

READING

A Biography



1 Read the first two sentences in the biography. What can you infer from them?

- a Sakena's father educated her.
- b Sakena's father wanted her to have a better life than he had.
- c Sakena's father didn't think women should have an education.



2 Now read the entire biography. Write T (true) or F (false) next to each sentence. Find evidence in the text to justify your answer.

- 1 Sakena's father wanted her to get married in her teens.
- 2 Sakena studied abroad because girls weren't allowed to study medicine in Afghanistan.
- 3 Sakena received no support in Pakistan.
- 4 Sakena's achievements are known around the world.



3 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why did Sakena's family leave Afghanistan?
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- 2 How did Sakena's father react when she left her teaching career?
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- 3 Why was it important for Sakena to give refugee children an opportunity to learn?
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- 4 Why did soldiers in Afghanistan threaten Sakena?
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4 Find words in the text that mean:

- 1 resist (lines 1-6)
- 2 devastated (adj) (lines 16-21)
- 3 difficulties (lines 22-30)
- 4 forbidden (lines 30-36)



Education Changes Lives

Dr Sakena Yacoobi knows that her father started her on the path she chose in life. He never had an opportunity to go to school, so his children's education, no matter what their gender, was important to him. Since girls in Afghanistan traditionally get married in their early teens, Sakena was lucky to have a father who encouraged her to defy tradition.

Sakena Yacoobi was born in the city of Herat, Afghanistan. After finishing secondary school, Sakena was accepted at the medical school in Kabul, but couldn't attend because there was no dormitory for female students. Therefore, her father decided to send her to the United States to continue her education. While Sakena was studying in the US, life in Afghanistan became too dangerous for her family and they had to escape to Iran. They lived in a refugee camp for several years until Sakena managed to bring them to the US to live.

After rescuing her family, Sakena felt the need to go to a refugee camp to help other refugees. Although her mother was heartbroken that Sakena was leaving her family again, her father understood her motivation and supported her decision. So in 1992, Sakena left her successful teaching career in order to work in the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.

Most of the refugees were women and children who were poor and sick, and the sights in the camps reminded Sakena of the hardships she had seen women in Afghanistan suffer. She knew how the opportunity for an education had changed her life, and that was what she wanted to give to the refugees, especially the young girls. Sakena opened her first school in a tent with the aid of a local mullah, an educated religious man. Within a year, she was running 25 schools where 15,000 children were studying.

Sakena's efforts in the Pakistani camps and later in Afghanistan often put her in danger. In a 2015 talk, she described facing a group of soldiers who came to her school in the refugee camp. They threatened her because education was banned for girls. Amazingly, she got them to leave without hurting her or closing the school. She admits she was terrified, but she knew that she had to be strong and keep everyone safe.

Sakena has received many awards and international recognition for her work. However, what motivates her is her deep belief in the value of education. As she said in an interview after winning the WISE Prize for Education in 2015, "I have dedicated my life to promoting the importance of education because I really believe it is the only way to bring peace."