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**Life in Khartoum: Probing Forced Migration  
and Cultural Change Among War-Displaced  
Southern Sudanese Women**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This report is based on ethnographic data that I gathered in 2001-2003 to document the adjustment experiences of Southern Sudanese displaced women in one of the major shantytowns in the capital city, Khartoum. These women represent the majority of the 1.8 million internally displaced persons (henceforth IDPs) who arrived in Greater Khartoum after the reactivation of the civil war in 1983, and of whom 260,000 were resettled in government-designated camps (UN 2000). The objective of this project was to examine the factors influencing the recent adoption of the practice of female circumcision (FC) by a group of these war-displaced women after their arrival in the camps. Before these women were forced to flee, FC was unheard of in their home communities in Southern Sudan. However, the practice is prevalent in Northern Sudan; 91 percent of the population adheres to it (SDH 1995). Using qualitative ethnographic methods, I examined the prevalence of the practice among the displaced, the extent to which Southern women may have experienced coercion, and whether these women began to accept various Northern justifications for the practice such as restoring virginity and sexual integrity. The views of those who did not adopt the practice are also incorporated for further comparisons. An analysis of the findings demonstrated a strong link between war-displacement and the adoption of FC. In addition to expanding the anthropological and demographic literature on the practice of female circumcision, and that on displacement, this study explored the phenomenon of cultural responses in times of human trauma and suffering. In this respect, the study addressed new areas of research by exploring the social world of IDPs in host communities and the incidence of cultural change in the context of social fragmentation and political violence. In writing this report, I hope to provide a new way of explaining cultural responses during times of pervasive violence and to look at the attempts of a displaced population to gain security and a sense of belonging after experiencing violence. This study reveals that most of the practices that were adopted by Southern women were part of a creative process of adjusting to a new environment and of an attempt by a forced migrant population to create familiarity and interpersonal links in a harsh urban environment. These findings are firmly located within the wider political context of human responses to state-sanctioned violence. For this reason, the study located these cultural responses within the broader milieu of economic, social and cultural change and coping mechanisms.

# Life in Khartoum: Probing Forced Migration and Cultural Change Among War-Displaced Southern Sudanese Women<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

When a group of Southern Sudanese women arrived in Khartoum's camps and shantytowns, where the majority of displaced people live, they were confronted with an overabundance of gendered rituals they knew little about before the longest-running civil war drove them North from their homes. The women in their host communities, for example, bathed in smoke from burning *sandal* and *talih* wood to fumigate and soften their bodies. Ritualized genital surgeries known as female circumcision, as well as other less extreme types of body modification and adornment were also common. Some of the displaced women began to adopt these practices. In doing so, they started to subscribe to new forms of womanhood and feminine identity that can be viewed as "the outcome of complex social processes which embed the person in a series of social contexts" (Preston 1997: 53).

By unraveling the subtleties of the wide-ranging experiences of Southern Sudanese, war-displaced women who live in one of the largest shantytowns in Khartoum, Izzbba, this study explores the creative shaping of ideas about self and society in times of violence, dominance, and transgression. Although inter-community violence has played a role in dislodging these women from their homes, they were and are among the most affected by the war—a conflict between the government and the forces of the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) that has been on going since 1983. This war has been the

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primary cause of widespread human rights abuses in the Southern region. It has not only imperiled individual and collective security which has been acknowledged in international conventions as a basic inalienable right, but also has infringed upon cultural rights deemed fundamental more than five decades ago by the United Nations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

How have Southern Sudanese women acted in response to the challenges of war, dislocation, and resettlement? They have done so in ways that are exceptionally complex and reflective of the worth of networks, memory, and location that P.W. Preston (1997) sees as crucial to understanding political and cultural identities. Their ideas about self, gender, and community are constantly being renegotiated, in part because of the extended period of time they have lived in Khartoum—some as far back as 1983. Contact with Arab Muslim populations and a mix of varied ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities have also had an impact, as have new communities, networks of associations, exchanges, and mutual attachments. The corresponding transformations in the realm of subjectivity cannot be isolated from “given contexts, assignments of local significances, and specific effectivities” (See Faris 1989:15). In the words of Letisia Karasit, who moved to Khartoum in 1996, “I interact with my Northern neighbors and have learned about *henna*, *dukhan*, *dilka*, among other customs. I am prepared to embrace these customs.”

It is important to keep in mind that these interactions, which are a critical force behind identity formation, must be situated within particular histories. Izzbba narratives of change, therefore, can be found when looking more broadly at the ways in which war, as an act of violence, has limited women’s access to indigenous cultural activities by subverting the foundations of community life and affective networks at home. The underlying processes that prompted change among displaced women will therefore be approached by a detailed assessment of cultural bereavement or loss. Maurice Eisenbruch (1991) discussed this phenomenon in his analysis of South Asian refugees in New Zealand that interrogated and transcended the “biologism” of post-traumatic stress disorder that typifies research paradigms on the mental life of refugee populations. Similarly, the effect of forced migration on selfhood and identity, which has been poignantly discussed in the works of Abdel Salam and De Waal 2001; Abdel Magid 2001; Cohen and Deng, 1998; Hackett 1996; Moruawska 2000; and others, has also proven useful to this study. The implications of migration for the formation of one’s identity—particularly gender identity—is crucial, as displaced women begin to see *change* as an innovative way to create “permanence in transience,” or what Aihwa Ong (quoting James Clifford) describes as “dwelling in traveling.” As I will show in this study, prolonged residence in shantytowns and camps and the sheer reality of Sudan’s civil war being the longest in history, generate new, symbolic meanings of space that in turn create affective relationships between people of interdependence and sustenance.

## **2. FRAMINGS**

In an effort to establish a larger whole, this study is positioned within a number of interrelated frames and contexts that refer to “the environments, which an individual inhabits before, during, and after situations and interactions with others” (Rappaport and Overing 2000:332). In order to form new social relations with their hosts, the majority of displaced women strive to “compose a life” (to borrow Mary Catherine Bateson’s phrase) by improvising and adjusting. Given the shakiness of many of these communities, (since the hosts themselves were also displaced in the early 1980s), there is no attempt to homogenize either hosts or newcomers. Descriptions by both groups of the volatility of these communities are indistinguishable from what Greenhouse, Mertz, and Warren call “ethnography in unstable places.” However, despite this instability, the experiences of women in Izzbba as they try to find their inner rhythm and equilibrium are compelling examples of human tenacity and resilience.

Perhaps most important to our understanding of shifting lives in the shantytown is bereavement. I use bereavement as an underlying principle that shapes the micro-economy of cultural exchange in Izzbba community. From a feminist ethnographic perspective, I try to explain the ways in which women who were forced to migrate strategically create themselves in their new locations.

### **A. The Larger Picture: Sudan’s Civil War**

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights declared that, “In those states in which ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities should not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language” (UNESCO). Sudan’s civil war contradicts every feature set forth in the Covenant, working against the rights of Southerners in two specific ways.

First, it violates the cultural rights of indigenous people by undermining the functioning of their communities to live in security critical to human welfare. As Boutros Boutros-Ghali brilliantly argued, “By the right of an individual to culture, it is to be understood that every man (or woman) has the right to access to knowledge, to the arts and literatures of all peoples, to take part in scientific advancement and to enjoy its benefits, to make his (or her) contribution towards the enrichment of cultural life” (UNESCO 1970:73).

The link between cultural rights and human rights was strengthened through the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, although the Covenant does not attempt to define cultural rights per se. The Covenant’s preamble recognizes that the “ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights.” Other international agreements and documents, including the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; UNESCO’s Draft Declaration of Cultural Rights; the 1966 Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation; and the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of

Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities, also bolster the legal understanding and conceptualization of cultural rights *as* human rights. Notably, these documents focus on “cultural rights” in terms of arts and literature, language rights, religious freedoms, and self-determination<sup>3</sup>.

Second, war leads to substantial population displacement, forcing indigenous people to locations where they become subjected to laws and regulations that ignore their rights to culture and self-determination and dismiss the legitimacy and soundness of their modes of knowing. The Qanoon El-Nizzam El-Amm, or Public Order Law, in Khartoum, for instance, has been devastating to Sudanese women, restricting their mobility and participation in some labor force occupations and forcing the *hijab*, or Islamic dress, on them.

Regarding the problem of security as a prerequisite for human society, the consequences of the war have been immeasurable. In a report titled, “Follow the Women and the Cows,” Jeff Drmutra (2000) of the U.S. Committee on Refugees stated that the death toll of Southern Sudanese is larger than the combined fatalities suffered in recent wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Somalia, and Algeria. Since the civil war started, an estimated 1.9 million Southerners have died, 2.5 million are famine afflicted, and 350,000 crossed the borders to neighboring countries. This war continues to expose the South to widespread instability, forced capture and slavery, destruction of physical and natural environment, disturbance of cultural life and social cohesiveness, death, and displacement (Malwal 1993, Deng and Chen 1998, Bales 1999, Jok 2001). Approximately 4 million people have been forced to flee their homes in the Southern provinces of Equatoria, Bahr Elghazal, and Upper Nile. Joice Yatta, a Christian Fujulu from Yei, explained what war displacement has meant to her: “I arrived from Juba in 1993. I have very fond memories of pre-war days and before I was forced to move. I am very sad and stressed about the thoughts of what happened to my family back home and in Khartoum. I pray that peace will come back so that we can return to our land and enjoy life in the same way as we did before war displacement.”

Yatta’s story resonates with the stories of millions of others and speaks powerfully to how war has undermined the rights of Sudan’s indigenous peoples to live peacefully in their home villages. Largely cast in religious terms, the conflict has embodied the ideals

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO's 1970 publication, *Cultural rights as human Rights*, offers an international perspective on the relationship between cultural rights and human rights, albeit heavily influenced by the politics of the Cold War and decolonization. This book emphasizes a reciprocal relationship between cultural rights and human rights: cultural rights are necessary to secure other human rights, and the promotion of human rights overall is essential to ensuring respect for cultural rights. Members of the UNESCO Secretariat write, "Culture is central to man and without it no rights are possible since it is the matrix from which all else must spring." (UNESCO 1970:10). In *Cultural Riights as Human Rights*, the development of cultural rights is placed in a historical context as following on the international community's preoccupation with political rights and then with economic rights. The development of the notion of cultural rights as human rights is rooted in processes of industrialization, decolonization, and the spread of mass media (UNESCO 1970:9-10). Post 1948, the contributors argue, the general discussion of cultural rights is informed by a picture of culture as "something to which everyone has a right, both insofar as one participates in a culture, and insofar as one helps to create a culture." (UNESCO 1970:11).

of Arabization and Islamization of the Sudanese populations, irrespective of their indigenous affiliations. In this regard, the war exemplifies an uncompromising effort by the country to manufacture one national identity against the wishes of ethnic and religious minorities. As Michael Ignatieff argues, nationalism can be seen as “the claim that while men and women have many identities, it is the notion that provides them with their primary form of belonging” (1994:5). According to Ali Mazrui, Arabization and Islamization has been transforming North Africans’ identities since the 17th century (1986:33). The effort to create one national identity, however, is recent. It was introduced in the Sudanese political scene by former President Jaffar Mohamed Nimeri and strictly enforced by Omer El-Bashir, another military commander, who came to power in 1989.

This forced assimilation process, deeply embedded in the forging of a monolithic Sudanese national identity, did not go unchallenged. “Faced with the assimilative excesses of the ruling classes in the North,” writes Mansour Khalid, “the South has experimented with the entire spectrum of resistance, from a political crusade to be recognized as having their own authenticity and rights as citizens of the Sudan, to carrying arms” (2003:308)<sup>2</sup>. Some observers have suggested that colonial polices planted the seeds of disunion in the Sudan, a country with remarkable ethnic diversity, pitting North against South, Muslims against Christians, and Arab against Africans. In the process, the policies enhanced the development and security of one group at the expense of another (Beshir 1965, Ruiz 1997). Colonial history, memories of the slave trade, unequal development, and other abuses of political, economic, and cultural rights undermined the trust upon which a peaceful environment could have been founded. To concentrate on the culpability of history, though important, not only oversimplifies the agency of violators who infringe upon conventions and rules, but also absolves them from their responsibility in shaping policies that made Sudan’s civil war the longest in world history. Colonial history notwithstanding, since the country attained its independence from Britain in 1956, millions of Southern Sudanese have been left dead or displaced as competing masculinities continue to undercut human security and welfare.

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<sup>4</sup> Northerners, too, are not immune to human rights abuses as Bona Malwal highlights in his analysis of the sources of Conflict in the Sudan:

It might be easy for a Southerner to say we should get what we can for ourselves from whoever is in power in Khartoum, irrespective of what the regime does to its own people. But whatever the status of the relationship between Southern Sudan and Northern Sudan, it does seem both wise and prudent for the leadership of Southern Sudan to ensure that for itself and its neighbors, democracy is the principle on which state power will be exercised in the name of the people. The South cannot be oblivious to matters of human rights, freedom and the rule of law for the people of Northern Sudan, having itself suffered so much at the hands of the powers that be in Khartoum from the lack of these basic rights and freedoms (1993:3).



### 3. STUDY METHODS

#### A. Feminist Ethnography of Izzbba

I arrived at Izzbba, which lies some 30 miles from the center of Khartoum, in the summer of 2001 to explore the ways in which Southern women manage as they find themselves caught in “a plurality of life-worlds” (Rapport and Overing 2000:160). I was particularly interested in how prolonged residence in squatter settlements influenced the pragmatism women use when confronted with the inevitability of change. I wondered, for instance, how they approached the intersection of religion and gender when the very language used to depict the war was cast in the religious terms “Jihad,” or holy war. Understanding the impact of forced migration on gender and gendered rituals is the main focus of this study, especially as it relates to the ways in which forced migrants from ethnically, linguistically, and religiously different communities negotiate not only strategies for survival, but also the question of “Who are we becoming?” (Abusharaf 2003).

Perhaps the biggest concern that plagues women dealing with the civil war in the Sudan, as well as other ethnoreligious antagonisms around the world, is the gruelling abuse they face as sexed bodies. Catherine MacKinnon sees the underlying principle behind this glaring lapse as follows:

What is done to women is either too specific to women to be seen as human or too generic to human beings to be seen as specific to women. Atrocities committed against women are either too human to fit the notion of female or too female to fit the notion of human. “Human” and “female” are mutually exclusive by definition; you cannot be a woman and a human being at the same time (1998:44).

Although displacement is harrowing for everyone involved, it is far worse for women and girls. They are the most likely victims of sexual violence and torture (Agger 1992; Eastmond 1993; Indra 1998; Habib 1995; Hackett 1996) before, during, and after their flight and arrival in new communities. And they are left to deal with the significant physical and psychological effects (UNHCR 1995). Christina Dudu (1999), a Southern displaced woman living in Khartoum, outlined the gendered forms of exploitation that accompanied the mass flight of women and girls but were absent at home in the South before the renewal of the civil war, including sexual abuse, prostitution, and harassment. In light of these conditions, a feminist ethnography seems fitting for a textured, multi-layered analysis of women’s experiences both as women facing the challenges of crafting new selves, and as displaced persons dealing with formidable obstacles in a new venue. Feminist ethnography helps to promote an understanding of “how gender has become an ordering category of anthropological analysis” (see Visweswaran 1997:592), and for this reason, it should not be viewed as a reductive way of reporting women’s problems. Indeed, since “womanhood is a partial identity” (See Abu Lughod 1990:25), a “privileged relationship between a feminist ethnographer and the oppressed people she may study is not automatically rooted in her womanhood” (Harrison 1997:89). Using feminist ethnography is in no way exclusive from recognizing that women are raced, classed, and

gendered subjects. According to Abu Lughod, “Feminism and ethnography are practices that could shake up the paradigm of anthropology itself by showing that we are always part of what we study and we always stand in definite relations to it” (1990:25-26). In this respect, differences in women’s experiences can be viewed as assets rather than liabilities. As Miriam Cooke points out in her study of the war in Lebanon,

In this world of shifting standards, I borrow meaning from these women. I build my story on foundations they have lain. My hope for myself and for all embarked on this venture, this cultural crossing, is that a recognition of our own strangeness will not serve to silence, but will rather allow for the proliferation of multiple stories each of which will contribute to the flourishing of shared understandings based on mutual respect. (1996:12).

In the Sudan, the urgency of reporting women’s stories is necessitated by the fact that the women themselves long to talk. Beverly Bell points out that in a similar situation, Haitian women wanted to recount painful stories “both for catharsis from the horror and for relief from a lengthy enforced silence” (2001:xi). The experiences of war-displaced women in Izzbba bear striking resemblance to the scenario that Bell articulated. A compelling analysis of women’s concerns should, therefore, emanate from both “an anthropologically minded feminism” (See Thomas 2000) and a feminist-minded anthropology—practices in which our intellectual and political agenda do not necessarily collide, but instead go hand in hand (See also Bourgeois 1997).

In this study, I used a combination of ethnographic techniques, such as a preliminary ethno-survey, participant’s observation, interviews, life-history collection, and research of archival sources. For authoritative sources on how forced migrant women view themselves, their lives as a displaced people, and their place in an ever-changing and conflict-ridden universe, I also used their testimonials and biographies. Ethnographic fieldwork for this project was carried out in Khartoum from 2001-2003. In collaboration with Mutawinat Group, a Sudanese NGO with extensive expertise and programs dealing with IDPs, exploratory work was undertaken in Dar El-Salam and Izzbba Aradi. I also collaborated with Kimu Charitable Society and Amal Group, another Sudanese NGO working in camps and shantytowns in Khartoum. They facilitated my entry into the Dar El-Salam community. Finally, the Sudanese National Committee organized several visits to El-Bashir and Gabarona camps. Protection of displaced women’s rights to privacy was of prime importance. Given the sensitivity of their situation in Khartoum, we avoided questions and approaches deemed offensive or intrusive to them.

