Until recently, Sudan was engaged in an almost constant 50 years of civil war. The conflict resulted in millions of civilian deaths and millions more forced from their homes. South Sudan became an independent country on July 9, 2011, but millions of South Sudanese refugees are still living in all parts of the world. The segment of the story that is more often told in popular culture is the struggle that the refugee goes through in his or her native country. The story that is not as often told is the struggle that refugees continue to go through even after reaching the "promised land" of the United States. This research looks at the economic aspect of this latter struggle for about thirty Didinga refugees of South Sudan living in Central New York.

“Skills of earning, budgeting, and saving are indispensable for citizens. But we are not born with them.”

ADVANTAGES:
CITY TO SHINING CITY
- Stayed for a few months in Kakuma refugee camp in a rural area, and then put into school in the capital city Nairobi.
- Exposed to a city lifestyle at an early age.
- Better off than if they had gone straight from the rural refugee camp to an American city.

STREET SMART
- Grew up with violence and corruption.
- Able to easily interpret the negative intentions of others and are always aware of suspicious situations.
- Even with a language barrier, unlikely to be cheated or to fall for a scam.

AMERICAN PRESTIGE
- South Sudan is now an independent country with a lot of potential for new business.
- If a Didinga returned to Sudan, they might become very successful by Sudanese standards because of the prestige that comes with having lived in the United States for so long.
- Especially true for younger, single men.

DISADVANTAGES:
FINDING A JOB
- The problem is not finding a job, but finding a satisfying or sufficiently challenging job.
- Partly because diplomas or degrees received outside the U.S. are not recognized in the U.S.
- Partly because of the language barrier.
- Some have to balance working, going to school, and raising a family.

BUDGETING
- Budgeting and saving money are central values in the American economic culture and are part of an American child’s upbringing.
- Not as much money to save in Kenya or Sudan, and therefore habits for saving or budgeting never develop.
- After arriving to the U.S., refugees from those parts of the world may have a hard time learning to responsibly handle much larger sums of money than they would ever have in Kenya or Sudan.

CREDIT
- Living as young refugees in Kenya, did not have any experience paying with credit.
- Had help opening credit cards in the U.S., but did not realize the importance of paying credit bills on time.
- Now, those who came first have bad credit history, but those who arrived later were warned by their fellow Didinga to pay bills on time.

References: