

# **“We Will Do it Our Own Ways”:**

## **A Perspective of Southern Sudanese Refugees Resettlement Experiences in Australian Society**

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## DECLARATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of my thesis is to understand, from the perspectives of Southern Sudanese themselves, their resettlement experiences in Australia, to provide knowledge about how their experiences of exile reshape their thinking of home, place, identity, gender roles, and traditional practices, to explore the extent of their resettlement and integration into Australian society, and to inform policy on the resettlement of refugees and the settlement services offered to them.

The thesis explores the range of interactions and relationships among Southern Sudanese and between them and their Australian hosts. It demonstrates how these interactions and relationships shaped and reshaped the Southern Sudanese sense of identity and belonging in resettlement in Australia. The thesis also provides insights into the relationships between the war that forced them out of their homeland, their flight, life in refugee camp or in exile, and how these affected their ability to resettle. To understand these, I have listened to how they described their lives before and during the war, while seeking refuge, and of their present and future life in Australia. From this I will show how they reproduce and maintain some aspects of their culture within the context of the Australian society, as well as how they are adapting to some aspects of life in that society.

In this thesis I also explore the concepts of place, home and identity. In order to understand these concepts and how fluid they are in the current transnational era, I follow Thomas Faist's (2000) thinking about the causes, nature and the extent of movement of international migrants from poorer to richer countries (also Cohen 1997; Kaplan 1995; Appadurai 1995). Faist in particular examines the process of adaptation of newcomers to host countries and the reasons why many migrants continue to keep ties



to their home or place of origin. These ties, according to Faist, link transnational social spaces which range from border-crossing families and individuals to refugee diaspora. In this, I argue that resettlement involves complex interactions between newly arrived Southern Sudanese and members of Australian society. These complex interactions include firstly an array of social interactions occurring between Southern Sudanese and the staff of support organisations delivering settlement services to them. I show how the Southern Sudanese perceived the services they receive vis-à-vis the staff's perceptions of Southern Sudanese as recipients of their services. Secondly they include various kinds of social interactions, relationships and networks among the Southern Sudanese and between them and members of Australian society through making friendships, home visitations, joining social and cultural clubs, and becoming involved in professional associations and churches which are predominantly Australian. I show how these social relations and networking are being enacted and maintained and/or fall apart over time. I ascertain whether these relationships have enhanced their resettlement or not. Thirdly, the thesis shows the impact of a shift in gendered roles and intergenerational conflicts between parents and children on family relationships and how these in turn affect their actual settlement.

This thesis is based on these themes and on the analysis drawn from detailed qualitative ethnographic research which I conducted over a period of fourteen months between January 2006 and March 2007 and from the literature. In keeping with the traditions of ethnographic fieldwork practices, I carried out structured and unstructured in-depth interviews and Participant Observation of informants during the fieldwork.

The subjects of this thesis are the Southern Sudanese refugees who resettled in South Australia and some staff of organisations which delivered settlement services to them. The fundamental questions which these ethnographic explorations attempt to answer are

how do the Southern Sudanese experience resettlement in Australian, interact with members of their host society, construct their identities in relation to their notions of home and place, and negotiate shifting gender roles and relationships in the family. I show how their previous life experiences in Southern Sudan, their plight, their flight from war, their life in refugee camps and/or in refugee settings in other countries, their personal socio-economic and historical backgrounds, have affected their resettlement in Australia. I also explore their current and ongoing relations with their homeland and other Southern Sudanese diaspora and show how this perpetuates their identity as Southern Sudanese.

I argue that success or failure in resettlement hinges mostly on the Southern Sudanese ability or inability to understand and speak the English language, their access to employment and stable housing, relationships with Australians, and the quality and quantity of settlement services which they access and receive. I assert that the interplay between/among these factors have combined to influence significantly the settlement processes and the extent of integration of Southern Sudanese into Australian society. Furthermore, I assert that these factors are inseparable and need to be examined and explained in relation to one another as they tend to be interwoven into the daily life experiences of Southern Sudanese.

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It almost seems impossible to me to avoid describing the doctoral degree journey I have made. Being a refugee from Southern Sudanese myself who has suffered so much from and has experienced decades of war, has been forcefully displaced several times, has lived in exile, and finally has resettled in Australia without resources (capital, social, financial etcetera), to be a student in one of the prestigious Universities in Australia and achieving this degree has been one of the daunting experiences of my life. I would like to thank the University of Adelaide Graduate Centre for granting me the scholarship

without which, as a refugee, I would not have been able to study and complete this degree. Being a refugee who has been deprived by war and related conditions of access to opportunities for enhancing one's life, my candidature has been throughout layered with personal, practical, academic and technological challenges as well as financial challenges at the conclusion of my candidature. However despite these challenges, I have arrived at the end of this academic journey. Thus I can gladly look back with pride and call myself a persistent good fighter. But like any other successful fight, it needs a reliable or unwavering training and trainers and in this case, stewardship and supervision. I am fortunate to be connected to Dr. Arthur Saniotis, former lecturer in the Discipline of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide by Sharon Lewis the Discipline of Anthropology's administrator. Sharon's single click of a mouse to distribute my resume to the teaching staff resulted in my getting to know Dr. Arthur who encouraged me to enroll in a PhD program in the Discipline and informed me about the availability of postgraduate scholarships at the University. He willingly showed me where the University of Adelaide Graduate Centre, which administers the scholarships, was located from where I later collected a scholarship application that resulted in my admission to the program. Dr Arthur then introduced me to Dr. Andrew Skuse, a senior lecturer in the Discipline who became my principal supervisor. Hence, as the saying goes, 'big things grow from little things'. Sharon's simple click of her mouse, thus sending out my resume, has brought me this far and for this I am indebted to her and Dr. Arthur.

As I have stated earlier, a successful fight needs reliable and unwavering training, stewardship and supervision. Hence, my greatest appreciation goes to my supervisors: Dr. Andrew Skuse and Dr. James Talyor. They have been academically very helpful, supportive, encouraging and accommodating. They guided me throughout all the stages

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## **DEDICATION**

I wish to dedicate this work to my late grandmother Miriama Poni commonly known by the name Ajwókó. Through her care, she had made me what I am today. She cared for me when my mother died when I was barely one and half years old. May you never be forgotten my grand Mom! I also dedicate this work to my wife Hellen Poni Anduga and my daughter Manuela Poni Wani-Kana.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the complex nature of the experiences of refugees and of forced migration, resettlement and integration, I take an interdisciplinary focus in this thesis. The choice of this interdisciplinary approach has been dictated by the need to elucidate and provide a comprehensive understanding of those themes which I have cited in the thesis summary. This approach adequately captures the fluid and diverse nature of the experiences inherent in the refugees' life during war, and period/s of displacement, encampment/refuge and resettlement in a new environment. In this chapter I offer an overview of the thesis structure and a summary of the contents for discussion in each chapter. I also show the potential contribution of my thesis to the knowledge of both the Discipline of Anthropology in the areas of refugee studies and settlement theory, and to the practice of policy makers working in the areas of refugees' resettlement programs.

This thesis comprises eight chapters: each explores specific themes which I have highlighted earlier. In this chapter (Chapter One) I provide a brief historical account of immigration to Australia and theoretical perspectives that inform the discussions of the themes in each chapter which situate this thesis within the subfield of refugee and forced migration and resettlement studies in anthropology. I will show the contribution of the thesis to the body of knowledge within anthropology by offering elaborate empirical understanding of the Southern Sudanese experiences of life of resettlement in Australia and how they rework and re-establish meanings related to their new life, identity, place, home, shift in gender role, traditional practices, and family relationships in their new environment.



In Chapter Two I will provide a description of the field sites where I carried out my fieldwork and show how I conducted my fieldwork among my informants, the Southern Sudanese. I describe how I selected the field site and informants, conducted unstructured and structured in-depth interviews, and participant observations. These were done during home visits, while I assisted informants to search for and locate rental property (housing), assisted them with shopping, completed various forms, acted as an interpreter for them, as well as participating in other social events such as receptions for new arrivals from refugee camps in Africa, religious festivals, birthday celebrations and marriage negotiations. During my fieldwork I did voluntary work with the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA) and the Australian Refugee Association (ARA) in order to make connections with those Southern Sudanese who accessed the services of these support organisations. During that time, I combined my volunteer role with my role as researcher. This enabled me to connect with staff of those support organizations in order to observe when and how they interact with and service their Southern Sudanese clients, and to interview them regarding the services they deliver to them. In Chapter Two, I also highlight the reasons why I chose to volunteer with MRCSA and ARA and conducted part of my fieldwork in those settlement support organizations (service providers).

In Chapter Three I offer a brief description of the people who collectively called themselves ‘Southern Sudanese’ or ‘Junubin’ (an Arabic word for Southern Sudanese people). I complemented my fieldwork data by consulting ethnographies produced about some of the ethnic or tribal groups living in Southern Sudan whose members are currently resettled in Australia under Australian humanitarian and refugees’ resettlement programs. This chapter also provides a brief description of the historical background of the Southern Sudanese, especially the recent decades of civil war that

plagued Southern Sudan between 1955 and 1972 and from 1983 to 2005 which led to massive social displacement of Southern Sudanese and eventual resettlement in western countries, including Australia. The chapter discusses how the war and related conditions had adversely affected the life of the Southern Sudanese, and hindered access to education, economic opportunities, health, and other services. It examines their experiences in refugee camps and in other urban cities in exile. I argue that the adverse effects of the war and related conditions which the Southern Sudanese endured have impeded and adversely influenced their resettlement capabilities in Australia. I assert that any attempt to ignore their historical background, which is shrouded by wars and their refugee experiences, will obscure the understanding of why some Southern Sudanese have more difficulties than others in resettling into Australian society. Furthermore, war and displacement has severely destroyed the institutional structures (social-family, economic, political, administrative, civil, educational, legal and so forth) in Southern Sudan; as a result, moving from Southern Sudan to refugee camps with barely non existing structures and then resettling in Australia - a society with highly developed and sophisticated institutional structures - presented daunting life experiences for the majority of my informants.

Chapter Four offers from the perspective of the Southern Sudanese - my informants - an ethnographic account of their complex resettlement experiences and of the challenges that they encountered in resettling into Australian society. In order to understand these, I draw on Richardson et al. (2004), Knudsen (1991), Malkki (1995a & 1995b), Kunz (1981 & 1973) and other studies on refugee resettlement (migration) experiences to show how the difficulties of some Southern Sudanese in resettling in Australian society are linked to their experiences of war and life in refugee camps or in countries of transition. Although Kunz's (1973 & 1981) work could be regarded as an old study, his

kinetic theoretical model of the flight of refugees in particular is still regarded as relevant in refugee studies when it is used to complement contemporary scholarship, including those I have cited. This is because it gives insight into the experiences of refugees from the time of plight, flight and camp life to the time of resettlement. Kunz's theoretical model depicts refugees' associative patterns in practical ways and suggests that there is an inclination among members of the host society to see all refugees from a given country/region as a homogenous group, which is not the case. Kunz (1981) claims that within any one refugee group there are subdivisions of waves, or what he has termed "refugee vintages", and that refugees flee a country at dissimilar points in time, are escaping from different pressures and have different backgrounds. This depicts the situations of the Southern Sudanese refugees who resettled in Australia which significantly influence their resettlement and integration capabilities. Thus, Kunz's model, in addition to others, will considerably enhance our understanding of the complex resettlement experiences of Southern Sudanese in Australia.

This chapter discusses what my informants consider as participation in the activities of Australian society and their perceptions of the quantity and quality of the resettlement services which they received. It relies, among other studies, on Putnam's (1996) concept of "bridging social capital" to inform my own approach to this. The chapter considers their pre-resettlement expectations of life in Australia, how those expectations transpire in their real life of resettlement in Australia, and how these have led to re-orientation and reconstruction of their way of life in their new society. It discusses potential barriers to resettlement, particularly in areas such as employment, housing and English language, and shows how these have enhanced the successful resettlement of some, but have also been an impediment to some Southern Sudanese in Australia. The chapter also discusses what they consider as services that could best meet their resettlement

needs. In this thesis, I use ‘resettlement needs’ to refer to the desires and wants of my informants for a range of things that are essential for their current and future lives in Australia. These needs include education, housing, household goods, transport, jobs, healthcare, social and financial support and so forth. I argue in this chapter that as the Southern Sudanese who resettled in Australia came from distinctively different socio-cultural, economic and political environments from that of Australia, their success in resettlement and integration occurs gradually over time as they need to understand the English language, and the systems, structures, and procedures of their new society such as access to employment, housing and other services. I also stress that the period of time to achieve successful resettlement and integration depends on an individual’s abilities to overcome resettlement challenges.

In Chapter Five I discuss social relationships and networking among Southern Sudanese themselves and with their Australian hosts. The chapter shows how social relationships and networks are negotiated, reworked, maintained or fall apart overtime. It explores whether or not the Southern Sudanese engage as a separate group in activities which they organise, whether they invite Australian friends (and vice versa), and whether they both exchange home visits. Additionally it then shows how such social relationships and networking among the Southern Sudanese themselves, and between them and Australian friends, significantly enhance their resettlement processes. This chapter also demonstrates the central role of the church in supporting Southern Sudanese in meeting their religious and other essential resettlement needs, and its role in connecting Southern Sudanese church goers with Australians in the church.

In this chapter I argue that host governments and resettled refugees have divergent views of what constitutes successful resettlement and integration for newcomers. Host governments principally measure success or failure in resettlement and integration of

refugees and migrants by their abilities to speak the host language, find jobs, become economically independent, and by the ease of their access to and use of mainstream services. Central to these is the assumption that once refugees do not depend on social welfare payments, they have successfully resettled and integrated into their new society (Richardson et al. 2004). Conversely, I claim that this model of measurement and this assumption tend to ignore the social and cultural dimensions of refugees lives such as social relationships, interactions, friendships, networks, and other forms of support among the resettling refugees which are pivotal in the resettlement and integration success of any newcomer. Thus I assert that the ‘aggregate sum’ of social relationships, including networks among Southern Sudanese themselves and with Australians, as well as the support they received and the connective role of the church and other support organisations, do significantly determine the success or failure of the Southern Sudanese attempts to resettle and integrate into Australian society. This is because those social and cultural factors have the propensity to create a strong sense of being accepted into, and of belonging to, Australian society (Barnes 2001; Stevens 1997) as much as interpersonal contacts and friendships can result in trust, and social links established can make them feel welcomed. I therefore conclude that success in resettlement and in integration into Australian society, which is an unfamiliar socio-cultural and economic environment for Southern Sudanese, is not an easy path to walk; it requires a lot of effort and resources from the Sudanese as well as from their host society in order to overcome the hurdles on this path. The chapter also shows how success in resettlement and integration are affected by individual abilities and attributes such as rural/urban origin, level of education, cultural, ethnic background and so forth.

Chapter Six shows how the Southern Sudanese experience life in Australia, and how they negotiate and construct the meaning of home, place and identity in the context of

their life of resettlement in Australia after being displaced from their homeland. It also shows whether they call Australia a 'home' or a 'place' to live. To fully understand this, the chapter focuses on whether becoming an Australian citizen, acquiring property (house/land, permanent employment etc), and mastering the English language amount to a claim to full membership of the Australian society and identification with it. It also shows my informants' views of who they define as Australians. In this chapter I suggest that the Southern Sudanese concepts of home, place and identity define who they are and these significantly influence their resettlement and integration into the Australian society (also see Salih, 2002). The chapter reiterates that the war in Sudan had led to subsequent resettlement of thousands of Southern Sudanese refugees in Australia, Finland, USA, Canada, New Zealand, and in other countries worldwide. This has created transnational communities of Southern Sudanese. Thus, because of their transnationalisation and diasporic experiences, the chapter demonstrates how they connect and relate to one another both in diaspora and with those at home. It shows how living way from home perpetuates their collective identity as Southern Sudanese or "Junubin", which is significant because it impacts on their meaning of home, place, sense of belonging and how other identities are developed in the context of diaspora and transnational networks. It is argued that space is a social product in which social relationships are constructed and negotiated as well as contested and made meaningful.

This chapter also highlights how the Southern Sudanese experience spatialisation, as well as how they socially and culturally read and interpret those experiences to harmonise and reshape, or maintain, their definition of 'selves' and of 'others'. Among my informants the shifting concepts of 'home, place and identity' are formed from a range of interwoven cultural, social, political, historical, and psychological constructions derived from how they as individuals or groups experienced them. This in

turn influences their notions and meanings of place, home and identity in specific spaces or locations in which they have lived. In this I show how they acquire meaning and perpetuate it through multifaceted processes of re-construction, remembering and recounting of the past lived places and experiences as well as their imaginings of future.

Chapter Seven shows the impact of resettlement on traditional gender roles and practices in the domestic sphere. It focuses on husband-wife and parent-child relationships in families. It shows how traditional practices, and especially performances of domestic gendered roles, are importantly linked to the notions of identity, home and place among my informants. Resettlement demands a radical shift in gender roles and renegotiation of relationships in the family, which in turn leads to new meanings of identity between men and women. In this chapter I also show how men, women and children experience and interpret both the shift and change in their life of resettlement. The chapter demonstrates how resettlement in a new and unfamiliar society influences the day-to-day lives of the Southern Sudanese within and outside the family. It particularly examines husband-wife and parent-child relationships and shows how they are renegotiated and enacted in relation to gendered role participation and also how these and intergenerational conflict in totality affected the resettlement of my informants.

The chapter also considers different attitudes between parents and children regarding adherence to cultural practices and shows that while parents have a strong desire for their children to maintain and fully practice their culture and traditions, children on the other hand want to try out some aspects of life in their new society such as male-female relationships including cohabitation before marriage. Although resettlement is regarded by McSpadden and Moussa, (1993: 224) as an end point to the refugees' predicament, I argue conversely that in fact it is the beginning of a long period of new predicaments,

including renegotiation of identity, roles and relationships, because perceptions and values in resettlement societies regarding these aspects of life (culture and traditions) are not comparable with those of the newcomers. Chapter Eight is the conclusion. It highlights the main themes and arguments of the thesis and offers recommendations to policy makers and practitioners in the area of refugees' settlement and services delivery.

### **Resettlement of Migrants and Refugees in Australia: A Historical and Contemporary Context**

At this stage I would like to offer a brief historical perspective of immigration and resettlement of refugees and migrants in Australia. Australia is currently one of the principle resettlement countries for refugees and migrants; according to DIMIA (2004), over 620,000 refugees and displaced people have resettled in Australia from ever-changing source countries over the last 50 years. The literature on migration to Australia indicates that from 1947 Australia began to move away from being a country largely peopled by migrants of British and Irish ancestries to one with diverse populations from other European and Asian countries in addition to its original inhabitants-the Aborigines. The post-war refugees between 1947 and 1953 brought to Australia refugees from Eastern and Central Europe who had escaped communist and fascist rule (Kunz, 1971) and in 1956 and 1968 Australia resettled a wave of refugees from Hungary and Czechoslovakia respectively. This wave of refugees was followed by a wave of economic migrants between the 1950s and the 1970s, and in the late 1970s and 1980s Australia resettled a large number of refugees from South East Asia, especially refugees from Indo-China (Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos) as a result of the Indo-Chinese war, and refugees from Latin America as a result of civil strikes and political and military upheaval in Latin America. The literature indicates that in the early 1990s Australia also resettled refugees from Vietnam and El Salvador, while it resettled



refugees from former Yugoslavia two years later. Australia's most recent wave of refugees is from Africa (including the Sudanese) and the Middle East as a result of wars and the political and social upheavals plaguing the Middle East and Africa. Refugees from some Asian and European countries also continue to be resettled in Australia. It has been claimed that the resettlement in Australia of Sudanese and other African people came about in the context of a changing Australian immigration policy which placed a greater focus on global immigration.

### **Early Migrants**

Historically, the first migrants to Australia were British and Irish as a result of the British Empire's resettlement scheme and during the period of the gold rushes. Three waves of migrants and refugees followed the British and the Irish. The literature on migration to Australia shows that refugees and migrants from European countries integrated well into the Australian society because of their cultural similarities, and their shared social, political, and economic orientations and values with white Australians from Britain and Ireland. The migrants who followed those early settlers included Greeks, Italians, Lebanese and others. The first Greeks arrived involuntarily as refugees, but others came to Australia in search of fortune following the discovery of gold in Victoria and New South Wales between 1851 and 1880. Others resettled in Australia following the Greek defeat and expulsion from Asia Minor (Tamis 1994: 13). It is worth noting that after those fortune seekers had amassed their fortunes, some decided to return home; but others stayed in Australia.

According to Tamis, the Australian view of their society as Anglophone White and culturally British significantly influenced Australia's immigration programs, policies and the negative attitudes of a good proportion of white Australian citizens towards

other migrants and refugee groups. Tamis supports this by citing the legislation against the migration of non-Europeans to Australia and the immigration policy that favoured northern Europeans over southern Europeans and Chinese over Italians. He particularly refers to a Royal Commission Report (known as the Ferry Report and commissioned by the Government of Queensland in 1925) on the social and economic effects of the increasing number of aliens in North Queensland which made references critical of immigrants from southern Europe and specifically described the Greeks as “being generally of an undesirable type” who “do not make good settlers” and who added nothing to the wealth and security of the country (Tamis 1994: 15). According to Tamis, the report prompted racial attacks against the Greeks and also led to the perception of Albanians, Yugoslavs and other migrants as constituting a threat to Australia’s development, cultural heritage and to Australians’ employment opportunities.

Castles and Miller (2003: 214) noted how some Australians are suspicious of foreigners because they feel that newcomers will take over their jobs, despite the fact that most Greeks arrived without English proficiency and most took up physically demanding and unattractive jobs to earn a living because this lack of skills in the English language limited their access to more attractive blue and white collar jobs. However, hard work and sacrifices by Greek immigrants made them one of the successful migrant groups in Australia; but their success created hostilities from their hosts which resulted in some discrimination and attacks against them (Tamis 1994: 109-173). Nevertheless, Castles and Miller (2003) indicate that the 1960s and 1970s witnessed an increasingly growing acceptance of different people by Australians because migrants’ participation in the economic activities in Australia had brought economic growth and prosperity to the country. Castles and Miller claim that it is the combination of migrants’ economic success and pressures from Liberal pressure groups that prompted the abolition of the

White Australia Policy and gave way to the introduction of Multiculturalism. As a result, there has been a large scale influx of migrants and refugees to Australia from many countries worldwide. This contrasted with the traditional Australian migration policy by which refugees and immigrants were accepted on the basis of their capacity to assimilate into the Australian society; this was judged on the basis of their cultural proximity to the United Kingdom and the degree of historical links with the British and the Irish (Tamis 1994: 16).

Gentili (1983) and Mistilis (1985) indicate that the first Italians arrived in Australia as missionaries and political refugees and their shared goals of success and their collective sense of identity enabled them to amass substantial resources in Australia. Mistilis (1985: 521) argues that the Italians saw themselves not as individuals but as members of a family away from home, and that was an incentive for organising themselves and uniting for the common purpose of improving their economic and social wellbeing in Australia. Furthermore, Mistilis (1985) indicates that Italians' collective attendance at church services and engagement in other cultural activities created unity among them. Attendance at church services and engagement in other cultural activities had provided them with opportunities to maintain connections with people from similar regional backgrounds and this strengthened their collective sense of identity. But according to Thompson (1980) a good proportion of Italians returned home at the beginning of 1946 due to hostilities and discrimination against them from some Australians because of a fear of job losses due to competition over the few jobs available. Nevertheless, like the Greeks, many who stayed on later succeeded and established their own businesses, and their descendants have assimilated well into Australian society (Bertelli 1986; Cresciani 1986). The 1991 Community Profile attests that a high proportion of Italo-Australian families own homes and businesses, which is indicative of the extent of their social and

economic integration into Australian society. However, as Bottomley (1979) indicates, although the Greeks and Italians have successfully resettled and integrated into Australian society, they still maintained close connections with their communities and have a greater tendency to maintain cohesion across generations than other migrants.

Among the migrants from the Middle East were the Lebanese. The Lebanese came to Australia for a variety of reasons, including the imposition of heavy taxes by the Ottoman Empire on Lebanese Christians, and subjection to political persecution and Turkish instigated conflicts among the Lebanese ( e.g. between Maronites and Druzes). It was also claimed that rapid population increase had put greater pressure on the declining economy and created severe difficulties for many Lebanese. As a result, many Lebanese left their country for Australia. According to Drury (1981: 26), the Lebanese arrived generally with little education and with a poor command of English, but many had some capital, entrepreneurial skills and much energy for hard work. Drury (1981) argues that it was the combination of their entrepreneurial skills and hard work that made them successful and able to integrate into Australian society. But like the Italians and the Greeks, the Lebanese have maintained their heritage and kept strong links with their country of origin and family ties back home despite their long period of residence in Australia (Drury 1981). Like the Greeks and the Italians, the Lebanese had also faced some hostility from Australians, apparently for the same reasons as the Italians and the Greeks.

Literature on immigration in Australia suggests that the migration of Africans, and especially of Sudanese, has only occurred in recent years (Adelaide Migration Museum, 2003 & Jupp, 2001). Arguably they have received minimal research attention from scholars. Most research on refugees and migrants resettling in Australia has been on

Europeans, Asians and Latin Americans (Cohen 2001; Hiller 2002; Cox, Copper and Adepoju 1999; Franz 2003; Colic-Peisker 2003; Holton et al. 1994; Hinsliff 2007; Cohen 2001). Little has been done on African migrants and refugees (Snubanga-Kyobe and Dimock 2000; Atem 2003; Udo-Ekpo 1999 and Hinsliff 2007) and virtually no studies have been carried out on Sudanese immigration and, in particular, on Southern Sudanese refugees who form the greatest numbers of the refugees in Australia from Sudan, to explore how they are resettling in Australia (Hillier 2002). Further, most of the studies on Africans have not been done from an anthropological perspective but rather from the perspectives of other disciplines within Social Sciences. There have also been few anthropological studies of Sudanese refugees who resettled in USA (Abusharaf 2007; Shady 2003; Holtzman 2000; and Heldenbrand 1996), Canada (Stoll and Johnson 2007) and Simich et al. 2004), and in other countries where Sudanese have taken refuge (Akuei 2004; Fábos 2002 and Saeed 1999). Hence, there is a great need to fill the apparent gap in scholarship in this regard and provide knowledge about the resettlement experiences of Southern Sudanese in Australia.

As the Sudanese are among Australia's newest recent arrivals (South Australian Migration Museum 2003 & Jupp 2001), this thesis will provide useful insights into the resettlement experience, the extent of integration of Southern Sudanese refugees into Australian society, as well as their potential to make substantial contributions to their new society. The thesis also has the potential to shape important national debates on the resettlement and integration of Sudanese into Australian society as it will provide valuable knowledge to the public, policy makers, national organisations and support groups delivering settlement support services particularly to Southern Sudanese and other refugee populations from the horn of Africa and other African countries.

## **Locating the Thesis**

The following paragraphs of this chapter establish the main research themes of my thesis and offer a theoretical framework that will be the basis for ethnographic discussion in subsequent thesis chapters. They also situate the thesis within the current anthropological scholarship in the area of forced migration and refugee studies (resettlement and integration) within anthropology.

Over the last three decades, refugee population movement has become more prevalent and refugees have become more visible worldwide. However, although it is claimed that globalisation has increased the volume of peoples' movement worldwide, it is ironic that the increase in this movement has on the other hand accelerated the tendency for nation states to tighten restrictions on such movement on a global scale. As a result, global immigration has become an issue for many governments. Miles (1999) asserts that the global flow of migrants and refugees has become the subject of a highly contested political debate. This is in sharp contrast with the relative silence about, and desire for, free movement of capital, goods, and services worldwide (also see Appadurai 1996: 27-29). Both Appadurai (1996) and Miles (1999) highlight the inherent paradox regarding the global flow of goods and services in contrast to the flow of people (refugees and migrants), and agree that the migration of capital, goods, services and certain material cultures like music, arts, movies are desired by many societies despite the fact that they too impact on the people of the receiving societies. The flow of people, and particularly refugees and migrants, has caused fear among both the people and governments of receiving societies. This fear has prompted the formulation and establishment of structures to restrict the flow of refugees and migrants globally across nations. This has resulted, as Hage (2003) writes, in paranoid nationalism and in the construction of negative "others".

Although the impacts of refugees and migrants on receiving societies are undeniable, refugees and migrants have become scapegoats for many vices that exist in the receiving community (Hage 2003: 43) and hence the community looks for protection from the threats posed by these negative “others” (McMaster 2002: 2; Hage 2003: 43, 52-53; also see Said 1978). Miles (1999: 179) also shows that the fear of the “others” emanates from the belief that the influx of culturally and ethnically distinct people represents a threat to the receiving society’s culture and identity (see also Cohen 1980), and this has been used by some members of host countries to claim that the influx is a threat to their society’s culture and identity. Thomas (2000:5) highlights the detention of Vietnamese asylum seekers in Hong Kong in the 1980s, suggesting that this provides an interesting analogy to Australia’s immigration policy of detaining asylum seekers. Similarly, the research of Klintworth (2001), Nicholls (1997) and Mares (2001) presents evidence about differential treatment of onshore and offshore asylum seekers in Australia.

In the current ever increasing movement of refugees and migrants, the traditional migration theory based on the interplay of “push” and “pull” factors used to explain migration across national and international boundaries (Jansen 1970 in Jupp 1994: 2; Petersen 1970) has failed to offer adequate explanations for the current circumstances that has forced refugees out of their homelands and to seek resettlement in other countries. Although the line between push and pull factors is barely distinguishable, it has however been recognised that refugee movement is mainly caused by push rather than pull factors. It is also recognised that refugees’ experiences are much more distinct and severe than those of voluntary migrants who left their countries willingly in search of better lives elsewhere (Castles and Miller 1993). Colson (2003) has highlighted how refugees were uprooted from their places of origin and has discussed the effects of other

consequential issues such as identity management, manipulation of myth, and boundary construction which refugees faced in their new society of resettlement. In the case of the Southern Sudanese, persistent wars had uprooted millions from their homes and forced them to live elsewhere in exile and as refugees in search of safety. As a result many have been resettled in western countries including Australia. The result is, as Sassen (1999) has pointed out, a creation of diaspora communities that transcend boundaries of nation-states (refer to Chapter Three). Several studies highlight the experiences of refugees in resettlement countries and cast more light on how refugee experiences are different from those of voluntary migrants (Pittaway 1991; Pizarowicz and Toscher 1982; Steen 1993; Kjaerum, Slavensky and Slumstrup 1993; Ager 1999; Harrell-Bond 1999; Colson and Scott 1987, and Lewins and Ly 1985).

It is important to recognise here the interplay between legal, political and other structural aspects that shape the global movement of populations, individual community agency and network systems. There is evidence to indicate that although movement of people including refugees and migrants is facilitated or is linked to globalisation, those on move have however encountered regimes that fail to diminish physical, legal, structural and cultural barriers against free movement of people and in particular forced migrants (Marfleet 2006: 21-25). But although this is the case, the literature on transnationalism has emphasised the importance of the links between local and global social networks in the processes of immigration and integration. Thus, transnationalism is a multifaceted and multi-local process and the contemporary transnational flows of people have significant effects upon societies involved, as it impacts on cultural, social and economic interactions at the local and global levels. As such refugees and migrants who have become part of transnational communities have remained intensely connected to their places of origin across the world as well as maintaining worldwide web of



relations (see page Chapter Six). Thus in the current era of globalisation, refugees and asylum seekers constitute a significant component of diasporic communities (Demetrios 1997:18). In political terms, it could be argued that refugees and asylum seekers have assumed significance which stems from the growing perception that they represent a threat to national security as well as undermining the sovereign right of states to control the admission of foreign 'others' onto their territories. From the literature, such attitudes tend to be prevalent in Western Europe, where immigration from other parts of the world has generally been discouraged but with less success. Nevertheless, refugees and registered asylum applicants do enjoy specific legal status that set them apart from other migrants. It could be noted that in the case of Southern Sudanese refugees resettled in the west and who have become part of the transnational communities, the global networks they have become a part of do not solely consist of refugees, but also of networks that not only link them to their ethnic groups and families, but to other Sudanese from other parts of Sudan as well. These networks are more likely to include a variety of different migrant categories. For examples, Sudanese asylum seekers in Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and so forth, as well as expatriates or labour workers in gulf countries or illegal Sudanese workers in Egypt and other countries could well be part of this global social network.

As I have indicated earlier, due to the multifaceted nature of refugee experiences, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach in this thesis. This follows from my review of the literature. It appears that there is no single definitive theory that accounts for the diverse experiences of refugees' experiences of war, flight, camp life and experiences of life when they are resettled in an unfamiliar society. The choice of an interdisciplinary approach has been driven solely by the complexities inherent in the studies of refugee and forced migration and hence the need to view the experiences of refugees from

multiple theoretical perspectives. This approach will enable a better understanding of how the Southern Sudanese make sense of their experiences of refugee life and their life of resettlement in Australia. It also enables us to grasp better from their viewpoints how their previous experiences have impacted on the processes of resettlement and integration, and how they renegotiate and construct their identities in a society different from that of their origin. Here I follow Ewing (2004), Malkki (1995a & 1997) and Ager (1999) who provide insights into individual and group experiences of the meaning of the life of exile and resettlement.

These studies also show how the construction of identities (individually or as a group) is determined by circumstances (also see Huntington 2004). This is also similar to the work by Jackson (1995), Basso (1996), Entrickin (1991), Massey (1994), and Gupta and Ferguson (1997) where they describe how people socially construct meaning and attach values to the place in which they live [home] (refer to Chapter Four). These studies, including those by Appadurai (1995), Kaplan (1996), and Cohen (1997), inform my understanding of how the Southern Sudanese perceive, construct and attach meaning and value to place and home in the context of their resettlement in Australia. From these, I explore in Chapter Four whether or not the Southern Sudanese have a sense of Australia as their home and as a place of belonging. Additionally, studies by de Haan (2002), and Lewins and Ly (1985) further enable me to approach and comprehend the links and feelings of belonging to Australia or to Southern Sudan among Southern Sudanese. Here I consider the degree of relationship (frequencies of contacts and regular financial remittance) to the next of kin and family members “left behind” and the anxieties resulting from the inability to support them.

Informants have indicated that leaving kin and family members behind means that they will have to make regular remittances and spent a considerable amount of their income

on making regular phone calls to inquire about the well being of those they have left in refugee camps and in Sudan and, if necessary, to help them. They feel obliged to do this. This is illustrated by Akuei's (2004) vivid descriptions of prayers, songs, speeches and attitudes among the Dinka refugees in Cairo which were intended to convey messages to remind relatives and kin leaving for resettlement in the west not to forget their obligations and responsibilities to help people back home and elsewhere who are suffering. In Australia, being aware of these morsels of conveyed messages during the time of departure to Australia, and being constantly reminded of them through regular phone calls from kin left behind, they are kept aware of the moral need to meet such cultural obligations and responsibilities, which can only be fulfilled through considerable family or individual sacrifices by way of a reduction of expenditure on their essential needs. Since they have not yet accumulated income in Australia, combined with their being aware of the uncertainties of those left behind, any failure to support their family and relatives at home results in feelings of guilt and shame. This quotation from Jokpi explains what my informants implicitly feel or mean when they talk about 'leaving their next of kin and family members behind':

Almost every week I receive phone calls from my family members, other relatives and fiends in Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Egypt. They only call for a minute and ask me to call them back ... when I called back, they will ask for help, I mean for money because someone there is sick or ill and needs treatment or children are no longer attending school because school fees, uniform, books, and so are lacking ... they don't have the money to buy these things .... Most of the times, I don't have the money to send to them because I am not employed, I could only loan from friends and pay back later whenever I find some money. I could imagine the situations they would be in there and so I really feel I should help them somehow. I feel ashamed if I didn't support them or to tell them that I don't have any money ... but even if I tell them that I don't have any money, they won't believe me ... they think everyone living in Australia has the money and so I don't like to help them.

(Jokpi interviewed on 23 March 2006)

Most informants have indicated that the need to support those who are ill or sick, or to assist funerals of dead relatives back home or in refugee camps in other African countries, in certain instances could override their own basic family needs here; that is why Jokpi has to borrow some money if such demands urgently arose at a time when he has no money. Arguably this enduring sense of connectedness and relatedness, of extended kinship obligations and responsibilities among Southern Sudanese are likely to be ongoing.

From the data it is evident that most informants with roles and in positions (spouse, parents, siblings, uncle/aunt) charged with securing or maintaining the well being of family members, and of meeting the needs of other kin, feel compelled to help them back home or in refugee camps. Informants have indicated that it is their moral and cultural duty to help next of kin and other family members, and if they do not, they become particularly vulnerable to feelings of shame, guilt and of inadequacy (see also Oxfell 2004: 100). Thus, in this situation, my informants tend to be torn between meeting their own settlement needs here and the needs of their next of kin, other relatives and friends left behind. They find themselves experiencing conflicting currents of responsibilities and obligations that pull them and their resources in multiple directions; there is conflict between their capacity to meet fully their settlement needs on the one hand and to save income to assist their family back home on the other. This concurs with a study by Bulcha (1988) of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan who had left next of kin and other relatives behind. This study indicates that those who left behind their next of kin and other relatives were constantly plagued with anxieties about how to support them. In the case of my informants, such anxieties tend to exacerbate their practical and psychological resettlement in their new society. Also, similar studies by Horst and Van Hear (2002), Ahmed (2000), Akuei (2004) and Eckstein (2003) have

shown how refugees have effectively engaged in making remittances to kin in home countries for varied reasons including avoidance of shame and guilt.

On the other hand, to ascertain my informants' degree of attachment to Australia, I have considered whether the acquisition of Australian citizenship, English language, permanent jobs, and property (house) in Australia constitute a claim of full social membership and a sense of attachment, belonging to and identification with Australia. Other studies by Colson (2003), Krulfeld (1994) and Adelman et al. (1994) are also relevant in this thesis because they inform me about how refugees reconstruct their family lives, their relationships and how they renegotiate shifts in gender within the domestic sphere when they are resettled in an environment with an unfamiliar culture. These studies also help to illuminate how the Southern Sudanese interpret new experiences, cope with shifts in gender role, and create meanings out of the changes in their lives.

## **Theoretical Perspective**

In this section I will examine past and current debates on migration in general, paying special attention to discourses about refugees and their experiences of resettlement and integration in host societies. It is also here that I situate this thesis in the subfield of Forced Migration and Refugee Studies within anthropology. In exploring the settlement experiences of Southern Sudanese, I will consider the impact of their current experiences of the life of resettlement in Australia. Within their experiences of resettlement, I will focus on identity, home and place because migratory experience and resettlement tend to disturb the linkages between identity, home and place of belonging (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 12). I will also consider the prospects of integration by exploring, among other things, interactions with Australians and fellow Southern

Sudanese, the support my informants received, access to employment, housing and to settlement services, as well as the shift in gender roles, and changes in cultural practices and family relationships.

## **Integration**

In this thesis integration is a one of the key concepts and hence, before I proceed further, I would like to indicate its use here. The term “integration” signifies complex and inexhaustible experiences. Its use in this thesis is traceable to my sociological perspective. As I have shown earlier, the traditional migration theory of “push-pull” factors no longer adequately explains the immense and socially distinct refugees’ experience of migration and resettlement in an unfamiliar society. The deficit in this theory emanates from the involuntary nature of refugee movement from their country of origin. The social, economic and psychological effects of migration, and the physical losses that refugees experienced, are often lost in the perception that migration is mainly a response to negative circumstances at the point origin and positive circumstances at the point of destination. This thesis attempts to move beyond this traditional theory which portrays resettlement in the host country, and the social integration that may follow, as processes that guarantee social reproduction and harmony between newcomers and their hosts. It recognises that conflicts between refugees’ cultural traditions and those of their host do occur as a result of differing cultural orientations (Giddens 1979).

In the literature it is recognised that the term ‘integration’ is difficult to define because it means different things to different people. For instance, integration can imply achieving equal opportunities and rights for all members living in the same society. This implies that becoming integrated means achieving improved living conditions due to equality of

access to employment, healthcare, housing, social welfare services, and so forth. But for some people it can have negative connotations; for these, integration invokes the unwanted imposition of uniformity and is viewed as a way by which governments or institutions prescribe established patterns of activities and involvement in given activities within a society. Thus integration can be seen as a means whereby institutions and organisations define, categorise and discipline people in the society. In Foucault's (1977) view, it is a legitimate disciplinary measure by which institutions "tame" individuals and groups in order to contain conflicts and to guarantee a minimum amount of negative impact on the existing social order.

From a policy perspective, integration is a set of organised routines and activities which refugees are supposed to understand, accept and perform. By understanding and participating in these organised activities, refugees are assumed by the authorities to be able to function independently, or with only limited support from others. This is expected to be reflected in their ability to plan and to organise their lives successfully in the context of their new society. The underlying assumption here is that refugees or migrants become integrated when they fully participate in the various activities of their host society and become positive contributors in their new society (Coleman 1994).

However, this thesis is not premised on this perspective, but rather on the perspectives of Southern Sudanese people regarding what they define as successful resettlement and integration and how they think they achieve these outcomes. The thesis focuses on networks and relationships among Southern Sudanese and between them and members of their host society. It explores their participation in social, cultural and economic activities as well as their access to, and the support they receive from, settlement support services. I argue that in their totality these are significant in understanding how these influence the resettlement and integration processes of Southern Sudanese in

Australia. Further, successful integration is only possible when Southern Sudanese make a transition from having a sense of being newcomers to having a sense of belonging to, and having responsibilities (being on jobs, etc) and obligations (paying taxes, etc) towards, the Australian society. Arguably these could only occur as a result of a growing confidence through building social and economic networks with Australians.

I also note here that during my fieldwork most informants have told me that having social interactions and friendships with Australians made them feel liked and accepted by Australians and that this enhanced the development of a sense of belonging to a community and a feeling of being part of Australian society. Idurra's comment attests to this when he says that:

...my Australian neighbours are good, we interact, visit one another and sometimes enjoy time out together, they have also encouraged me to go bowling with them in their club ... they made me feel liked, welcomed and belong here, to this neighbourhood, they sometimes took me and my family to the beach or to see other places, like to the museum, the zoo and botanic garden and support us in various way, like with transport to church for prayer and to shopping.

In this social context I will argue that social interactions between my informants and their Australian neighbours, having time out together, and establishing membership of social or cultural clubs/associations, will help to define attachment as well as local identity with their neighbourhoods because these enable them find their social space in their neighbourhoods. These tend to provide structures that promote and enhance the development of social capital (making friendships) between them and their Australian neighbours. The combination of all of these is similar to what Bourdieu (1986:248) describes as genuine or potential resources which accrued from the possession and maintenance of a long-lasting networks and relationships or of mutual social contacts. Other scholars, including Baker (1990: 619), Burt (1992: 52 & 355) and Portes (1998:



6), have similarly shown the significance of social capital and the resources resulting from it which enables individuals to enhance their lives (also see Bourdieu 1986: 243; Bourdieu & Waquant 1992: 119).

I would like also to emphasise here that social relationships and networks of support (social capital), as well as the services received from fellow Southern Sudanese, Australian friends and governmental and nongovernmental settlement support organisations, significantly influence the participation of Southern Sudanese in any activity in Australian society. Participation gives them a sense of identifying with and belonging to their new society and, as hinted earlier, this is symptomatic of success in resettlement and integration, and this reflects inclusivity. This is supported by Bommers' (2004: 213) proposition that some conditions such as availability of and access to membership in social, cultural, and religious associations/institutions of the receiving societies, and the underlying interactions and relationships, are pivotal to the inclusion of newcomers. Similarly, ethnographic studies by Shandy (2002) and Holtzman (2000) of the Nuer ethnic group from Southern Sudan, who resettled in the USA, showed that their engagement in church activities and interactions with their hosts, the American members of the churches, eased their transition into their new society (see Chapter Five).

In the analysis of the data I found this also to be the case with the Southern Sudanese who resettled in South Australia. However there is an indication that they need confidence in themselves, the trust of the members of their new society and adequate information concerning the availability and requirements of social/cultural associations/organisations, clubs, churches and other civic institutions before joining. This is, however, possible when the available associations or organisations are willing to accept and engage the Southern Sudanese in their activities by relaxing rigid

conditions of entry and participation. If this happens, then it is likely that bridging capital would accrue from the participation in those civic organisations/associations or clubs. This is what Putnam (1993: 35) refers to as a set of horizontal association (connections) or “bridging social capital”. These connections are likely to help my informants in their new environment get to know others and share information, and although Putnam recognises the fragility of such connections and relations, he suggests that these connections could be useful in linking individuals to work and other opportunities in life and are likely to be sources of social inclusion (see also Putnam, 2000). Furthermore, according to Frank (2005: 2), linked networks with others are pivotal for leveraging resources beyond one’s own community. Also, as indicated by Bourdieu (1985), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995 & 2000), social relationships assist individuals to move positively forward in life. An underpinning example of this could be in the area of employment: it is likely that employers would be more likely to trust information about potential employees when it comes from trustworthy people in their networks who are refereeing job applicants (see also Hansen 2000).

It is worth noting here that the literature on resettlement and integration of refugees and migrants in Australia discusses three aspects of integration: occupational adjustment, identification with Australia and acculturation. Occupational adjustment relates to refugee and migrant participation, access and satisfaction with available jobs. Identification with Australia includes naturalisation and a sense of being Australian and belonging to Australian society. On the other hand, acculturation is adjustment as the result of contacts made with different cultures (Redfield et al. 1936 in Doná and Berry, 1999). It is acknowledged that acculturation occurs when groups or individuals from different cultures come into continuous first time contact with one another and the contacts then result in subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or

both groups. Hence, it is a two-way process that requires changes from both groups. Integration then is perceived as a way to accommodate newcomers. However, despite these perspectives on integration, it has been difficult to develop a practical and successful integration policy even in countries with a long history of accommodating migrants and refugees. This is because practical integration is dependent on the variety and quality of support to refugees as well as the refugee's willingness to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic activities of their host society and to become resourceful members of that society. I conclude that this is because policies formulated to bring about the integration of refugees often tend not to result from consultation with refugees and therefore often do not include their inputs, and programs and activities that concern their lives; in other words, such policies often result from a top-down approach to integration.

Friedman (2004) argues that practical integration is not the same as "formal state" integration due to the assumption in most western countries that refugees would become integrated into the host societies by joining and participating in the available social, cultural and economic activities of their new society rather than organising, joining and participating in their own activities. However, although refugees do participate in the host society's activities, it is often the case that they are not willing to forgo certain aspects of their own cultural practices that promise the maintenance and continuity of their identity. Hence, in this context, Collinson (1993: 18) questions the integration of migrants and refugees from more distant countries and cultures into the societies that host them by suggesting that refugees and migrants are perceived to pose social, economic and political challenges to receiving countries. The literature of early migration to Europe, USA and Australia confirms that the economic interests of the sending and receiving countries, and the proximity of the migrants' and refugees' ways

of life to those within the receiving countries, had underpinned other considerations in accepting migrants and refugees. It is claimed that the integration of immigrants and refugees from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, and of distinct ethnicity and culture, is problematic to a receiving country because those migrants and refugees share little in common with their hosts (Collinson 1993: 19).

In this thesis I do not follow the “functionalist view” of integration which was previously part of modernisation theory and which proposed that there are patterns in society that underline unitary function. This view tends to down-play the existence of contradictions in those patterns as a result of social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds that are at stake in the process of the integration of refugees and migrants into their host societies (Connolly 1995). I also do not follow the “multicultural models” which are put forward as being conducive to the successful resettlement and integration of refugees (Collinson 1993) because, as Rex (1985) has proposed, there are potential conflicts prevalent in multicultural societies. Rex indicates that civic structures in multicultural societies are ridden with conflicts which have the potential to challenge the existing social order. I instead follow Herzfeld (1987) and Pahl (1991) who propose that resettlement and integration entail identity issues which contrast with sameness in a diverse society. Thus I argue that successful resettlement and integration of the Southern Sudanese into the Australian society is a product of, among other things, interactions between them and members of the Australian society across social, cultural and economic spheres.

Historically in the classic immigration countries of Australia, Canada and the USA, the favoured policy was ‘assimilation’ of migrants and refugees. Before the advent of the theories of acculturation and social integration, assimilation theory, now considered racially infused, was the dominant theory used in immigration studies and by policy

makers and practitioners. Assimilation was grounded on the premise that migrants and refugees would lose all their characteristics through interactions with their hosts and become like the host. Unlike acculturation and integration, it is a one-way direction towards the host population. As a policy, it had succeeded to some extent because migrants and refugees were from societies that shared a lot in common with these resettlement societies (Bade & Weiner 1997; Thränhardt 1992). The underlying principle was that assimilation diminishes cultural dissimilarities that serve to mark out differences and sustain membership (solidarity) of particular groups. However, in the current global refugee flows, resettled refugees to those classic immigration countries come from societies that share so little with them and therefore the importance given to assimilation as a policy and theory has waned.

Thus, instead, integration in the context of multiculturalism has become a favoured policy for refugees and migrants in those classic immigration countries including Australia. I would like to state here that multiculturalism is not one of the themes of this thesis. However, it is worth noting that “multiculturalism” proposes cohesion and harmonious coexistence of cultural heterogeneity. It is a move away from the paradigm of assimilation to multiple ethnic diversifications in society and a rejection of a society with only one identity (Ritzer 1996). It is a state sanctioned policy that calls for an inclusive society and acceptance of diversity as a source of inspiration and strength (Puhle 1998: 255; Landfried 2003 in Huntington 2004). In contrast however, Marks (1997) contends that people living in a multicultural society and believing in the same core values do not often exhibit social cohesion; he claims that multiculturalism does not nurture integration. Marks suggests, instead, that multiculturalism is about power and domination based on inclusion and exclusion of others, and that policy decisions are

made on this basis regarding who is to be included into the multicultural society and who is not.

It is worth reiterating here that voluntary movement of migrants arises mainly from people's attempts to improve their livelihoods elsewhere. More often than not it follows cultural and historical patterns in that migrants are likely to move to destinations where they can speak the language or already have friends/relatives (Wallace 1999: 203). Unlike refugees, voluntary migrants are not seen as helpless individuals or groups. Accordingly, de Haan and Rogaly (2002: 5) show that voluntary labour migration is a social as well as an economic process because it binds up the ways in which migration is arranged as well as its meaning to the people both in the country of origin and of its destination. Similarly, de Haan, Brock and Coulibaly (2002) indicate that migration has historically been crucial to the livelihoods both of those migrating and those left behind, and it creates vast social networks and relationships across countries. In contrast, the movement of refugees is often involuntary, involves a search for safety and protection, and often does not follow historical or cultural patterns. Usually, there is no preference in the point of destination and no prior information about countries they fled to or resettled in; such migrants are unlikely to know the languages of, or have friends and relatives in, host countries (Pisarowicz and Vicki 1982). Hence, Scudder and Colson (1982) indicate that refugees often face unfamiliar challenges in their host society as they struggle to re-establish themselves in their new environment. This is exacerbated by psychological stress resulting from compulsory displacement from home and bereavement due to the loss of kin, friends, assets and other necessities of life. Scudder and Colson (1982: 272) affirm that, after being uprooted from their homes and resettled in an unfamiliar environment, refugees are confronted with unfamiliar uncertainties. As a result, they are likely to cling to their old ways of life and practices rather than taking

risks by adopting practices and ways of life they are not familiar with. However, as Turton (1996) indicates, when refugees (forced migrants) have a choice about where they would like to be resettled (considering availability of friends/relatives or acquired information about countries of their choosing), they are likely to adjust and adapt with relative ease to their countries of resettlement.

In recent years the arrival of African refugees in western countries, including Australia, has invited debates about the nature, possibility and difficulties of their integration into their host societies. As such, a number of examples of re-settlement and integration of Africans in western countries have been studied (Pisarowicz and Toscher 1982; Steen 1993; Kjaerum, Slavensky, and Slumstrup 1993). Unfortunately, there has been very little attempt by scholars in Australia to examine critically the social relationships/interactions between these recent arrivals (the Southern Sudanese) and members of the societies that host them.

