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Sudan, Women's Rights

Women's Rights, Climate, and War Struggles: Tackling Hunger in Sudan

When climate and war intersect, a country can struggle to find balance and achieve sustainability. In Sudan, there are seasonal flash floods due to an increase in rainfall that this country is experiencing. The continuation of their civil war, sparked by rivaling parties in the political system starting in 2023, is causing one of the largest potential food insecurity problems in the world. With many deaths and citizens fleeing, there is no sign of stability anytime soon ("Civil War in Sudan"). These conditions are causing a shortage of goods and medication. Disease is spreading, and starvation and malnutrition are occurring. Families have **limited** access to food, worsening these issues. Then the idea of becoming agriculturally sustainable became hard to do due to the fact of civil war occurring now. Creating an organization in Sudan that supports women in agriculture processing by providing education, resources, and grants would empower women, extend the shelf life of food, create jobs, and both strengthen families and the economy.

About Sudan

The instability of Sudan's government has been a major factor of this hunger crisis. Although Sudan's government is considered a representative democracy, its leadership has been marked by corruption. Former president Osman al-Bashir, who ruled until 2019, was charged with war crimes and genocide in 2005. Further weakening the government. ("Omar al-Bashir"). Since his removal, ongoing power struggles and outbreaks of violence between leaders competing for the position of president has made it difficult to establish stability. This political uprising has moved attention away from addressing urgent issues such as food insecurity, leaving citizens at risk in a system that lacks consistent leadership.

When it comes to the agricultural portion of this country, their land and food they are growing in their country is what they have been depending on for their food security since the war started. Before, they focused on importing food, but with the economy, it has gotten way too out of hand to afford getting their food imported. Sudan's cultivated land is 60.31% of it in 2021. Their major crops are cotton, peanuts, sesame, gum arabic, sorghum, and sugarcane ("Sudan - Agricultural Land"). The average farm size was 20 feddans, the Egyptian unit of area measurement. (Elageed 11). For reference, that is about 21 acres and the average farm size in the United States is 464 acres in 2023 ("Farming and Farm Income"). Sudan's natural resources include oil, gum Arabic, gold, uranium, chromite, gypsum, mica, marble, and iron ore. Their major 2 exports are oil and gum Arabic ("Sudan - Agricultural Land").

Sudan is a diverse country when it comes to climate and geography. The lowest annual temperature is usually in the high 50° to high 70°F. Their highest annual temperature is usually high 80°s to mid 100°F ("Sudan Average Temperature"). The region is semi-tropical and consists of rainforests, mountains, swamps, rivers, and deserts ("Sudan Geography"). The temperature and weather changes depending on the season, but it mostly stays warm because of the semi-tropical climate and the deserts. The cooler places are going to be those swamplands and the mountains.

The population of Sudan was a reported 48 million in 2023. While the percentage of urban people is 43% of the population, the other 57% of the population is rural (“Urban and Rural”). The average household size is 5.6 people. In a survey of 5,000 houses in rural Sudan, only 30% have a finished floor, 50% have finished walls, and 50% have a finished roof. These homes are built with non-reliable resources, and with many other factors, these homes are at risk of natural disasters and climate change damage. The number of people affected by flooding increased by 50% from the 2015- 2019 averages (“A place to live in dignity for all...”). Women work on their land to provide food for their families, and the men control the finances and own the land. But these women have struggled to support their families, especially with the economy and they hardly make anything for their work (“Enhancing the Capacities”). Additionally, there has been a power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in 2023, resulting in many deaths and many leaving their homes, leaving 12 million Sudanese people displaced, with 10 million remaining in Sudan with half being children, causing the largest displacement crisis in the world (“Crisis in Sudan...”).

In many household surveys the results have shown almost 40% of the population have access to limited water or unsafe water (“A reality check...”). Over 10 million people defecate outside instead of using toilets (Mustafa, Iman). Only 60% of the population has access to electricity (Energy Information Administration). 68.6% of the population has access to cellular mobile connections (Kemp, Simon). There are roads in Sudan, but only major highways and roads are paved and well-maintained (“Traffic and Road...”). But on top of that many markets, stores, banks, and more have been looted, hurting the access to goods for citizens (“Crisis in Sudan...”).

In Sudan, they used to take pride in their cuisine and use it to bond as a community with many dishes of stew and gravies and other dishes that share similarities with other Muslim countries. But this has become increasingly difficult because most of their food is imported. The cost of food has been rising, and the average salary could not keep up with this causing many to fall into poverty due to the inflation of food at roughly 40% per year. On top of that, employment opportunities are also low causing food insecurity. Some families are just getting by as vegetarians due to the increase in meat prices (Eltigani & Habiballa).

The war makes it hard to access crucial necessities. In a survey by the UNHCR, they found that 90% of young people do not have access to formal education (Hujale, Moulid). Also due to the war and fewer job opportunities it leaves only 2% of the population with access to healthcare. With many hospitals closing down in the war, most citizens depend on the clinics but most are mobile clinics making it hard in emergencies to gain access to these needed resources (Tanis, Fatma).

