

# CONNECTING CULTURES

ISSUE 16 SUMMER 2010



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# Kia ora Welcome

This year, on International Volunteer Day, 5 December, we're celebrating the fact that an astounding 20,000 people have donated their time and skills through this organisation to help migrants and refugees settle into Aotearoa.

English Language Partners' volunteers have made an enormous contribution to the changing face of our country, and it's a privilege to pay tribute to them for the part they have played, and continue to play, in shaping our society as it is today.

A fresh direction was signalled at the AGM in May with the adoption of the organisation's new Strategic Plan, and planning work for the next three-to-five years is well underway.

Strengthening partnerships with learners and their communities is a strategic goal that we have already begun work on. A number of changes at the national level are now in place. I am delighted that Khadra Mohamed has taken up the new role of Client Relationships Developer at the National Office, and is also coordinating the Ethnic Advisory Group. An article on Khadra and her new position features in this issue.



Partnerships between the Ethnic Advisory Group (EAG) and the Board have been strengthened, with Emi Csollány (EAG member) co-opted to Board and Rhonda Lin, Board Treasurer, co-opted on to the Ethnic Advisory Group. Adam Awad, Chair of ChangeMakers' Board, has also been co-opted onto the Board. These new partnerships will involve a sharing of ideas and working together in new ways that will benefit the learner communities we serve.

'Partnerships' is the theme of this *Connecting Cultures* issue. An interview with Kafeba Mundele, Chair of the New Zealand National Refugee Network explains his organisation's work and the opportunity the two organisations have to work more closely together. A feature on Bay of Plenty's new Learner Advisory Group highlights a local modelling of the Ethnic Advisory Group, and a unique partnership project in Christchurch benefits deaf refugee literacy learners.

Claire Szabó  
CE, English Language Partners New Zealand

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## English Language Partners New Zealand

**Who we are** 250 staff and 3,000 volunteers working with 8,000 migrants and refugees in 23 New Zealand locations

**What we do** Provide a range of voluntary and paid, one-to-one and group, English-language tuition and settlement support services

**Where to find us** For local contact details and training dates see [www.englishlanguage.org.nz](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz)

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# *The heart of a strong partnership*

Learners receiving services from English Language Partners North Shore have always come from diverse backgrounds, but now the staff have noticed a new trend – an increasing diversity among the tutors. Mary Atkinson

**I**t seems English Language Partners' new logo is more fitting than ever. Inspired by a whakatauki, or proverb, written by the late Tamehana Tai Rakena, the logo shows strands of coloured threads interwoven to represent the many cultures that make up Aotearoa's diverse communities. The idea originated with the words of the first Māori king, who spoke of achieving strength and beauty through diversity and unity.

As well as diversity of ethnicity, age and gender among the new tutor groups, there also seems to be plenty of unity of purpose and ideals. Many tutors, such as Cheol Jeong from South Korea and Luke Puamau from Tonga, express a desire to help migrants in need. In return, they hope to gain experience and understanding of cultures different from their own.

Among the 28 who signed up for a tutor-training course that began in February 2010, there were volunteers

from China, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Tonga, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Australia and Britain as well as several New Zealand Pākehā and Māori.

Other groups have included people from Hungary, Brazil, Niue, Lithuania, Fiji, Vietnam and Argentina. It seems that more and more people are becoming aware of English Language Partners and the opportunity that tutoring provides to use personal experiences of immigration and the



Cheol Jeong



Jenny Zhang with fellow trainee, Amy Galvin.



Lesley Harper and Mieke MacInnes

learning of a new language to help others.

It was a photo in the newsletter of English Language Partners North Shore that finally convinced Mieke MacInnes to take the plunge and sign up for tutor training. Seeing the proud and smiling faces of the ethnically diverse group calmed her fears. She felt that perhaps this was something that could be achieved by someone who speaks English with an accent and still makes the odd grammatical mistake.

Mieke had been encouraged to join by a friend she met at the North Shore Breast Cancer Friends Group. In the end, three group members, all breast-cancer survivors, decided to join together.

For Lesley Harper, it was this brush with cancer that led her to slow down and reprioritise her life. On an extended business trip to Shanghai with her husband, she had felt the impact of culture shock and the isolation that comes of not being able to communicate easily, or to fully understand the surrounding culture and customs. She hopes that she

**“A man who lives for himself is a failure, [while] a man who lives for the other has achieved true success”**

will be able to make the lives of new immigrants or refugees more fulfilling, enabling them to participate more confidently in the New Zealand community. For herself, she hopes to meet people with similar values and outlooks on life.

Birgit Grafarend-Watungwa, Manager at English Language Partners North Shore, has been excited by the contributions of younger tutors who have signed up recently. She says that they have new ideas involving tutoring using internet-based, and other technologies.

