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## **South Sudan: Coordination and Peace to Increase Aid Efficacy and Stabilize Vulnerable Populations**

“My life’s a curse,” Mary Nyekueh Ley, a South Sudanese woman living in Sudan, states (Gettleman).

It’s not surprising that she feels that way, given the past and current circumstances of her life, and the feeling is typical of many South Sudanese families, whether they live in Sudan or South Sudan. Ley has no husband; her first, a guerilla fighter, died in her arms, and her second husband, the first’s brother, was abusive, so she fled from him. Two of her children died from diarrhea, an illness that Americans hardly think fatal. To make matters worse, Ley has no skills besides brewing homemade alcohol, illegal where she lives. Because of the paucity of income, Ley struggles to feed her children and most likely will not send them to school, lacking the ability to pay school fees.

One of the world’s youngest countries, South Sudan gained its independence on July 9, 2011 (“The World Factbook”). Wars and conflict riddle this nation; South Sudan and Sudan have internal displacement conflicts as well as border and nomadic conflicts. In larger families, many are left hungry as food security is often undermined by civil and tribal wars as well as border conflicts. Security issues such as inter-community fighting have caused a contraction in agriculture; farmers are unwilling to expand their farms for fear of attacks and consequently have also lost the knowledge of working vast farms. The dearth of food and water resources and opportunities for income has impacted health and education negatively. Only 30% of South Sudan’s 8 million people have access to a safe water source within walking distance, and only 15% have access to improved sanitation (“Basic Social Services”). Not only does 30% of the population not have access to basic health services (“Basic Social Services”), denizens must walk, on average, 75 minutes to reach the nearest health institution (Woldetsadik 35). In South Sudan, children are needed to work. With a relatively larger average family size of seven people, South Sudan’s families cannot provide healthcare to all of the children who need it, especially if their families were originally unstable. This is reflected in the 2010 census of the larger Sudanese region, where the infant mortality rate was 66% (“Sudan”). Suffering from acute malnutrition and food insecurity, high disease rates in children, lack of infrastructure and healthcare as well as changing demographics from refugees and returnees, South Sudanese families have been stripped of their resilience to natural disasters like drought and manmade disasters like warfare over resources. For the fastest and most powerful effects, the rehabilitation effort for South Sudan should require both top-down policy change and grassroots movements and coordination between humanitarian agencies. In order to improve food security as well as assist vulnerable populations through effective humanitarian and food aid, South Sudan needs to at once secure the present by first negotiating peace and building infrastructure and secure the future by increasing access to healthcare and education.

### **The Impact of Humanitarian and Food Aid**

Humanitarian aid is not news to the Sudanese. In fact, they are highly dependent on aid money. As a region that has not reached any of the Millennium Development Goals because of civil war, Sudan has been one of the major aid recipients in recent years. Since the succession of South Sudan in 2011, however, humanitarian aid directed towards the Sudanese region has become a complex issue. According to UNOCHA, the major obstacles to humanitarian situation are “insecurity stemming from the activities of armed militias, and from inter-communal violence linked to seasonal migration, resettlement of returnees, and competition for natural resources.

In 2009, Sudan was the leading recipient of humanitarian aid. However, South Sudan lacks infrastructure; they only have around 60 kilometers of paved roads in a country that is about 645,000 square kilometers which makes it hard to deliver aid (“The World Factbook”). Additionally, South Sudan depends largely on aid. Humanitarian organizations provide around 80% of all health services in South Sudan. NGOs like Save the Children, countries like the UK, USA, and China, and international organizations like the World Bank are all involved in providing aid to South Sudan, whether it is funneled to security, children, or health related issues.

The resettlement of returnees and internally displaced persons is factored into the humanitarian issue. In 2005, north and south Sudan signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), ending their 21 year long civil war. Since then, millions of refugees and displaced persons have been moving back to South Sudan, straining South Sudan’s already meager supply of water, health services, education, and other resources.

