

hope Potential
ability sanctuary
Change
refuge



Rebuilding lives, breaking down barriers

Thank you for taking the time to read this report, we hope it gives you a flavour of what we have been up to over the past year and the difference RETAS has made to people's lives.

RETAS faced public funding cuts of 79% (£144,000) this financial year and since September '11 we no longer have any income streams from public sources going forward into next year. This will be a huge challenge for us!

We are thinking creatively of ways RETAS can adapt to these uncertain times in order to operate more sustainably and to keep our unique services running.

Should you wish to help us out financially we would be extremely grateful. Any gift, no matter how large or small can make a big difference to the lives of refugees and asylum seekers.

Donations can be made using the enclosed donation form or online at www.retasleeds.org.uk

For more information please feel free to contact us.

“So many doors are open to me now”



RETAS (The Refugee Education Training Advice Service) provides an open and welcoming door to refugees and asylum seekers in West Yorkshire. With over 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the region, these groups are on the margins of our society, facing multiple barriers to accessing employment and training opportunities. Lack of English, no UK work experience, cultural differences, not understanding UK systems, misunderstandings from employers and lack of UK qualifications are often the causes of unemployment and underemployment of refugees.

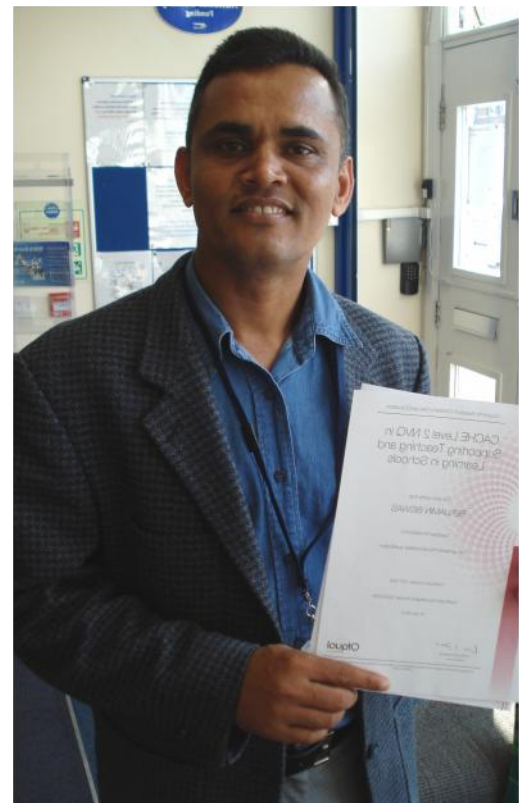
At RETAS we believe that every refugee and asylum seeker can reach their potential here in the UK. Through our education and training services we aim to help integrate refugees by providing a platform to rebuild their lives. RETAS is based in Harehills, Leeds in the heart of the Community; a multicultural section of the city with a high percentage of refugees living locally. As you will read we also provide volunteering opportunities so refugees are able to develop skills and gain valuable work experience, and raise awareness of ‘the refugee experience’ in schools and the local community.

We hope you find this booklet interesting, thought provoking and informative!

Job search skills courses

RETAS’s Job Search Skills course is designed specifically to help refugees learn about UK job culture, IT skills, internet job searching, CVs, cover letters and application forms. It also involves interview preparation and mock interviews with real employers. This practical course empowers individuals towards accessing permanent employment in the minimum amount of time, and uses live vacancies; therefore employment is secured for many as a direct result of the course.

53 refugees secured paid jobs this year



Building conversation with RETAS

RETAS is working on a project commissioned by STAR (Student Action for Refugees) to support and train up student-led English conversation clubs across the UK.

We are also embarking on a new pan-European project involving partners from 6 countries to develop new informal methods of language learning for new migrants.

RETAS also maintains a directory of English classes (formal and informal) across Leeds for the community to use.

Working with the University of Leeds, RETAS acted as main delivery partner to develop research on ESOL provision in Harehills, Leeds.

To find out more see:

<http://retasleeds.wordpress.com/ielts-english-courses-leeds/>



From Yemen to Yorkshire..

