

Mesoun Hassan

North Star High School

Lincoln, NE

South Sudan, Population & Conflict Resolution

South Sudan's Food Crisis: War on Survival

The western world has painted an image of Africa as a crippled continent where every country is plagued by malnutrition, disease, war, and a post colonialistic government endangered by an inability to sustain democracy. Unfortunately, the tenants of those beliefs are very grounded within society's stereotyped understanding of African culture. This has made it difficult for individuals in certain African countries like South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia to receive development assistance and aid. South Sudan, which is the world's youngest country, has been inflicted with an inevitable civil war that has obstructed food securities, habitable living, and stability. Morbidity and mortality rates have risen significantly since the succession of the country from the North six years ago. It is imperative that we understand how these demographic indicators, and South Sudan's political history have become significant enough to developmental insecurities across the nation.

Bordered by Sudan to the north, Kenya to the east, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, South Sudan has a population of 12.73 million people. Roughly 19.3% of the population lives in urban areas while the rest of the population lives in rural areas. Because the underdeveloped nation doesn't have enough resources to provide the country with an urban lifestyle, most citizens live in the outskirts of the country. Though citizens are surrounded by substantial agricultural plot, farmland is underdeveloped. Much of the land in South Sudan is suitable for cultivation, but the tools needed to utilize and produce a crop are unattainable or are partially developed and unable to sustain the ranges of fields and crops. Therefore, farmland is not plowed due to undying conflict, but if it was, developmental researchers claim that "with the development of appropriate and adequate infrastructure, South Sudan could become the breadbasket of Africa" (Kenoma). Half of the population relies on imported food, an important indicator of the impact of war on food accessibility.

The average household in the country consists of 5.7 people. South Sudan is considered below the world's housing standards, with 93% of the population living in grass hatched mud huts (South Sudan's Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning). Despite a trend of slight improvements in food availability, food insecurity is expected to increase throughout the year of 2018. The reason for the food inavailability is that much of the country's food supply has been intercepted by third parties and unknown sources. Roughly half of the population is facing Crisis (IPC 3) or worse "levels of acute food insecurity." As the year progresses food resources become scarce with the heat of summer and severe conflict.

Furthermore, South Sudan hasn't projected sustainable economic growth since 2012, due to heavy military spending and economic mismanagement. This has made it difficult for the country to transition from a state of culminating war to capital growth. There remains a fear among business owners that possible attacks on goods will occur, significantly reducing the level of investment that is put into the trade. Now what is left of the food is very expensive and has become so commodified that the poor can't afford simple necessities like flour or corn. For instance, in the capital city of Juba the grain staple sorghum has risen 600 percent in retail price from what it was in 2015 (Mercy Corps). As a result, violence has caused the little crops farmers do grow to become extremely difficult to even transport for sale in the marketplace.

Ongoing violence has also caused school enrollment to drop at large rates. The war has caused the few education opportunities that existed to plummet. With those discrepancies, South Sudan has the highest

rate of out- of-school children, and in comparison to other nations suffers the worst (The Christian Science Monitor - Ben Rosen). Roughly one in three schools have become destroyed by armed forces, and combined with the low wages of teachers, there are not enough educators-both qualified and unqualified- to teach students. More than half of primary level teachers (58%) have no prior job experience or training, which is empirically detrimental to educational spaces across the nation (Unicef - South Sudan). Reports suggest that due to fighting, food insecurity has become one of the leading causes of decreasing enrollment rates. Children for other reasons drop out of school because of school-home distance, cost of tuition, and displacement insecurity.

Healthcare is alarmingly just as difficult to sustain. Medical care is unaffordable. and most people are poor and unable to pay. Healthcare institutions are also extremely overcrowded without enough doctors to amend to patient's needs. In Juba, water providers continue to push back people's access to sanitary drinking water. That discrepancy is worsened by the fact that South Sudan has the lowest accessibility rate to safe toilets in the world. It is reported that 93% of the country doesn't have access to latrine that is able to separate waste hygienically, which has led to the spread of diseases such as cholera, gastrointestinal illnesses, and severe dehydration. Because of a lack of provisioned water, most of the population is at risk of illnesses and death.

