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South Sudan, Conflict

Civil War in South Sudan and Vocational Agricultural Education

Making food readily available and gaining food security during a civil war is difficult. In general, food security is a challenging and daunting task for many countries. The newest country in the world currently struggles to achieve food security due to its ongoing civil war. The country itself was established in 2011 with a civil war starting December 13, 2013 (**Civil War in South Sudan**). The civil war has a hefty impact on food security in South Sudan. In order to solve or at least better issues within the country, one must examine the country as a whole. One must hone in on things like: the severity of food insecurity, population (urban and rural), government, agriculture, natural resources, exports, climate, geography, family size, diet, jobs, income, education, healthcare, telephone, electricity, and access to hygienic facilities.

About South Sudan

Understanding the government that has created so much unrest in the country of South Sudan is helpful in deciding how to solve issues surrounding the civil war. South Sudan's government is a Presidential Republic, the executive branch consists of a head of state, a head of government, and commander in chief of the armed forces. A president is elected by direct vote every 5 years. The judicial branch has a single judge appointed by the president and is used until they are dismissed by the executive branch. The legislative branch votes on issues regarding all levels of government: national issues, creating programs, and a new legislature. These legislators are voted in by popular vote every 4 years. This government has been in place since 2011 (**South Sudan: Government**).

Agriculturally speaking, the land in South Sudan is only 4.3% cultivated. Some of the major crops in South Sudan are: sesame, millet, maize, sorghum, rice, sweet potatoes, yams, coffee, mango, papaya, okra, cowpea, greengram, pumpkin, and tobacco (**vol. 1**). The average farm size in South Sudan is in the range of 0.4-1.7 hectares. .04 hectares is not even quite an acre. Most farms are larger than the average farm in South Sudan (**vol. 1**); however, South Sudan is a great place for fisheries because the Nile runs through the country. There are also lots of tree plantations. South Sudan exports lots of millet, sorghum, rice, sugar, groundnuts, and tree crops such as oil palm, tea and coffee. (**vol. 1**). Unfortunately, South Sudan is pretty barren other than that. They are forced to import over 50% of their goods, forcing families in South Sudan to consume locally grown crops or pay large tariffs on imports. Some of these foods consist of fish, meat, milk, millet, and sorghum. Oftentimes, sorghum is made into a porridge type gravy and often topped with a meat of some kind which happens to be a very popular meal in South Sudan (**Afs-Usa**).

The climate and geography of South Sudan is quite unique. The climate is pretty tropical with wet and dry seasons. In the winter, winds blow in from the North bringing dry and cool air, but no rain. Around April winds come in from the south and are much warmer and wetter. The lowest temperatures in South Sudan have reached about 60 degrees Fahrenheit while highs can get up to 80-90 degrees Fahrenheit; however, temperatures stay fairly consistent throughout the year. (**"Climate of South Sudan"**).

South Sudan has a green belt zone where a lot of the crops are grown and rainfall occurs. The country is home to many tree plantations, grasslands, and the Nile river runs through the country (vol. 1).

South Sudan currently has a population of 11,280,833. The urban population is 2,749,061 which is 24.37% of the population. The rest of the population, 75.63%, is rural (“South Sudan Population (LIVE)”). The average family in South Sudan typically consists of 6 people (“Data Center: International Indicators”). Families are traditionally more patriarchal. Women are oftentimes housewives, they stay home, do the chores, cook, and take care of the children. Children typically live with their parents until they get married. Sons usually live near their parents, so they can take care of them in old age. Culturally, children are a major reflection of their parents in South Sudan (Afs-Usa). Many people tend to live in a single dwelling. Said dwelling is made of grass and mud, creating a type of hut (“Architecture Students”).