Yusra and her mother Nabawiah tell us about their new life in the UK

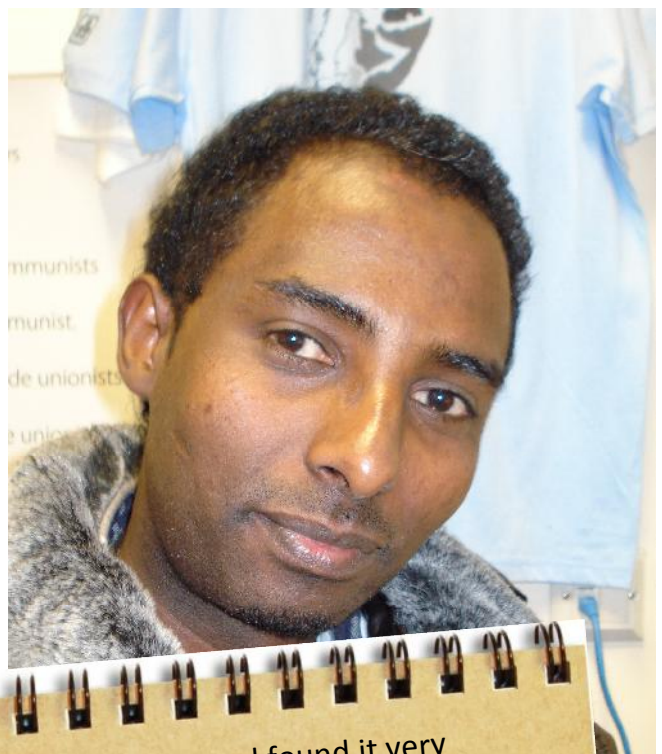
“ Due the political situation in Yemen we were forced to leave our jobs there, and we arrived in the UK in April 2011. Coming through London, Huddersfield and Wakefield we eventually arrived in Leeds in September - we had been to the UK before as tourists but being a refugee here is a very different experience. It was a very difficult time for us at the beginning, waiting for things to happen and facing a lot of uncertainty, but thankfully when we reached Leeds we received a lot of help and met people who were very understanding. Leeds has more services than other cities, but it is still very difficult for refugees to learn how the systems work here, such as how to deal with bills and sort out housing. Many services do not understand the needs of refugees; when these basic things are not sorted out it is difficult to settle.

After doing some volunteering at RASA Advocacy in Wakefield we moved to Leeds and found out about RETAS from a friend. We were both practising doctors in Yemen, and we are keen to re-qualify here in the UK so we can enter the medical profession again, but this is difficult as we first need a certain level of English. RETAS's IELTS course is helping us learn the right techniques to do the exam, and soon we hope we will get the results we need to re-qualify as doctors. RETAS really helps with the important steps you need to get into work, and we took the Job Search course which helped Yusra get an interview, and we are now volunteering as receptionists at RETAS to help our English and give us experience. RETAS is a very good place which welcomes anyone, and they have really helped us settle here.

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**VOLUNTEERS
WELCOME**
PLEASE CHECK AT OFFICE

Encouraging refugees to volunteer is the single most effective way of supporting someone towards employment. Our volunteering opportunities range from working as a receptionist and administration roles, to supporting at events, and taking part in ESOL courses.



I volunteered as a receptionist for RETAS for five months, and found it very exciting. I got to meet many people - refugees and others - and made good friends. I benefited through several courses I undertook at RETAS. The receptionist work was challenging sometimes; the photocopier gave me problems to begin with! It was a learning experience, it boosted my self belief and I now have the confidence to work as a receptionist. It has helped me to get my job at York University and I am definitely going to introduce my sister and daughter to RETAS so that they get the same opportunities I did. The people working at RETAS are part of my family now. Volunteering at RETAS helped me to focus not only on my own problems, but other people's as well, and the solutions to both. I'm so proud to be able to tell the staff of RETAS about how it helped me, about my new job, and that I'm moving to a new house.

Rahab, former RETAS volunteer receptionist

These roles are geared towards giving refugees the opportunities to gain more work experience and to help allow the host community to support refugees.

Volunteering is a bridge builder between hosts and newly arrived people and is an opportunity to make refugees and asylum seekers feel more supported through the journey of finding a new home.

Recent RETAS receptionist volunteer Tekle (above) says, "I'm really enjoying it. There are very nice people here so I'm happy. I can meet different kinds of people here, so it's really interesting. The main outcome of the volunteering I'm doing would be to integrate with people, and the culture, and in the long run to get a job. Volunteering can help improve my interpersonal skills, by meeting new people. It can help improve everything."



Employer engagement

At RETAS we believe it is vitally important to engage and maintain links with the private sector.

