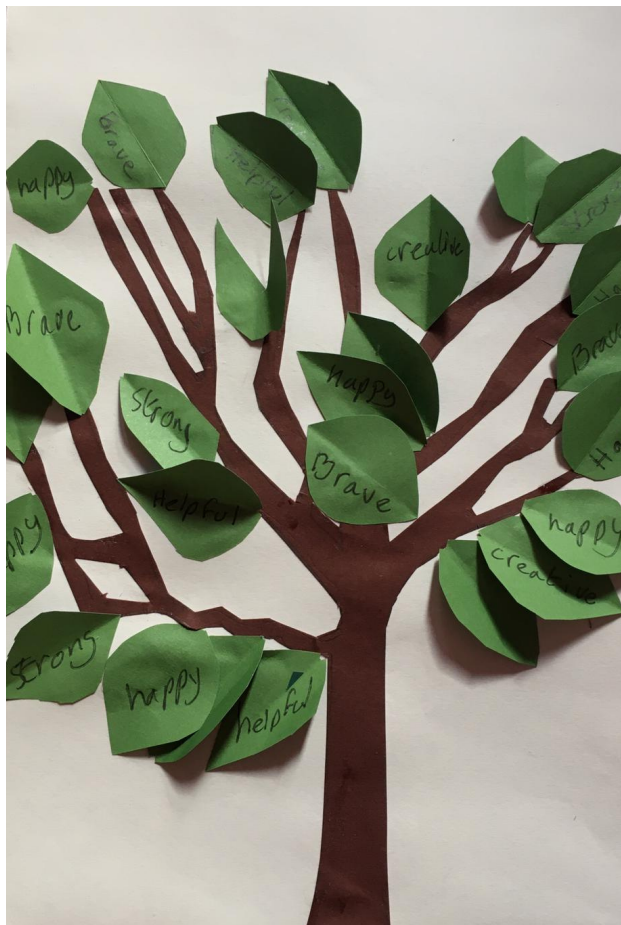


# Remember The Child of Whom You Are

Zarokè ku hùn ne bînin bîra xwe



Ranti ọmọ ti o jẹ

تذكر الطفل الذي بداخلك

***“I just  
discovered now  
that I  
can draw”***

Through the making of this book one of the mothers from Algeria discovered that she had a talent for drawing.

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# Introduction

Action for Refugees in Lewisham is a small, dynamic charity that works to support asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants, and refugees in our local community. We enable our service users to overcome their complex problems and meaningfully integrate into local society. We offer a range of services, including the Helping Hands foodbank; an Advice and Advocacy Service; an Immigration Legal Advice service in partnership with Southwark Law Centre, and wellbeing activities, including the Allotment of Refuge.

One of our most important, and unique, services, is the Rainbow Club supplementary school. The Rainbow Club provides weekly additional English and Maths classes to children from asylum seeker, migrant and refugee families to help them excel in education, as well as art, music and sports to develop physical and emotional wellbeing.



We are thrilled to have worked with Creating Ground on this very special project. The pandemic, and lockdown, were very difficult for our service users, exacerbating already complex problems: we worried that they would not have the time, or desire, to work on a project about memory, culture, place and migration. However, as you will see from this book, it has been an intensely meaningful experience for everyone involved. We are delighted to share this book with you, which looks at our families' experiences of home here and abroad, their feelings about their complex identities, and their understanding of their own migration journeys. We are so grateful to Creating Ground for facilitating this wonderful work, and to The National Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting us, especially as plans changed over the past year.

The work in this book has moved us, and we hope that it will be a basis for more understanding across the communities of Lewisham – as well as enabling the people that have worked on this project to take pride in their journeys and their identities.

