

Branden Arends  
Pleasant Valley High School  
Bettendorf, Iowa  
Nigeria, Factor 13

### **Developing Minds for Developing Nations**

The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization has estimated that “1 out of every 6 people are undernourished”. The heart of this problem can be found in the vast amount of developing countries found on several continents such as Africa (“Millennium Development Goals”). Together developing countries account for more than half the world’s population (“Transition in Population” 15). Africa, a center for these developing countries, is surrounded by a multitude of problems that result in families accustomed to starvation and low morale. On the southwestern portion of Africa stands Nigeria, which is home to more than 11.9 million people who are considered to be “living” under severe poverty (Osinubi 3). Many of these people are overshadowed seeing as Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation consisting of precisely 155,215,573 people. This extreme poverty is umbrellaed over food security. The roots of food security can be split into four sections including accessibility, stability, safety, and nutrition. In a general way of speaking, food security is when people have a realistic, ongoing access to a food supply that suits their dietary needs (*Food and Agriculture Organization*). Both Nigeria’s and Africa's food security and its sustainability as a whole are constantly torn apart by a multitude of problems that most would not begin to count. Parts of these problems are derived from Nigeria’s traditional values. One of these values is to work off the land, another being to insure that each family has an abundance of children, and the traditional roles of a man and woman are fulfilled in everyday life. Each section of food security, whether tackled as a whole or individually, is currently being pursued by several organizations (*Millennium Development Goals*). However, when Nigeria stresses the importance of sustainability for future growth, the importance of education becomes stressed as well. Therefore, if education on both the promotion of urbanization and the reduction of Nigeria’s population is implemented in rural villages throughout Nigeria, it would result in a sustainable promotion of food security.

In order to better understand the challenges supporting a family in Nigeria the issues must be compared to those of an American family. Like a typical American family, most families in Nigeria are composed of 5 members: a mom, a dad, and three children (Hered 204). However, the average Nigerian family is *not* so average. The members of any family residing in Nigeria with the capability to work are left with a fifty-one percent chance of employment whether it be self-employed or working under someone else (Osinubi 3). On average, each employed person would make between N75,000 and N100,000, an income equivalent to that of 480 and 654 US dollars (“Insight into Business in Africa”). (The US Department of State says 157 Naira equals U.S. \$1 as of October 19, 2011). The international poverty line set out by the United Nations sits at \$1.25 US or 47.44 Naria per person each month (Osinubi 7). Although these incomes might not seem quite so abnormal, the income gap in Nigeria tends to mask all statistics blinding others from the truth. The said income gap results in “the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer” as the saying goes.

Most of the people put into the category of employment are smallholder farmers. As tradition is typically followed the person growing crops would most likely be the man of the family. While the father is preoccupied making a measly Naira amount growing crops to sell to the village’s market, the mother is left with their children to insure the survival of the family. The family’s children and women are forced to walk for water on average around four miles a day. The walk is extremely dangerous. After carrying forty pounds, the women are weak and vulnerable to harassment that can go as far as rape. Not only can the sexually transmitted disease lead to complications, but the turmoil placed on a woman’s spine carrying such a substantial amount of water is known to cause detrimental problems later on in life (*Charity:Water*). This walk most likely takes around three hours of their day and wastes precious time

they could be using to go to school, get a job, start a small business, or just to take care of the many other tasks needed to support their family. Some of the other daily tasks of any woman raising a family in a developing country are cooking, cleaning, and gathering wood for a fire to cook on, keep the family warm, and protect them from wild animals. Many of these seem simple but when placed in an environment currently struggling with the worst drought in sixty years they become nearly impossible (*Famine War Drought*). Although the wood you may find for a fire may be dry it is most likely scarce and the challenge of trying to cook without water for even a day is nearly impossible. In the United States the average person uses 176 gallons of water *each day* (*Water Information Program*). The average third world country citizen is left with up to 40 gallons of unclean, unsanitary, and sometimes deadly water.

Poorly sanitized water is estimated to cause ten percent of the disease burden found worldwide. Generally collected from the ground, contaminated water flows from swamps, creeks, and rivers. Many of these waters contain diseases include E.coli, Salmonella typhi, Schistosoma, Cholera vibrios, and Hepatitis A. Many of these diseases are fatal and “kill more people every year than all forms of violence, including war”. If not fatal, however, the diseases can still cause both chronic diarrhea and dysentery. Dysentery can be defined as an infectious disease marked by inflammation and ulceration of the lower part of the bowels, with diarrhea that becomes mucous and hemorrhagic. Unsafe water and germ-ridden household conditions account for a total of 30,000 deaths each week. Ninety percent of these deaths are children under the age of five because of their bodies inability to fight the symptoms that go hand-in-hand with the for-mentioned diseases (*Charity:Water*).

