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## **Examining the Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan: Long-term Impacts of Violence and Conflict on the Population.**

South Sudan has endured years of prolonged conflict, resulting in widespread devastation of the lives of its citizens. As the world's most impoverished nation with a population of approximately 12 million, more than 75 percent of whom live in rural areas often caught in the crossfire of ongoing war, the country faces enduring challenges with minimal progress toward resolution. The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan is multifaceted, with issues of malnutrition, limited access to healthcare, persistent violence, and a growing number of refugees and internally displaced people. The Sudanese people are succumbing to diseases, violence being enacted, and famine. The factor of climate change further creates challenges. With the country having yet to witness significant socioeconomic improvement, this creates the pressure of intervention with effective armed forces, and the implementation and enforcement of critical legislation needing to be addressed to end the humanitarian crisis in the country.

The Republic of South Sudan, is located in North Africa. South Sudan is bordered by multiple countries including The Central African Republic, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The weather alters, but it is predominantly tropical. Lowlands, covered with tropical forest, marshes, and grassland, range more than 400 kilometers of the country. Mountains dominate the far south, northeast, and west of the country, while desert dominates the far north. Kinyeti, South Sudan's highest point at 3,187 meters, occupies a spot on the country's far southern border with Uganda. Along the capital of the country, Juba, flows The White Nile, a branch of the Nile River. Following twenty-one years of armed conflict in what is known as the Sudanese War, South Sudan was officially pronounced a sovereign and separate state from Sudan on July 9, 2011.

However, violence arose again in 2013 as the result of the South Sudanese Civil War which displaced millions of people. Additionally, the war left half of the population dealing with devastating famine which could have been avoided due to the rich biodiversity, excellent soils, and copious water supplies of the country. South Sudan's changing climate over the last several decades has also worsened the situation. Rainfall has declined by ten to twenty percent from the mid-1970s, and temperatures have risen while droughts, floods, and water bodies drying up have all become more frequent. These occurrences have had a negative influence on food production and the overall livelihood of those residing in the country. In 2023, more than two-thirds of the population faces extreme food insecurity, a lack of basic human necessities, and an abundance of violence.

South Sudan was a component of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, a joint political control with Northern Sudan. From 1899 to 1956, the country fell under the hegemony of both Egypt and Great Britain, extending their power and influence across the economic, political, and religious aspects of the country. During this point in history, officials made a consequential decision to create a divide between the North and South, although the exact reason(s) for this division remains unspecified. However, one can reasonably infer largely due to the period in time this took place there was deep-rooted racial bias and xenophobia. The predominantly Arabic and Muslim North was devoting the main share of the resources, which propelled its economy, while the predominantly African South was unjustly regarded as "useless" by their Northern counterparts. The calculated redirection of resources away from Southern Sudan planned with the intent of stifling economic prosperity, served as the key catalyst for the First Sudanese Civil War, spanning from 1955 to 1972. This conflict emerged from the Southern Sudanese people's yearning to obtain self-governance, driven by the aim of coupling their region's wealth to foster a

restored and balanced "multi-religious, multicultural," and independent nation. While the Southern standpoint saw an endeavor as a means to growing, the Northern leadership viewed it as a rebellion that threatened to destabilize and depart from the prevailing Islamic faith and Arabic language dominance. After years of enduring persistent conflict and war-ravaged regions, which plunged the populace into profound turmoil as they sought to merely survive, fortunately, a pivotal moment arrived in 1972 with the emergence of the Addis Ababa Accord of 27 February 1972. The agreement marked a significant turning point, granting South Sudan the autonomy it soberly sought out. With the newfound self-governance, the nation embarked on the journey of pursuing socioeconomic advancement, dismantling religious discrimination, and adopting English as its primary language. Furthermore, embarking on the mission to return the displaced Sudanese people who had left due to war's destruction. Regrettably, this move was misinterpreted by the northern leadership, notably Colonel Jaafar Nimeiry, who had ascended to power via a coup in 1969, leading into his presidency. Nimeiry, grievance with the idea of a multi-religious society, led to his launching of another coup, dismantling political parties, ending the agreement, and creating a campaign to institute Sharia law as the prevailing governing force. Sharia, honored by Muslims as a divine counsel for leading virtuous lives and drawing closer to Allah, was, however, employed not for its intended moral purposes but as a tool to undermine the progress of the South. Due to the severe erosion of opportunities, the Second Sudanese War, from 1983 to 2005, emerged as a conflict between the central Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Even after the overthrowing of Colonel Jaafar in 1993, the cycle of destruction of South Sudan's socioeconomic standing and reconstruction continued. The conflict being endured for two decades, finally came to a resolution in 2011 with the independence of South Sudan. The aftermath was catastrophic with extreme famine,