One of the youngest new tutors at the North Shore centre is Jenny Zhang, who was only seventeen and still at high school when she began her training. A former ballet student, she discovered that she had time to spare after stopping her dance training. She wanted to channel her

energy in a direction that helped others, rather than simply take up a new sport that would benefit mainly herself.

However, Jenny soon found that lacking tertiary qualifications, there were few organisations that could make use of her. Being fluent in both English and Chinese, and having immigrated to New Zealand at the age of four, becoming a volunteer tutor seemed the perfect choice. “I understand how important learning English is for truly settling into the community and feeling at ease in a new country.”

While some high-school students may lack the maturity to take on such a commitment, Jenny seems more than capable. Talking about her own experiences of immigrating to a country with a very different culture, she says, “I remember that it was strange even to learn things which seem now so simple, such as how to use a knife and fork correctly, and I understand how difficult it is.

“At school, I lead the Carmel College Human Rights Group, and we examine situations of war and conflict, ▶



North Shore trainees, February. Twelve cultures were represented.

► which endanger people's safety all around the world; this has instilled in me a strong sense of empathy towards refugees and a desire to help out."

Jenny adds that a school trip to New Caledonia opened her eyes to the fact that even studying a language for many years – in her case French – does not mean that communication with native speakers in their own country will be an easy or comfortable experience.

Luke Puamau is one of an increasing number of men who are becoming tutors. Luke (pronounced 'loo-keh') believes that "a man who lives for himself is a failure, [while] a man who lives for the other has achieved true success," and that a successful leader is someone who helps others develop.

He thinks that, without the ability to communicate effectively, people are incapable of meeting their full potential, which is why he chose to become an English-language tutor. Luke is an experienced teacher, having taught maths and science at high-school level in Tonga. Now, while in the process of applying for

a work permit for New Zealand, he is busy with volunteer work. He has donated his time to the Tongan Youth Trust, the Auckland Regional Migrant Services and also to the Māori Wardens as a Pacific Island Associate Member.

In addition, Luke has attended two other tutor-training courses, one with the Auckland School Community Education Association on tutoring adults, and another with the Kaipatiki Project (an environmental education and restoration group) on teaching communities about waste reduction. In March this year, Luke was matched with his first English Language Partners' learner, a man from Burundi.

Luke sees the male and female genders as being like two sides of a coin, with both sides having many rich ideas that can be brought together within a group to create an even greater whole. The increasing number of male tutors seems likely, therefore, to be a source of new inspiration for English Language Partners. In 2009, approximately a quarter of the learners using services at the North Shore centre were male. The increasing availability of male tutors will enable more male learners to be tutored by a man, which for

learners from some backgrounds or cultures may feel more appropriate.

Along with Luke Puamau, Cheol Jeong was one of seven men who trained earlier this year. Cheol was first drawn to tutoring in Seoul, South Korea, after he met several migrants who were having difficulty learning Korean and understanding the culture. Cheol prepared himself by attending a seminar on multi-cultural understanding and a course in Teaching Korean to Speakers of Other Languages. Now an immigrant himself, he works as an ambassador for Heart of the City, giving advice and a friendly welcome to tourists and locals on the streets of central Auckland. He believes many immigrants here have the same problems as those in Korea, and while he is aware that he does not have a great deal of experience of New Zealand, he wants to contribute what he can to helping others settle here.

Volunteers such as Cheol Jeong hope that by becoming tutors they will enrich their own lives with new experiences of other cultures. It seems likely that, for Cheol, this wish was granted just by attending the tutor training. As far as the learners are concerned, a greater diversity of tutors can only help meet the needs of more individuals, and in 2009, English Language Partners North Shore had English-language learners who identified as coming from 56 different ethnicities.

Seeing how other immigrants and refugees have settled here and become keen and able to give back to the community is likely to inspire confidence and hope in new learners. Strength is indeed likely to come from such a partnership of diversity. ✨

# Partnering *with* learner communities

Encouraging migrants and refugees to give effective and genuine feedback is at the heart of a recent appointment for English Language Partners New Zealand. Janie Walker



**K**hadra Mohamed is the association's new Client Relationships Developer. A vital part of her job is to develop authentic systems that allow learner feedback to contribute to how the organisation delivers its services.

Choosing Khadra for the position was not difficult. She had already worked successfully as a volunteer on the association's Ethnic Advisory Group, and had been employed as a contractor to look at ways to further the excellent work the Group was achieving.

For Chief Executive Claire Szabó, creating the new Client Relationships Developer role is about delivering on a key aspect of the Strategic Plan: seeing the organisation's clients as partners.

"This new role is about going straight to the source," says Claire. "It cuts right to the heart of the organisation and why we exist.

"We want there to be a clear understanding among the people we serve that we see them as partners. This means we're looking to them for input and leadership. The ideal is that people feel this is their organisation and it does the things that they feel are most needed."

