Focus on: South Sudan and Uganda

A World Vision educational tool
The history of South Sudan

South Sudan is one of the most diverse countries on the African continent, with over 60 major ethnic groups calling it home.\(^1\) It is made up of the former 10 southern states of Sudan, an area bigger than both Spain and Portugal combined. South Sudan has rich oil reserves, but it’s also one of the least developed regions on earth.\(^2\)

The original Sudan was controlled by neighbouring Egypt for thousands of years. The Sudan region, since ancient times, has been a melting pot of influences between African and Mediterranean traditions. Islam and Arabic languages were common in the north, while older African culture and languages dominated in the south.\(^3\)

The Egyptians and British gained control of the country by the end of the 19th century.\(^4\) Resistance to British rule was strong in the south, while the north accepted the rule more easily. For this reason, British rulers in the north could focus on modernisation, but in the south the rulers were more concerned with simply trying to keep the peace. This meant the development in the north far outpaced the development in the south for decades.\(^5\)

By 1956, the country was granted independence by Britain. After that, governments continued to struggle to unite the diverse groups within the country.

The larger and more powerful north of Sudan was controlled by fundamentalist Islamic law. The religion of the area that’s now known as South Sudan was either Christian or animist – a belief that objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Eventually, the country split into the two religious groups which divided them into distinct north and south groups. A civil war quickly developed between them and fighting lasted until 1972 when the Addis Ababa Agreement was made.\(^6\)

The second civil war broke out in 1983 when the mostly Muslim government of the north tried to impose Islamic law on the south. Conflict was further inflamed by ethnicity clashes and the south’s oil reserves. There were more than two million deaths, and more than four million people were displaced.\(^7\)

In 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed which ended what had become one of Africa’s longest-running civil wars.\(^8\) A referendum was held, which indicated South Sudan’s overwhelming preference to have independence from Sudan. In 2011, South Sudan gained autonomy and became the newest country in the world.\(^9\)

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3 Britannica (15 June 2018) “Sudan” [online]. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/place/Sudan
5 Britannica (14 June 2018) “South Sudan” [online]. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Sudan
6 Britannica (14 June 2018) “South Sudan” [online]. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Sudan
7 United Nations Mission in Sudan (26 June 2018) [online]. Available at: https://unmis.unmissions.org/comprehensive-peace-agreement

A South Sudanese girl at independence festivities
The history of Uganda

Uganda’s early history was shaped by herders who brought different cultures and languages into the area. Bantu people, from nomadic sub-Saharan tribes, were farming in the area from around the year 1000 BCE, while iron work can be found going back to around 1000 CE.¹⁰

Northern areas were organised by clan structures, while the south developed into five kingdoms: Bunyoro, Buganda, Busoga, Ankole and Toro.¹¹

In the 1840s, traders from the east coast of Africa arrived in the country. The first European reached Uganda in 1862 – a British explorer named John Hanning Speke who was looking for the source of the Nile River. In 1877, the first Anglican missionaries arrived in Uganda, and Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in 1879.

Uganda was declared a British protectorate in 1894.¹² With the start of the 20th century, Uganda’s infrastructure began to grow quickly. An education department was established by the protectorate in 1925, and schools were built by missionaries and the government. After World War II, high prices of coffee and cotton helped the economy to boom.¹³

In 1962, Uganda gained independence from Britain. Milton Obote was elected as prime minister, and King Mutesa II held the position of president – a position that was mostly ceremonial. But the uneasy alliance didn’t last for long. Obote staged a coup in 1966 and attacked Mutesa’s palace, forcing Mutesa to flee to Britain.¹⁴

Obote took over as executive president, introducing a new constitution that abolished all kingdoms and other types of federalism in Uganda. Obote was later overthrown in 1971 when one of his army generals, Idi Amin, staged a coup, taking over as president.

Amin’s reign is remembered as an eight-year reign of terror. He is estimated to be responsible for the deaths of 300,000 people out of a population of 12 million.¹⁵ Amin formed internal security forces, including the State Research Bureau and the Public Safety Unity, and used them to terrorise the public. Christian tribes called the Acholi and the Lango were killed in mass executions for having been loyal to Obote.

Amin ordered that all Asians living in Uganda be expelled – this was a population numbering around 50,000 to 70,000 people. This caused economic collapse as workers were suddenly lost for various industries, and the effects of this were felt for years afterwards. Eventually, Ugandan exiles and Tanzanians took control of the capital of Kampala, and Amin fled into exile in 1979. He was never brought to justice, and died in Saudi Arabia in 2003.¹⁶

A five-year war followed, which brought President Yoweri Museveni to power in 1986. He is still president today.
Conflict in South Sudan has forced 4.4 million people to flee their homes. World Vision is working to meet the health, safety, shelter and education needs of families in South Sudan and neighbouring countries, so that children can survive, thrive and return to school.

**South Sudan**

Nearly 2 million internally displaced people

**Uganda**

1.4 million refugees

Did you know that, according to UNHCR, **85% of refugees are hosted in developing countries**? That means that countries already struggling economically are taking the majority of the responsibility associated with sheltering refugees.

Research who your local Federal Member of Parliament is and send them a hand-written, personal message asking them to increase Australian Aid in support of refugees. In your message, explain why supporting refugees and displaced people is important to you. You could even ask them to come to your school to talk with you and your classmates about Australian Aid and the importance of supporting refugees around the world!