These visits were important avenues for participant observation and for interviewing key informants including residents, chiefs, priests, camp authorities, health personnel, and social workers. While valuable insights were gleaned from these diverse locations, I decided to focus on Izzbba as the main area of study. This decision was prompted by two considerations:

- (1) Unlike the camps for IDPs, Izzbba has an impressive mix of ethnic groups. This diversity plays an important role in inter-ethnic interactions and in the shaping of ideas about selfhood and identity.
- (2) Compared to the other camps and shantytowns in urban Northern Sudan, Izzbba, with a large population of 60,208 as of 1998, is fairly organized. Recently, its population was given some sense of ownership when a new land-tenure plan shifted the perceptions people had of themselves from *naziheen* (displaced) to owners and residents. Most of the residents in Izzbba have been long-time residents of the shantytown since the mid-1980s, another factor that helps us explore the cultural dynamics of the communities in question.

While the focus of the study was shifted to Izzbba, I used interviews from other camps to illuminate the particularity of this shantytown and to highlight some of the differences and similarities among displaced communities in Greater Khartoum.

## **B. Profile of Izzbba**

The narratives of Southern Sudanese women illustrate that when they arrived at Khartoum, they joined an estimated 1.8 million other internally displaced persons living in the surrounding areas of the capital city known as *El-sakkan El-ashawi*, in squatter settlements and in the major government-designated camps such as El-Salam, Wad El-Bashir, Mayo, Jebel Awlia, and El-Baraka. Like hundreds of thousands who came before them, these women found shelter in houses built with adobe-like material known as *zibala*, composed mostly of animal dung, or straw and plastic materials. Some Arabic speaking Muslims residents, mostly from the Western provinces of Dar Fur and Kordofan, arrived in the early 1980s, prompted by environmental disasters: drought and desertification. The Southerners, who joined them after the reactivation of the war in 1983, adhere to indigenous religions and Christianity. They descend from a variety of ethnic groups including: Acholi, Anyuak, Azande, Bor, Didinga, Dinka, Baka, Balanda, Bari, Berta, Bongo, Kakwa, Karamojo, Koma, Kwkwu, Lango, Lotuka, Lotuho, Luwo, Madi, Mangbetu, Moru, Mundu, Murle, Nuer, Schilluk, Sere, Turkana, and Uduk. (See the Immigration and Nationality Directorate List of Main Ethnic Groups of the Sudan, Library of Congress.) In their narratives, women said that they came from the five main regions and counties of the South: Southern Kordofan, Southern Blue Nile, Upper Nile, Bahr El Ghazal, and Equatoria. Once in Khartoum, they linked up with the ethnically mixed community of Izzbba, which includes: Nuba 23.6 percent; Fur 16.1 percent; Arab 15.1 percent; Dinka 14.1 percent; Shiluk 9.5 percent; Nuer 5.5 percent; Bari 4.5 percent; Fonj 4 percent; Acholi 3 percent; Moro, Zande, Latuka, Firteet 1 percent, and non Sudanese .5 percent. (See also Loveless 1999.) Ethnic mixing, consequently, is not limited to that of Arab Muslim and non-Arab/non-Muslim peoples—cultures from the far-flung regions of Southern Sudan also came together to give Izzbba its distinguished personality.

### **C. Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of Women in Izzbba**

In the initial exploratory phase of the project, which was undertaken in 2001, a survey questionnaire was administered to obtain background data on pre-war and post-war characteristics. Given the unsettled nature of displacement, the questionnaire was distributed to a non-random sample. This was followed by in-depth interviews, which allowed me to examine the question: How are war-displaced populations in general integrating into the receiving communities in urban Khartoum? With the help of research assistants, I surveyed a non-random sample of 100 units in Izzbba. I chose this location because it represents different cultural constituencies of the South and because of its size, which is typical of other shantytowns and camps (each camp has 1,200 to 1,500 residents). Given the transient and unsettled nature of displacement, it was difficult to extract a representative sample. Also, there are no complete registers from which a representative sample can be drawn.

Seventy-one women gave detailed responses on the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics as well as on their experiences in Khartoum. The reader should be cautioned that these results could not be generalized to the entire universe of Sudan's IDPs. However, there are some striking similarities in gender composition between Izzbba shantytown and the other camps I visited, such as El-Salaam, Wad El-Bashir, Gabarona and El-Baraka.

Of the 71 respondents, 23.9 percent were between the ages of 15 to 25, 29.6 percent were between the ages of 26 to 35, and 53 percent women were over 35 years of age. Although the majority do not live with husbands, 85.9 percent were married, 8.5 percent were widowed, and 4.2 percent were divorced. The majority of women, 93 percent, were Christians, while 7 percent were Muslim. There were no followers of Noble Spiritual Beliefs or indigenous faith traditions. Regarding schooling, 21.1 percent had no formal education, 38 percent had completed basic primary education, 22.5 percent had completed intermediate or secondary education, and 18.3 percent had finished higher or post-secondary education.

War seemed to be the primary factor influencing their decision to migrate to Khartoum. In addition, 10 percent said that they were looking for work, 25 percent said that they left to meet with family or see relatives for various reasons, and 8.3 percent said that they moved for educational opportunities. (More could have moved for the same reasons, but they only referred to the war in general.) Chain migration and the presence of relatives or friends in the new settlement seemed to play an important role for why Izzbba was chosen as an area of destination. Of the 71 respondents, 79.3 percent had relatives/friends in the area to which they moved, while 20.7 percent did not. In spite of this reality, family fragmentation was evident. When asked about family composition and whether it has changed as an outcome of displacement, 93 percent said that their family composition changed, while only 7 percent indicated that it did not. This response is corroborated by other displaced people whom I interviewed in other camps and shantytowns such as El-Salaam and Wad-El-Bashir, of whom the overwhelming majority cited loss of property and family ties without which they feel "alone and without very much in the way of

emotional shelter. In the first place, the community no longer surrounds people with a layer of insulation to protect them from a world of danger” (Erikson 1976:240). War as an act of aggression and dominance obliterates the basic entitlements needed by people and their communities: shelter, access to food, affective networks, and protection.

These losses prompted the question of interaction with Northerners in the new host community. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 62.9 percent, claimed to interact with Northerners in some way or another, while 37.1 percent claimed they did not. Questions surrounding cultural continuity and change yielded interesting responses. For example, 16 percent indicated that they were unable to keep their cultural practices, such as the consumption of alcohol, while 73 percent said they would not embrace Northern customs but made the exception for *tobe* (or dress) and henna. The remainder indicated that their experiences had been mixed—they were able to keep some elements of their cultural practices while foregoing the rest.

By all accounts, life in Izzbba is an extremely complex emergency situation, especially for women and children, and bears remarkable similarity to thousands of squatter settlements and refugee camps around the world. According to a UNICEF (2001) report on the Situation of Women and Children in the Sudan, the overwhelming majority of displaced women and children suffer from economic exploitation, abductions, malnutrition, lack of water resources, sub-standard sanitation and hygiene, and lack of access to health care and education. According to the UN, in 2003, only 15 percent of IDPs were accessible and only 13 percent of the 3 million people affected by war could be accessed. As a result, IDPs in the Sudan are among the most impoverished people in the world. Some IDPs integrate themselves into their new community but the majority have lost all possessions and end up at overcrowded camps that do not provide enough shelter and have no clean water. Numerous reports highlighted the urgency of improving access to health, nutrition, food security, shelter, water, sanitation, and education. According to UNICEF Operation Lifeline Sudan: “Sudan presents perhaps the most persevering situation of unmet needs by internally displaced persons worldwide” (1998:17). It’s no surprise, then, that when asked about the conditions in the camps and shantytowns, the responses from the women in Khartoum are disturbing.

Of the 71 respondents, only 5 percent described their conditions as positive. The majority—95 percent—described their experiences as negative and “worse off.” The women with whom I also had extensive conversations corroborated this view. Many saw the limited access to basic needs as threatening to their survival and security as human beings. In view of the extreme conditions of poverty encountered in Khartoum since October 2002,—when the ceasefire was signed—hundreds of thousands of IDPs have started to repatriate to the south. Repatriation however, has not solved the problem. The South is also lacking economic opportunities, social services, security, and basic infrastructure.

One of the most forbidding challenges facing IDPs is access to employment. According to a United Nations report (2000) the major sources of income for IDPs are daily casual and seasonal agricultural labor and petty trade. Women supply the main income and carry

out 70 percent of the work (UN 2000:54). Many displaced women in Khartoum will perform any tasks available to them, including domestic work.

They also brew alcohol and work as prostitutes, both activities considered illegal and punishable by the Qanoon El-Nizzam El-Amm, or Public Order Law. The law has been particularly difficult for displaced persons, the primary targets of the Public Order Police, according to a report put out by the Sudan Council of Churches Unit of Advocacy and Communication. “The Public Order Police are not bound by any geographical jurisdiction. Any of the units may make a campaign of searches or kasha (raid) in any place even if it falls within a jurisdiction of another unit,” it writes. “This makes it very difficult to know the jurisdiction to which the arrested persons are taken.” Many women are held at the Omdurman Women Prison, arrested for trying to make a living as prostitutes or by brewing alcohol.

The law also makes the Islamic dress *hijab* mandatory, even among Christian women. As Susan Sered correctly argues, this imposition reflects the thinking of “[an] authoritarian institution with a large stake in women’s bodies” (2000:17). Emelide Kiden, a 45-year-old Kuku Christian from Bahr-El-Jebel, told me: “I came to Khartoum in 1995. Ever since I was not able to wear my traditional dress and I felt forced by law to cover my whole body. I am also afraid to brew beer here, and this fear made it very difficult for me and other women to make a living.” Other women echo the same sentiments. For many, alcohol brewing is not only about making a living, but also has many uses in numerous ceremonial practices involving birth, marriage, and death. Susie Pito, a Mikaya Christian who arrived at Izzbba in 1996, said: “I am no longer able to make alcoholic drinks because of Sharia law. I am troubled by being viewed as an infidel under Sharia.” Since little work is available for women who struggle against urban poverty, in desperation they turn to sex work and alcohol brewing. Yahya el-Hassan, a PANA correspondent, described the forbidding reality:

Once in the north, (women) are forced to live in cramped camps around the big cities that lack all conditions of a decent living. This situation forces women to compete for the very limited opportunity available, such as washers and maids. The rest opt for the brewing of local gin (*araq*), or prostitution, two lucrative but dangerous businesses if the women are caught by the police. If convicted, the women are moved to an all-female prison. A recent UN research has found that over 80 percent of the inmates of Omdurman women prison in Khartoum were women from the South convicted of trafficking in *araq* or prostitution (2000:1).

These kinds of experiences bring into focus the weight of cultural rights and “the cultural health of minority groups.” Highlighting individual rights and individual freedom, in this case, should not be used to point toward advocacy of a liberal tradition that has no roots in Sudanese society. Defenders of the liberal traditions of rights would argue that, “While we are right to be concerned about the cultural health of minority communities, this gives us insufficient reason to abandon, modify, or reinterpret liberalism. Far from being indifferent to claims of minorities, liberalism puts concern for minorities at the forefront”

(Kukathus 1992:107). For the purposes of this ethnography, indicating the pervasive violation of the rights of Sudanese indigenous people problematizes and interrogates the institutionalized state power over minorities, especially defenseless populations such as displaced women in Izzbba.

#### **D. Cultural Dynamics**

It is not difficult to recognize that people conduct their lives as bearers of cultures that not only epitomize “aesthetic choices,” but also help mold, symbolically, their views on how to be in the world. The vibrancy and richness of the peoples and cultures of the Southern Sudan have profoundly inspired anthropological knowledge. War as an act of dominance and violence abolishes individual and collective access to cultural life. Of course, cultures are constantly on the move and herein there will be no attempt to treat the concept of “culture” as static or timeless. However, what is pertinent to our analysis is that war destroys the *right* to culture, whatever it may be. These rights are transgressed because of the prevalent lack of security that has been recognized as a fundamental right. In the words of Susan Pani Lubaya, a Izzbba resident:

I fled to Khartoum running from guns. I worked in Juba as a cleaner for the Ministry of Education. Forced to leave my household and husband behind, I thought I was running to a safe haven, but when I arrived in 2000, I found myself in even worse conditions. I now live among relatives and friends, but I had given up my traditional culture. I spend my days in constant anxiety and suffering. I believe that continued residence in Khartoum will destroy my conscience of being. I want only peace and to go back to the South.

As can be expected during war, human distress multiplies and takes on different forms of individual and collective trauma. Selfhood and personhood also undergo dramatic shifts. Since personhood is a highly differentiated experience, the systematic destruction of a community’s physical safety and cultural life intersects to strike at its foundations in profound ways. The loss of communality has meant that people are reconsidered afresh. Everyday experience, which emerges from dislocation, prompts a serious deliberation of the dialectal relationship between person and community and self and the world in roundabout ways. The effect of war on self-perception and sense of security is distilled in Eisenbruch’s notion of “cultural bereavement.” This bereavement is attributed to the loss of shelter as well as vanishing security. Eisenbruch’s notion of bereavement receives ample validation from the testimony of Theodora Poni, a Kuku Christian from Equatoria, who has lived in Khartoum since 1984. “Sometimes I say to myself, it is better to die rather than live in the conditions I am living in right now,” she says. “I desperately want to reunite with my family members from whom I have been separated twenty years ago. I cannot stop thinking about them. I hope to be able to go back to the South so that these feelings could get resolved.” Forced migration, as shown in Poni’s story and many others, affects collective and self-perception, representations of self and others, national and ethnic culture, as well as material and economic security (See Moruawska 2000).

The repositioning of displaced persons in the North brought together Arab Muslim populations with non-Arab/non-Muslim peoples. It also amalgamated a variety of non-Arab/non-Muslims. Among Sudanese people who were the most secularized populations in Northeast Africa, religious identity did not assume any salience in daily interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims. Rather, these religious identities were made to be important by political decisions. Therefore, the process of change among displaced people in general, and women in particular, cannot be understood in isolation from the context of war, violence, and forced migration. This process, especially among the non-Arab/non-Muslim Southerners, is not always cast romantically. Southern community leaders see the transformation of displaced persons as extremely complicated and emblematic of larger losses. Many chiefs, teachers, and priests with whom I talked view this amalgamation as strong evidence of identities lost and homes ruined. In the context of war, violence, and forced migration, assimilation into the Arabo-Islamic practices of host communities in the North means annihilation of an “unambiguously” African world, though itself far from monolithic. In the words of Margaret Mondong, who arrived in Khartoum in 1996: “I am concerned that continued residence in Khartoum would lead my people to abandon or lose contact with their culture. Although we try to teach our children our culture, we often find it impossible to compete with Arab and Islamic culture taught to them in school. I feel that my problems are the problems of all displaced people; we are drinking in the same pot. The only acceptable solution to these complicated issues is peace.”

In Izzbba, I looked at the ways in which displaced women tried to make memories by forging social ties with their hosts and with other Southern women, all of whom carry significant burdens and wounds. Nowhere are the psychological scars more deeply felt than in the experience of Nora Lako Mule, who thinks death is the only answer to her predicament. Mule is 60 years old and has been separated from her husband since she departed Kopoeta in 1989 with her son. She works as a housekeeper, but relies on her grown children for support. She describes life before the war as much better, but feels better being in Khartoum, away from the sounds of guns in Kopoeta. She lives far from other friends or relatives, but has been able to maintain her culture through food and occasional folk dances. She has given up alcoholic drinks, however, due to her commitment to Christianity. Since she was separated from her husband, she has maintained decision-making authority in her household, which she feels has given her a better life. She was, as she puts it, “at peace with [her husband].” Although she believes her life has no pressing conditions, she misses her children who are working in the army, and makes do with the photos she has of them. When asked for an acceptable solution to the problems facing herself and others, she reflected that, although peace would bring some joy, death might be the only solution.

Stories like those of Nora Mule prompt the question: how are loss and bereavement understood in the Southern Sudanese milieu? The question of loss is measured through a series of inquires such as those voiced by Carolyn Nordstrom:

What happens to people when the landscapes of their lives—personal, social, and cultural—are landmined, when the maps of meaning that order



people's lives are blown apart? What happens to people when what they believe makes them human-home, hearth, family and tradition-has been wrenched from their grasp? (1997:184).

These anxieties have been strongly captured in Nyankwit Martin's words recounted below:

I come originally from Anyuak group. I am also Christian from the Bor region. I moved to Khartoum from Malakal with my younger brother in 1990 because of the war. I recall my pre-war experiences always very fondly, because of my closeness with my family and friends. I miss my life at home very much. Since my arrival in Khartoum, I found my new life with my husband, whom I married in Khartoum, and my children more difficult due to considerable cultural and financial stresses. I consider my separation from my parents my greatest loss. I always feel a separation from my culture, in large part because of my geographic isolation from my family and friends. This left me with no one with which to practice my culture. I had since given up the traditional way of dressing, of getting and storing food in granaries, and of giving birth. I have to say that my contact with Northerners is limited to occasions such as birthdays, funerals, and markets. I had learned of many Northern Sudanese cultural practices but I did not feel prepared to embrace them because they were not part of my way of life. I do know some women who did adopt these practices out of admiration for the style of life of the people in Khartoum. I am also aware of female circumcision, but I feel that it was contrary to my culture and did not advocate it. The situation is different for some people. I had heard of Southern Sudanese women who were forced by Muslim husbands to adopt the practice. I heard about this from other people, but I do not know of any of these women personally. It is my view that Muslims segregated themselves from non-Muslims. I strongly disagree with the conversion of non-Muslim women to Islam, and the teaching of Islamic cultures while my culture was ignored. But what can you do? Here people who come from the South have to find a way to make the situation better for their families. It is very difficult though.

