

# HOPE ROAD

Life disrupts the best  
laid plans...

2017  
IN COMPETITION  
SYDNEY  
FILM FESTIVAL

2017  
OFFICIAL SELECTION  
MELBOURNE  
INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL

*"Inspiring,  
eye-opening ...  
a captivating  
and necessary  
contribution to  
our refugee  
debate".*

STUDY GUIDE



A FILM BY TOM ZUBRYCKI





[www.hoperoad.com.au](http://www.hoperoad.com.au)

## FILM SUMMARY

Hope Road lifts the veil on what life can be like for a refugee caught between two worlds. A refugee from the Sudanese civil war, Zacharia (one of the 'lost boys' of Sudan) lives in Australia, with his partner and daughter. Like many others who are forced to leave their homeland, Zacharia wants to give something back and improve the lives of people he left behind. Zac's ambitious dream is to build a much-needed school in his home village, now part of the new nation of South Sudan. For support he enlists the backing of an unlikely band of Aussie supporters who join him on a 40-day charity walk to raise funds for this venture. But life disrupts the best-laid plans, and Zac has to draw on all his resources to keep his dream alive.

## PART ONE

The film begins in 2012, a year after South Sudan's Independence, when Zacharia returns to his village. Hundreds are out on the road waiting. A bull is slaughtered, women ululate and dance. Zac is overwhelmed. He addresses the chiefs of the village. Promises are given and expectations raised. Plans are drawn up for the school. Yet almost immediately things start unravelling: the workers who are drawn from the 8 village clans want more money, the well is dry and needs fixing, and there are arguments as the women push for the school that means so much to them. Eventually the work proceeds, and work starts on clearing the site and making the bricks. 20,000 bricks are made, enough for the entire school.



## PART TWO

Zac returns to Sydney in high spirits. We meet Janet, his English-language teacher, who has become his most dedicated supporter. Fund raising now starts in earnest at countless small events across Sydney. But any possibility of help from the Australian government is lost when aid to Africa is savagely cut. Zac's support committee comes up with an ambitious plan: a 42-day charity walk from the Queensland border back to Sydney. Zac was one of the 'Lost Boys' who walked out of Sudan, but can he do a walk like this again? All of 1,200 kilometres.

Meanwhile back in South Sudan there's been a fresh outbreak of civil war. This may hold up the project, but the committee is undeterred. In July 2014 Zac and Janet hit the road. They take off down busy highways and forest tracks. What they lack in preparation they make up for in sheer passion and energy — calling into schools, Indigenous land councils, Rotary clubs. It's a roller coaster ride and along the way there are some close encounters with back-road Australians. And then some home truths kick in. Will they reach their target? Have they been unrealistic? Finally Zac and Janet reach Sydney. Zac is welcomed back by his community as a hero. They have raised \$20,000. Enough to make a start on the building of the school.

## PART THREE

Zac resumes his life back in Sydney. His daughter graduates from pre-school. Back in South Sudan, civil war has escalated, while clan warfare breaks out in the village. People are killed. The plans for the school and the 6,000 bricks they have made are imperilled when the project co-ordinator leaves the village. Even more unexpected is a tragic twist in Zacharia's personal life. Zac's wife suddenly leaves him. Shocked by the broken relationship, Zac suddenly faces the challenges of rebuilding his life and being sole parent to 3 young children.

As the months go by increasingly some members of the committee like Rob become more and more disillusioned with the prospects of ever getting the school built. Why not put the money into scholarships for girls, is his view. Janet remains as Zac's steadfast supporter, despite the news that many of the bricks have been taken to build a government office in a nearby town. She believes him when he says that the village still wants the school and that the bricks can be recovered.

Meanwhile the village clans have arranged a new wife for Zac. The traditional marriage takes place by proxy. The bride-price is paid for in cattle and Awau arrives at Sydney airport to a very warm welcome. The entire committee is there, including a lot of Zac's friends and supporters. Zac talks about his marriage to Awau being the solution to getting back to South Sudan and resuming the project. However when the film ends we get the sense that this is still a long way off.





**Zacharia's long trek**  
South Sudan refugee walks to build village school

**Tim Howard**  
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THE story of a former South Sudan "lost boy" highlights the difference between problems in the developing world and First World countries.

Zacharia Maciek walked into Grafton from Maclean on Sunday, two weeks into his Hope Road 40-day walk from Tweed Heads to Sydney.

The walk is to raise money for a school in his home village of Abyei Ajok in central South Sudan.

In Australia the education debate rages about the distribution of billions of dollars to fund schools in any state, but in South Sudan, the situation is dire. At the same time, half the population are illiterate (this equates to 40% for males and only 16% for females; 53% of the population are illiterate, so the demand for educational services is immense.

