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SECURING SUDAN

Picture this; a man who fled his war-torn country returns to find his three sons on the verge of death from starvation. War ravages his homeland and he comes back to a place unfamiliar to what he had previously known. He finds his three sons, all of them starving and on the verge of death from starvation because of the terrible conditions. He faces a choice between saving a son by transporting him to a therapeutic feeding center and leaving the other two behind, or, staying with all three of his sick sons and watching them all slowly die from hunger. James Manuen Deng, a citizen of Sudan, fled his home in 1988 because of a war-induced famine that took over in Sudan. The famine claimed about 70,000 lives; a famine that southern Sudan may be facing soon, as they are currently coming out of a twenty-one year long civil war (Nyamlell). Today in Sudan, there is much conflict between the Sudanese government and rebel groups, such as the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement. The conflict has resulted in almost 450,000 dead and two million homeless (Kessler). Approximately 2,000 Darfur villages were destroyed in the war, and the cease-fire agreements, along with peace agreements, are not being carried through - meaning many victims have been left homeless and even more returning evacuees have no place to go (Kessler). Conflicts in Darfur are still heated, which is resulting in continuous displacement of civilians all the way out to the Central African Republic, approximately 300 miles away ("Darfur"). The tragedies faced in this displacement of so much of Sudan's population is leading to a huge problem with starvation and lack of shelter and food resources for returning families of the civil war. With the loss of homes and family, many Sudanese are struggling to readjust in their homeland and food is in shortage. Even camps created to help these displaced Sudan residents are falling short of the dire need for food. "Last week, the U.N. World Food Program announced that it had received only thirty-two percent of the \$746 million in donations it had sought for its operations in Sudan. For that reason, it said, food rations to the camps will be cut in half"(Kessler). Starvation is a huge problem which many Sudanese now face after much turmoil, and their ever-present, life-threatening conditions seem to be worsening. Understanding Sudan's available resources, its population, and what roadblocks its people face, is the first step to solving the food shortage and war effects in the country.

Subsistence farming is the largest type of farming in Sudan, even today. Around two-thirds of the population are subsistence farmers. The main types of crops grown on the farms are sorghum and millet, along with wheat, corn and barley ("The Sudan"). The farmers also focus on the raising of livestock and traditional rainfed farming because irrigation is hard to come by ("Rural poverty in the Sudan"). Subsistence farming is located in southern Sudan but predominates in the savannas of central and west Sudan. A problem the typical farmer faces in these areas is the low-rainfall levels, making it hard to irrigate. Subsistence farmers also lack access to irrigation routes from the Nile, unlike most government funded farming. This makes it hard for the average subsistence farmer to keep a steady crop growing without facing a huge loss by the time harvest season comes around. Southern Sudan also has many rural communities. Within them, many homes are extremely poor and are only made up of elders and run by women with children to care for. Less than one third of these woman have access to an education ("Rural poverty in the Sudan"). These uneducated farmers also face many problems in their farming because of their inability to fight the brief growing season, frequent crop failures, pests, and disease. Despite the small efforts made to combat these problems, Sudan still struggles to aid its rural farmers with any kind of technical means. The isolation of these southern Sudanese farms

means little access to any kind of main irrigation routes, wage labor opportunities, or mechanized farming options that many centralized Sudan farms benefit from, meaning the majority of Sudan's farmers remain some of the poorest people in the world ("Rural poverty in the Sudan"). Education and more communication and transport to all farms in Sudan will be the only ways in which Sudan can recover from its long-running poverty rates.

In Sudan's current post-war situation though, just getting a farm started is hard enough. "I don't know how to cultivate, but I have made my decision to come home, and I will struggle. I hope to build a house and settle with my family," said Aliza Kuol, a returning victim of Sudan conflict (Nyamell). Kuol is a twenty-five-year old mother with four children and she is just one of the many examples of returning war victims who have no place to go and no food to eat, but they are trying to live in Sudan; a country unable to support almost half of its starving population. A huge problem that the returnees face is that they are coming at a time after the beginning of Sudan's rainy season and have to spend their time building shelters and planting crops, pulling them further away from their goal to sustain themselves on their own crops, because of the bad timing.

A widespread problem of the people of Sudan is this lack of knowledge on how to sustain an efficient food supply. Many Sudanese lack the general education they need to get themselves on their feet and be able to support their families and themselves by producing their own food supply in areas that are not dominated by industrial agriculture. Yet, not only do the people of Sudan struggle with being able to provide for themselves, their country is in such a miserable state that it is struggling to find a way to provide for its people.