Wealthy nations contend that developed infrastructure is the trademark for economic growth; something the country incredibly lacks. South Sudan has weak rural connectivity, and has the smallest road density in Africa. Because of poor infrastructure, freight and transportation costs are expensive, taking nearly 60 days for traders to move and locate goods. The country is landlocked, and regional and interstate links are disparately developed, making commute infeasible. The road sector in South Sudan is ranked amongst the worst in Africa (Official PDF, 62 pages - World Bank Documents & Reports). Roadways are nonexistent with only one route of transport in and out of the country, making it increasingly difficult to navigate. This has made the development of the energy sector difficult, causing the energy consumption in South Sudan to become the lowest in Sub-saharan Africa. Only 4% of urban areas have access to electricity. In whole, less than 1% of the country has access to grid electricity, an important establishment for energy sectors.

Another effect of the structural violence is that more than 40% of women have been affected by sexual violence (Relief Web). Most assaults go unreported, without any social protection against rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Sexual violence has become a weapon of war by militant groups. Since women are the primary breadwinners for families, these sexual assaults decrease the likeliness females will go out to seek food and other vital resources. Gender disparities make it difficult for women to attain warfare and independency. In comparison, young boys and men are forced to fight in the army, and have also been victims at large to the sexual violence.

Since most citizens have been pushed to rural areas, there is a high level of malnutrition and food insecurity. After militia groups began raiding villages in 2012, civilians living in urban areas were pushed to the countryside without any means of attaining the potential of South Sudan's agricultural sector. Conflict has not only made it difficult for citizens to produce crops, but it also made climate change management worse. Today up to 95% of South Sudan depends on climate sensitive sectors, with little provisions in farming. Because of the high demand for these sectors, there has been an increase in resource-based conflict. In result, nutritious food has become difficult to find.

It is evident, as stated throughout this report, that civil war has made structural violence worse in the country. A lack of media coverage and international awareness have both become the largest contributing factors to the growing humanitarian food crisis. The current state of the war suggests that the severity of

conflict is worsening from a lack of government authority. As time progresses, trends worsen in the country as there is a decreasing chance that the North Sudanese and South Sudanese leaders will sign a peace agreement, or bind a power-sharing deal to end the civil war.

In Nigeria, intergovernmental organizations, such as the UN, and the Africa Food project have used their sustainable development goals to improve food securities in the country. These goals are projected towards addressing the issues of the agricultural sector and human rights. The Kaduna state in Nigeria has implemented different sustainable development goals- initiated by the UN-to protect the environment, improve productivity, “increasing farming revenue” and enhance different farming techniques (Sustainable Development Goals Fund). In result, the country has greatly succeeded in “revamping the food sector” to provide jobs for young people, while also helping them provide in their own ways. By applying the same sustainability goals from Nigeria to South Sudan, there is going to be a large improvement in the way the country’s social and economic institutions operate. Since the agricultural sector is heavily underdeveloped and human rights abuses are continuing to proliferate, addressing these two issues is going to largely increase food securities in the country for the internally displaced. The first development goal in South Sudan is to make food more secure. There is an absence of government authority in South Sudan to combat the sexual assault against civilians who’ve been caught in the war zone. As a part of that goal, schools will also be encouraged to teach individuals about sexual violence in an effort to make food accessibility safer for victims. The final development goal to teach people about the agricultural sector so they can familiarize themselves with different modern methods of creating the most food possible.

The United Nation’s 12th goal to transform the world is to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns” (United Nations - Sustainable Development Goals). This leads me to my first proposed solution, which is to create a program that will take Sudanese refugees from displacement camps and place them on permanent agricultural plot. These programs will significantly reduce the confinement issues that lead to rape, by working to address the food supply issue at the same time. With this structural reallocation, there will be a reinforced stability, and secure attainment of food for those who’ve instead relied on imported food. Along with that improvement, agricultural plot will become more spacious in including different areas to plant and harvest. One organization that can help further the implementation of this plan is the International Fund for Agricultural Development (also known as IFAD). IFAD is a United Nations agency based in Rome that invests in developing countries with underdeveloped agricultural sectors. They can help fund current established government institutions in South Sudan, and help to expand areas under cultivation. Another organization that is already helping fund government institutions in South Sudan is the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (also known as FAO). One of their three goals in the country is to support its move from subsistence farming to commercial farming, while addressing the issues of nutrition security. The involvements of these two organizations in South Sudan will make it easier for the government to coordinate intervention in improving farmer’s access to the local market.

