ISSUE 2

2025/26 Newsletter

LEARN * DEVELOP * GROW

1 May 2026



Thank you for another amazing year...

Over the past year, thanks to our Basmat Amal humanitarian support:

- **190 school-aged children** have been able to access school this year, including 100 Sudanese students.
- **175 adults** completed vocational training and over 65% are working.

The Building Better Futures vocational collaboration was covered by both ***The National*** and ***Khaleej Times*** in May 2026 (links in the write up).

During the summer of 2025, students, mostly from Khalifa University and American Community School, organised a summer program for Basmat Amal participants. We are hoping to repeat the summer camp in 2025/26.

During Ramadan 2026, 1447 Hirji, we also supported over 30 children with medical, dental, and vision care.

Arabic is Fun is in its third year on Saadiyat Island, our **Sunday programs** are across two Abu Dhabi locations, and we are launching a growing portfolio of vocational training collaborations.

We now have an **ACTVET license** which will allow us to expand the certifications and programs we offer.

In 2020, the UNHCR and partners helped us teach 20 women how to sew. In 2025, the participants branded the cooperative as **Sadu**. We also started **Learn Up**, with schools and companies. We even taught children how to upcycle old uniforms.

If it sounds like a lot, it is! Thank you to each and every one of you who made this possible.

Together, we are joining hands and hearts to help each other build skills and training in uncertain times.

May and Maya

In this newsletter you can expect:

- Building Better Futures--UNHCR, Al Ghurair Foundation
- ACTVET Certification and collaboration
- Sadu sewing cooperative and Retal Designers
- Upcycling Program
- Arabic is Fun and other programs





Building Better Futures-UNHCR and Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund

In **May 2024**, UNHCR approved its first-ever program to provide direct support to people living in the Gulf. The **Building Better Futures** initiative, implemented by Lotus Retal and funded by the Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund, marked an important milestone.

Through the program, 35 children had their school fees covered for the 2024/25 academic year, while 140 participants received vocational training. By the end, 100 people achieved positive livelihood outcomes, taking real steps toward independence.

This impact was made possible thanks to our incredible training partners — **Green Light Training Centre, Trusity, Arabian Child, Phi Sports Academy** and **3elm Consulting**— and a group of dedicated volunteers who mentored participants one-on-one throughout the journey.

The program's success was also recognized nationally, with both *The National* and *Khaleej Times* featuring the graduation and job fair in May 2026.

Building on this momentum, we've now launched new initiatives to grow and scale our impact.

ACTVET Certification

In 2026, Lotus Retal obtained its **ACTVET certification** to train and provide certifications in

1) Language (Arabic)
2) Safety and Security
3) Personal Competencies
4) Entrepreneurship training

We are known for our programs to improve **Arabic**. We are working with an internationally certified native Arabic speaking instructor to provide child protection training, meeting ADEK's standards.

If you are interested in supporting our **child protection program**, or can help us reach out to schools and organizations which need child protection training, please send a message to Maya Motlik at retaluae@gmail.com

We are also working on our entrepreneurship and financial management programs and will announce new offerings soon.



Powered by People

We are a growing community of **nearly 30 people** — volunteers and trainers — working together across a wide range of programs delivered both at our centre and at partner locations across Abu Dhabi.

Our revenue-generating programs operate through **fair and transparent profit-sharing agreements.**

Volunteers work hand in hand with our Basmat Amal team to design and deliver **meaningful, high-impact programs.**

If you would like to be part of this journey, **we would love to hear from you.**

👉 Please complete the form to express your interest.

The word Retal means a soft harmonious voice that supports, guides and reassures. **Growth begins quietly, taking root in care and attention**. Through that growth, change becomes possible.

Over the past eight years, Lotus Retal has come to house many projects which have created brands of their own.

Some Collaborations and Cooperatives

20 talented sewists work alongside a dedicated **volunteer support network** who provide training and support with marketing and sales.

