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Factor 15: Human Rights

Argentina: The Right to Work

A young boy roams the streets of Buenos Aires, hoping he will not be abducted, while also begging people for spare change. He has worked all day and all he wants now, is a place to retire for the night. Argentina is a great country, at least from the outside. When one takes a closer look, they will find out every country has flaws, but especially Argentina for its forced labor issues. The country struggles with what is actually a low unemployment rate for the ages of 15 to 24 years of age (South). This means a majority of the children are going straight into labor directly out of schooling, and most of the time, it is not by choice.

A typical Argentine family will be a close-knit one. They will usually live in a regular style home with one or two children, grandparents living in the house, and extended family living close by. With their families, they will eat a form of beef and a form of pasta at nearly every meal. The dangers facing a family and especially its children creates a need to be rather close to each other. This means the parents want to know everything their child is doing and when it is happening. Education remains important to the people and the culture; a typical student will attend schooling for about 17 years (South). Homes in Argentina are much like the homes in any other Hispanic country, but they are seen to be stricter. This is just for the security and safety of the families.

Agriculture in Argentina makes up for 10.5 percent of their GDP. Crop production includes sunflower seeds, lemons, soybeans, grapes, corn, tobacco, peanuts, tea, and wheat. Livestock is also a major part of their agricultural world. The nation's agriculture and animal husbandry have traditionally accounted for 70 to 95 percent of their export earnings. The geography of Argentina includes the Pampas – vast plains which spread westward over the central part of the country. The Pampas provide amazing, arable soil and therefore are a major contributing factor to the nation's total agricultural production. The maximum individual farm size in Argentina is nearly 470 hectares, which would be 1161.4 acres. Larger farms are becoming more normal as smaller farms and farmers are disappearing. It is in this issue of factory farming that child labor comes in play (South).

Despite Argentine agriculture being so productive, a good portion of the country is urbanized. The capital, Buenos Aires, is growing rapidly and attracting people from around the world to come join its workforce. The GDP per capita in 2015 reached an estimated 22,400 dollars. Industry makes up 29.1 percent of the nation's GDP and popular industries to work in are food processing, motor vehicles, consumer durables, textiles, chemicals and petrochemicals, printing, metallurgy, and steel (South).

Health care in Argentina is, for the most part, strong. The Health care strives to reach all people but unfortunately cannot due to smaller remote cities considered to be off of the grid. The health care workers are typically expected to be well-educated and exceptionally knowledgeable with the idea they have studied abroad, outside of the main capital. Equipment and technologies in the hospitals may not be the most up to date there is, but in case of emergency, will do just fine. Most of the pharmaceutical can be bought as over the counter without a prescription. Pharmacists are also able to recommend remedies for typical ailments like a headache or the flu (Health).

In Argentina, there is one major issue which is being avoided by the government, and it is the amount forced labor on farms. Human trafficking is an issue which is just starting to gain global attention, what

is also seldom known about it is where the victims are going. Many of the people considered to be human-trafficked are being forced into harsh working conditions on the farms in Argentina. What may be the worst part is the fact in which many of the human trafficked, forced laborers are children.

The present status of this factor remains at a gross amount of people being held against their will to be the laborers on the Argentine farms. To clarify, there are two problems with laborers on farms. The first problem would be the Argentine kids who have no choice but to join the workforce; the second problem would be the people considered to be human-trafficked and forced to work as a slave. Both are major issues and are ones which the government knows about but has not done enough with. Argentina's government is corrupt anyhow and is struggling to maintain stability.

For the Argentine kids whose only option is to work in the field, there are laws in action, but not enough to protect them. There are advances being made in Argentine legislation but even on top of the new legislation, child labor is still growing. There are over 435,000 kids in between the ages of five to 14 who are active in the current work force. As for the slightly older generation, people ages 15 to 24 have an unemployment rate of only 23.5 percent (South). These numbers mean, aside from too many young children starting work early, the kids whose education does not proceed after the average amount go straight into work.

The Argentine government also is not doing enough to protect those who are human trafficked; they do not comply with the minimum standards of elimination for trafficking of people. What little effort the government has put forth would be the setup of shelters for victims. Nearly 900 victims were cared for last year but this is only a fraction of which all have been affected across the nation of Argentina. The government has tried to step into the problem by sending out government officials to farms in an attempt to catch those farmers who support this modern day slavery, but so far the slavery has not come close to an end.

In all, for both issues the government will make the situation feel as though problems are close to being solved, but when in reality the forced labor issues are only getting worse. In fact, 8894 victims have been rescued between 2008 and 2015. Those victims had suffered retention of personal documents, unsafe working conditions, wage manipulation, and unlawful wage deductions, therefore, sending them into a spiral of terrible and unsuitable employment which is near impossible to escape. This means no real improvements have been made, only failed attempts.