## **"Choosing Khadra for the position was not difficult."**

A change in the migrant and refugee climate in New Zealand has meant more and more communities are proactively seeking support.

Responding to this is something Claire is passionate about. "There is a shift in the way communities are developing – migrants and refugees have got more organised in recent years," she says. "It's fantastic."

Khadra is working to enhance the relationship between people within English Language Partners and their client communities. These commu-

nities are the migrants and refugees that access English Language Partners' services, as well as their supporters, leaders and community representatives.

Khadra arrived in New Zealand as a refugee 11 years ago. Having empathy for the journeys of others is a great motivator for her new role.

"I can remind people that it takes a while to settle here; that it's not easy, and in the beginning you might get stuck. But their struggle is not new, we've all gone through it, and you can overcome it.

"When I first arrived, I used to admire people who could understand English, even the simplest things. Just telling people how this felt for me can help them in their own journey. It's just one of the steps they face."

Genetics also seem to have played a part in her 'calling' to work with communities. ▶

► “My father used to be a negotiator,” she says. “And my mother was a very sensitive human being; she always knew what people were going through.”

Understanding the hearts and minds of learners will help Khadra develop different options for gathering in feedback. For some learners, giving feedback brings about a whole range of fears and barriers, and having English as a second language is just one ingredient.

The more upfront ‘Kiwi way’ of giving feedback can be confronting and uncomfortable for many learners.

“People come from different backgrounds,” says Khadra. “And depending on where they came from, they have different views of authority. Encouraging them to give feedback without fear of persecution, or critique, is part of what we are trying to do.”

She says that often migrants and refugees feel so grateful for being given any support as part of their resettlement in New Zealand, that they don’t feel deserving of the right to influence the things around them.

Although a challenge, Khadra says educating and encouraging a shift in thinking around giving feedback is achievable.

Claire says the organisation has always received good feedback, but now they are focused on ways to get feedback that influences the services offered. “How do we really put our clients and learners in the driver’s seat more?”

Khadra is hopeful that other organisations and government agencies might adopt a similar role to hers in their own organisations. She says the concept of integrating the role of both host and newcomer is a bold move.

“I think it makes a statement for other organisations and government agencies to read,” says Khadra.

“We could be the leaders when it comes to partnerships with their clients,” she says. “A mix of people in any organisation brings a different approach and different ways of thinking.”

Khadra Mohamed is settling well into her new role.

“Khadra is inspirational,” says Claire. “She’s walked a long hard road – and she’s done it with great resilience.”

“She’s inspiring for people like me, and inspiring for people resettling in New Zealand. She embodies what we all ultimately hope for in our society for both settlers and the people who support them: she values education, family, and community contributions.”

## Client Relationships Developer goals:

- Develop authentic partner relationships between English Language Partners and its clients;
- Improve relationships between English Language Partners and community groups, and their supporters and leaders;
- Provide centres with new options in client feedback processes;
- Provide support to the Ethnic Advisory Group;
- Inspire clients, staff and volunteers to really listen to what learners are saying;
- Help the organisation confidently increase the ethnic diversity of staff and volunteers. ↗

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## Have you heard of Password magazine?

- Password is written by practising English teachers for use in the classroom and for private study.
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- It is written for adult and senior high school migrants to New Zealand, explaining both services and customs here. It tells you about NZ’s bicultural history and multicultural present.
- The Teaching Notes which come with Password give suggestions for use of the articles, and professional comment on researched practice.
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Clockwise from top left: Weber Yu, Ramesh Sharma, Frank Wang, Joyce Lin and Petcharat Pentecostpaomung

# Shaping a learner-directed future

When Philippa Cairns returned to Tauranga from English Language Partners' national conference in May, she felt reassured the changes made at her centre earlier in the year were a leap in the right direction. Millie Freeman

The Bay of Plenty manager had just listened to Adam Awad, Chair, ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, speak about reaching success through partnering, where he challenged the organisation to consider what a partnership truly means.

"While the organisation's name and constitutional change last year were an encouraging beginning, Adam suggested we needed to be looking at a new way of working together with our learners and our communities to really effect lasting change," says Philippa.

It was an inspiring moment for Philippa who had already taken the

opportunity to do something locally to respond to the name change and the values in the organisation's new Strategic Plan.

"We could see how the partnership with the Ethnic Advisory Group at a national level is an excellent model, and wondered whether we could replicate this idea by forming a partnership with our migrant learners," she says.

"When you think about our organisation as 'a partnership' it changes everything. It's not about one group having control; it's about both parties working towards a common goal. That became a lot clearer to me after listening to Adam speak."

## Reversing the roles

Just like the Ethnic Advisory Group provides guidance to the National Board, Philippa and her committee invited four learners to talk about how they could help guide the tutors and the centre as a whole.

