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Sudan: A Country in Need of Assistance

Sudan has been a region of civil war and food insecurity all throughout history. The violence due to civil wars causes hardship for the people of Sudan, mainly because of its effect on markets and agricultural production. This problem has caused trading relationships to be eliminated, and has brought agricultural production to a halt. There are many organizations that are trying to improve the conditions in Sudan, such as the World Food Programme, also known as the WFP. WFP Sudan Representative, Kenro Oshidari stated "As we continue to press for peace in Darfur (a state in Sudan) we must ensure that food aid gets to millions of hungry people trapped by the violence" (World Food Programme). He was speaking of past efforts to get food to the people of Darfur that have failed, due to the militia in Sudan, and opposing parties. These obstacles are an issue in maintaining the life of many Sudanese people. The Sudanese are food insecure, they are undernourished, and they live in poverty. This is a time of increased demand for food products for various reasons, such as the need for biofuels, and it is very hard for farmers in this underdeveloped country to be able to compete with such demand. There are many challenges that face the people of Sudan. In the western region of Darfur civil war has broken out, many people are being displaced, and crop land is being destroyed. In South Sudan the region is plagued with having to rebuild and recuperate from over 20 years of civil war. Also, in the east region of Sudan there is serious food insecurity, and underdevelopment. In the northwest states of Sudan there are many refugee camps with displaced peoples from other countries such as Ethiopia. Conflict needs to end, and it all begins with making sure no one goes hungry, by insuring food and nutrition security.

Food and nutrition security are not the same thing. Food security is sustained when a household has access to food, and can lead a healthy active life, yet they can still lack efficient or balanced diets. Nutrition security has to do with a living in and maintaining a sanitary environment, having proper health care services and is coupled with food security. In Sudan, and all of Africa, food and nutrition security are directly related to agricultural productivity (Lofgren). A typical subsistence family in Sudan would be parents and typically five children. They grow enough food to feed themselves and pay off taxes (Lipton). The perfect situation in Sudan would be that farmers could grow an abundance of crops, enough for their families, a sufficient amount of crops to sell to the public, and in turn, prices would be low and everyone would be able to afford food. However, this is not the case, especially when many Sudanese live on less than a dollar a day. To prevent starvation, many international responses occur. Sudan relies heavily on the support from outside forces, because many that are displaced are entirely dependent on food aid for sustenance. Due to the dependence on international assistance, it puts strain on the government structures, and it is hard to rebuild the economy. Something needs to change for Sudan. World organizations, institutions, and the Sudan government need to come together to better the lives of these distraught people.

Sudan, the largest country in Africa, is slightly larger than one fourth of the United States. It is located in Northern Africa, bordering the Red Sea. Only 6.78 percent of Sudan's land is arable, or capable of producing crops, and 0.17 percent of the land in Sudan is used for permanent crops. Some of the natural hazards in Sudan include dust storms, annual flooding, and periodic persistent droughts, which can damage or bring production of crops to a halt. A major environmental issue affecting many Sudanese is inadequate supplies and resources of potable, or drinkable, water. The only water sources that may be available are, in most cases, infested with harmful bacteria and diseases, such as bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever, that may infect the person drinking the water or others they come in contact with. The biggest export in Sudan is oil and petroleum products. In 2004 alone, they exported 279,100 bbl/day. As of July 2008, the population of Sudan has risen to 40,218,455 people

(U.S. CIA). Over 20 million of these people are living below the poverty line, or they make and live under one US dollar a day. In Sudan, nineteen million people are estimated to be living in extreme poverty (Rural Poverty Portal). Sudan is ranked 141st out of 177 of the least developed nations according to the Human Development Index (UN). Poverty is a tragedy, but to most Sudanese, it is a reality. Poverty, in most cases, leads to food and nutrition insecurity, malnutrition, and death; the latter is becoming more common in these cases. The literacy rate in Sudan is 61 percent of the population. Between 20 and 40 percent of the population in Sudan are undernourished, and 17 percent of children under the age of five are underweight. The average woman produces 4.58 offspring, which between the high amount of death due to warfare and disease keeps the population growth around 2.1 percent (United States: CIA). These statistics point to the need for humanitarian efforts to aid the people in this country.

