite all these challenges, local and international initiatives continue to work to reverse the situation. For example, Through the Twige Neza project, supported by the French Development Agency,

**“Educating a child in Burundi still requires conviction and determination. Yet if education is truly “the most powerful weapon to change the world,” then combating poverty is only possible by sharpening this weapon.”**

some schools are being provided with laboratories and computer equipment. UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, continues efforts to gradually integrate refugee and returnee children into the education system. Through this collaboration, more than 87,500 refugees—half of whom are children—have been granted access to education in Burundi. Across many municipalities, awareness campaigns against school dropout are carried out in cooperation with school management committees, and community initiatives such as support for vulnerable families are emerging.

The Türkiye Maarif Foundation International School in Burundi has contributed to the country's qualified human capital since 2018 by offering education from preschool to high school in line with international standards. The school not only promotes stronger cooperation between Burundi and Türkiye but also inspires other foreign investments in quality education. These initiatives set important examples for strengthening

inclusivity, improving infrastructure, and enhancing teacher quality.

### **Recommendations for Breaking the Vicious Cycle**

If I were to offer a set of short- and long-term recommendations to overcome the education crisis in Burundi, I would suggest the following:

- The education budget should be increased to improve teacher salaries, infrastructure, and learning materials.
- New school buildings should be constructed, and infrastructure such as clean water, toilets, and electricity must be ensured.
- Disadvantaged students should receive scholarships, meal support, and transportation assistance.
- Young mothers should be reintegrated into the education system through social, legal, and psychological support.
- The teaching profession should be strengthened through continuous training, incentives, and merit-based advancement.
- Early childhood education and early learning opportunities should be expanded.
- Education data should be monitored regularly, and resources should be directed toward priority areas.
- Education should be recognized and valued as a national priority.

Educating a child in Burundi still requires conviction and determination. Yet if education truly is “the weapon that changes the world,” then combating poverty is only possible by using this weapon correctly. As Kofi Annan stated at UNESCO in 1999:



*“Education is a human right with immense transformative power. Freedom, democracy, and sustainable development are built on the foundations of education.”*

Burundi must listen to its children and ensure that school becomes not the first

place to be abandoned, but the place where hope is born. Otherwise, another generation will be left waving at the development train from behind.



*When families must choose between needs such as nutrition, shelter, healthcare, and education, schooling often fails to secure a place among the top priorities.*

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## MULTILINGUALISM AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: **A LANGUAGE-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE ON NORDIC EDUCATION POLICIES**

Today, multiculturalism and multilingualism are seen not only as demographic realities but also as normative frameworks. This necessitates the development of policies and practices that ensure equity and fairness in education for students with diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

**Although Nordic countries have not fully achieved linguistic rights and inclusive education for all students, they are regarded as strong examples of efforts toward this ideal.**

*Her name was not called during morning roll. The teacher did not even look up from the list. Yet she was there, in her usual seat. Notebook open, pencil ready... Being unseen was quieter than being mispronounced. She spent the day copying the words on the board; the letters belonged, she did not. On her way home, she noticed the words on the school wall: "Education for all." She stopped for a moment, then kept walking. Because some sentences were true not for everyone, but only in some people's language.*

The right to education is a fundamental right that enables every child's full and active participation in social life. In Europe, the principle of equal access to education is guaranteed both by national constitutions and supranational frameworks such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

But is mere access to education sufficient to ensure equality?

Although migration and immigration are not new concepts in Europe, the multicultural landscape shaped by historical movements, postcolonial mobility, recent refugee inflows, and the effects of globalization creates both unique challenges and significant opportunities for education systems. Today, it is—and should be—viewed as a normative

framework as well.

This necessitates the development of policies and practices that ensure equity and fairness in education for students with diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

As a linguist and a researcher of multilingualism, I inevitably view education through the lens of language; therefore, I approach this article from a predominantly language-centered perspective. Throughout this article, I will explain and illustrate immigrant children's access to education through the dimension of language.

So what kinds of policies do the Nordic countries—often cited in the literature as examples of educational equity—implement for newly arrived students?

The Nordic education model is based on the vision that schools should be inclusive, holistic, and non-segregating so that they provide equal opportunities for all members of society (Telhaug et al., 2006).

For example, in Sweden, the Education Act (Chapter 3, §12a) defines the status of a "newly arrived student," and students are assessed and supported under this status for four years within the education system. The right to education, however, is independent of legal status; in Sweden, all children are entitled to full educational rights.





A classroom of immigrant students in Norway

Unlike in many European countries, undocumented children are also entitled to full education if they enroll in school before the age of 18.

In Sweden, students who are newly arrived in the country and do not know Swedish well enough to follow the lessons are placed in preparatory classes called “introduktion.” In these classes, they receive partial instruction in a separate group formed outside their regular class, and this process lasts up to two years. In the preparatory class, students receive intensive Swedish instruction; additionally, core subjects such as English and mathematics are included in the program. When the student is assessed to have sufficient Swedish proficiency, the preparatory class is discontinued and the student is gradually integrated into regular classroom lessons.

There is also guidance support called “studiehandledning,”

provided to students in their own mother tongues. These support teachers assist students in their native languages during school hours and collaborate with other teachers to help students better understand the subject matter. Especially during transition periods, these support teachers may take on the role of interpreters or supportive assistants within the classroom.

Similar practices exist in Norway and Denmark as well. Newly arrived students whose mother tongue is not Danish are legally considered “bilingual students.” Those who can participate in regular education take Danish as a second language—an additional course—and are defined as “students in need

**“Today, multiculturalism and multilingualism are not only demographic realities but also should be seen as normative frameworks.”**

*\*In Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and the Netherlands, undocumented children have full access to education. In countries such as France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Greece, Malta, and Cyprus; as well as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the access of undocumented children to education is not legally guaranteed.*



**In Sweden and Finland, the education system specifically encourages students to preserve and develop their home languages (mother tongues).**

of supplementary instruction.” Those who cannot participate in regular education are placed in a “basic preparatory education” program lasting up to two years and are referred to as “basic students.”

In addition, mother-tongue support is provided not only to newly arrived students but also to children from families who speak a different language at home. In Sweden and Finland, the education system especially encourages students to preserve and develop their home languages. This course is open to all students who request iTørslev & Børsch to the school curriculum, and provides an official course grade that students can use in later years of schooling. Thus, students receive this support within the education system rather than through uncontrolled or informal channels. In this way, the understanding is reinforced that their mother tongues and identities are not ignored but rather have a rightful place and value in education and in public life.

Furthermore, in Sweden Tørslev & Børschial courses are offered to teach “Swedish” and “Finnish” as second

languages to students whose mother tongues differ. The curricula of these courses differ from those designed for native speakers and focus specifically on supporting second-language development. Although these courses are beneficial for second-generation and later-generation immigrant students as well, leaving the decision of who should take these courses to school administrators has been heavily criticized for sometimes categorizing and stereotyping students.

Since 2002, public schools in Denmark have no obligation to offer mother-tongue instruction to students who speak a language other than Danish at home. Mother-tongue instruction is mandatory only for immigrant children coming from EU and EEA countries, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands; for students from other countries, the decision is left to the municipalities’ discretion. This situation can be seen as an example of how European education systems, too, may exhibit regressive practices regarding the language rights of immigrant students (Tørslev & Børsch, 2017).



COUNTRY	SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) APPROACHES	MOTHER TONGUE (L1) APPROACHES	NEWLY ARRIVED STUDENTS
Denmark	Danish as an L2 course; mandatory national tests are administered for all students.	L1 is offered only to immigrant students from EU and EEA countries; no testing is conducted.	L2 Danish and other subjects are taught outside regular classrooms.
Finland	The L2 course may be Finnish or Swedish; it provides equal access to higher education.	L1 may be taken as an elective when certain conditions are met.	Preparatory instruction is provided for one year.
Sweden	L2 Swedish is equivalent to L1 Swedish; both provide equal access to higher education.	Municipalities are obliged to offer L1 courses when certain conditions are met.	Students are integrated into regular classes; schools may open preparatory classes for up to two years; L1-based study support is also provided.
Iceland	Schools decide how L2 instruction is organized; L2 proficiency levels are defined in the National Curriculum Guide.	L1 instruction is offered by voluntary NGOs; students with Swedish, Norwegian, or Polish as L1 may receive L1 courses within the school system.	Students are integrated into regular classrooms; transition to the standard curriculum occurs within 2–4 years.
Norway	Basic Norwegian is provided for up to two years; L2 rights continue until proficiency is achieved.	L1 instruction is available when certain conditions are met	Students generally attend preparatory classes for up to two years.

As can be understood from the table above, although Nordic countries have not fully provided linguistic rights and inclusive education for all students, they are considered strong examples of efforts toward realizing this ideal. These countries differ from many parts of Europe and the world where migrant mother tongues are not taught at all, migrant identities and backgrounds are disregarded, and only limited support is offered for second-language learning. In conclusion, Nordic countries share common values they aim to uphold. However, the differences mentioned above also indicate that these countries are gradually diverging from one another. In the future, these differences may deepen further depending on social and political developments within each country.

It must be remembered that when examining the academic performance of students with migrant backgrounds, international large-scale studies such as PISA reveal that these students face systematic disadvantages in European societies. Since 2015, PISA results have shown a striking performance gap between migrant and native students.

**When the academic performance of students with migrant backgrounds is examined, international large-scale assessments such as PISA reveal that these students face a systematic disadvantage within European societies.**

Although second-generation immigrant students perform better than first-generation students, their performance in these assessments still does not reach the level of native students. These results are also valid for the Nordic countries—often cited as exemplary—and are indeed concerning. These findings indicate that current efforts to ensure equity in education are insufficient for migrant students and that more comprehensive and targeted policies are needed to eliminate systemic inequalities.

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# THE WOMAN WHO BUILT THE FUTURE

## WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION IN MALI

“The years following independence marked a period of rebirth for Malian women. This time, the struggle was waged not in the streets, but in classrooms, university halls, law faculties, and artistic stages. Education was no longer merely a tool for acquiring knowledge; it had become a form of resistance. The pioneering women of this new era wrote a story of freedom woven with words, laws, and culture.”



*Post-independence Mali witnessed not only the birth of a new state but also the emergence of a new female identity. One of the brightest names of this period was undoubtedly Aoua Kéita.*

Sometimes, you encounter a nation's story not in history books, but in a mother braiding her daughter's hair at dawn. Mali's story is much the same: On these ancient lands, women have carried the conscience of a nation with their unseen hands, leaving quiet yet lasting marks. For many years, girls grew up in the shadow of their homes, within destinies stitched together with sewing needles; for them, going to school was not a right but a dream. Yet, like every child capable of dreaming, these girls eventually found the courage to step beyond the threshold—beginning a long journey. That step was not merely a personal walk; it became a path leading toward the country's future.

In the early mornings of independence, the sight of a little girl walking along dusty roads

**In the early mornings of independence, the sight of a little girl walking along dusty roads with a notebook in her hand was, in fact, the herald of a profound transformation.**

with a notebook in her hand was, in fact, the herald of a profound transformation. The woman would no longer belong solely to the home; she would become part of the school, the hospital, the parliament, and even history itself. This article traces that journey: the long, patient, and often silent path from a little girl to a woman who takes on responsibility. From Aoua Kéita to Adame Ba Konaré, from Soyatta Maïga to Aminata Dramane Traoré, many women fill the pages of this story. What unites them is how their words, their pens, and their resistance touched the conscience of a nation.

#### **PRE-INDEPENDENCE: THE LIMITS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION WITHIN THE FAMILY**

In the final years of the colonial era, girls' education in Mali was almost a privilege. School doors opened wide for boys, while girls grew up in the shadow of the home, shaped by the traditional roles placed in their mothers' hands. Education in their world was often synonymous with traditional womanhood: cooking, hosting guests, remaining silent...Yet within this order, an awakening was beginning to ferment. Those courageous enough to challenge societal norms decided to send their daughters to school. This was not a revolution confined to a single household—it resonated across an entire nation.

Every girl who attended school in this period became the protagonist of a story of courage. The notebooks they carried

were not only filled with lessons—they were manifestos written for the future. Each girl who learned to read carried the potential to transform another woman's destiny. Thus, Mali's struggle for independence was not only political; it also contained women's quest for intellectual freedom. Even before the chains of colonialism were fully broken, women had already begun to erode their rust with the power of words.

#### **POST-INDEPENDENCE: AOUA KÉITA AND THE BIRTH OF WOMEN'S CONSCIOUSNESS**

Post-independence Mali witnessed the birth not only of a new state but also of a new female identity. One of the brightest figures of this period was undoubtedly Aoua Kéita. She was a midwife, a writer, and the voice of her people. In an era when women were absent from photographs and erased from official documents, Aoua Kéita carved her place in history through her pen and her actions. Her autobiography, *Femme d'Afrique*, written by Mali's first female member of parliament, was not merely the story of one woman—it was the chronicle of Africa's awakening.

Kéita chose to travel from village to village to become the voice of women. With every mother she accompanied through childbirth, she also witnessed the rebirth of her nation. Her struggle was not confined to the medical field—it was a struggle for human dignity. "The freedom of women is as valuable as the freedom of the nation," she said. These words gifted the women of independent Mali a new consciousness. Equality that began within the home needed to transform into a public demand for rights. Yet Aoua Kéita's writings, speeches, and union activities influenced thousands of women. The woman was no longer seen merely as a "helper," but as a productive, instructive, and transformative force. Under



her leadership, the women's movement in Mali took on an organized form, and this movement soon inspired neighboring countries as well.

### THE MODERN ERA: AWA DEMBÉLÉ, SOYATTA MAÏGA AND THE SOCIAL RESILIENCE OF WOMEN

The years following independence marked a period of rebirth for Malian women. This time, the struggle was not fought in the streets but in classrooms, university podiums, legal forums, and artistic stages. Education was no longer merely a tool for acquiring knowledge; it had become a form of resistance. The pioneering women of this new era wrote a story of freedom woven with words, laws, and culture. In this narrative, women were no longer merely the invisible laborers of society but active agents in the construction of the nation. It was in this period that another woman illuminated the quiet pages of history: Adame Ba Konaré. As a historian, writer, and the spouse of Mali's first President, she made significant contributions to institutionalizing women's memory. The Musée de la Femme (Musokunda), which she founded in the heart of Bamako, transformed women's stories into walls, objects, and archival documents.

