



ANNUAL REPORT 2022

THE VAD FOUNDATION





THE VALENTINO ACHAK DENG FOUNDATION

Valentino Deng and Dave Eggers established the VAD Foundation to empower South Sudanese communities. We do this by increasing access to primary and secondary education, improving the education of young women, providing vocational training, and implementing community development programs to help create the future leaders of a peaceful and thriving South Sudan.

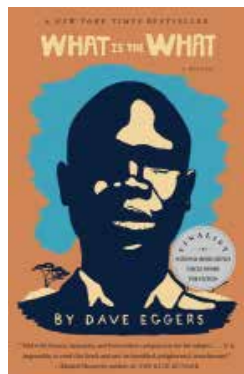
OUR HOPE is to empower the children, young people, and women of South Sudan with opportunities to build thriving communities for their families.

OUR AIM is to help create peace and long-term sustainability for all citizens through vocational training and skill-building. While traditional schooling is at the core of our strategy, we believe students and community members must be empowered beyond the classroom.

OUR GOAL is to promote economic development through education to provide a resilient foundation for the citizens of South Sudan.

FROM THE BEGINNING

2006 *What Is the What*, a novel by Dave Eggers based on Valentino's early life story as a refugee from Sudan's civil war, is published. The VAD Foundation is established and dedicated to bringing quality and sustainable educational opportunities to the war-torn communities of South Sudan.



2007 Valentino returns to Marial Bai, his home village, to consult with community and government leaders in the region and lay the groundwork for construction of a secondary school and educational facilities.

2008 Working with a team of local architects and construction workers on a plot of land donated by the community, Valentino begins construction on the secondary school and educational center.

2009 The Marial Bai Secondary School (MBSS) opens as one of the first fully-functional high schools in the entire region, providing an opportunity for youth – especially girls – to receive an education past elementary school.

2010 New boarding facilities allow young people from across South Sudan to attend MBSS. A library, community center, sports facilities, school farm, and teacher-training facilities are added to the campus. State-of-the-art science equipment is received from the government for a brand-new science lab.

2012 Our first senior class graduates from MBSS.

2016 The VAD Foundation and *What Is the What* celebrate ten years: Valentino continues to expand the impact of his work within South Sudan.

2018 The VAD Foundation opens its second campus, Alok Girls' Academy (AGA), with an inaugural enrollment of 144 students.

2019 Enrollment at AGA soars to 500 girls in grades four through ten.

2020 The South Sudanese government announces that all schools across the country must close due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. To support the region's public health response to the pandemic, Valentino assembles a COVID-19 Awareness TaskForce to educate communities on the importance of social distancing, mask-wearing, hand-washing, and safe hygiene practices.

2021 As part of a USAID program to support local media for displaced communities and refugees in South Sudan, the VAD Foundation is awarded a grant from the organization Internews to train over 400 students in media and drama in performance-based education. The government also announces the reopening of all schools. Nearly 800 young women enroll at AGA.

2022 The official announcement of Grade 8 results: Our first all-girls senior class graduated from high school and Angelina Ajok Bak Yep was in the Top Ten across the State in Girls' Performances for 2022.



DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Over the years, the VAD Foundation has accomplished a lot with your support. We have provided educational opportunities for thousands of South Sudanese youth and have helped them realize their dreams. Many of our alumni are now working as engineers, nurses, teachers, and community development managers across the different regions of South Sudan. It is no secret that our educational programs rank among the top transformative educational initiatives in the country. We could not have accomplished all of this without your unwavering support!

As another year comes to a close, I am reflecting back on all of our accomplishments and challenges. Since its opening, the VAD Foundation has been a beacon of light for education in South Sudan. Over the past four years, we have provided a safe environment for our girls to learn and grow and 2022 was no different. At the start of the academic year, we enrolled 530 female students across the elementary and high school levels and throughout the year, our students have continued to excel in and out of the classroom. I hope you enjoy seeing their smiling faces and reading the year's highlights in this report.

As we look ahead and plan for 2023, we are excited for a new year and continued growth. One challenge we plan to tackle in 2023 is school overcrowding. With the growing need for girls' education in the region, our enrollment numbers continue to climb, and classroom space and facilities are limited. In the coming year, we have plans to expand our reach by constructing a new campus for our girls' school. By doing so, we will be able to accommodate the growing enrollment demand and provide our students the space to learn and succeed. I am excited for these big plans and for the opportunity to provide learning opportunities to even more youth in the region.

Despite the ongoing challenges we face in a young country, we will continue to fight for our students and their rights to educational opportunities. We are grateful for your continued support!