Grasping the intricacies of changing values and ideologies is an exasperatingly arduous problem made clear from critical questions raised by Morton Klass in his book, *Singing with Sai Baba*. "(How) are values expressed? Can we ever be sure the same value is present even when two people make the same choice in different situations? Is it possible that one and the same value may be expressed by different choices in varying circumstances?" (1991:10)

The question of why some of the Southern Sudanese women in Khartoum started to take on the practice of female circumcision following their arrival in Khartoum in 1989 is particularly difficult. This practice, which has been performed for thousands of years, comprises a variety of genital surgeries, including clitoridectomy, excision, and

infibulation, and are performed on girls ranging in age from three years old to puberty. Trained or untrained midwives, traditional healers, and occasionally doctors, perform the surgeries. This practice is a time of joyous celebration and elaborate festivities. The reasons for female circumcision and the age at which it is performed differ across Sudan by regional, ethnic, and class differences. People justify their support of the practice by arguing that it preserves virginity, enhances femininity, and increases the purity and cleanliness of the body. There is also variation in its prevalence, in the exact types of the practice, and in the rituals associated with it. The practice became illegal in 1946, when the British colonial administration passed a law making it a crime punishable by imprisonment and fines. Despite the law and the country's strong anti-circumcision campaign, however, female circumcision has persisted with tenacity because of its link to sexuality and sexual politics. Attitudes toward sexuality and reproduction are at the heart of significant cultural and religious beliefs among the Sudanese. Openly discussing sexuality, for instance, is extremely limited. To a great extent, this interdiction is intimately linked to how society views sexuality in the first place—as an ominous threat that looms over one's purity and morality if left unchecked. Social and physical regulation, therefore, is aggressively pursued. This view is of particular importance to female sexuality. One of the most important vehicles for dulling women's sexuality is through female circumcision.

On August 29, 2001, I interviewed Nafisa, a Muslim woman from Darfur who arrived in Khartoum in 1982. Her narrative on interpersonal relationships within displaced communities is extremely illuminating as it highlights the question of who introduces and markets new ideas in the community:

In this place there are many people from different regions in the Sudan. There are Fur, Nuba, Southerners, Baggara, and Meseria. We have been living in peace since we arrived. We became very good neighbors and some people were influenced by other people's customs and habits. For example, a lot of Southern women who are good friends started to use henna to decorate their feet and hands. They do the smoke bath just like us. They wear tobe. Some of them even converted to Islam. We also became aware of their habits and traditions. However, when they converted some decided to become circumcised like the rest of the group. For boys, though, there were group circumcisions that everybody was aware of. All of us circumcise our girls. How can we leave girls like that, uncircumcised? Some Southern women started to understand our reasons that it is shameful for a woman not to be circumcised. So some of them did. Our relations here are very strong and we depend on each other on several occasions. However, this circumcision is not a problem for us. We are suffering, all of us: Fur, Southerners, Nuba. There is no employment, no income, and lack of food. We send our children to school hungry and we still have to make sure to pay the fees that are imposed on us. Our children are forced to work in the market. These kinds of problems are confronted by all of us displaced people. We all live in the same level and

that is why Southerners have been greatly influenced by their friends and husbands.

Like Nafisa, many displaced people from Dar Fur and Kordofan play a critical role as cultural brokers advertising wide-range practices to the new arrivals in their communities. According to Jeremy Loveless, “Many of the groups from Western Sudan (e.g. the Fur) have managed to retain the cohesion of their society, including networks and social capital, to a greater degree than the Southerners. This may be related to the continued links with a home society, which has been less disturbed than that of the South. It may also be related to their relative cultural compatibility with Northern society” (1999:25). In the circumstance of forced migration, though, it is important to understand that in spite of the goal of many new arrivals to conserve their cultures and traditions in their new locations, they found themselves compelled to accept different practices which they would have effortlessly rebuffed at home. In the words of M.E. Abu Sin, “Displacement blends the cultures of different communities. Empirical evidence suggests minimum cultural conflict among displaced populations from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, perhaps due to common shared misery” (1995:18). I have noted earlier that this practice is marketed by other segments of Sudan’s displaced communities in the shantytowns. Therefore, this reality seems to create a sense of camaraderie and mutual reciprocity. There were other compelling indicators of how new communities are created. For example, when I asked 34-year-old Judith about how they handle economic hardships, she explained: “We have a *sandug* (rotating credit). We try to allocate a fraction of our small income and pool it to pay a neighbour in need. The credit rotates until everybody is paid off. This is very helpful to a lot of people in this neighborhood.” The *sandug* speaks forcefully to how existential realities mould webs of reciprocal obligations and mutual aid, and in turn assist displaced women’s incorporation into established communities.

### **E. Understanding Female Circumcision among Displaced Women**

To understand the factors influencing the adoption of female circumcision, I raised the following questions: 1) Is the decision to adopt female circumcision structurally integrated in Izzbba or is it an individually based strategy? 2) Who is deciding whether or not a woman or a girl will adopt the practice? 3) To what extent are these women being coerced?<sup>3</sup> 4) How has the loss of, or need for, social, economic, and ethnic security driven this practice? 5) To what extent does the loss of cultural life due to war led to substitution? 6) Why circumcision? Is it the only cultural practice in Northern Sudan they adopted? 7) How do women view this practice now, and have their views changed overtime? 8) Did Southern women experience sexual violence during flight, such as rape, and if so, have they accepted the northern Sudanese reasoning for circumcision as a vehicle for restoring virginity and sexual integrity? If this situation is confirmed, can we investigate the phenomenon in terms of “violence as a remedy for violence”? 9) And how does their situation in Khartoum threaten their own cultural survival as they have sought

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<sup>5</sup>The Center for the Prevention of Genocide reported that male and female circumcisions were forced on Christians upon conversion to Islam in the Indonesian context of Laskar Jihad movement. See [www.genocideprevention.org/weekly\\_report.html](http://www.genocideprevention.org/weekly_report.html)

new alternatives and substitutions? Because of the novelty of this practice among Southern Sudanese women, it is important to recount the multiple sources of its occurrence. These sources should provide sufficient substantiation to the question of how do we know that female circumcision exists among Southern women?

### **1. Sources of Documentation**

In addition to women's authoritative testimonies about their encounters with female circumcision, there are additional sources in which NGOs and community activists attempted to document the incidence of the practice. For example, Ahmed Abdel Mageid, a university professor and social activist, noted in his comprehensive report on female circumcision in the Sudan that a study undertaken by GOAL International has shown that "Many Southern Sudanese displaced women in Khartoum started to adopt the practice of female circumcision," which he considers to be a perfect illustration of "negative acculturation."

During my visit to the Sudan in 1996, considerable concern over the spread of this ritual was mounting. According to one social worker from a local NGO, "While we are trying very hard to curb the practice among people who practiced it for thousands of years, we are starting to receive news about its spread among Southerners who did not know about it before."

The United Nations' Executive Summary on Humanitarian Operations in the Sudan stated that traditional practices are common among displaced people, including female genital mutilation, which is practiced in its most drastic form, infibulation, or Pharaonic circumcision (2000:59). Incidence of the practice was also discussed in a proposal prepared by the Sudanese National Committee for Traditional Harmful Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (SNCTP). Amna Abdel Rahaman, who heads this committee, proposed bringing a training and sensitivity campaign to the displaced. She justified the urgency of this project:

Due to the high rate of illiteracy in the camps, displaced people are ignorant about the eradication of harmful practices, and female genital mutilation in particular. According to reports collected from established clinics in the camps and other teams, FGM is now being practiced in the camps. Some families do bring their young girls to the clinic to be circumcised, although this is usually refused. Circumcision for both boys and girls has been reported in some camps, e.g. Carton Kassala and Dar Elsalam, mainly among the displaced from the Western Sudan. Since different groups are accommodated together in one camp, Southerners have already started to adopt female genital mutilation as an urban fashion and as assumed religious requirement (2000:2)

One of the most compelling sources of documentation of the practice has been the SNCTP's effort to promote alternative employment for midwives who derive large incomes from the practice. The president of the organization told me that Southern

midwives who learned how to perform the operations from their Northern counterparts could also work as agents for change. One way they tried to do this was by starting a store that would employ midwives as vendors. The strategy for finding alternative sources of income for midwives and traditional birth attendants has been one of the most effective tools in the fight against female circumcision in the Sudan. In 2002, I accompanied SNCTP social workers to Wad El-Bashir, one of the largest camps in Omdurman, to see how the store was progressing. Ten Southern Sudanese midwives were present at the time. They expressed frustration with the work in the store, but ended the meeting by reiterating their commitment to its success. There is no doubt that the inclusion of Southern midwives in the Inter Africa Program, which allows them supplementary sources of income, remains a powerful symbol of the momentous role they can play in either the proliferation or the obliteration of the unyielding tradition.

Coverage of the spread of the practice was also the focus of a recent Reuters news article, "Sudan Peace May Help End Female Circumcision." Reporter Andrew Hammond wrote that war has encouraged the spread of female circumcision in Sudan, but peace could give a much-needed boost to efforts to combat the practice (2002:1). Hammond cites Samira Amin, a founding member of the Sudanese Network for Eradicating Female Circumcision, who said, "A 2001 survey of street children who live in the capital's displaced communities showed 67 percent of them had undergone what medical textbooks call genital infibulation. These are people from the Dinka tribes in the South, the Nuba Mountains, and the Felata in the west, who did not do this before. It is a transmitted trend." Dr. Constantine Jervase, a surgeon from Bahr Elghazal, said this in the Reuters piece:

The practice had extended to tribal groups in the South before the war brought northerners and southerners together in the shantytowns of Khartoum. They are just copying it from the Arabs. If they show their neighbors they are now using the same culture and system they might be able to get some assistance. The internally displaced are concerned with how to survive, and that can mean acquiring certain things to please their masters. If the south becomes a different country something has to be done because it won't disappear just like that. Something has to be done to fight it, just like the northerners are doing, by campaigning and enlightening people (Jervase quoted in Hammond 2002:2).

Anthropologist Hamid El-Bashir wrote another important document evaluating the SNCTP's efforts to end female circumcision. El-Bashir told the story of 37-year-old Aquair Achol, a non-Muslim Shilluk and a midwife serving her displaced community in Goz Al Luban, a camp near Kosti City in central Sudan. Achol's narrative is worth recounting at length:

In 1978 I was selected to join the midwifery school in Malakal. The midwives who came to train us from Khartoum told me that I have to get circumcised since I myself will be a midwife in the future. I was about to accept but due to the unexpected sickness of my mother, I quit the training

program to sit next to my ailing mother. Now, 17 years later, I joined the midwifery school in Kosti in order to graduate after one-year training and be a certified midwife to serve the community of the displaced southerners in Goz Al Salam Displaced camp. I was really surprised when they taught us this time in the midwifery school that female circumcision is bad and we shouldn't practice it. I told them, but it is Islamic; they said no, that is not true. That is only a wrong popular belief. In my family we are very much mixed: My sister Nabita is a Muslim (through marriage), I'm a Christian (by birth) and my daughter Suaa'd is also a Muslim. Nabita became Muslim when she got married to a Muslim soldier in Malakal in late 1960s. He became part of our family and he told my sister that they should circumcise me. My sister liked the idea and called the midwife, but I ran away and hide with my aunt for few days. When I came home they were laughing at me and accused me as being coward and not daring of a small operation like circumcision. So I never got circumcised until I grow up and got married to a Shilluk man and had my daughter Suad. Suaa'd became a Muslim through her uncle (my brother in law) Mubarak, who was primary school teacher. She was living with him when she was young. He circumcised her with his daughters in 1980; and from that time she automatically became Muslim. Three years ago, Suaa'd got married to a Christian man from the Shiluk tribe, but she is still Muslim. Now Suaa'd is living with us in Goz Al Salam displaced camp.

Finally, an AFP news article, "Female Circumcision in Sudan Resists Abolition Efforts," states that: "The Christians (who) escaped from the South have adopted circumcision. They think this practice will ease their integration into northern communities" (2002:2). The question remains: does the adoption of circumcision reflect an attempt by displaced women to reduce the distance between themselves and their hosts?

## **2. Accommodation**

Five women were interviewed specifically on the subject of female circumcision over the entire period of the research. Though the numbers of those who adopted the practice are by no means extensive in scale, these case studies provided in-depth understanding of the relationship between displacement and the practice. Still, these women did not represent the full range of experiences of women in Khartoum so I also include the views of women who resisted the adoption of the practice throughout the study.

Female circumcision as practiced by some displaced women provides a new set of rationalizations underlying its adoption. Their reasons however, are by no means rooted in deeply held value systems and beliefs such as those upheld by Northern Sudanese practicing communities. In effect, when I asked about whether Southern Sudanese women started to agree to the justifications of the practice as a means of restoring sexual integrity, the response was in the negative. Instead, the great majority reported intermarriage as one of the most significant justifications for adopting female circumcision in Izzbba, as some interview excerpts show.

## **Liz Nyo**

I am Liz Nyo. I am Christian. I moved from Juba in 1999 with my husband, a Northern Sudanese man whom I had since divorced. My parents moved to Khartoum after me. During my first year in Khartoum, I lived with my husband's family. After the first year, I faced discrimination from my husband's family as a Southerner. I became ill and I believe that my mother-in-law bewitched me. After divorcing my husband, I lived with my parents, but my child died as a result of these troubles. I believe that my marriage to a Northern Sudanese man was a waste. I tried to maintain aspects of my culture even when living with my in-laws. I respected them and cooked Southern food for them. My child was named in the Bari birth tradition. While living with my in-laws, however, I found myself in a "different society" where I learned about Northern foods, dilka, khumra, Karbaret, henna, dukhan, dressing with tobe, and other traditions. I was circumcised by my ex-husband's family during my second child delivery and find it "normal." I believe that Sunna circumcision, in which only a small portion of the clitoris is removed, is acceptable, but I do not support Pharaonic circumcision, which removes much more. I know many women who adopted it and either married Muslims or who grew up in Muslim communities and do not want to be degraded as "nijis" or impure.

## **Bagune**

My name is Bagune. I am 25 years old. I am Fujulu. I was Christian before but now I became Muslim. I joined my mother in Khartoum. Since my arrival, my father and many relatives have died. I adopted female circumcision as part of my conversion to Islam. My life in Khartoum is "good" because I live with relatives far away from fighting. I have a lot of financial hardships, however. These problems have taken their toll and I wish I had enough to ensure that my children would be educated. I believe that women can contribute a great deal to our current situation. We are here because of the problems at home. Let us hope and pray that these problems get solved soon.

I have a lot of friends who are Arab and Muslim in this place. I regularly interact with Northerners. I live with them and have learned about their food, crafts, marriage, witchcraft, and sorcery, and I am prepared to embrace some of these practices. I am unhappy about one thing however, that Northerners despise Southerners and call them "slaves" and "servants." I was circumcised when I converted to Islam along with many women of my age. My views about female circumcision have changed since I adopted it. I think it was a mistake and I am glad that it is now prohibited by law.

## **Fawzia**

I moved to Khartoum from Juba. I am married to a Northerner. I met him in Juba and when he asked to marry me, I did not ask him about the topic of female circumcision. I knew very well that most Northern Sudanese women follow it. I thought that my husband would want me to get it done. I asked a midwife in Juba who knows how to do it. I had it done a few months before my marriage. It caused a lot of pain but after a while it subsided. The midwife told me that it is very hard for grown women because their flesh is tough. I suffered but I did not regret my decision until I got married. My husband was shocked. He asked me why I decided to do circumcision. Don't you think that I already know that Southern women are uncircumcised? Did I ever talk to you about this? He was very disappointed and upset. But my main reason was to be like Northern women since I was marrying a Northerner. I think the practice did not make a difference for me except for the pain of the operation that I mentioned. I think that we will not circumcise our daughter since my husband was angry. I know a lot of Southern Sudanese women who married Muslims and got circumcised. The reactions of all Northern men are not the same, some want it and others don't. A lot of women say that having sex with circumcised women is better than with uncircumcised women because they are not as tight, and cannot feel anything. As I said, I am not sure whether this is true or not. My reason behind my decision was to appease my husband but obviously he was not impressed. I did regret the decision because of his reaction and also I remembered how hard it was to go through this surgery.

## **Sayda**

I am not supportive of female circumcision but my sister is. We both arrived in Khartoum in 1994 from the Nuba Mountains. Some Muslim Nuba practice female circumcision if the child has duda (vaginal itching caused by worms). The majority of women don't. My sister and I are Christians. When we arrived here we found that some Nuba and Southern women started to adopt female circumcision. My sister made up her mind. She went to a midwife who performed a lot of surgeries on women her age. She had the surgery and was lying on the angaraib (native bed) in pain. I was trying to stop her but she did not listen to me. I resisted this practice because I am afraid of the pain of the cutting. I asked my sister why did you do this now? Why all your life you were not circumcised, what are you doing it for? But she was in pain and she kept repeating sakit sakit (for no reason). No one gets circumcised for no reason, especially if you are a grown woman. I know one thing: my sister wanted to be like the other women she met in Khartoum. She thinks that Khartoum people's ways are better than hers. But all these women who did circumcision are not young women. They all learned about circumcision because some neighbors do it and tell them about it. Now they think it is a good idea. I will not do it as long as I live. I am too afraid of razors and needles. Oh, I will never go to the midwife like my sister."



## **Josephine**

My experience is very strange. I am a Christian woman who heard about female circumcision but it did not occur to me to really form a strong opinion about it since it did not concern me. I married a Christian man from Bahr El-Ghazal. It is his original home but he looked for employment in Kosti and moved there long time ago when Nimeri was still in power. He had interactions with people in Kosti who are Arabs. He has good relations with them and I think that is why he liked this practice. Men talked to each other about it. This is how he found out and insisted that I get the operation and went far enough to tell the midwife who delivered my child to cut and sew. Of course I was very tired of being in labor and felt little pain because I almost passed out after the child was born. This situation made me question his judgement. Although we stayed after this incident took place, eventually I got a divorce.

#### 4. FINDINGS

It should be stated at the outset that this study has revealed that the views of displaced Southern Sudanese women in Khartoum are wide-ranging and are in no way monolithic. The responses by many survey respondents as well as interviewees exhibited tremendous adaptability and transformation as well as continuity and resistance. For example, 17 percent mentioned that their views are neutral since the practice does not affect them personally. About 5 percent approved of the practice, while others suggested that female circumcision should be actively stopped. However, 50 percent of the respondents affirmed that they knew women who embraced the practice to be like Muslims and fit in the community, for religious conversion, for religious conversion and intermarriage, “pure deception,” and copying a new tradition.

There is no doubt that acquaintance with Arabs and Muslims in the shantytowns has had a remarkable impact on identity, as the case of the adoption of female circumcision makes abundantly clear. The study has uncovered the following issues with regard to our understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of female circumcision.

First: Displaced women adopt this practice as adults;—it is only occasionally performed on young girls. Therefore, since the practice in the North is performed on young girls of six to nine years of age, the adoption of the practice by adult women is a major departure.

