

Sudanese Quick Fact Sheet

Background

- Located in North Africa, geographically 4th largest country in Africa w/ ~725,000 square miles (roughly size of West Coast+ UT, NV, ID, AZ, and HI).
- ~26 million people from as many as 400 different ethnic groups. Dominated by Arabic-speaking Muslims.
- Since independence in 1956, Sudan has been at war with itself. In 2011 South Sudan declared independence.
- Racial tension exists between black southerners and Arab northerners. Religion pits the Muslims in Sudan against Christians in South Sudan.
- There has always been inter-tribal conflict in South Sudan, and Sudan has fomented more conflict by providing arms.
- Severe famine and massive displacement in 1983 have further disrupted the country.
- All sides have been known to commit human rights violations such as conscripting child soldiers and raiding and attacking civilian populations. People are ambushed as they flee, and there seems to be "no safe place." Most sources agree, however, that the government and its allies bear the largest responsibility for the continual suffering.

Culture and Life in a Refugee Camp

- 4 out of 5 Sudanese make their living either farming, raising livestock, or both.
- The civil war has caused significant loss of people, cattle, and crops.
- Although medical care in Sudan is, in principle, free, there are not enough trained professionals, clinics, hospitals, or medicines. Traditional healing arts continue to be practiced.
- Many refugees will be coming from either Egypt or Kenya. In Kenya, there are an estimated 66,000 in Kakuma Camp alone. There are also thousands of Sudanese refugees under UNHCR protection in Egypt.
- In many ways, life in the camp has been like that in any other African village, with the youth living in clusters that serve a family-like function.
- Education has been an important part of refugee assistance in Kakuma, with more than 30 schools serving more than 33,000 students. Child welfare workers note that the Sudanese youth generally have very high expectations about education, which is seen as a "recovery strategy"—a way to take back control over their lives.

Adjusting to Life in America

- Sudanese refugees may struggle to learn the importance of time and of keeping/making appointments in the U.S.
- Their expectations are high. A Sudanese worker said that the Priority Two and Unaccompanied Minor refugees "are so used to humanitarian aid and the style of relief workers, that they may think everyone in the U.S. will want to help them, too."
- They will need help in setting realistic goals, managing time, making decisions, and maintaining a positive attitude.
- A Nuer source said the Sudanese do not accept the concept of "no." Yet, resettlement staff have noted that the Sudanese do learn about the limits imposed on them "when all efforts at negotiation fail."