I wish you all a wonderful holiday season filled with happiness and health, and a happy new year.

Your friend,

Valentino

Co-Founder



STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2022, we enrolled 530 girls in school. 330 of those students are elementary age and 200 are high school age. Students were taught a variety of subjects – english, mathematics, history, citizenship, physics, biology, agriculture, geography, chemistry, and literature. Our students excelled inside and outside of the classroom. Students were also very excited to participate in many extracurricular activities such as soccer, volleyball, drama club, and debate team. A big hit among the students was the science lab, where students learned about anatomy and even participated in dissecting frogs. The hands-on learning really resonated with students, and they were thrilled for the opportunity!

Debate team was another popular activity with our students. Throughout the year, there were three debate competitions between Grades 6 and 8. The Grade 6 team was the overall winner, and the students were excited to “out debate” their peers. Subjects ranged from sports to academics to local topics. Next year, the students are interested in competing in inter-school debates with other schools around the region.

One of the challenges we continue to face is lack of dignity packs (sanitary items) for our young adolescent female students. Not all can afford to buy sanitary items and while we try to provide as many as possible, the number of students who need these materials continues to increase as the girls reach puberty. This past year, our teachers and staff held multiple classes and training sessions on how to make sanitary pads for personal use and even to sell. We hope to continue this important education to help meet the demand of such critical items.

In August, a two-day training workshop was organized to teach girls about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). 150 eighth-graders attended the workshop to learn awareness and recognize signs of SGBV. The goal was to teach students about this critical, and unfortunately, common topic so they can better protect themselves, their relatives, friends and peers. The topics included what is SGBV, the types of SGBV, human rights and customary laws, the psychological after-effects of survivors, and how to identify the causes and contributing factors of SGBV. At the time of the workshop, Valentino was visiting the school and was able to attend and contribute to the content of the training.

All-Star Students

Our AGA students continue to be academic champions across the region and in the state. They led and took the Top Ten in statewide test scores throughout the year. We are continuously proud of such outstanding academic performance!

In May, Grade 8 official test results were announced, and one of our students, Margaret Abuor Bak Yep, was a top performer in the region, scoring 452 out of 500 marks.

On July 9, South Sudan celebrated 11 years of independence. To celebrate, our students marched in a local parade and two of our 7th grade students, Alek Lual Garang and Awien Deng Rehan, wrote and recited a powerful poem titled “Independence”. The poem highlighted the plight that the South Sudanese people have endured throughout the struggle for liberation and emphasized the importance of peace and coexistence in the country.

INDEPENDENCE



What We've Been Up To in 2022

In July, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) invited some of our students to commemorate International Peacekeepers Day – a day to recognize peace and remember those who have lost their lives in the pursuit of peace. This year's theme was "People, Peace, Progress: The Power of Partnerships". Our students were invited to submit essays for a competition to speak to this theme. Nine of our eleventh-grade students participated, three of whom placed and were invited to read their essays at the celebration.

In August, two of our 7th grade students benefited from a skills training course, conducted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Topics included health and hygiene, comprehensive sexual education, challenges that young girls face, leadership skills, and values and rights of women. After the training, the two students presented their learnings to their peers. An internal survey was conducted by the Foundation to see if the workshop and the presentation was effective with the peers and the results were encouraging.

In October, the Shinemaker Foundation donated 100 solar lamps to our school. The lamps were distributed to our students and will provide sufficient lighting when power at the school is limited. They will also help students complete homework when there is no power at their homes. Thank you, Shine-maker Foundation. You have made a huge difference in helping to educate our students!

Peace! Peace! Peace!

*Yes, peace, we pray for peace
Peace in our homes, peace in our school
And peace in our beloved nation*

*We are tired of social problems
The shedding of blood and all forms of crimes
We are not animals to be slaughtered*

*Peace! Peace! Peace!
Yes, peace, dear leaders, we see
No reasons for us to feel like strangers
In our own country*

*There are no reasons for us to run
Away from our country and fight our own people
For what are we fighting for
And why are we creating wars among ourselves*

*We thank our martyrs and our leader,
late Dr. John Garang De Mabior, for fighting
For our freedom*

*Independence! Independence!
Yes, independence, today is a day
To celebrate our independence with joy and gladness
Remember we are the future leaders
Ready to lead with loyalty*

*Justice and wisdom
We love South Sudan
Our beloved motherland
Flowing with honey and milk*

Written and recited by Alek Lual Garang and Awien Deng Rehan,
VADF students in Grade 12 during the 2022 Independence Day
celebration.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROFILES



My name is Alai Noon Akok, and I am in Grade 9. I have four sisters and three brothers. I am the third born in our family. My hobbies include reading novels, knitting bed sheets, and listening to music. I want to study medicine when I graduate and attend university. I thank the VAD Foundation and all of the supporters who continue to support my education and for the opportunities you have given me.