When I inquired about whether the decision to adopt female circumcision is structurally integrated in Izzbba or is an independent tactic, most of the interviewees affirmed that it is individual strategy adopted by women. Some explain their decision as a coping mechanism within intermarriage, others for conversion to Islam, and others in an attempt to fit into Khartoum. Closely related to this question is who decides whether or not a woman adopts the practice. The majority of interviewees agreed that men play a very important role in the decision while others have suggested that Southern women themselves decide independently since they became acquainted with the importance of this practice among Northern women. According to Rebecca Alcec, a 28-year-old Dinka from Bor, “I believe that female circumcision is harmful to women. Although I know of Southerners who adopted the practice, I feel that they were forced by their Muslim husbands, who deceived them into believing that it was part of overall cleanliness and who did not care about their wives’ well-being. I believe that female circumcision is a misled attempt to correct God’s way of making women.”

These responses show that some level of coercion —real or imagined— existed among those who took up this practice. The question of whether Southern women were coerced is critical for our discernment of who promotes the ritual among the displaced. As we have seen, several women stated that they underwent the practice after marrying Muslim men. In the words of Susan, an Izzbba resident, “I interact with my Northern neighbors particularly at funerals and when there are neighborhood problems, and to help each other when families have no salt. I learned about their dress, henna and *dukhan* and about their general way of living. I am willing to accept some of these practices, but not circumcision. I believe that it is unfair because it leads to suffering during childbirth and

can cause health problems if a doctor does not do it. I have a relative who married a Northerner, became circumcised, and now must undergo childbirth with a midwife or a doctor.” This raises significant issues regarding the values and justifications of the practice since the most significant rationale for the practice is intermarriage and marriageability.

Timon and Wosa undertook a detailed study called “Southern Sudanese Women and Children's Experiences of Oppression.” They corroborated this view when they argued: Under the present conditions of displacement, southern educated women are suffering socially because they do not easily get married. Part of the explanation may be because of the heavy financial burden that families impose unnecessarily high dowry demands in proportion to the level of their daughter’s education. The huge amount of money demanded from them, the would be husband, gives the impression of buying and selling and thus the commercialization of the marriage institution. Many men find this sickening and discouraging. (1999:43)

There is no doubt that the altered pattern of the marriage institution—due to the obstacles that Timon and Wosa have explained—is a common denominator among Southern Sudanese women forced to migrate.

Second: We looked at how the loss of, or need for, social, economic, and ethnic security by those forced to migrate have driven this practice. The interviewees have spoken eloquently about cultural losses that were incurred as an outcome of war. They also emphasized how the Northern Sudanese receiving society with its laws posed significant threats to their own cultural survival. This was made clear by Stella Pio, a Bari Christian who arrived in Khartoum in 1990. “I do not interact with Northerners because in my view they do not respect Southerners or even consider them human,” Pio said. “I believe that Northerners discriminate against Southerners. For example I am troubled by the impact of Northern culture on my beliefs such as the closing of eating places during Ramadan. This is an example of how they deny Southerners their right to their cultural practices.” Therefore, loss of cultural life due to war had played a part in prompting the women to explore new coping mechanisms and ways of adjusting to their new realities.

Third: Closely related to cultural bereavement and loss is the question of why female circumcision? Was it the only form of cultural practices in Northern Sudan they adopted?

To consider the adjustment experience of Southern women within a broader context of transformation, I encountered incidents where other forms of Northern Sudanese gendered rituals were adopted, such as the ritual of *dukhan* or the smoke bath. By all accounts, the smoke bath is a beautification ritual among women in Northern Sudanese provinces, usually performed after sunset. After large numbers of Southern displaced women settled in Northern-dominated host communities, they became acquainted with *dukhan* as they had with henna and other forms of body adornment. This ritual is open only to those who are married or about to get married. Associated with sensuality and eroticism, it is believed to boost sexual gratification. During the ritual, a series of steps have to be followed carefully before one bathes in smoke. To start, a blend of scented

*shaff*, *talih*, and sandalwood is placed inside a hole. A *birish* rug, woven from palm tree branches, is then placed on the hole. To start bathing, a woman strips naked. The body is then thoroughly rubbed with *karkar*—scented oil made from animal fat, orange peel, and clove essences. The woman sits on the hole, allowing the rising smoke to fumigate her body. Women rarely perform *dukhan* alone. Usually, they rely on the help of female kin, neighbors, and friends to add wood as needed or to provide water to compensate for the massive amount of sweat released while bathing, which can last for an hour or more. A body scrub known as *dilka* is then used to clean the body and to reveal a glistening skin layer. A warm shower concludes the process. Although women insist on the benefits of *dukhan* for health reasons such as curing body aches, its links to sexuality cannot be glossed over. *Dukhan* is frequently regarded as an invitation for sex. In a society where expression of sexual desire is condemned, as earlier discussed, the elucidation of the ritual as incitement to have sex is by no means unreasonable. To participate in the *dukhan* ritual is to engage in a cult of femininity in which clear rules about the construction of ideal womanhood are followed with astonishing passion.

Displaced women who took on the practice of *dukhan* have not been spared the harsh censure of Southern men. Theodore, a 47-year-old social worker, expressed his trepidation towards the ritual by saying, “I don’t know why these women are doing *dukhan*. As men, we hear that the *dukhan* is performed when a woman is too wide and that *dukhan* helps tighten her. The Southern women here are mostly single or widowed. What do they need it for?” Notwithstanding this view, the women I talked to provided a more textured and nuanced reason for adopting *dukhan*. As Angelina, a 37-year-old Dinka explains, “When you go by your neighbor’s place to see her and you find her digging up a hole, you too dig up a hole to bathe in it.” What Angelina is trying to say is that it is through the active participation in social practices that one forms some understanding of self while learning how to become a member of a community. It is a response to a situation in which compensation is sought for lost networks and idioms that gave meaning to social existence before displacement.

In addition to *dukhan*, interviewees told me that a lot of women have adopted the Northern Sudanese *tobe* dress and some have adopted *hijab*, or Islamic dress, to avoid confrontation with the authorities since the Public Order Law of Khartoum State enforces the *hijab*. According to Susan Yengi, a Christian Acholi who moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1998:

I am trying very hard to maintain my culture such as our birth traditions, dancing, and funeral rites. However, my family and I have given up alcohol due to Islamic laws against it. I now cover my body and head with a scarf. As a Christian, I feel that there is no freedom to wear my traditional dress or to practice my own culture because of these Islamic laws in Khartoum.

The overwhelming majority of those who started wearing the *hijab*, however, agree that its acceptance is a short-term measure that is bound to disappear if the conditions prompting its use are no longer in place.

Fourth: Although Josephine's narrative, recounted earlier, is an anomaly, the husband's compliance should be recognized. In a migratory context, the husband's recognition of the values surrounding female circumcision as essential to womanhood and femininity cannot be isolated from the broader understandings of ways in which newcomers attempt to "fit in" the host community. However, one should caution that embracing rituals does not always reflect identical values and moralities, as evidenced in Max Glukman's work on the Ndembu of Zambia. He notes that while it is important to establish common explanations for ritual phenomena, "It is essential to grasp that there are fundamental differences between them and also between modes of interpreting them" (1997:40). Therefore, acquiescence to new norms and belief systems can be seen as one part of a series of adjustments that women make to overcome the sense of cultural loss and marginalization. Thus, seeking substitutions should be understood as part of a greater process of negotiation that displaced people undertake. Notwithstanding the importance of intermarriage, in a forced migratory context it is reasonable to suggest that the adoption of the practice is a strategic move by the displaced to find a place in the host society and reduce the distance between themselves and their hosts. Several grassroots workers told me that the overwhelming majority of displaced women started to see the practice as an urban innovation. However, whether this practice is an outcome of an "urbanization of consciousness" or not is a question that I continue to investigate.

This study has illustrated that access to cultural life, or lack thereof, is intimately linked to questions of peace and the ability of individuals and communities to live securely in an environment in which they are free to engage in cultural activity. The women interviewed for this study had to assume new roles as they struggled to create a space for themselves in the host community. In their introduction describing the experiences of Togolese, Russians, and Polish Jews, Greenhouse, Mertz, and Warren note that people strive "to manage their everyday lives against a palpable transformation of the world they thought they knew but now feel pressed to reassess through the lens of their everyday circumstances (2002:3). The residents of Izzbba with whom I had extensive conversations would readily recognize this observation, both experientially and intuitively, as reflective of their own lives. Without resorting to a cause-and-effect argument, it became apparent that the inability of women to carry on cultural traditions in the new settlements affected subsequent renegotiations and evaluations. This was made with crystal clarity in descriptions of the substance of the loss of cultural rights: the right to brew alcohol; wear traditional dress; perform ethnic dances; and perform marriage, birth, and death rituals in the same way they were celebrated at home.

Fifth: I have noted above that among the wide-ranging justifications of female circumcision in Northern Sudan is that the practice promotes sexual integrity and protects virginity. I wondered whether Southern women experienced sexual violence during flight, such as rape. If so, have they accepted the reasoning for circumcision as a vehicle for restoring virginity and sexual integrity for rape victims? In the course of my conversations with displaced women, I did not encounter any evidence that this was the case. Although I made a conscious effort to avoid topics that could ignite painful memories, many interviewees went to great lengths to describe their experiences without recounting sexual violence as one of them. Therefore, as the narratives demonstrate, there

is no evidence of a link between sexual violence and the adoption of the practice. To be sure, sexual violence was widely perpetrated during the war as evidenced in the anthology “The Tragedy of Reality, Southern Sudanese Women Appeal for Peace” published in 1999. However, since my interviewees did not choose to address it as an important element of their war experiences, I decided to forego the topic because of its extreme sensitivity and the painful memories it may have triggered.

Lastly, whether it is circumcision, decorating the body with henna, or the bathing ritual *dukhan*, engaging in these acts can only be appreciated in the context of the public presentation of self. This presentation enables a sense of neighbourliness and sociality and celebrates belonging rather than distance from other members of the community. Women find themselves in a state in which they have to elbow their way into a new multicultural scene in which they are prompted to compose new concepts of self and community.

This, of course, does not imply that all Southern displaced women have adopted female circumcision or *dukhan*. Instead, it shows how women respond to new situations and contexts with dynamism and creativity. Rites and rituals cannot be isolated from the larger context of social action. As Wendy James shows in her analysis of the politics of rain control among the Uduk, “To perform a rain ritual is not simply to carry out a naïve ‘symbolic’ act, which is supposed to have instrumental efficacy. It is to make a calculated move in a very real game of social and political maneuver” (1972:33). It is within the context of displaced women’s responses that can one appreciate the symbolic and practical aspects of the adoption of the gendered rituals of circumcision and *dukhan*. This adoption has its symbolic value for it plays a useful role in community understanding and reconciliation as they construct bridges across ethnic communities. The experiences of displaced women, described in this study, not only mirror their inner strength and adeptness, but also act as “the groping footsteps” towards peacemaking and equanimity in the war-torn nation at large.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

After years of eager anticipation, a deal to end decades of war violence was signed by the two major warring parties, the Sudanese Government and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movements, in Kenya on May 26, 2004. The parties have agreed to split church and state; form an army comprising fighters from both sides; and allow a referendum on independence for the South after a six-year period. They have also agreed to split the £2 billion annual oil revenue over those six years (*The Times*, World News, May 27, 2004: 51). In light of the new political development in the country, women as the main stakeholders in the reconstitution of their communities should be afforded opportunities for equitable political participation. The following recommendations may be of help to local and international NGOs, government agencies, and others interested in the rebuilding of Southern Sudan.

- (1) Because of the length of residence in Khartoum, many women have developed robust ties and associations in their present localities. This

fact helps us understand that repatriation is by no means the instantaneous response of all Southern women residing in Khartoum. In light of this reality, governmental and international material support for displaced women is vital. In fact, in numerous conversations, displaced women have indicated their interest in capacity-building projects such as sewing, typing, and petty commodity production. Support for women in their present localities should top the government agenda for the empowerment of displaced women who lack financial resources to look after themselves and their families.

- (2) For Southerners who continue to reside in Khartoum, there should be an honest effort to promote multiculturalism and support for the teaching of their religious views and cultural traditions. International donor agencies can play an important role in contributing resources to educational programs to be designed and implemented by Southerners. In camps and shantytowns, this effort will give assurances of good will and trust in the validity of the peace agreement.
- (3) Long residences in Khartoum and in displacement camps throughout the country helped women define important political views. NGOs and other bodies should play an important role at this phase of incorporating women's views on the current debates in the North and the South. Learning from women's experiences in the camps and shantytowns is critical for creating a sense of direction and accountability. Workshops, lectures, and focused group discussions could provide an avenue in this direction.
- (4) In cases where repatriation plans for women are underway, providing security and protective measures for their safe return is of vital importance for the sustainability of peace and trust.
- (5) Long-term plans for correcting the problems faced by women are undoubtedly linked to the larger context of good governance and democracy. Displaced women who gained a strong sense of political subjectivity as they had years to reflect upon the root causes of their forced migration can provide first-hand knowledge in expediting solutions for the unfolding problems in Dar Fur.
- (6) Women's groups in Khartoum should network with the United Nations and other feminist organizations around the world to solicit assistance for displaced women. The UN Commission on the Status of Women can be an important interlocutor in this regard.
- (7) Although this study has dealt with an incident of cultural transformation, it recommends that addressing the wider context of political reform is the only answer for ending political violence against

unprotected populations who, in their predicament, attempt to adopt inventiveness and creativity, even if that entails espousing practices and rituals formerly unknown.



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## **Working Paper #8**

### **Life in Khartoum: Probing Forced Migration and Cultural Change Among War-Displaced Southern Sudanese Women**

**Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf**

#### **Appendices: Excerpts from Life Histories of Women in Izzbba**

##### **Joice Yatta**

Yatta was 13 years old when she came to Khartoum from Juba in 1993. When she arrived, she found work, was married, and had children. She remembered her pre-war life fondly compared to her life after arrival in Khartoum, in which she encountered financial problems, and was unable to provide her family with food or health care. Yatta's husband had maintained full authority in her family, and she had no decision-making power.

Yatta lived in an area with friends but far from her relatives, and had been unable to maintain her traditional birth ceremonies and dress. A Fujulu Christian from Yei, she had been able to maintain her language, as well as marriage, birthday, burial, and child-naming traditions. Her children spoke Arabic. She had no interaction with Northerners and thus had neither learned of nor embraced their culture, with the exception of henna and arms and legs decorations. Yatta was aware of female circumcision, but said that only Southerners who married Northern Muslims practiced it, although she did not know of any. She did not feel that the cultural practices of others were her concern. She was troubled, however, with the segregation of religions, and the tendency to view the Southern Sudanese as third class people. With the pressing concerns of food, healthcare, and money bearing down on them, Yatta did not know what would happen to her family if they continued to live in Khartoum. She prayed that peace could come so that her family could return to their land in the South and live as they did before the war.

##### **Margaret Achan**

An Acholi Christian, Archan moved to Khartoum from Parajuk in 1994 with her family and relatives to escape the war. In Parajuk, where she worked as a clerk, she and her husband had been fully able to support their family on their combined salaries, and had no trouble educating

their children or interacting with other tribes in the South. Since her arrival, she struggled to support their family, brewing alcohol while her husband tried to find work in contracting. These problems were exacerbated by the fact that they had left behind much of their property, and by the additional expenses of schooling, which had been free in Parajok.

Since her move to Khartoum, Achan lived among friends but with few relatives. Despite that, she had maintained almost all of her cultural traditions with the exception of her dress and “sitting inside the fence.” She now used henna on her legs and hands, and had begun to use water for washing after she used the toilet. She interacted with Northerners through social gatherings such as marriages, funerals, birthdays, and hair-pleating. These interactions had taught her some of the Northern Sudanese cultural practices, but she did not accept them as part of her culture.

Achan had heard of female circumcision, but was unimpressed with it and its effects on women’s lives. She discouraged it because she felt that it harmed women, but knew of Southern women who were forced to adopt it by Muslim husbands. She was troubled by what she felt was religious discrimination and an attitude of superiority on behalf of the Muslim culture.

Achan’s husband was the head of the household, making decisions with her consultation. She had noticed, however, that the men in her tribes were sharing their decision-making authority with their wives more than in the past, and felt that she personally had more power than previously. Despite these changes, she felt that her new life was far more difficult, mainly due to financial concerns. She feared that her children would be unable to attain an education, and that those who would be educated would be completely indoctrinated into Islam. Achan felt that these pressing conditions necessitated mobilization of all Sudanese people, and of other countries, to address the suffering of the Southerners. Longing to go home, she felt that the only solution was peace.

## **Rebecca Alcec**

Alcec moved to Khartoum from Bor in 1990 with her husband and children to escape the war. A 28 year-old Dinka Christian, Alcec was forced to leave behind family, livestock, and her job as a clerk. Her father, an Executive Officer, was killed in the war. She described her life before the move as simpler, as her family was healthy and able to afford to buy what they needed.

After moving to Khartoum, Alcec found employment as a social worker, but began to feel neglected in her new surroundings, where her culture relegated her to third-class citizenship. She recalled being turned from her home repeatedly by Northern landlords. Alcec lived among friends and relatives and maintained all aspects of her cultural identity. She did not interact with Northerners and, although she had learned of some of their practices, she was not prepared to embrace them. She believed that female circumcision, in particular, was harmful to women. Although she knew of Southerners who adopted the practice, she felt that they were forced to do so by their Muslim husbands, who deceived them into believing that it was part of overall cleanliness, and who did not care about their wives' well being. Alcec believed that female circumcision was a misled attempt to correct God's way of making women.

Alcec was troubled by the way that Northerners treated Southerners, particularly the segregation of the two groups, and the religious superiority that she believed the Northerners felt. She also disagreed with the way that Northerners separated men from women in their homes. Alcec shared decision-making with her husband, something that she felt had changed since her grandparents' time, when women had no power.

### **Theodora Poni Moasa**

Moasa left Kajokaji Equatoria when she was 15, and has lived in Khartoum for 20 years. A Kuku Kajokaji Christian, she moved away from her relatives to be with her husband and has not seen her family since. She described her life before her move as far happier under the care of her family. Since her departure, she has been completely separated from her family, and lost her eldest child.

