



## DR. UMUT DUYGU UZUNEL

### VOLUNTEERISM

Dr. Umut Duygu Uzunel is a lauded ophthalmologist devoted to providing free, essential eye care for women and children in underserved communities. Her commitment to changing the lives of her patients is truly selfless. Dr. Uzunel spent her annual vacations and personal earnings to fund her work in remote villages. Over the course of her time volunteering, she has examined an astounding 20,000 individuals and performed more than 3,000 operations, with her work often saving a patient's vision.

Dr. Uzunel has overcome immense personal struggle to continue her work, most importantly, she has been impacted by a muscular disease that causes muscle weakness and requires assistance. She also fled her home country of Turkiye after the government objected to her involvement with a nonprofit and hid from the police for three months. In Canada, she went on to share her powerful story with The Shoe Project, a "growing family of

immigrant women, Canadian authors, and theatre artists passionate about writing expressively, and creating public performances where the brave and moving stories of newcomers and refugees are presented to the public." Through this project, she has been able to raise awareness of the experiences of refugee women and the challenges they face to make it to Canada.

As a Canadian and new graduate from the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, she is again able to provide her life-changing volunteer work in Africa, completing her most recent trip in June, 2022.

"Umut" means "hope" in Turkish. As her name denotes, she is a shining beacon of hope for women and children trying to access vision healthcare locally and internationally.

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