THE SUDANESE AND SOUTH SUDANESE COMMUNITIES IN LONDON

A Forum for Service Providers

PRESENTED BY
JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF LONDON AND DISTRICT

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND ENGAGEMENT (ICCE) PROJECT

Ontario Trillium Foundation

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John Howard Society of London and District

LONDON & MIDDLESEX LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF SUDAN

- Sud means black and Sudan means two groups of black people, (Arabic Language)
- Sudan shares borders with 9 African countries
- There are 114 dialects spoken in Sudan
- Sudan was the largest country in Africa prior to the secession of South Sudan in 2011. It is now the third largest, after Algeria and Democratic Republic of the Congo. The size of Sudan is now approximately 25% smaller, with an area of 1.86 million square kilometers
- The top exports of Sudan are crude petroleum, gold, sheep and goats, other oily seeds and insect resins
GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN

- Today, the government of Sudan operates under a presidential representative democratic republic. Under this system, the President is the head of state, head of government and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The nation and its people are represented by a multi-party system, and public affairs are administered by 3 branches: the executive, the legislative and the judicial.

- Sudan’s presidential election takes place every five years.

- For the last 25 years Omar al-Bashir has been the President of Sudan.

- Corruption is common among Sudanese government officials who routinely act with total impunity, knowing that they will almost certainly not be investigated for any transgression.
• Sudan is identified as an Arab country
• The official language is Arabic but every tribe speaks their own dialect
• There are several different religious backgrounds such as Anglican and Seventh Day Adventist, but the main one is the Muslim faith
Most marriages are arranged. The parents from both families must approve of the arrangement and pay a dowry in the form of money.

Sudanese cuisine varies by region, and greatly affected by the cross-cultural influences in Sudan throughout history.

Kisra is the tradition food. It’s a kind of spongy flat bread made from sorghum or millet and tastes pretty good when it’s fresh.

In Sudan people eat by hand.

Hand shaking is a way of greeting someone of the same gender. Sometimes, people put their hands on their heart as a way of respect and a way of greeting those of the opposite gender.

For Muslim Sudanese greetings start with “Al-Salam Alaikum”. “Wa Alaikum Al-Salam” is the proper response.
CELEBRATIONS AND FESTIVALS

- **Eid al-Fitr or Id-ul-Fitr:** is a Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting.

- **Eid al-Adha** is the latter of two Eid festivals celebrated by Muslims, whose basis comes from the Quran.

The following public holidays are the same every year:

- January 1: Independence Day
- January 7: Coptic Christmas
- June 30: Revolution Day
- December 25: Christmas Day
Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1956, the history of Sudan has been plagued by internal conflict.


❖ Today, the two countries have split creating separate countries:
  - Sudan
  - South Sudan
Since 1983, chaos and war have consumed the Sudanese people. Those who were lucky enough were able to flee to nearby countries like Kenya and Ethiopia, while others travelled internationally to Europe, Australia, and North America. During this period, there were mass murders, rape, destruction and famine. The UN, NATO, and US forces were brought in during the 90s to help stabilize the situation; however, those efforts have not been successful to this day. The war did not affect the entire country but only specific cities and areas; therefore, only people who were affected escaped the country. Life was difficult in refugee camps. Many people lost their lives in these camps and many people decided to go back to their home country.
SOUTH SUDAN

- Made up of 64 tribes
- The first election occurred in 2010, and as a result, South Sudan gained independence on July 9th, 2011
- The civil war broke out once again in 2013, just two years after the declaration of Independence day
- This war was between the South Sudanese only, and still goes on to this day
- The role of South Sudanese living in diaspora is to work hard to bring peace back to the country
CURRENT POLITICS

- Currently, the federal government of South Sudan is weak.

- There continues to be UN Peacekeeping soldiers, in addition to armed forces from other African countries like Ethiopia and Kenya, to maintain an atmosphere of peace.

- One remnant of the civil war is the rebel group referred to as SPLM IO (SPLM In Opposition) which has ties to the Khartoum Regime in the Sudan.

- This group has been responsible for mass murders, fear, and instability within South Sudan.
Culture

Culture is the most important part of South Sudanese society and they would be lost without their culture.

The Marks the tribes create on their bodies make it easy to be identified within the community, country and in the world.

They make these marks using knives, razor blades, and needles.
Each tribe has a series of different marks planted into the skin, representing different things and containing different meanings.

These marks help to identify the difference between tribes.