Although she lives in an area with other friends, her separation from her family has caused her to lose her cultural identity, and she has not been able to maintain any aspect of her culture. She has no interaction with Northerners and has not learned of any of their cultural practices, although she has heard of female circumcision. The health risks associated with female circumcision have given Moasa a very negative view of it, along with other practices that she believes have nothing to do with her. Moasa's husband has full decision-making authority in their household, which has not changed recently. Since her arrival in Khartoum, her life has been fraught with suffering, hunger, health problems, and poverty. She believes that continued residence makes "one wants death." Moasa desperately wants to meet the relatives that she was separated from 20 years ago, and hopes for peace so that she can go back to the South.

## **Rita Osho Odur Nyareth**

Nyareth moved to Khartoum alone to escape the war in 1989, when she was 28 years old. She is a married Christian with primary level education, and now works as a housekeeper. Her life since arrival in Khartoum has been exceedingly difficult and she has lost relatives due to separation and death. She resides in an area with many friends and has Northern neighbours whom she visits and invites to her home. She has been able to maintain her tradition of dressing, her foods, and some folklore, but has given up drinking and face tattoos for personal and religious reasons. She has learned of many Northern Sudanese cultures that she finds unacceptable, such as “Islamisation,” “enslavement” of southerners, and the style of dressing with a black veil that makes one “look like a devil.” She also rejects female circumcision, believing that it attempts to alter what God has made and should be stopped. She does not know any Southerners who have adopted it. Nyareth makes the decisions in her household only with her husband’s consent, and has noticed an increase in the amount that they discuss decisions.

Overall, Nyareth’s life in Khartoum has been “not bad,” due to her husband’s ability to provide for her. She considers staying, but wants to see her relatives. She is also concerned that she cannot work enough to help her husband. More than anything, Nyareth wants peace.

## **Nora Lako Mule**

Mule is 60 years old and has been separated from her husband since she departed Kopoeta in 1989 with her son. She works as a housekeeper, but relies on her grown children for support. She described life before the war as much better, but feels better being in Khartoum, away from the sounds of guns in Kopoeta. She lives far from other friends and relatives, but has been able to maintain her culture through food and occasional folk dances. She has given up alcoholic drinks, however, due to her commitment to Christianity. Since she was separated from her husband, she has maintained decision-making authority in her household, which she feels has given her a better life. She was, as she puts it, “at peace with [her husband].” Although she feels that her life has no pressing conditions, she misses her children who are working in the army, and makes do with the photos she has of them. When asked for an acceptable solution to the problems facing herself and others, she reflected that, although peace would bring some joy, death might be the only solution.

Mule has no interaction with Northerners, but has seen their practices, such as wearing hena, tobe, and a veil. With the exception of tobe, she



has not adopted these practices. She has heard of female circumcision but, like most other practices of the Northerners, she has no views on it and knows no Southern women who have adopted it.

### **Nyankwit Martin**

Martin, a Anywak Christian from the Bor region, moved to Khartoum from Malakal with her younger brother in 1990 because of the war. She recalled her pre-war experiences fondly, because of her closeness with her family and friends. Since her arrival to Khartoum, she found her new life with her husband, whom she married in Khartoum, and her children more difficult due to cultural and financial stresses. She considered her separation from her parents her greatest loss. She felt a separation from her culture, in large part because her geographic isolation from family and friends left her with no one with whom to practice her culture. She had since given up her traditional way of dressing, of getting and storing food in granaries, and of giving birth.

Martin described her contact with Northerners as limited to occasions such as birthdays, funerals, and markets. She had learned of many Northern Sudanese cultural practices but did not feel prepared to embrace them because they were not part of her way of life. She did note that some women did adopt these practices out of admiration for the style of life. Martin was aware of female circumcision, but felt that it was contrary to her culture and did not advocate it. She had heard of Southern Sudanese women who were forced by Muslim husbands to adopt the practice, but did not know of any personally. It was her view that Muslims segregated themselves, and she disagreed with the conversion of non-Muslim women to Islam, and the teaching of Islamic cultures while her culture was ignored.

In the past, Martin's husband had dominated the family's decision-making, but she noted that this had transformed into a more shared decision-making process. However, she found that there were new complexities in her life, such as providing her children with an education, transportation to school, and food. She was concerned that continued residence in Khartoum would present more obstacles to her children's education and cultural identity, as well as endangering their lives from the lack of food and medicine. The only acceptable solution to these problems, in her opinion, was peace.

### **Joyce Modong Kenyi**

Kenyi, a Kuku, Nilo-Hamite Christian, arrived in Khartoum in 1992 with her husband, children, and dependents. She fled Juba due to instability, leaving her home, her job as a school teacher in Juba, and

her relatives, many of who were subsequently killed in the war. When she arrived in Khartoum, she was unable to find a job for years. Kenyi had three more children and more dependants joined them, and her husband's student status was unable to support their financial and medical needs.

Since moving to Khartoum, Kenyi has lived among friends and family and has been able to maintain aspects of her cultural identity such as folk dancing, language, and certain traditions of marriage and death. They have been unable, however, to use animals in dowry due to poverty, and her children cannot speak her dialect well because of the heavy Islamic influence. Her family is learning Arabic and Kenyi interacts with the Northerners regularly through work and socially. Although Kenyi has learned Northern traditions such as the separation of men and women, or marriage among relatives, she does not intend to embrace these practices. Kenyi knows of some Southern women who have converted to Islam and have undergone female circumcision. She feels, however, that the practice is an abuse of God's creation, a health risk, and should be fought through enlightenment. The Northern Sudanese world, in her opinion, subjects women to inferior roles through isolation and discrimination.

Kenyi shares decision-making authority with her husband, although his decision is always final. She is currently working to support her family and to assist her relatives who are refugees. She hopes to improve her standard of living in order to create a more sustainable life for herself and her family, and is troubled by the lack of financial support available to educate her children and feed her family. She hopes for peace, so she can rejoin her family, and for freedom, "even in Khartoum."

### **Stella Dimitri Pio**

Pio left Kapoeta in 1990 with her sister when she was still a youth and a student. She is a Bari Nilo-Hamite Christian. Since her arrival she has had to give up school for marriage and work. She left her friends and relatives behind, including her father, who has since died. She lives in an area with friends and relatives, but has been unable to keep most aspects of her cultural life, with the exception of some foods. She believes that this is partly because she left her family too young to have learned her traditions. Pio shares decision-making authority with her husband, and they discuss all issues with each other.

Pio does not interact with Northerners, and has neither learned of nor attempted to embrace the Northern culture. Northerners, in her view, do not respect the Southerners or even consider them human, and would

prefer to control the Southern population. She has heard of female circumcision, but knows of no Southerners who have adopted it. Pio considers female circumcision contrary to her Christian beliefs. She is also troubled by other aspects of the Northern Sudanese culture that impact her life, such as the closing of eating establishments during Ramadan. She believes that Northerners discriminate against Southerners, denying them the right to their cultural and political practices.

Pio describes her life in Khartoum as happy, but at the same time feels that her life is not good, and wants to join her relatives in the South. She believes that until there is peace and separation from the North, the South will never be united.

### **Teddy Kiden**

Kiden, a Madi Christian, moved from Juba in 1999. The move was very difficult for Kiden, who had to leave her husband, relatives, and her job as a civil servant. She now struggles to support her children and dependents without a job or the aid of family or friends. Although Kiden's tradition gives men powering decision-making, she and her husband shared power when they were together. Now that they are separated, she makes her own decisions. Although she has maintained all aspects of her culture, she is lonely and struggling without her husband. She believes that she will suffer cultural losses, and that any education she might receive in Khartoum would be meaningless. Kiden views her life as one of constant war and suffering, and does not believe that it will improve in the future. Nor does Kiden know how to better her life; the war, she says, has disturbed her and she cannot foresee a way out. She does not interact with Northerners, who used to throw stones over her fence. Kiden has not learned any of their cultural practices and, although she has heard of female circumcision, she does not agree with it and knows no Southern women who adopt it. When asked, Kiden had nothing to comment about Northern culture.

### **Susan Samuel Wani**

Wani is a Bata Christian from Western Equatoria. She moved to Khartoum with her family, including two children, when she was only a teenager, separating from her family and leaving all her possessions to thieves. After her arrival in Khartoum, her mother died. Wani describes her life before the war as poor, but free, and finds life in Khartoum a constant struggle. She has no desire to remain in Khartoum, where she fears that her children's education will be lacking and that they will fall victim to social influences, such as drinking and smoking, that are

beyond her control. She prays for peace and for her children to remain tied to her culture.

Although she lives among neighbors and friends, Wani has given up much of her culture in order to devote herself to Christianity. While her husband makes most household decisions, when they disagree, they will refer to the Bible, and her husband will sometimes defer to her position. She chats with Northerners, but has learned little of their cultural practices, and resents the way that they treat Southerners like “pagans.” Wani believes that female circumcision is a sin, though she knows of a Southern woman who converted to Islam and adopted the practice.

### **Mary Dudu Kenyi**

Kenyi is an ethnic Kuku Christian who moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1999 with her elderly father and four children to join her husband. She describes her life before the war as “a simple life of peasantry” in a family village. In Khartoum, her family struggles for money and cannot afford food and water. In moving, she separated from her family and from one of her children, who died in Juba. She has since been joined by friends and family, but has nothing to offer them when they arrive. Although Kenyi attempts to preserve her culture by speaking her native language and practicing naming traditions and funeral rites, her community has been unable to maintain dancing and marriage traditions. She believes this is in part due to the suffering they endure; traditional dances are generally expressions of happiness.

Kenyi’s family interacts with Northerners on occasions, particularly through their children. She has learned about henna and female circumcision, which she does not believe in. She shares decision-making responsibilities with her husband but they each play specific roles; she decides what the family should eat and when she should visit friends and relatives, whereas he is responsible for providing them with shelter. She feels as if she has gained power in this relationship to some extent, particularly with regard to their children. The demands of life in Khartoum, however, have made her life considerably more difficult, and she believes that it will only become worse. She worries that her children will grow up uneducated and lacking any sense of cultural or familial identity. She hopes that peace, resettlement in the South, and reunification of families will help them solve these pressing problems.

### **Rejoice Juru Reremano**

Reremano left Juba in 1993 with her family and her brother’s children to escape the war, losing relatives and friends in the course of the flight.

A Kuku Christian who is married with children, Reremano left a happy life in the South, where food and necessities were easy to come by either through gardening or the market. Education was also free, and their children were given transportation to and from school. Since her arrival, life has been far more difficult, particularly since the distribution of relief food stopped. Reremano lives among friends, and has been able to maintain all aspects of her culture but has adopted the Northern practice of wearing a tobe or scarf over her head. Reremano and her husband share decision-making power; her husband is the “symbol of [the] household leader,” but no decision can be made unless he first consults her and she agrees to it.

Reremano does not interact with Northerners because, in her words, their lifestyles are incompatible and the Northerners do not associate with Southerners. Aside from the style of dress that she has adopted, she has not learned of Northern practices and does not wish to embrace them. She has heard of female circumcision but, having never known a circumcised woman, did not wish to comment on it when asked. Reremano does not feel that it is compatible with Christianity, and does not know from where the Muslims derived the practice, since she can’t recall it being in the Koran. She finds some aspects of the Northern culture unacceptable, such as the way that she felt Northerners segregate themselves from Southerners and refuse to allow intermarriage. She feels that these actions prevent interactions between the two cultures. Reremano’s deepest concerns are the education of her children and their hope for a future. She is concerned that they will eventually have to “surrender” to Islam. In her view, the only acceptable solution to these problems is peace.

### **Rose Dudu Samuel**

Samuel, a Kuku Christian, is married with seven children and one dependent and works at a small business enterprise. She moved to Khartoum with five children in 1997 to follow her husband, who was imprisoned for political reasons. Her move separated her from relatives (some of whom since died), friends, and all of her property. After moving to Khartoum, her life became much harder, particularly after her husband decided to marry a second wife. Although her burdens have increased, she notes that they are “struggling together.” She and her husband share decision-making power.

Samuel lives among friends and relatives, and has been able to maintain her marital, funeral, and folk dancing traditions. She has given up alcohol, in part due to religious commitment and in part due to the Islamic law in Khartoum that prohibits alcohol. She interacts with her Northern neighbors, and they help each other with “social issues.” She

has learned about henna and Northern marriage traditions, but has adopted nothing but wearing a tobe. She has also seen female circumcisions, but wants no part of it. She knows a Southern woman who adopted it, but only because she was “deceived.” Samuel also rejects other Northern practices, including foods, methods of personal cleanliness, and the veils women wear.

Samuel’s family struggles with financial troubles. In her words, “money solves everything in Khartoum.” She does not know what lies ahead for her, and can think of no solution to her problems.

### **Betty Achola Ruchico**

Ruchiro left Juba for Khartoum in 1988 with her husband and children, losing her husband and relatives, who died during the flight, and her home. Leaving what she describes as a better life in Juba, she struggles without her husband, attempting in vain to find work and selling smoked fish to support her family. She lives among friends and family and has been able to maintain all aspects of her cultural life, including dances, birth and funeral traditions, and alcoholic drinks. She has had no interaction with Northerners and has learned nothing of their culture or of female circumcision. She had nothing to comment about the Northerner lifestyle.

Since her husband died, Ruchiro has become the sole decision-maker in her family. She struggles to make a living in Khartoum, secretly making and selling alcoholic drinks in violation of the law. Her one hope for her future would be a free flight to Juba.

### **Mary Cirilo**

Cirilo left Juba with her five children in 1999 to seek treatment for an illness. Her life before and after her arrival in Khartoum has held a great deal of suffering. Her husband remains in Juba and much of her family has been killed in the South. She lives in an area with friends and relatives, and has devoted her life to the church, relinquishing many of her former traditions for her commitment to Christian religious values. When asked to describe how her life has changed she stated, “I am in the care of the Lord.”

Cirilo does not interact with Northerners and has not learned anything of their culture or of female circumcision. She makes all her household decisions because she is no longer living with her husband. When her husband joins her in Khartoum, she abides by his decisions, but when they are separated, she makes decisions with which he would agree. Her life has changed in so many ways that she cannot tell what is next, but is most troubled about her children’s education. The best solution

she can think of would be to stay in the village where her family could cultivate their own food.

### **Asha Gire Lodu**

Lodu, a Muslim, moved to Khartoum from Kajokeji with her children in 1997 to escape the war. Her husband and all of her brothers were killed in the war, and one of her children was abandoned on the road while fleeing. Her mother has also since died. Her life before the war was good—there was enough food for everyone. Since the war began, even when she is not afraid of dying in the crossfire, she suffers from financial troubles that have left her unable to educate or feed her children, or provide her family with health care. Since her husband's death, Lodu has been the sole decision-maker in her household. She lives in an area without friends or relatives close by, but has maintained her native language, foods, and birth ceremonies. She has not been able to maintain traditions such as cultivating her food, as there is no land available, or drinking alcohol, as the Islamic law in Khartoum prohibits it. Lodu converted to Islam after moving to Khartoum and has since adopted the prayer and fasting of the religion, since they are part of the Koran. She rejects female circumcision since it is not written in the Koran, and believes that God will question those Muslims that circumcise women. She knows women who have adopted it, but does not know their reasons. Lodu also rejects Northern practices such as hair removal and “smoking.”

Lodu struggles to feed her family, and described her life as “suffering.” She does not believe that she will be able to care for her children if she remains in Khartoum, and believes that their education and her health will suffer. Lodu's loneliness is as consuming as these other worries, and she describes herself as waiting for death. She believes the only possible solution is peace.

### **Susan Charles Yengi**

Yengi, an Acholi Christian, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1998 because of the war. The war forced her father to leave his job and ended her education. Since she arrived in Khartoum, she has had no education. She has lost her brother and all her property since moving to Khartoum, and lived with her husband and his relatives. Yengi's husband makes family decisions in consultation with her, and she believes that shared power works best. She has maintained cultural aspects such as birth traditions, dancing, and funeral traditions. However, they have given up alcohol due to Islamic laws against it, and she now covers her body and head with a scarf. She feels that there is no freedom in Khartoum to practice her own culture because Islamic

law is the law of Khartoum. Yengi interacts with Northerner neighbours, particularly at funerals, when there are neighbourhood problems, and to help each other when families have no salt. She has learned about their dress, henna, Dukhan, and about their general way of living. She is willing to embrace some Northern practices, but does not agree with Dukhan or female circumcision. She believes that female circumcision is unfair because it leads to suffering during childbirth, and can cause health problems if a doctor does not do it. She has one relative who married a Northerner, was circumcised, and now must undergo childbirth with a midwife and a doctor.

Yengi's life has deteriorated since the move, particularly since she finds it so hard to provide for her family and to educate her children. She believes that the law against making beer keeps the Southerners in poverty, since jobs are so scarce and this is their only way to make money. She is searching for other means with which to support her children and to provide them with an education, transportation to school, and medical treatment. She hopes that peace will come, that the South and North will separate, and that everyone will be able to go back to their villages.

### **Susie Pito Mikaya**

Mikaya, a student, came to Khartoum in 1996 from Juba when civil strife in the South became unbearable. She describes her life before the war as excellent, with work and food available to everyone. Since her move, she has had a hard time adjusting; she has trouble finding money, food, and transportation, and even in adjusting to the extreme weather. Her life improved after she was relocated to a displacement camp.

Mikaya left behind most of her belongings when she left Juba with her parents and siblings. Although her husband has formal decision-making power, her power has increased as "democracy is the basic unit of the country, i.e., family." She no longer feels confined to only childbearing and kitchen duties, and participates fully in running the family.

Since her arrival in Khartoum, Mikaya has been joined by relatives and friends, and lives near them in Khartoum. She still speaks her native language, goes to church, cooks her traditional food, and maintains dancing and singing traditions. However, she no longer is able to make alcoholic drinks under Islamic law, and is no longer able to marry freely, since Muslims only marry other Muslims. She interacts very little with Northerners and has learned very little of their culture, although she is willing to try the Arabic language and wearing a tobe. Mikaya learned about female circumcision from some of the



Southerners she knows, but overall has a negative feeling about it. She does not think that southerners have adopted it because she feels that some already practice it as part of their tribal culture, but noted that a few Southerners adopted it when they embraced Islam as their religion. Mikaya is troubled by many Northern practices, such as hand-washing after meals, only marrying within the religion, and their way of calling non-Muslims “infidels.”