The literature on refugee resettlement in Australia suggests that Australia's experience with Sudanese refugees in particular, and with African refugees and migrants in general, is only very recent. This is because, generally, Africans were only permitted to resettle in Australia after 1973 when the 1901 Immigration Act known as the White Australia Policy was abolished (Jupp 2001; Adelaide Migration Museum 2003). Arguably, there is a lack of knowledge about the resettlement and integration experiences of Southern Sudanese refugees who resettled in Australia because virtually no research has been undertaken on this visible and newly emerging refugee group. As a result there is no available and relevant knowledge on their resettlement experiences and how they perceive the resettlement services which they have received. The available studies on African communities, including the Southern Sudanese, show that they have not been conducted from the perspective of the Africans or Sudanese refugees, but rather from

the perspective of government or service providers (support organisations). Thus, there is a need for research to explore the experiences of the life of resettlement and the processes of integration of Southern Sudanese in Australia approached from their own perspectives. As Holton et al. (1994: 52) show, most research into Australian immigration is undertaken from the perspective of Australians rather than that of the migrants or refugees. The research also focuses on the lives of immigrants and refugees in Australia and neglects their life experiences/circumstances prior to their arrival in Australia, which I would claim significantly influence their lives and their resettlement and integration abilities in Australia.

Furthermore, Lohrentz's (2004) survey of the literature of the immigration of refugees from Northeast Africa (Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali and Sudanese) who resettled in USA and Canada since 1970s reveals that most studies there concentrate on the resettlement and adjustment needs of these refugees, but do not explore the relationships between the refugees and their host communities and how these refugees renegotiate their identities in the new societies. This implies that the literature contributes little to our understanding of the complexities of the relationships between resettled refugees and those who host them, or of how those relationships in turn affect their adjustment or the resettlement and integration processes, and shape or reconstruct their identities as they rebuild their lives in the new environment.

The literature on immigrant and refugee resettlement in Australia, USA, Canada and other western countries indicates that the Southern Sudanese refugees who resettled in Australia have generally received less academic attention than those who resettled in USA and Canada. This thesis attempts to bridge this gap. This is done by relying on an ethnographic approach (methodology and techniques) in order to provide an in-depth



understanding of the resettlement experiences of the Southern Sudanese and to show how their experiences of resettlement reshape their notions of home, place and identity in the context of Australia. To better understand these, I focus on their relationships and interactions with Australians and with fellow Southern Sudanese and show how these affect the processes of resettlement and integration in Australia. As such, this thesis adds anthropological knowledge to the limited literature on the ethnography of the resettlement experiences and integration of refugees from unfamiliar cultural, social and economic backgrounds into societies which are ethnically and racially very distinct from that of their own.

There are studies, including those by Ager (1999), Harrell-Bond (1999) and Lewins and Ly (1985), which have been carried out on refugees and other forced migrants. However, most of these studies concern issues such as the uprooting of refugees, flight and camp experiences, repatriation, resettlement, adjustment, violence and torture, post traumatic disorders, and mental health. In this thesis I endeavour to explore and understand resettlement and integration from the perspective of their complex connections to sets of social, cultural and economic activities that transcend the Sudanese community groups in Australia and affect the Australian society at large. These provide a context and a basis on which I can understand whether my informants feel more attached to Australia, or to their country of origin, and how these feelings have developed. Studies by Barnes (2001) and Steven (1997) of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in Australia are relevant here because they highlight how the Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in Australia feel attached to the country. Drawing on these studies, I will accentuate the factors that influenced my informants' feelings of attachment to Australian society, or those which worked against such an attachment but instead favoured attachment to their country of origin.

Another relevant study to draw on here is DIMIA's (2002) longitudinal survey between 1993/4 and 1999/2000 which assessed the experiences of recent migrants in Australia and the role played by Australian migrant services. This study shows how changes in the overall state of the economy and in government policy have had a substantial effect on the early integration of migrants in Australia. However, there is a problem with this survey because it generally treats refugees like migrants, without taking into account the refugees' diverse experiences, backgrounds and the circumstances that made them refugees and which resulted to their resettlement in Australia. This generalisation probably resulted from the fact that refugees to Australia are accorded permanent residence status like other migrants. There are few separate statistics available on refugees as a particular category of migrants (Holton, et al. 1994: 194) and, due to this, very little is known about the resettlement experiences of refugees as a separate group.

It is often the case that the resettlement of refugees in a society can generate opposition from the host population because the new arrivals are seen as a threat to the security, jobs, and identity of the hosts, and as sources of disease and criminal behaviour. While these are some of the arguments advanced against the resettlement of refugees and migrants, it appears that most members of a host society, and some policy makers who argue against the resettlement of refugees in their midst, are not well-informed about the conditions and the plight of their refugee newcomers.

Unlike in the past where Australia had only accepted migrants and refugees from a limited and restricted list of countries, Australia currently resettles migrants and refugees from all over the globe and has become one of the principle refugee and migrant resettling countries. Australia's most recent arrivals are from Africa, including the Southern Sudanese who arrived as a result of wars and political and social upheaval that has plagued Sudan for decades. But although the Southern Sudanese have become

visible in Australian society, there has been very limited anthropological scholarship which has examined their resettlement and integration experiences in Australia.

The Southern Sudanese face different resettlement and integration hurdles from those of other migrants and refugees in Australia due to their different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Although the same can be said of the other refugees and migrants who have resettled in Australia, I would like to reiterate that the Southern Sudanese have undergone one of the longest wars in the world. Until February 2005, the Southern Sudanese have suffered and endured a brutal war, and social and economic upheavals for thirty-nine years out of the fifty years since Sudan became a sovereign state in January 1955. Since 1995 there has been only ten years of relative peace in Southern Sudan; for most of those years Southern Sudan was consumed in wars against Northern Sudanese domination and their forceful Islamic and Arabisation policies directed against the people of Southern Sudan. Because the war had not permitted most of them to enroll in any form of formal education, many Southern Sudanese arrived in Australia without the literacy and numeracy skills so essential for living in urban settings. Most had spent years in refugee camps with very limited, if any, access to opportunities that would have enhanced their life skills. In addition, their different cultural, socio-economic and civic orientations would have exacerbated the resettlement challenges they encountered in Australia.

I have asserted that an interdisciplinary approach is needed in order to understand better how the Southern Sudanese make sense of their experiences of resettlement in Australia. The thesis shows those factors that either favour or work against my informants' identification with Australia and their sense of belonging and attachment to Australian Society.

I have also claimed that the classic explanation of migration using ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors does not provide adequate explanations of the circumstances that uproot refugees from their homes and the subsequent experiences that follow the uprooting, displacement and resettlement because it does not address fully the combination of factors that mark refugees as a distinctly different category of migrants. My position here is that voluntary migrant movements, unlike the involuntary movements of refugees, pivot around the assumption that there are economic benefits in the countries of destination which outweigh those in the countries of departure/origin.

The ‘pull and push’ theory generally depicts migration as a desire to escape poverty or low socio-economic status in the countries of origin; it is more often than not a move by migrants from a relatively economically depressed environment to relatively affluent societies or countries. Although I do not deny that the reasons which forced refugees to flee their countries are complex and include economic hardships because war, persecution and so forth make their lives difficult, I advocate here that security and/or safety are the core reasons forcing refugees to flee from their home countries. Movement of voluntary migrants is based on calculated considerations of the economic, material or symbolic benefits to be gained, and is also based on a consideration of all relevant information about the countries of destinations. In contrast, refugees often do not have this luxury when they are being forced to abandon their home countries. Their movements result from flight due to potentially precarious or life threatening situations at home, and hence they are unable to remain at home or return home from countries of asylum because the danger to their lives still remains in the home countries. As a result, when situations at home do not permit them to return, it is then that they will eventually seek resettlement elsewhere (Kunz 1973: 145). Arguably, the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors obscure these differences. In short, refugee movement often arises from violence and

persecution sponsored by the state apparatus, or situations that result in civil strikes, war and the fact that the state is unable to offer protection to its citizens. The ‘push’ and ‘pull’ theory fails to account for these factors and hence to mark refugees as distinct categories of migrants within the migration phenomenon.

In this chapter I have offered a brief historical account of migration to Australia and how Australian immigration policies have changed over time from the White Australia Policy to its demise and the acceptance of migrants and refugees from all over the globe. I have also shown that in the classic migration countries of Australia, Canada and the USA, the policy of assimilation of refugees and migrants has waned in favour of policies which emphasise the importance of integration.

In the next Chapter I will describe my field sites and how I collected my data for this thesis. I will show where my informants were located and how they were selected to participate in this research. I will also reflect on my position as an insider researcher and the challenges I encountered during the fieldwork.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FIELD SITES AND FIELDWORK

#### Introduction

In Chapter One I outlined the structure of my thesis and the theoretical perspectives that inform the discussion of my thesis themes in each chapter. I also highlighted the central questions of the thesis and the potential contributions of the thesis to Anthropology, and especially to the subfield of forced migrations, refugee studies and refugee settlement.

This chapter provides an ethnographic description of the field sites and explains the methods and techniques I used to conduct and carry out my fieldwork among my informants - the Southern Sudanese refugees who resettled in Australia when I was volunteering with the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA) and the Australian Refugee Association (ARA). These organisations deliver the bulk of the settlement services to refugees and migrants in South Australia, including the Southern Sudanese. Before commencing my fieldwork in MRCSA and ARA, I made preliminary contacts with relevant authorities in these organisations regarding my intention to do voluntary work and part of my fieldwork in their organisations, and also to seek their support in permitting me to interview some of their staff who deliver settlement support services to Southern Sudanese. However, I would like to state here that the participation of the staff was negotiated on the basis that whatever they said would be taken to represent their own views and opinions and not those of their respective organisations.

Before I began my fieldwork in early January 2006, I had to be cleared of any criminal record by the police; this was a policy of those organisations regarding anyone doing

voluntary work with them. That was because my role as a volunteer would require me to visit and assist clients in their residences and hence it was deemed important to check volunteers for any criminal wrong doing. This is one of the ways of protecting their clients.

This chapter shows how and where I conducted in-depth interviews (unstructured and structured) and undertook Participant Observation on Southern Sudanese informants in several social settings, including within families and other socio-cultural and religious activities. In addition to the Southern Sudanese, I also interviewed staff of MRCSA and ARA and observed them while they delivered settlement services to Southern Sudanese. I spent about fourteen months in the field; I interviewed and observed my Southern Sudanese informants and the staff members of the two organisations from late January 2006 to April 2007. The languages I used during the interviews were the English, Juba Arabic, Bari, and Kuku.

This chapter also describes a range of available settlement services delivered by the MRCSA and ARA, which are the main support organisations or service providers delivering settlement services in South Australia to refugees and migrants. I carried out voluntary work and part of my fieldwork at MRCSA and ARA because they are the settlement support organisations most frequently visited by Southern Sudanese refugees.

## **Methodology**

The ethnographic methods used for gathering the data for this thesis are mostly in-depth interviews and Participant Observations. I obtained data through long hours of Participant Observation which I spent in the fields with different informants

individually or as family and groups, interacting and networking in various social activities and sites.

Since the work by Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anthropology has distinguished itself from the other social science disciplines by its use of and emphasis on Participant Observation, in-depth examination of social contexts, and the importance of the length of time researchers embedded themselves in the field. Ever since, ethnography has been the primary method used in anthropology, and the texts produced from ethnographic work have resulted into anthropology. Hence, I follow this useful and rich tradition and I contend that this is where my accountability as a researcher in this thesis lies.

### **In-depth Structured and Unstructured Interviews**

In collecting my research data, I used in-depth face-to-face structured and unstructured interviews. This provided me with the opportunity to learn and write down in detail responses from my informants in a narrative way: this included backgrounds or histories, experiences of war, plight, flight, and life in exile in camps and in displacement within Sudan. It also enabled informants to narrate their current experiences of the life of resettlement in Australia as well as their views and perceptions of the new environment. I contacted one informant at a time. The nature of the interview took the form of discussions/conversations; I could guide and control the discussions/conversation while at the same time I could be flexible to allow leads to other relevant issues or topics to come up during the discussions. I would then follow up any relevant leads. The in-depth interviews were important and permitted questions exploring complex interpersonal issues including wife-husband, parent-child relations, gender role reversal and so forth. This method offered me better rapport with an



interviewee, and also provided interpersonal harmony and compatibility between my informants and myself during the period of the fieldwork. It also enabled me to adopt and modify questions and the wordings of the questions and so clarify questions not well understood by my informants. Thus, unlike using questionnaires, in-depth interviews permitted informants to tell their stories in ways that were meaningful to them.

### **Participant Observation**

I also used Participant Observation as a tool of data collection during visits to informants in their homes and at various social events and activities in different sites. Participant Observation allows me to understand my informants' experiences, actions and behaviours in relatively natural settings (homes and social events) as opposed to interviews settings. Those settings offered relatively unaffected views of my informants' behaviour and actions, which may otherwise not have been present in an interview environment. In ethnographic literature, it is acknowledged that informants' are likely to withhold information or suppress certain behaviour when asked about them in an interview environment for reasons better known, or even unknown, to them. Hence, since my use of ethnography was to learn and describe aspects of my informants' ways of lives, it was of significant importance for me to take part in Participant Observation in order to learn from them by participating and observing what they did and to ask them questions later. Operating within the context enabled me to observe and listen to what informants do and say and that notably enriched my ethnography. Participating in the social activities of my informants was important in that it enabled me to learn from informants' experiences of their daily lives. As O'Reilly (2005: 10 & 84) shows, it is only by talking and listening to the researched in context

that researchers can get informants to describe how they think and feel about certain issues.

My choice of Participant Observation was driven by the fact that asking informants to talk about their personal life experiences is likely to yield different data from that generated through interviews. Participant Observation also allows me to capture actions or behaviours that could otherwise not be exhibited in interview settings. It also stimulates relations between my informants and me and creates a sense of commonality/familiarity constructed around my being with them and as a Southern Sudanese. Such a construction was so important in the field because it prevented them from seeing me as a stranger in their community. The importance of Participant Observation in collecting data for this thesis is that it situated me in the lives of my informants, but at the same time allowed me to maintain a social distance from my informants during the time I spent with them observing and noting down data.

This method resulted in a detailed collection of data because it permitted me to observe most aspects of my informants' lives including body gestures (eye gaze, facial and hand expressions, and so on). Using only non-participant observation methods may give way to limited insight into the nature of the social contexts or activities being studied. My participating in the activities of my informants, while observing them at the same time, enhanced my comprehension of how they act and behave when they are in group vis-à-vis when they are not, and also as individuals when they are in the confines of their home environments. However, I am also aware that Participant Observation may not capture everything that goes on and to complement it, I have taken some photographs and short video clips to capture the detail of certain behaviours and activities that would otherwise be difficult to interpret during observation on site in the time available.

During my fieldwork I found Participant Observation enriching in that it permitted me to modify questions that I would ask later on during in-depth interviews. Participation in an activity itself made me become more familiar to informants and that in turn made them more willing to talk about their experiences of life and to behave relatively characteristically. This supports Gold's (1997) assumption that when a researchers' presence in social settings becomes more familiar to participants as time passes, informants are less likely to behave uncharacteristically. Gold attributes this to face-to-face relationships between researchers and informants because the researchers would demonstrate to informants that they are there to learn about their life experiences without making any judgment on them. In my case, participation in activities together with my informants also helped both my informants and me to develop and maintain positive relationships, which in turn gave way to openness and truthfulness in discussing the themes of my research and to generate the data I need.

### **The Field Sites**

According to Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 37), a field is where anthropologists go in order to capture and understand different forms of knowledge within the field from different social (cultural) and political settings and to collect the data necessary to produce ethnography. Arguably the methods and techniques used in the field vary according to the situations in the field and the social, cultural or political context in which the field is situated.

In this study, I relied mainly on the ethnographic methods of Participant Observation and in-depth structured and unstructured interviews. Interviews and Participant Observation were conducted within the informants' everyday life activities in homes, at social events, or while I assisted informants in shopping and in searching and locating

rental property (accommodation). Participant Observation was used to complement the in-depth structured and unstructured interviews. It was through these methods that I collected the qualitative and some quantitative ethnographic data for this thesis.

The targeted informants are Southern Sudanese refugees who have been resettled in South Australia through Australian Government Humanitarian and Refugee Program in recent years. In addition some staff members of support organisations delivering settlement services to them were also targeted. The methodology and techniques I used were adapted to suit the conditions and the social milieu of the field and the sites. I spent separately three months with MRCSA from January 2006 to April 2006 and another three months with ARA from March 2006 to June 2006 respectively. The remaining months of my fourteen months of fieldwork period were spent doing fieldwork among the Southern Sudanese in visiting them in their families, attending and participating with them in their social events, and assisting some in shopping and in searching private rental property.

While I was volunteering at MRCSA and ARA, I had two roles to play: one was my role as their volunteer and the other was as a researcher doing Participant Observation on both Southern Sudanese who come to receive settlement services and some staff in these organisations and to interview them as well. In playing these two roles I was often conscious of the need to draw a line between the two regarding what information those organisations regarded as confidential and what was not. It is essential to note here that the main reasons why I preferred to be in those organisations were to make myself known to those Southern Sudanese who I did not know before, to experience for myself what is it like to service refugees, and to observe the interactions that were going on during the provision and reception of those services between the staff and the Southern Sudanese.

I would like to indicate here that the contacts and home visitations for the purpose of this research were organised and carried out after I had left volunteering. This was in order to eliminate or minimise power relations that were likely to develop between those I delivered services to in those organisations and me. When I visited former recipients of my services later on as potential informants to request their willingness to support me by participating in the research, I had to inform them that I was no longer volunteering in those organisations as I had to leave in order to concentrate fully on conducting my fieldwork. This was to eliminate any form of a dependency relation between them as recipients of the services that I had provided and me as their provider.

My voluntary work with MRCSA and ARA offered me the opportunity to interact with both the Southern Sudanese and their staff. It was through this that I knew many Southern Sudanese whom I had never met before, and some of them later became my informants. The voluntary work proved to be essential to establish trust, rapport and good relationships with both my Southern Sudanese informants and the staff. My duties in those organisations involved the provision of practical support to Southern Sudanese clients by assisting them to find affordable rental accommodation, assessing their needs, recommending limited financial support in the form of vouchers to enable them pay part of their phone, electricity or gas bills, and either arranging appointments for them with other service organisations or making referrals to relevant service providers that have services which are not available at MRCSA and ARA. I also assisted Southern Sudanese people to complete their forms or applications (medical, Centrelink, tenancy applications or contracts, housing, educational), and provided various information as required. On other occasions, a staff member and I delivered used furniture and other essential household goods to clients in their residences.

My participation in those activities helped me to build good relationships and trust with my potential informants and created conducive atmosphere in which I could later conduct interviews and carry out Participant Observation. Participant Observation was carried out to complement or reinforce in-depth interviews and to gain from informants a better understanding of how the services are administered and delivered, and what their views were regarding the services being delivered to them as well as how they thought the services they received had impacted on their resettlement in Australia. In addition to MRSA, ARA and my informants' homes, I also followed some of my informants to worship services such as church, funeral and burial ceremonies, as well as other social and cultural events such as meetings organised by the Sudanese Community Association of South Australia, community welcoming parties for new arrivals (see figures next page), and traditional marriage ceremonies. These were important field sites for me as they are sites and activities where the Southern Sudanese interact socially with Australians as well as with other Sudanese.

**Figure 1: Traditional welcoming party/celebration for newly arrived members of community from refugee camps in Kenya and Uganda (Photo by Author, August 2006)**

NOTE:  
This figure is included on page 47  
of the print copy of the thesis held in  
the University of Adelaide Library.

Another reason why I chose to carry out part of my fieldwork at the MRCSA and ARA is because they are the two settlement organisations best known to the Southern Sudanese refugees resettled in South Australia. This is because almost every Southern Sudanese resettled here has previously received household goods and other services from ARA and MRCSA. For example they have been received at the airport on their arrival, placed into temporary accommodation, and have had their basic resettlement needs assessed and met by MRCSA staff and ARA. As a result, these are the organisations most frequently visited by my informants in their search for services to enhance their resettlement. Consequently, these organisations are good sites to engage in an ethnographical study of Southern Sudanese. However, most importantly these organisations were willing to accept me to do voluntary work with them, and the management and the staff of these organisations fully supported me during my volunteering and fieldwork.

### **The Sudanese Community Association of South Australia Branch Inc**

At the time of my fieldwork, the office of the Sudanese Community Association of South Australia was at the time of my fieldwork located at 16 King Street in the city of Prospect and it was one of my ethnographic sites. The Association has been regarded by the Sudanese in general and the Southern Sudanese in particular as their unifying symbol in South Australia, and it comprises diverse ethnic groupings from Sudan. It is worth noting that most of the Sudanese refugees in South Australia consist mostly of ethnic groups from Southern Sudan. Like many other communities and cultural associations/organisations deemed to represent the whole, the Sudanese Community Association is constantly struggling to find a common ground among its diverse ethnic groups. But despite this, the association is viewed as the voice of the people of Sudan in South Australia and a place to go to and discuss issues pertaining to Sudanese refugees

resettled in South Australia as well as to discuss issues of concern back in Sudan. However, its strength and effectiveness is impeded by its lack of resources and of effective personnel to manage it because most of its elected office bearers are volunteers and are doing other work to earn a living. Hence it has tended to be merely a talking shop for issues facing its members, be they political, social, cultural or economic problems from within or outside of the organisation. This is evident from the fact that on several occasions during my fieldwork it had urgently called several meetings to discuss, find or suggest solutions to some of the issues facing the community. However, not any of these meetings and the suggested solutions provided any tangible outcomes to address the issues of concern. But the association had a form of moral authority over its members. For example, it has been instrumental in galvanising financial, moral and other resources whenever death struck any of its members. Whenever this occurs, it calls an urgent meeting of its various ethnic group members and requests each community to contribute money to the family of the deceased. In addition to this, most members willingly take food and drinks to the family.

The association also encourages its members to visit the bereaved family to lend their moral and physical support. The financial contributions made by members are used towards meeting the cost of the funeral, burial, electric/gas and telephone bills and other related expenses incurred during the time of grieving. The food and drinks are shared by those who come to the family to demonstrate their sympathy, support and solidarity. Hence, on these issues the Association has successfully counted on the support of its members and this enables many families who have lost their dear ones to cover a proportion of the expenses incurred by the death. These actions socially and psychologically assist grieving families to cope with the loss of their family members.



## **Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA)**

As I have indicated earlier, the MRCSA is one of the peak settlement service providers contracted and mainly funded by the Commonwealth Government to deliver on arrival general settlement services to diverse refugee and migrant groups from various countries arriving in South Australia. The Southern Sudanese are among the refugees receiving the wide range of settlement services and programs (visit <http://www.mrcsa.com.au> for detail) that the MRCSA delivers.

The MRCSA was established in 1979 as a community based and independent charitable organisation. Currently its head office is situated in a beautiful heritage listed building at 59 King William Street in the city of Adelaide. It has outreach offices and community based facilities in the Adelaide metropolitan area and in regional South Australia to cater for the needs and the changing patterns of settlement locations of the newly arrived refugees and migrants. Amongst its roles, the MRCSA receives refugees at the airport, takes them to on-arrival accommodation, and assesses their settlement needs to ensure that they have access to a set of available services. It also refers clients to other organisations for services which it does not deliver.

Additionally, the MRCSA organises community volunteers to provide interpreter services, to orient new arrivals to the city environment including shopping centres, and to take the new arrivals to schools and English learning centres to register for studies. As part of orientation to urban modern life, the volunteers and the staff often teach new arrivals who have not used and operated modern appliances and amenities before such as microwave ovens, gas/electric cookers and washing machines how to use and operate them. Staff and volunteers also assist them to open bank accounts and teach them how to use the ATM machines. The MRCSA also offers free migration advice and organises

various information sessions to inform new arrivals about life in Australia, the available settlement services, and how to access them.

It is worth noting that the MRCSA employs people from diverse refugee and migrant backgrounds; in fact, the multicultural nature of its employees makes it a preferred and favoured settlement organisation. This is attested by the crowding of refugees, mainly from Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, South-eastern and Eastern European countries, in front of its main office and in the reception area or in interview rooms during working days either waiting to be serviced, or to meet friends who are being serviced. Thus, during my period of voluntary work at the MRCSA, one of the staff told me that the MRCSA is a ‘multicultural village’ because it employs its staff from several newly arrived and emerging refugee and migrant communities in South Australia.

### **Australia Refugee Association (ARA)**

ARA’s office was located at the time of my fieldwork at 304 Henley Beach Road at Underdale, a suburb in western metropolitan Adelaide. Like the MRCSA, its main responsibilities include the provision of diverse settlement services and programs that support and facilitate the settlement of refugees, including the Southern Sudanese, and migrants arriving in South Australia from different countries (for more detail visit <http://www.ausref.net>). The various settlement support services it provides prepare refugees and migrants to re-establish themselves in Australian society with relative ease. ARA also undertakes the assessment of refugee and migrant families or individuals and makes referrals to other organisations for services it does not offer. Additionally, it provides free access to computers, printers and internet services. It is important to note here that during my voluntary work, I have observed that this particular service has daily drawn several Southern Sudanese young people to the organisation to use its

offerings. ARA also manages an open door centre (help desk) where it receives donations from its friends from the wider Australian community. These donations, which include computers, washing machines, fridges, kitchen utensils, furniture, clothes and other essentials, are then given out by ARA to refugees and migrants who come to the centre to seek any of them. Upon the assessment of each individual or family's needs, ARA then arranges free delivery of the items by one of its staff and or volunteers to the residence of its needy clients. The centre also provides very limited financial assistance to help refugees pay part of their telephone, electricity or gas bills, or to meet any minimal financial emergencies.

Other services being delivered by ARA include the provision of limited scholarships to refugees to enable them pay for basic scholastic materials. It also offers advocacy and migration advice to refugees, as well as assisting them to negotiate payable interest free travel loans from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The loans enable them to pay for air travel costs of their family members and friends whom they have sponsored to join them once their visas to Australia have been granted. Most of my informants have benefited significantly from this service.

Between 2004 and 2008 ARA had created and maintained two positions for employing two Sudanese settlement officers to deliver various settlement services to their fellow Sudanese refugees in culturally appropriate ways. These settlement officers also easily link newly arrived members to the general Sudanese community and to their respective ethnic communities to enhance and foster their cultural traditions and to reduce incidents of social and cultural isolation. The settlement officers also link members of the general Sudanese community to ARA and to other settlement support organisations and government institutions so that they can access a variety of settlement services that are not available in ARA.

## **Field Activities**

During my fieldwork, the principal methods of my data collection were in-depth structured and unstructured interviews, discussion of research themes and Participant Observation. These methodologies enabled me to grasp some of the daily life experiences and actions that my informants constructed and re-constructed in the various social interactions in a variety of social activities and settings in which they were engaged. I stress here that Participant Observation has essentially led me to be involved in some of the activities in the lives of my informants. By placing myself in those social settings and contexts, I was able to observe, comprehend and record as data in my note book the actions and experiences of my informants. Being in the context of those activities permitted informants to talk easily about how they experience and think about their resettlement in Australia. It also enabled me to ascertain whether my informants do what they say they do or not (see O'reilly 2005: 10).

At MRCSA and ARA, I carried out the following activities: assisting the case-management of clients, assessing their needs, assisting them to search for affordable housing in the internet and in newspapers in suburbs which they prefer, completing application forms for rental accommodation and explaining the terms of tenancy contracts. I assisted them to complete other forms including medical and driver's learner forms, and applications for bank loans. I also assisted some clients to search for jobs on the internet and in newspapers, to write résumés and cover letters, and to interpret English language into Juba Arabic, Kuku, Bari and vice versa for those who were unfamiliar with the English language. In addition to the above services, I assisted clients to negotiate payment of telephone, electricity or gas bills by phone. I similarly provided information in person or over the phone to clients about available settlement services and referred clients to other settlement services.

Due to the multiplicities of my field sites and as an ethnographer, I had to move amongst several locations and contexts in order to collect adequate data for my thesis. I embedded myself fully in the social activities and practices being undertaken by my informants either within or outside of their homes. In those contexts I was able to record as data my informants' current experiences of life in their new society. However, in doing so I do not claim to have studied, observed and recorded in totality every aspect of the activities and practices relevant to my informants' resettlement experiences of life in Australia, but I have attempted to do as much as I could given the ethnographic tools, knowledge and techniques I have gained during my years of training as an anthropologist.

### **Home Visitations, Interviews and Participant Observations**

Home visits were essential to my fieldwork. The visits were arranged according to the time and days in a week that suited my informants. Saturday and Sunday afternoon and evenings were the most preferred time, but any day of the week between 6pm and 9pm was also suitable. This is because during daytime and on week days many Southern Sudanese are either studying or working and could not be found at home during the morning or afternoon. Thus most observations were conducted in homes during weekends between 6pm and 9pm. This has yielded useful data because during this time span, all or most family members were around and I could observe either covertly or overtly significant aspects of their actions and behaviours which were relevant to the themes which this thesis explores. However, I was also aware of the fact that unequal power relationships exist in households and they are likely to make some informants withhold information regarding their relationships when in a company of other members of the household, especially when discussing relationships between spouses and between parents and children when all are present. To overcome this, I negotiated

additional and separate interview schedules with potential individual informants in the household at time spans she/he saw fit. Also in some other times when situations allowed, I have to discuss issues such as husband-wife relations, performance of domestic chores, baby sitting (childcare) and parent-children relations when driving either of the spouses to shopping, to view rental properties the family wish to rent or when I drive them to pickup children from schools or/and childcare facilities and they were not in the company of other family members. These have equally yielded useful data which should have been otherwise withheld because other family members were around whom informants would not like them to listen to what they were telling me about their relationships. In such environments where they were only with me, I found that they were willing to open up and talk about their relations with relative ease.

Participant Observation enabled me to grasp who is doing what, how and why, and later on I followed up these observations with interviews or with discussion with informants. It is worth noting that intense family activities and interactions occur during the above cited span of time where most, if not all, family members were around. It is in these particular times and social contexts that I could observe and hand record data on how informants share food and tea/coffee, watch TV, listen to radios or African traditional or church music, and watch Nigerian films. I could observe and hear what they discuss and why, who does what, why, how and when? In the midst of all this, I had the opportunity to observe and note relationships between husband and wife and parent and children, and aspects of their behaviour and interactions that go with these relations and activities. It was also during home visits that I conducted structured and unstructured interviews and discussions on my research questions with informants, and arranged for the next interviews. Additionally, during home visitations I assisted some informants on

request by driving them in my car to shopping centres, or to locate and inspect rental accommodation and assist them to complete tenancy applications.

While driving informants to shopping centres or to view rental accommodations, I often discussed with them the themes of my thesis and I found that informants would discuss my research questions with greater ease while they were in the car than if I were to discuss the same topics with them in their houses. I also found that while being driven in a car, married informants were more likely to open up and talk in depth about their family relationships, how they perform certain domestic gendered chores but not others and why, their roles and attitudes towards role reversal, as well as how they manage and control family income, than if the interviews or discussions were conducted in the house in the presence of the other spouse or other relatives. This is because each one would not want the other to hear what he/she says about the other. The car environment tends to offer seclusion from being overheard by any one of the family. However, even if they could easily open up in their homes, interviews or discussions in homes were constantly interrupted by phone calls, or children coming to their dads or mums to solicit attention regarding some of their concerns. Home interviews could also be distracted by other family members and visitors, friends or relatives who just walked in without prior notice, a thing regarded as normal in my informants' cultures.

### **Social Events**

At some point in my fieldwork, I attended social activities such as birthdays, Christmas parties (see figure next page) or welcoming parties for newly arrived members of the different Southern Sudanese ethnic groups from refugee camps in Africa.

**Figures 2: The Azande Community and Friends Celebrating Christmas in a Traditional Way in Adelaide South Australia <sup>1</sup> (Photo by Author, 28 December 2006).**

NOTE:

This figure is included on page 57 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

I also attended traditional marriage ceremonies, traditional dances, funerals and burial ceremonies, and prayers for community members who had died here or of kin who had died in Sudan or in refugee camps in Africa. The kin of the deceased organise funeral prayers for the lost soul of their dead relatives. With my informants' permission, I followed them to social events including meetings organised by the Sudanese community association, and to information sessions with service providers to observe and record what they did in those social events. In these situations I attempted to record most of what I considered as relevant data for my thesis. By participating in or attending those social activities in which my informants were involved, I managed to establish close relationships, and created trust and rapport with my informants which were crucial for getting reliable and valid data (see Gold 1997).

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<sup>1</sup> This Christmas celebration took place on 28 December 2006 instead of 25 December 2006 because the Azande did not find a hall to hire on the Christmas day.



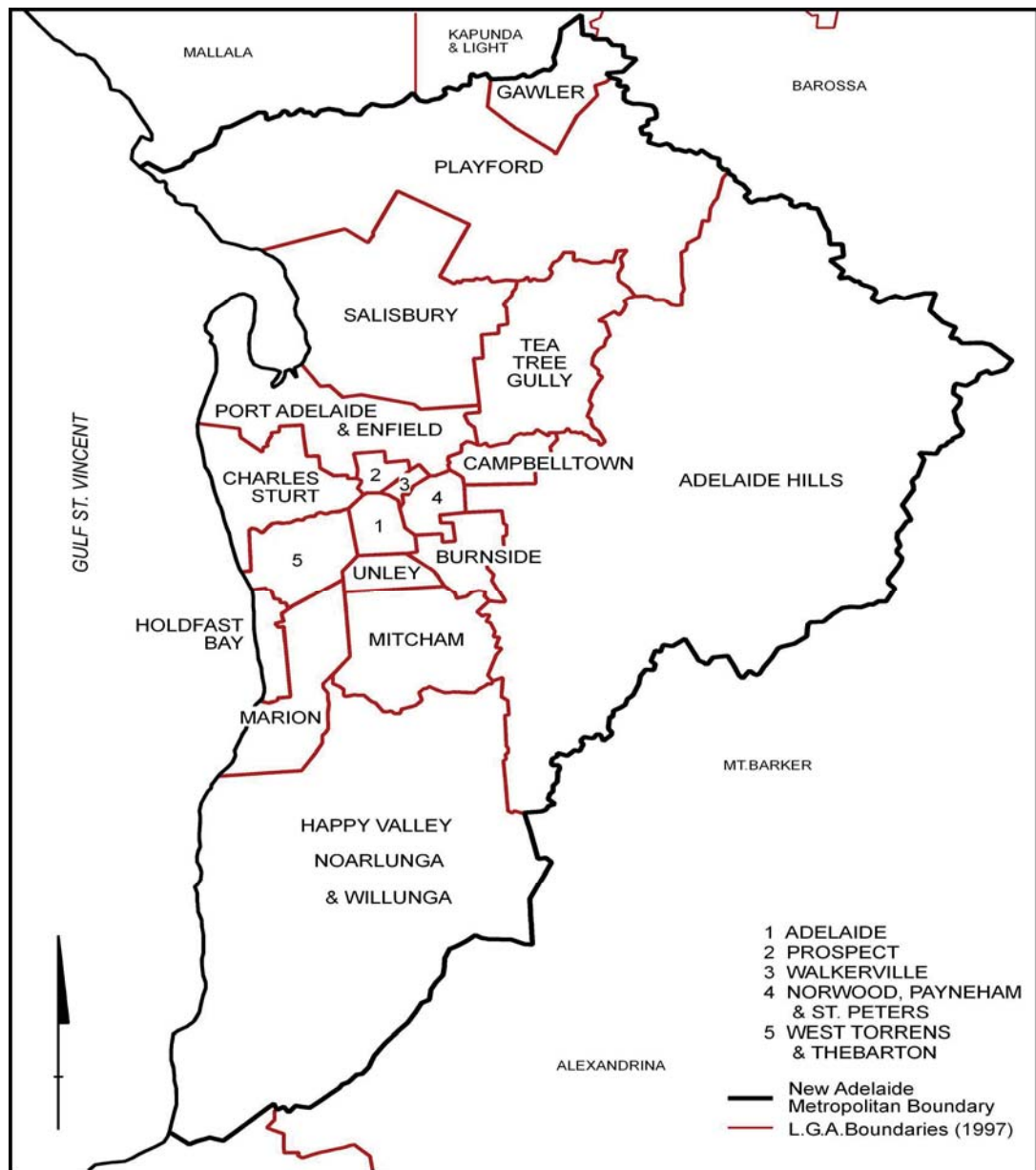
## **Locating the Informants, Gaining Access and Trust**

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics census for 2006, there are about 1586 Sudanese resettled in South Australia who arrived between 1991 and 2006 (Space Time Research Pty Ltd 2007). Most Sudanese in South Australia live in the western, northern and north eastern suburbs in the Local Government Areas of Port Adelaide Enfield, Charles Sturt, West Torrens, Campbell Town, Salisbury, Tea Tree Gully, Marion, Norwood, Payneham and St. Peters, Mitcham and Prospect (refer to the map next page). A few others are scattered among the city council areas within the Adelaide metropolitan area.

The majority of the Southern Sudanese refugees resettled in South Australia live in private rental housing, but a few live in houses offered by the Housing Trust of South Australia (now Housing SA) and Lutheran community housing. It is however worth noting that given the current state of resettlement of refugees from Sudan, fewer refugees have arrived between 2006 and 2008 as the government decided to reduce the intake of Africans, and particularly Sudanese refugees because of their alleged “inabilities” to integrate into Australian society (see pages 170 - 172).

### Figure 3: Map of Metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia

Map drawn by Christine Crothers (2008), Department of Geographical and Environmental Studies University of Adelaide on the request of the author.



During my fieldwork, I identified some of my informants while volunteering with MRCSA and ARA, and others in meetings organised by the Sudanese Community Association as well as in various social events organised by separate Southern Sudanese ethnic groups. When I approached a Southern Sudanese person, I explained to him/her my research topic and the processes involved. I then asked his/her willingness to participate in the research by becoming an informant. If she/he agreed to participate, a

meeting was then arranged at a time that was suitable to the person. Often I used my first arranged meeting/contact with informants as an opportunity to explain again in detail my research topic and interest, issues of confidentiality and informed consent, and the nature of the information sheet, and I would reaffirm my request for their willingness to participate in the research. That was also an opportunity to start building a relationship favourable to the establishment of trust and good rapport, as these act as foundations on which Participant Observation and in-depth structured and unstructured interviews are built.

In the second meeting I always checked once again if the person was still willing to participate before asking the person to sign two informed consent forms; after the person has signed, I then signed both forms and gave one to the person to keep. It is at this time that I started to interview and to observe my informants should the situation and time allow; if not, another meeting was arranged. Often I had to follow up any arranged interview or meeting with phone calls a day or two before the visit to confirm that the informant would be available. Often the interviews and some observations took place in informants' houses.

Although both my informants and I are Southern Sudanese, the issue of trust is paramount in my process of collecting the data. In researching refugees and forced migrants, the notion of "trust" is problematic because the situations that produced refugees and forced migrants are clouded by a lack of trust caused by a sense of betrayal by others, including their own kin (Voutira and Harrell-Bond in Daniel and Knudsen 1995: 207-224; Schwartz 1997; McGovern 1998; Geuijen 1997, and Harrell-Bond & Voutira 1992). Their refugee experiences have made it harder for refugees to ascertain who is trustworthy and who is not. On the issue of trust, Bisharat (1997: 664) highlights how trust among refugees can be shattered by systemic violence against them, and the

result is an installed persistent mistrust of others, even when conditions that foster the distrust no longer prevail. Hence, the openness between researchers and researched necessary to collect ethnographic data lies at the centre of ethnography.

As an ethnographer in the field I often adopt a collector's attitude to information by noting observations, hand recording interviews, and listening to information being conveyed as well as overhearing remarks being made while in the field. I decided to leave the fieldwork when I felt that I had enough data to make sense of what I had noted, listened to and observed, as well as having established that I had exhausted the information relevant to my research themes.

### **Selecting Informants**

Informants are selected because of their availability and willingness to participate in the research, and their being people who define themselves as refugees from Southern Sudan. Some informants were initially contacted and selected when I was doing voluntary work with the MRCSA and ARA and some were approached in meetings, social events, after prayers meetings in churches and through home visits. Other informants were located and selected through a snowball method. All interviews and observations were hand recorded. Short video clips and photographs of informants in social events were also taken by digital camera to augment the hand written interviews and observations. The target of this study is Southern Sudanese who have lived in Australia for a period of not less than six months. This is because I think that those who have lived for less than six months may have not grasped fully the real life situations and experiences in Australia within that period. I would like to state here that to protect the identity of all my informants, I have given them pseudo names and places instead of using the real names of informants and places.

I preferred informants aged 18 years and above. This is because I assumed that those who are under 18 years at the time of my fieldwork may not have a clear enough memory of their ways of life in Southern Sudan, their experiences of the war, or of their life in refugee camp in countries of refuge, and so would be unable to compare those experiences with their current life while resettling in Australia. Presumably, most of the Southern Sudanese under the age of 18 years were born in a refuge outside Sudan and hence the experiences of life in Sudan and of the war might have eluded them.

My being a Southern Sudanese and a refugee myself made access to informants a lot easier as they considered me to be one of them. That was a resource for me to draw on during home visitations. Also my ability to speak local Juba Arab was an indispensable asset as almost all Southern Sudanese do speak the local Juba Arabic which is widely spoken throughout Southern Sudan. This allowed me to engage easily in discussions with informants in Juba Arabic without needing any interpreter. Due to these factors I was able to meet with my informants in their homes and to assist them in shopping, search advertised rental accommodation and drive them to view advertised rental property.

### **Reflections on my Position as an Insider Researcher**

In the coming paragraphs I will discuss my experience of fieldwork as a refugee researching fellow refugees, as well as a Southern Sudanese researching fellow Southern Sudanese away from our original home. I will discuss my position as an insider researcher and how the dynamics of the relationships entailed in this position during the fieldwork process were negotiated through culturally bounded contexts. To understand the complexities imbued in doing fieldwork as an insider, and particularly as

a refugee researching fellow refugees, the literature tends to suggest that research methodologies and how they are applied in the field are two different things. In doing fieldwork on my own people, the Southern Sudanese in South Australia, I experienced both the advantages and the disadvantages of being an insider, and the challenges of balancing methodological knowledge with cultural knowledge and seeking to maximise both.

Although I was an insider, some informants still viewed me as an outsider. Each insider and outsider position carries with it certain advantages and disadvantages. This confirms recent discussions about insider and outsider positions which suggest that these positions are complex. These discussions recognise that the dividing line between insider and outsider researcher is not clearly marked (Anderson and Jack 1991; Chaudhry 1997 & Lee 1999). It is often perceived that when researchers and informants share the same culture, the field offers a conducive ground for gaining access, nurturing rapport, and asking culturally appropriate questions. I claim that my fieldwork, which was conducted away from my original home among my fellow Southern Sudanese, created mutually perceived homogeneity between my informants and me, an insider researcher, and also created a sense of community which further enhanced trust and openness throughout the research process. This is similar to Aguilar's (1981) suggestion that when a researcher researches within his/her own culture, there will exist an immediate perceptive bond of brotherhood/sisterhood within the field between the researcher and the researched. This was clearly reflected by most of my informants at the time of my fieldwork. My being a PhD student and a Southern Sudanese was perceived by most informants as likely to produce a result which would be rewarding to the Sudanese community here, and it was an incentive for many to participate in the research. They regarded my educational qualification (if achieved) as a community

achievement or asset, which produced a statement like “It is good that our own Southern Sudanese is studying at that level because when you finish your studies you would be able to help us”, which I often heard from my informants and other Southern Sudanese during my fieldwork. This was a kind of reward from members of the Southern Sudanese communities for my being involved in what they perceived as an action which could benefit the Southern Sudanese as a collective group.

It was interesting that the cultural value attached to my education shaped the context of my relationships with informants in the field, and thus my being a Southern Sudanese united me with the community whose members I researched. My fieldwork was also enriched by my ability to understand culturally bounded phrases, local proverbs, non-verbalised answers conveyed with hand gestures and facial expressions, because I did not need someone to interpret this communication for me. My background in the language (local Juba Arabic), which most of the Southern Sudanese and I commonly speak and understand well, made my informants feel free and to speak at ease. Additionally, having no interpreter was also an assurance for some informants that no other person would know what they had told me.

However, in the practical world of ethnographic fieldwork there is a good bit of slippage and fluidity between these insider/outsider positions. Although I am a Southern Sudanese, my position as an insider researcher was not free of challenges. Some informants perceived me to have undergone the same experiences as they had and were reluctant to be engaged in discussing their resettlement experiences. Some of the informants often said to me, “you are a refugee like us and you know everything ... you have the same experience as we do and so why do you ask us? What more do you want us to tell you?” Confronted by such questions, I had to explain to them that although we had faced similar conditions, it is very unlikely that we had experienced the same

conditions in the same ways because each one of us is different, and so would experience the same situations differently. It is that difference that I would like to know about.

There were also a few educated Southern Sudanese who envied my PhD candidature and the scholarship I had received. I overheard them whisper to themselves alleging that a member of my ethnic group who had been a long time employee of the University of Adelaide had negotiated my admission and scholarship award and that the person had intentionally hidden information about such an opportunity from them because they were of a different ethnic group. This focus on my ethnic group separated me from being a Southern Sudanese and set me apart from this small category of educated Southern Sudanese from other ethnic groups. As a result, some were unwilling to participate in the research. However, after I had explained to them how I got my admission and my scholarship, I encouraged them to apply and try their luck. Having understood that no person from my ethnic group working in the university had negotiated my admission and scholarship, most then willingly agreed to participate in the research.

### **Challenges Encountered in the Field**

In the next paragraphs I will highlight the challenges I encountered during the fieldwork. One of these challenges was that some informants saw the signing of the information consent form as taking away their anonymity and placing them physically in the research. This tended to create concern about the confidentiality of the information they provided. Informants thought that by signing the information consent form they had given away their right to withdraw from the study at any time. They perceived the information consent as only protecting me but not them. To overcome



this, I had to explain meticulously again and again why it was important for them to sign the information consent form and assure them that their signatures also protected them from anything that I would inappropriately do to them, or any behaviour from me in the course of my fieldwork that they might regard as endangering them because, should this happen, they would be able to call my supervisors or the secretary of the Human Research Ethics Committee and complain to them and appropriate action would be taken against me. To emphasise this point, I had to highlight the phone numbers of my supervisors and that of the Secretary of Human Research Ethics Committee on the information consent form. That assured them that above me there were authorities they could call upon at any time if they believed that I had done any thing which they regarded as inappropriate. That has worked out well and has eliminated their concerns about signing the information consent form.

During fieldwork there was a major issue concerning informants keeping arranged appointments; many arranged and agreed upon field visits or interviews had to be cancelled, postponed and renegotiated from time to time. On the other hand, some interviews had to be started very late after the agreed time because informants were either busy doing other chores in the family at the appointed time or were not available at home at that particular time. I had to be patient; without being always patient and willing to wait, I should have not been able to collect the data I needed for this thesis. However, the long waiting periods were overcome by the friendliness and welcoming attitudes of my informants when they welcomed me into their homes. During my home visits, any person in the house would welcome me, even if the person I was going to interview was not at home at that particular time. I was always made to feel at home; and once an interview or observation had commenced, they always yielded satisfactory results.

It is worth reiterating that as MRCSA and ARA deliver the bulk of the settlement services to Southern Sudanese and link them to mainstream services thus the two organisations were my essential contact points for informants and they have provided a context for me to connect easily with Southern Sudanese who often come for their services. Hence doing voluntary work in those organisations offered a process to engage with potential informants and of establishing trust between them and me.

The ethnographic methods and tools I employed during my fieldwork significantly contributed to my better understanding of the resettlement experiences of my informants through the relevant data I collected. My flexibility in the field and my adaptation of the methods and techniques to conditions in the field allowed other relevant issues to come up during the interviews and observations. The methods and techniques used also offered better rapport and gave me the ability to probe for more detailed information. Flexibility in the methods and techniques used enabled me to adopt, modify and clarify the wordings of the issues from which relevant data were sought and also allowed informants to tell me the required information in ways that were meaningful to them.

As indicated earlier, during the fieldwork, my position as a researcher and an insider was not challenge free although it has facilitated my accessibility, the establishment of rapport and my engagement with informants to discuss important issues in their experiences of war, life as refugees and their current life of resettlement in Australia.

In the coming Chapter I will briefly describe the people who collectively prefer to call themselves as 'Southern Sudanese'. I will also describe their historical backgrounds and specifically the decades of war and related conditions that had led to their massive forcefully displacement from their homeland to refugee camps in exile and consequent resettlement of some in Australia and in other countries. The Chapter also highlights my

informant's experiences of life in refugee camps or in exile in other countries and shows how those experiences collectively impacted on their resettlement and integration abilities in Australia.

### **How the Data were Analysed**

As indicated earlier, the data for this thesis were collected through ethnographic methods which resulted in large amounts of textual data (mainly qualitative data) derived from interviews, Participant Observational, field notes and to some extent photographs and video clips. Although it was difficult to conduct data analysis alongside data collection, I have at certain times attempted to do so when time allowed. This offers flexibility necessary to permit some research questions to be refined further and new avenues of inquiries to be expanded. That has helped shape the ongoing process of my data collection. It is worth noting that I have not used any computer packages to assist in the analysis of the data. After the collection, the data are explored inductively using rigorous and systematic content analysis to generate and identify analytical categories and to describe and explain social phenomena (actions) as they emerge from the data. In doing so I read and reread the data in order to identify themes, patterns and categories. This centred on particular incidents, types of observed behaviors and actions, phrases used, key issues, concepts and others in which the data can be examined and referenced to. This is done by drawing on the questions derived from the aims and objectives of the research as well as issues raised by informants themselves during the course of the fieldwork as well as experiences and views that recur throughout the data. The result of these is a detailed catalogue, which labels the data into manageable mass for subsequent retrieval and exploration.

Through this coherent and systematic approach, all the data significant to each category are identified, examined and compared with the rest of the relevant data so that analytical categories could be established. This is an inclusive process in which more related categories are put together to mirror as many of the nuances in the data as possible. Those categories were further refined and condensed by grouping related categories together (data rearranged according to appropriate part of the thematic category to which they related). This allows for the selection of key themes or categories through copying and pasting so that like or related themes are put together. This helps to map out the range of phenomena which provide explanations and interpretations that emerged from the data themselves for any findings.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN SUDAN: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE EXPERIENCES OF WAR AND DISPLACEMENT

#### Introduction

In Chapter Two I described my fieldwork, field sites and how I collected the data for this thesis. I also indicated where most of my informants - the Southern Sudanese -live in South Australia, how I selected them and what methods and techniques were used for collecting the data. In this chapter I will offer a brief description of the people who collectively call themselves “Southern Sudanese” or “Junubin”. To complement my fieldwork data, my perspective in this chapter has been informed by contemporary and classic ethnographies on some of the Southern Sudanese ethnic groups including ethnographies and other related work produced by Hutchinson (1996), Jok ( 2001 & 2004), James (1979 & 1988), Lesch, (1998), Hassan (1985), Ninan (1983), Evans-Pritchard (1937; 1940; 1948, 1951; 1969; 1971; & 1979 ), Stigand (1968), Huntingford (1953), Seligman and Seligman (1932), Ryle (1982), Lienhardt, (1958, 1954, & 1961), Wai (1973), and Deng (1972). These studies provide detailed ethnographic descriptions of the people of Southern Sudan and highlight their ways of life.

I will also briefly describe the historical background of the Southern Sudanese, especially during the recent decades of civil war between 1955-1972 and 1983-2005, that resulted in massive displacement of Southern Sudanese from their homeland and which in turn led to their eventual resettlement in western countries including Australia (see Idris 2001; Hutchinson 1996; Suliman 1992; Deng 1995; Yongo-Bure 1993; Collins 1961; Alier 1972; Beshir 1975 & 1968; Peterson 2000; Lesch 1998; Johnson 2003; Jok 2001). These studies discuss how the war and related conditions adversely

affected the life of the Southern Sudanese. The war and the associated conditions hindered access to education and economic opportunities, healthcare and others services. In this chapter I will examine my informants' experiences of life in refugee camps and in other urban cities in exile in order to ascertain whether those experiences enhanced or impeded their resettlement in Australia.