Her work *Dictionnaire des femmes célèbres du Mali* (1993) restored the names, faces, and voices of hundreds of forgotten women. History was no longer the stage of men alone but of women as well. One of the figures who wrote the earliest lines of these stages was Mme Macalou Awa Dembélé. Her educational journey, which began at the École Normale Supérieure in Bamako, led her to Voronezh University and later into the imaginative world of children. She was not merely a teacher but a storyteller who played with words. Her stories, tales, and poems resonated in the hearts of children who imagined Mali's future. Teaching a nation's



*As the wife of Mali's first President, **Adame Ba Konaré** made a significant contribution to institutionalizing women's historical memory*



*The pen and podium of **Me Soyatta Maïga** became the voice of silent women*

children to dream in their own language was perhaps the greatest social reform. For this reason, Awa Dembélé earned the title "Grandmother of Mali's Children's City." For every story she wrote offered children more than a fairy tale—it helped build an identity. Another powerful figure was Me Soyatta Maïga. She studied law at the National School of Administration in Bamako and made it her mission to uphold justice not

only in courtrooms but in every corner of society. She served in distant lands such as Uganda and Ethiopia, yet her heart always beat with the women of her homeland. When she returned, she gave the struggle for Malian women's rights an international voice. Her pen and her podium became the voice of the silent women. And of course, Mme Dembélé Fatimata Doumbia, known as "Fatou" among the people... With the international law education she received in Moscow, she represented the feminine face of justice upon returning to her country. By establishing the Clinique Juridique under the Association of Women Lawyers, she turned it into a refuge for broken families, silenced women, and mothers living in fear. Under her leadership, hundreds of women escaped the cycle of divorce, violence, and poverty. Fatou's struggle was a women's fight that brought law and compassion side by side. In this period, women became not only "participants" but "foundational" figures.

Women's voices were now resonating in universities, the military, administrative ranks, and cultural institutions. Each of them worked in different spheres but toward the same goal: elevating the dignity of Malian women.

### **EDUCATED WOMEN: THE QUIET DRIVING FORCE OF DEVELOPMENT**

A country's development is often measured through numbers: growth rates, export charts, budget balances... But in Mali's story, there is a deeper indicator: the education of women. For every girl who attends school is essentially a signature placed on the nation's future. Every woman who learns to read and write removes another link from the chain of poverty. In the early 1960s, when Mali had just gained independence, only about 7% of girls attended primary school. In villages, girls were often married off at an early age, and "education" was viewed as a luxury. But slowly, a new awareness began to rise: Education was not only for boys; it was an issue for the entire society. From the 1990s onward, educational reforms—particularly prioritizing girls' schooling—became a state commitment.

In the 2000s, the picture began to change. In villages, the sounds of schools blended with the laughter of girls. Families began to understand that a girl who studied was no longer a source of shame, but of pride. Through the joint efforts of the government, local associations, and international organizations, the National Unit for Girls' Schooling (CNSF) was established. This initiative became the most visible institutional face of women's education in Mali. By 2010, the gross primary school enrollment rate for girls had reached 75%. This was more than a statistic. It was the result of thousands of stories and thousands of struggles. From Bamako to Kayes, from Mopti to Sikasso, women were now remembered not only as mothers, but also as teachers, doctors, engineers, and artists. However, this rise was severely shaken by

**During the crisis years, thousands of schools shut down and hundreds of thousands of children were cut off from education. But women did not surrender to this void in silence. They reorganized education in homes, mosque courtyards, and refugee camps.**

the security crisis that began in 2012. The shadow of weapons fell upon the books. Hundreds of schools closed in the north and center of the country, and thousands of teachers were forced to flee. Girls were the most affected. Families stopped sending their daughters to school due to security concerns. In some regions, marriage began to be perceived as a form of "protection."

An entire generation grew up without ever holding a pencil. But the story did not end there. Women resisted once again. Mothers who sought refuge in camps with books in their hands did not abandon their children's education. In some villages, volunteer teachers turned tents into classrooms. Some mothers left their homes to keep their daughters safe, yet still allowed them to study. Education became more than a right; it became a form of resistance. Today, women's education in Mali is not only an economic matter; it is also a marker of national resilience. An educated woman is regarded as a natural advocate of peace and social stability. Every mother who sends her daughter to school is, in fact, investing in her country. For this reason, Mali's future is shaped not only by oil, cotton, or gold, but

by the knowledge of its women. They are the silent heroines of history. Each one is a book, a hope, and proof of a nation's rebirth.

### **WOMEN OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE: VOICES IN GOVERNANCE AND DEFENSE**

In the rebirth of a nation, the sword matters as much as the pen, and the office as much as the classroom. Malian women have been present not only in front of classroom blackboards but also in uniform, at decision-making tables, and in the highest ranks of the state. They are the women of a generation that merged knowledge with courage.

### **WOMEN IN UNIFORM: THE BALANCE OF COMPASSION AND RESOLVE**

Imagine a woman doctor standing guard in military hospitals, wearing a white coat in a time when gunfire echoed across the land. She is General Coulibaly Kany Diabaté. The first female general of the Malian army, and also a physician and writer. Her story proves that feminine compassion and military discipline can coexist. Hands that save lives on the operating table also carry the conscience of a society. Colonel Aïssata Badiallo Touré is another emblem of humanitarian struggle on the front lines. This courageous woman, now serving as Mali's Minister of Health and Humanitarian Action, remained loyal to the same principle even after leaving her white coat for a ministerial seat: "To serve is to protect." Her rise taught young girls not only to read, but to lead. The gradual rise of women in public life is not merely symbolic; it signifies the reestablishment of social equilibrium. Marie Claire Dembélé Kanté, as the first female governor of the Sikasso region, demonstrated the strength of women's leadership in local governance. Similarly, Mariam Coulibaly earned public trust through her leadership in the Dioïla region. They proved that women need not remain "in the background" but can stand at the center of decision-making. The success of these women is the result not only of individual effort but of the collective labor





*Marie Claire Dembélé Kanté, as the first woman governor of the Sikasso Region, demonstrated the strength of women's leadership in local governance.*



*Colonel Aïssata Badiallo Touré is a symbol of humanitarian struggle on the front lines.*

of an entire generation. For they are the inheritors of a long path that stretches from the classroom blackboard to the decision-making table. Each one is a living example of how vital a role educated women can play in governing a country. The portrait of Malian women no longer fits into a single role. She is a mother, a teacher, a leader; a witness to war and an architect of peace. When the determination of Coulibaly, the compassion of Badiallo Touré, the leadership of Dembélé Kanté, and the dedication of Coulibaly come together, the female face of Mali becomes not merely “supportive” but “foundational.” These women did not merely break their own glass ceilings; they became part of the political intellect reshaping the nation's future. And each of them whispers silently to today's girls:

“Your place is wherever you choose to serve.”

### **THE WOMAN'S FACE OF RESISTANCE: EDUCATION, HOPE AND RECONSTRUCTION**

War destroys not only buildings but also a nation's memory; yet in Mali, beneath the rubble, one thing always remains intact: the faith of women. After 2012, red zones multiplied on the country's map, yet at the

heart of those zones, a white light of hope continued to burn. That light was a woman teacher holding a piece of chalk. It was a young girl in the corner of a camp, learning to write by placing her notebook on a few stones. It was a mother saying, “The school may be closed, but we will keep learning.”

During the crisis years, thousands of schools shut down and hundreds of thousands of children were cut off from education. But women did not surrender to this void in silence. They reorganized education in homes, mosque courtyards, and refugee camps. In some villages, volunteer mothers established “Community Learning Centers.” Books were scarce in these centers, but determination was endless. Every girl who learned to read was an act of defiance thrown into the shadow of terror.

Educated mothers guided not only their own children but all the children in the village toward school. In some places, women said, “Send my daughter to school, I will work in the field in your place,” creating the purest form of solidarity. It was a heroism that numbers could never capture—women's silent yet unshakable resistance. Miraculous stories also emerged among teachers. Many returned to duty despite threats; some continued teaching outdoors when

school buildings were burned. One teacher said, “My classroom may have no walls, but as long as my students are still here, this country is standing.” This sentence was like the summary of a nation's rebirth.

Today in Mali, the traces of war have still not been erased. But the women of this country, just as in the past, continue to be the architects of the future. For them, education is no longer merely a right; it is a duty, a resistance, a way of life. Every girl who picks up her pen silently continues a revolution. Every mother who carries her daughter's school bag is rebuilding a nation. For Mali's reconstruction will be possible not with weapons but with books, not with force but with knowledge, not with fear but with the hope of women.

And when history is written one day, this era may be remembered as: “The century women began anew.”

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*Bekir BİLGİLİ*

# In the Shadow of the Tian Shan Mountains, the Homeland of Proud Nomads

# KYRGYZSTAN

*The nomadic life preserved for thousands of years on highlands accessible only by horseback makes Kyrgyz lands one of the most authentic routes in the world.*

*When you closely observe this culture shaped by majestic mountains stretching as far as the eye can see, you cannot help but say this: In essence, Kyrgyzstan is made of mountains and water.*

I do not know if there is any other geography on earth where mountains shape human life to such an extent. The Tien Shan, Pamir, and Ala-Too ranges—extensions of the great Tian Shan Mountains—cover more than 80% of the entire country. This allows the Kyrgyz people to develop a unique, nature-integrated culture and lifestyle unlike anything you will find elsewhere. In this harsh yet magnificent landscape, the Kyrgyz—who have lived a nomadic or semi-nomadic life for centuries continue to preserve a rich culture and

tradition in harmony with the land, despite the many hardships they have faced throughout history.

The nomadic life preserved unchanged for millennia on highlands reachable only by horseback makes Kyrgyz lands one of the world's most authentic destinations. When you observe this culture shaped by boundless, majestic mountains up close, you cannot help but say: In essence, Kyrgyzstan is made of mountains and water.



### THE FIRST MODERN CITY OF CENTRAL ASIA: BISHKEK

The first stop of my journey in Kyrgyzstan is the capital city, Bishkek. Bishkek holds the distinction of being the first city in all of Central Asia built in a Western style. At first glance, you immediately notice that the city is a perfect example of Russian planning skills. With its squares, green spaces, wide boulevards, and monuments, Bishkek is one of the most modern cities in Central Asia. Buildings of equal height line the ruler-straight boulevards of the city, never overwhelming the eye.

Except for a few cities like Osh and Uzgen near the Uzbek border along the Silk Road, most of the cities in present-day Kyrgyzstan do not date back very far. This is partly due to the fact that most of Kyrgyzstan's geography has long been the homeland of nomadic peoples. Cities like Balasagun, once the capital of the Karakhanids and highly significant in Turkic history, are now merely archaeological sites. Due to invasions and the gradual decline of the Silk Road's importance, many once-thriving settlements in the Chüy Valley were eventually abandoned. Until the Soviet era, there was no significant urban development in Kyrgyzstan. Xuanzang, who traveled to India as a Chinese envoy between 629–645 AD and was briefly held captive by the Göktürks, mentions in his travelogue

the communities in the Chüy Valley engaged in agriculture and trade.

The Kyrgyz warrior Pishpek, who heroically resisted Kazakh Khan Ablai in 1766, was buried in this area after his death. In 1825, when the area was under the Kokand Khanate, a fortress named Pishpek was built in his honor. After the Russians captured and destroyed this fortress, they established garrisons and began settling in the area. The city was built in 1878 according to a plan that still forms the basis of its urban layout today. During the post-World War II construction boom, German prisoners and Crimean Tatars exiled under Stalin were also employed. Some of these prisoners and exiles returned home after the war, while others built new lives here. Today, around 3,000 Germans and a considerable Tatar population still live in the city. In this grid-planned city, waters from the Tian Shan Mountains were directed into street channels, which were then lined with oak and poplar trees. As a result, Bishkek is now considered the greenest city in the entire Turkestan region—one of the main reasons Kyrgyz people take great pride in their capital. In 1926, the city's name was changed to “Frunze” in honor of Mikhail Frunze, a Bishkek-born Soviet general who came to Ankara during the Turkish War of Independence to coordinate Soviet aid. Among the Russian generals



Kurmancan Datka, also known as the “Queen of the South,” is regarded as a hero who saved her people from annihilation during the Russian invasion. She is honored alongside her husband, Alimbek Datka, and her legacy is commemorated with monuments throughout every corner

standing just behind Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü, and Fevzi Çakmak at the Istanbul Taksim Monument are Semyon Aralov and Mihail Frunze. The tragic irony, however, is that Frunze—who organized Soviet aid in Ankara—was also one of the main figures responsible for the devastation in Turkestan. The city continued to be known as Frunze until 1991, after which it regained the name Bishkek following Kyrgyzstan's independence.

### THE BLEEDING WOUND OF KYRGYZ MEMORY: ATA BEYT

The most meaningful place to begin a tour of Bishkek is Ata Beyit, which overlooks the city from above. This memorial cemetery holds immense significance for the Kyrgyz people, and with its deeply moving story, it occupies an unshakable place in the



nation's collective consciousness. In 1937, on the grounds of opposing the regime, 137 intellectuals were executed at this location known as Chon-Tash, where a brick kiln once stood, and their bodies were thrown together into a mass grave. Their deaths remained a secret for many years. For 56 long years, the families of the executed waited, not knowing whether their loved ones were alive or dead. Among those who waited was Chinghiz Aitmatov, who had last seen his father, Törekuł Aitmatov, at the age of nine. The only witness to this tragic

event, the kiln guard Hydyr Aliyev, could not tell anyone what he had seen. Near his death, he entrusted the secret to his daughter living near Lake Issyk-Kul, asking her to inform the authorities if circumstances ever changed. Finally, after Kyrgyzstan gained independence, Hydyr Aliyev's daughter, Babuyra Akadiraliev, believed in 1993 that the time had come and informed the Kyrgyz government of what had happened, leading to excavations at the site. Fifty-six years later, when Chinghiz Aitmatov recovered his father Törekuł Aitmatov's remains from Chon-Tash, he embraced the bones and cried, "Father, I have been searching for you for fifty years... where were you?" Chinghiz Aitmatov dedicated his novel *Mother Earth* to his father with these words: "Father, I could not build you a grave; I do not even know where you are buried. I dedicate this work to you, my father Törekuł Aitmatov." Ata-Beyit means "the father's grave." Today, Chinghiz Aitmatov and his father Törekuł Aitmatov rest atop a hill overlooking Bishkek, alongside other martyred Kyrgyz intellectuals at the Ata-Beyit Memorial Cemetery.

