

YÖDU* (SOUTH SUDAN)

“Education is the key to the future.”

See [Mary’s Refugee Learner Narrative](#) for another perspective and additional information on Sudan.

Life before Canada

Birthplace and Family

My name is Yödu and I was born in Kajo Keji, Central Equatoria, South Sudan, on January 1, 1992. I identify myself as a woman of the Kuku people and I speak Bari. At home in South Sudan, I and my grandmother, Yaya, spoke both Arabic and Bari.

I lived with my Yaya since the age of two, when my parents divorced. I didn’t have any brothers or sisters. After the divorce, my father went to Kenya and my mother went back to her father’s home and remarried. I was left with my grandmother, who lived with one of her sons, my uncle Chriz. I lived with them until the age of 13, when I left and went to live in Uganda with a friend of the family.

I grew up in a large family. There were 15 children (my uncle’s 14 children plus me), Grandmother Yaya, Aunt Grace, and Uncle Chriz. My uncle was a farmer and my grandmother worked as a nurse

* To protect the participant’s privacy, pseudonyms have been used in this narrative.



Map No. 4450 Rev.1 UNITED NATIONS October 2011 Department of Field Support Cartographic Section

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in a hospital. My grandmother taught me a lot of stuff. One of these was how to cook and care for other people that prepared me for my future life. My uncle sold the food he grew in the village and provided food for the family. I had another uncle, who was a soldier, but he passed away.

Kajo Keji isn't like a city. The homes are made of grass and mud. There is no running water. I would go into the bush to go to the bathroom. We drank water from the river which was very dirty. I became sick with malaria, but now I am healthy. Despite the conditions, I loved living in my community because everyone was friendly and helped each other. Even here in Canada it is the same; the members of my community help each other. I was very happy living in Kajo Keji.

But not everything was good in Kajo Keji. When the rebels came we would have to leave and hide in the bush for several days, until they left. I remember often feeling scared because they could come at any time.

Life in Kyangwali Refugee Camp, Uganda

I left Kajo Keji and South Sudan as part of the process of coming to Canada. I took a bus to Uganda and then took a taxi to the refugee camp on my own. I stayed in the refugee camp with a female friend of my father, who had her own children. The refugee camp was called Kyangwali Refugee Camp (Jungali) in Hoima District, Western Uganda. Life in the refugee camp was similar to my life in Kajo Keji, because we also farmed for our food.

It was a very large refugee camp with many people from many different countries who had fled to seek safety. I remember getting up in the morning and doing my chores before I went to school. After school I would have to work on the farm. So there wasn't time for me to do my homework. But, life in the refugee camp was okay because at least there was no war there. We just had to provide food for ourselves. Sometimes the UN would provide some food. Generally, I felt safer in the refugee camp.

School in Uganda

I didn't go to school when I lived in Kajo Keji because we didn't have enough money to pay the school fee, uniform, shoes, and books that were required. So I only started school when I went to Uganda. I was 14 by then. I was placed in Grade 2 because I already knew some things. I attended that school for three years.

I recall that school well. It was made of wood with a metal roof. There were more than 200 hundred students in a class. You had to pay attention. In your class were also teenagers like me, from 14 to 19 years of age. The students didn't change classrooms; the teachers did because the classes were very large. We students sat at long tables, with four to six at a table. We copied notes from the chalkboard onto our notebooks.

The school day went from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. I went to school five days a week. The school year began in February and went until the end of September. The school closed from October through February. This allowed the students to go home and to spend time with their families after their exams (especially for students who lived in far away villages). It also allowed us to be with our families through the holy month of January.

Children of the Kyangwali Refugee Settlement



Jeaninne is an orphan who cares for two younger orphans.

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SOUTH SUDAN

Diversity

South Sudan is a nation of diverse peoples from a cultural, linguistic, and religious perspective. English is the official language of South Sudan, but there are over 60 indigenous languages spoken. English is widely spoken by those who have attended school. Most indigenous languages are from the Eastern Sudanic and Central Sudanic family. The others are from the Ubangi languages of the Niger-Congo language family.