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18 UNHCR (accessed 6 June 2018) “Global trends in forced displacement” [online]. Available at: www.unhcr.org/5b27be547
Focus on South Sudan and Uganda

South Sudan

Conflict didn’t end for long in South Sudan. After South Sudan split from Sudan in 2011, the government’s main concern was to get oil flowing. But civil war erupted again in 2013, when President Salva Kiir Mayardit fired his cabinet and accused his vice president Riek Machar of organising a failed coup against him. While it is unclear if there was a coup, the allegation was potent for ethnic tensions because Machar is from the second largest ethnic community, the Nuer.

What began as a political problem escalated into ethnic violence. Though both Kiir and Machar each had supporters from the other’s community, there have still been mass killings along ethnic lines. The army has divided and there have been clashes around the country.

Initially split along ethnic lines, as South Sudan’s civil war has progressed both sides have increasingly fractured, meaning a growing number of armed groups in conflict and worsening violence being carried out against communities. Hostilities continue, partly because South Sudan’s long history of ethnic tension. This isn’t helped by the easy access to guns after decades of conflict. Both sides have been involved in crimes like looting, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, beatings, enforced disappearances and executions. Although a peace agreement was made in 2015, the fighting resumed not long afterward.

This violence, as well as drought, have led to the threat of famine and a major refugee and displaced persons situation. Even after five years of crisis, the number of refugees fleeing the country is immense. More than one third of South Sudan’s 12 million people have been displaced, with 2.4 million people now refugees in neighbouring countries and 1.76 million people internally displaced. It is estimated that 85% of these refugees are women and children.

South Sudan’s presidential guard await the arrival of foreign dignitaries invited to participate in the country’s official independence celebrations in the capital city of Juba.

21 Ibid
Uganda

Since coming into power in early 1986, President Yoweri Museveni’s government has taken important steps toward rebuilding the economy and regaining stability in Uganda. However, he has been criticised by the United Nations for allegedly aiding rebels in the conflict in Democratic Republic of the Congo.25

Rebel activities have plagued the country since the late 1980s, with the Lord’s Resistance Army, – led by Joseph Kony – the most notorious. Both the United States and Uganda had been hunting this group and there are now thought to be no more than 300 fighters left.26

Uganda has an “open door” refugee policy which has been praised by the international community. Refugees in Uganda do not live in camps, but settlements, where they are provided plots of land. They can move freely, have access the same healthcare and education that’s available to nationals, and are allowed to work and own businesses.27 Uganda is now fifth on the list of major refugee-hosting countries.28 The country has kept its borders open despite a severe lack of funding, but it is now facing a refugee crisis after it was flooded with arrivals.29

More than one million South Sudanese refugees have settled there. In 2017 alone, over 350,000 refugees from South Sudan arrived. At its peak in mid-2017, more than 2,000 refugees were being received in Uganda every day. Now, it’s an average of 245 people per day.30

27 UN Development Program (26 June 2018) “Uganda’s contribution to refugee protection and management” [online]. Available at: http://www.ug.un.org/content/dam/uganda/docs/UNDPUGj7-Uganda%20Contribution%20to%20Refugee%20Protection-Study%20Summary%20%282%29.pdf
28 UNHCR (14 June 2018) “Global trends in forced displacement” [online]. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34


A family of South Sudanese refugees take shelter from an oncoming storm just a few days after they have arrived in Omugo settlement in Uganda.
Meet Rhoda

She fled her home, but couldn’t flee the country

Rhoda, 12, fled her village in the north of South Sudan after her home was destroyed in the civil war. She left with her parents and four siblings, taking a cargo plane carrying humanitarian aid. Arriving in the capital city, Juba, they sought protection in a camp for displaced people.

Like many internally displaced people, Rhoda didn’t want to leave her home. But it was too dangerous to stay. In Juba, her family had to start a new life with almost nothing. “We left all our belongings,” Rhoda explains. To make ends meet, her mother runs a small market stall. Her father cannot find work.

Because there’s not much space in the camp, Rhoda can no longer play her favourite sport, volleyball. She has to improvise when it comes to getting active and she now enjoys skipping and hula hooping. She still follows her favourite soccer team, Real Madrid, who she thinks has the best players.

Rhoda misses her family and friends most – although she misses the weather and her old school too. Her new school has over 3,000 students, but she doesn’t let that stop her from studying. She’s focused on working hard to become a doctor when she graduates.
What’s next?

South Sudan

At the end of April 2018, South Sudan was experiencing the worst food and nutrition crisis since conflict began. About one million people are starving. With the situation continuing to deteriorate, the need for humanitarian aid is likely to grow.

People are being forced to flee areas affected by conflict. As communities fracture and people go in search of food and water, millions of children have been forced to leave school and risk being separated from their families. By May 2018, more than one million South Sudanese refugees had moved south across the border into Uganda, a number that is growing each day.

Uganda

The brutal fighting in South Sudan and mass influx of refugees is putting extreme pressure on Uganda’s resources. As refugees continue to arrive, the need remains overwhelming in the Ugandan refugee camps. World Vision is responding with ongoing food assistance, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, reception centre management, and livelihoods empowerment. Around 60 percent of all the new arrivals in Uganda are children.

South Sudanese refugees are unlikely to be able to return to their homeland any time soon, and ongoing support will be needed to meet the basic and long-term needs of the refugees.

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31 World Vision International (14 June 2018) “South Sudan Crisis” [online]. Available at: https://www.wvi.org/south-sudan-crisis