"The learners' response was really enthusiastic," says Philippa. "Our task then was to work out how they could contribute. We had to make sure we could act on their advice and suggestions, otherwise the initiative would be pointless."

Learners Petcharat Pentecostpaomung (known as Pen), from Thailand, ►



“When you think about our organisation as ‘a partnership’ it changes everything.”

► Ramesh Sharma, from India, Joyce Lin and Weber Yu, both from Taiwan make up the learner representatives on the Bay’s Learner Advisory Group, which was formed in January. The committee also asked tutor and committee member Frank Wang, who is from China, to be part of the group.

“I was very scared at first to be part of this group,” says Pen who started with English Language Partners as a learner last year. “But now I am very excited. It has given me more confidence. It has really helped me to feel part of the community.”

#### Getting down to business

The committee wasted no time in inviting the new Learner Advisory Group to a 2010 planning workshop being held for tutors. Philippa says the discussion was valuable and prompted planning towards a more in-depth training course for experienced tutors later in the year.

“We have a responsibility to be a bridge between learners and tutors,” says Joyce, who, with her husband Weber, had been a learner for two-and-a-half years before joining the Group. “Lots of migrants have difficulties with learning English and I think we can provide suggestions to tutors that will help their teaching.”

Ramesh agrees and says it’s important for tutors to converse with their learn-

ers in an informal way and discuss boundaries early on, rather than working in a strictly teacher/learner relationship.

“A new migrant will feel comfortable in a new environment if we give them encouragement,” says Ramesh, who became a learner as soon as he arrived in New Zealand three years ago and is now vice-president of Tauranga’s Multi-Cultural Council. “Tutors need to discuss cultural differences with their learner right from the beginning so they know what to do or what not to do.”

For perhaps the first time, tutors were able to see the situation from a learner’s viewpoint, and this was exactly the kind of information the tutors and committee needed to know. Up until the Group was formed, learners had never had this level of opportunity to contribute and Philippa says it had also been difficult to make meaningful contact with the migrant communities.

What the centre now had was a bridge to these communities.

“Language is the bridge between people but migrants can quickly become isolated if there is no support,” says Weber. “If there were more advisory groups like this, migrants would have a lot more support which would be good for the whole country.”

A subsequent committee meeting with the Group agreed its ongoing roles and responsibilities which would include four to five meetings per year as well as taking part in tutor training.

#### Valuable insights

With the Group now formally on board and tutors already benefiting from valuable discussions and feedback from the learners – the committee decided to run a second level 26-hour training programme for experienced tutors in July.

Philippa believed a course with longer evening sessions would provide good time for tutors to get to know each other and yield in-depth discussions.

The decision paid off. The Group spent three hours with tutors on the first evening talking at length about cross-cultural models.

“During the course of the evening, the learners began to open up and share their personal experiences of racism and talked about cultural differences. They really gave us some valuable insights,” says Philippa.

The July training programme also covered a number of other topics (see box) including a grammar workshop, that was identified by the Group earlier as important professional development for tutors.

It was clear the traditional model of teacher and learner was being rapidly overtaken by this new partnership where the Group felt privileged to be involved in discussions and tutors felt privileged to learn from them.

"We were beginning to understand what a partnership really means," says Philippa.

Tauranga's Chinese community is a good example of how the partnership is working together to provide much needed language assistance. Frank, who settled in Tauranga in 2007 and became a tutor last year, says many Chinese migrants come to New Zealand with very little English.

"The Group can help by telling tutors exactly what the migrant wants to learn. For one Chinese couple, what they really needed to learn was how to work out their GST payments," he says. "Next year we want to start teaching introductory English in groups at the Chinese church because that will make a big difference to the community."

### Meeting the Group

Winter also offered the perfect opportunity for the whole membership to meet the Learner Advisory Group and find out about their role, with 85 tutors and learners meeting up at a local restaurant.

Seventeen newly-trained tutors have also gleaned valuable advice recently following a two-hour session with the Group as part of their initial training.

"For two hours they were able to question the learners about what works and what doesn't with tutoring and it made them so much more confident going into that first one-on-one session with a learner," says Philippa.

### Striking a balance

Despite a few logistical problems of getting everybody together for meetings in between work and family commitments, or travel to home

countries, Philippa says the initiative has been a huge success. But while the Group has been invaluable, Philippa is mindful of not over-burdening them, especially as they offer their time voluntarily.

"We're taking little steps. We need to strike that balance between making sure they are involved without putting too much pressure on them or demanding too much of their time.

"We are now working proactively rather than reactively and are building what we have learnt into our strategic plan. It's an evolving project and we have to be flexible with how it operates, but as we go along we are coming up with more ideas and can see the role of the Group expanding."

Indeed, Frank Wang suggests the Group itself may need to expand as he would like to see other cultures, such as European and Middle Eastern, represented as well.