Many years of civil war resulted in South Sudan being heavily influenced by the neighbouring countries. Many Sudanese fled to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda where they interacted with the people there and learnt their languages and culture. Most of those who remained in the country, or went north to Sudan and Egypt, largely assimilated Arabic culture.

However, most South Sudanese kept the core of their culture even in exile and in the Diaspora. Traditional culture is highly upheld and a great focus is given to knowing one's origin and dialect.

Chadian Arabic is one of the major non-indigenous languages in South Sudan. In the capital, Juba, many use the Juba Arabic dialect. Since South Sudan was part of Sudan for a century, some may speak Sudanese Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic. In 2011, South Sudan announced that Swahili will be introduced in South Sudan with the goal of replacing Arabic as a lingua franca.

South Sudanese practice traditional indigenous religions, as well as Islam and Christianity. Estimates indicate that the majority follow traditional beliefs or are Christian while 18% are Muslim.

References

Jok, J. M. (2012). Diversity, Unity, and Nation Building in South Sudan: Special Report 287. United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Retrieved from <www.usip.org/publications/diversity-unity-nation-building-in-south-sudan>

South Sudanese Society, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, <www.goss.org/>

I was taught in English. This was my first experience with English, even though it is an official language of South Sudan. I studied math, English, religion, social studies, and science. There were a few textbooks but not enough for all, so we usually shared the books. I liked the teachers very much. I thought that they were very helpful. I loved going to school and I never missed any days. My favourite subject was math because the teacher was very nice. He took the time to explain problems to me and then I would get it. Social studies was my second favourite subject. Social studies involved the study of the history of Uganda and other countries all over the world, including America and Canada!

School at first was very hard and difficult for me because I started school a lot later than many of the other students. I soon learned that the best thing that I could do was to ask the teachers to clarify or explain again things that I didn't understand.

Before I came to Canada, I wanted to go to college and follow in my grandmother's footsteps by becoming a nurse. My grandmother, sadly passed away at the end of 2003 when I was already in Uganda. I miss her very much.

Immigration to Canada

I came to Canada from Uganda to be reunited with my father. At the time, I was still living with my father's friend in Kyangwali Refugee Camp. The only thing I really knew about Canada, was that my father was living there. That is why I chose to come to Canada because it gave me the chance to be with my father again. I was 16 when I immigrated to Canada. I was very happy to be with him again. Fourteen years had passed since I had last seen him. However, on my papers my age was increased to 18 so that I could travel to Canada on my own. In Canada, my legal age is still two years older than my birth age as this is what appears on my immigration papers and I have not had this corrected.

I still have family members who remained behind in South Sudan to help rebuild their country. I hope to visit and stay with them in the future.

Kajo Keji and the Kuku People

South Sudan is very near the equator and it has a tropical climate, and the land consists of mainly tropical rainforests.

Kajo Keji (also known as Kaji Keji) is a city and a county in the state of Central Equatoria in the south. It is located just south of the capital city, Juba, and it is very close to the border with the nation of Uganda.

The Kuku people inhabit the agricultural lands of Kajo Keji County in Central Equatoria State. The Kuku speak a Bari dialect, also called Kuku. The Kuku are traditionally an agricultural people who rely on mixed farming for survival. In the rainy season (April to October), they grow various food crops, primarily sorghum, maize, millet, cassava, sweet potatoes, and beans. In the dry season, they turn to small scale cattle, goat, and sheep herding. The Kuku are known to be good beekeepers. They supplement their farming with collective hunting with arrows and bows in the dry season.

References

Kuku. <www.gurtong.net/Peoples/PeoplesProfiles/Kuku/tabid/203/Default.aspx>.



