

ARESTA NEWSLETTER

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ARESTA hosted the UNHCR Participatory Assessment Exercise (AGDM) Workshop in Western Cape

On the 27 of September 2010, ARESTA hosted a workshop for UNHCR staff and partners, including various non-governmental organizations that work with refugees in the Western Cape, to familiarize themselves with the process and purpose of the Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) initiative.

The main focus of the workshop was on how to conduct effective participatory assessments of refugees in order to discover their current issues, the causes of the issues, and to document solutions as proposed by the refugees themselves. It was made clear that a key part of this exercise is to carefully select participant groups that are representative of refugees of various nationalities, genders, ages, and abilities. In this way, a mutual understanding between service providers and clientele can be developed, and the UNHCR and partner organizations can see ways in which they can improve their services.

Members from the participating service providers were divided

into four multifunctional teams.

On September 28th and 29th, each team went to different areas in Cape Town to conduct spot-checks, semi-structured discussions, and focus groups of issues that are affecting refugees in Cape Town. The main themes explored were those of issues related to documentation, livelihoods, accommodation, education, health, and safety. Overall, access to proper documentation recognized in South Africa was seen as the largest barrier to refugees being self-sustainable and safe

in South Africa, for a number of reasons. Concerns about inadequate social services and education were also expressed by most participants.

After completing their designated tasks and participatory assessments, the teams then came together on September 30th to discuss their findings and begin to compile the data into a report. Upon the report's completion, the UNHCR will email it to all parties involved including necessary "next steps" that have been identified.



Participants at the UNHCR's AGDM exercise that took place at ARESTA in Athlone/Cape Town

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These next steps include: reviewing processes for refugees to obtain documentation, creating methods of educating refugees about their rights and the resources available to them, as well as other specific initiatives in order to resolve explicitly identified issues that are currently occurring. This will ultimately improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness of those that deal with refugees in the Western Cape.

Closing the workshop, Mrs. Monique Ekoko, the UNHCR Senior Regional Protection Officer said that one of the main goals of UNHCR's AGDM is to strengthen.

the voices of refugees in UNHCR and NGO's overall planning process, which will improve their protection. She thanked ARESTA for hosting the workshop and the welcome afforded to all participants.

Charles Mutabazi, ARESTA Director commenting on the AGDM exercise, said that the exercise has brought UNHCR and refugee services providers closer to persons of concern to hear what they need, this will help prioritise action and will feed our programmes for next year.

He added that "UNHCR's age and gender mainstreaming process is a best opportunity to ensure refugees and asylum seekers place in the decision-making process. No one knows better than refugees themselves so after this exercise we look forward to seeing real changes in the lives of refugee and asylum seekers in Western Cape."

Community leaders trained vow to promote the spirit of Ubuntu

On 21 September 2010 The Agency for Refugees Education, Skills training and Advocacy (ARESTA) in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency organized a training called "Train-a trainer training for community leaders".

The training was attended by Community leaders of Khayelitsha who are members of Site C Action Committee Against Xenophobia (SACAX) and ARESTA staff.

On his side, Star Thandabantu speaking on behalf of SACAX team gave an overview of the partnership

between his organisation and ARESTA; SACAX members realized that it was necessary to mobilize the community against Xenophobia and raise awareness that Xenophobia is an attack against us all. This awareness was raised by different means which were geared towards the general public. Star mentioned among others the dissemination of pamphlets to school learners and local community members at taxi ranks, posting posters on lampposts across Khayelitsha and by organizing festival and peaceful march against xenophobia. "This is still at infancy level but is seen as the way forward.

Star concluded that a formal organization SACAX will take up much broader issues under the theme of human rights, including xenophobia.

Patrick Kawuma, The senior field officer of UNHCR Cape Town gave to participants an overview of the UN Refugee Agency, The historic, mission and its mandate. He further gave an interesting presentation on protection and UNHCR urban setting policy and durable solutions.

Jean Luc Tshiamala, the senior refugee rights educator gave a presentation on refugee law and legislative framework in South Africa.



Participants to the AGDM workshop at ARESTA



Participants to the train-a-trainer training for Local Community Leaders



Mr. Patrick Kawuma, Head of UNHCR Field Office in Cape Town presenting the UNHCR urban policy settings.

Charles gave a presentation on xenophobia in South Africa and gave the way forward of the anti-xenophobia Education Campaign that is being conducted in Khayelitsha.

