

## Saving Lives in Sudan

### *My Cousins' Lives Are Lost, But Others Won't Be ...*

**M**y name is Liza, and I come from Western Equatoria, though war drove me from Sudan in 1999. It was hard, but hopeful news to learn that Nonviolent Peaceforce had succeeded in settling a cattle dispute in my home state.

Perhaps you've heard stories of land disputes, water disputes, disputes over oil and other resources coming out of Sudan. Maybe you've seen a newspaper article or caught a radio or a TV report that gives my country a few minutes of airtime. Such reports are more than news stories to me. They are real life. They are personal.

I know about bloodshed in cattle-grazing disputes. I know about it not from the newspaper, radio or TV. I know about it because blood spilt in one such dispute in the 1990s came from members of my own family. Apart from the different ending, the story ran as Tiffany Easthom describes on the first page.

An argument over cattle and crops one week. Murder the next. Armed gunmen surrounded my cousins' house at 4 a.m., ordered everyone out and forced them to sit down in one straight line. Then one by one they started shooting. Those who managed to flee left the dead behind. My cousins Abraham, Robert, Tadayio, Silvestor Hakim and Silvestor Laku lay in the hot sun for two days before soldiers buried them. Yesibayi, who was wounded, died later after

long treatments failed to save his life. Such stories were common in the Sudan I grew up in.

It's too late for my cousins. But thanks to Nonviolent Peaceforce, it's not too late for other lives to be saved. Other wives, mothers and children will keep their husbands, sons and fathers because of the courageous efforts of unarmed civilian peacekeepers. I believe the real value of Nonviolent Peaceforce is that its peacekeepers can protect civilians without using violence. Nonviolent action does not separate and divide people as armed protection might. Rather, it brings them together to talk, to heal and to mend differences so people have a chance to live peacefully together. I am proud that many of the peacekeepers in Western Equatoria are local Sudanese. I am proud that they are helping and training their own communities to respond nonviolently to conflict. I am proud to know Nonviolent Peaceforce. Unarmed civilian peacekeeping gives me fresh hope in the possibility of a peaceful future for Sudan.



Liza Mulla now lives in Minneapolis but was born and lived in Sudan for 31 years. Learn more about her life in Sudan at: <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/lizas-story>