© Jack Welsch/Panoramio. February 2, 2013. Wudu Market, Kajo Keji. <www.panoramio.com/photo/85552921>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© Jack Welsch/Panoramio. December 18, 2012. Wecome, Kajo Keji. <www.panoramio.com/photo/83561242>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.



© The Water Project. Kajo Keji Secondary School. <<http://thewaterproject.org/community/projects/sudan/new-well-sudan-201>>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Starting a New Life in Canada

My father met me at the airport and it was he who helped me settle in Canada. At first it was a bit strange; I really didn't know him because we were separated for 14 years. I wondered about who he was as a person. Now that we have lived together and I have gotten to know him, our relationship is okay.

At first, I lived with my father in an apartment in East Kildonan that he shared with a friend. I arrived in July and was surprised at how hot it was. I thought that Canada was hotter than Africa. But that changed, in the winter time, when I had to go downtown and was left waiting for a bus that didn't come for about two hours. I was frozen. It was at that point that I learned about the importance of wearing winter clothing. Winters are the things I like least about Winnipeg and Canada. What I like best about coming to Canada is the educational opportunities I have here.

I didn't experience many difficulties in making the move and adjusting to Canada. The move to Canada was a good thing because it gave me the opportunity to live with my father and get to know him. My father and an uncle had already immigrated to Canada in 2000. So, that made it easier. By the time I came, they were well settled enough to assist me with my own settlement. I and my father moved to our own apartment after a while. I am now living with my Father and the uncle that came to Canada with my father. In the beginning I was very shy around my father. I almost didn't believe it was really him. For 14 years I had no contact with him or any idea of what he was like as a person. But, over time we began to know each other and I am beginning to feel close to him and my uncle.

I have found it easy to make friends within the Winnipeg South Sudanese community. I have become quite involved with the South Sudan community and was the Youth Ambassador for the Sudanese Folklorama Pavilion in 2010. I also got to travel to British Columbia in 2011 to participate in a Miss South Sudan pageant. This year, 2012, I was elected to the board of the community organization as secretary for women and youth affairs. This shows that my community members trust me and they know that I can do the job. I now speak four

History of South Sudan

The contemporary states of South Sudan and Sudan were at one point part of Egypt and later governed by an Anglo-Egyptian alliance until Sudanese independence was achieved in 1956. After the First Sudanese Civil War (with the Anyanya Rebel Army), the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region was formed in 1972 and existed until 1983. A second Sudanese civil war broke out soon thereafter (with Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement [SPLA/M]) that ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. Later that year, southern autonomy was restored when an Autonomous Government of Southern Sudan was formed.

The two Sudanese civil wars had a serious toll on the nation and people. They resulted in serious neglect, lack of development and infra-structure, and extensive destruction. More than 5 million persons were forced to flee South Sudan and seek asylum in other countries. More than 2.5 million people were killed.

South Sudan became an independent state on July 9, 2011. Today, South Sudan has an estimated population of 8 million, but because of the extensive wars, this estimate may be incorrect. The economy is predominantly rural and relies chiefly on subsistence farming. Around 2005, the economy began a transition from this rural dominance, and urban areas within South Sudan have seen extensive development.

Continued Conflict

The independence of South Sudan did not bring peace to the region. Since June 2011 and continuing into 2012, heavy fighting within Sudan between Sudanese armed forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North has resulted in the displacement of large numbers of Sudanese who have sought refuge in Ethiopia and the newly independent South Sudan. Bordering Blue Nile State of Sudan, Upper Nile State has witnessed the spill over of aerial bombardments and ground fighting. As of July 2012, the UN Refugee Agency estimated that the state's Mabaan County was hosting 109,000 refugees in Yusuf Batil, Jamam, and Doro settlements.

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Renewed fighting drives hundreds of Sudanese refugees across border. Retrieved from <www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=50618cb99&query=South%20SudanB>.