#### ALA TOO SQUARE

Located in the heart of Bishkek, Ala Too (Ala Mountain) Square was built during the Soviet era on the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917; it is an

impressive square surrounded by government buildings, wide parks, and monuments. . The Lenin statue that once stood at the center of the square was moved to a park behind the History Museum after independence, and the statue of Manas, the hero of the Kyrgyz epic, was placed here instead. The Freedom Monument, symbolizing Kyrgyzstan's independence process and the people's struggle for liberty, was also inaugurated in this square in 2011. In Kyrgyzstan, monuments and statues are still greatly valued, a habit inherited from the Soviet era. The square and its surroundings are adorned with striking buildings.

What was once called Lenin Square during the Soviet period is now surrounded by cultural centers, theaters, grand government buildings, and lush parks that shape Bishkek's political, cultural, and artistic life. Dozens of important buildings—including the Frunze Museum displaying Soviet-era documents and artifacts, the Kyrgyzstan State History Museum, and the Parliament building—are located around this square. This square is the gathering place for celebrations, demonstrations, and public events in the city. The square also holds a special place in daily life; throughout the year, various festivals and events are held, and local markets are set up.

*The Manas Monument and the National History Museum at Ala Too Square*



Ata-Beyit means "the father's grave." Today, Chinghiz Aitmatov and his father Törekuł Aitmatov rest atop a hill overlooking Bishkek, at the Ata-Beyt Memorial Complex, together with the other martyred Kyrgyz intellectuals.

## COUNTRIES AND CULTURES

### THE KYRGYZSTAN HISTORY MUSEUM

Closed for 5.5 years due to renovations that began in 2016, the museum was reopened to visitors in 2021. Renovation and landscaping were undertaken by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), and the museum houses invaluable artifacts that shed light not only on Kyrgyz history but also on the early periods of Turkic history. At the top of the staircase in the entrance hall, a magnificent replica of an inscription in the Orkhon (Göktürk) script greets visitors, as if reminding them of the shared past of all Turkic peoples. The museum's sections, organized by historical periods, can be visited with ease and without monotony. In this respect, the museum stands among the finest examples of modern museology.

### ALA-ARCHA NATIONAL PARK

One may visit many countries to see their cities, but in my opinion, people travel to Kyrgyzstan not for its cities but for its unspoiled natural beauty. In this regard, Ala-Archa National Park is one of the closest natural wonders to Bishkek. The second highest peak of the Tien Shan Mountains—stretching toward Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Chinese border—lies within this protected area, just 40 km from Bishkek. With its glacial lakes, spruce forests, and steep slopes rising toward the sky, the park offers breathtaking natural scenery as well as opportunities to experience the Kyrgyz nomadic lifestyle firsthand.

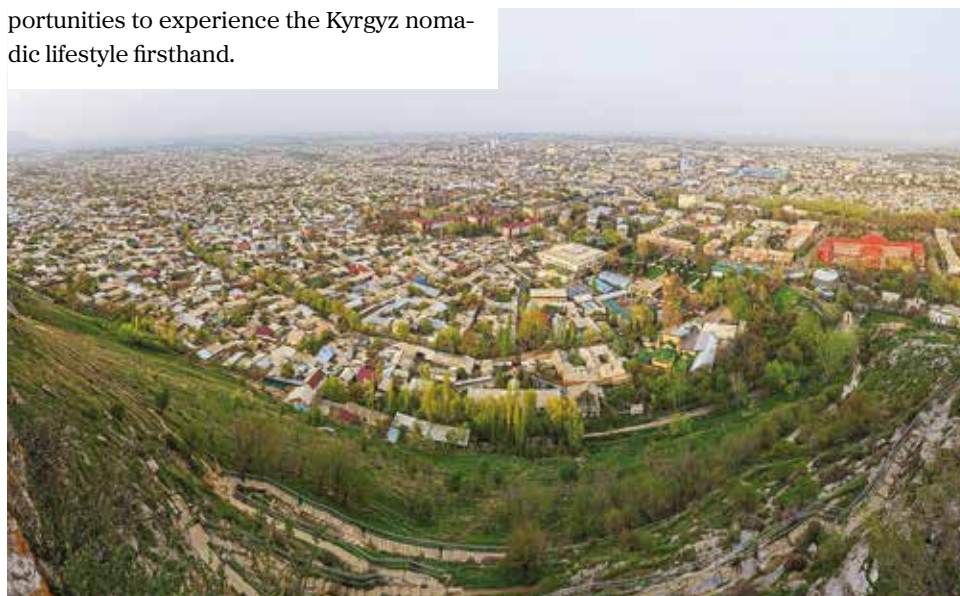


### MARKETS

Markets are among the first places that visitors to Bishkek traditionally stop by. In these markets, one can find everything from local products to electronics at reasonable prices. Osh Bazaar and Dordoy Bazaar are the most famous of these shopping hubs. It is claimed that Dordoy Bazaar is the largest public market in all of continental Asia. Covering an area of roughly 100 hectares, Dordoy Bazaar hosts nearly 40,000 businesses operating in various sectors.



Ala-Archa National Park



Oş Şehrinin Süleyman Dağı'ndan görünümü

### THE CITY BROUGHT TO LIFE BY LEGENDS: OSH

Osh, the foremost trade center of the Fergana Valley and Kyrgyzstan's second-largest city, remains significant today with its cosmopolitan character. Divided by the Ak-Bura River, Osh serves as a center of economy, culture, arts, and education in Kyrgyzstan. Osh, one of the most important stops along the Silk Road with a history dating back 3,000 years, also stands out with the legends that ascribe sacredness to the city. Because of these legends, the city is regarded as sacred by both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. The most prominent symbol of Osh is Mount Suleiman, visible from every corner of the city. According to legend, when Prophet Solomon visited Osh, he spent the



night here in continuous prayer, hence the mountain was named “Suleiman Mountain.” At a vantage point overlooking the city stands an archaeological museum carved into the mountainside. The mosque located at the foot of the mountain reflects the architectural characteristics of Central Asia. As you descend from Mount Suleiman and turn left, you reach the Rabat Abdullah Khan Mosque, built in the 16th century. This important mosque of the city also receives a large number of visitors. The city does not have a wealth of historical monuments, and there are very few tall buildings. Single-storey, zinc-roofed houses reminiscent of workers’ dwellings form the general texture of the city.

Osh is a peaceful and comfortable city with its parks and well-lit streets. However, urban development projects have accelerated in the city. For this reason, the dust rising into the air can be bothersome.

**Kyrgyzstan is a country that captivates not with its cities but with its nature. Here, nature draws you in with its purest form. Nomadic life in this land of mountains has fostered a respectful harmony between people and nature.**



*With Kyrgyz children in front of the Mausoleum of Imam Serahsi*

## THE GATE OF THE FERGANA VALLEY: ÖZGÖN

The Fergana Valley is a region that contains the historical cities which best reflect the Turkic character across all of Central Asia. Extending from the Fergana Mountains in the east, across the landscape shaped by the Syr Darya River, it covers an area of approximately 800,000 km<sup>2</sup>, encompassing the basin where Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are located. Özgön, which served as an early capital of the Karakhanids, is one of the most important of these cities. Kashgarlı Mahmud describes the city of Özgön as follows in his *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*: “These cities were built by the Turks, who themselves gave them their names...”

Among the Oghuz and those who follow the Oghuz, the word means ‘village,’ whereas for most Turks it means ‘city.’ Based on this, the town of ‘Fergana’ was given the name ‘Özkend,’ meaning ‘our own city.’”

The most important historical site in the city is the complex containing the Karakhanid Tower and its mausoleum. Built of red bricks and adorned with geometric decorations in various styles, the tower has managed to stand for a thousand years despite numerous earthquakes. It is believed that the tower was originally 44 meters high, but its upper section collapsed during earthquakes. The surviving part of the tower stands 27.5 meters tall. You can climb to the top via a narrow staircase and gaze out over the city of Özgön toward the Kara Darya River. Within the complex lies the Özgön mausoleum, one of the most impressive architectural structures in all of Kyrgyzstan. Constructed of red bricks similar to the tower, the mausoleum reflects the characteristic features of Central Asian architecture. Entering through the intricately carved doors that showcase masterful craftsmanship, the play of light inside the tomb is mesmerizing. Another important site to visit in Özgön is the Serahsi Mosque and Mausoleum. Imam Serahsi, known as Shams al-A'imma (“Sun of the Imams”), is regarded as one of the most important scholars of the Hanafi school. Imam Serahsi,



*In the Karakhanid Complex, the mausoleum—constructed with red bricks similar to the tower—reflects the characteristic features of Central Asian architecture.*

who raised students even in prisons and pits, proving that knowledge can be pursued under the harshest conditions, is known for dictating his 30-volume work, *al-Mabsut*, to his students from the pit in which he was imprisoned. Following the visit of Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez, President of Religious Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Turkish Diyanet Foundation, to the grave of Imam Serahsî after a symposium in 2003, the decision was made to build a mausoleum and a mosque here, and the mausoleum was opened to visitors on 8 November 2012. The mosque and mausoleum, built in a style blending Central Asian and Ottoman architecture, also draw attention with the tiles adorning their exterior. An imam has also been appointed to Serahsî Mosque by the Turkish Diyanet Foundation. Furkan Hoca, who lives here with his family, welcomes us in his residence located in the mosque courtyard. As we drink our coffee, we receive information from Furkan Hoca about the mausoleum and the mosque.

The majority of Özgön’s population consists of Uzbeks. As far as I can observe, Uzbeks are more devoted to their religion compared to other Kyrgyz groups. When the noon call to prayer is recited, the mosque fills up immediately. I believe their long-established culture and a civilizational heritage that has influenced the entire world have made Uzbeks more resistant to assimilation.



*A view of Lake Issyk-Kul from Ruh Ordo Park.*

### THE PLACE WHERE THE TURKS EMERGED ONTO THE STAGE OF HISTORY: ISSYK-KUL

This deep-blue lake surrounded by the Tien Shan Mountains is the world's second-largest mountain lake after Lake Titicaca in South America. Even in early October, countless legends about the lake—mesmerizing amidst snow-covered peaks—increase its air of mystery.

Around the lake lie many archaeological sites—such as Barsgan, Atbashy, Chumgal, and Tokuz-Tarav—that shed light on the lives of early Turks. The Issyk burial mound, where the famous “Golden Man” was discovered during the 1969 excavations, as well as the Karakol kurgans dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE, are located in this region. This area also contains the highest concentration of balbals (stone statues) in the Tien Shan Mountains. Most balbals depict a curved sword suspended from the belt with two straps, a traditional Turkic headdress, and long drooping mustaches.

Issyk-Kul and its surroundings are regarded by Islamic sources and some Turkic epics as the earliest homeland of the Turks.

For example, according to the Oghuznamas, Yafes first settled along the Volga and Ural rivers, while his son Turk lived around Issyk-Kul. Issyk-Kul holds a significant place in the Kyrgyz epic Karahan's Son Alman-Bet and appears as the principal settlement area in the Manas epic. Archaeological excavations, however, indicate that the Turks first lived in the Abakan–Tuva–Minusinsk steppes north of the Altai Mountains and southwest of the Sayan Mountains (2500–1700 BCE). Some researchers argue that Issyk-Kul is considered the earliest Turkic homeland because it served as a meeting point for Eastern and Western Turks. Today, Issyk-Kul and its surroundings are Kyrgyzstan's most visited tourist region. Despite the short summer season, the lake receives a flood of visitors. The mountains around the lake offer excellent opportunities for outdoor sports and mountaineering.

Russian rule began in the Issyk-Kul region in the 1860s. Karakol, built by the Russians as a garrison town on the southeastern shore of the lake, serves as the region's main center. The settlements along the lakeshore are lined up on the narrow plain between the mountains and the lake. Since the topography does not allow otherwise, the neighborhoods—consisting of single-row, mostly one- or two-story houses—stretch along the narrow line between the mountains and the lake. Russian influence is also dominant in these settlements. While passing through some towns, it is still possible to come across rusted signs from the kolkhoz era (Soviet-style collective farming units and associated settlements). The Islamic influence strongly felt in southern cities such as Osh and Özgön becomes weaker in the settlements around the lake. The fact that only Cholpon-Ata has a mosque confirms this observation.

The northern shores of the lake are more densely populated. Whether you travel





Jedi Oğuz

along the northern or southern route of the lake, the city of Balykchy is a junction you must pass through. We take a short break in Balykchy and walk along the lakeshore. The mountains rising along the lake are so tall that even the clouds glide along the snowy slopes like a veiled bride. Since we are here, we do not miss the chance to taste the fish caught from Lake Issyk-Kul. After our meal, we continue along the more densely populated southern shores. I believe that due to the lack of travel freedom during the Soviet era, intercity public transportation across the country remains quite inadequate. That's why you come across people hitchhiking at nearly every step along the roadside. My travel companion Kanat explains that people consider this normal and that hitchhiking, in exchange for a small fee, is a practical solution people use for intercity transportation. After passing Balykchy, you reach the city of Cholpon-Ata by driving through the villages of Sarikamysh, Toruaygyr, Chyrpykchy, Kosh-Kol, Tamchy, Chok-Tal, Örnök, Chong-Sary-Oy, Sary-Oy,

and Kara-Oy. Beyond Cholpon-Ata, we pass through many similar small and medium-sized towns before reaching Karakol, the administrative center of Issyk-Kul.

#### **KARAKOL: THE CENTER OF WINTER TOURISM AT THE FOOT OF THE TIAN SHAN MOUNTAINS**

As mentioned earlier, Karakol is a garrison town built by the Russians. Its demographic structure was largely shaped by the deportations during the Stalin era. Kyrgyz, Tatars, Uighurs, Dungans, Russians, and Germans are the main ethnic groups forming the city's cosmopolitan character. The city is world-renowned for outdoor sports and winter tourism. Although numerous archaeological finds and petroglyphs (rock carvings, mostly depicting animal motifs) have been uncovered in the surrounding kurgans, the city itself does not have a long historical background.

