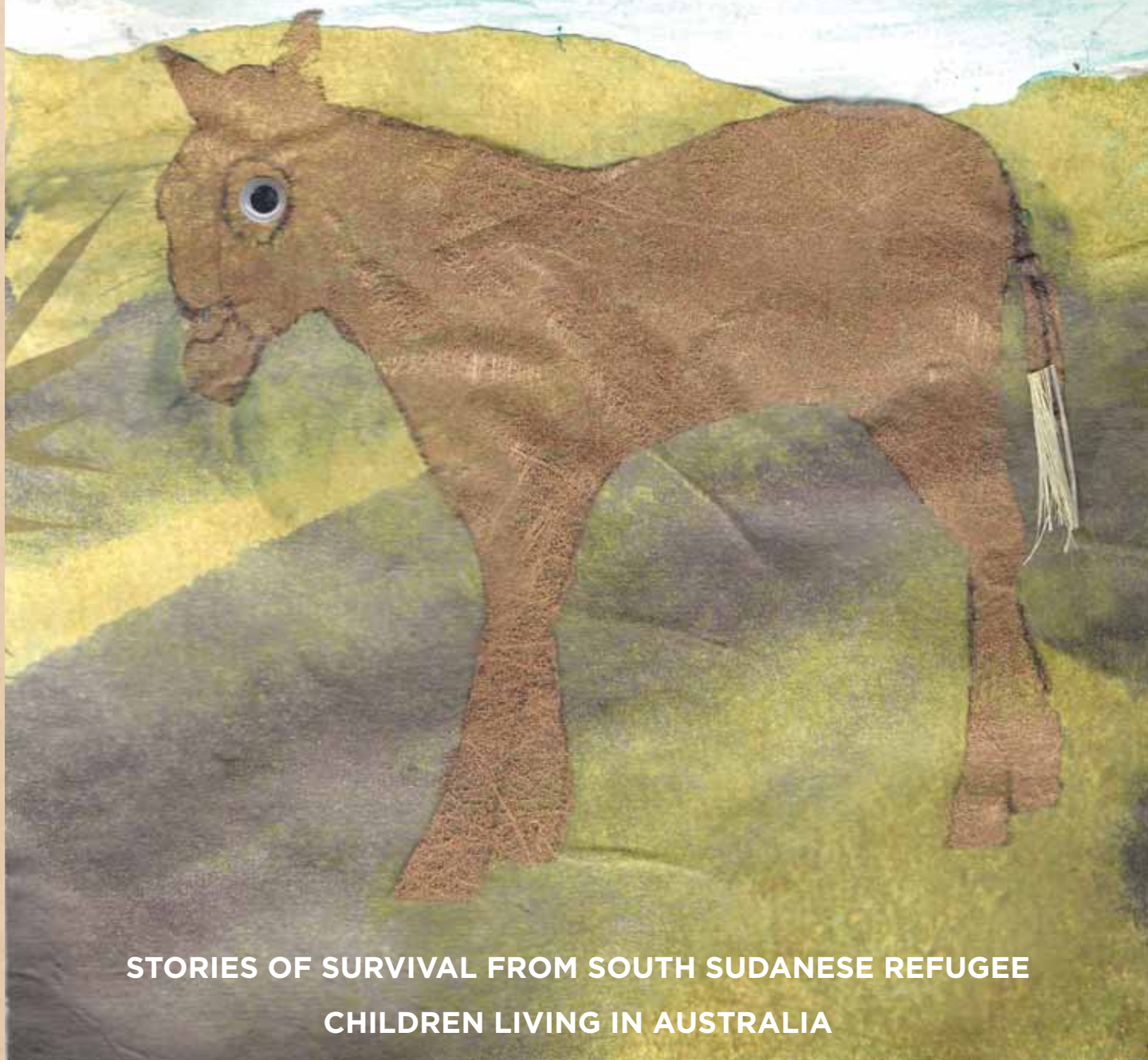


Donkeys can't fly on planes



STORIES OF SURVIVAL FROM SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEE
CHILDREN LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

**DONKEYS CAN'T FLY ON PLANES - STORIES OF SURVIVAL
FROM SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEE CHILDREN LIVING IN
AUSTRALIA**

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BOR ORPHANAGE & COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROJECT

All proceeds from the sale of this book go to Bor Orphanage & Community Education Project Inc. to support child victims of war in Bor, South Sudan.

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<https://bororphan.wordpress.com>

With thanks to Sharon Sandy (Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Latrobe English Language Centre, Liddiard Rd. Primary School, Traralgon)

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Kids' Own Publishing is a not-for-profit arts organisation that empowers children, families and communities to share their stories through artist-led processes and publishing to a wider audience.



The following children
are to be commended
for their participation

Kudamba Abas

Nyalat Biliew

Nyawech Biliew

Nyalieb Chiok

Nyawech Chiok

Adior Deng

Mayen Deng

Zach Deng

Sunday Garang

Paul Kuol

Victoria Kuol

Angeth Malual

Gugeui Malual

Abiar Maluk

Adier Maluk

Nyakim Ruach

Nyetap Ruach

Nyakaka Ruot

Nyaduo Ruot

Elizabeth Wut

Erjok Wut





Donkeys can't fly on planes

STORIES OF SURVIVAL FROM SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEE

CHILDREN LIVING IN AUSTRALIA



Donkeys can't fly on planes

Stories of Survival from South Sudanese Refugee Children Living in Australia

It is an enormous privilege to work with children who have come to Australia as refugees and I have been fortunate to do exactly that for the past six years. In the course of getting to know the children and their families, I have come to learn of the specific hardships and struggles refugees face.

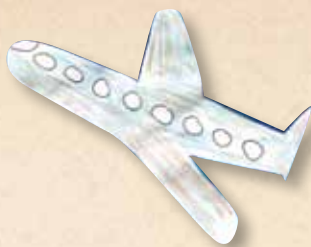
I love seeing the process of growth that takes place, not just in the child but in the family as a whole. There is much to learn in the process of adaptation and assimilation into Australian life. At first, everything is foreign. Flushing toilets, water flowing freely from taps inside the house, houses that light up at the flick of a switch; tall, tall buildings, traffic, indoor cooking and supermarkets stocked with food. The concept of school and learning is vastly different. Children must go to school every day. They must take lunch and a snack.

The 'village' no longer belongs to everyone. You cannot run and play in your neighbour's yard. People will walk past you in the street and they may or may not greet you as you pass. Nothing is as it was and everything you have known is now forever different.

From the desolate camps in countries bordering their motherland, where food was scarce, violence rife and death and illness frequent guests, to the bright lights and bustle of the airport on their arrival in Australia, to their settlement into some semblance of normal life in a place most of them could never have imagined existed.

Australia is a safe haven and though children do prosper here, trauma can never be completely left behind. If we can think of a single catastrophic event in our lifetime, we know the impact is great and continues to affect us for a very long time, perhaps forever. For these children, the catastrophic events in their lives have been many. I am continually amazed at their resilience.

These stories are real, as seen through the eyes of the children. They are the thoughts, feelings, experiences; the stories, of the South Sudanese refugee children, living in Australia. These are the images that visit when they close their eyes in the night. These are the stories that brought tears to my eyes and these are the stories the world needs to hear.



Big thanks must go to the people who have played a part in bringing this book into being. To my colleagues Sue Sleswick and Sue O'Rourke who have assisted in the collecting, collating and scanning of the children's stories and artwork. These ladies have given up countless hours of their own time to support, attend meetings and share ideas. To the artist, Lisa Gardiner, who travelled to us, sacrificing paid work, in order to conduct the Artists Workshop, enabling the children to bring their stories to life with such beautiful collage images. To the staff of Liddiard Rd. Primary School, who supported the workshop. To Victoria Ryle and team from 'Kids' Own Publishing', who saw the worth in the stories and who made this all possible.