**Katie Commons**  
AFRIL Director

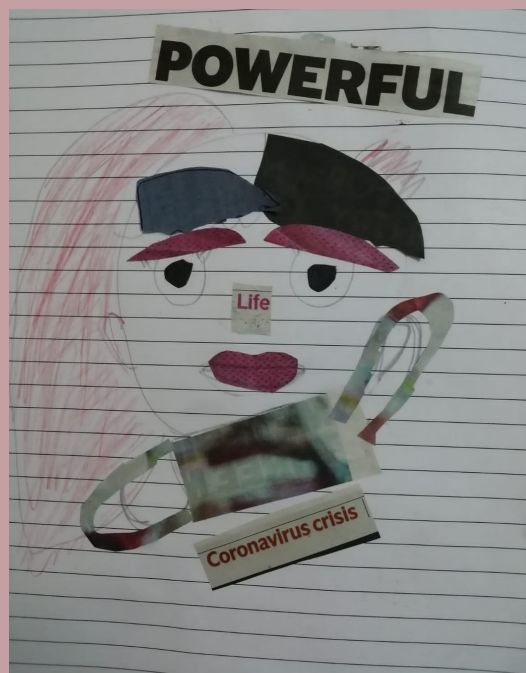
# About the Discovering Stories book

Creating Ground CIC is a non for profit organisation promoting cross-cultural awareness, learning and sharing across different communities in South East London through collaborative arts and educational projects.

We started to work on the Discovering Stories project in September 2019 when the world was a different one. We managed to have a couple of workshops at AFRIL and had lots of great ideas and plans about our future work together with the parents on the book. However, COVID 19 came and, of course, it stormed our lives and our plans. We are so grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for being so flexible and for allowing us to work longer on the project.

After an initial moment of pause, doubts and worries, we decided to resort to online work. We contacted all the parents and created a WhatsApp group.

We held online workshops where we brought parents together to reflect on identity, culture and their migration journeys through a creative process. The sessions also helped us to check in with the parents and be closer to them in a very challenging time.



We also organised one to one interviews to explore parents' individual stories and go deeper on some of the themes and issues raised and addressed in the workshops.

We asked parents to do some tasks at home with their children and we also sent some activity sheets for the children to do with their parents. This helped parents and children bond and talk about the meaning and value of their culture to each other. Through many of these activities, children learnt about their parents' childhood and about the similarities and differences to their childhood.

To finish this book was a challenging journey but through this journey we have learnt that the parents at AFRIL have so much in common. They do not only share many similarities in their cultures, for example childhood games, importance of family, food and religion, but also and more importantly they share the same hopes and wishes for their children. What they all want is for their children to take the best from their cultures, to cherish and nourish their origins, to remember where they have come from and what it has taken their parents to come to the UK and start a new life here. They want their children to be proud of them as much as they are proud of their children. They want their children to be able to confidently recognise themselves as someone who is British but has also a different, unique, special heritage. This is why we feel that this Yoruba proverb from one of the parents is the best possible title we could have for our book "remember the child of whom you are".

We hope that by reading this book you can recognise yourself, learn something new and gain insights into the cultures of the parents from AFRIL's Rainbow Club.

**Laura Marziale**  
Creating Ground CIC Director



# Hands Activity



In one of our group sessions, we used “our hands” to discover our past and imagine our future.

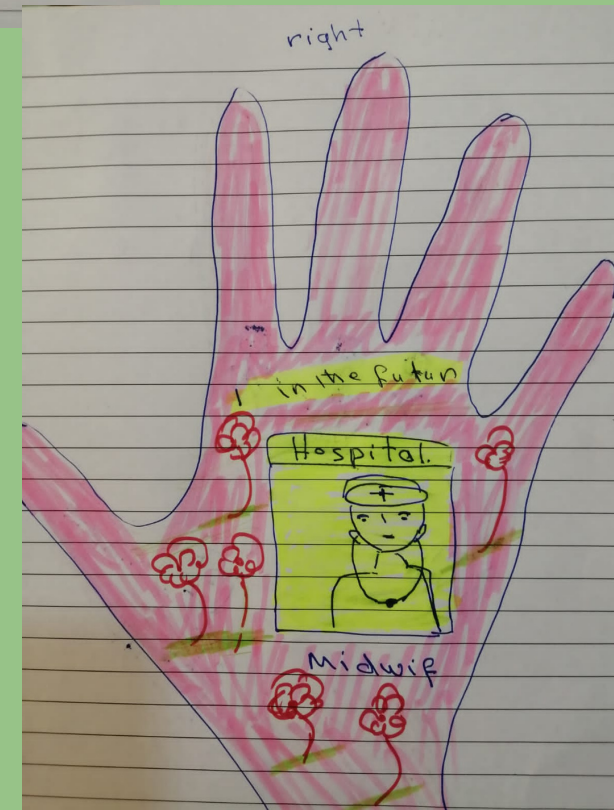
We drew our hands on a piece of paper and we put our past on one hand and our future on the other hand.

Through working on this activity, we remembered and shared our stories and reflected on what has made us who we are today. It was not always easy to think about the past but looking at the future brought hopes and dreams to our minds and hearts.



