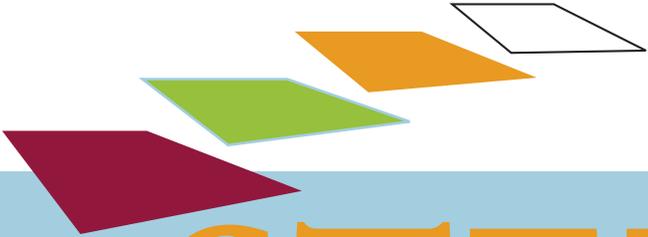


NUMBER 1

April 2014



Step *by* STEP

From South Sudan

News or and about people who have taken extraordinary steps to get to where they are now.

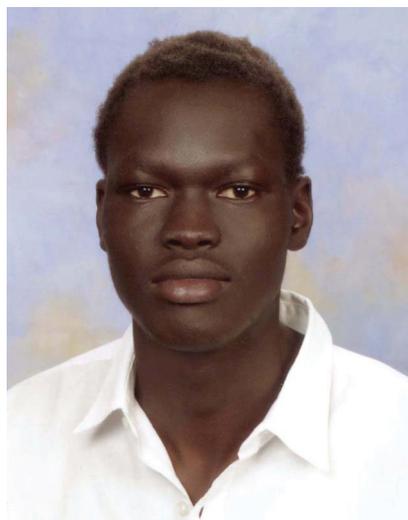
It is written to invite others to take the next step with them.

Welcome to our newsletter, Step by Step from South Sudan.

We have been associated with the South Sudanese community in Melbourne for many years and have a large number of friends in that community. We are saddened by what we see as the distorted representation of this community in the mainstream media.

A great many people from South Sudanese backgrounds have successfully made the transition to life in this country while being challenged daily by the enormous cultural differences between our two countries. By producing this Newsletter on a regular basis we intend to highlight some of these stories and provide an alternative view.

We hope also that South Sudanese people reading it will feel justifiably proud of their community, and will contribute their own stories.



ABOUT OUR
feature **STORY**

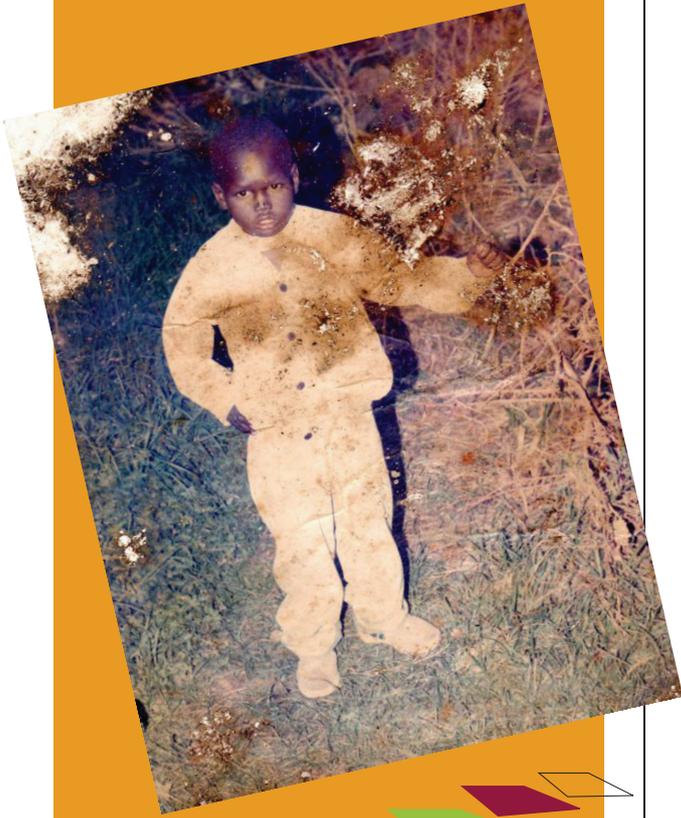
Joseph Maker as a student.

Our first story is about **Joseph Maker**, a young man who was sent from his war-torn and impoverished country to another African country. When he came to Australia he had almost finished his secondary schooling in a refugee camp and has gone on to complete a university qualification in Wagga Wagga. Yet having achieved so much, he cannot find a job.

Joseph is one of many people who have succeeded against overwhelming odds, after fleeing from war, famine, violence and other situations that are deeply foreign to most Australians. He is one of the many refugees in our society who are determined to live a fulfilling life. If opportunities are given to them they have much to offer.

