

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

University of Glasgow invited to join UNESCO's prestigious Universities Network for its work in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts

The University of Glasgow has been invited by UNESCO's Director General to join its prestigious universities network (the UNESCO Chairs) and establish the first **UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts**.

The purpose of the UNESCO Chair is to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation on how the integration of refugees into new communities can be promoted through languages and the arts. The UNESCO Chair will bring together internationally-recognised researchers in this field from across the University as well as other institutions in the United Kingdom, in Africa, the Arab States region, as well as in other regions of the world.

The University of Glasgow's Professor Alison Phipps will lead this activity as the UNESCO Chairholder. Professor Phipps, who is **Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies, in the School of Education and Co-convenor of GRAMNet – the Glasgow Refugee and Asylum Migration Network**, said:

"The endowment of this Chair by UNESCO will allow us to extend our work significantly with a focus on the protection of living culture. It will allow us to develop multilingual and creative hubs of activity with a number of partners, including Glasgow Open Museums, Scottish Refugee Council, the Red Cross and the Iona Community to enable refugee integration through languages and the arts. In Ghana we shall be working with the University of Ghana and the Noyam African Dance Institute and in Gaza with the Islamic University of Gaza."

Glasgow's UNESCO Chair will be delivered in partnership with the University of Glasgow's Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNet), migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, a collective of international researchers, artists, public and third sector organisations. It extends present work funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council under the Translating Cultures theme with existing partners – including those in Gaza and Ghana with historical experience of refugee integration, land, language and population loss – to address needs in countries that are presently receiving displaced persons.

In response to UNESCO's announcement, the University will establish a full-time secretariat to undertake a programme of research focused on fostering refugee integration through creative and cultural expressions. The University will also appoint two artists-in-residence – Gameli Tordzro, a Ghanaian multiple arts professional, and Tawona Sithole, a poet from Zimbabwe.

Professor Anton Muscatelli, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow welcomed the announcement and said:

"The establishment of this UNESCO Chair is a great honour for the University and reflects our commitment to and support for refugees since the 1930s when the University was a haven to academics fleeing the Nazi regime. It is also a tribute to the inspirational research that has been led by Alison Phipps. I have no doubt that the UNESCO Chair will lead to an expansion of this important work at a time of unprecedented refugee crisis".

The UK National Commission for UNESCO, which is the central hub for UNESCO-related matters in the UK, supported Professor Phipps through the rigorous application process to establish the UNESCO Chair. The UK National Commission for UNESCO's Higher Education Director, Professor Kiran Fernandes, said of the announcement:

“With its focus on fostering community integration through creative and cultural expression, Glasgow’s UNESCO Chair encapsulates what UNESCO is all about – building peace in the minds of men and women through intercultural understanding and collaboration. In being invited to establish a UNESCO Chair, the University of Glasgow is taking its rightful place within a dynamic, global network of universities which have been formally honoured by UNESCO for high-quality research that is working to further UNESCO’s peace building mission”.

Research projects range from the dynamics of ethnic inequality and identity in the UK since the Second World War; lesbian, gay and bisexual migrants in Scotland; and a training model for effective interpreting in healthcare settings. Other aspects include:

- **The Researching Multilingually at Borders** project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). It is a collaboration between seven academic institutions (international and UK) and third sector organisations. The international team of researchers, with their different disciplinary backgrounds, research experiences, language and performance skills, will conduct *international comparative research* on translation and interpretation at different kinds of border in order to develop theory, ethical research practices and research methodologies in relation to multilingual research.
- **Artists-in-residence:**
- **Gameli Tordzro** was appointed GRAMNet Musician-in-Residence in 2015. His plans include the development of a Migrants Arts Network within GRAMNet in collaboration with other artists-in-residence'. He said: “I will also bring the expertise and experience of a diaspora artist from a context in the global south with a history of both receiving and losing populations through slavery, displacements and conflict. This is vital knowledge for working with refugee populations in the present and in their own displacement from the contexts where their languages are spoken readily and cultural forms are palpable and part of everyday life.”
- Poet-in-residence **Tawoni Sitholé’s** work with the University of Glasgow has ranged from Global Health inductions to working within the School of Education, and is currently focused on the Researching Multilingually project. He said: “Working with the Chair I will ensure that the ethics of respect for indigenous and ancestral knowledges are maintained and observed fully within the project and the academic work. As the programme of work with the Chair becomes established with the two partners in the global south we will work to extend the reach of the work into my own native Zimbabwe and also with indigenous custodians of culture and language with whom Prof Phipps has established and trusted relations.”

An inaugural UNESCO Chair lecture will be held at the University of Glasgow in spring, 2017.

The Scottish Refugee Council’s Head of Policy and Communications, Gary Christie, said: “Since the considerable increase in interest in refugee integration, through the resettlement of refugees from Syria, we have further consolidated our work with the University. Large public meetings on the Greek arrivals and humanitarian aid with Médecins Sans Frontières, artists and campaigners, and also with the Italian Ambassador to the UK, have each attracted audiences of over 300 at the University for our joint work.

