



INTEGRATION PATHWAYS

IMPACT REPORT 2024

OVERVIEW

In 2024, Integration Pathways continued to make significant strides in improving the employability and livelihoods of people on the move, thereby advancing their integration into South African society. During this period, Employment Access continued our focus on delivering comprehensive employment support services, skills development opportunities, and targeted interventions for all our clients – jobseekers, entrepreneurs, learners and students. The Employment Help Desk (EHD) remains the cornerstone of our programme, supporting and preparing jobseekers for employment opportunities through CV creation, job posts and career advising. Skills Hub capacitated learners in job readiness, digital literacy, vocational skills sponsorship and business development; it also provided sponsorship for vocational training and business grants. The Foreign Professionals Desk supported clients in the evaluation and verification of their qualifications and the registration with professional bodies. Additionally, it provided information on applying to higher education institutions and on access to bursaries. The UpLearn project's partnership with Southern New Hampshire University Global Education Movement (SNHU GEM) ensured that students were supported with academic guidance and planning, tutoring and training, access to resources and preparation to enter the workplace, as they become the future leaders in their communities. The English School provided training in the fundamental first step to integration by offering various levels of English via in-person or WhatsApp classes.

UpLearn experienced increased stability and growth in 2024. This allowed the project to strengthen its processes and systems while continuing to steadily grow the student numbers. Employment Access had several personnel changes, which allowed us to re-evaluate roles and functions and consider strategic changes to the project's structure. This resulted in the dissolution of the Skills Manager and the Employment Support Coordinator positions and the creation of the Skills Facilitator and the Employment Access Team Leader positions respectively. The Team Leader will oversee the day-to-day running of the project and the Skills Facilitator will facilitate workshops as well as engage and support clients on their employment and entrepreneurship journeys.





HIGHLIGHTS

- Graduations are important, as they mark significant accomplishments for our students and clients. This year we held a very special UpLearn graduation for 38 students and their families at Scalabrini Centre's Hall. The venue was filled to capacity and resonated with pride and joy as each student collected their certificate from the SNHU GEM Executive Director, Rachael Sears. Students gave moving speeches on the impact of the SNHU Scholarship Programme on their lives and how Scalabrini had built their leadership capacity. Additionally, the English School hosted end-of-term graduations for learners who had advanced their English towards integration. These were proud moments for all.
- In the SNHU GEM scholarship programme, a student's pace is the length of time it takes them to complete the scholarship programme, which is a maximum of two years per degree. Over the past year, UpLearn significantly improved the students' pace from over two years to an average pace of 1.6 years.
- In Skills Sponsorship consultations, clients are encouraged to assess their skills and identify their skills gap with the help of the Skills Facilitator. They also have to conduct their own research on availability, quality, and foreseen impact of the training. Within reason and budget, the decision of how they empower themselves lies with the client. This collaborative and consultative approach ensures that the client takes ownership of their own professional growth journey, while being empowered and supported by Employment Access. This unlocks agency and grows leadership traits.
- Assessing and placing learners in the correct English level continued to be refined through the development and implementation of a digital placement test, an oral assessment and a more efficient registration and payment process for new and returning English learners. They also received a brief introduction to what they could expect to learn in both the WhatsApp and in-person classes. We also adapted our Smartphone Digital Literacy training for English, so that students were more equipped to navigate WhatsApp, as a platform for learning, during the term. These changes have proven effective, as learners had a higher rate of homework submissions and achieved better results.

HIGHLIGHTS

CONTINUED...

- Being an entrepreneur is difficult and not always successful. However, most of the business owners we have worked with in 2024, either through training, the provision of grants or mentorship, report that they are not only progressing towards financial sustainability but are also better equipped to navigate and realise future growth opportunities. As leaders, some have made strategic decisions to diversify their product offerings; others have found innovative ways to overcome operational challenges and adapt to market needs.
- The Foreign Professionals Desk supported 56 clients in successfully navigating accreditation and qualification-recognition processes, increasing access to employment and higher education opportunities.
- To develop aspiring IT professionals, we partnered with Learn Networking Academy and ran two cohorts of Cisco IT Essentials in 2024, with 44 learners successfully obtaining their certification. This course not only prepared learners for specific technical roles but also enhanced their problem-solving skills across various IT domains. Additionally, nine learners were co-sponsored to complete the more advanced and internationally recognised Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certificate course, with all successfully passing their final exams at the end of the intensive six-month course. The CCNA qualification equips participants with intermediate IT networking skills, enabling them to pursue entry-level positions in the IT industry. Four learners reported finding work during the training or immediately thereafter.
- Greater collaboration between tutors and academic advisors resulted in increased student engagement, not only for academic progress but also in lab engagement. By collaborating more closely, the team built stronger trust and enhanced communication with UpLearn students.