Sudan is one of the biggest humanitarian concerns for the rest of the world, and these humanitarian efforts have greatly benefited the Sudanese people. More than 5.6 million people in Sudan are in need of assistance from these projects. There are many goals of these humanitarian efforts, such as improving education, protection and maintaining human rights and improving the food situation and livelihoods of the Sudanese people—improving health and nutrition, and improving water and sanitation. Between the United Nations, National NGO's and International NGO's the total budget for humanitarian action in all of Sudan is 1,819,846,328 United States dollars. NGO is an acronym for non-governmental organizations, which are non profit and are comprised of volunteers. This money is split between sectors, or goals, and then given to individual projects. Yet the humanitarian groups have suffered seriously in the past few years. Rebel groups are increasing in size, and they are trying to put a stop to humanitarian efforts, so the access and security of these efforts have been the greatest obstacles for the humanitarian groups. Some humanitarian programs have withdrawn completely because of the lack of safety, thus resulting in the limitation of activities that include health, food distributions, and water sanitation. This risks the health and lives of the highly susceptible population of Sudan.

Food security and livelihoods of the people of Sudan are of great importance to humanitarian efforts. This is why most of the budget is reserved for this goal—699,291,775 US dollars. As noted earlier, most people in Sudan are completely dependent upon food aid from humanitarian efforts. This problem is expected to get worse in years to come. GAM, or Global Acute Malnutrition, helps people understand what kind of crisis Sudan is in. In 2005, the GAM was 20.7 percent, which is above the 15 percent emergency point (Relief Web). It has improved, and in 2006, it had fallen to 13.1 percent, but is steadily increasing again. This is illustrated by the 2007 GAM rates being at a high yet again. Nutrition surveys were taken in six different regions in Darfur and GAM rates ranged from 17.2 to 30.4 percent. Conditions are just as bad in southern Sudan. GAM rates have increased from 19 percent in 2006 to 20.7 percent in 2007. The abundance of humanitarian help has kept the food security situation from worsening, but without constant support, malnutrition and death will occur more frequently. The DPA is restricting free circulation of goods, which could hinder further help to the Sudanese, and without the help, they will have trouble surviving. The civil war going on in Darfur, the devastating weather conditions in east Sudan, and the dreadful condition of the land and economy in south Sudan has caused problems for many subsistence farmers. They cannot grow enough crops for their family, which means there are no crops left to sell to urban families, and in turn they cannot make money to buy the food they need. Urban families have trouble coming up with enough money to purchase food mainly because 80 percent of the population is employed in agricultural type jobs. When there are no crops, there are no jobs, and as a result of that, there is no income to purchase basic food staples to survive. This state of life is only going to worsen unless outside resources can help farmers grow crops in a way in which the crops will survive and research ways to improve crop yields, and drought resistance. Some of the crops mainly grown in Sudan include cotton, wheat, peanuts, sorghum, and sugarcane. They also have a wide variety of fruits. The food insecurity situation is very severe, and the situation for farm families in Sudan is getting worse. People are being displaced due to civil war, and families are being separated. Many men

are taken from their families, leaving the eldest woman in charge. These broken families are in need of even more help to survive.