In these dwellings, over 93% of families do not own an actual toilet. South Sudan has fewer hygienic toilets per person than any other country in the world. (“World Toilet Day.”). Not only do many not have access to sanitary toilets, but access to water is extremely difficult, as well. Over “Fifty per cent of the population in South Sudan lacks access to safe water.” (“Water, Sanitation”). Many of the homes do not have access to electricity. “Only about 1 percent of South Sudan’s 12.5 million people can access the electric grid, according to the state-run utility” (IEEE Spectrum). Many families are dependent on generators which are not eco friendly and waste diesel. Although access to the electric grid is very limited, 20.086 out of every 100 people have cell phone subscriptions in South Sudan. (“Mobile Cellular”).

Families are struggling to get access to food and maintain a stable, livable income due to economic issues such as the fluctuation of their currencies value, trade issues, and general poverty. Constant fluctuation leads to creation and elimination of jobs quite frequently. There has been flooding and political instability such as conflict, rebellion, looting, etc. For the majority in agriculture related careers, flooding and stealing makes it hard for families to feed themselves, let alone afford anything else needed to survive like shelter and clothing (“World Report”).

Families have limited access to education and health care. Health care is very expensive and inconvenient because “South Sudan has about 120 medical doctors and just over 100 registered nurses for an estimated population of nearly nine million people” (“South Sudan: Desperate”). There are few hospitals and terrible roads making it difficult to travel to hospitals. South Sudan spends little money on their health care. Most of it is funded by outside entities. In limited areas, South Sudanese people have to fight and pay large sums of money to receive care. The education in South Sudan is underfunded and understaffed, as well. There are few teachers, and students outnumber teachers at a 100:1 ratio. (“Education in South.”). Parents often have to pay for the education due to the limited space and money funded into schools.

The job market in South Sudan is mostly agriculture based. Over 80% of the population depends on agriculture for their income (“How South”). Specifically, four-fifths of the population depend on farming or animal husbandry (“Climate of South”). The average income per employed person in South Sudan is roughly \$3,506.53 per year. (“South Sudan”). With inflation, this average wage is barely livable. Many are in poverty, suffering from malnutrition, and struggling to survive.

Conflict in South Sudan

Conflict in South Sudan has resulted in lots of displacement and death: “over 50,000 people have been killed—possibly as many as 383,000, according to a recent estimate—and nearly four million people have been internally displaced or fled to neighboring countries.” There has proceeded to be many organizations intervening in the country: “the UN Security Council authorized a rapid deployment of about 6,000 security forces, in addition to 7,600 peacekeepers already in the country, to aid in nation-building efforts.” (“Civil War in South Sudan | Global Conflict Tracker.”) They are attempting to make legislation and agreements to improve conditions “Later that month, Kiir and Machar signed the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement that included a cease-fire and a pledge to negotiate a power-sharing agreement to end the war. Despite sporadic violations over the ensuing weeks, Kiir and Machar signed a final cease-fire and power-sharing agreement in August 2018.” (“Civil War in South Sudan | Global Conflict Tracker.”).

This topic affects both rural and urban populations, but in different ways. People in rural areas are having a harder time accessing food because getting extra supplies transported is difficult because of the common issues with robbery. People in urban populations have more access to food, but are often more in central areas of the civil war. The civil war negatively affects women the most because militias are kidnapping them, raping them, and forcing them to work. Children are also kidnapped and forced to work. Men often become a part of these militias. The elderly have been forced into slave labor (“South Sudan's War on Women.”). This topic affects minorities much differently because “since the outbreak of conflict, armed groups have targeted civilians along ethnic lines, committed rape and sexual violence, destroyed property and looted villages, and recruited children into their ranks.” (“Civil War in South Sudan | Global Conflict Tracker.”) Due to the government being overwhelmed, there is less control and consequence for those rebelling and wreaking havoc. People are fleeing the country, and the amount of refugees entering the country is very low. Most refugees are fleeing South Sudan, not entering it. The civil war also affects the environment because it is worsening the effects of climate change. The conflict in South Sudan is absorbing the attention and budget needed to help with the climate change issues. These climate change issues are getting worse: flooding is becoming more prevalent. Unlawful environmental practices are not regulated, monitored, and prevented due to the issues overwhelming the government at the moment (“Climate Impacts Fuelling South Sudan War Says Minister.”).