Death rates may be rising but along with them higher birth rates and population growths are flowing from various countries as well. "This century began at 1.6 billion and ended with 6.1 billion," and "the momentum created by this population growth will carry us past 7 billion in 2015". There would be no problem if it was not "most certain that nearly all future population growth will occur in developing regions of the world." (*Population Bulletin* 5). This assumption put into the right hands can either destroy or remake developing nations as a whole. Help has been sent to Africa since the abolitionists ended slavery and former African-American slaves were sent back to Africa to start the country of Liberia (Johnson-Sirleaf). With improvements in many things the life expectancy rate in developing countries rose from 41 years of age to 63. In that same time frame from 1950-2000 the infant mortality rate in these countries had fallen from 180 to a mere 61 deaths out of a 1000 births (*Population Bulletin* 6). The result is both more people to feed but at the same time more people to work and connect the barriers between rural villages and urban cities. As people in developing countries start a slow migration to urban cities it would seem obvious their reasoning. Like many of us in the more developed parts of the world it is a given that cities normally provide necessities in a closer proximity than that of the country - not only necessities but jobs are also clustered more in city settings from small businesses and factories to large corporations.

As cities are crowded so is that of the general population in developing nations. Most families, although large, know at the very beginning that they could never support such a large amount of children. In fact “surveys suggest that most women in developing countries have more births (or children) than they would like” (“Transition in Population” 8). With so many children and unfair traditional beliefs towards women and children it is almost impossible for a family to send their children to school. Add on the fact that most families in developing countries live in urban villages and it is impossible for them to make it to schools thousands of miles away. In Nigeria the net rate of children and young adults enrolled into *primary* school sits at 64 percent of males and 58 percent for women (UNICEF). Various organizations similar to *Charity:Water* stand for injustices like this. The *Free the Children* organization understands this 6 percent of women that make up the gap between women enrolled and men enrolled in primary education could be as many as 9 million Nigerian girls on their own path to a better life. Schooling in developed nations is quite different from that in undeveloped nations. Schools located in places similar to Nigeria strive to nurture their students by teaching basic concepts of sanitation and education. Some schools might go as

far as teaching practical occupations such as weaving, improved farming techniques, pottery, small businesses, etc. and how villages can connect to larger markets.

Eventually the various people that make up the village start spearheading their own actions and organizations soon prepare the village for its brighter future. Some of these organizations will bring things as simple as materials for sanitation units, but all will have a much greater impact on the village's future seeing that the village members have learned practical *and* sustainable techniques for management. With a glimpse at said future, organizations can then instruct the villagers on controlling the population growth. (however sensitive a topic it may be made into). A slow yet steady transition is set as villagers are taught these important steps to earning food security. This includes both education on the negative effects of population growth and the importance of alternative incomes through more urban markets it could then be set into cyclic motion. One of the previously taught villagers could then go on to teach others using the unavoidable sense of automatic acceptance they would receive from being a fellow Nigerian. This would involve a need for less staffing and staff training for these specific school teaching positions. In turn utilizing taught villagers for villagers in other nearby areas would be extremely valuable eradicating the need for funding education on foreign languages and travel expenses (among other things).

The *Millennium Development Goals* served as a great example when they stated their biggest roadblock being the amount of "staff" that can work to help solve these problems. The Millennium Development Goals are constantly uniting various organizations to solve eight issues. Starting in 2000, 189 nations signed a declaration with goals to eradicate extreme poverty and multiple hardships or disadvantages the people of third world countries are forced to face (*Millennium Development Goals*). In turn the before talked about "cyclic motion" of a village member becoming an ambassador for his village and going on to share the news and/or lessons with other villages would wipe out this problem. By setting up schools in neighboring villages to teach of the new business practices, sanitation initiatives, etc. that had once been taught through people of foreign countries the problem would be solved in yet another village and even better- transform more villagers into teachers for either more generations to come or their own village. This of course takes time which is why the necessity of teaching sanitation initiatives and short term methods in bettering the lives of Nigerians are the backbone of this whole idea. For example if time is spent in class setting learning how to use the forest's resources to construct drip irrigation systems the outcome of next seasons harvest might be enough to keep a young child in school (Bucknall). As for the teachers, if they are taught how to become small business leaders they would not only be supplied a source of income for them self and their village's people, but an understanding of the importance of education long-term.