As an extension to the first goal, there needs to be an improvement in the education system of South Sudan. This improvement will include a reform in one thing: a course -set as a standard curriculum- on sexual violence for students; both adults and children alike. This will fulfill the public enlightenment aspect of helping raise awareness for the current state of food insecurity. The sexual violence course will provide self defense training, and will shift the paradigm in public policy towards this issue. The first impact is that women who are already victims of gender-based violence, will now learn how to physically and lawfully themselves against their offenders. This includes bringing the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice in the highest court of the law. With this training, women can finally become economically independent from male authority. This change will empower females to work in the food sector, ultimately increasing food productivity. Since the Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement took power in

2005, education has been increasing in South Sudan (Reliefweb - Education and Conflict In South Sudan). Today more than 1.3 million children are attending primary and secondary school. As educational spaces increase, educators need to raise discussion on the prevailing issue of sexual violence. This will help individuals living on permanent agricultural plot to access food in a much simpler avenue. Organizations such as the UN, and the World Food Programme can help fund to for this institutional reform, while also ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns. Whether it's at in displacement camps or villages, primary and secondary schools are important places to start for discussions about this highly ignored issue.

To further elaborate, revitalizing the educational system to include courses on sexual violence should become a national priority to help women in developing nations obtain food and other necessary resources. In that same development plan, teachers must be required to have certification and degrees so they can teach in. The Global Partnership for Education has initiated a goal to change curriculum for all grades across the world. They've trained more than 9,000 educators, and given 88% of their support schools a supervised visit, and approved minimum school construction standard to reform subjects that are being taught (Global Partnership for Education - Replenishment 2020). With trained teachers and supervision, the implementation of this reformed system will go long ways in helping address the obstacles that come for families to enter the market, or agricultural plot to obtain food. Since the effects of sexual violence are so prolong, these courses are necessary. In regards to the young boys and men in the country who've become victims to the violent war, helping them understand the issue of sexual violence will help bring even more stability to the country. Under the first development goal, not only will they have been given a permanent plot to cultivate on, but they would also have become aware of the different ways they can defend themselves against sexual violence. This will help bring the country out of the dark history sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war, while also combatting the displacement insecurities that are faced by men in harvesting and producing food for their families. The greatest impact of this reform is that both genders can finally prioritize obtaining food without experiencing psychological trauma in the process of this necessary dailytask.

The final sustainable development goal is 'Zero Hunger.'The plan of this goal is to improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Even though this last development goal sounds very similar to the first, its main objective is to train farmers to have maximum agricultural productivity. The current 2.4 million hectares of land land South Sudan has, if cultivated continuously, can help improve access to markets, while decreasing the input costs of herbicides, insecticides, and pesticides. Most citizens in South Sudan are living in economic deprivation without access to sufficient resources that can help them sustain different plots of land. As a part of the Zero Hunger initiative, one aspect of "agricultural resilience" is to "maintain the genetic diversity of plants and animals (Sustainable Development Knowledge Forum)." Increased investment into different agricultural sectors will help towards the production of an economically manageable food sector. USAID has been working with South Sudan to build agricultural capacity by educating villagers on the technical efficiencies of farming (The National Academies Press). Other organizations such as IFAD and FAO can help fund farmers in sustainable profiting, by helping them expand the excess land into additional land for cultivation.

One agricultural reform global organizations in South Sudan can mirror is the agrarian reform that occurred in Turkey during the early 1900s. In 1927, Turkey had more than 20% of the rural population who could not cultivate or produce sufficient amount of crop. Agrarian transformations began taking place in the late '30s as part of the Republic's Enlightenment Project. The project had 4 goals: to reform land, establish sales productions, provide farmers with knowledge and support, and to teach farmer's modern agricultural techniques (Lund University). If USAID and the WFP implement the last Enlightenment Project goal, the land in South Sudan that is uncultivated could be used to produce high value fruits and vegetables to maximize crop diversity. Instead of depending on the limited crops, which

have become excessively commodified, farmers and local villagers can use different strategies to increase the economic potential of all the crops they produce.

The civil war in South Sudan has worsened food insecurities across various regions in the country. Conflict today has become almost inevitable in villages that are a part of the war zone. The onslaught of sexual violence and agricultural deficiencies calls for action from the western world. The only people who are capable of creating change in the country are those who are not a part of the war, and that is us; the individuals who are living in developed nations. Educational spaces call for knowledge and the only way we can make a difference to the oppression others face is by understanding what causes that persecution in the first place. Food insecurity becomes a growing problem in South Sudan yearly as individuals aren't able to access it securely, and education is absent combat these structural issues. To help the 1.3 million severely malnourished civilians in South Sudan, there needs to be governmental implementation of these proposed solutions. The world's youngest nation has now reached a level three food crisis, and the full extent of its effects have not been narrated in entirety. By implementing these proposals into the education system and farming sector, there is going to be many improvements in South Sudan. A perennial social crisis exists in the country, and we certainly have a way to rid of the food insecurities and agricultural deficiencies.

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