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South Sudan: The Race to Restore Governance, Integrity, Economy, and Peace of Life Within a Wartorn Country via Safe and Effective Agricultural Practices.

Conflict on a national scale is nothing new in the global political scape and is generally regarded as “normal” for certain regions of the world. The country of South Sudan has been crippled by a bloody 10-year civil war which devastated much of the country's farmland and displaced citizens from their homes. This civil war concluded in 2018 as a peace treaty was signed between the previously in-placed government (Sudan People's Liberation Movement), and the main rebel group against them (Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Democratic Change). Although the country has reached an internal peace agreement, the government, economy, and general governance of the country are still at critical recovery stages (Alawad, 2019). This weakness is a great threat to all citizens within its borders and to the future of the country; effective and sustainable solutions must be implemented to help pull the country from the brink of disaster. Implementing advanced and effective agricultural practices within the country of South Sudan will not only provide a stable source of food for those who have long been without it but will also stimulate the economy and widen the country's export market.

South Sudan is ranked as the world's lowest country in terms of political rights and civil liberties. Since gaining its independence from the country of Sudan in 2011, South Sudan has been regarded as one of the poorest and most dangerous countries in the world as civil war ravaged the country's land and population. The average GDP per capita of South Sudan is just over \$1100 (USD) as of 2015 (World Bank Group, 2022), and over 80% of the population make their income from farming, pastoralism, or a mix of both (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2013). Out of the nearly 11.5 million citizens of the country, over seven million are in need of humanitarian aid, and nearly as many experience food crises and other resource shortages.

South Sudan is a democratic republic founded on the basis of a constitution and is presided over by Salva Kiir Mayardit. The power within the government is mainly split between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Democratic Change, but various other rebel groups are represented within the council- although they hold limited power (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], n.d.). Due to the starkly contrasting ideas of the two main groups, it is nearly impossible to reach a consensus that both parties feel is fair, which contributes to a weak government. The introduction of younger members into the government has allowed for some advancements to be made; however, the founding constitution of the country makes it difficult for individuals to gain personal liberties and freedoms. A lack of a strong central government also leads to a weak private sector and stunted infrastructure. The open market in South Sudan is poor as businesses are not able to produce quality goods and the average citizen is too poor to afford goods that will last, even if they were available. This, in turn, leads to a lack of banks and other financial organizations to assist citizens in making financial gains and investments as well as savings for future use.

Many ethnic groups reside within South Sudan and with various religions practiced. The primary ethnic groups in the country are the Dinka, who make up two-fifths of the population, and the Nuer, who make up one-fifth of the population. Over 80% of the population lives in low population density, rural communities. South Sudanese of Dinka ethnicity can be found throughout the country and are primarily livestock workers, while other smaller ethnic groups such as the Shilluk are more established farmers living in the east. The primary religion throughout South Sudan is Christianity; however, many non-Christian citizens practice traditional African religions. The South Sudanese population consists primarily

(70.8%) of individuals ages 0-29. Only 4% of the population are ages 60 and older (Alawad, 2019). South Sudanese family life is patriarchal with men providing food and income for the family and the women providing childcare and completing housework. Family ties are important within their culture as families often stay close, even after marriage (AFS-USA, n.d.).

Another issue within South Sudan is the poor economy. During the civil war, it was difficult for citizens to produce for themselves, much less produce exportable goods. Approximately 36% of South Sudan's economy is agriculture or agriculturally based production making agriculture indispensable to the overall economy of the country. Out of the 619,745 kilometers making up the country, roughly 50% are suitable for farming (USAID, 2013) and 80% of South Sudanese citizens make their living and support their families through agriculture. Although ample land for farming exists, on average each family only owns two acres and produces roughly 742 kg of cereal crops per hectare, while the average farmer in the United States owns 444 acres and produces 8,781.1 kg of cereal crops per hectare (World Bank, 2020a; World Bank, 2020b; Statista, 2020). Farming within the country is rudimentary. Most irrigation is rainfed and almost all land work is done with hand tools or animal power. This in conjunction with poor seed and animal quality as well as agronomic practices, leads to minuscule yields for the required inputs. If a farmer were able to produce a quality yield to take to market, more challenges exist. An overwhelming majority of South Sudan's roads are not paved and are poorly maintained, making some parts of the country nearly inaccessible by larger vehicles used to carry goods to market. The lack of access to sell goods, in turn, creates a lack of interest in creating a surplus of goods, which weakens the overall resilience of the crop and dampens the volume of harvests. Livestock owners, as well as fishery owners, struggle from a crippled market and poor agricultural practices. Most livestock owners own land for farming because no ready market for livestock feed or other commodities is available. A constant cycle occurs of poor harvest, poor returns, and poor agricultural practices as many only produce what they need to survive since that is all they can afford. South Sudan is in desperate need of agricultural advancements and policies to break this cycle (AfDB, n.d.).

