

Paul Deng Wol

Region: Bahr al Ghazal

Age: 31

I am from Rumbek. In 1986, I fled my home with my mom, two brothers, and two sisters. Two other brothers left Rumbek and I haven't seen them since. We walked for about one month to get to Wau. We stayed for a few months until war broke out when the government militia started fighting against Dinka. Next we traveled on big lorries for about three weeks until we reached Khartoum.

We settled in Dar al Salaam refugee camp about forty kilometers south of Khatoum. I lived with my family in the camp, except for my two brothers and dad. I had schooling in the camp. My mother also went to school in the camp and she worked with the Sudan Council of Churches. In 1992, I left the camp to go boarding school for S. Sudanese refugees, Sheikh Lutfi, in Rufaa. I lived there for three years and received the Sudanese School Certificate. Afterwards, I went to University of Khartoum and received a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering. I went back to Dar al Salaam and worked with Changemakers Sudan as a Volunteer teacher in the refugee camp for one year. Later, I went to Cairo and registered as a refugee. I stayed with some friends for three years, until I came to the U.S. in April 2002.

My mom came to the U.S. before me so I stayed with her. I live with my two sisters and one brother. Considering what I had been through in Sudan, life here is easy. In Northern Sudan and Egypt there is discrimination against Southern Sudanese Christians. There is no discrimination here.

For the past two years, I have been working as a PetSmart associate in the warehouse. I am planning to pass the TOEFL and then go to the University of Arizona. I have to take about twelve credits in agricultural engineering and then they will let me go into the master's degree program.

I like it here because everyone has access to work and be independent. It's hard to get a job in Sudan. Sometimes I miss my relatives in Sudan. All the Sudanese guys that have come here can still go to school and study. They can improve their lives in the U.S. and then they can volunteer to improve the lives of the Sudanese in Sudan.