

OPPORTUNITY GRANT AWARD REPORT

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SOUTH SUDAN UNIVERSITY LINK

SOUTH SUDAN



**TO: INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION
COUNSELLING**

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1. Grant Summary

Since late last year, South Sudan has experienced a return to full-scale civil war as violence escalated and political tensions deepened. These civil wars have affected the number of students applying for university admissions in south sudan. During such a time, majority of students only drop out from high school and join rebel groups, others join the south sudan people's defense forces. Additionally, With the ever-changing technology, mainly the change in the university admission application from paper application to online application, life became difficult for majority of students of South Sudan. These students do not have any computer knowledge and even access to computers. It is from this background that I thought of offering a service to the students of south sudan who are affected by the civil wars to apply for university applications. In south sudan, guns still have more power than education. To change this narrative, I thought of carrying out this project such that each student that we help carries home the good news of higher education back to their peer so that they can also be encouraged to higher education instead of joining rebel groups. We had a great turn up of students and they were very excited for this opportunity extended to their community to help they get university admissions counselling and helping them make online university admissions application. I was joined by fourteen colleagues, eight from Uganda and six from within south sudan. We managed to help 5,126 students to apply for university admissions. The project was successfully implemented as planned from 30th June, 2025 to 14th July, 2025.

2. Project activities

The main project activity was to help students who have been affected by civil wars to apply for university admissions application. This started by identifying the project which followed by engaging other college admission counselors both from south sudan and Uganda who helped me carry out the project and finally, carrying out the project which started on the 30th June, 2025 to 14th July 2025.

3. Results and Impacts

It was a very great achievement carrying out this project. As I said earlier, we managed to help 5,126 students to apply for university admissions. The students were very excited and ready join universities of their choices. Students from lower classes were also present to witness the process of university admissions application. We did not only help the students to apply for university applications but we also trained them on how to use a computer and we also took them through different university application procedure. Beyond admissions, the project has provided mentorship, emotional support, and hope to students who felt forgotten by the world. Many of them have expressed how this process restored their confidence and gave them a renewed sense of purpose. The initiative has also helped raise awareness among the local and international institutions about unique barriers faced by displaced students. In some cases, it has contributed to changes in admission procedure for example, accepting alternative documentation and extending application deadline for war affected students.

4. Lessons learned.

I learnt the power of education as liberation. For these students, education is not just about learning, it is a pathway to freedom, safety, and identity reconstruction. Access to education

can be life changing, turning victims into empowered agents of change. Secondly, Resilience of human spirit. Despite facing trauma, many war affected students display incredible determination and hope. Human resilience can thrive even in the harshest circumstances, and education often becomes a symbol of a better future. Thirdly, inequities in global systems. Students from conflict zones often face systematic barriers, limited access to documents, technology, language barrier or biased admissions processes. The world is not equally accessible to all. Advocacy, flexibility, and compassion are needed to make system fairer. Another lesson I learned is the importance of trauma informed support. Many of these students have experienced deep emotional wounds. Traditional application systems ignore these traditional realities. Compassionate, trauma aware practices are essential when working with displaced or war affected individuals. Additionally, some of these war affected students often come from diverse backgrounds with unique cultural, religious, and social values. One must approach work with humility, recognizing the limits of their worldview and learning from others. Another lesson is creative problem solving. When formal documents are missing or deadlines are tight, flexible and innovative thinking are required. Rules may need interpretation, and solutions often lie in partnerships, exceptions, and persistence. Lastly, is the role of mentorship and advocacy. A single caring advocate can make the difference between rejection and opportunity. Helping students navigate bureaucracy can be as impactful as financial aid or academic preparation. Generally, this project has opened my eyes. I have learnt a lot from it and I would encourage all college counselors out there to try to extend their services beyond their schools and communities. A lot of students need counselling out there.

5. Future plans and sustainability.

My future plan is to build a long-term support system that helps students from war affected areas to access higher education by; creating clear guidance resources, mentorship programs, and building partnership with universities and scholarship organizations. I aim to study international education, public policy or humanitarian studies to better understand how global education system can become more inclusive and responsive to displaced students. To make this work sustainable, I plan to train and empower others especially former student beneficiaries to also support new applicants, creating a cycle of peer mentorship. I also plan to collaborate with organizations that focus on conflict affected youth so that support is not just from one person, but embedded in larger systems. Sustainability, for me means building models that can function even in my absence through digital platforms, local advocates, and partnerships. Ultimately, I want to help shift university systems to more accessible, so that this support is not a temporary solution, but a long-term change.

5 (I) Challenges faced while carrying out the project.

One major challenge was lack of documentation. Many students had lost academic records, identity cards and certificates due to displacement caused by the conflict. This made University applications and scholarship process very difficult. To address this, we had to work with institutions that offer flexibility or alternative like affidavit or academic reference. Another challenge was limited access to technology. None of the students had a reliable device, only the computers that we came with are the only devices that were available for use. There was also the emotional burden. Many students had faced trauma, and navigating complex system while

healing was overwhelming for them. We had to learn how to be patient, sensitive, and encourage them without pushing too hard. At the same time, I realized the importance advocacy, not just helping individuals, but also pushing institutions to create more inclusive and flexible policies.

6. Additional information

Having witnessed how war disrupted the future of bright, ambitious young people, I felt compelled to act. I knew that access to higher educational could be a turning point in their lives.

7. Conclusion

Helping students from war affected areas apply for university has taught me that education is more than a pathway to opportunity, it is a form of healing, empowerment, and resistance against the circumstances that try to limit young people's futures. Despite the many challenges, this work has deepened my commitment to creating fairer systems in ensuring that no student is left behind because of conflict or displacement. As I continue this journey, I am focused on building sustainable, scalable solutions that not only support individual students, but also advocate for more inclusive and compassionate educational policies globally. Great appreciation to international ACAC, and OK Construction Company for financial support that facilitated this project.