We now have an established **commission structure** for supporters who help bring the ladies new orders. The program is always **looking for new volunteers and supporters**.

The cooperative has developed a collection of **20 original designs** incorporating traditional Sadu fabric, celebrating local heritage while promoting sustainable livelihoods. We have also completed **bespoke orders** for clients.

Our **products are available at our centre**, as well as **Centro Hotel** and the Etihad Modern Art Gallery at **Sheikh Zayed Mosque**.

What if we could **combine Sadu with enviromental responsibility** and **reuse old textiles?**

The Learn Up program partners with **companies and schools to upcycle old uniforms, clothing, and textiles** — incorporating traditional Sadu elements while reducing a significant source of landfill waste.

The impact has gone even further. Student clubs and CCAs asked to learn how to upcycle uniforms themselves. In response, we have expanded the program to include **hands-on workshops**, where our skilled partners in macramé, crochet, and sewing work directly with students to teach practical upcycling techniques.

A strong c**ommunity and student volunteer–driven program,** jointly run by **NYU Abu Dhabi** and Lotus Retal.

Last year, 20 volunteers supported **60 participants** from the Building Better Futures vocational program in improving their English skills. In addition, five participants benefited from free access to the **IELTS test**, further supporting their academic and career pathways.

Do you see a place for yourself in these initiatives?

Tell us about yourself

BASMAT AMAL, AN IMPRINT OF HOPE

Lotus Retal dedicates 40% of revenues to Basmat Amal, a volunteer-run initiative helping children referred by the UNHCR access education.

Volunteers work closely with the children to build the foundational skills they need to succeed in school. They support the children's online learning in schools registered in their home countries, while also ensuring their basic needs are met, including food support. There are many ways to volunteer.

Corporate partners, universities, and community collaborators support our team. Some of the support they have offered this year: Eid gifts, computers and other technology, non-perishable food gifts (like milk). This year during Ramadan the children were assessed by doctors, and 30 children received eyeglasses and dental care from supporting doctors.

In the summer of 2025, a select group of university and high school students (led by Khalifa University) staffed the summer camp and Bassam Freiha Art Foundation organized an art day for Basmat Amal.

There are so many collaborations and supporters of Basmat Amal that we cannot mention them all here. Basmat Amal remains the heart of what we do



Skill building, rooted in hands-on learning techniques

Lotus Retal and May Kadkoy have been **running programs for children in Abu Dhabi for over a decade.**

One of the few centres in Abu Dhabi offering programs like **"Let's Contemplate With Anoos,"** a comprehensive, creative series designed to build faith, character, and self-esteem in Muslim children.

People have also come to our centre to learn Arabic as a foreign language, learn sewing, crochet, robotics, mental math, and other hands-on skills.

We also run exciting and fun camps, often with amazing partners, during school vacation and during the holy month of Ramadan every year.

We work with partners to launch classes which fit with our mission and vision of helping people grow skills.

On Saadiyat Island, our **Arabic is Fun** program has been helping children learn to enjoy themselves while speaking and playing in Arabic.

On Sundays at Cranleigh and on Fridays at Saadiyat Beach Residences, children **build a community of friends who build their vocabulary and fluency through play.**

We are partnering with more teachers who will help children who want to learn in a more structured way as well.

At four schools in Abu Dhabi, we teach children how to upcycle and recycle items from their schools and manage their environmental footprint.

In 2026/27, stay tuned for a program to teach people how to crochet, learn woodworking, learn Arabic while crafting and other programs to build our skills.

"My daughters have spent three years with Lotus Retal. Their Arabic communication improved, which is wonderful. However, what my family has loved is the Contemplate With Anoos programme. This programme has gently created an understanding of the values of Islam and transformed how my daughters look at the world. I sincerely hope this programme continues its good work."

–Dr. Ola





If you want us to send you more information, contact admin@lotusretal.com or 056 644 4699