The adverse effects of the war which informants endured negatively influenced their resettlement capabilities in Australia. Any attempt to evade their socio-economic and historical backgrounds and experiences before their resettlement in Australia, and not putting them in the context of their current lives in Australia, will obscure any understanding of why some Southern Sudanese have more difficulties than others in resettling in the Australian society. I contend here that war and displacement had severely destroyed the institutional structures (social, economic, political, administrative, civil, educational, legal and so forth) in Southern Sudan and, as a result, moving from Southern Sudan to refugee camps with barely non existing structures and then finally resettling in Australia - a society with highly developed and sophisticated institutional structures - presents daunting life experiences to the majority of my informants.

### **Brief Ethnographic Description of the Southern Sudanese**

It is vital to emphasis here that although some of the ethnic groups in Southern Sudan have figured in anthropological literature, there has been no ongoing research on them carried out by trained anthropologists. Much of what we know about them today comes from data collected by inconsistent methods by journalists, humanitarian workers and travelers and what has been produced was probably based on impressions and prejudices rather than on anthropological methodologies and knowledge. Hence I feel

obliged to provide to my readers a brief ethnographic account of the people who collectively called themselves ‘Southern Sudanese’ or “Junubin”. This is not however to deny the useful anthropological scholarship and other relevant work produced by Hutchinson (1996), Jok (2001), Evans-Pritchard (1937, 1940, 1951, 1969, & 1971), Stigand (1968), Huntingford (1953), Seligman and Seligman (1932), Ryle (1982), Lienhardt, (1958 & 1961), Chili (1995), Nanan (1983) and Deng (1972) among others on some ethnic groups in Southern Sudan.

In this thesis the term ‘ethnic group’ is defined as a group of individuals who collectively nurture a strongly belief of belonging to one common ancestry because they share customs, traditions, habits, religious beliefs, language, and territorial attachment as well as identifying themselves with one another. This is similar to Hall’s (1995: 181) definition of ethnicity as a very strong well-bounded vision of cultural identity that emerges wherever shared activities and systems of meanings in one place by some people are strengthened by shared kinship and blood-ties. Hall further indicates that cultural identity tends to be verifiable by certain observable shared physical characteristics and features of a given group in question; shared physical characteristics and features are strongly seen as evidences of belonging to the group. Furthermore, according to Hall, ethnicity is also strongly bounded to a group’s sense of belonging to a place, which is historically and continuously constructed over time and hence unifies a group of people.

This collective of people is a segment of a large society but they are easily identifiable from the larger group because they possess certain distinctive cultural traits and a common set of traditions which they practice but which the large segment does not. Hence, they are perceived by the large segment and by themselves as being different. However, I would like to recognise that the boundaries that mark one ethnic group from

the others are not fixed and are more or less permeable to members from each group. Therefore, although members of a particular ethnic group are assumed to be biologically and culturally similar, in practice this is not the case because of the permeability of those boundaries. The fluidity of these boundaries becomes apparent when people from different ethnic groups intermarry and the resultant children exhibit some attributes, such as skin complexion or hair type and so on, which are different from those of the members of one group. Here is a current and typical example. A Dinka man who resettled in South Australia married a Middle Eastern woman and produced Dinka children (patrilineal descent) with light or brown skin complexion and wavy hair as opposed to the Dinka's dark skin complexion and short hair.

The Southern Sudanese are people of African descent living in the southern part of the republic of the Sudan, called the Southern Sudan or South Sudan (Wai 1973: 7). According to Gore (2002), Southern Sudan is about 648,052km (322,000 square miles). It covers about 26% of the 2,500,000 kilometer square (967,500 square miles) total land area of Sudan (refer to the figure next page). Politically, Southern Sudan is currently divided into 10 states and each state has its own government and a parliament or legislative assembly, but most powers are centralised in the Federation Government in Khartoum in Northern Sudan.



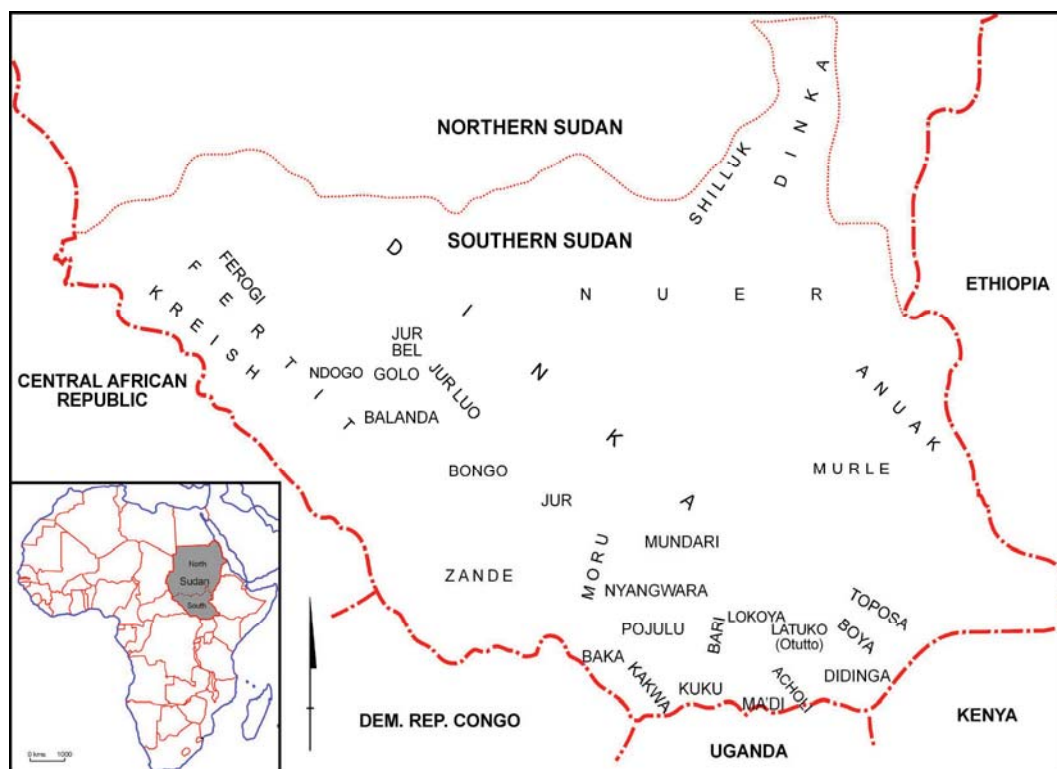
**Figure 4: Map of the Republic of Sudan Before it was Redivided into twenty-six states:** The Areas that comprise the “Southern Sudan” are numbered 19, 20 and 21 and currently comprise ten states.

NOTE:  
This figure is included on page 74  
of the print copy of the thesis held in  
the University of Adelaide Library.

Most Southern Sudanese are adherents of traditional religions; many have been converted to Christianity and fewer to Islam before and during the war. The principle cities of Southern Sudan are Juba (the capital), Malakal and Wau. These cities are not highly urbanised. The people of Southern Sudan formed about 34% of the Sudanese population (Lesch 1998: 17). It is estimated that over 83% of the population of Southern Sudan lives in rural areas and only 15% lives in urban areas (Gore 2002). Southern Sudan has one of the highest illiteracy rates unemployment and underdevelopment in the world. It is estimated that about 70% of the population is illiterate due to the impact of colonialism and the policies of successive Sudanese governments toward Southern Sudan and the many years of war in Southern Sudan which have impeded advances in education and economic development in that part of the world. I would like to stress at this point that it is not possible to provide an accurate population figure of Southern

Sudan. This is due to the long civil war that plagued the region between 1955 and 1972 and between 1983 and 2005 respectively. According to Gore (2002), the 1993 Sudanese population census estimated the population of Southern Sudan as 3.9 million and the 1983 census estimated it as 5.3million. A recent population projection from the 1983 population census estimated the population of Southern Sudan as 4.2 million. However, Gore reiterates that those estimates are all inaccurate because the censuses excluded areas in Southern Sudan which were seriously affected by the war and were totally inaccessible.

**Figure 5: The Map of Southern Sudan Showing Some Tribal (Ethnic) Groups.** Map drawn by Christine Crothers (2008), Department of Geographical and Environmental Studies University of Adelaide on the request on the author



The Southern Sudanese (or Sudanese in general) are not one homogeneous group, as many people might think, but are distinct ethnicities that comprise the people of Sudan. Hence, there are many divergences among them. Fortunately, there are also some similarities among them and due to this, they have commonly accepted that even if they

belong to different ethnic groups, their cultures bear some similarities and more importantly they strongly believe that they belong to one race, 'Black Africans', who occupy the same geographical region, the Southern Sudan.

The Southern Sudanese as a people comprise many ethnic groups. According to Gore (2002), most scholars have suggested that there are over 200 tribal (ethnic) groups living in Southern Sudan. Some of these groups have been known to anthropologists through studies by some scholars including Hutchinson (1996) and Evans-Pritchard between the late 1930s and the late 1960s. These studies offer substantial ethnographic descriptions of some of the ethnic groups living in Southern Sudan, including the Nuer, the Shilluk, Azande and others. As I have stated earlier, there has been no on-going research on these ethnic groups and hence I am forced to revisit relatively old ethnographies. I acknowledge that since then several changes have occurred in the cultural, social, economic, and political lives of the Southern Sudanese and those changes have directly affected and influenced their ways of lives. However, some of the ethnographies exemplified by Evans-Pritchard's work are regarded as classic ethnographies written about the Nuer and other groups in Southern Sudan and they remain relevant in understanding some aspects of the Nuer cultural and social lives up to the present.

With respect to classifying the people of Southern Sudan into groups, Gore (2002) indicates that there has been no consistent criterion used by scholars to classify the over 200 tribes (most of my informants here use 'tribes' and 'ethnic groups' interchangeably but African scholarship favours the use of ethnic groups because the term 'tribe' is believed to carry negative colonial associations) living in Southern Sudan, but he shows that the most commonly used criterion has been one that broadly classifies the Southern Sudanese according to their cultural and linguistic similarities. According to this

classification, there are three broad groups, namely the Nilotics, the Nilo-Hamites and the Sudanic (Hassan 1985: 21-30, Lesch 1998: 17, Wai 1972: 9-10). Some members of these groups have resettled in Australia as refugees under the Australian Government's Humanitarian Resettlement Program. In South Australia they include Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Ma'di, Bari, Acholi, Pojulu, Muru, Anuak, Kakwa, Otuho (Lotuho), Lokoya, Kuku, Azande, Nyangwara, Baka, and Mundari among others. Members of these groups in South Australia, however, differ in size: some are larger than others; the smallest could be only a family or two while others like the Dinka, who form the majority, are in hundreds or thousands.

### **The Nilotics**

The term 'Nilotics' or 'nilotes' is used to describe a group of people who exhibit certain resemblances of cultures, means of livelihood, physical features, and language. The term was formerly used without discrimination, with the exception of the Arabs, to describe all the people living along the banks of the river Nile, its tributaries and distributaries. Generally, the Nilotics live in Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei, Lakes, Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal and Warab states in Southern Sudan. They inhabit the central and flood plains of the river Nile. Some Nilotics live in Eastern and Central Equatoria states (Acholi, Lango, the Pari (Lokoro) of Lafon and probably the Mundari). They are agro-pastoralists whose livelihood mainly depends on livestock husbandry. Traditionally they are similar in their livelihood and in physical traits such as the possession of facial tribal markings (tattoos) and their height. These features have served to distinguish them from the Nilo-Hamites and the Sudanic groups who do not possess these traits. There is a widely held view among the non Nilotics that the Nilotics are noticeably taller than any other ethnic groups in Sudan who often regard themselves

as short to medium in height, but this view has not found any scientific support in the scientific literature (Chili 1995).

The main ethnic groups comprising the Nilotics are the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Acholi, Lango, the Pari and probably the Mundari. In this group, members of the Dinka, the Nuer, the Shilluk, Mundari and the Acholi are among the Sudanese refugees resettled in Australia. The traditional livelihood of the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk and the Mundari is mainly based on cattle rearing, supplemented by limited subsistence agriculture, fishing and hunting. Cattle ownership is essential to their culture. Cattle are the centre of social status and prestige and in their society prestige is weighed by the numbers and quality of the cattle one owned (Lienhardt 1958; Evans-Pritchard 1940 & 1969). Livestock such as goats, sheep and particularly cattle are the medium of exchange whether in payment of debts, blood price, marriage, sacrifices or in performance of other rituals (Lienhardt 1961). Cattle also provide them with a variety of nourishments (milk, blood, meat, butter) and other material (hides used for sleeping on, as footwear and shields, and bones used locally to produce buttons). Even though the Nilotics have lost most of their cattle to the war and infestation by cattle diseases, their concepts of wealth and property are still centred on cattle and cattle remain pivotal in their socio-cultural, religious and economic life in Sudan. Thus during my fieldwork some Nilotics have told me that they have to send some money home to kin to restock lost family cattle and other livestock. The value attached to cattle and the roles cattle play in their society in Southern Sudan permeate every aspect of their social and cultural life and relationships within and outside their groups. However, among the Nilotics, the Acholi are not agro-pastoralists but derive their livelihood mainly from crop husbandry.

The Nilotics society is an egalitarian and classless society but rigidly patriarchal; descent is traced through the father. Hence it is important that each male must marry to

continue the lineage. In the family, men expect women to do for them several aspects of domestic services but they monopolise the decision making process in the family. Their society expects individuals to be generous to others and like any other ethnic groups in Southern Sudan, social relationships among them are deeply rooted in sharing, reciprocity and strong extended family values. It is obligatory to help family members in need and this is demonstrated by my informants' financial remittances to family members back home. Kinship structures are extremely important and bloodlines are broadened to others members believed to have descended from the same ancestry (members of the same clan).

The livelihood and behaviour of the Nilotics is very much influenced by the ecology of their land. Unlike any other ethnic group in Southern Sudan, the ecology of the Nuer and Dinka homeland necessitates semi-annual movements between relatively wet seasons and dry seasons. The Nuer and the Dinka have their permanent and temporary settlements scattered across their territories (Hutchinson 1996: 22; Howell 1989; Deng 1972; Leinhardt 1958). During the wet season, they settle on high grounds to avoid floods, and in the dry season they move to lower grounds and settle in temporary camps along the river Nile and its tributaries and distributaries where water, fish and pasture are in abundance. Till today, the combination of these seasonal movements and their pastoral interests have overwhelmingly affected their livelihood, their political and social relationships, as well as their relationships with their environment and neighbouring ethnic groups (see Abbink 2000: 82; James 1979 & 1988; Evans-Pritchard 1951; Hutchinson 1996, Jok 2001). It is evident that the collective function of obtaining for themselves the necessities of life from the same scarce resources, as well as protecting themselves from outside threats, is widespread among the Nilotics. They are, however, socially excitable people who culturally pride themselves with the image of

courageous warriors. It is conventionally acceptable in their society for a person to put right any wrong committed against him/her. But it is also not uncommon to seek the support of kin, tribesmen or friends in a fight or when there is a threat of it. However, like any other society, the Nilotics' ways of life and society have been changing from within or by changes which have been forced on them by war and other conditions. They have been exposed to outside influences and they too have been trying to influence their neighbours, for example the Nuer relationships with their neighbours Uduk and others (James 1988). Hutchinson (1996) ethnography, *Nuer Dilemmas, coping with money, war and the state* offers an insightful knowledge about the Nuer and how their society and way of life have been changing due to war, access to arms, migration to northern Sudan and exposure to money from paid labour and other financial activities.

### **The Nilo-Hamites**

Another group of people living in Southern Sudan are the Nilo-Hamites found in the Central and Eastern Equatoria and in the Upper Nile state in Southern Sudan. This group mainly consists of the Bari-speaking group, namely the Bari, Kakwa, Pojulu, Anyagwara, Mundari, Kuku, Pojulu, Anyagwara, Mundari, Lulubo, and Lugwara, the Otuho (Lotuko), the Anuak, the Murle, the Didinga, and the Toposa. The Bari-speaking group speaks one language with different dialects and so they communicate and understand one another fairly well. Some members of this group have been resettled in South Australia as refugees.

Unlike the Nilotics, the Nilo-Hamites are sedentary subsistence farmers and like most Southern Sudanese, they live in small villages scattered in rural areas. However, in recent years young people have been increasingly moving to towns in search of employment

and better social services. The traditional economy of this group is mainly based on subsistence mixed farming. They keep livestock on a small scale for supplementing their diet, but mostly as a socio-economic investment. They also fish and hunt. Notably, livestock are used as bride-wealth in marriages and in other social events such as sacrifices, rituals, celebrations of marriage, child naming and funerals (Huntingford, 1953, also see Stigand, 1968 & Ninan, 1986).

### **The Sudanic**

The third group of the people of Southern Sudan is the Sudanic group. This group mainly live in Eastern and Western Equator states, but others also live in Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal states. The Sudanic group includes the Azande, Muru, Ma'di, Baka, Mundu, Avokaya, Makraka, Bongo, Bagirmi, and Balanda. The Azande have a light brown skin complexion in contrast with the Nilotics and the Nilo-Hamites who have a dark skin complexion. In this group, the Azande, Ma'di, Muru and Baka have some of their members resettled in South Australia. Unlike the Azande, who have been ethnographically well studied by Evans-Pritchard (1971), it is hard to find literature on the others in this group.

### **The Reasons Which Forced Refugees to Leave Their Country of Origin**

In the coming paragraphs I will describe the historical background of Southern Sudanese, especially the recent decades of civil wars that led to their massive displacement and eventual resettlement in western countries including Australia. I will also highlight the key root causes of the civil war in Southern Sudan which were a complex mixture of political, socio-economic, cultural, and religious factors. I will show how the two civil wars between 1955 and 1972 and between 1983 and 2005 have severely affected the lives of my informants. I will highlight their experiences of life in



refugee camps and in refuges in other urban cities in order to illustrate in later chapters how their experiences of war, exile and refugee life before resettlement in Australia have impacted on their resettlement in Australia.

It is argued that the classic explanation of migrations using push-pull factors, chain, circular or career migration, which better describe varying degrees of motivation, destinations and timing, offers little understanding of the complex phenomena that produce massive 'refugee' population movements worldwide. Legally, the 1951 United Nation Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees define a "refugee" as:

a person owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of particular group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself to the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

(NPC. in Jupp 1994: 8)

Refugees worldwide are products of enduring civil strikes/wars, generalised violence, persecution, drought, famine, disease, and repressive and marginalising regimes; the Southern Sudanese refugees who have resettled in Australia are no exception to these. These factors collectively forced them to leave their countries of birth in search of safety elsewhere. But notwithstanding the collaborative force of these factors which drove refugees from their homes, refugee movement has become a global, geographic, socio-economic, and political issue. The enduring quest of refugees for protection and safety has been downgraded to see them merely as fortune seekers. It is essential to note here that in addition to war, economic hardship, sharp increases in government debt and the collapse of traditional socio-economic sectors, partly due to neo-liberal economic policies and globalisation, the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and

the World Bank have equally caused enormous suffering to citizens in poor countries by making them unable to afford to pay for their very basic needs. These in turn have forced many citizens to leave home in search of survival elsewhere. Thus, the former factors and the later policies are intertwined and hence one factor alone is not sufficient to produce a massive movement of refugees. For instance, economic hardships caused by neo-liberal economic policies could trigger civil strikes or wars in a country causing massive refugee movements. Similarly, although globalisation is perceived as a carrier of development, it however tends to weaken, submerge or wipe out local economies and other local initiatives as they become unable to compete locally with international firms; the result is marginalisation and probably civil strife, despair and war. Also the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with its unpopular structural adjustment programs in exchange for loans given to poor nations, recommends cuts in spending on social services and other basic societal needs. This could lead to poverty, marginalisation and perhaps civil disobedience, despair and war which in turn would cause unprecedented hardships to citizens in poor countries, thus forcing them to leave their countries in search of protection and a better life in other countries.

### **Root Causes of the Two Civil Wars in Southern Sudan**

To understand why Sudanese have recently been resettled in Australia and other western countries, it is important to revisit Sudanese history in search of answers to the question, why have there been two successive civil wars in Southern Sudan since the colonial rulers left Sudan? Revisiting Sudanese history answers this question and illuminates the political, military, economic, religious, and socio-cultural upheavals which have occurred in Sudan since the colonial period. It is essential to emphasise here that Sudan is ethnically and culturally one of the most diverse countries in Africa. It comprises different ethnic groups with their cultural diversities and multiplicities of religious

beliefs. But these cultural diversities and multiplicities of religious beliefs have combined with social and economic deprivation to make Sudan one of the most socially, economically and politically unstable countries in Africa. Sudan's different ethnic or tribal groups, with their diverse cultures and multiple religious beliefs, have been its curse rather than its blessing as it has been unable to accommodate them adequately. Thus, this complex mix has for years threatened to tear the society apart rather than glue it together. Hence, most of Sudanese history is shrouded with armed conflicts as a result of its ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious diversities, marginalisation, and ideological differences between Southern and Northern Sudan, and as a result of the often misguided policies towards the Southern Sudan during colonial and post colonial times.

It is crucial to understand Southern Sudanese experiences in this historical context in order to grasp their resettlement experiences in Australia because avoiding these will obscure our understanding of why they are experiencing resettlement in Australia in the way they do. The Southern Sudanese have had only ten years of relative peace since 1955, the year the colonial master left. War had broken out between the Northern Sudanese and the Southern Sudanese in 1955 soon after the British had left, and ended in 1972. But in 1983 another war broke out again also between the Northern Sudanese and the Southern Sudanese and dragged on until February 2005 when an agreement known as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was negotiated between the leadership of the rebels of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement under the leadership of Dr. John Garang de Mabior and the Islamist government in Khartoum (Sudan) under President Omer Al Bashier. The Peace agreement was negotiated under the auspices of the Inter Governmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD) in the city of Mashakos in Kenya. IGADD is a regional organisation

comprising Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Since its formation in 1986, it has become politically instrumental in dealing with issues of drought and desertification as well as regional trade, security and peace, by initiating political dialogue among warring parties in the region. This is exemplified by its efforts in the achievement of peace in Sudan. The war in Southern Sudan had uprooted many people from their homes to become displaced within and outside Sudan while others resettled in Australia and other western countries.

### **The Plight and Flight of the Southern Sudanese: A Brief Historical and Contemporary Perspective**

Historically, Sudan was ruled by the Turks and Egyptians (Turko-Egyptian rule) from 1821 until 1885. This period marked the marginalisation, the plight and flight of the Southern Sudanese. Under the Turko-Egyptian rule in Sudan, Arabs (both the Northern Sudanese and Egyptian Arabs), Ottoman Turks, who were also ruling Egypt at that time, and Turkish traders with their private armies, penetrated into and plundered Southern Sudan for slaves and any valuables they could find (Idris 2001: 29). The rulers levied heavy taxes on the people of Southern Sudan, introduced forced labour, and searched for and took away ivory, livestock and any other valuables they could find. They broke down the socio-cultural, economic and natural fabric of the Southern Sudanese leaving them destitute and with enduring memories of the brutalities they suffered under the occupiers. Thus given those past relations, some Northern Sudanese Arabs still tend to refer to the Southern Sudanese as “Ibd” - an Arabic word meaning slaves - and do not dare to acknowledge the wrongs they have committed against the Southern Sudanese. Those past relations have created and left a deep sense of mistrust, grief and resentment of Arabs by Southern Sudanese, and have become the rock-bed upon which the Southern Sudanese have built their resistance and animosity against the Arab and Islamic Northern Sudanese.

The Mahdiyya (Mahdist) movement, which was regarded as both a political and Islamic religious popular movement in Sudan, drove out the Turko-Egyptian rulers from Sudan in 1885 and established an Islamic state which ended in 1898. The Southern Sudanese had supported the Mahdiyya against the Turko-Egyptians because the Mahdiyya had claimed to be the “Messiah” for all the Sudanese. But on coming to power, the Mahdiyya (Mahdist’s rule) perceived the Southern Sudanese as infidels (non-Muslims), inferior, and hence enslave-able (Johnson 2003 & Jok 2001). The Mahdists became the new Southern Sudanese oppressors. They actively engaged in endless slave raids on Southern Sudanese territories and took thousands of them to Northern Sudan as slaves (Idris 2002: 41). The Mahdiyya revived and institutionalised slavery which it had been against during Turko-Egyptian rule. Under the Mahdiyya, the Southern Sudanese were constantly hunted for their slave value because they were considered pagans (infidels). However even those who were islamised only became second class Muslims because they were blacks and not Arabs (Idris 2001: 42).

The Mahdiyya ended in 1898 when Britain and Egypt jointly set up the Anglo-Egyptian rule know as the Condominium in Sudan. The Condominium created a native administration in Southern Sudan from the ruins of the Mahdiyya. Although Britain and Egypt were supposed to rule the Sudan jointly, Britain had more influence because of its imperial power. During the Condominium, the Southern Sudanese witnessed punitive military campaigns and exceptional violence to subdue their strong resistance to it (Suliman 1992). The Condominium instituted contradictory systems of administration in Sudan. The North was politically and economically promoted and the northern religious sects of Khatmiya and the Ansar (Mahdists followers) were groomed to become political forces/parties. The Khatmiya and the Ansar were Islamic religious sects in Northern Sudan. The Khatmiya was headed by Sayyid Ali Al-Mirghani and the

Ansar by Sayyid Abdel Rahman Al Mahdi. The two sects later transformed themselves into political parties and became the Democratic Unionist and Umm Parties and these became formidable political forces in Sudan after the British and the Egyptians had left. There was also educational development taking place in the north but Southern Sudan was left to languish under native administration of the tribal chiefs with no socio-economic or educational advances or other social services.

The Condominium administration curtailed Islamic influences in Southern Sudan in favour of Christian missionary activities. English was the lingua franca in Southern Sudan as opposed to Arabic in the North. Education in Southern Sudan was lagging and there were only a few elementary schools, two intermediate schools, one senior secondary school, one commercial school, and one primary teacher training centre in Southern Sudan during the Condominium (Deng 1995; Yongo-Bure 1993). According to Collins (1961: 62), the British had intended to federate Southern Sudan with Uganda and by then colonial governors from Southern Sudan attended administrative conferences in Uganda instead of in Khartoum. The British administration passed the Closed District and the Passport and Permit Ordinances between 1920 and 1922: this required the use of passports and permits for travelers from the north to Southern Sudan and vice versa. Under these Ordinances, no Northern Sudanese could go to Southern Sudan without a permit and the same was true for Southern Sudanese who wanted to travel to Northern Sudan.

When the British were about to leave Sudan on the eve of Sudan's independence in 1955, the Arab Northern Sudanese and their Egyptian counterparts pressured the British on the future of the Southern Sudan and urged it to be joined to Northern Sudan. Due to the pressure, the British hastily organised the Juba Conference in 1947. It was stated that the conference was to discuss whether or not Southern Sudan should unite with the

North or be a separate country or join Uganda. However, the outcome of the conference seemed to have been already decided by the Northern Sudanese and the British civil secretary, and it was only held to inform the Southern Sudanese chiefs of their decision to join Southern Sudan with the north (Alier 1972: 16). The Southern Sudanese tribal chiefs, though not educated at the time, demanded a federation for Southern Sudan, but this was rejected by the British and the Northern Sudanese. Also the Southern Sudanese were not allowed to consult among themselves on this issue and most importantly there was no voting regarding unity or separation (Alier 1972: 17). Unity, according to Alier, was imposed on the Southern Sudanese. Alier quotes from the minutes of the conference against the imposed unity, a plea from Chief Ladu Lolik, one of the Southern Sudanese chiefs:

A girl who had been asked to marry a young man usually wanted time to hear reports of that young man from other people before consenting; likewise Southern Sudanese before coming to any fixed decision about their relations with the Northern Sudanese need time. The ancestors of the Northern Sudanese were not peace loving and not domesticated like cows. The younger generation said that they meant no harm, but time would show what they would do.

(Alier 1972:18)

When the British left Sudan, almost all public positions both in the north and in the Southern Sudan were filled up by Arab Muslim Northerners in an arrangement known as Sudanisation. This left the Southern Sudanese dissatisfied (Alier 1972: 18-19) as they strongly felt they were being colonised by the Northern Sudanese (Beshir 1975). That feeling led to the first civil war in Sudan, which began when Southern Sudanese in the army mutinied in Torit town in Southern Sudan in 1955 (Beshir 1968). It was a demonstration of their strong feelings against unity with the north and what they saw as Islamisation and colonialisation by the Arab North. The mutineers became known as Anya-any1 rebels. The Anyanya1 rebel fighters were Southern Sudanese who were fighting for the separation of the Southern Sudan from the north. The word “Anyanya”

is a Ma'di word literally meaning 'snake poison' and implies that they reacted like snake poison against their adversaries, the Northern Sudanese.

The civil war in Southern Sudan raged on for seventeen years (1955-1972) sending many Southern Sudanese across the borders to Uganda, Central African Republic, Kenya, Ethiopia, and to former Zaire. Many more were internally displaced within the bushes and forests of Southern Sudan and others moved to the Southern Sudanese towns of Wau, Juba and Malakal held by the government army. Few others moved north as far as towns including Khartoum, the capital. The war ended with a negotiated peace settlement known as the Addis Abba Peace Agreement which gave the Southern Sudanese limited political and administrative powers while the central government in Khartoum retained most of the powers (Idris 2001: 105-6). The Addis Abba Peace Agreement was negotiated in the Ethiopian capital under the auspices of the World Council of Churches between Joseph Lagu, the leader of Anyanya1 rebel fighters and the then Sudanese government under President Nimeri in 1972. After the agreement, almost all the Southern Sudanese returned to their homeland and lived in relative peace for ten years only to be again displaced by another civil war in 1983. During the war most Southern Sudanese had no access to education, economic opportunities, healthcare and other essentials of life.

In 1983, there was again another rebellion in Southern Sudan in the town of Bor and it marked the beginning of the second civil war between Southern Sudan and the Northern Sudanese Islamic government. The rebels became known as the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) led by Dr. John Garang de Mabior. The reasons for that war was an accumulation of grievances including the contentious issue of Sudan's identity, equitable distribution of resources and power, imposition of the Islamic shari'a law, Islamisation and Arabisation, the Jonglei canal project, the



discovery of oil in Southern Sudan and the annexation of oil rich areas in Southern Sudan by the north, the abrogation of the Addis Abba agreement, and the re-division of Southern Sudan into three regions.

Studies by Lesch (1998: 17), International Crisis Group (2002: 5), Deng (1995), Johnson (2003), and Jok (2001) have articulated how diverse Sudan has been and estimated that the Northern Sudanese of Arab origin formed only 35% of the Sudanese population while 65% of the Sudanese population is of a very diverse African descent. Religiously, 70% of the Sudanese are Muslim (Sunis), between 5-10% are Christians, and the remainder are adherents of traditional beliefs. Given such diversity, I concur with An-Na'im (1987:72) who asserted that any attempt to identify Sudan purely with Arabs and Islam or with Africans alone, misleads and negates the realities of Sudan's diverse nature. An-Na'im suggested that instead, efforts should be directed to seek and to determine constructively shared traits and perspectives on various identities in their current forms in order to create a framework for a national identity that will accommodate the diverse Sudanese characteristics. Arguably discourses about Sudanese identities have soured the relations between Northern and Southern Sudanese, between Muslims and Christians and people of traditional faith as well as between Arabs and Africans. The Southern Sudanese reject the Arab and Islamic identities imposed on Sudan because it excluded them and made them second or third class citizens without equal rights. The North has marginalised and dominated the Southern Sudanese for decades (Jok 2001). Over the years the issue of Sudan's identity has emerged as the most contentious issue in the Southern and Northern Sudanese politics resulting in what Deng (1995, 1987 & 1998: 62-64) has called "Sudan's crisis of identity". This has become ammunition in the war between Southern and Northern Sudan.

Amidst the suspicion between the Southern Sudanese and Northern Sudanese, the announcement of the construction (digging) of the Jonglei canal project by the central government in Khartoum triggered student riots in Juba in 1974 (see Howell, Lock and Cobb 1989: 585-586). Due to the riots most Southern Sudanese became aware of the canal's negative effects once it was completed and the canal also became a recipe for the rebellion and the war against the North (Lako 1992: 45 & El Sammani, 1988: 408-419). Serious socio-economic studies into the effects of construction of the canal were then carried out after the riots. The government had never asked the people of the area whether they wanted the canal or not because the local people graze their herds and carry out fishing and hunting around the Sudd area were the canal would be constructed to drain the water from the Sudd making the area dry. The Sudd is a thick swampy wetland (aquatic vegetation) area of 320Km long and 240Km wide in Southern Sudan. It is fed by water from the Bahr el Ghazal, Bahr el Jebel (White Nile), and the Bahr el Arab. It is estimated that about half of the water in the Sudd is lost to evaporation and absorption before traveling north the river Nile. The digging of the canal was to circumvent the Sudd and drain the swampland for agriculture. The Sudd is a home to many animal, fish, bird and game species. It is regarded as a giant filter and sponge that controls and normalises water quality and stabilises water flow. It is a major source of water for livestock, wildlife and domestic use, and an important source of fish for the Dinka, Shilluk and the Nuer who live around the areas

According to Lako (1992: 25), studies carried out on the effects of the canal indicate that the ethnic groups comprising the Dinka, the Nuer, and the Shilluk living adjacent to the Sudd area will have no alternative to graze their herd, to fish and hunt or perform socio-economic and cultural activities associated with the Sudd once the canal is constructed and the Sudd vanishes. This caused those ethnic groups to strongly oppose

the construction of the canal. The construction of the canal also led to a rumour in Southern Sudan that Egypt and Northern Sudan had secretly planned to settle Egyptians along the canal areas once it is finished. The Southern Sudanese strongly opposed any Egyptian resettlement on their soil and were convinced that the Jonglei canal project was a neo-colonialist conspiracy of Northern Sudanese and Egyptians to grab their land and other resources (Lako 1992). It was argued that the canal would not benefit the Southern Sudanese, but Egypt and northern Sudan. It was believed that Egypt wanted more water for agriculture to feed its rapidly growing population.

The Southern Sudanese were also suspicious that the government in the North had a hidden strategic reason for digging the canal. This arose from the fact that the Sudd had acted as a grass curtain and a barrier hindering quick military transport to move troops and equipment from Northern Sudan to Southern Sudan through the river Nile. Hence, once the canal is dug, the government could use it to swiftly move troops and military equipment to Southern Sudan to crush any rebellion in Southern Sudan against the government. Given these strong feelings against the canal, it was not coincidental that the rebels attacked the earth moving machines digging the canal rendering it un-useable and thus halting the work on the canal (refer to figure low).

**Figure 6: The Sudd**

**Source:** Photos Courtesy of Sudan's Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources, Dwight Peck, Ramsar: Accessed online at URL: [http://www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.sudan\\_sudd.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.sudan_sudd.htm) on 19 July 2008



In May 1969 President Nimeri overthrew an elected government in Sudan and signed the Addis Ababa peace agreement in 1972 ending the war that began in 1955. After the signing of the accord, there was an uneasy period of peace in Southern Sudan for ten years. Within that time most Southern Sudanese had increasingly become scornful of the way in which President Nimeri, who had negotiated the peace agreement that granted them limited autonomy, was ruling the country. Nimeri angered the Southern Sudanese when he redrew the South-North borders and annexed the Bentiu area in Southern Sudan to the north because a large oil reserve was discovered in the area (Idris 2001: 121-2). That decision reignited and strengthened the long suspicion of the Southern Sudanese that the Arab north was determined to rob them of their resources. That added powerful ammunition which widened the rip between northern and southern hostilities, fuelling the war further (Dallalah 1988: 430- 455).

In 1983, President Nimeri made another blunder when he issued a presidential decree imposing Islamic shari'a law on the Sudanese populace with no consideration given to any other religion present in the Sudan; Islam became interwoven into all aspects of Sudanese society. This was strongly rejected by the Southern Sudanese non-Muslims who viewed it as discriminating, excluding and marginalising them from the Sudanese society. They demanded a political system and laws that cut across socio-economic, racial, cultural, and religious spectra without being discriminatory, and which reflected and respected the diverse characteristics of the country. But these demands were rejected by the ruling Northern Sudanese.

Also in 1983 President Nimeri decreed the re-division of Southern Sudan, which was once a single geographic, administrative and political region, into three separate regions (Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal) and effectively abrogated the regional autonomy negotiated in Addis Abba in 1972 (Lesch 1998: 50-1). When the re-division was implemented, people in the newly created regions became resentful and disobedient towards the government in the North because they believed it had marginalised them. This again added to the war recipe.

The second civil war began soon after the implementation of the Regional Presidential decree and Government Act of 1983 which re-divided the Southern region into three administrative and political regions. In May 1983 an army battalion comprising mainly Southern Sudanese ex-Anyanya1 rebels in the Sudanese army mutinied in Bor town in Southern Sudan. The mutiny marked the start of the second civil war and the birth of the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Sudan People Liberation Movement - SPLA/SPLM - under its leader Dr. John Garang de Mabior<sup>2</sup> (see Akol 1987: 12-27).

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. John Garang was an officer in the Sudanese army. He took a study leave to earn Master and PhD degrees in Agricultural Economics at Iowa State University in USA and then returned to the army. When the mutiny began in Bor in 1983, he was assigned to mediate between the government and the mutineers.

Garang was a highly educated Southern Sudanese from the Dinka ethnic group from Bor town. Dr. Garang was an officer in the Anyanya I rebellion during the first civil war between 1955 and 1972 and was assigned to the Sudanese army after the agreement where he rose to the rank of colonel. The mutiny was triggered by the government's order to transfer the Southern Sudanese battalion in Bor town entirely to Northern Sudan. The transfer was seen by mutineers as a violation of one of the core principles of the Addis Abba agreement, which stipulated that Sudanese army battalions were to be solely formed from the former Anya-nya I rebel fighters and should not be transferred outside the borders of Southern Sudan.

On 30 June 1989 President El Bashier came to power in a military coup amid the raging war in Southern Sudan. On coming to power President El Bashier refused to remove the shari'a but instead implemented it with rigour on both Muslims and non-Muslim Southern Sudanese. Lesch quotes President El Bashier's declaration about the Islam shari'a:

We will gain nothing from relinquishing the shari'a because he who seeks people's satisfaction by causing God's indignation loses everything ... Our existence is originally linked to implementation of this shari'a. Therefore, it is a matter of principle for us ... It is better for us to die in the cause of that principle and we are ready for that.

(Lesch 1998: 129-133)

He swiftly incorporated the Islam shari'a, Islamisation and Arabisation programs into the educational, political, economic, social, cultural, and administrative nerves of the Sudanese society without any distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. The shari'a became the source of legislation and a mechanism by which the Arab elites

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However, he was already a member of a secret group of Southern Sudanese in the army conspiring to defect and form a group of anti-government rebels. When the government army attacked the mutineers at Bor, the mutineers moved to the bush and Dr. Garang joined them. He became the Chair and commander-in-chief of the SPLA/SPLA and became instrumental in effectively organising the SPLA/SPLM into an effective fighting and political force in Sudanese contemporary politics. On 9<sup>th</sup> January 2005 in Nairobi Kenya, he negotiated a peace agreement with the Sudanese government which ended the war. Unfortunately, in late July 2005 Dr. Garang died tragically in suspicious circumstances in a plane crash.

mobilised support from Muslims to further their political ambitions (Lesch 1998: 86-87 & Adar 2000). The sharia soon became the spine of control and a parameter by which all socio-economic, cultural and political policies and activities were drawn and functioned. Further more, the Islamic agenda was publicly made known by El Bashier's number two man in the power hierarchy (the secretary general of the National Islamic Front, Dr. Hassen El Turabi) who was the sole Islamist ideologue in Sudan. On one occasion he had declared that:

the country is ... an Islamic republic for all effective purposes regarding the implementation of Islamic injunctions in the political, economic, social and cultural fields. At present, Islam is ruling the Sudan; Islamic values prevail in society and Islamic injunctions are being implemented in all fields.

(Leach 1998:130)

President El Bashier's regime increased military operations and the level of violence in Southern Sudan by conducting aerial bombardment on the populace of Southern Sudan, mainly in rural areas held by the rebels. According to House (1989), the Sudanese population census of 1983/1984 showed that only about 3% percent of the 5.3 million Southern Sudanese lived in the urban centres in Southern Sudan and in those urban centres employment and other opportunities remained very limited and hence most people lived in rural areas. As the war intensified in the rural areas, many people were forced to seek safety in neighbouring countries, in government controlled areas and elsewhere. But in the government controlled areas Southern Sudanese and others who exhibited any sort of opposition to any Islamic policies and programs were constantly rounded up, detained, tortured, imprisoned, and killed or they disappeared without any trace. This brutality forced more Southern Sudanese out of the country and forced some others to join the war to oppose the government's Islamic agenda militarily.

The complexity of the nature of causes of the war in Sudan and the forceful displacement of Southern Sudanese from their homeland supports Kibreab's (1987)



assertion that the root causes for people to flee their countries of origin are a complex mixture of political, social, economic, religious and other factors that threaten, or have resulted in, violence and war. The Sudanese case demonstrates this. According to most of my informants, life in refugee camps, in the bushes of Southern Sudan or in camps for the internally displaced has been their life long experience.

The second civil war had uprooted more people from their homeland than the first one. As a result people had to cross national borders, others moved deeper into the bushes and forests of Southern Sudan to hide, and yet others moved further inland to towns in Southern Sudan or further north to Northern Sudanese towns. The influx was felt as far away as towns in Northern Sudan including Khartoum, the capital city (see Hutchinson, 1996). The war caused disruption in traditions, cultural practices, enrolment in education, provision of health, and other services as well as an unprecedented social breakdown among the Southern Sudanese (Summerfield 1999: 120). This went on with varying intensity for twenty-two years and brought terrible suffering and destruction to people's ways of life and to their properties. The war was estimated to have claimed between 2.5 to 3 million deaths and about 4.5 million people were forced to flee from their homes in Southern Sudan (See Waller 2002).

I argue that the war caused civil society to crumble as almost the whole population was forced to move; houses and villages were burned down, and crops and animal husbandry was destroyed or abandoned as people fled for their dear lives. People's cultural, social and economic arrangements, which had formed the basis of their communal ways of life at home, were altogether abandoned. There was a total breakdown of law and order; functional education and general social and economic services became non existent. As people migrated, the effects of migration forced them to reshape their ways of living after being forced out of their original homes (Deng



1998; Moruawska 2000; Hackett 1996; Abdel Salam and de Waal 2001). Informants have indicated to me that at first they saw the life of displacement as transitory for they yearned to return home and resume their original ways of life. However, as time passed by and the war raged on, there was no sign of any possible return home. Prolonged stay in camps and the uncertainties of life there made them seek resettlement somewhere to the west with the hope that, once resettled, they would be able to rebuild their lives in their new society.

### **Experiences of Life in Displacement**

During the war, life for the majority of Southern Sudanese became unbearable and unsafe. Apart from the insecurity, there were widespread shortages of essential commodities and social services both in Southern Sudan and in refugee camps and in places of displacement elsewhere. Even those who moved to northern cities, including Khartoum, and those who lived in camps for the internally displaced, lived in appalling conditions. In Khartoum many squatted in the outskirts of the city, but often the government demolished their squalid residences and relocated them to camps far away from the city. There they were left to fend for themselves without any government support and with only relief organisations and Churches to provide them with food, water, and other basic services.

In the displaced camps there was no adequate or formal education or other social services. The displaced Southern Sudanese were daily harassed by security agents and their auxiliary forces, and thus living in those camps became unsafe. The ultimate result was alienation, destitution and fear for their lives that forced many people to leave Khartoum and other cities in the north for Egypt or other countries. In the camps for the

internally displaced persons within Sudan, many people had to live solely on basic human necessities provided by humanitarian relief organisations and churches.

As indicated earlier, the war in Sudan has displaced many Southern Sudanese both internally and externally to neighbouring countries. The impacts of the war have been devastating and have affected the lives of all Southern Sudanese (Minear 1999: 6) whether un displaced, displaced internally or those who fled to neighbouring countries (Woodward 1990: 218-219). Informants have indicated that fleeing the war zone does not necessarily promise safety. For example, those who fled to Khartoum and were living in makeshift shelters around the city were hardest hit among others by the 1988 floodwater which according to Kebede (1997: 53) led to hundreds dying from disease in the days and months after the floodwater receded. As if this tragedy was not enough, at the end of 1990 the government destroyed all the makeshift camps around Khartoum city and relocated them about 30 miles from Khartoum to (Jebel Aulia) a barren desert with no shades, water, food, healthcare and electricity ( The New York Times, 4 November 1990 in Kebede 1997: 53-4). In addition to insecurity in those camps for displaced, the Southern Sudanese remained trapped in disease-prone environments, uprooted from their traditional ways of life, culture and with no means to support themselves.

Informants indicated that government agents controlled entry to and exit from those camps. However, despite this control, many left the camps and journeyed further north to cross the Sudanese-Egyptian borders to Cairo. As a result the UNHCR (2002) reported that up to 20,000 Sudanese have sought protection from its Cairo office in the last ten years. Most of the refugees in Egypt were from Southern Sudan, a region of Sudan severely ravaged by decades of civil war and other war related difficulties. In Cairo, Egypt these refugees have to go through UNHCR refugee status determination

processes which can take quite a long time before they know their status in Egypt and according to Salih (2006) those processes were mostly undertaken by unqualified staff. As a result, many were denied refugees status and most have their files closed after they have lodged appeals. The consequences of these among many Sudanese were lack of protection, inability to access social services including basic education, healthcare and employment to mention a few. These lead to a state of limbo and with it comes frustrations, discontent, alienation, marginalisation, depression and other social, psychological and physical effects. Those few lucky ones who were recognised as refugees received minimal protection from UNHCR and other assistance including healthcare and little money for meeting their very basic needs. Those whom the UNHCR has closed their files on do not have any legal status (protection) either from UNHCR or from the Egyptian authorities and hence they are a vulnerable group in all aspects including; health, financial, physical, educational, housing, employment and so forth. These conditions pushed them further into the periphery of Egyptian society. They often live in fear of harassment, arrest, detention and deportation by Egyptian police as they had to earn their livelihood from the informal sector.

In the informal sector, they were exposed to demeaning conditions, harassment, discrimination, racism and attacks from the Egyptian host (Kasia 2003) and even in the streets of Cairo. One informant told me, “Black Sudanese are daily harassed and racially discriminated and were fearful to let their children out alone”. As the numbers of refugees increased in Egypt and there were limited places offered by the few western countries willing to resettle few refugees, the UNHCR with the agreement of the Egyptian government began to offer the refugees local integration (i.e. resettlement in Egypt) to Sudanese. However, the local integration option was dogged by provision of minimal aid and assistance and inadequate coordination between UNHCR and Egyptian

government and other different organisations including churches. Due to these the conditions of Sudanese with closed files and those resettled locally under the option of local integration deteriorated further. Those conditions forced these categories of Sudanese refugees in Cairo to stage a sit-in or a protest in one of the gardens or parks (closest to the UNHCR office) to protest against the UNHCR, but the protest which began on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2005 was tragically ended by Egyptian authorities in December 2005 after three months. The police brutality on the Sudanese refugees led to many deaths (Salih 2006 & Schafer 2006). The protestors' demands included among others; their closed files to be reopened and their cases reviewed, assistance particularly to the elderly, widowed/single mothers and unaccompanied minors, group protection and a halt to involuntary repatriation, and an end to local integration. They argued that since there were no national legislations in Egypt for refugees to be treated equal to Egyptian citizens in areas such as employment, housing, healthcare and other social services and for ending harassment, random arrest, detentions and deportation of Sudanese, local integration is likely to exacerbate their conditions in Egypt.

However, critics of the protest including UNHCR in Cairo argued that the protestors were driven by misapprehension of resettlement on the part of the refugees as a right and not as one of the other solutions to their plight. Although the UNCHR office in Cairo attempted to negotiate with the protestors, in certain circumstances, it has dismissed the protestors merely as economic refugees that do not fit into the 1951 UN Convention and definition of refugee. However according to Salih (2006) and Schafer (2006), it has responded positively to some of the demands including providing one-off financial assistance on an individual basis, working with Egyptian government to stop unauthorised arrest, detention, deportation and harassment of Sudanese in Egypt and help children enroll in schools. But the refugees want all their demands to be meet, as a

result the negotiation between the protestors and UNHCR broke up. According to some of my informants who were in Cairo during the protest, the UNHCR collaborated with Egyptian Authorities to forcefully break up the protest. They alleged that between 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005, thousands of Egyptian police officers stormed the protestors in the garden and brutally evicted the protestors. In the ensuing brutality, about 30 Sudanese protestors were killed, many sustained injuries and many others were detained. According Salih (2006) and Schafer (2006), the UNHCR assisted in the release of those who were under the processes of refugee status determination and those it has resettled locally in Egypt but those with closed files were people of no concern to UNHCR so they remained in jail for a long time before they were released.

As the protestors have moved to the garden with all their few belongings and left the apartments which they have rented, almost all their belongings were lost during the police crackdown. Others were separated from their children, family and friends when the protest was broken up (Schafer 2006). The protestors have no immediate shelters to go back to. Arguably, the dire conditions that the Sudanese have endured that led to the protest and the action of the Egyptian authorities resulting in many deaths, injuries, lost of properties and detention highlight how vulnerable refugees would be when they are not accorded legal protection. These also highlight important aspects in refugees' lives which require acknowledgement. Refugees everywhere move in search of a place where they can feel safer and yet this is not the case for thousands of Sudanese refugees who live in a state of limbo in Cairo, even if Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of refugees.

**Figure7: Sudanese Refugee Protestors in Cairo, Egypt.**

**Sources: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/africa/4570446.stm> accessed online on 25/05/2009**

NOTE:

This picture is included on page103 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Unlike in Egypt, in other recipient countries of refugees from Southern Sudan including Ethiopia, Zaire (the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Uganda, the Central African Republic, and Kenya, the refugees live mostly in refugees camps (Miheisi 1996:6) far removed from their cities. However, they received relief assistance and a very limited degree of security from international humanitarian organisations including UNHCR, while those in Egypt are not provided with relief assistance.

On the other hand, those internally displaced Southern Sudanese continue to endure countless sufferings at the hands of their own government which is supposed to provide services and protection to them. The government was unwilling to allow the international community to provide assistance and protection to people displaced within it national boundaries. Arguably, having lost their homes, jobs and their livelihood the

internally displaced continue to endure more suffering. Seemly, the war has disrupted and broken down traditional livelihood dependence on livestock for food and other nutrients (milk, butter, blood) for some ethnic group including, the Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk, Mundari, Anuak, Murle, Tobosa and others who were agro-pastoralists. On the other hand, there was no enough arable land to cultivate and produce food and become self-sufficient. Those international organizations and local churches which ventured to help them were relentlessly harassed by Sudanese security forces and their auxiliaries, the civil or popular defense forces. According to my informants who had lived in those camps for the internally displaced before they fled the country, many had to move from one camp to another within Sudan in search of food, safety and other services. They have also indicated that such movement for many had led to only more suffering, insecurity and even death as they find themselves within the conflict zone and became seen as enemy supporters by both sides of the warring parties who dealt with them brutally or they had become casualties of landmine explosions during their movements (Battersby 1994: 6-7). On the other hand both the government and the rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forced the displaced in the areas they control to give them military service and if they refused, they were accused by one group or the other of supporting the enemies and they could face harsh treatment including disappearance or even death.

During the war both the government and the SPLA/M have little or no concern for human rights of Sudanese citizens, particularly the government and the several tribal militia groups it sponsors. Most informants have indicated that even though both the government and the SPLA/M have denied using food as political weapon, they were both in one time or the other prohibited food aid from reaching the starving Southern Sudanese population and have expelled several humanitarian relief organisations from

their respective controlled areas for varied reasons including accusation that food could be used as a cover to transport weaponry (Kebbede 1997:56). In many areas of Southern Sudan and in the bordering states of Southern Darfur and Kordofan, Arab tribal militia especially the Rizeigat, Baggara and other militias deliberately created by the government to hinder the expansion of SPLA/M to those areas frequently carry out attacks and pillage of neighbouring Southern Sudanese population forcing thousands to flee their homeland as a result. In other circumstances, this has degenerated into racial or ethnic warfare involving cattle raiding, killing of innocent people, burning of huts and destruction of crops and entire villages. In the midst of these, many Southern Sudanese especially women and children were captured and taken to the north and become enslaved by their capturers or sold into slavery (Kebbede 1997:58; Alley 1996:1 & Christian Solidarity International 1996) or sometime presented as gift on special occasion (Samboma 1995:1).