The role of organizations, corporations, and governments currently involved with developing countries would be to work together making sustainable schools and insuring that each school has ways to meet the nutritional needs of the children in order to promote itself. That in itself takes major funding, but is the *only* way that families will allow their children to attend these schools long term. They truly have no option when given the ultimatum of either giving their child to a stranger who would teach them long term life skills and not take care of the child physically or going back to trying to provide the physical care they need at the moment. If governments can mandate schooling as long as the school is providing the necessities of the students physically we might see a change short term. However, eventually the dam would burst. This whole journey needs to be seen through the eyes of the beneficiaries. The people need to know that not only the best intentions are being kept but those intentions are at the same time being backed up with their values and our lessons.

I have talked a great deal about an organization by the name of *Charity:Water* because it is on the path to implementing some of my own ideas and beliefs on how to tackle food security. It starts small and simple- by building a well in a village. Immediately the villagers witness the outcome they had actually helped to create. Soon beginning to praise the workers who are given at the very minimum automatic

respect and acceptance along with native citizens in which the company is known to partner with. This is not some scheme or publicity act. Charity:Water knows that no one else knows the land better than those who have been farming all their lives there. The importance of the people is unsurpassed when dealing with various issues in which science and technology can not amount to (at least not on a budget). Those who are receiving the well, may not have as much education but are fully aware of the problems they face due to the inability to access one of life's necessities. Part of what I mentioned was not only having the right intentions, but the know how and the clear cut plan to see those intentions through. Some companies have come up with these elaborate plans in which the metaphorical well- is not ending up in the peoples hands. On the other hand, some countries are led by people so desperate to help they appear to forget about the vast amount of resources that are untapped. People are a resource, villagers are a resource, farmers are a resource. *Charity:Water* also uses various methods of running their organizations that are unique to only them including merchandise, staffing techniques, technology, and partnerships with other people and organizations. To be specific, they are often boasting about a very successful "give up your birthday" program that works with their website interface to gather in funds from people abroad who are not able to help physically (*Charity: Water*). Most of our strongest dreams are thought up when we are around six years old. If a little girl understands that there are other little girls in Nigeria who need help and can't stop crying to the point where she is willing to give up part of her birthday money, who knows what she'll become.

It is important that we remember that change is happening everyday. We all need to unite as one people in order to even start analyzing issues and searching for the perfect solution for each situation. The first woman president of Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was fully aware of the value of prioritises, finding sequential approaches, and using those in need to help one another- to help themselves. "We are looking at a second round. Every indication is that it is inevitable," Madame President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia reiterates. She alone stands as a beacon of hope throwing her life into recreating *her* home for the better of all its occupants. She has solved many issues in her term using nonviolent practices including the initiation of a democratic government. There is something to be recognized- I feel it was no mistake Ms. Sirleaf was a woman. On the contrary I feel it was necessary. She had helped raise two generations and knew what it meant to help someone in need. Her country was in war for many reasons. If it were generalized the foundation of it's problems were a cross between two different cultures. Liberia was started by a group of black slaves after being set free the United States had decided to send them back to there previous roots. The time gap that existed between there ancestor's capture and there return was so vast that they had now been accustomed to another culture. Misunderstood the people were treated on a larger scale much like a foreign educator might. If her practices of creating a better education system and more alternative incomes has demolished a once war-torn country's problems what is stopping it from solving the problems of Nigeria's people today? In her younger years Sirleaf was put into exile for protesting the governments policies and practices. While on exile she earned a degree at Harvard in economic which led her to solve some of the corruption from the inside of the government financially. Once resolved the countries managed to earn better income for sustainability, public plumbing, and lights or electricity (Sirleaf).

Although the people now have less to worry about and more time for food, I think there was more to it. It was a change in values; these people claimed Sirleaf as the nations grandmother, one of the most respected members of a family. Most know about her background and the effort she went to receive an education, and most it seems are trying just as hard, to follow her and earn an education in the country they were raised in (Sirleaf, 100). One person for another person, one village for another village... soon after may the realization form that a simple chain of events can truly solve all man's physical problems. One step at a time we have the power to change lives, the power to connect villages to one another and make an abiding difference on a global scale.

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