“Here there is more freedom. I can’t wear anything, I can’t go outside, speak anything in Syria. I can’t speak anything about my culture because it is Arabic and I am Kurdish. I can’t speak in Kurdish.”

“When I came to the UK the first thing they asked me when I went to college was ‘what thing do you want in life?’ I said ‘I want freedom’”



# Interview Activity

In one of the activities we sent the children, we asked them to interview their parents and do a portrait of their mothers.

We asked the children to find out what their mum was doing at their age, how a typical day was; what her favourite game or hobby was, what she ate and the biggest difference they could find between their childhoods.

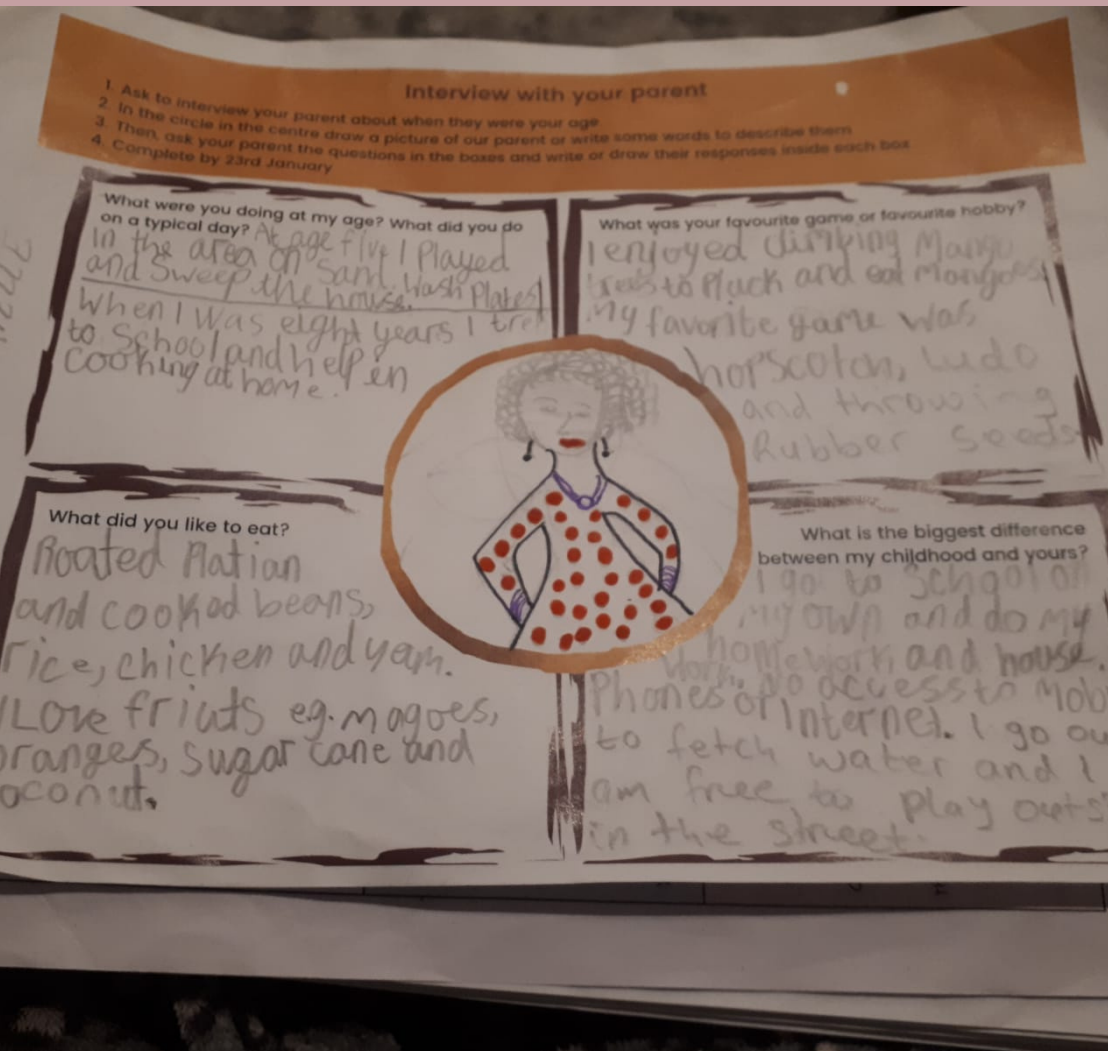
It was so nice to reflect on the similarities and differences of their childhoods. Many parents spoke about being able to go to and from school by themselves, playing in the streets and having to help with home tasks like fetching water. They also mentioned the difference in owning electronics and in different discipline methods used by the parents.