“They have been central to capacity building required across many new sectors. Working with academics under the proposed UNESCO Chair programme will enhance those new activities considerable and enable us to work with partners in contexts from which we have much to learn, but where we often struggle for research access. The proposed extension of the CARA (the Council for At-Risk Academics) work by the University is particularly pleasing and could lead to significant capacity building around refugee integration in the higher education sector.”

Dr Nazmi Al Masri, Vice-President of External Relations, the Islamic University of Gaza, said: “The Islamic University of Gaza is delighted to be a partner in this innovative UNESCO Chair established at the prestigious University of Glasgow and to be competently and creatively led by Professor Alison Phipps. Speaking from Gaza, which has been hosting Palestinian refugees for about seven decades, I can confidently confirm that this UNESCO Chair will achieve its noble objectives and will contribute to the promotion of universal values adopted by the UNESCO and the partner universities involved in this Chair. Hand in hand and with languages and arts we will together promote the culture of peace, tolerance and pluralism.”

The Artistic Director of Noyam African Dance Institute, Nii Tete Yartey, said of the recent work with Professor Phipps, Gameli and Naa Densua Tordzro and Tawona Sitholé in Ghana: “The past weeks with the research and artistic team of Broken World, Broken Word has been a transformative experience for not only the Noyam Dance Institute, but also the Dodowa community as a whole. It is rare to have a project that goes beyond just harnessing the collective energies of a community to touch and actually bring families together in the end. It has been an amazing journey. I look forward to future work deepening these relationships through the UNESCO Chair programme. ”

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MEDIA CONTACTS

For more information, contact Sophie Leedham, Policy and Communications Manager at the UK National Commission for UNESCO Secretariat sleedham@unesco.org.uk / 020 7766 3492 or visit <http://www.unesco.org.uk/designation/unesco-chairs-and-unitwin-networks-in-the-uk/>

For interviews with Professor Alison Phipps, please contact Liz Buie, Communications and Public Affairs Office, University of Glasgow

Links to videos:

Ghana: <https://vimeo.com/138059033>

Gaza - sign languages: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnxZ_tWPOT0&feature=youtu.be

Glasgow and Languages: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl77CaxL_BA&feature=youtu.be

Ghana artist in residence, Gameli Tordzro's Ha Orchestra: <https://vimeo.com/103518219>

Zimbabwean Tradition-Bearer and Poet in Residence – Tawona

Sithole: <https://vimeo.com/98254165>

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the UNESCO Chairs Programme

The UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Programme was established as a way to advance research, training and programme development in UNESCO's fields of competence and strengthen the interface between policy and research by building dynamic university networks and encouraging inter-university cooperation through transfer of knowledge across borders.

UNESCO Chairs UNITWIN Networks are established in over 700 institutions in 126 countries worldwide.

The UK is home to 22 UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks playing a leading role in research areas as diverse as sustainable mountain development to archaeological ethics and practice. In the UK, the Programme is coordinated by the UK National Commission for UNESCO. Learn more about the UK's UNESCO Chais here:

<http://www.unesco.org.uk/designation/unesco-chairs-and-unitwin-networks-in-the-uk/>

About UNESCO

UNESCO promotes a culture of peace by fostering intercultural dialogue and international cooperation through collaborative work in the fields of education, the natural and social sciences, culture, communication and information.

UNESCO in the UK

The UK is home to a diverse network of UNESCO projects. From Biosphere Reserves to Creative Cities, Global Geoparks to World Heritage Sites, UNESCO is closer to home than you might think. Discover UNESCO near you at www.unesco.org.uk. The UK National Commission (UKNC) works to support the UK's contribution to UNESCO and bring the benefits of UNESCO to the UK. It is the hub for UNESCO-related matters in the UK.

The UKNC has three core priorities:

1. We provide expert, **independent policy advice** to UK and devolved government on UNESCO related issues
2. We advise and support individuals and institutions in the UK, its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on accessing **UNESCO accreditation and prizes** and how to derive more value from their involvement with UNESCO
3. We support the UK government's agenda in helping **UNESCO to become more effective**

In carrying out these roles, the UKNC relies on advice and support of its expert network, including specialists in the fields of education, culture, the sciences and communication and information from across the UK.

To learn more about UNESCO in the UK and how you can get involved, contact info@unesco.org.uk or visit www.unesco.org.uk

About the University of Glasgow

As a top 0.5% university, we deliver world-class and world-changing research and education with impact. We are a member of the prestigious Russell Group of leading UK Universities with annual research income of more than £181m and the top student satisfaction rates in Scotland.

Recent award success can be found here:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/awardsandranks>

About Professor Alison Phipps

My research interests focus on languages and intercultural studies, with a particular critical concern for the different ways in which people learn to live and communicate together by stepping outside comfortable or familiar contexts.

My work is interdisciplinary and draws on the resources of social and cultural anthropology, theatre and cultural studies, theology, law, modern languages and education. My Ph.D. research and ethnographic training focused on open air community theatre in Germany. I have continued ethnographic work among tourists, modern language students, adult learners of tourist languages, in conflict zones and among sanctuary and asylum seekers, refugees and befrienders.

At present I am developing research on languages and intercultural advocacy with asylum seekers and refugees; and through intercultural workshops on education for peace and non-violence with a growing focus on constructions of faith and on the contribution of theological perspectives. I am a published poet and bring poetic and dramaturgical approaches to bear on much of my work.

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