### **Relations Between Southern Sudanese and Host Communities in Refuge/Exile**

Life in refuge has long been regarded by social scientists and mental health professionals to be stressful (Buijs 1993: 2 & Sua'rez-Orozco 1986). Events such as moving from one's place of origin, job losses and ruptured social relationships are known to be highly disruptive and often trigger a variety of reactions such as anxiety, frustration, depression, and other emotions and related behaviours. Similarly, according to Baker and Akin (1996: 215), becoming a refugee usually involves major cultural and social transformations in refugees' lives. As refugees come from ethnic backgrounds dissimilar to that of their hosts, hostilities do occur between them as they both daily compete over the available scarce resources including food items, water, firewood, physical and social spaces, and other services. It is also worth noting that there were also



hostilities between different Southern Sudanese ethnic groups in the refugee camps. Malkki (1995) highlights the relationships among refugees in exile and the need for organisations providing services to refugees to understand the specific histories, socio-political circumstances as well as the localised politics of the refugees in order not to be caught in between the hostilities.

In refugees in Uganda, Kenya and Egypt, the UNHCR does not adequately meet many of the basic needs of the refugees. But it is worth stating that not the same support is provided to refugees everywhere. In the camps in Kenya and Uganda the UNHCR provides limited food rations and other basic services to every registered refugee until they become self-reliant. Refugees are given land to cultivate to produce their own food, and when they become self-sufficient in food, the food rations are withdrawn. In contrast, in Cairo the UNHCR does not provide food rations and other services to refugees until they are proven genuine refugees and it only provides very limited financial and healthcare support to those it recognises as genuine refugees. However, in Egypt the majority of the Sudanese refugees are not recognised by UNHCR and the Egyptian government and hence they have to fend entirely for themselves. To sustain themselves, the majority of the refugees have to work illegally, mostly cleaning the homes of wealthy Egyptians and other foreigners, because the Egyptian government does not permit them to work. However, some do receive limited assistance from various Christian churches in Cairo and Alexandria where they live. The churches offer them basic education, health services, food handouts, limited financial support, and other basic necessities of life.

However relations between the Sudanese and Egyptian governments and its people was initially cordial, based on long historical ties that predate pre-colonial times (Zaki, 1993); but it soured after the attempt on the life of Egyptian President in Addis Ababa

allegedly masterminded by Sudanese secret agents (Fábos 2001). The Southern Sudanese become the victims of that act against the Egyptian President. Unlike Northern Sudanese Arabs, who share many features in common with Egyptians, the Southern Sudanese share very little with the Egyptians; this difference makes them easily identifiable, and they are targeted by the Egyptians who are unhappy with the presence of the Southern Sudanese in their midst. The Southern Sudanese are seen by the Egyptians as sympathetic to the SPLA who were fighting their Arab and Muslim brothers and sisters in Sudan. Thus, in general, the Egyptian host communities have antagonistic relationships with the Southern Sudanese. Some of my informants who moved from Egypt and who resettled in Australia have reported being hit by stones, having dirty water poured on them, and being harassed, robbed, beaten and called names (chocolate, charcoal, soot, monkey etc.), in the streets of Cairo, or being accused falsely to authorities by their Egyptian hosts. Generally, Sudanese have no legal rights in Egypt and, according to Fábos (2001: 178), a decree regarding the Sudanese adopted in the 1990s further limited their legal rights in Egypt. In addition to Egypt's reluctance to recognise the Sudanese as refugees, the decree caused the Southern Sudanese to encounter a lot of racial harassment from both the Egyptian police and the public.

The hostile relationship between Sudanese and Egyptians led to unauthorised police arrests, detention and deportation of Southern Sudanese back to Sudan, and put the lives of the deportees at greater risk in Sudan (Johnson 2002). As the conditions of the Southern Sudanese refugees in Egypt deteriorated further, Southern Sudanese women demonstrated in 1994 in front of UNHCR office in Cairo demanding recognition as refugees. Some informants indicated that, although it was a peaceful demonstration, the women were mistreated by the Egyptian security agents. However their demonstration paved way for the Egyptian government to grant permission to UNHCR to register and

to determine Sudanese claims for refugee status. According to Malwal (1995: 5) this occurred only after the Egyptian government was pressured by Human Rights Groups and the USA government to grant refugee status to the Sudanese. But despite Egypt being a signatory to the 1951 UN and the 1969 OAU Refugee Conventions, it refused to determine the status of refugees itself; instead it transferred this responsibility to the UNHCR citing lack of resources. As a result, the UNHCR office was inundated by refugee claims leading to excessively long waiting periods for refugees wanting to know their legal status in Egypt.

Similarly, in refugee camps in Uganda and Kenya, the Southern Sudanese also have uneasy relations with some of the communities that host them. In Adjumani refugee camps in Uganda, Moro (2004: 427) indicates how in 1990 the Kuku and Latuho fought fist fights with their hosts, the Ma'di of Uganda. This conflict resulted in one death and many injuries, and a number of huts were burned. On the other hand, the refugee camps in Uganda's northern border with Sudan were constantly infiltrated by the rebels of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) who were fighting the government of Uganda. The rebels often staged attacks on the camps and carried out looting, burning of huts, killing and/or maiming people, and abducting and raping women.

The rebels of the SPLA also searched for conscripts inside refugee camps, probably with the permission of the Ugandan army (Hovil 2001: 11). In addition, Sudanese government fighter bombers often dropped bombs inside refugee camps located not far from the Sudan-Uganda border (New Vision 2001). These threats created a sense of urgency among the majority of Southern Sudanese refugees in those camps to pursue resettlement opportunities in western countries through the agency of the UNHCR and some western embassies as a way of leaving the refugee camps and thus seeking protection. Unfortunately, only a few succeeded in resettling. For those who remained

in the camps, there were only limited or no educational and economic opportunities, and as a result they had no access to education or to other formal services.

In refugee camps in Kenya, the Southern Sudanese were also in conflict with Somali people (Refugee International 2003) and with the Turkana natives. According to my informants resettled from Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya, the Turkana often entered their camps to steal property and rape women, and they accused them falsely of creating water and firewood shortages, of stealing their livestock and of engaging in intimate relations with their girls. Due to these conflicts, fights have broken out between the Turkana and the Southern Sudanese causing several deaths, injuries and on several occasions the destruction of property (Refugee International 2003).

As I have shown earlier the Southern Sudanese have been devastated by the two civil wars in their homeland. Many fled their country to live as displaced people within Sudan, in exile or in refugee camps where some sought resettlement in western countries including Australia. Those wars severely affected their economic, social, and cultural traditions. On the other hand, the war has exposed many of them to modernising influences and has led to an infusion of different cultures from the unfamiliar societies where they live as displaced refugees in countries of resettlement. But even if many changes have occurred that have directly influenced their lives inside and outside Sudan, many are still clinging on to their cultural traditions and ways of life. It is important to reiterate here that from 1955 till 2005 Southern Sudan has enjoyed only ten years of relative peace. Most of this period has been consumed in wars and the consequent displacement of its people. Millions were either killed or fled the country, and among them thousands were resettled in Australia, USA, Canada, and other European countries. This has created substantial refugee or diaspora communities worldwide. Fortunately in February 2005 a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

was signed between the leadership of the rebels of the SPLA/M and the current Sudanese government, led by the National Congress Party (NCP) leader President Omar El Bashier. Thus, for the moment at least the guns have ceased firing and many are returning home from refugee camps and from elsewhere within Sudan where they had taken refuge.

As a result of the war, Southern Sudanese have greatly suffered; the war rendered the majority without access to education, economic opportunities and other basic social services. It has severely affected their normal ways of life, cultural traditions and values; it has ripped them off from their homeland, depriving them of the usual kin support and of their familiar environment. They have lost family members, and witnessed atrocities including violence, looting/banditry, rape, killings, maiming, and the destruction of homes, livestock and other valuables. They have also suffered from diseases, drought and famines. War has thus created widespread destitution making life in many cases unbearable. This has prompted massive population displacement across national boundaries to refugee camps in neighbouring countries; others have been forced to live with locals as self-settled refugees; many others have lived within Sudan in camps set up for the internally displaced; and thousands more have lived in hiding in the bushes and forests of Southern Sudan. Most have lived without any services.

The two wars from which they suffered were mainly fuelled by accumulated grievances and a combination of past and recent memories of the injustices committed against them by Islamic Northern Sudanese. On the part of the Northern Sudanese Arab and Islamic governments, the war was fuelled by political greed and the desire to control the Southern Sudanese and exploit their resources. The war was also driven by an Islamic agenda to Islamise and Arabise the people of Southern Sudan. Thus these in combination ignited one of the longest civil wars on record between people of African

descent who are mainly Christians or believers of traditional religions and people of Arab or of African descent who profess the Islamic religion in the north of the country.

In refugee camps in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and in Egypt where they lived as self-resettled refugees, the Southern Sudanese suffered from poor relationships with their hosts as they competed over scarce resources and space. Intense competition became the source of conflicts. The Southern Sudanese are prohibited from leaving their refugee camps. Departure from the camps is only possible with official permission from UNHCR and the country's authorities or, in Sudan, from government security agents (mostly on medical grounds, emergencies or other reasons deemed legitimate). This limits their access to opportunities such as education, employment and to any form of economic activities. In the camps they generally live in fear of violence from within and without the camps. Within the camps, they fear affiliation with ethnic groups perceived by others to have committed atrocities against their kin back in Southern Sudan, which would cause them to be targeted by others. Informants have indicated that most Southern Sudanese seemed to have brought prejudice against other ethnics and consequent conflicts from their original homes. For example, Sudanese who are Muslims or of Arab descent have been attacked by other Southern Sudanese who viewed them as anti SPLA/M.

Informants have indicated that they have lived without proper systems of justice, formal education and structures in the camps but have experienced life under the rule of the gun. In the refugee camps, hostilities and violence were prevalent; refugees feel threatened and unsafe living in the camps. Living in the camps under such conditions for a considerable period of time erodes peoples' social structures and cultural norms and leads to a break down of traditional institutions. Some informants have stated that whilst in the refugee camps, their hopes for better lives faded as there seemed to be no

foreseeable solution to their predicaments. Consequently there was a sense of agency to escape the camp life by seeking resettlement in western countries; but resettlement proved illusory to many because there are only very limited positions offered for resettlement by western countries.

This brief description of the flight and plight, the backgrounds, cultural, social and the general life of the Southern Sudanese highlight the implications of those experiences and the effects of the war on the current resettlement and life experiences of Southern Sudanese in Australia. As shown earlier, most Southern Sudanese had lived in rural areas where there were limited educational, employment and economic opportunities. Most had derived their livelihoods mainly from animal husbandry and/or subsistence agriculture and the majority had not experienced a sophisticated urban lifestyle. Arguably, rural livelihood skills are not so useful in urban Australia and the effects of a long period of war and in refugee camps without access to formal education exacerbated their experiences. Hence, these conditions are likely to retard their resettlement and integration into Australian society.

The next Chapter offers an ethnographic account of the complexities of my informants' settlement experiences and the challenges they face as they attempt to resettle and integrate into Australia Society. It highlights how integration is defined in the literature and how the Southern Sudanese defined it on their own terms and what they considered as factors that could facilitate or hinder their successful resettlement and integration in Australia. The Chapter also provides the Southern Sudanese perceptions about the settlement services they received and what make others reluctant to attend settlement activities such as information sessions organised by some support organisations supposedly for them.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES OF SOUTHERN SUDANESE REFUGEES RESETTLED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

#### Introduction

In Chapter Three I highlighted the historical background of the Southern Sudanese, especially the recent years of civil war that led to a massive displacement of Southern Sudanese from their homes. As a result of the war, thousands have been resettled in Australia and in other countries. I discussed how the war and related conditions had adversely affected the life of the Southern Sudanese and how these in turn have worked to impede their resettlement and integration into the Australian society. This is because the war and associated conditions of life in refugee camps had hindered access to education and economic opportunities, and to any opportunities for personal development and self-actualisation. In that chapter I argued that to appreciate the resettlement and integration experiences of Southern Sudanese in Australia, it is essential to understand the long period of war which they endured, the effects of the war on their way of life, their refugee experiences, and how the combination of these impacted on their current lives and their resettlement in Australia. I asserted that war and displacement had severely damaged their institutional structures (social, economic, political, administrative, civil, educational, legal and so forth) so that moving from such a setting to Australia - a society with highly developed and sophisticated institutional structures - presented them with daunting day-to-day life experiences.

In this chapter I offer the perspectives of my informants, an ethnographic account of the complexities of their resettlement experiences and the daunting challenges they



encountered in their daily lives in South Australia. It shows what are their perceptions of participation in the activities of mainstream Australian society and culture as well as their perceptions of the support services they received. I asked informants what they meant by “mainstream Australian culture”. The following appears to encapsulate what most of my informants meant:

... I mean the majority of people, the things they regarded in Australia as dominant, accepted and practiced by the majority of Australians ... things like attitudes ... expected behavior, laws, values, language, and so forth which override our own as ethnic community group practices here.

(Anguyo interviewed on 7 May 2006)

A quick review of the literature shows that until recently - as a consequence of the White Australia Policy - most immigrants came from Great Britain and Ireland (see Jupp 2001). Hence in this context Australian mainstream culture, including the language, cultural norms, values and attitudes, and political systems, tended to be Anglo-Celtic. Arguably this tended to shape and influence the perceptions and attitudes of Australians towards other groups of migrants and refugees in Australia, and these have formed the essence of resettlement and immigration policies in Australia.

This chapter elucidates how expectations of life in Australia before resettlement do not necessarily coincide with the realities of lived life during resettlement in Australia, and it shows how those unrealised expectations in turn affects my informants’ resettlement and integration experiences. Both the resettlement and the integration of refugees are multidimensional and entail complex and overlapping processes pertaining to participation and interactions by both newcomers and their hosts in various societal activities - cultural, social, economic, and political. The processes of resettlement and integration are also rendered complex because they also affect the receiving society in terms of refugees or newcomers being seen as “the others”. In my attempt to understand

these complexities in these processes, I chose to approach them in the context of how my informants narrated their lives within the wider Australian society. Hence, this chapter is a reflection of my informants' views about their resettlement experiences and of the settlement support services they received. It also highlights the social relationships between my informants and their Australian friends and how those interactions and relationships and the support they received from such social relationships enhanced their settlement into Australian society.

The literature of immigration to Australia shows that in recent years Australia has abandoned its historic White Australia immigration policy of choosing immigrants mainly from Europe in the belief that their cultural similarities and shared values with Australia would result in their integrating easily into Australian society (Bade and Weiner 1997). Currently Australia is resettling non-European refugees and migrants, including thousands of Southern Sudanese refugees, on humanitarian (refugee) visas through UNHCR and its overseas missions in Africa. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2006:37) estimates that in June 2005 there were 23, 287 Sudanese resettled in Australia and out of this over 1,500 were resettled in South Australia. The 2006 Australian population census indicates that there are about 1586 Sudanese who have resettled in South Australia (Space Time Research Pty Ltd. 2007). But whilst there is a sizeable body of literature on migration to Australia from Europe, Asia, the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, South America, and other parts of the world, there has been little written about the migration of Africans and barely anything about Sudanese migration.

Unlike migrants and refugees from Europe, cultural distant exist between the Southern Sudanese and Australians. Southern Sudanese came from environments that were socially, culturally, economically and politically distinct from that of Australia. It is also

important to reiterate here that my informants' experiences of wars and the immense uncertainties in life (lack of education, healthcare, basic amenities and so forth) have greatly influenced their ability to resettle in Australia. For example, the war had hindered most from accessing education and the acquisition of knowledge and skills which would have been so essential in their resettlement. Education and English skills would, among other things, have enabled them to communicate easily with Australians, and to access, read and use valuable settlement information without assistance from others. In this regard, informants have indicated that life in Australia demands marked changes in their ways of life to suit the conditions in their new environment. However, for any change to occur, they needed to understand the systems and procedures regarding accessing and meeting the requirements of services such as employment, housing and other services which are so important for starting a new life in a new society. As they are unfamiliar with most of these, they have to learn them. This however is a gradual process because it requires a shift from their previous ways of lives and of an adjustment of their views of the world (social, cultural and economic) in order to suit those of their new society. Also, for this to occur, it is essential for the members of the host society to minimise structural and other barriers that limit the participation of Southern Sudanese in the activities of Australian society. For example, failure to recognise overseas qualifications, experiences and skills which provide access to employment and enable people to compete in the job market sets up substantial barriers for new migrants.

It could be argued that the 'cultural distance' that exists between Southern Sudanese and Australians is exacerbated by the fact that they are unfamiliar with one another. Some informants have indicated during the interviews that their being culturally distant from Australians has in one way or the other interfered with their attempt to integrate into

Australian society. According to my informants actual or perceived cultural likeness is in a sense a form of bonding capital and they noted that the cultural distance between them and their host is created among others by; inability of some Southern Sudanese to communicate in English, their different English accents and lack of knowledge about Australian culture and because they do not share same customs and traditions. Others have mentioned the contents and conventions of job resumes and job application, behaviour and appearance or presentation style during job interviews on which decisions on who to hire are made upon are culturally specific. These have been acknowledged by informants as some of the resettlement obstacles they are experiencing while attempting to integrate into Australian society. It could also be stated that the cultural distance that exists between them and Australians makes it slow for individuals from both sides to transfer their trust to those they share little in common with (see Putnam 2007). But some of my informants have also acknowledged that once they succeeded to interacting and developed friendships with Australians, those friendships become helpful to both as they learned a lot from one another's culture, while at the same time being aware of cultural sensitivity between them as well.

Most informants have told me during the interview that despite having arrived from a different cultural context (unlike other refugees and migrants from Europe in Australia), they are adjusting well, but slowly, into this culturally different environment [Australia]. They also told me that crossing this cultural distance or narrowing it, means forgoing some of the valued traditions, customs and social roles they possessed. The cultural distance that is to be crossed, particularly for Southern Sudanese of rural backgrounds, includes inundation with written communication (letters from Centrelink and other service providers) in contrast to verbal communication they were used to at home. The communication is about Australia, social security, education, adult English

language program, employments, childcare, transport, housing, health, budgeting and many others. Those with none or low levels of English proficiency in particular find it difficult to understand and absorb these variety of information and these tend to slow access to several services as the obvious barrier is English language which is very vital for understanding any information in Australia.

### **Integration as Defined in the Literature**

Before I proceed further in this chapter I would like to define the term “integration”. As a sociological concept, integration presupposes that over time, through interaction with each other, both newcomers and the host population would undergo changes in response to each other’s ways of life. As Jacobsen (2001) indicates, this should be sustainable and beneficial to both the newcomers and the hosts. It is also important to note here that the term is a complex and multifaceted construct (Valtonen 1999) and, because of this, it means different things to different people (see Chapter Five). However, I claim that integration is a process that entails both ‘continuity’ and ‘change’. By ‘continuity’ I refer to my informants’ abilities to retain some aspects of their original ways of lives so that they will not feel alienated, and by ‘change’ I refer to their abilities to allow for integration to occur so that they become part of the host society without necessarily feeling alienated. I further claim that continuity and change need to be complementary rather than competitive to permit Southern Sudanese newcomers to resettle and integrate with relative ease into Australian society. Commonly integration is perceived as a process through which newcomers are included in the economic, social, cultural and political fabric of their new society. According to Korac (2003: 51), integration comprises sets of overlapping processes and activities. It is a policy and as a policy, Korac suggests, it fails to recognise its complex social overlaps and treats refugees not

as social actors (Valtonen 1998: 5; 1994: 66 also see Wahlbeck 1999) but rather as policy objects.

In Australia discourses on integration pivot around cultural integration (including proficiency in the English language), access to and advances in education, employability, economic independence and economic contributions to Australia, and acquisition of property. This concurs with a study by Ager and Strang (2004) which indicates that often governments measure success in the integration of newcomers (migrants and refugees) by reference to their access to housing, education, employment, healthcare and other services framed through ideas such as full and equal participation for all citizens. Arguably less attention is paid to how newcomers feel attached to their new society. However, integration is not easily attainable because, as Chavez (1992: 5) indicates, there are hurdles to social, cultural and economic incorporation of migrants (and refugees) into their new societies and it is these hurdles (e.g. language, unemployment etc.) that retard newcomers from resettling and becoming part of their new society. Thus as a result some would remain “liminal” in their new society and hence they may live with the enduring hope of returning to their countries of origin.

### **Southern Sudanese Perceptions of Settlement Support Services**

Informants indicated that life in Australia is very different from their previously lived lives in Sudan and in refugee camps. As most of Southern Sudanese resettled in Australia were of rural background, urbanity itself presented a challenge to most of them. In Australia, life revolves around money and demands knowledge of household budgeting and financial management, payment of bills, rent and other expenses, some of which they were not familiar with and hence they lacked the necessary skills to manage urban life. Based on the data collected, some informants have for the first time learned

using things like washing machines, electric/gas cookers, and microwaves from the staff of service providers in Australia. Mangok explains the importance of the support he received from service providers:

... when I arrived in this country, I did not know something call bills, I did not know how and where to pay them and had problems allocating the money I received from Centrelink for my needs. But with the help of staff from the MRCSA and ARA, I slow by slow was able to manage the new life in Adelaide.

(Mangok, interviewed on 13 January 2006)

On the other hand, although all my informants were grateful for the kind of support they received, there was some unease regarding their being given used, or a combination of new and used, household items instead of new ones. The items mentioned included washing machines, TV sets, fridges, furniture and others. Their concern about used items was that they could break down before they had time to save some money to repair them or buy new ones. Additionally, they indicated that even if settlement support organisations did assist them to fix broken items, fixing them took a long time. There are indications that most informants on arrival had never expected organisations, well resourced by the government, to deliver to them household items, including used ones. However, in analysing the data, I compared the quality and quantity of the settlement services delivered by settlement support organisations and received by informants who arrived in the 1990s and those who arrived in the 2000s to ascertain whether or not there had been an improvement in those services and I found that there had been marked changes and improvements in the quality and quantity of the settlement support services delivered to refugees.

However, informants indicated that restriction by funding institutions in delivering specific settlement services in a restricted timeframe has been one of the problems in the resettlement process. For example, the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services

Scheme (IHSS) only allows new arrivals to be serviced for six months after arrival and only up to five years after arrival for the provision of general resettlement services. But based on the analysis of my data, most resettlement problems mentioned by all informants occurred after they had “exited” from the IHSS and continued beyond the five years after arrival. “Exited” is a term most often used by staff of IHSS to describe (at least theoretically) the end of their services to newly arrived refugees and migrants and marked the handing over of the newly arrived refugees and migrants to the services of the staff of the general settlement services program who are supposed to support them for the remaining period of five years from their arrival. While informants were exited from receiving IHSS services because they were assumed to be able to do most things by themselves, in reality some could not. Evidence from the data shows that even those who have arrived more than five years ago are still encountering some problems in accessing mainstream services such as employment or other information due to inadequate English language use and other cultural barriers.

Although funding institutions would like to see refugees become independent as quickly as possible, often this is done without giving due consideration to individual experiences, backgrounds and circumstances. Limiting support equally to a particular timeframe for every refugee tends to disrupt the resettlement process. I urge that there is a need to assess refugees individually and for the duration of support to be determined according to individual circumstances, experiences and backgrounds. Considering refugees as if they are a homogeneous group with the same experiences under the same circumstances and backgrounds is not a good model of service delivery to meet the diverse needs of refugees. This is because resettlement involves a gradual transition to a new environment and its success or failure significantly depends on individual efforts, situations and previous experiences. During the transition, linking refugees (and in this



case my informants) to the economic, social and cultural activities of Australian society is central to their resettlement success. Activities like the home support initiative being offered by the Australian Refugee Association, which provides support on a one to one basis, is a good model which should be extended and duplicated by other settlement support organisations. This service has connected numbers of my informants to Australian friends and by linking them to mainstream services. Through this service many Southern Sudanese have gained confidence in accessing mainstream services and in building relationships and friendships with a number of Australians.

### **Informants' Reluctance to Attend Settlement Activities**

Settlement support organisations (service providers) regularly organise various activities including information sessions, workshops, seminars, and forums to inform refugees and migrants about the available settlement services. These activities are also supposed to be venues for refugees, migrants and support organisations to discuss various settlement issues facing refugees and migrants and for refugees and migrants to make their voices heard and make suggestions concerning issues that affect them in their resettlement in South Australia. However, during my voluntary work with ARA and MRCSA, I have observed that most Sudanese either do not attend such organised activities, or do so rarely. Hence, during my fieldwork I asked why my informants and other Southern Sudanese tended to be reluctant to attend information sessions, seminars, workshops, and forums organised by settlement support organisation.

Informants' responses to this question included:

- being unaware of the activity;
- being informed at short notice to attend;
- lack of coordination or collaboration between service providers and members of their respective communities;

- not being involved in the planning of their settlement activities; and
- their suggestions not being accommodated by support organisations.

Most have alleged that some support organisations write grant applications for projects intended for them without any consultation with them regarding the projects. Many also claimed that sometimes grant applications were lodged in their community's name without adequate consultation with members of these communities. Jembe, a chairperson of one of the Southern Sudanese community associations, explained that:

... some service providers do not consult us in planning for the services intended for us. I am the chairperson of my community and often I feel ignored by them and that makes me not to attend some of the activities they organised even if I was invited because I feel they have sidelined my community and me in the planning of programs and activities intended for us ...even if I go and make suggestions regarding the problems my community is facing, those organisations never listened to us take our suggestions into consideration, so why attend their activities.

There are some service providers offering specific resettlement services to Sudanese, but due to lack of adequate consultation with the Sudanese regarding what services they think would best suit their settlement needs, some informants have claimed that certain views of service providers regarding what constitutes better resettlement services for them do not necessarily coincide with their own views. Ager and Strang's (2004a) study of the experiences of integration among refugees resettled in the local communities of Pollokshaws and Islington in the United Kingdom reveals a similar problem. This perception has led to a lack of participation in settlement activities from informants for whom the services were intended.

In addition, some are unable to attend activities organised by service providers because they have difficulties with transportation and in locating the venues where the activities were held. Informants claimed that some service providers give them invitations and maps for locating venues for organised activities which they have been invited to

access. Understandably, some informants find it difficult to read street directories, streets, maps and directions or to locate places/premises from the maps. Jore, one of the informants who arrived in June 2005, recounts his experiences:

A service support organisation sent me a letter and a map with directions and a path highlighted in pink ink and marked with arrows from my house in Clearview to a vaccination centre at Enfield. I was asked in the letter to take my two daughters to the Centre for vaccination and to trek following the marked path on the paper from my house to the Centre as shown on the map. I tried to follow the direction and the path but I got lost. I couldn't find the Centre ... I don't read English well and I don't read maps and directions also. I don't know where and how to transfer the location of the Centre from the paper on to the ground. I tried and tried and tried, but I cannot find it and lastly, I have to phone a member of my community to come and help me. He came in his car and drove me and my children to the Centre and back after my children were vaccinated.

(Jore interviewed on 25 December 2006)

Based on my observation and my analysis of the data, time management has been a problem for the majority of my informants. This is due to different traditions, cultural conceptions and value attached to time. These are extremely different between my informants and their Australian hosts. In western societies, unlike the Sudanese society, time is not regimented and controlling but is always relaxed. In my field observations, informants often arrived late for social activities, meetings or any social or cultural events that they organised. It seemed that arriving late at any event to which they had been invited was culturally tolerated, and that any activities that they organise would mostly never start at the planned time. However, I have also observed that informants take into consideration the tangible or intangible benefits that would accrue from a particular activity they are invited to attend. For example, informants do not (or very rarely) arrive late at Centrelink arranged meetings, activities or appointments; they always try their level best to arrive early or on time because they fear that their welfare payments will automatically be stopped. Stopping welfare payments, which most depend on, would mean that they would not be able to pay for rent on time, food,

transport and other essentials of life and these would affect the whole family adversely. Informants are also punctual in reporting for job duties and studies because of the expected return value of these activities and to avoid being given a bad work record or achieving a poor performance in their studies. These did not seem comparable to those activities organised by service providers, or the social and cultural events they organised where arriving late does not matter much.

Most informants tend to agree that to solve problems arising from transportation and the inability to read and locate streets, service providers need to initiate outreach programs in suburbs where there are significant numbers of Southern Sudanese and other refugees and migrants rather than concentrating most of the services in the city centre, taking the services to where the needy live in order to make them more accessible. The data analysis shows that there tends to be a lack of proper links or communication channels between service providers and various ethnic groups that comprise the Southern Sudanese. I suggest that this could easily be resolved if service providers trained effective community volunteers from the Southern Sudanese communities to work in outreach programs and to act as links between their respective ethnic groups and the service providers. There is also a lack of collaboration; instead there has existed competition to woo Southern Sudanese to particular service providers in order to gain more funds from funding institutions. It is not uncommon for Southern Sudanese to receive invitations from more than one service provider to attend activities scheduled on the same time and day. This makes them uneasy in deciding which one to attend and which one to miss. There is also a perception among informants that service providers tend to duplicate services and consequently some choose to frequent particular services providers and not others. Some informants were also concerned about the inability of some service providers to address some of the problems or to accommodate suggestions

which they have raised at previous meetings. Thus they think meetings with them may not be worth spending time on because their contributions are not taken into consideration by the service providers. However, it is also evident from the analysis of the data that most of my informants will only seek information or help when they encounter problems but rarely before encountering the problem.

Although most informants are aware of the importance of attending information sessions, forums, workshops and other activities organised by service providers to inform them about the availability of services and other matters vital in their lives of resettlement, they seem to downplay the importance of attending them. Informants have indicated that this is because at the time of arrival there are always overriding priorities concerning what they intend to do, and attending those activities may not be a high priority for them. According to them, most information presented soon after arrival may not be put into immediate use and consequently they would often prefer information which they can put to use immediately and benefit from sooner rather than later.

Nevertheless, although there is reluctance to attend information sessions and activities organised by service providers, the majority of my informants indicated that they were treated with dignity and respect and were able to develop good relationships with the staff who deliver settlement services. Similarly, most of the staff delivering settlement services to Southern Sudanese refugees whom I interviewed for this thesis also indicated that they had good working relationships with these refugees and added that the Southern Sudanese are resilient and are settling in fairly well despite the enormously difficult experiences of war that they have suffered. They further suggested that, if given the support they need, Southern Sudanese refugees would easily adapt and integrate socially, culturally and economically into Australian society and become positive contributors to that society. The staff indicated that necessary and adequate

support is needed from governmental and non-governmental organisations, members of the Australian society, and from the Southern Sudanese themselves. They further indicated that such support would eliminate any feeling of alienation in their new society. This support would underpin their abilities and their confidence to participate in those activities which are culturally significant to the Australian society, as well as developing feelings of being recognised and accepted in their new society. These, arguably, would have a direct bearing on the psychological wellbeing of the Southern Sudanese in Australia. This is also paramount in their developing feelings of attachment to, and of being part of, Australian society which in turn determines their success in resettling and integrating into their host society.

### **Southern Sudanese Perspectives of Resettlement and Integration**

Kunz's (1973 & 1981) theoretical scholarship highlighting the plight, flight and resettlement of refugees is a relevant conceptual tool in understanding the resettlement experiences of the Southern Sudanese in Australia. I choose to draw on Kunz's theoretical perspective, in addition to other theoretical perspectives, because of its relevance in distinguishing refugees from voluntary migrants on the basis of their experiences and the reasons they left their homelands.

These refugees' experiences, according to Kunz, inevitably affect their resettlement and integration into their host country (see also Scudder and Colson 1982: 271). As I have already discussed in Chapter Three, the Southern Sudanese left their homeland under great duress due to war and political, economic, social and religious upheavals; they had never planned in advance to leave their homeland but were forced to leave in a hurry out of fear for their lives. In addition, long periods of stay in refugee camps had limited their abilities to achieve self actualisation and to develop feelings of self-worth as there

were no activities, facilities or resources to permit them to develop their inherent capabilities. According to Richardson et al. (2002), these pre-migration experiences impinged on refugees' abilities to resettle and integrate with ease into their country of resettlement.

Based on the evidence from the data, it seems likely that some of the informants are still being haunted by those experiences and were unprepared for the kind of life they encountered in Australia. Thus, it is these experiences that marked 'refugees' as a different category from migrants. As a result, they need a different way of delivering settlement services to them. This is because most are still struggling to cope with the experiences of war and related conditions, having their kin ties ruptured, and losing the social and economic status which they had enjoyed at home. This complex mixture of experiences significantly impacted on the daily lives of my informants in Australia. As Matsuoka and Sorenson (2001: 64) have indicated, this brings about the experience of "charged strangeness" inherent in the experiences of exile or diaspora. The experience of charged strangeness reveals itself in the case of those of my informants who for the first time in their lives encountered such things as gas/electric cookers, bank cards and ATM machines, elevators, computers, and answering phones. This first time encounter, according to these informants, was a frightening experience for them. These are things considered to be mundane in western society; yet they have been sources of 'charged strangeness' to many of my informants in Australia because they had not been part of their lives in Southern Sudan or in refugee camps.

It can be argued that governments of settlement countries often measure success in refugee resettlement and integration by the extent to which they are able to access social services such as health, education/training, employment, acquisition of the host language, and capacity to earn income and acquire assets. These measurements are,

however, obtained without adequately taking into account the different experiences and circumstances that affected the individual refugees and which resulted into their resettlement in another country. Host governments and settlement support organisations have often tended to advocate a top-down model of services planning and delivery. They focus on structural arrangements and procedures to which refugees are expected to conform. But these were, however, worked out without any input from the refugees themselves. This supports Knudsen's (1991: 31) argument that resettlement programs and services are always founded on unequal power relationships. Knudsen then stresses the need to take the complexities of the refugees' experiences into consideration when planning programs and services for them. Drawing on this, I advocate that when planning programs and services for refugees, both government and non-governmental support organisations should recognise that refugees possess diverse experiences and needs and should not be treated as a homogeneous group of people, but rather their different levels of education, socio-economic, experiences and cultural backgrounds, as well as other intervening factors, should be taken into account. Furthermore, most organisations delivering services to refugees often lack programs and activities aimed at developing what Putnam (2000: 20) calls "bridging social capital" which has the potential to generate social cohesion within a community and in the wider society.

I emphasise here that it is essential for support organisations delivering settlement services to refugees and migrants to consult on a regular basis with all those receiving their services in order to guarantee that their views and concerns are effectively identified and taken into account in their policy and program formulation. By doing this, refugees and migrants would see the organisations as committed to their welfare. The organisations would thus become more effectively engaged with the refugees and migrants. Regular consultations would enable the organisations to receive feedback



about the services they delivered and enable them to incorporate positive suggestions into their future plans and into the decision-making process regarding effective service delivery models. This is likely to generate trust because the refugees and migrants would feel listened to.

Although services formulated by settlement support organisations and governments are aimed at successful resettlement and integration of refugees, refugees' inputs are typically omitted during the planning stages. When I asked informants regarding what successful resettlement and integration meant to them, their responses indicated a move away from governmental and non-governmental views. Most informants argued that since resettlement and integration are individually experienced and contested, there should be flexible models of settlement services delivery which take into consideration individual experiences; staff who delivers the services should understand the experiences of individual refugees. They indicated that when the same service delivery models used to service refugees from Europe is used for those from Southern Sudan, it is unlikely that they would achieve the same desired effect because refugees from Europe possess similar 'cultural capital' and values to Australians while the Southern Sudanese do not. This is because cultural capital that individuals possess will habitually influence their life in a new environment (see Bourdieu 1984: 101; 1986: 241-2, 245 & 247). This is also because their resettlement and integration abilities, challenges and experiences are markedly different from those of refugees from Europe and other countries.

Thus there is a need for different resettlement strategies, resources and servicing. These differential factors require a gradual re-orientation of the Southern Sudanese to the Australian way of life which is markedly dissimilar to that which is required for European migrants. The re-orientation requires learning new sets of symbols from the

Australian culture in order to understand the new environment and to permit adaptation and change to occur once the meanings of those new sets of symbols are understood (see Bourdieu 1990: 25-6; 57 & 95 and Bourdieu & Passeron 1977).

Informants also indicated that the willingness of members of the Australian society to learn from, and to allow development and establishment of relationships and social networks with, them are equally important because these are likely to generate positive social returns to both (Bourdieu 1986: 248-9 & 1980: 2; Burt 1992: 9; Portes 1998: 11-12; Putnam 1993: 3-7; 67 & 163-185, Newton 1999: 8 & 18-20; see also Coleman 1990; Erickson 1995 & Putnam 2000 and Bourdieu 1983). The establishment of social networks and relationships are significant in facilitating any resettlement and integration processes and are hence pivotal for the Southern Sudanese because they offer them both emotional strength and self-confidence. These energise them and make them realise their resettlement potential by participating in what Putman (2000: 19 & 287) describes as “civil associations”, namely social connections in the church, community clubs, and other social groupings of the wider society.

For most of my informants starting life in Australia, a very unfamiliar society from that of their own, has been a challenging and difficult experience. This is because the majority of the Southern Sudanese were from rural backgrounds where their livelihoods were mostly dependent on subsistent farming and agro-pastoral livelihoods. As Dudu, in Abusharaf (2002: 54), indicates in her study of the Sudanese in North America, the rural life skills that the Sudanese possess are not so transferable and useful in an urban environment. Most informants had lived a livelihood not solely dependent on an earned income, and therefore in Australia managing money became a challengingly difficult task. Hence, in this context, most have indicated that their first six months in Australian was the most difficult period of their resettlement experiences. This is because it was a

learning period in which they were yet to comprehend Australian socio-cultural and economic landscapes. But as time progressed, and with support from services providers like MRCSA, ARA, members of their own ethnic groups, and Australian family friends, they were slowly able to learn to cope and manage with most of the settlement challenges.

However despite these positive resettlement experiences, recently Sudanese refugee resettlement in Australia has been the focus of considerable government and media scrutiny regarding their abilities to integrate and conform to Australian values and way of life. Conversely, Jupp (2003) has challenged such a scrutiny on specific migrant and refugee groups. He indicates that generally migrants who arrived in Australia have recurrent settlement problems due to lack of resources and family support. Yet the Australian government through its funded organisations has provided an assortment of settlement services to the refugees and migrants (Taylor and Stanovic 2004; also see DIMIA 2003) to ease their resettlement in Australia. Nevertheless, as I indicated earlier, service providers need to adopt a variety of models for servicing refugees with different background experiences.

In order to satisfy the resettlement needs of the Southern Sudanese, who are a distinct group and who possess life experiences quite different from those of other refugees and migrants with whom Australians have been familiar, it is essential to find out from them what they think best meets their resettlement needs. While my informants are appreciative of any resettlement assistance which they have received and would like to be successful settlers in Australia, many have argued that success in resettlement and integration is a function of the time lived in Australia as well as a function of the quality and quantity of the settlement assistance offered to them. The length of time lived in

Australia is seen as a core factor in their success or failure to resettle, adjust and integrate into Australian society. Gaitot demonstrates this in the following comment:

Like most Southern Sudanese and I arrived in Australia in 2000 and am still breathing out the horrible experiences I had gone through. I need time to know and understand how things work here ... this is a different society, different people and culture ... I need to peel off my experiences and replace them with new ones from Australian society and so I tell you that success in resettlement and integration can't be possible within a short time.

(Gaitot interviewed on 4 December 2006)

Similarly, Ayitó emphasises the importance of the period of staying in Australia to achieve successful resettlement and integration:

I have lived in Australia for about 30 years and now I feel more Australian than Sudanese because I have been working and living in Australia in all these years. I bought a house and I am also married to an Australian girl which completed my integration process.

(Ayitó interviewed on 10 August 2006)

As the above quotations suggest, the length of stay in Australia, the services received and the resources acquired during the period lived in Australia significantly influenced my informants' feelings for and attachment to Australia. The longer they stayed in Australia and acquired properties, education, and permanent jobs, and even married Australian partners, the more they felt attached to, and part of, the Australian society. Also the more they became knowledgeable about Australian cultural traditions and how to navigate within Australian systems, the more they felt part of those systems. In my informants' opinion, integration is a slow process that takes a longer period to occur than is usually recognised.

When asked what in their view constituted success in resettlement, most of my informants mentioned living with fewer uncertainties in life (being permanently employed, gaining financial independence, achieving success in education etc). Given their previous experiences, living in peace without fear for their lives also means

successful resettlement. They hail Australia as a country of security characterised by respect for the rule of law and human rights. They also indicated that the ability to overcome life's challenges in Australia without, or with less, support from others also indicates a person's level of successful resettlement. Thus, it is the combination of all these, and the satisfaction which they feel as a result, that makes them feel fully resettled and part of their new society.

It is essential to note that all my informants perceive integration to be a result of personal endeavour. They view integration as a process occurring gradually over time. However they suggested that there is an attempt from service providers to use one measuring model for everybody when assessing the extent of their integration. But because each person's experiences and responses to resettlement, integration and resettlement challenges are different, there are often those who have more difficulties than others to resettle and integrate. Based on the evidence from the data, responses to resettlement challenges are generally affected by individual socio-cultural, economic, educational and linguistic abilities. Nevertheless, despite the numerous resettlement challenges and difficulties which informants faced, the data analysis tends to indicate that most are generally resettling fairly well into their new society and would eventually integrate over time.

At the time of my fieldwork, most of my informants had acquired Australian citizenship as part of an attempt to become legal members of the Australian society. Their hope was that "citizenship" would open up for them opportunities which were only available to Australian citizens. It was also perceived to widen their prospects of employment both in public and private sectors of the economy. However, others have claimed that since they acquired Australian citizenship and began to search for employment both in private

and public sectors, they have not succeeded. This has led them to allege that citizenship seems to be unequal in the eyes of those who possess the power to employ.

### **Education and Educational Achievements as Essential Factors in Resettlement and Integration Processes**

Access to education and achievements in education are strongly perceived by my informants to hold the keys to their successful resettlement and integration in Australia because they increase their chances of interaction with Australians and of finding stable jobs. Informants strongly valued both their own education and that of their children. As a result most tended to invest in education as a means of improving their future lives in Australia. The drive to engage in educational activities and to acquire qualifications, knowledge and skills in Australia is driven by the belief that education will make them employable and hence it is given a high priority. It is also believed that it is important to bridge the educational gap between them and their hosts which had been created by decades of war without adequate access to education. However, they also faced daunting challenges in seeking to obtain educational qualifications because the Australian educational system is very different from the one some have experienced in Sudan or elsewhere in Africa. Informants who had studied in Sudan or elsewhere in Africa reported that in Australia students are required to do most things by themselves. The teaching and learning in Australia are technologically driven and students use the internet, online materials, PowerPoint or overhead projectors and computers a great deal. Most of my informants were unfamiliar when they arrived in Australia with these technologies and this system of teaching, and hence they faced difficulties in making the most of the Australian system of education.

However, although studying/learning is challenging and technologically intimidating, most informants believed that getting into the educational system facilitates their

resettlement because education socialises them and orients them to the civic, economic, social, cultural and political values of their new society. It also makes them aware of their obligations, and the rights and responsibilities of good citizenship. Additionally, informants think that education allows them to learn a lot about Australian systems, makes them interact with Australians and enables them develop friendships and networks with Australian students and other colleagues.

Success in education and getting a job are viewed as indicative of a certain degree of success in resettlement and integration in Australian society. Hence, education is considered by many as a prerequisite to success in resettling and integrating into Australian society because it equips them with the knowledge and necessary skills useable in Australian society. Informants suggested that the knowledge and skills acquired in education enables them to make positive contributions to Australian society when employed, including the contribution which they make by way of the taxation deductible from their earnings.

However, although my informants would like their children to experience educational successes in Australia, major challenges exist in families where both parents and their children have never experienced any formal school system before. As a result of this, both children and parents struggle with study demands. In these families the desire to study and acquire knowledge and skills brings new pressures, in addition to other resettlement pressures which they are already experiencing. It is often the case that after completion of the program tailored for new arrivals, children are referred to the main stream school system where many encounter problems because they have not experienced a formal school system before. They are not familiar with some of the subjects being taught. This is exacerbated by the Australian system of education which places the children of refugees/migrants in classes according to their ages rather than

according to their ability to understand and manage the subjects being taught in those classes. Parents are concerned about their children who were born in refugee camps and grew up where they had no access to education before resettling in Australia. Thus, placing such children in classes according to their age together with those who have progressed and enjoyed uninterrupted schooling does not always produce desirable results for Southern Sudanese children. This impedes their school progress and educational achievement as they are studying some of the subjects for the first time. This has been reported by parents as a major reason for truancy among their children. Hence, some parents are concerned about the likelihood of juvenile delinquency if nothing is done to help their children. Parents urge the establishment by the school system of strong preventative and collaborative initiatives between schools and the parents in order to monitor any tendencies towards truancy and delinquent behaviour in their children so that the family and the school can jointly take preventative measures.

It is worth noting that informants often mention their children's education as one of their motives for making the decision to seek resettlement in western countries rather than continuing to live in refugee camps where there was no adequate education. They perceive education as the only means by which they could improve the quality of their lives and enhance their social and economic mobility. Similarly, they also view education as a gateway to social, cultural, economic, civic and political participation in Australian society. For example, informants indicated that once they have achieved an adequate level of education and have developed the ability to speak good English, they will be able to read information, interact with Australians, and understand and interpret symbols in the wider Australian society.



## **Resettlement Challenges**

### **Language**

Perhaps one of the most important social and cultural determinants of success in resettlement and integration for non-English speaking refugees in Australian society is the ability to communicate in English with Australians. According to Taylor (2004), lack of English proficiency is blamed for the exclusion of refugees from participation in education and employment, for limiting their social interactions and in denying them access to services in their new society. It also hinders them from communicating with authorities and in accessing societal information essential to their daily lives in Australia. To my informants, the English language is pivotal in their interactions and for their cultural acceptance into Australian society as it permits face-to-face social interactions, communication and enhances understanding of one another. Informants have stressed that without some mastery of the English language there would be a breakdown in communication between them and their hosts. This in turn would thwart any chance of meaningful interactions, and significantly reduce their chances of getting jobs, understanding job interviews and job instructions, making friendships, and learning new things about Australia and its culture. Informants asserted that knowledge of the English language helps to strengthen and to speed up their resettlement and adjustment to the new society and it is a tool and a vehicle for social and cultural adjustment, and for getting better grades in studies. It also enhances their self-esteem and gives them the confidence to approach and interact with Australians. Studies conducted in Britain by Bloch (2002) and in New Zealand by the New Zealand Immigration Service (2004) confirm that similar views were held among refugees resettled in Britain and New Zealand.

Unlike children, the majority of adult Southern Sudanese refugees enroll on arrival in an Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and other English language learning institutions designed for new arrivals. However, often their studies are interrupted by general settlement issues such as difficulties with transport, instabilities in accommodation, childcare issues, personal and family commitments, and other problems. Although the older informants have acknowledged that learning English for the first time and in adult life is difficult, the use of a self-rating method (on a scale from 0 to 4) to assess and rate their own levels of English language on arrival and at the time of the interview gave evidence of their having achieved significant improvements in individual levels of English skills since arrival. As a result, some have moved on to do courses in TAFESA (Technical and Further Education, South Australia), in other institutions, in Universities, or have found jobs. It is worth noting that generally Southern Sudanese arrived in Australia with varying levels of English proficiency. There are those who do not possess any spoken or written English at all, others who possess quite good levels of English, and a few others who possess quite high levels of English proficiency. This divergence was due to the differential effects of a long period of war in Southern Sudan which deprived many of the opportunity to enroll in any study.

### **Housing and Accommodation**

Currently the Australian immigration authority, through its funded organisations, accommodates new refugees on their arrival in standard housing; these refugees enjoy the same utilities and services as any other Australian citizen. However, in South Australia they are expected to live in the provided accommodation for about six months and are then expected to move to long-term accommodation, mainly in the private

sector, supposedly with support from Anglicare<sup>3</sup> and other support services The South Australian State government does provide four weeks paid rental assistance and the rental bond to new arrivals, while Centrelink provides rent assistance which is added to the refugees' welfare payments. But lack of housing development has created a shortage of affordable housing and rent has become more competitive. As a result, competition over the few available rental properties has pushed rents substantially higher relative to the financial assistance received by refugees.

Housing is a very crucial factor in any resettlement and integration program. Research has shown that in countries of settlement, refugees generally need greater assistance in housing than other residents (Dunbar 1994; Pittaway 1991). Similarly, DIMIA (2003b) has shown that single people and large refugee families have the greatest difficulty in finding and being offered long-term housing. As Foley and Beer (2003) have indicated, discrimination and financial and cultural unfamiliarity with the Australian housing and legal systems are among the barriers that create difficulties for Southern Sudanese refugees finding housing in Australia. Hence housing has been one of the significant resettlement difficulties for informants. Adding to these difficulties is the average size of the Sudanese family. On average, a Sudanese family size is about seven people. This size is relatively larger than the average Australian family. Most residential housing consists of three bedroom homes and informants have reported that some landlords and real estate agents are very reluctant to offer a three bedroom house to a Southern Sudanese family of more than six.

Although housing is a national issue in Australia, it is much worse for my informants than for Australians because they have just arrived and the majority has neither

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<sup>3</sup> Anglicare is one of the service providers (support organisations) in South Australia contracted by the commonwealth government and MRCSA to provide accommodation to refugee new arrivals.

extended rental nor stable employment histories, and lack a proven stable income. Quite often some families have reached a housing crisis point because landlords or real estate agents have been unwilling to offer them rental properties or have refused to let them renew contracts at the end of their leases, instead asking them to leave or face eviction if they do not move out within the period of time specified in the original lease.

Most informants had bad relations with authority figures back home (such as the police and the army) so that any mention of an authority is regarded as disturbing. As a result some families have felt forced to move and stay with relatives or friends before the given time of the lease has elapsed. While they temporarily stay in a relative or friend's house, the two families would push the carrying capacity of the house to its limits and could create another problem with the accommodating family if the landlord or real estate agent realised that the house was being occupied by extra people. Abiya explained his experience of looking for rental property and his encounters with landlords and real state estate agents:

We are eight in my family. The house I rented was sold and I was notified to evacuate within three months. But I was never offered a rental property. Even if I have applied for many houses, my applications were rejected. The buyer threatened to evict my family, so I had to take my family to stay with a relative until I found a house. I think my applications were rejections because the landlords and real estate agents seemed to be scared of my family size. I was told that a three bedroom house is not enough for my family; I was told that eight people in a three bedrooms house will wreck the house ... but they didn't offer me a four bedroom house either. Maybe they think I couldn't afford to pay the rent because my wife and I are not employed.

(Abiya interviewed on 3 March 2006)

There is a general perception among the majority of my informants that landlords and real estate agents consider that Sudanese have a lot of children and love to congregate in one house with relatives and friends, regardless of the house's size. This perceived view

is alleged to influence significantly most of the decisions made by landlords and real estate agents when deciding whether to offer rental properties to them.

Due to the high demand for housing, landlords and real estate agents select applicants who suit their criteria. Some prefer employed tenants to those who are unemployed and living on welfare payments which they see as unstable income. Others require certain documents like a driver's licence, credit cards, passport, bank cards, or rental and employment histories; they also prefer Australian referees in addition to an income statement. These documents are accordingly allocated high and low scores as determined by the real estate agents or landlords. Applicants with the highest aggregate scores qualify and are offered the properties. This disadvantages most Southern Sudanese because they do not have all of these documents and hence they are very likely to be excluded by these criteria. The most commonly held documents by my informants are their humanitarian visas which, unlike passports or a driver's license, are not familiar to most Australian landlords and real estate agents. Also most informants reported that their inability to speak English, or their possession of an unfamiliar English accent, created communication problems with landlords or real estate agents as it negatively affected their interactions during property inspections, when reporting any breakage in the house, and when negotiating yearly rent increments. Furthermore, information on rental property is found either in newspapers or on the internet. These further exacerbate the difficulties of searching for a house for those who cannot read or who are unfamiliar with computers and the internet. In addition, searching for rental properties requires access to a car to drive around to see houses that are advertised; most Southern Sudanese neither possess cars nor do they drive. For those who drive and have cars, an inability to read maps and directions in street directories, which are essential in locating streets and house numbers, presents another problem.

