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### **From hunger to hope: Combating Malnutrition in South Sudan**

South Sudan is a landlocked country in East-Central Africa. Best known as the youngest nation. It has a population of 11,483,374 in 2023 (World Health Organization). Among this, 78.8% of the population lives in rural areas and the other 21.20% in urban areas. This tropical country is rich in oils and minerals found all over South Sudan. Nevertheless, only 4 percent is the latest cultivated. Although South Sudan is known for their extensive biodiversity in savannas, rainforests, and many others. Some factors are worsening the quality of life of the majority of the population, such as the loss of biodiversity, pollution of air, water sanitation, food insecurity, and poverty.

In the same way, there are many issues in South Sudan, one of the biggest ones being malnutrition. About 57 percent of the entire population suffers from food insecurity (2025 Al Jazeera). Malnutrition is a public health issue in South Sudan, which has some of the highest rates of malnutrition in the entire world. Severe acute malnutrition is widespread owing to insufficient food, poor sanitation, and malnutrition diseases.

Not eating for an entire day or maybe not eating for more than one day might sound unreal for many of us, but for many people in South Sudan, it isn't just a bad day but a daily reality. Malnutrition has been a silent death for many South Sudanese. Affecting everyone from the youngest to the eldest. Kids having nothing to eat and parents having nothing to give them is the cruel reality of this country. Several problems, such as economic issues, conflicts, and natural disasters, have affected food scarcity. But this is not another unhappy story; it's a call to action.

Family life in South Sudan is based on a 5 member family with a low income and just the basic needs. The structure is traditionally extended and multigenerational. Their culture influences how many members are in their family since they prefer having as many kids as possible. Because they have a lot of members, South Sudanese families prefer living in one only house or close to each other. Even in different cases, they can have up to 20 kids, making it even more difficult for families to obtain good health care, basic food grains, and more. In every country, but especially in South Sudan, money is difficult to get. It's not usual to see a housewife, meaning that everyone in the family will work. Kids work daily from the age of 5 to 15 years old, creating high rates of child labour and kids not going to school. The lack of education for kids is huge, and the low income makes it harder for them to go.

Job opportunities are very scarce for the average household due to economic instability and other factors. However, some of the most common jobs for South Sudanese are farming, mining oil, and fishing. The majority of South Sudanese rely on farming. Growing crops is an essential part of the

daily life of people. Farmers grow crops like sorghum, maize, and millet or raise livestock. In areas like the Nile River and other water bodies, fishing is important for livelihood and the production of food. The mining job is very dangerous and poorly paid for local workers. Even when large groups work for the same industry, they don't get well paid, and the damage is seen physically for both men and women. The extreme difficulties that many households go through make it complicated to subsist with the small amount of money they are getting paid.

According to the World Food Programme, there are about 2.1 million children at risk of malnutrition. The high malnutrition rate in South Sudan can be attributed to several factors. As an example, food insecurity, being almost 7.5 million people are food insecure being less than 1 percent of the world's population. Also, conflict is another reason since the failure to reach political stability leads to factors that affect malnutrition. There have also been floods; since there have been intense rains, there's been severe crop damage in different places in South Sudan. These places include Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Jonglei states. Poverty and limited healthcare access can't be left behind. Diseases such as malaria and anemia have affected people all over South Sudan, and having no healthcare access is worsening the situation.

One of the main concerns that leads to malnutrition is conflict. It is one of the main drivers of malnutrition in South Sudan. The country has experienced prolonged civil war, local conflicts, and political instability, every last one connected to food insecurity and high malnutrition rates. When displacement and loss of livelihoods happen, people start fighting forces to flee their homes, leaving farmlands and food supplies. Most of the time, they end up in overcrowded refugee camps with excessively limited supplies for everyone. Conflict stops farmers from planting or harvesting crops due to the displacement. Livestock is often stolen or killed, reducing food sources. War makes the economy decay, which makes basic food grains unaffordable for many South Sudanese families.

South Sudan faces a severe and recurring problem with floods devastating communities across the country. Floods have been destroying food supplies, displacing families, and increasing the spread of diseases. Floodwaters destroy farmland and wash away important crops like sorghum, maize, and vegetables. In the case of fishermen, they usually struggle to obtain fish due to the flood disruption to the ground. Flooded roads are destroying different structures in the country. This includes bridges, houses, businesses, etc. It is hard to transport food leading to scarcity in local markets. Because of it, prices are getting unreasonably high and making it unpurchasable for a home.

Widespread poverty leaves many families unable to purchase nutritious food, forcing them to survive with minimum things. The country's weak healthcare system makes it complicated to treat malnutrition effectively. For example, rural areas lack hospitals, clinics and even the basic hygienic facilities everyone should have. They often suffer from shortages of medical assistance, supplies, treatment and food, among others. Diseases like diarrhea, malaria, and pneumonia are not treated perfectly since there are no actual medical supplies that are useful to prevent or to treat this type of disease. Most of the time, malnourished kids need special medical attention and that is something this country lacks. Poverty also limits access to clean water, sanitation, and healthcare. Tons of families drink from unsafe water sources, leading to constant cases of diarrhea and diseases that

further weaken a malnourished person. Due to poverty, malnourished children struggle to develop properly, affecting their skills and abilities to develop and their ability to learn and work will deteriorate.