Although South Sudan receives food aid and humanitarian aid, critics believe that receiving food aid causes a dependency in the recipient country as well as an exacerbation of existing conflict. In the Yale Daily News, it was reported that food aid became a resource for factions in the recipient country to fight over, while extensive dependency of the recipient country on “external goodwill” undermined the growth of an independent, long-term agricultural development (Gami). In general, humanitarian aid can become a resource that fuels conflict by feeding troops, creating private incentives, hurting vulnerable populations, and intruding into national sovereignty; all of this allowing the continuation of conflict which in turn causes an inability to reach a peaceful state that would facilitate a prosperous economy (Branczik). In fact, Amelia Branczik stated in her paper that Sudan was actually a commonly cited example of aid continuing conflict.

#### Past Examples of Aid

A parallel of South Sudan and its conflict, former Yugoslavia also received humanitarian aid to recover from a long civil conflict that resulted in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. Yet today, the countries that composed Yugoslavia—Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Slovenia—seem to be thriving. So what went right in the humanitarian aid process in these eastern European states? In the UN Economic Commission for Europe issued on May 5, 1999, they had established three broad goals: a recovery program aimed at restoring growth and investments, rebuilding infrastructure, and reestablishing “good neighborly relations.” However, this just looks at the economic aspect of rebuilding. The European Commission also gave 69 million dollars’ worth of euros to former Yugoslavia, which those nations used mainly to address their refugee and internally displaced persons and to stop depending on food aid and social assistance from other countries (“Former Yugoslavia”). Yet many still look back on at the humanitarian aid given to Yugoslavia as exacerbating the conflict there.

The conflict in South Sudan differs from the Yugoslavian breakdown in that Yugoslavia had pre-existing infrastructure that facilitated the rebuilding of former Yugoslavian nations and the deliverance of aid money and workers. Also, the humanitarian aid and food aid was mostly issued after the resolution of conflict in the area. The Yugoslavian conflict does lay-out a plan for the restructuring of South Sudan, although it has to be adjusted for the situation.

Arguably, the effectiveness of aid depends on each individual country. In Steven Radelet’s study on foreign aid, he determined that aid was most effective if the country receiving aid was more participatory in the aid process and the various large donors harmonized instead of issuing unique sets of regulations for each organization. The aid, Radelet states, should be funneled towards quantitative goals as well to achieve the most benefit.

## Developing Agricultural Economies and Humanitarian Aid

Yale Daily News pointed out that the “external goodwill” of humanitarian aid would undermine long-term agricultural growth in regions like South Sudan. Because they lack an incentive to grow and expand, the economic foundation of the country, agriculture, would stagnate rather than develop. Humanitarian aid can also undermine local agricultural production by shifting the focus of the economy to other areas, thus causing agriculture to seem less profitable.

Paul Macek, a food aid expert from the humanitarian organization World Vision said he thought the relationship between food aid and civil wars remains unclear, but agreed that food-based aid programs are flawed because they create a dependency on external goodwill. The root of this dependency, he said, was the inability of food aid to generate long-term agricultural development.

## Targeting Causes of Vulnerable Populations and Food Insecurity

A vulnerable population, otherwise known as a population at risk, is defined by the Free Dictionary as a group of people who share a characteristic that causes each member to be susceptible to a particular event (“Population at Risk”). In this case, the vulnerable population is susceptible to food insecurity because of many reasons, but especially malnutrition.

Tesfatsion Woldetsadik, in his Nutrition Causal Analysis, ascertains the hypothetical reasons for malnutrition in a flow chart that starts with seven broad categories that encompass economic and social aspects. He states that, in South Sudan, farmers unwilling to change their practices leads to the cultivation of little land. Therefore, there will be a low agricultural output and diversification, leading to low dietary diversity and thus not enough good food for children. Along with this factor, according to his research, patrilineal families, maternal ignorance of malnutrition, cultural food preference, low value of education, lack of health care, and general ignorance of sanitation all lead to the malnutrition of children in South Sudan (Woldetsadik 48).

His research only further strengthens the viewpoint that funneling money into a country is not enough; there is only so much humanitarian aid money can address. In order to have effective humanitarian aid and achieve food security, local government needs to step up.

Research on food security in southern Sudan in 2010 shows that food insecurity is caused by “low agricultural productivity and income, low human capital—knowledge and skills, limited access to social facilities, high disease burden and poor market integration” which undermine the resilience of households (“South Sudan Annual”).

