

Written by Loretta Heigle, Jones Middle School, Upper Arlington Schools — Upper Arlington, Ohio

This project gave me the assurance that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to, any goal I set. I can truly believe after this project that anyone and everyone can make a difference. 9 9

-- Claudia, 6th grader at Jones Middle School

# What? A few fast facts...

- Students and teachers wanted to help Sudanese Lost Boys who were refugees from civil war.
- 84 sixth-graders
- Teachers: Loretta Heigle, Nancy Kaufmann, Sara McKinley, Molly Todd
- Curriculum Area(s): Social Studies, Math, Language Arts
- Community Partners: MCL Cafeteria, Mary's Catering, Loeb Electric Company, CD 101

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### The Big Idea

Sixth grade social studies classes at Jones Middle School in Upper Arlington, Ohio not only took on the plight of the Sudanese refugees called the "Lost Boys" -- they learned some valuable life lessons along the way.

### Investigation

In an article in *Junior Scholastic* newsmagazine, our students read of the **terrible situation of Sudanese boys who were refugees from the civil war** going on there. The boys had to flee Sudan to hoped-for safety in Ethiopia, only to discover that they had to retrace some of their steps to get to a refugee camp in Kenya. During the long journey on foot, they **faced wild animals**, **hunger**, **a lack of water**, **and war**.

While the sixth graders were influenced by the words of the article, it was really the photographs of undernourished children that most affected them. These suburban children were terrifically impacted by the thought that children their own age had to travel hundreds of miles to find safety without their families to protect them.



I decided to abandon our planned, more traditional study of various countries to focus specifically on Sudan, its people, and how we could help the *Lost Boys*. The students truly took this project and made it their own.

# Rigor, Relevance and Relationships

Service-learning has demonstrated the potential to provide a curriculum that is rich in rigor, relevance and relationships—three elements of learning that play a crucial role in the school improvement process, according to Bill Daggett and his associates at the International Center for Leadership in Education. **Consistent with these** elements, research clearly shows that students who participate in high quality service-learning experiences become more engaged in learning, more committed to their communities, and more empowered to make positive life and career choices.

International Center for Leadership in Education, www.leadered.com

## The Lost Boys of Sudan

#### **Preparation**

We used a wide variety of resources to gather information about Sudan and the Lost Boys. We learned of Sudan's cultures, the civil war, the religions, customs, weather, roles of men women and children, and why there were no Lost Girls.

Articles in news magazines, newspapers, and the Internet gave us facts about the situation in Sudan and Kenya. One student contacted a *Lost Boy* who had emigrated to the U.S. and was living in Michigan. We set up a phone interview with Emmanuel Makender and asked him questions the students prepared in advance to get his perspective. We also invited a Sudanese woman living in Columbus to come speak with us about life in Sudan. Students

RIGOR... The rigor presented in this service-learning project was taking knowledge and applying it to a real world situation in order to accomplish a genuine, significant goal. The students not only learned about life in Sudan and of the horrible challenges faced by the Lost Boys; they turned that information into a cause. They knew that they had to keep their facts straight. They knew they had to figure out ways to use those facts to persuade others to help them.

-- Loretta Heigle

created Venn diagrams to compare Sudan and the United States and gathered so much information that they were certain they would never forget it.

#### **Action**

Based on our research and conversations with Sudanese people, we decided to send individual boxes of supplies to the Lost Boys at Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. In addition to the personal hygiene supplies that the students first thought were needed, educational supplies such as pens, pencils, and paper were collected. We added the educational supplies because every Lost Boy we knew of spoke of the importance of education to make his country strong again and also spoke of returning to Sudan to help out his people and his country.

The sixth graders also decided to raise money to help the *Lost Boys* who were still in Kenya and to spread the word here in the United States about the plight of the *Lost* 

Boys. Their original goal of \$1,000 was quickly surpassed, and they ended up collecting over \$4,000.

Sixth graders worked collectively and individually to inform people of the situation of the Lost Boys and to raise money and supplies to help them. Some students prepared presentations and spoke to elementary school classes and community organizations. Everyone was involved in fundraisers such as bake sales, trinket sales, morning doughnut sales, and loose change collections. Some students developed brochures and letters that they sent to friends and relatives asking them for help.

Others contacted television stations and newspapers to ask

them to help us get the word out. Individuals wrote to Oprah and other celebrities to try to increase awareness. When a student contacted our congresswoman, her office also helped with research. Various business locations around our community displayed collection boxes that students created in order to collect money and supplies for the Lost Boys.

One of our biggest challenges was finding a way to get materials to the refugee camp in Kenya. Many adults told us that our project was a noble one, but there was no way we would be able to cover the cost of shipping materials to Africa. Those adults hadn't figured on the ingenuity of 12 year olds. Maggie, a late night television watcher, saw a piece on an international relief organization located in the United States. When

Maggie contacted the organization, they told her that they would get the supplies to the refugee camps if we could get the materials to their office in Oklahoma. This was no small task in itself. But once again,

**RELEVANCE...** What could be more relevant than realizing that you are truly impacting the world? These kids had a passion and a purpose for learning and for taking action. As one of my students, Mike, said, "I learned that if everyone did what we did, then the world would be a much better place."