BBC: Sudan Country Profile. Retrieved from <www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094995>

UNHCR: Crisis In Sudan—Background. Retrieved from <www.unhcr.org/pages/4f689d6c6.html>.

2012 UNHCR country operations profile—South Sudan. Retrieved from <www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=4e43cb466&submit=GO>

languages—Arabic, Swahili with my father and uncle, as well as Bari and English.

Moving to Canada allowed me to continue to study and go to school. At first I tried to register in a Christian independent (private) school. The school did an English and math assessment. I did well in both subjects. But, I didn't feel comfortable speaking with the principal. So I did not respond to the principal's attempts to communicate with me, even with a female staff member present. I just didn't feel comfortable speaking with her too. Because of this, the principal told my father that the school could not accept me because I wasn't speaking.



© Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). February 02, 2011. Southern Sudan: Overcoming the Trauma. Continued exposure to violence makes the population of southern Sudan even more vulnerable.

MSF helps those who have survived attacks by armed groups in Yambio, Western Equatoria State. "We've seen that the children have suffered quite severe reactions. Some tend to withdraw from school and social activities, and some even become aggressive. Some children blame themselves and they think that they have brought suffering to their parents.... So we have games, activities, and storytelling for children, which helps relieve their minds of the problems they might have encountered." <www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/slideshow/southern-sudan-overcoming-trauma>. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Three days later, a friend took me to a large senior high school in East Kildonan, where I met the EAL teacher. I liked the way the teacher welcomed me and casually said hi when I first met her. I responded to her welcome and I began to feel comfortable in her presence. I still don't know why I didn't speak with the principal at the Christian school. I could understand him, but I just did not feel comfortable.

At first I was placed in the EAL program to improve my English language skills for most of the school day. After a while, I started taking some Grade 10 courses as well. At first it was difficult to adjust and fit in because the teaching style was very different from what I used to in Uganda. In Uganda we had large classes and we had to make an appointment with the teacher if we wanted help.



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Here the classes are much smaller and I could get help immediately by just asking the teacher, and I did not have to make an appointment for a later time.

All my teachers were very helpful. But, my relationship with my EAL teacher was very good. If I didn't understand a word, the teacher would work with me and use different techniques to help me understand. For example, she would use the word in a sentence, use flash cards with pictures to help communicate the meaning of the word, and would help me with the spelling of the word. When taking regular classes, sometimes I returned to the EAL teacher for help. My EAL teacher told me that she would always be there for me, whenever I needed something. In many ways, my EAL teacher was like a mother to me and the EAL class was like a home away from home for me.

The most stressful part of school was exam time. But, the school made some adaptations that helped. I was given more time to write the exams if I needed it. Also, I was given some help with understanding the question but not to the extent that the teacher would answer the question for me.

Reflecting back, I feel that the programming and support met my needs. I got a lot of help from my teachers and that made a difference.

My friendships with other students were also important. I found it easy to make friends in the school.

Some of them were in the EAL program, others I met in many different places. I also met my EAL teacher's daughter who was a student at the same senior high school at the same time.

I loved being in school in Canada and I have a chance to get a good education. Education is the key to the future. If you are not educated then you aren't moving forward.



Michael Nuul Mayen is a South Sudanese, a former child soldier, co-founder of the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan in Winnipeg, and Founder and Executive-Director of the Language Center for Newcomers (LCFN), a not-for-profit literacy organization in Brooks, Alberta. In the photo, Michael is seen speaking to the Honourable Dr. Lloyd Axworthy during the convocation in 2007, in which he received his degree in International Development Studies. In 2014, Michael received a Distinguished Alumni Ward from the University of Winnipeg.

© The New Sudan Vision. March 3, 2012. Michael Nuul Mayen chatting with the Honourable Dr. Lloyd Axworthy. CC License. <http://76.74.247.50/~cv9938/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2543:shining-the-spotlight-on-a-south-sudanese-trailblazer-in-canada&catid=2:diaspora&Itemid=8>.