Although an ancient tradition, there are still many individuals with these marks from the past, as they are permanent.
Each tribe in South Sudan has their own traditions and celebrations.

There are several different religious backgrounds and beliefs, but the main ones are Anglican and Catholic.

The majority of the country continues to practice their own beliefs or traditional beliefs.
The official language of South Sudan is **English**, followed by Arabic as a second language.

- All 64 tribes existing have a right to speak their own dialect.
- Although dialects may sound the same, pronunciation may sound different, due to different accents or slangs.
FESTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS

Independence Day:
• July 9th is a big day of celebration for South Sudanese

Traditional Marriages:
• Each tribe have their own way of celebrating marriages
• Some pay a dowry in the form of money; others pay with animals, i.e. cows, goats etc.
• Most of the marriages are arranged between the two families of the bride and the groom

Christmas:
• Is the most important celebration in the whole country and the Christmas parade is usually on Christmas Eve

Bull Tradition:
• Is a traditional dance and every tribe has their own dance. The dance occurs mostly on occasions like wrestling, marriages or to celebrate ancient traditions, such as making marks, removing teeth and when a child becomes an adult
FOOD/TRADITIONAL DISHES

- Combo and Kisra
- Aseeda with Nyaguai
- Akop with Spinache
- Okra
ROLE OF THE MEN

• Men are the head of the household
• Young boys are not allowed to help in the household. They are not allowed to be in the kitchen, clean or participate in housekeeping
• Once a boy celebrates becoming an adult, they have limited contact with women, this includes their mother, sisters, etc.
• Men are considered to be responsible for the income of the family. They are expected to work and provide for the family
• Men are allowed to marry as many women as they want
• Men are expected to be protective of the family
• Men are allowed to discipline their wives and children, this includes using physical violence
• When a dowry is paid, it is expected that the dowry goes to head of the household
ROLE OF WOMEN

- Women are expected to get married as soon as they reach puberty
- Today in South Sudan, women’s lives are still inextricably linked to livestock. When men see women, they think about cows. Women are valued and exchanged in terms of cattle. Wealthy men with large herds marry several women
- If a young woman ‘reveals herself’ to her lover, the only way forward is for her to move in with his family, and for them to speak with her male relatives. Then his family will send her family some cows as a dowry
- If the woman becomes a widow the brother-in-law takes over the family and all belongings
- High illiteracy rates and rigid gender roles are just two of the many challenges for the women of South Sudan
- Women are not expected to work outside of the home. They are expected to take care of the children and the elders
- Young girls are expected to do the housework, cooking and cleaning
THE IMPACT OF CIVIL WAR ON SOUTH SUDANESE PEOPLE

The civil war has had a major impact on the South Sudanese people:

• The 2013 civil war caused a huge division in the community
• The tribes are killing each other to support the leader of their interest
• Some of the community members in Canada continue to support the leaders of the two groups by sending money to South Sudan to support the war
• The youth in London, Ontario are united and are supporting one another as South Sudanese Canadians no matter what their parents tell them
The war broke out on May 16, 1983 in the town of Bor in Jonglie Province, now Jonglie State. The civilians, including my family, were forced to flee to the nearby countries. After seven years living in Itang, a refugee camp in Ethiopia, the civil war broke out there in May 1991. My family escaped again to Kenya. It took us almost 13 months to reach the Kenyan border. During this period we were just wandering in the bush without food and were lucky if we found a dead animal or green leaves to feed on. Sometimes we went for as many as 3 days without any food or water.
My father heard the news about my husband being killed while he was crossing the Nile river. He did not tell me because he was afraid that the family may not make it out to the Red Cross camp. In February 1992, in a place called Pochala, my father was killed on our way from Ethiopia to Kenya after being in the bush for nine months. At the same time my brother, who was the only one I depended on, was also killed. In February 1993, we finally arrived at the refugees camp in Kenya.
LIFE IN A REFUGEE CAMP

• Struggle to find basic needs like food and water before the UN was involved
• Lack of education/no qualified teachers/no proper schooling
• Lack of medical supplies
• Lack of hygiene products
• Sickness and mental health issues
• Many people lost their lives in the camp
• Many families were separated and many children were orphaned
• Domestic violence/rape/assaults
One of the main issues facing the South Sudanese and Sudanese communities is poverty. Many of them rely on government financial assistance and often live in social housing complexes.

