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Nigeria: Aiding the Farmers

Nigeria is one of the world's poorest countries. The poverty in this West African country is caused by various factors such as political instability, income inequality, and ethnic conflict. Its population of over 200.96 million people makes it the most populated country in the entire African continent and seventh most populated country in the world (Nigeria Population, 1960-2019). Most of Nigeria's population lives in the rural areas of the country. It is important to consider that the majority of the population has to deal with hunger, hygiene issues and extreme poverty on a daily basis, but it is possible for Nigeria to progress with foreign economic aid, farmers doing business, supporting local farmers and export partners.

Nigeria is a democratic country; its government consists of three branches, legislative, executive, and judicial. Most of the land in this country is fertile and good for cultivation, however, according to Nation's Encyclopedia, only about 30.7 million hectares (76 million acres), or 33% of Nigeria's land area, is under cultivation (Nation's Encyclopedia, 2018). Nigeria's small family farmers own 0.5 hectares of land on average, mainly managing mixed crop-livestock systems, including fish farming. This is a very small portion of land compared to a U.S farm size, and considering the crops are mostly used for consuming and not selling or exporting means this does not generate any profits to the farmers or the country. It is the lack of resources and agricultural education that farmers have that is holding them back from expanding their crops potential and earning a living from agriculture production.

Nigeria is located in West Africa and its weather is unique due to its geographical location, which plays an important role in agriculture. Nigeria shares land borders with the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, and Niger in the north. Its coast lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the south and it borders Lake Chad to the northeast. Noted geographical features in Nigeria include the Adamawa highlands, Mambilla Plateau, Jos Plateau, Obudu Plateau, the Niger River, River Benue and Niger Delta. Nigeria is a large country, so the climate is varied in many regions of the country. The southern coast region of the country gets more rainfall during the year than the northern region. While the southern coast region receives more than 150 inches of rainfall the northern coast only gets about 20 inches (Climate - Nigeria." Nigeria Climate: Average Weather, Temperature, Precipitation, Best Time). The dry season can be the farmer's biggest challenge. During this part of the year, it is hard to cultivate crops if the correct tools and resources like water are not available. These kinds of issues are what makes it more difficult for farmers in Nigeria to be able to grow good crops for selling if they don't have the right resources or if they are not well-prepared for an extended drought.

The average household size in Nigeria is 5.0 people. This number is slightly higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Rural areas have an average of 5.1 and urban areas have an average of 4.7 people per house. Considering that this is one of the poorest countries in the world, there are too many people in one household, this means more people to feed, educate and provide other basic services that are hard to afford or unreachable purchases for the majority of Nigerians. One of the most important services for people is health service, and the inability to effectively address the country's numerous public health

challenges has contributed to the persistent and high level of poverty and the weakness of the health system. Political instability, corruption, limited institutional capacity and an unstable economy are major factors responsible for the poor development of health services in Nigeria. Households and individuals in Nigeria bear the burden of a dysfunctional and inequitable health system, delaying or not seeking health care and having to pay out of pocket for health care services that are not affordable. This is concerning considering that a large number of Nigerians suffer from health issues due to poor nutrition and hygiene problems.

People in the northern region of the country are in the majority Muslims, which is why their diet consists of beans, brown rice and other types of grains (they don't consume pork). This makes it difficult for them to receive foreign supplementary food during types of crisis because most of the time they are offered food that is not included in their diets. Most of their food comes from their own cultivation and farms, which makes farming the second most popular occupation in Nigeria, after factory working and just above taxi driving. We can learn that local farmers are the ones who know best what their potential customers consume, so are they the ones capable of growing more nutritious and culturally accepted food. But still, none of these are well paying or stable jobs.

Even though primary education is officially free and compulsory, about 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school. Only 61 percent of 6-11 year-olds regularly attend primary school and only 35.6 percent of children aged 36-59 months receive early childhood education. Imagine for adults the lack of an education is much worse, because this makes it even more difficult for a person to find a good and well-paying job. The lack of good education is the main reason why Nigerians aren't able to have well-paying jobs that increase their family's economy. This creates a perpetual circle where kids don't get educated then they have non-well-paying jobs as adults. As adults they have their own kids being raised in poverty and the circle starts all over again. If this situation continues like this, the country will never rise from poverty.

Agriculture is the major occupation in Nigeria, employing almost two-thirds of the active workforce and contributing 40 percent of the national GDP. However, based on data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (2015), Nigeria has the largest natural gas reserves in Africa and is the continent's biggest oil exporter. This wealth of resources have helped Nigeria maintain a relatively steady economic growth even in the face of the recent global financial meltdown. Nigeria's economy is mostly driven by oil. This has helped it grow from a developing country to lower-middle-income status, although changes in global oil prices make progress unstable. Considering that the only income that increases the economy of the country is an unstable income, the country can at any time have an economic meltdown and enter into a terrible crisis if it doesn't have another income that is stable and steady. I suggest that sustainable agriculture and international trade of produce can be an additional, stabilizing source of income for Nigeria.

The country has plenty of fertile land and has the potential to harvest many crops to export to other countries and generate incomes to increase the country's economy and each farmer's individual economical wealth. Obviously, for harvesting good crops, the farmers should have the adequate materials and good resources so they can sell and export their products. The farmers clearly don't have the resources or the money to afford and acquire the materials and tools, neither does the country's government have the facility to provide them with such resources.