As aforementioned, family is a very important part of South Sudanese culture and this is both a blessing and a curse to the agricultural scape of the country. As many farms are passed down from generation to generation, food and farm land is nearly always assured to the newer generations as they are starting to establish themselves. This is helpful in extending the life of the members of these families as well as creating a better quality of life as there is less food scarcity for the family. Although these generational farms benefit the families in the short term, in the long term they have been extremely detrimental to the overall agricultural scape of South Sudan. Children within South Sudan grow up working on these farms with their parents and learn the same agricultural practices that their parents implement, which means when they assume ownership of the land, they implement the same practices. This causes stagnation in the evolution of agricultural practices as the same poor practices are repeated again and again, causing poor land quality and even poorer crop yield.

The National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Policy (2011) laid the framework, budget, and implementation practices to better the agricultural and livestock sectors within the country of South Sudan. A key tenant of this plan involved partnerships between governmental figures, non-governmental individuals, citizens, and an extension organization. No evidence is available that the proposed relations between these groups came to fruition. Thus, I believe to remedy the crumbling economy of South Sudan, action must be taken to enhance agricultural legislation and practices within the country. Agriculture is an ever-changing and advancing field as farmers and scientists alike are reaching new levels of yield, disease resistance, nutritional value, and overall quality of crops and livestock.

Advanced agricultural practices such as GPS and satellite imaging allow farmers to more accurately cultivate the land and plant crops as well as survey good areas for livestock to graze (National Institute of Food and Agriculture [NIFA], n.d.). Many legislations introduced by the United States government assist

farmers in growing and selling their products by providing funding and establishing markets to stimulate the local economies as well as the national economy. South Sudan is in dire need of legislation and government assistance to boost the quality of farming within the country, which in turn would stimulate the economy and strengthen the government. Since a large majority of the farming within the country is done with seeds and other plants that are not hardy and produce low yields, organizations within the United States or other countries should work with the South Sudanese government to implement a program to distribute seeds to farmers and develop legislation regarding assistance to farmers in need of hardier crops. This would be a relatively cost-effective first step to securing quality agricultural products as well as higher-yielding harvests for the South Sudanese people. Another action the government should take is developing the road and transportation systems as well as aquatic systems. This would allow farmers to easily move their crops to sell or trade and get supplies for more effective planting and harvesting. Implementation of government water reserves would allow farmers to irrigate their crops as needed rather than rely on rainwater, which would make for healthier crops and higher yields. All of these government programs and legislation would be highly beneficial to both the governing body as well as the farmers and citizens of South Sudan. Some concerns could be had about the vast difference in climate and soil composition between the United States and South Sudan; however, many types of agricultural practices implemented in the United States are adaptable and can be changed to suit the requirements of the South Sudanese soil and climate. The United States could also work towards creating new methods and practices of agriculture that are specific to South Sudan as a way to provide better and more personalized assistance to the country.

In conclusion, South Sudan is one of the harshest places to live. It is ranked last in the list of most free countries in the world and has one of the lowest GDP per capita on the planet. The country has been plagued by war and ill governance since 2011 and is struggling to recover under the current governing body. The economy of South Sudan is based on agriculture and is decaying at a rapid rate because of poor agricultural practices and limited governmental assistance for farmers. Programs to distribute higher quality seeds as well as provide steady water sources for farmers could strengthen the economy, and create a domino effect benefiting the citizens of South Sudan as roads are improved, local markets prosper, and the governance of the country is raised to a higher level. Outreach from the government is urgently needed in conjunction with the efforts of other agriculturally advanced countries. If an effective legislature is enacted, South Sudan could be pulled from the shambles of civil war and rebuilt as an economically stable nation.

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