

# European by resettlement

**If they pass a round of tests successfully they will become refugees instead of displaced people, and be resettled in the USA, Australia, Canada and many European countries.**

**A**mong the 10.5 million refugees in the world, 1% have a different journey than the rest. They don't get into pontoon boat to sail to a second continent, they don't hide in a boot of a truck in order to arrive in another city. All of that is already behind them. Now they are waiting - will they be chosen? Did what they said during interview convince the officials? Do they fulfil one of the six criteria for resettlement? Will they end up in America or instead in Norway? In short, will they qualify for the UNHCR resettlement programme.

When a decision is finally made, each year 750 refugees will be informed that they are going to Great Britain. 90 of these will live in Sheffield, a city in the north of England in the county of South Yorkshire. During cultural orientation courses before they leave for the UK they will be presented with the UK currency, the pound, and see pictures of the Queen and double-decker buses. They will then be handed a ticket for the flight, and in the UK will be welcomed by an assistant who will help them during the following year. He will take them to a previously prepared flat and say - 'this is your new home'.

## ***Greeting - Maitham from Iraq***

His new home seemed to Maitham most of all quite cold. It was 45°C when he flew out of Iraq with his family. When they landed in England it was -5 °C. It's just 4pm, but it's already dark. Winter, February 2009. 'See you tomorrow', said the assistant, and closed the door behind him. There was no way to call their family. 'Let's wait for a neighbour, maybe he will lend us a phone', said Maitham to his wife Narjes and their three daughters Zahra, Marim and Zynab. In Iraq, when you move to a new neighbourhood, neighbours come and greet you. They bring food, invite you for dinner. In Iraq you should take care of seven neighbours in either direction from your house. If your seventh neighbour has a problem, you are responsible for helping him.

Maitham walked outside waiting for a neighbour. Nobody came. Maybe they haven't noticed? The light was on in a house next door. An older man opened the door. 'Good evening Sir, I am your new neighbour', Maitham introduced himself. Silence. 'I came with my family from Iraq'. Silence. 'It is our first time in Great Britain. We have just moved in'. 'OK', said the neighbour. Then 'anything else'?

'Listen, it is a bit different here than where we come from', said Maitham on his return home to his wife and their three daughters, closing the door behind him. Next day the assistant explained to them that English people are not too open. 'Maybe in a couple of months you will get to know each other better and become friends', he said. Two years passed by and Maitham failed even to get to know his next door neighbour's name. Shortly after two years after their arrival, they moved to a different neighbourhood.

### ***Education - Beatrice from Liberia***

Beatrice also initially found it difficult to understand how things worked in the UK. It took her nine years to learn just how the English live their lives - they stick together, and they mind their own business. When you meet somebody on the street, you do not tell them everything. If you want to pay someone a visit, you have to call and ask beforehand. Although when Beatrice's washing machine broke down, the neighbours did help – they did the laundry and then returned it.

Beatrice is still learning here. She is learning everything. Back in Liberia she did not finish school. After coming to England she attended courses, where she learned the alphabet from scratch, and later English language and maths. In a supermarket she found out that after paying you should wait for your change. Assigned to Beatrice was an assistant named Sara, who showed her how to paint the walls, how to wallpaper and how to set up the 50-inch TV that she bought from a loan given to her by the Jobcentre. The TV was later stolen when her house was broken into.

Beatrice used to live in a bad neighbourhood. Her son Adam was harassed by bullies, who shouted 'nigger' after him on his way to school. They moved out. Beatrice learns in her local church that you should keep away from violence and crime. She also learns that women should get educated, be smart, get a job, earn money and take care of their children. They should be strong, even though things can get tough sometimes.

On Sundays Beatrice goes to the church to attend mass, on Thursdays for Bible study, on Fridays to attend women's meetings, and on Saturdays for quiet prayer and a choir rehearsal. A week ago she passed her driving test and now has a second-hand car. She will now be able to pick up her children from school and go shopping by car. She has achieved something. They preach in the church that to be able to move on, you have to leave something behind. Beatrice left her previous life in Liberia, and in England she separated from her husband.

