

LBE 2009 – Migration

Episode 8

Going Home: Ghana - Somalia

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Characters:

Scene 1:

Narrator (female)

Edmund Mbroso (male, in his early 30s, English)

Scene 2:

Narrator (female)

Guled Abdisalam (male, 32, English)

Intro:

Hello and welcome to a new episode of our Learning by Ear series about migration between Africa and Europe. Today, once again we are going to meet some Africans who went back to their home countries after spending a while in Europe. Take a trip with us to Ghana and Somalia.

Scene 1:

1. SFX The depot of a meat importing company in Tema, Ghana

2. Narrator:

We're at a meat importing company in the industrial zone of Tema. Tema is the most important port in Ghana, West Africa. There is a sign on the wall which reads: "Adom Mbroso Import-Export". Women are loading boxes onto crates. The boxes land on each other with a loud thud – the goods are frozen and therefore hard as rock.

3. SFX: in the offices of the meat importing company, Tema, Ghana

4. Narrator:

The company Chief Executive Officer is sitting at his desk. He is surprisingly young. He introduces himself as Edmund and says he runs Adom Mbroso Import Export.

5. SFX: at the cold-storage depot

6. Narrator:

The company deals with frozen goods – especially meat and fish. Pork from Holland and Germany, chicken from Brazil, fish from Mauritania, basically meat and fish of all kinds from all over the world. The company also has a branch in Kumasi, which is inland. Edmund explains that the company employs some 100 permanent workers in Tema alone and about 250 occasional workers. So, the company is far from small. Therefore, the 30-year-old Chief Executive Officer has a lot of responsibility. Especially in these times of global financial crisis.

7. O-Ton Edmund Mbroso

Actually, the volumes that we sell have gone down drastically. Before, we were selling like, let us say, five containers of chicken in a month, now we barely sell a single container. Which is about 20 tons. So from something like over 120 tons to 28 tons – that is quite a big drop in our turnover, really, and it is the general trend everywhere! Every one you speak to is experiencing the same thing!

8. Narrator:

Although Edmund is calm as he speaks, the situation does not bode well. Indeed, it is dramatic. Asked if he is worried about the future, he answers frankly:

9. O-Ton Edmund Mbroso

Honestly? There is no hope! It is always this or that or the other – if it is not an economic crisis, it is the fuel crisis, and really, the cost of doing business in Ghana is really high. And from what I see, the government policies are not helping either.

10. Narrator:

This situation pushes tens of thousands of Africans to try their luck in Europe every year. But not Edmund. He just came back:

11. O-Ton Edmund Mbroso

I lived in London for about 10 years. I had all my senior education in London, I went to university and everything, I have done my masters, but even though I was making a good amount of money, I had to come down to help. This is something for me. In London, I was working for the government, so I would not say that this would be the best thing. If I work

hard and this business grows, it is for me, it is not for the government. In London, I work really hard, but at the end of the day, the government is only paying me my monthly wages, and that is it. That is how I came down.

12. Narrator:

But to be honest, Edmund seems somewhat better off than many other Ghanaians. His parents set up the import-export company that he now runs. Now they are old and do not have the energy to manage the company alone – especially not in times such as these. This is why their son came back from the English capital so that he could shoulder the responsibility. In Europe, he had studied something completely different – pharmacy.

13. O-Ton Edmund Mbroso

I wouldn't say I regretted it. I don't regret anything in my life, for a start. But coming down is good (*coming down = coming back*). I am a citizen of this country. If I learned something, I should come back to Ghana and use it for the benefit of Ghanaians. I don't think in England they need me as much as Ghana needs me. Because in England, there is a lot of pharmacists, who have the same education like I've got. Ghana does not have a lot of people like me. And number two: This is my country. I am proud of my country – I need to come back here. The little I have learnt in England – bring it here to help my people to grow! We are talking about the competition to Europe – to be fair, we need to help as citizens as well. The little that we know, we need to bring it back. And that is what I am doing. I think I do it to help my country.

14. Narrator:

His answer is not that easy to understand. Why does he want to help his country when he says the situation is hopeless? Maybe he underestimated the situation, thought that it would be easier?