This activity provided a framework for parents and children to spend some quality time together allowing the children to discover something new about their parents and their childhood.

*"She likes eating egg and yam"*

*"My childhood we don't get disciplined, but my mum's childhood they get disciplined."*

*"She had no electronics and I have it"*





# Childhood

## Games from childhood

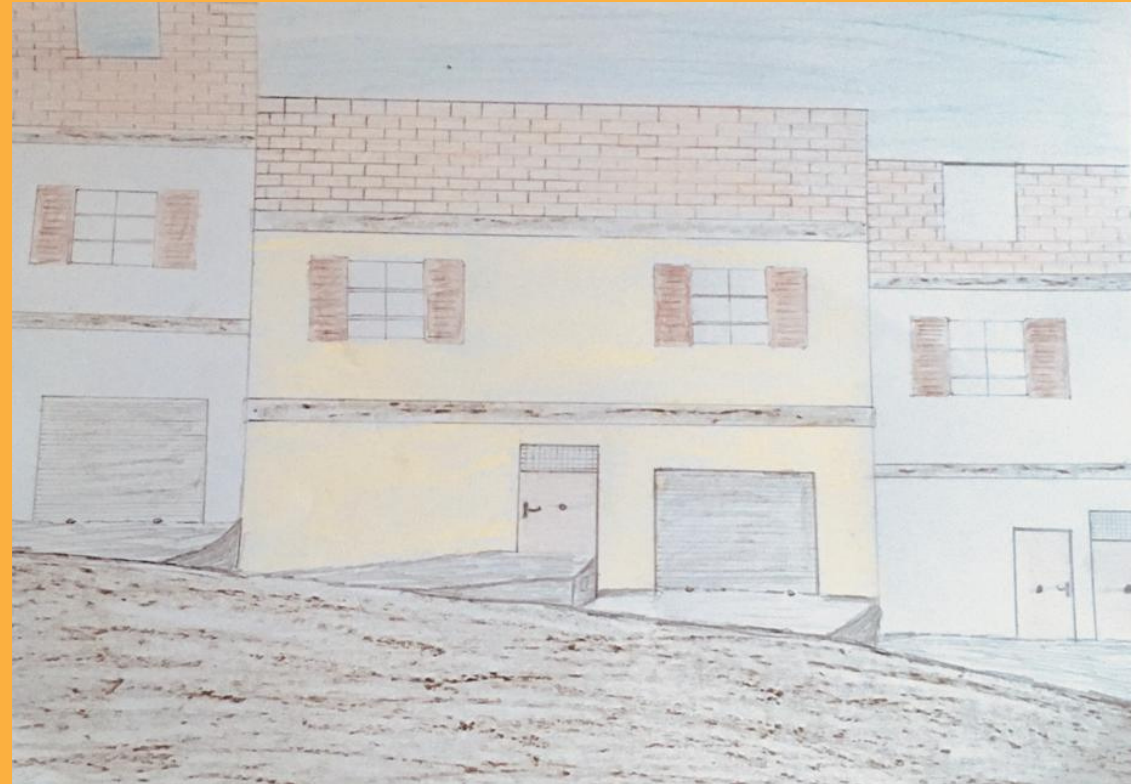
A Nigerian mother told us about the games she used to play as a child.

*"The game I played during my childhood was called ten ten. Two people played it together and clapping their hands and also need to raise a leg up. If eventually both parties raised the same leg up one person loses."*



*"It takes a village to train a child in Nigeria... when a child goes out, he or she knows that even if the mum is not there, there are other people who are watching so the child tends to behave himself or herself."*

## The street where I grew up



We asked mothers to draw their childhood homes. A mother from Algeria drew this amazing illustration from memory of the road where she grew up. She had to dig deep into her memory and really try hard to remember all the details of her house and the street as they looked then, as now they are different.

She had to go back with her memory to when she was a young girl in primary school and she would play in the road with her siblings and neighbours. The activity brought all her fond memories back to life. She completely immersed herself into it and found it to be inspiring and emotional. It was like she could relive and re-experience those nice days of her childhood.