Mikaya’s hope for the future is that the troubles that keep her in Khartoum are removed from the South, and stability is restored. Her husband has been unable to find a good job; his meager salary barely lasts through the month, and she has no money for her children’s education or any recreational activities. Mikaya wants to provide for her family, but also dreams of giving them a life beyond necessity. She remarked that since her arrival, she had been unable to do something as simple as take a trip to the zoo. For now, she wants something as simple as a well-paying job. Mikaya noted all the things in Khartoum available to those with money, “There is plenty of food in the market; what is lacking is money. And there are also good schools in Khartoum which if you have enough money [you] will be able to send your children to it.”

### **Sira Erosa**

Erosa is a Moru Christian who left Juba with her children in 1998 to follow her husband, a student at the time. Erosa recalls the time before the war as being far easier; her family could feed itself from its garden, and water was free. She left behind her job as a nurse, her household, and her relatives, some of whom have joined her in Khartoum. Since her arrival, she has noticed that everything has a price, and is unable to care for her children with her limited resources.

Erosa lives in an area with friends and relatives. Although she continues to cook her traditional food, she has given up her birth ceremonies. It has been difficult to maintain aspects of her culture, in part because her husband is from a different tribe. Erosa has contact with Northerners through her new job as a nurse, and in her neighbourhood. She has learned about, and is prepared to accept, practices such as wearing henna and a tobe. However, as a medical staff member, she believes that female circumcision is bad. She does not know any Southern Sudanese women who have adopted it. In addition, Erosa disagrees with Northern divorce practices.

Although Erosa’s husband makes most household decisions, she has gained more power as of late. She does not, however, want to stay in Khartoum. Her husband is unemployed and her salary is not enough to

provide for their children. She believes that all men should be employed and that women should have more assistance.

### **Letisia Baaniba Karasit**

Karasit's life before the war was simple but happy. She left Nyala for Khartoum in 1996 to look for work as a laborer. Since then, only two of her nine children have survived. She has been joined by relatives and friends and, living among them, has been able to maintain birth ceremony traditions and folk dancing. She has not maintained traditions with witch doctors or the customs after bearing twins, mainly due to church commitments.

Karasit interacts with her Northerner neighbours, and has learned about henna, "smoking" the body, and dilka (body scrub), among other customs. She is prepared to embrace these customs, but does not believe in female circumcision, which she has heard can have detrimental effects during childbirth. She also disagrees with the Muslim religion, believes that Northerners divorce too easily, and she does not agree with the tradition of women wearing black veils to cover their face.

Karasit's husband makes the decisions in her household. She recently gave him a book about the rights of women, and has noticed that she now has more power in the family. But when she takes this power, he becomes depressed. Karasit is constantly worried about her life. She does not know of another place better than Khartoum, and relies on her husband to determine their family's future. But she worries about her children's education. She prays to God and believes He will provide.

### **Charity Ebere Amosa**

Amosa left Juba in 1994 to follow her husband, who had moved to Khartoum to study. She left all her relatives and property behind, as well as her job as a civil servant. Since her arrival in Khartoum, she has been unable to find a job and brews beer illegally in order to sustain herself, her husband, their three children, and three dependents. Amosa does not live near friends or family. Although she still cooks some traditional food and speaks her native tongue, she has forgotten much of her culture since marrying into a different tribe. She does not interact with Northerners and pays no attention to their culture. Although she has heard a small amount about female circumcision, she disagrees with it and does not know any Southern women who have adopted it.

Amosa makes most household decisions, and her power in household affairs has grown. However, her life also sees far more suffering than in the days before the war, during which she was a student and very happy.

Her most pressing problems are finding enough food for her family each day. She longs to go back to Juba, or to have enough money to survive in Khartoum.

### **Alice Mondong**

Mondong remembers her life before the war fondly. She lived with her tribe and had strong ties with its people. Dances were organized regularly, and people moved between villages attending celebrations. There was enough food for everyone who needed it, and education was free for children.

Mondong left Juba in 1993 because of the war, losing touch with her family. She now struggles to provide her family with food and education, and to find basic transportation to attain these needs. She lives in an area with friends, but no relatives, and attempts to maintain her traditions. However, she finds it difficult to maintain her mother tongue (her children cannot speak her language) or perform traditional dances, since most of the men are absent. She now wears a tobe and scarf to cover her body and head to conform to life in Khartoum society.

Mondong interacts with Northerners regularly, in social interactions such as marriages, children's birthdays, or sometimes just socializing over coffee with other women. She has learned about their use of henna on the legs, feet, and hands, smoking (dukhan), and customs such as Agid marriage (religious wedding), and the 40 day rituals after birth or death. She maintains, however, that dressing is the only custom that she is prepared to embrace.

Mondong has also learned about two forms of female circumcision: phoromi and sumi. She considers phoromi, which is far more extreme and involves the removal of the entire clitoris, far worse because of the complications it can cause during childbirth. She believes that female circumcision should be discouraged because it perpetuates a view of women as valueless, and spoils God's creation. Mondong knows some Southern women who have adopted it, who either have Muslim fathers or have married a Muslim.

Mondong's husband is the head of the household, and she has not gained any power in decision-making. Her life has changed drastically, however, in becoming a displaced person. She cannot find work, and she fears that she will be imprisoned or fined for making and selling beer. Mondong hopes for peace, so that everyone in Khartoum can return to his or her own village.

## Lucia Mondong Gordon

Gordon, her husband, children, and relatives left Juba in 1987 with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Before the war, she enjoyed a life of free movement, in which she enjoyed cultural activities, such as dances. In Khartoum, she lives among friends and relatives, and has maintained certain aspects of birth and death traditions, and baby-naming. However, she has found herself unable to preserve her language, and without the money to maintain certain birthday and funeral traditions. She finds it particularly hard to maintain her culture with her tribe separated, and living among another culture. During Ramadan she struggles to find food and water.

Gordon has few interaction with Northerners. She believes that the Northerners look down on Southern culture, refusing to come to their celebrations, and resorting to lies to assimilate Southerners and convert them to Islam. She says that she has learned of practices such as the use of henna and smoking the body because Northerners try to get Southerners to adopt their practices. Gordon believes that, aside from the Northern dress, these practices are incompatible with her culture, and she does not intend to adopt them. She learned about female circumcision as a community health worker, working with midwives. She notices the difficulties that circumcised women faced in childbirth due to excessive bleeding and shock. As a Southerner, Gordon does not accept the practice, particularly since delivery is done without a midwife in her culture, which is impossible if the female is circumcised. While Gordon knew of many Southerners who adopted female circumcision, she maintained that the majority did not. She believed that the only women who adopted it were those who had no knowledge of circumcision but were daughters of men bribed to convert to Islam, or women who married Muslims and were forced to undergo the procedure.

Many other aspects of the Northern culture struck Gordon as unacceptable, such as the use of a “witch doctor” in marriage ceremonies, and the belief in “magic rather than pure love God has made.” She also disagreed with the traditions requiring ceremonies 40 days after childbirth or death. She also cited a cultural practice of cooking Balila (chickpeas) and giving it to children.

Gordon’s husband makes the decisions in her household, but recently she has gained more power. She now shares in decision-making with her husband because of what she described as “a change of life towards [the] gender issue.” However, her life has suffered greatly as a result of her move to Khartoum. It is difficult to find transportation, food, water, and medical treatment. Gordon worried that they will not be able to afford to educate their children. She worries that Southerners will be moved as a

whole to areas where there is no education and a total breakdown of life. Another pressing condition facing her people is the inability to find land on which to live, particularly with their lack of money. It is very hard for Southerners to start a business, and making beer is illegal in Khartoum. She wants all parties to the war to come together to reach a peaceful solution. Without peace, she is certain that the suffering of the Southerners will only increase.

### **Susan Pani Lubaya**

Before she fled to Khartoum “running from guns,” Lubaya worked in Juba as a cleaner for the Ministry of Education. Forced to leave her household and husband behind, she thought she was running to a safe haven, but when she arrived in 2000 she found herself in even worse conditions. She now lives among relatives and friends, but had given up her traditional culture for her commitment to the Christian Church. Lubaya has no interaction with Northerners and has learned nothing of their culture or of female circumcision. Living alone, she still abides by the decisions of her husband when she can, but also says that they share power in decision-making.

Lubaya spends her days in constant anxiety and suffering. She believes that continued residence in Khartoum will destroy her conscience of being. She wants only peace and to go back to the South.

### **Josphine Nairobi Jarvasio**

Jarvasio and her family had a good life in Juba before the war. Her salary as a nurse, combined with her husband's, provided enough for her family, and they had an active social life. She left for Khartoum with her two children in 1997 to join her husband, who had left earlier, leaving behind her relatives, property, and animals. Although she resides among friends, she is very lonely without her relatives. Jarvasio has been able to maintain her folk dancing and some birth and funeral rites. She has had to stop making alcoholic drinks to comply with the law, and she cannot cultivate land or keep animals because they have no land. She has also given up some traditional foods because they now lack the money to buy ingredients such as milk.

Jarvasio has no interaction with Northerners, but has learned of some practices such as using henna, face veils, hijab, and tobe. She wears a tobe to conform to legal requirements. She learned about female circumcision from her nursing job. She has had to treat cases of infection, and believes that the practice should be stopped. Jarvasio also disagrees with Northern

practices such as wearing dark veils, smocking the body, and dressing with the hijab.

Jarvisio's husband makes most household decisions, but her authority has increased. Still, her life in Khartoum is not what she had hoped. The food that her family survives on is not enough to keep them healthy, and her children's education is suffering. Like so many other women in Khartoum, she hopes for peace to solve these problems.

### **Hamil Phozia Lado**

Lado arrived in Khartoum in 1990 with her husband, who is a Northerner. A Bari Christian from Juba, she remembers her life before the war fondly, when her family cultivated peacefully and was free to move. In her move, she lost this life, her freedom, and contact with her relatives, except for one family of relatives that live near her. As a married woman in Khartoum, she finds her life full of worries, such as finding enough food for her family. She has maintained birth ceremonies and certain customary rites, but has lost certain rituals. In particular, she has not been able to receive the customary blessing from her relatives ten years after having her last child, since her family is in Juba and she does not know how to do it.

Marriage to a Northerner has brought Lado into close contact with the Northern culture. She has adopted birth ceremony customs, marriage ceremonies, henna, keberet (perfumes), and others. She has also heard of female circumcision, and knows of Southern women who have married Moslems and undergone it, but she is not circumcised and does not support it. Her husband has agreed that if they have a daughter, she will not be circumcised. She also disagrees with Northern traditions such as wearing tobe, and the social status of women in the family. Although Lado's husband makes most decisions, sometimes she is able to enforce her own decisions over her husband's will.

Lado has noticed friction between her Southern family and her husband's family, who are Arabs. Her husband, however, supports her, and believes that their marriage is God's will. Lado worries that, although her existence in Khartoum is not problematic, should peace come repatriation will create a problem in her family. She wants to see her family, however, and believes that peace will solve most of their problems.

### **Rebecca Nyaluak Peter**

Peter was 18 years old when she was interviewed. She was born in Khartoum and had never seen the South. Married with one child, Peter had no pre-war experience to recount. Her life in Khartoum, however, was not

good. She had not seen her mother since 1993 and had no idea where she was. She was raised under the care of her grandfather, since the war cost her contact with both parents and her education. She has not been joined by other relatives and lives in an area without friends or relatives. She was unable to learn of or maintain any part of her culture.

Peter has contact with Northerner neighbours, and has adopted the practice of applying henna. She has heard little of female circumcision, but does not believe that it is good and knows of no Southern women who have adopted it. Peter also disagrees with Northern practices such as smoking the body, and wearing a black veil. She alone makes household decisions, and her husband respects them.

Although she describes her life as happy, Peter does not want to continue her life in Khartoum. She wants the war to end and the people to have freedom of movement, so she can see her relatives.

### **Teresa Mojwok Nyon**

Nyon, a 30-year-old Christian, moved from Malakal with her sister in 1994 to escape the war. She is married, with four children and eight dependents. She describes her life even before the war as difficult, mainly due to the death of her father when she and her sister were very young. In a way, life in Khartoum has been better for her because it has allowed her to escape the violence of the war. Though she has suffered from separation from her relatives, many of whom have died, and has lost her family's farm and livestock, she is able to live a good life with her husband, who makes the household decisions. Many additional relatives have joined her in Khartoum, and she lives in an area with family and friends. She has been able to maintain all aspects of her culture, such as food, dressing, and birth ceremonies.

Nyon interacts with her Northerner neighbors, attending their birthday celebrations. She has learned about henna, the tobe, and is prepared to embrace these customs. She has also heard a small amount about female circumcision, but knows no Southern women who have adopted it. She believes it is unacceptable, along with practices such as smoking the body.

Nyon believes that she has never experienced happiness, and will never feel happy. She wants to see her parents, introduce them to her husband, and have them bless their marriage. She often cries for them, and hopes to one day locate them and be united.

## **Olga Eunice Odera**

Odera is a Christian Acholi who moved to Khartoum from Tonit-Tusa in 1993. She is a graduate of Educational College and continues to work as a teacher in Khartoum, although finding a job can be difficult due to language differences. She is divorced with two children and four dependents.

War has brought Odera many problems. She lost her job, household, and land in moving to Khartoum, where she found herself living alone and helpless with her children while their father was held in the war zone for over three years. She lived as a displaced person in shanty areas where it was difficult to get transportation to see relatives and friends or to get health services. Due to the difficulty in obtaining a job, she was in an economic crisis trying to provide for her family.

Odera has maintained aspects of her culture such as traditional dances, marriage rituals, and funerals ceremonies, and she speaks some of her dialect for religious activities. However, she has lost the freedom to brew and drink alcohol, and she no longer uses or teaches her dialect publicly, out of fear. She believes that living in a new culture has made her people feel inferior, and that the Northerners think that they are valueless to God. Odera finds the Northerners to be untrustworthy and concerned with wealth. She thinks they do not have self-control toward women, and disagrees with the way that women are made to sit at home alone. However, she appreciates their unity as a culture and as families who help each other, and the way that they greet each other and speak without fear. Odera has learned about female circumcision, but believes that it should be abolished because of the complications it can cause during childbirth, menstruation, sexual intercourse, and sports activities. She believes that God made women a certain way for a reason. Odera knows of a few Southern women who have adopted it to fit into the community or because of intermarriage. She also disagrees with male circumcision, and of Northern customs such as smoking the body.

Husbands ordinarily make the decisions in Odera's culture, but since she is alone she makes her own decisions. Whereas she previously wrote her husband to ask him to tell her what to do, her education and her responsibility as the sole provider for her family have given her the ability to exercise more power. She no longer believes that women should adopt a passive role.

Odera's life has changed dramatically since her move to Khartoum, and she has many fears about the future. She is concerned that her children will grow up with a lack of respect for her and her cultural values. She is also concerned that the adults in her community will lose their cultural



values such as respect for in-laws, that immorality will continue to increase, and that they will forget their language. She hopes that women will cease to be seen as “half human.” Specifically, Odera wants women to have freedom of movement and safety, and to be employed as men are and given the same safety at work. She does not feel secure in Khartoum.

Odera proposed many possible solutions to these problems. Most importantly, she wants the people of Khartoum to ask themselves difficult questions about the use of cultural law and why so many of them are conforming their beliefs and culture. She believes that her people need to face the community and its problems for the sake of the next generation.

### **Joyce Achiro Marchello**

After her father died, Marchello could not go to school but could not find work. The war has brought even more suffering, as she, her mother, and two sisters were forced to move to Khartoum in 1994 to live with her uncle. She has learned nothing of her culture but her language, which she has maintained in Khartoum. She has had a child with a Northern man, and has learned of some Northern practices such as henna, some foods, and female circumcision. She does not agree with the practice of female circumcision, and knows no Southern women who have undergone it. Other practices, such as dukhan and Kujur (witch-craft), also strike her as unacceptable.

Marchello is now married to a Southerner with whom she has four children. Although her husband makes most household decisions, Marchello makes the decisions whenever he is away. She describes her life as very difficult, and cannot imagine a continued residence in Khartoum. She is concerned about the education of her children and their health, and longs for peace and to leave Khartoum.

### **Agnes Nana Manase**

Manase moved to Khartoum in 1989 with her husband and father-in-law to escape the war. She left behind her job as a labourer, her household, and her relatives. Her life now faces difficulties on a much larger scale: her husband is out of work and her job as a nurse is not enough to feed her children and provide for their education. Living among some friends and relatives, she has been able to maintain aspects of her culture such as birth and funeral ceremonies, but has done away with practices such as witchcraft.

Manase has Northerner neighbours and workmates, and has learned of customs, such as wearing a tobe, through them. Although she is not prepared to embrace these customs, she believes that her people have been

forced to do so by Islamic law and the conditions of the weather. She believes that female circumcision should be forbidden due to its dangerous health consequences, and because it is against the will of God. She knows of no Southerners who have adopted it. Manase also disagrees with Northern practices such as “Islamisation” (forcing others to practice Islamic traditions). She believes that Northerners are liars and racists who will marry Southern women but refuse to allow their daughters to marry Southern men.

In Manase's family, her decision-making power has increased recently. Her life, however, faces many difficulties as her family struggles with financial problems. She fears that her family may separate, that she will lose touch with her relatives, and that her children will not have a future. Her husband's joblessness and drinking have also become pressing problems for her, and she believes that their many frustrations have led them to such bad habits. Manase believes that if the war could only end, they could once again have the freedom to return to their simple life.

### **Anchor Deig**

Before the war, Deig lived comfortably with her tribe, attained a university-level education, and never expected to have to move to the North to escape the war. Watching many of the poorer citizens die, Deig left for Khartoum with her husband and children in 1986. Upon their arrival, they faced enormous obstacles in finding housing, feeding the family and finding drinking water and transportation. After remaining in Khartoum for five months, her husband found a job and they moved into a house, which brought them some relief from their troubles. She also lives among friends and relatives, and has maintained all of her tribal culture as a dinka, making sure that she teaches it to her children. In accordance with Dinka ways, Deig's husband makes all household decisions. Although she does not believe that she has more power now, when Christianity became a part of her culture she began to share some power with her husband, and is thankful for the change.