We seek to raise awareness of refugees amongst employers, promoting their potential and the positive contributions they can bring into the workplace.

The private sector has a wealth of additional expertise, knowledge and skills on offer to our client group, and we seek to act as a facilitator and a connection point for refugees and companies to meet and share experiences and receive practical support. Here are some examples of our employer engagement activities over the past 12 months.

Interview workshop days A job interview is a daunting experience at the best of times, let alone considering how difficult it must be for individuals who have English as a second language, no previous experience of UK job interview culture and the alien concept of having to sell yourself. Information sharing and practical mock interviews with private sector employers is therefore an extremely useful exercise and very popular activity amongst our clients. Employees from British Gas, PriceWaterhouse Coopers and Business in the Community all delivered interview workshops during the year at RETAS to around 40 refugees.

Get Smart events with Carphone Warehouse Employees of Carphone Warehouse (including The Geek Squad) have delivered Get Smart workshop days which include basic I.T skills workshops, free PC and phone repairs and demonstrations of the latest technology.

Hosting seeing is believing events through Business in the Community These events are an opportunity for people working in the private sector in Leeds to discover more about local communities and the projects that support them. This year RETAS had visits from and has begun building relationships with: Clydesdale & Yorkshire Bank, DLA Piper UK Addleshaw Goddard, Leeds Building Society, Ptarmigan Bell Pottinger, Squire, Sanders & Dempsey, LLP & Telefonica O2 UK.



RETAS was a really good place to meet people from different countries, and I soon began volunteering as a receptionist. It made a difference to me that my RETAS adviser, Olivier, was from Africa and could speak French. That helped me feel comfortable and have a good understanding of what RETAS did, how they could help, what my options were and what I needed to do. Olivier took my details and gave me an English assessment to see if I was eligible for the IELTS course.

I started the IELTS course with Jon, and found him to be a very good teacher. I was also studying English at college, but although I found the IELTS course to be harder I learnt things much quicker. My work as a volunteer receptionist was really great, I helped new clients and learnt administration skills. It built my confidence and helped me with my spoken and written English. I also went on RETAS's Job Search course, which helped me understand how to apply for a job in the UK and improve my CV and application form skills.

I was delighted to get a score of 6.5 for my IELTS exam which allowed me to take an International Communications Management and Spanish course at Leeds Metropolitan University. Olivier was very helpful, as he gave me advice on how to complete the application form and how to apply for student finance. I also found a temporary job as a French teaching assistant at Moortown High School which was fantastic. In my second year at university I started working on Marketing and Advertising Management, and later with the ERASMUS exchange scheme went onto do a Masters in Marketing, spending some time in France.

When I returned to Leeds I started working for a Market Research company which specialized in Online Games, and I am now working in Leeds as Market Researcher for EDF, the French Energy Company. It's really good that I can use my French as a skill in my job. My experience at RETAS was very valuable. It is a lovely place, where people are always smiling, and are really helpful. I didn't know where to start or where to go when I arrived in the UK, but thanks to them so many doors are open to me now.