When she showed the drawing to her sister in Algeria, her sister thought that she had taken it from the internet. She could not believe that she had done it and that she could remember everything so well. She had never done any drawings and working on this activity made her discover that she could do it, that she enjoys it and that she is very good at it.

*“Outside we were playing together with neighbours. All the neighbours came outside to play. Not like England - they don't go outside to play in the road.”*

*“The road it's like one car fits and still we played here. It was very nice. I was happy”*

*“We played hide and seek. A lot. And we were going inside neighbours' houses and we hid there. Next to us was a large cemetery. We were playing inside because when we were children we didn't think it was scary. We just played and hid behind graves. When we grew up they cleaned it and they closed it so we can't go inside anymore.”*

*“In my country when I was in primary school we were going to school with all the neighbours. A lot of people are all together going and all together coming back. There were no parents coming with us and it was far. It was very nice. We studied from 10 until 12 and then we came back home, we ate our lunch and we took a rest, and then we went back again to school with all the neighbours, all people from this area, from this area, from this area, we met all together in the main road and went together and came back home at 5 o'clock. Every day like that. No parents came with us.”*

# Birds Activity



In one of our art sessions, we “became birds” to think about our culture and reflect on what we have taken with us from our countries of origin to our new homes in the UK.

Beautiful birds were made with card paper and any decoration we had at home. The wings were made with another piece of paper.

On the wings we all wrote what we kept with us from our cultures or countries. Some of us wrote what they miss most and what they would like a bird to bring them if they could fly to our countries.



Becoming birds metaphorically helped us reconnect with our migration journeys and helped us think of what we cherish and value of our cultures.



"When I feel free, it's like I'm a bird. I feel good, I feel everything, I can do everything I want. No one tells me 'don't do this, don't do that' and when I come home I close my door and relax."

## What does your culture mean to you?

My culture is my identity, heritage and belief

Feel confident

Is great

Beautiful respectful and helpful

Unity

Historical, hardworking and loving

A lot

Community, Nation, State

Heritage, ancient cities, buddhism, respect and friendliness.

Pride, Identity, Belonging



# Culture

## Theatre

One Nigerian mother told us about the live performances they do every Sunday.

*"The national theatre, we normally go to the national theatre every Sunday. You can go and spend your Sunday there at national theatre and watch stage films."*

*"Ade Love is an old Nollywood film and when they brought this film to the stage everyone left to go and watch it at the theatre. Everytime they want to show that film in the theatre everyone would like to go."*

*"I like the natural way they dress. That's what I like about it."*



*"For me Nigerians are fashionists... Nigeria is a diverse, multicultural economy... me as a Yoruba I still try to learn from Igbos"*

## Music

A Kurdish mother told us about this instrument which her husband brought with them to the UK. It is played by both men and women.

## Tambura



*"This is Kurdish not Arabic. My husband plays it. My husband brought this from Syria."*

*"My husband is teaching my daughter to play it"*

*"Many women play this."*

## Yoruba Lullaby

Iya ni wura

Iya ni wura iyebiye ti a ko le fowo ra

O loyun mi fosu mesan

O pon mi fodun meta a a

Iya mo ki o ku ise o

Iya ku itoju mi

**Mother is gold**

Mother you are a precious gem that  
money cannot buy.

You carried me in your womb for nine  
months and you carried me on your  
back for three years. Thank you  
mother.

Who sat and watched my infant head  
When sleeping on my cradle bed  
And tears of sweet affection shed  
My mother!

When pain and sickness made me cry  
Who gazed upon my heavy eyes  
And wept for fear that I should die  
My mother!



## Poetry

أَعَدَدْتُ شَعْبًا طَيِّبَ الْأَغْرَاقِ  
بِالرَّيِّ أَوْزَقَ أَيَّمَا إِيْرَاقِ  
شَغَلْتُ مَا يَرْهُمُ مَدَى الْأَفَاقِ  
الشاعر حافظ إبراهيم (١٨٧٢-١٩٣٢)

الْأُمُّ مَدْرَسَةٌ إِذَا أَعَدَدْتَهَا  
الْأُمُّ رَوْضٌ إِنْ تَعَهَّدَهُ الْحَيَا  
الْأُمُّ أَسْتَاذُ الْأَسَاتِيذَةِ الْأَلَى

Mother is a school, when you prepare it, you have prepared  
a full nation to be of good breed.

Mother is a garden, if watered well it flourishes in the best  
way.