Deig interacts with Northerners socially, taking tea and coffee with them, borrowing household items, and making trips to the market together. She has learned about henna, smoking the body, and how to prepare Northern foods, but she is not prepared to embrace any of these traditions. She has a negative view of female circumcision and does not know of any Southern women who have adopted it. She also disagrees with the Muslim religion, their refusal to allow Muslim girls to marry Christian boys, and with women smoking their bodies.

Deig's family still struggles to provide their children with education and to find transportation. She is concerned that no one seems to have an idea

what the future of Sudan will be. She believes that this is a question for all the people of Sudan, not just the Southerners, but that the Southerners will continue to suffer more because their children risk losing their culture and education. She is worried that, as a result, her children will become enslaved in the current situation without any tie to their past and without any future. She believes that in order to solve these problems, Sudan needs peace.

### **Loice Awate Jamba**

Before the war, Jamba, a Kakwa Christian, lived with her tribe and all of her family in a life that she described as free and easy. Her father owned a shop, and was able to provide for her family. However, the war forced Jamba and her husband to leave Yei and come to Khartoum. During her flight and after her arrival, Jamba suffered the losses of her family and possessions. Fortunately, Jamba's husband was able to find a job as a teacher in one of the schools for the displaced. However, rent and transportation are still problematic, and his salary is very low. Jamba lives among both friends and relatives, and has been able to maintain aspects of her culture such as traditional dances, and birthday and funeral rituals. She has had to change her manner of dress, her language, and her toilet customs to conform to the culture in which she lives.

Jamba has Northern friends who have taught her to use henna on her legs and hands, and taking coffee. She has learned about smoking the body but has not taken it up. She has also rejected female circumcision, which she believes undermines God's work. She knows Southern whom who have practiced it, but only those who are Muslim. She also disagrees with the Islamic restriction on brewing beer.

Jamba's husband makes decisions in her family, and she has not gained any power in this process. Her life in Khartoum has been manageable but difficult, and she is concerned that continued residence will allow the government to convert Southerners to Islam. She believes that the most pressing conditions she faces are political, and have to do with the government enforcing cultural conformity. Jamba wants to solve these problems through peace or separation.

### **Josphine Opio Kenyi**

Kenyi moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1995 with relatives because she could no longer receive an education in the South. Her life in Khartoum is very hard and expensive, and Kenyi struggles to find transportation. She teaches her children her dialect and traditional culture and religion. She has friendly interactions with Northerners and knows of Southerners who have intermarried. She has learned about their commitment to Islam,

family, and business. Kenyi has also learned about female circumcision and that it can cause problems during childbirth. She disagrees with the notion of changing God's work, but knows other Southerners who have undergone it when converting to Islam. Kenyi also disagrees with the ways that Northerners reject marriage with other Southerners and will only intermarry with each other.

Kenyi's husband makes household decisions, and does not believe her indigenous society should be changed, as it is God's will. Throughout all the problems that she has faced, her education remains her greatest motivation in life. She knows the world is full of problems, and believes that there are many ways to look at the current situation in Sudan. She believes that one solution is to put her mind to use and learn a skill, and to think of ways to face problems with ideas.

### **Alice Badi**

Before the war, Badi had a good life with her family. An Avukaya Christian, she had finished her primary school education and was in secondary school. However, she was forced to flee the war in 1995, and her uncle brought her to Khartoum, which ended her education. At first they stayed with their relatives, but when the relief food stopped, life became far more difficult, and they were forced to live as displaced persons. Badi married in 1999. She lives in an area with friends and relatives and, because she married one of her own tribesman, she has been able to maintain her cultural life and traditions, though she has been obliged to adopt the Northern manner of dress. Badi interacts socially with Northerners on occasions such as marriages, funeral rites, and market days. She has learned about practices such as burying dead bodies, traditional dances, and marriage ceremonies. She will not adopt these practices, however. Badi has also heard about female circumcision, but believes that it is wrong. She believes that it goes against God's creation of women, and causes women to suffer. She knows of one Southern woman who was forced to adopt it after marrying a Northerner. Badi believes that "[the] woman is always a victim of any culture of a man's origin." She rejects female circumcision, along with the burial rites, and how Northern Muslims "always look to [the] religious point of view."

In Badi's household, her husband makes decisions with his wife's consultation. Badi struggles with her new responsibilities as a wife and mother, and often feels she cannot meet its demands, particularly with no means of getting money. Without being able to buy the necessities for her children such as food and transportation, she fears that they will not really feel as if they have parents. She hoped to leave Khartoum and escape the problems of high rent, costly education and transportation, the assimilation of her children, the intermarriage of the girls of their tribe, and the loss of

their native language among the children of her tribe. Her most pressing concerns are for her children. She worries that they will lose their culture and not know who they are and where they come from. The only acceptable solution to her is to bring peace to Sudan and to let the Sudanese people enjoy freedom in their own towns and villages.

### **Margaret Mondong**

Mondong and her children followed her husband, a student, to Khartoum in 1996. Before the war, her family had enjoyed a happy life, and her husband earned a good salary as a bookkeeper. Her children had been receiving a good education in Comboni schools. Life in Khartoum has been more difficult. Housing is expensive, and it is difficult to find enough money for food, her children's education, and basic transportation. Mondong left all her relatives and property behind in Juba. She is a Lokoya Christian, and has been able to maintain all aspects of her culture except her manner of dress, adapting to Khartoum law by covering her head. She lives, however, among people of her own tribe, and thus has learned nothing about Northern culture or female circumcision. Mondong's husband makes household decisions, in accordance with Lokoya tradition, in which this is a sign that a woman respects her husband a great deal. She has noticed that Christian norms have changed her culture, and encouraged women to participate in family decisions. This has resulted in an increase in respect and honor between husbands and wives, rather than a change in the power distribution.

While Mondong's life has taken on increased hardships since her arrival in Khartoum, Mondong measures her life according to the means available to live, and her resources are limited in Khartoum. She is concerned that continued residence in Khartoum will cause her tribe to abandon or lose contact with its culture. Her people attempt to teach their children about their culture, but often find it impossible to compete with the Islamic culture taught to them in school. She feels that her problems are the problems of all displaced people, that they are, "drinking in the same pot" and that the only acceptable solution to these complicated issues is peace.

### **Rose Poni**

A Kuku Christian, Poni moved to Khartoum with her children and some family members in 1997, following her husband. The most marked contrast between her life before and after the war is her separation from her family, which has made her life much more difficult. She arrived in Khartoum without any property, having been chased from Kojokeji, and she now struggles to feed her children and to provide for their education. She now lives close to friends, although without any relatives, but is able to maintain all aspects of her cultural life. She has learned about Northern

traditions such as burning the Bokue, using hena, birth traditions, and female and male circumcision, although she is not prepared to embrace any of these practices. She believes that female circumcision causes suffering to women and is a violation of human rights. Poni also rejects Northern practices such as their segregation from Southerners, what she deemed “religious superiority,” and their treatment towards women, which she described as indicating that women were of less value than men. In Poni’s family, the husband’s word is final but decisions are made with the input of both husbands and wives. She has noticed the wife’s power increasing, as household decisions have become something to be shared and agreed upon.

Poni worries that remaining in Khartoum will bring more and more hardships to her family. Islamic law has been difficult for her to live under, particularly as a woman. She cannot provide for her family, and must rely on her husband to ensure that her children can eat. She hopes for peace, so that her people can go home, where they can feed their children, provide them with education, health care, and freedoms of religion and expression.

### **Monika Konyun**

Konyun’s life before the war was simple. A Nyangara, her social life among her people was good, and her family was able to afford the things it needed. She left Juba in 1998 with her children to escape the war, leaving behind all her property, including a home, livestock, and clothing. Her husband has been unable to find work in Khartoum, and Konyun has to work very hard to find ways to provide food and education for her children. She has been able to maintain traditions such as dances, funeral ceremonies, burial performance, marriage ceremonies, and naming children. She has not, however, been able to maintain her means of dressing, her traditional food, and marriage ceremonies, due to the environment in which she lives. Konyun has limited interaction with Northerners in the market, at school, getting water, and during funerals and burials, but has learned little of their culture. She believes that female circumcision is a brutal way to treat a woman, mainly because of its harmful effects during birth. She also disagrees with the way that Northerners segregate themselves from Southerners, and force Southern women to convert to Islam when they marry Muslim men.

Konyun’s husband acts as the head of their family, but makes decisions with his wife. The two of them share this power, working together for the good of the family. They struggle to feed their children and provide them with an education and basic transportation. She is also worried that she will be arrested for making Aragi and tea. She fears that the “Islamisation

program” of Khartoum will wear her family down. Konyun believes that peace is necessary in order to solve these problems.

### **Roda Joseph**

Joseph left Rumbak in 1994 because of the war, fleeing with only her husband and children. Her family left most of their property behind. She has found adjustment to life in Khartoum very difficult. Although able to maintain cultural aspects such as language and rituals for marriage, birthdays, and burials, she has had to change her manner of dress and her food. In addition, she has been unable to brew beer or tea because she fears punishment under Islamic law.

Joseph does not interact with Northerners because of cultural differences, and thus has learned little of their traditions. She knows very little about female circumcision, but believes that it violates the way God meant women to be. She also disagrees with practices such as henna decorations, and the way women are treated as having little value. In Joseph’s family, she and her husband share decision-making power, but her husband is the head of the household. Joseph believes that Christian influence has led to increased overall power sharing.

Joseph fears that continued residence in Khartoum will be harmful to their children, and that she will lose them to the Islamic culture that she believes is indoctrinated into them in school and through the foods that are available for them to eat. She has barely enough money to provide for her family, and does not know how to solve these problems. Joseph believes that the only possible solution is peace.

### **Mary Wilson**

Before the war, Wilson enjoyed a life close to her family, where food and money were not a problem. In 1998, after having been shot, she was forced to flee Lanya alone due to the war, leaving her family and all her possessions behind. After arriving in Khartoum, she joined her brother, but found food and housing difficult to obtain. She is currently divorced. Prior to the divorce, her husband made all household decisions.

Wilson has maintained all aspects of her culture. She has little interaction with Northerners, and does not know anything about female circumcision. Since moving to Khartoum, Wilson has encountered many financial difficulties, and she is concerned that the children of her culture will adopt Islamic culture. She longs to return to her parents but cannot do this until there is peace.

## **Wilma Bukwan**

Bukwan describes her life both before and after the war as one of suffering. Prior to the war, she was struggling to provide for herself, but had no education and thus could not find a job. Since moving to Khartoum in 1998 with her husband and children to escape the war, she has found it difficult to support her family, having left behind her relatives and what wealth she had. A Shilluk Dolep Christian, she has been able to maintain some aspects of her culture such as dress and foods, but has given up face tattoos, folk dances, and making drinks, mainly due to their financial constraints and to social barriers (there are no experts in facial tattoos in Khartoum). She has interaction with Northern neighbors, but has not learned anything about their culture or about female circumcision. She feels that Northerners look down on her religion.

Bukwan and her husband share decision making in her household, just as they always have. Though her life is difficult, she continues to pray and wait for God's Providence. She fears that her children's education will suffer if she remains in Khartoum, and that her husband will be unable to find work or money. If there is a way out of Khartoum, or to see her relatives, Bukwan intends to take it.

## **Macellina Lonardo**

Lonardo moved from Nyala to Khartoum alone in 1992. Her life in Khartoum is difficult and she has not been able to maintain any cultural practices there. A Madi Christian, she knows nothing about Madi culture because she was not raised in the South. Lonardo has studied with Northerners and has Northern friends. She has learned about henna, dukhan, dilka, and hair dressings. Although she adopted these practices for a while, now that she has moved to Khartoum she has dropped them because she lives in a Southern society. Her parents discouraged female circumcision, and so she has grown up with the understanding that it is not good. She knows Southerners who adopt it who were "between Islam and Christianity" and "pretending to be Muslims." Lonardo also strongly disapproves of the Northerner's attitude toward Southerners and non-Muslims, and disagrees with their intermarriage of relatives. Lonardo and her husband share decision-making power. She described her life as "not bad," and added "God is providing." She is concerned, however, that her children are losing their cultural identity in Khartoum, and is worried by the number of youth she sees misbehaving. She posed many possible solutions to these problems, such as community enlightenment, the creation of more income-generating activity for the poor, organized entertainment activities, parental involvement in the educational process, and having religious organizations take an active role in educating people both spiritually and morally.



## **Nora Poni Noah**

Noah, a 27-year-old Achoh Christian, moved to Khartoum from Torit in 1992. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she was a bookkeeper; now she is a housewife. Noah left behind all her relatives in the South and moved with her children and husband because of the war situation in Southern Sudan. Her pre-war experiences were characterized by her and her husband's work in the government in the South. Rebels overran Torit in 1990, and things became so bad for Noah that she and her husband decided to leave. After her arrival in Khartoum, she suffered rougher conditions as a displaced person, but notes that food was not a problem to obtain; instead, her problems include rent, education for her children, and transportation. Noah incurred losses on all of her properties, and does not know what happened to her relatives. She does not even know if they are alive or dead, since she has not heard from them since 1990. She is homesick sometimes, as nobody moved with her, and nobody joined her after departure, but she lives in an area with friends.

Aspects of cultural life that she maintains include: dance, language, naming of children, and celebration of her children's birthdays. She is not able to maintain traditional modes of dress, as she is forced to wear a scarf to cover her head, as well as tobies. Also, she has forsaken the use of water when going to the bathroom, but has adopted henna. It is difficult to maintain her culture due to the new environment and the culture of its people. Her interaction with Northerners is primarily through formal occasions like marriage, death, and funeral rites. She learned some of the cultural practices relating to these occasions, but is not prepared to embrace any of them. She considers female circumcision to be against a woman's dignity, but knows of some Southerners who adopt it. These Southerners adopt it, she says, because they marry Northerners who are Muslim, and are converted to Islam and have to obey everything the man says. Other practices that strike her as unacceptable are religious discrimination, as well as indoctrination of Arab culture. While her husband is the primary decision maker in her household, she notes that today both the women and men share decision-making responsibility. Life for Noah today is not as free as before, and what is especially harsh is the lack of money, which limits access to education, transportation, a healthy diet, and so on. She worries that she will fail in her struggle to educate her children and that they will be converted to Islam. The only solution to her problems consists of an end to the war, so that she can go home.

## **Reida Peter Samuel**

Samuel, a 24-year-old Fujulu Christian from the Yei Province, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1997. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she worked on the area council of Kajokeji; now she has no job, but sews bed sheets. Her family composition has not changed due to departure; she moved due to sickness, and her husband followed her. Before the war, in Juba, she received free things like charcoal, firewood, water, and other food materials. In Khartoum, life is difficult without money; one cannot eat without it, as firewood, charcoal, and food are all sold in the market where there is no work. The government prohibits even petty work for women, which would be desirable to earn money. Khartoum is also difficult because alcohol and even tea are prohibited. She has difficulty obtaining food due to lack of money. Also, she notes that her children suffer due to the lack of education because it costs too much. During flight and arrival in Khartoum, her relatives almost died, and all her properties were either left behind or sold. Her relatives joined her after departure, and she currently lives among friends, neighbours, and relatives.

Aspects of Samuel's cultural life that she was able to maintain include: her way of cooking food, respect for visitors, family members, and her husband, birthdays for her children, and the avoidance of cosmetics. She is not able to maintain the rituals of naming of her children, or birthday performances for them, as those were dependent on elders who are not present in Khartoum. Samuel's interaction with Northerners is limited; she shares burial customs with them but nothing more. She has learned about henna and other cultural practices, but is not prepared to embrace or practice them. For her, female circumcision is an unnecessary sin. The only Southerners she knows who adopt it are Muslims. Circumcision strikes her as unacceptable because she views it as artificial; God was not wrong when he created women, she says. Both she and her husband make decisions in her household, and are equal in power. Her life has changed because she and her husband have control over their lives, but continued residence in Khartoum is difficult for her because she is afraid that her children will adopt the culture of the Northerners. The most pressing condition she faces is the lack of money, which limits life span and quality of life; if peace comes and she can go home, some of her problems will be solved.

## **Hanan Jabir**

Jabir, a 28-year-old Bari Muslim, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1997. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she was a messenger; now she is a housewife. She moved with her husband and children to escape the war,

leaving relatives behind; they have not joined her, nor does she reside in an area in which they live, or even where her friends live. Before the war, she describes living peacefully with her relatives, and after her arrival in Khartoum, she describes her life as decent; her husband earns a good salary, but she notes that this is rare in comparison to other people. She left behind her belongings in Juba, along with her parents, brothers, and sisters, who are in a refugee camp in Uganda.

Aspects of cultural life that Jabir has been able to maintain are: respect for her husband and relatives, and cooking for her husband. Her cultural life has changed now, since she is a Muslim; she cannot maintain any other practices that are outside the sphere of Islam. Her interaction with Northerners is extensive, and in many ways: marriages, funerals, public holidays, births, naming of babies, and socializing. So far, she has learned other Northern cultural practices, such as helping others in times of need, making henna, and bakhour (incense). She embraces these practices. With regards to female circumcision, she finds it to be a bad practice within the Muslim community since the Koran does not say anything about it, though she says that she is circumcised, even though her husband did not want her to be. According to Jabir, circumcision is a social crime, and the only reason Southerners adopt it is because they are married to Muslim Northerners, and are therefore left without any other option. Other practices that strike her as unacceptable include the brutal Muslim method of divorce.

Jabir has noticed a change in decision-making, but also says that she cannot distinguish if she has more power now, as she and her husband share decisions. Life for her is as good now as it was in her prior home because her husband earns a good living. She notes, however, that Southerners living in Khartoum will find it difficult or lost. She wants peace as much as anyone else, even though she does not face any immediate, pressing conditions.

### **Ruta Jolo Kenyi**

Kenyi, a 48-year-old widowed Nyangwara Christian, moved to Khartoum from Rokon in 1996. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she was a housewife; now she is unemployed. She moved because of the war in the South, and sustained several losses during flight and after arrival. She lost two sons, and left all her household properties behind. Some of her relatives were moved to neighbouring countries, except for her daughter, with whom she lives. Before the war, her life was fine, because all her relatives and friends were from her tribe. Food was plentiful and she moved freely within her relatives' houses. In Khartoum, her life is difficult as a displaced person, and she finds it hard to find enough work to earn

money. She moved with her daughter, and relatives and friends have joined her; she now lives in an area with other friends and relatives.

