

**South Sudan: Decreasing Food Insecurity by Implementing Agrarian Secondary Education**

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As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Not only is education powerful, but it is also overlooked as a necessity in countries such as South Sudan. Secondary education will not only provide food security for South Sudanese citizens but also help them escape generational poverty by teaching agrarian practices. In South Sudan, where the challenges of conflict, poverty, and instability are extremely evident, access to quality education is often seen as a luxury rather than a fundamental necessity. However, agrarian secondary education could lead to the key success of South Sudan.

South Sudan is a country located in Northeastern Africa. The national language is English, but many children in South Sudan speak an indigenous language, such as Dinka or Nuer. Most of South Sudan's population believes in Christianity and Animism, unlike Sudan's government, which is a firm believer in Muslim beliefs. Salva Kiir Mayardit currently serves as the president of the Republic of South Sudan.

The beautiful country is characterized by diverse terrains, ranging from stunning mountains to lush grasslands, tropical rainforests, swamps, hills, and valleys. Unfortunately, South Sudan's breathtaking land has been stripped of its beauty due to a lack of cultivation and ongoing conflict with civil war, as well as a rocky start to developing a country after gaining freedom from Sudan. As of July 9, 2011, South Sudan became an independent country, in addition to joining the United Nations (UN). Many South Sudanese citizens had been hopeful of leading a conflict-free life; however, conflict resurfaced despite numerous efforts to establish a stable country. Consequently, many issues affecting South Sudanese citizens have been overlooked. The South Sudan civil war began because President Salva Kiir accused Vice President Riek Machar of starting a coup to overthrow him. Under the circumstances, President Salva Kiir removed eleven cabinet members, which ultimately led to war.

Consequently, many families in South Sudan experience food insecurity. As a result of the war, agrarian practices such as farming have not been prioritized, leading to food insecurity. Nonetheless, South Sudan still has the potential to become a thriving, self-sufficient country despite ongoing conflict. A stable economy can be achieved by teaching teens and young adults the skills and the significance of farming. By teaching young adults and teenagers agrarian practices, such as how to grow their own crops, the upcoming generation of adults will be well-prepared to repair the war-torn country and escape generational poverty, as well as food insecurity.

Famine, poor education, disease, poverty, and food insecurity have all been extreme issues that lack attention from most South Sudanese citizens due to conflict. All of which have a significant effect on South Sudan's population. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the average family in South Sudan consists of approximately 5-6 people per household. With most of South Sudan's government focused on the war crisis with Sudan, the need for nutritional food is not being met. AFS-USA expresses that the typical meal in South Sudan is ideally composed of fish, meat, milk, and grains such as millet and sorghum. However, the ideal meal for South Sudanese culture is not always readily available. Out of the 11.48 million people in South Sudan, 7.7 million (67.07%) are food insecure, making it challenging for them to know when their next meal will be available. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), about 95% of South Sudanese Citizens do not

have access to clean water. With many South Sudanese citizens being food insecure, diseases such as Pneumonia, Malaria, HIV, and AIDS are more easily spread due to weakened immune systems, ultimately leading to higher death rates.

In South Sudan, 78.2% of the population resides in rural areas, while the remaining 21.8% live in urban areas. Resultantly, many South Sudanese citizens prefer farming over other jobs because it is the most straightforward and most accessible occupation, with materials readily available to them. Each family in South Sudan has roughly two feddans (acres) of land. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the most commonly grown crops in South Sudan are soybeans, maize, cowpeas, white beans, and green beans. While 80% of South Sudan's population is familiar with agrarian practices, such as growing crops, only 4% of 33 million feddans are being cultivated. Temporary solutions have been implemented to support South Sudanese citizens during the conflict. Nonetheless, none of the solutions implemented so far have been sufficient to sustain food security. However, the implementation of education for secondary school could become a permanent solution through the use of agriculture.

Most South Sudanese families attempt to grow their own food, but often receive aid from humanitarian organizations, such as the United Nations World Food Programme. The United Nations World Food Programme has assisted in South Sudan by supplying meals, healthcare, and funding for schools. While the United Nations World Food Programme offers tremendous help to South Sudan, the efforts made are still not enough to become a permanent solution. In South Sudan, many families experience generational poverty. According to Compassion International, the definition of generational poverty is "poverty that has become a familial pattern for at least two generations, although it typically affects multiple generations. Unlike situational poverty, in which a family experiences poverty for a brief period due to a crisis, generational poverty is lasting and systemic." The primary cause of generational poverty is a lack of educational opportunities. For most people, education provides pathways and opportunities to jobs. Without a stable job, parents are unable to provide a safe environment and household for their children, thus limiting their opportunities based on their income and location. In South Sudan, generational poverty translates to not having an educated background, and the main source of jobs is primarily agriculture-based.

As of 2021, a UNICEF report states that there are 2.8 million children without access to education, most of whom are in secondary education, and 63% of teachers are unqualified to teach the proper curriculum. As stated by the UNICEF *Education Case Study*, "More than a decade after independence, South Sudan remains in a protracted humanitarian crisis, impacted by conflict, economic stagnation, and instability as well as being highly prone and vulnerable to climate-related shocks. One of the outcomes of this protracted crisis is the lack of educational opportunities for children and adolescents." (p. 1). With non-profit organizations not prioritizing secondary education in South Sudan, the overall population is at risk of decline. Unfortunately, most of the aid received from the United Nations World Food Programme is not focused on teaching teens and young adults how to provide for themselves through farming. As a result, many South Sudanese citizens are malnourished due to the lack of access to nutritious food. Due to South Sudan's underdeveloped status, relying on imported goods is neither the most suitable nor the most sustainable option for addressing the severity of food insecurity. That leads to the conclusion as to why education in STEM fields is so important for children in countries such as South Sudan. In addition, the government does not have educated experts to prevent diseases

such as Pneumonia, Malaria, HIV, and AIDS, all of which have 20% death rates or higher. That being said, education can help prevent unnatural and disease-caused deaths as well as promote food security.

Agrarian practices utilize fundamental skills such as problem-solving and hands-on learning that can be used in various ways. One benefit is that South Sudan will not have to rely solely on its allies, such as the United States, and can create a self-sufficient economy through farming. Another reason is the abundance of crops that can be grown in almost all areas of South Sudan, thanks to its rich biodiversity. Instead of Non-profit organizations promoting funds towards new school buildings and training teachers on what they think is the appropriate curriculum, non-profit organizations should provide specialized training to teachers based on the country's needs. In the article "*Manufacturing of South Sudan*," Robert O. Collins and Mohy el Din Sabr convey that "English is the language of instruction in South Sudan's education system, although indigenous southern Sudanese languages are also used in the early years of primary education." Most of the United Nations World Food Programme's funding is supplied by the United States, meaning that the curriculum being taught to students has some affiliation with American culture and standards. Teaching agrarian practices to secondary school-age kids, rather than focusing on teaching English to primary school-age kids, will promote future entrepreneurs and farmers to cultivate the land and create a thriving society.

By implementing a plan to raise awareness about education in South Sudan, families will no longer struggle with uncertainty about their next meal. The 4% of cultivated land could be significantly increased. This approach isn't specifically aimed at resolving the ongoing conflict between South Sudan; however, it seeks to establish a foundation of stability and hope that will benefit future generations. By implementing STEM programs in the secondary education curriculum, South Sudan's future could potentially thrive to become one of the most self-sufficient agrarian-based countries in Africa.

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