NEW PROJECTS

We launched the Professional Growth Workshops series as part of our job readiness offering. This series aims to empower clients with a balanced blend of personal and professional skills to bridge the gap between self-awareness and career competence. Additionally, we adapted Exploring Opportunities as part of the students' orientation to their SNHU studies. Here, the focus is on study-life balance, the development of soft skills, and the importance of peer networking and relationship building.

Wrap-around Services: In partnership with the UpLearn project, Employment Access developed and piloted Wrap-around Services for students and graduates. This initiative ensures that students have greater access to all services offered by the Scalabrini Centre. Additionally, it includes a tailored Professional Development Service that provides personalised career planning consultations and group workshops specifically designed to support students at critical milestones in their Associate and Bachelor's degree programmes. The service targets students at various levels of their studies, gradually fostering a career-focused mindset.

The programme refined its digital literacy curriculum, introducing new modules in cybersecurity, online job applications, and advanced Microsoft Office skills to prepare clients better for the evolving job market. The cybersecurity module, in particular, was well received, with 92% of participants declaring they felt more confident in recognising and avoiding online scams.

We partnered with Bridge for Billions (B4B), a US-based social enterprise organisation, on the Conecta Migrants' Project. This project supported our entrepreneurs through a six-month pilot training period through an interactive learning platform and mentorship programme. In total, 28 business owners completed the programme and most found it helpful in strengthening their business skills. Ultimately, the programme chose not to renew the partnership due to the training duration being too long for participants' schedules and concerns regarding the mentorship component. We reverted to the previous model of a shorter, more focused course that incorporates local content examples and a more structured mentorship framework with regular check-ins to enhance support.

UpLearn implemented a system of weekly student status meetings to discuss and track individual student progress on a regular basis. In this targeted approach, priority students – those struggling to meet their monthly competencies – were assigned a tutor to work with to bring the student on track to meet their credit requirements. This initiative has seen increased progress in students' delivery.

We consulted with an expert online teaching practitioner from the Open University in the United Kingdom, who confirmed that our bridging course is on par with international standards. Feedback that we incorporated was to create additional peer-to-peer feedback opportunities, which encourage collaborative learning and skills improvement.

Previously, we had noted that students who had been re-admitted into the academic programme did not fare well. Therefore, we developed a structured learning space on Google Classroom to support students prior to readmission. Students were also instructed to adhere to strict deadlines to enhance accountability and time management. Additionally, they were assessed on essential soft skills needed to be an independent learner. Three students were readmitted and are progressing well in the programme.

In the Group Coaching sessions, we implemented a number of strategies, which included the introduction of their peers as Accountability Partners. We also invited UpLearn Management, SNHU alumni and other Integration Pathways staff members as guest speakers to provide real-world insights and leadership perspectives. This has proven highly beneficial in keeping students motivated and on track.

122

EMPLOYED OR INCREASED
INCOME

1737

HELP DESK
CONSULTATIONS

880

NEW CVS CREATED



15

SMALL BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT
GRANTS

56

FPD SAQA APPLICATIONS
AND REGISTRATIONS OR
ADMINISTRATIVE
SUPPORT

1785

CLIENTS
PARTICIPATED IN
SKILLS HUB TRAINING

415

English
School

+



801

Job
Readiness
Training

+



383

Digital
Literacy

+



71

Small
Business
Training

+

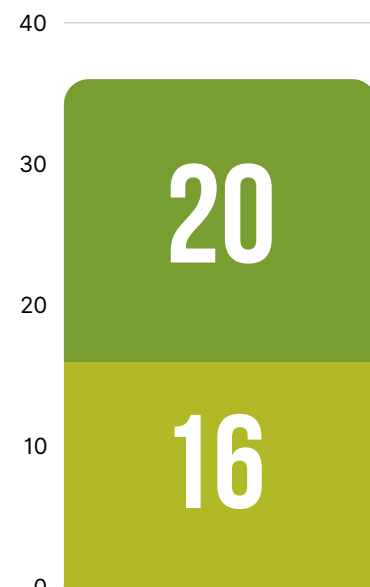


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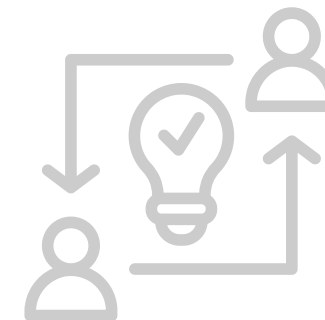
Vocational
Training
(Sponsored)36
GRADUATES

● Associates of Science

● Bachelor of Arts

52 NEW
STUDENTS

96

ATTENDED
BRIDGING COURSE2180
12INDIVIDUAL
COACHING
SESSIONSGROUP
COACHING
SESSIONS

TEACH OUTS

456 STUDENTS/
84 SESSIONS

"YOU CAN TRY AGAIN": REDISCOVERING HER PURPOSE

From creating her CV, to now studying towards her Bachelor's degree and lots in between - Elgadine is steadily building towards a future where she can do something that she loves. Her journey – filled with both setbacks, and growth – was shaped by the support she received from Scalabrini's Integration Pathways and making the most of the opportunities offered.

