

South Sudanese Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of South Sudanese people who live in the Eastern Region of Melbourne. This description may not apply to all people as individual experiences may vary. However this profile can be used as a guide to some of the issues that may concern your clients.

Introduction:

The Republic of South Sudan is the world's youngest nation, officially established on 9th of July 2011. The Southern Sudanese have fought for this independence for decades in an ongoing civil war between the north and south since 1956. There was a brief peace period between 1972 and 1983 by negotiations between Southern Sudanese insurgents, the Anya Nya, and the Sudanese government at Addis Abbaba.

Southern Sudan has been damaged significantly by this ongoing civil war which has been fought for all but 11 of the past 50 years (Collopy, Langley, DeBlasio & Chippett 2007; Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008). In January 2005 both sides signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the fighting and granted the southern part of the country autonomy for six years (DIAC 2007). Under the terms of the CPA, a referendum on the south's political future was held in 2011 where nearly 99 percent of the region's voters approved a split from northern Sudan (now known as Sudan), which saw the south decide to separate from the north and form a new country – the Republic of South Sudan (Addario 2011).

The Republic of South Sudan is located in the northeast region of the continent, bordering six other African nations: Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda (Collopy et al. 2007). South Sudan has an estimated population of 8,260,490 people and is ethnically and culturally diverse with approximately 600 varying ethnic groups existing throughout the country. In addition, there are over 400 different languages spoken (CIA 2011; Collopy et al. 2007).

Migration:

- Drought, famine, war damage and limited infrastructure in the south have hindered the return of the estimated 500,000 Sudanese refugees who fled to neighbouring countries such as Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Egypt and Ethiopia in an attempt to find safety and security (DIAC 2007; Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- Due to the Republic of South Sudan recently becoming a new country, no statistics have yet been reported which isolate the south from the north.
- Australia has assisted in resettling some of the worst affected people from Sudan and in the 2002-03 financial year, Sudan became the Humanitarian Migration Programme's top source country and has since provided more than 33% of programme arrivals (DIAC 2007).
- In recent years, Australia continues to see a rapid increase in the number of Sudanese arriving as refugees under the Humanitarian Migration Program (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008). This was evident at the 2006 Census, where it was recorded that there were 6,205 Sudanese-born persons in Victoria (32.6% of Australia's total Sudanese population), increasing by 528.7% from 987 persons in 2001 (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Local Demographics: Sudanese-born* residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Sudanese-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over
City of Boroondara	47	4	0	0	0
City of Knox	94	6	0	0	0
City of Manningham	84	16	8	3	0
City of Maroondah	141	3	3	0	0
City of Monash	116	5	0	0	3
City of Whitehorse	153	3	6	3	0
Shire of Yarra Ranges	12	0	0	0	0
Eastern Region	647	37	17	6	3

* Note: the above census data does not distinguish between northern Sudan and southern Sudan born individuals (ABS Census 2006)

Local Government Area	Total number of new Sudanese arrivals	55-64 years	65 years and over	Total number of Sudanese-born people aged 55 and over	People aged 55+ as a % of Sudanese-born population
City of Boroondara	5	0	0	0	0%
City of Knox	7	0	0	0	0%
City of Manningham	2	0	0	0	0%
City of Maroondah	16	1	0	1	6%
City of Monash	18	0	0	0	0%
City of Whitehorse	10	0	0	0	0%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	4	0	0	0	0%
Eastern Region	62	1	0	1	2%

* Note: the above settlement data does not distinguish between northern Sudan and Southern Sudan born individuals (DIAC 2011)

- In the 2006 Census in Victoria, 6,205 individuals originating from Sudan were recorded, making up 32.6% of Australia's total Sudanese population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- Only 38.4% of these individuals held Australian Citizenship at this time, compared to 67.5% of the total overseas-born population in Victoria (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008). This is because of their relatively recent arrival.
- The median age of the Sudanese-born population is 22 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Language:

- Individuals from Sudan originate from diverse ethnicities, speaking many different languages. According to the 2006 Census data, 46.6% of individuals spoke Arabic at home, 25.1% spoke Dinka and 9.1% spoke Nuer, making these languages the top three languages spoken

in Victorian households of Sudanese-born residents (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

- As indicated by the 2006 Census, 33.7% of the Sudanese-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not well' or 'not at all', while 25.8% of the Sudanese-born population identified themselves as being able to speak English 'very well' and 33.5% 'well' (Victoria Multicultural Commission 2008).

