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A Journey Shaped by the SFF Program

My name is Dilnoza, originally from Tajikistan and currently pursuing my Master's degree in Cybersecurity in France. Before joining the Shams Family Foundation (SFF) Program, I was a high school student searching for opportunities to grow and turn my passion into a meaningful path. I applied to several programs, and then one day, one of my teachers introduced me to the SFF Program. I was immediately drawn to it and applied right away.

After a few weeks, I was invited for an interview, and shortly after, I was accepted into the program. The SFF Program was in collaboration with South East European University (SEEU) in Macedonia. It offered opportunities for students like me to pursue Bachelor's or Master's degrees in selected fields, along with scholarships for qualified applicants. I was one of the students selected to study for a Bachelor's in Computer Science at SEEU through the SFF Program.

When I received the acceptance letter, I was beyond excited and immediately shared the news with my parents. I went through the admission and visa process, and upon arriving in Macedonia, the SFF team provided invaluable support. They helped us navigate the early steps of this new chapter, making sure we felt mentally supported and not lost in a foreign environment.

During my Bachelor's studies, SFF continued to support students by organizing events and gatherings to help us feel at home and enjoy the journey. My academic experience went smoothly, and eventually, I reached another exciting milestone: I applied for a student exchange program organized jointly by SEEU and SFF. I was fortunate to be one of the selected students and spent one semester at the University of Calabria in Italy. This experience helped me gain valuable skills such as international collaboration, adaptability, and advanced technical knowledge related to my field.

After returning to Macedonia, I continued my studies and became involved in various university clubs. These experiences helped me develop additional skills, including teamwork, leadership, and creative problem-solving. I also participated in hackathons, where I worked on startup ideas. These events were instrumental in strengthening my entrepreneurial thinking, technical abilities, and collaboration under pressure.

Finally, in my last year, I completed my degree and officially graduated with a Bachelor's in Computer Science. Sadly, it was the end of our journey with SEEU and SFF Program but even at graduation, the SFF team stood by our side. Many of us were far from home, and their presence made the moment truly special. It was a beautiful and emotional celebration—for us, the students, who had come so far, and for SFF, which had played an important role in helping students and seeing the success they have achieved.

I am deeply grateful to the SFF Program for giving me the foundation I needed to move forward in life. Their support throughout my studies at SEEU was constant and empowering. Today, as I continue my academic journey in Cybersecurity, I carry with me the values, confidence, and experience I gained through the program.

I wish the SFF Program continued success and hope it will empower many more students in the future to pursue their dreams, just as it did for me. A big thanks to the SFF program and many more successes in the future.