The most significant structure in the city is the Dungan Mosque. The Dungans are a



*Most balbals feature a curved sword suspended from the belt with two henna-tied straps, a traditional Turkic cap, and drooping mustaches*





DUNGAN CAMII



major ethnic group in the Karakol region. Their origins trace back to Chinese ancestors who became Muslim with the arrival of Arabs in the region. The Dungans migrated from central China to Central Asia about 140 years ago. The local people called them “Dungan,” meaning “those who came from the east.” The Dungans, who lead a life deeply devoted to their faith, take pride in possessing one of Karakol’s most magnificent architectural masterpieces—the Dungan Mosque. Dominated by elements of classical Chinese architecture and built entirely without nails using traditional wooden interlocking techniques, the Dungan Mosque—also known as the Ibrahim Haji Mosque—has stood tall for over a century. The Ibrahim Haji Mosque was built in 1910 by Zhou-Su, a Chinese architect invited by the Dungan community leaders who had fled China due to persecution in the late 19th century.

Closed for worship and used as a storage facility during the Soviet era, the mosque was reopened for worship in 1960 thanks to the persistent efforts of the Dungans.

After buying some of the enchanting honey distilled from the magnificent flowers of the Tian Shan Mountains, we leave Karakol Bazaar, follow the southern shores of Issyk-Kul, and set out toward Bishkek. The most important settlement along our route is Barsgan, which Mahmud al-Kashgari marked as the “Center of the World” on the map in his work *Divanü Lügati’t-Türk*, and where he himself once lived. It reminds me of Nasreddin Hodja’s anecdote in which he claims that the spot he steps on in Akşehir is the center of the world; meanwhile, I believe that ancient scholars attributing such distinctions to the lands where they were born and produced their works carries deep

## FOOD & DRINK

Just like their history, traditions, and customs, Kyrgyz cuisine shares many similarities with that of other Turkic communities. Dough-based dishes such as boorsok, samsi, manty, and meat dishes like kurdak, beshbarmak, and shashlik are among the most characteristic elements of Kyrgyz cuisine.





*The horse still maintains its importance as a means of transportation in the daily life of the Kyrgyz people.*

meaning in terms of belonging and approaching the world with a certain awareness.

After a brief city tour in Barsgan, we begin our ascent toward the Tien Shan Mountains. At an altitude of around 4,000 meters, successive mountain ranges rise continuously. At this elevation—where only yaks and their herders can live—dozens of lakes and streams create an unforgettable view at the foot of snow-covered peaks. In the plains between the mountains, wild horses run freely. I give myself over to the intoxicating beauty of the Tien Shan. On these peaks untouched by the destructive hand of man, I remember the spirits of my nomadic ancestors with reverence.

By October, the mountain nomads have already descended to lower areas or to the towns. I learn with regret that we are too late to experience mountain life in Kyrgyzstan. After traveling the mountain roads for some time, we turn back to Barsgan upon the warning of a yak herder who tells us there is no road beyond this point, and then continue toward Bishkek. Kyrgyzstan is a country that enchants not with its cities, but with its nature. Here, nature draws you in with its purest form. The relationship between nomadic life and nature has fostered a harmonious balance between humans and the environment. My advice to friends planning a trip to Kyrgyzstan is to learn the Cyrillic alphabet beforehand. This way, you will have no difficulty reading the signs—most of which are similar to Turkish you will find your way more easily, and you will discover many similarities between the two languages, making your journey more meaningful and exciting. Secondly, reading the stories and novels of Chinghiz Aitmatov will



## The Yurt or Boz-Üy

The traditional tents, known as Boz-Üy among the Kyrgyz, are one of the country's most significant symbols.

“Üy” means “home” in the Kyrgyz language, while “boz” refers to the color of the felt covering the tent frame. The frame of the tent is made of wooden slats fastened together with woolen cords, and

no nails are used during its construction. It is very easy to dismantle, transport, and reassemble in another location. Even from this alone, it is possible to sense the fragrance of the nomadic past. At the top, where the wooden slats forming the frame come together, there is a circular opening called the tündük. It is a national Kyrgyz symbol, featured on the country's flag, reflecting their pride in their nomadic history.

be enlightening in understanding Kyrgyz geography and its people. As the characters he describes and his depictions of Kyrgyz culture appear before you across the mountains and steppes of Kyrgyzstan, you will feel as though you are tracing the stories of this great writer, enhancing the joy you take from your journey.

I extend my gratitude to all my friends at the Kyrgyzstan office of the Turkish Maarif Foundation—especially Kanatbek Isiroilov—who accompanied me throughout my journey filled with unforgettable moments.



*A yak herder on the peaks of the Tien Shan mountains. Although it is early October, the temperature is -10 degrees.*



*A woman selling local products at the Karakol Bazaar*

Firdevs  
Kapusızoğlu



The Reflections of Geographical Indication on Access to Higher Education:

## THE CASE OF MUŞ ALPARSLAN UNIVERSITY

Today, we stand in a land where each layer of the soil hides historical and mystical stories. With Prof. Dr. Mustafa Alican, who transforms the idea of “geographical indication” in higher education into a genuine experience, we will witness the quiet journey of science and effort at Muş Alparslan University. In this issue, where we place the theme of access to education at the center, we hope that this story rising from the east of Türkiye will remind us once again of the boundless nature of learning.

*Professor, Muş University is not located in a highly visible place. Nevertheless, we see that quiet yet impactful work is being carried out here. If we were to ask how educational institutions in less prominent cities can still make a difference, what would you say?*

I have been in this region for about 15 years. Since I work in the field of history, I have focused particularly on Malazgirt as well as Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia.

There are very important developments taking place in these geographies that are not noticed from the outside and that most people are unaware of. With the establishment of universities over the past 25–30 years, we can observe I consider their establishment extremely valuable. Because this region has never developed as much as it has today. Higher education institutions have enhanced the multicultural fabric of cities, strengthened





transportation, and enriched social and cultural life. Moreover, for entrepreneurial and forward-thinking individuals, this is still an untouched field. Muş stands on the brink of a quiet yet profound transformation. And the university is the most important catalyst of this transformation.

***The university is carrying out significant projects, and perhaps the most notable among them is the one related to Malazgirt. Shall we talk about how the project began and how it has evolved?***

The initial aim of the project was to determine the exact location where the Battle of Manzikert took place. The Malazgirt Plain covers an area of 165 km<sup>2</sup>, and we were seeking answers to the question, “Where exactly did the battle occur?” However, once we started

fieldwork, we realized that this could not be a study limited only to identifying the battlefield. This led us to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, working with nearly one hundred scholars from fields such as history, archaeology, art history, anthropology, computer engineering, artificial intelligence, GIS, geology, and sociology. During this process, we established an anthropology laboratory. The anthropologist who set up our ancient DNA laboratory worked at Oxford for many years and took part in projects in Egypt, Greece, France, and Italy. He is now working with us and has been leading this project in Malazgirt for five years

The city was surrounded by walls, and these fortifications needed to be examined by experts. The geography of

“Higher education institutions have enhanced the multicultural character of cities, strengthened transportation, and enriched social and cultural life.”



the Malazgirt Plain is also very unique; just 30 centimeters beneath the surface lies volcanic rock formed by the lava of Mount Süphan millions of years ago. Therefore, the contribution of geologists to the project became essential.

We traced accounts from medieval sources—such as “the stream from which the Seljuks cut off the water supply to the Byzantine camp” directly in the field. Some streams in the plain dry up in summer, some do not; others have completely disappeared over the course of a thousand years. These data are evaluated jointly by geologists and historians. We visit villages, speak with local people, and encounter remarkably rich information that is not found in academic publications. Following the traces of such narratives naturally requires the involvement of sociologists as well.

***Would you like to talk about surprising findings you encountered in the field?***

**The Malazgirt project  
uncovers not only a  
battlefield but also the  
civilizational layers of  
Anatolia.**

The village of Afşin near Malazgirt is particularly interesting in this regard. In this village, located 7 kilometers from Malazgirt, the current population is Kurdish. They say they came from Aleppo and that Armenians were living in the area when they arrived. In the village, there are both Armenian cemeteries and an old Muslim cemetery. This was surprising when you looked at the chronology. We excavated the cemetery and found around 30 skeletons. We decided to establish an ancient DNA laboratory for the analysis. Thus, after METU and Hacettepe, the third

such laboratory in Türkiye was established at our university.

The graves in Afşin yielded Muslim skeletons from the 11th century. These findings, dated to just before or just after the Battle of Manzikert, clearly showed that Muslims lived in the region. The analyses revealed that the skeletons were of Asiatic origin. Ottoman tax registers also mention a Seljuk legacy that can be traced until the 17th century. When you work in the field, history becomes visible again. However, unfortunately many people outside do not believe that such projects can be carried out in Muş. This creates difficulties in obtaining grants, funding, and investment.

***How does Muş Alparslan University interact with the international scientific community?***

We recently hosted the world-renowned Islamic archaeologist Prof. Timothy Insoll from the University of Exeter. Researchers from France also visited. Foreign





***While tracing ancient heritage, you are also engaging in cultural diplomacy. Can we say that making these studies visible in Turkey first and then establishing contact with different countries transforms projects that began as local initiatives within the university into a global diplomacy process?***

Indeed, we can. Our membership to the Russian Academy of Sciences was accepted, and we are invited to present every year. Our researchers have presented the project in Barcelona and in the UK. This year, we will sign a protocol with the University of Barcelona. However, it is necessary not to overlook intelligence risks in such studies.

Previously, excavations were carried out under the supervision of the Ahlat Museum, because by procedure, excavations can only be conducted through museums or universities. The findings were sent to the museums. The project is now being conducted within our university. We are working to activate the Malazgirt and Muş Museums. We are in constant contact with the Ministry of Culture. We are planning a multidimensional process such as

researchers who join our projects leave very satisfied. We foresee that the research groups will grow even further in the coming years. We are currently working on a project comparing Muslim graves in al-Andalus with those in Manzikert. Our work was carried out with limited resources for a period of time. However, we are progressing much more professionally now. Recently, by a Presidential decree, the leadership of the historical excavations in Malazgirt was assigned to a faculty member from our university. This is the only excavation authorized by such a decree this year. Some coin findings we presented to the President of the Council of Higher Education attracted great interest. The Director General of the Mint was contacted, and it was decided to produce collection prints.

Bostankaya, one of the capitals of the Urartians, is located near Malazgirt. There

**Our core policy is to share all the university's resources and outputs with the public.**

are remains dating back to the 2000s BC, which were damaged by various interventions in the past. There is still much work to be done in this area. Based on Urartian inscriptions, we traced the historical origins of the name Malazgirt; in excavations on a nearby hill, we identified findings related to a women and children cult. We examined the city walls, created 3D models of them, and presented these to the relevant institutions. Each new finding creates the need for collaboration with new disciplines and institutions.



analyzing the artifacts, exhibiting them, producing their replicas, and creating 3D models, and we are including field experts in this process.

Until the 1980s, Malazgirt had a cosmopolitan structure. It reportedly had three cinemas; people from Muş would come to watch films. However, after the 1980s, identity destruction began, and people were forced to sell or abandon their lands. A large excavation house is currently being built in the area with the support of the Ministry of Culture. In addition to the ancient DNA laboratory, we also have archaeology and anthropology laboratories. We are also working on establishing a gemology laboratory. The professor who will work in this stone analysis laboratory is an academic who specialized in this field through studies conducted in the United States. There is significant stone diversity in the region. Basalt stones are found in Malazgirt, and special stone types in Ahlat. We are researching how these stones can be utilized in architecture or artistic work. For this, data such as durability, testing, cost, and usage potential must be scientifically established.

It is extremely valuable to transfer the region's typology to international scientific studies, but such examples are rare. Many universities were opened in Turkey; some planning may have been insufficient. However, instead of evaluating these as mistakes today, it is necessary to focus on the specialization programs developed by the Council of Higher Education in recent years.

***This is also an example of pilot programs in higher education. Could you elaborate a bit on the specialization processes you mentioned?***

According to the new policy initiated by the Council of Higher Education in 2019, universities are expected to focus on areas that align with their regional potential. We were selected as a pilot process slowed down due to earthquakes and the pandemic, but we are working on new models that can turn us into an attraction center. The Muş Plain is Turkey's third-largest plain after Çukurova and Konya. Its livestock potential is extremely high, yet today families do not want their children to engage in farming and animal husbandry. We must take steps to change this perspective. Fifty-seven percent of

the Muş Plain consists of pasture. Because only one crop can be harvested per year due to the climate, the soil has remained clean; no chemicals or fertilizers have been used. Organic agriculture has a global commercial volume of 150 billion dollars, and this is a major opportunity for the region. An organic agriculture ecosystem to be established in the plain could potentially meet Turkey's needs. In addition, consider Muş's geographical location: it is two hours away from Elazığ, Ağrı, Erzurum, Van, and Diyarbakır. It is in a location where you can reach a population of eight million several times a day. The opening of the Zangezur Corridor and advances in integrating the northern line of Lake Van or northern Iraq and Syria could transform this place into a remarkable logistics hub.

We have a farm affiliated with our university. We have 150 sheep and are conducting adaptation studies on three different breeds. We also built a large facility on a 90-decare plot of land near the airport. Once the renovations are complete, it will become a more comprehensive farm. We produce honey, and we have academics pursuing doctoral studies in this field. We have a professor specialized in queen bee breeding. We also have a dairy facility, although its operations are not yet at the desired level.

We met the feed needs of our sheep by mowing the grass on our campus. We planted forage crops on university land, and we will continue feeding our animals with the crops harvested from there. We consider an interdisciplinary approach essential as we specialize in these fields. We find it valuable to transfer the knowledge gained in one field to others. Our university has two departments: animal production technologies and plant production technologies.

***In an era when artificial meat production is on the agenda, access to basic food sources is of vital importance. Humanity is facing a major threat, and the value of these fields***



***is increasing. Your efforts are extremely valuable in this regard. In recent years, the international visibility of universities in smaller cities has been increasing. Where does Muş Alparslan University position itself in this process in terms of academic, cultural, and sports activities?***

When you look at international scientific ranking lists, you can see that academics from provinces such as Ardahan, Iğdır, Muş, Hakkâri, and Şırnak have begun to appear in these rankings in recent years. Muş Alparslan University also appeared in international rankings for the first time this year. We have many academics who studied in different cities of Turkey or abroad and shaped their careers through international academic programs. The contributions of these academics to both our students and the city are extremely valuable.