Issues with Food Security

South Sudan has many issues with food security due to the political and economic instability. The country lacks access and affordability because of this instability. South Sudan is facing food insecurity because they are struggling to get access due to economic issues such as the fluctuation of their currencies value, trade issues, and general poverty. There has also been some flooding and political instability such as conflict, rebellion, looting, etc. The food security within South Sudan is chronic because these issues have been occurring over the course of a few years. They are still struggling to overcome these issues. South Sudan is roughly a phase 4 and definitely has many reasons to be concerned. There are large food consumption gaps, high acute malnutrition and excess mortality, classifying it as a phase 4 (“Famine Early Warning Systems Network.”). The country is falling apart politically and economically and people are dying of food related illnesses because of it.

Solution to Current Food Insecurity

Solving issues of food insecurity in any country is no easy task, especially one as new and complex as South Sudan. Civil war is no little hurdle. It is more comparable to a mountain. One possible solution to the problem of food security in South Sudan is to install vocational work training programs. Part of the reason South Sudan decided to become its own country was because South Sudan was rich in oil. In order to spark the economy and help avoid poverty, the people of South Sudan should be offered an out. Invoking vocational training programs would give people the opportunity to better their lives and help avoid conflict over money. Some of the much needed humanitarian assistance which is happening right now could be pulled and the country would no longer be in such poverty and insecurity. Some may ask, "How would one go about creating a vocational training program?"

While there are no exact ways one could go about creating a vocational training program, one could consider some factors. South Sudan heavily relies on crude oil, "currently, oil accounts for 98 percent of the country's foreign exchange revenue." (*South Sudan: Fall in Global Oil Prices Hitting Economy and Peace*) There has been a major downfall recently in South Sudan's economy, so invoking a vocational training program focusing on careers in oil would greatly benefit the country. One company in particular would be ideal for hosting this program, Nilepet. "Nilepet has a vital role to play in the development of the country's oil sector and the industry's continued growth." ("Meet South Sudan's Oil Operators.") Nilepet is a South Sudanese company. Many Asian companies are stationed in South Sudan, but the Asian companies often transfer employees who have already been trained in order to avoid training South Sudanese people. Nilepet would be more ideal to give funding to because many of those in charge are living in South Sudan, and many of the employees are South Sudanese. They would be more likely to have the patience and know how to train those who have never worked in an oil field. Some of the budget currently being used in South Sudan could possibly be located to help fund this program. Nilepet could be paid to host this program.

Many of the jobs required in an oil field are fairly simple, and would need little to no training. For example, floorhands which are necessary in a field. The main responsibilities of a floor hand include: "painting, rust removal, cleaning maintenance, clearing the deck of safety hazards, lifting and moving equipment around the oil rig, and other duties assigned to them." ("Different Types of Oilfield Jobs: Oil Rig Hierarchy.") Another example would be a derrickman which "manages the drilling string of a drill machine when lowered down the drill hole." ("Different Types of Oilfield Jobs: Oil Rig Hierarchy.") This job also would require little to no training. There might need to be people to help in translating if there is a language barrier, but that would only spark further job creation. Much of the training needed for jobs like this could be given in a few days and through spoken communication because in some areas of South Sudan literacy rates are not very high.

Conclusion

Overall, South Sudan is a beautiful country with many strong people. Civil war has, unfortunately, devastated the country and created issues in food insecurity and poverty. Poverty and lack of access has left many to starve. However, there are a couple of ways the country could be helped or help itself. Other countries and organizations could give South Sudan funding for vocational training programs. These programs could help citizens obtain work more easily and stimulate the economy. While there is no exact solution to solving poverty in the time of a civil war, brainstorming solutions, creating training programs, and resolving some of the conflict could benefit the country of South Sudan majorly.

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