Mr Maciek is one of the "lost boys" of South Sudan who as a child was separated from his family during the civil war and became a refugee.

On Monday, June 11, Zacharia hit the road with the money to fulfil his dream of building a school in his home village. Yesterday he added to his list of sponsors.

Project co-ordinator Jane Dyne said South Sudan, a country of about 8 million people, became an independent country in July 2011. It won its independence after many years of civil war estimated to have killed more than 2 million people and created 4 million refugees.

Education is a major challenge in this post-conflict situation. Only 27% of the adult population is literate (this equates to 40% for males and only 16% for females; 53% of the population are illiterate, so the demand for educational services is immense.

SSOE was formed to provide assistance to the new nation of South Sudan by helping the country to develop its educational institutions and capacity.

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tion (SSOE), made up of teachers and other professionals who have been motivated by Mr Maciek's vision.

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group of local supporters at the Gurehigam Aboriginal Corporation in Grafton.

He said the level of support he received from every community he visited had

**It's the people I meet on this walk that are the sponsors for this project**  
- Zacharia Maciek

**ZACHARIA'S STORY**  
Zacharia is lucky to be alive. His life began in a cattle camp, and his duties included taking the cattle out all day to water and pasture, bringing them back to the camp at night. He also had to defend the cattle from wild animals, including lions. When his father died, Zacharia now became responsible for the whole family, especially his two younger brothers.

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When the army from the North arrived – burning villages and killing civilians, Zacharia and other people fled and began a long walk into Ethiopia with men, women and children along with the Sudan People's Liberation Army, a trek during which many more perished. Lost Boys, orphaned during the war were collected together in training camps forming the Red Army. However Zacharia didn't feel safe, so with the other surviving boy from his village, he decided to set off back to home. He barely survived:

*"Once when I and a friend slept under a tree a wild animal came through the grass and took my friend. He cried out. It was so dark I couldn't see anything. I was screaming out to him, but there was nothing I could do."*

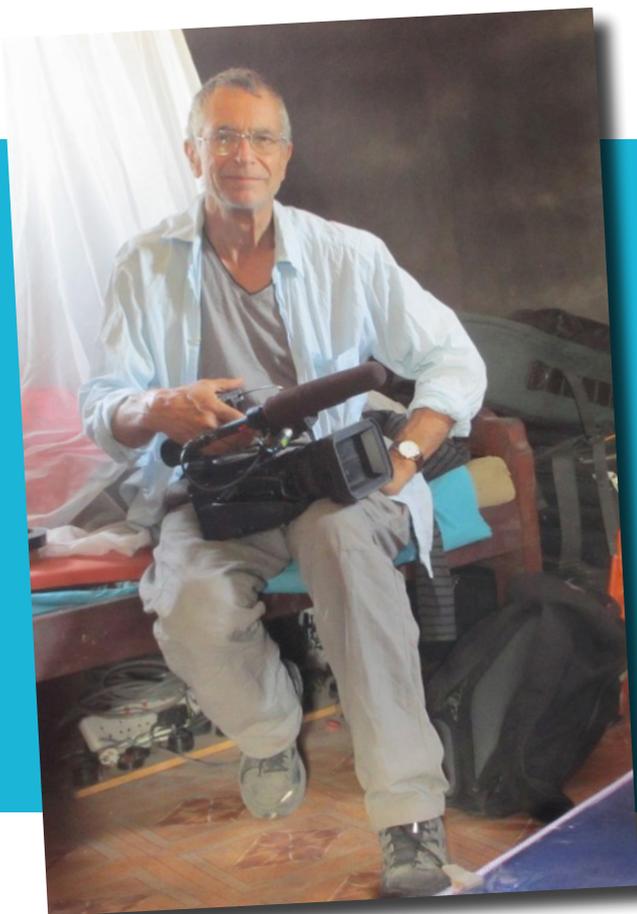
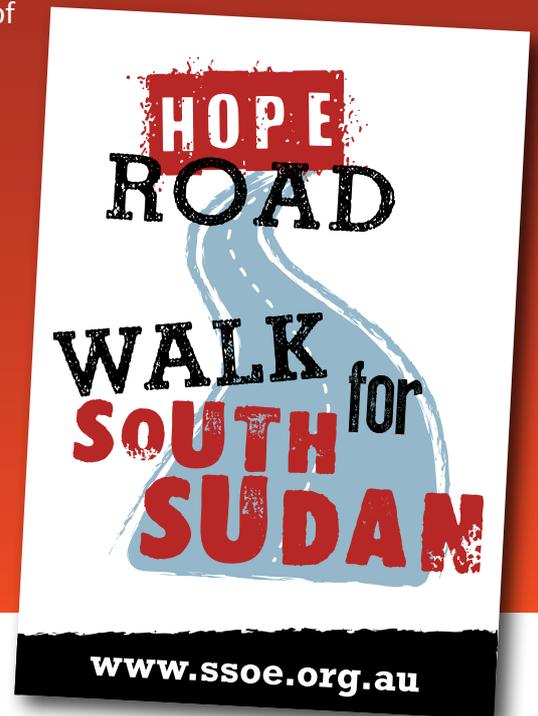
Zacharia eventually found his way to Kenya and along with many other 'Lost Boys', ended-up in the Kakuma refugee camp. Life in Kakuma was very tough. However, he was able to continue his interrupted schooling. From the group of six boys from his village he is now the last one who survives. Eventually after spending 11 years in refugee camps, Zacharia come to Australia in 2001 under the UNHCR resettlement program.