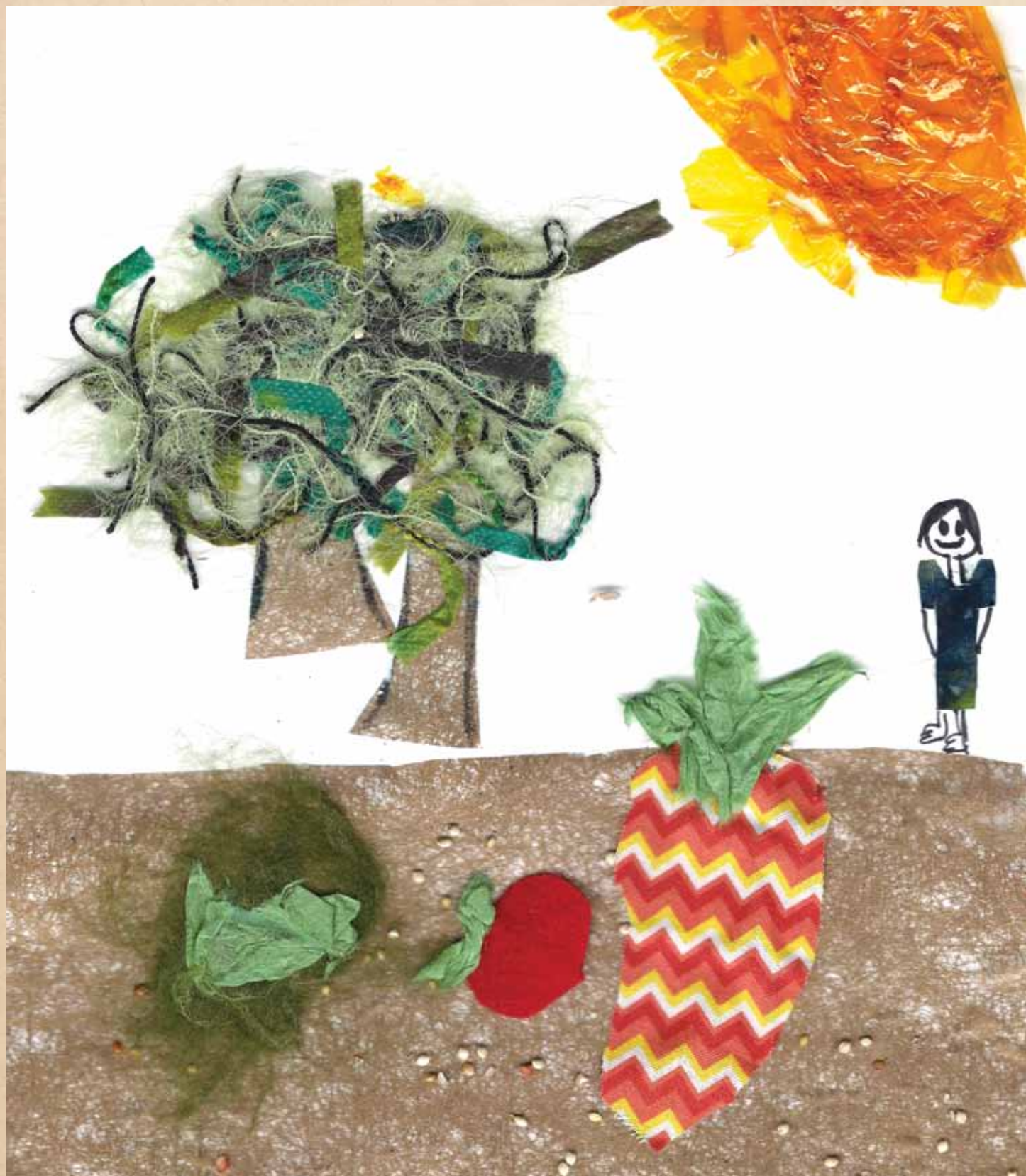
Lastly, I must thank the South Sudanese refugee children who have told their stories and touched our lives by sharing their lives and their stories so honestly and openly. Many of them gave up their lunchtimes for weeks to complete artwork.

I know I am a better person for having worked through these stories, from scribbles on a notepad to the beautiful book you see before you today.

Sharon Sandy

Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Latrobe English Language Centre, Traralgon





Steven the donkey

The Story of Sunday Garang

I was born in a refugee camp named Kakuma, in Kenya. In the camp, our life was difficult. We had no pillows but we all had a blanket. My family also had a very special helper. It was a small donkey named Steven.

The camp was a sad place to be because there was usually no food to eat. When my family and the other families had no food to eat, we would begin to starve. Starving feels like when you are so hungry your tummy hurts. It makes rumbling sounds inside you that can go on for a very long time. We had nothing really to feed Steven either.

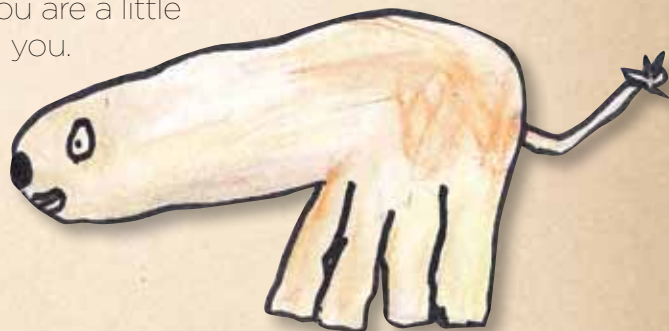
When I was starving, I could not cry because I did not have enough energy to make the crying sound or to squeeze tears from my eyes. When we went to bed hungry, my mum would try to make us feel better. She would say, "There is food growing right now while we sleep. It will be ready soon." She was right because we had been given some seeds to grow. There were carrot seeds and some other vegetables. I did not want to go to sleep while the food was growing.

Sometimes I would drink from my mother. She made her own milk for me but she needed to eat food to make the milk. We did have a lot of water in the camp. I would climb on Steven and he would take me to collect the water for the people. I liked to put the water that Steven collected on to the vegetables to help them to grow. Everyone took great care of the growing vegetables

I could go on my own because the well was not too far away. It would take about twenty minutes to get there but I knew a shortcut and I could get there in about five minutes. I always took the shortcut because I would gather water many times in one day. I would give water to people for drinking, for people who were starving and sometimes for cooking.

I tried very hard to always be back in the camp before it got too late. If I got home late my mum would get cross with me because if you are a little girl on your own in the dark, someone might kill you.

When we came to Australia, I had to leave Steven behind. Donkeys can't fly on planes. I miss him but now he is helping my cousin's family to collect water for the people in Kakuma. I hope the people who have Steven remember to take the shortcut.





Just a piece of material

The Story of Adior Deng



I came out of my mum's tummy in Kenya. I came out screaming! My mum wrapped me in a piece of material, like a towel. She carried me around on her back, with the piece of material holding me in place. My mum still has that piece of material and I think it is special.

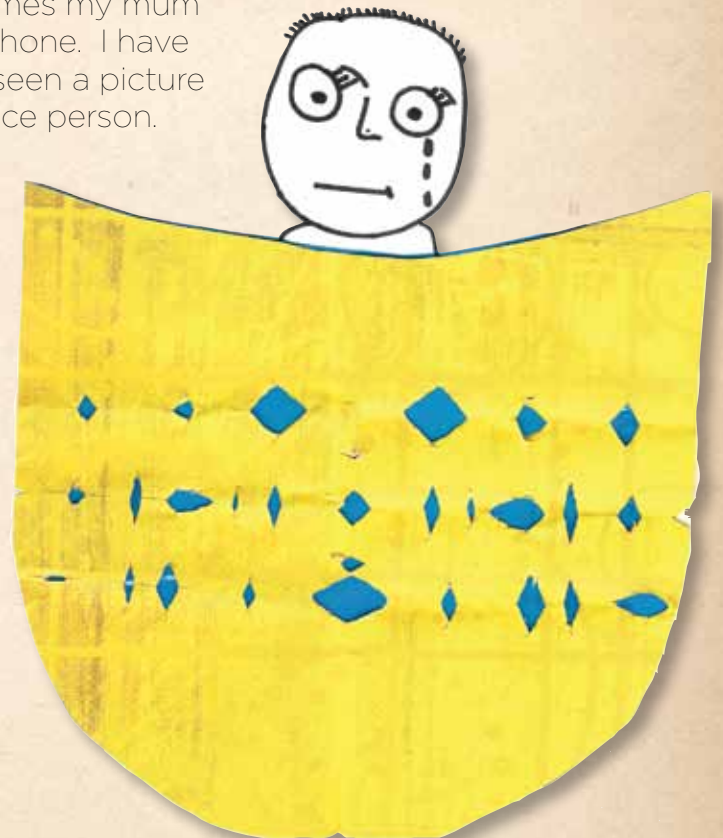
My mum, my sister Ayak and my brothers Majur, Zach and Mayen all came to Australia together in 2004. We came on an aeroplane and my mum brought my piece of material with us.

When I wanted to sleep my mum would put me in a baby bed with my piece of material. One day I grew too big for my baby bed, so my mum gave it away. She did not give my piece of material away though.

My dad, my grandmother, my uncles, aunties and many cousins still live in Africa. Sometimes my mum talks to our family in Africa on the telephone. I have never met my grandmother but I have seen a picture of her and she looks like she is a very nice person.

I don't remember my dad but my mum tells me about him. She says, "Your father is a good man Adior". On Father's Day, when all the other children in Australia give their dad a present, I think about what I would do if my dad was in Australia with us.

I would like to give my dad a surprise, like a watch. If my dad walked into our house, I would hug him and it would make me feel good! If I showed my dad the baby material, he would know that I am his baby girl grown up.



From Ethiopia to Australia

The story of Nyalat Biliew

I grew up with my Grandma in Gambella, Ethiopia. My Grandma would always tell me that my mum lived in Australia. I can't remember the first time my Grandma told me that I would one day live with my mum in Australia but it seems like it was something I always knew.

I can remember a time when I was very small, perhaps about two years old. My mum's brother Buay was carrying me in a bag. My mum was carrying all of our clothes and my dad was carrying my sister Nyawech.

At the end of that day we arrived home and I could see my Grandma talking to another lady. The next day my mum and dad went away, taking my sister with them. Grandma and I sat together on top of a big rock, holding hands. When we could no longer see my mum and dad, Grandma gave me some new clothes. I did not know that my mum and dad and Nyawech were going to Australia. I thought they would be coming back. I did not know I wouldn't see them for a long time.

After nine years I heard the news that I was finally going to live with my family in Australia. My Grandma and my aunty took me on the long journey to Addis Ababa. We were on the bus for two days and two nights. I slept a lot of the time, with my head on my Grandma's lap. I always feel sick when I travel on buses and I had to be sick into a bag many times. I felt horrible.

The bus got a flat tyre at one stage, after something sharp went into the tyre and made a hole in it. We ate some food as we waited for the man to fix it.

When we arrived in Addis Ababa my cousin and his family met us. We stayed at their house with them until it was time for me to fly to Australia. One day we went to the airport and talked to a man about the papers we needed for me to go to Australia.

