

# WALKING BACK TO SUDAN

A peace agreement in Southern Sudan is now in place, which means there will be a six year period before a people's referendum. The referendum will decide whether the south will remain united with the north or become an independent state. The aim of all parties is to rebuild Southern Sudan after 21 years of civil war. There will be a competition for the hearts and minds of these people over the next few years. A large scale rehabilitation programme is being negotiated by the international community. It has not yet been agreed nor delivered. The extent of the task is to create a complete infrastructure of government administration, schools, hospitals, etc. This will come, but meanwhile Sudanese refugees are returning from hiding in the mountains and from neighbouring countries like Uganda. They are quite simply **walking back home**. The scenario when they arrive is often bleak. Although not for everyone, because the ones who come from refugee camps usually bring some farming tools and seeds with them. The others often have nothing. It is not unusual for a mother and her children to arrive back to find a collapsed home and nothing else. The husband may have spent years in the bush fighting against northern Sudan and his whereabouts or even whether he is still alive may not be known.



AFRINSPIRE has been in contact for the past three years with Sudanese refugees in Northern Uganda. We have actively assisted them in the camps and now our key contacts, who are leaders of their people, have returned to Yei. They immediately started a **school for 600** with limited classrooms and meeting under trees. They are creating the community structure that the people need. They also want **to help the poorest families to settle on their land**. Houses are made out of trees, mud and thatch and the land is fertile.

AFRINSPIRE is responding to the two main priorities voiced by the returnees. Firstly we have begun to equip the school with essential curriculum books, exercise books and basic school supplies. Secondly we want to appeal for sponsorship for these poorest families. **What each family needs to start again is very simple; an African hoe, a panga, an axe and several kilos of seeds. The total cost is just £6. From this a family can farm to feed itself.**

The Afrinspire team in April did not visit Sudan but was able to hand over some assistance to Pastor Komi, who travelled with his wife, Edina, and son to meet the team in Kampala. Pastor John Noah Komi wrote in May: "Thank you for the money Afrinspire has given to help our resettlement and school programmes. We have bought African hoes, panga, axes and seeds. One hundred and fifty families have benefited from that support. We have also bought some school materials including text books, exercise books, pens, pencils and balls. Three nursery schools and two primary schools with a total of one thousand four hundred pupils have benefited.



The distribution continued and in June we heard: "The money has been a very great help to the poor people who are now returning from the displaced person and refugee camp. Hundreds of school children have benefited too. Two weeks ago



I hired a vehicle to take school materials to Kebedole Nursery school and Payawa Primary school ten miles away from Yei town. Over 300 pupils received school materials. Twenty teachers received hand agricultural tools, hoes, axes. Southern Sudan is now open, with freedom of movement, no more war and soon they will open the roads which were closed between

government held towns and the SPLA controlled towns. Many people are returning from the displaced camps to their original home and places which have been destroyed by the civil war. Komi also adds: "We are looking forward to seeing your team in the Sudan one day and we are praying that God will open up the way."

As well as the needs of families and the schools the Sani-Tayi Self Help Community Project needs a vehicle to be effective. The cost is £5,000 for an appropriate second hand vehicle. A small 20 horsepower maize grinding machine is needed which costs £1,000, and there is a need for bicycles which cost £60. If you can help these returning people to begin again please get in touch. Thank you.

Pastor Komi left Sudan in 1997 due to the war. People fled to hide in the mountains and some to Uganda. He and his family have lived in Arua in northern Uganda. Komi is the overseer of 24 churches and he has visited these churches and the dispersed people during the past 6 years until now, when he is back in Sudan. He is a leader who can organise and help the people, and Afrinspire is pleased to be supporting him.