Pen, Ramesh, Joyce and Weber agree, and encourage other centres to consider setting up advisory groups to help members work more effectively with their communities and in doing so, help to improve the quality of life for migrants.

Now, nearly one year on, the members of the Bay of Plenty Learner Advisory Group are more than happy to continue in their role, knowing their input is helping tutors to be more effective, and, perhaps most importantly, is helping to build bridges into the migrant communities to provide much-needed support. ✨



## Training for experienced tutors proves a hit

In addition to the usual short workshops offered to experienced tutors, the Bay of Plenty centre ran a second level, 26-hour training course held over three weeks. With funding provided by the Lotteries Commission, the centre was able to invite professional facilitators to instruct on a range of different topics. Longer workshops generated in-depth discussion and the three-week duration encouraged the forging of friendships between tutors who don't often get together. Twenty-two tutors took advantage of this opportunity.

In their evaluations, tutors were full of praise, finding the training extremely helpful. One tutor even asked when the level 3 training would start!

The following topics were covered:

1. Cross-cultural models with the Learner Advisory Group;
2. The teaching / learning process;
3. Listening skills;
4. Help with literacy skills;
5. Grammar;
6. Speaking skills / functions of language;
7. Pronunciation. ✨

# A central voice for refugees



Kafeba Mundele, Chair of the New Zealand National Refugee Network (NZNRN) is looking forward to his organisation forming fruitful and strong links with English Language Partners New Zealand.  
Mary Atkinson

**K**afeba hopes the NZNRN will be able to work closely alongside English Language Partners, providing up-to-date information about what works for refugees and what does not.

Recently, Kafeba met with Claire Szabó, English Language Partners' Chief Executive, to discuss ways the refugee network can provide consultation services. He hopes to be able to further inform the organisation about cultural sensitivities and teaching content by drawing on the network's collective experience.

He says that many former refugees know both the problems facing refugees and have an understanding of Kiwi culture. They are particularly well situated to provide information about refugees' needs and are keen to participate at all levels in decision-making processes. He says that English Language Partners has welcomed the network with open arms, and he has been impressed by the organisation's willingness to listen – something he does not take for granted.

Collaboration between NZNRN and English Language Partners is particularly important to Kafeba. "Language is the key to a refugee being able to do

anything at all in a new country. Everything else comes second. Language is the key to successful settlement, to getting a job, going to a hospital or finding a home.”

Kafeba believes it is important that organisations such as English Language Partners are able to develop tutoring methods that teach refugees the basics very quickly, enabling them to settle in as fast as possible.

The NZNRN is a coalition of refugee forums from around the country. It began as a result of a Department of Labour initiative to strengthen refugee voices. The aim was to create one overarching organisation to be a point of contact for the Department of Labour, other government departments and non-government organisations (NGOs). The NZNRN came into being in January 2009 and was officially launched by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, a month later. In July, Kafeba attended the UNHCR consultations in Geneva to represent the NZNRN.

Representatives from refugee forums around the country now attend an annual NZNRN meeting in Wellington each May. Since its beginning, there have been representatives from ChangeMakers Refugee Forum in Wellington, the Auckland Refugee Community Coalition, the Canterbury Refugee Council and the Hamilton Refugee Forum.

Recently, another member refugee forum has been established in Palmerston North, which also sends representatives to meetings. In addition, at the suggestion of English Language Partners, the NZNRN is planning to create another forum in Nelson.

The NZNRN is not government funded. So far, it has been able to exist financially due to grants from the Tindall Foundation and a one-off donation from the UNHCR to support a meeting in Palmerston North.

The extent of what the network can achieve will depend on funding. Its main aim is to create a strong, central voice for former refugees.

Kafeba explains that, as refugees have arrived in New Zealand, they have tended to form communities of people from the same ethnicity. Different groups have then got together in local areas after discovering that they have issues in common.

In time, regional refugee forums have developed. In the past, these forums communicated individually with government organisations, NGOs and other groups.

While this was useful and necessary, it also created some duplication of work and confusion with other organisations about who to contact.

**“English Language Partners has welcomed the network with open arms, and he has been impressed by the organisation’s willingness to listen”**

It is not just refugee-run organisations that Kafeba hopes will become more streamlined with the new central network, but also other organisations that work for and with refugees. He says that the problems facing refugees, such as unemployment, poor housing, language difficulties and mental-health issues, are being addressed in different ways and to different degrees by different organisations. Some have more information about what has been successful than others.

Kafeba hopes that the NZNRN will be able to collaborate in making these organisations increasingly useful by keeping them fully informed and by enabling each one to focus on its particular speciality area, such as

language learning or mental-health care, while knowing that the other areas are being covered.

The NZNRN will be in a position to identify duplications and gaps in the services provided, and go directly to those most likely to be able to assist.

