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Republic of Niger, Education System

Niger: The Power of Education and the Possibilities from it

“Education opens up the mind, expands it, and allows you to improve your life in so many ways.” (Edberg, 2021). Imagine waking up to a world where you do not know what will become of your life. Every day your schedule is different, and you do not even know where or when your next meal will be. Imagine going home to no bed, just a couple of blankets under some form of a structure. Imagine living in a community with no schools, hospitals, or businesses near you. For many parents, children, and other people living in developing countries, this is a reality.

Living in America and growing up in a stable home has enabled me to become blind to those hurting around me. This hurt is not only in my community but also around the world. Growing up in America, I have lost sight of how privileged I am. I have the same schedule of going to school, a couple of practices, and to a house with running water with food available. However, many places around the world are not as fortunate. One of these locations is the Republic of Niger, located in North Central Africa. More specifically, directly north of Nigeria with the Niger River as the southern border.

The landscape of the Republic of Niger consists of mountains and scattered trees. Niger is known for a torrid climate where some regions receive less than 7 inches of rain (Bonnal, n.d.). The current population of Niger is roughly 19 million people, most of whom live in rural

areas (“PMC IN NIGER,” n.d.). Their predicted population will be triple that amount in 2050 (“PMC IN NIGER,” n.d.). The citizens of Niger rely on crops, livestock, and mining to receive funds. The Global Yield Gap Atlas states, “Crop and livestock production is the foundation of the national economy, contributing about 40% to its GDP,” and their main crops include millet, sorghum, cowpea, and maize (Alhassane, n.d.). As for mining, “Niger has two significant uranium mines providing about 5% of world mining output,” and the government is trying to help expand mining as well (“Uranium in Niger,” 2021). Depending on where someone works, the monthly salary average is 338,000 XOF which is around \$605 (“Average Salary,” 2021). Meaning per year, an average citizen of Niger will earn \$7,260. The total earnings in Niger per year are similar to 2.5 months of work for the average American worker (“Average Salary,” 2021).

The Human Development Index Ranking ranked 189 countries, and out of those countries, the Republic of Niger was 189th due to the average years of education being 2.1 years (“Latest Human Development,” 2020). Also, the life expectancy is roughly 62.5 years (“Latest Human Development,” 2020). When thinking about this compared to America, the citizens of Niger would most likely not retire in America. A monitoring report states that the adult literacy rate is less than 30% in Niger (“Education For All,” 2012). Out of 120 countries, they had the lowest EFA Development Index (“Education For All,” 2012). Knowing Niger was ranked last on the EFA Development Index allows us to assume that disease is a concern. Thus, it is not uncommon for diseases like leprosy to spread around Niger (“Niger Fact File,” n.d.). In the past, leprosy has become more of a threat and is spreading around the country (“Niger Fact File,” n.d.).

As for the education system, schooling for six years is free for students 6 to 12 years old, yet many children do not attend school due to the uneven population across the country (“Niger,” n.d.). Additionally, there are five different native languages in Niger (“Niger,” n.d.). The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) states that Niger has a low enrollment rate for primary school at 71%, and this percentage is higher than it was ten years ago (“Education,” n.d.). UNICEF also confirms that children between 7 and 16 are most likely not in school, and around half go to secondary school (“Education,” n.d.). Also, only one-third of the teachers are adequate to teach, and after primary school, only 8% of students have reading and numeral skills sufficient for work (“Education,” n.d.). The Republic of Niger has low circumstances, and the lifestyle of the people living here includes laborious work for little pay. However, with the right education and proper training, the entire economy could change for the better.

