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South Sudan, Factor 14: Conflict Resolution

South Sudan: The devastation of Political Corruption

Since the early 1960's South Sudan has been in constant turmoil due to raging wars and cultural tensions. These wars have caused millions of deaths and grave devastation to the natural land and cattle. Many families have been torn apart leaving the inhabitants of South Sudan scared and alone; some waiting for death to free them from such misery. Tensions between tribes go back for centuries beyond centuries. If there is ever going to be a possibility of correcting such a problem we need to get to the source of the problem; Political Corruption.

1. South Sudan Crisis

In the month of December, 2013 Salva Kiir (the newly elected president of South Sudan) accused Riek Machar (former vice president of South Sudan) of plotting a coup. Kiir then sent out troops to find and murder Machar, who went into a short period of hiding while assembling his own troops. Soon hundreds of villages are burned to the ground, thousands are killed, raped, and looted in this process. Rebels also known as the white army (soldiers on machar's side) seize regional towns. Many towns are left in ruins with piles of dead bodies left to rot. By the month of January, 2014 a cease-fire is signed but broken multiple times. A few short months later millions are dead and five million are in need of humanitarian aid. In the month of July it is announced by the UN Security Council that South Sudan has the worst food crisis in the world. Even as peace talks continue into August, the fighting still remains throughout the land. Because of this war there is terrible tension between the sudanese tribes. The two largest groups; Dinka and Nuer tribes (the two largest ethnic groups of south sudan) used to live side-by-side in harmony but are now turning against each other because of the actions of two men.

Living in fear and rage nearly 400,000 of the South Sudanese people fled to safety in neighboring countries such as Kenya and Uganda. In a somewhat stable environment the sudanese find asylum in one of many refugee camps. By the middle of 2014 over 250,000 refugee camps were built up in South Sudan, where 220,000 sudanese are depending on humanitarian aid. Though the camps may feel like an asylum to many of the sudanese, there are still serious protection concerns. Nearly 1.4 million people in South Sudan are experiencing famine as a result of food scarcity and malnutrition. Another factor of the famine is the lack of plant harvesting due to forced displacement. Environmental issues such as heavy rains tend to make the delivery of food and essential items very complicated; resulting in food insecurity and logistical constraint. Humanitarian workers are now put at risk without the proper essentials to give out to the refugees. Competition of scarce resources has caused great tension and fighting between the refugees and host communities. The multiplicity of armed elements make it harder to re-establish the civilian character of the refugee camps. Protection of the environment is then affected with little or no law and order in the refugee settlements. Financial requirements for UNHCR's operation in South Sudan as of 2015 is 324.6 million for life saving assistance to the increasing number of those displaced.

2. Refugee Camps

A typical family living in a refugee camp may only have three to four members as a result of separation during the outbreak of war. Many travel for as long as months and years before getting to safety; overcoming harsh obstacles such as soldiers and animals for many of the nights. This civil war knows no boundaries; everyone is a target no matter their age, gender, or ethnicity.

“When war broke out, families were separated. Fathers were killed, mothers were on the run. Children were left separated from parents. Many children were enlisted as child soldiers, while others ran for their lives,” (unhcr stories)

Upon reaching a camp, some only live a short time because of a contracted illness or disease from going such a long period of time without proper sanitation or essentials. Few families are fortunate enough to find each other after being separated for such extended periods of time; for many it is often years before they are reunited with their parent/child or sibling again.

I lost my father during the war in South Sudan. He was a major in the army until he was killed in 1992, which then left my family very vulnerable. After his death, all of our crops and cattle were taken. In search for a better life, my mother walked for months through Ethiopia until she reached Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. She built a small shelter there and then came back for us after two years.

While she was away, we had nothing. I lived with my grandmother in our village and even when we had food, we only ate once a day. Sometimes, all we had was a little bit of milk. Sometimes, not even that.

We didn't even know if my mother was still alive. People who left the village were getting killed. Those who tried to leave, gave up and would come back with terrible stories. When she came back to the village to get us, we then went to the refugee camp where we lived for 12 years before coming to Australia. (UN World Food Program)

It is estimated that if the current trend continues, as many as 300,000 South Sudanese refugees could be sheltering in Uganda by the end of the year. Over 65% of the new arrivals are children and hundreds are arriving unaccompanied after being separated from their parents or caregivers during the fighting. In response Save the Children is helping to register separated and unaccompanied children and then reunify them with their family members. The child friendly spaces include Early Childhood Care and Development Centres. These centers provide refugee children in Uganda with a safe and nurturing environment in which they can play, learn and receive the support they need to move on with their lives.

3. Education

The majority of refugee camps have little opportunity to offer the refugees a proper education. Many schools in the east and south were destroyed; leaving many with little or no education. Less than 2% of South Sudanese adults completed a primary school education; the adult literacy percentage stands at 27%. South Sudan currently has the world's worst illiteracy rate; in the month of September of 2013 it was recorded that three quarters of adults were unable to read or write. A 2005 peace deal paved way for South Sudan to secede from the North in July of 2011. The country has since struggled to build an education for its inhabitants. Of the few teachers there are, most are primary school leavers and are untrained, making the quality of instruction very poor. Classrooms are unmanageable and there isn't content or appropriate skill being taught, let alone how to handle people with different needs. With great improvement from humanitarian funds, the number of schools increased between the years of 2006 and 2010; the numbers doubling from 700,000 to 1.6 million. Even after internal donations, the country's school system does not have the resources to keep up with the demands.

