

The Sudan Project is a mission outreach of the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee.



THE SUDAN PROJECT

Churches of Christ at work in Sudan

Life in a Sudanese Refugee Camp

What comes to mind when you think of living in a refugee camp? Crowded, unsanitary conditions? Lack of sufficient food and water?

All of the above are true. However, for the Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia and Uganda, a great blessing is coming out of their current exile. They are hearing the Bible for the first time, becoming Christians, and changing their eternities!

As director of the Sudan Project, I have just returned from 24 days in South Sudan. Side trips were also made to Ethiopia and Uganda to visit our evangelists working in the Sudanese refugee camps there.

The first stop was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to pick up two respected Christian Ethiopian brethren to accompany me to Gambella, Ethiopia where we had arranged to meet with all the refugee camp evangelists. Since these two brothers have vast experience in African evangelism plus work in refugee camps, their advice was invaluable.

The UN does not now allow visitors into refugee camps. So we had invited the camp evangelists to meet us in Gambella. All of the Sudanese refugee camps in Ethiopia surround this city but require a long bus trip over really bad roads.

In Ethiopia, we are now supporting 16 South Sudanese preachers in four Sudanese refugee camps. Four evangelists work in Kule I. Kule II is the largest camp with six evangelists and 250,000 refugees. Three more men per camp are serving in the Lietchuor and Fugindo camps. Two of the 16 evangelists are very experienced so mentor the other 14 men in their work, which is working well.

Each of the preachers was encouraged to share how his work is going. We were careful not to leave the impression that the only information we wanted was the



Overlooking one of the large refugee camps, refugees are queued for food rations.

number of baptisms, fearing that might lead them to baptize untaught people so their work would look better. So we do not have precise statistics.

Kule I, however, reported that they have baptized about 50 refugees so far. Kule II is averaging around 150 in worship on Sunday mornings and has built a meeting



This is a gathering of some of our refugee camp preachers sharing their progress and needs.

place that will seat 300. The Fugindo workers mentioned a difficulty in their work because there is no water close for baptizing.



Another of the groups explained that, while there is a river close, it is full of alligators and snakes! They throw rocks into the water to scare away the alligators, but snakes are still a problem.

One story shared was that a certain snake there grows to about 3-4 feet long, has horns on its head, and is poisonous. During a baptism service, one of those snakes showed up and quickly broke up the baptizing! (It seems the devil *still* uses snakes to accomplish his work!)

We explained how to dig a hole in the ground, line it with a plastic tarp, and fill it with water for baptisms. However, the only water available to some of them is that delivered by a UN truck for drinking, a problem on which they are working.

In our discussions, we also asked what the men needed in their work to do a good job. They specifically mentioned

bicycles because of the long distances around the camps for Bible studies. Used bikes cost about \$170 each, and blackboards needed for teaching ran around \$35. (They instead



Sample of the bicycle we bought for each of our refugee camp preachers.

bought wood and painted it with blackboard paint.) So Sudan Project contributions provided the money for six bicycles and three blackboards. We also left some teaching materials that we had brought.

In addition, the residents are going to build three huts with signs identifying them as "Bible Study Centers." These cost \$250 each and will be staffed by Christians inviting those interested to take a Bible course. Since no mail service exists, students will bring completed lessons back to these centers where personal teaching will take place over each lesson.

Traveling on to Uganda ...

We are also supporting refugee camp evangelists in Uganda, all of whom are graduates of our Pajok preaching

school. Again, the UN does not allow non-residents to visit the refugee camps in Uganda so we brought the preachers to Bweyale, the closest town.



Preaching school graduates James Apollo and Edward Mutese, former residents of the Kiryondongo Camp during the earlier Sudan war, are now preachers in the camp.

These camps, called Kiryondongo and Adjumani, are not as large as those in Ethiopia but still have a huge population. The Sudan Project is supporting two evangelists in each of the two camps, two of whom were once residents of the camp.



Mark Obama and Michael Oryen, two more of our preaching school graduates, are working in the Adjumani refugee camp.

Again, our purpose was to encourage these men in their work and to ascertain what they need to do a good job. They also needed bicycles, and Adjumani needed some financial help to build a meeting place.

We gave each preacher money to purchase a bicycle and gave Adjumani \$2,000 to enable them to purchase a plot of ground and materials to build a satisfactory meeting place. The Christians themselves will provide the labor. Two weeks after arriving home, I received word that the Adjumani Christians had baptized 18 more and put the roof on their new structure!

During the earlier war with Sudan, thousands of refugees were converted in the Kiryondongo camp; and they built nice meeting places. After the Christian refugees returned to their home villages, those who remained in the camp tore down our buildings so they could use the materials. We have been able to retain the ground but have to build new meeting places.

The Ugandan workers were quite excited to receive lesson materials they could use in teaching. It is humbling to realize that in the U.S. we have such an abundance of teaching materials whereas these people who had none are working so hard and so successfully to share Christ.