Kenyi strives to maintain all cultural aspects of her life, except for dressing differently, which she has had to adapt, due to the environmental pressure to wear a tobe and scarf. Kenyi has no interaction with Northerners because she has no connection to them; she lives among relatives and tribesmen, who constitute a more closed community. She has learned nothing of Northern practices and is not ready to embrace any of them. She is ignorant of female circumcision, except for a note that it is dangerous for women during childbirth, and may result in death. She does not know of any Southerners who have adopted the practice, and other practices, such as making henna, religious segregation and superiority, the easy divorce of women by men, and smoking of the body, strike her as unacceptable.

With respect to decision-making, she has noticed a change; she and her husband share responsibilities. This is small comfort, since her life is not like the life she led before; her husband has no job, and there is no money to buy food. Continuing residence in Khartoum is difficult for a number of reasons: scarce education, residence based on land ownership, religious intolerance, and the fear that Islamic cultural learning, traditions, and culture will engulf her. Her conditions are so difficult that nobody can understand them except for God; she says that peace would be the solution to alleviate some of these problems.

### **Lona Jacob Yatta**

Yatta, a 24-year-old Fujulu Christian originally from Yei province with a university education, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1999. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she was a clerk; now she is unemployed. She moved alone due to the war; prior to the war, she was with her mother and her relatives, and had started her university education well, without any problems. After arriving in Khartoum, she describes her life as bad; she lives by working in other people's houses washing clothes, plates, and the floor to earn a living and to pay school fees. She sustained several losses during flight and arrival; she lost her documents, which all burned inside her house, and her father died in the same incident. She is separated from some of her relatives, and cannot see her uncles, aunts, sisters, and brothers. Other relatives have joined her, and she resides in an area where other friends and relatives live.

Aspects of cultural life that Yatta was able to maintain include: the Christian religion, language, traditional dances, and respect towards visitors. She cannot dig or cultivate land, as she used to do in the South, and cannot grind flour any longer. It is difficult to maintain her culture

because of the new environment, and she cannot visit the place that she used to live. With regard to Northerners, she has no interactions with them, saying instead that they do not accept the culture of Southerners and are trying to force Islamic culture. She has learned about henna, and has been forced to study the Koran in schools, and to learn Arabic, which is mandatory. She is not prepared to embrace any of these practices, and finds female circumcision to be, in her words, bad. She doesn't know of any Southerners that have adopted it, and finds other practices, such as the separation of the women from men in Islamic houses of prayer, and the segregation of religion that occurs between Islam and Christianity to be unacceptable. In her household, the husband and wife together make decisions; as a newlywed, she has not noticed any changes with regards to decision-making. Her life has improved from when she first arrived in Khartoum; some relatives joined her, and she has completed her studies. She is worried about continued residence in Khartoum, which would be difficult for her and her children, because education would not be there, rent is hard to meet, the forced Islamic learning and Islamization scares her, and her language will die. The most pressing conditions she faces are the plight of the Southerners; something needs to be done for them. The only solution to these problems is peace and unity for the South and the North, or separation of the South from the North.

### **Lucia Modong**

Noah, a 40-year-old Kuku Christian originally from Bahl-El-Jebel, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1992. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she did not work after receiving her secondary education; now she is a community health promoter. She is married, and her family is composed of relatives and her own children; her family composition changed for the worse. Modong moved because of the war; prior to the war, her social life was good because she could visit relatives with her children, her children could learn traditional dances, food was easy to grow, and children grew up with respect for each other. After her arrival in Khartoum, the love between her family and relatives has broken down. The different traditions of another ethnic group mold the children to a different state of behavior. She sustained a loss of family properties due to the war, and some of her relatives died. She found difficulty in Khartoum until she obtained her current job, but notes that she does not earn enough money for a decent living, as good schools for her children are expensive and far away. She lives in an area with relatives and friends who joined her after departure.

Aspects of cultural life that she was able to maintain include: language, funeral rites, marriage rites, birthday rites, naming children, and dancing. Other aspects that she is not able to maintain include some traditional dances, especially ones involving the funeral, which have changed, and birthdays have slightly changed due to a lack of money and inability to

perform according to her traditions. It is difficult to maintain aspects of her culture due to the lack of money and because of the adoption of other tribes' traditions, as well as the restrictions of Christianity. Modong does not interact with Northerners, and notes that the reason the two sides do not interact is because the Northerners are Muslim while the Southerners are Christian. Relations only change when a Muslim man marries a Christian woman. She thinks that this segregation is artificial. Modong believes that the Northern Sudanese culture is out to destroy the Southerners by forcing its culture on the South. She is not prepared to embrace any of these cultural practices, and though she knows about female circumcision, it is foreign to the area that she is from, Juba. She views female circumcision as a bad practice that causes pain for girls from a young age, during menstruation, etc. She knows a Southern woman that had to adopt female circumcision because her husband was Muslim, but has since converted back to Christianity. Other practices that she views as unacceptable include religious difference or superiority, and the easy divorce of women, which devalues them. She has noticed a change in decision-making, and has gained more power from it. Life has gotten a little bit easier now that both she and her husband are employed, but she views continued housing in Khartoum to be a problem, because of the difficulties with housing for Southerners, the high price of education, high rent prices, and bad government policies. The most pressing conditions she, along with other Southerners, face, include residence, food, treatment for the sick, education of children, and transportation. An acceptable solution to the problem in her mind is to appeal to international bodies to work for the case of Sudan. She hopes that God will take notice of the plight of the Sudanese women and bring peace to ease their suffering.

### **Atto David Uman**

Uman, a 26-year-old Anywak Christian originally from Akobo, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1986. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she was not married; now she is a housewife. She moved to Khartoum with her uncle when she learned that her mother was sick. Her family, which consists of her children and husband, changed due to the departure. Prior to the war, she was happy; her father was working as an army officer, but he died in Khartoum. Uman moved when her mother fell sick; though she has recovered, life has become bad. Other losses she sustained due to the war include the loss of her brother, and the dispersion of the rest of the relatives living with her. Other relatives did not join her directly after departure, though she now resides in an area where her brothers live.

Aspects of her cultural life that she has been able to maintain include: marriage, dance, naming of children, preparing white stuff (alcohol), and food. She has not been able to maintain the making of white stuff during the birth and naming, because the sharia prohibits it. Uman does not have

any interaction with Northerners due to the religious segregation that exists between Muslims and Christians. She has learned about their marriage practices by making henna, halawa (waxing), dukhan, Sheila, and food for marriage ceremonies. She also learned about the dance of duluka, and though she saw these practices, she is not prepared to embrace any of them. She knows about female circumcision but hasn't seen it, and believes that it is dangerous, because it risks death for the mother during birth. She does not know of any Southerners who adopt it, save for those who marry Muslims and are forced. Other practices that are unacceptable include segregation of religion, the "colonization" of Southerners, and the hatred of Southerners by Northerners. In her household, decision-making is shared equally. Life in Khartoum is difficult for displaced people from the South, East, and West; she fears that her children will not have any food or good schooling if she stays. These are the most pressing conditions to her, and she hopes to God that everyone will be able to return to their place of origin; acceptable solutions to this problem are peace, or the separation of the South from the North.

### **Luscia Christopher**

Christopher, a 32-year-old Nyangwara Christian, moved to Khartoum from Rokon/Juba in 2000. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she worked as a matron in a school; now she is a housewife. Christopher moved to Khartoum because of the war; her husband was badly beaten, almost to death, and he was referred to Khartoum for treatment. Christopher moved with her husband and children; she left some of her relatives behind. Before the war, Christopher describes her life as cheap and easy; everything that her family needed could be gotten from the cultivation of the land that was owned. Christopher describes life in Khartoum as far more difficult, because it is difficult to obtain food, women cannot work because it is prohibited by Islamic law, and children are forced into Islamic schools. While moving, Christopher sustained the loss of her household properties, relatives that died along the way, and children that were left behind. No relatives and friends joined her after departure; she does reside in an area where she has friends.

Aspects of cultural life that Christopher maintains include: her children's birthdays; death ceremonies; naming of children; respect towards visitors; house arrangements; and how to handle marriage ceremonies. She is not able to maintain her traditional dress, as she is forced to wear tobés, and has lost freedom over eating patterns, as she is forced to fast by the Muslims in her area. She cannot maintain these aspects of her culture due to the coercive nature of her environment. Christopher interacts with Northerners in aspects of life such as marriage and death, which are shared. She says that almost all other aspects of life are not shared; one example is intermarriage; Southern girls are considered to be pagan and

unclean. Some cultural practices of Northerners that she has learned include: considering women to be of low value and division of house apartments and of men and women in general. She is not prepared to embrace any of these practices; she does know about female circumcision, but doesn't know any women that have gone through the process. She views female circumcision as unclean and dangerous, especially during childbirth. She doesn't know of any Southerners that have adopted the practice but suspects that the ones that do adopt it are married to Northerners.

Decisions in Christopher's household are made on an equal basis between her and her husband; she credits the great change she has noticed to the adoption of Christianity. Her life now is different from before, because women are oppressed and not valued. She feels that continued residence in Khartoum will cause her children to be lost to a foreign culture and to forget their own. The most pressing conditions she faces are religious discrimination and the pressure to adopt Islamic culture. She views peace and the return of Southerners to their homes as the only possible solution to her problems.

### **Mary Afred**

Afred, a 34-year-old Kakwa Christian originally from Yei province, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1992. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she was unemployed; now she is a housewife. Afred moved to Khartoum because of the war; she moved with her husband and children. Before the war, Afred describes her life as very good; everything that her family needed could be gotten from the cultivation of the land that was owned. Her relatives were all present, and her parents helped with food, which made things "easy and simple". Afred describes life in Khartoum as far more difficult, because she cannot find work; her husband quit his job in the South, and was supplied food by the Sudan Council of Churches. However, the Sudan Council of Churches stopped providing relief, and now she has to resort to brewing alcohol, which is another challenge. While moving, Afred sustained the loss of her household properties, her brother, and was separated from her parents, sisters, and other relatives. Some relatives and friends joined her after departure; though she resides in an area without them.

Aspects of cultural life that Afred maintains include: her language; religion; naming of children according to the traditional order of family line; and dancing. She is not able to maintain her traditional dress, as she is forced to wear tobies; she does not use water to go to the bathroom anymore; she cannot educate her children in the traditional manner; and she cannot build her house using mud instead of grass, poles, and bamboo. She cannot maintain these aspects of her culture due to the coercive nature



of her environment. Alfred does not have any interaction with Northerners. She knows little of Northern cultural practices, but has embraced the different style of dressing and basic modes of living with regards to going to the bathroom. She knows about female circumcision, but doesn't know how it is performed, or any women who have gone through the process. She views female circumcision as dangerous, with several bad effects, such as pain during menstruation and during childbirth. She doesn't know of any Southerners that adopted the practice. Practices that strike her as unacceptable include religious discrimination, circumcision of women, and the mistreatment of women and their rights.

Decisions in Alfred's household are made on an equal basis between her and her husband; she does see a change in the decision-making process. Her life now is different in Khartoum; she faces a lot of difficulty as a displaced person. The government centralizes all food, education for children, transportation, and work; Southerners are discriminated against. She feels that continued residence in Khartoum would cause her children to be lost to a foreign culture, identity, and traditions. The most pressing conditions she faces are religious discrimination and the pressure to adopt Islamic culture, which she views as especially dangerous to her children, who she feels will lose their culture and traditions. She views peace as the only possible solution to her problems.

### **Emelide Kiden**

Kiden, a 45-year-old Kuku Christian originally from Bahr-El-Jebel, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1995. Prior to her arrival, she was a cleaner; she remains as a cleaner in Khartoum. Kiden moved to Khartoum because of sickness and the need for treatment; she moved with her children. Before the war, Kiden describes her social life as better, and the work as enough to cover her expenses. Kiden describes life in Khartoum as far more difficult, because of the following: food; money; transportation; education of children; and health, treatment, etc. While moving, Kiden sustained the loss of all her household properties, and now faces rent payments. No relatives joined her after departure though she resides in an area with friends.

Aspects of cultural life that Kiden maintains include: love towards neighbors; naming of children; marriage and birthday ceremonies; funeral rites; and burials. She is not able to maintain her traditional dress, as she is forced to wear tobies; she cannot maintain her language; she does not have freedom to eat when she wants to; and she cannot maintain traditional dances. She cannot maintain these aspects of her culture due to the coercive nature of her environment, the influence of Arab culture, her relatives and tribesmen are not present, and her children adopt the

language that they are taught in school. Kiden does not have any interaction with Northerners. She knows nothing of Northern cultural practices, and is not prepared to embrace them. She knows little about female circumcision, except that it needs to be discouraged, that it makes women suffer, and it makes menstruation and childbirth dangerous. She doesn't know of any Southerners who have adopted the practice, except for those who got married to Muslims, or "deceived to be Muslims". Practices that strike her as unacceptable include religious discrimination, circumcision of women, the decoration of women's hands and feet during marriage.

Decisions in Kiden's household are made on an equal basis between her and her husband; she does see a change in the decision-making process. Her life now is different in Khartoum; she faces a lot of difficulty as a displaced person, and is not happy there. Continued residence in Khartoum for her means greater despair; her children will be lost to the culture of the Arab, there will be no housing to live in, education for her children will be difficult, and she believes they will become slaves of the Northerners. Her life in general is the most pressing condition that she faces. She views peace as the only possible solution to her battle against Arab oppression.

### **Adara Bona**

Bona, a 36-year-old Dinka Yorol Christian originally from Lake Province, moved to Khartoum from Yural District in 1996. Prior to her arrival, she was a cleaner; she remains as a cleaner in Khartoum. Bona moved to Khartoum because of the war; her brother was killed in it. Bona moved with her children and relatives. Bona describes life in Khartoum as far more difficult than her life before it: it is difficult to obtain food and housing, education for children is difficult, and it is difficult to make aragi (beer) for sale, because it carries the threat of arrest, since women are not allowed to work. While moving, Bona sustained the loss of her household and other properties. Some relatives and friends joined her after departure; but she does not reside with them, though she resides in an area with friends.

Bona struggles to maintain her culture as a Christian despite her environment. She has no interaction with Northerners, has adopted none of their cultural practices, and is not prepared to embrace any of them, either. She does know about female circumcision, but considers it to be "no good", with complications that can cause suffering and death. She knows of some Southerners that adopt the practice and thinks that Muslims deceive the ones that do.

Decisions in Bona's household are made by her husband. She has noticed that increasingly, both husband and wife share in decision-making, but she does not notice any more power in her particular case. Her life is now bad as compared to good before, because of the problems with housing, food, and education of children. She feels that continued residence in Khartoum will cause increased religious discrimination and her children will be lost to a foreign culture and will forget their own. The most pressing conditions she faces are hunger and the lack of food, the absence of relatives to support her, and finding a place to live. She views the return to her home in the South as the only solution to her problems, and peace as the necessary precondition for that solution.

### **Cecilia Dyanga**

Dyanga, a 33-year-old Kuku Christian, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 2000. Prior to her arrival, she was a typist; she is now unemployed. Dyanga moved to Khartoum because of the war. Her family is still in Juba. Life in Khartoum is more difficult than her life before it: it is difficult to obtain work, transportation, and education for her children. While moving, Dyanga lost track of her education, but manages to maintain some social networks in the place where she lives.

Dyanga struggles to maintain her culture and language despite her environment. She is not able to maintain her way of dress due to the change of environment and the sharia laws. She has some interaction with Northerners, but does not trust them, and so does not share any important issues with them. She knows about some of their practices, like dressing, and food, but is not prepared to embrace any of them. She does know about female circumcision, but considers it to be "not good", and that it should be stopped completely. She does not know of any Southerners that have adopted it.

Decisions in Dyanga's household are made by her alone since her first husband passed away, and she is separated from the second. She has noticed that increasingly, both husband and wife share in decision-making, (when she was with her husband), but does not comment on whether she has more power. Her life now is very hard as compared to before, because of her problems with employment, getting enough money, and providing an education for her children. She doesn't want to stay in Khartoum. The most pressing conditions she faces are hunger and the lack of food, and the conditions in relation to her children. She views the return to her home in the South as the only solution to her problems.

## Rejoice Kaku Agai

Agai, a 32-year-old Mundari Christian originally from Bahr-El-Jabel, moved to Khartoum from Juba in 1999. Prior to her arrival in Khartoum, she worked as an accountant; now she is unemployed. Agai moved to Khartoum because of her studies. Agai moved with her relatives. Before the war, Agai describes her life as socially better, and easier because she was able to grow her own food. Agai describes life in Khartoum as far more difficult, because living conditions are bad, as well as food and social interactions. While moving, Agai sustained the loss of many things in pursuit of her studies. She resides in an area with relatives and friends, who moved with her.

Agai tries to maintain all aspects of her cultural life. She is not able to assimilate to Arab culture; she finds it difficult to suppress her traditional food and traditional dress. She cannot maintain these aspects of her culture due to the coercive nature of her environment. Agai has some social interaction with Northerners in aspects of life such as transportation and schooling, which are shared. Some “cultural practices” of Northerners that she has learned include: forcing people to accept their religion, either through using money or restricting another essential need, and restricting food commodities and water. She is not prepared to embrace any Northern practices; she does know about female circumcision, but hasn’t seen any women who have gone through the process. She views female circumcision as a process that perpetuates suffering. She doesn’t know of any Southerners who have adopted the practice. Other practices that strike her as unacceptable are marriage of relatives, and the process of female circumcision.

Decisions in Agai’s household are made by her husband. She has not noticed a change in decision-making processes, though notes that the responsibility is shared. Her life now is different from before, because it is far more difficult, especially with respect to religion. She wishes that people could get along with each other’s religion and wishes that there wasn’t so much pressure from Northerners. The most pressing condition she faces is the restriction of her freedom; she feels like a prisoner. The only solution, according to her, is for the UN to enter and separate the North from the South.