-- Loretta Heigle

resourceful Maggie contacted an electrical supply company, *Loeb Electric*, that agreed to ship the boxes of educational and personal supplies to Oklahoma. Another problem solved!

#### Reflection

Students kept journals and portfolios of their work on the project. The portfolios were used for reflection and documentation of individual and small group involvement. There were regular written and graphic reflection times during class, as well as a variety of discussions and presentations. All of these strategies helped students attach personal meaning to their experiences.

### **Celebration/Demonstration**

In addition to our own celebrations in the classroom, students were recognized by the Upper Arlington City Council and Columbus City Council. *Junior Scholastic* newsmagazine ran a follow-up article that spotlighted the sixth graders' project, the amount of money raised, and the impact this experience had on students.

At the very end of the project, students also researched refugee agencies that were helping the *Lost Boys* in Kakuma. Groups of interested students presented in the school auditorium to the whole sixth grade to make the case for a specific agency. It was a **great example of authentic assessment** since everyone was invested in the project and interested in sending the \$4,000 to the most worthwhile, efficient agency. After those presentations and follow-

#### A typical servicelearning project includes five components:

Investigation: Teachers and students investigate the community/world problems that they might potentially address. Investigation typically involves some sort of research and mapping activity.

Planning and Preparation:
Teachers, students, and
community members plan the
learning and service activities,
and address the administrative
issues needed for a successful
project.

Action: The "heart" of the project . . . engaging in the meaningful service experience that will help students develop important knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and will benefit the community.

Reflection: Activities that help students understand the service-learning experience and think about its meaning and connection to them, their society, and what they have learned in school.

Demonstration/Celebration:
The final experience when students, community participants and others publicly share what they have learned, celebrate the results of the service-learning project, and look ahead to the future.

Assessment is part of all activities to ensure that the learning and development that occur through service-learning can be measured, and to help diagnose student needs, provide feedback, and improve instruction.

K-12 Service-Learning Project Planning Toolkit. Created by RMC Research Corporation for Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

#### K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

Meaningful Service: Servicelearning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service.

Link to Curriculum: Servicelearning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

Reflection: Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.

Diversity: Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.

Youth Voice: Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.

Partnerships: Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

Progress Monitoring: Servicelearning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

Duration and Intensity: Servicelearning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

Source: National Youth Leadership Council (www.nylc.org)

## The Lost Boys of Sudan

up discussion, the students chose to send the money through *UNICEF*.

An unexpected celebration occurred when a group from the Kellogg Foundation visited our school. Former astronaut and Senator John Glenn was a part of the visiting team. It's hard to describe the thrill of having a real American hero in our classroom to hear about this project.

The visitors brought along supplies to donate to the *Lost Boys*. However, part way through the students' presentation, Senator Glenn got up and began walking in front of the other adults with an empty box. He told them that they hadn't brought nearly enough to contribute to the hard work of the sixth graders. His spontaneous effort resulted in another \$100 for our project.

#### **Assessment/Evaluation**

Factual knowledge about Sudan and the *Lost Boys* was demonstrated through **informational writing**, **Venn diagrams** comparing the U.S. and Sudan, **verbal sharing** of information, **morning announcements**, **presentations** to our own class and to other classes in the school and the district, presentations to community groups, and **Public Service Announcements** (PSAs) on our local radio station, CD101.

**Periodic checkpoints** were conducted when students documented

their involvement individually, in groups, and in class work. These **self-assessments** were very important as students not only recorded their involvement, but also reflected on its importance and on what they might do next.

In addition, each student maintained a **portfolio of individual work** where he/she could collect any fliers, articles, persuasive letters, presentations, or other evidence of involvement in the project.

### **Curriculum Connections/Standards**

**Social Studies**: regions of the world; roles of men, women, and children in a country; geography; latitude and longitude; religion

**Language Arts:** public speaking; persuasive writing; informational writing

*Math:* currency; population graphs

"We would have learned about countries and found out where they were, but now that we are doing the Lost Boys project, we are learning those things and helping people at the same time."

-- Christine, 6th grader

### **21st Century Skills**

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified the elements described in the sidebar on the right as the critical systems necessary to ensure 21st century readiness for every student. Though the Lost Boys of Sudan service-learning project clearly demonstrates connections to many of the skills, the following outlines one skill in detail.

**Communication and Collaboration:** 

Students really talked with each other and honestly listened to ideas from other people. They were aware and appreciative of the skills and efforts of other students. Individual students who were previously on the outside became an integral part of the effort. In addition to collaborating within the school, students tapped into community resources and engaged citizens in our effort.

Students presented to other classes and community groups to persuade them to help us with the project.
Students contacted media outlets, legislative offices, and community businesses to get publicity for the project.