### ***The past - Mimi from Burma***

Mimi cannot forget Burma. She cannot forget because she will go back. Very soon, in 2015, there will be new elections in her country and Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy will win. Her League will win, Mimi is sure of that. Then she will return and tell her story. As for now, she recounts her story in Sheffield, in her twenty-something square metre apartment on the first floor, where flowers standing at the window smell of Burma. The flowers grow well. No wonder, as Mimi's father and uncle used to own orchards. They left them in 1962 when, after a military coup, they found themselves in prison. Her father was released after 5 years, although her uncle didn't survive.

20 years later Mimi became a geography student. Not for long though, as in 1988 the military junta closed universities and Mimi joined a new party. Since then she has described Aung San Suu Kyi as her leader. In 1989 Mimi had a son, and in 1996 she was imprisoned. Every night back to back and face to face with another couple of hundred prisoners in one prison hall. Three cups of water constituted a shower and only one needle was used for

vaccinations. After two years, guarded by the police, she was moved to another prison. There, 50 women stayed in one cell and were allowed a daily 15-minute walk.

She was released in 2001. She moved to a gold-mining region where, equipped with a bamboo basket, she walked around selling food to the workers. After a couple of years she managed to save some money and buy some small pieces of gold. In May 2006 she arranged to meet her 17-year-old son. She was a couple of days late, but eventually managed to ride a scooter to town, where they were supposed to meet. He didn't make it. Two days earlier he had been beaten up on the street by policemen. Mimi found out from the people who saw him that he died in a hospital. She could not speak to the police. In June 2006 she managed to escape to Thailand where she found a local UNHCR centre.

### ***Work - Prem from Bhutan***

Going abroad meant new opportunities for Prem, and going to the UK meant that all these opportunities would be even more realistic. The UK is a developed country, his education will be recognised here - at the end of the day, that's what he had worked hard for.

In the early 1990s Hindus of Nepalese descent were forced to leave Buddhist-dominated Bhutan. Prem, then a 13-year-old boy, left with his family, and for the next 18 years they lived in a refugee camp in Nepal. Prem went to a camp school organized by Caritas, followed by a university in India, which was located close to the Nepalese border. He finished his postgraduate studies in Nepal and became a university academic, lecturing in accounting.

In 2007, a resettlement programme was launched for Bhutanese refugees. Prem's wife's family was moved to the Netherlands, but his family had to wait another year before they heard about the UK. Prem checked the distance on Google Maps – it didn't seem far, he thought they would be able to visit. He was slightly worried about finding a job, although on their departure in September 2010 they were greeted by the British ambassador at Kathmandu airport, who assured Prem that there were many organisations in England which would help him.

After coming to the UK Prem attended a job interview at one of the universities, where he was told he needed more experience. So he took a job in a primary school. After a week he came back to the university with a paper confirming employment, but was informed that he needed experience at a higher level. He then applied for a monthly internship at a secondary school, but that wasn't enough either.

Since September 2012 Prem has been studying finance and accounting. His studies cost him £5,000 a year, and he can take a student loan deferring payment until he finds a job. Prem attends classes three times a week and once a week he visits the Jobcentre. As a jobseeker claiming welfare assistance (£444 a month for Prem and his wife) he needs to meet his job consultant regularly. Every week the consultant asks 'How is job hunting going?' and Prem replies 'How do I go about getting a job?'

### ***Friends - Joseph from Liberia***

Joseph has been looking for a job for 9 years. He hasn't found it yet, but maybe he will succeed soon. After all, he is a British citizen now. In 2010 he collected his documents from the Town Hall. Back in 2004 it was a different story. When the first resettlement group of 66

people from Liberia came to Sheffield, pieces of paper were their only documents, sometimes with no picture and their names misspelled, and the banks refused to even consider opening an account for them. Those were the times when the city was learning how to deal with refugees. Now, once Joseph received his British passport, he bought a plane ticket. After a long 12 years he could eventually see Jerry, his childhood friend from the same village and the same school.