Mother is the teacher of all teachers whose  
accomplishments busied peoples throughout the horizons.

"My Koran is going with me  
anywhere I go. If you tell  
me choose anything in your  
home, I choose the Koran.  
The book is our life, our  
constitution for us, for  
Muslim people."





# Marriage

"In other Arabic countries they do not have the same tradition. On the wedding day, female family and friends gather in a big rented hall. The bride does not come in with a white dress.. she wears different dresses and lots of gold and sparkle. She enters the hall and goes around all the tables to be admired by everybody. She then goes inside and changes clothes and comes back again with a different dress as in a fashion show. She can do it for 6 or 7 times depending on how much money she has.

At the end, she wears her white dress and the groom is allowed to come in accompanied by a few male friends.

They cut the cake and feed each other.

People usually hire the clothes as they are only needed for one day.

The night before the wedding, bride and broom in their family houses are celebrated by their families, they are put henna on their hands, they wear traditional clothes, they dance and eat. That is their send off to their new life together."



# Identity

We spoke with a Kurdish mother who was happy to talk about her culture and identity as a Kurd who lived in Syria.

"I want to talk about Kurds. Kurdish live between 4 countries - Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. We have our own nationality but we don't have a country yet."

"We have our own special language different from the country we live in - Kurdish."

"At home I speak Kurdish only"

"Most Kurdish are Muslim, the rest are Christian, Jewish and Yazidis"

"In Syria there is a struggle for Kurdish culture. It is forbidden to speak Kurdish in public. They have to change their names to local authentic names, if they want a job or to enrol their children in school"



"21st March we have a special festival Newroz. We wear special costumes. We make food. They make like theatre about culture and Kurdish dancing, a special dance"



# Food

All the mothers we spoke to mentioned food as an important part of the culture that they wanted their children to keep. Many also spoke about how important it is to sit down as a family and eat together.



*"I miss sitting with my family to eat together - it was important to me. Now just my husband and my daughter"*

## Kurdish Kibbeh



*"I don't like the food here because the spices are different"*

*"Sometimes I cook Arabic Syrian food and sometimes Kurdish food. With Arabic country we share in common some food"*



# Algerian Couscous

## Ingredients:

- Meat (of your choice)
- 2 big onions cut into slices
- 3 tomatoes cut into pieces
- 1/4 olive oil
- 3 carrots
- 2 turnips
- 1/2 white cabbage
- 2 courgettes
- Some pieces of pumpkin
- Cup of chickpeas
- Some fresh coriander
- Some fresh parsley
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Turmeric
- Ginger
- Mixed spices
- Paprika

*"In my country  
we eat, we meet,  
we chat until 1 in the  
morning"*



## Sauce preparation:

In a saucepan heat the olive oil, then put the meat and fry it for 5 minutes. Add some salt and mix it together. Add onions and fry them until golden. Add tomatoes, chickpeas, white cabbage, carrots, parsley and coriander. Add black pepper, ginger, turmeric, salt, paprika and water. Cover it and leave it. In a half cook add the pumpkin and courgettes.

## Couscous preparation:

In a large dipping bowl, pour the pack of couscous and add 1 tbsp of olive oil and salt, mix well and add some water. Leave it to drink. When it drinks rub it well with hands then put it in the steamer. Steam until the steam is appearing from the couscous. Again put it in the large dipping bowl, add tbsp of butter or ghee and rub it well with hands. Serve it hot.



## Amala

Amala is a Nigerian food, native to Yoruba people. It is made out of yam and/or cassava flour, or unripe plantain flour.

Yams are peeled, sliced, cleaned, dried and then blended into a flour, also called elubo

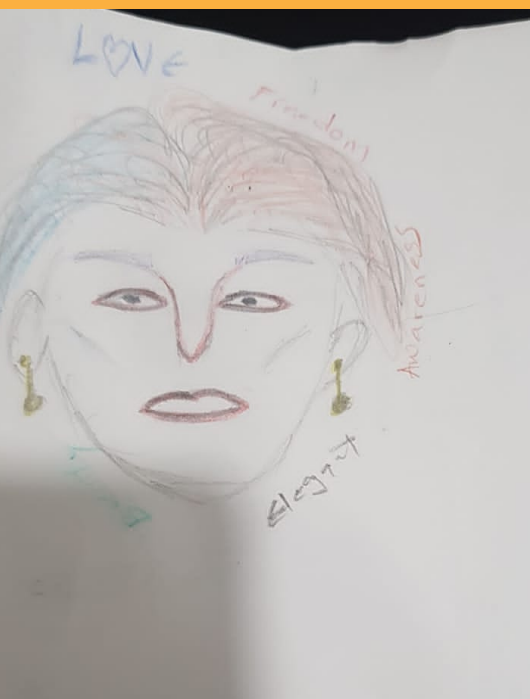
## Ewedu

Ewedu is a green leafy vegetable that is made into a traditional soup native to the Yoruba often served with Amala.



