

Timed Summary

Interview with Angelo Diing Dhel

OH 839

Interviewer: Alison McDougall

Date: 12th December 2007

Note: Key words shown in bold.

Background information from Disc 1.

Angelo was born on 1st January 1977 in **Dinka, Southern Sudan** in a village called **Nyinboli**, with a population of 100,000. His father was in the ANA army and then became chief of the Dinka. As chief his father was responsible for determinations on domestic violence, marriage problems, family issues and crime issues, he acted as a judge in the community. He is responsible for 50,000 people. Angelo was eight years old when he was appointed as his father's successor and started his training by attending court with his father and learning to be a critical thinker. His family all grew up as Christians, as Anglicans; he was baptized in a Catholic Church and later joined the Uniting Church which he continues to attend in Australia. The war in Southern Sudan began in 1983 and it reached his village in 1986. In 1986 the people were told that they were to be governed by **Sharia Law** but the chiefs said 'no' as they were Christians and would not obey these rules. The militia was armed by the government and attacked the people of Southern Sudan. About 200 people, including his grandparents were chained, put in a hut and burned alive. After three months he decided to leave and join the rebels to fight the enemy. During the raid he hid in the bush. His friends who were caught became slaves for the Arab Northern Sudanese people.

START TIME	SUMMARY
Disc 2	
0.00	Introduction
0.16	Angelo describes what happened when the village was attacked. He hid in a tree in the bush for five hours without moving before going home. If he had run he would have been seen, so he hid and didn't move.
3.35	He walked home along the road, and saw people were crying. Many people had been killed and others burned alive, including children. The men bought guns to protect their families. There was a war within his own country, and the whole village was destroyed.
6.38	He found his parents alive at home. Other family members had been killed. He stayed at home for three months and then decided to join the army.
7.49	His father told him that he was too young to join the army and that the walk to Ethiopia would be too dangerous. On the day he left he only told his mother he was going.
10.59	When he reached the rebels he sent word back to his father about what he was doing. The rebels said they would look after him if his family was killed. He planned to train as a child soldier.
12.49	Angelo speaks about his experience of joining a base group of rebels in Southern Sudan, a four-hour walk from his village. Boys as young as eight years old joined. There were no girls at that time. They walked at night to hide from the militia, and they had no water. He was told that he would be taught to shoot and that he could join the army as an adult
16.59	He walked with an armed escort to Ethiopia to join the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army , but as children they were sent to the frontline. It was a three month walk and they took some cattle for food. There were lions in the bush. There were about 800 in the march but the boys were kept apart.
19.55	They only marched at night, in long lines, protected by four army personnel. Some children were taken by lions. At the Ethiopian border they were welcomed by the Ethiopians and taken to a refugee camp and organised in a group by the army personnel. A group consisted of 1,000 young children and it was called Red Army or "child soldiers" and they were kept there for six months. They were starving and did not get enough food until rescued by the United Nations staff who visited the camp.
26.16	Angelo describes life in the army. There was no shelter and they slept under the trees until the UN brought tents, but there were not enough as there were then 14,000 children. They were protected at night so that the lions would not get to the children. Angelo was made head of one group and was responsible for making sure that 1,000 people got food and blankets. He was ten years old.
31.13	He was given the leadership role because of his leadership style and he could write a bit of English and Arabic and also because of his social background. He was also responsible for discipline and it was very challenging. Sergeants were put in charge and responsible for delivering judgment on punishments; he delivered his judgment based on a humanitarian basis. He was involved with counselling and assisted the children to understand and face reality and he tried to give them hope for the future. He was able to undertake this leadership role because of his experience and training with his father.

START TIME	SUMMARY
39.19	After this initial period they were taken to a disciplinary training camp for three months and later for a four month training exercise of shooting practice in the bush before being released to the frontline or some other duty. He was not strong enough to carry the AK-47. Some boys aged 15 and 16 were taken to the frontline in several areas of Southern Sudan. He was given the role of trainer and also put in charge of wounded people; he was training to be a radio operator for headquarters. The Ethiopian Government was overthrown and he had to collect all the wounded in trucks and take them away and return for more wounded at the camp. The United Nations staff had left and they were able to take over their trucks.
44.14	Angelo describes how the government in Ethiopia had changed and it was not sympathetic to Sudanese refugees. They were still based in Ethiopia near the Sudanese border; they tried to get the refugees through Sudan to Kenya but it was a big task. They took everyone to Fashalla in Southern Sudan and then some walked to Kapoeta and others were flown to Lokickokio in Kenya. The new camp was the Kakuma Refugee Camp. He worked there for 20 months before the United Nations took responsibility at the camp.
49.42	He recalls that he had to use his rifle and pistol several times as part of his role and he had to force some of the soldiers to go back to the frontline. They were threatening to shoot him to scare him but he was able to negotiate with them. He was 14 years old.
52.50	Angelo describes his illnesses. He was very sick with diarrhoea as a result of drinking dirty water at the river. When he was seriously ill with yellow fever, he couldn't get any medicine and he was cured with a local wine made from sorghum. He introduced soccer to all the groups of children as a way of healing. When a child died in the camp he was responsible for organising the burial and for keeping records for the future for the families. He considered this was big burden for a young child. He had to grow up very quickly. These experiences changed his life and is responsible for the man he is today.
	End disc 2