

Should Jariatu Stay or go?

Objectives:

- To explore the reasons why skilled people from Africa come to work in the UK.

You will need:

- Copies of the role play characters.
- To arrange the classroom so that the children doing the roles are facing the rest of the class.

Instructions:

Role Play

- Allocate the roles to pupils (more than one pupil can take the part of any of the roles if they are too long).
- Set the scene – Jariatu is a nurse from Sierra Leone working in the UK. Should Jariatu stay in the UK or return to Sierra Leone?
- Ask the roles in turn to give reasons why they think Jariatu should either stay in the UK or return to Sierra Leone.
- The rest of the class listen to all the presentations and decide whether Jariatu should stay in the UK or return to Sierra Leone. If there is anything on which they need clarification they can ask any of the roles questions.
- In reaching a conclusion it may be helpful to encourage the children to think about whose needs are the most important.
- Having listened to all the arguments the class vote. Ask the pupils for their reasons for voting one way or the other.
- Depending on the maturity of the children you may wish to discuss some of the moral issues that the “Brain-drain” raises.



Question Chain

- Ask the children to make a chain of questions, for example :

Why do doctors and nurses leave Sierra Leone and other African countries?

...because the governments there cannot pay for their skills...

...because they are attracted by better pay and conditions in Europe and the USA....

Why can't the government pay for their skills?

...because of repaying their international debt...

...because of receiving inadequate aid...

Why are they in debt?

...because they borrowed money for making improvements like building schools and hospitals and have to pay it back...

...because they don't earn enough from trade...

Why don't they earn enough from trade?

...because of the unfair trade rules imposed by the rich countries...

....because they get taxed if they process any of the raw materials for export...

Role Play Cards

Jariatu Sesay

My name is Jariatu Sesay and I come from Sierra Leone, West Africa. I was brought up in the countryside where there were few clinics and doctors. When I was very young I decided that I wanted to become a nurse when I grew up. I began my nursing training at a time when Sierra Leone was involved in a terrible war.

I became a nurse at a hospital in Freetown as soon as I passed the exams. There were almost no medicines or equipment at the hospital where I worked. If people did not have the money to buy medicines then they could not be treated. The government often did not pay us for months at a time. Often there were not enough nurses on the ward as they could not get to work because they didn't have the bus fare to get there.

I volunteered to work on a medical ship for a couple of months. My volunteer expenses for this work were more than my previous salary had been. My friends at the hospital had stopped going there to work, as they had to look for other paid work to feed their families. Then I heard from colleagues that there was a shortage of qualified nurses in the UK and that I could earn a good salary there. I left Sierra Leone at the end of 2003 and started work in a London hospital as a nurse. It is so good to be in a hospital where there are medicines and the things you need to treat sick people.

I earn a lot more than I did whilst nursing in Sierra Leone and there are more opportunities for getting a better job. I can send some money home for my mother and sister. However, life in London is not easy for me. I miss my home and family and I am lonely. It is hard to know what to do for the best.

Government Health Minister in Sierra Leone

I am very worried because we do not have enough doctors and nurses. This is partly because we don't have the money to train them but it is also because those that we do train leave our country and go to countries like England. We are very concerned because it takes a lot of money to pay for education and training for someone to be a doctor or a nurse and we are not a wealthy country. It is very bad for us. It is not fair that rich countries get our doctors and nurses. Poor, sick people here cannot be treated because we haven't enough doctors and nurses. I can understand that opportunities are better in England and they get paid more but I think they should stay here and look after their own people. We need them more. You should be training your own doctors, not taking ours. Do you know that 12,500 doctors who are working in the UK come from African countries which are short of doctors?

Patient in Sierra Leone

I had been injured in the war here. It went on for 10 long years. I was not a soldier but I was injured when the building I was in was bombed. It took ages to get to the hospital and I had to wait for hours for a nurse to be free to treat my wounds. You see, we are very short of trained staff. When I did eventually receive attention the nurse was exhausted because there had been so many people hurt and so few doctors and nurses to see to them. We had no antibiotics or other medicines, so I was in a lot of pain. I had a very hard time. Our country needs better health services. The doctors and nurses who have trained here should stay and work here, not in other countries.

Role Play Cards

Doctor in Sierra Leone

I can understand why so many of my friends who are doctors want to leave and go abroad. The government needs to sort out the problems and improve our hospitals, give us what we need to explore causes of illnesses so that we can find cures, then people will stay. They need to listen to their people.

They would gladly have stayed if they got a decent wage, were paid regularly and on time. We have the right to use our skills to earn enough to cover the basic needs of our families. It is the "pushing factors" rather than the "pulling" that is causing people to leave.

Jariatu's Sister

I knew for ages that Jariatu wanted to be a nurse, when we were little we played hospitals a lot of the time! She used to get upset when people in our village died of illnesses because they had no doctor or medicines. I had a job at a college training teachers and I saved money so that Jariatu could train as a nurse. In Sierra Leone you have to pay for training. Besides the fees she needed money to live on and buy books so it wasn't easy. I can sympathise with her feeling fed-up and upset working in the hospital in Freetown, with nothing that you needed to treat the patients. I was very shocked when she found out about jobs in England; I didn't think she would go. After all there are loads of people here who need nursing. They won't get anything out of all the money I spent getting her trained. Also I am left to support my mother and nieces and nephews on my own. But most of all I miss her; we were good friends and helped each other if there were problems. I worry about her being so far away in a strange land with people who don't understand our way of doing things.

Patient in the United Kingdom

I was on the waiting list for an operation for months because the hospital had to close the ward as they did not have enough nurses. I was getting very upset because I was feeling very ill and was in pain. You can imagine how relieved I was to get the letter telling me to come into hospital. It seems that a number of nurses from abroad have come to work here so now the ward can be re-opened.

I don't care where they have come from as long as my operation can happen soon! It will be such a relief.

Government Minister in United Kingdom

We need people to work in our hospitals and have to ask in other countries if there are trained people who are interested in coming here. Last year nearly half of our new nurses came from abroad. This means of course that they are losing skilled people whom they need too. But we have set rules to try and be fair when we are advertising for people from other countries. In fact in some countries we don't advertise at all. Of course people are free to apply to come here if they want to. We won't say no because we need their skills. We can offer more money and our hospitals are better to work in. We can offer new career choices to them. If they go back to Sierra Leone they will take their new skills and experience with them and then the country will benefit. We are aware of the concerns in African countries and are now making more places in medical schools to train more doctors. Anyway if we turn them away they will probably go to countries like the United States or Australia.