Kafeba is anxious that people understand that the NZNRN has no desire or capability to take over these specialty roles, but instead wishes to work in partnership with NGOs and government organisations to help them become as useful and efficient as possible. This is likely to save costs and as a result may even enable funds to become available to assist more refugees to enter New Zealand.

The NZNRN believes its present focus needs to be on ensuring that refugees can settle in and become productive members of the New Zealand community as quickly as possible. It hopes that other organisations that work with refugees will come to understand the importance of this goal and be open to hearing ways that they can work alongside NZNRN to achieve it.

He says that many refugees feel gratitude for what has been given to them in New Zealand. They arrived here having been betrayed or rejected by their own country and with few expectations of any assistance coming from this new and unknown nation. They were astonished to find that after leaving the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, they were provided with a furnished home and other assistance, much of it given freely by volunteers.

These people now want to be able to work, achieve some independence and be able to give back to the community – possible if refugee services are focused on these same aspirations. ✨

# Opening the door to job opportunities

English Language Partners' tutor Maria Work and learner Re Ber Paw Sein forged a strong partnership that led to Re Ber achieving her dream of finding employment. Patricia Thompson, from an article by Maria Work



Re Ber, who is 50, arrived in Palmerston North with her husband and four children four years ago. Originally from Burma, they had spent 22 years in a refugee camp in Thailand and had no English skills.

Maria began tutoring Re Ber just over a year ago and was instantly captivated by her warmth and personality.

"Her life had been a struggle – she later told me that she carried 60kg daily on her back," says Maria. "But her eyes and her beautiful smile told me that this lady had a wonderful personality and a great sense of humour, but was also very humble."

Re Ber was extremely motivated to improve her English and to find employment. She told Maria that she and her husband had set up a coffee shop at the refugee camp and she had also worked at a childcare centre there. Her dream was to work

in childcare here too but she was worried about her ability to write reports in English.

"Re Ber would often say: 'I need to get a job. I want to be off the benefit and I want to thank the government for all their help since we arrived here'," says Maria. "This really blew me away. She didn't want a job so she could be better off, she wanted simply to be contributing to society and giving a little back."

Re Ber was also nervous about interviews, fearing that a prospective employer would not be understanding about her language skills.

One morning, Maria arrived for their usual 9am lesson and Re Ber soon began talking about how much she wanted to find work.

"I thought, 'There is no time like the present'," says Maria. "So I asked if she had a CV ready. She did, so I said 'Ok, let's go and get you a job!'

"Setting off in my car I did think 'Crikey, this is a tall order' but I knew I would have no hesitation in recommending Re Ber to an employer and that she would give 100 per cent to whatever job she was given."

First stop was Eon, one of the smartest cafes in the city. Maria introduced herself and Re Ber to Bernice Forbes, the manager, told her briefly about Re Ber's background and asked if they had any suitable jobs.

It turned out they needed a dishwasher for a few hours a week at busy times. Maria explained this to Re Ber who said, eagerly, that any hours would be fine.

Bernice scanned Re Ber's CV, asked some questions about her time in the refugee camp, then said: "I know nothing about refugees except that they have been arriving in the city. I feel we should all do our bit to help them settle, so we will do a trial for



Bernice Forbes, Re Ber Paw Sein and Maria Work

a week or so and see how she goes. Can she start tomorrow?"

Re Ber was delighted, firm handshakes followed and the pair left the building "grinning from ear to ear".

"I had a big lump in my throat, I couldn't believe it!" says Maria. "We then headed off and dropped CVs into a motel and a supermarket too, Re Ber feeling that she could easily manage another job too."

In the weeks that followed, Maria often dropped into the café to see how Re Ber was doing and Bernice also called her to say how impressed she was with Re Ber, was increasing her hours and was keen to help her get off the benefit.

"I let her know also to not hesitate to contact me if there was any issue with Re Ber and that English Language Partners offered the free English for Employees programme if she was interested," says Maria. "I was so

grateful to this wonderful lady for taking a chance on Re Ber."

Re Ber is now off the benefit, working 30 hours a week and really enjoying her job which extends to waitressing and cleaning too. Lesson plans with Maria now include time for the pronunciation of the names of hot beverages, and they went through her employment contract together before she signed it.

"Recently Re Ber told me: 'Before you helped me get this job, it was like all the doors were locked and everything was in darkness and now it is like the lights are all on and I can go in,'

"I wonder how many other learners feel they cannot just walk into a shop or café to ask about work. This is about my learner and I working in partnership to reach her ultimate goal, and anyone who has faith in their learner's ability can give them a hand up in this way." ✂

## Network news

**Hon. Wayne Mapp**, Associate Minister for Tertiary Education, awards Sunethra Gunawardana's certificate during North Shore and South Auckland's joint Adult Learners' Week event in Auckland.



