



JULY/AUGUST 2003 SPOTLIGHT:

Sudanese Youth

Sudanese youth resettled in the United States between October 2000 and September 2001 have received extensive press attention for their strengths, the experiences they have endured, and the challenges they face adjusting to the United States. Known as “The Lost Boys” in popular media, about 700 entered foster programs designed for unaccompanied refugee minors, and approximately 3,000 more resettled here as young adults.

These youth place great importance on connections—staying connected to their cultures, to friends who have resettled in other parts of the country, and to those remaining in refugee camps in Africa.

Their intense desire to reconnect with family members they have been separated from remains high. In fact, a few have successfully located family members in Sudan, or nearby countries, through international family tracing efforts.

Getting (Re-)Connected, Helping to Stay Connected

A new video profiling three Sudanese youth in the United States, [A Great Wonder](#), provides a compelling case for special efforts to help youth remain connected to their cultures and communities.

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) offers a Sudanese youth website, for the purpose of helping youth resettled in different parts of the United States reconnect with each other. It provides free email accounts and a directory of participating youth across the country. Access beyond the homepage is restricted to Sudanese youth resettled between October 2000 and September 2001. This site was funded by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) at the U.S. Department of State.

A BRYCS roundtable in July will discuss the importance of connections to culture and community, among other topics. Foster Care at a Cultural Crossroads: Refugee Children in Public Foster Care System will be held July 20-22nd, in Washington, DC.

Also in Washington, DC, a ***Sudanese Youth Gathering*** will bring together more than 230 youth from around the United States for five days of informative workshops, discussion, and reflection in July. The youth will also participate in an advocacy day on Capitol Hill by bringing key concerns to members of Congress, such as the resettlement of friends and family members left behind in refugee camps.

The Gathering is the result of requests from the youth themselves, registered in a series of regional meetings over the past year. It is being held in association with the All Come Bearing Gifts . . . Will You?: National Migration Conference 2003, jointly organized by U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) and Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), July 6-10, 2003. Special guests will include Bishop Paride Taban of Sudan, as well as other presenters from the Sudan and the United States.

In August of 2002, the Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. (ECDC) held the Southern Sudanese Youth Summit for about 300 Sudanese youth. The reunion was held at a YMCA camp near the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland, with funding from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement. It included a day trip to Washington, DC, with visits to the national monuments, museums and other sites.

Results Upcoming from New Research on Sudanese Youth Well-Being

A team of independent researchers from the Boston University School of Medicine has been studying a range of health outcomes of over 300 Sudanese youth in the refugee foster care system. Preliminary results show functional health outcomes (how health problems impact on daily life), as well as coping skills used in stressful situations, to be quite good with very high ratings of overall health and health improvement since arrival in the U.S. Some of the youth, however, were noted to have emotional difficulties, including 20% with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and emotional or behavioral problems in the family or home setting. These findings are briefly noted in an [executive summary](#) of the Project Report.

This research has been led by Paul Geltman, MD, MPH. Dr. Geltman is Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Dental Medicine at the Boston University Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine; Medical Director of the Refugee and Immigrant Health Program, Massachusetts Department of Public Health; and staff pediatrician and practice administrator at the Whittier Street Health Center in Roxbury, MA.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and USCCB/MRS, BRYCS' partner agencies, supported this research by facilitating participation of refugee foster care programs affiliated with each of the two agencies. Trained staff in ten such programs across the country greatly assisted the research process, by administering a series of health questionnaires, and recording interviews with youth who elected to participate.

LIRS and USCCB/MRS eagerly anticipate Dr. Geltman's final research results in the coming months. Watch the BRYCS clearinghouse for information on how to find his results as soon as they are available in publication.