## **Employment as a Key Component of Resettlement and Integration Success**

I think I would have resettled easily in Australia if my overseas qualifications, experiences and skills were recognised and if I am given a chance to demonstrate my experiences and skill on job ... I mean if employed in my profession. See! I am a qualified accountant and I have many years of work experience with the Sudan government before the war and with international organisations while I was a refugee in Kenya. But here I am only employed as a casual Dinka language interpreter and translator as if I do not have any qualification, skill and experience. I prefer to be employed according to my qualification, experiences and skills and paid according to my worthiness ... this would make me feel satisfied and part of this society because I would make my contributions to the Australian society through taxes from my income ... I am underemployed ... this does not make me happy because I cannot provide for my family here as I used to do in Africa.

(Yirol interviewed on 30 June 2006)

Similar views were expressed by those informants with educational qualifications, skills and experiences but who were not employed in their professions. These expressions indicate how difficult they feel that resettlement and integration are without employment where they could derive both financial and job satisfaction.–Informants stated that gaining employment accommodates them into Australian society and allows them to use their potential effectively. But without any support, most will remain unemployed or underemployed for a long time. Currently there are no pathways for refugees with overseas qualifications, skills and experiences to make a successful transition into the Australian job market in the area of their professions. Southern Sudanese with overseas qualifications, experiences and skills typically do not find work in their profession. Those who are employed work as casual or unskilled workers in jobs unrelated to their previous training or fields of study because employers do not recognise their overseas credentials, skills and experiences. Most informants have blamed their unemployment on what they perceived as protectionist attitudes on the part of Australian employers and professional associations or unions which have erected

stringent structural barriers to forbid them from practicing their skills in their profession. Informants claimed that professional associations and unions have placed severe demands on those wanting to retrain and that there has been no government support in the form of subsidies to help them meet those demands. It is worth noting that, so far, a few like Amou have succeeded in overcoming the structural barriers through their own initiative and their determination to undergo rigorous assessment, testing and retraining. It was after passing all these that Amou was permitted to practice his profession in South Australia.

Employment is viewed by all my informants as a form of participation in Australian society whereby they could put their full potential to use and make contributions to the Australian society in the form of financial injections such as tax deductions, and through increases in their consumption of goods and services. Informants pointed out that employment and working together with Australians brings them closer to one another and increases the chances of developing a better understanding between them because employment provides a context for face-to-face social interactions (see Chapter Five). Employment, they stress, helps them to learn on the job more about the Australian work culture and other aspects of the Australian way of life from their Australian workmates.

Discourses about employment during the interviews were centred on its significance in enhancing their lives, on its capacity to give social and economic security, and on its ability to elevate their social and economic status within their families and in the wider community. Employment is also cherished as a key to self-sufficiency, financial security, and as providing a way to move up the social and economic ladders in Australian society. Most informants are fully aware that without any employment, they are likely to live in the margins of the Australian society. The general belief among

informants was that unemployment and underemployment retards their ability and capacity to resettle and integrate. It was also believed that unemployment sustains economic and social insecurity in their current and future lives in Australia. Additionally, informants indicate that employment makes them feel greater self-worth and more able to support themselves, their families here and also their kin left behind.

Most informants stated that Australian employers' attitudes towards them are influenced by a common perception among many people that refugees are a "vulnerable and traumatised" category of migrants and when employed, they are likely to be liabilities rather than resources in the workplace because their traumatic experiences would make them difficult to manage. Furthermore, they added, Australian employers were prejudiced towards them, seeing them as lacking the skills and experiences they needed. In a similar way, Shady (2007) shows that African refugees fleeing from war to the West encountered employment problems because of the assumption that they are from under-developed countries and lack the necessary qualifications and skills useful in the West. Shady argues that this assumption fails to recognise that in the current global era, Africans are in touch with modernity and some had already acquired when they were at home the necessary credentials and the abilities to use technologies and others skills in pursuit of better lives, and that these could be transferable and useful in the West.

According to Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007: 11), Australia currently enjoys a period of economic affluence and low unemployment (under 5%). It is also experiencing skilled and unskilled labour shortages. However Colic-Peisker and Tilbury reveal that, ironically, in comparison to other migrants Sudanese refugees (most of whom are Southern Sudanese) both skilled and unskilled have highest unemployment and underemployment rates in Australia (ABS 2001 in Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007). This concurs with the views of my informants who claim that Australian employers in



general tend to privilege and favour Whites, Asians and others over Africans. This relates to the belief that Europeans are more educated, more skilled, and speak better English than Africans (and specifically Sudanese), and are culturally more similar to Australians. The majority of informants think that the cultural similarities of Europeans to Australians allow them to make a relatively easy transition to the Australian job market. Informants also stated that Australia's familiarity with, proximity to and economic links with Asians, New Zealanders and others make them preferred employees. Due to this, informants claimed that people from these countries tended to experience less discrimination in workplaces in comparison to the Sudanese who are more visibly different from Australians. Informants also pointed out that the Asians are particularly favoured because of their familiarity with, geographical proximity to, and economic links with Australia.

In analysing the data, I found that most employed informants reported working in unskilled, menial jobs including fruit picking, laundry work, meat and chicken abattoirs, and in production lines in factories. An insignificant number have found niches in the skilled sectors of the settlement service support organisations working as settlement workers, bilingual and multilingual interpreters and translators. Their cultural and linguistic expertise, in addition to their refugee experiences, makes them employable by organisations delivering settlement services to refugees and migrants. On the other hand, it is only recently that there has been a small entry to the ever growing aged care industry where some informants have taken up subordinate positions (casual and fulltime) in both lower and upper care sections of the industry. According to informants, entry to this industry is less restricted and less discriminatory in its recruitment practices than entry to other industries. However, most entered the industry purposely to make an easy transition to nursing or to midwifery studies.

Based on evidence drawn from the analysis of the data, the majority of informants claimed that there is a perception among some Australians that refugees, whether skilled or unskilled, should take up the available unattractive jobs that Australians avoid. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007: 14) confirm this when they show that some employers have expressed to DIMA offices their need for labourers and requesting “refugees” for such jobs which were unattractive to Australians. Although there are jobs in the unskilled sectors, informants with overseas qualifications, skills and experiences believed that once they take up such jobs, the knowledge, skills and experiences they have acquired are likely to degenerate and their hopes of practising them will be dashed. Instead, some few others have opted to retrain or embark on studying new courses to acquire qualifications that make them employable rather than entering unskilled jobs. The most cited reasons by informants with overseas qualifications, skills and experiences for not wanting to enter unskilled jobs include the following:

- (i) First, those jobs are mostly seasonal, do not pay much and are inadequate to support their families and kin back home;
- (ii) secondly, they fear that they would be trapped in those jobs and would be unlikely to upgrade their previous qualifications or acquire new ones; and
- (iii) thirdly, they fear that once trapped there, they will be unable to network and get information about retraining opportunities or about the availability of better jobs.

Wood (1990: 6) confirms this fear among newcomers living in a new country. Nonetheless, those without qualifications, or who are less skilled, have opted to look for any job and have found employment. This is because they think that since they have no established qualifications and skills, to start training or studies afresh will take a long time and that makes them unable to support themselves or meet their cultural obligations to assist kin left behind.

There is a body of literature suggesting that refugees and other forced migrants often experience a loss of professional employment in their countries of resettlement. According to Evan and Kelly (1991), this has been due to structural or/and individual discrimination, or it may simply be a result of market forces. However other scholars, including Rydgren (2004), McSpadden (1987) and Shih (2002), point to a lack of social capital and especially to the refugee's limited social networks and connections to assist them in employment. Nevertheless, other views regarding unemployment and underemployment of refugees suggest that there is a systematic and ingrained discrimination and prejudice which works against refugees on the basis of their qualifications, absence of skills and Australian work experiences, English skills and accents, and their perceived attitudes toward work and time (Essed 1991; Shih 2002; Rydgren 2004). In addition to these barriers, my informants have indicated that the lack of a driver's licence, accessible transport and Australian referees have collaborated with the other barriers to edge them into the periphery of the Australian job market. Hence, Mr. Amoko, one of the informants, told me that "Australia and Australian people would benefit a lot from us when they do not create employment barriers for us but let us prove ourselves on job".

It is worth stressing here that on arrival in Australia Southern Sudanese with overseas qualifications typically applied for the recognition of their qualifications, but that once they were recognised, it was not easy for them to find jobs in their professions. Currently, there is no established professional service to support refugees with professional skills and qualifications to make a smooth transition to the Australian job market through mentoring or work placement programs in their respective professions in order to acquire the needed Australian work experiences. The range of available job networks are not equipped to cater for the employment needs of qualified professional

refugees, so that those referred to them usually end up being told to take up unskilled jobs in factory production lines, meat and chicken abattoirs, fruit picking and so forth. There is so far no attempt to connect them to potential employers or associations of their professions in order to provide support. Joki explains her personal experiences:

I am a trained nurse and midwife and I have worked for 17 years in Sudan. When I came to Australia, I thought with my skills, qualification and experience I will find job either in nursing or midwifery but I was wrong, I didn't find any. There is no support for refugees like me with qualifications, experience and skills and there is no job placement for us to gain Australian work experience ... I have to start from zero; I am currently studying Aged Care and I hope after I have worked in aged care for a while, I would qualify to enroll at TAFE and study nursing again ... You see! I have become like someone without any qualifications, no skills and no experience at all.

(Joki, interviewed on 13 June 2006)

The problem of lack of recognition of refugees' overseas qualifications has been authenticated by Korac's (2003) comparative study of the settlement experiences of refugees in Italy and the Netherlands. This study found similar employment and unemployment experiences among refugees resettled in these countries. Like Joki, other informants with overseas qualifications, experiences and skills stated that if they were given opportunities to use their professional skills, or to be retrained, they would be able to contribute positively to Australian society, and that being on the job would facilitate and hasten their resettlement and integration into Australian society. But, due to lack of support, the employment potential of the Southern Sudanese with overseas qualifications, skills and experiences remain untapped, thus making them unable to contribute effectively to their new society. Being unable to practice the knowledge gained from several years of studies/training in a particular profession, and putting those acquired experiences and skills to use, creates lingering stress, frustration and depression among some individuals who believed that they had been abandoned and left without any support. Regrettably, this has led to some individuals taking to heavy

drinking because they think that their expectations to get jobs in their career areas have been squashed by resettlement.

During my fieldwork some informants with qualifications, skills and experiences who have not found jobs in their professions and who believed that their employment potential has not been put into use in Australia, have returned to Southern Sudan because the war there ended in 2005. In the Christmas of 2006, two of my informants who returned to seek employment opportunities back in Southern Sudan came to enjoy Christmas with their family and returned after the Christmas. Others arrived recently to spend time with their families and they too have returned. After their arrival, I contacted and arranged separate interviews with them to ascertain whether they had found employment in their professions back in Sudan. Some reported that they had found employment through people now in the government of Southern Sudan who had been colleagues either in study or work; for others, getting work there was not as easy as they had thought. They indicated their intention to continue with their jobs there, but had no intention of moving their families back to Southern Sudan because they would like their children to get a better education in Australia and because they were not certain whether or not another war would break out. Two of these individuals have bought houses here and also have houses in Southern Sudan and they are grateful to have the two homes, one here and another in Southern Sudan, and to be able to travel between the two homes and places.

These individual informants were concerned that the longer they remained unemployed in Australia, the faster their learned knowledge, skills and experiences would wane; they indicated that returning home had enabled them to use their qualifications, skills and experiences to help rebuild their war ravaged homeland. It seemed to be generally incomprehensible among these informants that Australia has a high demand for skilled

migrants and yet shows no intention of accommodating those who are already in Australia and possess some skills. Informants urged the establishment of a body/authority to make a stocktaking of what skills the country already has among its refugees and how they could be utilised. Otherwise Southern Sudanese and other refugees with overseas qualifications will feel that they have been intentionally excluded from employment in areas where they could use their skills and qualifications effectively.

On the basis of the above, I would argue that there is a need for a governmental or non-governmental organisation to establish a registry of refugees entering Australia with overseas qualifications and demonstrated skills and experiences, and to support them in making the transition into Australian job markets by putting them into job placements, or to establish a mentoring program so that this category of refugees could work under the supervision of qualified professionals in their fields/professions so that they could either gain Australian experience or be retrained so that they become employable in the Australian workforce. Even if overseas qualifications are accredited/recognised, without this kind of support many skilled refugees will continue to face rigid blocks to entry to the Australian professional job market and hence remain unemployed. This is likely to make them dissatisfied with their life of resettlement. If this is not done, Australia will not benefit from the valuable qualities which refugees possess and those individuals are likely to be denied employment and to feel discriminated.

Some informants have expressed concern about incidents of racial discrimination in the job market and racial bullying on the job. This lends support to Colic-Peisker and Tilbury's (2007: 17) proposition that Australian labour market discriminates on the basis of racial and cultural visibility. This however contradicts Evans and Kelly's (1991) assertion that the Australian job market is generally "blind to ethnicity" and that

people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds are treated equally. Nevertheless, I would argue that because the Southern Sudanese are visibly and culturally different from traditional migrants to Australia, they are likely to be the least preferred and probably the most discriminated against during the job recruitment process because employers are not familiar with them, are likely to feel mistrust, awe, and concern over their reliability and their capacity to work satisfactorily. Although the Australian Racial Discrimination Act (Commonwealth) of 1975 dictates that all Australian residents must have equal access to employment services, it is probable that some informants who have become Australian citizens and who are permanent residents could have fallen through the cracks in this well intentioned Act.

Although this thesis is not designed to explore racial discrimination, nonetheless I would claim that any form of discrimination, real or perceived, tends to lower my informants' sense of belonging to their new society and to thwart their ability to connect positively to individuals or groups in the society. This in turn tends to cause a loss of self-actualisation, confidence and self esteem, which consequently affects their well-being and their daily lives in Australia.

In this thesis the majority of informants prefer to use the term 'resettlement' as opposed to 'integration' because they fear that 'integration' implies a loss of their own culture and identity in favour of the Australian culture. They prefer to maintain most aspects of their culture but to accommodate some aspects of the Australian culture with which they feel comfortable. Australia is a multicultural society and multiculturalism tends to foster the notion that all cultures are of equal value. Hence there is a need for a policy designed to create spaces to validate the cultural values of all within the society rather than privileging the cultural values of the dominant group.

As I have indicated earlier, Southern Sudanese resettlement, adjustment and full integration into Australian society are gradually occurring but it will take a bit of time to be fully realised. This is because some of the Southern Sudanese are still being haunted by the devastation and experiences of war, in addition to the potential differences in culture (language) and social orientation, as well as the barriers they face in accessing employment as a result of the lack of recognition of their overseas qualifications, skills and experiences, and inadequate support needed to give them adequate access to employment and housing. Additionally, most informants lack an understanding of the Australian systems and procedures regarding employment, recruitment and interview processes.

There are also differing expectations and values attached to 'time' between my informants and their Australian hosts; hence Southern Sudanese need to reconceptualise their concept of time and the value attached to it in accordance with Australian concepts in order to facilitate relationships between them and their hosts. Given these factors, it is likely that at least the first generation of the Southern Sudanese refugees in Australia will continue to struggle to adjust as they resettle in their new society.

Understandably the effects of war and of life in refugee camps have severely affected the enrolment in educational courses of most of the Southern Sudanese resettled in Australia. Achieved levels of education should have been more useful in Australia than having none. However many arrived without any spoken or written English. This minimises their ability to interact and make friendships with Australians.

It is contended that services delivery to Southern Sudanese requires a coordinated, flexible and interactive approach that critically takes into account the views of refugees regarding what they think is best for their resettlement. This can be achieved by actively



involving them in planning, delivery and evaluation of those services planned for them. Lack of consultation with Southern Sudanese concerning their involvement in the planning and delivery of services has resulted in a reluctance to attend activities organised by settlement support organisations. This is because informants claimed to have been sidelined. Some service providers have lacked cultural sensitivity regarding issues that concern refugees and their cultures. This pinpoints the need to inform settlement support organisations about the cultures and traditions of the recipients of their services.

I would like to stress here that Australia is a medley of refugees and migrants with different cultures, and unique attributes and traditions. Delivering settlement services for refugees and migrants using the same model/approach for each of these groups raises concerns about whether these different groups feel that they have been serviced in culturally appropriate ways. For example, assessment of individuals and families in staff offices rather than in informants' households may not yield the intended outcomes. Assessment in offices tends to obscure the assessor's understanding of what is really going on inside the families of those they are assessing, and makes it difficult for them to determine and assess with certainty what type of on-going services a family, or individual within it, needs in order to facilitate the processes of resettlement and adaptation into Australian society.

In the following Chapter I will examine social relationships and networking among Southern Sudanese and with Australians. I will discuss how they are reworked, negotiated, maintained or they unrumbled overtime. The focus here will be on home visits and participation in social and cultural activities with Australian friends in order to determined whether these interactions augment the settlement and integration processes of Southern Sudanese. Similarly, I will examine the significant role of the

church in support my informants in their needs and in connecting them with Australians in the church.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### STRENGTHENING THE TIES THAT BIND: SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKING WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE SOUTHERN SUDANESE COMMUNITIES AND THE EFFECTS ON RESETTLEMENT PROCESSES

#### Introduction

No settlement is ever complete. It is always in a process of settling, unsettling, and resettling ... It may house particular groups, reflect patterns or practices of togetherness, and symbolise a past or present way of life. It should not be thought of as a permanent structure that has no openings or interchanges with the outside.

(Iltan 2002:3)

In Chapter Four I provided informants' perspectives on their experiences of resettlement and the difficulties confronting them in Australia. I elucidated how those difficulties, which are directly linked to their previous backgrounds, experiences of war and life in refugee camps in exile, have influenced and exacerbated their resettlement abilities in Australia. I explicitly discussed their difficulties in accessing employment and housing, and the inabilities of some informants to speak/write and understand the English language and some of the potential barriers they faced in Australia which to some extent impeded their success in resettlement and integration.

In this chapter I will discuss social relationships and networking among Southern Sudanese and between themselves and their Australian host. I will show how these are negotiated, reworked, maintained or fall apart overtime. I will show whether or not informants engage separately in activities they organise within their own communities, or whether they invite their Australian friends and vice versa. I will also show whether they exchange home visits. This is to ascertain how such social relationships and networking, as well the support received from their fellow Southern Sudanese and from their Australian friends, enhances the resettlement processes. In addition I will consider

the role of the church in supporting some Southern Sudanese church goers in meeting their religious and emotional resettlement needs and in connecting informants who are church goers with Australians in those churches they worship in. I will argue that the aggregate sum of the relationships, networks and support systems determine the successes or failures of my informants in resettling and integrating into Australian society, but that host governments and resettled refugees may have divergent views of what constitutes successful resettlement and integration.

As indicated earlier, it is often the case that host governments commonly measure successful resettlement and integration of refugees and migrants by their abilities to speak the host language, find jobs, become economically independent, and gain access to mainstream services. Central to these is the claim by Richardson et al. (2004) that once refugee newcomers do not depend on social welfare payments, they are assumed to have successfully resettled and integrated into the host society. However, I contend that this tends to ignore social and cultural dimensions such as social interactions, networks and other forms of support among the resettling refugees and from their host, which are crucial for any successful resettlement and integration to occur. These have the propensity to entrench in refugees a sense belonging to the new society of resettlement. Hence, in this chapter I argue that social interactions, relationships and networks among fellow Southern Sudanese, and with members of the Australian society, have enormous power to create a stronger sense of belonging to Australian society (see also Barnes, 2001) among my informants. This in turn produces success in resettlement and integration because interpersonal contacts, friendships, trust, and social links which they establish with Australians makes them feel accepted and at home.

My discussion of social relationships and networks in this chapter is informed by studies by Putnam (2000: 19 & 1995: 66 & 77; 1993: 89-90 & 173-4), Boissevian (1974: 72) and by Putnam's (1993: 83-120) concept of community and civic engagement, and by the work of Eriksen (2002: 9, 20 & 42) and Emauel Marx (1990: 194-5 & 197-9) on the social world of people who migrate (see also Johnson 1994; Sanjek 1990; Hannerz 1980; and Boissevian and Mitchell 1973; Zhou 1997 & Alba and Nee 1997).

The discussion of social relationships is underpinned by Putnam's concept of social capital, a notion that has drawn widespread attention among many social scientists, as it asserts to explain an assortment of social, economic and political activities (civil attitudes, trust, reciprocity, support, civic engagement, and social interaction among citizens). On the other hand, while I am drawing on this, I also acknowledged and am aware of the recent debate on social capital which tends to question the effect of diversity on social cohesion. At the centre of this debate is Putnam's recent article entitled "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century" in which he discussed the impact of greater linguistic, religious, national and ethnic diversity in America (Putnam 2007). Despite his hope and expectations that diversity could result in positive outcomes, Putnam in his research on US communities which produced this debate found that at least in the short run, diversity is likely to reduce social solidarity and social capital, and make people less likely to participate in the community and its politics, to lower social trust between people and to make society less cooperative. According to Putnam, these were visible both in ethnically diverse communities and in white majorities as well. Contrary to his other work (Putnam 2000; 1995 & 77; 1993), he added that people living in mixed communities are more likely to withdraw from social participation and spend more of their time watching television.

However, it could be argued that although Putnam's findings have suggested this to be the case, it may not be the case that what has happened in US will happen in other societies as well, because the US society is distinct from other societies in many important aspects such as the racial divide, which tends to influence socio-economic disparities. As it will be shown later in this chapter, most Southern Sudanese who understand English regularly attend predominantly Australian churches and are engaging in other activities with Australians including interactions with neighbours from different cultural backgrounds regardless of their social, cultural and economic disparities. Thus, direct contacts and interaction with diverse 'others' are essential for building what Putnam (2000) calls bridging and bonding capital and a sense of trust that could transcend racial, social, cultural, and economic boundaries specifically when it involves support, cooperation and respect for others ( Gaertner *et al.* 1996 ; Allport 1995; Pettigrew and Tropp 2000).

In this chapter I will also discuss my informants' perceptions of what successful resettlement and integration means. Here I will draw on the studies of Ager and Strang (2004) on the experiences of integration of newcomers in local communities of Pollokshaws and Islington in United Kingdom and Korac's (2003) comparative study of the settlement experiences of refugees in Italy and the Netherlands.

Success in resettlement and in integration into the Australian society, which is an unfamiliar socio-cultural and economic environment to the people of Southern Sudan, is not a straight path for my informants to walk, but requires a lot of effort and resources both from my informants themselves and from their host society if they are to overcome the hurdles on the path to successful resettlement and integration. Here I will also show how success in resettlement and integration are affected by individual abilities and

attributes such as the rural/urban origin, the level of education, and the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the people involved.

The term 'refugee' is most often misunderstood as 'migrant', but refugee is a distinctive category of people arriving in host countries escaping from war and other conditions that endanger their lives at home. The 1951 United Nations Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugee defined a "refugee" as a person who:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of particular group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/her self to the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

(NPC 1991 in Jupp 1994:8)

This categorical label 'refugee', however, obscures people's understanding of the dynamic circumstances in which refugees flee from their countries of origin. This obscurity is due to the label's lack of descriptive ability to enable people to grasp fully the dynamic circumstances that generate refugees. As a result, there has been suspicion, stereotyping, anxiety, and fear of refugees by host communities (also see Said, 1978 & McMaster 2002). These could be reflected in host attitudes towards, and in the ways host communities relate to, refugees and vice versa. These may have serious implications for their relationships which will consequently have a significant impact on refugees' resettlement and integration into their new society. Writing on refugee resettlement, Malkki (1995a: 232) has described the lived experiences and circumstances that permit historical forms of consciousness among refugees in Tanzania, and suggests that refugee resettlement depicts their situation of de-territorialisation and uprooted-ness from their habitat and culture. Malkki (1995b: 518) illustrates this by describing how Burundian refugees in Tanzania have persistently struggled with their cultural identity and the experience of exile that often places them

“beyond or above politics” and “beyond and above history” in a “floating world”. Malkki indicates that social relations and identities are cultural constructs blended in intersecting points of historic memory, class, ethnicity, and politics. These, she argues, have strongly influenced or have been influenced by the conflict and the displacement which the Burundian refugees have gone through and which in turn have impacted on their lives in refuge in Tanzania (also see Malkki 1992: 24). Similar informative studies by Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton (1995), Kearney (1986), Appadurai (1991), Gupta and Ferguson (1999), and Malkki (1997) provide relevant insights into “territoriality” and “rooted-ness” as delineating particular inhabitants. Given the above perspectives, I will argue that the resettlement and integration processes of Southern Sudanese refugees into Australian society are affected by the totality of the social relationships, networks and supports among the Southern Sudanese themselves, and between them and their Australian hosts as well as how their hosts perceive them and how they perceive themselves in Australia.

### **Social Networks and Relationships**

Social capital is created when people join organisations, volunteers, socialise with friends and family, participate in learning activities or develop trust with neighbours. These and similar activities represent social networks that produce norms of reciprocity that is the inclination to act positively towards others.

(Lohrey 2003 in Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues 2006: 17)

To know whether the Southern Sudanese interact and make social connections among themselves and/or with members of the Australian mainstream society, it is important to draw on the concept of social network proposed by Fernandez-Kelly and Schaufler when they write:

... social networks are complex formations that channel and filter information, confer a sense of identity, allocate resources, and shape behaviour. [They are] individual choices to engage in social networks



dependent not only on the availability of material and intangible assets in the society as large, but also on the way in which the members of interpersonal networks interpret information and relate to structure of opportunities.

(Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler 1994: 670)

Johnson (1994) indicates that the social network has emerged as one of the key anthropological tools for investigating complex sets of relationships between social actors. Hannerz (1980: 57) and Sanjek (1990) have also shown the usefulness of social networks as offering an analytical and methodological approach for dealing with urbanite situations where actors came from livelihoods formerly who were dependant on crops and/or animal rearing and who in urban situations no longer depend on crop/animal rearing but instead depend on dealings with one another. However, as Boissevian and Mitchell (1973) indicate, anthropology's interest in social networks has its roots in general anthropological interest in social structure that was so prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s.

On the other hand, du Toit, Skuse and Cousins (2007: 523) provide an insight into the importance of social relations and networks as a form of social capital that have a significant influence on people's daily lives and in breeding trust among them. Hence, as a conceptual tool, the social network is relevant to my study of Southern Sudanese refugees in Australia because the majority of my informants had drawn their livelihoods from crops and/or animal husbandry and as a result they currently face remarkable changes in their ways of life in urbanite metropolitan Adelaide. As an analytical tool, it permits me to understand how my informants have established social relationships among themselves and with members of Australian mainstream society which is new and unfamiliar to them. I will show how these relationships are negotiated at wider societal and individual levels (Emanuel Marx 1990: 194; see also Rogers & Vertovec 1995).

The social network as a conceptual and analytical tool also enables me to unpack the ways in which the formation of social relations and networks works, holds together or falls apart over time. The key anthropological premise here is to contextualise the interactions and the acts and situate them in the wider Australian society. But in doing so, I must take into consideration the socio-cultural, economic, educational and historical backgrounds impinging on the resettlement and integration processes experienced by my informants. This anthropological gaze provides an understanding of the social relationships and networks which informants have established the experiences within and outside their ethnic groups and how these transpire into useful resources that enhance their resettlement and integration processes.

The relevancy of social networks in analysing migration experiences has been emphasised by Boyd (1989) and Coleman (1988) where they proposed that social relations and networks tend to have regulatory effects on actors and hence are essential in resettlement and integration processes. Other scholars (Hauff and Vaghum 1997; Boyd 1989; Massey and Espana 1987) have also shown that in any resettlement processes, social relations both among newcomers and with those hosting them are essential because they act as conduits for useful support systems. This was reflected in my fieldwork during which I observed that social relations and networks are influential in the resettlement and integration processes of informants because they offer frameworks for actions whereby individuals or groups can look for support within and beyond their families and ethnic group safety-nets.

Furthermore, I would like to note here that social relationships and networks among my Southern Sudanese informants are rooted in ethnic affiliations. This is exemplified by the fourteen formal and informal ethnic community associations currently being established by Southern Sudanese in metropolitan Adelaide. Ironically some of these

ethnic community associations are based on territoriality (areas of origin) rather than ethnic or tribal belongingness. For example, the Dinka who are widely viewed as a single homogenous ethnic group have more than five community associations in South Australia. Though territorially formed and rooted, the associations are at the same time ethnically linked, so that within an ethnic group there are more extensive social interactions, relationships and networks of informal support than there are within the overall Sudanese community. As a result, unlike in the overall Sudanese community, within an ethnic group everyone knows each other extremely well. Thus, strikingly, despite the fact that most are still struggling to meet their own settlement needs, more often than not support to needy members can be mobilised and delivered to them in times of need. Evidence is plentiful to support this. During my fieldwork in informants' families, I observed people of the same ethnic group arriving and leaving all of the time, making financial contributions for meeting medical, funeral, and burial expenses, and meeting other needs of their members either here or for their close kin in refugee camps or in Southern Sudan.

There have also been numerous phone call interruptions during interviews or when discussing my research themes. I have also observed informants exchanging basic personal details such as phone numbers and residential addresses, or passing them on to other members or friends in order to facilitate easy communication, to maintain contacts, and to facilitate the delivery of any needed support. I have also found from the analysis of the data that ethnic or tribal affiliation, family and kinship ties, and original residential bond are essential in their settlement processes and for mobilising support. Most informants carry on with their lives within these bonding ties and it is from these that they draw most of their closest friends and acquaintances. However, some others, and especially young people, have crossed these social boundaries and territories to

freely interact with Australians outside those boundaries and territories. Hence, to summarise, the settlement experiences and integration processes of my informants are affected by a combination of the relationships and networks within and outside their various ethnic communities.

Support within and outside the family and ethnic group is one of the major factors influencing the resettlement processes of the Southern Sudanese. However, although informants are likely to get support from others outside, those who have left their closest family members (spouse, children, siblings, parents etc) behind and have unsuccessfully tried several times to lodge family reunion applications, are still feeling unsettled. It is clear that family reunion plays a vital role in resettlement and integration success or failure of my informants. Thus, to have one's closest family around eliminates the anxiety and feelings of isolation which are so powerful when these family members are left behind. For example, Nipo, one of my informants who arrived in 2004 leaving his wife behind in a Kakuma (Kenya) refugee camp, lodged a spouse application after arriving Australia but was refused. Following the refusal he spent a lot of money paying migration agents to prepare family reunion applications, but each application lodged was rejected. Since his arrival, he has traveled twice to the camp in his hope of lodging a successful application for his wife there. But all efforts so far have been unsuccessful. He is currently in Kenya to plead with UNHCR officials who had previously told him before leaving the camp that his wife would join him in Australia; but it is yet unclear whether he will be successful. This further demonstrates how failure in achieving family reunion can be destructive to a refugee's efforts to resettle and integrate as they will spend much of their resources (energy, time and money) attempting to bring the closest family members to join them. These resources, which

were used in unsuccessfully attempting to bring their family members to Australia, should have been invested in facilitating their resettlement.

This situation reflects what Emauel Marx (1990: 189) has described as the refugees' social world. Emauel Marx suggests that the social world of refugees comprises all the social relationships and forces that impinge on them. It could be suggested that in any resettlement process, social relationships are driven and perpetuated by the level and quality of support given and received (Kora 2003: 398; Wellman 1981) from the hosts and from the refugees themselves (Joly, Nettleton & Poulton 1992: 65). By relationship I refer to those interactive social processes aimed at connecting individuals, families or groups to others and, as Faist (2000) shows, for relationships to bond, some social transactions need to occur between the actors. Support here may include a range of resources such as material assistance, social brokerage, personal service, financial assistance, and emotional as well as empathic understanding.

Based on the analysis of the data, it is clear that Southern Sudanese have a rich culture of giving and receiving embedded in their social relationships and they tend to value these greatly. Without these, any relationship is likely to be perceived as weak. Exchanges of home visits and other reciprocal actions have the social propensity to generate and to reinforce trust (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). I have observed during the fieldwork that informants' daily interactions with their colleagues were related to their expectations, and the others' perceived expectations, which arose from their social relationships. But because Australia is so different from their native Southern Sudan, establishing social relationships and networks with Australians is often challenging due to their lack of understanding of the ways in which social relationships and networks operate in the Australian social and cultural context. This requires a degree of adaptation. Adaptation here refers to the ability of informants (refugees) to achieve a

degree of socio-cultural and psychological comfort in their resettlement that results in their participation in the activities of their host society rather than feeling discomfort with the way of life of the host society that could lead to their non participation in, and isolation from, the wider society.

### **Making and Maintaining Social Relationships and Networks with Australians**

Based on the analysis of the research data, the majority of my informants favour face-to-face interactions in their relationships with Australians and other friends and they prefer these relationships to be sustained by exchanges of home visits, or at least regular phone calls from one another to check how the other is doing. Face-to-face interactions are much more favoured because, according to them, their communications are overtly observable and involve meaningful body languages which phone calls or other forms of indirect interactions do not. Informants view such interactions as offering varieties of physical, moral, emotional, and psychological support which informants need in their resettlement.

However, they also suggested that their engagement in meaningful relationships depends on their knowledge and understanding of what Australians regard as culturally acceptable and what is not. This is essential for developing and maintaining positive, useful and socially meaningful relationships through which support is rendered and received (see McMichael and Manderson 2004; Hauff and Vaghum 1997; Boyd 1989). According to Koser (1997), these would have significant effects upon a migrant's resettlement and integration into the country of resettlement.

Furthermore, in addition to a lack of knowledge of Australian culture being an impediment to the establishment and maintenance of social relationships with

Australians, some informants have also cited their inability to understand the English language as one of the major factors that hinders them from initiating any meaningful relationships with their hosts. They reported that their inability to communicate makes interaction and participation in any activity very difficult<sup>4</sup> and this has tended to augment their feelings of isolation. This is supported by Chile's (2002) study of African refugees who resettled in New Zealand. Chile found that lack of basic language abilities disenfranchised and excluded African refugees from participation in societal activities in New Zealand. This has been further supported in studies by Sen (2000), Ballah and Lapayere (1999) and de Haan (1998) in which they demonstrated how failure to participate in societal activities and the resulting isolation detached individuals and groups from many activities of the wider society. Likewise, de Haan and Maxwell's (1998) analysis of the impact of social exclusion of newcomers shows that a lack of understanding of the basic language of the host society alienates newcomers, preventing them from accessing resources and knowing their rights; it also hinders the development of relationships with others.

Other studies (Steel 2003; Mansouri and Bagdas 2002 and White 2004) have indicated that certain policies relating to such matters as visa categories, among others, exclude newcomers (refugees and migrants) in Australia and in United Kingdom from accessing some activities in the wider society. For example, certain visa categories prohibit holders from accessing free English classes funded by the government, as well as gaining access to employment and health services.

Based on the analysis of the data, there is evidence to indicate that informants who are not proficient in the English language tend to draw most of their friends from their own

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<sup>4</sup>Without English language, participation in any activity will be difficult due to a failure to understand; hence communication will break down halting any progress towards integration. Also the inability to read and speak English limits access to information about the services being offered.

ethnic groups and tend to spend more time at home and less time socialising with others outside the family, than do those who are proficient in English. The ability to understand and speak English enhances self-confidence that is pivotal for initiating conversations, in developing relationships and friendships with Australians, in accessing settlement services, as well as in making contacts with governmental and non-governmental institutions. Hence social networking is nurtured by the use of the English language and this act to create conditions conducive to the development of social interactions between Australians and my informants.

During my fieldwork I have observed that informants with some English often invited their Australian friends to participate in social activities which they organised. I also observed them being assisted by Australian friends and exchanging home visits between them. Thus, drawing on Faist (2000: 101), it is clear that interactions between my informants and their Australian friends signify how strong or weak a particular social network and relationship is between them. Social interactions and networking does not occur in a vacuum but in a socially constructed space within specific structured or unstructured social settings. The church, the workplace, home visitations, neighbourhood gatherings, classes, meetings, information sessions, social and cultural clubs or associations, and social events of various kinds are examples of such settings. The majority of informants believe that their involvement in these settings with Australians have a significant bearing on their resettlement and integration.

However, there are certain barriers which inhibit entry into some of these settings. In this chapter I do not intend to discuss all these settings, but only those which informants have frequently mentioned during the interviews and discussions. These are churches, workplaces and neighbourhoods where these refugees interact with Australians.



## **The Church's Role as a Provider and a Connector of the Southern Sudanese to Mainstream Australian Society**

Members of the Synod of South Australia are concerned that the Federal Government has halted African immigration because of a perception that some ethnic groups [Sudanese] are not integrating well. The Synod believes immigration eligibility should be based on the need for humanitarian assistance and not on the basis of a particular ethnic group's ability to integrate. Members have affirmed the positive contribution made by African migrants to Australian community, including to many local Uniting Church congregations.

(Uniting Church SA Dec. 2007: 5)

This claim of integration difficulties was made by the then Federal Minister of Immigration and Citizenship Mr. Kevin Andrews in the lead up to the 2007 Federal election after a Sudanese died following being assaulted in Melbourne (see The Advertiser, Oct. 4, 2007: 11; The Age Oct. 11, 2007: 1; Library of Articles 2006; Sunday Mail Feb.4, 2007: 24; Sunday Mail Feb. 18, 2007: 26-7: & New Times Dec. 2007:5). On 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007, Leip Gony, a young Southern Sudanese man was brutally assaulted in the Dandenong in Victoria and consequently died. This made headlines across the country and racial tensions ran high in the city. In the eve of this unfortunate event, the Minister announced he was compelled to freeze the intake of Sudanese because they were 'perceived' as having some difficulties integrating into Australian society. This further inflamed the racial tension in that city as Sudanese leaders were angered by the announcement. They alleged that the announcement amount to legitimatising racism against them because according to them, the announcement has sparked reprisal attacks against some Sudanese. Racial tension was evident from those who attended the SBS special edition of Insight, which traveled to Melbourne's Greater City of Dandenong to bring together leaders of the Sudanese community, local council, concerned residents and the police to tackle the problems facing the community (see <http://news.sbs.com.au/insight>).

The event in Melbourne led to the depiction of Africans and particularly members of the Sudanese community in the mainstream Australian media as ‘problems’ (Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria i.e. ECCV 2007:4). Arguably, the negative depiction (gang threats) of this community by the media can damage their acceptance by their host as well as a sense of belonging to Australian society among Sudanese. Damage of acceptance of members of the Sudanese community was demonstrated by the action of Tamworth Council and community’s refused to participate in the Federal government’s program to resettled Sudanese in the council. This further increased the difficulties of Sudanese to adjust and integrate into Australia society as negative representation by the host of any newcomers has the potential to result in feelings of rejection and isolation among the newcomers. Tamworth Council lies 260 km northeast of Sydney, the city rejected residency for five Sudanese refugee families to resettle in the council area allegedly due to fear that it could ignite racial riot equal to the Cronulla beach riot in Sydney because of the cultural difference of this African people (Taylor 2006). The Council dismissed accusations of racism, but instead cited a lack of social and health service provision for specific groups as the legitimate reasons for its refusal. This refusal tends to support associate Professor Andrew Fraser, a formerly professor of Macquarie University who has alleged that an expanding black population in Australia is a sure-fire recipe for potential crime increase and other social ills.

The negative representations of the Sudanese community in the media led to widespread misconception against them even if evidence in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven indicates that Southern Sudanese are settling fairly well into Australian society despite the numerous challenges they face in their new society. For example, in an interview with the president of Sudanese Tertiary Students Union of South Australia (STSUSA), the president told me that in 2007 there were about 200 Sudanese enrolled and actively

studying in universities and in technical and further education (TAFE) in Southern Australia alone. According to him this is an investment to the Sudanese community as well to the Australian society because if this number graduated, they would hopefully find jobs and contribute to both Australia society and to the Sudanese community in various ways. Similarly, the President of the Sudanese Community Association of South Australia Branch whom I interviewed on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2006 reported that Sudanese are becoming visible in the job market, educational and training institutions and most are progressing positively in learning English in classes offered by the adult migrant English services or English as a second language (ESL). Many, he argues, have acquired consumer or life skills useful in they attempt to adjust into Australian society. Most have become friends to Australians and are interacting well.

As Chapter Four and indicated and later this Chapter and Chapters Six and Seven will indicate, the Southern Sudanese in Australian Society are coping fairly well with their resettlement challenges, despite their experiences of war, displacement, camp life and lack of services. Those Chapters challenge negative perceptions against Sudanese regarding their alleged difficulties to resettle and integrate into Australian society. Notwithstanding the negative media depiction of Sudanese and the comments made by the former Federal minister of immigration and citizenship, as I have indicated earlier, the Southern Sudanese have developed extensive social relationships and networks within and outside the Sudanese community and they have acknowledged these in the interviews that these having positive effects on their resettlement processes and is a reflection of some instances of social cohesion as proposed in the context of multicultural Australia.

The majority of informants who are churchgoers indicated that they have developed significant social ties outside of their ethnic groups with Australian members of the churches through their church attendance, and the interactions and contacts they made during and after worship. Often at the conclusion of worship service the congregation is invited for free tea and coffee, and while enjoying the tea and coffee informal social encounters occur when both Southern Sudanese Australian members of the church mix together and establish relationships and form friendships.

However some who are not church goers have formed relationships and friendships with Australians by associating with their Sudanese friends who have Australian friends. This kind of relationship and friendship making is highlighted in Boissevain's (1974) informative work, "Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalition".

To some informants the church had also been a source of financial support and a provider of food items as well as of used clothes, bedding, furniture, used cars, and basic household items. In addition to these, the church had also been a meeting place and a worship space for ethnic groups who wished to conduct meetings or worship services in their own languages, or those who wished to worship in Juba Arabic as a collective group of Southern Sudanese. Some churches also provided spaces for ethnic school classes to operate which allowed the Southern Sudanese to teach their mother tongues, culture and stories to their children. Furthermore, informants also indicated that their Australian church friends individually provided a variety of important personal supports including transport to shopping and to appointments, acting as referees, linking them to employers, helping them to find accommodation and schools for their children, assisting their children in doing their homework and teaching them English in their homes. Some of these friends, they further indicated, have been very

close to them and have supported them in a number of other ways including showing them how and where to pay bills, to open bank accounts and to find family doctors.

The majority of informants who are church goers have gratefully acknowledged the significant assistance which they received from the churches they worshipped in. The following quotation from Kajo, an informant who became a member of a Uniting Church in North Adelaide is indicative of the role of the churches in helping the Southern Sudanese resettle and integrate into the Australian society.

I feel very much a part of the church community because I have received a lot of support from the church and particularly from the Circle of ... friends<sup>5</sup> in the church. The support has changed my life in Australia. The church has helped to train me; it also helped me find a job that my family now depends on. My church friends always help me with transport and teach my children English and assist them in doing their homework. Recently, the Circle of Friends held a fundraiser to raise money for my air ticket to visit family in refugee camp in Uganda and those in Sudan and it was a success. Without their support, I would not be able to pay for the air tickets to Sudan and back ... I am proud of my membership in the church and I am also grateful to those who provided me with support. They are very supportive and caring to me and with their support, I feel as if I am living among my extended family and through my interactions and exchange of home visits with my Australian friends, I have learned a lot from them and from their culture and they have also learned a lot from me and from my culture.

(Kajo interviewed on 10 June 2006)

The churches have often been mentioned and held in high regard by my informants during the interviews because of the support they have given. The churches which have been frequently mentioned are the Uniting Church, and the Lutheran, Presbyterian, and the Catholic Churches. The Uniting and Lutheran churches in particular have been admired for their generosity in facilitating and providing interest free travel loans that enabled informants and other Southern Sudanese to pay for the air tickets of their family

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<sup>5</sup> The Circle of Friends are a group of individual Australians who have faithfully devoted portions of their efforts, income and time to alleviate the conditions of refugees and asylum seekers in South Australia by providing them with various kinds of settlement assistance including paying for driving lessons and legal support to asylum seekers.

members and friends which they sponsored for resettlement in Australia. The Uniting churches which were most frequently mentioned by informants were those at Brougham Place, Maugham, Adelaide West, Modbury, and West Croydon.

**Figure 8: Kajo (middle left) and her friend telling their refugee stories and giving thanks to Brougham Place Unity Uniting Church at North Adelaide for the continuous support they have been receiving from the church. They spoke in their language (Kuku) and the author on the left interpreted to the church congregation. On the right is an Australian member of the church interviewing Kajo and her friend about her refugee life experiences (photo by one of the congregation on the request of the author, 2006).**

NOTE:  
This figure is included on page 175  
of the print copy of the thesis held in  
the University of Adelaide Library.

Most Southern Sudanese in South Australia attended the same church they had attended in Sudan or in exile. Others attended churches that bore similarities to those they had attended in Sudan or in refuge. For example, most Nuer tended to attend the Lutheran church while the Dinka attended the Anglican church, but some also attended the Uniting church because they saw it as closely related to the Anglican tradition (the church they attended in Sudan), while some few others attended a Catholic Church. Most Ma'di, Zande, Acholi and Bari, who were traditionally Catholic affiliates, attended a Catholic Church. The Kuku, Kakwa, and Muru mostly attended Anglican, Presbyterian or Pentecostal churches of which they were members in Sudan and in refugee camps, but others now attend prayers in a Uniting Church.

Participation by informants in the church which they attended included worship and singing with Australians, but they also sang as a separate choir group, bringing into the Australian churches the unique African style of exaltation with singing, drumming and ululations (see figure below).

**Figure 9: (a & b): Southern Sudanese members of Uniting Church with their Australia members of the church in prayer and worship with drums, singing and dancing in a Uniting Church in North Adelaide (photo by the Author, 2007).**

(a)

(b)

NOTE:  
These figures are included on page 176  
of the print copy of the thesis held in the  
University of Adelaide Library.

The Southern Sudanese also participated in cleaning of the churches when required, and others have become members of the church councils. The majority of the church goers found their new churches through their friends, relatives or members of the same ethnic group who were already worshipping in the church. They indicated that on arrival in Australia, their relatives or friends took them to those churches without any particular consideration of their previous religious denominations or affiliations. But as time passed, informants began to move around and began to do many things by themselves without much support from their relatives and friends; others individually began to look for the churches or the denominations they had belonged to back in Sudan. Informants also indicated that other service providers had provided them on their request with

information regarding the churches located nearest to their residences. Churches located nearest to their residence are preferred in order to minimise transport problems and the expense of attending the church. Still fewer, mostly those not sponsored by families or friends, have found their new churches by themselves while walking around their suburbs. Nevertheless, regardless of how they found their new churches or to what denominations they had previously belonged, they found that once in those churches Australians did assist them with their basic settlement needs.

As shown earlier, church affiliations and attendance have been some of the major factors in influencing the resettlement of my informants in South Australia. Interactions with Australians in the churches and the social connectivity this has offered by way of financial, spiritual, social, psychological, and physical support to both individuals and families, have all positively enhanced their resettlement and integration. The church acts as an important institution in helping them to meet some of their basic settlement needs which had been traditionally provided for by their network of kin. The church offers services like assisting with shopping, giving out used cars, driving them to church to attend prayers, and so forth.

This support is not offered by the government funded service providers/organisations. This church role is similar to what Shandy and Fennelly (2006) found in their comparative study of the integration experiences of the Sudanese and Somali refugees resettled in Faribault, a rural community in the United States. Similarly, another ethnographic study by Shandy (2002) of the Nuer (Southern Sudanese) Christians resettled in the United States shows that engagement with churches and interactions with its members have eased the Nuer's transition to their new society. Kajo's experience, referred to earlier, and these studies all demonstrate the cross-cultural and integrative role of the church as well as its ability to enable its congregation of different



ethnic or racial composition to interact with and support needy members. For the most of my informant churchgoers, the church has often been their safe haven in times of dire need in Sudan, in refugee camps and in exile in urban cities during refuge. This concurs with the work of Abusharaf (2002:56) who found that the Southern Sudanese refugees in Cairo-Egypt sought the protection and assistance of the churches there, and the churches in response oversaw most of their affairs in Egypt. Additionally, informants revealed that some church sermons do appeal to their situation as refugees and that those sermons redeem, restore and offer renewed hope for a better life in future.

When asked whether or not evangelical missionaries compete to convert them to their respective churches, informants did not report the existence of open rivalry among church denominations in trying to proselytise and convert them. However, some informants have expressed their uneasiness with some members of certain denominations, including members of the Jehovah Witness and the Mormon (i.e. the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints) churches, who frequent their homes most often without prior information about their visits and who consistently urge them to convert to their churches, even when they indicated their unwillingness to convert because of their allegiance to other Christian denominations of their liking.

**Figure 10: Moving House: An Australian member of Adelaide West Uniting Church drove his truck to help move Mario's (an informant) family to a new residence after being in conflict with his landlord and threatened with eviction. He is joined by friends from his ethnic group (photos by the author, 26 March 2006).**

NOTE:

These figures are included on page 179 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

### **Relationships with Neighbours**

In the coming paragraphs I will discuss the social and cultural practices which favour, or work against, the development and maintenance of social relationships and friendships between my informants and their Australian neighbours. With the exception of church goers, most informants have reported having no, or very limited, social interactions with their Australian neighbours. However, they all reported that they feel

very safe to live in their neighbourhood. Kasuko explains her relations with her neighbours in the following terms:

...since I first moved to this house, I have no interactions with my Australian neighbours. When we meet in the street, we only say hi, hi to one another and that's it. They always stay inside their house, their compound is always quiet, and you couldn't hear any voice outside the house, it like as if there are no people. It isn't like in Sudan where you can see neighbours outside their house and you can go to them and they can come to you to talk and socialise. Here you rarely see neighbours outside; you see them only when they are going out. See, have lived here for three years but I don't know their names and they don't know mine either. But everything is fine here. I don't feel scared to live here and I am happy and my family is happy to live here.

(Kasuko interviewed 2 July 2006)

My informants consider that neighbourliness entails more sociability and hospitality, including the sharing of food and home visits, which signify the strength of the relationships between neighbours. Thus, it is not only the lack of English language skills which limits interactions and the making and maintaining of relationships with Australian neighbours; there are cultural barriers as well. Most informants regarded Australian neighbourhoods as relatively quieter than they are used to, with people staying indoors most of the time as opposed the situation in Southern Sudan where they spent time outside their compound socialising with neighbours and with children running around. This experience of living in urbanised neighbourhoods in Australia is very different from the neighbourhoods they had lived in Sudan. Although informants agreed that most Australians are open and sociable if approached, some informants found it not easy to approach Australian neighbours to initiate social relations for fear of unintentionally being embarrassed or embarrassing them because their cultural orientations are different and they do not know much about the Australian culture. Consequently some informants reported limiting their contacts to fellow Sudanese or to other African neighbours.

Interactions with Australian neighbours, and in particular exchanging friendly home visits and being willing to shake hands with neighbours, is regarded by most informants as ‘embracing’, making them feel a part of the social fabric of the neighbourhood. These kinds of social interactions are an investment in what Putnam (2000: 411) has termed “building bridging capital” because it is viewed by informants as connecting them to the Australian social fabric. This allows for numerous processes of mutual cultural exchange (Berry 2001: 616). The social implication of this is that when informants feel attached to their neighbours/neighbourhood, they feel a part of their new community and of the general Australian society.

Informants blamed a lack of contact and limited interaction with neighbours on the prevalence of suspicions about them from other Australian neighbours. Sagar’s (1995) work highlights some of the concerns from members of the receiving society about an influx of refugees into their society, and the social and cultural implications of such an influx. Such concerns or suspicions may lead to newcomers being perceived as a burden and not as resources (see also Taylor 1993; Joly 1996; Bommes 2004). Despite this, some informants (including Apoke) have been interacting fairly well with their Australian neighbours. Apoke reported that:

...the first day I moved into this house, two of my neighbours who are Australians, one across the street and other next to my house, came to say welcome to greet me and me and I thanked them. The two came again the next day to inform me to contact them if my family needed help with transport and so before I learned to drive and bought a car, they had assisted me a lot with transport to shopping and to other places for appointments with service providers.

