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Sudan: A Country Changing Charity

The Sudan, translated "land of the blacks", is a country in eastern Africa (Bekele). Sudan gained its independence from Britain in the 1950s. Since then the people of Sudan have been constantly fighting with not only the surrounding countries but with themselves. They need a nudge in the right direction, and the battlefields need to be cleaned and forgotten. The geography of Sudan ranges from arid to lush; however, political conflicts in and around Sudan prohibit the Sudanese from fully using their land resources. This land is also filled with around thirty-two million people, all who need the same thing, peace ("Factbook"). Sudan is in desperate need of help due to the excessive violence that is happening around them. It is up to philanthropists around the world to help the third largest country in Africa, Sudan, out of the hole that politics and war have dug.

Geographically, the Sudan is split mainly into two regions, the north and the south. The north is comprised mostly of the Nubian Desert, which is a plague of heat and terrifying sand storms; while the south consists of swamps and rainforests, harboring many diseases and dangers ("BBC"). The country is also split down the center, north to south, by the Nile River. Along the Nile is one of the most fertile growing areas in the world. To the northeast there are several mountain ranges, where everything from granite to gold can be found. This geographical variation gives Sudan an advantage over their surrounding countries. It allows access to many minerals, rich farmland, lumber and a good chance for hunting ("BBC"). The Sudan has many resources but cannot use them with wars raging all around them.

Sudan is involved in conflicts with nearly all of the countries around them in one fashion or another. This has caused the death of not only of millions of Sudanese people but also millions of other countries' citizens. There is no easy way to explain the conflicts besides individually.

On the western side of Sudan, the conflict in Darfur is possibly the most unorganized struggles that the country faces. Darfur is made up of many rebel militia groups all with different motives ("BBC"). Sudan is having trouble with one tribe in particular, the National Redemption Front (NRF). After refusing to sign the peace treaty, the NRF was attacked by Sudan. Sudan is having trouble fighting because they do not know exactly who to shoot at, much like America's conflict in the Middle East. The Sudanese president called the rebels attacking them "thieves and gangsters" ("BBC"). Yet it was easy for the NRF to attack them. The government of Darfur also was "allegedly" accused of supporting the NRF, making it harder to fight the rebels. The NRF represent a large portion of the rebel militias in Darfur and remain a constant problem for Sudan.

Boarding Sudan to the east is Chad. In 2005 Chad declared war on Sudan saying they were trying to destabilize their government ("BBC"). The war was a big game of cat and mouse; both countries denying involvement of their troops in the other's country at the beginning. After two years of fighting, the war finally came to an end on May 3, 2007 ("BBC").

The Sudan also ran into some troubles with the U.S. around the '90s. The Sudan had a good relationship with the West before, but then Sudan got involved in its civil war. They tried to ask the U.S. for help, but in 1998 Sudan was sanctioned for "collaborating with terrorists" ("BBC"). It became a known safe haven for terrorists, and even worked with the Al Qaeda. During this time, the U.S. bombed a suspected

chemical weapon factory in Khartoum (BBC). Since then the U.S. has kept a careful eye on Sudan and have been monitoring their civil war with interest.

Sudan used to be the largest country in Africa, but that changed when South Sudan separated from them. South Sudan was mostly Christian while the North was Islamic (Esposito). When Britain ruled the Sudanese, it ruled the north and south with two different administrations. In 1924 a law was made so people in the north could not cross into the south and vice versa; they made this law for two major reasons: to keep down the spread of malaria and other tropical diseases, and to keep Christianity from spreading north and Islam spreading south ("BBC"). A rift formed from the moment Sudan gained its independence from Britain. In 1955 the south started leading guerilla armies to take over and gain independence. This conflict went on for nearly twenty years before the Addis Ababa Agreement. This allowed the south a period to govern themselves for ten years. But even this could not stop the fighting, and it erupted again in 1982.

Soon America got involved when Jimmy Carter was president and negotiated a very long six month cease fire. During this time, relief was brought to the South Sudan which before was inaccessible due to the war. Soon the north advanced on the south again, this time bringing Kenya and Uganda with them ("BBC"). This proved to be too much for the south, and they signed a peace treaty rejoining with the north. The south did not stay down for long, and soon they used propaganda to say that the north just wanted to impose Islamic religion on them, hoping to get America involved on their side ("BBC"). This did get the U.N. involved in 2004 which eventually led them to getting their independence on July 11, 2011. Thus making South Sudan the newest country in the world; however, bitterness still remains and many issues are unresolved("BBC").

