

Uduk

The Uduk people have historical links with many other people groups on the Sudanese-Ethiopian border. While the name "Uduk" was given to them by their colonial administrators, they call themselves Kwanim pa or "people of the village." Thirty years of civil war tore them from their homeland, but with peace in South Sudan, many Uduk are returning from the camps to Sudan.



SIM Ministry

SIM began work among the Uduk at Chali in 1938 and continued to minister to the Uduk until 1964 when the government closed mission work in southern Sudan. Since 1993, SIM has ministered among the Uduk refugees in the Bonga camp, Ethiopia. SIM has responded to the Uduk request for Bibles and education. SIM has also translated a primary school curriculum into Uduk for the first and second grade level and has trained volunteer teachers using the curriculum. The Uduk refugee children in Ethiopia had no formal education for at least eight years until SIM received permission to work in the camp. Now, the Uduk are returning to South Sudan, and many are receiving education through the Basic Education and Learning Centers, part of the Rebuilding Southern Sudan: Church and Nation program.

Scripture Availability

Bible portions had been translated between 1947 and 1966. In 1963, the entire New Testament was printed in the Uduk language. In 1978, the New Testament became available to the Uduk as an audio recording. Only portions of the Old Testament have been printed, including Genesis and Psalms. The Way of Salvation booklet has been printed in the Uduk language and distributed among the Uduk in Sudan and Ethiopia. A first draft of Exodus 1-28 was translated by the late Pastor Paul, the first Uduk pastor. It is being checked by a team in the Bonga camp. Twenty chapters are ready for a consultant check.

Topography

South central Sudan contains large, fertile, rainy areas with fields and pastures.

Culture

Uduk society is matrilineal where women feel pressured to keep their family line going. The ravages of war have led to the breakdown of the cultural morals, and polygamy has become fairly common.

Population: Over 15,000 dislocated refugees are in camps in Western Ethiopia; 3,500 Uduks are in the Sherkole camp near Assosa, and 12,000 are in the Bonga camp near Gambella. A few Uduk have wandered to other places including Kenya, Uganda, Zaire, and Egypt. Most have been pushed from their traditional homeland in the southern Blue Nile Province.

Language: The Udek language is related to other languages in the Koman family. The majority of Uduk also speak Arabic, the trade language of the Sudan.

Livelihood: The Uduk traditionally made their living as farmers and herders. The civil wars have left the Uduk completely destitute and dependent on the United Nations and relief agencies for food, clothing, and shelter. Recently they were given a little land to farm in Ethiopia, but they are still far from self-sufficient. If they have a good harvest, they still have only provided 10% of the basic needs for their families.

Living Conditions: One-room huts are the most common Uduk housing. These huts have thatched roofing and no cooking facilities. Cooking must be done in separate cooking huts. Each camp has a medical clinic. There are 2 mills for grinding grain in the Gambella camp, and 9 hand-dug wells. There are still no paved roads; however, the dirt roads have all been upgraded.

Religion: Less than 13 years ago, African traditional religion ruled the hearts and lives of the Uduk people. Today, however, very few Uduks adhere to the traditional beliefs, as most are converted to Christianity and are baptized. Christian Uduks are now reaching out to the Muslim Sudanese. They are in great need, however, of teaching and discipleship.

History

The Uduk, as well as other Southern Sudanese peoples, have had a tumultuous political history. The Sudanese have had numerous civil wars over the control of the government dating back to 1955. These wars have resulted in a large number of Uduk's seeking refuge in the neighboring country of Ethiopia.

Urgent Prayer Need

Bingham Academy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, urgently needs a [French teacher](#) to join their staff team in August. Pray that God will provide the right person to meet this need.