Closing the workshop, Mr. Mncedisi Mbatha known as Mr. Big said that SACAX believe that South Africa belongs to those who live in it. There is no need for us to fight each other we should live peacefully

and learn from each other. People should stand together and channel our energies towards fighting inequality and tackle the root causes of poverty, and lack of service delivery. To do this requires to work together instead of chasing refugees away

In his closing remarks, Mr. Kawuma Patrick asked SACAX to organise itself and call his office anytime they will need more training especially in human rights.

“SACAX initiative contributes significantly to increasing the social cohesion and tolerance between locals and refugees that is why it should be lauded and supported.” Concluded Mr. Patrick

The anti-xenophobia education campaign is having a positive impact on Khayelitsha community. The results thus reveal that with some trainings and resources, the impact can be significant.



Khayelitsha Community leaders who are members of SACAX were keen to know more about refugee rights

Maitland Refugee learners' English and learning skills have improved

Since 2008, African Smiles Project (ASP) helps high school refugee youth to improve their English and learning skills, so they can improve their school results, their social interaction and over all self esteem.

2010 has been a productive year. In January, African Smiles Project ran an orientation programme to welcome new refugee learners to the school; to assess their English levels and to offer them some Basic English skills. This really helped the learners feel more at ease at the beginning of the school year.

The learners were then placed in 3 levelled English classes and the project has assisted

about sixty youth throughout the year.

In addition to offering the youth English lessons, the learners have also received learning support, for example, study skills, reading skills and note making skills.

Furthermore, the project has slowly been developing its library and run competitions to encourage its learners to read to improve their English! Lastly, the matric learners were assisted with career guidance and helped to apply for tertiary funding.

Although the project has been successful in the sense that many learners' English and learning skills have improved, there is still room for improvement.

In 2011 ASP has some exciting ideas planned to alter the project slightly, so that it can run better. Firstly, the educators will begin to work with newly registered learners at the end of 2010, so that their English will be at least a pre-intermediate level when they enter schooling. Secondly, the project will hopefully run during school hours to increase learner attendance. Thirdly, Mrs. Foubister, who manages the project, will work one-on-one with weak matric learners to offer them learning support. Lastly, Miss Jansen, one of the project's educators will offer counselling to learners who have experiences trauma.

2011 is going to be a busy and effective year.



Caroline Foubister in the library that her project is implementing at Maitland High School



ARESTA ends the academic year 2010

ARESTA Community Learning Centre is now in the final phase of a very traumatic academic year. I wonder if it would be worthwhile to ponder and deliberate the events that marked the year. On the other it can serve as a lesson to avoid certain pitfalls in the future. One off the snags was the reliance on the WCED for financial assistance.

Despite the unpredicted occurring events, there are phenomena which are most definitely worth mentioning, events that will have an everlasting effect on the future endeavours of the centre.

Let us assess the positive elements/events that highlight these occurrences at the centre:

✓ The centre became an affiliate of the Western Cape Education Department and all learning taking place at ARESTA CLC must meet the criteria set by WCED and is therefore accredited accordingly. This in itself is a very huge step in the right direction.

✓ Also of great significance is the offering of level 4 learning areas; thus enabling our learners to

to enter the skilled labour market.

✓ Of very meaningful impact is the option of entering the tertiary education field. The learners, attending level 4 classes are able to attend colleges and universities to further their education.

It should be brought to the reader's attention the various learning areas we offer:

Level 1: English Language, Literacy and Communication and Numeracy;

Level 2: English Language, Literacy and Communication, Mathematical Literacy and Integrated Studies;

Level 3: English Language, Literacy and Communication, Mathematical Literacy and Integrated Studies;

Level 4: Fundamentals: (39 credits)

English Language, Literacy and Communication (23 credits)

Mathematical Literacy (16 credits)

Core: Life Orientation (32 credits)

Choice learning areas:

☞ Ancillary Health Care (45 credits)

☞ Travel and Tourism (38 credits)

Future endeavours (learning areas) will include ICT (Information Communication Technology)

ECD (Early childhood Development) and

SMME (Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises).

Due to the centre's affiliation with WCED the local community also profit by availing themselves to further their education and improving their lifestyle.

For any successful/meaningful education can only be determined by means of assessment. For that purpose we have the following methods of assessment. Formative assessment. These assessments take place during tuition and form part of the final assessment: the summative (examinations) assessment.