## Was there anything that surprised you about the UK?

"The first difference is the light. When I first came to the country I saw everywhere was light. When you go to Africa its dark. You don't have light in Africa so that is most important thing here"



"I miss the weather. No jacket every time. We are free. You can show your clothes, you can show your dresses. Here you are always with your jacket. One uniform."

"In this country different family - not together, but our families in Syria together. They separate when they get married. Here when they reach 18 years they separate from family"

## What has helped you feel more at home in the UK?

The freedom, the help from government

The help of organisation (AFRIL) and my child

The people are so lovely and accommodating

Love from charity

People are very friendly and helpful

My children, help from charity like AFRIL and some very good friends who love to me and my children

The love and ability to accept me as an individual and my family

Huge support from the charity organisation

Support

Commitment, loving, caring and togetherness and helpfulness

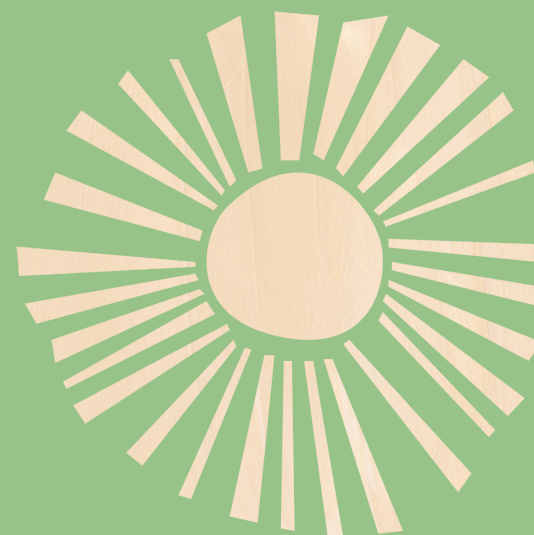
Love support caring

## What traditions would you like your child to keep?



## What traditions would you like your child to keep?

*"In Nigeria you cannot do ganging because everybody is auntie and uncle... that is why everybody calls you auntie and uncle....we are used to call everybody like that, even your neighbour is your uncle...this is one part of the culture that I really really miss."*



Across different cultures, parents shared the same hopes for their children. They wanted their children to be kind, respectful and show solidarity to others. They wanted their children to learn these values and nourish them in their lives. They wanted their children to learn the importance of community and how nice it is to be there for others and to be able to rely on others whenever needed. This sense of community is also what many of the parents said that they miss most.

AFRIL and Creating Ground though have been a place where they have regained that sense of trust and belonging. Knowing that organisations like these two exist is of a great emotional support for migrant families. Knowing also that parents from other countries share similar stories and have so much in common is also comforting. It makes people feel less lonely and more understood.

All the parents told us that the best way to pass those important values of respect, solidarity and empathy to their children is to be a good consistent role model for them, showing them the way and being alongside them to guide them and support them.

Our cultures might be different but through discovering our stories, we have learnt that we share similar journeys and on these journeys we are the guiding light for our children. May our light always be powerful and reliable and may our children be like the tree on our cover: have solid roots, a strong and resilient trunk and beautiful branches to aim to the sky.

*"Remember the child of whom you are...that means wherever you go remember your value, remember our values"*

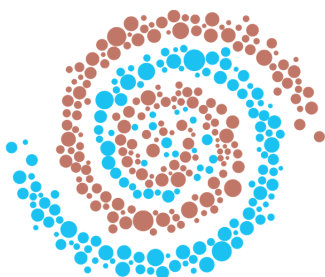


A huge thank you to all the parents and children at AFRIL who have contributed to the making of this book.



Action For Refugees In Lewisham

[www.afril.org.uk](http://www.afril.org.uk)



Creating Ground

[www.theground.org.uk](http://www.theground.org.uk)

Discovering Stories  
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