When the day came for me to





leave Ethiopia I was crying a lot. I did not want to leave my Grandma. Grandma was crying too. She could not come to the airport because it was night time. We said goodbye at my cousin's house. My aunty and some other people came with me to the airport. Another girl came with us to the airport too. She is a young girl, who lives with my Grandma because she has no family of her own.

When it was time to get on the aeroplane I was really scared. I had never been on a plane before. My aunty took me to the gate and then a woman who I had never seen before took me onto the plane. She was very kind. On the plane I sat next to a big girl from a different country. She had material covering her face and I could only see her eyes. She was going to America.

It took so long to arrive in Australia and I slept a lot. When we arrived, a lady woke me up and talked to me. I did not know what she was saying because I did not know any English. She made me stay on the plane until everyone else got off. Then she walked with me. I was so tired. My legs hurt and my butt hurt because I had sat for a very long time.

When I walked out of the plane I saw a Sudanese man and lady and two white ladies. I did not know that this was my parents as I had not seen them for nine years. When the Sudanese lady hugged me tight and cried very loudly, I knew it was my mum. The white ladies were two people from my school in Australia.

My mum could not stop crying, so the two white ladies helped her to walk, while my dad took my hand. He carried my little handbag in his other hand. He tried to give me a lolly but I shook my head. We went in the car belonging to one of the white ladies and I vomited as soon as the car started to drive.

It was a long way to the house where my family lived. When we arrived there were so many people there, waiting for me. I met my brothers and sisters. Everyone was staring at me and I felt scared all over again.

I have been in Australia for two years now. I have four brothers and sisters and I go to school. I am happy I came to Australia but I still miss my Grandma.





Grandma and the cow

The story of Elizabeth Wut

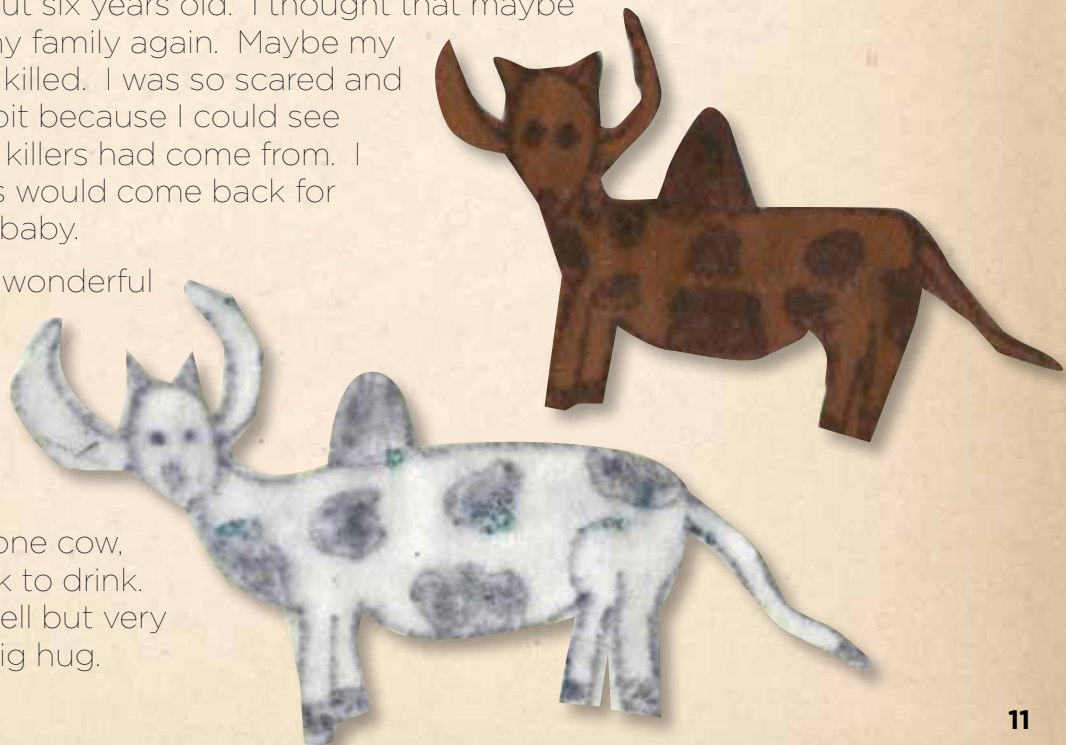
Sometimes when I was living in Sudan I did not feel safe. I did not like it when bad people came with guns and I did not like the fighting. The bad people wanted to take Sudan to be their home. Maybe they did not have a home of their own.

My mum became very sick and she had to be taken away from our home so that she could get some help to get better. I stayed behind with my grandma. I helped her to take care of the growing vegetables. I would dig with her and water the plants to make them grow.

I remember a time when a small boy went for a long walk to collect water for his family. On his way home he saw the killers coming towards our houses. He ran as fast as his legs would go and told his mother what he had seen. His mother came and told all of us, so that we could hide our cows. The bad men would sometimes kill the cows,

Soon after, the bad people came and took my Grandma away. They took all of her cows as well. My mum's sister and brother went to look for Grandma and the cows. They were gone for one night and it was almost night time again when they came back home without her. All that time, I waited in the house with my aunty's baby girl. I was about six years old. I thought that maybe I would never see my family again. Maybe my Grandma would be killed. I was so scared and I was crying a little bit because I could see the trees where the killers had come from. I was afraid the killers would come back for me and my aunty's baby.

Then, something wonderful happened! My Grandma came home with one of her cows. I was so happy to see her and the cow. If we don't have at least one cow, I don't have any milk to drink. My Grandma was well but very tired. I gave her a big hug.





My sister Nyalat

The story of Nyawech Biliew

I was born in Ethiopia. My big sister Nyalat still lives there with my Grandma. She is eight years old.

Maybe, one day she will come to Australia to live with my mum, my dad, my brother Sunday, my sister Nyamal and my little baby brother Jimem. She will have great fun.

Nyalat cannot speak English. She has to speak in our language, which is called Nuer. Maybe Mrs. Sandy, the Welfare Teacher and I can teach her to speak English.

Sometimes we talk to Nyalat on the phone. My mum worries about her because she has only cold water to wash in. Mum tells her to stay out of the cold water. My mum cries a lot because she thinks Nyalat will get sick.

When my mum cries it makes me feel sad. I say to her, "Don't worry!" When I talk to Nyalat on the phone I say, "hello" to her in Nuer. One day when she comes to live with us, I will say, "Hello ... welcome to Australia!" I will tell her that I go to a good school where the children and the teachers are all friendly.

I know how she will feel when she comes to Australia. She will feel like I felt at first. I was scared of all the white people. I am not scared anymore. I can tell her there is nothing to be afraid of. I cannot wait until my sister comes and my mum has five children to care for!





My nice uncle

The story of Nyakim Ruach

When we were living in Africa, there was a lot of fighting all around us. When my mum was born and when she was growing up, there was a lot of fighting. When I was born there was fighting and it still goes on today. We never felt safe.

My uncle had to fight to defend the people and the land. He was a very nice and kind man and a fine brother to my mum. Sometimes he put his own life in danger to protect others. One sad day my uncle passed away. He was killed during the fighting.

Our family was sad and upset to lose such a good man. Everyone went to church to say 'goodbye' to him. I can remember my mum crying.

Once I almost got shot when I was going to my cousin's house. A man was near me and he started shooting at people. I ran as fast as my legs would take me, to my cousin's house.

When I told them what I had seen, they quickly put everything inside their house in front of the door so that no one could enter the house after me. That is the reason why my family came to Australia.

Australia is very different to Africa. The houses here are not made of sticks. In Africa the houses were made of sticks because we did not have bricks and cement. Our houses were good though because they kept us cool.

When we turn a tap on in Australia, water just comes out. In Africa we had to collect the water from a pump outside our house. Everyone had to share the pump.

My family is happy to be in Australia. It is a safe country. But we can never forget about my nice uncle. Now my family sends money to his wife and his children to help them to buy food and clothes. We must always help them because my uncle helped my mum and her family.

I am very happy that my parents brought us to Australia to live. Now we can grow up safe.





My three sisters

The story of Victoria Kuol

My name is Victoria and I have three sisters. One sister is Jina. She is Sudanese like me. She is a good sister. She helps my mum to cook and to clean and she takes care of me very well.

Jina cannot hear but I can hear her making sounds. She knows what I am saying because she can tell by looking at my lips when I talk. She goes to Secondary School and they are teaching her how to sign. I am learning to sign at my school too, so I practice talking to Jina with my hands.

Another sister is Nyawer. She still lives in Africa. She used to help me when I was there. She would take me to her house to play with her. I loved helping her with the cooking. I miss my sister.

I have another sister too. Her name is Melissa and she is bigger than Jina and Nyawer. She is my white sister. We do not have the same mum and dad but we pretend we are sisters. Melissa takes me to her house. We play with the dogs and take them for walks in the park together. We have so much fun.

Melissa has a job in an office and sometimes I go to visit her there. One time I took a cake to her at work. She is always hungry and so are the girls she works with. I helped her to cut the cake and she shared it with her work friends. The girls in Melissa's office are all very nice to me.

One sister is in my house. One sister is in far away Africa. One sister is pretend. I love my three sisters!





Angeth goes to a wedding

The story of Angeth Malual

There was a wedding in the village. My mum and some other ladies were helping the bride to get ready. Her name was Ayak Buol. They were braiding her hair to make her look beautiful. Her hair was long, down to her waist. It took two days and two nights to finish her hair.

The ladies helped her to get dressed. They put a lovely white dress and white shoes on her. Her husband would wear a black suit and he would be very handsome.