There are human rights groups in Argentina that fight for their missing. 'Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo' is a group of mothers and grandmothers who are searching for their missing grandchildren and children. Their work focuses on disappearances dating back to the late 1970s. Another group searching for loved ones is titled 'HIJOS', hijos in Spanish translates to children in English. This group is comprised of the children of the missing. There are five other human rights groups that have online pages readable in English, but unfortunately, none are attracting worldwide attention to Argentina's issues.

There is no media attention directed towards the issue of forced labor in Argentina which means not enough people know of what is happening. Seventy percent of all identified forced laborers, or those who have been human trafficked, have identified as non-Argentine. Most of those people identified from neighboring countries like Peru, Paraguay, and Bolivia. Many others had identified with China being their origin. Some of the victims of human trafficking used as labor in Argentina are from Argentina, just a different part of the country. Since the people who are going missing in Argentina aren't getting attention, the seventy percent from other countries can unfortunately hide under the radar also.

One solution that would solve the media's direction of attention and would hopefully help the whole situation of forced labor in Argentina would be to pull the Argentine government out of corruption. The country's main problem within its corruption is the lack of discipline. 81 percent of Argentinians believe their own government is ineffective when dealing with fighting crime. Stricter policies in Argentina would go great distances in helping to fix its corruption, and it would be highly supported by the people since over four fifths of the Argentinians do not feel protected enough.

A solution to stop and reverse the growing number of modern slaves being forced to work would be giving oversight to powerful, developed countries whose governments are not corrupt. These countries could secure the nation's job structure and help to grow and strengthen the fines and penalties which would be charged against all violators. Stricter punishment would have a direct effect on human-trafficking worldwide since agriculture is a top four contributor as to where the slaves go to work. Exterior government crackdown would mean an international alert too. It would be much harder to try to cross stolen people over tighter borders. Documentation of workers on the farms in Argentina would help to monitor where the workers are coming from. Since the workers are often times being held against their will, more oversight of the farms will show the overseers who are supposed to be there and who are not supposed to be there.

Neighboring countries of Argentina would be best and most effective in helping and watching over Argentina. Chile borders almost all of Argentina's left side and would make a great over-seer of the country for various reasons. Alongside sharing a lengthy border with Argentina, Chile has fought hard to change its title of a developing country to developed country, and within the past twenty-five years, it has done so very well. Chile has recently even put out some of the highest economic growth numbers throughout the entire world. Argentina also shares a border with Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay. Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay are all on strong paths to becoming developed countries and have promising qualities that would help Argentina out immensely if given proper oversight. If the oversight given is as fair as possible, all countries involved would be able to remain independent successfully.

The American public should be onboard with the idea of foreign aid for Argentina. Even though the idea of helping other countries before one's own is a hard one to swallow, it is very necessary even for the betterment of one's own country. Napoleon Hill stated "It is literally true that you can succeed best and quickest by helping others to succeed." If the US were to choose to start helping more with foreign aid, the country would come together knowing that it is going to benefit every party involved. There is not a loss when it comes to helping someone else out.

Stopping the use of child labor and trafficked people would create a better Argentina. Instead of bringing in foreign, illegal, and under aged work, the country could start to work on the nation's 7.6 percent unemployment rate. This would go into fix an unstable economy which is none the less, struggling to gain stability once again.

If all of the country were to be on a similar basis, Argentina could become a stable country yet again, and they would then have the power to become un-corrupt in a stabilized country as well. The people of Argentina would represent all of the country and what its real needs are. Giving jobs to the older and unemployed would also save the children from being worked too hard at such a young age. Allowing the children to focus on their schooling would better the future of Argentina completely. The kids are the future of the country and if their young lives are revolved around hard labor before they have any other opportunities, they will not be able to succeed as leaders in guiding their country in a more positive direction.

Placing a stronger educational system in Argentina would be a process, but it would be very much so worth any hassle that comes with it. Nelson Mandela once said "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." A better educational program would change the entire future of the country. At first, teachers could be international students studying abroad in Argentina, but eventually, most likely with the help of the neighboring countries listed before and the United States, Argentina would have a very strong educational structure that includes fair schooling hours, highly educated teachers, and impressive school buildings. Eventually, this high-class schooling would reach even the smallest towns in order to help 100 percent of the children in Argentina.

Children focusing on schooling and jobs which will pertain to further advancements in technology will lead to a multitude of great things including greater technologies, population growth, and better food supply. These are indirect effects but are brought upon directly by the potential of the youth. Better technologies can be brought forth through any type of school subject of study. Imagine the poor boy who walked through streets begging for money; with stricter child labor laws and labor laws in general, that same boy has had the freedom to continue with school. He discovers his love for science, but the coolest part is how he discovered a cure for a disease and would go on to save as many people as Norman Borlaug's work did.

With this, a new generation of students will be able to grow up to become engineers, inventors, scientists, artists, musicians and world leaders who will be able to solve new problems which may occur in the world around them.

With the help of more constructive labor and human trafficking laws, the young boy who used to roam the streets of Buenos Aires can now go back to his family. He will have a steady source of income and will be safe with the family which loves him very much. Argentina will be able to find peace again in knowing all forced labor upon their people and children will soon vanish into extinction.

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