Nour Al-Zouhairy graduated from Mosul technical college in 2014, majoring in computer engineering technology. During the period that the Islamic State group controlled the city, she was unable to find a job. Every day felt alike, as if the clock had stopped. What gave Nour strength then – as it does now – was her relationship with her siblings and parents. “My family is bound together by a lot of love,” says Nour. “We gather every night to talk about our days and discuss any problems we’ve encountered, so that we can support each other and help each other to solve them.”

Nour first heard about MSF through her sister. “My sister was working as a translator with MSF, and through her I learned a great deal about the organisation,” she says. “When she told me about a vacancy at an MSF project in Mosul, I applied and was lucky enough to get the job.”

But the 28-year-old deserves her good fortune: she is ambitious and diligent and got where she is today through hard work. After working as medical data entry officer at Nablus hospital in West Mosul for some months, she applied for the position of medical data supervisor and was successful.

“What I like most about my job is that I learn something new every day,” says Nour. “I have developed my professional and personal skills. Also, when you work with an international organisation like MSF, you get to meet people from different countries and are introduced to new cultures. This makes it a dynamic work environment to be in.”

Nour’s work can have its challenges. She supervises a team of four: two registrars and two medical data entry officers, two of whom are men. “It still feels a bit difficult in our society to have a woman supervising a team of men,” she says. “I have to be strong and decisive in taking decisions and distributing tasks, but at the same time I seek to maintain good professional relations with my colleagues.”

Nour is inspired by some of the strong women in her life, such as her logistician friend who proved that logistics doesn’t have to be a man’s job, and her hardworking mother, who still finds time – despite long hours working shifts in a public hospital – to listen to Nour’s concerns and provide her with advice and moral support.

In her free time, Nour immerses herself in fiction. “*The Alchemist* is my favourite novel,” she says. “It taught me that one should cling to one’s dreams and hope till the very end. We can take risks and set out on adventures to achieve our goals, and we should keep trying until we reach that goal.”