A NEW PATH

When speaking with her, it is easy to tell that Elgadine works hard and dreams big. So, it was no surprise that Elgadine dreamed of studying medicine in France after high school – encouraged by her family members who lived there, and who said they would organise it. While waiting, Elgadine started a degree in International Relations in her home country of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

But the move to France never materialised. Left disappointed, she completed her degree in DRC and promised herself she would never dream of leaving the DRC again. This was until Elgadine reconnected with an old friend, they fell in love, and she moved to South Africa to start a new life with her now husband.

FEELING LOST

Once in South Africa, Elgadine was excited to start her career, but finding work with her degree in International Relations was seemingly impossible. Instead, she took a job at Builders Warehouse.

After 6 years at Builders Warehouse, Elgadine left her job due to family responsibilities. Once she was able to get back into the job market, finding a job, again, proved difficult.

Elgadine describes this as a period in her life where she felt "lost". "Being in a country where you feel like whatever you did in your country, was nothing, was very painful," she explains.

It was while she was looking for employment, that Elgadine was introduced to Scalabrini – leading her to Integration Pathways, specifically, the Professional Growth workshops, which she credits for getting her where she is today.

CHOOSING GROWTH

When Elgadine first walked through the doors of Scalabrini, she felt like she was being welcomed by old friends. "Everyone here is friendly - people you've never met before greet you like they've known you for a long time," she reflects. "I see us coming from different countries, but we sit together and do things together. You would never know that we're from different countries."

Clients who join Integration Pathways follow a specific process. The first step is assistance with CV creation and following that clients are added to a WhatsApp group where different opportunities are shared. Through this WhatsApp group, Elgadine found information on the Professional Growth (PG) workshops. "I wanted to grow my skills professionally and personally," she says – and she jumped at the chance.





SETTING GOALS

During a PG session, Elgadine heard about UpLearn, Scalabrini's higher education programme. She realised that she had applied before, but didn't pass the entrance test. At PG, she was told that she "can try again". "I held onto that; "you can try again". After that I decided, okay, I will try and see," she says.

Inspired to reach her goal, Elgadine started to prepare for the UpLearn test. "I knew I wasn't good at computers, so I signed up for Scalabrini's Digital Literacy course... I was building myself," she explains.

PG supported Elgadine in regaining her sense of purpose and confidence. "From the workshops, I felt like I knew what my next steps needed to be, and I felt ready to face anything and try anything that came my way."

Two PG sessions, in particular, stuck with Elgadine: self-awareness and resilience.

"The self-awareness lesson helped me a lot. The activities made us experience real things. It wasn't just theory – we could apply it," she says. "Self-awareness made me do everything I did after."

The lesson on resilience hit home. "I've been through a lot in this country," she says. "But the resilience lesson made me realise that, even if we fall today, we should take it as a lesson, as something that's building us and making us stronger for the future."

Elgadine took full advantage of every opportunity. "Every time I saw a message [on the WhatsApp group], I would go. The growth was there." When the time came, Elgadine took the UpLearn test again – and passed. "I was ready, and I did well!"

WHAT'S NEXT?

Elgadine is now a student at UpLearn, pursuing a degree in Operations and Logistics. Elgadine hopes to return to a company like Builders Warehouse – where she already has experience – and apply for a higher-level position. "I would like to get a good job, where my skills and qualifications will be valued... When you do something you love, it makes you feel better about yourself."

While she is working towards that job, she is clear about where her transformation began. "The Professional Growth workshop was the starting point that built the person I am today. It helped me a lot."

Elgadine encourages others to make use of the opportunities offered at Scalabrini. "I learned a lot without spending much! I am an example of what Scalabrini's assistance can do!"

LOOKING FORWARD...

Building on this year's Youth Leadership & Employability initiative, we'll continue offering work-readiness support and digital literacy training, enhancing youth employability and creating job opportunities for future-ready youth.

Workshops or sessions on the ethical and effective use of AI will be introduced for UpLearn students at every level of training to enhance learning while avoiding potential risks.

A major focus area across Integration Pathways is the capacitation and empowerment of people on the move, be they clients, students or learners. Therefore, in 2025 we will continue to refine our teaching and development practices in workshops. Content in all areas will be improved continuously based on learner and student needs and the challenges they face. We will endeavour to innovate our facilitation methods to make content more engaging, to deepen learner interaction, foster agency and promote active participation in all our training programmes. This leadership-focused approach aspires to fostering greater resilience and independence.



The centre is registered with the South African Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation (021-079 NPO), as a youth and child care centre (C7569) and as a Public Benefit Organisation with the South African Revenue Services (930075335) and governed by a Trust (IT2746/2006).
Auditors: PKF Constantia Valley Cape Town Inc
VAT number: 478 025 1437

43 - 47 Commercial Street, Cape Town. 8001

Tel: (0) 21 465 6433

www.scalabrini.org.za