The summative assessment (external/national examinations) of the level 4 learners has taken place from Tuesday the 26th October till Tuesday the 16th November 2010. The number of level 4 learners to have enrolled for the external examination is thirteen.

The summative assessment of level 1 took place on the 2nd and 4th November 2010. The graduation of these learners will take place on the 26th November 2010.

In conclusion, I want to iterate my conviction that ARESTA CLC will benefit the entire refugee and local community – those who want to make use of the opportunities granted by the centre.



ABET Level 4 learners preparing for the assessment



Level 4 Students writing thier English Language Literacy Exam paper from the Western Cape Education Department / ARESTA Training Centre



Young learners writing thier Mathematic Literacy Exam.

Talk show on refugees issues at CTV

In an effort to educate the South Africa public about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, ARESTA's Advocacy office has been assisting the Cape Town TV to highlight the commonalities between locals and immigrants. ARESTA has also been assisting the Cape Town TV production unit to identifying presenters who are knowledgeable about specific aspects on refugees and asylum seekers.

The Cape Town's TV slogan "Abahambi Namandwendwe" (people on the move) provides an epic of themes/episodes that reflect facts and realities about migrants in the democratic South Africa.

Based on this believe, a series of episodes were developed with a true reflection of the environment on the ground.

The first episode which was broadcast on the 12th of October, 2010 was presented by ARESTA's Advocacy officer Fred Bidandi. The series contextualised migration, immigration, refugees and asylum seekers' plight in South Africa, thus reflecting on the definitions of refugee, origins of migration and the difference of the later and migration.

The Advocacy officer was invited by CTV on Friday 15th October 2010 to assist the production team unpacks the remaining episodes and plots the rest of the series.

The subsequent episodes include the following among others; reintegration and repatriation, Post 2009 violence-resettlement, documentation of migrants by the Department of Home Affairs, Rights of migrants, education Services, gender issues especially women and children, labour and Business.

ARESTA'S participation in these TV series is an added advantage to our information education communication program and also to the ongoing campaign against xenophobia in the Townships. The TV presentations have provided us with a platform to reach a wider audience and we hope that CTV will continue to work with us on issues of refugees and asylum seekers.

As part of our mandate we endeavour to have a multiplicity of communication channels so that many people in the host community/ Country become aware of the plight and rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Tribute goes to CTV for offering us this opportunity.

Impact of the information session is being felt

Although ARESTA plays different roles in refugees' lives, its objective among others is to promote refugee rights awareness and protection of refugees and asylum seekers. ARESTA peer educators teach refugee rights to refugees and asylum seekers because it is very difficult to claim what is

due to you when you don't know what your rights are.

Our peer Educators make sure that we explain to refugees the all process when applying for asylum in South Africa while recommending them to other organisations for services that we can't offer.

The impact of the information and education sessions that is being held most of the time at the DHA is being felt in different testimonies by clients coming from different countries in the world. One would imagine a person coming to a foreign country, not knowing the language or even where to go to

apply for asylum in some instances; this is where the advocacy work that we do is kicking in to make sure that asylum seekers are well informed about different procedures leading to them integrate the society and be self-reliant.

The education provided range between refugee documentation, security, refugee rights, legal and social assistance, HIV and AIDS, English classes to name few.

For refugee documentation, we inform asylum seekers why it is

important to tell the truth while applying for asylum by letting them know on the importance of filing the eligibility form properly to avoid unnecessary mistakes.

Here we inform them to always be prepared for the second interview with an Refugee Status Determination Officer (RSDO) who will determine whether they can be recognized as refugees or not.

On the security issue, we inform them to try to cooperate with the police by reporting crime and making

their community a better place to live.

They are also reminded to renew their permits on time which actually is part of their own security.

Refugees are as well informed on their rights and obligations in South Africa. Amongst rights that are most of the time talked about is: the right to life, right to seek employment, the right to equality, the right to seek medical attention, the right to education, et cetera.

What our Interns say about ARESTA

Sophie volunteered at ARESTA in October. She tells our readers about her experience: I've finished my studies 4 years ago in France where I got a master Degree in Anthropology and a Professional M.A in Social Development. At the end of my university programme, I've worked as intern, in Amnesty International, as a policy officer on questions related to economic, social and cultural Human Rights.

After my studies, I've been working for 2 years in a French NGO, Cimade, which defends migrants and refugees rights in France. I was a legal and social counsellor in retention

In France, I was also involved in several organizations working to fight against discriminations and xenophobia. Part of my work there was dedicated to raise awareness about these issues.