"At the World Food Conference in 1974, food security was defined as 'availability at all times of adequate food supplies of basic food-stuffs . . . to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption . . . and to offset fluctuations in production and prices' (Conway 286). Food security in Sudan has struggled for many years, especially for the past twenty-one years. The poverty of Sudan is very wide-spread and is within many rural areas. Even in 2002, it was estimated that around "twenty million people lived below the poverty line of less than one U.S. dollar per day" ("Rural poverty in the Sudan"). Today, "over ninety percent of people in South Sudan live on less than a dollar a day" ("South Sudan: New struggle for former rebels"). Eighty-five percent of Sudan's rural population, or roughly nineteen million people, are living in extreme poverty where they can not feed themselves because of no access to safe drinking water and health services ("Rural poverty in Sudan"). With the ongoing argument between the fighting people of Sudan, it has been hard to keep any kind of long-term program to aid the well-being and overall health of the Sudanese running. "The people who could have been saved are dead, and those who are suffering in the camps are still there. What does this agreement mean to those who have perished? It means very little," said Ted Dagne, a specialist in African affairs at the Congressional Research Service, when speaking about the peace agreement signed between the Muslim government and rebels of the southern part of Sudan (Kessler). The situation of southern Sudan has not been changing for the better, and more families and individuals continue to suffer because of the failings of many food programs which sought to help the Sudanese, and the lack of widespread knowledge in Sudan on local subsistence farming. Many people in the Sudan depend on any kind of humanitarian aid they can receive. Because of the pull of the economy towards war efforts, much money for agricultural programs has been lost and people in southern Sudan, as well as in the central and the east, have been hard hit. Also being in a less-developed area, the populous of southern Sudan is very isolated - another factor increasing levels of poverty in the country. Many food centers and programs are far-off from the poor southern farms.

Many U.N. camps cover the area of southern Sudan in hopes to aid the many victims of the long conflict. Although the United Nation's World Food Program fell through on its estimated aid for the people in the camps, other conglomerations are helping to raise awareness and try to make a difference in the Sudan crisis. The Food for Peace program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), recognizes that nearly 800 million people are food insecure throughout the world and "many of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa ("Food for Peace"). They provide funding through Public Law 480, Title II, that "makes commodity donations to Cooperating Sponsors (Private Voluntary Organizations, Cooperatives, and International Organization Agencies) to address the needs of food security in both five-year projects and emergency food assistance programs" ("Food for Peace"). This effort benefits those struggling in mainly southern Sudan who depend solely on such humanitarian aid for their food and clean water.

Another effort for the salvation of Sudan is that of a man named Reuben Meen. Meen and his five helpers are located in South Sudan working to educate young girls and boys in hopes to help these out-of-school children and promote education for survival and life skills. "Community leaders credit the campaign with changing attitudes toward the role of women and starting to reverse some of the worst environment rates in the world" ("South Sudan: New struggle for former rebels"). For many girls, war has created brutal outcomes. This is because marriage is a good source of income (with dowries that can pay for cattle) and young marriage is a leading cause of young girls being pulled out of school. "Fewer than one percent of girls in South Sudan complete primary school. At Rumbek Girls' Primary School, 320 students enrolled in Grade 1 – but only seven in Grade 8" ("South Sudan: New struggle for former rebels"). This statistic shows the insignificant role women play in Sudan's day-to-day efforts to try and reduce poverty levels.

Change in Sudan must be made. Huge lacks in agricultural expansion, basic education, and food aid have caused the evergrowing poverty of Sudan to continue at unacceptable rates – this was true before its civil war years and continues today. Education must be available to young girls and especially to adults trying to create livable conditions through subsistence farming. The United Nations' efforts to support Sudan's crisis of civil warfare by sending food aid and setting up camps for stranded refugees have failed miserably according to statistics. New programs must be made and carried through to ensure overall health and well-being for the people of Sudan. The isolation of the Sudanese people is also a critical issue. Without access to new agricultural technologies and irrigation pathways, eastern, central, and especially southern Sudan are cut off and left in the dark. Many don't even know the first step to effective farming and need the education and integration of higher farming standards. Smaller efforts, such as Meen's, to help locally in hard-hit spots of South Sudan, seem to be the most effective method yet of aiding the Sudanese people and reversing poverty and major degradation of feminine roles in society. By creating smaller, community-based aid organizations, which would educate adults on prosperous farming and irrigation methods and allow younger children to attend school without the burden of having to work to survive or be married at such a young age, Sudan could take small steps that may eventually turn into large strides. These small steps could develop into a government run program where the Sudanese government could pour some of its funding into the education for and agricultural development of the poorer and poverty-stricken areas of Sudan. With a peace-agreement signed and a civil war just past, change will take time as the country readjusts from its shaky state. But, improvement is still crucial. Too many suffer in U.N. camps where, even there, they cannot reach food or good health care. In conclusion, the small steps Sudan can take locally, could eventually evolve into a larger and more nationally-based organization devoted to the education of the Sudanese population, the development of agriculturally-inept areas, and the improvement of general health and welfare for all the people of Sudan.

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