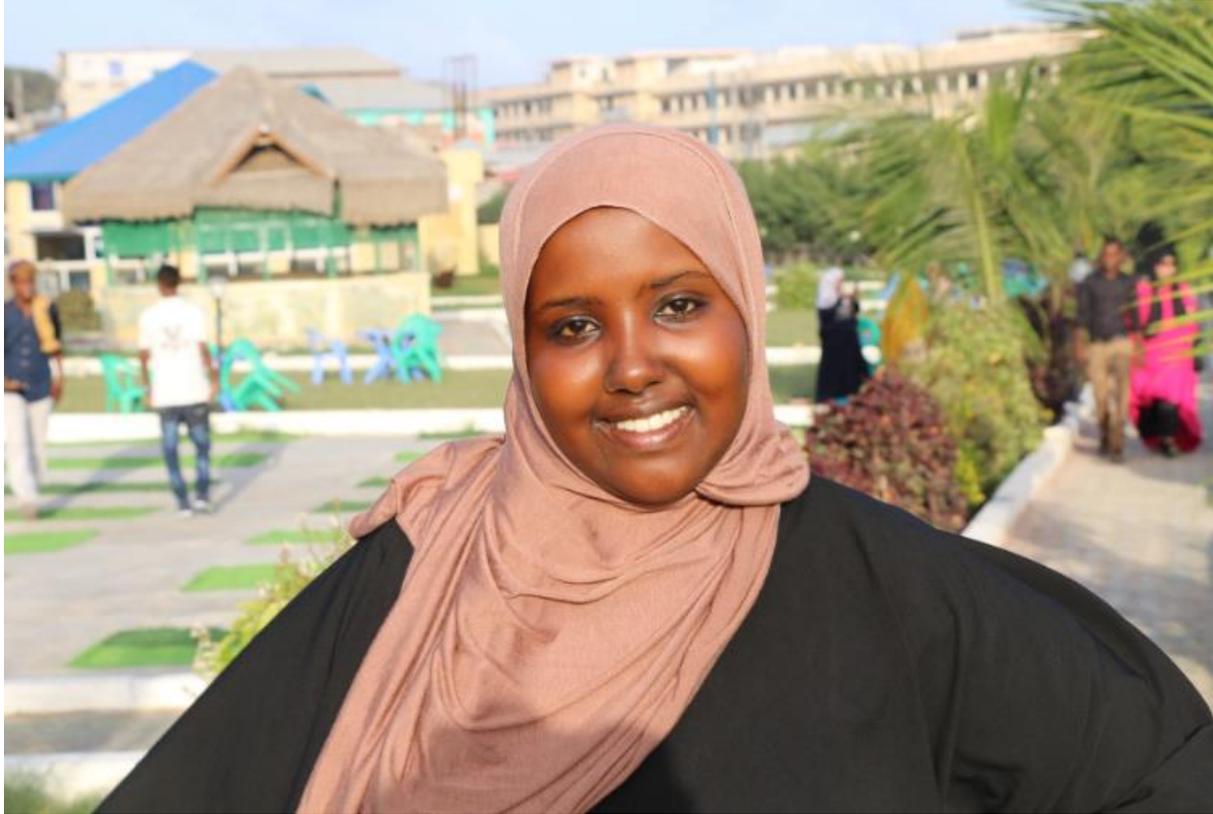


*Miski, a former Ark St Alban's Academy student and Reuben Scholar, is studying Biochemistry at the University of Warwick. This summer, Miski travelled to Mogadishu, Somalia, where she volunteered in a school and shadowed medical staff at local hospitals. Here she reflects on this experience and how it made her appreciate the opportunities she was given at school and the national healthcare system in the UK.*



This summer I visited Mogadishu, Somalia and volunteered at the local Tawfiq primary school teaching English, maths and science. I admit I felt nervous about this trip - the country has had many years without government, a situation which has only been reversed in the last three years. However, I felt a strong pull to experience life there, see my extended family and give my time to support the local community.

The students at the primary school, aged 8-11, were very keen to learn English, a language which they connected to the dramas and cartoons they watched at home. Although cheeky at times, the children were well mannered, hardworking, and eager to devour new knowledge.

When I was in Year 10 at Ark St Alban's Academy, I was lucky enough to have been given the opportunity to teach Spanish to my classmates. With the help of my fantastic teachers, I managed to excel in the language, and through teaching my classmates I learnt how to share my knowledge and enthusiasm with others. This helped me to better understand the role of a teacher - to engage and motivate students to interact with the subject. I was so grateful that I had this experience when I stood in front of the students in Mogadishu for the first time, because it made me feel confident and capable as a teacher.

However, I don't think this trip would have been possible without the Reuben Scholarship, which I was awarded at Ark St Alban's Academy to cover my living costs at university. Coming from a low-income family, I wouldn't have been able to move away from home and

study at Warwick if it weren't for the scholarship. It really has opened up many doors of opportunity for me, not least this once-in-a-lifetime experience in Somalia.

While in Mogadishu, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to tour several of the charitable hospitals and spent many hours informally shadowing nurses and doctors - seeing first-hand what I had previously only learnt about in lectures. I am studying Biochemistry at Warwick University, so I'm interested in learning from medical practices around the world. My cousin works at one of the main hospitals in the city and I observed her taking blood samples from patients with infectious diseases like typhoid, malaria and cholera. The tragedy is these diseases which kill so many are easily treatable.

Unfortunately, Somalia has very little in the form of medical provision for its citizens, and even once it's available, it's far from affordable. It made me very grateful for the NHS, despite its shortcomings. However, with charities educating people about hygiene, symptoms of diseases and where to find medical help, the situation is slowly but steadily improving.

My experience over the summer, as well as the support given to me by Ark St Alban's Academy and the Reuben Foundation, has instilled in me a desire to help others. After graduating, I hope to pursue a master's degree, and longer term, I plan to apply my knowledge of biochemistry and health science to help combat some of these diseases. Now, more than ever, I'm committed to improving health systems in developing countries to better the health of those who live in poverty.