(Apoke interviewed on 12 January 2007)

Due to this welcoming attitude, Apoke and his Australian neighbours have become what Apoke describes as ‘intimate friends’ and exchanged home visits and sometimes shared food and tea together. On several occasions Apoke stated that his neighbour taught him

some basic computer skills and helped connect his internet in the house. I have also observed that Apoke's children and the children of his neighbours play together and have also become friends. According to Apoke, their relationships are comforting; because of the support his family receives from his neighbours, they feel they belong to the locality in which they currently live. He also reported his family being offered home grown fruits by his neighbours and that they have also been lending him their lawn mowers to use on his lawn.

When I asked informants how they maintain their friendships with their Australian friends, most cited not being judgmental or not getting angry over little things, not treating any act or comment as negative or racially motivated, and never focusing on things that hinder maintaining their social relationships. Arguably, being positive towards others is a form of social capital; it is inviting and could make people feel accepted and could earn the respect of other actors in the relationship. This could make resettlement and integration attainable, as good relationships and earned respect from others could facilitate participation in many activities in Australian society and enable individuals to make contributions in the society in which they live. However, the ability to be positive in order to foster an ongoing social relationship does not resonate with another informant, Achuila, who arrived in Australia in 2001. According to Achuila, she has had a friendship with two Australian women for more than three years, and trust had begun to build between them as they started to share a lot together. However, one day their friendship soured. She explains:

...one evening my two Australian friends from the church came to my house and I welcomed them...we sat here with them and my three daughters ages 14, 16 and 18. As we talked to one another, I heard one of my friends ask my 18 year old daughter, 'do you have a boy friend? My daughter looked at me timidly and said no. She asked her another question: have you ever had sexual intercourse with a boy in your life? And my daughter kept silent but she repeated the question again. I was very annoyed with this question and so I stood up and asked the two

women to leave my house immediately and never again to come to my house or talk to me or my daughters again...and you see, instead the women were very surprised with my reaction, but that was it! Our relationship just ended that way.

(Achuila interviewed on 30 August 2007)

This probably highlights a clash between two cultural orientations and attitudes regarding the open discussion of sexual issues with children and others. In the culture of the Southern Sudanese, it is deemed inappropriate and taboo to ask about, or discuss, sexual intercourse, sex or and sexual related issues with children. But those Australian friends were unaware of this and as a result it cost Achuila her relationships with them.

### **Social Relations and Networking Among Southern Sudanese**

Social relationships can be described as 'social ties' occurring in the context of ongoing interpersonal interactions among people. Thus, as Wasserman and Faust (1994 in Faist, 2000: 101) indicate, people attach mutual interests, expectations, obligations and norms to relationships that bond them within a social network. Among refugees, forced migration is a process that tends to create and develop networks based on common identity, experiences, regions of origin and solidarity formed in the course of fleeing to refuge. These have worked to retain a sense of a community which promotes community based support such as helping others with transport, searching for rental accommodation in newspapers and on the internet, or helping to move others to newly rented houses. Informants indicated that despite some differences they may have among themselves, they see themselves as a people from a particular geographical region who are victims of similar circumstances. In Australia, these feelings tend to narrow any ethnic differences and conflicts which were brought over to Australia from Southern Sudan or refugee camps (refer to Chapter Three). However, the irony is that more often informants' ethnic loyalties take precedence over these. The ethnic factor works well in

resolving family disputes, in providing interpersonal support and in conducting and negotiating marriages as well as in organising welcoming parties for newly arrived members of their ethnic groups, and community or familial events such as their children's birthday and Christmas parties, child naming, funeral and burial ceremonies/rites and prayer. It is worth noting that child naming ceremonies and birthday parties are fully catered for by the respective families organising them, but women from the community help in preparing the food to be shared and consumed. But when it is a community (ethnic) social event, the organising and catering is carried out by the whole Sudanese community. These community (ethnic) social events include Christmas and welcoming parties for new arrivals, funeral and burial ceremonies, and rites or prayers that often bring community members together to share food, tea, drinks, to socialise or to share grief. These events are useful in overcoming isolation, grief, and social and economic deficiencies by supporting one another by way of financial contributions and by placing greater emphasis on the community than on the individual (see also Portes and Zhou 1993).

Exchanges of mostly impromptu home visits between friends and relatives, which involve the sharing of food, tea, drinks, and conversation, are often of great social significance to the Southern Sudanese. It is in these social contexts that the need for individual assistance is made known and requested from members. For example, the Nuer organise rotational group home visits at weekends during which the men play cards or dominos, or merely sit and talk about life in Australia and Sudanese politics. It is also during this time that they exchange information about houses for rent, jobs, assistance from other service providers, requests for transport, or the need to move a family to a new residence. This social strategy has positively served the Nuer as a

community to overcome isolation, and creates in them a sense of a family within their own ethnic group.

**Figure 11: A Southern Sudanese elder sitting on the right is being consulted in his residence by a member of his community regarding information about jobs (photo by the Author, April 2006).**

NOTE:  
This figure is included on page 185  
of the print copy of the thesis held in  
the University of Adelaide Library.

It is also in such a socialising context that parents lament about how life in Australia has influenced their children's behaviours by becoming disobedient, and how they can no longer discipline their children by caning or smacking because Australian laws prohibit this and regards such behaviour as child abuse. They indicated that these were the means which they had used in Sudan and in refugee camps to make their children comply when they had committed wrongful acts. In Australia, they argued, they had no alternative ways to discipline children who did wrong because they feared that police may charge them with child abuse, or the children would be taken from them. Parents believed that when children become disobedient towards their parents, they are likely to disrespect any authority and may not be useful citizens.



### **Rotating Informal Credit: A Women's Initiative**

To financially support themselves, the majority of women informants in this study have formed themselves into small groups of at least five and established what they called *Sonduk*. *Sonduk* is an Arabic word meaning 'save' or 'treasury'. It is a localised financial support initiative whereby, in this particular case, women individually agree to lend their money to themselves in order to improve their financial situation. In most groups, the amount of money to be lent fortnightly by each member is not less than \$200.00. There is no interest on the amount loaned and in practice members receive an equal amount of what she has loaned to the others when it comes to her turn. The group makes decisions by consensus regarding how the loans will rotate among them, who goes first, next and so forth, but they also take into consideration and give priority to those in dire financial need due, for example, to sickness, inability to pay accruing bills and rent, when family members are ill/sick here or back home and need treatment, and so on. The group chooses a woman among them to be a treasurer. There are no elections and no elected office/officers; the choice is based on mutual trust and social bonding within the group, which are the basic building blocks upon which the group functions (see Velez-Ibanez 1993). Assurance of participation is based on trust, social bonding and community or group norms. Each member agrees to lend the amount agreed upon for a fortnight and the total amount is given out in that same fortnight to a nominated member. The total amount varies with group size and no money is kept by the treasurer. The treasurer is vested with the responsibility of ensuring that each member gives her contribution, does the record keeping, handles the money safely and gives it out to the nominated recipients. The group meets monthly or whenever a need arises, and the treasurer updates the group about the transactions. In those meetings, the group norms are emphasised and re- emphasised, including the need of the group to stick together in order to support one another. The women have told me that with the money they are

able to buy household items such as cooking utensils, cups, furniture, curtains, woollen blankets, lounge chairs (sofas) imported from the Middle-East by Somalian business personnel, and purchase personal items such as clothes, ornaments (golden bracelets, necklaces, finger and ear rings), as well as to support their kin financially in refugee camps and in Sudan. They further indicated that their system of informal rotating loans has reduced their inability to buy the things they desire and their financial dependence on their husbands.

The literature on informal rotating (revolving) credit schemes has highlighted the importance of a poverty alleviating initiative among poor people. Scholars such as Velez-Ibanez (1983), Bouman (1983) and others have offered informative insights into the significance of rotating credit schemes in improving the livelihood of impoverished people. Informal rotating credit schemes have become increasingly important institutions within the social structure of economically disadvantaged groups in society and act as a poverty alleviating financial mechanism (see Adam 1989; Aforika 1990; Wachtel and Wachtel 1977).

### **Residential Proximity as a Factor Influencing the Choice of a Residence and Enhancing Resettlement**

As I have already shown in Chapter Two, the majority of my informants in South Australia live in the western, northern and north eastern suburbs. Most prefer to live in suburbs where other Southern Sudanese live, and close to shopping centres, schools (for children), and bus routes to prevent isolation and to minimise transport costs. Jones (1967: 412) has written that residential proximity increases the probability of social interaction with people in similar social positions and with similar values and expectations. This permits the maximisation of group interactions and enables the maintenance of group norms (Coleman 1988: 117). These aspects of living together in a

suburb are recognised in the Australian migration literature as a common phenomenon to many people of non-English speaking background (see Storer 1985 & Thomas, 1999). Baldassar (2001) and Thomas's (1999) work confirms the residential concentration of migrant and refugee communities in Australian cities and suggests that it is indicative of communitarian tendencies. This arises from the socio-psychological necessity of living near one another in order to easily render support to each other during times of need. It is suggested in the literature that migration outside of one's familiar native environment, and living in a society with an unfamiliar language and culture, could lead to a condition of destitution for many people, at least for a while. To my informants living near one another is necessary because it enhances mutual assistance within their communities. As most came from less urban and sophisticated environments than that found in Australia, and possess less social capital (urban and English language skills, education, etcetera), they have to rely on one another for day-to-day support, as for example in finding adequate transport, searching for rental property, and taking care of one another's children from time to time. Such support eases some of the financial expenses, helps to maintain and perpetuate their cultural practice of reciprocity, and strengthens their communities' values. This ethnic (community) self-help initiatives is suggested by Colic-Peisker (2002) to be one of the most important factors in the settlement process experienced migrants (refugees).

It is worth noting that the majority of the informants who arrived from the year 2000 have moved residence at least three times since they arrived. The reasons for their instability of residence include the refusal by landlords and real estate agents to extend tenancy contracts because the property was being renovated, sold, or they were not happy with the ways their property was being used. This makes landlords and real estate agents refuse to renew the tenancy contracts, and to ask the tenants to vacate the

property within a specified period or face eviction. It may also be that the number of occupants in the rented property has exceeded the carrying capacity agreed upon in the previous tenancy agreement. In certain circumstances, tenants could not afford rent rises and were forced to move out (the Advertiser February 20 2007:14). Others however moved because the space in the property they had rented had become limited because sponsored family members and other kin who were left behind had arrived or were expected to arrive. There were also those who moved simply because they would like to have an extra bedroom for visitors who could come to visit and who wished to stay for a while or spent a night. Some others, however, affirmed that they were leaving some suburbs because their neighbours were unfriendly. For instance, some have claimed that they moved residences because neighbours had complained to police alleging that they often make loud noises that disturbed their tranquility. Although police did not substantiate these accusations, they decided to relocate elsewhere to avoid further hostilities with neighbours. In general, there was an expressed dislike by all informants of living in suburbs known to have a prevalence of racism, discrimination, burglary, robbery, drug use, assault, and other kind of crimes, because they think that because of their different appearance (African) they would be targeted.

There is often a craving among informants to live in affordable housing administered by the Housing Trust of South Australia (Housing SA), Lutheran Community Housing, Wesley Uniting Care, Red Shield, and in other non private rental property. Some informants have informed me that when offered rental property by these organisations, they would take it irrespective of where it is located because it is cheaper than private rental and, unlike private rental, rent increases are determined by the family's income and they are likely to be permitted to live in the property for as long as they wished. However, based on the analysis of the data, most informants prefer to

relocate to, and reside in, suburbs where there are already some Southern Sudanese, preferably from same ethnic group, so that they could be close to one another and offer each other immediate support in times of need. In most situations, they like to be able to receive support when it is needed: this would include leaving ones' children with relatives, tribesmen or to other Sudanese friends living nearby when parents leave home, getting help with transport, getting help reading letters or filling in forms (for those who are illiterate), and obtaining assistance with household chores in times of illness/sickness. This range of support is likely to take precedence over rental cost. Drawing from the data, there is strong evidence to indicate that all these factors are seriously considered when informants search for rental property. In particular, expected support from present friends and relatives in a particular suburb strongly influences their choices of residences and the suburbs in which they choose to live.

### **Re-Thinking Integration Our Way: The Southern Sudanese Views of Successful Resettlement and Integration**

Under its 'multicultural' policy, integration in Australia is not the same as assimilation and tends to negate the old concept of the 'melting pot', which suggests that newcomers would give up what had made them who they are and become like their hosts.

In the opinion of my informants, it is the strength and the weakness of their relationships with members of Australian wider society that strongly determine how successfully they have resettled and integrated into Australian society. The length of the relationships which informants have had with their Australian friends, the feeling of closeness in those relationships, and the frequency of their interactions are pivotal in building and maintaining the bridges in their social networks. From the analysis of the data, most informants have stated that strong and positive relationships with their hosts create a sense of acceptance, attachment and belonging to Australian society. From their

viewpoints, true belonging to Australian society would consist of feeling of being safe, welcomed and accepted, having access to food, healthcare, shelter, and education like everyone else, being given equal opportunities in employment, respecting Australian laws, having equality of rights, and being respected. But as refugees they indicated that being safe and accepted by their host stand above all the others because these could open up ways to other opportunities that will assist and facilitate in their resettlement and integration success. As refugees and people who have become a minority group, they believe that being accepted regardless of differences in backgrounds, skin colour and cultures means they could easily find jobs and make friends. They indicated that when they are employed, they would become economically independent and feel part of their new society and these constitute success in resettlement and in integration.

Most of my informants' view of integration is that, for them to fully integrate into their new society, an effort should come equally from them (their willingness to integrate) and from Australians, and particularly from those who have the abilities and the resources to let them integrate by making available opportunities such as employment and so forth for them. These informants stressed that integration is fundamentally an individual process, rather than a group process, and it is realisable only through adequate support from both Australians and from themselves. Similarly, they have indicated during the interviews that like any other migrants and refugees, if they are discriminated against or encounter acts of racism and they are not treated like any other Australians in their interactions with members of Australian society, successful resettlement and integration would be harder to achieve (refer see page 60 for some examples of what informants perceived as success in resettlement and integration).

It could however be argued that integration perceived either as a group or as an individual process is not devoid of vagueness. The receiving country often tends to

emphasise its identity and to focus on how new arrivals should integrate into its national identity rather than on how to accommodate the divergent cultural identities of those who have arrived. This contrasts with the newcomers' intentions to maintain, practice and keep their culture and identity in their country of resettlement. In theory, integration is assumed to be a cultural consensus, mainly based on the nation-state and revolving around the idea of a 'unitary' construction of core values embodied in the host country's cultural identity. However, Herzfeld (1987) has shown that this construction has failed to take into consideration the nature of conflict that could arise as newcomers feel their identities being suppressed by their new society.

Indeed the majority of informants have indicated during the interviews that peaceful co-existence between their culture and the Australian culture involves a lack of any form of discrimination and creates a sense of belonging to the new society. This would result in forms of assurance of their safety to live in Australia. This is understandable since the reasons for claiming asylum and seeking resettlement entailed very grave dangers and hence safety is of paramount concern to all my informants. Informants generally agree that a lack of a sense of safety leads to an inability to get engaged in the activities of their host nation and significantly impedes access to mainstream social services. Being safe invites a willingness on the part of the refugees to join activities within Australian society, which in turn enriches and strengthens their resettlement and integration endeavours.

Equally, the majority of informants believed that both their willingness and that of their hosts to create mutual relationships between them and the support services which they could receive from Australian friends are pivotal to their successful resettlement and integration. This is supported by a qualitative study by Ager and Strang (2004) into the experiences of integration of newcomers into local communities of Pollokshaws and

Islintgton in the United Kingdom. Ager and Strang's study indicates that relationships based on mutual respect and shared values formed the basis of a sense of trust and a feeling of community for newcomers.

My informants' comprehension of integration is greatly swayed by the expectations of relationships and what those relationships might bring to them. As relationships are a collection of interactions between the refugees and their Australian hosts, their perceptions of successful integration depends mainly on the creation of socially meaningful support links between them and their Australian hosts, and how that linked support system and social relations are sustained overtime. Most informants suggested that in order to sustain those relationships, they require an anchor on how they as a distinct group are perceived and are treated in the process of interaction with members of their new society. This would offer a context in which a sense of belonging to their new society is nurtured and sustained.

As has been often the case during the interviews when discussing resettlement and integration issues, informants re-emphasised the effects of the war, their refugee experiences and time spent in refugee camps, as the most important factors influencing their abilities to resettle and integrate. They suggested that any assessment of their success to resettle and integrate into Australian society must not deny those experiences and how they subsequently impacted on their lives. Those experiences, they claimed, had made them lose everything they had, including their social identities, their jobs, their social status, their position in the family's lineage, their nationality and their sense of selfhood, and had left them only their physical beings (see also Rajaram 2002: 251). They stressed that any assessment of how they are resettling and integrating must also not deny any progress they have individually so far made in employment, education and other areas. Thus in this context most think that any expectations and judgment of their



success or failure to resettle and integrate into Australian society should consider their previous experiences as well as their diverse backgrounds. Like most informants interviewed, Mangok explains how war and related conditions have affected and exacerbate his resettlement and integration processes in Australia when he states:

... you know! I was born during the war which occurred between 1955 and 1972. My parents escaped to hide and live in the bush during that period. There was no healthcare, no education and life war so hard and we lived in fear of attack from the Arabs. After the Addis Ababa agreement in 1972 my family returned to our village in Akobo in rural Southern Sudan in 1975. And for the first time, my parents sent me to school in 1976... *'ana ma mutuakhit kan umur fitai kan kam'* (*I am not sure how old I was by then*). I started schooling but didn't continue because my parents had no money to buy for me uniform, books and school fees. Fortunately in 1979 my uncle from Malakal visited us and gave my parents some money for my school. But ....

When he was about to complete the above sentence, one of his children about four years of age ran to him sobbing and told him something in Nuer which I did not understand. He stood up and took his child by hand and said to me in Arabic, *'min izinan'* (*excuse me*) and I replied also in Arabic *'mafi mushila'* (*no problems*) and he disappeared into the kitchen closing the door behind him. He returned later after about ten minutes and said to me, children have a lot of problems my brother, I nodded approvingly and said "yes they do" and never bother to asked what those problems where. Mangok continues, when my child interrupted us I was about to tell you that:

... in 1983 war broke out again and we fled to Ethiopia. I had only three years of schooling and I could only read and write my mother tongue but not English. In Ethiopia we were yet trying to settle in a refugee camp when war broke out there. And again we had to flee on foot to Sudan but then to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya because war was still raging in Southern Sudan. Life in the camp was so hard, very hard *'akuwi'* (*brother*), no enough food, water, inadequate healthcare, insecurity and bad sanitation. I never joined any school again *'akuwi'*... I was always sick and I spent 11 years in there. *Ita ainu!* (*you see*), since my childhood, I spent most of my time on move, no education but I was fortunate I had at least been to school in Sudan, many Southern Sudanese didn't at all due to the war and constant movement in search of safety. You know! my experiences of war, lack

of education and English language skills in addition to different rural livelihood including lack of opportunities for employment and other aspects of modern life have harden my resettlement in Australia. When I first arrived, I have difficulties communicating in English with Australians, I have difficulties even in reading and understanding my own letters, I have problems managing my household budget. You see! I learn a lot of new things always... this country is not like Southern Sudan, it's different in many ways... but if war had not prevented me from schooling, I know things would have been a bit better here for me...

(Mangok interview on 21 November 2007)

As Mongok's quotations above indicate, his movement on foot for many months from Sudan to Ethiopia and back to Sudan, and from Sudan to Kenya and spending 11 years in refugee camp with barely no opportunities for advancement in life before resettling in Australia have tended to slowdown his resettlement and integration processes. Like any other refugee, Mangok and his family fled home without prior preparation. They left behind the only possessions they had to embark on journeys whose destination was unknown. In most cases refugees have to entrust their lives to fate as they trek on foot for many days or even months covering hundreds or thousands of miles often under difficult conditions including lack of food, water, healthcare and many others (see also Miller 1982: 5 & 12; Adepoju 1982). Mangaok's quotes also demonstrate how many of my informants' war, displacement and refugee experiences, in addition to lack of education and the impact of rural background/livelihood, have combined to slowdown resettlement processes of many Southern Sudanese refugees while resettling in urban Adelaide.

It is acknowledged that governments which resettle refugees often prefer to measure success in resettlement and integration of refugees by the levels of their participation in the economic activities of the host society including how well they speak its national language. But these kinds of measurement do not necessarily match with how refugees themselves measure their own successes or failures in resettlement and what they

perceive as integration. Non-economic aspects of resettlement like the strength and quality of friendships, social networks and support between my informants and their Australian hosts transcend any numerically measurable indicators like employment and income, acquisition of the host language or ownership of property. This is because friendships, social networks and interactions between them create feelings of attachment to the Australian society. To borrow Weinfeld's (1997 in Korac 2003: 63) term, these enable my informants to "nest" in their new society. Therefore it is essential to put in place local policy initiatives and practices that facilitate the consolidation of relationships and social networks on both informal and institutional levels between Australians and Southern Sudanese in neighbourhoods or local council areas where they live.

Host societies tend to make policies and programs on resettlement and integration without adequate consultation with refugees and expect the refugees to conform to those policies and programs. But in doing so they miss out the refugees' voices, their expectations, and what they think are appropriate for them or could accommodate their previous experiences in life as refugees. These policies and programs that are being made for them significantly affect their lives and yet they have no opportunity to contribute to them. The refugees' involvement in those policies and programs that concern their lives from beginning to end are pivotal to their successful integration into their new society.

In addition, any improvement in their chances to become independent and to enable them to plan for their future is also essential for refugees to make a successful transition to their new society. However, any support given to refugees should not be understood as indicative of the refugee's lack of initiative to succeed and to take control of their lives, but rather of the support needed to guide refugees on their path to successful

resettlement and integration (Korac 2003). As Harrel-Bond (1999) has suggested, some ways in which refugees are helped may undermine their personal coping strategies and their abilities to succeed in their country of resettlement.

As this chapter shows, success in resettlement and integration into a different socio-cultural and economic environment is not a straight path to walk through; it needs a lot of resources from both the newcomers and the society hosting them in order for the newcomers to overcome hurdles on the path. In the case of my informants, their attempts at resettlement are made more difficult by their war experiences, prolonged periods in refugee camps with barely any formal education or opportunities for life enhancement, and by the fact that the majority were rural agro-pastoralists who came from low socio-economic backgrounds. The combination of these makes urban life problematic to navigate.

The extent of success in resettlement, participation in any activity in Australian society and integration are affected by individual abilities and attributes such as their rural/urban origin, their inability/ability to speak and understand English, their level of education, and their cultural and ethnic background. Resettling in a new society requires a lot of effort in learning the host language, its culture, systems, procedures, laws, rules, and the norms that enable newcomers to interact, make friends and to network with their hosts. Inability to make friends and to interact is thought to be related to language and cultural barriers. To some extent experiences of perceived or real incidents of discrimination and racism were blamed on lack of information to the Australian public regarding why the government was resettling Southern Sudanese in Australia. Although informants in unison believe that successful resettlement and integration is a two way process, they however acknowledged that for them to successfully resettle and integrate, they had to work harder themselves by trying their best to mix positively with

Australians, and to find jobs. The other side of the coin was for Australians to give them a fair go by making available the ways and means to allow them to participate fully in the activities of the Australian society.

In the next Chapter I will discuss the experiences of Southern Sudan regarding how they negotiate and construct the meaning of place, home and identity after being context of forcefully displacement from home into refuge (refugee camps) and after resettlement in Australia. I will examine their feelings of attachment to Australia or and to their country of origin to ascertain whether they feel and call Australia a 'home and place to live' and the factors that bring about these feelings or those that work against feelings of attachment to or identification Australia.

## CHAPTER SIX

### LIVING BETWEEN “HERE” AND “THERE”: NEGOTIATING HOME, PLACE AND IDENTITY IN RESETTLEMENT

#### Introduction

In Chapter Five I discussed social relationships and networking among Southern Sudanese and between Southern Sudanese and their Australian friends, and showed how those social relationships and this networking are negotiated, reworked, maintained or fail apart overtime. I have also shown whether informants engage separately in the activities which they organise or whether they invite their Australian friends to join them, and whether they exchange home visits. I ascertained how the range of interactions, social relationships, networking and the support that my informants received from Australian friends and from within their fellow Southern Sudanese, have affected their resettlement. I also highlighted the central role of the church in supporting some Southern Sudanese in meeting their religious, emotional and other resettlement needs and in connecting my informants with Australians in those churches where they worship. I argued that the aggregate of the social capital interactions, relationships, networks, and support systems determine the success or failure of the attempts of Sudanese refugees to resettle and integrate into Australian society. I urged that a more active involvement of Southern Sudanese and other refugees in the planning and implementation of those programs and activities that concern them would produce better outcomes in their attempts to resettle and integrate into Australian society.

In this chapter I will show how the Southern Sudanese experience, negotiate and construct the meanings of home, place, and identity in the context of their life of

resettlement in Australia after being displaced from their homeland. I will focus on whether they call Australia a 'home' and or a 'place to live', and show whether the acquisition of Australian citizenship, property (house/land) and familiarity with the English language amount to a claim of full attachment to, and identification with, Australian society. I recognise that asking the question whether my informants call Australia a 'home' and or a 'place to live' could be problematic. Critics will argue it assumes that all informants are assumed to fit into one category or the other, in fact the question was designed to understand from informants whether they make a distinction between a 'home' and a 'place to live' or a home could be both. The question was not intended to be bounded but instead to allow for flexibility that permits informants to express themselves in a way they see fit. That also allowed me to follow other related issues that arose during the interviews.

In this chapter I will argue that the Southern Sudanese concepts of home (Salih 2002: 51-67), place and identity, and the reconstructed meanings and values attached to them, do influence their resettlement and integration in Australia. To understand and explain these, I will draw on studies by Jackson (1995), Hage (1993), Basso (1996), Entrickin (1991), Massey (1994), Gupta and Ferguson (1997), de Haan (2002), and Lewins and Ly (1985) to demonstrate how people socially construct meanings and attach values to place, home and their own identities in the context of displacement. Due to war and subsequent resettlement in Australia, the Southern Sudanese have become a transnational community. I will show how they relate to one another both in diaspora and with those at home and how living away from home perpetuates their collective identity as Southern Sudanese. This is significant because it impacts on the meanings they give to 'home' and 'place', and how they develop other identities in the context of diaspora through their transnational networks, in addition to their separate ethnic group

networks. These two concepts, 'transnational' and 'diaspora' communities, are also closely linked to the concepts of 'identity', 'home', 'place', 'belonging to', and 'yearning for homeland' (Armbruster 2002: 8). The concepts of 'diaspora' and 'transnational' also capture the challenges inherent in the notions of place, home, and spatial transience of the life in exile. These concepts also capture the ambivalence entailed in the cultural experiences of dwelling away from home.

The concept of diaspora serves as a tool for the understanding of resettlement experiences of the Southern Sudanese in Australia (see Lavie and Swedenburg 1996; Clifford 1997; Appadurai 1995; and Kaplan 1996). From Wahlbeck's (1999) perspective, diaspora includes situations of forced migration and collective identity forged by a sense of belonging to a country of birth, the feeling of loss in resettlement, myths and memories associated with the country of birth, a longing for return, and ongoing connections with homeland. Cohen (1997:26) similarly proposes that diaspora is an extension from homeland in the pursuit of work, trade or colonial ambitions; and according to Vertovec (1997: 227), diaspora depicts the experiences of exile or resettlement. This concurs with Van Hear's (1998:8) description of diaspora as a continuing presence outside of one's country of birth while still having some kind of social, economic, cultural and other exchanges among or between the spatially dispersed diasporas and their homelands (see also Safran 1991). Thus, the above descriptions of diaspora embody the situation of the Southern Sudanese in Australia.

In this chapter I will draw on the theories of social space and place, including those proposed by Faist (2000), (Ross 1998), Shields (1990), Martins (1983) and Merrifield (1993), to highlight my informants' experiences of spatialisation and how they socially and culturally read and interpret their experiences, and reshape or maintain their definition of 'selves' and of 'others'. Thus the concept 'diaspora' offers a deeper



comprehension of the social realities which the Southern Sudanese experience in Australia. Similarly, diaspora as an analytical concept will enable me to understand the social and cultural links and gaps that exist between resettlement and the Southern Sudanese home country, as well as pre-resettlement and post-resettlement experiences.

### **Negotiating the Meaning of Home and Place in Resettlement**

... even though I love to be called Sudanese or African and I love where I came from, I don't feel ok when someone other than Sudanese asks me the question 'do you like it here'? This question may be intended to engage me in a discussion but as a refugee, it is not only engaging, it's loaded with other meanings. It reminds me of my country and it also reminds me that I am an alien here and I belong somewhere else.

(Ikodi interviewed on 12 July, 2006)

In order to appreciate how my informants conceptualise and negotiate their understanding of home and place in the context of resettlement in Australia, I asked them this question: 'What does home and place mean to you and do you call Australia a home and/ or a place to live?' Each informant's response was constructed from the words 'security, safety and a feeling of being part of the place' which from their point of view are the core constituents of 'home' and 'place to live'. Nyanmir's comment underlines this view:

... I feel safe in Australia; I live in peace in my heart and I go to study English at ELS<sup>6</sup>; an opportunity I had missed in Sudan and also my children also go to school ... we have food to eat everyday and we get financial support from Centrelink. You see, if there is no security, no peace, no food and no support, a place will not be a home... 'Mushida, wolekhief'<sup>7</sup>? These things make me and my children feel at home, Australia is my new home, it is my second home and Southern Sudan is my original home because all my relatives and two other children of mine, my brothers and sister and other relatives all live in Southern Sudan. I was born there and that's where my roots are

(Nyanmir interviewed on 28 October 2006)

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<sup>6</sup> ELS is an acronym of English Language Services. It is one of the Adult Migrant English Programs (AMEPs) established to teach refugees and migrants the English language.

<sup>7</sup> 'mushida' and 'wolekhief' are Arabic (Juba Arabic) words. In this context, their equivalent translations in English are 'is it not like this' or 'what do you feel'.

This quotation highlights the central issues inherent in the meanings of home and place. It also indicates what it is like for my informants to feel at home and what makes a place a home. Based on the data analysis, this also indicates how my informants conceptually positioned themselves between Australia and Southern Sudan as a way of dealing with the experience of living in two homes and places, one currently imagined (Southern Sudan) and the other (Australia) being the current physical home and place of residence. This brings into question the issues of belonging and attachment. It can be argued that a dual sense of belonging invites us to resolve a feeling of belonging to a particular home and place or to both. For most of my informants, although they physically live in Australia and call Australia home, the notion of 'roots' highlighted here by Nyanmir is similar to Malkki's (1997) notion of 'roots' which is linked to national identity and the nation left behind, which Malkki indicates has become an important coping strategy for refugees in their resettlement experiences. Thus, in this context, it is a sentimental response to conditions of resettlement and exile that significantly influences how my informants define themselves, as well as how they reconstruct the meanings of 'home' and 'place'.

It is worth noting that the literature on migration shows that home and place mean different things to different people and, as Al-Ali and Koser (2002: 6) indicate, the meanings of these have often been changing, evolving and moveable; "home" and "place" become spaces created within the shifting links between "there" and "here". Hence, as 'home' and 'place' are defined and experienced differently by different people, this chapter explores from the perspectives of the Southern Sudanese what 'home' and 'place' mean to them after being forcefully displaced from their original 'home' and 'place' into exile and eventual resettlement in Australia. Thus, 'home' and

'place' to my informants not only denote spaces for living but rather specific conditions<sup>8</sup> and experiences, including the presence of kin and kin support.

Although scholars, including McMichael (2002), Mallett (2004), Black (2002) and Bascom (2005) have acknowledged that "home" has multiple meanings, to my informants who were torn away from their home and place by war, 'safety and security' and 'peace and support' have become central to their meaning of home in a particular place. From this perspective, Australia as their new and second home and place to live offer what a home in a particular place offers: 'safety, security, peace, and regulated support' from service providers. But for Nyanmir, who was born in Southern Sudan, a place where the family and other kin live, the place is symptomatic of the differences between 'here' (Australia) and 'there' (Southern Sudan). Nyanmir's comment is a depiction of the migratory relation between place of origin and place of resettlement. This, on the other hand, demonstrates a particular sense of displacement which makes the two places distinct from each other, although they consider both as homes. According to Zetter (1999), "home" does not present only bounded spaces, but a living repertoire of relationships and traditions extending back to the past; it is a symbolic imagery of an inherited status and order. Zetter (1999: 6) further states that home is currently reworked in a romanticised form and mythologised for many rationales, such as for example, to retain the bonds of family, kinship (Black 2002: 126) and ethnic and national identity and so forth.

Hence, the memorable home 'there' (the Southern Sudan) plays an undeniable role in differentiating itself from Australia, as well as in the reconstruction of the meanings of a new home and place. This is because Southern Sudan is not 'here' within their reach; it

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<sup>8</sup> These conditions include living in an extended family where a wide range of social, economic, physical and emotional support is available i.e. support received from and provided by kin and an extensive network of kin support systems.

is far away 'there' with its kin support, and it is not easy to grasp. This experience undoubtedly disturbs my informants' construction of identity in their resettlement home. This leads me to Ayitö's comment when I asked him the question: 'What does home and place mean to you and do you call Australia a home and a place to live?' He answered:

... I have been living in Australia for more than twenty years and I certainly call Australia and especially Adelaide my home and a place to live. To me, home is where I have security and friends and people who can support me and make me feel secure, safe and I don't feel my life is in danger. But you know, even if I have been living here for these many years, I tell you, I still have spiritual and romantic feelings about Somere<sup>9</sup> my village in Kajo-keji Southern Sudan. You know, although I feel more Australian than Southern Sudanese, I still feel attached to Somere. I still desire to live in my home village again where I was born. I would like to sit under the shade of our family mango trees there and be able to pick up fresh mango fruits to eat ... be able to see the sun rise in the morning over Nyiri mountain and also see it set down in the vast plains of western Kajo-keji and because of my spiritual and romantic connections to my village, I have decided to return to Somere, my former home. I want to go and help my people. They had helped me when I was a child and now I want to go and build a school, a church, a health centre, and drill boreholes for them with the knowledge and experiences I got from Australia. I still feel that my homeland is one of the best places on earth to live in if there is a lasting peace in Southern.

(Ayitö interviewed on 10 May 2006)

This comment supports Anderson's (1983) proposition that remembering places often serves as symbolic anchors of displaced communities' identity and attachment to their place of origin. Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson's (1997:6-16) study highlighting the processes and practices of place making, challenges the spatially territorialised concepts of culture, and the relationship between the construction of community and locality indicate that the memory of places by displaced people has been essential to their construction of identity in their new environment. For Ayitö, home in Somere is a place full of memories and romantic experiences fantasised in its physical features, the mountain, the visible rising and setting of the sun, the mango trees and its fresh fruits,

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<sup>9</sup> Somere is a village in Kajo-keji country in Southern Sudan where Ayitö was born and resided before being forced to leave to seek refuge until he eventually sought resettlement in Australia.

and the shade of family mango trees that Somere offers but his new Adelaide home does not. Although Ayitö had left Somere decades ago, it still offers him memories and a history as a person who had lived there. Although identity is no longer territorialised, historically self-conscious, spatially bounded or homogeneous and so forth, as Appadurai (1991: 191 & 196) indicates, it is the nature of Somere's locality as lived experience by Ayitö that matters to him. The two homes offer him different sets of space and social relations. Although social relations do change, they are however woven with different experiences, networks and social relatedness to the space lived (see Thirft 1997: 126).

When I asked what he meant by 'romantic' (meaning nyarju in the Kuku language) and 'spiritual' (meaning mulokotio in the Kuku language) feelings, Ayitö answered that he meant those memories and feelings of Somere where he was born and which had lived in him to the present. According to him, these came from his experiences of living in Somere during his childhood and teenage years; his imagined memory of Somere had never vanished and thus he still felt attachment to it. He still remembered and imagined the mango trees and the shade they had sat under to listen to the elders' stories, and he still vividly remembered waking up each morning to see the sun rising over mountain Nyiri and to see it set down over the rolling plains of western Kajo-keji. He indicated that the romantic and spiritual feeling of attachment to Somere is his emotional response to Somere where he was born and partly grew up. This supports Roccio's (2002) proposition that for refugees, home is never allowed to go from their imaginations; they strongly desire to maintain a powerful connection to it. Roccio's (2002) study of the Senegalese in Italy confirms this.

Ayitö's quotation articulates his experiences of Somere and Adelaide and it demonstrates his connectedness to both which has served to create a meaning of home

and place for him both in Adelaide and Somere (see Bruner 1997:141). However, although Bammer (1994) regards such experiences as the most common experiences of our century, Ayitö's lived experiences of both Somere and Adelaide tend to be a dialectical process of social attachment in time whereby he employed particular attributes of a place to mark it from the other and then to reconstruct a sense of attachment to it. The quotation also highlights the significance of primary socialisation with ones' social and physical environments and how this has a formative influence in binding individuals and their identity to a place. This supports Colson's (2001) suggestion that place and personhood are conceptually bound together in most societies. On the other hand, Cohen (1997:185) claims that the old country is usually romanticised and its past glories are kept alive as a way of asserting continuity and a sense of belonging to it.

Being born in Somere and partially raised there creates memories which Ayitö could relate to. On the other hand, living in Adelaide outside Somere is another spatial experience that also has influenced his definition of self. Arguably his pre-migration spatial attachment to Somere competes with his resettlement spatial attachment to Adelaide, but also tends to create a sense of longing to both. What is of particular relevance to this chapter is how Ayitö still sees himself as a displaced (exiled) person regardless of the many years he has lived in Australia. As he indicated, his view of territorial attachment to his birth place is retained despite his separation from it for many years and by the long distance between Kajojeji (Somere) and Adelaide. But despite his long years of residence in Adelaide, Ayitö is not able to reproduce a permanent home locality in Adelaide (see Appadurai 1995; Gupta and Ferguson 1992) and hence longed to return to the 'continuity' offered by his original home. Ayitö's lived experience tends to agree with Parking (1999) and Malkki's (1995) insightful

discussion on continuity maintenance with places of origin and place making practices among displaced people.

It is evident from my analysis of the data that when resettlement is not a preferred choice but one which arose from the necessity of leaving refugee camps due to insecurity (life in danger) or the hardships of life, life in resettlement tends to cause an enduring sense of longing for home (Southern Sudan) regardless of the time lived in resettlement. This longing and the feeling of separation from one's original home is sustained by memories of the original homeland and regular contacts with kin who in turn serve as abstract symbols of displacement that induce a sentimental desire to return. However, for many informants, actual return remains only a hypothetical possibility; as the history of migration shows, return may remain wishful thinking not easy to be realised. As Joly, Nettleton and Poulton (1992: 65) demonstrate, return could only be possible where refugees and migrants have successfully resettled; unsuccessful settlement in the country of resettlement often leads to unsuccessful attempts to return to the country of origin.

Although all my informants still have very strong feelings and connections to Southern Sudan, at moment Southern Sudan does not offer the safety and security that Australia does. Unlike Southern Sudan and refugee camps, Australia is hailed as a new second home and a place where they no longer feel endangered, a place where they are able to engage without interruptions in studies and other activities aimed at improving their future lives. Hence, regardless of the strong feelings of attachment to Southern Sudan, discourses about 'home or place' and identity do not evoke among my informants a very strong desire for an immediate return to their homeland after the cessation of the war. However, although this tends to be the case, it is evident from informants that the discourse of return, belonging and place unequivocally dominates when they discuss

issues relating to Southern Sudan, displacement and resettlement in their new place of dwelling (see Rodman 1992: 642).

The desire to return to their homeland seems to be more remote among most women than it is among male informants. This is because most male informants feel that they have lost their socially and culturally accorded status as a result of resettlement, and that returning home would re-establish what they had lost. This lends support to Myerhoff's (in Cohen 2001: 71) proposition that displaced persons do commit to memory their previous social life in order to reconstruct their definition of "identity" and of "community" in the new place. However, during my fieldwork the most recurring word used by all my informants when discussing home and place is 'safety', which is reminiscent of their refugee experiences and their forceful displacement from Southern Sudan, their home. It is also an affirmation of the protection and safety they have found in Australia. Safety in this context is crucial in giving a meaning to Australia as a home and a place to live. As Probyn (1996) indicates, it is a prelude to the understanding of, and the making sense of, the new home.

As place and home are distinct from one person to another, so are the culturally significant meanings and values attached to home and place by their inhabitants. Hence it is argued that home and place become fused into identity (Entrickin 1991 & 1994) and this was reflected by most of the informants when they first introduced themselves to me during the interviews. They introduced themselves by referring to where they came from, their original home village in Southern Sudan. For example when I first met Njara and Bak, they respectively introduced themselves to me as: "Ana Zende min Yambio" i.e. I am a Zande from Yambio, and "ana Dinka min Rumbek", i.e. I am a Dinka from Rumbek. These demonstrate how the ethnic identities "Zande" and "Dinka" are respectively fused in the localities Yambio and Rumbek in Southern Sudan and



show the attachment to places of origin. This was strongly emphasised by most informants who were qualified professionals in Sudan and who had worked in Sudan and in other countries as refugees but who could not find employment in their professions in Australia.

Similarly, identification with a place of origin is demonstrated by Gaitot in the quotation below which demonstrates how layered identity is, and how he negotiated Australia as a home and as a place of belonging vis-à-vis identities developed during childhood in Panjak village in Southern Sudan. The quotation shows how Gaito tries to marry the two identities together. Furthermore, this is evidence of the multilayered and fluid nature of identity:

... I am a Dinka from Panjak in Southern Sudan, a refugee from Sudan. I now live in South Australia and I have become an Australian citizen. I call myself 'Sudanese-Australian'. But I see myself more of a Southern Sudanese than I see myself as an Australian because I was born there and most of my people live there.

(Gaitot, interviewed on 28 April 2006)

Njara, Bak, and Gaitot's self identification with their former home villages is arguably a foundation upon which attachment to imagined places and homes are built, evoked and articulated in the context of their resettlement in Australia. This also indicates how my informants situate themselves in positions of intricate social and cultural relevance to places and homes. Even though I did not ask my informants during the interviews about their ethnic groups and where they had lived in Southern Sudan, most instinctively identified themselves by reference to their ethnic groups and where they came from in Southern Sudan. However, interestingly, I have observed also that when they introduce themselves to some people who are not Southern Sudanese, they do not identify themselves by referring to their ethnic groups and home villages but simply as Southern Sudanese or Sudanese. This is perhaps to show to the 'others' that they are a united community but yet, when they are alone, individual ethnic groups prefer to mark

themselves off from the other ethnic groups from Southern Sudan by their ethnic groups and home area markers in Southern Sudan.

The identification with place and ethnic group serve to attach them to their former places of origin. This is a further indication of how identity is developed and negotiated in accordance with place and home location. This tends to underpin Bourdieu's (1977) crucial notion of "habitus" which in his view denotes the standard of representations and of generating and structuring practices that consequently lead to identity production through particular structures associated with environment. For Bourdieu (1977: 72), structures refer to functional structures constitutive of a specific type of environment and also as a principle of generation and structuring of practices and representations as well as how they can be objectively regulated. Although all of my informants called Australia their new and second home and a place to live, identification with their ethnic groups and territories in Southern Sudan highlights their feelings of displacement and suggests their spatial and ethnic affiliation to Southern Sudan. According to D'Alisera (2004:40), this shows how identity in displacement is actively played out, and the images of homeland are invoked as a way of localising memories within the space of displacement. D'Alisera has shown this to be the case among the Sierra Leonean refugees who resettled in the USA.

### **Negotiating Identity in Resettlement**

By the term identity I mean the totality of a person's perception of him/her self and how groups and individuals view themselves as being unique from the 'others'. Identity is a product of self-consciousness and an entity of differentiation on the basis of "me" versus "you", and "us" versus "them" (Huntington 2004: 21). Bhugra (2001) indicates that ethnic, racial and cultural identifications form part of an individual or group

identity and from Gupta and Ferguson's (1999a: 13) perspective, identity is characterised by exclusion from, and construction of, "others". However, identity does change with changes in the circumstances of life. For example, changes in social, cultural, political, legal and economic status and, as Ewing (2004) and Malkki (1995 & 1997) indicate, it is socially constructed, and as a social construct it is fluid and shifting.

Before I proceed to discuss in detail how my informants identify themselves in the context of their resettlement in Australia, I would like to discuss who they define as 'Australians'. When asked who in their opinion are Australians, my informants stated that Australians include the Aborigines (indigenous inhabitants), the descendants of early settlers and other migrants who came from the United Kingdom and from other European countries, and any other people from different countries in the world who arrived in Australia later on who have become Australian citizens by documentation or by birth and now call Australia their home. According to them, becoming Australian by documentation is achieved by passing a citizenship test and by way of interviews. In their view, passing the test/interview becomes a rite of passage to Australian citizenship which is formalised ceremonially by the award of a certificate (document) of Australian citizenship. The current test is based on basic Australian history, Australian values and uses of the English language to determine the level of English proficiency, and awareness of Australian history and values, acquired since arrival.

My informants' opinions regarding who Australians are, is important for negotiating their own identity in Australia, and their perception of the 'others'. Informants are, however, aware that being an Australian requires accepting most aspects of Australian values, and understanding the social, economic, and political systems and beliefs that set Australia apart from their own society and which are signifiers of 'Australian-ness' or 'un-Australian-ness'. Stratton (1998: 9) claims that "Australian-ness" has always

been defined against what has been considered to be un-Australian. According to Smith and Phillips (2001: 12), the popular understanding of un-Australian-ness includes the perception of, or the resistance of, immigrants or refugees to prescribed Australian values and identity. They argue that these represent challenges to the fantasy of white supremacy (see also Hage 1998: 209). However, it can also be argued that this assertion is blended with notions of race and country of origin: before the end of the White Australia Policy, these had been used as markers to exclude those considered as ineligible members of the nation (Australia). But even after the White Australia Policy was abolished and a multicultural policy was formulated, race and ethnicity in Australia still largely determined the perception of Australian-ness (Bhabha 1990 & 1994). This supports a claim from some of my informants who have acquired Australian citizenship that in their experiences in searching for jobs, acquiring Australian citizenship has never meant that they have become equal with white Australians.

Informants have stated that acquiring Australian citizenship by documentation and being of African ancestry does not lay equal claim to Australian citizenship because Australia is perceived as a country of white people. But they agreed that acquisition of Australian citizenship, and having their own houses and permanent jobs in Australia, did allow them to establish symbolic attachments to Australia. From this perspective, owning a house and land is culturally a physical attachment to a place and removes the feelings of living in transition. This is demonstrated by the comment from Ngor that “there is nothing in my culture so worrying than to live in other people’s houses and to die leaving one’s children without a house in a place a person called a home”. Such a view is also articulated by those who cherish the idea of returning to their country of origin. They wish to own a house here and another in Southern Sudan so that if they are in Southern Sudan and trouble (war) flares up again, then they will be able to come to

Australia and stay in their own home. Nevertheless, despite all these views, the most commonly held view of most of my informants concerning who are Australians is captured by Ikodi's comment:

...in addition to the Aboriginals and the descendents of the early settlers and others who arrived later on from Britain and from other countries, Australians are those people like me who became Australians by applying to become Australian citizens and passing interview or test after living in Australia for a certain period of time in order to be legally accepted as Australian citizen.

(Ikodi interviewed on 12 July 2006)

Arguably my informant's perceptions of who they (the Southern Sudanese) are is a blend of symbolic identities constituted from Southern Sudan as a territory and a tribal or ethnic group occupying a specific territory/ies. These act as symbols of shared identity. These symbolic identities and the meanings they serve are given by their functions in specific contexts and become firmly situated in social practices in wider society (Moore 1986: 3). These in turn provide a sense of self-identification with the society at large. It is not however only social practices in the wider society that provide self identification. In analysing the data there is evidence to suggest that the informants' identification with Australia is constructed around how they perceive themselves in Australia and how they think 'others' perceive them. Hage's (1993) concept of "otherness" in multicultural Australia, and the forms of difference that serve as signifiers of "otherness", better explain this (see also Lechte and Bottomley, 1993: 33). One's self-perception, and the interpretation of how one is perceived by 'others', is apparent when identity consciousness between different groups of people operates on the principle of differentiating others by supposedly shared beliefs, symbols, values, and economic and political thought, or on the basis of skin colour and country of ancestry. Thus, identifying one self with others offers a comfort zone, a sense of commonality and a sense of belonging embedded in commonly understood symbols within the group.

Since the symbols are commonly understood, they evoke particular memories which the group interprets as offering meanings within their social world (Adam 1995: 464).

The concept of 'home' is relevant here because discourses on identity among my informants and how they are constructed in Australia, including the circumstances in which they were forced from their place of origin to refugee camps and then eventually resettled in Australia, are dominated by comparing Australia their new home with Southern Sudan, the old but now imagined home. For many informants, the meaning of home is constantly recreated and transformed by individuals through their lived life experiences in Australia their new home in order to facilitate the possibilities of adjustment to cultural changes and social distractions they encounter in the new home. Putting the experiences of my informants in this context, it is arguable that their constant recreation and transformation of what they perceived as home during plight, flight and in refuge has had an impact on how they reconstruct their identity in Australia. The influencing effect of place on identity is evidenced in the data by the willingness of my informants to acquire Australian citizenship to add to their other identities. The newly negotiated hyphenated identity (hybrid identity) of the 'Sudanese-Australian' perhaps demonstrates the fusion of identity with place and society in which individuals or groups reside. This renegotiated identity became possible and was rendered useable by the lived life of exile or resettlement (Malkki, 1995: 156-7). This claim of 'Sudanese-Australian', although individually pursued, has become my informants' adaptive and inclusive strategy for marrying their Sudanese-ness with their Australian-ness without divorcing the former.

I have shown in the preceding paragraphs of this chapter how Gaitot's identity was shaped by his native Sudan and his ethnic group, and how it has been reshaped by resettlement in Australia. I also indicated his desire to maintain his old identities. This is

confirmed by Fábos' (2002) study of Sudanese exiled in Cairo-Egypt in which she shows a strong desire among the Sudanese to preserve their identity. A similar study by Farah (2002) of Somali immigrants in Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, and in the United Kingdom also suggests how the Somali refugees are concerned to maintain their identity in resettlement or exile.

During the interviews those informants who had acquired Australian citizenship indicated that they are proud of their Southern Sudanese identity as well as of their acquired Australian identity, and they tend to demonstrate unwavering loyalty to both. One of the informants, Panchol, explains:

... I would like it to be shown in my passport that I am a Sudanese-Australian ... a dual citizen, which both matters to me a lot because it permits me to maintain my Sudanese identity and my acquired Australian identity, and I will respect and be loyal to both Australia and Southern Sudan.

(Panchol interviewed on March 13, 2006)

Duality in citizenship and loyalty to both countries resonate with my informants' notions of 'here' (Australia) and 'there' (Southern Sudan) as two distinct places, each offering different life experiences and opportunities. However, this notion of places being distinct from each other has been questioned by Anderson (1983) when he shows that places are no longer distinct from one another in this current global era because places and localities have become more blurred so that nothing has remained culturally and ethnically distinct. This is similar to the postmodernist view exemplified by Cohen's (1997: 127) claim that collective identity based on homeland and nation is a sound but frequently changing set of cultural beliefs that question the very idea of 'home' and 'host country'. These challenge any attempt to fix particular space onto a particular place. People, cultures and identity have become more mobile and can be said no longer to be static.

Writing on this same theme, Clifford (1988: 275) has questioned the meaning of “native land” and “cultural experience of identity” as fixed entities in the twentieth century. On the other hand, the postcolonial notion of place is that it no longer exists as in an abstract space but involves interactions between its history and memories. Space encompasses various territorial locations, and by space here I specifically refer to physical attributes as well as to social life, opportunities and individualised images that place represents for refugees and migrants. Thus, I argue that place influences identity and that it is more intense with resettled refugees who see themselves as a minority group with a minority culture in their country of resettlement. My analysis of the data indicates that because of the forceful displacement from home, the majority of my informants have shown a profound sense of loss of what they have called home, alongside a fear of erosion of identity in resettlement. Although my informants accepted Australia as their new home, they however conceive of resettlement as a condition that has a deterritorialising effect on their identity.

