

Funds plea for game project



■ The game's welcome screen

A Bahrain-based video game developer hopes to raise \$23,000 in 45 days through crowdfunding, so she can complete her project.

By **GHAZI ALSHEHABI**

Pakistani Saba Saleem, who was born and raised in Bahrain, is working on an educational game about refugees called *Musa: A Brother's Story*.

It is a story of two refugee brothers in which players control the older brother Musa, who cares for his little brother Isa, and is being designed for PC and mobile.

Ms Saleem said she was in-

spired to make the game after volunteering at an organic farm in Turkey in 2014.

"(A life-changing event) was waiting for me in the city of Istanbul," she said.

"I went there for a few days to see the main tourist spots, but what I was really struck by instead was the enormous amount of refugee children on the streets.

"The refugee crisis was not as talked about then and this was shocking to me,

"I saw children everywhere and sometimes full families living under a bridge.

"All of these children were just trying to make ends meet. There were children entertaining onlookers by playing instruments on Istiklal Street, there were children begging for a pilaf to share with their family in Taksim Square.

"When I came back to Bahrain, I started donating regularly to the cause – but it was not much and I knew that I had it in me to do more.

"A nagging feeling stuck with me since then and I don't remember how, but one day I decided that I can become a tool of awareness and empathy by sharing the stories of these children.



■ Ms Saleem

"Musa has become a huge part of my life and I believe everything in life, including my business experience, my artistic ability and my love for video games, has come together to do what I believe to be my life's work.

"That is why I am in talks with a global refugee agency to make sure that I represent this topic properly.

"The funds will allow me to quit my day job and do Musa

full time, so the money will support me as well as allow us to purchase a better PC for development and pay for software such as Unity Pro.

"The fund target is not our complete funding target, but just a first round.

"Having a first round of funding allows us to raise more money from traditional investors."

Campaign

Ms Saleem began work on the game last October and co-founded The Stories Studio, a games studio, with her husband Sajad Hameed in January.

With the help of her husband she has been creating 3D models, animations, writing code, designing the game's first level and even creating the music for it.

The crowdfunding campaign was launched on May 6 on Indiegogo.com and so far has raised \$3,623 with the help of 64 backers, which is 16 per cent of the goal.

The campaign has six donation tiers – \$10, \$35, \$95, \$490, \$5,000 and \$9,500 – each with its own perks.

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■ Two students of Multinational School Bahrain donated BD300 to Al Rashad Centre for Autism. Salma Mahmood and David Smith raised the funds through a school bake sale. Above, David, left, and Salma, second from left, presenting the cheque to representatives from the centre in the presence of a school official.