We acknowledge the suffering of the South Sudanese people who have settled among us, and the struggle they have to settle in a new land and culture. We applaud them for their determination, optimism and courage, and we have faith that one day it will be rewarded.

*Father Don Edgar
Judie Bainbridge*



Don has been involved with the South Sudanese community in Melbourne since the early 1990s when the first of them began arriving. As an Anglican priest he has enjoyed a lasting friendship with many South Sudanese. He has also been concerned that the issues they face in settling here have become obstacles that sap many of them of hope for their future.

Judie began working with Don in 2005 in the Sudanese Welfare Office of the Anglican Parish of Footscray, providing assistance to all who came seeking help. For the last four years she has been Director of The River Nile Learning Centre, a place for young African women to reengage in education and for their babies and small children to be educated.

Don and Judie welcome your feedback and comments either by email: –

dhedgar@bigpond.com or judie.bainbridge@gmail.com or by calling our mobile phones. Don's phone is 0418 967 829 and Judie's is 0407 822 869.

JOSEPH'S STORY

My name is Joseph Maker. I have two brothers and two sisters and my mother's name is Martha. I am the second eldest in the family. We grew up in the township of Bor, where the war started against the North in 1984. Rebel leader John Garang was from Bor and a Dinka. Our community was bombed and scattered because they had taken leadership roles in the war.

As a young boy I left South Sudan to go to Uganda to stay with relatives where I could be safe. Initially we fled to Equatoria, which is the most Southern part of South Sudan. We crossed the border into Uganda with a large group of people. I had been separated from my mother and brothers and sisters. My mother went to Refugee Camp in Kenya with the other children and I joined her there after four years in Uganda. To get to Uganda I had to trek through the bush for weeks with the community who were fleeing. We were protected by the army and my father was one of the soldiers.

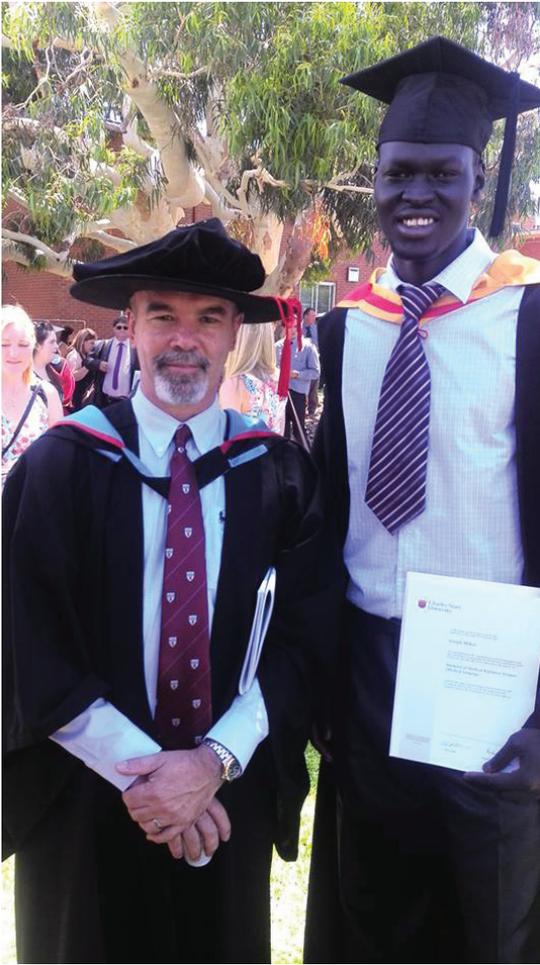
It was dangerous. There was gunfire and bombing and we walked at night so as not to be detected. Many people were bitten by snakes or attacked by other animals. One night I was almost left behind when the group began moving whilst I was asleep. It was only that my Aunt returned to look for something that she had dropped that she found me as she felt around the area. When we reached the Ugandan border my father handed me over to relatives and returned to the war. Our relatives had fled some time earlier than us and were already in the Displaced Persons Camp.

Uganda had its own problems with rebels and people who had fled from the Lord's Resistance Army. In the camp we were confined to a certain area considered safe by the United Nations.

I was nine years old when I went to Uganda and there I began my schooling. In school in Uganda we were taught in English. Initially the school was under a tree and had few books or resources. I learned to read by reading an English version of the NIV Bible with a group of friends. It was a small edition which I carried in my pocket. Christian Religious Education became my favourite subject.

Our teachers were from Uganda and Sudan. We had to clear an area for a building to house the school before we could move from under the tree as numbers were growing and there were no facilities available.