The wedding was to take place under the big trees. All of the people would sit on the ground under the trees. The ladies sit on mats because they do not like to get their clothes dirty.

I badly wanted to go to the wedding. My mum said, "You cannot go to the wedding Angeth because you are not dressed up!" I felt sad because I wanted to see the beautiful bride and climb the big trees.

After my mum had left to go to the wedding, I sneaked quietly out of our mud house. I went to the wedding all by myself. I went quietly on my tip-toes to watch the beautiful bride get married.

I was watching from behind the big trees until my mum saw me. She was a little bit angry but she could not help laughing because my hair was all over the place. Messy! My clothes were very dirty! She said, "Go home Angeth and change your clothes!"

I ran away quickly but I did not go home and change my clothes. Instead I ran into the jungle. I played in the water where the giraffes and elephants were drinking.





Living in Australia

The story of Mayen Deng

I love my country Sudan and I liked living there but it was not very safe. Sometimes people would come and try to take our land. My people had to fight so that we could keep our homes.

When the bad people came, the children would have to hide. If you did not hide well, you could be shot. If they saw a person walking along with a bag, they might just snatch the bag. If someone was wearing a necklace, they would rip it from around their neck. You would not be able to stop them from taking your things because you could be killed.

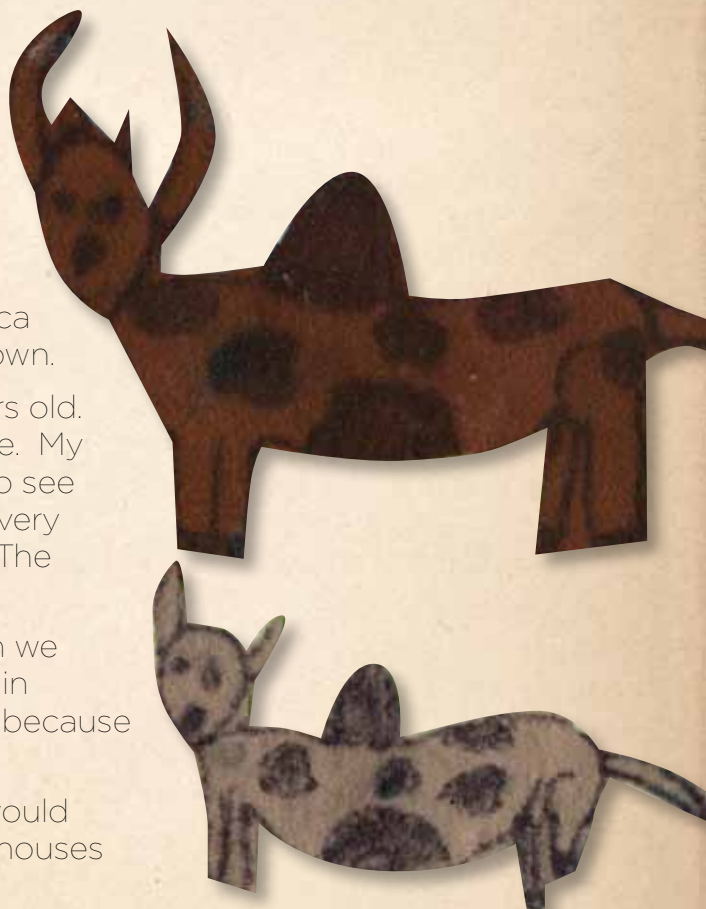
When the fighting became really bad, we moved to Kenya but it was still not very safe there. Small children, perhaps as young as seven, would walk the streets, looking for somewhere safe to go.

My dad was a soldier and it was his job to protect the people, so we did not get to see him very much. He is still in Africa making it safe for people. Sometimes I talk to him on the telephone. We sent some photos to Africa so that my dad can see how big we have grown.

When we came to Australia I was four years old. We went to live with my cousins in Melbourne. My uncle met us at the airport. I was surprised to see what Australia looked like. The houses were very different to the houses we lived in, in Africa. The roads were different too.

We lived in Melbourne for a while and then we moved to Traralgon to live. When we arrived in Traralgon I thought it looked a bit like Sudan because there were many trees and some cows.

If I could choose where I wanted to live I would choose Australia. It has good buildings and houses and it is a place where I can feel safe.





The big feast

The story of Elizabeth Wut

My name is Elizabeth and I was born in Kakuma in Kenya. Kakuma is a camp for refugees. In Kenya people called me by my Sudanese name, Nyang. One day I was playing in the sand with many other children. The boys had some small toy cars. My sister Nyalat and I were playing with the girls. We were having a lot of fun.

Suddenly one of the women from our village came quietly up to the girls and whispered, "Go! Go!" She explained that while the boys were still playing, we could go and eat. I took Nyalat and ran very fast with the other girls.

I was just a skinny girl. Sometimes there was no food to eat. On those days I felt sad and my tummy felt empty. Usually, if I felt hungry and there was no food, I would go and have a little sleep.

On this day though, the ladies had cooked a lot of food. They brought it together, placing it between two lots of big trees. There was a lot of food and it was delicious.

We sat under a big tree so the sun would not be too hot. We ate our food while the boys were playing. Soon the boys realised the food was ready and some of them began to fight for it. Mostly, it was the small boys fighting because they did not really know the rules.

When the boys started to be sensible, they sat down and began to eat. I remember that day well because there was plenty of food for everyone!





Africa

The story of Guguei Malual

I started school in Africa. There was a big wall of rocks built around the school for protection. We hoped that if the bad people came to get us, they would trip over the rocks.

Sometimes when the teacher was writing on the blackboard, I would sneak out of the classroom. If a person got caught doing something naughty, they would be sent to the Principal. The Principal would take a stick and whip them. After a whipping, you would get lines across your butt.

When it was time to go home from school, the teacher would give us some biscuits. They were extremely delicious! Then we would walk home from school, singing African songs.

The toilets in Africa are not very nice. They are just a big hole in the ground and sometimes small children fall into them. There is no toilet paper and you have to wipe your bottom with sand!

We had to watch out for scorpions. When they stung you, they would leave a small red poison under your skin. It would be very painful until someone removed the poison.

Our home was near the jungle and there were many rocks there. The rocks would grow hot under the sun and you would burn your feet when you stepped on them. In the jungle there were elephants, giraffes, monkeys and lions. Some of the monkeys would bite you if you went near them but the pink-bottomed monkeys were not scary.

The giraffes were not scary either. They would usually run away when they saw me coming. They are scared of people. The lions would come out at night and try to eat people while they were sleeping.





I'm Not Scared

The story of Nyawech Ruach

I was born in Sudan but when I was quite small we went to Ethiopia to live. When I lived in Africa life was very hard and I was an angry girl. I used to fight with people a lot. I would slap my sisters and brothers on their faces.

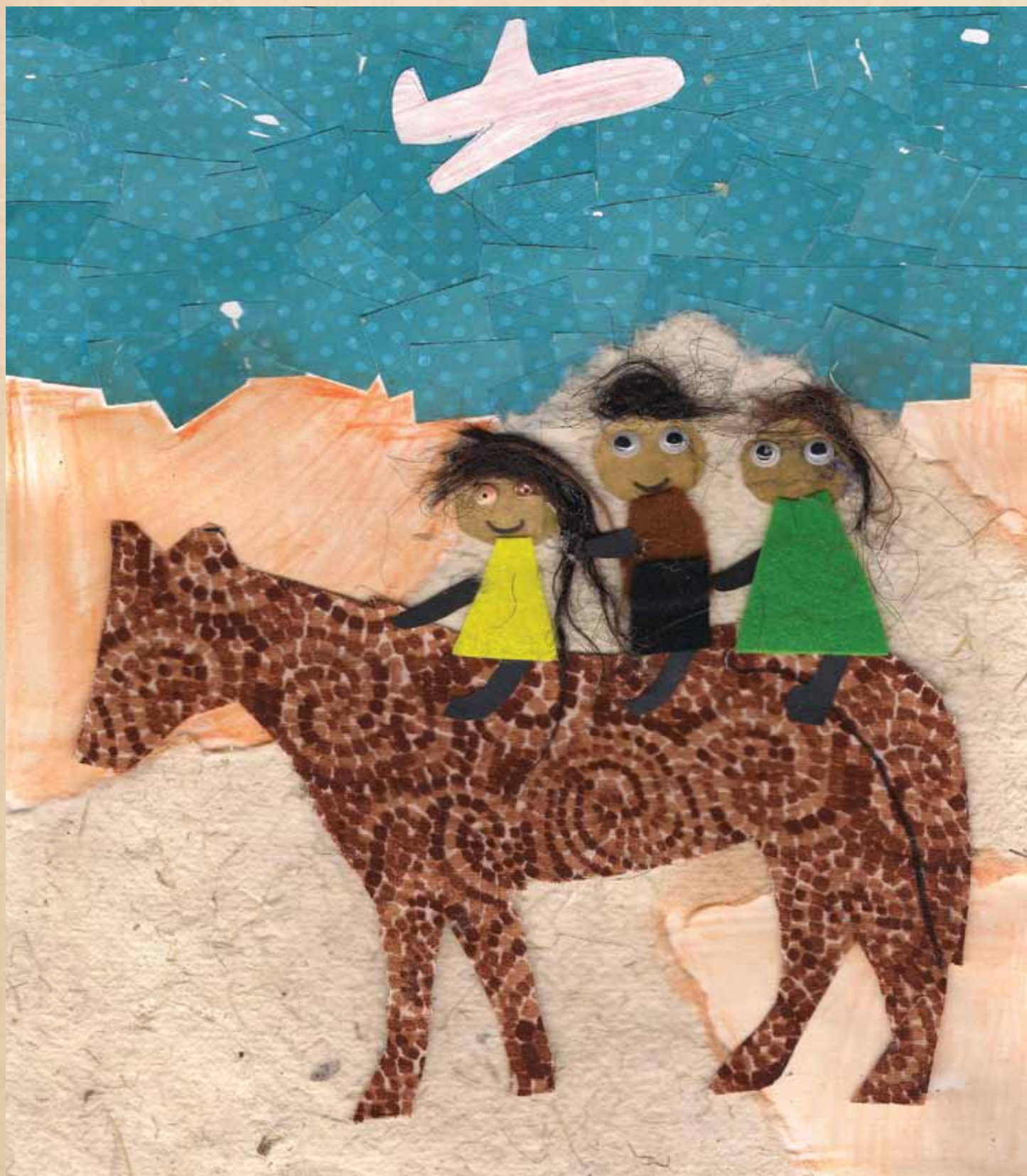
I would even fight with people on the street. Sometimes I felt so angry I would go out of my house and wait for someone to walk past and I would go quickly up to them and slap them. Most of the time people would fight back and I would keep hitting them until they started to cry. When the crying started it would make me feel happy and I would walk away.