One of the major current issues between the north and south is who Abyei belongs to. Abyei is located in the center of Sudan and right in the middle of the north and south conflict. It was decided that Abyei citizens could make the choice, so they voted. This only caused the argument of who the citizens are and has made tensions rise as they diligently work to figure out how to solve this. In the mean time, life in Abyei is hard: famine, violence and effects of a bad economy have become a part of everyday life even with a large humanitarian presence.

The other issue is that of oil. Oil counts as 50 percent of Sudan's domestic revenue and was 93 percent of their exports ("BBC"), and Sudan lost three-fourths of its oil to South Sudan. North Sudan owns most of the pipeline and modes of trading the oil. This leaves both countries bartering for what they think is a fair price for the oil; both countries think they are being cheated, and this is also causing a lot of rising tensions. Both countries know war is not in their interests. The people are still recovering from the last war which caused an estimated two million civilian deaths and the displacement of at least four million more people ("BBC").

The many wars have left the Sudan in economic ruins. Forty percent of the people in the Sudan are below the poverty line, and they are suffering from 18 percent unemployment. Currently 80 percent of the workforce has jobs to do with agriculture even though only 6.7 percent of the land is usable ("Factbook"). Most of the people live in small huts in which they have to duck to fit through the door. The roofs are straw and have to be rethatched every five years (Rayah). They cook over small stoves which are heated by makeshift coals and straw. Their dinner is whatever they have boiled to keep diseases away. The average family size is about eight per household, this may seem like a lot but often grandparents to grandchildren live in the same hut ("Eyes on Darfur"). The children spend their time outside, because there is not enough space to be in the house. The men of the family often work all day at their farm or another job to keep their family alive; most farms grow millets or wheat, and women of the family cook

and do other things around the house and village (Rayah). The families do not have very much land; some just have a few acres. They sell their crops and buy their necessities at small local markets. These markets support the economy of Sudan; they are encouraged because they are robbed and sacked less. Those who sell their produce there often make very little but do sustain themselves as best as they can. Nutrition is poor because they cannot afford to make a hearty meal every day.

Frequent attacks on Sudan villages has more than crippled an already dysfunctional economy. Many times villages are attacked; men come in riding on camels sometimes already shooting their AK-47s. This is sometimes to kill and sometimes a tactic to discourage people from fighting; often times they are in and out quickly before anything can be done. Livestock is killed or taken, huts are burned to the ground, and, often times, most villagers are killed (Schechter). The survivors usually flee and after an extended period of time, either relocate or come back to rebuild the village. This can happen many times and makes life dangerous. The farms have suffered some bombings in the past, and this year's crop is predicted to fail. This threatens the very livelihood of the people whose whole life is farming. Already about one of three children under five years old are underweight, a failed crop could lead to the death of thousands of people if they do not receive support. This goes to show that villages could grow far better if they were not being attacked and bombed.

Many other hardships, besides guerilla violence, make daily survival difficult for the citizens of Sudan. There are also many diseases that can easily kill the unhealthy; the major diseases are malaria, malnutrition, diarrhea and respiratory infections. There is only about one physician for every 4,000 people. It is hard for people to get to a physician, let alone pay for one ("Factbook"). Like a lot of poor countries, the people of Sudan are getting desperate. People are regularly raped in the middle of the day and robberies occur often. Murders happen every day out of disparity. Numerous nomads travel through Sudan, too; they live in fear of getting their herds stolen or killed. The nomads' lives are all about their herds; they follow water moving from one place to another. They only have one goal, and that is to survive, this is sometimes very hard. They have to survive periodic dust storms, which can completely block out the sun and suffocate living things if they do not seek cover. At best, life is arduous for villagers and nomads, and it is a struggle to survive every day. Sometimes enough help is given to help them survive, but the people need more than that.

People in the United States and around the world can help the Sudanese people by donating money to a charity that will be created specifically for the Sudanese people (SC). This charity will help the Sudanese learn peaceful ways, be less aggressive, and improve daily life in Sudan by 2015. This charity will not look at a short term goal but always be changing in what aid it gives based on what the people need in order to be relieved of the pressures of poverty and violence. This charity will be different than any other charity in the world because it will get involved in politics. It will help with the relations of all the countries around the Sudan, as all are in need of repair. Most charities give basic necessities to the Sudanese such as bed nets to protect from mosquitoes and food. This is not enough to help Sudan, this is obvious by looking at the charities helping the other countries in Africa; they receive this help but are still third world countries. Such aid is not bad, it just does not reach far enough. Sudan needs a chance to help itself; to do this, the Sudanese need peace, and peace should be in their grasp.

