

Testimonial

Sila Arslan was responsible for the assessments, purchasing, budgeting and delivering of the aid provided by DAC. These are her words on how she and the survivors found the experience-

“It was a great honour to be a volunteer for Craig & Steve from DAUKI when they came to my hometown to help after the earthquake. Helping them made me feel worthwhile, following the earthquake the mood had been hopeless, it was an awful situation. I had wanted to help people and DAUKI gave me the opportunity. I felt inspired and motivated, this was what I had been hoping for.

It started as a request to perform some translation services but I was keen to take on more responsibilities and learn how survivors should be treated and helped after a disaster.

I soon became more involved, conducting assessments and identifying needs. I liked how DAI operated as they bought specific items as requested. We had been neglected by many other NGO,s. They had conducted assessments and then left without providing any aid. What some people got was just forced on them whether it was a priority or not.

When we delivered aid together I saw their smiles and how happy it made them feel, it gave them hope and we had their trust as we had delivered where others had failed. For myself I felt a sense of fulfilment, at night I went to bed knowing I was doing good.

After Steve and Craig left I continued to supply mattress to the camps. I felt a great responsibility. I couldn't bare to fail and was determined to live up to their expectations. Both Steve and Craig told me what a great job I had done. I now knew this was an area of volunteering I would like to get more involved in. I learnt aid working and researched how I could get more involved.

I was then contacted asking if I could act as an agent for DAE for the import of Ujeta water filters supplied from Germany. This was something I had not done before, I was happy to help and organised the process. The filters were to be sent to my home where I would then install them in the camps. I learned such a lot from this experience. The procedures were complex and I had to keep chasing up the customs officers. Again I didn't want DAE to be let down and worked on this tirelessly. Eventually the filters arrived, I took them to the camps and installed them. Previously they had taken bottles to be filled or bought water. These filters changed their life. Suddenly they had a source of clean drinking water and it makes their situation much easier and simpler.

Again I was congratulated on my success by members in Germany, Czech Republic, UK and USA.

In July I was again contacted by Craig asking if I would be willing to accept some money from Canada, perform further assessments and deliver aid. I realised that I now had their trust, I felt proud and despite being young they had confidence in me. I jumped at the opportunity, I had concerns as it was a big step for me but it was something I wanted to do. I wanted to see the childrens smile and hug the survivors. I knew it was now a part of my life.

When the money came to my bank account I was so excited, I got myself organised and started to take notes of everything I did. I wanted to make sure that I could help as many people as possible and get the best value for money. I wanted to show DAC that I could manage their budget well and prove myself as an aid worker. This is when I really began to feel like an aid worker, going out alone, speaking with victims to do assessments and sourcing exactly what

they needed. I had never managed large budgets before and so kept all my receipts so they can be checked. I also realised just how difficult a job this is, when others sheltered from the sun I was out doing all I could to heal the suffering that my sisters were feeling.

The sense of fulfilment I got when I delivered the aid cannot be understated. The people were used to being let down and they were so grateful for the help. There were many tears and emotions between us all. They felt like they had not been forgotten and neglected but now that someone cared. This was particular touching with the children. They had been so bored and unoccupied for months. Now they had things to do and things to play with. In the end I took 53 children for a private viewing of a cartoon at the cinema. The excitement was uncontrollable by them. They couldn't believe it was going to happen and hadn't slept the night before. They wore their best clothes. This was the highlight for me as the children had suffered the most.

My whole experience was amazing, I was out walking with my mom one morning when a car horn beeped. I looked to see a lady waving and shouting my name. She wanted to thank me for the mattress. She was so appreciative. This made me and my mom feel great, we do know that this was only possible as a result of the money provided by DAC. They are the ones who did the fundraising and provided the help. I could not have done any of this without them.

In August I was delighted to receive Craig back into my country. He surprised me as he had arranged for all my family to be present where he awarded me a Paul Harris Fellow. I was shaking at the time, it was a shock and all my family were delighted for me saying how deserving I was, they kept saying how proud they were as they knew how much effort I had put into helping people.

I now feel inspired to be a DART. To learn my role and help again with DAI. This feels like something I was born to do"