

South Sudan Skills Story: From Perspective of Skills for South Sudan Founding Member

Lawrence M. Tombe

AuthorHouseUK (Sep 29, 2017)

Softcover \$19.76 (314pp)

978-1-5462-8112-2

South Sudan Skills Story is a hopeful, sober, deep examination of the potential for development in South Sudan.

Deeply informative and heartfelt, *South Sudan Skills Story* by Lawrence M. Tombe is an unprecedented insider's look at pursuing peace and education in a new, war-torn nation.

A new nation. A new hope. A new chance to bring development, education, and peace to all people. That's the promise that awaited the newly independent country of South Sudan in 2011. This book recounts the progress toward that goal, that dream, and the devastating challenges and losses that have come from ongoing violence within the country.

Tracing the history of the nation leading up to and after independence, the text recalls strides made, through organizing, toward peace and nationhood, as well as the grave difficulties encountered, including gender-based violence. It then forwards a thoughtful map for peace and prosperity in a voice filled with insight, compassion, and advocacy for a people in desperate need.

Academic and methodical, the text focuses on comprehensiveness and actionability over ease of reading. Language is sometimes stiff and stilted. Dire need is juxtaposed with the vast potential of the nation, and this tension holds the book together and keeps its pages moving.

Tombe is a lifelong resident of South Sudan who spent years in government service; his expertise translates through the book's many insights. He brings his knowledge to bear but also brings the depth of feeling that is necessary to enact true change. He helped to found Skills for South Sudan in 1994; the organization works to obtain and maintain peace.

The chronology in the front matter gives a sense of the overarching time frame. While most of the world has little idea of what's really happened in South Sudan, this work provides the information necessary to achieve understanding.

While this is primarily a book for South Sudan, its lessons—such as on the power of communities working together, and on building educational infrastructure even in the face of poverty and trauma—are relevant to community developers, educational activists, and developmental advocates in troubled locations around the world.

Back matter is lengthy, mostly consisting of organizational documents from Tombe's organization that are more a matter of the institution's record keeping than they are practical or educational for outsiders. A wordy title is ambiguous, concealing the powerful promise and purpose of the book.

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MELISSA WUSKE (January 2, 2018)

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