Arabic-speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Arabic at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Arabic speaking people aged 65 and over	Arabic speaking people aged 65+ as a % of the Arabic speaking population
City of Boroondara	447	46	40	22	0	32	7%
City of Knox	1125	143	102	34	6	70	6%
City of Manningham	1721	243	127	89	22	169	10%
City of Maroondah	324	19	15	12	3	21	6%
City of Monash	1083	157	108	54	19	122	11%
City of Whitehorse	578	50	50	24	9	50	9%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	175	14	12	8	0	11	6%
Eastern Region	5453	672	454	243	59	475	9%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

Arabic-speaking new arrivals in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of new arrivals speaking Arabic at home	55-64 years	65 years and over	Total number of Arabic speaking people aged 55 and over	Arabic speaking people aged 55+ as a % of the Arabic speaking population
City of Boroondara	13	0	0	0	0%
City of Knox	67	7	7	14	21%
City of Manningham	50	2	1	3	6%
City of Maroondah	17	1	1	2	12%
City of Monash	37	2	1	3	8%
City of Whitehorse	22	0	0	0	0%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	1	0	0	0	0%
Eastern Region	207	12	10	22	11%

(DIAC 2011)

Religion:

The Sudanese-born population identify with a number of religions, with Southern Sudan being both culturally and religiously different from northern Sudan. A contrast between Arab and Muslim influences predominate in the north and animist and Christian beliefs in the south have been identified (DIAC 2007). The following top 5 religious affiliations held by the Sudanese-born population in Victoria were identified at the 2006 Census (Victoria Multicultural Commission 2008):

- Roman Catholic – 37.8% (2,348 persons)

- Anglican Church – 16.9% (1,049 persons)
- Muslim – 13.3% (826 persons)
- Presbyterian – 11.0% (682 persons)
- Coptic Orthodox Church – 3.4% (211 persons)

Attitudes and Issues with Ageing

- The Sudanese-born population in Australia is relatively young, with the majority of people in the community aged between 12 and 18 years. Only 10.2% of Sudanese born individuals were aged between 45-64 years with only 2.5% above the age of 65 years (ABS Census 2006)
- Some studies have reported that for older people from Sudanese backgrounds who have come to Australia, displacement and settlement experiences have negatively affected their roles as elders in their families and respective communities (Refugee Health Research Centre 2004).
- In Sudan, elders maintain a high position in family life, being called upon to resolve family and community disputes, provide advice to children, administer traditional laws and act as cultural guardians (Collopy et al. 2007; Refugee Health Research Centre 2004).
- In some communities, from a spiritual point of view, elders are also considered to have the power to curse or bless people and as a result are highly respected (Onyala 2011).
- In Australia, older people from Sudanese backgrounds often feel disempowered and isolated as state and federal laws manage family matters (Refugee Health Research Centre 2004).
- In Sudan, aged care welfare is all undertaken at home as aged care facilities are not available and it is the moral responsibility of the family to care for the elderly.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- It has been reported that some people from South Sudanese backgrounds regard mental illness as a sign of weakness and therefore it is not an issue that is openly discussed (McLean 2005).
- Mental illness and disability can also be regarded as the result of an elder's curse upon the person (Onyala 2011).
- Traditionally, a strong social stigma is attached to mental illness and therefore, individuals with mental illness often sought help from native healers in the village (McLean 2005).
- There is a shortage of mental health service provision in South Sudan and therefore individuals may be unfamiliar with this type of service (McLean 2005).
- Southern Sudanese families care and support their family members with disabilities, while moral support is also offered by the community (Dei Wal 2004).

Attitudes to Death and Palliative Care

- Sudanese-born people are usually very demonstrative in their grief, often throwing themselves on the ground. As a result of this, bad news is often not given without the presence and support of the community (Sneesby, Satchell, Good & Van der Riet, 2010).
- Customarily in South Sudanese culture, a celebratory feast is held when a person over the age of 60 years dies (Sneesby, Satchell, Good & Van der Riet, 2010).

- However, in the circumstance that a younger person dies, South Sudanese-born people look at it as a time of great sadness. Often the bereaved mourners scream or cry and there is an increased risk of self-harm in those close to the deceased (Sneesby, Satchell, Good & Van der Riet, 2010).
- Black clothes are traditionally worn when mourning in Sudanese culture, except by some tribes in Sudan where the widow wears white (Sneesby, Satchell, Good & Van der Riet, 2010).
- It has been reported that while parents or siblings of the deceased are expected to grieve for 40 days, widows are expected to mourn the death of a husband for 12 months, after which, a community member will remove the mourning clothing (Sneesby, Satchell, Good & Van der Riet, 2010).

Customs / Values:

- South Sudanese-born people often have a respect for culture and their elders (Onyala 2011).
- South Sudanese families are often very private and reluctant to discuss family conflict or issues with non-family members.
- Visitors in a South Sudanese home are often provided water initially, followed by food and tea or coffee. Receiving and sharing such hospitality is a sign of courtesy and respect (Collopy et al. 2007).

Communication Styles:

- Eye contact is important within South Sudanese culture. As a sign of respect to their elders, young people cannot give direct eye contact; instead they must cast their eyes downward (McLean 2005).
- Individuals of the same sex and age group may give direct eye contact to one another; however individuals of the opposite sex cannot give direct eye contact (Onyala 2011).
- Communication styles between northern Sudan and Southern Sudan can be quite different (Collopy et al. 2007).
- Individuals from Southern Sudan greet friends, relatives and even foreigners with a handshake (Collopy et al. 2007).
- In Southern Sudan, men and women can shake hands and women can also be addressed directly (Collopy et al. 2007).

Naming Conventions:

- People are often called by their first name, except for elders, teachers and religious leaders who are addressed by their title and surname.
- Married women usually maintain their maiden name and do not take on their husband's surname (Onyala 2011).

