

"ReConnect makes a huge difference to people's lives. It enables refugees with often unrecognised talent and competence to find a way forward in higher education and teaching. Everyone benefits: the individuals, society and the education itself."
Professor Tom Schuller, former Dean, Birkbeck, University of London

UPDATE

Preparation for Higher Education Programme at UCL

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, our partner University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IOE) has continued to deliver ReConnect's Preparation for Higher Education programme.

33 refugees and asylum seekers from 13 countries, 16 females and 17 males, were supported during autumn 2021 and Spring 2022 terms. 24 refugees and asylum seekers from 24 countries, 13 females and 11 males, are currently attending the summer 2022 term.

Since the programme started in September 2018, 204 refugees, 113 females (55.4%) & 91 males (44.6%), from 37 countries have been supported on the programme.

Our thanks to the *Equator Fund* for providing some of the much-needed funding for the programme.

Our thanks to *National Lottery Awards for All* for funding our *Refugee Connexion Project*.



Pathways into Teaching, PGCE Post-Compulsory Education

To date, in partnership with the Institute of Education (IOE) & Birkbeck, we supported 59 refugees (33 males and 26 females) from 20 countries, to gain PGCE in Post-Compulsory Education. Around two third are now teaching in London.

Theodros Abraham
Director of ReConnect
theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk

JOIN US AT OUR REFUGEE WEEK EVENT

Free Event
SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Organised by ReConnect & UCL Institute of Education

Thursday 23 June 5pm -8pm
In the Elvin Hall, UCL Institute of Education,
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL



Images by E. Zinah, UCL IOE G. Michael

Key Themes:
RECOGNISE

the achievements of students who completed the UCL IOE ReConnect - Preparation for Higher Education Programme for refugees

RAISE AWARENESS

about the barriers faced by refugees in accessing Higher Education & the work of ReConnect

- ❖ Official Opening by **Professor Li Wei**, Director of The institute of Education, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society
- ❖ Guest Speakers include:
 - Professor Alison, Ribeiro de Menezes**, Head of Department of Hispanic Studies, University of Warwick, on 'Research and reflections on the importance of education in supporting refugees'
- ❖ **Students & alumni** from the programme, teachers with refugee background
- ❖ **A short video** of a research project - Seeking Access: An Applied Ethnopoetic Analysis and Poetic Rendering of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Narratives of seeking access to Higher Education
- ❖ **A Presentation on a UCL Public Policy, Policy Engagement and Impact Fellowship project** to develop engagement pathways to reduce barriers for refugees and asylum seekers, seeking access to Higher Education.

Please confirm attendance on:
theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk

A SUCCESS STORY

ReConnect creates opportunities for refugees to realise their potential

Interview conducted by Sarah Buxton Chair of Trustees of ReConnect

'The course gave me hope that I could teach in UK'

Amirtha participated in the ReConnect 'Preparation for Higher Education' 10 week course in 2019 and again in 2022. She is a 1st class graduate in Agricultural Science from Sri Lanka, where she was selected to help first year students with practicals and was then promoted to Assistant Lecturer. She taught Biology practicals and led field visits. After 7 years in the UK she learned about Reconnect, and the course at the Institute of Education, via a WhatsApp group. 'Theodros helped me, and the course was so helpful, it gave me a path back to my profession. I realized that I could teach in the UK.'

Amirtha was accepted onto the Post Graduate Certificate in Education in 2019 but lost her place because she just missed the required score in the IELTS test (International English Language Testing System). She has worked hard towards the test since then, through self-study (course fees are too high), using model papers and materials on the website, and will take the test again in July. Meanwhile she is a volunteer Learning Support Assistant in a London Further Education College, supporting 16+ students in maths and biology GCSEs. 'I know this is the place for me!' Amirtha took GCSE Maths and English herself, and Level 2 'Supporting Teaching and Learning', both free in college. Paying £500, she has begun Level 3 Education and Training (a national qualification through City and Guilds). It will help her Plan B, if she cannot do PGCE, and will continue to support students to achieve their aims.

