



Watering the
Seeds of Change

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Salva Dut Biography



Salva Dut, WFSS Founder &
Chief Strategy Director

Salva Dut is Founder and Chief Strategy Director for Water for South Sudan, Inc. (WFSS). He is the inspiration and vision behind the humanitarian not-for-profit organization, which provides access to fresh water and hygiene education in remote villages of his native South Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries. Since 2005, WFSS has drilled more than 450 wells, serving hundreds of thousands of people.

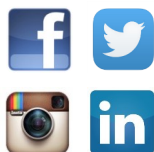
In 1985, Salva, then just 11 years old, was one of the 17,000 "Lost Boys of Sudan" who fled that country's southern region during Sudan's two-decade civil war. During that flight, a significant number of the Lost Boys perished from hunger, thirst, and disease as well as wild animal and military attacks. Among the lucky survivors, Salva escaped to the relative safety of Ethiopia and later to Kenya.


As a teenager in 1990, Salva led about 1,500 of the Lost Boys from Ethiopia across hundreds of desert miles through Sudan to the United Nations-controlled Kakuma refugee camp near the Kenyan city of Lodwar. He lived in the barbed wire-enclosed camp with 92,000 other refugees for nearly six years.

In 1996, under the auspices of the U.S. State Department and the United Nations, about 3,800 of the Lost Boys, including Salva, came to the United States while others went to Australia and Canada. Arriving in the U.S., Salva spoke little English and lacked any formal education.

Salva's family members who survived the war and remained in Southern Sudan thought he was dead, and he also thought they had perished. But Salva was determined to return to South Sudan someday. In January 2002, Salva

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learned from a fellow refugee that his father was seriously ill in a UN clinic, which he'd reached after walking 300 miles. The two had not seen each other in more than 16 years. Sensing that this could be the last opportunity to reunite with his father, Salva returned to Sudan. There he discovered that his father was suffering from waterborne parasites and disease. There was no clean water in his father's village. Once reunited with Salva and healthy again, the elder Dut abandoned his lifelong home and moved about a hundred miles away to where he could find clean water.

Salva's trip reconnected him to the harsh truth of everyday life for the people of South Sudan who lack access to safe, fresh water. Grateful to the American people who helped him change his life, he returned to the U.S. determined to make a difference for the people of his birthplace. In 2003, Salva and a small group of friends founded Water for South Sudan, Inc., to raise funds and drill water wells. It has become Salva's life mission. The first well was drilled in 2005 in Salva's father's village. Meanwhile, Salva became an American citizen and studied International Business at Monroe Community College (MCC) in Rochester, New York, while working as president and drilling manager of WFSS.

The Sudanese Civil War finally ended in 2005 with a comprehensive peace agreement. In January 2011, the Sudanese people living in the southern part of the country voted to formally secede from the Republic of Sudan. In July 2011, the Republic of South Sudan was born. Salva moved back to South Sudan following his nation's independence and now oversees WFSS operations in Africa. Salva has earned numerous awards, including Rotary International's highest award—"Service Above Self"—in 2011. He is also a member of the MCC Alumni Hall of Fame.

In 2010, award-winning author Linda Sue Park, also of Rochester, published *A Long Walk to Water*, which tells Salva's story. The book, which has sold over 1.7 million copies, is in the Common Core curriculum and has inspired more than \$2.5 million in donations to WFSS from supporters around the world. WFSS currently has supporters in all 50 U.S. states and 54 countries.

Salva's heroic personal story and authentic, humble character continue to inspire people from around the world to support Water for South Sudan's humanitarian mission of service to the people of South Sudan.