



## **Ambitious scholarship programme for outstanding refugee teenagers launched by UWC and BRC**

London, 21 January 2016

Many outstanding and talented young refugees will get a first-class education at United World Colleges (UWC) each year thanks to a partnership announced today with the non-profit organisation Blue Rose Compass (BRC).

Initially, ten refugees from Syria and other priority conflict regions will be awarded scholarships to UWC colleges in 2016. This will be expanded in subsequent years – providing refugees from the Middle East and other parts of the world with a unique opportunity to access UWC’s world-class transformational education programmes. UWC and BRC wish to establish a consortium of donors and supporters to provide a life changing education for up to 100 of these young people every year.

Today around 60 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of conflict, violence or persecution, the highest figure since records began. Half are aged under 21. Many refugee children and teenagers miss out on an education when they become internally displaced or are forced to flee their countries of origin.

Blue Rose Compass visits countries hosting refugees to identify gifted young people, and connects them with educational opportunities in world-leading colleges and universities, including help with language, testing, visas, travel, living expenses and finding a job on graduation. In return, scholars commit to use their education to benefit their regions of origin.

Lorna Solis, Founder & CEO of Blue Rose Compass, said: *“This will make 100 dreams come true each year and affect the lives of many others. When I visit refugee camps I am heartbroken by the waste of talent and human potential. Gifted students are being left to stagnate. Girls who have the potential to achieve academically, are often married off and become mothers in their teens. I see first hand how education in conflict zones can bring opportunities to youth who would otherwise have none.”*

Each year UWC will offer up to 100 of these young people a unique educational opportunity at one of its 15 schools and colleges around the world. UWC leverages education as a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.

In a recent survey of UWC students, 5.5% stated that they or their families had refugee status at some point in their lives. This partnership with BRC will greatly increase its capacity to recruit refugee students and nurture their skills and talents at a time when it is crucial that the world pays attention to the plight facing so many people from conflict zones. The partnership with UWC sets an example to other institutions about inclusion and learning among diverse student populations.

Jens Walterman, Executive Director of UWC International said: *“We greatly welcome this partnership with BRC. Together we will find young people whose experience of conflict gives them the desire and drive to bring about positive change in their lives and the lives of others. UWC has a unique role to play in addressing global challenges by demonstrating the power of education to unite diverse groups of people. The young people we select will meet others from all over the world, forming a unique global cohort. Together they will learn not only that they can excel in any field they choose, but also that they can become community leaders and help to find solutions to some of the world’s most intractable problems.”*

*“With experience of conflict giving them a deep commitment to peace, these are the future leaders who can reverse the brain drain and help to rebuild their troubled regions. This partnership constitutes an investment in future peace and prosperity that will pay dividends many times over,”* said Lorna Solis.



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**The UWC Movement**

UWC makes education a force to unite peoples, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. To achieve this, UWC provides a transformational pre-university education to students of different ethnicities, religions, nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds, including those from marginalised communities and refugees. Selection for UWC is based on merit and potential and is managed by volunteer selection committees in more than 150 countries.

This unique and challenging education model places a high value on experiential learning and community service, to prepare students for future roles in community leadership.

Founded in 1962, UWC now has 15 schools and colleges on five continents, the majority of these are two-year residential colleges following the International Baccalaureate Diploma, a qualification UWC played a major part in developing.

Currently, 75% of UWC students receive full or partial financial assistance. UWC also has a network of short courses, often held in regions of political, economic, ethnic or environmental tension on themes such as conflict management or environmental awareness.

The UWC movement aims to inspire a lifelong commitment to social responsibility and to create a global fellowship for international understanding among its alumni, now numbering more than 55,000.

The UWC schools and colleges are located in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Swaziland, USA and Wales.

**BRC Mission Statement**

Blue Rose Compass (BRC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to giving gifted young refugees the opportunity to develop their talents and become agents of change in the world. We travel to conflict zones in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America to identify young adults – especially, though not exclusively, girls – who have exceptional academic talent and leadership qualities. We help them to apply to top universities and to find work when they graduate.

Among other criteria, candidates for BRC Scholarships must be either living in a refugee camp or otherwise displaced by conflict, and committed to finding ways in which they can use the opportunity of an education to contribute to peace and rebuilding in their region of origin.

Without our intervention, the talents of these exceptional individuals would most likely go to waste. The NGOs that work hard to cater to more than 50 million refugees understandably prioritize emergency needs such as safety, food and shelter. Education takes a back seat.

In particular, talented young women in the regions we work in tend to be extremely marginalized. They are typically encouraged to marry young rather than to pursue their studies. Often cultural or political pressures keep them away from school.

An education from an elite university can enable an individual to break their entire family's cycle of poverty, and exponentially increase the impact they can have in their home regions. BRC Scholars are also encouraged to work together on cross-border projects. As a diploma is only part of the equation, we work hard to get our students first class summer internships and jobs with Fortune 500 companies on graduation.

As beacons of hope and positive role models, BRC Scholars remind us that it is possible to create your future and impact the world no matter where you are from.