

SOUTH SUDAN



INTRODUCTION

The Republic of South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in 2011. South Sudan is a country with one of the richest agricultural lands in Africa, supporting 10-20 million head of cattle. The country has one of the world's largest wetlands, the Sudd, a vast swamp area formed by the White Nile in the north central region of South Sudan. During the rainy season, the wetlands can reach 15% of the country's total area CIA (2020.a).

South Sudan is also abundant in natural resources, such as gold, silver, zinc, limestone, iron ore, copper, and oil. The government of South Sudan is heavily relying on oil for its budget revenue, thus making the country one of the most oil-dependent countries in the world. Despite its natural resources, the several decades of conflict with Sudan have crippled the development of South Sudan. Poverty and food security are a major issue that have bedevilled the population of South Sudan for many decades long before the independence. This situation is compounded with poor and underdeveloped infrastructure. Albeit there is a growing presence of China in the development of the infrastructure and energy sector in the country, only 2% of the roads are paved, electricity is still mostly produced by diesel generators. Indoor plumbing and potable water are also scarce. Approximately 90% of consumable goods, capital, and services are imported from neighbouring countries, mainly Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan.

South Sudan has a population of 10,561,244 million people CIA (2020.a). Demographically it is one of the youngest populations in the world, with an average age of 18 years old. The social landscape is extraordinarily complex and diverse. South Sudan is the home of over 60 different ethnic groups, which can be grouped into six main clusters defined by a host of ethnic, historical, and linguistic factors. These groups are Nilotic (native to the White Nile region), Central Sudanic, Nilo (Hamid, Bari-speaking), Zande and Anyuak people. The Nilotic people are the biggest ethnic group in South Sudan - Dinka and Nuer both belong to the Nilotic ethnic group.

Understanding the complexity and diversity of the South Sudanese social landscape is essential to comprehend the cultural background, traditions, and dynamics between different groups in South Sudan and within the diaspora. The population of South Sudan, despite ethnic diversity, has always treated each other with respect and bounded together during the South's liberation war. However, the civil war that started after the secession of the South from Sudan carries an ethnic undertone in the political struggle and in various regions across the country. People's attachment to their own ethnic background and views on South Sudan ethnic divisions varies from time to time and is based on personal experience and political affiliation.

This community profile is making an attempt to understand why South Sudanese people became in 2019 the 4th largest group of refugees in the world with 2.2M people fleeing the country (UNHCR 2020) while showing diaspora's relentless effort to build a peaceful country.

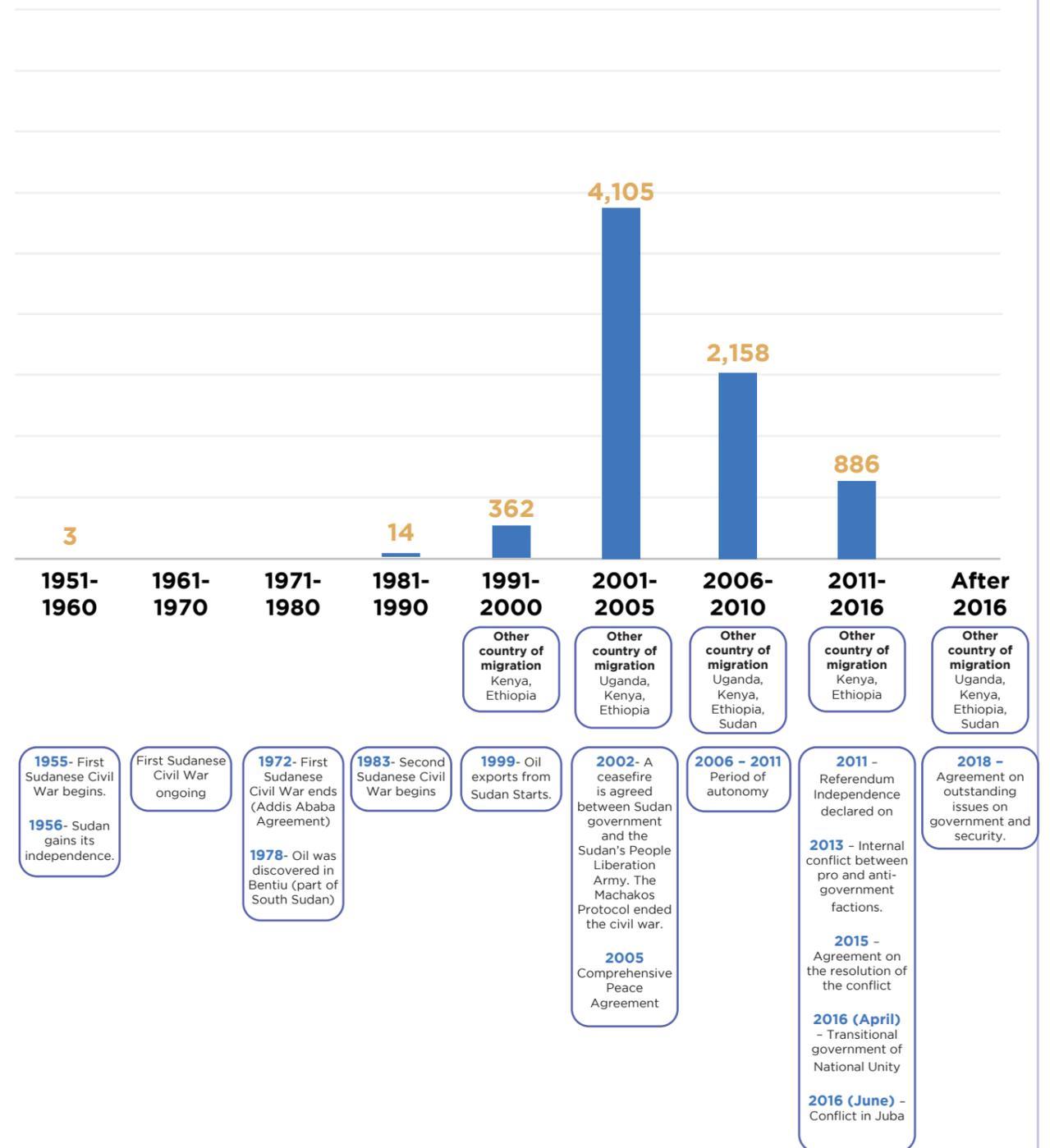
HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