Zacharia's motivation for raising money to build the school is to do whatever he can to alleviate the lack of educational facilities and opportunities in his former village, where at present the children are having classes under the trees. The rate of literacy for adults in South Sudan is among the lowest in the world at about 26% (with the rate of literacy for women and girls at only about 17%).

## THE ORGANISATION BEHIND THE WALK

South Sudan Orphan Education (SSOE) was formed in 2007 by a group of concerned community workers and teachers with the idea of providing assistance to the world's youngest nation to develop its educational institutions. SSOE's main project is to raise the finance necessary for the building and operation of the school in Abyei Achok. The village administration and regional government strongly support the project.

SSOE was incorporated as a community organisation and is governed by a volunteer management committee. Over the last few years the group has been conducting regular fundraising projects such as dinners, auctions and concerts. In 2012 the funds generated enabled Zacharia to travel to the South Sudan and commence the first phase of the project. By the end of 2013 local villagers manufactured 20,000 bricks, and detailed drawings for the school buildings were prepared. The next stage is the actual building work itself.



## A DOCUMENTARY

Experienced filmmaker Tom Zubrycki is documenting the various stages of building the school as well as telling Zacharia's own story.

Tom has directed and produced over 35 films, for more information please see [www.tomzubrycki.com](http://www.tomzubrycki.com)

The documentary was released at the Sydney Film Festival in June 2017. It has since been updated. [www.hoperoad.com.au](http://www.hoperoad.com.au)



## CURRICULUM LINKS

'Hope Road' can be linked to the following subject areas within the National Curriculum:

- Year 10 History
- Year 10 Geography
- Senior English

### SPECIFIC LINKS TO LEVEL 10 HISTORY:

- Level 10: The Modern World and Australia

Overview content includes:

- The major movements for rights and freedom in the world and the achievement of independence by former colonies.
- Developments in technology, education, public health, longevity and standard of living during the twentieth century.
- Depth Study 3: The Globalising World - Migration Experiences
  - Migration experiences (1945 – present), including the waves of post-World War II migration to Australia, including the influence of significant world events.
  - The impact of changing government policies on Australia's migration patterns, including abolition of the White Australia Policy, 'Populate or Perish.'
  - The contribution of migration to Australia's changing identity as a nation and to its international relationships.

### SPECIFIC LINKS TO LEVEL 10 GEOGRAPHY:

- Unit 2: Geographies of human wellbeing
  - The different ways of measuring and mapping human wellbeing and development, and how these can be applied to measure differences between places.
  - The reasons for spatial variations between countries in selected indicators of human wellbeing
  - The issues affecting the development of places and their impact on human wellbeing, drawing on a study from a developing country or region in Africa, South America or the Pacific Islands.
  - The role of international and national government and non-government organisations' initiatives in improving human wellbeing in Australia and other countries.

### LINKS TO SENIOR ENGLISH:

- Hope Road can be used as a supplementary text when exploring Context based writing for areas such as:
  - Identity and Belonging
  - Encountering Conflict
  - The imaginary Landscape

It also links to the National Curriculum's focus on the General Capabilities of:

- Ethical Understanding
- Inter cultural understanding



## POST VIEWING ACTIVITIES

As a class, discuss the following questions:

- Why does Zacharia feel he has a 'national obligation' to help the people back in his village?
- How does he feel as he returns to Sudan for the first time in over 20 years?
- How is he received back in his village?
- What are the villagers hopes for their future?
- Discuss with students the purpose of Zacharia's walk.
- Why does the committee become frustrated with the prospects for the school.