15. O-Ton Edmund Mbroso

Yes and no. Yes because in Ghana here, I have a lot of family. And I always think that with my family around, I can be more relaxed. I feel more relaxed working in Ghana. It is a little bit tense working in England. You have to work to pay the bills! In Ghana, you can relax a little bit. Not that this is advisable, but that is basically what it is. You don't feel the pressure to work really hard – even though I do my best to work. I do the utmost I can – but I don't need the pressure as well. I wake up in the morning, I do the best I can do in 24 hours, but I don't need the pressure on top of it.

Scene 2:**16. SFX Guled at the hotel, is on the phone, speaking Somali and English****17. Narrator:**

We're at a hotel in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia in East Africa. The young man who is constantly on his mobile phone speaks both English and Somali. He speaks English like a native Briton. Guled Abdisalem is 32 years old and has spent over half of his life in London. He returned to Mogadishu four weeks ago.

18. O-Ton Guled Abdisalam

Of course, there is a risk that lies in here. Very much. If we put it in THAT word, risk assessment is 100 plus plus plus, (laughing), so it is kind of no-go-zone. But again: There is a people in here. There is a country in here. And you can't do things easily and expect things to be perfect ...— risk lies everywhere.

19. Narrator:

Guled seems to have brought back from London a sense of the understatement for which English people are so famous. He simply does not see things as dramatically as they actually are. Yet, in Mogadishu the risks are somewhat higher than in the rest of the world. For almost 20 years now, since 1991, Somalia has not had a real government that has been able to keep the country under control. Anarchy and lawlessness are widespread. Although a new government took the reigns shortly before Guled's return it hasn't even been able to bring the capital under control, let alone the rest of the country. But Guled has high hopes for the new government. And that's why he came back from England.

20. O-Ton Guled Abdisalam

I never thought about being a billionaire, I never thought about earning so much, I always thought about helping someone. Bringing out something I know. And contribute to the world for the best. I think I am doing the job I always dreamt to do: Come back and invent the things that I think I can do. Mobilize the people and talk to the young generation, and tell them the difference between violence and peace. What is the difference between living in peace and what life is like living in violence?

21. Narrator:

The reason for his return was a call from Mogadishu in February 2009. The new prime minister's office called Guled in London and offered him a job as spokesman and media consultant for the prime minister. Guled Abdisalam is a freelance journalist and has made a name for himself in Somalia. He has also made films about the war in his country for the BBC. He kept returning to Somalia to do research and knew what it would mean to come back for good. He packed his suitcases after receiving the phone call.

22. O-Ton Guled Abdisalam

The reason why I came back this time and I am determined to stay is because I do see hope. The hope I do see is: The people I do see are different from the normal guys we used to see. And I always looked for that hope.

23. Narrator:

Some of the new members of the government have also just returned from overseas. Guled's new boss, Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmake, has both a Canadian and a Somali passport. The former diplomat to the United Nations spent the past nine years in different crisis regions of Africa. Guled himself first went to London when he was 14. His parents sent him to stay with relatives there whilst they lived in Egypt. The family was driven into exile by the war in Somalia. Although, he says his parents did not suffer, they were not able to receive an education:

24. O-Ton Guled Abdisalam

They always had in mind that they wanted their children to live a better life; their children and the generation after them to have a different vision and mentality. So they always had that hunger for education. They planned for me. It wasn't my plan at all, to become a British, to become a European. It wasn't my plan. But it worked.

25. Narrator:

Guled Abisalam has two degrees. He is a journalist and also has a Master's in African Studies that he was awarded in 2007. All the time he was in Great Britain, he couldn't forget Somalia.

26. O-Ton Guled Abdisalam

My parents and my family, they always have this kind of mentality, they say: If you go to Somalia, you will be much better off, and you will have a bright future, if you go there – your people need you. And ever since, Somalia has never been a place where you wanted to live. When you look at the news, when you look at the refugees and all that kind of stuff, so it was very difficult. And again, my parents were kind of patriot people. My dad and my uncle they always said: You know what? We want Somalia to have a better life. And they used to tell me what Somalia used to be. So they said: You know, this country needs bright people who can make this country what it is. So I always said: Yes, I have a place where I can be the pioneer. Someone who invents something that never existed before. So I have that kind of hope. And not only me, but a lot of Somali.

Outro:

That's all for today's Learning by Ear program about migration. Our reporter was Bettina Rühl. Thank you for listening to us. If you would like to find out more about this topic, or listen to other Learning by Ear programs or to this broadcast again, please visit our website at www.dw-world.de/lbe

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