## Addressing Outside Factors

In addition to targeting aid to develop the economy and bolster vulnerable populations, factors such as climate, politics, and energy demand must be considered in the quest to attain food security. South Sudan’s geographic location ensures that agriculture is possible. South Sudan has more wetland and seasonal rainfall, thus more potential for agriculture whereas Sudan is more arid. One of South Sudan’s ten states, Unity, also converges with the discovery of most of the Sudanese region’s oil reserves. According to the CIA World Factbook, the government of South Sudan derives 98% of its budget revenues on oil. In fact, the oil reserves in South Sudan are major factor in its conflict with Sudan. Before the split, almost three-fourths of Sudan’s total oil output was produced by the southern region of Sudan.

However, if Sudan and South Sudan cannot reach peace over the oil reserves, conflict becomes even more of an obstacle to food security in the region in addition to tensions of religion. Oil reserves also serve as a point of conditionality in today's industrialized world. Recently, China has been more willing than willing to give aid to South Sudan; however, their motives in doing so unfortunately involve the acquirement of oil. Additionally, if South Sudan does reach the point of economic independence, there is doubt that developing countries can break down the trade barriers of the developed countries (Branczik). That becomes another stumbling block in its quest for food security.

### Possible Solutions

Currently, there are many different types of organizations trying to help South Sudan gain food security. The Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Food Program have been working to identify and improve food security in South Sudan by filing reports and providing food aid. Pooled funds, like the Basic Services Fund set up by Britain's Department for International Development (DFID), are funding the public health system. The DFID has released a detailed plan to address the economy by dealing with gender inequality. USAID, an American agency for international development has also released plans that will attempt to increase stability from 2011 to 2013, thus raising the South Sudanese quality of life. Save the Children, a non-governmental organization (NGO), is also funding the public health sector. Overall, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is trying to improve the coordination of the humanitarian aid in South Sudan by building consensus between NGOs, UN agencies, and other donors.

It might seem like all of these organizations are focusing on different aspects of South Sudan. However, the goals of these agencies will, hopefully, result in food security by bolstering health, agriculture, infrastructure, and economy. To ensure coordination of all agencies, however, it is difficult to establish overarching committees like OCHA, but expanded to coordinate all humanitarian aid efforts to oversee everything—it's too idealistic and for the most part, impossible without infringing on national sovereignty. The government of South Sudan needs to create peace, because without it, food security is undermined. All aid efforts are undermined by ongoing conflict; food and humanitarian aid is currently too fungible to hit the proverbial "bull's eye." Aid money often goes to food, uniforms, and munitions instead of poor farming families, thus fueling the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan rather than promoting peace. Thus, aid efforts should include an aspect of monitoring the incoming money or delivering the aid in a less fungible form. Humanitarian aid needs to contain conditions so that the South Sudan government and locals are inspired to improve. Nevertheless, aid with conditions also has its own problems; different aid packages from different organizations come with conditions that can undermine other conditions. This creates a vicious aid cycle where the government of South Sudan can rely on other aid packages when they do not reach the conditions of another aid package, causing the nation to be a "black hole" for aid money.

In a nascent nation riddled with foundational problems, South Sudan has many obstacles to face in achieving food security. Change has to happen on every level; farmers need to expand and improve their crop, but to do that, they need peace—which the government potentially could help bring through the effective use of funds, negotiations with Sudan, and policy changes. Food security for the nation of South Sudan would be a giant step towards almost all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, in peace and war time, there are public health issues that impact food security that, in South Sudan, can only be addressed with outside help. There is also the issue of aid dependency, and allowing South Sudan to thrive into an independent nation. Inadvertently, working together on this many levels ensures effective global cooperation, a MDG.

To effectively implement food aid and humanitarian aid, the government of South Sudan must work in tandem with international and local representatives to help create peace and monitor aid money, and

incentive to attain peace and food security must be provided by the aid donors. South Sudan needs to prioritize issues that, when addressed, will provide the most immediate effect—creating peace—while long term civil development projects are addressed by the international community. Slowly and steadily, South Sudan will take steps to reach the final goal of food security by improving the efficacy of humanitarian and food aid given while decreasing aid dependency.

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