## MAPPING ACTIVITIES:

Have students visit the following site to look at a map of Sudan and the surrounding region:

[www.atlapedia.com/on-line/maps/political/Nth\\_Africa\\_E.htm](http://www.atlapedia.com/on-line/maps/political/Nth_Africa_E.htm)

- Show students the map of South Sudan, pointing out that it is the world's newest nation (formed in 2011): <http://www.mapsofworld.com/south-sudan/>
- Project the map to the class via digital projector (or provide individual copies). As a class, identify the neighbouring countries, the capitals of Juba and Khartoum, the North/South border, the region of Darfur, the Nile River, and other natural resources (oil) on a map of Africa.
- As students work with the map, have them consider some of these questions:
  1. What countries does South Sudan border with, and why did it split off from Sudan and seek independence? What was it about it's culture, and ethnic composition? Was religion a factor?
  2. How do you think the geographic location of South Sudan (North Sudan bordering Libya, Egypt, and other predominantly Arab countries and South Sudan bordering Uganda, Kenya, Central African Republic, and other more African nations) has affected its national identity?
  3. Why do you think Sudan was difficult for the British to govern as a colonial power? (Large country, lots of terrain that is difficult to travel, minimal infrastructure put in place).
  4. What other regions of the world face similar problems?
  5. What resources are more readily available in North Sudan and in South Sudan?



## HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL OVERVIEW OF SUDAN

Visit the following sites to help them answer the questions below.

*(note: these suggested sites are by no means exhaustive and students and teachers are encouraged to undertake their own additional research):*

### LINKS:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14069082>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_South\\_Sudan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_South_Sudan)

<http://strategyleader.org/profiles/dinka.html>

### Second Sudanese civil war 1983 to 2005

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Sudanese\\_Civil\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sudanese_Civil_War)

### Third and latest South Sudanese civil war

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Sudanese\\_Civil\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Sudanese_Civil_War)

1. Who colonised Sudan and when did they leave?
2. Who was given control of the government when this group left? Why was this problematic?
3. How long has Sudan endured Civil War?
4. What specific things were people fighting for?
5. What caused the outbreak of the new civil war in South Sudan, which started in 2014?
6. How do you think this will affect the school building project?



## WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH SUDAN

As we know, the rate of literacy for adults in South Sudan is among the lowest in the world at about 26% (with the rate of literacy for women and girls at only about 17%). Zacharia makes specific mention of wanting to help women in his village achieve an education.

South Sudan has been named as the toughest nation in the world for girls to receive an education, with nearly three-quarters failing to attend even primary school, according to an index published this week. More than half of girls in South Sudan drop out of school before the age of 18. Many come under pressure from their families to get married.

Conduct some research and answer the following questions about the situation of women in Sudan. Some sites to get you started:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/oct/11/revealed-the-10-worst-countries-for-girls-to-get-an-education-international-day-girl>

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/south-sudan-schoolgirls-voice-concerns-early-marriage-171002113412038.html>

<https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/education.html>

### Questions

1. Traditionally, what responsibilities fall to Sudanese women? What jobs are considered “women’s work”? How do traditionally female jobs (fetching water, cooking meals, childcare) keep girls out of school?
2. Explain the role of the dowry system in keeping girls out of school. How does the dowry system encourage the marriage of child brides?
3. How do you think the government of South Sudan will be able to convince families that the long-term benefit of allowing their daughters to receive an education and seek jobs outside of the home is worth the immediate financial benefit of receiving cows in a dowry payment?
4. How has the recent civil war made it more difficult for girls to go to school ?
5. In what ways would increased access to education help improve the lives of those living in South Sudan
6. As a class, consider the challenges facing South Sudan’s education and health care systems. In small groups describe some possible solutions to some of these challenges.



## SOUTH SUDANESE IN AUSTRALIA

Hope Road lifts the veil on what life can be like for refugees like Zac - caught between two worlds. Re-establishing their lives in Australia versus feeling the need to contribute towards rebuilding their former homeland. This often creates tensions within the families themselves as is the case in this film when Ayuen and Zac split up.

Conduct some research and answer the following questions about the situation of South Sudanese in Australia.

<http://www.roads-to-refuge.com.au/settlement/settlement-challenges.html>

<http://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/news/deep-anger-at-core-of-apex-gang-causing-havoc-on-melbournes-streets/news-story/f4e886da66594d4ea38cb323ea069612>

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/african-gang-violence-is-a-problem--but-so-is-our-primitive-view-of-africans-20180102-h0cdr2.html>

### Questions

1. Why do refugee families often experience relationship issues not long after they arrive in Australia. Discuss the impacts on people coming from a civil war region, and the impact on the next generation.
2. How does the media work to racially profile South Sudanese people. Make reference to media reports of 'violent crime sprees' by 'African gangs' in Melbourne.

## SETTLEMENT ISSUES FOR SOUTH SUDANESE IN AUSTRALIA

### challenges facing Education

- No school buildings
- No school supplies
- Few teachers
- Children have to work before coming to school or unable to attend school at all due to work commitments
- Teachers don't receive salaries
- Teachers are limited in the subject areas they can teach
- Others?

### challenges facing Health Care

- Epidemic diseases are spreading across South Sudan
- Hunger
- Doctors don't receive salaries
- Limited medical supplies
- Poor/limited medical facilities
- Others?