Other issues include:

- Language barriers
- Discrimination issues which impact their integration into Canada in general
- Lack of awareness of the resources available
- Domestic violence/role of the men and women
- Lack of mentorship programs for youth
- Lack of programming to address the trauma experienced by youth and other adults alike (i.e., PTSD, and grief counselling)
- Level of education
- Lack of positive male role models in the family within the communities
- Lack of communication between children and parents
- Youth becoming involved in the Canadian criminal justice system
ISSUES/GAPS/CHALLENGES

Other issues include:

- No domestic violence laws in their home country, and adjusting to the legal systems of Canada
- No child welfare laws in their home country
- Struggle with what is acceptable in Canada in terms of disciplining children
- No women rights in Sudan and South Sudan
- Youth identity issues
- Intergenerational issues/conflict
- Issues among South Sudanese people such as lack of communication, hatred and blame
- Lack of trust in authority/police/CAS
- Lack of parenting skills
- Reaching out for professional help is not common. Members depend on the community for help and support
SOUTH SUDANESE COMMUNITY
IN LONDON, ONTARIO

- The impact of the Civil War continues to affect the South Sudanese community in London.
- The Sudanese community started to arrive in Canada in 1991.
- The community has started to address the poverty issues by looking for employment and other resources.
- Employment within the South Sudanese communities has increased in the last few years.
- The level of education was low and has been improving in recent years.
- Most of the Sudanese males work in factories or as cab drivers; while females work in the health care field i.e. as PSWs or in housekeeping.
- The South Sudanese youth face the challenge of connecting with their culture and families as they grow up in Canada. The South Sudanese Youth become conflicted with their family's culture and the Canadian culture and have difficulties in finding where they belong.
- Many of the youth continue to become involved with the Canadian criminal justice system due to issues with addictions, peer pressure, lack of identity, self-esteem issues and mental health.
- Religious figures play an important role in supporting the community (i.e. interfering with domestic violence and bringing the community together).
WORKING WITH THE SUDANESE COMMUNITY
WHAT SHOULD SERVICE PROVIDERS DO TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THESE CHALLENGES?

- Identify the differences between South Sudan and Sudan countries and assist members accordingly
- Ask the client where they came from (South Sudan or Sudan); this will create a foundation of trust
- Use interpreters to communicate effectively. Using family or community members for interpretation raises issues with confidentiality, accuracy, objectivity and professionalism
- Help the youth build positive coping skills as they have a hard time adjusting to Canadian culture
- Educate youth on drugs/alcohol and connect them to the appropriate resources available in the community
WORKING WITH THE SUDANESE COMMUNITY
WHAT SHOULD SERVICE PROVIDERS DO TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THESE CHALLENGES?

▪ Parents also need help to better understand their children’s situation. Support and encourage parents to attend parenting classes and provide resources that can build trust with their children

▪ Sundanese and South Sudanese settlement workers at schools will benefit the communities

▪ Given the many challenges that the community is facing, please work with your client to identify the challenges/needs that should be addressed first

▪ Work with other agencies who are serving newcomers/refugees to develop collaboration methods to better serve your clients

▪ Attend cultural sensitivity training to increase your awareness of newcomers needs
Sudanese communities have their own time called “Sudanese time”, which means if the meeting is scheduled for 2:00 pm, people will show up at 4:00 pm.

South Sudanese community members in London, Ontario are only available for meetings on Saturdays; therefore programs for this community should be offered on Saturdays to ensure community members attend.

The Sudanese communities are in need of programs conducted using a culturally sensitive approach and delivered in their own language, if possible.

The workshop materials of the Immigrant Community Capacity and Engagement (ICCE) Project are translated and delivered in Arabic and Dinka languages which allow the communities to gain a better understanding of how to access the services available to them in the city of London. The ICCE project has been a good program model for the Sudanese community.

Programs/workshops for the Sudanese and South Sudanese communities should be delivered separately to each community.
RESOURCES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

For more information on the Sudanese communities, please visit:

• The Sudanese Community Association of Ontario: [http://scaon.ca/](http://scaon.ca/)
• Cross Cultural Learner Centre/training on cultural competency: [http://lcclc.org/](http://lcclc.org/)
  or call 519-432-1133
• [https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices/empowering-women-south-sudan](https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices/empowering-women-south-sudan)
• For more information on the ICCE Project, please visit: London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership - London Immigration Portal – City of London at [http://immigration.london.ca/LMLIP/Pages/default.aspx](http://immigration.london.ca/LMLIP/Pages/default.aspx)
Questions / น่องก่ำ บ้าที่่ี่่่่
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