South Sudan gained independence after decades of war. There are generations of South Sudanese who have scarcely experienced peace. To understand today's South Sudan, it is useful to trace back its history from colonial time. In 1870 the colony of Equatoria (comprising of what is most of today's South Sudan) was established by Samuel Baker in the name of the Ottoman Khedive of Egypt who claimed the territory. In 1899, after the Mahdist War, Equatoria was made a state under the Anglo-Egyptian condominium. During the following decades, Christian missionaries converted a large part of the population and facilitated the spread of English, while North Sudan was predominantly Muslim and Arabic speaking.

Until 1947, Equatoria was ruled separately from what is today's Sudan (North Sudan). The unification of the two colonies was part of the British plan to prepare the region for independence. However, in 1956 when Sudan became an independent republic, southerners' expectations to fully participate in the political system were denied. The unrest escalated into two wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005) during which it is estimated that 2.5M civilians died due to starvation and drought.

Across the world, South Sudan's independence in 2011 sparked the hopes and expectations of the South Sudanese diaspora. It was an exciting moment. Many people either decided to return to South Sudan to contribute building the country or decided to organise themselves in the host country to support the development of South Sudan. The resurgence of new internal conflict in 2013 and the continued state of unrest, has greatly impacted South Sudanese who saw their hope remaining unfulfilled.

Migration to Australia

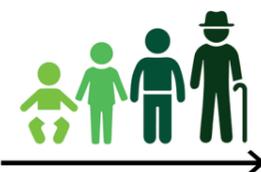


¹ DFAT - Accurate statistical data of ethnicity in Afghanistan are not available due to the sensitivity of the subject.
² Twitter, <https://bit.ly/3iqTL5l>

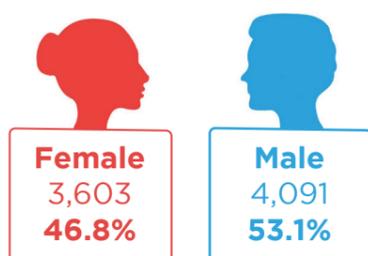
DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

According to the 2016 Census there are **7,699** South Sudan-born in Australia'. Out of the **300** different ancestries reported by Australians in the last Census, **10,755** responses were towards South Sudanese ancestry.

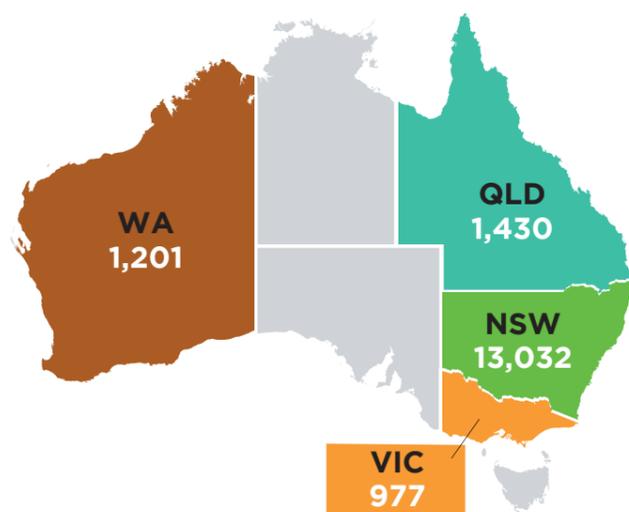
Structure by age



Gender structure



Geographical Distribution



Language

At the time of the Census, the main languages spoken at home by South Sudan-born people in Australia were Dinka (3,901), Arabic (1,565) and Nuer (565).

