

Livelihood opportunities for Sudanese refugees

by Leben Nelson Moro

Some of the most disadvantaged refugees in Egypt are former Sudanese students who remained in Egypt when the democratically-elected Sudanese government was overthrown in 1989. A small number of them managed to settle in the West but the majority remained in Egypt as refugees; legal restrictions, however, prevent them from working officially.

Many work illegally in jobs that do not match their qualifications. Some stay at home, dependent on their spouses. Women have assumed greater responsibility for their families often because the men are unwilling to do the lower status - and lower paid - jobs that are available. Some former students receive remittances from relatives and friends in the West, a flow of resources key to the survival strategies of many

refugees in Egypt.

Skills for Southern Sudan is an NGO set up in 1995 by Windle Trust International to support educated Sudanese refugees in Britain and East Africa in developing relevant skills for the job marketplace and helping them find employment.

In 1997 Skills for Southern Sudan set up an office in Kenya to facilitate Sudanese professionals' return to Africa, arranging job-seeking workshops and assisting with recruitment. In February 1999 they opened an office in Cairo to provide information and support to those Sudanese refugees willing to take up training and employment opportunities in East Africa and southern Sudan. The Cairo office is now closed.

Skills for Southern Sudan has run training courses (in Cairo, southern

Sudan and Nairobi) in subjects such as report-writing, CV preparation, interview techniques, good governance, language skills and women's empowerment. A number of Sudanese refugees from Cairo have returned to Southern Sudan; most have mainly found work with humanitarian organisations but some are working with the civil administration of the SPLA, which sorely lacks skilled personnel. When the peace accords are finally signed, returnees will be able to contribute to their country's reconstruction and attainment of a durable peace.

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