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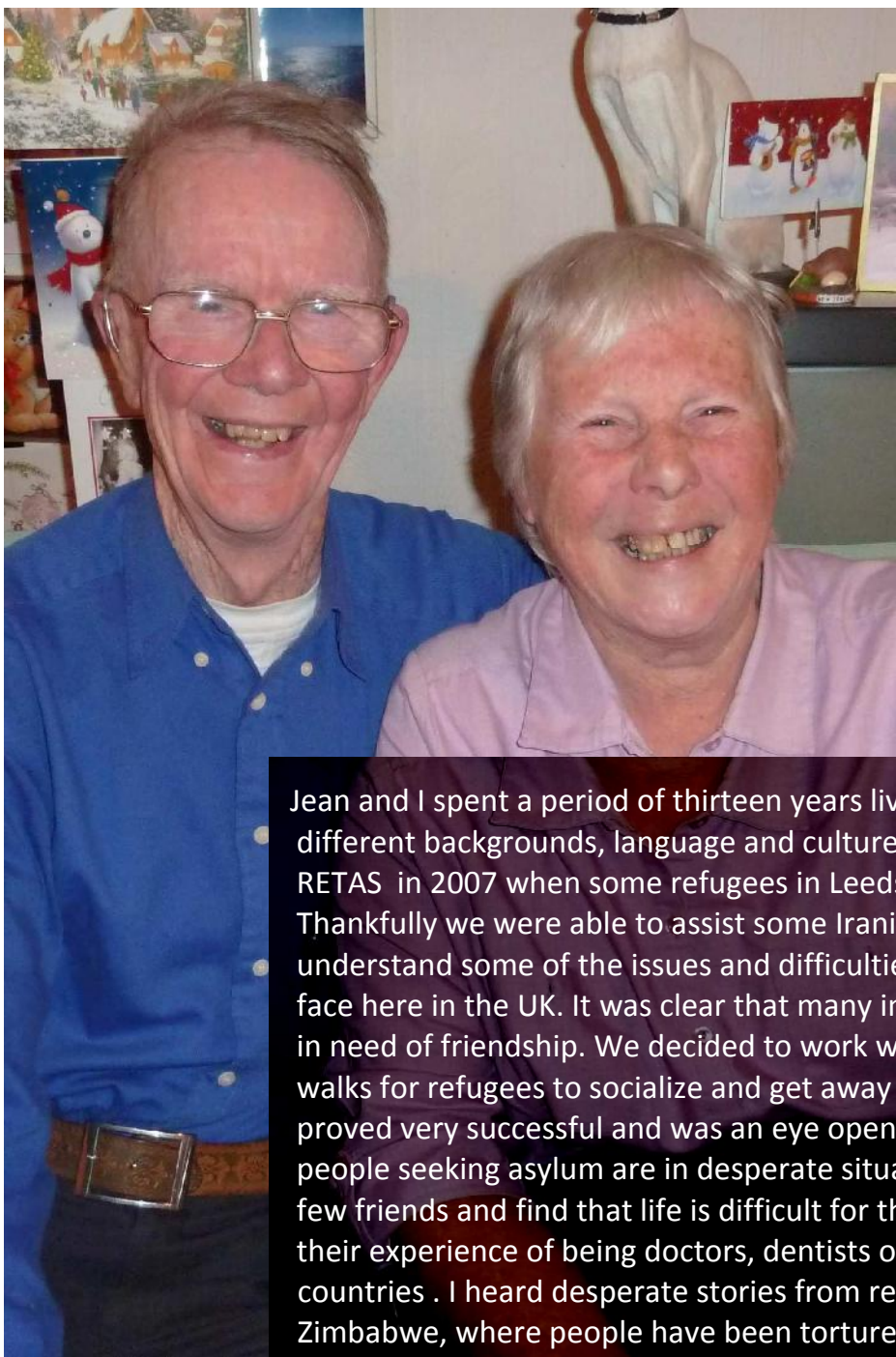
The IELTS course is a rolling course throughout the year, in 2011 so far 66 people have completed the course

The average score of those taking subsequent IELTS exams is 6* or more

It costs **£5,000** to fund the running of each course

*level 6 is the standard required for HE study





Jean and I spent a period of thirteen years living in Thailand with people of different backgrounds, language and culture. Our church in Otley heard of RETAS in 2007 when some refugees in Leeds were in need of computers. Thankfully we were able to assist some Iranian people. We then began to understand some of the issues and difficulties refugees and asylum seekers face here in the UK. It was clear that many in urban areas were isolated and in need of friendship. We decided to work with RETAS to provide country walks for refugees to socialize and get away from the city centre. This proved very successful and was an eye opener for us, learning that many people seeking asylum are in desperate situations. They have little money, few friends and find that life is difficult for them in the UK. This is despite their experience of being doctors, dentists or teachers in their home countries. I heard desperate stories from refugees in Estonia, Congo and Zimbabwe, where people have been tortured, faced severe trauma and were forced to flee to safety.

Charities like RETAS can make a real difference, providing social, educational and training opportunities. This offers hope for those wanting to start a new life here. Over the past 2 years there has been greater interest from the Otley community in understanding where refugees come from, the traumas they have been through and issues they face. There is still a need to educate people, raising awareness, dispelling the myths from sections of the media, and eradicating prejudice. This is especially true in rural areas of Yorkshire. It is crucial that the community works proactively to welcome asylum seekers and refugees to the region. These are difficult times and funding is needed to support charities like RETAS.





Awareness Raising

RETAS delivers awareness raising sessions in schools, businesses and community organisations in West Yorkshire.

We aim to dispel the myths and misconceptions associated with refugees and asylum seekers, informing on the facts, rights and entitlements relating to this group. Sessions involve input from a refugee or asylum seeker who has received training from the Project Worker at RETAS.