I mostly liked to fight girls who were my own age but I would fight boys too. I was not afraid of anyone. Everyone would try to walk a different way because they would say I was a crazy girl and I would fight everyone.

One day my brother came to me with a knife in his hand. He wanted to remove my six lower teeth as is the custom for my people. I did not want this because I thought it would hurt me a lot. I kicked and screamed until my brother walked away. "I hate you" I screamed at him! "Don't come back!"

When I visited the dentist in Australia, she was happy my teeth had not been removed like many other Sudanese children she had seen. She said to me, "Nyawech, thank God you did not let your brother pull those teeth out!"

I said to myself, "Thank God I am not scared of anyone!"



Mum's mobile phone

The story of Nyetap Ruach

My name is Nyetap and I am six years old. I was born in Africa. We came to Australia when I was four years old. A horse took us to Kenya and then we went to the aeroplane.

The aeroplane went up and down a lot. It was not scary. It was funny. We ate lots of food and watched television on the aeroplane. We played some games on the computer screen.

When we arrived in Australia my big cousin came to collect us. We were excited to be in Melbourne. We slept at my cousin's house for a while and then we moved to Traralgon.

We moved to Traralgon because we got a house there. When we met our neighbours, we thought they were nice. Now we are good friends. Our neighbours help us to get ready when we are going somewhere and they help my mum to go to the shops.

When we had not been here very long, my mum lost her mobile phone. Some big girls picked it up and they would not give it back to my mum. The police could not help because the girls ran away from them.

My mum was feeling sad because the phone had important numbers in it, like my cousin's number. My mum had no phone for a while and my dad was in Africa and he could not help her. My mum could not speak much English, so my big sister Nyakim and I had to explain to people what had happened so that my mum could get some help.

When my dad came home, he helped my mum to get a new mobile phone. Her new phone is a grey one. She has got all of the important numbers in her phone again.





Animals

The story of Adier Maluk

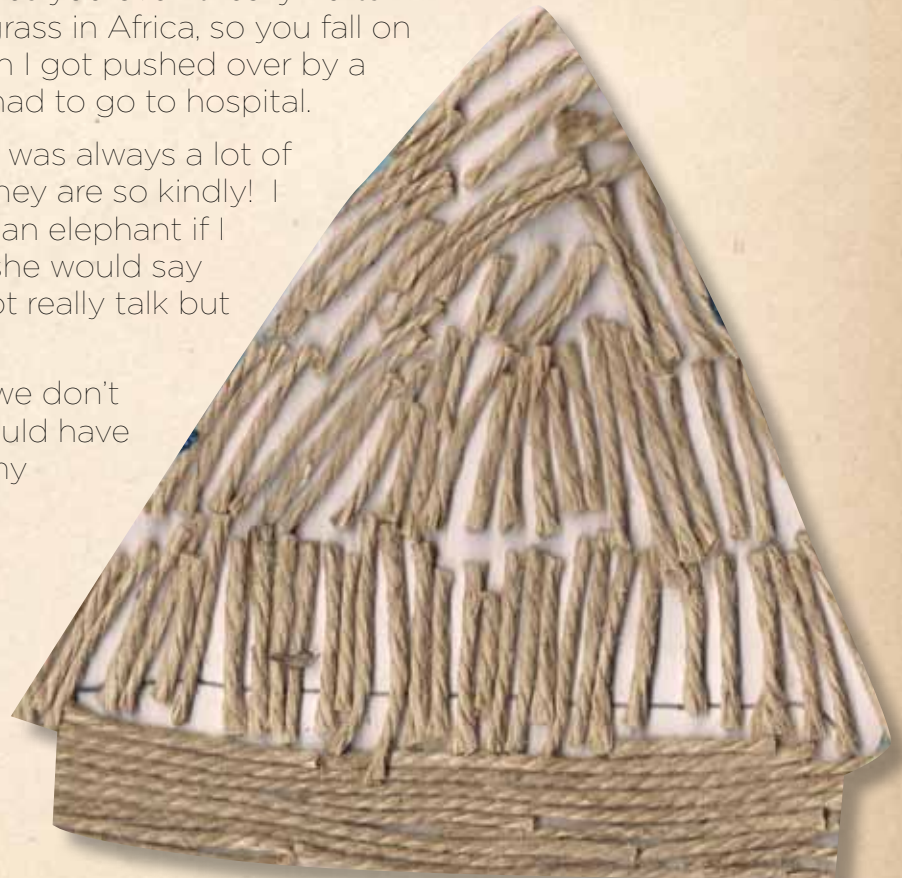
I was born in Kenya in a house made from sticks. Our house was a triangle shape on top and it had a rectangle shape at the bottom. There were a lot of animals where we lived. At our house we had some cows, a horse, some sheep, some chickens and some pigs.

There were a lot of snakes in our village. The snakes would follow people and bite their legs. They would hide in the long grass. Once when I was outside playing I was bitten by a snake. I ran inside and my mum took care of me. After a while, my mum went outside to get some water and the snake came through the grass and bit her too. My mum said, "No one is allowed outside now until the snake has gone away!"

There were giraffes in our village too. Giraffes are not friendly. They like to push people over. If a giraffe pushes you over it really hurts because there is not much grass in Africa, so you fall on the hard ground. Once when I got pushed over by a giraffe I hurt my head and I had to go to hospital.

I like the elephants. There was always a lot of elephants near our home. They are so kindly! I used to imagine I would ask an elephant if I could ride on her back and she would say yes. I know elephants cannot really talk but imagine if they could!

At our house in Australia we don't have any animals. I wish I could have just one kindly elephant at my house!





Abiar's journey from Kenya to Australia

By Abiar Maluk

In Kenya, where I was born, I lived in a village. My family's house was made from sticks and mud. The mud would help to keep us cool because the weather was very warm.

It is beautiful in Kenya but there is a lot of fighting. The fighting became so bad that we did not feel safe. Then, one terrible day, my uncle was killed. He was trying to help my mother because she was holding my sister and I. He was running around to see where it was safe for us to go and he did not make it back to us. My dad had to fight to protect us too.

I felt so sad when I heard that my uncle had died. My mum was crying and I was crying too. We had to bury him. I was just five years old, too young to live with fighting.

After my uncle died, my dad said, "We have to go to Australia". He went to the government and asked if our family could move to Australia. At first the government told us that we would have to wait because many people wanted to move to Australia.

One day the government contacted my dad to say that it was now time for us to go to Australia. I felt happy because I knew there was no fighting in Australia and my dad told me there were koalas there. We came on an aeroplane which took a long, long time. We tasted our first Australian food on the plane. We even slept on the plane. I was sitting next to my mum. She kept saying to me, "We are going to Australia!"

When we arrived in Melbourne, we went to see our cousins. My mum and my aunty were crying about my poor uncle who had died in Kenya. My dad said to them, "You can stop crying now because the fighting is far away. We are safe".





My house

The story of Nyalieb Chiok

When I lived in Africa I lived in a house made from hay and mud. The roof was made from hay and the walls were made from mud. It stayed nice and cool inside.

My mum cooked our food outside on a fire. She would gather some little bits of trees and sticks to make the fire. She would put a pot on the fire and cook African food. While my mum was cooking I would sweep the floor inside the house.

Really it was not a very safe way to cook because when the ladies are cooking, the children are running and playing. The ladies were careful and they would tell the children to stay away but children who are playing can forget. Many times small children would go too close to the fire and get burnt. I will never forget the time my five year old cousin accidentally put her hand in a boiling pot of water. She was burned so badly on her hand and on her tummy.

One day after I finished sweeping the floor, I ran off to play with my friend. We climbed up a tree together. My mum was looking for me but she could not find me. After some time she found us high up in the tree.

She was upset because she was worried that something may have happened to me. She took me back to our house and put me to bed on a piece of carpet on the floor.

That night, while I was sleeping, a scorpion crawled across my bed and bit me on the toe. I woke screaming! The sting of a scorpion is painful. Scorpions bite a lot of people in Africa. Almost everybody in Africa gets bitten by scorpions. The next morning my uncle carried me a long way away through the jungle to the hospital, where the doctor gave me a needle in my toe. After I had the needle, he carried me home again. Still, it was a long time before my toe felt better.