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Daniel Swaka was born in the Republic of Sudan during the bitter civil war between the North and South Sudan in the early 80's. He completed his secondary education in Juba, South Sudan. As the war intensified, he fled to neighbouring Uganda. As a young refugee separated from his family, the challenges he faced in Uganda were many; however, he survived and the challenges he overcame developed in him an enormous sense of determination to overcome all life obstacles and to succeed. Lacking travel documents, and in a desperate bid for safety and better opportunities for education, he managed to travel far to South Africa. In South Africa, he was able to be recognized as a refugee and started a new phase in his life. He managed to find support and enroll in North-West University, South Africa and graduated from there with a four-year degree in Education, majoring in biology and physical sciences.

Daniel taught in a high school in South Africa before coming to Canada in August 2010. He holds a Manitoba provincial teaching certificate, and he is currently pursuing his postgraduate diploma in Education at the University of Manitoba.

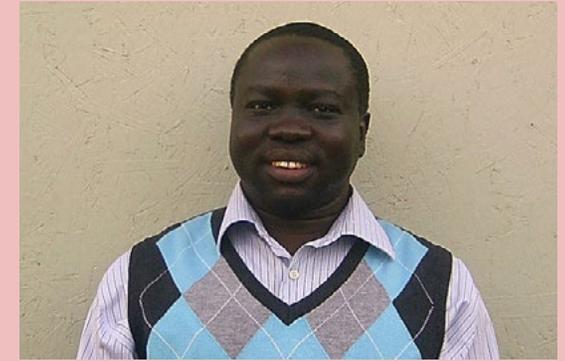
Daniel is the Director of The Peaceful Village Program with the Manitoba School Improvement Program. He firmly believes education is the best tool to bring about positive changes to a society and to contribute to the development of a good and peaceful society. Daniel is passionate about his work with refugees and immigrant newcomers. Through personal experience, he knows the importance of education in the life of war-affected youth. Drawing on his own life experiences, he strives to be an example of hope, a mentor, and a role model.

Life Today and Hopes for the Future

In 2010, I started working while still in school for about 14 hours per week after school and on the weekends. I have now graduated from high school and I am currently working at McDonald's. I plan to attend CDI College to get a health care aid certificate. It will take me nine months to get the certificate. I have decided not to work while taking the health care aid course so that I can concentrate on my studies. My plan is to work as a health care aid for a while and to save some money to attend university in the future. I still hope and dream of being a nurse and following in my grandmother Yaya's footsteps.

Everything is going well for me at this point. I have great hope for the future. I feel very good about my school experiences in Canada and I believe they have prepared me well for my future life. The EAL program and support played a big part of my success in school. If I hadn't had that support, it would have made it very difficult for me to be successful in school. I believe that the EAL program is very good for the students who come from other countries and need help like me. Having an EAL program in a school is an asset for all newcomer students.

I feel that if the principal of the Christian school had given me a chance and was more understanding with respect to my initial discomfort communicating, and not made assumptions about my abilities, that I could have also been successful at that school. Teachers and principals should not make assumptions about newcomer students and their abilities. They need to be supportive and have positive expectations of newcomer students. They should encourage them to strive for their dreams.



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Abraham Thon Duot, a former child soldier, is one of the many hundreds of thousands "Lost Boys of Sudan," who were forced to flee conflict in Sudan. Having survived the journey from Northern Sudan he spent four years as a child soldier fighting for South Sudan's liberation.

When child soldiers were released by Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a friend took him to a camp in Uganda. Eventually, he worked with Care International in the Kenyan Refugee Eastern Camp as a teacher at the early and middle years level.

From Kenya, Abraham made his way to Canada and worked in several local firms to survive. But Abraham knew the importance of a good education. And while working at Palliser and Federated Co-op, he began to work towards a Manitoba high school diploma (completed in 2006). Two years later he applied to Red River College to study Business Administration, which he successfully completed in 2010. Currently, he is pursuing an education degree at the University of Winnipeg.

