

THE LOST BOYS OF SUDAN

When war broke out in Sudan in 1983, it began one of the longest civil wars on record and would eventually claim the lives of two million people by war, famine, and disease. Another four million people in the southern part of Sudan were displaced during the war. A number of those four million were the Lost Boys of Sudan.

As the government destroyed villages in southern Sudan, an estimated 20,000 Sudanese children ran from their homes in search of safety. The northern government deliberately targeted civilians and kept tight control on food as a military strategy. Orphaned and caught in the crossfire of a lethal civil war, thousands lost their lives from starvation, dehydration, and exhaustion. On the thousand-mile journey to Ethiopia, even more were killed by attacking armies, by wild animals, or by drowning as they tried to cross rivers.

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After finally reaching refugee camps in Ethiopia, the conflict only worsened. In 1991, war broke out in Ethiopia and the government ordered the refugees to leave the country within twenty-four hours of the announcement. Again the children fled, this time back into Sudan, but not before being attacked by Ethiopian forces on the way out. As they tried to cross the Gilo River, thousands died because they didn't know how to swim, the crocodiles caught them, or the militia shot them. But when they got back to Sudan, there was no safe place for them there. They turned around and began the journey to Kenya. By the next year, nearly 10,000 children and teens made it safely to Kakuma Refugee Camp.

Among those who traveled to Kakuma were **Jacob Thon Guot**, **Paul Deng Kon**, and **Gabriel Akech Kwai**. They lived in Kenya for nine years, and received their elementary and high school educations during their time there. In 2001, the United States allowed almost 4,000 orphaned Lost Boys to travel to America for settlement. Jacob, Paul, and Gabriel left Kenya with the first of the 4,000.

They arrived in the United States with nothing but broken English and hope for a new life. The transition has not been easy. They have had to work hard to attend college, to learn how to live on their own, and how to adjust to a culture so radically different from their own.

Gabriel attended Murray State University and earned a bachelor's degree in finance.

He worked for Republic Bank for five years as an Internet Banking Administrative Assistant. He is presently working as an assistant manager at Kroger while pursuing a Masters in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting from Sullivan University. He is married and has two daughters.

Paul is currently working full time and completing his undergraduate degree. He is a deacon in his home church and plans to attend seminary in the future. His wife is currently living in Kenya and he is working hard to bring her to the United States.

Jacob earned a Bachelor's degree from Lancaster Bible College and masters degrees in Intercultural Studies and Christian Leadership from Asbury Theological Seminary. He is married and he and his wife have three energetic children. His focus now is to raise support and return to Africa to help rebuild his homeland through Africa Sunrise Communities, Inc.