When a country, such as the Republic of Niger, is introduced to a proper education system, including qualified teachers and more school buildings around the country, the opportunities to grow are endless. A nonprofit organization dedicated to helping young girls receive an education states that education and developing countries are similar in multiple ways. “The role of education in poverty reduction is huge. Some advantages of education are: it boosts economic growth and increases the GDP of a country. It even reduces infant mortality rate, increases human life expectancy”(Kudroli Foundation, 2019). Also, having suitable training for teachers is necessary to impact students, and it affects their learning experience, problem-solving, and becoming critical thinkers (Kudroli Foundation, 2019). Improving education would also be beneficial for agriculture because Niger still has challenges with farming. The worst problems facing agriculture in Niger include the unfertile soil, lack of

information on Agriculture Extension, decrease in quality seeds, better water irrigation is needed, and population control (Alhassane, n.d.). On top of those issues, farmers are short on funds, fertilizer, pesticides, and seeds (Alhassane, n.d.). “Together, these problems cause poor use of natural resources and worsen the recurrent food shortages that have occurred over the past four decades” (Alhassane, n.d.). It can be hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel with all these problems.

With all these other less expensive issues occurring, it might seem unimportant for members of Niger’s government to want to put money into building schools. Building more schools could cost more and possibly take longer to see the results than other issues concerning Niger. However, when developing countries focus on their education systems, the population is better under control, fewer children die before the age of 5, and the country moves toward their future goal (Government Of Canada, 2017). However, for some developing countries, different barriers prohibit this from happening.

One barrier in Niger is the number of languages spoken. For schools to overcome this, they can focus on using direct communication and visual cues not only with students but also with parents; they then can also give the students examples of homework or other schoolwork, but overall they can include the culture and unique part of the students as well (6 Ways, 2020). Another concern for many farming families in countries like this is harvesting days. This time of the year is a big concern for developing countries. If this creates an issue, developing countries can set up the school year to have a break during harvest time to find a solution. Another barrier for developing countries is poverty. Poverty has many causes, but education can solve many issues concerning poverty. Including “economic growth, reduced income inequality, reduced infant and maternal deaths, and reduces violence and illness (Giovetti, 2020). Leading into the

last major barrier I will discuss, disease. When developing countries prioritize education, diseases, and addictions such as “smoking, auto fatalities, environmental contamination, and AIDS” are all reduced (Prevention, n.d.)

Fixing the education system would lead to fixing more diverse problems. A recent study shows that farmers with more education yield a greater quantity of products annually, and a proper education system would allow farmers to understand business marketing and financial management (Warmbrod, 2019). Also, applying science and other technology systems in agriculture can bring more effective farming methods (Warmbrod, 2019). Along with farmers getting increased produce, being educated would enable farmers to decrease environmental dangers, food contamination, and the need for water and other chemicals (“Farmer Education,” n.d.). It may seem overwhelming to accomplish, but all it takes is little accomplishments to reach the overall goal. The Republic of Niger has realized this will take steps of action. The U.S. Agency of International Development has decided to help the education system by setting goals to increase the number of quality schools, high student reading performance, improvement in the atmosphere for students mentally and physically, and community engagement in education (“Education,” 2021). With the help of the U.S. Agency of International Development, how can Niger increase the number of students in schools and the number of students achieving a high academic level?

For Niger to develop faster, some would argue that the government must make as many jobs as possible for citizens. Providing multiple jobs will increase the GDP, but the workers will not know how to do the job efficiently. I would suggest starting at the foundation of the country instead of going with the idea above. For most countries, including Niger, this would be through education. When a country like Niger has poor education, it leads to impoverished production. In

return, impoverished production lead to reduced resources, which reduced resources further continues the impoverished production. The cycle of Niger has become an uninterrupted issue. The solution will occur if we fix education at the beginning of the problem. When education is improved, the government can start building new jobs. Then, educated students that know how to adapt to change and think through different work situations would receive these positions.

Moreover, the organizations above help make a difference in several areas of Niger, but none of them target the education system. If Niger were to find an organization like Build On Global, it would help them build schools. More organizations that strive to construct schools in developing countries include Schools for the Children of the World (SCW), UNICEF, and Education International. All of these organizations are currently helping different countries and helping to improve the world's education system as a whole in developing areas. When looking at some of these organizations, you see just how much they are doing. The Education International organization is currently helping over 170 countries, and they represent over 32 million people who are supporting the education system while also creating quality education for children (Education International, n.d.). Finding an organization that helps build schools would help cut down the financial burden of building schools and training new teachers. SCW strives to create not necessarily school buildings but quality education where students truly learn and gain knowledge (Schools For The, n.d.). Each of these organizations provides something unique to each country.

