

David Athoi

Age: 22

Region: Western Upper Nile

I left Sudan in 1987 because of the Civil War. My dad was a policeman. He was killed in 1983. My mom was killed by crossfire in 1990. I had six brothers. Two of my brothers died in the same year as our mom. Now, my three surviving brothers live in Sudan. Sometimes I talk to them on the phone, but I haven't seen them in many years.

I left with a lot of young kids like me. We didn't know where we were going until we reached Ethiopia. We walked barefoot a thousand miles. We ate whatever we could find to help us survive-leaves from trees, grass, and fish if we were lucky to get one. It was the hardest thing we ever did.

I lived in Ethiopia for four years. When war broke out, we were forced back to the border where we lived for three months without food. That time, most of the kids, including me, lost hope. Some people were dying of hunger and disease. There were mosquitoes, lots of rain, no shelters, no warm clothing. By God's will, and the will of the U.N., the Red Cross was sent to us. They brought food, mosquito nets, blankets, medicine, school supplies, and more.

We eventually walked to Kenya where we were placed in a refugee camp called Kakuma. Thankfully, in 2001, I came to America. A few years later, I found the Lost Boys Center. After I arrived here, I attended Pinnacle High School. And was involved in Track and Field. I went to Phoenix College and Apollo College and became a medical assistant. I currently work with United Blood Services and I'm interested in becoming a nurse or physician's assistant. If I go back to Sudan, I'll be able to help people. I have more choices and opportunities living in the U.S. The hardest part is earning enough money to live on and pay for school while also supporting people you left behind.