LIVING WITH WAR AFTERMATHS: THE HEALTH OF THE LOST BOYS OF SUDAN

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In 1983, the Sudanese civil war broke out between the Northern Sudanese, mainly Muslims, and the Southern Sudanese, mostly Christians. Thousands of young boys fled their country after the government invaded their villages in the south. Many of their parents were killed or displaced separately. After fleeing this deadly war, the boys have lived in insecure refugee camps, both in Ethiopia and Kenya. The term "Lost Boys" has been given to those Sudanese youth whose families were lost during the breakout of the civil war and who have lived their youths in exile. After their long agony, their voices were heard by the world. About 4000 Lost Boys were resettled in the US in 2000-2001. About 110 Lost Boys currently reside in Salt Lake City.

The Lost Boys of Sudan have not had an easy life, due to the rampant civil war in their country. As a result, they now exhibit a unique set of health problems. The most common health problems affecting the Lost Boys are: Tuberculosis, parasites, gastrointestinal pains, vision impairments, and body injuries. The health issues that the boys face do not, however, threaten the US public and are mostly related to drinking dirty water and malnutrition.

The objective of my study is to explore how the civil war has affected the current health status of the Lost Boys who have resettled in the US. To address this issue, I conducted a survey with 48 Sudanese Lost Boys living in Salt Lake City. The survey questions asked each boy to elaborate on the health issues they experienced before coming to the US, their current health problems, the types of health care they have received while in the US, and whether or not these health services have been sufficient for them. Findings suggest that the Lost Boys exhibit a significant amount of health problems, such as frequent stomachaches and headaches. However, they have not always received appropriate medical care while in the US, primarily due to lack of health insurance.

The findings of this study can be used to educate the medical professionals about the unique health problems this population faces, as well as to make the community aware of how inefficient the US health care system has been in addressing these boys' particular health needs.