



International development: challenges for a world in transition

Challenges faced by Ethiopians in London

Narrator

Long established communities change over time. As British born Greek Cypriots improve their economic status over the years, so they move up Green Lanes, out into the suburbs of Enfield. The rag trade is gradually left behind. As they join professions like opticians, dentists and solicitors will their strong sense of community and identity be kept up in these new circumstances?

It's too soon to predict the pattern of London life for Ethiopians. It's unlikely however that their fortunes will be very similar to the Cypriots. Ethiopians came over in smaller numbers, and rarely joined existing family and friendship networks. But had to start from scratch in a difficult legal environment. The challenges of overcoming marginalisation and poverty are still mostly to come.

Alemhayu Dessie, Ethiopian Community in Britain

Whatever qualification you have. Whatever experience you have at home, is not recognised here. That's what the most.. the worst thing that happens to us. I'm not sure it's not only to Ethiopian, to all the refugees, is the disregard we're shown for the experience and knowledge we have gathered throughout our lives.

Male Ethiopian

Me personally, I'm a physiotherapist. I've got Masters in Physiotherapy. As minor, physical education teacher, this is my qualification. I came over here, I wanted to practice. But for top of course I was asked £8,600 by the time when I haven't had £8.60, where I used to live for £40 a week. And me, now I drive taxi.

Narrator

There are some opportunities to acquire new skills and learn English. Crucial for most jobs in London like these classes here, at the Centre for the Ethiopian Community in Britain.

Female Teacher (*writes on board – addressing class*)

....you have done very well. It's just you have to make a question out of it. Ok, why has English become a worded language?

Narrator

Even with a job, as a refugee it can be hard to feel at home.

Wondimu Mekonnen

I am nobody here. I really would like to go home, if the conditions back home change. If they don't persecute our people. If they don't kill. If they don't harass. All I dream is really going home. I will definitely go home as soon as things change. And I hope it will change. And that is why everybody struggles. Everybody tries to do his best. So hopefully I will not remain in Britain forever. I love Britain. It's a lovely place. But it's not home.