

# Can we resettle more young refugees?

Australia has resettled about 10,000 Sudanese refugees in the last two years under its Humanitarian Program.

But, according to Pastor Severino Loful, chairman of the United Refugee Churches in Kakuma Refugee Camp, many more - especially young people - are desperately in need of help.

"I would like to appeal to the government, the people and the churches of Australia to help the people of Kakuma, and the Sudanese community, especially in terms of re-settlement in Australia," he said.

"I am concerned about the vulnerable people, the lost boys and the lost girls. They are still loitering around in the camp.

"If they could go to Australia they could benefit in terms of education - and we hope that, when there is peace in our country, we will be able to use these people as leaders in the development of our country."

Pastor Severino said education in the camp is very poor.

"There are no proper materials," he said.

"There are so many problems. The environment is so hostile. The feeding system is very, very poor.

"People are really suffering. The food given to us is just enough to survive on. The women, the children and young people are particularly suffering.

"We hear back from those who are resettled in Australia. They are doing well, especially in terms of education.

"And is there some way Australia can help in vocational training of people here in Africa, so that people can become skilled? Can your government provide some scholarships or sponsorships?

"Only about 25 people from the camp have been taken into secondary school each year. This is a very small proportion of the population."

Pastor Severino said there are something like 95,000 people in the camp. About 70,000 of them are Sudanese - and the majority of them are young.

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*Nick Kerr and Sudanese friends*

Part of the problem is that teachers in the camp are very badly paid and many are not properly qualified.

"Southern Sudan has never really been developed," he said. "There has been no real education.

"There is now some hope that there will be peace in our country. There are no roads, no schools, no hospitals. There are lots of landmines and there are lots of guns still in the wrong hands.

"People are living in great fear. I don't think, if peace is declared, they will go back quickly.

Pastor Severino said there are 23 different denominations in Kakuma.

"As churches we are begging the people of Australia, through the National Council of Churches in Australia, to help these people by resettlement, by giving chances for scholarships," he said.

"When there is peace we will still be a young nation. We must start from somewhere. We need educated people. We will need help until we are mature enough to stand on our own feet."

Pastor Severino appealed for prayers for peace. "We know very well that the use of guns doesn't solve problems," he said.

"We have been fighting for 21 years

and the enemy has not overcome us. The only solution can be by negotiation.

"The ecumenical community should do everything it can to bring the two parties together in peace.

"Somewhere between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of Southern Sudanese are no longer in Sudan or, if they are in Sudan, they are in displaced people's camps, and not in their own areas.

"Our people cannot stay in a land where there is so much suffering, so much fighting, so much killing and so much hunger.

"People are dying because they do not get treatment, so there is not only the fear of fighting, there are totally inadequate facilities.

"Many people have come here to Kakuma to save their lives. They hope for an education.

"But what sort of life are they living? They get just a little education and just enough food to survive on."

*Story: Nicholas Kerr*

**Your generous response to our Sudan Appeal is gratefully received by our partners. \$140,756 has been received to end of October. Thank you all.**