“My name is Yasmine Mohamad. I am 27 years old. I am from Mosul. I love Mosul and I live to serve Mosul.”

This is how Yasmine introduces herself when meeting new people. It’s an accurate description. But there is a great deal more to find out about her.

Yasmine believes that time stopped for Mosul when the Islamic State group took control of the city. To protect her brothers and sister from the risks of going out to work, she quit her studies at the nursing institute and took over responsibility for supporting the family. Having learnt the basics of nursing from a friend, Yasmine opened a small clinic within their house.

Yasmine charged only a nominal fee for her services and only to those who could afford it. Her aim, first and foremost, was to help people from Mosul who had been injured as a result of the ongoing battles, removing shrapnel and suturing their wounds.

“When the Iraqi government regained control of Mosul, many of us, young men and women, were at a turning point,” she says. “We saw our city under the rubble and we wanted to get it back on its feet. We started with clearing the university campus and school compounds. We helped people who had been displaced from their homes. We also raised money to rebuild a church and we held the first mass in West Mosul following the battle over the city.”

With the fighting over, Yasmine was able to get on with her life, intent on further developing herself to help others. She took part in courses on people empowerment and peacebuilding. She became a leader and trainer, then started facilitating courses and seminars on the empowerment of women. “The role of women in our society isn’t limited to the home,” says Yasmine. “How would Germany have been rebuilt after the second world war were it not for women? The women of Mosul have an essential role to play in rebuilding the fabric of our society.”

Yasmine now works as a watchwoman at MSF’s post-operative care hospital in East Mosul. Her main motivations for working for MSF are its principles of independence and neutrality and her passion to help others. “I like people very much, and I feel satisfaction doing my work,” she says. “I may make a patient happy or lighten the day of a colleague with a friendly word as they enter the building.”

Yasmine says her work has bolstered her self-confidence and her belief in her capacity to make a difference. Recently she decided to reach for her childhood dream and become a television presenter – while still working at her day job and contributing to civil society initiatives. She now moonlights as a presenter on a local TV channel. Her first two TV programmes focused on telling the stories of resilient women who were supporting their families after their husbands were killed in the violence. But Yasmine’s media job hasn’t got in the way of her humanitarian work, which “runs in her blood now”, as she puts it.

“I receive a lot of criticism: a lot of people tell me that helping people will not benefit me, but I don’t care what they say,” says Yasmine. “My life is beautiful and I don’t need to own a palace or a car to be happy. Materialism is not the purpose of life. Humanity is life.”