Salaries can vary depending on factors, such as education, industry, location, and other similar factors. On average the salary is 20,000 to 30,000 Sudanese Pounds per month for many jobs; that's only 33.25 to 49.88 USD per month. Some of their highest-paying jobs are doctors, engineers, Financial professionals, lawyers, and more, showing there are many different jobs in Sudan but it all depends on education, gender, location, job openings, and much more (“Average Salary in Sudan”).

Equal Rights in Sudan

Women working in the agriculture industry is very common in Sudan with many women working on their land to provide food for their families, but they continue to be undervalued and with the recent economic

struggles, it has been harder for these women to earn a profit or even provide for their families, lowering their chances of showing their value to their country (“Enhancing the Capacities”). According to the 2013 Human Development Report's Gender Inequality Index, Sudan is ranked 129th out of 148 nations. On top of that, the country is experiencing many problems with violence against women and girls. While this is happening, almost 50% of Sudan's population falls under the poverty line. But there have been some steps towards change such as some programs assisting women in the agriculture industry in Sudan (“Sudan-Agricultural Land”). In a recent survey by AFRO Barometer, they were able to find that many citizens in Sudan believe the government isn't doing a good job of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women. They were able to find this in educational opportunities, ownership of key assets, and control over household financial decisions.

The survey also found there is little encouragement for women to hold a political position. The highest concerns that need to be addressed are education with 29% and then gender-based violence with 21% (“Most Sudanese Rate Their”). In urban areas over 40% of young women were unemployed. Women are also very excluded from the labor market in general. Women's employment was 33% in 2014, compared to 76% of men. Overall women were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as compared to men. Women and youth living in rural areas are over four times as likely to be employed than those living in urban areas (Ndip, Alvin Etang, et al). When it comes to employment with the cultural stereotypes almost 50% of unemployed Sudanese are under 25, with most being women, as young females are 55% less likely to be employed compared to female adults (Ndip, Alvin Etang, et al).

While Sudan is taking steps in the right direction for the equality of women, they haven't given women in the agriculture industry the credit they deserve. Sudan has The Women in Agricultural Development Administration, WADA, which was established in 1989 in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. That administration doesn't hold a high status and only gets a reported 0.47% of the annual budget of the Ministry. That is less than 1%. Then when considering how many women work in the industry that go unrecognized. About 80% of their nation depends on the agriculture industry for their livelihood. Women represent 49% of the farmers in the irrigated sector and 57% in the rainfed traditional sector. Women play a key role in the industry and household food security. In Agricultural Graduates Cooperatives, there are less than 15% women as a part of membership and only about 8% in leadership positions. This shows even with all the work they put into this industry they get so little in return (Fact Sheet: Sudan - Women).

Issues with Food Security

Food Security in this country is at an all-time low and seems to be only getting worse. 25.6 million citizens are facing an IPC Phase 3 or above which means they are facing a crisis or worse conditions (“Sudan: IPC Acute”). Sudan is facing economic problems, war, flooding, and equality struggles. Considering the fact that most of Sudan has their food imported food has become so expensive or dangerous to get to with that war. Families are facing famine and have few job opportunities. They need to have more focus on raising and harvesting food produced in their country. Women are going unnoticed for their work in the agricultural industry, this country needs more focus on women in agriculture and equal rights for them. The agricultural industry produces many job opportunities for everyone and this could be the first step in solving the famine problem.

Solution to This Problem

In the past, there have been a few different attempts to solve this problem that have made some progress in helping alleviate this issue. One example would be the We Rise Project which aims to create an environment that promotes the economic empowerment of women and contributes to gender equality, and women's rights ("From Fields to Futures"). The same project uses funds from the European Union and used that to buy seeds for women in this industry (Babiker, Shakir) Then there is another project that involves educating women in the agriculture industry in Sudan to practice more sustainable farming techniques to help their land from irrigation and gain profit and food security for their families. This is USAID-funded and put on by the Sustainable Agrifood Systems Approach for Sudan (SASAS) ("Enhancing the Capacities"). Other examples that have been working around the world include projects like Oxfam. They have done a lot with advocating, setting up local programs, educating, and bonding a community of women in the agriculture industry to battle food insecurity and gender equality. They work in many countries around the world ("Empowering Women Farmers"). An example of what hasn't worked where some countries have tried using food banks to solve their hunger problems but using food banks for a long-term solution doesn't work. It only stops the problem for a short period and at some point, it will run out (Holt).

Using all this information the solution is to create an organization to promote women's agriculture processing. This organization would focus on educating women on how to process and preserve the food they are growing, this will provide more jobs in the community, have women in the agriculture industry in the public eye; and extend the shelf life of food in this struggling country. This organization could also provide grants to help with promoting processing and giving women the material necessary for processing their products. The strength of this plan is the ability to promote improvement in the processing of foods in this country and others like them who are struggling as well. It will also extend the shelf life of food in the struggling country, encourage women to improve their knowledge in this topic, provide resources for families to gain more profit with longer-lasting food, and promote women in these industries of sales, food science, and agriculture.

Conclusion

While there is not one thing we can do to end food insecurity in Sudan, educating women in agriculture processing can be a step we take to start in the right direction. Sudan has its struggles with equality, climate, and war. This will only get worse if nothing changes. The reality is this war ending is going to be one of the biggest goals in helping end these other struggles. That is what they have to personally do but right now what we can do is advocate and take actions to help improve the citizens that need our help.

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