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[1] Making shoes is a craft handed down from father to son in Syria. Diyaa and his family had been making shoes for decades before the war obliged them to leave their home in Damascus. Now, **they** are settled in Morocco and Diyaa is a successful business model.

[2] When he arrived in Morocco, Diyaa settled with his family on the outskirts of Casablanca, but he started his shoe-making workshop in a small street of the city. He started from nothing, working long hours to make sandals and shoes. "At the beginning, I worked for 18 to 20 hours a day and lived 20 km away from Casablanca. Each day, I had a two-hour ride to get to work," he says.

[3] Gradually, Diyaa's hard work gave good results. His determination to succeed allowed him to have more customers and orders. With the help of a grant from the refugee organization UNHCR, he bought his first sewing machine and other shoe-making tools. "In the beginning, I worked alone. Then I received the first sewing machine as part of a UNHCR support for refugees. It was a real motivation for me. Today, I employ four Moroccan workers. Moroccans have always inspired confidence in me. As an employer, I feel reassured working hand in hand with them," he says.

[4] In recognition of his efforts and contribution to his host country, Diyaa was awarded a prize by the Moroccan association MASPSE. "The prize was a surprise for me. I never thought my hard work and perseverance would be recognized in a foreign country. I came here with empty pockets," he said. "Thanks to my work, my family and I are able to progress. Whenever I had difficulties, my wife would tell me to never give up, to go forward and to get up every time I fell down," he continued.

[5] Diyaa not only employs young Moroccans from a poor neighborhood, but he also helped other Syrians to open their own shoe-making workshop nearby. He has also opened a second shop in Casablanca. He's really a model by his entrepreneurial spirit. Previously, Diyaa had no car. With a small income, he could afford little. Today, he finds Morocco comfortable. He can provide for his family and is renting an apartment closer to his work.

[6] In recent years, thousands of refugees have not only found safety in Morocco, but also a space where they can manifest their creativity and entrepreneurial skills. "People **here** do not consider us as refugees but as citizens," says Diyaa. "In Morocco, I have never felt like a foreigner."

Adapted from:*www.unhcr.org*