It has been acknowledged that the identity of people living outside their country of origin is crucially linked to that country of origin. Cohen’s (1997) study of African diasporas highlights this and reveals a sense of disconnectedness which in turn energises diaspora and produces an attempt to reconstitute collective identity and to establish complex connections between diasporas and Africans at home (Cohen, 1997: 148). This is similar to the proposition of Rogaly et al. (2002: 89) that refugees and migrants have a sense of themselves as a social (cultural) group which is enhanced by being away from home. In the case of my informants, Southern Sudan has been central to their life experiences and identity, but they agreed that Australia as their second home has in one way or another impacted on their current life and identity as for example in the acquisition of Australian citizenship, English language and so forth.



Arguably in this current era of globalisation forced and voluntary migration have become interwoven and so to some extent portray similar, though not the same, experiences. Forte (2002) and Hasse (1999) have done informative work in which they attempt to reconcile globalisation with the formation of diasporas and identities; this highlights how globalisation and incidents of racism against migrants and refugees have provided a context in which refugees as diasporas and transnational communities have continued to cling onto their identities. Forte (2002) shows how globalisation has facilitated the linking together of the Indigenous people worldwide. According to Forte, these links have created a world community which identifies itself as being made up of indigenous people. He shows how globalisation has facilitated the indigenous people to exchange information, and also to learn skills and share experiences with others to broaden their self-discovery and to strengthen their cultural identity. In accordance with this, Hesse has argued that diasporas are symptomatic of globalisation and are energised by the will of ethnic communities to survive by transmitting their cultural heritages and the cultures of their origins to their offspring. This encapsulates the empirical idea that diaspora incorporates a profound reference to both centre and periphery (home). Hasse further stresses that diaspora creates discourse of home, identity, dispersion, and the desire to come home (see Brah 1996 in Hasse 1999: 135-7).

The subject “diaspora”, as Ilcan (2002: 7) points out, “is massive historically, geographically and culturally”; it denotes transition, displacement, migration, homeland (territory/borders), and discourse about origin, about natives and ‘otherness’. However, in this chapter I approach diaspora as a concept that is engendered by the processes of resettlement and the connections made by the resettling of Southern Sudanese. I view it as a process by which the Southern Sudanese were displaced by war experiences and led to a life of resettlement away from their original home, but not as a people who had left

their homeland to better their economic prospects in western countries. Although it is understandable that diaspora may not adequately describe the experiences of refugees, both diaspora and refugee experiences of residence outside their own country of birth are characterised by strong desires to preserve their distinct identity and by a longing to return to their homeland (see also Lewin & Ly, 1998: 30; Clifford, 1997: 254). Writing about diaspora, Berking (2004: 103) has argued that the notion of “home away from home” reveals itself in the formation of diasporic transnational networks of ethnic relationships with a sense of community and collective identity (see also Koser 2002).

### **Transnational-ness and Communication as a Means of Maintaining Collective Identity in Diaspora**

The identity ‘refugee’ is stigmatising so that given favourable social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances, refugees in resettlement would like to shed it as soon as possible. However, even so, my analysis of the data indicates that the identity ‘refugee’ is essentially used by informants to describe an integral part of their life experiences and the conditions that compelled them to resettle in Australia. Thus, it is in this context that they reconstruct a new identity, ‘Sudanese-Australian’. Their desire to maintain their identity is revealed by the formation of the Sudanese Community Association of South Australia branch, several ethnic community associations and ethnic schools which they have established. These are perceived by informants as symbolic of Sudanese-ness and their ethnic affiliation as identities among the Sudanese. These have been the anchoring symbols of their territorial and cultural roots. In their ethnic schools and in other social and cultural activities, a strong emphasis has been placed on ethnic traditions and values. There is direct and indirect pressure on children to conform to these through teaching and story telling by parents in ethnic schools and in families. It is deemed necessary to pass on to their children language, stories and other aspects of life from

Southern Sudan while they are adjusting to their new social and cultural environments. This has tended to be an emotional demand created by the fear of losing their cultural identities, traditions and links to their original home. This, according to Matsuoka and Sorenson (2001: 87 citing Knudsen 1995), suggests that the use of memories is a key feature of refugees' maintenance of self-identity and who they were, which often constitutes an attachment to their country of origin.

For my informants, their sense of attachment to and identification with their homeland are captured by the stories, memories and images of lived localities in Southern Sudan recounted in stories to children and discussed among themselves. I have observed this often happening during my fieldwork in informants' homes and in classrooms in ethnic schools. This strategy of utilising memories to recount images and symbols representative of the Southern Sudan as a home-away-from-home has served to anchor them emotionally to Southern Sudan. Malkki (1995: 209) describes a similar strategy used by Hutu refugees in Tanzania to maintain their identity and to maintain the longing to belong to their homeland. The Hutu refugees in Tanzania according to Malkki used this to cope with their uprooted and liminal status in Tanzania and to resist assimilation by reasserting among themselves a purity of collective identity based on past life experiences and connectedness to a remembered homeland.

In this regard, my informants' view of Australia being a second home located far away from Southern Sudan tends to prolong their memories and acts to maintain their identity and their sense of belonging to it. This tends to create what Said (2001: 173) called "an unhealable rift that has been forced between the self and the true home, between a human being and a native place." On the other hand, Said (2000: 177) states that the exiles are cut off from their roots and their land and their past. This has, according to Said, defied the literature and the historic portrayal of exile as a positive achievement

because any achievement in exile is permanently undermined by the loss of things left behind, which are never recoverable in exile. This is also revealed in my informants' discussions of exile and resettlement which are riddled with disturbing memories of their relationship with the place of their birth, which had been destroyed by war, as well as what was left behind, including the extended family, siblings, parents and others who had previously acted as social safety nets for them. However, despite all these situations and feelings, there is evidence from the data to suggest that my informants have often tried to rebuild their lives in their new society of resettlement, and to renegotiate their notion of home through rethinking in order to recreate the lost home.

For most informants, refugee-ness and exile have deprived them of some aspects of their culture, traditions and kin support. In Australia informants have to deal with these and other losses incurred in their life so that they often find that what was once socially and culturally routine has to be re-examined and reassessed. But when these anxieties cannot be resolved easily, they bring about a desire to return because the original home is regarded as a place for rediscovering or restoring lost status, a sense of identity and lost aspects of their way of life. On the other hand, possession of economic and social status and of material goods in Australia to a greater degree than they had in Sudan tends to alleviate the desire to return and, instead, enhances the feeling of attachment to Australia. Likewise, a decline or non achievement of these exacerbates their sense of loss, which in turn causes nostalgia. This is most often expressed by those suffering from loss of employment and of social and cultural status in their new environment. Hence, return is hailed as a way to restore their original cultural and social status that was lost during resettlement (see Chapter Seven).

As a transnational community dispersed worldwide, the Southern Sudanese have significantly benefited from the World Wide Web and mobile phone technologies in

connecting themselves with others in order to perpetuate their identity as Southern Sudanese. These technologies have linked them together either as individuals, community groups or as Southern Sudanese. The mobile phones and online virtual communities offer them the space whereby they are able to share ideas, fashion and reconstruct an identity based on the experiences of diaspora, and to discuss and resolve amongst themselves situations they face in diasporas (e.g. funerals, the transporting of the corpses of dead members to Southern Sudan for burial and so forth), as well as giving them the opportunity to voice their views about social, cultural, political and economic developments in Southern Sudan without coming together in a physical space. In this way they are able to reconstruct and maintain their identity as Southern Sudanese through forming a transnational social internet network where they negotiate their existence as separate ethnic communities or as a global Southern Sudanese community. Hence, using the internet and phones effectively creates a network of people who globally define themselves as Southern Sudanese.

There are several websites and internet discussion forums that Southern Sudanese are using, but I will focus only on the few that are the most and frequently used by my informants. These include <http://www.gurtong.org> and <http://www.southsudan.net> which are used by most Southern Sudanese, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation, to discuss matters relating to Southern Sudan in general. On the other hand, the Mading De Bor website (Baai~Bor) (<http://www.madingbor.com>) was established and used by Dinka from Bor. Similarly the Anuak website (<http://www.anuakjustice.org>) was established and use by the Anuak ethnic group, <http://acholi.net> by the Acholi ethnic group, and the Paranet\_Lo\_KK discussion forum by the Kuku ethnic group. It is hosted by Gmail.com where accessibility is only by subscription by the sons and daughters of Kuku parents. All these have become transnational discussion boards and forums that

link the Southern Sudanese worldwide as a single people and also as individual ethnic groups. When I asked Gaitot whether he communicates with family members and friends at home, in refugee camps and elsewhere, he said:

... yes, I do because the rest of my kin are in Sudan and some in refugee camp in Kakuma in Kenya and Adjumani in Uganda... I have my brother in-law resettled in Canada and my sister resettled in US and my best friend resettled in Finland. And because I have Internet access in the house, we regularly communicate by email and sometimes by phone. I use <http://www.gurtong.org> and <http://www.southsudan.net> and <http://www.madingbor.com> a lot to communicate with other Sudanese and my fellow *Jeing* (*the Dinka refer to themselves as Jeing*).

Wahlbeck's (2002: 225-226) study on the Kurds in diaspora shows that in a similar way the internet has become one of the channels through which the Kurds in diaspora keep in touch with each other.

In recent years the literature on cyber space has recognised the significance of the World Wide Web as a communication tool and a resource for individuals or communities and which could effectively be used to build transnational bridges between diaspora and their communities in their country of birth. For my informants, the World Wide Web serves to lessen the issue of belonging that haunts diasporic communities; it also serves as a forum for discussions of social, cultural, social, economic, and political conditions existing in Southern Sudan. Significantly it enables them regularly to exchange messages with members from other sides of the globe about Southern Sudan. It also enables communities to collect financial resources for initiating small scale projects at home such as the provision of ambulance services to hospitals, and to provide support for the building of schools and health centres.

These internet sites show how Southern Sudanese reconstruct and maintain their Southern Sudanese-ness and their ethnic identity in diaspora. Often these links bind the Southern Sudanese together by way of shared histories, experiences of flight and exile,

cultural ties and claims of originality that are infused in their collective identity as people from a particular geographical region within the global space.

Arguably, online identity construction is mediated by the forces of globalisation which easily allow them to make connections with their home country, kin and friends elsewhere. According to Tetty and Puplamu (2006), the Internet provides unique opportunities for people living outside their home to keep abreast of developments at home, as well as to engage with other diasporas online. Accordingly, Southern Sudanese tend to value and consider both online and offline connections necessary in their lives of resettlement. The networks and forums in which they have engaged help alleviate feelings about their kin and kinship, friends and memories of Southern Sudan. Although the online attachment to home and to other kin elsewhere do not offer satisfaction like physical attachment does, it does however offer space, psychological and emotional satisfaction that helps to redefine them as Southern Sudanese and provides a sense of Southern Sudanese-ness. Hence, Southern Sudanese are using the Internet as a transnational public forum for the production of narratives of their resettlement experiences in addition to online identity construction. In this regard, the Internet is not merely a notable communication space but it has also become an emotionally and psychologically laden space where they build existing social networks across the globe to where family members and friends live (see Clifford 1994). Thus, the fact that the Internet has no fixed location reflects the displacement of Southern Sudanese in diasporas and their dispersed social connectivity and for those who have encountered discrimination in one way or the other, the online social network serves as a repository for the yearning for home.

As indicated earlier, these virtual online Southern Sudanese communities in their transnational context create spaces for dialogue where they can express their life experiences of resettlement. The World Wide Web has in fact become a channel for the delivery of, and the provision of access to, information among educated Southern Sudanese. Furthermore, these websites and discussion forums have achieved a certain degree of online social solidarity bounded by their sense of group identity as Southern Sudanese. The Southern Sudanese both abroad and at home have created a social space to foster relations across territories, and the social spaces they have created gives them cultural meanings and, as Faist (2000: 191) and Portes (1997: 812) have indicated, allow them to sustain their ties and advance their socio-cultural recognition. Hence, this further demonstrates that space is a social product in which social relations are constructed, negotiated, contested and made meaningful by the ways in which actors within that constructed space make sense of the space and all that takes place in it (see Ross 1998 and Sheild 1990). Faist's (2000: 191) conceptual proposition of transnational social space, which includes the experience of refugees as people who have crossed the borders of transnational social spaces, covers various phenomena which range from transnational communities, small groups and transnational circuits of people each of which is characterised by group reciprocity, exchange of information/resources and community solidarity. Faist further indicates that transnational social spaces are a blend of ties, positions in social networks and networks of organisations stretched across the borders of several states.

Most of my informants who are active participants in the discourses on these websites and forums have argued that the websites and forums provide some of their coping strategies which they use to deal with the pressure to integrate into their host societies because they help them to maintain their identity by virtually linking them to their place



of birth and to other Southern Sudanese elsewhere. Bhabha (1990 & 1994), Appadurai (1996a), Stratton (1998) and Hage (1998) offer valuable contributions to the study of diasporas and identity which are relevant to this chapter. It is worth noting that these strategies have also been used by Chinese-Australians to maintain their identity as well as to link them to other Chinese elsewhere and at home (Collin 2004: 2). Such online discourses operate and are negotiated within the context of the place of resettlement and living away from home in transnational spheres (see Appadurai, 1996a: 10).

The emergence of mobile phones and the internet have enabled my informants in diaspora to reconnect themselves as individuals and as communities, and to create a cyber social space where they can individually tell their stories of exile and resettlement, learn from one another, and share experiences. These online communities of dispersed Southern Sudanese separated from their homeland by long physical distances have essentially come to symbolise transnational communities rooted in a geographical location called the Southern Sudan and articulated in diaspora by identifying themselves with it. Hence, as Appadurai (1996b: 42) has indicated, the “production of locality” has been made possible by technology and, in this context, locality no longer depends of physical space; and identity has been transnationalised.

In a sense, the internet technology has shrunk actual geographical distance between their homeland and diaspora. With the internet, some of my informants have fashioned a new space where their identity as Junubin (Southerners) is articulated and projected at the same time. It also acts to encourage and reinforce ethnic affiliations. As Kolko, Nakamura and Rodman (2000: 9) indicate, the cyberspace enables “minorities” separated from one another by distance and other factors to connect, communicate and to foster issues that are of paramount importance to them and to their communities. Hence, the

internet has provided a fundamental social space that makes possible interactions and identification with other Southern Sudanese elsewhere and within Southern Sudan.

With the internet, diaspora has become a produced space within which identity is renegotiated, reconstructed and maintained within the contexts of cultural, historical and political experiences at home and in places of resettlement. In the current global era, the internet has blurred the boundaries between home and diaspora. As Kearney (1995: 547) has argued, “movement of information, symbols, capital and commodities in the global and transnational spaces” have been significant to the global communities, and Klein (2002: xxii) has indicated that, despite inherent problems in globalisation, the internet and mobile phones have brought about important connections that bind the displaced people with those at home. Similarly, Bernal (2005) has claimed that the internet and diaspora both reflect shifting social formations in the post-modern era.

In addition to their identities, informants also perceived themselves as a diaspora community when they discussed social and political issues pertaining to Southern Sudan. Thus, as Wilson and Peterson (2002: 449-454) have proposed, the new media tends to “bring together dispersed members of familial and ethnic groups ...” and therefore perpetuates the reproduction and indexing of identities as well as negotiated online interactions (see also Hakken 1999). Miller and Slater’s (2003) study of the virtual Trinidadian community indicates the way in which the internet has become a relevant tool that enhances a sense of belonging to Trinidadian online community which is both worldwide and virtual. Miller and Slater (2003: 55) stress that the “global encounter” made possible by the internet makes the sense of identity more intense. Similarly, Appadurai’s (1996a: 3) concepts of “ethnoscapes” and “mediascapes” in the globalised world, and his emphasis on the role of media technologies in creating newer social pitches, enrich our comprehension of the current global fluidity. Appadurai

asserts that “electronic media determinedly alters the wider field of mass mediation because they provide new disciplines and resources for the construction of imagined identities and of the imagined world.

Although diasporas are regarded as referring to those who have fully established themselves abroad for fairly long periods of time and are actively engaged in political activities in their homeland, the Southern Sudanese are relatively recent arrivals in Australia and do not actively participate in the political activities in Southern Sudan, even if they are politically conscious of political events occurring there. However, I believe that the fact that the Southern Sudanese identify themselves as Southern Sudanese in Australia qualifies them as diasporas because their experiences of displacement and resettlement encapsulate the situations of diasporas (Wahlbeck 1999: 170-177; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 13; Clifford 1992: 115; Appadurai 1995: 218; Kaplan 1996: 1-4 & 22; see also Cohen 1997; Clifford 1997; Vertovec 1997; Van Hear 1998; and Safran 1991). I will further argue that as refugees my informants’ spatialisation is not just a physical condition of being but is a social product within which social relations are constructed, negotiated, contested and made meaningful in their resettlement. Don (2002), Ewing (2004) and Malkki’s (1995 & 1997) work on how forced refugees and voluntary migrants constantly reconstruct their identities when resettled in unfamiliar societies is important to draw on here to grasp how in certain circumstances my informants reconstruct identities in the context of diaspora. This is relevant to this chapter because it helps me to ascertain whether they exclude themselves from, or include themselves into, the host society (also see Huntington 2004).

## **The Idea of Return as an Enduring Anchorage to Homeland**

On analysing the data there is evidence to suggest that most informants who brought to Australia qualifications, skills and experiences from home/overseas, but who are either unemployed or underemployed, tend to live in a state of emotional distress due to the downturn in their economic and social status. Males, especially the married and unemployed ones, experience a demise of their traditional roles as husbands and parents. Their social and culturally accorded status, as well as the income and assets superiority over their wives which they had in Sudan, no longer exists. As a result they told me that they had lost the respect and obedience of their wives and children; the Australian society has deprived them of these. Thus they were inclined to view Australia as a temporary home and a sanctuary from the war that forced them out of Southern Sudan where they had relatively high social and economic status. This was because they felt that their potential was either not being utilised, or was under utilised, in Australia. Mudjai told me during an interview that:

Australia is like a 'guruguru', a place I have come to hide from the Arabs who had endangered my life.

Guruguru is a Kuku/Bari word used to describe a place of hiding from the danger of marauding Arab tribes and government soldiers from Northern Sudan. Jerele, another informant, told me that:

Australia is both "guruguru" and lou, a place away from home where 'we' the Jubuni (Southern Sudanese) have come to hide, to cultivate and grow crops to take home.

Lou is a word used most often by members of Bari speaking ethnic groups to describe a place away from home where people can cultivate their land to grow food crops to be taken home. Then I asked Jembe what he meant by cultivating and growing crops to take home. He answered:

...I don't mean practical cultivation and growing and harvesting. I don't have any land here to cultivate. No! But I mean participation is

education to get knowledge, find a job and earn money and I could take the knowledge and the money home to help my people home if I return there.

Living in Australia is often characterised by most of my informants as 'si'da koke' or 'ghaidin brah'. 'Si'da koke' is a Bari word for 'living or staying outside' and 'ghaidin barah' is an Arabic word also for 'living or staying outside'. In this context both mean living out of home and the two words can be regarded as the equivalent of the English words living 'broad' or in 'diaspora'. Thus, 'living outside' is a depiction of a condition of deterritorialisation or displacement from what they regard as home. However, although most of my informants claim to have the feeling of temporality in Australia, this feeling may not be resolved simply by returning home because many things, including culture and traditions which had made them who they were, might have changed or have been replaced with borrowed ones from other cultures after the war had ended. Hence this will render return problematic to returnees. This is because some of my informants who have recently visited families in Southern Sudan and returned to Australia have informed me that many changes have occurred in Southern Sudan so that returning may require returnees to start a new life, and to have a lot of resources and endurance to readjust to the changes. The majority of my informants have also acknowledged that they have been changed in subtle ways by the life in Australia and that returning would lead to other problems of adjusting to a new life there because the old life has changed markedly. One of my informants, Alikin, sums up the views of what the majority have perceived as changes in their way of life in Australia:

... ayinu (is an Arabic word translated in this context as you see!) In Australia most of us have acquired and drive cars. We no longer travel long distances on foot or carry things on our heads and we no longer walk long distances to fetch water and firewood for our families. We now use phones instead of walking to deliver messages to friends or relatives by word of mouth ... and we don't use firewood or charcoal now for cooking but use electricity or gas. In Southern Sudan, we mainly (depended on) what we grew and animals that we reared and

not on money ... but now we live everyday on money, we buy all our things. These are great changes in our ways of life here.

(Alikin interviewed on 17 October 2006)

The figure below depicts lack of transportation in Southern Sudan and vividly reflects what Alikin has referred to.

**Figure 12: A woman carrying a bundle of sugar cane to the market on her head in Southern Sudan.**

**Source:** Kajokeji Australian Development Initiative (KADI) accessed online at URL: [www.kadiaustralia.org](http://www.kadiaustralia.org) on 2 December 2008

NOTE:

This figure is included on page 231 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

**Figure 13: Young girls in Southern Sudan carrying water home from stream (water point).** This photo is used with permission from Emma Yengi and her husband Mr. Ben Yengi, the KADI's Executive Director and initiator. This photo was taken in 2008 when Emma and Ben were in Southern Sudan initiating the project.

NOTE:

This figure is included on page 231 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

For most informants, and especially women, return is not an option that they will consider. They indicated that they would consider returning only if the services and amenities that they are currently using in Australia became available in Southern Sudan or if they could be guaranteed that they would find good jobs there. They stated that they had become used to the range of services and amenities which they enjoyed in Australia and that to return would deprive them of the good life that they enjoyed in Australia. Most informants claimed that in Australia women have become more independent and liberated from the patriarchal family arrangements where their husbands had dominated every aspect of familial life, and where they had rarely challenged their husbands. Here women had become more independent in that they had access to their own income (from a job or from welfare payments). Most importantly, they could now openly challenge their husbands because they were aware that the laws here are not so biased against women like the laws and traditions in Southern Sudan. Holtzman's (2000: 81) study of the Nuer who resettled in the United States of America demonstrates this when she shows how Nuer women have observed the freedom that American women take pleasure in, and that women do not necessarily need to obey what their men tell them. Holtzman also highlights how difficult it was for Nuer men to accept that wives should be considered equal to their husbands.

It is important to note here that before the signing of the peace agreement in 2005 which ended the war in Southern Sudan, most Southern Sudanese had longed to return as soon as peace returned. However, after the peace treaty was signed, discourse on return shifted to ways of acquiring resources for starting a new life in Southern Sudan before returning could be considered. Informants have also indicated that they did not wish to disrupt their children's education in Australia by returning to Southern Sudan. These have become the principle reasons on which informants have based their decisions to

return. Fulgerud's (1999: 4) study reveals similar experiences and discourse among the Tamil diasporas in Norway.

Most informants reveal an enduring desire to return home, at least to visit families and friends. An analysis of the data suggests that lack of resources and a prolonged period of stay in Australia tend to slowly diminish the desire to return. The desire to return is contingent on certain conditions and this illustrates my informants' dilemma. Lack of resources offers my informants a validation for continuous living in Australia. Arguably this also suggests a reason for my informants' reluctance to integrate socially and culturally into Australian society (see Morley and Ribon 1993). During the interviews, informants have indicated that they desire to return, whether sooner or in the remote future tends to strengthen the parents' insistence that their children practice and maintain their cultural traditions.

Despite the fact that return may not be possible for a variety of reasons, most informants have constructed return as a means that will undo some of their negative experiences of refugee-ness and a life of displacement and resettlement, and will ultimately end their disconnection from their ancestral home. The assumption that informants made was that return was a process of reconnecting to home and to the place to which they feel bound. This assumption is similar to that expressed by Malkki (1997 & 1995b), Appadurai (1991), and Gupta and Ferguson (1997) who have stated that exile and plight rupture the bond that symbolically attached specific spaces to people and that only return could heal that ruptured bond. In a similar way, Warner (1994: 169) indicated that conceptualisation of return "denies the temporal reality of our lives" so that those wishing to return never takes into account the historical, social, cultural, individual, and political changes by which home is constantly being constructed. Return is not solely a physical condition but rather a social, cultural and emotional condition which could be



detrimental to some returnees who upon return may find that they have lost close family members and properties. On return these people are likely to find the yearned for home 'unwelcoming and unfamiliar' because the social and cultural continuity which was the foundation of the original home, its meaning and the identification with it may no longer exist and cannot be re-established either.

However, for many informants, return is dependent on consolidation of peace in Southern Sudan and what they hope that they could take (education, qualifications, knowledge, skills, income and assets) from Australia to Southern Sudan. Returning to Southern Sudan without any of these to earn a better living or to sustain life there is claimed by some informants to bring shame on them from those who had been left behind and had re-established themselves socially and economically. Returning with no resources is seen as a failure to succeed in Australia, a well developed western country believed to be endowed with numerous resources, opportunities and offering the means to succeed. Moreover, there are other reasons cited by informants as hindering their return in the foreseeable future. Lack of resources and possibilities for their children's education, in addition to concern about an absence of social services (healthcare, housing, transportation, security and welfare) in Southern Sudan, were the most recurring mentioned reasons against return among most informants. There are also those who have taken study loans and/or mortgages who feel that they must pay them off before they could return.

In discussing return with informants, there were uneasy voices alleging that, since its establishment in 2005, the government of Southern Sudan had distanced itself from them and as a result there has been no links between the government of Southern Sudan and Southern Sudanese resettlement in Australia. This lack of official links has given rise to speculation that the government of Southern Sudan is not interested in their

return or in their participation in the coming 2011 referendum to decide the future of Southern Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 between the Islamist government in Sudan and the Sudan People's Revolution Army/Movement. The agreement allows for the Southern Sudanese to vote in a referendum in 2011 to decide whether they want the Southern Sudan to remain part of a unified Sudan or to separate and become a sovereign nation. This is indicated in a speech on 13 August 2006 by Mr. Aro, the president of the Sudanese Community Association of South Australia Branch, during the visit of officials of the Government of Southern Sudan to Adelaide. He urged the officials to establish a channel of communication between Southern Sudanese in Australia and the government of Southern:

...we are an integral part of Southern Sudan even if some of us have acquired dual Sudanese-Australian citizenship. We would like to participate in the political, social and economic development of Southern Sudan and we would also like to vote in the coming 2011 referendum. Australia is endowed with numerous resources and knowledge and I advise our young people to acquire qualifications, knowledge and skills from Australia and transfer them to rebuild our beloved Southern Sudan.

(Aro former president of SCASABI<sup>10</sup>  
interviewed on 13 August 2006)

Informants have also alleged that the government of Southern Sudan does not seem to encourage Southern Sudanese in diaspora to return home and so far the only strong links with their homeland have been through family or the community via e-mails, phone calls, letters and financial remittances to families and kin in Southern Sudan and in refugee camps elsewhere.

The concepts of home, place and identity are always shifting and mean vastly different things to different people. However, home, place and identity are formed from a range of interwoven cultural, social, political, historical, and psychological constructions as

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<sup>10</sup> SCASABI is an acronym for Sudanese Community Association of South Australia Branch Inc

well as experiences that influence the notions and meanings of place, home and identity in a specific space/location. Those meanings are acquired and perpetuated through multifaceted processes of re-construction, remembering and recounting of the past and imagining the future in a particular place and home.

It is important to stress here that all my informants are grateful to the Australian government and its people for opening their arms to welcome them in their midst and to allow them to enjoy the security and safety which Australia offers as they no longer feel threatened like they were in Southern Sudan and in refugee camps during the war. They argue that home and place becomes a true home when people feel welcomed and are treated equally like all the other people in a society giving opportunities to access jobs and other social services.

On the other hand those who have acquired Australian citizenship by documentation have stated that in certain circumstances their citizenship has not been perceived 'equally' when compared to the others who have been granted it. Informants indicated that even if some of them have acquired Australian citizenship, they have still been defined by 'others' on the basis of their race, colour of skin and country of origin as being different. However, this is not an issue that is confined to Sudanese or Africans alone. Carole (2003: 101-102) indicates that even among Chinese-Australians the differentiating process of "othering" by people in the Australian mainstream occurs, and accordingly it seems to be derived from the process of racialisation that the Chinese were subjected to on the account of their "Chinese-ness". Hence, regardless of citizenship acquisition, right of birth, longevity in Australia, and their negotiated sense of belonging to the Australian society, given their different visibility this process of 'othering' is likely to linger with my informants for ever. This I contend is because their physical and cultural traits are visible racialised markers of their 'Sudanese-ness' and/or

‘African-ness’ in general that they carry for life. Most importantly, racialised bodily traits are ineradicable and these traits will continue to position them as Sudanese, Southern Sudanese or Africans in Australia as they would be passed on from one generation to another. Furthermore, I suggest that their visibly different traits in a predominantly white Australian society will continue to be one of the major challenges to their claim of ‘Australian-ness’, no matter how they see themselves or feel.

In the next Chapter I will discuss how resettlement has impacted and influenced changes in traditional gendered roles and other traditional practices in the family, relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children and the inherent conflicts entailed in those relationships. This is to establish whether or not these in totality or partially have enhanced or disrupted the resettlement and integration processes of Southern Sudanese refugees resettlement in Australia.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **“WE WILL DO IT OUR OWN WAYS”: THE IMPACT OF RESETTLEMENT ON GENDER ROLES, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter Six I discussed how the Southern Sudanese identify themselves and what ‘home’ and ‘place’ means in the context of resettlement in Australia. I showed how they create and establish spatial connections and relationships with Southern Sudanese resettled in other countries and with those at home. I highlighted how the experiences of exile, created spatial connections and relationships reshape their thinking of exile, home, place and identity and how they negotiated and reconstructed these in Australia.

In this chapter I will explore the impact of resettlement on traditional gendered role practices in the domestic sphere, and on existing husband-wife and parent-child relationships in Southern Sudanese families in Australia. Performances of separate gendered roles are pivotal to the Southern Sudanese perceptions of who they are as individuals and as a group in a particular home and place. Resettlement in Australia demands a shift in gender roles and domestic relationships. This shift in gender roles and changes in relationships in turn lead to new identities and changed meanings of home and place. These redefined roles are experienced and interpreted differently by men and women.

Before proceeding further in this chapter, it is essential to define the term ‘gender’. According to Chattopadhyay (2000: 30), gender is a “social construct, which builds on a biological definition but extends to include the ways in which men and women participate in both production and reproduction” activities. But in this thesis ‘gender’

defines a set of regulatory practices that construct the identities 'male' and 'female' as unequal through the imposition of different norms and practices. Those practices and the identities are shaped and reshaped by attitudes and perceptions over time in a particular society. Gender entails socially and culturally constructed perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and appearance for women and men, as well as expectations of roles to be performed in accordance with being male or female. It is determined by traditions and thoughts regarding what it is to be a male or female. These traditions and thoughts are endorsed and underpinned by culture and by economic, political, legal, and religious institutions. Thus, it is essential in this chapter to examine the standards, social conventions and normative governing gendered roles in Southern Sudanese society in order to grasp how these are reworked in resettlement to meet the demands of the new society.

In this chapter I will draw on the analysis of my interviews and observation data and follow the theoretical perspectives on gender, decision-making and relationships in the family formulated in studies by Colson (2003), Krulfeld (1994), Orly & Oriel (1999), Gerson (1993), Agarwal (1997), Moser (1993), Chattopadhyay (2000), Moore (1988), Colson and Morgan (1987), and Buijs (1993). This will clarify how resettlement in a new and unfamiliar society influences the day-to-day family lives of the Southern Sudanese refugees resettled in Australia. Relying on both my data and on these studies, I will examine and explain husband-wife and parent-child relations, gender role reversal, intergenerational conflict, decision-making processes in the family, and how these in totality affect the resettlement experiences of Southern Sudanese.

I will focus on the causes of intergenerational conflict which are arguably a complex combination of differential strategies for adaptation and adjustment between parents and children, their views of modernity, and the adoption by children of some aspects of the

new society's life styles that parents are against. Hence, I will focus on different attitudes towards the adherence to cultural practices. I will show that while parents have a strong desire for their children to maintain and fully practice their cultures and traditions, children on the other hand want to try out some aspects of the new society's ways of life such as various forms of male-female relationships, including cohabitation before marriage. Conversely, parents/elders are still deeply loyal to their traditional marriage practices. As a result, this loyalty may put them at odds with their children who see them as old fashioned in a modern society where individual freedom of choice is more important than following cultural traditions. I will highlight how this perceived threat to traditions, culture and identity is interpreted by parents, and how it is understood and rendered meaningful by parents and children.

In this chapter I will also focus on how the decision-making process is carried out, by whom and how this affects family relationships. Hence, I will particularly explore shifting domestic gendered roles as a result of women's access to income and information about their rights, and their participation in studies and/or jobs which have become more available and accessible to them here than they were in Southern Sudan or in refugee camps. The objective here is to explore whether the shift interrupts or enhances their resettlement. It is worth noting that in my fieldwork I spent time with informants in their families and in social and religious events (Christmas and birthday celebrations, marriage negotiations and so forth) and was able to observe how household relationships were conducted and how decisions were made and carried out through interactions (verbal, physical or gestures) in the family. Observing those relationships and interactions has enabled me to explain how relationships and gendered roles are renegotiated and reworked in resettlement, and how they impact on their lives during resettlement.

Traditionally the cultures of Southern Sudanese tend to subordinate women in relation to men's position in the family and society by structurally instituting hierarchical relationships between men and women. This difference in cultural positioning of women and men affects men's understanding of women and of themselves and vice versa. Hence, resettlement in Australia offers conditions for cultural interruptions to those understandings because Australian society does not favour such strongly demarcated hierarchical relationships between men and women either within the family or in the society. If these interruptions are not properly managed and negotiated by individuals and families, they will negatively affect family relations and their abilities to resettle.

However, the subordination of women is not confined to one particular society alone. A body of feminist literature indicates that women's subordination by men does occur in most societies, regardless of the important roles women play in the family and society. Moore (1988: 13), a feminist writer, bears witness to this when she shows that the relationship between men and women in the family is dependent upon some consideration of gender relations constructed in the context of domestic roles, and expectations that women are to remain at home and tend children. These expectations affect gender relations in the family. Before I proceed further, it is necessary to define 'gender relations'. The term here refers to the totality of relationships between women and men.

In the Southern Sudanese society, gender relationships are based on a certain degree of patriarchy which has varied over time. The resettlement of Southern Sudanese in Australia has resulted in a gender role reversal, which in turn has contributed to the reshaping of the relationships between men and women and, in particular, of the power relations that has existed between them.



Drawing upon my analysis of the research data, there is evidence suggesting that Southern Sudanese women have in Australia assumed a significant role in the family as providers due to their access to income opportunities. Given this important role, they have tended to seek greater involvement in decision-making, particularly in financial matters, as well as seeking a fair share of their involvement in domestic chores. Most of my male informants have claimed that women's financial independence makes them stubborn and disrespectful of men. This point of view is illustrated by following statement by an Indian man saying:

once a woman starts earning some money she becomes very headstrong and self-willed. She starts placing her interests before that of the men in the household, and that's when the problems start. I know a lot of marriages that are breaking up because of this reason...

(Menon 1996:131)

Similar sentiments were echoed by many men when discussing women's employment and income during interviews. Jembe's comment below encapsulates these feelings:

... you see, since my wife started work, she does things as she likes, sends money to her family in Sudan without telling me. Oom! She has changed here with her job and money. Look, in Sudan 'she never called me by my real names ... she called me only "baba" Nyasejok<sup>11</sup> or "yebish"<sup>12</sup> but now, she calls me with all my real names and she always has something to say when I ask her to do something to me. In Sudan she wasn't like that because I worked and she stayed at home. I buy her everything, gave her money but now I am not working and she forgets what I did to her ... things have changed greatly here in Australia.

(Jembe, interviewed on 19 June 2006)

Chattopadhyay's (2000) study of relations among migrant families in Malaysia helps us understand such relationships. In this study, Chattopadhyay (2000:31, citing Blood and Wolfe 1960) offers a resource theory as a tool for examining gender differentials in

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<sup>11</sup> "Baba" means father and Nyasejok is the name of Jembe's first born child. Thus baba Nyasejok means father of Nyasejok. In Southern Sudan it is customary for wives not to call their husbands by their real names but call them by the names of their first children i.e. supposedly as a sign of respect to their husbands. If there is no child yet, they call them with romanticised names or pseudonym names.

<sup>12</sup> "Yebish" is a colloquial Arabic (Juba Arabic) meaning old man. It could sometimes be understood to mean father depending on the context in which it is used, but in this context it refers to father.

migrant families. The theory proposes that a person's authority and power relation in conjugal decision making, and his/her ability to bargain advantageously, are a positive function of the resources an individual possesses in the relationships. Similarly, Agarwal (1997) and Sen (1990) proposed a bargaining model of household relationships and decision-making processes. The model suggests that members of a household cooperate so long as the cooperation equally improves their positions in the household (see also Moser 1993). From this perspective it could be argued that social and economic gains or losses in refugee families in resettlement do influence the decision-making processes and the distribution of authority in the families.

The level of earnings of the individual spouse relative to his/her partner influences the nature of the social relationship, the decision-making within the family and the involvement in domestic chores. Thus, as Chattopahyay (2000) indicates, the more income a woman contributes to the family, the more likely she could define the traditional family chores often seen as women's work as 'unfair'. If women's performance of household chores is perceived as fair because they stay at home while their husbands are away doing some activities that the family would depend on, then it is likely that when women are employed and become family providers instead of their husbands, they are likely to ask their husbands to participate more in undertaking household chores. But this view challenges the Southern Sudanese culture whereby performance of household chores by women in their marital home is considered to be a constituent part of her marriage life. Although it is argued that men often want to avoid domestic chores (Glezer 1991 & 1993; Weston & McDonald 1991). Their reasons for avoiding domestic chores vary from one society or culture to another. For the Southern Sudanese, the reasons are strongly related to bride-wealth which is transferred by the man and his family to the family of his wife during the marriage. Southern Sudanese

society generally believes a wife's domestic service to her husband and his family is to compensate for the bride-wealth transferred to her family. Additionally, bride-wealth also makes the man (husband) supposedly the only legitimate person to have sexual intercourse with the woman (wife) and it also legitimatises the children born in the marriage. Thus in the view of my informants, household chores like cooking, washing dishes, and baby sitting are symbolic representations of femininity in Southern Sudanese cultures and, from my analysis of the data, married male informants who consider themselves traditionalists and conservatives often tend to be reluctant to perform household chores in order to protect their masculinity.

A study of marital relationships by Orly and Oriol (1999) indicates that women's access to and possession of resources act as an important leverage to achieve a position of authority within the family. The acquisition of resources by women elevates their position in negotiating important family issues. It could be argued that possession of resources, or increases in the material circumstances of a spouse, affect the possibility of a change in the nature of the relationship including a shift in the gender roles in the family. However, my analysis of the data indicates that Southern Sudanese married men are reluctant to engage in domestic chores irrespective of their wives possessing more resources than they do, because they think that it lowers their status as husbands and as heads of families. Thus, men's reluctance to participate in domestic chores, especially kitchen work, tends to be one of the triggers of spousal disputes due to women attempting to pressure their men to share domestic chores with them. These disputes can negatively impact on family relationships and on resettlement because it disrupts normal family life.

During my fieldwork I have observed that men are more reluctant to do certain domestic chores than others. For example, they are more likely to take children to school or to

childcare and pick them up, to mow lawns, iron clothes, wash or vacuum the car and lounge, take the bin to the road/street side for collection and do grocery shopping rather than taking litter from the kitchen bin to the bin outside, cook, wash dishes, serve food/drinks to visitors, baby sit and change nappies, and wash clothes, because they consider them women's domestic duties. However, men with certain levels of education who have lived in urban settings such as Sudan, Nairobi, Kampala, Cairo or other large cities before resettling in Australia are more likely to participate in domestic chores than those who originally came from rural settings, have little or no educational background and who had lived in refugee camps. For example, those who lived as urban refugees in Cairo, Egypt and other Middle Eastern societies are more likely to engage in domestic chores such as cooking, baby sitting, changing nappies and so on than those who were resettled from refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and other African countries.

It is essential to note here that refugees who resettled from Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries were un-camped and received minimal or no support from UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations in comparison with their fellow refugees in refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. In Egypt, Sudanese refugees were not officially permitted to work. To support themselves, they had to work illegally in Egyptian or other foreigners' homes as domestic workers (cleaners, cooks, gardeners, baby sitters etc). However, most Egyptian men preferred to employ women rather than men to work as domestic workers/servants because of the fear that male domestic workers were likely to engage in sexual relationships with their wives, daughters or other female kin in their absence from the house due to job commitments. Thus to earn a living, men had to allow their wives to work and they were forced to assume fully the responsibilities of doing the household chores, including child care and baby sitting. It is worth noting that some of the work required the women to sleep on site and to come

home only once a week to see their families. Hence, it is these men whose attitudes towards domestic chores have become more accepting and who are willing to renegotiate the boundaries of their domestic duties in their marital relations.

It is of relevance here to draw on Gerson's (1993) concept of "negotiation and boundaries" in marital relations. Gerson developed this concept as a tool for understanding and better explaining how couples negotiate boundaries of division between domestic roles, and how they bargain for family authority based on the resources each person possesses. The concept of negotiation and boundaries will throw light on how the Southern Sudanese refugees negotiate shifting gender role boundaries after losing their social status as a result of war, exile and resettlement in an unfamiliar social environment. It could be argued that some men's willingness to engage in domestic chores was a result of their social and economic downturn due to displacement from their original home environment and their experiencing unemployment in resettlement. Men who perform domestic chores have indicated that they do so to balance their failure to provide for their family with what their wives bring home from their employment. However, even if men do participate in domestic chores in such circumstances, their participation according to Crompton and Harris (1999: 106) does not equal the efforts made by their wives to support their families.

This observation is supported from my data analysis by contrasting families where husbands are employed and wives are unemployed with those families where both spouses are employed but where husbands earn more income than their wives. Indeed, the husbands tend to perform less household chores than their wives when the women do not work. However, in families where both the husbands and wives are not employed but rely on welfare payments, the wives tend to demand that their husbands share the household chores with them. In these families, the husbands often try to resist their

wives' pressure because they feel that their status and authority in the family is being usurped by their wives. Dak, whose family relies solely on welfare payments, explains his feelings regarding this:

... when I hear my wife tells me, Dak, today I will come home late, after my English classes, I will go to the central market to buy food items. Can you cook the beans and I will cook the rice when I return. Aaaaah (and shaking his head)! Eeee, I feel like I am not living in my house but is some one else's house, ... eee-eh, but what can I do here, this is Australia and there are no relatives to help and my wife thinks I should cook ... but if I am cooking, I only cook so that my children can eat but not because she told me to cook ... inside my heart I am not happy, oom! I am not. If I feel myself like cooking, I will do it happily but not when she tells me to. If she tells me repeatedly, now and tomorrow and another day and other, I feel bad and I feel she is pushing her responsibilities to me. I fear she thinks I am here to cook in this house. No, no! I will not allow this to go on.

(Dak, interview on 20 June, 2006)

This demonstrates how unwilling some men are to cook. Dak's fear of being asked to cook by his wife forces him to resist what he perceives to be his wife's growing deviation from and defiance of traditions. He blames this departure on women's rising authority and power in the family and hence, as Foucault (1978) writes, "where there is power, there is resistance..." It is important to note here that the Southern Sudanese family is structured and operates in a patriarchal fashion so that such a demanding attitude from a wife challenges and disrupts traditionally and historically maintained structures. As indicated during the interviews, discourses about the family are framed by both men and women in terms of men's dominance of family matters in Southern Sudan vis-à-vis women who desire for a change and a fair share in family affairs in Australia. Dak's comment is a reflection of how Southern Sudanese men often tend to eschew performing household chores to protect and assert their status as husbands and heads of their families. This has implications for what marriage and bride-wealth actually means for the Southern Sudanese. It is evident from the data that most of the informants think men's involvement in domestic chores compromises their identities as

husbands and as family heads. However, they also believe that the life of resettlement tends to impose a sharing of domestic chores between spouses as there are no longer other female kin around to help. Additionally, the cultural traditions, structures and societal attitudes that act to restrict men from sharing domestic chores do not exist in Australia.

### **The Impact of Resettlement on Gendered Roles in Southern Sudanese Families**

In his study of gender and power in rural Greece, Dubisch (1986: 23) indicates that gender roles and the values attached to them often have cultural justification which affects both the behaviour and the value attached to each gender. This plays a significant role in determining the differences and similarities between men and women and the gendered roles they perform in the household and in society at large. However, it is essential to emphasise that gender roles vary from one culture to another worldwide and they change over time (Moser 1993; Lind 1997; Agawal 1997). Hence, in this chapter it is essential to explore how resettlement has impacted on gender roles, relationships, expectations and behaviour between men and women in the Southern Sudanese families.

To understand the impact of resettlement on gender roles, it is pivotal in this chapter to examine how gender roles and gender relationships were enacted in Southern Sudanese society prior to their resettlement in Australia. In Southern Sudan there is a clear separation between which gender performs what tasks and what role each gender plays in the family and in society as a whole. As in most cultures and traditions, the Southern Sudanese cultures and traditions accord men the role of breadwinners and the women the role of domestic service providers. However, as it is in every society, these have not remained static in the Southern Sudanese society. Generations and times have changed

and hence the perceptions about gender and gendered roles are that Southern Sudan women are no longer restricted solely to the kitchen.

However, the rate with which this change is occurring has been slower than in many western societies. With this gradual change women either at home, in resettlement countries, or in refugee camps are also slowly emerging from behind the shadows of their men; some have assumed the role of breadwinner for their families whenever their husbands are unable to perform that role (Lejukole 2001). However, in Australia, the change is felt more keenly than it is in Southern Sudan or in refugee camps. In Australia the restrictive gender boundaries are slowly becoming blurred. For the traditionally minded Southern Sudanese male, negotiating between traditions of the homeland on particular gendered roles like cooking is difficult; these males think resettlement in Australia has led to the destruction of their cultural traditions. This was evident in Ayen's documentary film on teaching African men how to cook when one of the Southern Sudanese said that "cooking does not make a Dinka man a man; men have other things to do than cooking". Cooking is perceived as diminishing their social status as men, husband, and head of the family or elder in the community. This perception is grounded in their cultural and traditional orientation during the process of socialisation in their respective ethnic groups and on the expectations, honour and respectful status of a wife who uncomplainingly prepares food for her family and never lets it go hungry. However, my informants' have indicated that resettlement tends unequivocally to challenge these beliefs (see Holtzman 2000: 79 & 81).

The majority of my informants have indicated that resettlement in Australia has to a certain extent forced them to re-examine their perceptions of gender roles and, as a result, some of the married men now do carry out to some extent roles that they had regarded back home as female roles. For example, in Australia there is no marked



division of chores according to gender. However, it is essential to note here when discussing the shifting of gender roles, that men rather than women tended to complain about it because they believe that they are the victims of the shift. Women's uncomplaining attitude about this, and the effects it has on their status within the family, supports the proposition in the literature on refugees that women tend to exhibit greater resilience, are more adaptable to change and are less conscious than men of a decline in social status in comparison to the situation in the country of origin. This reflects Buijs' (1993:6) suggestion that men appear to be vulnerable to stress from the strain of attempting to hold on to their previous social status.

During the interviews, most of my informants told me that in Southern Sudan, if a man is employed his family depends mainly on his income, and if his wife is also employed her income is regarded as a supplement to that of her husband. But if they are unemployed and both work on their family farm, the man usually regulates the management, usage and the consumption of most produce from the farm, including the cash from the sales of any surplus produced. However, due to the effects of the war which had made many women widows, women have become providers of their families' needs. Generally, in Southern Sudan, most rural and urban women were not employed and hence their work and social activities revolved around the domestic sphere and rarely in the public realm. Thus, they often performed the bulk of the household chores while most men virtually performed none, and then only in circumstances where their wives were absent from home, were ill, or had given birth, and where there were no other female relatives around to be called to help.

## **Husband-wife and Parent-child Relationships, Intergenerational Conflicts and Implications for the Resettlement Processes**

As already stated, the Southern Sudanese society is patriarchal and deeply rooted in cultural traditions and customs. The society and the family are structured and relationally operate according to these social ties. The system of relations and descent is traced through the father. In these social ties, there are established responsibilities, obligations and roles conferred separately on individuals in the community with associated expectations. Within the individual family ties are the relationships between husband and wife, parents and children and between other members of the extended family, and these relationships carry with them prescribed expectations, responsibilities and obligations. Adherence to customs, values, norms, and traditions within the realm of their culture are expected, and these expectations play vital roles in the family life of the Southern Sudanese. Hence, what glues the husband-wife and parent-child relationships and other relationships is the fulfillment of these responsibilities, roles, obligations and expectations. Consequently, fulfilling one's gender role in relation to one's status/position in the family is one of the core values of Southern Sudanese family. How this is played out in Australia will undeniably have a positive and or negative impact on the daily lives of the Southern Sudanese.

It is worth noting that during the interviews the discourses about husband-wife and parent-child relationships in Australia were constructed in the context of how they were before their resettlement, how they are currently, and what they would have been like if they were still in Southern Sudan. The majority of informants were unaware of their rights within the family in the context of Australia and were also unaware of where their authority in the family begins and ends as well as where governmental authority exercised by the police and other institutions begins and ends in matters such as

husband-wife disputes, child discipline and so forth. Thus, they tend to feel fearful of governmental authorities and their influence on family matters. In particular, there seemed to be a fear among men that their wives and children could be separated from them in an event where the wives notified the authorities of domestic disputes or fights in the house. This is contrary to their culture where, if there is a problem (fight/domestic violence) between husband and wife, it is the wife who leaves the house and her husband and his kin/family assume the custody of the children. In most ethnic groups of Southern Sudan, the mother does not assume custody of the children who are older than seven years, and when the younger children turn seven, she is required to hand them over to the father. However, in other ethnic groups children are required to remain with their father and his family regardless of their ages. The traditions and cultural norms in Australia are in direct contrast to the Southern Sudanese core patrilineal principles which demand that children come under their father's custody but are permitted to visit their mother and her kin in case of separation or divorce. There are also concerns about child support being paid to the women when separation/divorce occurs because the men assume that women are likely to use the money for their own benefit rather than for the sole benefit of children. For example, those men claimed that women would use the money for personal needs including clothing and body make ups allegedly to attract other men to them or send the money to their family and other kin left behind at the expense of the children.

Regarding husband-wife relationships in Australia, both women and men informants have acknowledged during the interviews that their wives threats of separation/divorce or of notifying the authorities should their men exhibit violent behaviour towards them, have to certain degree acted to minimise or deter disputes and fights in many families. Both men and women have agreed that incidents of domestic violence/fights and

quarrels have diminished in their families in Australia. However, there are no reliable statistics to substantiate this claim, but to have a better understanding of it, I asked married couples to recall, and to tally for me, all incidents of domestic fights and quarrels in Sudan and in refugee camps from the beginning of their marriage and those that occurred after resettlement in Australia. I then compared the incidents of domestic fights and quarrels that had occurred in Sudan and refugee camps with those that have occurred after resettlement in Australia. The result was that the incidents of domestic fights and quarrels that had occurred in Sudan and in refugee camps separately exceeded those that had occurred in Australia; in fact some married couples reported no incidents of domestic fights in their relationships since they had resettled in Australia. Although occurrences of domestic violence do affect resettlement, it is not one of the themes of this thesis and hence it will not be discussed fully. However, it is important to emphasise that domestic violence leading to separation and/or divorce distorts family resources and makes resettlement more difficult.