My name is Alek Lual Garang. I am 14 years old and in Primary 7. I have three brothers and two sisters. I like to recite poetry, engage in debate team, play soccer and volleyball, and participate in drama. My dream is to one day become the President of South Sudan. I want to help build hospitals, roads, and schools to help pave the way for a peaceful South Sudan. One of my happiest moments was when we recited the poem titled, "Independence" on July 9th. It was wonderful – filled with fun and many celebrations. As an orphan, I could not have made it this far without the support of the VAD Foundation. I want to honor all of the donors for supporting my education. Thank you!



My name is Anger Yel Lual and I am 17 years old and in Primary 7. I have four sisters and two brothers. I love to sing, write poems, and participate in debates. My academic performance has improved and now I am always in the Top Ten in my class! When I enroll at university, I want to be a gynecologist so I can treat sick and pregnant women. In Paliang, my Village in Tonj East, Warrap State, there are no doctors or gynecologists to provide medical services. As a result, many women lose their lives during pregnancy. I hope to one day be a part of this change and become a doctor where I am most needed. Thanks to the VAD Foundation for your support of my dreams!



I am Awien Deng Rehan, 16 years of age and in Grade 12. I am the youngest of five children. My favorite subject is science and I want to be a doctor after I attend university. During my free time, I enjoy writing short stories, reading the Bible, and making home goods like lotion, hair shampoo, liquid soap, beads, tablecloths, and bed sheets. Learning to make these items through the VAD Foundation has helped provide my family with a small amount of money. I've also written several books, although I have only published one, titled "Beautification of Life". Thank you for your support.





LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023

Construction of a New Campus

Through the years of educational experiences, our team has realized that a stable and permanent learning environment is imperative for the successful education of young girls in rural Africa, like the village in which we operate. Due to the high demand of girls' education in the area, our school is becoming overcrowded, and our space is becoming limited. In 2023, we have a vision to establish a permanent gated all-girls learning campus with classrooms, a library, science lab, borehole, toilets, kitchen, dining hall, dormitories, staff quarters, outdoor fields, and facilities. With new facilities, we will be able to accommodate even more students and increase our enrollment. The construction of a fully equipped and functional girls' school is

projected to cost approximately \$500,000. Due to financial limitations, the team plans to build the school in phases, with an initial fundraising target of \$250,000.

Vocational Training Programs

In 2023, we hope to reinstate our vocational training programs. Due to COVID-19 and challenges in 2022, our horticulture, animal husbandry, aquaculture, and technical learning projects were put on hold. During this period, our team relied heavily on trainings provided by development partners, such as United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Trainings included creative writing seminars and American Refugee Council's sexuality and gender-based violence workshops.

WHAT WE ARE FUNDRAISING FOR

We have some very big plans for 2023 and a very ambitious year-end Fundraising goal of \$250,000!

Construct New Campus

In 2023, we will begin construction of a new campus for our female students, which will help alleviate overcrowding and provide a larger campus for our students to learn and grow. The new campus will include all of the necessities they need to succeed and receive their education, including a library with resources and space to study, a science lab, a kitchen, ample classrooms, and a dining hall.

Sponsorship of Individual Student

Only \$225/year or \$75/semester can educate a student for a full academic year and includes the cost of education and all school supplies.

Renovate Marial Bai School (MBSS)

In 2023, we hope to re-open MBSS for our male and female students in the community of Marial Bai. In order to do so, renovating the existing structure, rebuilding desks, walls, windows, fences, etc. is required for the school to be operational.

Administration and Programming

Our students are always in need of basic learning materials to enhance their education. New or used supplies such as notebooks, pens, pencils, papers, and books are always necessities in our classrooms. If you would like to donate new or used supplies, please email us at info@vadfoundation.org.





HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Donate Every penny counts, and your generous support and donations make everything possible. To donate, visit www.vadfoundation.org.

Connect Introduce us to your company, school, church, or organization for speaking events and scholarship sponsorships for our students.

Fundraise Organize a simple house party, happy hour event, or dinner party to raise money for the Foundation. You could introduce *What Is the What* by Dave Eggers to your book club!

Match Many companies and employers match charitable contributions, which is a great way to double your impact! To learn more about company matching, email info@vadfoundtion.org.

Shop Log in to smile.amazon.com with your Amazon login, select the VAD Foundation as your charity of choice, and Amazon will donate 5% of your purchases to VAD.

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