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Sudanese-born individuals residing in Australia sometimes feel that doctors do not prescribe medicine according to the pain or illness they are experiencing (Onyala 2011).
- Some Sudanese-born individuals may be unfamiliar with being treated by a doctor of the opposite gender and therefore it is important to ask them if they are comfortable with this (DIAC 2007).

- On rare occasions, Sudanese adults and elders utilise traditional herbal remedies (Onyala 2011).

Arabic Greetings:

English Greeting	Arabic	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	سلام	SALAM
Good Morning	صباح الخير	SABAH EL KHEER
Good Evening	مساء الخير	MASAA EL KHEER
Goodbye	مع السلامة	MA'A SALAMA
Yes	لا	NA'AM
No	نعم	LAA
Thank you	شكرا (جزيلًا)	SHOKRAN

Dinka Greetings

English Greeting	Dinka	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	Kudual	KUDUAL
Good Morning	Ci yi ruen	CI YI RUEN
Goodbye	Yin abi caath	YIN ABI CAATH
Yes	Ce tede	CE TEDE
No	Aliu	ALIU
Thank you	Yin aca leec	YIN ACA LEEC

Nuer Greetings

English Greeting	Nuer	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	Maale	MAALE
Morning Greeting	Ce nien ke mal?	CE NIEN KE MAL?

Key Sudanese Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Independence Day *1st January 1956*
(Sudanese nation achieves independence from Great Britain – this day is usually celebrated with speeches by leaders and politicians followed by traditional dances in the evening performed by each tribe)
- Addis Abbaba Agreement *3rd March 1972*
(Celebrates the end of 1955-1972 civil war, peace accord between north and south)
- Naivasha Agreement *9th January 2005*
(Celebrates the end of the 1983-2004 civil war, peace accord between south and north)

- Independence Day

9th July 2011

(Celebrates the Republic of South Sudan's independence from the northern region)

*To search for more exact dates of key cultural and religious events, festivals and national days for this year, visit: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-multicultural-australia/calendar-australia/>

Local Services Useful for Sudanese-born residents in the Eastern Region:

Settlement Services

Provide information, referral and casework for refugees and family migrants who arrived in Australia in the last five years.

Name	Address	Contact
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)	Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128	Ph: 9285 4888
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre	18 Chester Street, Oakleigh, 3166	Ph: 9563 4130

Aged Care and Disability Support Services

Migrant Information Centre Aged Care & Disability Services

Address: Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128

Ph: 9285 4888

The aged and disability team aims to increase access to aged care and disability services for CALD communities in the Eastern metropolitan region through working with CALD communities to promote those services, provide information and referral and supporting organisations to provide culturally appropriate care.

Other Support Services

Multicultural Sudanese Centre Inc.

Address: 12 Holland Court, Flemington, VIC, 3031

Ph: 9376 6513

Provides welfare and support for Sudanese migrants in Victoria. Also provides other services such as education support programs, employment services and community services aiding in accessing legal aid, tram and train ticket machines etc.

Sudanese Community Association of Australia

Address: P.O. Box 2328, Dandenong North 3175

Phone: 9706 8933

Fax: 9706 8833

E-mail: gai123@hotmail.com

The Sudanese Community Association of Australia assists newly arrived members to access services such as housing, employment and medical care as well as proposing Sudanese refugees for resettlement in Australia.

Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning Program Inc. - SAIL

The SAIL program provides free English support & community services to the Sudanese refugee community in six locations around Victoria. For locations please visit the website:

<http://www.sailprogram.org.au/site/>

South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre

Main Office Address: Level 1, 314 Thomas Street, Dandenong, VIC, 3175

Ph: 9706 8933

Provides training in aged care, settlement services, employment services and community education services to all migrants and refugees living in the south eastern region of Melbourne.

Nasir Community Development Agency (NCDA) Australia

Address: PO Box 11098, Bayside Shopping Centre, Frankston VIC 3199

Mobile: 0431 339 822

Email: info@ncda.org.au

Website: www.ncda.org.au

NCDA was established with the objective of breaking down barriers that cause marginalisation of newly-arrived South Sudanese refugees in Australia as well as supporting the work of NCDA in Southern Sudan through fundraising.

Media

There are a number of specific Sudanese media programs in Melbourne:

Media	Program	Details
Radio	1224 AM Fri 11:00 - 12:00 pm African	SBS Radio Melbourne http://www.sbs.com.au/schedule/radio
	3ZZZ 92.3 FM Fri 12pm – 1pm Fri 1pm – 2pm Sudanese Arabic Youth	Ethnic Public Broadcasting Association of Victoria Limited 1/144 George St, Fitzroy, VIC 3065 Phone: 03-9415-1928 Website: http://www.3zzz.com.au Email: admin@3zzz.com.au
Newspaper/Journal/ Articles	<i>AfricanOZ</i> - African Australian news and information. Also available is <i>AfricanOZ Magazine</i> (free monthly subscription) Sudan online newspapers	AfricanOZ.com African Australian Online Resource www.onlinenewspapers.com/sudan.htm www.themiddleeastonline.com.au

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