Refugees share their own personal stories and questions are answered on the asylum process. This builds understanding and breaks down barriers; also bringing confidence through empowering the speaker.

“It is essential that awareness raising is in place, particularly in primary schools, there is opportunity to influence attitudes at an early age before hardened opinions and prejudices are formed.”

Schools Project Worker
The Children's Society

“The presentation was a real eye opener. It has inspired me to look further into the issues facing asylum seekers”

Journalism Student
Leeds Metropolitan University

3000+

Is the number of people reached though RETAS's awareness raising over the past 2 years

It costs £7,750 a year to fund a part time awareness raiser at RETAS





Noma helps Rose fill out a form who she first met at the RETAS Huddersfield drop-in

Dropping into Kirklees

Noma Moyo, RETAS advisor

“

We operate a drop-in service at Clare House in Huddersfield on Wednesdays from 1pm-4pm. It is a service for asylum seekers and refugees, providing information and access to English classes, volunteering opportunities, higher and further education courses, training needs, and support in finding work. There's a lot of variety in the support we provide as our help is based on each individual client's needs; previously we've supported university applicants, student finance issues, and applied to charities and trust funds for clients.

Originally, we had a large number of clients asking about English classes. As a result, RETAS started conversation classes at the centre (these take place every Wednesday from 2-4.) These are very beneficial, as we see a lot of people who are not ready for other things yet because of the language barrier; learning the language becomes a crucial step in moving forward.

The drop in centre in Huddersfield is essential as it enables us to cover a larger area of West Yorkshire. It means we are able to offer RETAS services to people at the initial accommodation centre when they first arrive prior to their dispersal to towns and cities across the north.

We have helped clients find employment and had a number going on to study courses at Huddersfield University, Bradford University, and Kirklees College.

Client Rose said 'I met Noma the RETAS advisor at Clare House and she has been very helpful. I have had help with basics like clothes, pots and pans and after relocating to Leeds attended RETAS' session with Carphone Warehouse to learn how to use computers. I hope now to get my status and study Childcare.'

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The picture at RETAS



Job skills courses

66 clients registered on IELTS this year
Average score level 6
It costs around £20,000 to run 8 classes per year
£300 sponsors a refugee throughout the duration of the 3 month course



IELTS & ESOL



Over **40** people completed this training over the past 12 months
Trainer annual salary is £14,000 & course expenses (travel & subsistence) £1,200
£380 covers the costs of supporting a refugee through the duration of the job skills course

Premises

£22,000 per year

We are working with around **1700** active clients in the region. 350 new refugees registered this year, **53** of whom secured employment
Our 2 employment advisers cost £38,300

£25 covers costs for one refugee to access specialist 1-1 employment advice services



Employment advice



Awareness raising

40 awareness raising sessions delivered per year in schools, public services and private organizations. It costs around **£7,750** for a project worker, and to prepare and train volunteers to deliver these sessions per year

Volunteering

33 internal volunteer placements were hosted by RETAS this year

It costs around £16,000pa to run our volunteering programme (£12,000 – volunteer co-ordinator/training £4,000 – travel expenses)

£285 will cover the costs of supporting a refugee

Core Salaries

£55,000—Management, admin, finance, fundraising, communications

RETAS awards

12 refugees were rewarded with a **£200** RETAS training grant to progress with their requalification and studies
£2400

Social activities



£2,500 funds RETAS' social activities for registered clients



RETAS helps refugees and asylum seekers integrate and find a sense of community by organising social events, daytrips and our popular (and highly successful!) Thursday night football team. In partnership with Onside Sports all refugees are welcome to come and play and mix with RETAS staff and the other teams from the league. Please contact Roger at RETAS if you would like to do some talking on the pitch!

Get involved with RETAS..

Give your time or expertise RETAS relies on the hard work of volunteers. If you can donate time to support our clients, provide expertise to help us work more effectively, fundraise, or create opportunities and develop ideas then please get in touch with Duncan on 0113 380 5633 or email dwells@retasleeds.org.uk

Donate We are passionate about helping some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the UK make their first steps towards integration and employment. If you would like to contribute financially to our work, please complete and return to us the enclosed 'Donate' form, organise a fundraising event, or make a donation via the RETAS website at www.retasleeds.org.uk.

RETAS would like to thank its funders..

The Leeds Community Foundation, The Church Urban Fund, ERF, Lloyds TSB, LCCT and Henry Smith



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