Drawing upon the data analysis, there are indications that husband-wife relations, gender roles and the expectations husbands and wives have of each other have undergone marked changes in Australia. One of the changes commonly expressed by men during the interviews is ways of negotiating sexual intercourse. Informants indicated that in Southern Sudan a woman cannot refuse sex with her husband unless she is unwell; if she does, the husband will send her to her parents. In Southern Sudan a man can send his wife to her parents if she repeatedly refuses sexual intercourse with him without acceptable reasons. If she does, the man will accuse her of 'pushing him down from the bed', meaning she has unreasonably refused sexual intercourse with her husband, which is conceived of as the right of the husband over her. If this occurs, traditions and customs require that the bed from which the man was allegedly pushed

down from should be ritually cleansed. Procedurally, the husband sends his wife to her parents and later he and his kin would follow her to discuss the alleged social offence with the woman's family/kin. The two families will examine the circumstances in which the woman has allegedly refused sex with her legal man. If it is found that she refused sex to her husband only because she has no desire at the time but was not sick/ill or known to have performed heavy tasks that caused her fatigue, she would be fined. But rather than settling the fine herself, her parents/kin would shoulder the fine by providing a male goat and locally brewed beer to the man's family/kin before their daughter could return and share the bed with her husband. On the other hand, woman's repetitive refusal to engage in sexual intercourse with her husband would arouse suspicion that another man might be satisfying her sexual desire, which would have serious consequences for their spousal relationship.

In Southern Sudanese cultures, it is incomprehensible and unacceptable for a housewife to accuse her husband of rape. If she does, she will not find support anywhere, including from within her kin or her society, or from authorities and the courts. However, in Australia this is not the case; a husband can no longer send his wife to her parents for repeatedly refusing sexual intercourse with him without an adequate excuse. Instead Southern Sudanese women, after a serious dispute involving sex could now accuse their husbands of rape or sexual harassment if they forced them to have sexual intercourse against their will, and the accusations would be heard and investigated by the relevant authorities. During my fieldwork two women who had had serious disagreements with their husbands regarding finances in the family have confided to me that they have accused their husbands of forcing them to have sex against their will and that on these accusations they have been separated from their husbands by the relevant authorities. Hence, resettlement in Australia has endowed women with the legal rights which men

allege has given their women the courage to undermine what they have believed to be their right over their wives. Thus resettlement has emancipated women from men, and from the culture, customs, and traditions that have given men unequal rights over women, allowing them to impose their wishes on them.

As women in Australia have access to income through employment or from welfare (Centrelink) payments, they are not financially solely dependant upon their husbands as they had been in Southern Sudan. This independence has resulted in them standing up and challenging husbands who are domineering and do not value their views regarding issues in the family, or that concern them as women. Adiye's comment given below reflects the views of many Southern Sudanese women about the issues being discussed here:

... dependence on men makes women vulnerable and unable to express their opinions and views freely because they fear that men will punish them. In Sudan we mainly depended on our husbands but here things have changed, men and women both depend on government welfare payments if they are not employed and so we no longer fear that men will withdraw the support or punish us by beating .

(Adiye interviewed on 13 November 2007)

### **The Loss of the Role of a Provider and the Effects on Decision-making and Relationships in the Family**

In the following paragraphs I will show how authority and the role of a provider in relation to gender affect the relationships between spouses after resettlement. I will argue that the role of family provider, irrespective of gender difference, carries with it family authority and social status. It is emphasised by informants that the family has often been extended to consist of other relatives in addition to the husband, wife and their children, and it is often headed by a male (husband or an elder). In Australia, by Sudanese standards, the family has become smaller, consisting only of parent/s, children

and sometimes other kin - normally children below 18 years of age whose parents died during the war and who have been taken care of by family members. Children, with the exception of the well published 'lost boys of Sudan', mostly accompanied their relatives to Australia as biological children. According to my analysis of the data, the current average Southern Sudanese family size is only six, relatively smaller than their usual family size.

In each family, authority is traditionally vested in the male family head who is normally a husband and or an elder in the household. However, there are exceptions; women who have lost their husbands in the war or left them behind for various reasons have solely assumed the role of provider and family head. The majority of the informants indicated that decisions often flowed from the husband/elder to the wife/women, children and to other relatives in their household. There are no formal avenues for decision-making processes but normally, except for daily routines in the household, directives or decisions are made by the husband or an elder and then passed on to the wife, children and other kin in the household. However, this does not mean that a wife can not make any decisions in the family.

However, this traditional manner of decision-making has been gradually changing. In families where women (wives) are educated and in those which live in urban settings, even in Southern Sudan these women have become much more involved in the family decision-making processes, a domain that was traditionally male dominated. But in Australia, educated or not, women are demanding an equal share of decision-making and family authority. Evidence from the data indicates that women with an independent source of income have tended to challenge their husbands and have demanded an equal share in decision-making and authority in the household. In this context, male informants have claimed that such demands present a threat to their identities as

husbands and heads of the family. Thus women's access to employment and an independent income have opened for women the possibility of renegotiating some of the most important aspects of marital relations, which men have persistently resisted, because the Australian society offers women the supportive environment for this to occur. Thus, as Obbo (1980: 48) indicates, financial independence and the capacity to make economic contributions to the family gives women negotiating power over their husbands in areas of life such as sexual independence and other important aspects of marital life.

In Southern Sudan, family authority tends to accompany men's roles as providers. Women have little influence in decision-making in the family and it is accepted that women may make suggestions which could either be accepted or rejected by men. However, this is not a claim that women do not wield authority, great influence and decision-making in the family (Deng 1972). My fieldwork observations and the analysis of the interview data indicate that some women in fact do wield authority and great influence over their husbands within the confines of their household, but that outside of the household men tend to pretend that such a thing does not exist for fear of ridicule from their peers. Thus, in public, they would not admit that their wives have influence over them. However, it remains to be seen how long in Australia these men continue to deny these changing roles in the context of their women's growing awareness and knowledge of their rights to equality, freedom and independence from their men.

As I have discussed earlier, the provider's role draws authority and power in the household. When this role shifts from men to women, family authority and power also shifts with it. Most Southern Sudanese men are concerned about this, and some have described it as women taking over family authority from them. However, most men have indicated that it is beneficial if both husband and wife are employed so as to ease



household financial pressures. But as Obbo's (1980:51) study of rural-urban migrants in Kampala, Uganda indicates that although some men would like their wives to be financially resourceful rather than being dependant, paradoxically the same men fear that women's economic independence would result in a loss of their authority and control over them. This has also been a commonly expressed view by male informants who indicated that their inability to provide for their family's needs has direct implications on their authority as a husband. They also alleged that women's awareness of their rights, in addition to economic independence, has empowered them and enabled them to impose their decisions on important family issues that they could not before their resettlement in Australia. Female informants too agree that in Southern Sudan they had not mounted significant challenges to their husbands on important issues such as when to become pregnant, when to have sex, or how family resources (income) could be managed and used. The reasons, they indicated, were to avoid familial conflicts, separation and divorce that would stigmatise them in their society if they were to occur. Female informants claimed that woman's economic independence, and the absence of the culture and traditional structures that privileged men rather than women, have empowered them in Australia. Furthermore, both male and female informants also indicated that resettlement has led to a disruption of male dominated family authority and to declining customary gender roles, relationships and perceptions. Women have indicated during the interviews that the changes have been beneficial to them because resettlement has to certain extent led to a change in men's attitudes in spousal relationships.

Unlike the situation in Southern Sudan, men in Australia are reluctantly coming to accept women's fair share in decision-making regarding important family matters. Education and acquired information might have influenced the changes in their attitudes

but, most importantly, those cultural norms, attitudes and perceptions that in the past have hindered, constrained, reinforced and perpetuated male dominance in the family do not exist nearly as strongly in Australian society. For example, in families where both the man and woman solely depend on welfare (Centrelink) payments, the men will no longer take credit for being a family provider and hence have no excuse not to perform domestic chores. Similarly, they can no longer impose their will on their wives to do things for them. These factors have, however, been regarded by men as causing a demise of their status as husbands. But, on the other hand, women informants see resettlement as leading to liberation from a traditionally male dominated family and society that has kept them under men's control.

In the light of these family experiences in resettlement, it is often argued that refugees do not enter the host societies with their social, cultural and economic status intact because their traditional ways of life may not be wholly compatible with that of the host society. Colson's (2003) study demonstrates this by showing how refugees and other forced migrants face enormous changes to their gendered roles when resettled in societies with different cultures. Such changes demand new relationships and reconstructed meanings in their lives in order to ease resettlement challenges. This supports evidence from the interviews where informants strongly indicated that resettlement has stripped them of the status that had defined them as individuals in their families and society prior to becoming refugees. As Krulfeld (1994) has suggested, this is because refugees' (newcomers) ways of life, practices and meanings attached to gender roles in their new society differ from that of their society of origin.

Although I have earlier indicated that both men and women in the family stated during the interviews that they often try to avoid spousal conflicts between them, it is however essential to note that conflicts still do occur in their relationships. There is evidence

from the data to suggest that the shift in gender roles tends to encourage conflicts in families rather than hindering them, and conflict in turn disrupts efforts of family members to resettle. Most women informants have, however, attributed the causes of family conflicts to men's frustration from joblessness, loss of status and of respect from their wives and children, fear and anxiety about women's financial independence, and to difficulties they have experienced in adjusting to the shift in gender roles and in meeting the needs of their families as they had previously been able to do. This, according to Goode (1960: 483), leads to role strain which is a "felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations". This is supported by Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) proposition that a shift in gender roles negatively affects people's emotional well-being, which in turn has diverse effects on their psychological adjustment. When refugees from poor socio-economic backgrounds resettle in modern urban settings, it is likely that conflicts will occur due to men's inability to carry out their traditional roles as providers for their families, and women's shortcomings in fulfilling their domestic chores. Similarly, Holtzman (2000) has indicated that a reversal of gender roles initially caused conflicts among the Nuer (Southern Sudanese) who resettled in Minnesota, USA, when women were employed in order to add-on household income, and men were required to cook and shop.

When any form of conflict occurs in a family, it interrupts the meaning of a family as an anchor of emotional, socio-cultural and economic support and identity. It also disrupts the continuity of opportunities offered by resettlement support services that are better accomplished in the presence and support of other family members who act as buffers for any resettlement difficulties. Krulfeld (1994: 73) has indicated similar experiences among Vietnamese and Cambodian refugee men who resettled in the USA. He showed that the shift in gender roles created difficulties that affected Vietnamese and

Cambodians family members, and he particularly pointed out that men felt threatened by their wives' greater economic independence and responses to the shift. As a result of these shifts, divorce, desertion and domestic violence among South East Asian refugees in USA became prevalent.

During my fieldwork, male informants framed discussions about family relations and gender roles in terms of what it used to be like in Southern Sudan, which they lamented as having come to an abrupt end in Australia, thus creating uncertainties in their status in the family. Their apprehension and fears for the future of their status is caused by this reversal in gender roles and, to some extent, by a reversal of the role of provider which they claim symbolises their physical absence from the original home - Southern Sudan. This claim has implications for their meaning of home, which I discussed in Chapter Six. That absence from original home and from what used to be routine have exacerbated the difficulties of adjustment to the new environment more among men than among women as most female informants cherish resettlement in Australia as a gain in form of economic independence and freedom.

Women's perceived social and economic gains can be seen as providing leverage in challenging the decision-making process in the family as well as in controlling their own lives in Australia. This has reshaped their sense of self identity and underpinned their belief that Southern Sudanese society had failed them by according them lower social and economic status than those of their men. This has implications for any idea of a return to Southern Sudan as such women would not be willing to forgo the improvement in their lives and socio-economic status by returning to Sudan. My conversation with Olga one of my female informants in the Adelaide central market during my fieldwork demonstrates this. One afternoon I went to the central market with my wife and her friend to shop. In the market, I saw one of my female informants and I

went to greet her. We exchanged greetings and she looked at my wife and her friend who had gone ahead and asked me: “Are those your wives”? I answered jokingly, “No! How can you ask me this question when you know that in Australia a man can only marry one wife?” She smiled and said: “Oom! Is that a bad thing? No, it’s not... why have two, three or... wives? Fi Sudan “itum ruzal ya’u khan fhok, wo anina nusuwan khan teketh wo itum khan bi amulu hazat ze itum daeru. Lakin ini laáh! Anina nusuwan biggah fhok khaman<sup>13</sup>”. I said to her: “When we return to Sudan, we men will marry more wives because we will be above you again”. She said again reassuringly: “Do you think that if you men want to go to Sudan we women will go with you and stay there? No, no, no! We will not! We don’t like to return to that life again ... but we will go to visit relatives there and return to Australia”. In this conversation Olga indicated how unwilling women are to return to, and live in Southern Sudan, even if their husbands would like to. It also indicates women’s perception of Southern Sudan as a society that has deprived them of equality in life opportunities, freedom and status which they had found in Australia. Although resettlement has generally offered Southern Sudanese people safety and a better life as a result of access to a variety of services and opportunities most of which had not been available to them in Sudan, it has also altered their traditional family life, and has fractured personal identities and familial authority. This is what Zur (1999: 53) has called a “disconcerting sensation of disjuncture”, which in this case is observable among most married male informants. This is reflected in the data by their feeling of a loss of status and alteration of selfhood within the family. Hence, to some it creates a yearning to return to the original home because that is where they think their status and position in the family would be restored.

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<sup>13</sup> This is in Juba Arabic and is translated as ‘in Sudan you men were above us and we women were below you and you were doing things as you want, but here no! We women have also risen up too’.

It is important to note that most of my informants are unemployed. They are either studying English language or other courses, and they mainly depend on welfare payments. The few employed ones mostly work in low paid jobs and most have indicated that dependence on welfare payments has led to the loss of men's role as breadwinners. Informants have claimed that direct welfare payments to women and children above sixteen years of age complicates the traditional ways in which resources flow, and are controlled and used in the family. Back home there were no welfare payments and those unemployed earned their living by doing other activities like cropping, fishing/hunting and so forth to support their family and to sell any surplus to earn cash. In all of these, the man (husband) was in charge and economic support flowed from the husbands to wives and others in the family. Such a fundamental change in economic relations underpinned the breakdown of what was once male dominated control and disposal of family resources and so challenged men's (elders) authority. The study by Hampshire et al. (2008: 31) indicated similar effects of role shifts among Liberian refugees in camps in Ghana. In the same way, displacement from home and life in exile and in resettlement in Australia have generally transformed relationships in Southern Sudanese households. In Australia both women and men have equal access to income and employment opportunities. Australian society also challenges the Southern Sudanese cultural construction of man/husband and woman/wife relations. This tends to cause emotional problems which affects men's self-esteem and social identity because they feel that their social position in the family has been eroded by resettlement.

### **Intergenerational Conflicts and the Impact on Family Relationships and Resettlement Processes**

As I have indicated earlier in this chapter, conflicts do exist in parent-child relationships among my informants' families. The conflicts are generally described by my informants

as conflicts within the family between parents and children (young people) as a result of discrepancies in the perceptions of, and adjustments to social, cultural and economic realities of their new environment. The term ‘children’ here is used interchangeably with ‘young people’ by my informants to vaguely encompass people who are not yet married but still live with their parents or live independently from their parents. Conflicts also occur due to differences in values and interests between parents and children, and these are considered also to result from different perceptions of change and the acquisition of new values, attitudes, behaviours and perceptions which are considered by children to be ‘modern’. Parents perceive these as threats to their culture, traditions, customs and values that they uphold, and these can arguably create difficulties in adapting to, and resettling with ease into, the Australian society. These intergenerational conflicts have resulted from the inability to adjust fully and to accommodate to changes associated with modernity vis-à-vis traditional culture and identity. Parents frequently indicated their difficulties in accepting or tolerating some aspects of their children’s behaviours, dressing styles, the videos/films which they watched, the music which they listened and danced to, the company they kept, the internet contents they viewed, and so forth. Duk expressed his concerns:

...our children now do things as they wish. They dress funny in ways shameful to us parents. Boys hang their trousers at the end of their buttocks, wear chains around their necks, black or white headbands and ear rings and girls wear tight, short and small clothes exposing some parts of their bodies ... I don’t know what these mean! Wuu! Did you see how they expose part of their breasts and lower abdomens to be seen? This is not acceptable to us as parents, it’s shameful and it’s not what we used to do. But what can we do? They get their own money and they buy the things they like such as mobile phones, play stations, clothes and many things without telling parents.

(Duk interviewed on 29 March 2006)

These styles of dress and other behaviours from children violate what Hampshire et al. (2008: 32) call the “normative codes for inter-generational relations”. Another parent, Kasuko, expressed his disillusionment with his children’s behaviour saying:

... they want to behave like African-Americans while in Australia, watch their videos, listen to their music and mimic the ways they dress, walk and talk. I don't understand why copying things far away. I want them to at least copy things from Australia, the country they live in and that protects them ... I just don't understand ... I have told them time and time again and again to stop such things but they just don't listen to me.

(Kasuko, interviewed on 3 September 2006)

An analysis of the data and my field observations suggest that parents tend to pressure children to adhere to their culture and traditions. However, most young people I interviewed did not think that the pressure could produce what their parents wanted but instead believed that dialogue between them and their parents on such matters would help resolve most issues that their parents were concerned about. Senoo, one of the parents, agreed that dialogue helped her better understanding of her children's experiences and, in particular, why they behaved in the ways they do. On the other hand, it also helps her children better understand why she wants them not to abandon their parents' culture and traditions. She stressed that children cooperate when they believe their parents listen to them and understand their experiences rather than with parents who they think impose their own views of the world on them without considering theirs. Another informant, Alikin, proposed that involving children in planning and encouraging them to engage in household activities helped them to develop a sense of responsibility and self confidence, and also made them learn and understand better what parents expected from them. There is evidence to indicate that parents often failed to recognise that their children do face different challenges from those which they faced.

Informants believed that the practice of children mimicking some aspects of African-American culture is due to the American global dominance in world affairs. However, they also pointed out that although the circumstances of their migration were extremely different from those of African-Americans, it is probable that the shared experiences of



migration from Africa and living in predominantly white societies have created an imagined bond of brotherhood/sisterhood based on blackness, originality and ties to the Africa continent. Such an imagined bond tends to generate a desire among young Southern Sudanese to identify themselves with African-Americans rather than with white Australians or Aboriginal Australians because they have no African roots. Nevertheless, from the data there is evidence to suggest a feeling among young Southern Sudanese that African-Americans have created a unique culture within white American culture arising from that of continental Africa - a 'hybrid' culture as a result of forced migration and resettlement in a predominantly white society. On the other hand, mimicking aspects of the culture of African-Americans could be a strategy so that they could be accepted by Australian society. It could also be a denial of their Southern Sudanese identity. Gwude, a 19 year old informant, thought that it is both a rejection of the dominant white Australian culture, because they could not fit into it easily, and also a rejection of their parents' cultures which they do not understand or appreciate.

Cultural confusion resulting from discrepancies between parental and new social values, as well as many years of disruption of cultural practices, values and norms by war and associated conditions in refugee camps, have created a culture vacuum, which these young people prefer to fill with African-American culture. The social, cultural and moral disruptions caused by war and the associated forced migration do have combined negative effects on the children and such effects have been well documented among children in refugee camps in Ghana (Hampshire et al. 2008: 25-28). Taking advantage of the disruption of the established cultural norms, values and traditions, children found spaces for new relationships with parents based on contrary identities, attitudes and behaviours. In Southern Sudan and in refugee camps, children mostly depended on parents and that dependence gave parents an edge with which they could restrain their

children's behaviour, including the types and fashions of the clothes they wore. Here, things have changed. Children often no longer are financially dependent on their parents because some of them are employed or receive their own welfare benefits. If both parents and their children of working age are unemployed, they will all depend on welfare payments. Parents have stated that some children took this as a sign of parental weakness and in certain families this has helped to erode a sense of respect of parents by children.

Nevertheless, some young people have shown resilience and positive attitudes in dealing with the resettlement difficulties which they face by helping their parents in a variety of ways. As they often learn English more quickly than their parents, they can access a range of useful information about Australian society, which they pass on to parents. Parents who do not read and write English often rely solely on their children to read and translate their letters to them. By supporting their parents, children develop a sense of self-worth and confidence. As Hinto (2006 in Hampshire et al. 2008) indicated, by supporting their parents in resettlement, Bhutanese children did develop an increased sense of self-worth and respect. However, some parents have claimed that dependence on their children sometimes causes the children to undermine their role as parents. Parents have also alleged that some children hide certain information in letters sent from schools regarding their misconduct from those parents who do not read and write English. Some parents think that dependence on children on important issues such as reading letters undermines their feelings regarding their own ability to support themselves and to keep personal secrets contained in those letters from their children.

There is a consensus among my informants that war, displacement, life in refugee camps, and life in Australia have brought radical changes in parent-child relationships which is somehow shrouded in social and cultural conflicts that in some families have

disrupted the normal functioning of the family. Most children were born in refugee camps or elsewhere outside Southern Sudan and have moved from one society to another in the course of seeking asylum. Further, from the societies in which they have lived they have picked up different cultural beliefs and behaviours which were often very different from those of their parents, thereby exacerbating parent-child relationships.

### **Marriage and Bride-wealth: Is it Selling our Daughters, Buying our Wives or is it to Seal the Relationship Between two Families?**

... I once gave a talk to one support organisation here and I emphasised that we pay bride-wealth in our marriages and if my son married an Australian girl ... it is the right of the girl's parents to ask for bride-wealth from me and I am ready to make the transfer. Likewise if an Australian man chooses to marry my daughter, he should be prepared to transfer bride-wealth to my family, otherwise the marriage will not be acceptable ... We don't sell our daughters, nor do we buy our wives, but we are strengthening the relationships between the bride and the groom's families. The white people may think it is selling and buying but we are not selling our daughters and buying our wives, we are sealing the marriage.

(Gaito interview 21 May 2006)

As shown in Chapter Three, the Southern Sudanese comprise many ethnic groups living in different tribal territories and speaking different languages and dialects. This diversity is reflected in different marriage procedures, traditions and ceremonies. However, what transcends this diversity is the obligation to transfer bride-wealth in the form of a combination of livestock, money, labour, crops, implements or objects (hoes, arrows, spears), and so forth to the family of the bride. The family of the bride will then distribute these among its kin in accordance with cultural prescriptions. Marriage and bride-wealth occupies a position of fundamental importance in the life and culture of Southern Sudanese and underpin their notions of identity, family and the relationship between a husband and wife. However, war, forced migration and resettlement in Australia have greatly changed marriage traditions, customs, negotiations, ceremonies,

and procedures regarding transfer of bride-wealth. In Southern Sudan, parents have absolute power to demand bride-wealth from men wanting to marry their daughters. In Australia, this is no longer the case. Parents mostly have to rely on the willingness of the man and his family to make the transfer as demanded by their culture. The cooperation of their daughters is also crucial here in that she could pressure her fiancé to meet her parents' demand for bride-wealth before she becomes his wife and lives with him. The waning authority of parents in Australia to demand bride-wealth is exacerbated by the fact that it is illegal to demand or transfer bride-wealth or dowries under Australian law. However, most often parents ignore the alleged law and demand that their daughter's potential husband and his family make the necessary transfer before the marriage could occur. On some occasions, relatives in Southern Sudan have been informed and delegated to carry out marriage negotiations with the man's family/kin over there and to make the transfer. This is done to avoid any legal complications from Australian law regarding dowry or bride-wealth. This is also because they think that traditions, customs and marital negotiation have not changed much in Southern Sudan.

During my fieldwork, some informants lamented that in Australia young people barely hold on to their parents' cultural traditions regarding courtship, engagement, negotiation, marriage, and bride-wealth. As a result, they are likely to lose getting bride-wealth when their daughters get married because they now have little or no influence over their children in preventing them from marrying someone who does not wish to transfer bride-wealth. Hence, they are worried that their cultural traditions and marriage customs will fall apart and this will have serious effect on their cultural identity and institution of marriage. Based on the evidence from the data, the majority of informants believe that to maintain their marriage institutions, community leaders from all the

ethnic groups that comprise the Southern Sudanese must stand up together and never allow any young people within or outside their communities to take things into their own hands by rejecting their parent's culture and the traditions of marriage.

The desire to adhere to traditional marriage patterns and its requirements was demonstrated during the marriage negotiations of Nyanjur's daughter. Nyanjur's daughter slept-over with her boy friend. When she returned home the next day and Nyanjur learned that her daughter had spent the night with her boyfriend, she sent her to him and told her never to come home again until her family and the boy's family had met to discuss the matter. To resolve this issue, elders and community leaders from the boy's and the girl's families met after three months in Nyanjur's house to negotiate marriage between her daughter and the boy. According to culture and traditions, the girl and the boy were made to sit in front of the gathered elders, community leaders and members from the two families. The culture demands that a man from the girl's family asked both the boy and the girl to indicate their intentions about the act they have committed. The boy was asked first: "Are you aware of the consequences of sleeping with someone's daughter who is not yet your wife?" "Yes I do", said the boy. "I love her... but I don't intend to marry her now. We intend to live as boyfriend and girlfriend and to get married in future if God is willing". This boy's response equally angered both members of the two communities and families in attendance. One man in particular from the girl's family stood up and said:

We do not like to hear that. We are not khawazat (an Arabic word for foreigners, but the word has been corrupted by Southern Sudanese in Juba Arabic to mean white people instead). There is nothing in our culture called living as a boy and girlfriend ... If it is not that because we are in Australia, you would have seen what we could do to you. Is this irresponsibility, or stupidity, or is it arrogance that you want to show us?

On hearing this, the boy's mother stood up and intervened by saying:

My son! I don't like to hear such things from you again. Imagine if someone did this to your own sister and say what you have just said, what would be your reaction? Do you think you are still a small boy? If you think you are, why do you play<sup>14</sup> with someone's daughter"? Aaka! We do not come here to hear such nonsense from you. We expect you to say, I love her and I will marry her.

Her son then retracted his statements and said: "Mama! I love her, I will marry her, and I did not intend to anger any one here". The girl was also asked whether or not she was willing to marry her boyfriend and she reluctantly accepted, probably in fear of her parents' response if she negated what her boyfriend said. Her aunt had earlier informed the family that she had complained to her that she wanted to complete her TAFE studies before she could get married, but her parents and her aunt would not accept it. From my observations, the girl, like her boyfriend, felt pressured to get married. However, this acceptance by both the boy and the girl traditionally acted as a marriage vow between the two and hence opened the way for a traditional marriage negotiation to proceed.

During the negotiation process, the girl's family demanded a bride-wealth worth \$10,071 Australian dollars being an itemised bride-wealth, valued in the form of cattle, goats, school fees, hoes, arrows and other items. However, the boy's family argued that the amount was too much for them and pleaded to transfer only a sum of \$1,350.00 but promised to fully transfer the required amount as soon as they could get it. The plea was accepted by the girl's family based on the promise made by the boy's family to transfer the remaining amount in a period not later than one year. The negotiations were concluded with sharing of food and drinking provided by Nyanjur's family at a cost estimated to be \$450.

It is worth emphasising here that in the culture of the Southern Sudanese, premarital cohabitation is not permitted. It is abhorrent for a child, and especially for a girl, to

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<sup>14</sup> Literally, 'play with' here means to have sexual intercourse with a woman or a girl

leave her parents home to cohabit with a boyfriend before marriage. This practice is rejected and condemned because these acts throw into doubt any hope of her parents to receive bride-wealth. Also when children leave home before marriage, the ability and responsibility of the parents to care for and responsibly guide their children becomes questionable, and it paints a picture of a failed family and hence is an embarrassment to the family. The rejection and condemnation of cohabitation and of children leaving home before marriage is demonstrated by the marriage negotiation discussed above.

This chapter shows that changes in family structural conditions as a result of being forced to abandon one's place of origin do affect traditional arrangements in the family, particularly the household division of chores according to gender. Access to employment opportunities and women's awareness of their rights, which used to be so limited at home, have played a great role in Southern Sudanese conjugal relationships in Australia. It is worth noting that in the cultures of the Southern Sudanese, gender defines roles and gender affects behaviour and the interactions within the family and outside it. Resettlement in Australia has allowed changes in domestic status quo arrangements, and as a result the family has witnessed women's growing independence from their men, their ability to control their own lives, and the courage to challenge men on matters which they do not subscribe to. As Williams (2007: 549) has shown, migration tends to allow women to gain power, autonomy and independence.

There is always a gap between what people say and what they do. Circumstances and perceptions tend to distort people's reality and the challenge in this chapter is to discover how my informants make sense of the realities of their family lives as they resettled in Australia. During the interviews I have observed that experiences of family life between men and women informants in Australia have been markedly different. Some male informants claim to be more supportive, more involved in domestic chores

and have allowed for a fair share of decision-making in the family. I compared the domestic activities (chores) which they currently perform with the detailed records of the domestic chores they had performed in Sudan and in refugee camps/exile and I found that men have slightly increased their levels of participation in domestic chores, even if they generally have negative attitudes towards it. This change of attitudes is attributed to the absence of other female family members, women's employment status or engagement in studies, women's economic independence, as well as to the absence of traditional structures and kin that have often served to constrain them from doing domestic chores.

It is understandable that some men tend to exaggerate their participation in domestic chores to project images of being well adjusted family men, while others underestimate or deny their participation to protect their image as men and husbands and to show that nothing has changed much in their families. For example, in a documentary film entitled 'Ayen's Cooking Classes for African Men' presented by SBS television in 2007, I watched one of the male married participants in the film who coincidentally is one of my informants. The cooking classes were initiated by Ayen, a Sudanese woman, to teach African men how to cook, but as the documentary reveals, the men were from the Nilotic ethnic groups (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk) of Southern Sudan and were predominantly from the Dinka ethnic group and not from all over Africa as the title to the documentary suggested.

In the documentary, my informant indicated that cooking does not make a Dinka man a man, and that there are other more important things for Dinka men to do than cooking. He further indicated that men's involvement in cooking is taboo in his culture and he claimed that it could take a long time to change it. But contrary to what he said in the film, during my fieldwork visits to interview him in his house he had on several



occasions made tea and served food to me from the kitchen when his wife and daughters were not at home.

I have noticed that the literature on refugees often portrays refugee women and children as more vulnerable than men. This vulnerability results from how men treat women. As stated earlier, in Australia women have been substantially emancipated by the life of resettlement, unlike in Southern Sudan or in refugee camps where women had fewer or no opportunities for personal development. This has however caused anxiety and fear among men and that tends to invite conflicts but there is a feeling or desire in both men and women to avoid conflicts that would endanger marital relationships and put the joint custody and care of their children in jeopardy. The men claim that in the newly formed flexible husband-wife relations, women have sufficiently encroached upon the decision-making authority in the family which has traditionally been dominated by men.

In Australia, different kinds of intergenerational conflicts have occurred as a result of discrepancies between parents and young people who hold different values and perceptions of what modernity means. As Hampshire et al. (2008: 34) have indicated, in refugee camps in Ghana access to, and the shift in, economic opportunities is one of the major factors responsible for intergenerational strain and conflicts between parents (old people) and young people. Conversely, Hutchinson's (1996) informative study of the Nuer of Southern Sudan indicates that it is not only access to economic opportunities and role reversal that could cause a breakdown of intergenerational relationships, but also experiences of war which could lead to a breakdown of norms, morality and the usual ways of life. Further, civil war and forced migration can create a climate of disrespect which reduces the authority of elders as young people no longer consult elders on some important social matters as firearms become accessible to them. A study by Kaiser's study (2006 cited in Hampshire et al. 2008: 34) similarly shows that among

the refugees encamped in Uganda, availability of new opportunities for young people and their experiences of exile do cause intergenerational conflicts in the family. Among the Southern Sudanese in Australia, it is worth noting that intergenerational conflicts and lack of respect for parents by children also occur because some parents do not tolerate their children acquiring new ways of life that contradict their traditional ways of life, and they put pressure on their children to practice and maintain their parents' culture.

Although resettlement is regarded by McSpadden and Moussa (1993) as an end point in resolving the predicament of refugees, in fact it is a beginning of a long period of struggle to renegotiate their identity, gender roles and relationships (see also Colson & Morgan 1987). The majority of the informants perceived some aspects of family life in Australian society as not comparable with their own. For example, lack of clearly demarcated domestic gender role boundaries contrasts with the equality of relationships in the family and in domestic roles in Australian society. These contrasts challenge and unravel traditions and cultural values which they have attached to particular gender roles and relationships in the family. These changes have been suggested by informants as causing interrupted husband-wife role expectations, which were idealized embodiments of their beliefs and values concerning who they are, which were significant in their identities as husbands. However, informants have stressed that it is not only resettlement but also war and displacement from Southern Sudan that have severely affected their family structures by changing its roles and expectations. Therefore young people are experiencing contradictions as a result of identity confusion between the values of their parents embedded in old traditions, and influences from the Australian society and well as from the African-American culture. These additionally

create confusion in the children's sense of belonging, and also distort their identity development in their new society.

The next Chapter is the conclusion of the thesis in which I highlight the main themes and arguments of my thesis. It also offers recommendations to policy makers and practitioners in the area resettlement of refugee and service delivery refugees.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

The central aim of this thesis is to understand the resettlement experiences of Southern Sudanese from their own perspectives, to provide knowledge about how their experiences of exile reshape their thinking of home, place, identity, shift in gender roles, and traditional practices, to explore the extent of their resettlement and integration into Australian society, and to inform policy on the resettlement of refugees and practitioners in settlement services offered to refugees. This thesis demonstrates how the dynamics of social interactions, relationships and networks between Southern Sudanese and their Australian hosts have shaped and reshaped the Southern Sudanese sense of identity and belonging. The complex social interactions, relationships and networks discussed in the thesis include:

- (i) firstly, social interactions occurring between Southern Sudanese and staff of support organisations delivering settlement services to them; and
- (ii) secondly, social interactions, relationships and networking occurring among the Southern Sudanese themselves, and between them and members of Australian society through making friendships, home visits, and joining churches and other civic associations or clubs which are predominantly Australian.

The support received from these arrays of social relationships, interactions and networks have significantly enhanced the resettlement of Southern Sudanese into the Australian society and hence they are resettling fairly well into their new society, though some are still having some difficulties in understanding the English language. My informants in this thesis are Southern Sudanese who have resettled in Australia, have lived in Australia for not less than six months, and are 18 years old and above. In order for my

readers to understand who my research informants are, I have offered their brief description in Chapter Three. In addition to the Southern Sudanese, my informants, I interviewed and observed the staff of settlement support organisations who deliver settlement services to Southern Sudanese and other refugees and migrants. The data for this thesis were collected by ethnographic methods and techniques including structured and unstructured in-depth interviews and Participant Observations conducted in several field sites within metropolitan Adelaide in South Australia.

In the thesis I have argued that my informants' previous life experiences in Southern Sudan, their social, historical and economic backgrounds, the devastation caused in their lives by civil war, their deprivation of educational and economic opportunities over many years, and the hardships experienced in refugee camps before resettlement in Australia, have negatively impacted on their resettlement and integration in Australia. The war had disrupted their normal ways of lives, ruptured them from kin support networks, and forced them to live in refugee camps before being resettled in Australia. Insecurity in displacement and lack of basic essentials, including food supply, education, healthcare and employment, made life unbearable for these people. Camp life created a sense of urgency to escape because returning home was not feasible. Many turned to UNHCR and other western embassies in Africa to seek for resettlement in Western Countries, including Australia.

While in Australia, urban life and its sophistication presented daunting challenges of various kinds to many informants, whom most of them had previously lived a rural life in Southern Sudan, because their rural life skills proved mainly unhelpful in coping with urban sophistication. The possession of urban skills increases opportunities for those who have them and, conversely, diminishes opportunities for those who do not have them. As Levitt (2001: 211) points out, this depends on the socio-economic

characteristics of the individual or group, the social capital they possess, the social, cultural and economic contexts they departed from and enter into, as well as the transnational institutions and the social fields in which they are embedded. Most informants admitted to having arrived in Australia unprepared for urban living and hence making the transition from a rural livelihood, where income was not the sole means of living, to urban living where life was solely dependent on receiving an income, has been a difficult and challenging experience. On arrival in Australia they lacked the skills by which they could effectively navigate or negotiate urbanity. Most had to learn those skills anew from the moment of their arrival in this country from settlement support organisations.

In this thesis I have also shown how pivotal are social relationships and networking among Southern Sudanese and with their Australian hosts. These have significantly enhanced the resettlement and integration of my informants into Australian society. Support from and positive relations with Australians have been central in nurturing the sense of being accepted and of becoming part of their new society because with the support comes confidence in their relationships and the willingness to participate in activities in Australian society. These, as Giddens (1994: 186) has indicated, tend to energise and sustain trust in social relations and networks. These relationships connect my informants with Australians and act as conduits for both Southern Sudanese and Australians to learn about and to understand each others' cultural and social orientations.

I have also shown that the church offers various supports to Southern Sudanese including venues for meetings, classes for ethnic schools to operate, limited financial and material support, and the provision of useful information, social support and access to a range of social activities. In addition to these, the church has also met their spiritual

needs and has offered a context in which Southern Sudanese church goers can socialise, connect with various Australian individuals and can gather support from church members and from the church authority in general. Social networking and friendly social interactions act as features that, as Putnam (1995: 67) has shown, facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit between actors. They facilitate the flow of information, and the establishment of the norms of reciprocity and trust within ones' social networks (Woolcock 1998: 153). As Thomas (1996: 11) has indicated, these voluntary processes developed within civic society, promote the development of the "collective whole". Similarly, Loury (1992: 100) indicates that normal occurrences of social relationships among people are likely to promote or assist in the acquisition of skills valued in workplaces (see also Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998).

Informants believed that the most important factors that would enable them to resettle and integrate successfully into the Australian society are the support they received both from their fellow Sudanese and from Australians, and being given access to opportunities that enable them to put their potential into use in areas such as employment and education. These, they stated, make them self-reliant. Informants argued that positive relationships with Australians and the general Australian public, in addition to being employed, are at the core of their resettlement efforts because these make them feel part of the economic and social fabrics of their new society. Although all my informants are happy to live in Australia because Australia offers them safety, security and other basic needs, they have however indicated that resettlement in Australia has significantly caused changes in their ways of life and in the way duties were allocated according to gender. For many informants, those changes are linked and affect their notions of identity as individual in their families and in the society at large.

The changes which I have already discussed in the preceding chapters of this thesis made many of my informants rethink their ways of life and their identity in the context of their resettlement in Australia. Men have claimed to have been affected more than women by changes in family relationships, including performance of domestic chores, loss of social status and being the role of a provider in the family. It is however important to stress here that, unlike in Southern Sudan or in displacement areas somewhere in Africa where my informants had taken refuge, in Australia men are slowly becoming more willing to engage in domestic chores, including cooking and childcare, which they have long regarded mostly as women's work. This is because, unlike in Sudan, Southern Sudanese women have increased their participation in employment in Australia which takes them away from the kitchen.

For many unemployed husbands, however, this tends to create pressure on them to increase their participation in household chores. In Australia urban life requires them to blur the socially and culturally contrasted boundaries between what a woman does and what a man does. So to be successful in their resettlement, men have to share household chores to certain extent, although they still consider this to constitute a fall in their status as husbands and heads of the family.

Informants have indicated that in Australia, as opposed to what was the case in Southern Sudan and in refugee camps, incidents of domestic violence have decreased. It is however clear that men rather than women tend to be susceptible to frustration and aggressive tendencies due to a loss of social status and a lack of respect in the family from their women and children. Unemployment has led some men to lose their role as family provider. Informants have blamed the shifting gender roles as a result of unemployment, causing frustrations and aggressive tendencies in the family. In some families these have led to conflicts between husbands and wives and between parents



and children over changes in domestic arrangements and men's fear that family authority is fast sliding away from them.

Parent-child relationships, on the other hand, have also been a source of problems in certain families. The majority of informants (parents) do not favour the acquisition of certain attitudes, behaviors, fashions and lifestyles by their children because they see them as threats to their culture and traditions. In families where this has occurred, it has caused a breakdown in family relationships and communication, which in turn has affected the processes of resettlement and integration as family members spend time bickering over their conflicts. Married men want to be seen as heads of their families, regardless of who does what in the family; but women's claims of equality of rights in the domestic sphere threatens their position. However, one thing is obvious; both men and women have indicated that in order to settle successfully in Australia, they need to avoid situations that tend to result in conflicts, separations and divorces, as these make resettlement and integration even more difficult. They also indicated that separations and divorces put the future of their children in jeopardy, as one parent alone may not be able to support and bring up the children in a way that two parents living together would.

The literature on migration in Australia reveals that Africans and particularly Sudanese refugees are Australia's newest arrivals and hence there is lack of knowledge about them, especially about their resettlement and integration experiences in Australia. This is because there has been virtually no research carried out on Sudanese migration, even if they have become visible in the Australian ethnoscape. In general, the existing research on immigrants and refugees focuses on immigrants and refugees from Europe, Asian and other countries. The research concentrates on refugees and migrants living in Australia rather than equally focusing on their life experiences that preceded their

resettlement in Australia and how those experiences were changed by their resettlement. I argue that those previous experiences are so vital for understanding why some of my informants have more difficulties than others in their resettlement and integration into the Australian society. I stress here that most Southern Sudanese came from distinctively different environments from that of Australia and that Australia offers a life very different from the one they had lived.

The differences in these ways of life have been exacerbated by the war and related conditions which they suffered which had impeded their resettlement capabilities so that many of the things seen by their hosts as mundane (e.g. the use of elevators, ATM machines etc for the first time in life) have in fact been objects of strangeness to many who were using them for the first time. Very limited levels of English language skills considerably impacted on the daily lives of my informants as it hindered social interactions, making friendships and establishing networks with Australians. Hence, those without any English skills are constrained to only socialise within their ethnic groups and with members of the general Sudanese community. Lack of English also impeded progress in their studies and limited them from gaining access to job opportunities. But it is worth noting that it is not only those without English language skills who are experiencing employment problems; even some Southern Sudanese who were educated, who possessed overseas qualifications, skills and experience, and who had a superior level of English proficiency, are still either unemployed or are underemployed. ABS (2001 in Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007) studies bear witness to this when they show that Southern Sudanese have high unemployment rates in Australia in comparison to other refugee and migrant groups.

Regarding the perception of my informants about integration into the Australian society, the majority claimed that the length of stay in Australia, the services received, and the

acquisition of a permanent job determined their levels of success in resettlement and integration into Australia society and their eventual feelings of attachment to Australia. On the other hand, informants also indicated that the acquisition of English language skills and of Australian citizenship, and the holding of an Australian passport, do not necessarily amount to a claim of identification with Australia or a feeling of attachment to the country if they do not lead to employment in public as well as in the private sectors. Informants have indicated that if the acquisition of Australian citizenship does not translate into getting permanent jobs, then it would only be regarded as a means of protection for Southern Sudanese who wish to visit their families in Sudan from Sudanese authorities that had previously victimised them.

The thesis shows that all of my informants still have very strong feelings about, and connections to, Southern Sudan and to their extended and close kin back home, but they have indicated that at moment Southern Sudan does not provides the security and safety that Australia offers. Although my informants have strong links with Southern Sudan and their kin over there, they all viewed Australia as their new and second home and a place to live because their lives were no longer in perpetual danger as they had been in Southern Sudan during the war and in refugee camps. In this second home they are able to engage in uninterrupted activities including studies, but this home, they indicate, lacks the kin who had been their source of support and who gave them a sense of who they are. Informants have also indicated that their continuous identification with their country of origin, even if they have become Australian citizens, tends to reinforce their perception that Australians look upon them as ‘others’. This is a depiction of their displacement and their deterritorialisation from their country of origin. Thus I contend that resettlement in an unfamiliar society often raises the issue of identity and how newcomers think their hosts perceive them because of their unique attributes, as well as

how they view themselves being perceived by their hosts (Bhugra 2001). This supports the prevailing view in the literature on identity which suggests that although identity is a social construct, it is fluid and encompasses racial, cultural and ethnic components. Those of my informants who have acquired Australian citizenship are proud to be Australian, but their perception of who they are is a blend of symbolic identities constituted of their origins in Southern Sudan (territory, a tribal/ethnic group, language, etc), their life of resettlement in Australia, and their becoming an Australian citizen.

I have concluded that one of the major resettlement challenges facing the Southern Sudanese in Australia is a general lack of knowledge and comprehension of the legal processes entailed in the legal system, including the process of gaining access to both the private rental market and to public housing, as well as family laws pertaining to the rights of women and children within the family. There seems to be a general lack of awareness of where their family authority as head of the house (a man in the Sudanese context) begins and ends, and on the other hand where public authority (symbolised by the police and other relevant authorities regarding the family) ends, begins and coincides with theirs. This lack of knowledge or awareness has affected their resettlement in Australia as in some families, a lack of awareness of women's and children's rights and of issues regarding parenting have put culturally mindful Southern Sudanese in a collision course with Australian authorities regarding family matters.

It is averred that 'forced migration' often imbues families with greater stress, especially when refugees are resettled in different cultural, social and economic environments from those they fled from. In the case of most of my informants, Australian societal positions on family gendered roles, relationships and parenting practices tend to be in direct contrast with their practices. This include case with child disciplining; the Australian legal system prohibits (or at least discourages) parents from disciplining their

children with a stick or by smacking. Without using their traditional means of child discipline, most parents are concerned that they are losing control of their children, and that their children will not respect them and are likely not to respect the law either. Parents also believed that if they lose control of their children, the children would not be able to absorb their culture, traditions and values. They perceive this as a threat to their way of life. This creates anxiety in the family's relationships and has in turn made some families prone to conflicts. These conflicts have the potential to disrupt the process of resettlement and integration. Additionally, the fluidity of gender roles and of gender relationships in the family in Australian society also contradicts those of my informants, so that in many families this has been a source of worry to many men.

I have concluded that most of my informants have encountered many challenges whilst attempting to adjust and adapt to the ways of life of their new society and at the same time trying to maintain their own cultural traditions and values. These affect them in settling into the society with relative ease. In the culture of the Southern Sudanese there are often hierarchal but interdependent relationships within the family, and the lines of family authority, responsibility and obligations are clearly drawn and determined by their culturally prescribed positions in the family or clan and society.

## Recommendations

While I acknowledged that refugees and other migrants face numerous challenges as they resettled in Australia, I stress here that my informants' experiences of thirty nine years of brutal civil war and the related conditions have severely interfered with their abilities to surmount with relative ease the resettlement challenges they face in Australia. But despite their war experiences, there is evidence from the data suggesting that the Southern Sudanese are settling fairly well into Australian society. However, even if they are settling fairly well, it seems clear that most of them have higher resettlement needs because the thirty nine years of enduring and devastating war they have been subjected to have deprived them of access to education and economic advancement. Thus the war has pushed them into the lowest socio-economic and educational levels, and has deprived many of the needed social capital usable in urban environment in Australia. This has been exacerbated by the circumstances in which my informants fled from their country of origin and life in refugee camps or in exile where basic services such as education/training and employment were lacking. Additionally, unlike many other refugees settled in Australia, the Southern Sudanese possess significant cultural differences from Australians and most other refugees or migrants, and this makes blending in more difficult for them. Some informants have alleged that members of Australian society, due to lack of information and familiarity with Southern Sudanese people, tend to be suspicious or possess negative perceptions about them.

Successful resettlement and integration are gradual processes and entail social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental transformations and orientation. Given the fact that Southern Sudanese refugees come from a distinctly different society with different ways of life from that of their hosts, and unlike Indo-Chinese refugees who Australians are familiar with because of geographic proximity, economic and tourism links,

Australians and the Southern Sudanese have never before had the opportunity to become familiar with one another. Thus, resettlement and integration is not an easy path for them. Success in resettlement and in integration is therefore not going to occur automatically and it should not be seen exclusively as a one-sided problem to be solved by the Southern Sudanese alone; it's a two way process which equally involves Australians as well. It is an evolving process in which my informants recreate and re-establish their lives in new environment unfamiliar to them.

Hence, drawing upon the data which I have collected and analysed, I make the following recommendations:

(i) In Chapter Four informants have alleged that there is a lack of consultation on the part of settlement support services/organisations regarding those decisions and services that concern them. Hence, settlement support services/organisations need to empower those whom they service by allowing them to have inputs into the decisions that directly affect their lives. Involving them in this is vital. There is a perception among my informants that often the nature of their resettlement needs are assumed by non-governmental settlement support organisations and governmental institutions that provide support to them. There should be adequate consultation with Southern Sudanese refugees (and any other refugees group) regarding the policies, program activities, and services that concern their lives, and the ways in which they are delivered to them. Without involving the Southern Sudanese in those decisions that concern them, they are likely to feel alienated and disempowered by the very organisations established to serve them.

(ii) Generally, the Southern Sudanese with overseas qualifications, skills and experiences need to be fully supported to make a transition to the Australian job market.

In Chapter Four, informants have indicated that currently there is only a mechanism for overseas qualification assessment but not one for overseas skills and experience assessment. Hence, even if overseas qualifications are accredited as being equivalent to Australian certificates, diplomas, bachelors, masters or PhD degrees in various fields, it is harder for Southern Sudanese refugees to find jobs in their professions or fields of training. The current job networks are not well equipped to meet the employment needs of refugees with overseas qualifications, skills and experiences (see Colic-Peisker and Waxman 2005; Australian Productivity Commission-APC (2003)).

Hence, I recommend the creation of a body/organisation that screens and registers refugees arriving in Australia to assess their skills and experiences, and to co-ordinate a program whereby refugees with overseas skills and experiences are put into job mentoring or work placement programs, or are retrained if necessary, so that this category of refugees will acquire Australian work experience in their professions which is an essential requirement in the Australian job market. This makes them become employable and hence positive contributors to the Australian society. If this is done, the Australian society will benefit enormously from being able to make full use of the currently un-tapped human potential among Southern Sudanese refugees and other refugees. When this category of Southern Sudanese refugees is employed, they would be role models in the Sudanese community, a thing which is currently lacking. Informants assumed that at present young Southern Sudanese lack role models to emulate in their community. The existence of such role models in the community would benefit the Sudanese community as it will energise young people by making them to work hard in their studies because they could see evidence of the benefits of years of schooling. On the other hand Australian society will benefit from those overseas skills and qualifications and from taxes deducted from income of those employed.



(iii) In Chapter Four, informants have indicated a lack of coordination and collaboration between the settlement support organisations and various Southern Sudanese communities. Settlement services support organisations should establish links with the various Southern Sudanese community organisations by recruiting effective community volunteer workers who will act as links between their communities and the settlement support organisations. I suggest that it is vital for settlement support organisations to cooperate and work in collaboration or in partnership while delivering services to Southern Sudanese or to other refugees and migrants, rather than compete among themselves to service them or compete for funds for the delivery of those services. If this competition is replaced by collaborative work among themselves and members from communities are fully involved, the Southern Sudanese are likely to feel as part of those organisations that service them. Their full participation would be a resource to those organisations as they would bring range of lived refugee experiences vital in providing the desired services to them and to other refugees. Participating collaboratively with support organisations will enable Southern Sudanese to learn useful skills which they would use in managing the affairs of their respective communities and that would be of a great benefit to both Australian society and Southern Sudanese community groups, as they would become more aware and knowledgeable of how things are done in Australia.

(iv) Government and non-government settlement support organisations should also facilitate and empower leadership within the Sudanese community that would foster collaboration with those organisations and to help solve any problems being experienced in the Sudanese community in ways culturally appropriate to the Southern Sudanese. Doing this has the potential to make Southern Sudanese people feel recognised in their new society and to feel very much a part of the society ( a feeling

essential for successful resettlement and integration to occur) because members of their own community are directly involved in the activities of their new society. This would be socially and culturally significant to both Southern Sudanese and Australia society as this tends to bring them closer to one another and this enables them to learn a lot from each other too.

(V) In the section on resettlement challenges (Chapters Four see also Chapter Seven), there is a greater need to educate Southern Sudanese about family laws and, in particular, about parenting and the rights of women, men and children because these areas tend to be at odds with my informants' cultural traditions. There is also a great need for settlement support organisations to undergo regular cultural awareness training so that they will interact with and render their settlement services in ways deemed culturally appropriate to the refugees they support. Organisations that provide settlement services to refugees should earmark a proportion of their resources to create a greater understanding and awareness in these cited areas of needs. These areas are pivotal in the resettlement and integration processes of any refugee group resettled in Australia; without this, these areas are likely to make social, cultural participation and adaptation to Australian society very difficult. An understanding of family laws, parenting role, rights of women, men and children in the Australian context is pivotal in the new environment as knowledge of these is likely to prevent incidences of abuses in these areas of life. This is likely to be of benefit to the Sudanese community and Australian society in general, as they will foster respect of individual rights regardless of age, gender and race.

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