Muş Alparslan University has more than twenty athletes who entered international rankings this year. We have students who have achieved second place in the world and first place in Europe. We also have young athletes who have achieved international success in skiing. The success of these students, who live in harmony with nature and enjoy a calm life away from the crowded and exhausting environments of big cities, is no coincidence. Academics and students who were initially engaged in educational activities out of necessity now prefer to stay in the region due to its healthy living conditions and cultural richness. Muş offers researchers the opportunity to use their time efficiently; there is no traffic, housing problem, or chaos. You can work in close contact with nature and produce with high concentration.

This situation encourages us to improve both our academic vision and our physical facilities. For example, just last night we held a theatre performance in a 1,400-seat hall in our congress and cultural center. We have a stage equipped with a balcony, an elevator, and modern technical infrastructure. We have an indoor sports hall, a semi-Olympic swimming pool, a

student market, faculty housing, and a very vibrant campus life. We organize theatre festivals, concerts, and opera performances. We have an audience that fills our halls.

***You also mention the multicultural structure of the region. What kind of work does the university undertake to promote a culture of coexistence?***

Since I know the demographic and cultural structure of the region closely, we carry out special studies in this area. We offer Kurdish, Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew language courses in our continuing education centers. We attach importance to students spending time together.

We created a space called “Çay Bahane” where students engage in academic discussions and talks. With opera and theatre events, story days, festivals, and concerts, we try to keep our students together on campus.

While tracing the historical layers of this multicultural structure in our ancient DNA laboratory, we also make it a priority to keep the culture of coexistence alive on campus. Thus, we provide a tangible reflection of togetherness both in the field and on campus. I always remind my students: None of us has meaning on our own. Regardless of our ethnicity, belief, or cultural identity, nothing has value without others. No idea or ideology should come before the human being; the human must be at the center.

***Lastly, let's talk about intergenerational interaction. You adopt an inclusive approach to educational access. Could you tell us about the project carried out under the name Refreshment University?***

Our core policy is to share all the university's facilities and outputs with the public. Our conference halls and library are open for public use. Within the theatre festival, we organized performances for 10,000 people. We provide training in areas such as farming and cheese production.

Our volunteer academics go to the villages to give training, or we invite citizens to the university. With this understanding, we established the Refreshment University and came together with our elderly citizens.

***Are these courses conducted in a non-formal education format, or is there a specific curriculum?***

Of course, there is a curriculum, but the main goal is to revive the joy of life in our elders who, at what could still be considered an early age, withdraw from active living. Individuals over 60 are actually still very young to learn new things; however, many feel old and lead a passive life. We want both to benefit from their experience and to create an environment in which they feel good and continue to grow. Our students also provide mentorship to them. We attach great importance to bringing the two generations together.

***None of us has meaning on our own. Regardless of our ethnicity, belief, or cultural identity, nothing has value without others. No idea or ideology should come before the human being; the human must always be at the center.***

***Thank you for the valuable information you have shared. We have examined the educational and research potential in the east of our country on a global scale. We hope that our conversation will inspire all higher education institutions***



**Doç. Dr. Mustafa OTRAR**  
OTRAR Director General of Special  
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# THE PERCEIVED HIFZ COMPETENCE SCALE

“Selecting students for hifz (Qur’an memorization) training through a standardized scale that directly serves this purpose is a long-needed step, particularly in terms of ensuring objectivity.”

**B**oth the value attributed to this training by the Muslim world and its significance for the preservation of the Qur’an have ensured that the importance given to hifz education has been preserved for centuries. Determining which students will be admitted to this training requires a careful selection process, during which responsible personnel use various criteria to make these decisions.

For instance, the child’s school success (academic performance), the evaluations

of trained educators regarding the child’s ability in the Qur’an memorization process, written exams, and skill assessments are among the criteria used for this purpose. Selecting students for hifz training through a standardized scale specifically designed for this purpose was an important need, particularly in terms of ensuring objectivity. Although the selection criteria used until now have maintained their validity, incorporating a qualified measurement tool into the

selection process had long been considered but could not be achieved. Developed by a group consisting of academics and staff under the leadership of the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education’s Directorate General of Religious Education, the “Perceived Hifz Competence Scale” is the first measurement tool in our country that has been developed and standardized for this purpose.\*



### HOW IS THE CURRENT SELECTION PROCESS CONDUCTED?

Today, within the scope of the “Hifz Education Integrated with Formal Schooling Project,” the selection process for students graduating from 4th grade is carried out in two stages: a written exam and a skill exam. The written exam is completed by the end of May, and the skill exam is completed by the last week of August at the latest. The written exam covers Turkish, mathematics, science, social studies, religious culture and ethics, and pre-hifz competency. Students who pass the written exam are enrolled in a summer education program. At the end of this program, a skill exam is administered by a commission. Students who succeed in the skill exam are formally enrolled.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE “PERCEIVED HIFZ COMPETENCE SCALE,” AND WHAT DOES IT PROPOSE?

The purpose of this scale is to scientifically support the two-stage student selection process carried out within this project and to structure it using a measurement tool whose validity and reliability have been scientifically demonstrated. Thus, beyond improving hifz success, it aims to strengthen a holistic approach that supports students’ cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural development and helps raise individuals with high psychological resilience. It is recommended that the “Perceived Hifz Competence Scale,” whose validity and reliability have been scientifically confirmed and standardized, be used after the skill exam.

### WHAT METHOD WAS FOLLOWED IN DEVELOPING THE SCALE?

For this study, official permissions, ethics approvals, and institutional validations were obtained from the Directorate of Educational

Services of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of National Education’s Directorate General of Religious Education. In the first phase, the Delphi technique was used to identify characteristics of students who could and could not complete hifz; in the second phase, various quantitative analysis methods were employed for scale standardization (validity-reliability). Within the Delphi technique, a working group of 16 individuals was formed, consisting of Qur’an course instructors and guidance specialists who had long been involved in preparatory education and student selection processes. This group was asked to respond to open-ended questions regarding their observations about students—whether they had completed hifz or not in areas such

The scale contributes not only to increasing hifz achievement but also to raising individuals with high psychological resilience by supporting students’ cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural development.

as basic learning skills, personality traits, psychological traits, cognitive abilities, family characteristics, and general communication skills. The responses received were examined by the expert team and converted into item statements; then, to determine the extent to which these listed characteristics reflected the students and to identify any deficiencies, the same working group was

asked to rate them on an online form using a scale from 1 to 10. Taking into account the responses from the form, the average scores given to the items were calculated; the form was reorganized with these values added, and the working group was asked to re-rate it, completing the second stage of the Delphi technique and finalizing the scale items. For the validity and reliability analyses of the scale, the study group consisted of 548 students enrolled in imam-hatip secondary schools implementing the Hifz with Formal Education Project across Türkiye during the 2023–2024 academic year. The scale development study was carried out on a voluntary basis in cooperation with 25 imam-hatip secondary schools and 35 Qur’an courses across 20 different provinces, and the validity and reliability analyses were completed. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) revealed that the scale consisted of a single-factor structure with 48 items, explaining 62.97% of the total variance. The reliability coefficients were calculated as Cronbach’s Alpha .987, Spearman .950, Guttman .945, and the split-half reliability .907; Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) also showed that all fit indices were within acceptable ranges. As a result, the Perceived Hifz Competence Scale was proven to be valid and reliable, and it has been presented to stakeholders as the first standardized tool contributing to the field.

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# THE HISTORICAL JOURNEY AND CHALLENGES OF MADRASAS IN NIGER

Lawali Sani Toure Zakari

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Although colonial law came to an end after Niger gained its independence, a society that was intellectually fragmented emerged. Although not in their former state, Qur'anic madrasas began to regain popularity.



Veterans who took part in the conquests, as well as merchants, played leading roles in establishing study circles. Islamic preachers chose cultural and commercial cities such as Say, Agadez, and Zinder as their centers. Through these preachers, Qur'anic madrasas developed and began to spread across many parts of

Niger. To the extent that there remained not a single city—indeed, not even a single village—without a Qur'anic madrasa where children could begin Islamic education and pursue memorization of the Qur'an. In this regard, the people of Niger have shown the necessary diligence, and especially those who speak the Hausa language have





*The Great Mosque and Madrasa of Agadez*

been particularly attentive about sending their children to the courses. When the French entered the region for colonial purposes, they particularly obstructed the educational activities of these courses and imposed their own language and culture on the Muslim population. Numerous restrictive laws were enacted to hinder the spread of Islam; for instance, rihla journeys undertaken to seek knowledge and the pilgrimage (Hajj) were banned, and severe punishments were imposed on those who objected.

Although colonial law came to an end after independence, as in other colonized

countries, a socially and intellectually fragmented society emerged in Qur'anic. Although not in their former state, Qur'anic madrasas began to regain popularity.

The newly established governments did not give these courses sufficient attention; however, due to the high demand from the Nigerien people, the first official madrasa was established in 1957 in the Say district of the Tillaberi region. In this madrasa, French is taught alongside Arabic. After 1960, students who had studied in these courses were sent to Arab countries to advance their education in Islamic sciences and the Arabic language. Madrasas

Since Qur'an madrasas do not have an official status, it is quite difficult to determine the number of students. The age levels in these schools also vary significantly. Today, due to limited financial means, young people rarely continue their education.

continued to be opened in the country, and in 1974 the Niger Islamic Organization was officially established to administer religious affairs. In 1986, the Islamic University of Niger was also established.

Although Islamic schools have become more widespread over time, the nomadic population in particular hesitates to send their children to these schools due to concerns that they may be exposed to a curriculum influenced by colonial ideology. Instead, nomadic families continue to send their children to local Qur'an schools. These madrasas, which have survived to this day with their own distinctive educational system, have recently faced numerous financial and moral difficulties.

### TYPES OF QUR'AN MADRASAS IN NIGER:

We can say that there are two types of madrasas in Niger:

#### 1. Traditional Qur'an Schools: "Slate Schools"

These types of schools are known by various names throughout the Islamic world. In Egypt they are called Katatib, in Sudan Khalwa, and in Southeast Asia Madrasa. In Niger and Nigeria, these schools are locally referred to as "Mekerantel ello".

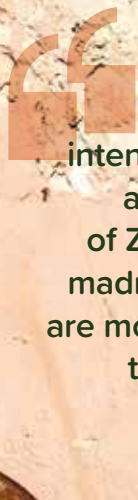
Many people leave their families and hometowns to attend these schools in order to learn the Qur'an and Islamic sciences. Using a traditional method, teachers gather students from their region and travel either to another village or to a city in another country.

These schools begin after the harvest season, which is known as the dry season. The end of the school term is scheduled according to the rainy season. An agreement is made between the teacher and families without financial compensation. Teachers provide for the children's educational needs and safety, offering spiritual guidance to foster good morals. Teachers in these madrasas hold high status and are respected by the community. Since these Qur'an madrasas are unofficial, it is quite difficult to determine the number of students. The age levels in these schools also vary significantly. Today, due to financial difficulties, young people rarely continue their studies. Students in these schools are called "Muhajir", as they leave their homeland in pursuit of knowledge. In some villages, Qur'an courses exist, and when teachers arrive with their students, they either join an existing course or continue their lessons in a newly established classroom beside it. If the course instructors have migrated with their families to train students, a designated place is arranged for them, and the students spend the nights around the school or on the streets. Since the teachers and students cannot bring food with them, they request assistance from people around the school to meet their nutritional needs.



Geleneksel medreselerde kullanılan yazı tahtaları





Madrasas operate intensively in many cities and towns. In the city of Zinder, there are 598 madrasas. Of these, 90% are modern, while 10% are traditional madrasas.





### CURRENT PROBLEMS FACED BY MADRASAS TODAY:

The people of Niger, who have a deep-rooted history, enjoy a distinguished reputation in Qur'anic madrasas. Through these madrasas, the people of Niger have been able to preserve the Arabic language and Islamic culture, and hundreds of scholars of whom Nigerien society is proud—have been trained in these institutions.

However, today, the madrasas face problems largely stemming from financial insufficiency. These problems may be listed as follows:

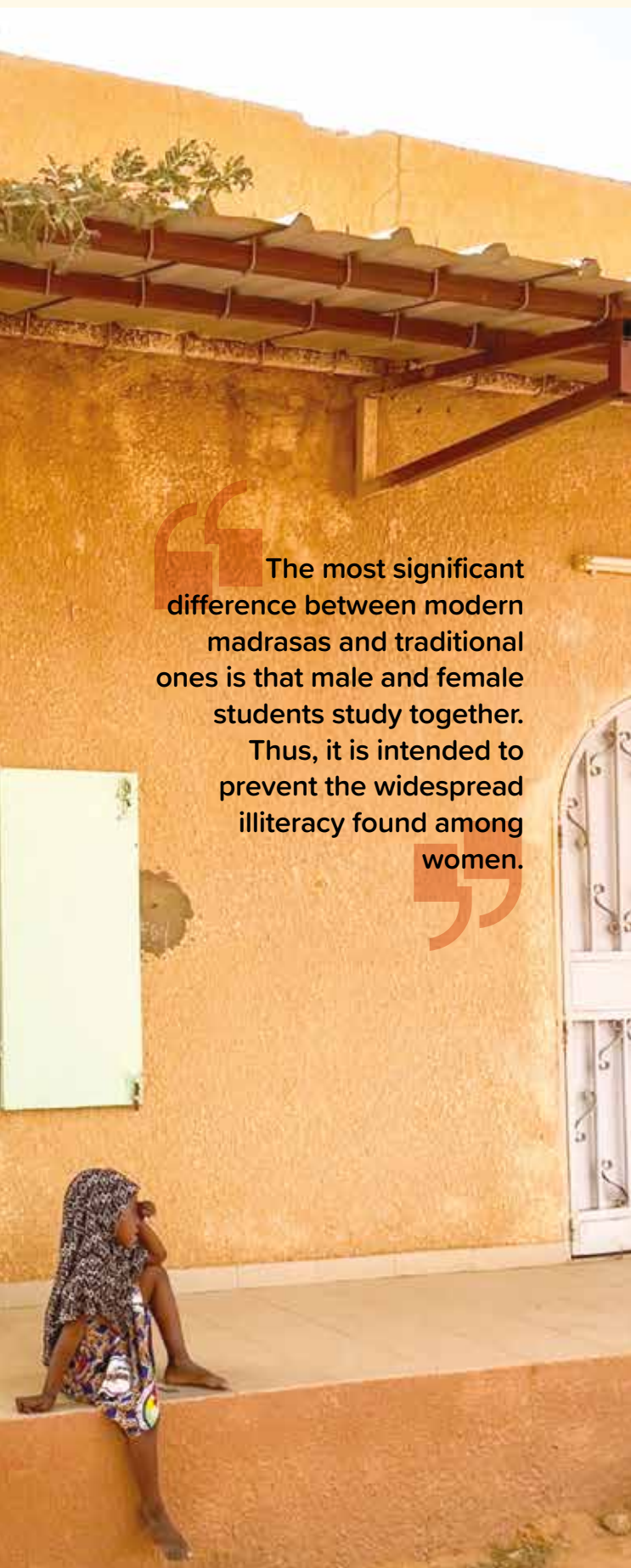
- The State of Niger's refusal to grant equivalency to students graduating from these madrasas and its failure to allocate salaries to their teachers significantly hinder the development of traditional madrasas.
- Since the madrasas do not have an official status, their needs are not met by charitable organizations or by the state. Therefore, the resources of both the instructors and the students are extremely limited.
- Due to financial hardship, students resort to begging for financial assistance. Since their housing and health needs cannot be met, they are compelled to work in jobs such as serving in the homes of wealthier families or washing dishes in restaurants. This adversely affects their motivation to continue their studies.
- Poverty, drought, and migration movements in the country also hinder the development of madrasas in Niger. Due to these adverse conditions, students are forced to drop out of school. The departure of young people from school leads to numerous social problems, such as drug and alcohol addiction and theft.
- The condescending attitudes of individuals educated in French institutions can cause the public to view these madrasas as simple and inadequate, leading them to keep their children away from them.
- The traditional neglect of women's education in madrasas has contributed to the spread of ignorance. However, today, women do have some opportunities to receive education in urban areas. Yet, education for women in villages has not yet begun. Providing educational opportunities for women is essential for the future of society.