Attempting to solve all of the problems the Sudanese people, is indeed an arduous task. However, there is one way that would be especially effective. If a charity is created specifically to fit the needs of Sudan at the time in need. For example, the fields have been bombed, so then the Sudan Charity (SC) would donate money to help ship food over to the families. In addition to helping the Sudanese out of ruts, this charity would help with the improvement of their lives, such as giving them better tools for farming. All these things would help out the overall livelihood of the people. The main problem though is all the violence

happening around Sudan. There are several ways to solve this; the best one is selecting a good leader to lead Sudan. The SC would back one leader, financially, to help the chances of him being elected. This seems out of the ordinary for a charity to get involved in political matters, but in this situation, it is the only way to solve these problems effectively. The next election is in 2015, and that leaves plenty of time to show the people of the Sudan that the SC knows what they need and how to help them. Once the candidate is elected, he will have the support that will help the country. A leader who is less aggressive and is backed by the charity will be more powerful and have a greater influence. This is a good option, but it is risky and could go dreadfully wrong. There are plenty of other options that many people have brought to the table, so there is no point of restating those. It is time someone goes all in on Sudan and tries to end their problems by 2015. From there on, it will be an uphill battle to improve their country, a battle they can win given the chance.

The SC may seem similar to many other charities at this point. Some charities such as *Sponsor A Child* or relief groups such as the *Red Cross* may seem like a safer bet to people, but consider the following. Sponsor a Child is for one on one action, you send money to a specific child and they send back a thank you letter. As great as this is it cannot help the country become stronger, and more prosperous. Think of Sudan as a broken down vehicle. The pieces of the country form different pieces of the car, such as the people are the engine, the leader is the steering wheel, the various companies and businesses act as the wheels, and the resources are the fuel. In Sudan it seems that the steering wheel is locked, the wheels are flat, the engine is not getting the job done for many reasons, and the fuel is just too expensive. Many people when looking at third world countries look at the people, just as the engine seems to be the most important part of any vehicle. So the charities try to help the people but just cannot get the country out of its “third world” status. This is comparable to trying to drive the vehicle with all these problems, every so often they “re-fix” the engine trying to succeed in running the vehicle, but the car simply will not run. But they are fixing the engine, “why does it not work” some may wonder. A car cannot run on an engine alone. It needs the fuel, the steering wheel, and the wheels all working. The SC will work on all these regions, focusing purely on Sudan. Sudan forced out charities coming in, coming to help the people. They knew that that the charities would not benefit the war they were in or their current needs. That is also how the SC will differ. SC will work with the government, they will tell what they need and the board will vote on what they are willing to do. The government is the key to success. We need to build trust in order to even thinking about any other problems. The SC is not a big western charity like most. That is where the World Food Prize comes in. Most countries do not like the American or “Western” influence on them. A lot of countries do not like when the U.S. interferes. That is why this may be the most important part. SC will have to get the world to help, all the countries they can, no matter what amount they are able or willing to contribute. The board of people in charge of the SC cannot be all “Western”. Diversity is the key. What the charity does exactly can vary to what Sudan needs at that particular point. What they need now may be different than what they need years from now. There are things that were listed to be done by 2015 but sometimes a date like that is difficult to meet. This charity is not a “one and done”. Hopefully it will stick with Sudan throughout their entire future, ups and downs, helping Sudan become what they should be, and once there, help them maintain it.

All in all, Sudan is in need of help, and it is up to philanthropists around the world to form a league to help Sudan. It is up to these people to form a charity that will help Sudan in a quick efficient way: a way that is different from all other charities. Sudan is suffering ever increasing pressures from all sides, and barely maintaining any sort of balance on the brink of war. If something is not done, another war will surely come. That is something the world does not want. Onlookers have seen the rebel fighting, a desperate reach at a higher social class, or even a higher chance at survival. That is all the Sudanese people want, and concerned and caring people can give them a chance at that. Once the violence

diminishes, the path to an improved daily life in Sudan will become possible. Once the SC's foot is in the door, there will be nothing to slow it down. This is no temporary improvement. The Sudan has all the resources it needs to be a modernized society; all it needs is the way to stop the fighting, a chance at a peaceful existence, and a little push. Once Sudan is modernized, it will be the heart of Africa, and it will be in a position to help its neighboring countries. This will not only improve lives but improve the bonds the countries have with each other. It does not have to be constant war and famine in Africa; Sudan, with the help of the SC, can show the world just how great an African country can be.

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