**Elizabeth Trueba**, from Mexico, enters into the spirit of the 'national costume' theme for Palmerston North centre's celebrations during Adult Learners' Week.



**Kay Sneddon**, from Nelson's social committee, shows some of the spices and ingredients that went into the delicious foods served up to over 160 people at the centre's International Healthy Food Festival during Adult Learners' Week.



# Partnering with China in education

Hon. Steven Joyce, Minister for Tertiary Education

In June, I travelled to Shanghai, China with Education Minister Anne Tolley and an 80-strong delegation of senior representatives from New Zealand universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics, schools and Chinese language organisations.

We were there for Education Week – an exciting part of the Shanghai 2010 World Expo. Education Week was a joint venture between the New Zealand and Chinese Ministries of Education. From a New Zealand perspective, it was designed to give education providers the chance to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones with key Chinese education players.

Education Week was a great opportunity to showcase New Zealand education in a country that is of large and growing importance to our economy. The relationship between our countries will have an increasing impact on the future development of New Zealand's economy and society.

New Zealand's bilateral relationship with China continues to expand and develop. Trade between our countries has increased significantly since the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between our nations in 2008. Links in areas such as research, economics, foreign policy, agriculture and aviation continue to expand.

Education is a key pillar in the overall relationship between China and New Zealand, and bringing together our strongest educational and business practitioners demonstrates to China the value we place on the relationship and is vital if we are to be taken seriously as a strategic partner.

Significant student flows between our countries are complemented by collaboration across the education system – from universities to vocational institutions to schools. This collaboration includes joint science and research, vocational training, research commercialisation, staff and student exchange, and the learning of Chinese language in New Zealand – to name a few.

This is a relationship that has developed over the past decade to become a strategic and mutually beneficial partnership for both countries.

The education delegation was a symbol of the importance New Zealand places on developing the relationship with China.

Together with the 7th New Zealand-China Joint Working Group on Education and Training held in Beijing, Education Week events helped keep the momentum in the education relationship and identified new opportunities for the future.



Claire Szabó, Chief Executive, English Language Partners, won the New Zealand Institute of Management's 2010 'Young Executive of the Year' for the Central Region. The award recognises leaders, innovators, team builders and high achievers aged 35 and under for their positive impact on the growth, productivity, and morale of their organisation. On December 2, Claire competes for the NZIM/Eagle Technology's Young Executive of the Year supreme award at the Deloitte/Management Top 200 Awards. ↗



### English Language Partners Chinese learners

Of English Language Partners' 8,389 learners in the 2009 year: 2,216 identified as ethnically Chinese. These learners come from a range of countries and may speak a number of different Chinese (or other) dialects and languages.

### Learn Mandarin – now's good!

One-fifth of the world's population are native speakers of Chinese. Forms of it are spoken in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore and in pockets all over the world. The eight main varieties of speech in China are called dialects though they are mutually unintelligible and are best thought of as different languages. Mandarin as spoken in Beijing is the basis of the modern standard language and is the official language of mainland China and Taiwan. 🌐

These opportunities include student and staff exchange, joint leadership development and training programmes and research partnerships. It is clear that it will be up to all of us across the New Zealand education system to take advantage of these opportunities and to formalise arrangements for long-lasting partnerships with Chinese counterparts.

During my time in Shanghai I met with President Zhang Xinsheng from the China Education Association for International Exchange. Our meeting highlighted China's desire to build long-lasting connections with New Zealand in ways that benefited both our countries.

The benefit for China is that it encourages development of relationships with the West. For New Zealand, it provides researchers with access to equipment and resources that wouldn't necessarily be available here. And, of course, it encourages cutting-edge international collaboration.

When he was Vice Minister of Education, President Zhang stated that the New Zealand-China education relationship is a "strategic partnership" and a "model" for other countries.

To maintain that status, we can't rest on our current success. Right across the education system we need to



Hon. Steven Joyce

**“It is through greater understanding of our respective cultures and backgrounds that will underpin enhanced relations between our countries at all levels.”**

continue to improve our engagement with Chinese counterparts, to develop partnerships that thrive over the long term.

And we need to encourage greater understanding between our countries. It is through greater understanding of our respective cultures and backgrounds that will underpin enhanced relations between our countries at all levels. 🌐

## Network news

**Prime Minister John Key** meets learners of Waikato centre's Nawton Literacy class during his July visit to the Western Community Centre.



**Samniang** from the Thai Villa restaurant demonstrating the art of vegetable carving at the Cultural Sharing workshop run by the Whanganui centre.



**Li Yu Lian, Ying Lan Zhen** and Qiziang Jiang, members of the Riccarton Chinese social English group in Christchurch. The group is run by the Christchurch centre's Chinese bilingual teacher.