These problems vary from region to region, and even from one school to another within the same region.



A young girl sitting in front of the mosque in Agadez





**The most significant difference between modern madrasas and traditional ones is that male and female students study together. Thus, it is intended to prevent the widespread illiteracy found among women.**

## 2. MODERN QUR'AN MADRASAS

The Modern Qur'an Madrasas in Niger represent the reflection of contemporary intellectual and cultural understanding on Islamic sciences and Qur'anic education. The relations of the Nigerien people with Arab countries have played an influential role in the establishment of modern madrasas. Students who pursued their education in Arab countries were influenced by Arab madrasas and wished to implement similar institutions in Niger. Thus, modern Qur'an Madrasas, distinct from the traditional ones, were established. The greatest difference of these schools is that male and female students study together. Many female students have graduated from these institutions as religious studies teachers and Qur'an memorizers (hāfīz). As a result of these efforts, educational institutions specifically for women have been opened in recent years.

Modern Qur'an madrasas are supported by wealthy individuals and foundations, and therefore do not experience the financial difficulties faced by traditional madrasas. Many of these schools bear the name of a donor or a charitable organization. These madrasas operate extensively in many cities and towns. There are 598 madrasas in the city of Zinder. Ninety percent of these madrasas are modern, while only ten percent are traditional. The instructors teaching in the modern madrasa system also do not receive salaries from the state or from any charitable organization. These teachers continue their activities by collecting a certain amount of payment from parents during registration and once a week thereafter.

The Nigerien society has waged an intense struggle to preserve the madrasa system. However, not only has there been no change in the curriculum system from past to present, but due to ongoing economic challenges, the madrasas are deteriorating day by day. These madrasas have enabled many people, including myself, to receive an education, to develop morally and spiritually, and have protected our youth from harmful habits. Improving the conditions of the madrasas and enabling these institutions to continue education with better opportunities is of vital importance for future generations. In this regard, the enactment of legal regulations and increased support from civil society organizations and foundations are essential for improving the conditions of the madrasas.



An abstract, textured portrait of a dervish in profile, facing right. The figure is rendered with dense, overlapping strokes of red, green, blue, and black, creating a sense of depth and movement. The background is a light, mottled pink and yellow, with a dark blue horizontal band across the middle. The overall style is expressive and painterly.

From Üsküdar a Melamî  
and Hamzavî dervish

*Niyazi  
Sayın*



## Muhammed BÂKIR KÖSE

*Editor of Lacivert Magazine*

**We lost Niyazi Sayın, the greatest ney player of our time and perhaps of all time, on 8 October 2025. He was not only a great musician, but also a master of prayer beads, a mother-of-pearl inlay artist, a rose grower, a bird enthusiast, and a photographer.**

In the final years of his life, Hammamizade İsmail Dede Efendi, thinking that Turkish music was gradually losing ground, said to his student Dellalzade İsmail Efendi, “The pleasure of this game is gone.” These words aptly summarized the troubled state of mind of a great composer who carried deep sensitivity toward Turkish music. What drove Dede Efendi to such despair was his inability to find a musician of comparable level within the musical world in which he had once roamed at the summits. I have always wondered: if Dede had known of the great revolution that Tanburi Cemil Bey who would be born twenty-seven years after his death—would

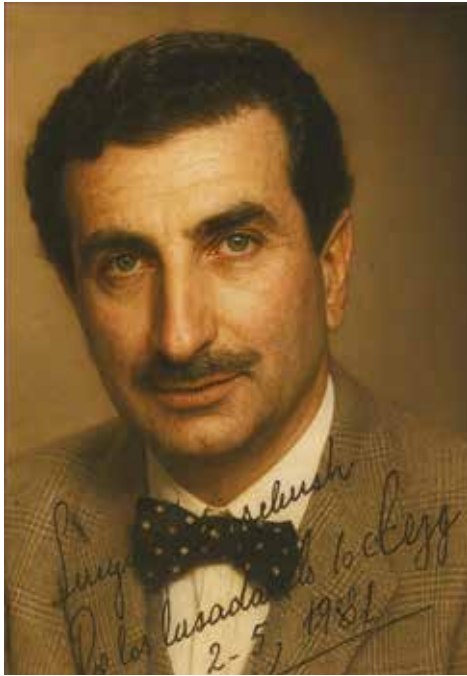
bring about, would he still have said that “the pleasure of this game is gone”?

Dede Efendi is indeed regarded as a final station for classical Turkish music; however, the journey that began with Tanburi Cemil Bey—although different in style—is also essential for the music’s re-emergence with a new breath. If we were to liken the history of Turkish music to a musical suite (fasıl), the period that began with Tanburi Cemil Bey could be compared to the instrumental saz semâisi performed at the end of such suites. This saz semâisi passes through figures such as Rauf Yekta Bey, Mesut Cemil, Münir

Nureddin Selçuk, Selahaddin Pınar, and Bekir Sıtkı Sezgin, reaching Niyazi Sayın in its final hane (section). Indeed, Niyazi Sayın, who has recently departed from this world, bestowed upon the final section of this saz semâisi the most magnificent era it could have.

Much has been said—and much more will be said—regarding Niyazi Sayın’s ney performance and his musical knowledge. My intention is to speak of the late master’s Sufi disposition. For according to him, even behind the epithet “kutbü’n-nâyî”—which everyone agrees suits him—there stands the prayer of a spiritual master.





#### FROM THE SOUND OF THE CALL TO PRAYER TO THE “ATTAR SHOP”

The Üsküdar of 1927, in which Sayın opened his eyes to life, was a town materially poor yet spiritually rich—home to Sufis of every disposition such as Halvetis, Melamis, Rifa’is, and Mevlevi, and to artists of all kinds including calligraphers, marblers, painters, and composers. The painter Malik Aksel describes this characteristic of Üsküdar as follows: “Üsküdar—this peculiar Turkish land—had, despite deprivation and neglect, a hidden beauty buried under dust and soil, a beauty that only the painters of a certain era were able to see and convey.” The “hidden beauty buried under dust and soil” mentioned by Aksel continued to subsist on its own means in Üsküdar during years when Turkey was undergoing a significant cultural rupture. As Prof. Dr. Uğur Derman states, “Üsküdar takes pride in being the only town that could witness the Glorious Conquest more than five hundred years ago, and since those times, it has settled opposite the Imperial Seat (Âsîtâne) as a ‘dream city’ with its beauty and grace; moreover, it was able to preserve this charm, to some extent, until about forty years ago.” Moreover, with its scholars, men of letters, poets, and craftsmen, it also knew how to sustain itself.”

Niyazi Sayın spent his childhood and youth within such a self-sustaining cultural environment. Through his father’s admiration for Tanburî Cemil Bey, he gained an early familiarity with refined music. In his early twenties, he begins following the afternoon call to prayer recited at Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi Mosque and meets Mustafa Düzgünman, who was the mosque’s imam at the time. Düzgünman—regarded as one of the foremost masters of the art of marbling (ebru)—opens for Niyazi Sayın the door of the famous six-square-meter “tekke,” the attar shop on Hakimiyet-i Milliye Street, a place that would mark the greatest turning point in his life; and Sayın becomes, in a sense, one of its devotees

“It is often said that environments and specific gathering places play an important role in the transmission of classical Turkish culture. According to its frequent visitors, the attar shop in Üsküdar served abundantly as such a meeting point.”

until Düzgünman’s passing in 1990. He also receives his first musical training (meşk) and marbling instruction from Mustafa Düzgünman.

It is often emphasized that environments and spaces have an important function in conveying classical Turkish culture. AccoÖzemre relates that, when remembering the spiritual atmosphere of this shop with gratitude, Niyazi Sayın uttered the following words: “My dear Yüksel frequented this shop—which became widely known through Ahmet Yüksel Özemre’s now-classic book Üsküdar’da Bir

Attar Dükkânı—including the Bektashi Yusuf Fahir Baba, the Rifa’i Sarı Hüsnü Efendi, the Hamzavî Eşref Ede, Shaykh Necmeddin Özbekkangay of the Özbekler Lodge, Nafiz Uncu, the imam of Üsküdar’s İskele Mosque, and the polymath (hezarfen) Necmeddin Okyay. Özemre relates that, when remembering the spiritual atmosphere of this shop with gratitude, Niyazi Sayın uttered the following words: “My dear Yüksel; had we not passed through this shop, today we would have been worse than the refuse of seven shops!”

#### THE SPIRITUAL MASTERS OF NIYAZI SAYIN

Among the regulars of the attar shop, the person who left the most indelible marks on Niyazi Sayın’s life was, without doubt, Eşref Ede. This venerable figure—remembered in Sufi circles by the saying “The friends of God conceal everything they possess, but they cannot conceal their gaze.”—was a mysterious saint trained by Abdülkâdir Belhî, the final pole (qutb) of the Hamzavî Melâmî lineage. Eşref Efendi—remembered by those who saw him for his piercing gaze and his speaking only when necessary—had also been in the company and under the spiritual gaze of Ahmed Amiş Efendi, the guardian of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror’s mausoleum, as well as Mehmed Sabit Efendi, who was said to possess spiritual authority.

We learn the most detailed information about Eşref Ede from Özemre’s work Üsküdar’ın Üç Sırlısı (“The Three Mystics of Üsküdar”). In this book, alongside chronological biographical details about the Master, there are also several anecdotes that Özemre either personally witnessed or heard from firsthand witnesses. One of these anecdotes is as follows: Sacit Okyay, the son of Necmeddin Okyay, was drafted into the military and was assigned responsibility over a large warehouse. Having signed the inventory report claiming that the warehouse was “full,” Sacit Okyay panicked upon discovering that the warehouse was actually empty and asked



his father to rescue him from the situation. Necmeddin Efendi went to Eşref Ede—whose spiritual authority he trusted—and explained the situation. Eşref Efendi said, “Necmeddin Efendi, leave this matter to unfold on its own. Do not interfere! Its end will be sorrowful.” Despite this, Necmeddin Efendi this time sought assistance from Abdülaziz Mecdi Tolun. This gentleman prescribed a dhikr for Sacit Okyay to recite. As a result of continuing this dhikr, a disturbance developed in Sacit Okyay’s mental faculties. Thus, he was discharged from the military but had to struggle with severe psychiatric problems for the rest of his life. resided in Eyüp. It was also Eşref Efendi who enabled Sayın to meet this venerable man. One day, referring to Sucu Ali Fani Dede, Eşref Efendi said to Niyazi Sayın and Mustafa Düzgünman, “I have a dede; he is one of a kind in the world—go and kiss his hand.” When Mustafa Düzgünman asked questions about who this person was, Eşref Efendi became stern and said, “Listen to me, Mustafa! A man upon whom I have placed my seal is a true man. Know this: if this man departs from this world, this realm will not be set right again easily.” As soon as Düzgünman and Sayın reached the Dede’s house in Eyüp—before even introducing themselves—he asked them, “Welcome. How is Eşref Efendi?”

What Özemre recounts regarding the final day of Sucu Ali Fani Dede is also quite remarkable. On 4 March 1956, Niyazi Sayın received the news that Ali Fani Dede was about to pass away. Sayın immediately went to the lodge and found the Dede lying motionless with the quilt pulled over his head. He asked after his condition but received no answer, and he wept bitterly in grief. He thought to himself that he should leave the money in his pocket with someone in the lodge, in case it might be needed for medicine or doctor expenses. At that very moment, the Dede said, “Do not leave any money. I am departing tomorrow. Do not wait here in vain. You may come tomorrow.” After Niyazi Sayın left the lodge, Aka Gündüz Kutbay arrived and, deeply moved by the



“My dear Yüksel; had we not passed through this shop, today we would have been worse than the refuse of seven shops!”

Dede’s condition, began to play a Mevlevi rite. Sucu Ali Fani Dede, who had been lying motionless, suddenly rose to his feet and began to whirl in sema. When the rite ended, he slipped back under the quilt as if nothing had happened.