displacement, rifling violence, and the tragic loss of an estimated two million lives. Regrettably, another episode unfolded of north and south grappling over control of the oil-rich Abyei region, a crisis known as the Heglig Crisis. The northern region continued in their reluctance to accept the South's success, with the addition of territorial loss and decay of revenue from the oil production. The conflict derived from the desire to regain lost power. Even in the 21st century, tension persists, as negotiations continue in governance of Abyei. Throughout Sudan's complex history, it remains stained with unhealed division, government versus people, and religious communities, inflicting profound devastation upon the growing nation, leaving generations longing for stability and peace.

Ongoing unresolved conflicts have placed South Sudan's reintegration efforts for displaced citizens, returnees, and the government's stability into a critical state of operation. According to the latest report in July 2023, based on the observations in South Sudan, a staggering 9.4 million Sudanese people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, with 5 million of them being infants and adolescents. The population is grappling with issues such as malnutrition, limited access to healthcare, and prolonged exposure to violence. "Millions of Sudanese people face exposure to the heightened risk of Ebola and Cholera due to the critical need for abundant access to water, sanitation, and hygiene resources." Unfortunately, attaining these necessities is often hindered by limited resources and forced displacement. Among these millions, a particularly vulnerable group comprises 1.4 million children who experience severe acute malnutrition, attributed to factors such as malaria, measles, diarrhea, and inadequate nutrition. Measles cases continue to surge, with a doubling in prevalence. "Malaria accounts for 23 percent of cases, diarrhea for 14 percent, pneumonia for 11 percent, and non-communicable diseases for 45 percent." Some of these cases originated from returnees and internally displaced

persons (IDPs). "More than a million children have either directly experienced violence or witnessed it, leading to profound psychological distress." The ongoing unresolved conflict has resulted in severe and inhumane actions being taken against children and women. Humanitarian assistance efforts in South Sudan, aimed at supporting the Sudanese population facing such challenges, have also faced attacks from neighboring communities. These attacks have further displaced refugees from their communities, posing threats and even leading to incidents of kidnapping. As a consequence, aid operations have been delayed and, in some cases, withdrawn. The impact of climate change on Sudan's rainy season (November to April), leading to increased flooding, has severe consequences. The floods have affected a significant portion of the population, displacing between 750,000 to over one million people. This displacement has disrupted access to clean water and food, exacerbated by the economic instability in Sudan. Furthermore, the movement of the displaced seeking aid has overwhelmed the roads, causing congestion with refugees. This influx, coupled with the closure of schools and healthcare facilities due to the crisis, has significantly hindered access to essential care. Sudan faces considerable challenges in finding a balance and effective solutions to address these complex issues.

The ongoing conflict between the government armed forces and the rebels in South Sudan has created a byproduct of the livelihood of its citizens. Resulting in the loss of homes, constant threats to life and families, and the significant disruption to the resources traditionally relied upon by the tribes and communities. Furthermore, the educational system in South Sudan has been severely impacted, leaving the academic environment unable to provide a secure space for the youth to thrive. More than 1,500 schools have been destroyed in the wake of the conflict in South Sudan, leading to the recruitment of tens of thousands of adolescents into the armed

