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ARMED CONFLICT AND FOOD INSECURITY: THE CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN

This case study is related to Goal #2 – Ending Hunger and Goal #16 – Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies from the United Nations’ [Goals for Sustainable Development](#).

POSSIBLE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- In what specific ways are food supplies affected during war?
- What is the definition of famine?
- Why does the international community sometimes look away from areas of the world experiencing large-scale starvation?
- How should other countries respond to the twin crises of war and famine?

BACKGROUND

One major impact of armed conflict on millions of civilians who live in contested areas is a lack of access to food. In some cases, this results in malnutrition and disease among the affected population, while in other cases the impact is massive starvation. This situation often affects the very young and the elderly most, but no one is exempt from the ravages of hunger. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, there are over two dozen active conflicts taking place across the globe today. As people are forced to flee from their homes, farms and local communities, their ability to produce and consume adequate food declines dramatically.

In South Sudan, a famine has been brought on by a deadly combination of drought, a collapsing economy and civil war. War and displacement mean that farmers are no longer on their land and therefore cannot plant or harvest crops, causing food shortages across the country. In July of 2014, the UN Security Council declared South Sudan’s food crisis to be the worst in the world, and warned that a third of the population, close to five million people, could be affected. Over half of those affected are children. Since that time, the situation has continued to worsen with over 7.2 million people currently enduring severe hunger across South Sudan, a country with a population of only 11.2 million people.

A closer look at the conflict in South Sudan provides insight into the relationship between food insecurity and armed conflict. Fighting between rival ethnic groups has been going since 2013, and officially ended in 2020. It is estimated that more than 400,000 have been killed and more than 4 million are internally displaced. The conflict was fueled by a political struggle between President Salva Kiir (from the Dinka ethnic group) and his former vice president Riek Machar (from the Nuer ethnic group). Because of the scale of the conflict and the ethnic violence, the country was in a state of famine for a number of years, and is now in a state of severe food insecurity. South Sudan is still at risk for another famine. Although their civil war ended in 2020, the effects of immense violence and neglect still run ramped through the country. The international community has thus far been unable to find a way to end to this tragedy.

RESOURCES

Personal Stories

- [Starving on the Streets \(NY Times\)](#)
- [Starvation as a Product of War \(NY Times\)](#)
- [South Sudan \(Save the Children International\)](#)
- [Refugees in South Sudan: "We Walked for Six Days... With Nothing But Our Clothes" \(Doctors Without Borders\)](#)
- [U.N.: Deliberate starvation in South Sudan could be war crime \(CNN World\)](#)

Articles

- [South Sudanese 'one step away from famine', as UN launches humanitarian response plan \(UN News\)](#)
- [South Sudan's Food Crisis 'worst in the world' \(BBC News\)](#)
- [The South Sudan Crisis, Explained: 5 Things You Need To Know In 2022 \(Concern Worldwide US\)](#)
- [From Yemen to South Sudan, climate and water stress seen worsening conflict \(Reuters\)](#)
- [Fighting, flooding, and donor fatigue: Unpacking South Sudan's food crisis \(The New Humanitarian\)](#)
- [Food Assistance Fact Sheet - South Sudan \(USAID\)](#)
- [Starvation used as weapon of war in South Sudan conflict, UN rights body finds \(UN News\)](#)

Images

- [South Sudan: IPC Acute Food Security Snapshot August 2019-April 2020 \(FAO of the UN\)](#)

Websites

- [Civil War in South Sudan \(Council on Foreign Relations\)](#)
- [South Sudan \(BBC\)](#)