Another goal that humanitarians are working on is to make sure the Sudanese people are healthy by having good nutrition and by providing access to healthcare. More than 13% of projects in the 2007 Sudan Work plan were based on improving healthcare and 237,701,563 US dollars were reserved for projects trying to accomplish this goal. Humanitarian efforts are trying to provide good healthcare, but with the high demand for health services, and the decline in available resources and funding, this is hard to maintain. Darfur is the region in Sudan with the highest maternal death rates, because of the limited access to emergency obstetric care. The State Ministry of Health and NGO's are trying to provide training to healthcare facilities in affected areas, and have also sent other supplies that are needed. Emergency packs have also been distributed, to aid in the delivery of neonates, prenatal care, post rape care, and other emergency situations. The most focused group of people, when it comes to preventing and treating malnutrition and health includes children under five, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly. Women are very disadvantaged in Sudan. Less than one third of women and girls have access to an education (Rural Poverty Portal). They are thousands of women raped every day, and many do not have proper health care and are at risk of infections and death if not seen by a healthcare provider. Even though women are beginning to become the primary caregiver and provider of their families because the men are being taken by rebel groups and the governments' militia, they are not being respected and are treated unequally. They are not seen as human beings, and so humanitarian groups are trying to promote human rights in this country.

Potable water is a rare thing to find in Sudan, yet it is one of the most important things in maintaining life, though in the past few years the UN and partners have been able to make advances in providing basic services. Between 66 and 78 percent of IDP's, or internally displaced persons, have access to safe water services. A smaller amount—67 percent—have access to safe sanitation facilities (UN). It is very hard to deliver these services because of the unreliability of security in this region and the ever moving IDP's. This makes it difficult to maintain safe facilities. Humanitarian projects will not only create new facilities, they will improve existing facilities and make it more appealing for IDP's to return to. Hygiene is a major focus in the 2008 Sudan work plan. Topics will include hand washing, safe water handling, and environmental sanitation. This will help prevent against diseases, and create a healthier environment for IDP's. A challenge faced by humanitarian actors will be to create water resources that can meet the needs of people living in large camps. These water levels may be affected by a steep increase in demand for water. Though water is not food, it is important in being healthy, and helps in nutrient security.

The lack of change and failure to implement policies has caused great hardship for farm families in Sudan. Their living conditions are just getting worse. The fact that government institutions and organizations are not working together to stop conflict and help the well-being of people in Sudan is what is keeping problems from being solved. If the government of Sudan enforced the Darfur Peace Treaty it would help prevent further damage on the people and land of Darfur and other regions of Sudan that are indirectly effected by the warfare. Responsibility for ensuring that people are able to achieve food security lies ultimately with the national government. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, governments need to provide their citizens with access to sufficient quantities of the foods necessary for a balanced diet; the means to acquire this food, whether through cash incomes or access to productive resources; education, so that people can provide themselves and their dependants with nutritionally balanced, hygienically prepared food; clean water and adequate sanitation; and effective health services (Benson). This should be what the government of Sudan is working towards, but they let international forces take care of it for them. By providing citizens with these resources Sudan can become more independent, and the country can begin to thrive. With new developments and better, more efficient ways to grow crops, subsistence farmers may have a better chance to thrive in the future. If

crops could have a higher yield on small farms, it would make a great impact on life for farm families and urban families. More people in Sudan would have access to needed food, thus improving GAM rates. More food would be readily available, and it would play a definite part in developing food security. Though increased food supply would not stop the civil war, it would help improve the life of people affected by the fighting. They would be able purchase food cheaper, because there would be a higher amount of crops, and they would be supporting their economy instead of depending on international help. The south region of Sudan needs to have more government help in the recovering process after the many years of a civil war. East Sudan needs help maintaining crops. They have many issues with the weather that halt agricultural production, and if organizations like the Agricultural Research Service would work on developing crops that could withstand floods and droughts, Sudan could have a better chance of producing more crops and preventing food insecurity. Diplomatic initiatives and conflict prevention in Darfur would increase food production, because families would be united and could raise and sustain crops. If the Sudanese government would let UN troops come in and enforce the Darfur Peace Treaty many people would be able to go on with their lives, and this would help agricultural production. Farm families would be able to farm on their own land without fear of displacement. Also, if the government were to allow for research to go on in Sudan to study different ways to produce crops in Sudan, production would be even higher, and many people would be able to afford food, and malnutrition rates, along with undernourishment percents would drop to a safe and manageable level. Sudan has never been a developed country, but with a little help of outside forces in the beginning, the country has the possibility to become more productive and to become independent of humanitarian aid.

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