forces, whether by the government or rebel forces. Additionally, rebels have resorted to burning teaching materials or textbooks, further exacerbating the crisis's impact on the educational system. This situation raises concerns that the ongoing conflict is intentionally undermining the education of the younger generation, rendering them illiterate and perpetuating the cycle of violence. Consequently, this crisis may deprive them of a proper education, which is crucial for fostering a brighter future for South Sudan. Education plays a pivotal role in equipping individuals with the skills needed to lead the nation toward resolution and away from conflict. The occurrence of child soldiering invariably leads to the exploitation of children for various roles, including combatants, spies, and suicide bombers. However, not all child soldiers are subjected to extreme tasks; some are more benign such as messengers, cooks, and foot soldiers. The recruitment of adolescents, typically under the age of 15, occurs through kidnapping, enticing promises, or voluntary usually driven by factors of poverty, displacement, or family separation. Many of these young recruits remain unaware of the profound traumas they will inevitably witness and endure. Even with the majority of child soldiers being males, girls are also recruited, often for child marriages and the roles of wives. The prevalence of sexual violence against women and young girls has been on the rise, with notable gender biases being evident in these crimes. It is important to note that sexual violence also affects young boys, particularly in the context of child soldiers, although such cases are underreported due to trauma and social stigmatization. Many instances of sexual violence occur opportunistically, often during raids in villages, where victims are abducted. Some cases are even strategically employed as military tactics. These acts of violence have dire effects, ranging from victims being left dead, and contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and pregnancies, to cases of murder. In 2018, initiatives were undertaken by the Sudanese government and warring parties to address the issue

of child soldiers and recruitment, culminating in the UN Action Plan in February 2020. However, there has been a notable lack of evident action, such as government-mandated training and the implementation of laws. The consequential psychological trauma, resulting in PTSD, permanent physical ailments, along with the impact of sexual violence, persists with limited available support.

Humanitarian organizations dedicated to aiding South Sudanese citizens in their reintegration, whether after displacement due to armed conflict, natural disasters, or famine, and providing medical assistance contribute to the healing process. The CARE initiative has been actively operating in South Sudan since the 1970s. Its primary objective centers on optimizing the healthcare infrastructure within the country, ensuring that local healthcare personnel possess the requisite knowledge and resources to effectively manage the influx of patients from across the nation. As stated by their mission their work revolves around "building resilience in fragile settings, promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, implementing climate-smart agriculture, and strengthening social cohesion." In light of proactive initiatives, it's imperative to acknowledge individuals such as Mikelina Serezio and Severina Philipo. These dedicated individuals have demonstrated commitment by establishing a farmer's group of men and women. Through their collective efforts, they successfully harvested 140 bags of maize and green gram, each weighing 50 kilograms. This endeavor not only generates a sustainable source of income for impoverished communities but also lays the foundation for positive change. Their collaboration with World Vision Canada played a pivotal role in educating the community about the importance of education, fostering economic growth, and promoting women's leadership roles. It's imperative to present the commendable efforts by Save The Children, which have collectively impacted the lives of over 790,000 Sudanese children. With 58,000 children out of

poverty, safeguarding 81,000 from harm, providing education and empowerment to 97,000, and ensuring health and nourishment. They endeavor to foster communities' well-being by facilitating access to education, nutrition support, food/livelihood assistance, and child protection programs, particularly for former child soldiers. Save The Children's advocacy is noteworthy, as it addresses the pressing issue of the humanitarian crisis and meeting Sudanese citizens with previously unattainable needs. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has successfully secured funding totaling 288.6 SEK (26.3 million USD) for humanitarian relief and 434.2 SEK (39.6 million USD) for development cooperation. This initiative aims to assist more than 80 percent of the population currently lacking necessities due to the impact of warring parties. The primary objective includes the restoration of access to education for 10,000 children and providing a safe and secure environment for survivors of physical or sexual violence. SIDA's overarching goal is to mitigate the ongoing crisis and conflict in South Sudan and contribute to the country's reconstruction. These efforts show a shared commitment to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. The aids provide care to reduce and eliminate the ongoing crisis while creating long-term development in the region.

South Sudan has been combating a humanitarian crisis since before its establishment as its own country. Their history is an intricate web of violence and persistence against conflicts that have profoundly impacted its people. A country derived from political instability and ethnic division, the crisis has presented consequences for the basic needs of the Sudanese people. Limiting access to essential services, food, clean water, and healthcare has been severely compromised, magnifying the vulnerability of the country that is already grappling with displacement and violence. The state of the South Sudanese people deepens the urgent need for international efforts to address the problems of the crisis, provide essential aid, and foster



sustainable solutions that can pave the way towards a more stable and prosperous future for the country. The international community's effort towards supporting humanitarian initiatives is crucial in reducing the suffering of the South Sudanese people and building a lasting recovery that will carry on for many generations to come.

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