Of the 7,333 South Sudan-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 84.4% spoke English very well or well, and 14.0% spoke English not well or not at all.

Legal Status



The 2016 Census shows:

75.1% of people born in South Sudan are Australian citizens.

Education Level*



14.3% Bachelor's degree level and above	18.5% Year 12
12.9% Advanced Diploma and Diploma level	5% Year 11
3.0% Certificate level IV	4.9% Year 10
13.1% Certificate level III	7.7% Year 9 or below
9% Certificate II	7.9% No educational attainment
0.3% Certificate I	7.1% Not stated

*The Census data refers to South Sudan-born people only and does not consider second generation South Sudanese.

Professional Activities



10% Child Care Services
8.1% Aged Care Residential Services
5.8% Meat Processing
5.4% Other Social Assistance Services
3.8% Building and Other Industrial Cleaning Services

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

The South Sudanese diaspora is active supporting its members in Australia and overseas, particularly given how dire the humanitarian crisis is in South Sudan. Agriculture in South Sudan is mostly subsistence farming, and it is also subject to floods in the White Nile region and droughts in other parts of the country. In 2017, famine was declared in parts of South Sudan (UN News 2017). Food insecurity and the prolonged conflict are forcing millions of people to leave seeking refuge in neighbouring countries like Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

Many of the Australia South Sudanese diaspora have lived experiences of the conflict and share strong cultural ties with the people still living in South Sudan or other host countries. Family bonds run deep between South Sudanese and extend to the whole clan. However, the heavy burden placed on diaspora in Australia is also the cause of financial and physical distress. As the situation worsens in South Sudan, the request for help increases along with diaspora's concerns for the safety and security of their family members.

HOW SOUTH SUDANESE DIASPORA HELP²

Family to family

Families in Australia cannot look the other way when their family members in South Sudan live in such dire situation.

Financial support is provided to ensure that people have food and shelter. Many helps with children schooling, often in other countries such as Uganda and Kenya.

Community to Community

Community to community help relies on members donations and fundraising. There is very little financial support from government or other agencies.

- Education initiatives**
 These types of initiatives can include building schools as well as scholarship programmes. Scholarships are predominately directed at orphan children (majority girls) who are, in some cases, assisted from young age all the way through to college-level.
- Healthcare initiatives**
 Common healthcare initiatives are about building clinics (particularly in rural areas) and refurbishing hospital wards (mostly in Juba). Diaspora are aware of the need for sanitation and to assist with women and children's health (particularly maternity wards). There is a group in Australia that is planning to build two pharmacies, one in Juba the other in Wau, to sell medications at low cost supplied by diaspora.
- Women independence and empowerment**
 There is a recognised need among diaspora, both female and males, to support women, particularly widows and single women, considered one of the most vulnerable groups. Women empowerment projects focus on developing women financial independence, for example supporting them to start up small food or tailoring businesses or home farming. For these types of projects diaspora usually provide the initial funding and equipment, e.g. sewing machine.

Women education initiatives are a way to foster their independence and employability.

- Response to natural disaster**
 Diaspora from the Jonglei region commonly fundraise to support projects to build dikes and other infrastructure that can help managing and containing recurrent floods.
- Aid to disabled people**
 These initiatives seem to be limited to acquiring wheelchair for non-ambulant disabled in South Sudan and those living in camps.
- Acquisition of vehicles and transport for remote areas, where there was none.**
- Burials**
 After the Bor massacre in the 90s, Australian diaspora raised funds to bury people. UNHCR stepped in and took care of the burial. The raised funds were then sent to families.

Sudanese diaspora in Australia has to deal with their day-to-day issues, financial commitments, e.g. house mortgage, rent, schooling, day-to-day living etc and many also face difficulties adjusting to life in Australia. South Sudanese youth also suffer mental anguish due to negative images portrayed by Australian media. They also suffer from reconciling self-identity conflicts. The impact can be seen in the hardship many well educated South Sudanese youth face when seeking employment.

However, the South Sudanese community greatly contributes to the betterment of Australian society. The South Sudanese Community Association in Victoria Inc. submission to this inquiry, highlights some of the community contribution and raises the communities' key concerns with regards to the community in Australia.