LEITCHUOR REFUGEE CAMP, Ethiopia, May 1 (UNHCR) – Nyarial Gtaka, a 14-year-old refugee girl, concentrates on a blackboard lesson in English about "things that can affect climate" in her homeland of South Sudan.

The classroom – in the biggest refugee camp for South Sudanese in Ethiopia – has makeshift walls covered with plastic sheeting and the 50 pupils share faded science

books. But for the teenager, who lives in Leitchuor Refugee Camp with her aunt, it's the ticket to a great future.

"I want to be a doctor, come back to my country and help my people," says Nyarial, one of 1,500 students who attend classes at the school in two shifts. There's a waiting list twice as long: some 3,000 refugees students hoping new classrooms will open so they can resume studies that were suspended when violence broke out in their country in mid-December last year. (IRINnews)

4. Health

Of the many problems caused by the wars, health has been named one of the largest issues. In the lead with education, South Sudan also has the worst health indicators in the world. The infant mortality rate is 135.5 per 1,000 babies while the maternal mortality rate is 2053.90 per 100,000 births. The health care system is set up in three tiers; primary health care units, primary health care centers, and hospitals. In some cases there is only one doctor for every 500,000 people, because there are only three hospitals in South Sudan three proper surgeons are responsible for the health of South Sudan. An immediate cause of many health issues is disease, particularly HIV/AIDS, diarrhoea, respiratory tract or ear infections, measles, hookworms and other gut parasites. A large portion of these diseases are contracted from unhygienic living conditions and unsanitary water. The inadequate care of vulnerable household members and poor health care are a few underlying causes of health issues. The noxious ambience of the environment has become a great factor of the famine, a leading cause to one of many health issues.

5. Major Environmental Issues

South Sudan is very quickly becoming a desert land as a result of deforestation. As the plantation of South Sudan decreases there is an increase of periodic droughts; South Sudan is currently in the most severe drought dating back the last 60 years. At this rate crops will never be planted because climate changes are so unpredictable it's impossible to know when to plan for rainfall. This country is ranked 9th for the most vulnerable extreme weather events. Current issues also include the following; inadequate supplies of potable water, soil erosion, threatened wildlife population due to excessive hunting, and complete desertification. These issues are factors of major food and water scarcity. Over four million people (citizens and humanitarian workers) are surviving without adequate sources to clean water, food, and health. With the top mortality rate in the world at 2,054 deaths per 100,000 people; the South Sudan crisis has been named one of the worst in history. Such a toxic environment isn't safe to live in, so what is there to do to make the conditions of the environment safer for its inhabitants?

6. Solutions

Many organizations are trying to find solutions to such a dilemma, these wars need to stop once and for all. Convincing or pressuring Riek Machar and Salva Kiir may be the only solution to get both leaders to stand down their forces. Stopping attacks on the humanitarian aid workers and convoys so food can get through to the workers and people would be a great way to alleviate some of these issues. Participating in a democratic dialogue that includes respected religious and community leaders may help both sides in negotiating an agreement on a more lasting political settlement that won't be broken as done in the past. Leadership problems can then be expressed and solved in electoral conferences rather than on the citizens of South Sudan. Re-addressing the imbalance of the military might convince Bashir and his generals that this fighting isn't going to solve such a deep-rooted issue, it will only bring more of the consistent bloodshed. The United States is doing their best to help with aid and building a better future. World Food Program has begun air-dropping food rations to people stranded between protagonist and antagonist forces. The Obama administration is supplying hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, attempting to maintain humanitarian aid and assistance. . The only way to end the South on South violence is to give

the forces the right tools to solve these deep rooted problems.. There was once peace in South Sudan , and it was founded through shared goal, understanding and reasoning.

7. Other Possibilities

To find peace in conflict, both sides don't necessarily have to agree with the other but it is very important that they see from each other's point of view. At least being educated enough to see that what's best for them may not be what's best for everyone as a whole. That being said we must know that if there is any chance at saving South Sudan we need to coalesce and educate the citizens from the ground up. So that all may have the chance at understanding the outcomes of a possibly life altering decision. Easier said than done, it isn't impossible with an ardent and patient heart. Wars have boiled and demolished civilizations too many times over simple misjudgements; to prevent history from repeating itself as it has many times before, adequate communication methods must be explored. How can we talk about coming together and educating if there isn't a way to make two ignorant people see the bloodshed they are bringing upon their own people. The key to the future lies in those who have the power to stand up and fight for their beliefs, because it is that type of leader that people tend to support and follow. Getting there is the challenging part, the South Sudan crisis has been named one of the worst in the world. If the the world sees it, then eventually so will the leaders. Stop the bloodshed, the world is watching, take accountability and end it. No matter the price, this blood-feud has to end. Saving South Sudan would not only benefit south sudan but the rest of the world also, to show that any amount of bloodshed can be overcome when we come together. The Bush administration, George Clooney, and several American public figures were instrumental in helping South Sudan gain independence and become the newest country in the world. Though a joyous event, many issues from the 40+ years of civil war with Sudan were left unresolved. These issues, the greatest of which is political corruption has resulted in the current civil war. The current civil war is still at a point where influence and pressure on the two actors(who respect the US) from countries like the United States, and Europe can stop this bloodshed. We need individuals in these countries to care and in return speakout to their representatives. The fault for this war and bloodshed lies not with the people of South Sudan but instead with the leaders who use ethnic patronage to justify their own needs and agendas.

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