Abraham is a dedicated and active community member. He has volunteered at Helping Hands Resource Centre for Immigrants from 2007 to 2012 and is a co-founder of the South Sudanese Families Learning Together Program (SSFLTP) that offers a summer youth programming. He has served as a board member of Helping Hands (for seven years), the South Sudanese Community Centre in Winnipeg, and has played many other roles in various initiatives and programs.

VIDEO RESOURCES

See [Caution Concerning the Use of Resources about War and Refugee Experiences](#).

Sudanese Conflict and South Sudan

Sudan's 22 year war: The longest conflict in Africa by Journeyman Pictures: Sudan's civil war has raged for over two decades. This film gives insight into its bloody and violent history.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKzpUCv5Olo

South Sudan's short-lived moment of hope by Journeyman Pictures (2013): After a 21-year civil war, peace seems to be returning to the region and refugees are coming home. This video explores life in the newly formed country of South Sudan. The hope and the challenges facing the people of South Sudan are addressed.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=blHr_dJQUWo

Videographic: A history of modern Sudan by The Economist: Split between north and south, Sudan's recent history has been shaped by conflict and oil.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj4hWU3VNr0>

Poporata—Kuku Kajo Keji by Desmond Yengi: This video features Kuku Music and scenes of life in Kajo Keji, Southern Sudan and The New Seed of Sedan charity projects.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9oN_CYB6OQ&list=PL422BF7F6E7189832

Sudanese Refugees and Camps

Ensuring children's access to education in Unity State, South Sudan by Save the Children South Sudan (2013): After decades of conflict that killed two million people, forced four million from their homes, and left generations without access to schools, South Sudan's education system is still struggling to rebuild itself.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJlhbyBlhlo

On Their Own—Films made by the children of Doro refugee camp by Save the Children South Sudan: This video provides an overview of the project that led to the production of a series of four youth-created videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9yz-FaiXAc>

The videos are available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCluB89PyS6T1SPdPwGdsIWA>.

Uganda: Unique Approach For South Sudanese by UNHCR: Uganda has once again taken in thousands of South Sudanese refugees. The government's rather unique approach to providing assistance is to give them land to build a shelter.

<http://youtu.be/QqUqiozwlxI>

Uganda: The gift of education by UNHCR: As the violence in northern Uganda abates, UNHCR helps children go back to school.

<http://unhcr.org/v-49be21902>

State of South Sudan Refugees in Uganda by World Vision Uganda (2014): This video, shot at Dzaipi refugee reception centre in Adjumani district, gives you the sense of how the over 25,000 refugees are faring. Also, two refugees explain what they are going through and how they wish to be helped.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9x1OUpSexg8>

Fears and Tears: Kyangwali Refugee Settlement by Refugee Law Project (2011): As the number of refugees in settlements increases daily, their need for services also increases. Many refugees are denied their right to movement, to health, and to justice among others.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gafm-k39v9Q

Life After War: The Sudanese Diaspora

Child Soldier Now Musician by TV2Africa: Emmanuel Jal is a former child soldier from South Sudan and now is a successful musician using his talent to raise awareness about the plight of vulnerable children.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_u9z0FSN1I

Sudan's 'Lost Boys' Return Home by The Nation: Three young men who fled the fighting in South Sudan as boys to grow up and be educated in three different US cities return home. In an emotional journey, they reunite with loved ones, grieve over those who have died, and offer the skills they acquired in America to help a struggling people.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcsmsEy02kc

Sudanese raising money for relatives by CTV (2013): A news video about efforts of the South Sudanese community in Winnipeg fundraising for their families back in South Sudan that have been affected by the conflict.

<http://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=289632>

For Additional Resources concerning Sudan, see the [Video Resources](#) provided at the end of Mary's narrative.