There are few clinics and hospitals in South Sudan, diaspora help with medical costs when a family member needs a medical procedure. Often the extended family fundraise with members in other countries, such as the US and other countries so the person can go to Sudan or another country to get treated.

There are also other initiatives that are not solely reliant on fundraising. Such is the case of sending supplies, where communities raise funds to pay for the shipment costs, while goods are donations from the South Sudanese diaspora or the broader Australian communities. These are:

- Clothing, commonly sent to South Sudan by diaspora throughout the world, particularly USA based,
- Schooling resources – reading material, textbooks, computers, stationary – also sent to children in camps,
- Sewing machines to help women and their children,
- Reusable sanitary items for girls to stay at school (women-led initiatives),
- Medical supplies. There is a group in Queensland that sends regular medical supplies. Others have approached an Australian hospital asking to donate second-hand equipment (beds, microscopes etc),
- Supplied people in camps with food and other essentials such as mosquito screens.
- Started small farming project in Uganda to help South Sudanese facing food shortage in camps.
- Online mentoring via social media for young people, especially in terms of work ethic and expectations. Diaspora young people have transferred significant knowledge, work ethic and professional standard setting. This type of initiative is seldom recognised.

Covid 19 Impact

Lock down measures implemented to respond to Covid19 pandemic have affected diaspora's action by:

- Halting fundraising activities. Most community fundraising is done at events attended by 200 to 300 people. The ban on assembly has put a halt on any of such activities.
- Decreasing job security. Some of the diaspora members have lost their jobs after the lock down while others, such as those employed in hospitality, have not been paid since mid-March. The reduced or loss of income impacts people's capacity to support families here and in South Sudan or to donate for projects.

HOW AUSTRALIA CAN HELP SOUTH SUDAN

“With peace, development can happen.”

In 2017 and 2018, DAA worked with DFAT and South Sudanese across the country on peacebuilding. While the initiative was welcomed it did not have a long-term vision, which led to unfulfilled community expectations. Developing a long-term peacebuilding and reconciliation process in Australia can bring together the community in Australia, coordinate efforts and find ways to aid Australia humanitarian programme in South Sudan.

About Peacebuilding

In 2017, DAA facilitated the South Sudan Peacebuilding Dialogue, an initiative which aimed to provide a space for South Sudanese peacebuilders in Australia to discuss and share ideas and experiences of building trust and unity within the community that can contribute to peace in South Sudan. This was to be achieved through two roundtable discussions that share information and perspectives about possible strategies for diaspora-led initiatives and collaboration. The roundtables aimed to include the main ethnic groups in the South Sudanese community in Australia, as well as include at least 25% women. The initiative was funded by DFAT with with in-kind contribution of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA).

“This South Sudanese Roundtable is a great start to build peace among South Sudanese communities in Australia and back home”. - Brisbane participant

Fifty-three South Sudanese peacebuilders and community members gathered at the Peacebuilding Dialogues in Brisbane (18 November) and Melbourne (25 November) to share ideas and experiences of building trust and unity within the community that can contribute to peace in South Sudan. At both events, the atmosphere was optimistic, and participants came to the table with an open mind.

Also, Australia being one of the few countries with a significant number of South Sudanese immigrants, Australia can capitalise on its success in multicultural policy and racial cohesion, to maintain peace and social cohesion amongst South Sudanese in Australia, and positively influence the culture of political and ethnic tolerance in South Sudan. Australia can do this either through by persuasion by directly engaging with the government of South Sudan, or by punitive measures – barring South Sudanese government officials who are implicated in committing human rights violations and corruption from entering Australia, and seizing any assets they have acquired in Australia.

The two dialogues consisted of facilitated discussions around the following three main themes: Network building and information sharing of peacebuilding initiatives, building trust and unity within the community, and positive messaging for peace. They also discussed the meaning and definition of peace and additional themes that emerged during the session in Melbourne, which also included a small-group discussion on the current political context in South Sudan and explored possible ways forward in the peace process.

“We need this roundtable to take place every three months to make people understand the meaning of peace”

While there were challenges to deliver the project associated to the tight timeframe, participants’ feedback was overwhelmingly positive, especially in Melbourne. The discussions were seen as fruitful and happened in a respectful and constructive manner. Participants in both locations expressed that they would like to see a follow up in a similar style, and to maintain regular communication and information sharing between peacebuilders from different ethnic background and the community at large. Unfortunately, there was no further investment in the initiative.

The South Sudan Peacebuilding Dialogue report is available on DAA website

<http://diasporaaction.org.au/south-sudan-peacebuilding-dialogue>