

## WITH ALL GOOD WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS &amp; THE NEW YEAR

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.

- ❖ 21 Refugees and asylum seekers from 11 countries, 8 females and 13 males, have successfully completed the Autumn 2023 module.
- ❖ Since the programme started in September 2018, a total of 298 refugees and asylum seekers, 160 females and 138 males, from 35 countries, have been supported on the programme.

**Educational Counselling & Credit Transfer Information Services (ECTIS)**

Since the initiative started, in June 2021, we have supported 118 (53 females and 65 males) refugees and asylum seekers from 27 countries to secure authoritative Statements of Comparability of their overseas qualifications from ECTIS (formerly NARIC), enabling them to make an informed decision on their preferred options in higher education.

**Pathways into Teaching for Refugees Programme at IOE**

We are currently actively seeking to raise the required funds to restore the programme.

Since 2005, In partnership with Birkbeck and the Institute of Education, ReConnect has enabled 59 (33 males, 26 females) unemployed and underemployed refugees, from 20 countries to gain teaching qualifications.

An Impact Survey Report of the 59 refugees supported by ReConnect, undertaken by Zhen Yang, a PhD student at University of Warwick can be accessed at:

<https://reconnectonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Impact-Report-The-ReConnect-PGCE-Programme-2005-2021-March-2023.pdf>

Theodros Abraham  
Director of ReConnect  
[theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk](mailto:theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk)

**SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION**

Join us to celebrate  
**ReConnect's  
20<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary**

**Dates/ Venue  
Monday 5 February  
5.30pm -8.30pm**

**In Seminar Suite  
2 and 3,  
Resource for London  
356 Holloway Road  
London N7 6AH**

Please confirm attendance on:  
[theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk](mailto:theodros@reconnectonline.org.uk)

**Reflection by Aine McAllister, Course Leader, ReConnect Preparation for Higher Education Programme, UCL**

Autumn Term 23/24 has been another highly enjoyable and stimulating term with ReConnect Participants. As usual we have been fortunate to have learned with highly accomplished participants; for example teachers, scientists, civil servants from various countries, as well as young people full of promise and enthusiasm, all of whom have had their professional journeys or their Higher Education journeys interrupted. The Poetic and photographic outputs from our collaborative autoethnography was as usual moving and insightful. The group presentations for the British Museum task were exceptionally critical and well researched and led to robust and critical debate and dialogue in class. We are looking forward to the next two terms of this academic year to continue working and learning with ReConnect.

## A SUCCESS STORY

**ReConnect creates opportunities for refugees to realise their potential**

"I am Mesay Gashaw, holding an MSc, NPQLTD (National Professional Qualification for Leading Teacher Development), and FSET (Fellow of Society for Education and Training). I arrived in the UK 32 years ago as a refugee and met my wife, Ms. Aster Dejene. She supported me during the trials and tribulations of settling in and finding my purpose.

After arriving in the UK with a B.Sc. degree in Mathematics and prior experience in computer programming, finding a job related to my qualifications and experience was difficult due to a lack of information and delayed settlement permission. To overcome this, I pursued further education with the support of my beloved wife and sons (Eyoael and Henok) and obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Computer Science followed by an M.Sc. degree in Internet and Database Systems.

I completed a Diploma in Education at the Institute of Education, UCL from 2008 to 2010 through the ReConnect program. The course provided theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and placement opportunities. I received exceptional guidance from Dr. Sam D. and Dr. Jay D., and learned from an experienced subject mentor, Mr. Gebre B., and a supportive lecturer, Mr. Rawa, during my placement at Hackney Community College.

I taught at Tower Hamlets College while studying and later taught at various colleges including Southwark, LeSoCo (Lewisham Southwark College), Orpington, Bromley, and London South East College. As a teacher, I held diverse roles such as Maths and IT/Computing Lecturer, Course Leader, Internal Verifier, Lead Internal Verifier, and Tutor.

I have been improving my skills by participating in CPD programs. Recently, I finished NPQLTD course at IOE, University College London.

Currently, I hold Fellow status of SET (Society of Education and Training) and I am a member of a PAG (Practitioner Advisory Group) of SET.

I am very thankful to ReConnect and Mr. Theodros for providing me with the initial support that helped me to build a fulfilling career and achieve my dream. It is worth highlighting that ReConnect has been going strong for two decades, shining a light and being a beacon of hope in the lives of refugees. I would like to wish them many more years of providing unparalleled service."

*Mesay was one of the 40 refugees supported by ReConnect at the Institute of Education, UCL (2007-2010), funded by the then Department for Children Schools (DCSF) and Families through the London Hub for Refugee Teachers/ Employability Forum.*

**SUPPORTING REFUGEES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION/ TEACHING**

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**

ReConnect has just past its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 20 years of pushing forward with its main purpose of enabling refugees with a teaching background in their home countries to gain a qualification to enable them to work in the UK. During these years, successful partnerships were established, firstly with Birkbeck, University of London, and subsequently with our ongoing partner UCL Institute of Education. 59 people with a refugee background have gained the Post Graduate Certificate in Education at one of the foremost institutes for training teachers in the world.

Much of ReConnect's achievement is due to the vision, energy and persistence of Theodoros Abraham, Founder and Director. He set up the charity in 2003 with Michael Stewart, solicitor and Chair of Trustees for 13 years. Theodoros identified the challenges facing qualified and experienced refugees from his professional experience working at Africa Education Trust in the 1980/90s. These difficulties include a lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, and lack of recognition of professional experience in the home country, experience which may have been at a high level of responsibility e.g. in schools or education ministries. See Mesay's words showing us how much he had to offer the UK, if he could gain a PGCE and gain employment. Refugees in UK face a complex path to gain a qualification here. The Preparation for Higher Education course at IoE, established in 2018, gives structured guidance and an intense orientation to the UK education system, as well as detailed individual learning support. It is making a difference and enabling many participants to enter education at different levels.

ReConnect received financial support from the UK government up to 2011. 54 people qualified with a PGCE during that time. Since then a lot of effort has gone into raising funds, from Trusts and Foundations, and individuals who have contributed small and larger amounts. We are grateful to receive any amount. If you recognise the value to individuals, to the education system, and to the UK, of enabling teachers with many different life experiences to work in the education system, please make a contribution. ReConnect and its future participants will be very grateful.

Sarah Buxton  
[sarahbuxton@reconnectonline.org.uk](mailto:sarahbuxton@reconnectonline.org.uk)

**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

[theodoros@reconnectonline.org.uk](mailto:theodoros@reconnectonline.org.uk)

Tel. 0207 6974065

**OUR THANKS**

To all those who have supported us with grants and donations during the year. The Equator Fund, Network for Social Change Charitable Trust (NSCCT), Resource for London/ Enhance Project, J H Levy Charitable Trust, The Inchrye Trust, CAPGEMINI UK plc 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/ Resource for London, 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-kdIuic>

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