#### YOU WILL BE

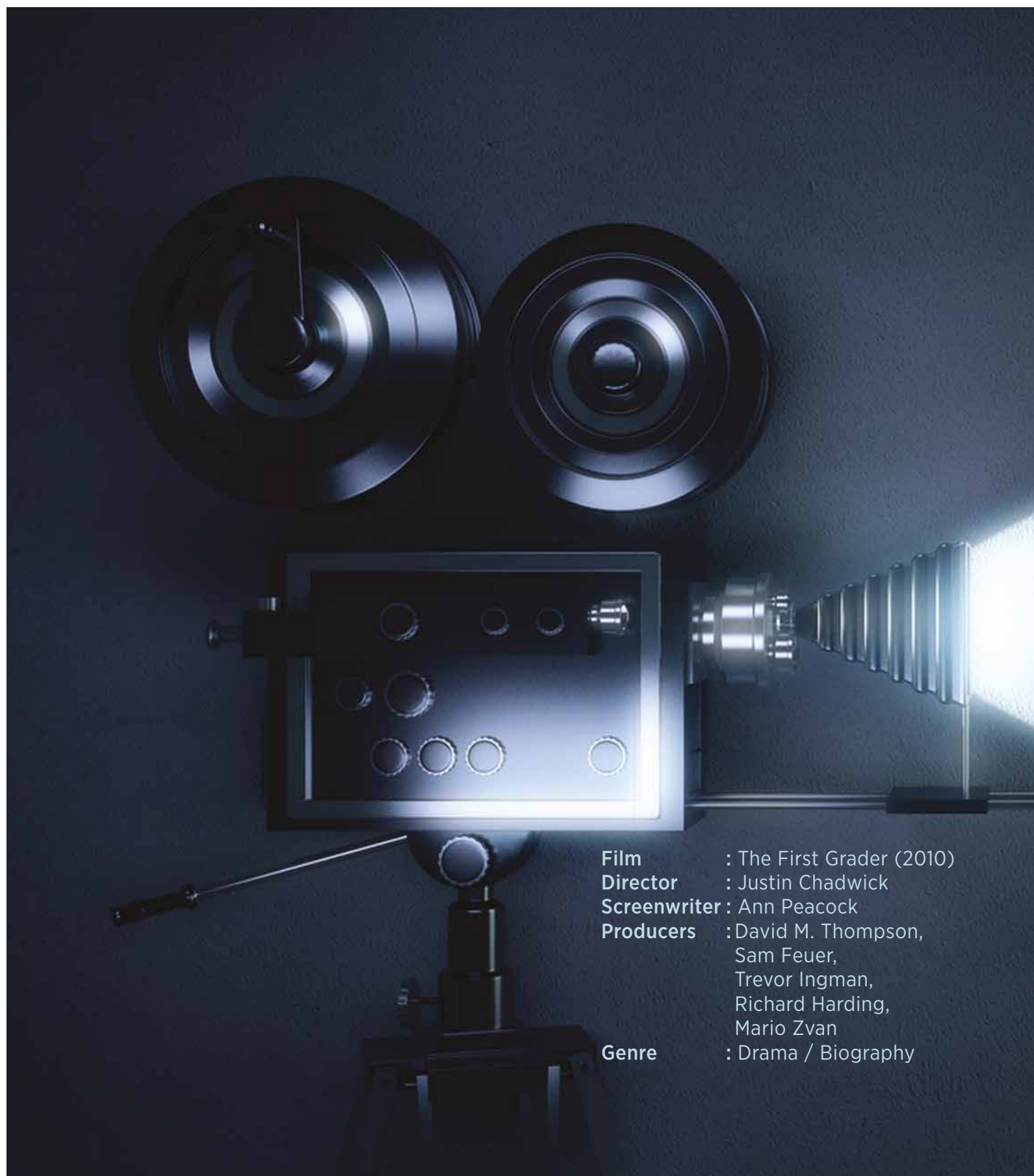
#### THE BEST NEY PLAYER OF THIS ERA

Niyazi Sayın continued to accompany Sucu Ali Fani Dede with sincerity for about eight years. The Dede was very pleased Hamzavî late master for the many services he rendered to him. It is said that Sucu Ali Fani Dede also had a spiritual influence in Niyazi Sayın’s receiving the epithet “kutbu’n-nâyî” (the pole of the ney players). In one of his writings, Süleyman Seyfi Ögün relates that Niyazi Sayın did not care much for praise or compliments; that on a day when he praised Sayın’s ney artistry at length, Sayın tried to change the subject; that Ögün could not restrain himself and continued to praise the master’s music; and that the late master, unable to bear it any longer, said that behind his mastery lay the “spiritual



assistance (himmət)” of Sucu Ali Fani Dede. Let us listen to Ögün: “Finally, during one of my visits, he told me that his own share in this matter was very limited; and that if anything had emerged, he owed it to the day when, after returning from military service, he visited Sucu Ali Fânî Dede on a cold winter day and played the ney at his request, whereupon the Dede—moved to silent tears—said, ‘May God be pleased with you, my dear Niyazi.’” He said that he owed it to this prayer, in which the Dede declared, “With His permission, you will be the best ney player of this era.”

Indeed, guided by the indication of Sucu Ali Fani Dede, we lost Niyazi Sayın—the finest ney player of our era, and perhaps of all time—on 8 October 2025. He was not only a great musician, but also a master of prayer beads, a mother-of-pearl inlayer, a rose cultivator, a bird keeper, and a photographer. And to some, he was a Hamzavî saint who concealed himself...



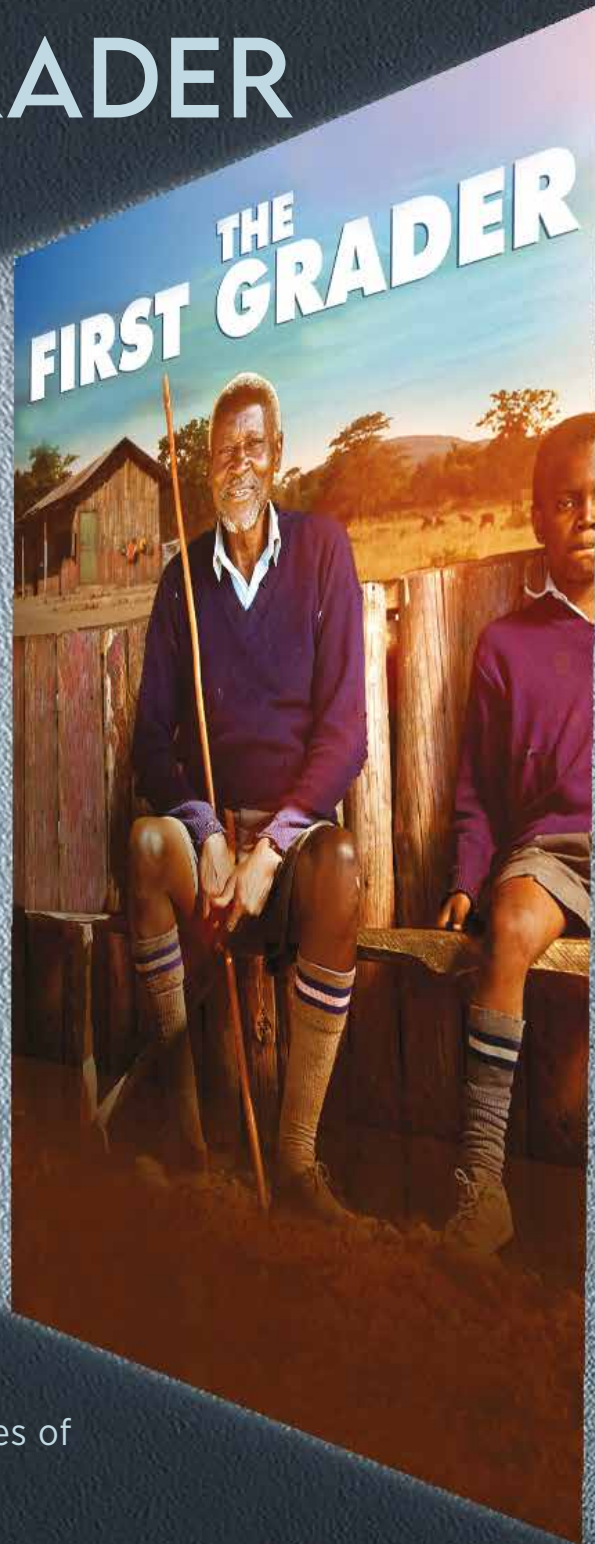
**Film** : The First Grader (2010)  
**Director** : Justin Chadwick  
**Screenwriter** : Ann Peacock  
**Producers** : David M. Thompson,  
Sam Feuer,  
Trevor Ingman,  
Richard Harding,  
Mario Zvan  
**Genre** : Drama / Biography



Aslı Zeynep AYDIN

# THE FIRST GRADER

A DESK FOR EVERYONE:  
THE STORY OF A  
DETERMINATION TO  
LEARN THAT KNOWS NO  
BARRIERS



This compelling film redefines the universal meaning of equal opportunity in education by focusing on the struggle of an elderly man to learn to read within a society still bearing the traces of colonialism.

In 2002, the Kenyan government announced that primary education would be free and that anyone who presented a birth certificate could enroll. The moment this news is announced on the radio, 84-year-old Kimani Ng'ang'a Maruge takes his walking stick, sets out for the nearest school to his village, and our story begins.

### FROM COLONIALISM TO INDEPENDENCE: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

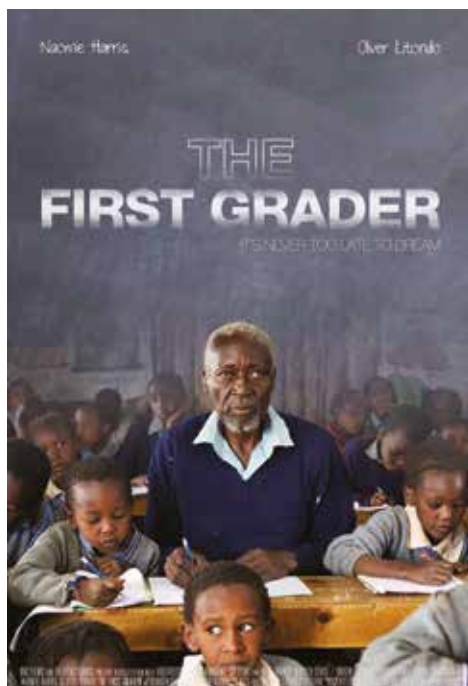
To understand the film's message, a brief look at Kenya's history is necessary. Kenya, under British colonial rule from 1895 to 1963, rose up to reclaim its freedom after a long colonial period marked by systemic racism and inequality. The Mau Mau Uprising (1952–1960) is known as one of the bloodiest resistances in Kenya's history. This period, during which thousands were killed and subjected to torture, left deep scars in the nation's collective memory.

Maruge is also one of the witnesses of this uprising. In the film's flashback scenes, we learn why his hearing is impaired, why he limps, and how his family was killed. At one point, we witness the intersection of the country's tragic history with his personal journey. These personal traumas become symbols of postcolonial societies' quests for education, justice, and humanity.

### A TURNING POINT IN EDUCATION: THE FREE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The education reform launched after Kenya's independence lies at the heart of the country's effort to rebuild its future. The campaign initiated in 2002 rekindles great hope with the promise that primary school would be free of charge. However, before long, we clearly see that fulfilling this promise is far from easy.

The crowd gathering in front of the school carries not only hope, but also its deprivations. We see children without pencils, without notebooks, without



The film does not merely tell a story of individual achievement; it also makes visible the fractures within Kenyan society.

uniforms. Due to limited resources, the teachers wish to grant the right to education only to children, who are regarded as the country's future. At this point, an elderly man's attempt to enroll in school sparks a broader social debate: For whom is the right to education?

### STARTING AGAIN WITH DETERMINATION: MARUGE'S STRUGGLE

Maruge does not give up after the first rejection. He sews a school uniform with his own means and returns to the school. This determination stirs the conscience of

the teacher, Jane. Despite all bureaucratic pressure, Jane admits Maruge into the classroom. Maruge's entrance into the classroom is not merely an enrollment process; it is a silent rebellion against age, status, and inequalities of opportunity within society. Teacher Jane, while struggling with the difficulty of explaining the situation to the educational authorities, simultaneously witnesses Maruge's determination. The deficiencies of the education system become more visible through the eyes of an elderly student.

### SOCIAL CONFLICTS AND THE PROBLEM OF AWARENESS

The film does not merely tell a story of individual achievement; it also makes visible the fractures within Kenyan society. Sent to an adult school, Maruge encounters young people who smoke and seem aimless. These scenes reflect the void that exists in public awareness despite the apparent progress of the education system. Substance abuse in cities and the lack of interest in education in villages are obstacles to postcolonial society's efforts to rise again. The reaction shown by the villagers and parents toward Maruge is a reflection of the fear of change. The attacks on his home are not only a reaction to his desire to learn; they are also the result of the community's fears.

In the later parts of the film, officials from the Kenyan Ministry of Education argue that limited resources should be directed to "young people who will contribute to the country." This approach shows that the hierarchical mindset of the colonial era continues. The teacher who accompanies Maruge in his struggle also cannot escape being punished by the authorities. The state's punishing the teacher instead of producing solutions contradicts the very spirit of the education initiative. Rather than expanding adult education schools into rural areas, the educational demand of an elderly person is perceived as a kind of rebellion against the order that sustains



The determination of an 84-year-old man on his way to school whispers the following truth to us: *“Education is beyond a right; it is a debt a person owes to himself.”*



the system. Thus, the film strongly criticizes how far education policies are from being inclusive.

#### FROM PERSONAL DETERMINATION TO COLLECTIVE HOPE

The First Grader conveys two fundamental messages by drawing on the life story of Kimani Maruge:

- On the individual level: Determination is the purest form of a person's re-creation of himself.
- On the societal level: For education to be truly “free,” not only financial but also structural and cultural barriers must be removed.

Maruge's story reminds us that education is not limited to childhood; knowledge is a lifelong means of liberation.

The First Grader speaks not only to Kenya's history but to the collective conscience of humanity.