Dangerous water

The story of Nyawech Chiok

I lived in Kakuma Refugee Camp for five years. One time when I was about seven years old, I went to the nearby river with my cousin. Really, it was not a river but that is what we called it. It was just a collection of water that comes every year with the rains. There were a lot of trees in and around the water. The water was very dirty and people would get very sick if they drank it. The adults were always telling us that the water is dangerous and we should not swim there.

On this hot day, my cousin and I jumped into the water. We wanted to swim across to the other side. The water was moving faster than we had thought and we got pushed along quickly.

We were crying and screaming very loudly. I felt like I was going to be taken away from my family. I was certain I was going to die. Everything was moving really fast around us. The water was very deep and we could not touch the ground below us. Many times we were pulled underneath the water. I tried to hold my breath but I was growing very tired.

Eventually two big girls heard our cries. They jumped in the water and swam out to us. Thank goodness they were tall girls and they could reach the ground. One girl grabbed me and one girl grabbed my cousin. They swam out of the water with us.

Those tall girls saved our lives!

When we arrived home, we both got into big trouble. I had not asked for my mum's permission to go to the river because I knew she would never have allowed me to go. My cousin and I were trying to blame each other and we were fighting over it but our mothers became very cross. "Stop it!" they said.

"You are both at fault because you are the same age. No one is bigger than the other. You are both to blame". We never went to the water alone again!!



The little black cat

The story of Nyawech Biliew

One day, in Africa, I found a little black cat near the water. It was tiny and alone, so I scooped it up into my arms and spoke softly to it. Then I carried it to my home.

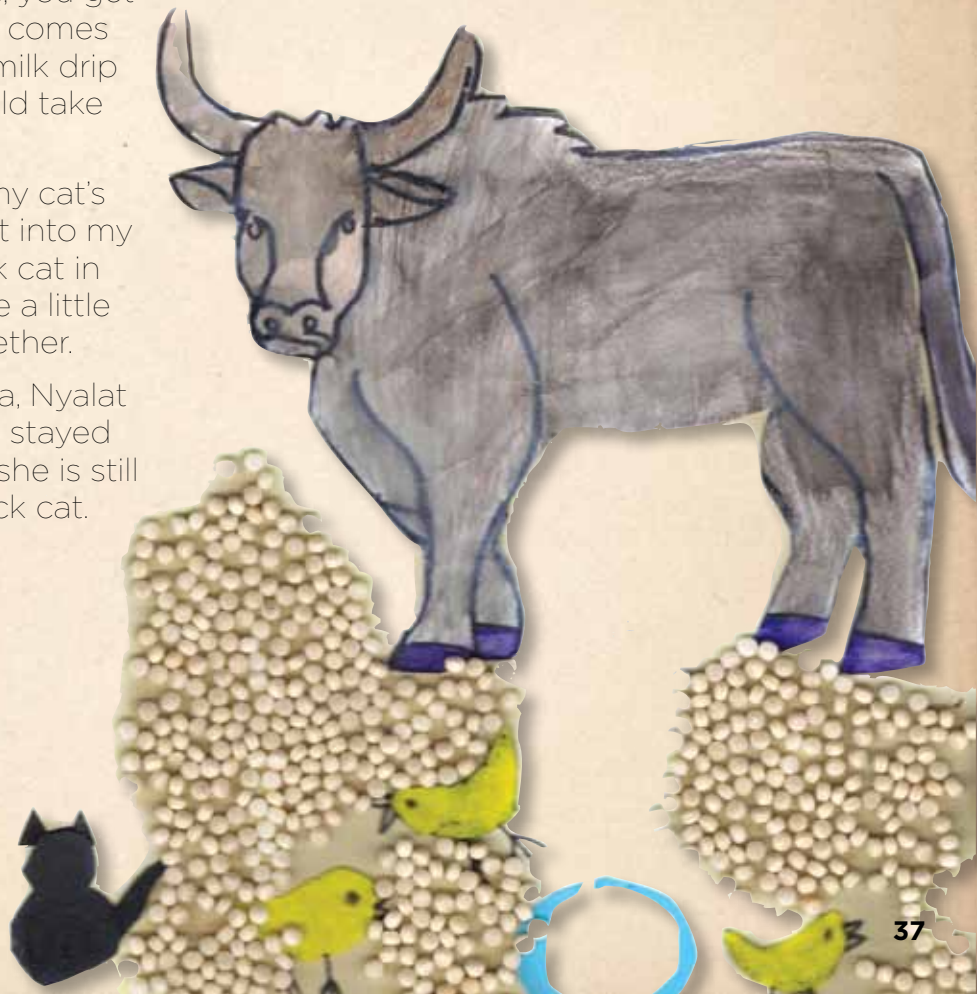
My mum was happy to see the cat. My big sister Nyalat looked at the cat. "Where is this cat from, Nyawech?" she asked me. "I found it near the water", I said. My dad said I could keep it because it did not have a home or anyone to care for it.

Whenever my sister and I got a little bit of food, we shared some with the little black cat. When we collected water, we gave some to the little black cat. Its little tongue tickled when it drank from our hands.

Sometimes, I would go to our cow and get some milk for her too. If you squeeze and pull on the cow's teats, you get lovely white milk. It always comes out warm. I would let the milk drip into a bowl and then I would take it to the cat.

When night came and my cat's tummy was full, I would get into my bed and put the little black cat in beside me. We would have a little cuddle and fall asleep together.

When I came to Australia, Nyalat did not come with us. She stayed with my Grandma. I hope she is still taking care of the little black cat.





My beautiful mum

The story of Nyakaka Ruot

One morning before I went to school, my mother called me to her bed. "I am sick, Nyakaka" she said. "I am going to die. I want you to be strong and look after your sister. You two have only each other. You are a good girl and I have shown you the way to take care of your sister and you know how to work hard". I wanted to cry but my mother told me to be strong.

I went to school that day but my heart was heavy. During the day a small girl from my village came to my school. "Nyakaka", she said, "your mum has died". I continued doing my work. My ears did not want to hear this message and my heart did not want to know it.

I thought if I kept working and if I ignored the girl, then this could not be real. The little girl insisted though. I had to go home with her. I started to run ahead of her. I ran and I ran and I would not stop. I kept telling myself that my mother was not dead. She was just in another country. Maybe she had returned to Nasir.

As I ran harder and faster I could hear people calling my name. Still I ran. Eventually I grew tired and I stopped running. I became aware that the people from my village were chasing me and calling for me to stop. Some ladies grabbed me and tied my legs and hands together with bunches of long leaves.

They talked softly to me as they carried me to my house, where my beautiful mother lay. Now I had seen her, I had to accept that she had passed away. My eyes were seeing it. My ears were hearing it. My heart was feeling it. She was not visiting Nasir.

I remembered all the things she had taught me and I remembered that she had told me to take care of my little sister. So from that day, I was the one to wash the clothes for my sister. I was the one to find food for my sister. I was the one to collect the grass for her to stand on while I tipped the water over her head to shower her.

Now I am the one to care for her like a mother does. When my mother passed away, my big sister in Australia worked hard to bring us to Australia to live with her. My little sister and I live in the house with my big sister and her family. We are all helping each other and taking care of each other.

My beautiful mother visits me in my dreams. Sometimes she brings my Grandma and my Grandpa. I did not know my grandparents when they were alive but I know them now. I think my mum is proud of me because I have done exactly what she asked of me.

Missing my father

The story of Kudamba Abas

When we were leaving Africa to come to Australia to live I felt very scared. I did not want to leave the place I loved; the place where I was born.

I put my clothes on, ready for the big trip. My mum had packed our bags. We went around the houses to say goodbye to everyone. Then some people came to collect us on bikes, to take us to catch the bus. We waited most of the day for the bus to come. While I was waiting I became more and more scared of leaving my family and friends behind.

I could not eat the food my mother had brought along. I was thinking of my friends and feeling glad they were not here with me. I knew that if I was to look into the face of one of my friends I would see my own face reflected and it would look so sad I might cry.

I felt so sad and so scared. I did not know how to speak English or how to write or how to spell. I was also really sad that because of the war I did not know my dad very well. I had seen him only once that I could remember.

I waited so long for the bus and I grew more and more scared. I decided I did not want to leave Africa and I ran away from my mother. I came to a big tree and I knew I was good at climbing, so I started to climb up into the branches.

Soon I saw my mum and some other people from the bus looking for me. They saw me up the tree and called me down. "Kudamba! Come down! The bus is coming!" I looked down and thought, "No I am staying right here. In this tree. In Africa!"



One person started to climb the tree to get me down. I started to go up higher and higher. I went up, up, up until I ran out of tree to climb. The man got me and took me down, down, down.

When we finally got on the bus I felt so sick that I vomited. We travelled for two days and one night until we arrived in Nairobi. Along the way, I looked out the window of the bus. I could see the animals we passed and in my head I was saying, "Goodbye lion, goodbye giraffe, elephant, donkey". I saw some camels but I did not say anything because I am afraid of camels.

After a long time on the bus, I was happy to get off in Nairobi. Here I saw my first upstairs house. I could not believe it when I heard we were staying there until we flew out of the country. I did not want to walk inside the upstairs house because I thought the top part would fall down at any time. I never felt safe when we were inside the house.

The next day we went on another bus to the airport. Then we got onto a big, big orange aeroplane. At first I refused to get on the plane but my mother said, "It's okay son, we are just going to visit your father". The plane was so big and it lifted us into the air. I kept asking my mother, "Where is my dad?" and she would say, "We are nearly there". Soon I could see things out of the window that did not look like my home. I said to myself, "This is not Africa!"