# Impact: Kids Using Their "Best Stuff" to Make A Difference

Students who were not always academic super-stars provided much of the leadership for this project. They used their interpersonal skills, dogged determination, networking ability, and courage to contact a wide variety of community agencies and media

**Relationships...** The unexpected and wonderful result of this collaborative project was the sense of working together that occurred. People who had never joined together before were shoulder to shoulder, digging into information and working hard to accomplish their goals.

—Loretta Heigle

outlets. They were fearless! Other students who had often been "on the outside looking in" became an integral part of the effort. Here are some examples: Maggie used her **power of persuasion**, contacting countless community members,

watching late night television where she discovered a helpful children's relief organization, and informing the *Junior Scholastic* staff about the impact of their article. Maggie was invited to New York City to Scholastic headquarters for a tour and several pats on the back.

Jayne **organized** the sale of student drama performance videos to raise money for the *Lost Boys*. She and her family duplicated the videos and sold them to interested families.

Holly **designed** a professional looking flier to mail to family and friends informing them about the *Lost Boys'* situation and asking for contributions.

Other students **developed** informational literature to distribute in their own neighborhoods to raise awareness, supplies, and money.

21st Century Skills addressed and demonstrated by *The Lost Boys of Sudan* servicelearning project:

- **Global Awareness**
- Financial, Economic,
  Business, and
  Entrepreneurial Literacy
- **Civic Literacy**
- Health Literacy
- **☑** Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility

Source: The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (www.p21.org)

# So What? Results and impact...

- ▶ 6,720 service and learning hours contributed
- Collected more than 100 boxes of educational and personal hygiene supplies
- ▶ \$4,000 raised to benefit the Lost Boys

# Now What? A Call to Action:

Now that you have read about Loretta's students and their efforts to help the "Lost Boys of Sudan," what could you and your classmates do to make a difference? Just like Loretta and her kids, there are people everywhere making a difference. Let us know what you and others in your community are doing by posting your information on . . . www.legacyevillage.ning.com

To learn more about how to help children affected by civil war, log on to . . .

Help Bring Hope: www.sudanclinic.org

In addition, you may find these sites helpful:

International Rescue Committee:

www.theirc.org
U.S. fund for UNICEF:
 www.unicefusa.org
Children's Defense Fund:
 www.childrensdefense.org
Haitian Health Foundation:
 www.haitianhealthfoundation.org

## The Lost Boys of Sudan

Aaron **visited** a local party supply store and **purchased** at wholesale prices various trinkets of interest to middle school students. He then received permission to **sell** them at school during lunch and as part of bake sales. This raised a surprising amount of money.

I can truly say that the **leadership** for this project came from the

"I have learned that almost anything horrible can be solved. The first time I heard about this project I thought there was no way we could help the Lost Boys because there are so many of them. But then we started to brainstorm ideas -- ideas that I thought wouldn't work. But then we raised all that money and got all those shoeboxes. And now I know that we've already made a difference. And we can make more."

-- Kelsey, 6th grader

students themselves. My role was mainly as facilitator, cheerleader, and organizer of information. They provided the leadership for each aspect of the project: collecting

supplies, raising money, contacting community agencies, and supporting each other's efforts.

From the first newsmagazine article, students were appalled that children their own age had to travel many hundreds of miles to find relative safety. They also learned about the role of men, women, and children in Sudan and the importance every Lost Boy placed on education and returning to help his country some day. These 6th graders in Upper Arlington, Ohio really got the idea that people in other places face a very different world from theirs. They spoke often of how it made them feel terrific to know that they were helping even one of the *Lost* Boys to have a better life.

One thing that made the students in this service-learning project especially proud was **knowing that they had made a difference in the lives of young people halfway around the world and that they had done it as a group of sixth graders with a vision.** 

### **Next Steps/Call to Action**

My students said that, "we've learned a lot about making a difference." They've learned that no matter who you are, you can make a difference. They'll take this knowledge into 7th grade, high school, and adulthood. Nothing can hold them back. They can do anything.

They also said that they hope that the things they've been doing for the *Lost Boys* will encourage the next 6th graders that will come to work on the project and hope they can continue the project. •

"I've learned what a legacy is. I've learned what a survivor is, too. I've learned how to get positive attention. I've learned how to make a difference in the world. Every little thing you do can make a difference. You don't have to be an adult to make a difference."

-- Hilary, 6th grader

### Other Insights . . . Reflections of the Teacher

I saw the students work together—**they truly became a team working on a common goal**. This was the first time in my experience that a group of students was truly the organizing, driving force behind a project. Once they became determined to take on this project, they worked collaboratively to make it successful.

The project took on a life of its own as the students encouraged each other, built on their successes, sought out resources, and took action to change the world. I wish that we had administered an attitude survey at the beginning of the project so that we could compare the results at the end. It would be great to be able to document the progress. I also wish I had taken more pictures of everyday moments of working on the project: counting money, working on presentations, packing boxes. Those images exist only in our memories.

6 6 Service-learning is real world magic. And sixth graders can change the world. 9 9

— Loretta Heigle, Jones Middle School

The Lost Boys of Sudan
Service-Learning Project
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## What Ideas Can You Add?