The determination of an 84-year-old man on his way to school whispers the following truth to us:

*“Education is beyond a right; it is a debt a person owes to himself.”*

Everyone who watches this film will inevitably feel their own share of responsibility in Maruge's silent yet deeply moving journey

# Library



## Books That Shed Light on the Future of Education

*Every act of reading is a new form of contact with the world. The books featured in this issue bring together voices from different disciplines and*

*cultures around shared concepts: access, belonging, and transformation. We view reading culture not only as a means of acquiring knowledge, but also as a space for empathy and intellectual transformation, and we are pleased to share these works—now on our radar—with you, our esteemed readers.*



### EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, EQUITY AND DEVELOPMENT: PLANNING TO MAKE RIGHTS REALITIES

*Educational Access, Equity and Development: A Plan for Making Rights Realities*

**Author** : Keith M. Lewin

**Publisher** : UNESCO IIEP

**Publication Year** : 2015

The work examines how access at the basic education level gains meaning within the context of “rights,” the practical barriers encountered in achieving this right, and the principles of systematic planning. It highlights the difference between “attending school” and “learning” in access to education and discusses, through examples from specific countries, the socio-economic, urban/rural, and female/male dimensions of access.

*(Excerpt from the publisher's description)*



### SÁTÁNTANGÓ

*Şeytan Tangosu (Dance with The Devil)*

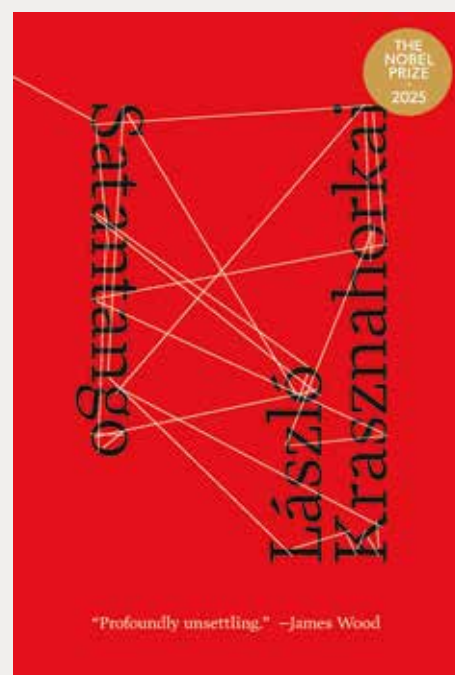
**Author** : László Krasznahorkai

**Publisher** : Magvető

**Publication Year** : 1985

The Hungarian author, who won the 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature, is regarded as one of the most striking voices of contemporary literature. *Sátántangó*, the most famous work of Krasznahorkai, was translated into Turkish in 2025 under the title *Şeytan Tangosu*. The novel constructs a broad allegorical structure through social collapse, economic and moral uncertainties, and the ordinary distortions of daily life in a small Hungarian village. With long, uninterrupted sentences, the author conveys the flow of time and space in an almost breathless manner, confronting the reader with the characters' internal and social tensions. The novel offers a structure that examines not only the fate of a village but also the themes of waiting, despair, and corruption in the modern world. By blurring the boundaries between individual and societal tragedy, it presents an experience that pushes the limits of literature both formally and thematically.

*(Excerpt from the publisher's description)*





## ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION: UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

Access to Higher Education:  
Understanding Global  
Inequalities

**Author** : Graeme Atherton

**Publisher** : Bloomsbury Academic

**Publication Year** : 2017

The work systematically examines inequalities in access to higher education across different regions of the world,

drawing on comparative research conducted in 12 countries. The pathways through which young people from low-income households access university are examined together with the roles of institutions and civil society. In terms of access to education, it reveals the often invisible barriers that target the “higher education level.”

*(Excerpt from the publisher's description)*

Access to Higher  
Education  
Understanding  
Global Inequalities  
Edited by  
Graeme Atherton

bloomsbury  
teaching  
& learning

www.bloomsbury.com

## ESCAPE FROM DYSTOPIC DELIRIUM

**Author** : Yunus Emre Özсарay

**Publisher** : İz Yayıncılık

**Publication Year** : 2025

Written in the form of a novel, the work constructs a narrative universe that interrogates the mental, social, and technological entrapment of contemporary humanity through short stories. Özсарay carries the concept of dystopia beyond clichéd future scenarios, making visible the small moments of delirium that emerge within everyday life in today's cities.

While the stories sharply portray the tension between the individual's quest for inner freedom and the control mechanisms of the modern world, they also prompt the reader to consider whether “escape” is truly possible. With its poetic language, observations flowing in an ironic tone, and a questioning structure resisting the pace of the age, *Escape from Dystopic Delirium* emerges as a striking new voice in contemporary Turkish short fiction.

*(Excerpt from the publisher's description)*



## THE ABUNDANT UNIVERSITY: REMAKING HIGHER EDUCATION FOR A DIGITAL WORLD

Yükseköğretime Erişim:  
Küresel Eşitsizlikleri Anlamak

**Author** : Michael D. Smith

**Publisher** : MIT Press

**Publication Year** : 2023

The work argues that higher education must move beyond the traditional model of “scarce resources and selective access” to become more widespread and accessible through digital technologies, discussing new models such as online education, micro-credentials, and learning platforms. It offers a modern proposal to address access problems in teaching and learning

## MAMA'S SLEEPING SCARF

**Author** : Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**Illustrator** : Joëlle Avelino

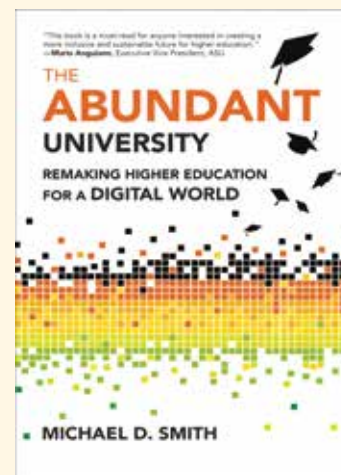
**Publisher** : HarperCollins Children's Books / Knopf

**Publication Year** : 2023



Written by the Nigerian-born author Adichie, the work weaves together small yet meaningful moments in the daily life of a mother and daughter through an emotional story centered around the mother's headscarf. Supported by colorful illustrations, this simple yet profound narrative delicately addresses themes of familial love, belonging, and identity in a way that children can understand.

Adichie conveys the universal language of motherly love with gentle humor and warmth while subtly suggesting how cultural identity is carried through everyday symbols. *Mama's Sleeping Scarf* stands out as a universal story rich both visually and emotionally that celebrates the mother–child bond.





# MAARIF DICTIONARY

Eyyup BOSTANCI

## Canteen

The earliest and original meaning of the word kantine is reminiscent of its contemporary usage. The word originally meant “cellar, storage room” in Italian. Later, the French word cantine shifted in meaning to refer to a “dining hall, military kitchen, or place where small amounts of food are sold.” In Turkish, kantine refers to a place where food and beverages are sold in schools, factories, barracks, etc.

Etymologically, the word is likely related to the Italian canto (“corner”), and the term, which originally meant “a storage room in the corner of a building,” gradually shifted in European languages to mean “a small place where food and drink are sold.”

Borrowed into Turkish from French in the late 19th century, the word began to be used especially in military schools and barracks during the Ottoman period, and in the Republican period became widespread in the sense of a school canteen, establishing itself as part of everyday language.



The Three Musketeers in front of the canteen.  
Joaquín Agrasot, 1885–1890

## Stone School

In the Ottoman period, the term Taş Mektep (“Stone School”) generally referred to the schools that constituted the first stage of the modern education system and were commonly known among the public as Mahalle Mektebi (“Neighborhood School”).

The expression Taş Mektep refers both to the sturdy masonry architecture of the building and to its place in collective memory as a symbol of a deep-rooted educational heritage. The use of stone in constructing these buildings aimed to increase durability against natural disasters such as fires and floods, thus preventing potential problems.

Public contribution played a central role in the formation and continuity of this heritage. From the etymology of the word mektep to the construction of the building itself, the people of the neighborhood contributed both directly and indirectly. Most neighborhood schools were built and financed either directly by the local community or through foundations established by the notable figures of the area. The school building, the teacher’s (muallim’s) salary, and even the students’ needs were covered by these foundations. This was the greatest and most traditional form of public contribution. The school’s daily needs (fuel, repairs, etc.) were also frequently provided in kind or in cash by the residents of the neighborhood. As in the case of the Büyükada Stone School, although some buildings (such as the Patriarch’s Mansion) later gained official status and began to be used as schools, the construction of Neighborhood Schools in general relied heavily on the individual philanthropy of the locals and wealthy patrons.



*Devecikonağı Stone School in  
Mustafakemalpaşa, Bursa*



## Tabiiyye

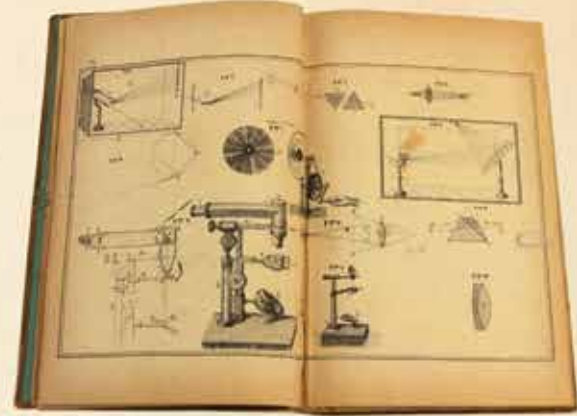
Most of you would likely say that this word carries meanings such as natural, pure, or unadulterated. But what does a word with such meanings signify when it appears as the name of a school subject?

You may have guessed that I am referring to a quantitative subject from our high school years that deals with nature, natural laws, and the physical world. Yes, today we will discuss the word for physics, which corresponded to “Tabiiyye” during the Ottoman period.

This word entered Turkish through the French term *physique*. This term is originally Latin as well. And it is derived from the word *physica* (natural science). The Latin *physica* itself originates from the Ancient Greek expression *physikē technē* (φυσική τεχνή), meaning “the art/science of nature.”

In the process of passing into Turkish, Ottoman texts used terms such as *tabiiyyât* or *hikmet-i tabîî* to correspond to this concept. The form “*fizika*” was also occasionally used during the Ottoman period to refer to the natural sciences.

During the language reform period of the Republic, the aim was to Turkify scientific terminology, and Turkish equivalents were considered for the word “*fizik*.” However, as a result of these efforts, the word “*fizik*” has retained its place in our language, both with its original root and its established use in scientific literature.



A page from **Mehmet Emin Derviş Pasha's book *Usul-i Hikmet-i Tabî'iyye*, Matba-i Amire, 1865**

## Lata

When you look it up in the dictionary, you will see that the word *lata* means “a narrow and fairly thick piece of wood.” But the interesting part begins here:

Beyond this simple definition, *lata* also appears in the Ottoman period as the name of a garment worn by members of the scholarly class—the teachers and scholars of the time. Originally exclusive to religious and scholarly circles, the *cübbe* and *lata* gradually spread to other segments of society, particularly the artisan class. Thus, this garment—once considered a symbol of wisdom and authority—became an ordinary part of daily life.

So how did the word *lata* acquire these two different meanings? When we trace the origins of words, two different paths emerge.

The first is the widely recognized root of the word: the Italian *latta*, meaning “a narrow, long piece of wood or metal.”

The second possibility relates to its use as a term for clothing. In this context, some researchers suggest that the word may be connected to the Italian *cuculatto*. *Cuculatto* means “a cowl-like robe” or “a hooded garment” — which shows a noteworthy resemblance to the stylistic features of the Ottoman *lata*.

Another view suggests that the word may derive from the Arabic root “*lāta* (لطة)”; however, this connection is not strongly supported by written sources. In the end, *lata* stands before us as a word that lies at the intersection of two semantic fields. On one side, the “narrow piece of wood” held by a carpenter, and on the other, the “scholarly garment” worn by instructors in the madrasah.

Between these two extremes, the journey the word has taken through time and culture stands as a fine example of how a word can define not only objects but also social roles and identities.

## Faculty

In the Turkish Language Association (TDK) Dictionary, *fakülte* is defined as “each of the divisions of a university separated according to field of study or specialization.”

This word entered our language from the French *faculté*. In French, the term carries both meanings: “ability, skill” and “university department.” The origin of *faculty* ultimately goes back to Latin. It is derived from the Latin word *facultas* (“ability, capability”). Ultimately, this root traces back to the Latin verb *facere* (“to do, to make”).

As can be seen, the core meaning of the word lies in the idea of capability and skill. In this context, the *faculty* one attends represents the individual's ability to specialize in a field and opens new paths in professional life. In this example, we witness how the original meaning of the word has changed over time, evolving into a term denoting specialization and institution.



**Paris Faculty of Medicine**



## CONTACT AND ACCOUNT INFORMATION

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• iletisim@turkiyemaarif.org • www.turkiyemaarif.org

### TURKISH MAARIF FOUNDATION DONATION ACCOUNT INFORMATION

IBAN

#### VakıfBank

<b>TL</b>	TR61 0001 5001 5800 7306 0925 82
<b>USD</b>	TR84 0001 5001 5804 8018 0952 52
<b>EUR</b>	TR42 0001 5001 5804 8018 0810 70

#### Ziraat Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR37 0001 0008 2481 9873 6050 01
<b>USD</b>	TR69 0001 0008 2481 9873 6050 07
<b>EUR</b>	TR42 0001 0008 2481 9873 6050 08

#### Halk Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR94 0001 2009 7530 0016 0000 38
<b>USD</b>	TR33 0001 2009 7530 0058 0003 90
<b>EUR</b>	TR60 0001 2009 7530 0058 0003 89

#### Türkiye Finans Participation Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR49 0020 6003 1903 6485 7400 01
<b>USD</b>	TR65 0020 6003 1903 6485 7401 01
<b>EUR</b>	TR38 0020 6003 1903 6485 7401 02

#### Albaraka Türk Participation Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR33 0020 3000 0398 8457 0000 01
<b>USD</b>	TR06 0020 3000 0398 8457 0000 02
<b>EUR</b>	TR76 0020 3000 0398 8457 0000 03

IBAN

#### Emlak Participation Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR49 0021 1000 0005 2211 0000 01
<b>USD</b>	TR65 0021 1000 0005 2211 0001 01
<b>EUR</b>	TR38 0021 1000 0005 2211 0001 02

#### Yapı Kredi Bank

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#### Vakıf Participation Bank

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#### Ziraat Participation Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR10 0020 9000 0014 8794 0000 10
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#### Garanti Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR82 0006 2000 4220 0006 2934 05
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<b>EUR</b>	TR22 0006 2000 4220 0009 0599 55

#### Kuveyt Türk Participation Bank

<b>TL</b>	TR58 0020 5000 0948 1373 6000 02
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