When the plane landed in Melbourne, my mum said, "Ah, we are in Australia now!" I just wanted to cry.

I want to go back. I want to see my dad. I don't know my dad.



From Sudan to Traralgon

The story of Paul Kuol

I was born in New Cush, Sudan, in a camp for the displaced. I lived there with my family in a house made of wood. We had many cousins there. I lived there until I was about four.

When my sister Jina was four years old she was a very good talker. She knew all of our language. Then, one day, she suddenly became deaf. I think the big noises from the explosions and the gunshot took her hearing.

After that, we moved to Kenya. My uncles and cousins helped my dad to build a big house with a fence around it. They used lots of sticks and wood. Our house had a couple of rooms in it and it was very comfortable. My mum would cook on a fire outside and we would eat outside too.

We went to school in Kenya. The classrooms were very crowded. We had to be at school by 7 o'clock in the morning and we went home at about 1 o'clock. If you arrived at school late, the principal would whip you. One of our neighbours had a huge dog that would chase us home from school. I don't know what would happen if he caught us because we always ran too fast! We went to church in Kenya too. That is where the priest gave me the name Paul.

It was a very dangerous place to live. One time my whole family was almost killed. A bad tribe of people came through our village. Their faces were painted and they were carrying weapons. That is why we moved away.

My uncle helped my family to get papers so that we could come to Australia. We had to spend two days in Nairobi before we were able to get on the aeroplane. Now my uncle lives in our big house with the fence.

Getting on the aeroplane was exciting. I saw t.v. for the very first time on the plane. I had no idea what it was. I couldn't even get the remote control out of the holder without some help! When I finally



turned the t.v. on, I thought it was great! I watched so many movies, like The Simpsons and lots of cartoons.



It took two days to fly to Australia. It didn't seem that long because I was just enjoying the t.v. and the people on the plane brought us food and drinks. When we arrived in Melbourne, our cousins took us to their house in Springvale. We stayed there for a few months, until we got a house of our own. We started to go to the Language Centre to learn how to speak English.

It was not hard for me to learn another language. It has been hard for Jina to learn English because she cannot hear. She is learning slowly though, because she is trying very hard.

We moved to Traralgon because the house we were living in was not very good. It took so long to get to Traralgon on the train. I nearly vomited. I tried to sleep so I would not be sick. I thought Traralgon seemed like a quiet place. We did not know the way to our house, so my cousins came along to help us find it. I thought our house was big but I was too tired and sick from the train trip to bother about it too much. Soon, I started to go to school. I like my school because it is close and I can ride my bike there. The people are nice and my teacher is especially nice.

I am in a Learning Assistance Program where a volunteer comes to the school to work with you. I get to work with Barrie. We play football and basketball. Sometimes he takes me to the skate park. We usually have a milk shake and occasionally Barrie and his wife Judy take Zach and I to their house for dinner. That is the best thing about school. I like Barrie a lot.





I remember

The story of Zach Deng

I was born in a camp for the displaced in New Cush, Sudan. I would like to tell you about some of the things I remember about my home.

I remember when my family had a lot of animals. Mostly, we had a lot of chickens and ducks. They all liked to come into our house. My mum would spend a great deal of time cleaning the floor and making our house look nice and clean. Then, the animals, who had been outside stepping around in the mud, would come inside. They would mess up my mum's floor. My mum would throw her hands in the air. "Ahhh!" she would say.

I remember one of our neighbours had a dog. The dog was always hungry. Our neighbour would say to his dog, "You go back there and sit down and wait for a minute". The dog was so well trained, he would go back and sit and wait. Then our neighbour would give him some food.

I thought it was good when we went to Kenya to live. One day in Kenya, we found a box with a little bit of money in it. We were very excited. We took it to the shop and bought some icy poles.

When we were in Kenya, I missed our home and our friends. Sometimes my dad would come and stay with us but sometimes he was away working. When he was away, I missed him as well.

We came to Australia on an aeroplane. When we arrived in Melbourne, my uncle came and picked us up. We lived with him for a while and then we got our own house in Keysborough.

Soon after, the government gave us a house to rent in Traralgon. Traralgon is a good place. The best part about living here is going to school. I want to finish my primary years at this school because I feel happy and joyful here!

I am very happy to be in Australia but...I still remember.



Drowning

The story of Achol Kuot

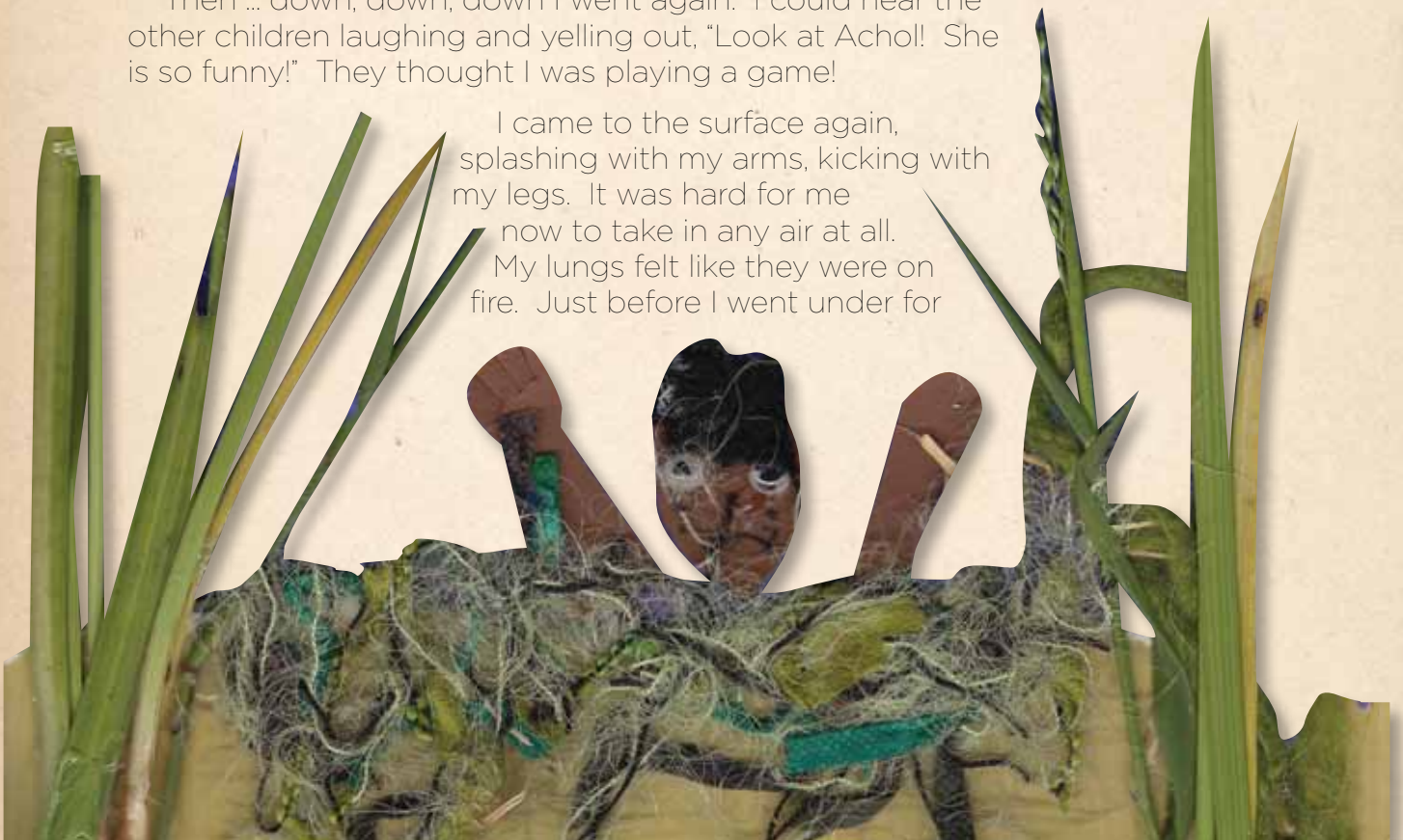
One day when I was a small girl of ten, I went swimming in the River Nile. I took with me a big plastic water container. It was empty so it would float. There were lots and lots of children in the water and we were all laughing and splashing.

I held on to my container and kicked my legs so I could move along quickly. When I reached an area where there were lots of children, I let go of my container. If there is a lot of splashing and noise, the crocodiles will stay away.

To my surprise, the water was well over my head. I started to go under the water. I was kicking and splashing beneath the surface of the water but I could not find my way up to get some air. I thrashed harder and harder and eventually my head broke through the surface and I took a big breath of air.

Then ... down, down, down I went again. I could hear the other children laughing and yelling out, "Look at Achol! She is so funny!" They thought I was playing a game!

I came to the surface again, splashing with my arms, kicking with my legs. It was hard for me now to take in any air at all. My lungs felt like they were on fire. Just before I went under for





the third time, I looked around desperately for something I could use to save my life.

With all my splashing and thrashing I had managed to push myself close to the home of a crocodile. Crocodiles make a big hole in the river where they can hide, waiting for fish or animals or people to pass by. They cover the opening of the hole by pulling the long grasses in the water and on the river bank over the hole so you do not know where they are.

Hungry crocodiles will eat anything that passes by if they are hungry. They will take you in their mouth and roll you over and over until you have drowned. Then they will take you into their home and eat you.

I thought I was nearly dead anyway and so when I saw the crocodile's home I said to myself, "Let the crocodile eat me". I started to grasp at the long grasses covering the hole. No crocodile. I pulled and pulled but my strength was gone.

