

"I am Matter Machar. I came from Unity State in Western Upper Nile in a small town call Ganyiel in Southern Sudan. I came from a family of 6 (1 brother & 3 sisters), my dad died when I was only 5 during the civil in Sudan that reigned for over 21 years. I left home when I was only 7 years old when my home town was destroyed by unknown gun men from the Islamic regime in Khartoum. The forces from the government destroyed hundreds of villages and burned down houses, livestock, humans and people's belongings.

The government kept on destroying basic needs and significant properties and killing people. In 1988 I fled with unknown young boys and a few girls and headed for Ethiopia to seek refuge, peace and protection. A number of us survived after trekking thousand of miles to Ethiopia in the 1980s with help from Red Cross that dropped food and water from the air using helicopters since other relief organisations couldn't do anything due to war and insecurity in the region. Again war broke out in Ethiopia in 1990 and I came back to Sudan walking where many of my friends died of starvation, thirst, drowning in rivers or were attacked by wild animals. I finally reached Kenya in June 1992 (Kakuma Refugee Camp) where I was a refugee for about 10 years.

In Kakuma Refugee Camp (Northern Kenya), life was hard but I excelled and completed a high school certificate in 2001 and got a scholarship to Australia through the Lost Boys of Sudan resettlement program and I managed to be the first to come to the country with help from the 60 MINUTES TV program. I first settled in Toowoomba two hours drive south of Brisbane. After spending 3 months there, I moved to Sydney where I applied for a tertiary education in Tasmania at the Australian Maritime College for a Bachelor of Applied Science (Fisheries) course. I was accepted for the course in March 2003 and graduated in 2005 with a degree.

After graduating I moved to Melbourne (Dandenong area) where I volunteered at Adult Migrants Education Services (AMES) as a home tutor for young people where I helped them resettle into the country for about a month and also worked as a life guard at Dandenong Oasis and Monash Aquatic Centre.

After that I moved to the City of Greater Dandenong council where I volunteered running sports program for young people from multicultural backgrounds. After working with that for a while on volunteering basis, they offered me a casual position (4 hours a week) running the same programs and in 2007 was offered to do a traineeship. I completed the traineeship in 2008 and I was employed on full-time basis as of 2008 January. I am currently working for the City of Greater Dandenong youth services as a sports inclusion worker".