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SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION/ TEACHING

RECONNECT

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Established in 2003 **RECONNECT** is a Charity that works with unemployed and underemployed **refugees** to reconnect them to their professions, especially teaching. We provide guidance and support; liaise with education providers to deliver relevant training including work experience; support transfer of skills to developing countries; and draw attention to forced displacement and education needs.
<https://reconnectonline.org.uk/>

APPEAL BY SARAH BUXTON Chair of Trustees of ReConnect

Participants tell us how crucial the Preparation for Higher Education course has been for them: it 'showed me it was possible to contribute here;' 'it really helped me to find my way and become independent again;' it 'gave me hope that I could teach in UK'. These and other testimonies are in previous newsletters and Annual Reports, see website <https://reconnectonline.org.uk/> And yet refugees to UK regularly report that their extensive working experience 'meant almost nothing here.' They face many obstacles accessing higher education and professional work. In the 1930s the UK had a very different attitude, as documented in Medawar and Pyke's book 'Hitler's Gift: Scientists who fled Nazi Germany' (2000). British science benefited hugely. The review states: 'This brilliant book.....is full of the generosity of the British, repaid many times over by its beneficiaries.'

Our hardworking director, founder and sole employee will soon be joined by a part-time Volunteer Coordinator, funded for a year by National Lottery Awards for All, who will enable skilled volunteers to contribute to ReConnect's needs, particularly in IT and fundraising. We also need two more people who are willing to take on the responsibility of being a Trustee. Please contact me if you are interested.

ReConnect needs funds! See figures on the right. We receive no government funding. Some Charitable Trusts provide funds, but I need to ask for your contribution, of any size, if you can make one. Individual donations are crucial in ensuring that ReConnect can continue to offer courses, which enable individuals to make their contributions to UK society.

We will be very grateful.

Sarah Buxton, Chair of Trustees

sarahbuxton@reconnectonline.org.uk

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Amirtha remains committed to teaching, knowing it is her way to contribute and be part of life in UK. I admire her energy, enthusiasm, commitment, and optimism.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE/ DONATE

- It costs £ 1,200 to enable A Refugee/ Asylum Seeker to undertake Reconnect - Preparation for Higher Education Programme. This includes guidance, course fees and cost of travel.
- It costs £ 11,000 to enable a refugee to undertake a teacher training course (PGCE Post Compulsory Education Programme), at UCL Institute of Education. This includes guidance, tuition fees, Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), and Occupational Health Checks fees, and cost of travel.

HOW TO SUPPORT US

Choose one of the following:

1. **Donate via Just Giving**
through the following link:
<https://reconnectonline.org.uk/donate>
2. **Write to us**
Send us a cheque or CAF voucher (payable to ReConnect)
Charity No. 1105016
to: *ReConnect*
Resource for London
356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA
United Kingdom
3. **Donate using Gift Aid**
Gift Aid is a straightforward way to increase the value of your gift to ReConnect – at no extra cost to you. If you pay tax in the UK, ReConnect can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you donate. For example, if you donate £50, it is worth £62.50 to us.

To donate using Gift Aid we must receive the completed form, which you can find via the following link:

<https://reconnectonline.org.uk/gift-aid> or by emailing

theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk

Tel. 0207 697 4065

OUR THANKS

To all those who have supported us with grants and donations during the year. These include Barrow Cadbury Trust/ The National Lottery Community Fund COVID, Network for Social Change Charitable Trust, J H Levy Charitable Trust, The Roundton Trust, Inchrye Trust, The Cotton Tree Trust, and our many individual donors. With this financial support the Charity has been able to implement its programme.

The Charity is also grateful for the dedicated teaching and pastoral support provided by staff at UCL Institute of Education, including for the 'buddying' (mentoring) initiative.

Our thanks also to our volunteers and members of our Advisory Group for their immense contribution to support our work.

LINKS TO OUR WORK

A Guardian article on refugee teachers

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2017/jul/14/the-refugees-rebuilding-their-lives-as-teachers-in-british-schools>

UCL video on preparation for Higher Education Programme
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDi7-kdluic>

UCL publicity video
<https://youtu.be/6DNZWezOXUU>

Awards Ceremony/ Refugee Week 2019
<http://youtu.be/TkriSEGiVzU>