Qali Abdille. Below left: Sheree Currie and Shoba Kadariya. Below right: Indira Bhandari and Devika Mishra



The small group that sits around the table is a mix of deaf pre-literate learners from Somalia and Bhutan and their Kiwi tutors and support workers. They are communicating animatedly through a mix of New Zealand and Nepali Sign Language, and the smiles say it all.

For this vulnerable group of refugees, the lessons, which are a partnership between English Language Partners Christchurch, Christchurch Resettlement Services and CCS Disability Action, have changed their lives and allowed them to share in the freedoms New Zealand offers.

"I can go places and meet people," says 30-year-old Somali refugee Qali Abdille, through our bilingual tutor and interpreter for the morning, Indira Bhandari. "I can text Sheree and go places with friends. I can meet other people and I'm on a cloud when they come," she smiles.

Sheree Currie, a deaf CCS Disability Action support worker, says the lessons help the refugees from becoming isolated. "There would be no point for them to come to New Zealand if we didn't help them."

Shoba Kadariya, a Bhutanese refugee, says that learning New Zealand sign language means she can make friends. In the short time she has been with the group she has already learnt to write the names of her classmates.

Fellow Bhutanese refugee, 57-year-old Kanchi Biswa has only been with the group a couple of months and, like the other members of the group, has never learned to read or write.

The group gets together for four two-hour sessions a week and makes slow, patient progress as they learn to read, write and sign in English.

Today they are learning the signs for a morning routine.

"We wake up," says Indira, her fingers dramatising the movement of open eyes. "We shower and then

# Action-based partnerships

There's plenty of good-natured communicating going on in a small room on the third floor of the Science Alive! building in Christchurch, but it's all in silence.

Kim Triegaardt



**“I can text Sheree and go places with friends. I can meet other people and I’m on a cloud when they come.”**

dry ourselves. We put on socks and shoes. We brush our hair. We put on makeup.” Her fingers do the talking.

In between actions, Indira and the support workers indicate the pictures and words on sheets of paper that depict the motions.

The learners mimic her actions and point to the pictures. In amongst the repetition and gradual understanding there are a lot of laughs.

Devika Mishra signs that she doesn’t like the hair that collects in the bottom of the shower and Sheree suggests she could use it to make a wig.

These refugees have more challenges than most. In addition to the stress that comes with being in a foreign country, they cannot hear and do not read or write in any language.

English Language Partners’ Manager, Joanna Biss says the pre-literate classes, of which the deaf group make up a small part, are a partnership between English Language Partners and Christchurch Resettlement Services. The ‘Living Well in Christchurch’ programme opened up to deaf learners when, in 2006, Qali joined the programme.

“These learners are some of the most marginalized and invisible groups in New Zealand society,” says Joanna.

“They have no access to mainstream New Zealand Sign Language classes as they cannot read or write in any language, and while deaf community workers support the learners, they are not funded to teach New Zealand Sign Language.”

Indira, who is herself a Bhutanese refugee and only learned to speak English when she arrived at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre in 2008, is the only bilingual tutor available who has a basic level of New Zealand and Nepali Sign Language.

Christchurch Resettlement Services Manager, Shirley Wright says they provide services, such as onsite childcare workers to allow the mothers to take part in the programme.

“We can see how these programmes make a difference and what benefits they bring for social inclusion. We are in awe at the way English Language Partners have responded to the need and provided some equity to ESOL provision.”

Sue Bruce, Manager CCS Disability Action, whose deaf community support workers attend the class with their clients, agrees that the service creates a great opportunity for these learners.

“Communication is one of the keys to being able to do ordinary things that not having a language stops you doing. The lessons are important to help create a normal life.”

Arnya Swindale, a CCS Disability Action support worker, says that she enjoys being able to make the lives of the refugees easier.

“Because I am deaf,” signs Arnya, “I understand what they are feeling and how hard it is.”

Christchurch Resettlement Services, English Language Partners, CCS Disability Action and Deaf Aotearoa have regular meetings to work on providing wrap-around support for these learners – a great example of partnerships in action. ♿

## Network news

**A member of Taupo’s** International Women’s Group about to begin her luge ride during the centre’s day trip to Rotorua to take in some of the fun activities the city offers.



**Auckland West centre** organised a trip to Auckland Zoo for this large group of literacy programme learners on World Refugee Day.



**English Language Partners** and ChangeMakers Refugee Forum launched the Facebook page ‘I Support Refugee Settlement in NZ’ for World Refugee Day. If you’re on Facebook join us!



# Work with MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

## Help with English language

Settling in New Zealand is much easier if you understand the Kiwi way of life. Join over 3,000 volunteers nationwide and learn how to help an adult migrant or refugee with their English.



Join our next training course – contact your closest branch of English Language Partners

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[www.englishlanguage.org.nz](http://www.englishlanguage.org.nz)

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