

"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 system itself." Professor Tom Schuller, former Dean, Birkbeck, University of London

UPDATE

Preparation for Higher Education Programme at UCL

Our partner University College London (UCL) Institute of Education (IoE) has continued to deliver ReConnect's Preparation Higher Education programme since 2018.

42 refugees & asylum seekers from 11 countries, 22 females and 20 males, were supported during Spring & Summer 2022 Terms.

21 Refugees and asylum seekers from 14 countries, 12 females and 9 males, are currently attending the Autumn 2022 Term.

Since the programme started in September 2018, a total of 225 refugees and asylum seekers, 122 females & 103 males, from 31 countries, have been supported on the programme.

Educational Counselling & Credit Transfer Information Services (ECCTIS)

Since June 2021, we have supported 55 (28 females & 27 males) refugees & asylum seekers from 19 countries to secure Statements of Comparability of their overseas qualifications, enabling them to make an informed decision on their preferred options in higher education.

Theodoros Abraham
Director of ReConnect
theodoros@reconnectonline.org.uk

Congratulations! to **Mentesnot Mengesha**, one of the beneficiaries of ReConnect's Pathways to Teaching project, now a lecturer, recently honoured at BBC Radio London's *Make A Difference Awards* for his efforts to help support low-income families in his local Newham. Refer to the following link for details:
- [Queen Mary University of London \(qmul.ac.uk\)](https://www.queenmary.ac.uk)

SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Extracts from reflections provided by two participants on our programmes

A refugee from Afghanistan who attended our Preparation for Higher Education programme Currently studying MPA Energy, Technology & Public Policy course at UCL

"It is quite obvious for people arriving to a new country as refugee or asylum seeker, to experience cultural shocks, language barriers and the overall understanding the system, especially the educational sector. You will come across various challenges such as entrance requirements, financial support and finding right program at a right place. After successful completion of my ReConnect journey with the wonderful tutor and staff, I understood the aforementioned barriers and through their efforts, I made contacts with UCL professors which helped me in launching my application and fulfilling other essential criteria. Along with this, I learnt the very much needed systems (Moodle & Portico) which quickly adjusted me in program. I think program such as ReConnect acts as bridge between refugees/asylum seekers and the educational sector, the society and the community which not only help the people to attain higher education but also help to become a contributing citizen of the host country."
(18.11.2022)

A refugee from Ethiopia who attended our PGCE-Post Compulsory Programme/ Pathways to Teaching Project. at UCL Institute of Education, currently teaching full-time in a further education college in London

"I am one of the students, who had the opportunity to start teaching on part-time basis whilst attending the second year of my part-time PGCE course. I had continued teaching in the same college for another year, which gave me the sought-after work experience in addition to the work placement that I had as part of the PGCE programme. Ever since, I am working in the FE sector with varied roles and responsibilities by being proactive in my subject specific and other aspects of professional developments. I would like to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to ReConnect for the opportunity it had offered me and others, who had the passion, experience, qualifications, and ability, to have both a career in education and to contribute my (our) fair share to the UK's Education system."
(25.11.2022)

A SUCCESS STORY

ReConnect creates opportunities for refugees to realise their potential

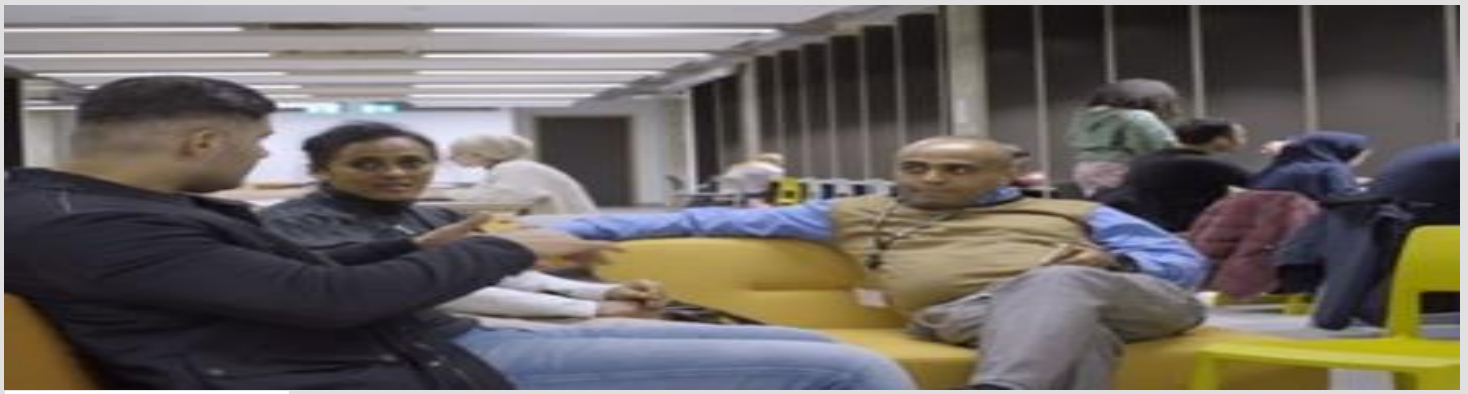
Ben (not his real name) is in his early 50s. He came to UK in 1998 as a refugee. He held BA degree in Arts and Master's degree in Animation and taught in the same field for four years in his home country. After arriving in UK he was confronted with the challenges of adjusting to his new life in the country. He had to customize his academic standards to the requirements of job markets in UK. He considered the need to pursue further studies to make best use of his existing academic background and practical experiences.

