



## Salva Dut Biography

Salva Dut is Founder and Senior Advisor 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 280 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, 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 US while others went to Australia and Canada. Arriving in the US in 1996, Salva spoke little English and lacked 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 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 over 16 years. Sensing

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Salva Dut, WFSS Founder & Senior Advisor

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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 water-borne 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 life-long 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 US determined to make a difference for the people of his birthplace. He and a small group of friends founded Water for South Sudan, Inc. (WFSS) in 2003 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.

Salva became an American citizen and studied International Business at Monroe Community College (MCC) in Rochester, NY, 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 Southern Sudanese people voted to secede from the Republic of Sudan. In July, 2011 the new Republic of South Sudan was born. Salva moved back to South Sudan following his nation's independence and now oversees WFSS operations in Africa.

WFSS has drilled 282 wells in South Sudan as of August, 2016. These wells produce clean water for over a quarter million people every day.

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 has sold over 1 million copies, and is in the Common Core curriculum. It has inspired more than \$1 million in donations to WFSS from supporters around the world. WFSS currently has supporters in all 50 US states and 33 other countries.

Salva's heroic personal story and authentic humble character inspires audiences to support Water for South Sudan's humanitarian mission of service to the people of South Sudan.

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