When the civil war started in Liberia in 1989, Joseph and Jerry were separated. Jerry won a green card and went to America, and shortly afterwards Joseph escaped with his family to Ghana. Jerry found his new home in New York, and Joseph in a refugee camp. Jerry looked for Joseph. He called his parents in Liberia and left his contact number, and after a couple of years Joseph called him back. In 2010, walking down a street in America, purely by chance Jerry met another friend of his and Joseph's from school - Joseph's friends have been scattered all over the world. Before the civil war Liberia was a country everybody headed to, from Sierra Leone and Ghana and elsewhere. It used to be West Africa's 'little America'.

### ***Home - Fatuma from Somalia***

Fatuma calls her friends at the weekends. They stayed in the refugee camp in Dabaab in Kenya. They tell her that a lot has changed there. At 6pm all the shops are closed, people hide in their homes. Murders have become more common, and a few are reported every day. Fatuma is surprised - it wasn't like that when she was leaving two years ago. They used to hang around the camp until 2am.

Fatuma would like her friends to be with her in Sheffield. But it is UNHCR and the western countries who decide who gets chosen. Since her arrival in England, Fatuma has become the head of the family. Her father is ill and bed-bound, and her mother takes care of him. Fatuma's brother is at university. She is 22, the youngest and works 12-hour shifts four times a week in a care home. She likes her job. When she chooses colourful headscarves to match her orange-grey uniform, the residents smile at her. Fatuma works with Pakistanis, Congolese, Polish, Zambians, English....she wouldn't like to leave, she would prefer to stay. Here, she can come and go as she pleases. Back in the camp she could leave only for a couple of hours and only with a pass.

Fatuma's parents came to Dabaab shortly before she was born. Although she was thus born in Kenya, the Kenyan government did not want her to be a part of their country. Fatuma spent 19 years and 10 months in the camp. She has been living in England since 2010, and in two years she can apply for British citizenship. Very soon she could call herself British. But if you ask her about her home, she would say it is in Somalia. She is not sure why - after all she has never been there.

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According to UNHCR, about 180,000 refugees in the world are in need of resettlement. However each year there are enough places for around one-third of them. The United States, Australia and Canada offer the most resettlement places. By contrast the European Union as a whole offers just 8% of global resettlement places. Responsibility for operating resettlement programmes project rests on each individual country, in collaboration with UNHCR. Poland has not launched a resettlement programme yet.

**Picture annotation - page102**

*44-year-old Mimi is a Burmese political activist. In England she claims unemployment benefit and has a part-time job as a cleaning lady. She learns English, and also likes cycling and playing tennis. She collects little figurines. Her savings are placed in a little plastic teddy bear. She puts aside the money for university, a car and a plane ticket back to Burma.*

**Picture annotation - page 103**

*36-year-old Prem had to leave Bhutan because of his Nepalese descent and Hindu religion. He came to England two and a half years ago with his 75-year-old mother, his wife and two children. His mother misses Asia, she would like to go back. Prem asks her to be patient and assures that with time everything will be fine. Prem also doesn't feel well in England. He would like to have a permanent job.*

**Picture annotation - page 104**

*44-year old Joseph used to work as a bank assistant in Liberia. He left because of the civil war. He has separated from his wife in England and now brings up his two daughters and a son. He works as a volunteer in a support group for new refugees. One thing he likes about England is the feeling that whatever he starts he can finish. It all depends on him.*

**Picture annotation - page 104**

*22-year-old Fatuma was born in a refugee camp in Kenya. She came to England in November 2010 with her parents and six brothers. She works in a care home and one day would like to become a nurse. She likes to go shopping and buy new headscarves.*