In his search for further studies in his field in UK he came across emerging opportunities at ReConnect. He managed to enrol on the Pathway into Teaching- Post Compulsory Education course provided at the Institute of Education, University of London where he successfully completed his two year part time study. As part of his course, he practised teaching media and web design for the period of 6 months at Hackney college.

Ben greatly values the opportunity for training at the Institute of Education, University of London which he considers to be one of the best academic centres in the world. He is thankful to his tutors for offering him valuable knowledge and skills which have enhanced his career in teaching. He remains grateful to his academic tutors at the Hackney College that taught him practical skills in teaching during his placement at the centre.

Using the best opportunity offered to him by ReConnect Ben managed to reconnect himself to his chosen academic and vocational field and is now working as a lecturer and head of department at a college in London providing distance teaching course. He appreciates and values all the contributions of ReConnect for helping refugees access higher education and academic careers in UK. Ben remains grateful to ReConnect for helping him realize his potential in his chosen teaching career at higher learning centre. He would be happy to associate with ReConnect sharing his experiences to promote the established aims of the charity.

*Interview conducted by Belay Gessesse
A Trustee of ReConnect*



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

I hope you feel inspired reading about the experiences of participants in our course. My role now is to ask if you could make a contribution to ReConnect's work, of any size. In our last newsletter (June 2022, issue 7) I quoted a participant in the Preparation for Higher Education course, who wrote that his prior working experience 'meant almost nothing here'. At a time of shortages in the workforce, the UK is neglecting to welcome the skills and experience of refugees, as well as those seeking asylum. This is such a loss of opportunity for individuals and their ability to contribute and settle, as well as the national economy. ReConnect's 10 week course provides a bridge into UK higher education for refugees and asylum seekers, who may have professional experience, and a complete or partly complete HE qualification, usually from their home country. It provides a route to re-qualifying for professional work, particularly in teaching. If you are able to contribute, we will be very grateful.

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 In the last Newsletter (June 2022, Issue 7) we told you about Amirtha, who had completed Preparation For Higher Education, and was working as a volunteer Learning Support Assistant in a college while improving her English Language skills. We are delighted that she gained the required score in IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and joined the Post Graduate Certificate of Education course in September. Amirtha writes:

"My higher education journey in the UK actually began after I joined the ReConnect program. The story of how I got to know about the ReConnect program might be insignificant but the benefit I reaped from it was very valuable and important in my life. Because, in my case, the information barrier was the very first gigantic challenge in my education life, and the language barrier was the next. After joining the Preparation for Higher Education programme I was able to cross each and every barrier that I had to face. With information and the experience I gathered from ReConnect, I overcame all the barriers to accessing higher education in this country. Now, I am a PGCE Further Education student at IOE UCL and successfully moving forward toward my goals and enjoying my course very much."

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. The Equator Fund, Cockiolly Trust, Newscorp Giving Fund, Awards for All/ National Lottery, J H Levy Charitable Trust, Inchrye Trust, MSN Fund, 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 Trustees, volunteers and members of our Advisory Group for their contribution to support our work.

Our thanks also to Mr. Mike Butler, for his committed support to the Charity's fundraising initiatives.

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>