At the end of primary school I joined my mother and brothers and sisters in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Kakuma is a very big settlement run by the United Nations. There were three separate camps because the population was always increasing. Somalis,



Joseph Maker with Professor Rob Davidson, Head of Medical Imaging in the School of Dentistry & Health Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.

“The first refugees to go to Kakuma were the Lost Boys, a group of Sudanese boys, who had gone to Ethiopia seeking refuge and then fled from Ethiopia when that government was overthrown.”

Sudanese, Kenyan tribal people, Ethiopians and Eritreans all shared the space. The first refugees to go to Kakuma were the Lost Boys, a group of Sudanese boys, who had gone to Ethiopia seeking refuge and then fled from Ethiopia when that government was overthrown. We lived in a tent initially and then built our own house with mud, tree branches and reeds on the roof. We were learning about design and house building.

Each family was given a ration card recording the size of the family. You had to produce this card to receive food. The sort of food issued was maize flour, wheat flour, lentils and oil. Meat had to be purchased from the local tribes. It was very scarce. Water from the wells was pumped to particular areas of the camp, where every morning a queue was formed at the tap by women who left containers there waiting for the water to be turned on in their area.

Some adults went to school, some had small businesses. My mother learned English in Adult Education classes.

Life in the camp was safe from bombing and the war but there was some intertribal violence and of course kids argued among themselves sometimes. Bicycles were the only mode of transport other than walking. Some people earned money using bicycles as taxis or in hiring charges to those needing transport who were able to ride themselves.

I went to Secondary School in Kakuma which has a British curriculum. It was a struggle because of harsh living conditions. In the refugee camp there were many primary schools and only three Secondary Schools funded by UNHCR. I moved from the Junior School after two years and completed two and a half years in the Senior School, the third year of which was equivalent to Year 11 in Australia. In Australia I had to start again in Year 11. The classes in Kenya were in English but we had to learn Kiswahili. Some of the subjects were the same as in Australia. In year 10 I studied Chemistry, Physics, Biology, English, Kiswahili, History and Government, Business Studies, Christian Religious Education, Social Studies and Ethics, Agriculture and Maths. We had laboratories for science subjects, not as well equipped as in Australia but better than nothing.

In Kakuma school hours were from 9 to 2.30, five days a week. We had specialist teachers. Some were from Kenya and some were refugees who had graduated. Some graduates got scholarships to study in Kenyan schools. Out of school hours we played a lot of soccer.

In the camp all the students worked hard. Young people in Australia have not experienced the trouble we have had and they take these opportunities for granted. It seems to me that they do not work as hard as those of us who have been in refugee camps.



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I was not on my mother's visa, which the rest of the family were, and I had to come after them on my own. That was after a DNA test proved that she was my mother. Coming to live in Australia was very different. I could speak English, but with an African accent. I was very self-conscious but quickly overcame this.

When we came to Australia we were sponsored by Sanctuary Australia Foundation, and were cared for by the group based in Inverell in NSW. We were the only Sudanese family in the town and our family were the only students at McIntyre High School. It was a mixed blessing to be the only Sudanese but on the whole I think it was an advantage. My schooling in Africa had prepared me well for fitting into the Australian system. As I arrived in October I did a short time at TAFE doing English to fill in the rest of the year. When I left Africa I was half way through year 11 and had to repeat that half year. The level of schooling was roughly equivalent to the same year in Kakuma. I tried very hard to fit into the school.

The main difference I noticed was the amount of writing here. In years 1-8 in Africa most questions are multiple choice and it is not until year 11 that you begin to write essays.

I have now studied Radiography at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga which is a four year course. I have completed the course and have my qualification. I had to work very hard to achieve this. I found things like anatomy difficult as it has a totally new language and is very detailed. I am proud that I was able to achieve this qualification.

I have a provisional licence and must be supervised for one year before I am able to have a full licence. I have not been able to get work yet but I need to so that I can help support myself and other members of my family who are still overseas. Currently I am volunteering in Radiology and understand that there are few vacancies now.

My mother is a personal carer, my sister has just finished nursing and one of my brothers has a biomedical science qualification. My younger sister is in Year 12 and my younger brother is in Year 11.

I am happy to share my story as I have had good help from mentors and would now like to be able to mentor others.

If you know anyone who might be able to help Joseph find employment please contact the editors.

Please feel free to circulate this newsletter to anyone you feel might be interested in reading this story.

We acknowledge the assistance of the Western Region Ethnic Communities Council in helping to distribute this newsletter.