Thanks to my militant commitment, I've come to South Africa to know more about the rainbow nation and to learn from this unique experience of fight and reconciliation.

I've heard about ARESTA through Internet and when I've had a look of what this organization was doing, I immediately wanted to share my time and helping them as best as I could, on collective actions aiming to the same purpose: **Living Together.**

I've mostly worked on the Anti Xenophobia Campaign, led by ARESTA since July 2010 in Khayelitsha, which was really passionate.

This campaign aims to address xenophobia and prevent xenophobia violence, through education and awareness amongst South Africans on issues related to xenophobia and foreign nationals.

It really makes echo to my professional and personal aspirations and I was happy to see the commitment of ARESTA' staff and to feel their belief in Change.



Sophie Thoonuts, Intern from France is happy to see the commitment of ARESTA's staff and to feel their belief in change

ARESTA received European and Indian visitors

From the 10-24 September ARESTA received 20 young from Europe and 2 Indians who were on a study trip on the Millennium goals.

The Case Study Trip to South Africa was about the project "UN Millennium Development Goals – A Challenge for Today's Youth?" The was to introduce best practices of youth contribution aimed at achieving the MDGs and to empower young people with skills and tools to contribute to this achievement.

In this issue one of the participants, Elena Georgieva is telling us how the trip inspired her and changed her life.

The experience we had is very difficult to be reported or described but I know it was transforming and enriching for soul and mind. After this project I have better understanding about UN, MDGs, what they are striving for, what the real situation in SA is, what is a real ARESTA spirit and how their staff work in general.

After retrospection of all what happened there I was grateful to realized that my expectations are covered. Now I am full of ideas, I want to continue what we have started there. The day of visiting ARESTA training centre and schools working with

ARESTA was one of the most enriching experiences for me.

I don't know if the students we met were selected especially for us but they were extraordinary bright, with clear vision for great future (honestly, this day I have realized how subconsciously prejudiced I am, actually my astonishment how clever they are was equivalent of my prejudices, it was like I have expected something else.). What I've realized is that these people are advanced even with the scarce resources (tangible and not) they have. It is beyond my imagination how far they could go if they have all the information and opportunities we have...

I will never forget the quotes written in the first primary school in Khayelitsha: "When you read, you can write your own life story." and "Let the choices you make today be the choices you will live with tomorrow." I also felt the huge gap between poor and reach, between people with and without opportunities. I felt it in the schools, in the train in the city (the difference between the city and townships). The gap was everywhere and was "screaming".

In the end I would say that the most high-prized thing from this trip is YOU. It was a privilege to work with you, learn from you and grow with you in these two weeks. I would like to know you better and work with you more, hopefully we will have this chance again. Now new world of opportunities is opened for us and I would like to open the same "doors" for others. Now if somebody is asking me: "Where are you from?" I would say: "I am child of the world." In this trip we were explorers of Africa and ourselves. I think this project gave us more than we can see and realize right now, it is beyond...

As Christian wrote in his postscriptum: "For some it was their first time in an intriguing, unknown environment. For others it was the logical next step in their personal development." For me it was both. And again, thank you ARESTA and UTRS for knowing you and welcoming us!



Mr. Mbatha known as Mr. Big explaining AEGEE's visitors how far Khayelitsha is with the MDGs



Participants to the MDGs study trip to South Africa together with Maitland High Learners

ARESTA is kindly supported by the following sponsors:

- ✚ The Australian High Commission (Direct Aid Programme);
- ✚ Donaldson Trust;
- ✚ Help South Africa Now;
- ✚ The French Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (CCFD);
- ✚ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- ✚ Uthando South Africa;

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the above-mentioned sponsors for their financial and professional support for our programmes.

About ARESTA ...

The Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training and Advocacy (ARESTA) is a Cape Town based Non-Profit Organization

ARESTA's vision is that refugees are integrated into society and enjoy full democratic rights and benefits of South Africa.

ARESTA's mission is to contribute to the successful integration as a solution for asylum seekers and refugees through advocacy, training, skills development, education and research.

How can you help us?

Donations

You can make a donation using the form below.

Volunteering

If you would like to help by giving some of your time, please contact us! Volunteers are a valuable resource for innovation and research.



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P.O. Box 821, Cape Town 8000, Republic of South Africa

ARESTA welcomes all donations in cash, cheque and kind. Your donation will help us to sustain our work and to broader our impact by training more refugees and offering them new income generating projects.

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