As vast and varied as the problems related to malnutrition, help always opens a path of opportunities. Organizations like the World Food Programme have provided emergency food aid and specialized nutrition supplements for both malnourished children and pregnant women. UNICEF is another organization that has focused on treating child malnutrition by therapeutic feeding programs. Providing therapeutic food to severely malnourished children.

Medical scarcity and having access to healthcare is becoming one of the major problems that leads to malnutrition. Ending malnutrition in South Sudan requires a mix of emergency aid, sustainable food systems, and improved healthcare. My idea for solving these problems is to work hand in hand with programs through organizations like WFP and UNICEF to expand emergency food all over the country through a programme. Making sure everyone receives adequate help in specific areas. Providing ready-to-use therapeutic food for malnourished children. Also, school feeding programs ensure kids receive a nutritious meal daily.

In the farmland area, providing drought-resistant seeds, tools and fertilizer will improve and help farmers to produce more food. Making many products for the market. Expanding irrigation systems and promoting climate-resilient farming techniques. Establishing and working more with nutrition treating centers focusing in rural areas. A great example can be the hard South Sudan organization. It is a program in which their main focus was to improve food security. They started working with the Integrated Food and Nutrition Security Programme (IFSP). This programme starts with small projects but then they become something big. With a small projection of 1,800 people to almost 22,700 The Hard south Sudan organization is successful due to its multy-sector delivery. They work across food security, homes, health and nutrition. Their mission and vision is to achieve self-reliance in agriculture, education, and food nutrition by involving sustainable development. I plan to build local partnerships by working with community leaders, local health workers, and government agencies. With this program, my main goal is to achieve humanitarian supporters and secure funders, and resources. To achieve greater coverage in areas where there is decay. As it is medically, in agriculture, basic homes, among others. My biggest goal is to be able to cover different areas in a certain way, but especially food insecurity. In order to achieve national growth and be able to help many families who are suffering from these situations.

A program in which the main goal is to reduce malnutrition in South Sudan demonstrates the potential that the program has and offers opportunities for collaboration and sustainability. By representing clear goals, strong partnerships, and accountability. Therefore, another idea is the food banks

They can be effective in addressing malnutrition in South Sudan, especially in emergencies or prolonged crises. These banks can provide access to nutritious food to vulnerable communities and ensure that people receive the essentials for their well-being. The final implementation of the program is to train local health workers to diagnose and treat malnutrition. Teaching families about

nutrition, breastfeeding, and hygiene practices. This will provide a bigger amount of help in the healthcare system and will reduce the amount of malnutrition cases.

The way for these proposals to happen is with organizations and foundations that complement what these ideas are. International organizations and NGOs like United Nations Agencies provide grants, food aid, and medical supplies. Also, the European Union(EU) supports food security and development. However, there are other types of foundations and charities, just like philanthropic ones. One of those is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which focuses on global health and nutrition. Another one is the Rockefeller Foundation, which is a really big supporter of food security initiatives. Although many foundations can support my program, government grants and embassies can be a great help. Apply for the South Sudan's Ministry of health or even other foreign embassies that support humanitarian work. Business partnerships make a significant assist with food, agriculture, and pharmaceutical companies. Companies like Nestlé, Unilever and agricultural firms have corporate social responsibility programs.

This program has a wide desire to help; however, it can be quite difficult without funders. Even so, there are some ways in which funds can be invested. Launching a fundraising campaign using online platforms and community events to raise money and to spread our message. Social media fundraising is a way for almost everyone to be informed of the program. Publishing content on social platforms attracts donors to invest in the project. Charity events are something helpful that could attract donors as well. Although in most situations we need funders, requesting in-kind donations and volunteers improves the opportunities to cover a greater population capacity in the nutritional aspect. To attract organizations to invest in my program, I will demonstrate the value and the impact of my initiative, build trust, and create opportunities for collaborations. When creating an impactful program plan, I can show the problem statement, program objectives, and strategies. In this plan it will include how to involve local communities, train local leaders, and most of all demonstrate that the program will continue working when the external funding ends.

Malnutrition in South Sudan is a complex and urgent issue driven by many factors. However, the consequences are devastating, particularly for rural areas and vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women, who face stunted growth, weakened immunity, and high mortality rates. By receiving help from local communities, government agencies, international organizations, and humanitarian groups can be the ones changing the tough life for South Sudanese. South Sudan can begin to break the cycle of malnutrition, offering hope for a healthier and a long-lasting future for its people. Because many of us have food in our house today, but maybe the next day we won't. Let's look to the future and improve it. Because for me, helping people is not just to help, but it's self-satisfaction seeing how people surpass themselves. Helping this country means leaving my mark on its overcoming as a prosperous nation.

## Citation

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