When Niger takes this step to get help, they also need to train and educate their teachers and create better school buildings for all children, including girls. They can bring up a new generation of future scientists, lawyers, firefighters, and farmers. Having a trained generation in different fields of studies enables other problems to be solved too. Training educators and

building more schools would break the cycle of having an impoverished production and reduced resources. Also, this will allow students to apply their knowledge to everyday problems around their community and push them to think out of the box.

Furthermore, when we look specifically at agriculture, Niger is currently getting support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The IFAD is working with Niger to have a rebound plan to adapt to risks in their location, and this plan will help improve both food and nutrient quality (“Niger,” n.d.). They are striving to help small businesses in Niger become sturdy, and they support farmers while making their produce or post-product become a better quality than it has in the past (“Niger,” n.d.). Although this is very beneficial, they are not learning how to farm better or learn better ways to increase productivity gained from an area of land. Building more schools around the country becomes necessary when farmers can not find new farming methods, so how can you build partnerships with organizations to better Niger’s economy and overall future as a country?

Well, to get something needed, the receiver must provide something in return. The world is a trading system. Since Niger is not financially in the best place, they could focus on other strengths and resources they have that are unique and valuable. The Republic of Niger can trade these resources such as uranium and other products grown or raised with other nearby countries and the organizations helping fund the construction of schools. Constructing schools would be the selling point for Niger to these organizations helping, and trading also shows that Niger is becoming more independent and could open up the possibility to create new relationships with other countries. Niger’s government could also set a budget aside specifically for their education system to help with the costs that would not be paid for by the organizations giving aid to them.

If money is still needed, the Republic of Niger can get money from other countries to build businesses and create new schools. However, the goal would be to eventually not need as much support and then work out any obtained debt. After being out of debt, Niger should build up other areas that need attention. According to the Library of Economics and Liberty, countries that gain too much help fail before fully developing (Crook, 1992). The best way to avoid this would be to use support from others until it is not needed so that over time you can become more independent and run a country without other's help. Using this method would allow Niger to become much more industrialized while giving each person the ability to create a better life for themselves by getting an education and a job.

Another option for Niger to get help and support would be from developed countries like America. Everyday citizens who live in fully developed countries can have a voice for the countries still in need. People can stand up and create a difference by organizing marches, gatherings, and events for others who do not have a voice. These activities show America's government that Americans care about other country's issues too. Over 39 billion was given to other countries from the United States in 2019 and is proven to impact those countries (Ingram, 2019). Our voices can help dictate where part of this money goes. However, some people will argue that America has enough issues to deal with that need focus. I agree we have problems, but ours deal with having too much, especially with food security. Niger does not have enough, and if we give our resources and wealth to others, not only will it matter more to others, but it can also bring down the amount of waste that occurs in the United States. The most important thing to notice when helping a country is that the country giving help should make sure that the country you are helping is trying to make strives to become better, and I fully believe that the Republic of Niger is trying to move forward.

Overall, the Republic of Niger is taking significant steps to become fully developed. Currently, Niger is receiving help from countries that allow them to stay accountable and continuously move forward. Although Niger is making moves to become developed, the government of Niger has not set up a plan to improve its education system for students. Most students do not go to school, and if a student does go to school, they most likely do not have established writing, reading, or numerical skills. If Niger's government were to incorporate a system to improve the education system, they could undoubtedly train their teachers and build more schools in different parts of the country. Hence, this allows more students to become fully educated. As more students become educated, the government can start creating jobs for qualified people. These qualified people would then make the country more industrialized. Eventually, Niger will not need as much support. Not needing this support enables Niger to leave different programs and organizations to become more independent and self-sufficient. As education keeps improving in Niger, citizens will be able to think through different situations. They also will be able to solve problems and find more effective and efficient administration practices. Whether it be solving problems with crops or livestock to starting a new business, everyone will have the resources to live in a house and have a job and impact those around them while providing for themselves. Education allows people to have the chance to do something no one has ever done before by empowering those around them. Offering education encourages people to go beyond all limits and opens the door to a world of possibilities around them.

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