I waited for a crocodile to come out and eat me. I was ready to die. Still no crocodile. I pulled on the grasses again and again and each time I was able to get a bit further up the bank. Eventually I found myself on the banks of the River Nile.

I lay on my back coughing, vomiting and crying. My stomach was big like a pregnant woman. My lungs felt big and were burning and throbbing. My heart was going so fast and I could feel its beat all through my body. My ears were throbbing, burning and my head was hurting badly, like it would burst. Every part of me was filled with water.

The other children crowded around me, looking, crying, worrying. We would all be in trouble. They all helped me to stand up and walk home. On the way I was saying, "Don't tell my mother. She will beat me!"

When I got home I went quickly to my bed. I felt so heavy, every part of me still filled with water. I curled up in my bed and I did not get out for five days. My stomach, my head, my ears, my heart and my lungs hurt for many more days than this.

No one told my mother for a long time because all the children were afraid they would get in trouble. Then one day when I was better, one of the other mothers came to my mother. "Your daughter almost drowned" she said. "That is why she has been so sick!" My mother asked me if this was true. I nodded my head. She did not beat me or yell at me. She took me in her arms and cried. She said, "My children are only two. If I lose one of them, I think maybe I will die too".

Life

The story of Nyaduoth Ruot

When I think back a long way I can remember when I used to live in a village in South Sudan, deep in the jungle. I did not have any clothes to wear. Sometimes when there was no food, my mum would pick the long grass and we would eat that. I did not have any toys to play with. I liked to build small houses with my friends. We would make them using stones and rocks and we would crawl inside them.

I loved it when the rains came because I knew that when they stopped the hard ground would turn to soft clay. Using our fingers we would scrape the soft clay from the top of the hard earth and we would make special things. We would roll the clay and shape it with our fingers to make teddy bears and little babies to love.

This life was nice. Sometimes bad things happened and people died but I was a happy girl with my mum and my people, playing and making special things after the rains. Everything changed the day I noticed that my mum was very sick. I could see that she did not want to get out of bed anymore. I could see she was no longer moving in the bed. The people in our village were talking and fighting. Someone was saying, "She needs to go to the hospital". Other people were saying, "No, don't take her to the hospital". People were saying, "Maybe it is already too late".

Then some people helped my mum to walk with me down to the river. They were telling me that I would have to take my mum to hospital in a boat. My mum could not walk so a person walked on each side of her, carrying her. When we got to the river I saw the boat, carved from a tree. They put my mum inside the boat and then they lifted me in. They pushed the boat hard into the water and they walked away from the river.

The boat went slowly along in the water. My mum was just lying in the bottom of the boat and I was thinking, "I am too little to take my mum to the hospital. What will I do when we get to the other side of the river? How can I carry my mum to the hospital?" I think I was five years old.

Suddenly I saw there was water in the boat. My mum was laying in the water. I tried to fill my hands with the water and put it back into the river but it was coming too quickly. The boat filled up with water and got swallowed up by the river! I was so scared. I did not know how to swim. My mum did not know how to swim and even if she did, she was too sick. It was hard for her to even open her eyes.

I was splashing in the water and holding on to my mum. The water would swallow me and my mum, like the boat and then we would come to the top again and get some air. Then we would go down again. I thought that my mum and I would die in

the river with the little boat.

Two men were near the river and they saw my mum and I splashing in the water, trying to save ourselves. They broke some branches from a nearby tree and put it into the water. At the same time a man came along in a boat. The three men pushed the branches towards us and my mum and I took hold of one each and they pulled us into the boat. I think God helped us.



A lot of people from my village came running. They took me home. Someone else went with my mum to the hospital. Some time later a little girl came running to me. "Nyaduoth, your mum has died", she said. I ran to look for her because I could not believe it. I ran all the way to the hospital. "Go away" they told me at the hospital. "It is not good for you to see your mum". I walked back to my village and the jungle. I did not cry. I did not really understand that my mum was never coming back.

After my mum died, one of the women from the village took my sister and I on a long walk to Gambella, Ethiopia. The walk took us four days. We took no food and no water with us. We walked through the day and we walked through the night. Now when the rains came, I did not make teddy bears and little babies. We opened our mouths wide and tipped our heads back to try to catch the rain in our mouths. Even when the rains were big, it was hard to catch it in your mouth.

When we arrived in Gambella, I became very sick. I fell down on the ground. The woman took off her dress and put it over me. She told my sister to stay with me and she ran quickly. I could hear her calling for help. "Please ... give me water for this little one because she has had nothing to eat or drink for four days!"

Soon she came back with some water in a cup. She gave the cup to me, telling me we would all have some of the water but I drank all the water. I wanted to save some for the woman and my sister because I knew they had not had anything for four days either but I could not stop! The woman took the cup again and asked for more water for my sister and herself. I will never forget the long walk from my village to Gambella after my mum died.

Working and playing in the garden

The story of Erjok Wut

One day when I was six years old I was helping my mum to work in the garden around our house. I loved spending time in the garden. It was beautiful and green and we grew lots of different food. We both used a scythe to cut the grass to keep it low and to cut the growing vegetables. One cheeky cow kept coming into the garden to try to eat the growing nuts. I had to keep waving my arms at the cow, telling him, "Go away cow! These nuts are not for you! None of this food is for cows!"

On this day my good friend Chol came along to play with me. Together we built a little house, using some branches and some of the cut grasses. We broke four thin branches from the trees around us and we sharpened one end of each stick so we could push the sticks into the ground. These were the four corners of our small house.

We wrapped the long grasses around the thin branches to make the walls.

We worked for a long time to make our house good and strong. I felt quite tired when our house was finished, so I decided to make a small area inside where I could have a little sleep. I piled the grasses high in one corner, creating a little alcove where I could rest. I climbed inside and curled up in a little ball under the warm sun. I listened to the sounds around me. Nice sounds. People chattering. My mum was still cutting the grass and I could hear the swoosh swoosh sounds the scythe made as it cut through the grass. I hoped the





cow would stay away from the food.

Then I heard some more sounds that made me feel scared. I heard fast footsteps very close to me. I turned my head to look. Nothing there. I felt like someone was near me. I turned to look a second time. No one there. I thought to myself, "something does not feel right. I am not sleeping anymore". I picked up a little toy car and started to play with it inside my little house.

When I moved, a big man wearing a black shirt turned quickly and pointed a gun at me. He reached out to grab me but I started to run. I knew he would kill me if I did not get out of there fast. I wanted to scream, to tell my mum and the other people to run, to get away, that there is a bad man with a gun but no words would come out of my mouth. I ran from my little house into the garden.

The man ran out of my little house too. He was running with his gun. As he came out of my little house he started to move his gun quickly back and forth, back and forth. I could hear the sounds his gun was making, "tatatatatatatatat" as he ran around the garden.

People started falling to the ground dead. I kept running but I did not know where I was going. My uncle came running towards me. He was carrying one of the scythes we used in the garden. He snatched me up quickly in one strong arm and ran with me. He took me to where my mum and sister and a lot of children were. After this day I no longer played out in the garden with my friend. I no longer worked in the garden with my mother. I no longer chased the cows away from the nuts.

...and lastly

The story of the Bor Orphanage & Community education Project

The Bor Orphanage & Community Education Project Inc. was formed following the gaining of Independence for South Sudan on July 9, 2011. It is our mission to build a home and school for children orphaned by the war in South Sudan. These children are recovering from trauma, many having witnessed the deaths of their parents and other loved ones.

Our founders Abraham Maluk & Abraham Malual are former Lost Boys of Sudan and child soldiers with a passion to give back to the community from which they came. Now proud Australian citizens, with a wealth of knowledge and newly gained education, the men believe they have an onus to help children such as themselves.

The men were disheartened following a return to their home village of Bor, South Sudan, after 26 years in exile, to find many orphaned children building their own classroom from mud and grass and the older children, trying to teach the younger, using sticks in the hard earth to write. Each time the rains came, the building would wash away and the children would rebuild. Daily, more and more orphans returned home, hoping to create new lives. With no one to take care of them, they cared for themselves and each other.

Before returning to Australia, the men had liaised with the newly formed government and secured a parcel of land to build an orphanage/school for these small victims of war. They returned home to Australia with a dream to build a construction that would home orphans and educate all of the children in the surrounding district. Recognising that peace for the children could continue to be threatened if old tribal practises were to continue, the men further proposed that the construction would welcome children from all tribes.

The committee of BOCEP is currently working hard to raise the funds needed to build a sustainable building fitted out for effective learning. We believe that education is the key to breaking the poverty cycle and recovering from the severe effects of war. It is only through the support of people such as yourself, who value human rights and education for all children that we will realise our goal, to build an orphanage/school in Bor, South Sudan.

By purchasing this book, you are contributing in a very real way to assisting child victims of war to recover from trauma and build a new and valuable way of life.

Yours In Peace,

Committee of BOCEP
susansleswick@hotmail.com
0416985165





We are enormously proud of the children who contributed to the making of this book. Telling their story was only the beginning. Thereafter followed a flurry of editing, illustrating and sharing, of the handmade books in schools and in the community. The demand for the children's books on loan has grown so much that we were encouraged to seek a publisher. And so, the children got busy again. A two day 'Artist's Workshop', followed up by several lunchtime workshops, resulted in the beautiful artwork you see in the book.

All proceeds from the sale of this book go to the 'Bor Orphanage & Community Education Project Inc' to support young victims of the decades long war in South Sudan.

WePUBLISH

Children as
Authors &
Illustrators

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