It's also important to remember that most farmers only cultivate for self-consumption and not for creating a business out of agriculture which doesn't leave them any profit, meaning that they will have food to eat from their own farms, but they will never make enough money to break the circle for their own children.

How can it be possible to provide farmers with resources so they can rise out of poverty?

The agricultural potential of Nigeria's land is great and it can be used more efficiently. Having sustainable agriculture is really important to a country with the potential to be a great seller. In Nigeria's case a big part of the land is fertile, but only a small part of it is under cultivation by small house farmers, for self-consumption which doesn't leave any profit to the farmers nor the country. With foreign economic aid, agriculture can grow in the country and farmers will have a way of making money out of their occupation. This way the country can have another income apart from the unstable oil industry. If we really look deeply into this idea we will see that it can be incredibly beneficial, lifting the country and its farmers out of poverty.

The money provided from other countries willing to help diminish poverty in Nigeria will be used to buy materials and supplies needed to secure good harvests. The farmers would benefit by being given the right supplies and tools to work with. The tools they will most likely need are rakes, machetes, escardillas, shovels, peaks, wheelbarrows, harrows, and an irrigation system such as sprinklers. By having all the adequate tools and supplies the farmers will have better grown crops and it will be easier for them to grow larger crops. If the farmers have good and large harvests they will be able to sell their products as well as growing for self-consumption and they will start making money for themselves. Foreign aid is an amazing option for raising Nigeria's economy and giving new and better opportunities to small town farmers in the country.

This project can start with a little help from other countries or organizations and it will keep developing within the country as more people begin to support the farmers. The first step is to receive economic aid from any country or organization that are willing to help. This money will go to an organized group of people and be used to acquire the right tools and materials to give them to the farmers and help them grow good food. Once farmers are given these resources they will start working on the growing and harvest of the food, and also they will start receiving a business management course provided by the same organization who managed the money at first. The course is so they can learn how to manage and maintain the business they will start to build by themselves.

After the course is completed and the farmers receive their production package the most beneficial commercial part will start. The small family farmers can start selling their product at small local markets. This will benefit not only the farmers who will be making money for living, but also the people in the communities who will be able to get freshly harvested food. How can we guarantee that people will be wanting to buy food from the farmers and not from the supermarket? Let's remember that not only farmers, but most of the country's population are not economically wealthy and the majority are Muslims, this meaning that most of these people's diets consist of grains, fruits and vegetables. The food sold by the famers in the local small market will obviously be fresher, cheaper and more culturally appropriate to their dietary needs than in a regular supermarket, making it a much better option for the population. Who doesn't want better food for less money? However, supermarkets can also help the farmer's business.

They can buy the fresh food from the farmers to then sell them in the supermarket, and it will still be profitable for the farmers.

The growth of this project will not stop there. Once agriculture is a stable way of making money and has succeeded in the local markets the farmers can start selling their crops to be exported to other countries. The same countries who aided Nigeria economically to start in this project at first could potentially import food from the Nigerian exportation. This part would benefit even more people, because the farmers who are selling will be generating money for themselves. Nigeria will be internationally exporting food, which will help the country's economy in general, and the countries who are willing to import crops from Nigeria will be getting fresh food and helping a developing country.

The farmers will also be able to stop the circle of poverty for their own children. By harvesting more crops, farmers can generate a stable income from selling at the local markets or exporting. The new personal income will help farmers invest in human services like healthcare and education for their families. This would help stop the circle of poverty. By doing this they would not only be giving their family a better form of life, but also they would be giving their kids better opportunities. If parents have a good income this would make it easier for kids to attend school and receive proper education, and by having proper education kids will have the opportunity to have a better paying and more stable job when they become adults. Having better job opportunities also assures that Nigeria's future generations will have more stable homes and their families will have a better quality of life. This will break the circle and people and job opportunities will keep improving with time. Poverty in Nigeria will be reduced. With little steps Nigeria may achieve many things and improve as a country.

With just a little help from the outside world, a developing country such as Nigeria may become a stable country and poverty will decrease. An entire population's future may have a positive change. My idea is to give help to Nigeria not only giving them money, but by giving them the opportunity to develop and export what they produce, such as vegetables, rice, fruits, and corn. This would help by giving the small farmer an additional and more sustainable income so that they can afford to feed the whole family and afford the basic needs of the household. A committee full of energetic, honest and responsible people that should be sent by the countries providing the money and be dedicated to help these people and be in charge of the finances should go to Nigeria and see the conditions the farmers are in right now to see in what areas the aid is most needed. It is important to let this country use all the potential that they have and it is necessary to give the country as much help as possible, not only the money that they need, but also the education in business management. This type of education is extremely important for the farmers to be able to maintain the business and this way make it a sustainable way of generating income for generations to come.

I think farmers will have a positive reaction to the project once they see the benefits they will receive. I think that if they know how great this will be for their families and their future generations they will be excited to start the business management classes and begin producing and selling large amounts of crops while maintaining enough food for their own households. It all starts with knowing what to do and start making little steps towards the goal. Once the business is stable in the country then schools can also start creating programs, clubs and classes related to agriculture and the business of it to get kids and teenagers involved in it from an early age.

It is incredible the positive changes we can create by just giving an opportunity to people. With these solutions, Nigeria can have sustainable agriculture and will be able to export food internationally, generating an income to small family farmers and in turn, helping the whole country rise out of poverty and eliminate food insecurity. It is really important to see the potential in this country and work on it to make it even better, there is never enough good done in the world.

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